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Safe Schools Initiatives and the Shifting Climate of Trust

Valerie Steeves and Gary T. Marx

The Columbine shooting left a large footprint in the Canadian consciousness, especially when, eight days after Columbine, a four-teen-year-old student walked into an Alberta high school and shot a fellow student to death (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [CBC] 2000b). Although media painted the shooting as a US problem that was moving north of the border (e.g., CBC 2000a), the first reported school shooting in North America occurred in Canada in 1975 (Cobb and Avery 1977); and in the three and a half decades that followed there have been twenty-six reported school shootings in the country (Howell 2009; *Toronto Star* 2007).

However, Columbine, and the Montreal Massacre that preceded it, significantly changed the public debate (Rathjen and Montpetit 1999). As Muschert notes, Columbine has become a metaphorical "keyword for a complex set of emotions surrounding youth, fear, risk, and delinquency in 21st century America" (Muschert 2007a, p. 365). In this context, the term "Columbine Effect" refers to the ways in which school shootings impact practices and beliefs about school violence and security (Muschert and Peguero 2010, p. 119). Certainly by the time of Columbine, there was a high level of agreement among Canadian teachers, students, school officials and police that zero-tolerance policies would enable schools to prevent another tragedy (Gabor 1995). Across the country zero-tolerance policies were adopted almost universally, setting out specific offences that would lead to automatic suspension or expulsion (Day et al. 1995).

In this chapter, we examine the impact of these formal policies and related behaviors in two Canadian schools. We ask, "What security

policies were put in place in the two schools in the years following Columbine?" We then turn to some ethnographic observations to describe changes in teacher and student behavior in response. In doing so, we build on Henry's insight that school violence is the result of a complex set of influences that operate at the institutional and individual levels (Henry 2009). We argue that the policies enacted in response to Columbine to reduce individual acts of violence have reshaped the social relationships between administrators, teachers, and students, and inadvertently created a school climate that under-mines students' trust in the ability of school administrators to respond to violent incidents.

The Schools

The two schools examined, Briargreen Public School (Briargreen) and Sir Robert Borden High School (SRB), are located in Nepean, a suburb of the city of Ottawa. Briargreen is an elementary school with a population of approximately 450 students. It is also a feeder school for SRB, a suburban high school with a population of approximately 1,500 students. Both schools are located in a quiet, well-off, and eth-nically and racially diverse suburban community (Statistics Canada 2010a, 2010b), are surrounded by large playing fields, and have well-funded and well-maintained libraries, and arts and sports facilities.

The community around the schools is relatively crime-free. In 2006, the city of Ottawa had the lowest violent crime rate of the thir-teen largest urban areas in the country (Statistics Canada 2008). The crime rate in the suburb Nepean is even lower, with few or no mur-ders and little gun violence reported in an average year (Ottawa Police Service 2010a, 2010b). In keeping with national norms, the schools are also at low risk for violence. National data from 2006 indicates that 13 percent of youth crime in Canada is committed on school property and only seven percent of that crime involves weapons. An even smaller proportion—less than 1 percent of that 13 percent— involves guns (Taylor-Butts and Bressan 2009).

The Board Policies

In spite of the low risk of violence, zero tolerance was introduced to the two schools on May 15, 1998, when the board passed a safe

school procedure (PR521.SCO; supplemented in 2001 with a safe school policy, P.032.SCO; for details of all school policies, see the Appendix), a weapons policy (P.036.SC; PR.525.SCO), and "Guidelines for Dealing with Reports of Strangers Approaching Students" (P.042.SCO; PR.532.SCO). In keeping with similar policies adopted in both Canada and the United States (Cameron 2006; Gabor1995), these documents assert that "assault, threat and intimidation are of serious concern to staff, trustees, students and parents" (P.036.SCO, s. 2.1). Relevant actors, including the school board, school staff, teachers, students, parents, community partners, and community agencies, must work together to ensure the success of "prevention and intervention programs" (P.032.SCO, s. 4.0).

Moreover, failure is not an option: "facilities must be safe places in which to learn and work" (P.036.SC, s. 2.1). Accordingly, weapons are "strictly prohibited" (s. 2.1) and possession, threatening. and use of weapons lead to automatic suspension (PR.525.SCO, s. 4). Codes of conduct are required to advise students of specific behaviors that will not be tolerated and the consequences that will ensue should the codes be breached (PR.521.SCO, s. 4.2).

The Safe School Initiative underlines the belief that schools are no longer safe places. The fact that there is little violence in the schools does not permit complacency; as Matthew notes, the logic of zero-tolerance policies implies that, "even schools that have not experienced violence, thefts, and other problems should consider increased [security] measures" (Matthew 2010, p. 123). Strangers pose a particular risk of danger, in spite of the fact that school shooters are typically students who are part of the school community (Langman 2009). Accordingly, "the presence of intruders on any of its property or at school-sponsored events" will not be tolerated (s. 4.4); and students must be constantly supervised both at school and at school-sponsored events (P.042.SCO, s. 2.1(a)) in order to "ensure the Board provides a safe environment" (s. 1).

The policies draw heavily on criminal justice language and metaphors. For example, the definition of weapons is explicitly drawn from the Criminal Code (PR.525.SCO, s. 2.1), and incidents involving weapons must be noted in the student's permanent record (ss. 4.1(f), 4.2(f), 4.3(f)), parts of which are required to be retained for fifty-five years after the student leaves the school. Staff members and students are also required to report to the principal the names of students or visitors who they believe threaten the security of the school (s. 4.8(a), (b)).

However, there is an absence of due process to interpret the meaning of these provisions. Principals may deem a variety of items, including scissors, knives, sling shots, hockey sticks, and baseball bats, to be weapons (s. 2.2(b)), and prohibitions apply beyond the physical borders of the school. Safety requires that all members of the school community—including parents and students—comply with the rules whether they are on school property or at school-authorized events off school property (P.036.SCO, s. 2.1; P.032.SCO, s. 3.2). Criminal justice–style responses are accordingly amplified and extended into the community, without the constraints of judicial oversight.

Given this ethos it is not surprising that police officers are given a privileged role because of their expertise with respect to security. In addition to automatically involving police in certain circumstances, such as the (threat of) use of weapons at school (PR.525.SCO, ss. 4.2, 4.3), the board and the schools are required to "maintain a close working relationship" with the police (P.042.SCO, s. 2.1(c)) and to create "procedures consistent with the recommendations of the Ottawa Police Services" (PR.532.SCO, s. 1.0). Responsibility for implementing the guidelines is shared by the school principal and the police (s. 3.0), and principals are required to notify police of "violent acts committed or likely to be committed, whether on or off Board property" (PR.521.SC), s. 4.7(c)). Police may be called in to assist regardless of the student's age because, although a child under 12 cannot be charged with an offence, "the school or Board is not similarly constrained in imposing discipline" (P.043.SC, s. 4(i)).

These provisions extend police surveillance in two ways. First, schools must report actions that have not yet taken place, broadening the traditional scope of intervention beyond post de facto response to preemption based on suspicion. Second, schools are co-opted to watch students both on and *off* school property, extending police surveillance beyond the confines of the school. The goal of this surveillance is to identify potentially violent children so that authorities can intervene to prevent violence from occurring.

The policies are intended to work together to "effectively inter-link public education and criminal justices systems" (Monahan and Torres 2010, p. 1). The Ontario Ministry of Education states: "The police play an essential role in making our school and communities safer" (Ontario 2012). Perhaps the most visible symbol of this inter-linking is the lockdown drill, which schools are advised to conduct at least twice each semester (PR.521.SCO, s. 4.9 (b) (xi)). In addition,

the police are embedded into the school community through the presence of police officers who work as school resource officers (SROs). However, as the above analysis indicates, the police presence extends well beyond the lockdown and the SRO; police involvement in school administration and policy setting reflect a commitment to increasing security by adopting criminal justice protocols that, in effect, reshape school discipline by "[borrowing] from policing mentalities and practices" (Kupchik and Bracy 2010, p. 24).

Individual schools, such as Briargreen and SRB, communicate the policy requirements to their students through school codes of conduct. Both Briargreen's Student's Pledge and SRB's Code of Behavior extend the Safe School principles to include routine behaviors. For example, Briargreen's Student Pledge indicates that "profane language, aggressive behavior, contact sports, body contact, and throwing snowballs" are "inappropriate" and "not acceptable." Similarly, "Game Boys, skateboards, roller blades, hockey sticks, solid rubber balls, small hardballs, lacrosse sticks, and aluminum and wooden bats" are not allowed at school "for obvious safety and security reasons" (section g). SRB's Code of Behavior indicates that students may be suspended for swearing at a teacher, being under the influence of alcohol, smoking, or being in possession of a laser pen on school property. The code also strictly regulates school dances and student dress.

In this way, the net is widened to formally regulate a variety of behaviors, including child's play and dress (Morris 2005). This in effect collapses the line between dangerous and annoying behaviors; students who pose a danger to others are equated with those who challenge authority through dress or bring a hockey stick to school so they can play with their friends, and the same zero-tolerance approach is applied.

Normal social interaction is also regulated. For example, the teacher who knows a student well is not allowed to let her enter a school dance if she does not provide an authenticated form of identification, and a minimum of two police must supplement supervision by teachers and parents at dances (SRB Code of Behavior, C). All visitors are subject to a policy based on suspicion. At both schools, visitors, including parents, are required to "report immediately to the office to identify themselves and their purpose for being on school property" (D.3). Accordingly, informal social relationships are restructured to conform to a set of rules that ostensibly promote safety. However, this may come at the expense of what individuals come to know

about each other through their social interactions and their ability to develop relationships based on trust.

This devaluing or lack of trust in informal social relationships is reiterated in the Alleged Harassment Policies (P.053.HR; PR.543.HR). A zero-tolerance approach is adopted to ensure that all members of the school community are "free of harassment and abuse" (P.053.HR, s. 1). The prohibition captures a range of behaviors: from sexual harassment and hate, to "embarrassing or harmful references to an individuals' intellectual or physical capacities or appearance" (s. 2.1(d)) and "condescending or patronizing behavior which undermines self-respect" (2.2(d)). Informal resolution is disallowed (s. 3.4) and formal investigations, with written records of interviews with parties and witnesses (PR.543.HR, s. 4.1(d)), a decision in writing on the part of the Superintendant of Schools (s. 4.2(a)), and an appeal process (s. 4.4), are mandatory. The Alleged Harassment Policy expressly states that it "is not intended to interfere with normal social interaction between people employed by the Board" (P.053.HR, s. 3.6), but makes no such claims regarding student-teacher or student-student relationships.

The Alleged Harassment/Abuse of a Student by a Student Procedure (PR.544.HR) mirrors the provisions of the other harassment policies, with three differences. First, there is no appeal process for a decision taken by the principal. Second, the procedure explicitly sets out "initial steps" a student "may" take when being harassed by another student. These steps include confiding in: another student; a peer support group; a teacher; the principal; the vice-principal; or a parent or guardian. Peer support groups and teachers are required to inform the principal. Parents are "expected" to inform the principal. Accordingly, an appeal to help from the people within the community by the student will initiate a formal process of investigation and possible punishment, predicated on a wide-spread duty to report. The only exception is when the student confides in another student; in those circumstances, the other student "*should* offer support and *may* encourage" the student to report the incident (emphasis added).

Third, police involvement is mandated in a number of ways. Principals are required to inform all students of the existence of a hotline, and to report any critical incidents to the police regardless of the student's age (PR.533.SCO, s. 2.2). Moreover, a duty is imposed on the principal to inform victims of support services available through the school, the board, and the police service, in effect embedding police within both the disciplinary process and the rebuilding of personal

and community cohesion. This is an inherent contradiction within leadership and social control roles, clearly seen in the community policing movement.

When bullying prevention programs were formally mandated by the board in 2008, the language of intervention began to depart from the zero-tolerance mantra that dominated the policies passed at the time of Columbine. For example, the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy (P.123.SCO) expressly incorporates progressive discipline principles (P.124.SCO; see also PR.660.SC)) that are to be "applied within a framework that shifts the focus from one that is solely punitive to one that is both corrective and supportive" (s. 2.0). This approach seeks to create a "safe learning and teaching environment" (s. 3.1) through the adoption of restorative justice practices (PR.660.SCO, s. 2). Interestingly, the document does not mention the police, except perhaps indirectly when it reiterates the need to "strengthen community partnerships/linkages to promote positive student behavior" (P.124.SCO, s. 1(d)).

The same shift in language is seen in the School Board Code of Conduct, also issued in 2008. Although safety is still the key motivator for policy development, the discourse has broadened to include as a policy objective the promotion of positive personal and community development (P.125.SCO, s. 3(b)). The role of the police is also less apparent, and only becomes visible for those "fewer students" who benefit from "supports" such as suspension, expulsion and the "involvement" of the police officer working in the school (see the appendix to this chapter).

Given the growth of evidence between 1998 and 2008 that zero-tolerance policies are ineffective (Skiba 2008) and have had a negative impact on students' privacy and civil rights (Addington 2008), one could argue that it is not surprising that the board is in some ways moving away from the language of punishment and criminality (although the link between evidence and policy is rarely direct). However, despite the shift toward a softer discourse of "supports," restorative justice, and community development, the zero-tolerance approach remains intact, and the new policies continue to be tied to the post-Columbine concern with bullying as a precursor to random acts of violence by students. Not only are the earlier policies still in force and effect, but many of the elements introduced in them, such as mandatory reporting and increased supervision, reappear in the policies enacted in 2008. Bullying has simply been added to the list of unacceptable behaviors (P.123.SCO, s. 1.1(e)). In this sense, the

2008 policies reflect the ongoing tendency to widen the zero-tolerance net (Morris 2005), as once again relatively innocuous behaviors are collapsed into a class of violent crimes which cannot be tolerated.

Perhaps more importantly, security continues to be framed within the context of rules, surveillance and an escalating set of punishments, and school response is built on early prevention and intervention. Accordingly, it is necessary to regulate a large range of "normal" social behaviors, such as respect, honesty, and integrity, because students can only "work to their full potential" (s. 4.3(a)) when their social interactions with each other are controlled by formal mechanisms that clearly articulate which behaviors will not be tolerated. From this perspective, schools are no longer unsafe solely because of school shooters, but because all students may be bullies in disguise.

Safety in Practice: Some Ethnographic Observations

Although there is a growing body of research on zero-tolerance policies, "Very little is known about the subjective experience of school actors—especially students—living within, navigating, and appropriating everyday surveillance" (Monahan and Torres 2010, p. 14) in the post-Columbine school. The following section examines changes in practices and beliefs about school violence and security exhibited by students, teachers, and school administrators in Briargreen and SRB from the late 1990s to date. We hope to provide some insight into the unintended consequences these policies have had for the children they seek to protect. We also examine how these practices draw on broader beliefs about fear and safety, especially in the context of children and youths.

Our analysis draws on ethnographic data collected by coauthor Steeves through observation and participation as a school volunteer and parent. From 1992 to 2004, Steeves was actively involved with the Briargreen School Council and in that capacity interacted with the school principal on a monthly basis on a number of issues, including school safety and bullying. She also volunteered in a number of capacities, tutoring students in the classroom, leading the school choir, working in the library and assisting with multiple field trips. As such, she was working in the school at least one day per week from 1996 to 2001, which provided her with an opportunity to converse with students and teachers without interviewing them formally.

Our discussion is divided to address four questions: (1) Who is the problem? (2) What is the problem? (3) Where does the problem occur? and (4) How do control agents respond to the problem? For ease of reading, personal pronouns are used when describing Steeves's observations and experiences.

Who Is the Problem?

Ostensibly, zero-tolerance policies are intended to regulate the behavior of students who are likely to participate in "truly dangerous and criminal behavior" (Dunbar and Villarruel 2004). However, our experience within the school system indicates that the definition of the person being regulated has been widened to include parents and families as well as students, and that being labelled "unsafe" may have serious repercussions.

For example, when our daughter was in grade one, she told us that we would no longer be allowed to send her to her room because, if we did, she would call the hotline and the police would come and punish us for being "mean" to her. Pursuant to board policy, the teacher had explained that when parents are "bad," children can call the hotline for "help." From our six-year-old's perspective, the school's instructions offered a new resource for asserting her interests. We explained to her that such reporting was only for serious offences. But the incident nicely illustrates how, in an admirable attempt to protect children at risk, the private sphere of the home can be opened up to scrutiny by the school with insufficient thought to how children will interpret the information or how this might alter family dynamics. Moreover, the extreme cases where child abuse has come to the attention of the authorities and protective action has not been taken suggest that often the problem is not that the state is unaware but that it does not act on the knowledge it has.

The same dynamic can be seen in the classroom; writing assignments in particular can be a means of opening up the private sphere of the student and the family. For example, our children have been asked to write about their use of drugs and alcohol, and their "most shameful" actions. These assignments are crafted as confessional; the students are encouraged to reveal personal details to the school as an institution. When our children have questioned these assignments, a few teachers have indicated their discomfort with the school's interest in their students' personal lives. However, rather than changing the assignments, they told the children to "just make something up."

More typically, teachers treat these assignments as routine cur-
ricular requirements, with interesting consequences. In a health unit
on eating disorders and family violence, for example, one class of
girls was asked to write letters of apology to their bodies for "abus-
ing" them. When our daughter asked what was she to do since she
does not abuse her body and has a happy family life, the teacher
smiled and said, "Come on, be honest." The girl's experience of non-
abuse was accordingly problematized and seen as inauthentic; and
the confessional nature of the assignment implicitly framed the school
as worthy of intimate trust and the family as a source of pathology
and violence. From this perspective, the school shooter behind zero-
tolerance policies recedes and every child and every family becomes
a potential source of danger.

What Is the problem?

Since the late 1990s, the definition of what is considered "unsafe"
has changed considerably, and often in ways that defy common sense
(Staderab 2006). Board policies target a variety of behaviors, many
of which are closely aligned with problems caused by school shoot-
ings (such as weapons offences, police intervention in cases of
school violence, and bullying). However, in practice, a growing num-
ber of interactions that were previously considered to be within the
range of normal behavior have fallen within the purview of increas-
ingly restrictive technologies of control (Morris 2005); some have
been hard-engineered into the school environment and others have
been imposed on student behavior.

Children's play is the foremost example; whereas it was previ-
ously largely a matter of personal choices and private interactions, it
has increasingly been regulated by the schools. For example, Briar-
green's playground equipment was replaced twice, to control behav-
ior that had been redefined as "dangerous." The first time was to
reduce the risk of a child falling off the structure into the sand below.
The children complained because the new structure was less fun, but
they still had swings, slides, and the zipline, a 15-foot wire with a han-
dle approximately 4 feet off the ground. The next year, the school
board replaced the new equipment with an even lower structure. The
slides were enclosed and the plastic made them difficult to slide on. A
number of swings were replaced with swings with child guards, which
made them difficult for the older children to play on. A special play-
ground was built for the kindergarten students, who were segregated

from the older children by a wire fence to "reduce bullying." This was particularly disturbing to siblings and friends accustomed to playing together on the playground. The zipline survived, although older children and younger children were not allowed to use it at the same time, which made it difficult for the younger children who, up until then, had relied on the assistance of the older children to reach the handle. The changes accordingly limited the children's opportunities for both large muscle play and cooperative interaction.

Playground trees were also altered to control the children's behavior and make it easier to place them under surveillance. In 2002, the favorite climbing tree was cut down because it posed a danger. Two years later, the lower branches of all of the pines were removed to make the children visible at all times. Trees lining the street were identified as particularly risky because they offered protection for a stranger bent on child abduction.

New controls were also brought to the school's sports equipment. The principal sold the field hockey equipment because hockey was "dangerous." Baseballs, baseball bats, and footballs were forbidden because they were "weapons." To fill the gap, the parent-teacher council purchased plastic and foam floor hockey sticks with foam balls as pucks, but their use was abandoned because the equipment made it impossible for the children to play the game.

In addition to these kinds of resource bans, a number of controls were put into place to regulate the games children were allowed to play. Some, like tag, were banned outright because they were "contact sports." In other instances, the activity was allowed but modified in order to pacify its rough edges. For example, after one of our children was hit in the eye by a badminton birdie (but not injured), the students were told that they were no longer allowed to play the game unless they wore goggles.

Boys in fifth and sixth grade had a particularly difficult time with the lack of activity at recess. Since they had nothing to do, they would roam around and bother the girls or the younger children, and the number of fights increased. Parents and teachers complained about an increase in misbehavior in class, often citing as the cause the inability of the boys to run around and play during recess. When one of my daughters complained, her teacher told her the boys were a "roving band of juvenile delinquents."

Teachers would also appeal to safety concerns to stop annoying but otherwise normal behavior. For example, Canadian schoolchildren celebrate Remembrance Day by wearing red poppies that are

attached to their shirts with straight pins. One sixth grader who joked with a friend about poking him with the pin was suspended for a day for "threatening with a weapon." Snowball fights and fort building are a staple of Canadian child's play. After snowball throwing was banned because it was too dangerous, one sixth grader was given detention and threatened with suspension for playfully throwing a handful of snow into the air and crying, "It's snowing!" Again, safety concerns were used to justify the detention. A five-year-old child walking down the hall was told by a distraught teacher to take her hands out of her pocket or else she might "fall and die."

Rather than making the students fearful, these kinds of interactions are taken as proof that adults are overly controlling for no apparent reason. Their authority is therefore seen as irrelevant. For example, "gang clothing" was banned at SRB and students were no longer allowed to wear bandannas or hoods even though there were no gangs at this suburban school. The boys made a game of it. When the vice principal would walk by, one of them would throw up a friend's hood, so the friend would be put on the school's "hoodie list" and receive detention for gang-like behavior. A girl was also given detention for wearing a sweater even though the temperature in the hall was in the 50s (Fahrenheit) because the sweater was deemed to be a coat and therefore part of the "gang colors" prohibition. From the students' perspective, this absolutist approach to rules enforcement underlined the administration's ineffectualness, because adults could not properly discern when a problem such as gang involvement was actually present.

Most, if not all, of the students we talked to indicated that the constant monitoring of their behavior, even though they were simply going about their business, created a sense of disillusionment. As Weiss reports in her study of student resistance to school surveillance, "Students in these schools experience first-hand what it is to be monitored, contained, and harassed, all in the name of safety and protection, and they are deeply aware that the persistent advancement of surveillance measures inside their schools has ill-intended consequences" (Weiss 2010, p. 214). This results in a "cumulative effect of claustrophobia in the lived experience of the student" (p. 215).

Over time, it has become increasingly difficult to challenge these kinds of rules. Although zero-tolerance policies were, at least in part, motivated by the ways in which "tragedies of school shootings become shared media and cultural spectacles, instigating moral panics that overshadow any cold, objective assessment of risk" (Monahan

2006), that intolerance to risk has grown to encompass an ever-widening conception of what constitutes a danger, and children's movements, play, and autonomy have been increasingly curtailed.

Where Does the Problem Occur?

Most of the time, safety rules are restricted to the school's borders; and children gladly leave the school yard to play road hockey or tag or participate in snowball fights. However, as noted above, a number of board policies extend the jurisdiction of zero-tolerance rules beyond the school yard. This creates a liminal space between school and public space in which the behavior of students—and parents—is sometimes subjected to both informal and formal regulation.

Because of the liminal nature of the boundary, it is often difficult for children to navigate the transfer from the regulated nature of school space to the relative autonomy of public space. For example, one Halloween, a boy in tenth grade was leaving the school wearing a costume he had worn throughout the schoolday. Just as he was walking out the door to the school, he put up his hood because it was cold outside. The vice principal gave him detention. When the boy complained that he was in the process of leaving the building, the vice principal told him, in all seriousness, that it was crucial that the administration be able to identify all students at all times in order to keep them safe and that hoods interfered with that. The boy was wearing a mask that completely covered his face at the time.

In addition, it is often difficult to discern when regulation will be extended beyond the school and when it will not be. As part of the SRB's graduating class's celebrations each year, a large number of students gather at local parks on the last night of school to drink and commit acts of vandalism. The event is known as Tequila Sunrise. The community has routinely protested and asked the police to intervene but the event has continued and been ignored by the school. In 2007, students participating in the event were drinking in the basement of a partially completed house in the area and lost control of a fire they had built. The building was completely destroyed. The next year, students returned to the same house during Tequila Sunrise and it was again burned to the ground. Interestingly, SRB refused to take part in the investigation of the fires and some teachers continued to encourage students to attend the event because, in the words of one teacher, it was "just good clean fun."

How Do control Agents Respond to the Problem?

The ambivalence shown toward Tequila Sunrise demonstrates the frequent gap between administrative policy and implementation. It is noteworthy that, at the same time that zero-tolerance rules constrain young people's behavior to protect them from dangers, in practice the same young people are often given a high degree of licence regarding behaviors that have been identified as unsafe. For example, on a number of occasions, students who were found drunk at school dances were suspended only to be immediately reinstated as soon as their parents complained to the board. One such student had been taken to the hospital during the dance for alcohol poisoning; the next week, his parents drove him to Tequila Sunrise because they felt it was unsafe for him to walk to the park in the dark. Similarly, many teachers chose not to challenge students who swore at them in class because—in spite of zero-tolerance punishments—they believed "there's nothing [we] can do"; teachers who did discipline students for swearing often lamented the lack of parental support for their actions.

Although parents often appeared willing to sacrifice their children's autonomy to ensure their safety, many were equally unwilling to let the school discipline their children. In effect, rules were accepted as a way to protect a child but rejected as a way of holding a child accountable for transgressive action. This creates a complex set of conflicting pressures on teachers and administrators seeking to implement board policy.

School practice departed from policy in another significant respect. In spite of the central role given to the police in board policies, student interaction with the police, in general, and the SRO in particular, was typically limited to the annual safety assembly. Students did, however, rebel against the criminal justice–style restrictions placed on them, and frequently complained that the school administration treated them like criminals. Many practices associated with the police, such as administering breathalyzer tests to students before allowing them to attend school dances, were undertaken by the school administration and, from the students' perspective, they were routinely presumed to be guilty of a variety of infractions. Students felt this was condescending and did not reflect the fact that they were capable of making responsible decisions. They also complained that adults did not trust them to behave in reasonable ways or to learn from their mistakes.

The board reliance on students informing on their peers also failed to materialize much in practice. On one occasion, when a boy in Grade 11 threw eggs at his younger brother as a practical joke, the school reported the incident to the police and asked students to identify the offender so charges could be laid. The students refused to cooperate, believing that the school was overreacting and that punishment was unwarranted. By refusing to inform on their peers, students were able to neutralize the school's control.

At the same time, students complained that the new safety regime was particularly ineffective when they did need adult assistance to deal with conflict. When one boy, known as a bully, beat up a classmate in 1996, he was suspended for three days, after which the behavior was not repeated. His fellow students saw the suspension as fair. When his younger brother did the same thing three years later, the new principal brought the two boys into her office and told them to exchange telephone numbers so they could "work it out with words." The children concluded that the antibullying program was a joke because they were no longer allowed to use the words "stupid" and "dumb," but the bullies could get your phone number and harass you at home as well as at school. In effect, the safety rules made it difficult for them to deal with aggressive behavior on the part of their peers because they could no longer use shaming or ostracism to constrain the offender, or to call others—or be called by others—to account when their behavior was hurtful or socially inappropriate.

However, one element of the zero-tolerance approach introduced in the post-Columbine panic over school violence has continued to thrive: the reliance on early identification and intervention. Since each student is framed as a potential risk, there have been ongoing attempts to collect information about all students in order to assess the need for intervention on an individual basis. In a particularly controversial move, the board initiated a student survey in 2011 that asked every student from kindergarten to twelfth grade to provide information about his or her "ethnicity, socioeconomics, gender, sexual orientation, student engagement, sense of belonging, school climate, student health, extracurricular activities and special accommodations" (Ottawa-Carleton District School Board 2011). This was done so that specific children could be tracked over time and the school could intervene to manage problems.

However, the general ethos of early identification and intervention can easily go awry. Our son's experience on his first day of kindergarten offers a prime example. He was wrongly put on a school

bus even though he tearfully tried to explain that he was "a walker" and that his parents were coming to get him. When we complained that our five-year-old son was forced onto a bus that could have dropped him off in an area that was completely unknown to him if we had not located the bus before it reached its destination, the teacher insisted that a school board psychologist assess him because he was "violent" and did not "respond well to authority." Even though her actions ostensibly created a safety risk, her request reframed the incident by fitting it within the board's goals of prevention and protection. This brought a new problem to us as parents. We needed to thwart a system that would "identify" our child in order to "intervene." We were successful, but here we see how the formal system of labeling embedded in board policies comes to be used for ends unrelated to safety: the teacher was trying to avoid a reprimand in her employment record and we were concerned about an unwarranted negative notation in our son's permanent school record.

Accordingly, the practice of zero tolerance is a complex one. It both captures and regulates an overly wide range of behaviors and fails to effectively respond to student concerns about security. It also reshapes the relationships between students and teachers to conform to a model that asserts that safety and security must be externally imposed through rules, surveillance and punishment, rather than through commonly agreed practices and behaviors (Chesler, Crowfoot, and Bryant 1979). In this sense, "rather than provide an orderly basis for *education,* rules are part of the technology of *social control*" (p. 500, emphasis in original). The result is a school climate that weakens bonds of trust, detracts from students' sense of competency to handle their own problems, and leaves students feeling that adults are ineffectual at responding to safety risks.

Conclusion

Although immediate fears about school shootings have receded since 1998, the post-Columbine notion that security can be obtained through the imposition of rules, surveillance and punishment has continued to reshape the relationships between students, teachers, administrators and parents. Safety concerns have become dominant, and are implicitly prioritized over rival ideas about how to provide an orderly foundation for education, such as trust, mutuality, discretion and transparency (see, e.g., Chesler, Crowfoot, and Bryant 1979).

The technologies of social control that have been imposed in the school reflect an intolerance of any perceived harm, no matter how small or insignificant, and the net has widened to capture behaviors and activities that were previously considered normal. Both hard and soft measures of control have limited children's opportunities for large muscle play, creativity and social interaction, and have led to a sense of claustrophobia and frustration on the part of many students. However, this intolerance of risk may also have unintended consequences for children's educational experiences and moral development.

Hope (2010) suggests that fears over safety cause many schools to "overblock" or unreasonably limit students' educational experiences. Because of this, "some frustrated students may be forced to seek alternative sites of learning or, worse, start to withdraw from certain educational processes" (p. 242). Cameron and Sheppard (2006) warn that zero-tolerance regimes treat students as: "untrustworthy and incompetent, suggesting to them that they are best off following directions and conforming to expectation. This may have a diminishing effect on students' developing autonomy and responsibility, as well as their capacities for independent thought" (p. 19).

In like vein, Bergin and Bergin (1999) suggest that discipline centered on compliance may work against the development of self-control and the internalization of community values. On the other hand, Morris notes that overly restrictive rules may "inadvertently [transform] the expression of youth identity, encompassing relatively innocuous stylistic rebelliousness, into a mode of subversive opposition" (Morris 2005, p. 43). Although this may lead to either complicity or disengagement from school, it is also possible that subversive resistance "may actually reflect sophisticated social skills on the child's part . . . [that] mark the child's emerging ability to balance autonomy with social responsibility in a socially acceptable form" (pp. 198–199).

Further research is needed to more fully understand the range of effects post-Columbine disciplinary regimes have on students' education and development. Current policies should also be reassessed to determine the extent to which they flood the system with complaints and escalate incidents which could be resolved through informal social mechanisms as they often were traditionally. Certainly, the tendency to import formal criminal justice practices into schools has been heavily critiqued in the literature. Giroux, for example, argues that children are "increasingly isolated, treated with suspicion, and subjected to diminished rights to privacy and personal liberties"

(Giroux 2003, p. 553), creating a "generation of suspects" (p. 554). Cornell (2003) argues that this could be corrected by a return to case-by-case assessment of student threats by administrators who can place the incident into a broader context and apply "good judgment" rather than draconian punishments. Caplan (2003) suggests that administrators should consider the context and meaning of students' actions and exercise their discretion to make individualized determinations about appropriate consequences.

However, discretion and judgment do not occur in a vacuum. Since the current regime sees any child as a potential source of danger, it has become imperative to invade the private sphere of the child and the family to identify risks for the purposes of intervention. Accordingly, the borders between school and police, school and family, and public and private have increasingly blurred, and a growing range of behaviors, on the part of students and parents alike, have been brought into the regulatory net through formal and informal mechanisms of surveillance.

Although child safety is a laudable goal, the lack of specificity in the post-Columbine safety regime leaves vast room for interpretation on the part of students and control agents. As noted, the regime has had unintended, and often ironic, consequences, reflecting a world of imperfect choices and trade-offs. Better policy requires an awareness of the ways in which well-intentioned rules may help in some ways and harm in others.

Appendix

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board Policies

Alleged Harassment/Abuse of a Student by a Student, PR.544.HR. (1998, August).

Alleged Harassment of a Student Procedure, PR.543.HR. (1998, August).

Alleged Harassment Policy, P.053.HR. (1998, August).

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy, P.123.SCO. (2008, May).

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Procedure, PR.659.SCO. (2008, May).

Guidelines for Dealing with Reports of Strangers Approaching Students Policy, P.042.SCO. (1998, May 15).

Guidelines for Dealing with Reports of Strangers Approaching Students Procedure, R.532.SCO. (1998, May 15).

Police Involvement in Schools Policy, P.043.SCO. (1998, August).

Police Involvement in Schools Procedure, PR.533.SCO. (1998, August).

Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behavior Policy, P.124.SCO. (2008, May).

Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behavior Procedure, PR.660.SCO. (2008, May).

Safe School Policy, P.032.SCO. (2001, September 4).

Safe School Procedure, PR521.SCO. (1998, May 15).

School Board Code of Conduct Policy, P.125.SCO. (2008, May).

Video Surveillance Policy, P.047.FAC. (2007, June).

Weapons Policy, P.036.SC. (1998, May 15).

Weapons Procedure, PR.525.SCO. (1998, May 15).

School and Provincial Codes of Conduct

Briargreen Public School. Our Student's Pledge. Expectations and Routines. Retrieved from http://briargreenps.ocdsb.ca/index.php?id=20.

Ontario. Ministry of Education. Code of Conduct. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/code.html

Sir Robert Borden High School. Code of Behavior. Retrieved from http://www.sirrobertbordenhs.ocdsb.ca/index.php?id=30