

## Lessons of Policing and Exclusion: Pedagogical Probabilities Present in Active Shooter Training

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### Abstract

While active shooter training in schools is socially framed as a necessary response to the perception that our educational institutions are inherently dangerous, this paper provides an alternate read that hopefully leads to critical conversations about such trainings and practices they inspire. It situates active shooter training squarely in the ever-expanding culture of fear that has prompted the usurping of various freedoms in exchange for greater levels of security through institutional and intrapersonal policing. In framing episodes of violence as expected and expanding the possibility of who perpetrates violence to include everyone, active shooter training is able to construct a rational justification for furthering hypervigilance and exhaustive surveillance. At the same time, it can be argued that such inclusive and boundless understandings of violence, especially when considering related pedagogical messages in the context of schooling and students, constructs a reality in which trust in others is a casualty, that surveillance is not simply institutional but instead an individual reality in which people normatively monitor one another, and in general, where difference is the impetus for the construction of metaphorical walls. And while these have been the responses to danger present in the commodified and individualized social world, it is important to question whether both the means and ends are justified. If democratic interaction is understood as requiring, among other things, attention to difference and dialogue, can democracy, let alone the expansion of democratic possibilities, exist in a reality in which these things are feared and avoided? Can schools, as sites where democratic interactions can be practiced, carry out this vital function if these needs are viewed in contention with or even subordinate to safety, as defined as furthering fear, policing, and exclusion?

Keywords: Fear, Surveillance, Policing, Exclusion, Democracy

### Introduction

The education of students and the imagining of futures are undoubtedly intertwined. Dewey (1907), among others, argued this point more than 100 years ago:

“What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy. All that society has accomplished for itself is put, through the agency of the school, at the disposal of its future members. All its better thoughts of itself it hopes to realize through the new possibilities thus opened to its future self. Here individualism and socialism are one. Only by being true to the full growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself” (pp. 19-20).

In simpler words, if we pool the education of individual students together to form a collective consciousness, this consciousness should hold new possibilities for a better and more democratic future. However, when coupling this assumption with the consideration that schools are multifaceted institutions with a myriad of responsibilities to diverse groups of stakeholders, we can conceive realities in which some functions compete with others and even diminish or usurp their importance. One such responsibility is student safety. Whether an actuality ever present in schooling institutions or a manufactured reality stemming from the visibility created by the connectedness and the always-on nature of the modern world, schools are seen as dangerous institutions, best exemplified by high-profile mass shooting instances within school buildings. This imagery is not only confined to and contemplated by those sitting on the outside looking in. Instead, schools themselves, including students, teachers, and administrators, whether by their own initiative or as a result of external pressures, embody such dominant narratives through their implementation of policies and protocols practiced and discussed during operational times of the school year specifically related to how they should respond to active shooter incidents. Indeed, because of the visibility of school violence, schools are pressured by the state, themselves pressed to action through media portrayals, to act “as a domain to ferret out sinful behaviors, inculcating students with state-sponsored values, and perhaps even teaching students a forceful lesson in values that may promote morality but erode citizenship” (Blankenau & Leeper, 2003, p. 568). In order to appease external pressures stemming from the perceived need for greater amounts of security, schools have turned to organizations like the ALICE Training Institute for direction. In turn, these organizations have filled a void created by the uncertainty inherent in the perceived war zones that are schools. In this void, external market-based entities are reactively, mechanistically, and uncritically asked to address and imprint themselves onto a political-moral problem that public schools themselves are not deemed trusted or capable enough to address. Their role provides them with the authority to author the narrative and understandings of school violence and to determine what are considered appropriate responses. The pedagogies that they promote come from a particular set of values that lead to equally particular visions of future interpersonal relationships and relationships within society as a whole, and these visions and relationships are closed for debate. And while it is difficult to argue against measures that are marketed as helping to foster a safe learning environment in schools, some questions that must be addressed include: At what point does the explicit and implicit understandings generated through active shooter trainings in schools, such as those administered by the ALICE Institute, create unintended human consequences such as the inhibition of the forming of bonds

necessary for furthering democratic interactions? Does the number of active shooter incidents in schools justify the time and energy spent formulating responses, drilling, and debriefing in preparation for a shooting incident in a school? What new dangers are created by limiting or confining understandings of danger simply to those that fall under the umbrella of physical violence? How does viewing school violence as a technical or logistical problem obscure underlying broader ethical issues such as the pervasiveness of gun violence or the non-addressing of issues pertaining to poverty? Can such technical solutions solve non-technical problems? Finally, what kind of citizen does the dissolution of bonds, emphasis on threat, and surface-level reactionary solutions to problems create? While in no way providing conclusive answers to these questions, the scope of this paper is to provide an alternative understanding of active shooter training in schools, one that views these processes as contributing to a longstanding culture of fear and policing that not only slows the imagining of different possible democratic futures but dismantles them altogether. Indeed, it will use the ALICE Institute's training as a backdrop to discuss how framing violence as both normal and inevitable prevents the building of bonds across difference, conspires against the building of trust, and fashions schools into sites of surveillance—watching students and teaching them to watch one another—where students are denied access to forms of democratic play that would prepare them for their roles as future citizens in the related game (Mead, 1934). To borrow from Bauman (2000), “[t]o re-start questioning means to take a long step towards a cure” (p. 89).

While it is important to analyze the implications of ALICE Training—that the security that it supposedly brings comes at the steep cost of individual and collective liberty—it is equally important to situate the perceived need for such training as a symptom of a larger social problem: The trust in public institutions to solve public problems has been eroded and replaced with a reliance on external, commodified, private sources to find or create solutions. In short, public problems now require private solutions. Education in a nutshell is illustrative of this, as evidenced by the pervasiveness of conversations surrounding and the implementation of different privatization schemas. Charter school and privatization debates are prime examples where the private sphere has been tasked with “fixing” public problems, never mind that the concept of “broken” is often politically constructed. This lack of faith in public institutions to take care of public problems is rooted in the fact that under organized capitalism, the state has become engaged in a crisis of legitimacy. Allan (2013), in discussing Habermas, notes that “[u]nder organized capitalism... the economy is managed by the state to one degree or another. This shift means that the crisis, when it hits, is a crisis for the state rather than the economy. It is specifically a *legitimation crisis* for the state and for people's belief in rationality” (p. 271).

If the state, in injecting itself into economic considerations, is unable to regulate them in ways that are satisfactory to its constituents, then the state itself, not the economy or the social organization that surrounds it, is viewed as the locus of the problem. The state responds to the questioning of its legitimacy by seeking new ways to justify its existence. This has manifested itself through the state finding new and more pervasive ways to make its presence felt. The organization of the economy is the source of problems, yet outside of sweeping structural modifications, all the state can provide are technical band-aids. In this respect, by “attempting

to solve economic and social problems, the state increasingly depends on scientific knowledge and technical control. This reliance on technical control changes the character of the problems from social or economic issues to technical ones,” and such technical solutions are the basis for more regulatory forms of control (Allan, 2013, p. 272). In this way, the state itself provides the basis for the public to lose faith in its ability to solve problems, yet it is able to redefine its relation to the public in ways that give it new forms of legitimacy.

In its inability to address root social and economic problems, the state justifies its role in the lives of citizens by assuming the role of a policing organization. In its shift from social welfare to social policing, the state recognizes that its legitimacy is tied to identifying and policing risk. Beck (2007) suggests that “[r]isks can and must be socially and politically defined and produced, can be hidden or revealed, be played down or writ large, become known and acknowledged in accordance with the highly mobile norms of science and law, or not, as the case may be, depending on who has control over the relations and means of definition” (p. 142).

Furthermore, it is not simply the identification of risk that justifies the state’s new policing role; it also includes defining new risks that continually evolve that must be dealt with. Indeed, “the domain of possibility of the threat solidifies into a becoming-real, into belief in the reality of a possibility becoming-real that must be prevented” (Beck, 2007, p. 151). In its inability to address crises in ways that are satisfactory to the public, the state constructs and exacerbates fear in ways that legitimizes its continued existence. At the same time, and given public skepticism in its ability to mitigate the actualization of such risks, the state outsources its policing function to private interests that, following the state’s lead, provide technical solutions to non-technical problems. It is in this spirit that we can situate the ALICE Institute’s training. It is simply a microcosm of the world that surrounds it. As the state loses face in its ability to address economic and social problems, the public loses faith in public institutions in general and clamors for private intervention in public problems. The ALICE Institute serves as an example of a private organization that provides the service of finding a solution to the publicly perceived problem that is the lack of security in schools. This is an example of a problem that the state is not trusted to address yet played a vital role in bringing to the forefront. However, in fulfilling its role of providing training in the event that a shooting incident happens, ALICE does not have the ability, authority, or need to address deeper-rooted problems that sit at the heart of gun violence. In a twisted sense, by outsourcing its policing role in the lives of citizens to private corporations and interests, the state stops the hemorrhaging of its legitimacy. While it is no longer trusted to solve large scale economic and social problems, it has instead cemented its role as the institution central to identifying and initiating response to risk.

### **An Introduction to A.L.I.C.E.**

When it comes to the pervasiveness of active shooter training, the ALICE Training Institute reports that they have trained over one million people and have had a training presence in all 50 U.S. states, including in 4,150 Police/LE departments, 4,200 K-12 school districts, 1,300 healthcare facilities, 950 higher education institutions, 3,055 businesses, 760 government

agencies, 480 houses of worship, and 1,640 individuals and families (Active Shooter Response Training, n.d.). With the pervasiveness of the training, one would only expect these numbers to grow. The ALICE Institute's claim, as stated on their internet homepage, is that they "can prepare your organization to respond to violence," and that "ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) Training instructor-led classes provide preparation and a plan for individuals and organizations on how to more proactively handle the threat of an aggressive intruder or active shooter event" (Active Shooter Response Training, n.d.). While being a jack-of-all-trades organization when it comes to whom they service, their presence in K-12 schools is evident as districts have taken to employing their services to train both staff and students alike. In their document titled "Case Study: A Lockdown Only Response to an Active Shooter in Schools Does Not Meet Federal or State Recommendations" (2015), they note that "[s]ince Jefferson founded public education for the citizens of the United States, schools have been charged with the safety of children in their care – a *duty to protect*. Teachers and administrators have a responsibility to anticipate potential dangers and to take precautions to protect their students from those dangers" (p. 2).

They continue: "If a school district fails its *duty to protect* students from injury and an appropriate *standard of care* was not used, the district can be found negligent" (ALICE Training Institute, 2015, p. 2). Armed with its growing presence and the backing of a litany of institutions supporting their training tactics, including the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, The International Associations of Chiefs of Police, Ohio's Attorney General's School Safety Task Force, and Massachusetts's Governor's Task Force, the ALICE Institute has positioned itself as a central voice of authority on the topic of active shooter violence (ALICE Training Institute, 2015).

### **A.L.I.C.E. and the Culture of Fear**

In recent decades, popular media depictions, political rhetoric, and the general public, often through absorbing and regurgitating media depictions and their accompanying rhetoric, have fashioned schools as sites of fear. They are described as war zones where the youth wandering the halls are either victims or hardened violent criminals and where educators are tasked with policing the entire system. The image of schools as war zones is evident in various studies, best described by Giroux (2003), who notes that "[r]ather than being cherished as a symbol of hope for the future, youth are now scorned, viewed as both a worry and a nuisance, a threat to be feared and a problem to be contained" (p. 58). Grossberg (2005) contributes through his understanding that "[t]he typical image of kids in the United States is that they are armed and violent, lawless, sex crazed, suicidal, drunk, and high" (p. 22), and his analysis that "[a]bout 120,000 kids are held in custody each day, nearly 10 percent in adult facilities, a number that has soared 73 percent over the past decade" (p. 30) clearly outlines that perception. Furthermore, Robbins (2013) recognizes that "[o]ver the last 20 years, public schools have been cast . . . as disciplinary centers" (p. 4). He notes that "[h]aving made public schools one of the principal targets in a social class war on public goods since the Reagan administrations, the U.S.

transformed children and youth from being symbols of the future, a status ascribed to them during most of the twentieth century, into collateral casualties. While youth – even the concept of youth – could not but be collateral casualties of the war waged on essential institutions that serve them, it seems that *some youth have recently become direct targets*, inner demons to be fought and fought again” (Robbins, 2011, p. 114).

While the culture of fear is a pervasive phenomenon in society at large, schools as microcosms of the world surrounding them are influenced by and assist in the reproduction of this culture. Fear and the various incarnations of the policing techniques used to alleviate the anxiety that comes from it are ever-present and impact the way that educational institutions and large segments of student populations are viewed. Robbins (2012) remarks that “[p]urposefully drawn from a range of social sites and relating to a number of public issues, such examples of what is at best a cruel insensitivity toward youth point to a society that, having become so afraid of its youth, has also become afraid of its future, a future in which democracy matters” (p. 628).

Indeed, the violence associated with schools locates them as sites to be feared and thereby in need of policing. What we see is a future—if we can even call it that—where youth do not have a place in any iteration of the expansion of democracy and, instead, their imposed absence destroys it. If the future of democratic interaction seems fleeting at best, it is because our society, whose primary function is watching and policing, sees no future in those whom a century ago were privileged with the task of carrying the torch.

The ALICE Institute’s active shooter training is nested in the expansive and pervasive culture of fear. It has seeped its way into schools by playing into the increasingly prevalent assumption that they, like the communities that surround them, are dangerous. These dangers are spelled out clearly in training modules authored and published by the ALICE Institute. Those who take their training course are almost immediately greeted with a hodgepodge of news snippets from past shooting tragedies including Newtown’s Sandy Hook Elementary, Fort Hood in Texas, the Washington Navy Yard in Texas, Arapahoe High School, and the movie theater in Colorado. The strategic use of these tragedies not only helps to reignite the terror and panic that came with originally viewing these reports on TV, they simultaneously frame the stakes that the trainings are designed to address. Death tolls in shooting incidents including Isla Vista near UC Santa Barbara (six killed and 13 injured), Seattle Pacific University in Washington (one killed and two injured), Oikos University in Oakland, California (seven killed and three injured), Sandy Hook Elementary (26 killed and two injured), and Virginia Tech University (32 killed and 25 injured) are specifically cited so as to emphasize to trainees the truly destructive nature of gun violence. While many of these cited statistics come from violence at institutions of higher education, the fact that they fall under the umbrella of places of learning makes them relatable to school employees in general, a primary targeted audience for active shooter trainings. The ALICE Institute suggests that “[p]eople confronted with a threat often deny the possibility of danger rather than respond,” that “40% of all attacks end in suicide or attempted suicide before law enforcement makes contact,” that “ 86% of attacks end through a ‘use of force’ by law

enforcement, civilians, or attacker suicide,” that “98% of active shooter incidents were carried out by a single attacker,” that “24% take place at a school despite schools being only 8% of all US buildings,” that “75% take place at a business,” and that “73% of all active shooter incidents involve a handgun” (ALICE Training Institute, n.d.). In addition to contributing to the terrifying possibility that is gun violence, these visualizations and data sets seemingly seek to suggest three important understandings that impact how trainees (along with those influenced by trainees) view the world around them and those they share it with, namely their students. First, they are led to believe that the world is a site of perpetual danger. Any individual in any location, even those in public sites like schools, should expect violence. In the teacher training modules, the implicit suggestion is that students will bring violence into their schools, so it is imperative that educators keep one of their surveilling eyes open for the inevitable moment that it occurs. Second, the training speaks to the totality that is school gun violence, suggesting that when it begins, the only way that it will end is with the death of the perpetrator. Such a totalizing understanding coupled with the manufactured expectation that school violence will happen creates circumstances where it is advantageous to dehumanize students so that it is easier to place them under surveillance and prepare counter responses for when they bring violence to the school’s doorstep. Third, the training suggests that in order to be responsible, educators and other stakeholders need to be prepared for and expect violence because if they are not prepared, they will be victims. The introduction module’s tagline, “You can’t predict when or where... but you can PREPARE,” explicitly sums up justification for the ALICE Institute’s active shooter training (ALICE Training Institute, n.d.). From their perspective, the world is a violent place, and individuals need to be ready for *when* they come face-to-face with that violence. Borrowing from Bauman (2008) to sum up this social construction, “[t]he world today seems to be conspiring against trust” (p. 64).

Indeed, the presented normalcy and inevitability of active shooter incidents is a theme that the ALICE Institute’s training relentlessly drives home. Active shooter incidents are likened to natural disasters, as epitomized by the president of the organization’s statement:

“Armed intruders are a difficult topic to discuss. However, like the natural disaster of fires, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes, the man-made disaster of an armed intruder requires preparation in order to minimize casualties. Like all disasters, this type of event is extremely rare, but the threat is very real. It’s terrifying to think about facing an armed intruder situation especially when you’re not sure what you would do, but let me ask you: do you feel the same level of fear about the threat of a fire? Probably not. Why? Because you’re prepared. You’ve been conducting fire drills for years. You know what to do. You know where to go and so do your students. Preparation leads to peace of mind, confidence, successful outcomes” (ALICE Training Institute, n.d.).

Of course, the intent of such a statement is to drive home the importance of preparing for and practicing designed plans. Such preparation is fashioned as equally important as preparation for tornados, earthquakes, floods, and fires. However, in each of these paralleled dangers, with perhaps the exception of fire, the locus of the disaster is not man-made and reaction is

practiced because of the spontaneity of their occurrences. They are unpredictable because they are of nature and, as such, are outside of the control of humans. Lumping shooting incidents in with natural disasters implies a similar degree of naturalness and a similar degree of helplessness to their occurrences. Bauman (2006) keys in on this link between naturalness and helplessness, saying, “by far the most awesome and fearsome dangers are precisely those that are *impossible*, or excruciatingly *difficult*, to anticipate: the *unpredicted*, and in all likelihood *unpredictable ones*” (p. 11). However, there is danger in looking at school gun violence in this way because it places the focus on responding to violence instead of preventing it in the first place. In fact, this is one of the most profound oversights of the training: Reaction is the emphasized response. Perhaps this oversight can be justified on the grounds that educators are already aware of the impact that school climate has when it comes to the safety of students and the creation of safe learning environments, and it is part of their responsibility to make sure that this climate is present. The purpose of active shooter training is to provide a contingency for when climate alone is proven insufficient. However, the U.S. Department of Education’s (2013) “Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans,” on which the ALICE Institute draws heavily, places a great deal of importance on prevention, as detailed in their recognition that “[t]he majority of Prevention, Protection, and Mitigation activities generally occur before an incident” (p. 2). They recognize that “[i]n schools with positive climates, students are more likely to feel connected to adults and their peers. This fosters a nurturing environment where students are more likely to succeed, feel safe, and report threats. A school culture and climate assessment evaluates student and staff connectedness to the school and problem behaviors. For example, this assessment may reveal a high number of bullying incidents, indicating a need to implement an anti-bullying program” (p. 9).

However, this emphasis is not present in the training that the ALICE Institute provides educators. Instead, it is buried within additional resources on their website. Is such a heavy emphasis on response instead of prevention indicative of the normalization of violence? How does such a response relate to other relational and cultural work such as bullying prevention measures? Do they merely become lip service hiding a normalized expectation of violence? Said another way, if educators surrender to the naturalized and expected character of school violence, jettisoning all faith in their ability to prevent it, then what place is there in their defensive postures where they lie waiting to pre-emptively strike those who are out to strike them, for the relationships and interactions that are necessary to possibly mitigate violence in the first place? Can compassion for students ever come from a place of constant surveillance and reactive preparation?

The reason that it is important to situate ALICE Training squarely in the culture of fear is because, as suggested by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), there is evidence to suggest that violence in schools is an aberration and not the norm. The BJA notes that “[g]iven the number of students in schools in the United States, multiple-victim homicides are still extremely rare, and in recent years, the overall rate of violence in schools has actually declined” (BJA & IACP, n.d., p. 1). However, despite this reality,

the BJA also remarks that “[m]any students and teachers are more fearful than ever before they enter the doors of their school. This climate of fear makes it more difficult for schools to provide positive learning environments” (pp. 1-2). This paradox is best represented in a statement by Bauman (2008), who notes that “[f]reedom, after all, tends to come in a package with insecurity, while security tends to be packed together with constraints on freedom. And as we resent both insecurity and ‘un-freedom,’ we would hardly be satisfied with any feasible combination of freedom with security” (p. 13).

Taken together, what is apparent is that we are part of a world that is clearly trying to decide where its values lie, and if the presence of perceived necessities like active shooter training is any indication, the desire for security has taken center stage and has terrifyingly been eroding the freedoms needed to embrace a more democratic society. And while a strong argument can be made that ALICE Training reinforces a reality that fosters fear within individuals and causes them to seek more comprehensive forms of security, the fact that the culture of fear has been present long before this manufactured need suggests a cyclic understanding of surveillance that continually builds, reinforces, and reproduces fear as well as the need for institutions in charge of its regulation and mitigation. As noted by Robbins (2013), “the state functions as a private investment-punishment state. Threats, internal and external, have become its lifeblood and, as such, need to be actively constructed if the state is to even have this role” (p. 4). However, in such a culture of fear, the elimination of violence is never the end goal, as “[p]unishment does not reduce violence. Punishment relocates the source of violence and, in the process, redefines it” (p. 7). Perhaps in this case, the relocation of violence is the elimination of freedoms that are willingly given up for greater amounts of security.

### **Fear, Violence, and Militarization: Inescapable Tools of Human Management**

Reflecting on the relationships between schools and the world, relationships that center on imagined futures, one must wonder what future the marketeers and victims of the culture of fear foresee. Indeed, if we borrow Bauman’s (2008) remark that “the secret of all successful ‘socialization’ is making the individuals *wish to do* what the system *needs them to do* for it to reproduce itself” (p. 149), then the logical conclusion is that such imaginations are begrudgingly tolerated so long as they do not deviate too far outside an accepted social norm. Indeed, along with thoroughly regulating the production of alternate imagined futures, the importance of schooling centers on the control of the now, of making stakeholders wish to reproduce the current social status, which, as noted above, is the culture of fear used to justify human regulation. Marcuse (1991) recognized this reality, suggesting that “[t]he government of advanced and advancing industrial societies can maintain and secure itself only when it succeeds in mobilizing, organizing, and exploiting the technical, scientific, and mechanical productivity available to industrial civilization” (p. 3). The mobilization, organization, exploitation, and general control of citizens is necessary for societies to maintain and secure themselves. Wolin (1994) suggests that “[p]olitical leadership is both the management of collective desires, resentments, anger, fantasies, fears, and hopes as well as the curatorship of the simulacra of democracy” (p. 13). Interestingly, he recognizes a fine line between control

and the extinguishing of the democratic flame when he remarks that the state cultivates “the political education of its citizens to instill the virtues of loyalty, obedience, law-abidingness, patriotism, and sacrifice in wartime” (p. 13). In this respect, the created culture of perceived fear could very easily be seen as not only a justification for an increase in the policing function that eases felt fear and that limits the potential democratic interactions noted by Wolin, but also as the basis for constructing the endless wartime in which individuals are tasked with being soldiers who sacrifice freedoms in the name of security. Indeed, Bauman (1990) notes that “Being free and unfree at the same time is perhaps the most common of our experiences” (p. 21). Here, Bauman’s notion of free corresponds to the freedom from uncertainty. However, this freedom is accompanied with the unfreedom to choose whether to participate in the surveillance-based police state that has been constructed to usher in the illusion of certainty. Individuals lose their freedom to choose whether they will or will not join in the highly regulated militarized state that provides safety at the expense of will. This is the present and future that ALICE Training builds through its presence in schools.

Bauman (2006) notes that “[l]ike all other forms of human cohabitation, our liquid modern society is a contraption attempting to make life with fear livable” (p. 6), and uncertainty in our modern society is a limitless source of fear. Building an understanding of violence as a certainty instead of an aberration, especially in school settings, allows for the construction of responses to violence in ways that seem to leave no uncertainty and help to mitigate the response of fear. This is exactly the way that the ALICE Institute’s active shooter training is framed. The ALICE Institute suggests that “[t]he sooner you understand that you are in danger, you can do something to save yourself and those in your care. A speedy response is critical. Seconds Count. Sadly, many in danger don’t recognize the threat and don’t act quickly. In shooting tragedies like Columbine and Sandy Hook and the Aurora Theatre, witness and victims said they didn’t realize they were in danger” (ALICE Training Institute, n.d.).

Later, the training goes so far as to suggest that it is imperative that teachers, upon hearing unknown sounds outside their classrooms, stop and process whether the sound is gunfire or other sounds that would be indicative of threat: “When it’s not obvious, like when you hear a strange sound, take the noise seriously. Pause and listen for more sounds. Pay attention to your surroundings” (ALICE Training Institute, n.d.). While suggesting that it is normal for people to rationalize whatever popping sounds they might hear, assuming that they have no association to threat, the ALICE Institute furthers a stance that such rationalizations should be suppressed, noting that “even seasoned police officers can sometimes be fooled by the sounds of gunfire since it can sound like fireworks, bags or balloons popping, or a car backfiring” (ALICE Training Institute, n.d.). This hypervigilant stance, especially when taken in conjunction with other parts of the training, builds a reality in which danger is ever present and preparedness means attentively being alert for the moment that violence happens. In one of the most disturbing vignettes of the training, a student gets up in the middle of the class and pulls out a gun, stating, “This is all your fault. You got me in trouble for the last time” (ALICE Training Institute, n.d.). As disturbing as it is to ask people, especially educators, to watch a school shooter skit for purposes of training—a sensationalized way of driving home a message of constant threat

coupled with preparedness—the responses of the students in the skit suggest a rehearsed preparation that is equally disturbing. Without skipping a beat, each student turned and threw whatever they had on their desks at the shooter. As the would-be shooter raised his hands to protect himself, the students who had just finished throwing items at him lunged toward his body, with several grabbing onto each of his limbs and holding him to the ground as another student picked up the gun that was dropped and threw it into a nearby garbage can. Their response was instantaneous and indicative of what the training wants from its trainees: They should always anticipate a violent incident and be prepared to act in response to that incident without thought. The response to violence needs to be as normal and instantaneous as the threat of violence itself. This interaction makes having a well-rehearsed and autonomous set of responses desirable; however, one wonders how much of a commitment to training schools would have to engage in to get to this point of automation. Would the responses of the students have been so instantaneous if they were not certain that violence was going to occur and if they had not prepared as if this was the case? And while there is no way to know whether such a response, if conducted in an actual active shooter incident, will successfully thwart disaster, a broader question would be: Is this the world we want to create for our students? Do we want them to spend every second vigilantly surveilling their classmates, replaying plans and contingencies in their heads, waiting for the inevitable school shooting to happen so that they can react according to their preparation? Do we want them to exchange the possibility of open-ended futures, ones in which interactions and relationships breed the possibility of better shared futures, for lonely deterministic ones in which every interaction with others is a source of fear that must be dealt with according to well-rehearsed plans and reactions?

The growing presence of active shooter training in schools suggests that its messages have become a pervasive force in the sponsored school curriculum. As the training suggests, “Just like fire drills, repetition and practice will increase your preparedness and confidence and greatly increase your odds of survival. You can’t control what an armed intruder does, but you can control what you do” (ALICE Training Institute, n.d.). This notion of practice is evident in the student shooter clip referenced above. When recapping the incident, the narrator voicing over the scene explicitly and affirmatively notes that “[p]rior to this incident, the people in this room practiced using distraction techniques. They understand that they must act immediately when first alerted of danger. Notice how quickly they throw items at the intruder” (ALICE Training Institute, n.d.). Indeed, preparation means repeatedly drilling procedures to not only internalize the range of techniques that should be used at key moments in the possible encounter, but to also be physically and mentally prepared to flip the switch and respond. The training suggests that teachers discuss barricading techniques to block the doorway, including tying doors shut using belts, chords, or zip ties, spreading out to be more difficult targets for shooters, and gathering counter measure materials—textbooks and even a stapler were used as examples in the training video—to throw at the armed intruder. It also suggests that classrooms discuss alternative evacuation routes including leaving through windows. Training here includes a discussion of the correct way to break a window and the correct way to jump out of a window from a level that is higher than the ground floor. Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to keep what they call a “go bucket,” a five-gallon bucket filled with items like a

space blanket, disinfectant, a unique identifier, a toilet seat, time passers, food and water, hand-cleaning gel or wipes, a flashlight with spare batteries, a first aid kit, duct tape to “help barricade the door or to bind the intruder’s hands and feet,” toilet paper, a class roster, a whistle, and barricade or evacuation aids including “items that will help you lockdown more securely or evacuate through the window: for example, a rope, window punch, zip ties, etc.” (ALICE Training Institute, n.d.). Alongside the physical preparation of having supplies that will ease the chaos in the event of an active shooter incident, mental preparation is equally emphasized. Indeed, the training states that “[i]f you deny that danger exists, you will not react. If you do not react, you could limit your survival options. Windows of opportunity to evacuate or lockdown could evaporate in the critical seconds that you are in denial” (ALICE Training Institute, n.d.). Again, the normalization of the possible presence of armed intruders and the violence that they inevitably bring is noteworthy. The future constructed by such normalizations is one in which an encounter should be expected to happen, and that all individuals should be equally expected to be prepared to react accordingly.

Beck (2007) notes that “[t]he restless search for the lost security begins through measures and strategies that lend the appearance of control and security instead of guaranteeing them and exacerbate the general feeling of insecurity and endangerment” (p. 156). Indeed, the management of uncertainty, or what might more aptly be described in this case as human management, is a terrifying but relevant point of analysis, especially when juxtaposing its single linear future reality with the plural realities present in Dewey’s understanding of the citizen’s role in a democratic society. However, this appears to be the consequence of learning to live within a culture of fear. Human behavior is deemed rational so long as it leaves no possibility of contributing to living with uncertainty. Regarding this rationality, Bauman (1990) notes that “[w]hatever it gains in enhancing the potency and efficiency of human enterprise, the legal-rational legitimation is pregnant with potentially sinister consequences – and that precisely because of its tendency to absolve the actors from their responsibility for value choice and, in a sense, remove the whole issue of value choice from discussion” (p. 124).

There is no question as to whether understanding reality in this completely rational way enhances freedom or whether it serves to further constrain it. Indeed, absolute rationality prescribes one single possible route of interaction as a result of its drive for prediction and pattern maintenance. And even if it is comforting to look for predictability in the way that violence occurs, what does adherence to this rationality do to the ability of individuals to critically engage with how such an adherence twists the building of their worlds? Indeed, complete adherence to rationality in the name of predictability creates a new form of honor, an adiaphorization in which there is a “tendency to play down the relevance of moral criteria, or whenever possible eliminate such criteria altogether from an evaluation of desirability” (Bauman, 2006, p. 86). Here, “[t]he honour of the civil servant is vested in his ability to execute conscientiously the order of superior authorities, exactly as if the order agreed with his own conviction” (Bauman, 1989, p. 22). However, obscured in the construction of a completely rational and predictable society are the power relationships that it helps to maintain. If we once again look back to Wolin’s understanding—that freedoms are arrested during wartime and

wartime is a period in which individuals must be managed or administered—then designing social responses in ways that follow an if/then format instead of allowing for a plurality of opportunity conditions individuals to accept reality as it is and to not imagine different organizations or futures. Training students to interact with their schooling experience in this militarized linear manner prepares them to later interact as citizens of a world in crisis where they must relinquish their right to the imagining of futures to protect the present.

### **ALICE and Democracy: Under-Developing and/or Severing Human Bonds**

Bauman (1990) remarks that “[t]here are friends and enemies. And there are *strangers*” (p. 143). The subject of the stranger is interesting when considering the trouble that it presents. While the categories of friend and enemy serve as opposite sides of a concrete and certain binary used to classify relatedness, the introduction of the stranger is unsettling, even more so than the enemy, because of the uncertainty that accompanies it. Bauman (1995) further describes the unsettling nature of the stranger:

“If strangers are the people who do not fit the cognitive, moral, or aesthetic make of the world – one of these maps, two or all three; if they, therefore, by their sheer presence, make obscure what ought to be transparent, confuse what ought to be a straightforward recipe for action, and/or prevent the satisfaction from being fully satisfying, pollute the joy with anxiety while making the forbidden fruit alluring; if, in other words, they befog and eclipse the boundary lines which ought to be clearly seen; if, having done all this, they gestate uncertainty, which in its turn breeds discomfort of feeling lost” (p. 1).

The stranger as an actor and as painted by Bauman is a problem that needs to be solved, especially in a reality in which uncertainty is equated to fear and fear is to be mitigated at all costs. The stranger in this context is a threat to the modern condition, “a condition of compulsive, and addicting, designing” (Bauman, 2004, p. 30). They are the foil to a world of design, feared “precisely because they are unfamiliar and thus unpredictable and suspect, are vivid and tangible embodiments of the resented and feared fluidity of the world” (Bauman, 2008, p. 38). If certainty comes from the simple way that individuals are fitted into the neat taxonomies of friend or enemy, then what is the solution for the problem of those who do not fit cleanly into these molds? More importantly, what are the problems that come with the oversimplified relational categories of friend and enemy? What other things are discarded when building such a tidy organizational duality?

Pervasive in the ALICE Institute’s Active Shooter Training is their answer to solving the problem of what to do with the stranger. Their solution is to simplify the classification of friends to be the people who are immediately known, and to sweep anyone who is not a friend into the closed category of enemy. Here, there is no room for designating someone as a stranger because implicit in the construction of the category of stranger is that it represents something categorically different than the friend, and the only existing category open for those who are not friends is the category of enemy. Ever present in reducing people to fit into this clean but

oversimplified binary is the understanding that we should be fearful of those we do not know because they are our enemies. Indeed, that which we do not know is the enemy of order. It dismisses the importance of difference and diversity as qualitatively positive elements, especially in a democratic context, and instead emphasizes difference in the unknown as a source of fear. The stranger is one and the same as the enemy. Schools in this sense have become detached from their community, for the surrounding community is a source of uncertainty spurred on by the insider/outsider understanding of who belongs and who does not. Given the heightened sense of fear that accompanies the reporting of school shooting incidents, as clearly evidenced in the data and statistics provided by the ALICE Institute, it is easy to justify the exclusion of outside community members from the building or to conflate the stranger with the intruder. However, what does such a locked-down, quarantined image of the school and the accompanying vilification of local citizens as strangers do to our understanding of schools as institutions that belong to the community and that should build citizens who feel responsible to their community? Additionally, what does the vilification of the concept of the stranger do to the democratic importance that they occupy when it comes to collective plural governing, especially when the stranger is framed as synonymous with the intruder or enemy who is to be feared and rallied against?

An even more important consideration that the ALICE Institute's training does not address is the question of who additionally gets folded into the category of stranger, specifically the expansion of the concept and the fluidity of its categorical boundaries. In the vignette of the student shooter referenced above, the stranger/enemy is present within the school itself. Indeed, the circle of those that can safely be considered friends, as opposed to enemies, is much smaller when the lines are blurred between insider and outsider. So, if the violent intruder can be imagined to be not only the outsider but the insider as well, how does one differentiate where the threat will come from? Could the enemy be sitting in a classroom across the school, in the classroom next door, or even at the adjacent desk? What effect does this have on students who are regularly constructing the definition of their own selves by forming distinctions from others? Is everyone who is different a stranger and therefore an enemy? In essence, this constructed reality reframes the creation of attachments with other individuals. Socialization is a desirable activity, but in a reality where the potential presence of the enemy accompanies every interaction, relationships must be surface-level, one-sided, and unilaterally beneficial. Only those clearly identified as friends pose little risk and all others must be approached cautiously, if at all. Individualism is the primary presence in such interactions as the individual must gauge whether the risk of associating with another—an enemy in all but action, for now—is weighed against the individual benefit that one can potentially obtain. Vigilant suspicion and detachment are the hallmarks of interactions with those in the expansive category of enemy. Indeed, the ALICE Institute's training essentially conditions trainees to minimize attachments and see all but the most intimate as possible threats, as sources of the inevitable danger of violence. Students and teachers have the responsibility to themselves to watch out for the stranger/enemy, and the coordination of individual suspicions are what creates a virtual safety net, or what Bauman (2013) refers to as a synopticon. Here, all are safe

so long as their suspicion prepares them to counter the inevitable event of violence from one of a litany of potential enemies.

### Conclusions: The Cleaving of Bonds and Democracy

Instead of constructing a reality that embraces and builds on educating for democratic futures, messages present in the ALICE Institute's training promotes pedagogies that further fear and suspicion and destroy collective possibilities. Borrowing from Giroux (2002), "Emergency time defines community against its democratic possibilities, detaching it from those conditions that prepare citizens to deliberate collectively about the future and the role they must play in creating and reshaping the conditions for them to have some say in how it might unfold."

In building the present as a state of perpetual emergency, the preparation of citizens is subordinated to constructing an illusion of safety. Instead of creating a space that values voice, institutions carefully script and dictate the messages and responses that are allowable. Space itself, specifically space that is public, is reconceptualized from being sites of possibility to ones in which limited outcomes are narrowly delineated. Speaking to this idea, Couldry (2010) remarks, "As neoliberal rationality becomes institutionalized culture, it shapes the *organization of space*. Some types of space become prioritized, other fall out of use and so stop being imagined; because voice is embodied, this matters hugely for the effectiveness of voice, since neoliberalism literally changes where we can and cannot speak and be heard" (p. 12).

All of this speaks to the allowable legitimacy of voice and democratic interaction. If projections of emergency serve as catalysts for the redefining of what are seen as allowable interactions with one another, then it is redefining or rather constraining the concept of democracy. Wolin (1994) writes, "What is actually being measured by the claim of democratic legitimacy is not the vitality of democracy in those nations but the degree to which democracy is attenuated so as to serve other ends" (p. 23). Tying these understandings back to the ALICE Institute's training and without suggesting whether or not they are consciously culpable in the design, would the fear that they address through contributing to the dismantling of human ties reflect a reality in which democratic interaction is something that is being subordinated and even eliminated? Is the fracturing of bonds a tragic result of the perpetuation of emergency, or is it the end objective, a subplot in a more sinister quest for greater forms of social control? If democracy is messy and chaotic, are we seeing new forms of control to achieve order, the end goal of modernity's insatiable appetite to design? To quote Bauman (1990), "Order is continually engaged in the war of survival. What is not itself, is not another order: any order is always the order as such, with chaos as its only alternative. 'The other' of order is the miasma of the indeterminate and unpredictable: uncertainty, the source and archetype of all fear. The tropes of 'the Other of Order' are: undefinability, incoherence, incongruence, incompatibility, illogicality. Chaos, 'the Other of Order,' is pure negativity" (p. 165).

While there are many that would find a sense of security—space to breathe a sigh of relief—in the protocols in trainings such as those provided by the ALICE Institute, the more important

question, as stated from the outset, is what such constructions do to democratic citizenship and the make-up of society as a whole. At what point does the delicate balance between security and liberty tip toward the abolishment of liberty in the name of security? If we see this as problematic, can we arrest the process before it becomes totalizing? If we continue to push the emphasis of security on younger and younger individuals and do not afford them true opportunities to engage with one another in meaningful collective ways—to engage in play so as to prepare for the game—then the necessary democratic language becomes lost and its possibility becomes non-existent. The reframing of democratic interactions and democracy in general is what allows political voice to be minimized to something exercised during November voting cycles, if at all, or reduced to the ability to choose what, not if, an individual should consume. Democratic interactions must be continually nurtured if they are to grow. Robbins (2013) suggests that “[i]f childhood and youth are no longer a space of play with roles and relationships in society like citizen or governance, and schools no longer are charged with providing organized forms of play with citizenship and civic life, then we have put at risk the basic conditions for democracy to form, reproduce, and recreate itself” (p. 8).

By constraining interactions in schools through the projection of constant fear of an enemy, young people, who will inherit whatever democratic reality is left, are robbed of the tools to improve and revitalize it. Instead, schools need to foster such interactions because it is the diversity of voice that generates the greatest possibility. Succinctly stated by Sennett (2012), “Differences are exposed in the course of the talk; contact may stimulate self-understanding; something valuable will then have transpired through the exchange, though the people in the bar or at the table may never see one another again” (p. 79). Instead of figuring out how to section oneself off from the other (the stranger), a more pertinent use of energy is figuring out how to engage with them, where “[t]he question is no longer how to get rid of the strangers and the strange, but how to live with them, daily and permanently” (Bauman, 1995, p. 12). Borrowing from Bernstein (2000), “Democracy involved a *reflective faith* in the capacity of all human beings no matter how diverse and different their backgrounds, to engage in cooperation, intelligent judgement, deliberation and collective action” (p. 217). These qualities are not present in a social reality in which reactionary individualism is the ruling trait. Thus, the stranger should not be perceived as a source of fear but as an agent of possibility. Speaking on the power of the stranger, Parker (2010) remarks that “listening and speaking to strangers is about powerful ideas and public problems – that is, *governing* – signals a citizen’s coming-of-age. Simultaneously, it works to reclaim and reconstitute the democratic public sphere as a fertile site for political critique and action” (p. 2831).

In a similar vein, Barber (1989) recognizes the importance of collective interactions as they allow citizens to “invent alternative futures, create mutual purposes, and construct competing visions of community” (p. 356). According to Biesta (2007), “Action is anything but self-expression; it is about the insertion of one’s beginnings into the complex social fabric and about the subjection of one’s beginnings to the beginnings of others who are not like us” (p. 761). Indeed, what becomes important is trust. Instead of contributing to and fortifying a culture of fear, citizens need to trust in the possibility of their interactions with others, especially others

who are unlike themselves. As stated by Bauman (2004), “Without trust, the web of human commitments falls apart, making the world a yet more dangerous and fearsome place” (p. 92).

In the end, the primary question that must be addressed is: How do we justify the balance that we strike between liberty and security? Stated as such, however, one wonders exactly how much say we get in determining this balance. While the ALICE Institute’s training can be seen as a response to a constructed need, where is the locus of that need and who has furthered it as a need? In a sense, we can optimistically locate the desire for preparation as a response to shooting tragedies that have happened in the past. However, if we weigh the social costs against what often amounts to only an increased *illusion* of security, is active shooter training a response to tragedy or a pedagogical decision geared toward building a specific type of individual? Pessimistically, are such trainings specifically targeting the creation of individuals who are more than happy to trade liberty for security? This possibility is why critically engaging with concepts is so important, especially when considering our roles as stewards for those who will inherit the world that we create. Furthermore, who is to say that liberty and security must be mutually exclusive? Could greater security be achieved through the forming of a more comprehensive and inclusive collective consciousness? Bauman (1989) suggests that “*pluralism is the best preventative medicine against morally normal people engaging in morally abnormal actions*” (p. 165). To him, it is collective governance that enfranchises a populace and helps them to construct collective security. He notes elsewhere that “[w]hatever safety democracy and individuality may muster depends not on fighting the endemic contingency and uncertainty of human condition, but on recognizing it and facing its consequences point blank” (p. 87). In other words, it is not by engaging with difficulties based on myopic reads of difference—building mechanisms or walls based on incomplete histories and interactions—that constitutes security. Instead, security comes from addressing the underlying conditions that have caused such difficulties to present themselves in a collective manner and in ways that build more permanent solutions to problems.

In short, the solution to the problem that is security is not dependent on us tightening our grips on those whom we see as the stranger, the other, or the enemy, but instead on engaging with them to construct an inclusive democratic world. Schools are sites where such engagement can be practiced and where such ideals can be internalized and formalized, and it is our responsibility to ensure that structures are not constructed that inhibit this process. Ours is not a question of security or liberty, but instead a realization that security can only be achieved through liberty, and while such an engagement is messy and can carry with it uncertainty, creating trusting mutual interactions with both friends and strangers opens the possibility for the most secure democratic future.

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