Smile Kids

adapted from an article by John Elder

1   Some Australian schools are reportedly trialling facial recognition technology that takes the place of teachers doing the morning roll call. The cameras will know if each and every child is present … or not. The cameras keep scanning through the day to ensure the students haven't bolted for the fish and chip shop or bailed early for the day. Presumably, too, they'll know who has been throwing paper planes behind the teacher's back – and who decorated the toilet block like a Christmas tree with toilet paper.

WATCHING YOU

2   "Constant camera surveillance takes away a huge sense of liberty for these children," says Dr Niels Wouters, at the Microsoft Research Centre for Social Natural User Interfaces at the University of Melbourne. "It's a good thing in a child's development that they might present themselves differently on social media, as a form of play, but also as something they can explore," he says. "But a child trying out who they are under the constant gaze of a camera runs the risk of being forever judged for pulling weirdo faces," he adds.

3   And then there is the question of who will own the data when facial recognition technology becomes ubiquitous. "I suspect it won't be the school itself, nor the parents. I worry that all the analyses will be sent through to a third-party service provider – and from there into the hands of the big players of the technology market." Meaning: Google, Facebook and Microsoft. "It creates revenue for them, but ultimately society gets little in return," Dr Wouters says.

4   __33__, the technology itself suffers from subjective bias and inaccuracies. However, as Matthew Warren, a professor of cyber security, told *The New Daily*, facial analysis technology is already making hard judgements about student attentiveness and other behaviours in schools in China.

5   Professor Warren notes that young people don't understand the concept of privacy, because they live in a culture where they share freely of themselves online. But in the same way old Facebook posts have ruined careers, years after they were posted, the consequences of a poor moment captured by facial recognition can be ruinous.

6   Dr Lisa McKay-Brown is a senior lecturer in learning intervention at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. She says: "For some of the young people we work with, just walking through the school gate on any given day is challenging. And knowing that this technology is being used may be enough for them to refuse to go to school at all."

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