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Surveillance Futures
Social and ethical implications of
new technologies for children and
young people

Edited by
Emmeline Taylor and Tonya Rooney

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An important collection that addresses the place of children as vital targets of new (as well as longstanding) surveillance practices. Contributors raise important questions about transformations in power, privacy and identity, accentuating how concern for the wellbeing of children can often culminate in forms of coercion and control.

Kevin D. Haggerty, University of Alberta, Canada

Youth today are exposed to an overwhelming and diverse array of surveillance applications. Creepy spy toys, drug tests, GPS location tracking, mobile phone monitoring, extractive games, and social media sites represent just some of the many controlling mechanisms that shape kids' lives. This book offers a remarkable multi-disciplinary investigation into this understudied but hugely important area.

Torin Monahan, The University of North Carolina, United States

This timely volume advances our understanding of how it is to grow up in the surveillance age. It documents how surveillance technologies and practices saturate the years from early childhood to adolescence and beyond. The collection provides an outstanding contribution to literature on the changing nature of surveillance in the 21st century.

Heidi Mork Lomell, University of Oslo, Norway

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7 Media discourses of girls at risk and domestication of mobile phone surveillance

Jacqueline Ryan Vickery

A middle-aged man is sitting in a monochromatic living room staring at a teenage boy seated across from him on a couch. He says, 'So, you're in my daughter's five, huh?' The teenage boy responds, 'Yes, sir' and the camera backs up to reveal the boy's clearly nervous stance. The father leans forward, picks up his daughter's mobile phone laying on the coffee table. 'I'm in there too', he says, gesturing to the phone. He flips open the phone, shows it to the boy and says, 'My picture's right next to yours. It's almost like I'm watching you ... *all the time*.' The boy laughs nervously as the father continues to hold his gaze while holding the phone. The camera pans back and forth to highlight the father's intimidation and the boy's visible discomfort. The teenage daughter then enters the room, approaches her father and asks, 'Is that my phone?' The father says 'Yes' and hands his daughter her phone as both he and the boy stand up. The daughter asks her date if he is ready to go, to which he eagerly replies, 'Yes!' The girl hugs her father and says, 'Bye daddy, I love you.' While she is hugging her father, we see him give an intimidating glare to her date. The boy exits with trepidation as he follows the girl out the door. The father tells them to 'Have a good night' while raising his eyebrows with an 'I'll be watching you' look directed toward the teen boy. (T-mobile Creepy Dad, 2007)

On the surface, this 2007 T-mobile commercial may be read as an example of a father monitoring his daughter's boyfriend. However, it is through the daughter's phone — which he readily accesses and views in the absence of his daughter — that he has constant and immediate access to her. The implication is that the daughter's perceived sexual innocence is at risk and her date represents a threat. The surveillance implied by her father reinforces the daughter's lack of sexual agency. This opening example serves as an *à propos* introduction to the overarching theme of this chapter: the increasing commodification and domestication of surveillance.

This chapter examines the media discourses surrounding mobile phone technology in the United States and how they serve to normalise surveillance in domestic spaces. The chapter has five parts. I provide a brief overview of risk as related to mobile phones, then briefly discuss the methodology of my research. My findings are presented in two parts: a discursive analysis of the ways media

and mobile technology industries commodify and marketise the domestication of surveillance; and a qualitative analysis of how teen girls and their parents use mobile technology to enact or resist familial surveillance. Finally, I consider the ethics of mobile-phone-enabled surveillance of young people's lived experiences.

Risk, safety and telephony

Recent decades have seen an increase in the use of technology as a tool for parents to monitor their children's movements and behaviours within and beyond the home (Shade, 2011). This is what I refer to as the domestication of surveillance: that is, surveillance that originates in the home as a way for adults (namely, parents) to monitor adolescents. Increasingly, mobile devices enable parents to monitor not only their children's movements and whereabouts but also their social lives — with whom they are interacting, when, where and how. Because many parents are fearful of their children's social interactions via the mobile phone (Shade, 2011), it is productive to contextualise mobile surveillance within the context of risk and media panics. Doing so allows for an examination of the ways in which technology and the mobile phone specifically — is simultaneously and paradoxically constructed as both risk and security, especially for girls.

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we have experienced an increased focus on the safety and well-being of young people, accompanied by increased anxiety and fear (Kelly, 2000; Stearns, 2003). While such a focus has its benefits (increased safety), it also gives rise to media panics about the risks young people inevitably encounter. Sociologist Ulrich Beck (1992: 21) defines risk as 'a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself'. He continues, 'in the risk society the unknown and unintended consequences come to be a dominant force in history and society. They can be changed, magnified, dramatized or minimized within knowledge, and to that extent they are particularly open to social definition and construction' (Beck, 1992: 22–3). In other words, the ability for a society to identify, intensify and individualise risk may make us safer, but it also increases our anxiety and fear.

Media scholar Alice Marwick (2008) argues that modernity has given rise to moral panics over the well-being of adolescents; however, rather than address the far too prevalent realities of child poverty or neglect and abuse in the home, media panic discourses fuel concern about the risk of 'others'. This typically falls into the category of 'stranger danger', in which parents are disproportionately cautioned to protect their children from hypothetical unknown threats outside the home (predators, paedophiles, and so on). Additionally, as I have argued elsewhere (Vickery, forthcoming), media increasingly fuel concerns about peers as a threat to adolescents' well-being. Within news and popular media, mobile and social media are constructed as a dangerous space for young people, not only because of predators but also because of potential bullying and harassment from peers, referred to as 'peer fear' (Vickery, forthcoming). In the most extreme circumstances, suicides have been attributed to online bullying (Hinduja and

Patchin, 2010), which become part of the broader media panic that positions mobile and social media as dangerous, and also urges parents to monitor and surveil their children's mobile media practices (Prevent Cyberbullying, n.d.).

Moral panics are part of a historical trend in which new technologies lead to fear and anxiety (Marvin, 1998; Springhall, 1998; Thiel-Stern, 2014). Like its predecessor, the landline, the mobile phone has become a lightning rod for anxiety and panic. In the 1950s, when the landline telephone was a new domestic technology, parents were concerned that boys would have unrestricted access to their daughters in the privacy of their homes; and later even in the intimate space of the bedroom (Kearney, 2005). Additionally, there were concerns about strangers being able to invade the private space of the home and about interracial socialisation among peers (Kearney, 2005; Marvin, 1998). The mobile phone has been likewise constructed as an instrument of risk and harm because it renders young people accessible to others, even within the supposedly safe confines of the home. This has led to increased anxiety about young people accessing inappropriate content, such as porn, and concerns that they will be victims of inappropriate and harmful behaviours perpetrated by predators, bullies, peers and paedophiles (Herring, 2008; Shade, 2011; Vickery, forthcoming). As with the 1950s panics about protecting girls' sexual innocence, mobile phones are today sources of anxiety around female sexuality, particularly in regard to sexting (see Chapter 6).

These concerns work alongside the continual construction of youth, and more specifically girls, as at risk in order to provide justification for policies of surveillance, control, protection and monitoring. Kelly (2000: 470) writes, 'powerful narratives of risk, fear, and uncertainty structure a variety of emergent processes and practices aimed at regulating the behaviors and dispositions of populations of young people'. Moreover, because young people are uniquely dependent upon various institutional structures, their behaviours are often observed, regulated and scrutinised (Kelly, 2000). However, outside of formal institutional settings, Shade (2011: 261) argues that the 'protected child' has become an 'intrinsic facet of millennium parenting in North America', leading to increased domestication of surveillance as well. Because cell phones transgress public boundaries (by extending the private reach of the household beyond a physical presence and constraint), they provide increased opportunities for surveillance of young bodies outside the home (Horst, 2010).

Alongside discourses of the mobile phone as risk and threat, we also see it marketed and constructed as a technology of safety and security. In fact, in 2010, 94 per cent of US parents cited 'safety' as a reason to purchase a phone for their children; this was particularly true for mothers and girls (Lenhart *et al.*, 2010). In modern society, characterised by busy schedules and long commutes whereby the family unit is frequently separated across geography and time, the mobile phone offers parents and children a sense of security (Horst, 2010; Livingstone, 2009). The potential for constant and persistent communication produces what Turkle (2008) refers to as a 'tethered child', offering both parent and child a sense of security.

Yet, rather than functioning as merely a tool for communication, the mobile phone has also been marketed as a technology of surveillance (Richtel, 2006; Shade, 2011). The extension of the mobile phone from a tool for constant familial contact to a technology of surveillance repositions it within risk society and media panic discourses. Marketing the mobile phone as a technology of domestic surveillance reinforces the panic of stranger danger and peer fear by amplifying the potential threats within a risk society.

Methodology

The two-part methodology and analysis adopted allows for an examination of both market expectations and family experiences related to the surveillance of teen girls via mobile media.

The next section of this chapter expands earlier research that examines how the four largest US mobile service providers market and normalise surveillance via their television commercials and services (Vickery, 2014).² The sample includes 42 US cell phone commercials from the period 2005–14; they were accessed via the mobile service providers' websites, YouTube and my personal recordings directly from television. Because the focus of this chapter is on young people and the domestication of surveillance, the sample only includes commercials that represent parents, children and families. In other words, commercials portraying professionals or non-parent adults are excluded from analysis. While the collection may not include every commercial from this time period, I am confident it encompasses a wide and representative sample. Drawing from feminist media studies, alongside discourse analysis, I consider the ways in which the commercials market and domesticate surveillance via mobile phones.

The following section shifts focus from representation of surveillance to an analysis of families' attitudes to surveillance via mobile media. The analysis focuses on three teenage girls – Gabriela, Selena and Jada – who participated as part of a larger ethnographic project.³ I have chosen to focus on these three girls and their families because their experiences and perceptions reveal a diversity of perspectives of mobile surveillance. This research is qualitative and the case studies are not intended to be representative; rather, their stories highlight how access to technology, parent-child relationships and living situations mediate attitudes to and experiences with mobile media surveillance in the home.

The commodification and domestication of surveillance via the mobile phone

Although a common household technology in most US homes,⁴ the mobile phone remains in a transitional state of flux – the social norms, values, and adaptations of its everyday use are still evolving (Silverstone and Haddon, 1996). Media scholars refer to this as a period of 'interpretive flexibility' to describe the ways technology is incorporated into every day life through negotiations, contestations

of meaning, localised social practices, and technological developments (Pinch and Bijker, 1984). Because youth and adults often have different constructions of technology and develop different communicative practices, it is important to consider how technology and social practices are adapted and developed within family units alongside the political economy of the consumer electronic industry.

Technology industries can play an integral role in shaping social norms and expectations, particularly in the early history of a technology's development, dissemination, adoption and domestication (Silverstone and Haddon, 1996). As an industry, mobile phone service providers have a significant economic and commercial stake in shaping discourse around young people and mobile devices. Examining mobile service providers accordingly affords a productive entry point for analysing the construction of mobile phones and girls' practices within a broader context of the domestication of surveillance.

Normative discourses of father-daughter surveillance

One way that mobile phone industries contribute to expectations of surveillance is via frequent visual representations of the domestication of surveillance in their television and online commercials. Within the commercials, the phone is frequently constructed and represented as a way to monitor girls' sociality within and outside the home. The example at the beginning of this chapter illustrates how mobile phone service providers frequently portray parents enacting some level of surveillance of their daughters via a mobile phone. A similar example of a father implicitly monitoring his daughter's sociality and sexuality is a 2008 T-mobile commercial called 'Derek with a Mustang':

A white dad enters the home and says, 'Check it out gang, just got that new T-mobile family plan, now we can talk to our friends and family all we want.' His wife turns around and replies, 'Like Vivian' and his son (approximately 13-years-old) walks in the room and says, 'And Skinny Pete'. After another exchange, his teenage daughter walks up to her father and says, 'And I can call Derek?' She looks up at her father for confirmation, to which he responds, 'Derek with a moustache and Mustang Derek?'⁵ The girl fiddles with her hands, smiles in a dreamy way while rocking back and forth on her feet, 'Yea'. Dad responds anxiously and abruptly with a nervous laugh, 'Yea, it's weird [looks at paper in his hand], there's a "no Dereks with moustaches clause" [points at paper]'. His daughter stands on her toes to try to read the brochure, but the dad moves it away. Dad continues, 'It's in the fine print'. [Dad shakes his head, pretending to be sympathetic to his daughter, even though he's the one enacting the rule that she cannot add Derek to the plan]. 'What a drag, dude.'

Although intended to be humorous, the commercial also highlights the father's attempt at monitoring whom his teenage daughter can contact. By not allowing

his daughter to add Derek to the phone plan, he essentially limits her ability to talk with him, which serves as a form of control and surveillance of her social and sexual life. In this way, surveillance is also gendered. Although the son suggested adding a male friend, arguably the commercial would not have worked had the dad attempted to prevent his son from adding a girl. In fact, in an AT&T commercial, we actually see a dad praising and encouraging his teenage son to add girls to the family plan (AT&T Sibling Rivalry, 2008). In this way, surveillance of girls' sociality is made possible via the phone plan, but is also explicitly framed as a way to monitor female sexuality, thus situating the commercials within a historical discourse in which female sexuality is portrayed as at risk via telephony (Kearney, 2005). Boys' sexuality, on the other hand, is not constructed as risky in the same way; hence, the father's implied justification for monitoring and surveilling whom his daughter can frequently contact via her phone.

Marketing surveillance services

Normative discourses of girls at risk

In addition to representing familial surveillance via mobile phone service provider commercials, surveillance is also normalised and commodified through actual surveillance service plans offered by the mobile phone service providers. These services are typically marketed to parents as a way to protect their children (Shade, 2007; Vickery, 2014). All four major US phone providers offer additional service options that allow phones – and, therefore, their users – to be tracked via GPS monitoring. Once the service is purchased and set up, anyone with access can log in and find out where the phone is currently located in real time and with accurate locational precision. Depending on the service, parents can even set up a feature that will automatically text them when their children arrive home. Additionally, on some plans, parents can set up 'safe zones'. If a child leaves a 'safe zone', parents will automatically receive a text alerting them of their child's whereabouts outside of the designated areas.

Unsurprisingly, these services are marketed to mothers as a way to protect their children, but more specifically, their daughters. In the opening scene of Sprint's promotional commercial for their family surveillance service, John Walsh, the host of *America's Most Wanted*, explains, 'It is a huge component of reality safety to know where your child is [at all times]'. In the next scene, a mother explains that her daughter forgot to text her after school. Rather than just calling or texting her, she enabled the family locator to find out exactly where her daughter was. Although she was safely at a friend's home, the mother explains how this feature gave her peace of mind (Sprint Family Locator, 2009).

The promo, thus, incongruously juxtaposes the threat of child predators alongside a girl who was 'missing' but completely safe. It exacerbates fears (and, thus, contributes to media panics), while also normalising and domesticating surveillance practices, particularly for girls, who are constructed as more vulnerable and

in need of constant protection (that is, surveillance). All of the promotional videos on the service providers' websites specifically address and/or represent mothers as the ones charged with responsibility for managing the safety of their children. With one exception (AT&T Family Map, 2009), which includes a son and daughter, all the videos represent daughters as children in need of monitoring:

In a Verizon commercial we see a mum and her teenage daughter at the mall together. The daughter walks away from her mum and heads down the escalator: she looks back over her shoulder to give mum a reassuring smile. Mum cranes her neck to watch her daughter get off the escalator as a picture of a US map appears above the daughter's head. We then see the mother check her phone; a layout of the mall is on the screen with a red arrow pinpointing her daughter's precise location in the mall. The daughter (still with an image of a map above her head) excitedly runs up to two other teen girls who exclaim, 'Hey, are you ready?' The three girls walk off together, the daughter turns around and waves and smiles one last time at her mum who is watching from the second-floor railing of the mall. Her mum smiles back at her and finally walks away. (Verizon Mall Moment, 2010)

Through T-mobile's Family Where (2012) app, mum can monitor her daughter and know if she leaves the mall (the presumption is that leaving the mall would put her daughter in danger). The commercial relies on a normative assumption that an unsupervised girl is inherently at risk in public. Rather than just having peace of mind that the daughter can call her if she gets into trouble (if a stranger abducts her?), the mother can call her if she gets into trouble. The service highlights a broader societal context in which youth are the rationale for increased surveillance in society; in other words, the surveillance apps are justified because of the presumed vulnerability of adolescents. Surveillance is presented as an acceptable, normative, and even expected aspect for girls in public away from direct parental supervision.

As with the previous examples, this particular commercial would not be read in the same way were it a teenage boy being actively and knowingly surveilled by his mother. Because boys have historically been granted greater autonomy and are expected to occupy public spaces (Thiel-Stern, 2014), it would seem incongruous to have a mother surveilling her teenage son's movements throughout the mall; he is not presumed to be at risk in the same way girls are. The commercial subtly invokes fears about the girl's sexual innocence and vulnerability in distinctly gendered ways that would not work with a depiction of a teenage son. In other words, it plays off the accepted fears and normative constructions of girls (and their sexuality) as vulnerable and at greater risk in public spaces.

Surveillance as convenience

In addition to keeping daughters safe, the services are marketed as family management tools: that is, as a way to keep up with the family's hectic schedules.

As the voiceover in a Verizon commercial explains, 'Being a mom can feel like a balancing act' (Verizon Family Locator, 2012). Rather than merely calling or texting the family to coordinate plans, mothers can manage the household 'without interrupting their kids' by simply monitoring their locations (AT&T Family Locator, 2013):

Sprint's promotional video introduces us to Emily, a busy teenager. Emily is portrayed as a cartoon character (racially ambiguous, but with fair skin), playing a musical instrument, going to soccer practice and karate lessons (markedly middle-class activities for this 'busy teen'). This is depicted by moving Emily across a 3-D map of her town. The voiceover tells us, 'The only person in Emily's family who's busier than she is her mom.' Emily's mother, Sarah, appears on the screen holding both hands to her head looking frantic with 'question mark bubbles' popping out all around her. The voiceover tells us, 'Sarah needed an assistant, so she got Sprint Family Locator'. We then see Sarah at work on a computer and on her cell phone, checking to see exactly where Emily is (represented by a dot on a map). We also learn that 'Sarah gets a text letting her know that Emily got home on time or not'. On screen, we see Emily entering the front door, with a clock displaying 3:00 in full focus. The video ends by telling viewers, 'Never wonder where your kids are' and to sign up for a free trial of Sprint Family Locator. Throughout the entire promo, we see Emily smiling and happy; the implication is that her mother is able to monitor her without being intrusive. Sarah is also smiling, reassured by the ability to surveil Emily's movements and location in real time. (Sprint Family Locator, 2012)

The feature is promoted as a simple solution to a perceived problem for busy middle-class families. The implication is that mothers need to and are expected to know precisely where their children are – especially daughters – at all times. Again, as with similar surveillance commercials, rather than 'interrupting' children by calling or texting to ensure they make it home safely, parents can unobtrusively surveil their children's precise locations at any time. Thus, rather than overtly enacting fears around strangers, the domestication of surveillance is presented as a normal – and necessary – part of any busy family dynamic. A discourse of convenience and family management serves to sublimate the typical surveillance discourse of fear and risk. Instead of highlighting the risk-based justification of surveillance, the commercial further promotes, normalises and commodifies⁶ the domestication of surveillance via a rhetoric of convenience.

In sum, many of the commercials rely on discourses of risk and safety to deny young girls' agency over their social and sexual lives and, thus, promote the domestication of mobile surveillance. The commercial at the beginning of this chapter implies that the father does not trust his daughter to exercise sensible decisions regarding her own sexual agency. His ability to 'always watch' is a threat and is intended to keep her in line with her father's sexual rules and expectations. Similarly, in the commercial with 'Derek', the father also implies he does not trust Derek or, rather, his daughter's social interactions with Derek. Therefore, he

enacts surveillance of her social and sexual life by denying her unlimited access to him. The commercials that more overtly portray surveillance – such as the mall commercial and the family locator commercials – invoke a discourse of risk by indicating mothers can only trust that their daughters are safe because of mobile surveillance. All these examples represent daughters as lacking agency; they cannot be trusted to make safe decisions. The message is that mobile phones – as a tool of safety – should be trusted instead. However, my interviews with teen girls and their parents in the next section reveal that their discourses of trust are from a people-first perspective – 'I trust my daughter' – not from a technology-first understanding of trust (evidenced by an absence of 'I trust technology' statements).

Familial perspectives of mobile media surveillance

As demonstrated, mobile phone service provider commercials represent the domestication of surveillance as a normative, necessary and natural aspect of family life. However, how do teen girls and their parents actually negotiate the surveillance potential afforded by mobile phones? Given the extent to which safety and surveillance discourses are typically gendered as female (Shade, 2007; Thiel-Stern, 2014; Vickery, 2014), this section highlights the experiences and perceptions of three families in central Texas. The three families include: Gabriela, a 16-year-old working-class Mexican-American and her father who earns a living installing windows; Selena, a 17-year-old low-income Latina and her unemployed single mother; and Jada, a lower-middle-class black 16-year-old and her mother who works at a hospital.

The three girls have different living situations, varied access to mobile technology and dissimilar relationships with their parent(s) – three factors that mediate the negotiation and domestication of surveillance. None of the families in this study used (nor could afford) family-monitoring apps, such as the ones offered by mobile phone service providers. It should also be noted that none of these families look like those portrayed in the mobile service commercials, who are all visibly middle class and white. For the families in this study, the mobile phone provided a way for parents to stay in contact with their daughters and gave parents access to their daughters' social media profiles and text conversations. The girls' families had different expectations of privacy and surveillance; and the interviews reveal the extent to which expectations of constant surveillance are privileged expectations that are not typically available to working-class families. Furthermore, unlike in the commercials, the girls exercise agency in negotiating expectations of surveillance and privacy.

Gabriela and her father: negotiating compliance and resistance

Gabriela lived in a three-bedroom suburban home with her little sister and her divorced, yet co-habiting, parents; she and her sister shared the master bedroom and her parents each occupied separate bedrooms. Gabriela's parents emigrated from Mexico to the USA before she was born. Her parents worked in

service and labour jobs; they have done well for themselves and had middle-class aspirations for their daughters. Gabriela owned her own phone, which both of her parents paid for, and her own laptop, which was a gift from an uncle.

Although Gabriela described her relationship with her father as open and trusting, she also expected that he would monitor her social life via mobile and social media. In fact, her father actually teased her about having a password on her phone – something Gabriela did to prevent her friends from looking through her phone at school. However, at home, she disabled it, because her father interpreted her use of a password to mean that she was hiding something from him. Her willingness to take the password off – and, thus, grant her father unrestricted access to her phone – demonstrated her own expectation of and compliance with the fact that her father would monitor her social life via her mobile phone. She further acknowledged that her parents probably looked at her call log when they paid her mobile phone bill.

Gabriela expected that her father surveilled her interactions via her phone, as this was considered an acceptable and normalised practice of surveillance within the home. In an interview, her father confirmed that he occasionally looked through his daughter's phone when she left it sitting around the house and frequently asked her about her communications. His primary motivation was to make sure she was 'not getting into trouble with her friends'. In particular, he worried she would hang out with the 'wrong kind of Mexicans, the ones who go to parties, do drugs, and get in trouble'. Gabriela occasionally expressed frustration that her father did not trust her discretion when it came to friendships and her social life outside of the home.

Although Gabriela was, on the one hand, compliant with her father's expectations of surveillance, she also exercised agency via other aspects of her social life. One strategy for negotiating and resisting her father's access to her social life was by setting up private social media accounts that he did not know how to access. She and her boyfriend used a shared Tumblr account to secretly communicate with one another throughout the day. This afforded Gabriela more privacy – and, thus, relieved her from the consequences of surveillance – because she was not connected to her parents or extended family on Tumblr. And she did not anticipate that her dad would ever access or read her Tumblr if he looked through her phone; unlike Facebook, it was an app with which he was unfamiliar. In this way, Gabriela both conformed to and resisted familial surveillance in the home. She complied with her father's expectations by removing the password from her phone and knowingly granted him access, but she also agentively negotiated private modes of communication that afforded socialisation outside of familial surveillance. Unlike the depictions in the television commercials, Gabriela resisted monitoring and negotiated privacy even within a familial context of mobile surveillance.

Selena and her mother: class expectations of privacy

Selena shared a small two-bedroom apartment with her single and unemployed mother, a younger half-sister, an older brother, his girlfriend and their two young children. Needless to say, the home was constantly crowded and there were few

expectations of spatial privacy. Selena's mobile phone access was precarious; her father occasionally helped pay the bill, but otherwise Selena tried to earn money doing odd jobs in the neighbourhood. Her pay-as-you-go mobile phone plan was frequently disconnected when she ran out of money to purchase more minutes and data. The family did not have Internet at home, so most of the time Selena depended on the school's Wi-Fi or friends' houses to access the Internet and mobile media. Unlike Gabriela, who presumed her dad would occasionally access her phone, Selena and her mother had a not-so-subtle agreement that they would not invade each other's mobile and social media privacy. In fact, it was Selena's mother who actually unfriended her daughter on Facebook because she did not want to see what her daughter was doing; likewise, she did not want Selena to see what she was doing online. As her mother explained to me:

I'm trying to give them [my children] their space, but there's things they'll post that I don't agree on. I don't want to see it. I don't want to – there's certain pictures I might not want to see ... They're kids and they tend to talk different than some of us adults and they put out things, whether it's cussing – a cuss word every other word – I don't want to see it. I don't want to associate with that.

In a household with limited access to mobile devices and low expectations of in-home privacy and personal space, the idea of familial surveillance shifts. Rather than mobile media providing a means through which mothers can keep tabs on their daughters, mobile phones become a space for both mother and daughter to exercise agency and privacy over at least some aspects of their social and domestic lives.

When Selena was out with friends, her mother would try to reach her via her mobile phone; however, Selena would deliberately turn it off (or claim to have run out of minutes on her pre-paid plan). Instead, she used a Wi-Fi-enabled iPod Touch as a way to communicate and text her friends, but not her mother. In other words, she was able to maintain contact with her peers, but she intentionally and deliberately made herself unavailable to her mother when she was not at home. Her mother was aware of this, to a certain extent; if she really needed to reach Selena, she called one of Selena's friends' phones or her friends' parents' phones:

If I don't hear from her of course I'm going to worry. When her friends don't answer I'm like, 'Okay. Something's going on.' It could be bad or innocent – that's when I start calling parents but I try to stay away from having to do that because I don't want to be nagging. I try to give her her space.

For financial reasons – as well as Selena's deliberate strategies – her mother was required to rely on more traditional means of communication, rather than overt surveillance, as a way to check on her daughter. Calling her friends and her friends' parents was a way to monitor her daughter (what the commercials portray as 'invasive' and 'interruptive' means of communication), but in a way that is significantly different from other modes of constant surveillance.

Thus, in many ways, Selena's precarious and limited access to mobile media alleviated her burden of surveillance because her mother was unable – financially or technologically – to constantly surveil neither her daughter's movements outside the home nor her social interactions within the home. Selena and her mother's perspectives problematise the normative value of surveillance – not all parents expect or want to monitor their children in the way mobile phone industries suggest they should. The expectation and justification for constant surveillance are a class-based norm that not all families can afford nor desire. Surveillance services, which cost even more money in addition to phone plans – are a solution and tool available to only some families. Selena's home life reveals how the normalisation of mobile surveillance is an inherently privileged class expectation (for more information about how expectations of surveillance are class-based and gendered, see Franks, 2015). Unlike the middle-class mother-daughter representations within the mobile phone commercials, both Selena and her mother actively negotiate expectations of surveillance and enact strategies for mutual privacy.

Jada and her mother: trust and dialogue

Jada lived in a small three-bedroom home with her unmarried parents and a little brother and sister. The family shared a computer in the kitchen, but Jada had her own Wi-Fi-connected tablet. Her parents paid for her mobile phone and expected her to maintain communication with them: 'If they text and I can't answer, I have to respond. I let them know I'll call later.' Jada explained her parents could be strict compared to some of her friends, but she desired to please them, and was quick to add, 'It's ok though, they just worry about me.' For the most part, Jada had an open and trusting relationship with her parents. She was a good student and stayed perpetually busy with a part-time job, drill team and several other school activities. When I asked her about privacy at home, she explained that her parents trusted her and she did not think that they would ever monitor what she was doing.

Her mother reinforced an attitude of open dialogue and trust, but also explained that she could, would and, on occasion, had monitored her children via the computer and their mobile phones. After explaining that she insisted her children add her as a friend on her Facebook so she could monitor their behaviour, she continued:

As for privacy in this house, they don't have a privacy. I need to know everything that goes on. If you're online and texting and you go out this door and I don't know where you are, I can always go back and see what you're doing. It's good to see what your child was doing. The last thing they were doing when they walked out the door. A lot of parents are like, 'My child was on the Internet before they walked out the door and I've never seen them again.' You can always check the history of computers.

When I asked Jada's mother the motivation for checking her children's phone records, Internet history and messages, she explained one of her biggest concerns was the negative effects of peer pressure. 'I think a lot of kids do that

[pressure each other] because they want to fit in and don't want to be teased. It's very hard to be yourself. I think that's the number one thing because you hear about a lot of kids committing suicide and bullying.' Jada's mother explicitly referenced concerns about the potential dangers of her daughter's socialisation, concerns that are also invoked via mobile service commercials and media panics. However, she also continued to explain that the best form of intervention was open communication with her daughter. Although she admitted to surveilling her interactions, search history and phone logs on occasion, she also made it clear that she wanted to be in dialogue with her daughter about potential risks and harms. Jada echoed this in a separate interview, in which she said she felt she could and did talk to her parents about most things.

Jada's mother's perspectives are similar to the ways mobile media commercials construct mobile devices as a tool for both safety and risk. While she worried that mobile and social media could be a threat to Jada's safety and well-being, she also utilised the phone as a form of safety via monitoring and surveillance. Her perspectives, expectations and practices most closely reflected the rhetoric utilised by the media and mobile service providers: She monitored her daughter's mobile phone as a way to subtly enact a level of control over her daughter's socialisation. Additionally, Jada was the least resistant when it came to mobile surveillance; she was not overly concerned about her mother watching her or accessing her phone. Unlike Gabriela, she did not seek covert ways to digitally communicate with friends outside the purview of her parents. In part, this could possibly be explained by the fact that Jada was afforded a multitude of opportunities to socialise with her friends outside of the home and via her involvement in many after-school activities. However, it is also possible that her mom's surveillance of her mobile phone use discouraged Jada from socialising via social media as much as she might otherwise have done.

Conclusion: ethical considerations

What these three families reveal is the extent to which discourses of surveillance are often class-based and also how actual lived experiences are more complicated than media discourses typically portray. Gabriela's father reflects some of the ways surveillance has become an expected and normative aspect of contemporary parenting; however, Gabriela's privacy strategies reveal the way she negotiates and exercises agency even within a framework of familial surveillance. Selena's position highlights the extent to which reduced access to technology, combined with already compromised privacy within the home, actually leads to both mother and daughter resisting increased surveillance via mobile and social media. Their story further illustrates the ways in which discourses of risk and surveillance are continually shaped by class-based and privileged perspectives and expectations. Additionally, within the mediated discourses of risk, girls are frequently represented as lacking agency. However, the girls in the study demonstrate agentive strategies for resisting parental surveillance via their mobile devices.

Further, what is also strikingly absent from media discourses of surveillance, but significantly present in all three families in this chapter, is the discourse of trust. All three girls – Gabriela, Selena and Jada – frequently brought up the topic of trust when discussing privacy and surveillance within the home and beyond. Although their home lives and family rules differed, they all expressed a belief that their parents trusted them to make good decisions, to assess risk, to ask for help if they needed it, and to follow family expectations of acceptable behaviour. Likewise, their parents all invoked a discourse of trust as well. Although their expectations varied, they all trusted that their daughters were mostly making good decisions when it came to using mobile and social media. Likewise, they trusted that their daughters knew how to assess risk and to stay safe both within and outside of the home. Trust – as well as a respect for girls' agency and discretion – play important roles in shaping the ethics of the domestication of surveillance. However, by continually depicting teen girls as vulnerable and at risk (Shade, 2011), media discourses often presume that safety trumps teens' expectations of privacy.

Considering the mediated representations of girls, alongside girls' actual expectations and practices, is a productive space to ask: Who benefits from mediated representations of girls at risk and the domestication of surveillance? Is it problematic that the mobile service industry simultaneously contributes to discursive constructions of risk, yet financially benefits from surveillance services? As others have also reasoned (Shade, 2011), it can be argued that the industry is exploiting parental fears and capitalising on constructions of girls at risk. It is difficult to separate the domestication of surveillance from the market that is promoting and profiting from discourses of risk – discourses that engender fear and construct technology as the 'natural' and 'affordable' solution.

The normative aspects of familial surveillance work alongside stranger danger and peer fear rhetoric in a way that allows the mobile phone industry to capitalise on parental fears (by invoking an assumption that 'good parents' must surveil their daughters in the name of safety). Yet, they ignore girls' agency, as well as alternative mechanisms of safety – such as education and empowering girls to assess risk, make safe decisions and be secure outside of a framework of surveillance. As girls' studies scholar Leslie Shade writes (2011: 270), 'My [research] reinforces how media and public discourse still, with a few rare exceptions, constructs young women as susceptible to cyber-bullying, online sexual predation and therefore in need of technological solutions to assuage their parents' fears surrounding their mobility'.

Young people are afforded few spaces in which to question the normative value of surveillance at all levels – from home, to school, to corporate and governmental tracking; yet, surveillance increasingly plays an accepted and expected role in their lives. More so, what the commercials and the families highlight is the extent to which youth – specifically girls – is presented as justification for increased surveillance within and beyond the home. Parents and adolescents alike need to question discourses that position girls as inherently vulnerable and at risk, as well

as messages that present mobile surveillance as the only and best solution to perceived threats. We should rather acknowledge girls' agency and enable them to safely navigate their social and sexual lives outside of a framework of surveillance.

Notes

- 1 Fave Five is a T-mobile feature that allows users to make unlimited calls to their favourite five contacts.
- 2 AT&T/Cingular (AT&T acquired Cingular in 2007), T-mobile, Verizon and Sprint (Lawson, 2013).
- 3 This chapter draws from data collected as part of the MacArthur Foundation's Digital Edge research project (S. Craig Watkins, PI). The ethnographic study included 18 ethnically diverse high school students, at least one of their parents or guardians and select teachers and administrators at a low-income high school in central Texas. The multi-method study included focus groups, participant observations in an after-school digital media club and one-on-one interviews with participants on a weekly basis over the course of the 2011–12 academic year. At the mid-point of the study, interviews were conducted at home with one of the girls' parents. All of the interviews were audio-recorded on mini-digital recorders and then transcribed and uploaded to a cloud-based qualitative software program for coding and analysis. For more information about the method and the larger project, see Vickery, 2012.
- 4 As of 2014, 90 per cent of US adults owned a mobile phone and 64 per cent owned a smartphone (Pew Research Center, 2014). As of 2013, 78 per cent of US teens owned a mobile phone and nearly 50 per cent owned a smartphone (Madden *et al.*, 2013).
- 5 A US sports car, the Ford Mustang.
- 6 In 2015, the services cost \$5–\$15 a month, depending on the service provider and the exact features of the plan.

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