Book Review

Nelson, Margaret K. and Anita I Garey (eds.) 2009.
Who's Watching? Daily Practices of Surveillance
***Among Contemporary Families.* Nashville:**
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Until recently, literature on surveillance of families and children seemed to be almost non-existent. The surveillance of children on the Internet (Steeves, 2006) and surveillance at schools (Monahan and Torres, 2009; Taylor, 2009) are the only issues that have drawn significant attention within surveillance studies. This is striking in that surveillance of children by parents is the oldest and most “banal” form of surveillance. Furthermore, surveillance studies has partly grown out of Foucault’s theory of discipline and surveillance and the family and children play a significant role in his writings. Moreover, looking at all the measures and technologies that have been developed to surveill children in 21st century Western society, it is astonishing how little research has been done on this issue. Together with the recently published special issue of *Surveillance & Society* on surveillance and children (2010), the edited volume under review is beginning to fill this gap in the literature.

A significant part of this book deals with these neglected topics, although the focus is on surveillance practices within and of the family. The editors state that the main purpose of the book is to link the field of surveillance studies with family sociology: “Examining family practices through the lens of surveillance studies complicates and informs our understanding of family life. Similarly expanding surveillance studies to include the realm of the family complicates and informs our understanding of surveillance” (p.2).

The volume, which for the most part consists of material that has already been published elsewhere, is divided into four parts. The first deals with the impact of outside agencies on the internal dynamics of the family. Important issues that are dealt with include that of nested responsibility, how family members become ancillary watchers for the state and the substitution of the family with the more coercive arm of the law. Part two explores how “private” family life is situated in the public sphere and is subject to public assessments and surveillance. Blackford, for example, explores the panoptic force of mothers at public and commercial playgrounds. This part also discusses issues of accountability and norms of what is acceptable vis-à-vis caring for children. For example, families or nannies whose membership (e.g. interracial adoption, social/ethnic background of the nanny) violates some groups’ deeply held norms could be treated harshly and even violently. The third part discusses how individuals monitor others, often with the help of technology, in order to make decisions about inclusion and exclusion with respect to family membership such as, for example, relying on ultrasound to make decisions about moving forward with pregnancy and assessment, and the monitoring of potential caregivers to become members of networks of care. Finally, part four deals with the dynamics of monitoring within the family when the impulse for that monitoring does not originate with an outside authority. This part also underscores the use of technology; for example

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Nelson discusses the use of baby monitors, Kurz explores how parents monitor their teenage children through the use of cell phones and Hofer et al. discuss the use of new communication technologies in parents' monitoring of their college-age children.

The editors point to four themes that emerge in the book:

1. The dynamic interplay between care and control. Even though Lyon (2001: 3) has asserted that surveillance has two faces – care and control – issues of care are often missing from debates of surveillance. These two faces become most tangible when discussing issues of surveillance within the family and of children. It is not always very evident which of the two faces is behind the actions of the surveyors (inside and outside of the family), nor can the motivations between care and control always be separated, as is illustrated by Nelson's chapter on the use of baby monitors by parents. Although on first view it can be characterized as an attempt by parents to provide good care for their infant, this care can easily turn into control. As the editors of the volume assert, there is a dynamic interplay that characterizes surveillance. This observation also emphasizes the role that motivations and desires play in surveillance practices (cf. Haggerty and Ericson, 2000).

2. The relevance of technology. A second issue that emerges is the role technology plays in the surveillance of and within families. This is also an issue that has not received enough attention within surveillance studies. Recently, discourses on how technology should be understood are shifting from the dichotomy between a technological determinist and social determinist view to "a more nuanced and dynamic view that acknowledges both sides simultaneously" (p. 9). These discourses also underline the value that debates within science and technology studies and philosophy of technology can have for surveillance studies. How technology works in practice and evaluations of surveillance technologies have been largely ignored within surveillance studies which is surprising given that in order to understand what influence surveillance practices have, it is necessary to also understand how the technology works.

This volume also shows us that a lot of surveillance does not include technology, but where new technologies are used this raises new ethical dilemmas and consequences for power relations. For example, in chapter six Nelson suggests that new technologies can help shift and rearrange the balance of power in preexisting familial relationships. Within surveillance studies the majority of publications focus on technological surveillance, while there remains a lot of non-technological surveillance out there to be studied, such as that which occurs at playgrounds, the topic of chapter five.

3. The nature of resistance. Resistance should be seen not merely as an epiphenomenon of surveillance but as a basic and necessary co-development of surveillance (Martin, van Brakel and Bernhard, 2009). This volume clearly endorses this view in that it discusses issues of resistance quite elaborately. Moore and Haggerty (chapter 3) assert in relation to drug testing of teenagers by their parents that the teenagers' resistance to this surveillance can be characterized by "strategies that work creatively within the field of visibility through imaginative engagements with the particularities of an observational regime" (p. 65), however resistance can also imply standing outside the gaze, finding cracks and fissures where surveillance does not penetrate (see chapters 8 and 10).

4. The abiding significance of social location. This theme refers to how individuals and families are positioned in broader social hierarchies of race/ethnicity, social class and gender. Surveillance plays an important role in establishing and reinforcing social inequalities. In chapter four Jacobson shows how unexpected differences in race/ethnicity can evoke vulnerability to intrusive surveillance. Chapters six and twelve observe how parents monitor their children's gender performance. The influence of surveillance on social inequalities is a key theme in this volume.

Apart from the themes suggested by the editors, the volume draws attention to several other relevant questions, for example about the nature and definition of surveillance. When reading one is constantly asking oneself what is the difference between surveillance and monitoring? The volume, however, does

not give an answer to this question and treats everything as surveillance. Should we call all of these practices surveillance, or should there be a clear distinction between surveillance and monitoring? Is the most cited definition of surveillance proposed by Lyon (2001) sufficient to cover all these practices? These queries also emphasize another aspect of current research on surveillance of which a significant part focuses on the macro-level of surveillance: surveillance by the state, surveillance of populations, etc. In contrast, a large part of this volume focuses on the micro-level, discussing surveillance practices that are characterized more by chaos than by being systematic. There is a big difference in motivations but also in the nature of the practice between the use of large databases by the government to influence populations and the monitoring of babies by parents with a web cam. Not only is the monitoring of babies not a systematic practice with the goal of influencing large groups, the motivations behind the surveillance practice are different: parents' motivations will be more care-oriented whereas the government tends to be more concerned with control. Looking at the surveillance practices at this level of analysis raises different questions about power and social and ethical consequences. Moreover it also emphasizes the multi-directional character of surveillance relationships, whereby it should be underlined that it is not simply the surveyor exerting power over the surveilled.

Although not all chapters are as relevant for most surveillance studies scholars (especially part III), the volume does raise important issues such as resistance and the relevance of technology that call for more attention in surveillance studies. What is remarkable, however, is that none of the chapters deals with how families are surveilled by the government through databases, which is generally considered to be one of the characteristic developments of the emerging surveillance society. Finally, to conclude on a positive note, one attractive aspect of this volume is that it inspires one to venture outside of the surveillance studies box, which until now has been dominated by theoretical discussions about the nature of surveillance, visual surveillance (i.e. CCTV) and the social and ethical consequences that accompany these practices.

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