Article

“...when no one is hearing them swear” — Youth Safety and the Pedagogy of Surveillance

Nathan Fisk

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, US.
nwfisk@gmail.com

Abstract

In this piece I examine the production and proliferation of adult surveillance practices online through internet safety discourses. Specifically, through an analysis of youth internet safety curricula provided to adults, along with interviews with parents, law enforcement officers and school officials, I describe the mechanisms by which adults are positioned as agents of surveillance relative to social networks and youth internet practice. As I argue, youth internet safety discourses represent what can be conceptualized as a pedagogy of surveillance—reconfiguring both adult and youth conceptions of online practice in ways which establish “trusted adults” as final arbiters of risk and appropriateness, while casting suspicion on the everyday social practices of youth. Through the pedagogy of surveillance provided by youth internet safety materials, parents and guardians are encouraged to conceptualize social networking sites and other information technologies used by youth as surveillance tools, rather than as social spaces. Additionally, these materials provide adults with a particular conceptual frame through which to make sense of youth sociality online, commonly interpreting everyday communication and actions from the standpoint of an imagined “21st Century” employer.

My mom and other adults are always so concerned that my friends or I are doing things that are wrong because I don't want her meddling, but it's just my private space where I can be a teenager.

— Student Survey Respondent

Introduction

In a statement which could very well be referencing inappropriate internet use by youth, rather than masturbation, Foucault states:

Wherever there was the chance [pleasures] might appear, devices of surveillance were installed; traps were laid for compelling admissions; inexhaustible and corrective discourses were imposed; parents and teachers were alerted, and left with the suspicion that all children were guilty, and with the fear of being themselves at fault if their suspicions were not sufficiently strong; they were kept in readiness in the face of this recurrent danger; their conduct was prescribed and their pedagogy recodified... The child's “vice” was not so much an enemy as a support... *Always relying on this support, power advanced, multiplied its relays and its effects, while its target expanded, subdivided, and branched out, penetrating further into reality at the same pace. In*

appearance, we are dealing with a barrier system; but in fact, all around the child, indefinite lines of penetration were disposed.

(1978: 42, emphasis added)

A similar type of campaign has been mobilized around youth internet practice. Indeed, in many cases of “inappropriate” online content posted or consumed by youth, it is much the same campaign—such as pornography, sexually explicit conversation, or online predators. Programs seeking to educate parents on the risks faced by children online have been developed at the national, state, and local levels, in addition to various curricula offered by private corporations and non-profit groups. The stated goals of these programs are to help prepare youth internet users to become good cybercitizens, fostering an effective and safe online environment for both educational and corporate activities. Additionally, they seek to assist parents to better understand what it is that their kids are doing online, and the potential risks they face should the internet be used inappropriately. These curricula have been freely provided to youth and adults across New York state, in the forms of course materials, online resources, handouts, assemblies and presentations, and provide significant insight into the ways in which youth internet safety has emerged as a key issue for policymakers, school administrators and parents.

In this piece I examine the production and proliferation of adult surveillance practices online through internet safety discourses. Specifically, through an analysis of youth internet safety curricula provided to adults, along with interviews with parents, law enforcement officers and school officials, I describe the mechanisms by which adults are positioned as agents of surveillance relative to social networks and youth internet practice. As I argue, youth internet safety discourses represent what can be conceptualized as a pedagogy of surveillance—reconfiguring both adult and youth conceptions of online practice in ways which establish “trusted adults” as final arbiters of risk and appropriateness, while casting suspicion on the everyday social practices of youth. Through the pedagogy of surveillance provided by youth internet safety materials, parents and guardians are encouraged to conceptualize social networking sites and other information technologies used by youth as surveillance tools, rather than as social spaces. Additionally, these materials provide adults with a particular conceptual frame through which to make sense of youth sociality online, commonly interpreting everyday communication and actions from the standpoint of an imagined “21st Century” employer.

Pedagogies of Surveillance

Internet safety discourses can be best understood as mechanisms for what Foucault (1980) describes as the capillary penetration of power, itself a commonly used concept in the field of Surveillance Studies (Campbell 2004; DiNicola 2006; Lyon 1993; Marwick 2012). Adult surveillance has slowly penetrated formerly unsupervised times and spaces of youth sociality both online and off, as youth have adopted social networking platforms into everyday social practice and have increasingly documented their lives through online video and photo sharing sites. As with Foucault’s (1978) discussion of onanism discourses above, the central logic of such surveillance comes in the form of child protection. Similarly, decades of moral panic scholarship have demonstrated the ways in which concerns over children and youth are mobilized in productive ways (Clapton, Cree, and Smith 2013; Critcher 2008; Garland 2008; Jenkins 1992; Payne 2008), allowing for “a ‘more than usual’ exercise of control” (Hall et al. 1978: 221). Further, and more explicitly referencing child surveillance and dataveillance, Wrennall (2010) offers the Trojan Horse theory of Child Protection, in which “the discourse of Child Protection is being misused for purposes that have little or nothing to do with enhancing the lives of children” (2010: 306).

Donzelot’s (1979) work provides historical context for the production of the modern form of child protectionism, describing the conditions by which children came to be “preserved” in the mid-18th century through various forms of supervision and containment. This emphasis on preservation sprung from a realization by the state that the current practices of child rearing were intensely wasteful—youth

abandoned at foundling hospitals were a financial expense, the child mortality rate was high, and those that did survive were seen to be "corrupted" and unfit for work. The result was a set of pedagogical practices which reconstituted the family around the preservation of children as state resources, through what Donzelot termed the regulation of images. As he describes:

What of childhood? ...the solicitude of which it was the object took the form of a *protected liberation*, a freeing of children from vulgar fears and constraints. The bourgeois family drew a sanitary cordon around the child which delimited his sphere of development: inside this perimeter the growth of his body and mind would be encouraged by enlisting all the contributions of psychopedagogy in its service and controlled by means of a discreet observation. In the second instance, it would be more exact to define the pedagogical model as that of *supervised freedom*. The problem in regard to the working-class child was not so much the weight of obsolescent constraints as it was excessive freedom—being left to the streets—and the techniques employed consisted in limiting this freedom, in shepherding the child back to spaces where he could be more closely watched: the school or the family dwelling.

(1979: 47)

Donzelot goes on to outline the institutional alliances and struggles that produced various forms of normative imagery and family education, ranging from the church to modern family planning, in describing the proliferation of these forms of pedagogy throughout history. Donzelot's discussion of pedagogies of the family continue to be relevant today, and bear much similarity to scholarship on youth and the internet today. Connolly and Ennew (1996) remark simply that, "To be a child outside of adult supervision, visible on city centre streets, is to be out of place." Similarly, referring to issues of youth internet safety, Brown notes that:

Children are seen as "in danger" from the internet because it seems that just as adults do not like young people hanging around on street corners, so they do not like them to have unfettered access to the virtual street corners of cyberworlds. Hence we see "moral panics" surrounding the supposedly deleterious effects of computers on children's development and morals, and the alleged need to control the amount of time children spend on the net, and what they do on it "for their own good."

(2005: 148)

As with Donzelot's work, here I begin to consider what I describe as *pedagogies of surveillance*, through which individuals become agents of surveillance, learning to observe, interpret, and police social behavior. In part, considering pedagogies of surveillance is a response to Smith's (2012) call for further research on surveillance-in-action:

as a participatory mode of being-in-the-world (in terms of socialization, pedagogy and the interaction order) and as an organizationally based mode of work (in terms of the prioritization and expansion of information collection techniques and corollary emergence of a specialized human/non-human labor force tasked with "reading," categorizing and deciphering this data such that it becomes expert and institutionally-relevant knowledge).

(2012: 108)

A focus on pedagogies of surveillance draws attention to the production and proliferation of institutionally legitimate forms of surveillant subjectivities, and as such recognizes that surveillants must be produced through training and education. Similar to what Campbell describes as technologies of suspicion, pedagogies of surveillance "constitute a set of empirical modes for producing and interpreting 'data'—

results—in ways that conflate prediction with prescription, acting as technological forms of supervision, monitoring, supposed deterrence, and ultimately control” (2004: 79).

Pedagogies of surveillance, then, provide conceptual approaches to technologies and experiences which produce institutionally relevant knowledge, often at the cost of “coextensiveness with [a] social field” (Donzelot 1979: 45). Further, an emphasis on the production of surveillants provides a means by which to better understand the incorporation of institutional surveillance techniques into everyday life. Smith (2012) characterizes surveillance work as simultaneously a mundane activity and an organizational activity, performing roles in cultural and identity construction, and building towards bureaucratic goals, respectively. As Lyon has noted: “Parents have always been concerned about what their children might be up to, of course, but our [generation] is the first that has deliberately sought techniques used by the military or police in order to monitor their activities” (2007: 13). An analysis of pedagogies of surveillance provides an understanding of the strategic intertwining between these two modes of work, as particular modes of identity construction become institutionally useful. Finally, conceptualizing the production of surveillance systems through pedagogies of surveillance allows for a further examination of the forces that allow various technologies to be interpreted and mobilized as surveillance tools by different groups. Just as surveillant subjectivities must be socially produced, so too must surveillance technologies. Drawing from work on technological flexibility (Hess 1995) and adaptation (Eglash et al. 2004) from the field of Science and Technology Studies, the concept of pedagogies of surveillance is predicated on the understanding that “users” approach technology from a particular sociocultural context. An analysis of pedagogies of surveillance points towards the discursive reframing of flexible technologies—such as social networking platforms—as institutionally valid tools for knowledge production.

Method

The data supporting this paper was drawn from a broader study on youth internet safety discourses undertaken from 2010 to 2012. The project included an internet safety curricula analysis, in addition to parent focus groups, administrator interviews, youth focus groups, and a largely qualitative online student survey (n=3,337), all of which took place in six school districts within New York State. Students within grades 6 through 12 (approximately within the age range of 10-19) in each district were asked to participate in an online survey, consisting of both quantitative and qualitative questions, focusing on the major concerns of students, the types of risky online experiences they have had, and the ways in which they understand district policies and curricula regarding internet safety. Survey respondents were distributed evenly across gender and grade level. Providing context to this survey data were two focus group sessions with students within each district. Sessions were conducted with students from grades 6-8 and grades 9-12, with between 6-9 students participating in each session, and lasting approximately 40 minutes (or one class period).

Parents of students within each of the participating school districts were similarly asked to participate in focus group sessions. These sessions generally took place with between 6-9 parent participants, each lasting approximately an hour and a half. In total, focus groups were conducted in four of the six districts, in one instance with as few as two participants. Similar to the student focus groups, these sessions focused on the types of online activities parents observed in their homes and their understanding of internet safety policies in their districts.

In order to gain the perspective of administrators and staff within each district, between two and five interviews were conducted with those individuals the districts identified as the most closely involved with youth internet safety issues. This group typically included the principal and vice principals at the middle and high school levels, along with directors of information technology, various teachers, and superintendents. These interviews typically lasted for approximately 40 minutes, and some became impromptu focus group sessions as additional administrators chose to participate.

The Construction of Trusted Adults

Developed in 2001 by the Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and funded in part by major corporations including Walmart and Viacom, the NetSmartz curriculum is among the more popular internet safety resources online. Within separate sections for parents, teachers, law enforcement and children across various age groups, NetSmartz provides a series videos, presentations, online games, handouts and classroom materials free of charge and comparable to other forms of internet safety curricula. Given the standing of the NCMEC and the breadth of materials available, specifically presentations designed for adults providing internet safety education to parents and children, the popularity of the program is unsurprising. A focus group participant—herself having presented NetSmartz material to youth and adult audiences—stated:

Where we've come from with drugs, we're trying to get there with internet safety, we're trying to get there with sexting... I go over the laws with them, I get my tools from NetSmartz. They're a great resource... It's free! The county always likes things that are free!

Indeed, most school administrators I spoke with did see a need for educating parents on youth internet safety risks. A school principal mentioned:

I think that educating the parent piece is incredibly important. The hard thing is enforcing the parents to participate in that. You know, with students here we can do that, but if someone's not supervising them with this media it's as good as—kids will swear when no one is hearing them swear... I fear for that.

And again, another administrator described the need for parental education, broadly explaining that if youth internet access was contained to schools, there would be no safety problems:

I do think that if they were just using these things in school, we would be okay... I think it's, in my opinion, one of those social responsibilities [schools] need to take on, because it's more interesting to the students than it is to their parents and the students are the IT people in their homes, and they can pull the wool over their parents' eyes... I do think we need to take on more responsibility of educating them about it... Anytime we can keep children safe, we need to.

As provided online, the commonly used presentation—often modified by variously positioned presenters—begins with a brief discussion on the kinds of technologies kids use to communicate with one another, and outlines the positive elements of online communication. The presentation then moves into internet safety material, providing means by which to identify particular categories of risky behavior online. First, parents are alerted to the dangers of posting too much information, as part of a tutorial on the functions and features of most social networking sites. Risky behavior includes activities such as “‘Friending’ unknown people,” “Posting personal information,” “Embarrassing and harassing people,” and “Talking about sex.” The online narrator goes on to state “Kids get away with these behaviors all the time, and doing just one of them might not get your child in trouble, but a combination of these behaviors... is likely to put them at greater risk” (NetSmartz 2010a).

Cyberbullying, “Crossing the Line” (by posting inappropriate or personal information), and online predators are all covered in detail by the presentation, with each section containing tips on identifying problems and navigating social networks. For example, the “Signs of Grooming,” provides parents with a diagnostic for identifying possible online sexual predation. “Turning away from friends and family” in order to spend more time online and “Spending a lot of time online” more generally are both indicators of

possible victimization. Further reframing any possible resistance, so too are the behaviors of "Getting upset when he or she can't get online," and "Minimizing the screen or turning off the monitor when you come into the room" made suspicious. Later in the presentation, the narrator attempts to assuage the fears of parents who feel as if constant surveillance as a means from preventing them from "sharing too much" may be unwanted by their children:

Helping your children filter their comments online may seem like a challenge, especially if you think they don't want you anywhere near their online life. But NetSmartz has interviewed these students who think parental involvement is not that bad.

(NetSmartz 2010a)

Following this statement a number of students are shown, describing the ways in which they are watched by their parents—although none explicitly state that they feel particularly comfortable with such monitoring.

The presentation ends with a series of broad monitoring and policing strategies for parents, including increased control over mobile devices, housing family computers in shared spaces, and installation of monitoring and filtering software. A need for active supervision is emphasized, suggesting that parents maintain a supervisory presence whenever their children are or could potentially be online. Closing the presentation, the emphasis on supervision is tempered somewhat as the narrator describes the need to maintain open lines of communication with children, and further mentions the ways in which overreaction and too much control can potentially be counterproductive:

But don't go overboard, many kids are afraid that if they tell their parents about something that's happened, they'll overreact and pull the plug. If you take away the Internet your children may be less likely to come to you if they have a problem.

(NetSmartz 2010a)

Indeed, throughout the material are references to the "trusted adult"—the figure to which kids online are expected to report to when they encounter risky situations online. The term goes largely unexplained in the materials provided to parents, but is detailed through the material provided to youth. Trusted adults are defined as, "Someone you can talk to about anything; someone you feel happy being around; someone who is a good listener; or someone who has helped you before" (NetSmartz 2010b), with an emphasis on adulthood—other children are explicitly excluded from the category (NetSmartz 2010c), likely given the suspicion that they might use personal or sensitive information to exacerbate existing problems. The resource manual provided to internet safety presenters, however, explains that "Trusted adults are educated about the online safety risks and encouraged to: Consider filtering and monitoring options, Establish rules and guidelines at home, Communicate with their children [and] Share resources with others in the community" (NetSmartz 2010d).

While the NetSmartz creators and presenters undoubtedly would consider most well-known adult figures as trusted adults, adults who have been exposed to NetSmartz or other forms of internet safety training are closer to the ideal. This ideal draws on existing legislative and mainstream media discourses which position parents as unaware of the risks youth face online, and facing overwhelming forces which threaten the safety of their children. Implicit in the concept of the trusted adult is that in the anonymous world of online communication, no one can be trusted. Youth are encouraged to discuss any problems they might have to adults who they can verify to be trustworthy and safe—and only adults known offline may be trustworthy. Such problems may include unpleasant incidents which youth have experienced online, or simply issues which they feel they need to talk out. In the latter, youth are told that talking to people online about personal problems is dangerous, given that predators and bullies may use sensitive

information to groom or attack, and are instead encouraged to only discuss such issues with known, trusted adults.

While NetSmartz and many of the other online resources available to parents do attempt to encourage dialogue between parents and children as a necessary aspect of managing the risks youth face online, these elements of the curricula are typically minimized in the presentations offered by school districts and communities. Law enforcement officers, information security groups, district attorneys, and computer crime units frequently offer free presentations to school districts targeted at both parents and students. In many school districts I visited, these forms of presentations were the only form of internet safety education on offer by the districts, whether it be for parents, students, or faculty and staff. Again emphasizing the role of the curricula provided by NetSmartz, freely presented through the lens of law enforcement officials, one focus group participant—quoted previously—stated “I go over the laws with them, I get my tools from NetSmartz. They’re a great resource... It’s free! The county always likes things that are free!” The NetSmartz curricula as provided by law enforcement officers is positioned as the least expensive and thereby the most popular means by which districts are able to provide internet safety education, often in highly publicized ways. By requesting or accepting presentations by law enforcement, school districts often receive local media coverage, further demonstrating commitment to the community. For these presenters, the risks youth face online are made manifestly real through experience with harassment, internet predation and child pornography investigations. As such, in presentations provided by law enforcement officers and those close to the judicial process, the sense of a real and looming threat is made prominent through the experiences of the presenter, placing further emphasis on the potentially disastrous consequences of inappropriate online behavior. Further, much of the discussion around communication and engagement with youth lives tend to be supplanted by stronger techniques for surveillance and control.

In one district, during what was meant to be a parent focus group session, I was provided with an opportunity to discuss internet safety issues with two participants who were both parents and law enforcement officers. One had previously acted as the CIO of a large police department, in addition to having founded the local chapter of Infragard—the public/private partnership established by the FBI to protect national information infrastructure. The other chose to remain anonymous, but both routinely provided internet safety presentations to both parental and youth audiences. The participants in this focus group produced the most extreme example of the law enforcement view of youth internet safety, as one of the parents linked social networking sites to organized crime, terrorism, and human trafficking:

When you open the door to the internet, you open the door to the entire world. And there are cultures out there that think nothing [of], and even worse, despise our way of life... Social media is a great venue for organized crime, especially international organized crime, especially the human slave trade... It is becoming almost an underground phenomenon that this is how they find their prey. And kids, that doesn’t even enter their heads.

Accordingly, the techniques offered by law enforcement and security experts tend to be significantly more restrictive and intrude into the social lives of youth online. These techniques can range from simply “friending” youth on social network sites for purposes of surveillance, all the way to suggestions that parents construct false identities online to run virtual sting operations on unsuspecting youth, ensuring that they do not engage with online “strangers.” As a school resource officer suggested to parents at a public cyberbullying discussion panel hosted by a New York school district:

I think with some of this technology, make a fake account and try to friend them on Facebook. Have a [adult] friend phone and text them, and say “Hey, what are you

doing?", and does he respond? If he does, that's a great teaching point... I'm accused of spying all the time, you know, I'm a cop, it's what I do...

(Whiteley 2010)

Another participant in the discussion panel, the technology coordinator for the district, provided additional, more technical suggestions on methods to monitor children online:

What can I do as a parent from a technological perspective to monitor my child's behavior? There's all sorts of products out there that you can install on your personal computer that will monitor and record every bit of activity that your student's doing. It may be seen by some as an encroachment of their rights, but we have a right as a parent to protect them as well. So you need to balance the two sides of that equation... Your digital footprint is forever, and I don't believe students can certainly understand or comprehend the ramifications...

(DiAngelo 2010)

Similarly, at a parent information session, presented by the New York State Crimes Against Children Task Force (NYS ICAC), the presentation had been modified from that provided by NetSmartz online. The title had changed from "The Internet & Its Risks" to "Your Child's D.I.G.I.T.A.L Life" with the core material and messages remaining largely the same. The session was part of a larger effort to educate New York State residents, developed by the New York State Attorney General's Office using NetSmartz material (NYS OAG). Sessions using the same material continue to be offered at school districts across the state and throughout New York City (NYDailyNews 2013). Despite a title change suggesting a broader discussion about the ways kids use the internet in their everyday lives, the information on positive elements of online communication provided by the original NetSmartz material were removed from the "D.I.G.I.T.A.L. Life" brochure and presentation. At the start of the NYS ICAC session, the presenter asked the audience, "What is your child doing online?" implying that the parents in the room simply did not know (Quinlan 2010). In this way, adults—even those who are relatively close to the everyday lives of youth—are positioned as confused and in need of a native guide to the "complex" technological world of youth spaces online, destabilizing their existing understandings of everyday youth sociality. The law enforcement official, the internet security specialist, the state Attorney General, or the school superintendent are positioned as having the expertise through which the confused adult may be transformed into a trusted adult, capable of effectively surveilling youth internet practice, seeing through the potentially deceptive practices of youth, and using those experiences to dispense meaningful advice through the frame of appropriateness.

In addition to delegitimizing existing adult knowledge of youth sociality online, these presentations reinforce concepts of the networked publics constituted by youth safety incidents. Later, the investigator noted that she would frequently tell teens that, "If you wouldn't tell someone something to somebody's face, don't say it online," and in cases where inappropriate content was involved, asking them, "Do you want your grandma to see that?" Shortly after she shook her head and lamented that the policy was at one point to tell youth internet users "Don't post pictures. Well," she said while shaking her head, "we lost that battle." Similarly, a school lawyer provided advice to adults at the previously mentioned cyberbullying panel:

With respect to privacy, I think my best advice is that once something is in an electric format, it isn't private... when we do any kind of legal issues training related to electronic use... the one thing you need to remember is the New York Times rule, when it comes to electronic communications of any kind, don't say anything that you would be embarrassed to see on the front page of the New York Times. Because once you put it in an electronic medium, it is on the front page of the New York Times, or at least could be... If it's

electronic, you should assume it is not private... that electronic footprint that children leave is forever...

(Ross 2010)

This anticipatory construction of networked publics, envisioning the frame of the future employer or college recruiter as a basis for constituting appropriateness, is further used as the rationale by which adults must reframe and police what might appear as "harmless" youthful communications.

At the NY ICAC session, the presenter continued on to mention that "Kids only think they know what they're doing," with the implication that trusted adults were necessary to show youth internet users what it was that they were really doing online, to show them how they produce the figure of online risk, transforming their online social spaces. As mentioned previously, there is no possibility of a "trusted child" within such curricula, serving to position youth as inherently untrustworthy and suspicious. In the absence of discussion around establishing lines of communication and the positives of everyday youth sociality online, risky behaviors such as "Friending unknown people, talking about sex, [and] clicking on pop-ups," are positioned as the "truth" about kids' lives online that parents "need to know," with the "D.I.G.I.T.A.L." acronym remaining undefined. Through this presentation of the material, everyday youth sociality further becomes framed as suspicious and in need of constant policing, and online activity becomes reinterpreted through the worst-case frames of child predation, cyberbullying, and the imagined gaze of the future employer or college recruiter. Because "Kids only think they know what they're doing," trusted adults must reinterpret what they are doing for them, and trusted adults must be provided with the appropriate frame through which to perform that interpretive work. As Kupchik and Monahan describe, "Students' experiences are thus framed within a climate of distrust under the watchful eye of the state" (2006: 622), or in this case, the state as extended through a network of other trusted adults.

Parents

Parents who participated in the focus group sessions were broadly concerned with keeping their children out of trouble. In these discussions youth were assumed to be both capable of and engaged in various forms of inappropriate behavior, both online and off. Protecting youth from harm forms part of the narrative, in that much of the trouble youth might find themselves are seen to have lasting effects, but the emphasis is centered on maintaining a specific kind of appropriate sociality both on and offline. Youth were broadly perceived to be "up to something" inappropriate. One exchange between parents in a focus group demonstrates the ongoing suspicion:

Parent A: ...but it's just trying to stay on top of it. Like you said, I don't know most of what the stuff is all, kids –

Parent B: Yeah, because they delete their history –

Parent A: They delete their history, they're not honest –

Parent C: They're not honest –

Parent A: And again they establish filters [to prevent parent supervision].

In addition to indicating pervasive suspicion surrounding youth behaviors online, the excitement and inflection throughout these statements suggested that on some register parents enjoy the challenge of uncovering or preventing inappropriate activities. Introducing themselves to one group, two parents joked that they were "The meanest parents in [the school district]" to laughter and approval from the other participants. Another parent provided an exchange between herself and her daughter as an example:

[My daughter] the other night had her phone, and made a smart comment to me, so I made her—"Well, it's time for you to go to bed, put your phone down." She said, "But I haven't said good night to my friends!" So I said, "Say goodnight." She goes, "I don't want to leave my phone down here, I don't want it down on the table, I want it in my room!" I go,

"You realize I can just call Verizon and have them print all your text messages, right?" I don't know if I can, but she didn't know. *The look on her face was priceless.* She says "You can? All right..." [emphasis added]

This pleasure in catching youth was by no means derived from the unwanted imposition of parental order on the lives of youth, but rather from the sense that by becoming "the meanest parents" they were becoming the safest parents. Arguably, the pressure to perform good parenthood was heightened within focus group sessions, as parent participants actively monitored and openly supported the surveillance strategies of other participants (Henderson, Harmon, and Houser 2010; Knowles 1996). Strategies for parental "meanness" invariably centered around surveillance, and those who failed to engage in such practices were seen as bad, disinterested parents. Two parents at the high school level began a discussion about such non-parents, actively positioning themselves as "parents who care" in relation to these other, non-surveillant parents:

Parent A: Parents are a big part of it though. All of us here show that we're parents that care. There's a lot of parents out there that don't. They don't monitor, they don't care what their kids are watching, or whatever at what age.

Parent B: There's a much smaller subgroup—my son got into a fight with a whole bunch of other kids last year, and I immediately called, I wanted to know exactly what happened. They're like "Mr. [Parent], you don't have to worry about [Student]. What you did, you talked to him, you're good. He's not the problem. But some parents I've tried to talk to, don't care, they can't be bothered."

Other parents were less critical of such non-parents, citing societal changes and economic pressures as the major reasons for a lack of supervision—again bringing to mind Donzelot's (1979) concept of a working class supervised freedom:

I think society has changed, I think kids don't have as much supervision, I think two parents work in a family and that's not the way it used to be. I think a lot of things have changed. We see more and more kids go home without parents home, it's just the way it is, it has to be that way. There's more chance for them to do things without parents being aware.

Another parent stated simply, "That's a family issue as well, I can't imagine, I can't imagine my 12 year old picking up her shirt. There's a parental problem going on there." The implication across these statements is, of course, not simply that parents who fail to supervise their children are bad parents, but rather that these parents can be implicated in the production of youth internet safety problems. In this sense, it is not simply youth who are under suspicion, but additionally parents themselves.

The implication that parents who failed to appropriately monitor their children was additionally used as a rationale for furthering ties between the institutions of the family and the school, allowing for a seamless web of surveillance as youth transition between the cyberspaces of the home and the cyberspaces of school. Parents who failed to surveil or discipline their children must be governed or assisted by the school district. This was made explicitly clear by one high school parent, who noted: "Well, that would be good if the school did step in for the kids that are not parented at home, and monitored at that home. They'd have to come up with a way to do it, that's the problem." Other participants continued the conversation, sarcastically noting that such bad parents would likely prefer such an arrangement, but would ultimately resist it.

Among the most commonly described surveillance strategies were requiring that youth access the computer in an easily visible space, requiring youth to provide passwords to their online accounts, actively monitoring messages on social networking sites and cell phones, and monitoring web browser histories. Parents legitimized engaging in such forms of surveillance as both part of their responsibility and as their right to search and monitor the property which they paid for and supported:

We have told the kids, "I want your passwords, write your passwords down," and with their cellphones as well: "At any time I may ask for your cell phone, and let me see what's up with you, let me see what you're texting your friends, that's my responsibility as a parent. We bought the phone for you, and we can do that." They were all very put off with that at first, but they kind of got used to that idea.

Such statements, of course, ignore the fact that few children—particularly those who are under the legal working age—are able to obtain or afford cell phones, computers, and high-speed internet access without adult assistance. This said, many parents appeared hesitant to monitor children online, not wanting to violate their privacy and not wanting to find anything which might incriminate them:

You know, it does feel like it's an invasion of their privacy, but I say, "You know, we're paying that phone bill, so it's not really your phone, it's our phone." They had a man come and do a presentation who was a recovering drug addict and he said, you know what, check those phones, check the Facebook, because that's how you find out what your kids are doing. They live in your house, this is how you know it. I guess my mom was right, because she kept saying, "If you don't check their things, you're not going to know what was going on." Like I said, sometimes I checked and found things I didn't want to know about, but if I hadn't, I wouldn't have known. I don't do it all the time, they think I can go online and check their texts, you can tell who they text, and who texted them, but you do have to get a court order to actually see the text. But they don't know that...

When asked what it was that made the internet different from the "real" space of the bedroom, another parent responded:

It's a combination, in terms of things. I guess, it's like I don't, there are just things I don't want to see, that they shouldn't be doing. I think it's a reflection on how they're perceived. Their room, I don't go in their room, because it is, it's private. Whereas the internet is a public thing. Especially if I find stuff on my laptop—guess what, "It's my property you decided to do something stupid on," and there's going to be a lot more consequences. But again, people have mentioned trust is earned, and if I have a reason to think that there's something, red flags going off.

Note the references to things that the participants "don't want to see," the things they "don't want to know about." In this way, many of the parents I spoke with framed surveillance as a productive necessity. While these parents were hesitant to engage in surveillance practices, they are framed as inescapable elements of good parenting, and often resulted in necessarily actionable data.

Additionally, it is important to note the ways in which parents variously frame spaces as public and non-public. Here, the space of the bedroom, made private behind the walls of the family home, is compared to "the internet" as a whole, openly accessible to all internet users around the world. Broadly, the parents I spoke with constructed networked publics (boyd 2007) not in terms of who was most likely to view any particular online content, but in terms of the broadest possible audience now and into the future. As one parent remarked: "They're finite, and the internet is endless." Speaking towards the perceived persistence of online material, an administrator mentioned that "What's funny

now may not be funny 22 years from now. You can twist things, or statements out of context." The dominant context in this case becomes that of the imagined future employer or recruiter. As another parent, who also owned and operated a summer camp for youth described how she monitored both her own children and her teen employees:

I'm not [just] monitoring my own children, I'm monitoring 30 staff for the summer. I'll put on there [the Facebook wall], "Naughty word alert!"—they'll come back and say "What did I say?" I'll say "The P-I-S-S-E-D word is not socially acceptable, even though you think it is." But my point to that was, as we tell them that what you write, anything you write, is a reflection of you. So, if you're going for that job, and that person happens to be a friend, then you've got to remember that they cannot say about hiring you because of—but I have had people who I have not hired back because of their behavior on Facebook. So, I think kids need to be aware, to be reminded that is a reflection on them even though it is just something they're typing on.

For this parent, and the others who commonly described the ways in which they required their children to remove online content, monitoring youth online is monitoring the ways in which they constitute themselves as individuals. Accordingly, there is only one social context for good parents—the "appropriate" one reconstituted as they enter into an online space, where appropriateness is derived from the combined gaze of other vigilant parents, collectively envisioning the needs of future employers.

In addition to envisioning a public in terms of future employers, some parents would trivialize the social practices of youth to further rationalize surveilling and policing their online activity. One parent described shock at the construction of identities in virtual worlds:

Well you have all this, virtual, virtual worlds. They develop their own avatar and they can make themselves look however they want! And they can do whatever they want in those virtual worlds. I think that's a little messed up, quite honestly. So you're pretending to be something that you're not, and you're doing things that you would never, probably never even think about doing as your real person, but yet, the sky's the limit...

Another parent described the "mindlessness" of social networking:

I use it as a tool. I try to teach my son [to use it] as a tool. They play games, they get on to some mindless games and stuff, but if he wants to use it: "What are you using it for?" He uses it as research. He's just not on there aimlessly looking at nothing. That's what I think Facebook, MySpace has become... Some of the younger generation coming in, it's like "Hey man, you may not want to be doing this stuff out there in public, it will be misinterpreted. You may think it's harmless, but someone may use it against you, against me..." That's why I say it's a tool—it should be used as a tool, some people use it as mindless [space to] air out everything, that's why I look at it as a tool. That's how I use it, it's how I want to teach my kids what it is... There's a way to do it right and a way to do it wrong. Similar to how you use the internet, for a wrong thing... there's a consequence. I took my son off the computer Saturday and said: "Go outside and do something."

Conceptualized as a tool, rather than as a space, any use of the internet as a social space by youth is easily dismissed by adults as the "wrong way," a lack of developmental filters, or simply "looking at nothing." Through such a frame, it is easy to see how parents and administrators simply lack—and are unlikely to ever have—the social context that makes youth internet practice meaningful and appropriate. As such, it is unsurprising that many parents and administrators I spoke with simply refused to engage with social

networking platforms as social spaces, instead using them solely for surveillance purposes. When asked about his online activities, one principal stated:

I'm not on Facebook, I'm not on social networking stuff, I'm not a part of that. In my position, I feel for me personally, it's a bad decision for me to be involved in those type of things, but I do have access to my kids. Both my kids are on it.

Adults who did use social networking sites—specifically Facebook—frequently described their use of the space to monitor youth online. Parents were the most likely to engage in such behaviors by comparison to administrators, teachers and other adults I spoke with, and in many cases explicitly created accounts solely for that purpose.

By demanding that their children “friend” them through the service, they are then able to view all of the comments made by the friended account. As one parent described:

I have a MySpace, and the only reason I have a MySpace is because my daughter has one, so she had to [look] up my MySpace and add me as a friend, or she couldn't have a MySpace. So I go on every so often and check her status. If I don't like anything, I'm like, “take it off, or I close it.” Period. I monitor, but you still, that's only Facebook and MySpace. There's a whole big other web out there that I'm missing, I'm sure, that I'm a little uncomfortable about.

This form of surveillance was occasionally referred to by both youth and adults as “creeping.” Some took this to an extreme, setting up the account in such a way as to send SMS/text message updates to their phone every time their child posted a status update. Given that Facebook and other social networks allow users to “de-friend” other accounts without notifying the de-friended user, such parents would often become suspicious when long periods would pass without any visible activity.

It should be mentioned, however, that not all parents felt strongly enough about the risks involved in internet use to violate their children's privacy. At least one or two parents in each focus group session adopted a stance in which they trusted their children until given a reason not to. One simply stated that, “I always trust until they break it.” These parents seemed to believe that the more general guidance they had provided to their children, the basic moral principles by which they lived their lives, would prove sufficient to keep their children out of trouble. In this sense, the extent of surveillance necessary to meet parental responsibilities was a controversial topic, and these parents would commonly defend themselves against other participants who were actively monitoring their children online (and sometimes off). Further, not all parents and administrators I spoke with saw engagement with social networking sites solely as a method for surveilling youth, however. Many enjoyed using it, not only as a means to keep in touch with family and friends, but also to foster stronger community ties.

One school resource officer (police officer assigned to a school district) I spoke with saw the accessibility of youth online through social networks as an excellent resource. Rather than fearing the relative expertise of youth online, he chose to use it to his advantage, both in terms of gaining information and further engagement with youth in his district. Discussing the students in his district, he stated, “They live this technology every day... I struggle with it a little... [I ask students,] ‘You're a tech junkie, what does this mean?’” Engaging with students in such a way allowed the officer to surveil online spaces, including social networking sites and confiscated cell phones, more effectively. Further, he indicated that youth were more than willing to assist him in doing so, seemingly happy to provide their expertise. This was commonly described by parents and administrators I spoke with. Youth, who seemingly want to both demonstrate their expertise and additionally bring adults into their own social world, often eagerly provide

their assistance, often despite an understanding that allowing adult access can potentially result in more effective surveillance.

Conclusion

Youth internet safety curricula establishes the position of the trusted adult, a position from which truth claims about youth social activity can be made. For those who are not exposed to forms of youth internet safety curricula, a conceptual framework is provided through ongoing media coverage of youth internet safety incidents. Repositioning social networks as surveillance technologies, youth internet safety discourses act as a pedagogy of surveillance, providing a conceptual frame through which youth internet safety incidents can be constructed and acted upon. Through the position of the trusted adult, the everyday dramas of youth social lives online become visible as incidents of "cyberbullying," "inappropriate content," and "online predation." These modes of interpreting the data collected through the surveillance of youth further become visible in scientific studies of youth internet safety, where terms such as "cyberbullying" are prevalent despite the fact that youth tend to understand potentially abusive online behavior in very different ways than those provided by youth internet safety discourses (Fisk 2011). Once stabilized through the concepts of youth internet safety, the data can then be mobilized to underwrite various forms of intervention, in the forms of policy, modes of technological regulation, and curricula.

Mobilized and appropriated as "tools" by adults responsible for youth, social networking platforms are transformed into surveillance mechanisms through pedagogies of surveillance, providing a conceptual frame through which youth internet safety incidents can be constructed and acted upon. Such shifts further serve to establish a relationship of suspicion, both in terms of adult constructions of youth and youth constructions of adulthood. Youth as subjects of surveillance are rendered as untrustworthy and unable to appropriately conceptualize the truth of any given situation. As such, youth must be placed under continued surveillance, and it is the responsibility of anyone charged with their care to surveil. Those parents who are perceived to be either unable or unwilling to monitor their children online are irresponsible, and seen to be one of the primary causes of problems involving youth internet use.

To date, research examining the production and circulation of institutional pedagogies of surveillance appears to be relatively scant. As too is research on the everyday work of surveillance, including the training and practice of surveillers (Smith 2012). As I argue here, further research in these areas will provide necessary insight into the formation of surveillant subjectivities and additionally the mechanisms by which institutional logics and power further penetrate everyday social life.

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