

“I might not scratch my ass if I think there might be a camera taping it”: Public Perception of Surveillance Technologies in Everyday Life

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1. Abbreviations

CSIS: The Canadian Security Intelligence service
FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation
Stats Can: Statistics Canada
US (or USA): United States of America
CCTV: Closed-Circuit Television
ICBC: The Insurance Corporation of British Columbia
CRA: Canada Revenue Agency

2. Introduction

Surveillance is and has been an ingrained part of many cultures and civilizations. It is not a new phenomenon as noted by several authors such as Lyon (2007), Foucault (2008), and Flaherty (1972). Surveillance has transformed in shape and form, and with changing socio-political times, real and perceived needs for surveillance have continued to emerge. Lyon (2007) observes that face to face surveillance can be traced back to sixth-century BC. Arthashastra (a manual on governing) which was written by an Indian writer Kautilya, emphasised “the importance of having adequate information on subject peoples...and even two centuries earlier the Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu also stressed having knowledge of the enemy as a means of obtaining advantage on the battlefield” (in Lyon, 76).

Social transformation and geopolitical events along with advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) have led to several real (for example: background checks for employees in sensitive areas such as a nuclear reactor)¹ or perceived needs (for example: wiretaps of citizens of interest without a warrant) so much so that Lyon (2007) considers everyday surveillance endemic to modern societies. From face to face surveillance of sixth-century to postmodern surveillance assemblages of the 21st century, it can be argued that we have always been a surveillance society, albeit of varying intensity. While both sides of this argument can be pondered upon, it is not the purpose of this paper². However, it is important to discuss how surveillance has become a key theme for the 21st century (especially since 9/11) Lyon, 2003a) and how it has an impact on our society at large. As Lyon (2007) notes, “due to widespread, systematic and routine ways in which personal data are processed in the twenty-first century, it is appropriate to talk of ‘surveillance society’” (p. 7). This paper looks at how people think about surveillance and how it impacts their everyday life. It focuses on qualitative and quantitative analysis of a survey instrument that was developed and administered for a similar project by academics in UK³. There are similar studies (that measure public perception) in the current literature that looks at certain strands of surveillance in society or measure impact of different surveillance technologies. For example, Best’s (2010) study aimed at understanding whether and how users of digital technology consent to surveillance in everyday life. Gill, Bryan & Allen (2007) looked at Public Perceptions of CCTV in residential areas. Alge (2001) and Chen & Ross (2007) looked at electronic monitoring and control of employees and their reactions to surveillance, and Fine et al. (2003) looked at urban youth’s experiences with surveillance in public places.

¹Arundhati Roy (an Indian social critic and activist) notes that “The Patriot Act ushers in an era of systematic automated surveillance. It gives the government the authority to monitor phones and computers and spy on people in ways that would have seemed completely unacceptable a few years ago (Roy, 2004: 62).

²Even if it is argued that we are not living in a surveillance society, the rapid pace of (surveillance) technological progress (coupled with a demand of these technologies) and the sluggish pace of legal apparatus to tame the deployment of such technologies and monitor appropriate use of such technologies will take us there sooner than later. For instance, at the time of its release, the movie *Minority Report* (De Bont & Spielberg, 2002) may have seemed science fiction and futuristic with its pre-crime theme where criminals-to be were arrested before they actually committed a crime. However, such pre-emptive actions (pre-emptive strikes on countries and pre-emptive arrests of people) have become a harsh reality of the post 9/11 world.

³A research group at the University of East London actually started this project.

3. Research Design & Questions

The data presented in this paper was collected over a period of three weeks in the summer of 2010. The data collection was based on one-on-one interviews of adult members of community. Efforts were made to maintain a balance of gender and ethnicity to minimize bias in the results. The interview instrument consisted of fourteen open and seven closed ended questionnaires and an information sheet⁴ that was given to interviewees at a pre-determined point during an interview. The interview instrument was adapted from its original version that was used in the London study and modified to be used in Vancouver, BC. Modifications included changing UK specific examples to either international or local examples. This research aimed to answer four questions. For the analysis presented in this paper, the fourteen open ended questions were grouped under four research questions (as shown below) to help answer the latter. My analysis methods and techniques were informed by interview analysis (qualitative) techniques described by Glesne (2006), Deacon, Pickering, et al. (2007), and other surveillance specific literature that I came across such as Fine, Freudenberg, et al (2003) and Gill, Bryan, & Allen (2007)—both studies use quantitative methods; Koskela (2002)—qualitative interview and focus group analysis; Monahan (2007)—qualitative analysis.

Research Question #1: What do participants know about different forms of surveillance and the storage and exchange of their personal data?

- What systems of surveillance (e.g. CCTV) and personal data storage (e.g. Motor Vehicles) are they aware of?
- Kinds of information they are aware of and who has access to it?

Research Question #2: What kinds of understanding of surveillance do they have, and how do these impact on their perceptions and attitudes towards it?

- Thoughts about the collection and use of data?
- Some people say that we have become a “surveillance society”. What do they think this means? Do they agree?
- To what extent, if any, are they aware of surveillance or data collection in everyday life (e.g. CCTV, databases etc)
- If they are aware at various times, what triggers this (e.g. speed cameras, crime programmes on TV etc).

Research Question #3: How are their constructions of surveillance influenced by knowledge about the extent of information held and the effectiveness of surveillance and data storage systems?

- Benefits of data collection (e.g. for crime etc)
- Any concerns about surveillance and data collection (e.g. data being lost on laptops, disks etc).
- Does level of concern vary according to the type of information or use to which it is put?
- How do they balance the right to privacy against other things like fighting crime or convenience (e.g. when shopping on the internet)?

⁴This information sheet consisted description of some of the forms and surveillance such as health, insurance, etc.

Research Question #4: How do participants' perceptions of surveillance impact on everyday conduct (e.g. do they change their behaviour in any way in relation to surveillance and data storage)?⁵

- Does it have an impact on the way they go about their everyday lives?
- Any on the list they were not aware of?
- What information do they think these agencies hold?
- What do they think of the kind and extent of information held?

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Demographics:

One hundred and one interviews were conducted. Some of the demographics collected of the research participants are highlighted in Table 1 below. Quantitative analysis presented in this paper has been conducted using SAS 9.2. (<http://www.sas.com/>).

Table : Selected Demographics of 101 Participants

Demographic Attributes		N	percentage of total
Gender	Males	53	52
	Females	48	48
Ethnicity	Caucasian	40	40
	Asian	59	58
	Other	2	2
Age	25	62	61
	>25	39	39
	Average	31	-
	Mode	22	22

As this paper is a research in progress, a sub sample of 50 percent of the participants was selected randomly to be included in this paper's analysis. This sub-sample's demographic information is displayed in Table 2.

Table : Selected Demographics of the Sub-Sample (50 Participants)

Randomly Selected Sample: 50 Participants		
Demographic Attributes		N
Gender	Males	28
	Females	22
Ethnicity	Caucasian	14
	Asian	34
	Other	2

⁵The last three questions in this group were asked after the research participants were given the information sheet.

Age	25	36
	>25	14
	Average	28
	Mode	22

To simplify data analysis, ethnicities were grouped together into three major categories. The *Asian* category includes research participants who reported their ethnic background as Chinese, Pakistani, South Asian, East-Indian, Persian, Korean, Thai, Malaysian, Taiwanese, etc. Two participants were originally from Mexico and their ethnicity was therefore recorded as Latino/Hispanic and for analysis purposes recorded as *Other*. As can be seen in Table 1, gender distribution in the original data of 101 participants is balanced well, with only five more females than males. This will help minimize gender bias in interpretation of the analysis. Ethnicity category however is not proportional with only 40 percent Caucasian participants. Similarly, participants between ages 18 - 25 years⁶ constitute 61percent of the research participants. Participants aged 22 formed almost one quarter (22 percent) of the total. About half (44 percent) of the sub-sample consist of female participants while Caucasian participants constitute only 28 percent of the total of 50. 44percent of the participants were aged 22 with only 28percent over the age of 25.

4.2. Further Quantitative Analysis:

Coding and a subsequent content analysis is presented below. The results of the content analysis are displayed in Tables 3 -5.

Table : Coding Analysis

	Participant discusses Consumer Surveillance as a concern	Participant discusses Privacy Issues as a concern	Participant discusses crime Prevention/Public or Personal Safety as a concern.	Participant discusses Data Storage, Data Theft, Unauthorized Access to Data, etc as a concern ⁷
Yes	25	22	32	21
No	1	2	0	5
Does not mention or discuss	8	6	14	14
Primary Concern	16	20	4	10

⁶This grouping was chosen arbitrarily.

⁷Even though there were open ended questions asking participants about the four “concerns” listed in Table 3, participants did not necessarily agree with all of them as their concerns and some did not answer all questions. Moreover, participants emphasized on some of the concerns/issues more than others. Therefore these four codes were developed to 1: see how many participants were concerned about each of the four issues and 2: which of the concerns were primary issues for how many participants and subsequently to see whether the findings are similar to the existing literature or not.

Table : Coding Analysis (continued)

	Participant is knowledgeable about most of the data presented in the information sheet.	Participant is surprised or shocked about at least one of the facts in the information sheet.	Participant agrees that we have become a <i>Surveillance Society</i> .	Participant accepts that Surveillance impacts her/his everyday life activities	Participant favours (positive perception) Surveillance of at least one form (for e.g. surveillance by police to prevent crime).
Yes	34	9	38	20	32
No	14	40	6	28	4
Not Answered or Not Asked	1	1	6	2	-
Does not mention or discuss	-	-	-	-	14

Table : Coding Analysis (continued)

	Participant is aware of CCTV	Mentions or is aware of surveillance mediation through TV, Film, or Radio ⁸	Participant mentions Facebook as a form of surveillance	Participant favours (positive perception) Surveillance of at least one form (for e.g. surveillance by police to prevent crime).
Yes	29	18	21	32
No	2	32	29	4
Mentions Security Cameras but does not use the word CCTV	19	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Does not mention or discuss	-	-	-	14

4.2.1. Rationale for using the codes in Tables 3 – 5:

The coding used in the content analysis above was naturally guided by the questions in the interview instrument used for the study. However, the codes were informed by David Lyon's (2007) book and Gates & Magnet's (2007) excellent review of surveillance studies in Communication. Lyon speaks of five *surveillance sites* which he describes as "surveillance situations that we might encounter" in different domains of our social life (p. 25). *Policing and Crime Control*, and *Consumption and making up Consumers* are two of the five *sites* he mentions. Similarly, Gates & Magnet highlight different strands of communication research and surveillance study of which *consumer surveillance*, *media representations of surveillance*, and

⁸Mention of social media as a form of surveillance did not qualify as a "yes" for this question/code. This code was developed to assess participants' awareness of surveillance modes.

police communications and surveillance are three. There is significant amount of literature discussing each of these strands of surveillance studies, some of which has been cited throughout this paper. For example, Koskela (2002) discusses how surveillance becomes an extension of male gaze and is used to discriminate against women. Fine et al (2003) look at youth's experiences of surveillance strategies in urban areas including policing strategies. Lyon (2003a) talks about fear and the resulting consumption of surveillance. Gandy's (1993) and Turow's (1997, 2006) are major works in consumer surveillance.

4.3. Tests of Statistical Significance:

In her study of gender issues in the context of surveillance in urban areas, Koskela (2002) concluded that "surveillance does not replace or erase other forms of embodiment" as "it can be understood as the re-embodiment of women as an extension of male gaze" (p. 273). She discussed several cases where women had been subjected to harassment and discrimination by male CCTV operators or males who had access to security cameras in places such as female dressing rooms and beaches. Fine et al (2003) found that surveillance in the hands of law enforcing agencies can be used discriminately towards people of colour or certain ethnic minorities. Koskela also found perceptions of her male counterparts different from their female counterparts. Similarly, Gill et al (2007) found their female research participants more supportive of CCTV installations in residential areas and difference in opinions of *white* and *non-white* participants about CCTVs in residential areas. It would therefore make sense to regroup the responses from this study according to their gender and ethnicity and explore for specific themes that may emerge. While this part of the analysis is under progress, chi-square tests were run to see whether any patterns emerged. Table 6 below shows what tests were run and their results. It is important to note in the following table that none of the tests were statistically significant indicating no difference between male and female perceptions of surveillance. However, the tests were run on the sub-sample and therefore the presented statistics could quite possibly change when analysis of the complete data set of 101 interviews is completed.

Table : Tests of Statistical Significance

Variables Compared with Gender	Pro-Surveillance	Impact of Surveillance on Everyday Life	Knowledge about facts in Information sheet
<i>p</i> value	0.25	0.80	0.55
Interpretation	There was no significant difference between males' and females' support for surveillance of at least one form.	Surveillance did not have significantly different impact on females than males.	There was no significant difference in knowledge of male and female participants about the facts presented in the information sheet.

5. Discussion & Data Interpretation:

5.1. Participants' awareness and knowledge of Surveillance Systems (Research Question #1)

"I am aware that it pretty much surrounds our community".

~A 20 year old female participant.

Participants were aware of different forms of surveillance technologies, mechanisms, and sites (similar to the sites that were noted by Lyon, 2007) around them. The different forms of surveillance mentioned by the participants included CCTVs, social networking sites such as Facebook, and MySpace, retail loyalty cards such as Safeway's, and Costco's, online websites and vendors such as eBay, Amazon, Air Miles (i.e. their ability to track customers' preferences and shopping habits using cookies), insurance data, personal data stored by government agencies (such as CSIS, FBI, ICBC, CRA, and Stats Can) or employers, cell phones (which can be used to track a person's location), credit cards, credit ratings, passports with electronic chips, and block watch programs. A 28 year old male further remarked that "you can be tracked (by your ISP) for what you download, what you're viewing, what you're searching".

Some of the participants were not sure who owned or had access to the data collected through surveillance technologies. A 22 year old male for example commented that he has no idea who has access to surveillance data. "Maybe the people that own corporations or businesses. But, I feel like I mostly have no control over it. Even when I go to the bank where I work, they are surveying me there". It was interesting to note that 21 participants mentioned that Facebook is used for surveillance by different agencies, business and corporations. A 23 year old male summed it up pretty well on the conundrum of Facebook use amongst his peers which is worth quoting in full:

Everybody knows about Facebook right? I mean it has become a second nature to our personal data. We use it every day when we're bored, we look at other people's personal information, and we browse through Facebook sometimes for absolutely no reason. You can say that Facebook is a metaphor of surveillance as the company is able to access the data of each user's profile and send out specific ads based on their interests. It seems like the government is behind in everything cause that's just the way things are. They have access of everything that they need to know.

Concerning Facebook use, on one hand participants were concerned about their posts having potential of being detrimental to them in more than one way and aware of the fact that their posts can be tracked, and their information can be sold to marketing companies and yet on the other hand they continue to post personal information, photos and other material which can reveal their likes and dislikes, political and religious points of view, and other private information which can hamper their personal lives or job prospects. Very few participants mentioned being extra careful in the kind of personal information they give out and despite the fact that 21 participants recognized Facebook as a form of surveillance and two others mentioned it during their interviews, only two participants said they tweaked their Facebook privacy settings to control the extent of information that others could gather from their online profiles and posts.

5.2. *Understanding of Surveillance and Its Impact on Perceptions and Attitudes towards Surveillance (Research Question 2)*

5.2.1. *Consumer Surveillance has many fans!*

When it came to sharing thoughts about collection and use of their personal data, invasion of privacy was the most common concern raised by participants. 22 participants raised concerns of surveillance technologies infringing upon their privacy and 20 participants indicated privacy issues as their primary concern. However, several participants appreciated when it came to consumer surveillance. They cited reasons which necessitated and justified collection and use of personal data such as need of credit checks when opening a new bank account. They also found consumer surveillance beneficial for targeted marketing/product development catered to their interests (respondents who were working in marketing naturally found consumer surveillance extremely useful). A 20 year old male for example didn't care about privacy issues at all. He thought that it was necessary for government and companies to collect data because "it is beneficial to them and makes something that's beneficial for me, such as deals and better serving my needs". A 25 year old female said: "I think we give our information for convenience of using different services and systems. For online shopping for example, you give information to be able to shop at the convenience of your home". As discussed in Lyon (2003a), the 2000 Annual Report of Privacy Commissioner of Canada reported that 42percent of respondents were happy to have their shopping habits monitored for a 10percent discount on purchases while 36percent of respondents who were internet users would be prepared to have their online surfing monitored in return for a new monitor and free internet access. Whether this suggests trust of commercial entities and lack of trust of government needs further exploration.

Those who were gravely concerned about breach of their privacy shared their uneasiness about their information ending up in wrong hands (credit card fraud and identity theft were mentioned several times). Despite some hesitation about security of the data, another aspect of surveillance that was looked upon favourably, the feelings of personal safety and security with video surveillance which has been found by other studies as well (for e.g. Gill et al., 2007). A 22 year old female had a comment in this regard. She remarked:

Some surveillance is good. It's almost like a catch 22. I mean, I feel safe knowing that I'm being surveyed when I'm places like downtown, or if anything were to happen to me it's being recorded. But I've never really had anything bad happen to me, so I think it's something about our culture. It's almost like we have surveillance because we're afraid of something happening, but nothing's really happened to make that fear develop. With some video surveillance, I'm okay with it, although it's kinda' weird that someone's watching it.

5.2.2. *Surveillance Society: Power, Control, and Social Sorting*

"It is always like you are living and conscious at all times even when you are not."

~A 65 year old male participant

Given the changes in attitude toward surveillance that Lyon (2003b; 2007) notes in his books about surveillance since 9/11, I expected that people would comment on 9/11 or post 9/11 society when they were asked about their perceptions of *surveillance society*. Although 38 out of 50 respondents agreed that we have become a surveillance society, only two people mentioned the

incidents of September 11 and only three people (one of these three was the respondent who had mentioned Sep 11 attacks as well) highlighted the importance of surveillance due to terrorist attacks and terrorism threats. Participants expressed their understanding of the term surveillance society in varying ways. Very few participants spoke of how surveillance has evolved since 9/11 attacks. A 23 year old male who agreed that the world has become a surveillance society thought that:

The world has embraced the (9/11) attack as we have increasingly grown comfortably for the safety of surveillance. People stopped worrying about terrorism as we sacrifice privacy for security. Wouldn't you agree? I mean even though those surveillance are able to track down our movement, we don't feel our privacy are threatened. It kind of feels like a spy technology, but doesn't really harm us.

Some participants even reflected on their perceptions in panoptic terms as they said they were aware that they were being watched all the time but did not necessarily know *who* was watching them. They also identified surveillance as means of control and social order and control through power that surveillance provides as a 22 year old male thought that surveillance "is like a system of social sorting because it has the power to shape our personalization." Interestingly, very few people spoke of surveillance society in terms of workplace monitoring⁹. Although one of the participants commented on how everyone is being watched by everyone else through reality TV shows, only 18 participants mentioned representation of surveillance in films or on TV.

A 65-year-old Persian male made a comment on surveillance society that was rather unique from other respondents in this research. According to him, structure is what constitutes a society and in order to maintain structure in a society, surveillance is essential. He said "any society is a surveillance society because otherwise it would not be a society, it would be anarchy". He went on to say "that your neighbour for example would watch you and other neighbours making sure that nobody would go against the quote of *god*". While the context of this last comment isn't quite clear from the interview transcript, I can only make an assumption based on the interviewee's age and ethnic background that he might have been referring to the issue of surveillance of a group or person based on religion. Barkun (2006) noted that the changes in the US Department of Justice guidelines permitting FBI surveillance of religious organizations (primarily and mostly Islamic) have the potential of creating new problems in the church-state interaction. Such policies could have wide ranging socio political impacts as Lininger (2004) has discussed declines in mosque attendance as an aftermath of such policies. Several factors (including know-how of a *foreign religion's* or a *foreign culture's* trivial intricacies) can undermine such surveillance.¹⁰ Although, discussion of religion in the context surveillance is a reality in the post 9/11 world, it is out of the scope of this paper. Some other recent studies that have looked at the issue of surveillance and control in society since 9/11 include those of Cooper (2003), Lyon (2003b), and Packer (2006). For a review of post 9/11 racial profiling in Canada, see Bahdi (2003).

⁹This could be due to the demographics of research participants. Most of them were in their 20s and several were not working full time. However, this interpretation could change once all interviews have been analysed.

¹⁰This aspect of surveillance assemblage is sometimes noted in media as well. For example, in the recently released *Unthinkable* (Chubb & Woodward, 2010) a junior FBI agent reports on an under surveillance Muslim woman who does not attend mosque, and the agent gets corrected by his supervisor who explains that Muslim women aren't required to attend mosques.

5.2.3. Awareness of surveillance and data collection in everyday life:

CCTVs in urban areas, security cameras in residential building, and shopping malls, online monitoring, traffic cameras, loyalty cards, and telemarketing calls were some of the forms of surveillance and data collection methods mentioned by participants. Several participants were of the view that surveillance has become integrated into everyday life and one doesn't think about it much while going by their everyday life. For example a participant commented, "I know that satellites are beaming down right at the city and can probably see what people are doing, but it's not something I actively think about."

As Guzik (2009) suggests, "the practices, places, and technologies operant in the United States 'War on Terrorism'—"enemy combatants," "black sites," "warrantless wiretapping," "waterboarding," "extraordinary rendition," etc.— have passed into the popular vocabulary and imagination". People seem to have been normalized (especially in USA) to these aspects of the ongoing war which Guzik believes has enabled the United States government to extend a particular type of future-oriented power which Foucault (2008) referred to as "security" or "government". As Guzik points out such power is practiced through database mining which discriminates by design (based on the algorithms these databases are designed upon), and a particular group of people (for example, people of Middle Eastern or South Asian origin) are mostly on the receiving end of this discrimination.

Other participants who were consciously aware of surveillance taking place everyday either due to their work experience or from general awareness and observations held slightly different views. A 43 year old participant remarked that he sees it every day when "going for a drive and walking in the streets...data collection takes place everyday."

5.3. Constructions of Surveillance Influenced by Knowledge of and Perceived Effectiveness of Surveillance Systems (Research Question # 3)

There were two main *themes* that emerged when participants were asked to share their thoughts on benefits of data collection: Safety and security (i.e. crime prevention), and consumer surveillance which makes targeted marketing possible (participants spoke favourably of marketing that is catered to their individual needs and choices). For example, a 52-year-old male thought that it made sense to collect data to prevent crimes from occurring or "when background checks are essential for obtaining jobs". Most of the participants remarked that security cameras and CCTV and other forms of surveillance data collection by police or other law enforcing agencies helps in keeping people safe. Other benefits to the public were noted as well, such as public data that is collected to create predictive models for crime rates or census data that is used to formulate policies. Despite the noted benefits, several participants were also concerned about identity theft due to credit card information being stolen, or a breach of privacy due to their personal information getting lost by insurance or health care organizations.

However, 46 out of 50 participants agreed that their level of concern varied with the kind of information being given out. For example some respondents were not worried about their Facebook posts while others were worried that their future employers seeing their Facebook data and pre-judging their candidacy. Others were concerned that the information they post on Facebook is sold to third parties for marketing purposes. Concerns were also noted by participants about their financial transactions. While a regular credit card transaction at a shopping mall was not of much concern, similar online transactions (and especially PayPal transactions) was a concern as some respondents commented on personal experiences of identity

theft or reading/hearing about stolen credit cards or stolen bank information in news. Similarly people's concerns with release of personal information varied with its extent. Hobbies, shopping habits, etc were considered trivial, but loss of SIN, health care information or banking information was considered a serious concern. People were more comfortable giving their information to government agencies and even big box stores but not to smaller shops as they perceived the bigger stores to have better confidentiality and privacy policies, and data protection in place.

5.3.1. Privacy and Surveillance

"Any society that would give up a little liberty to gain a little security will deserve neither and lose both." ~ Benjamin Franklin

Participants' comments were on both sides of the spectrum when it came to surveillance versus privacy issues. There were those who thought that is impossible to balance one's right to privacy in the society we live in today. For example, a 20 year old female while responding to the question of balancing one's privacy said that "it seems we have none of it." A 50 year old female who would later in her interview comment that there is no harm in giving out one's information if one has nothing to hide, remarked that "the right of privacy should be the prime factor, I do agree with that".¹¹

Twenty-eight out of 50 research participants said that personal safety or public security should overcome the need or right of one's privacy. They were of the view that if privacy needs to be breached for society's protection and public safety, then it should be done. This aspect of the society has been echoed by several scholars (for example, Lyon, 2003a, 200b; Parenti, 2003). In the post 9/11 North American society we live in, laws such as the US Patriot Act make right to one's privacy a mere afterthought. As noted earlier, many participants were found to be comfortable when it came to giving personal or financial information to government organizations but not so much to shopping outlets and businesses. However, some were quite sceptical of government agencies too. A 21 year old South Asian female remarked that

... from government's perspective, I think I understand the need for national security and things like that. Since the 9/11 attack, because of that, especially the American government is becoming so invasive in their citizens' lives that I don't think it is right. By creeping on people's telephone conversations, internet, email correspondence, that's not going to make your country safer, it's just going to start this paranoid hunt for people who seem suspicious—It's going to be a lot more false leads than anything—and they are just making it unfortunate for the citizens as well. For things like I said before like ads catering to my needs, it makes sense for them to narrow down my preferences for me. Like, if I'm constantly looking at organic jewellerys, I don't want to look at sci-fi things.

Gandy (1996) describes how technology helps discriminate against unfavourable customers but like the above participant, several others were found to be acceptable of consumer surveillance that would help companies cater to their shopping habits and needs.

¹¹Although I have noted this apparent contradiction, at this stage, it has yet to be found if there is more to it or what to make of it.

5.4. Participants' perceptions of surveillance impact on everyday conduct (Research Question #4)

"If I'm in a mall, I might not scratch my ass if I think there might be a camera taping it.

~ A 31 year old male participant

Twenty participants indicated that their everyday life activities are impacted by surveillance. It was interesting to observe that most of these participants mentioned the effects on their behaviour due to traffic cameras or cameras in shopping malls and public places. A 22-year-old male said that warning signs about being on camera (monitored) makes him consciously "stand up straighter, look a little more careful 'cuz I know I'm being watched. That's just something that I do unintentionally, and I just realize it after the fact." Most of the participants (28/50) said they go by their everyday lives without thinking much about the fact that they are surrounded by surveillance technologies. A 25-year-old participant said:

I believe that surveillance and data collection will continue to be a part of our daily lives. Also, they will continue to grow and expand as we enter into a new decade. I do not believe that anyone should live their lives differently so long as such surveillance does not conflict with personal rights and privacy.

5.4.1. Participants' perceptions after reading the information sheet

When participants were asked about their knowledge about the facts presented in the information sheet, 31 participants said they were already aware of most of the information. However some of them did say that they were not aware of the extent to which the mentioned organization could have information on them. 9 participants found at least some of the information not only new but surprising as well. The revelation of new information was evident in responses such as follows:

A 22-year-old male participant commented, "I didn't know about companies giving away credit card purchase history to vendors and that signing up for those rewards cards are actually a way of being surveyed".

A 21-year-old female participant pointed out that she "wasn't really aware about driving plates, how police do note down details of plates of people who do go to political demonstrations. As someone such as myself, I am politically aware, and I like being active, this is concerning".

Another 21-year-old German female commented that "it is a little shocking cause it's a lot. Some of the information is a little too much for me...that they know about. Yeah, I think they know too much about us. I don't like it..."

A 22-year-old male felt that having his whole life mapped out is "freaky" the information is "pretty scary". A 24-year-old female participant who was originally from Mexico said that it is scary for her to think that someone would know financial details about a person in her home country because such information could result in one's kidnapping for money. She went to say that "they can steal your stuff so it's really dangerous...that's really like, scary for me". Others,

although found the information new, were not concerned about the extent of the information held by organizations. A 50-year-old female for instance remarked that “if you are an open book, and haven’t done anything then you shouldn’t be too worried about it, and if it is helping the world to become a better place then I guess it is ok”. Whether her age has anything to with her point of view remains to be seen as there are still 51 more interview transcripts to be analyzed¹².

Most of the participants thought that a lot of their information is *out there* and is held by various organizations and agencies¹³. They were of the view that their personal, banking, and financial information, their shopping habits, demographics including place of birth, nationality, and ethnicity, and health related information is held by several organizations and government agencies. Another concern which was echoed by several participants was regarding organizations’ (including marketing companies) ability to track their Facebook posts. For instance, a 22-year-old participant commented: “Facebook probably holds all my preferences and photos, well, basically everything I post up they would have a record of for an indefinite amount of time. In terms of shopping habits, retailers would have a list of all the things I bought at their store.”

Once again, when it came to personal safety and privacy, respondents were okay with the extent of information agencies have. For instance, people were okay with security cameras because it gave them a sense of safety and security (as did the participants in Gill et al.’s study, 2007). Irrespective of the perceived kind and extent of information held, as long as the information was with government agencies, respondents were comfortable with it even if some of them thought the agencies hold too much information about them. This made them even more concerned about this information falling in wrong hands if that were ever to happen.

6. Conclusion

It can be inferred from the analysis that some of the participants were realistic in accepting the fact that one can’t get away from surveillance in today’s age and that it can actually be useful in certain circumstances. In regards to consumer surveillance, one participant commented that “there is no free lunch essentially”. Therefore consumers should realize that loyalty cards aren’t only meant to provide them discounts, they are also a means of sorting consumers and discriminating against those that are not considered favourable to business. Those who agreed with the notion of *surveillance society* echoed notions of constantly being watched by “someone”, and that everything and everyone is being surveilled in the modern world. Watching police recordings on TV, cameras on streets or security cameras in several different locations (e.g. retail stores), signs saying you are being watched or you are on camera, movies and TV shows about surveillance were some of the elements of everyday life that triggered participants’ awareness of surveillance technologies around them. Everyday impact was usually associated with change or control of behavior when participants are aware that cameras are around or driving within speed limits with traffic cameras are around. We are no doubt exposed to surveillance in everyday life and surveillance has the tendency to be normalized in a society (already has to a great extent) where reality TV shows have large following and fear factor (especially post 9/11) can make us give in to surveillance technologies and policies in the name of security and safety.

¹²Age specific patterns will be explored when the remaining data set of 51 interviews are analysed.

¹³Lyon (2007) talks of this phenomenon and names it as *data doubles*. According to Lyon, a data-double refers to “the electronic profile, compiled from personal data fragments, of an individual person and it takes on increasing social significance as assessments and judgments are made in various contexts based upon it” (p. 199-200).

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