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# Surveillance



*Edited by Sean P. Hier and Josh Greenberg*

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**Surveillance**  
Power, Problems, and Politics



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*We dedicate this book to Leah, Jacob, Jessica, and Toby.*



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# Foreword: Surveillance and Political Problems

*Kevin D. Haggerty*

Western societies are in the midst of a world-historical transformation in terms of the emergence of new practices, dynamics, and technologies of surveillance. Surveillance involves monitoring people or things typically as the basis for some form of social intervention. In the past half century, surveillance has emerged as *the dominant organizing practice of late modernity* and is prompting widespread changes across assorted social domains. At the same time, the forms of surveillance are markedly different in different contexts, involving diverse motivations, technologies, dynamics, organizational arrangements, and legal regimes, all of which raise unique social and political concerns.

When drawing attention to such developments, we should be cautious not to overemphasize the novelty of surveillance per se. Interpersonal face-to-face scrutiny is an inherent attribute of human coexistence. Institutions also have a long history of using surveillance in organizational practices. That said, we appear to be in the midst of a step-change in terms of the expansion, intensification, and integration of surveillance measures (Haggerty and Ericson 2000, 2006; Lyon 2002; Monahan 2006; Solove 2004; Webster and Ball 2003). The reasons for this change are complex and undoubtedly overdetermined but can broadly be attributed to the interplay of things such as new technologies, new government rationalities, novel organizational practices, political opportunism, capitalist market forces, and a heightened public sensitivity to risk (or certain forms of risk). At the cultural level, these changes manifest themselves in a *zeitgeist* where citizens and officials now assume that greater surveillance is the preferred response to an array of political problems. In my brief prefatory comments to this important volume, I hope to sensitize readers to some attributes of the relationship between surveillance and political problems.

There is now a voluminous literature on the production of political problems<sup>1</sup> (Best 1990, 2008; Gusfield 1989; Hilgartner and Bosk 1988; Jenness

1993; Ritzer 2004; Young 2006). The general orientation of these works is social constructionist in that they consciously try to dispel any notion that political problems are naturally given objective conditions that obviously warrant a public response. Instead, political problems are presented as emergent and contingent social phenomena. It is not inevitable that a specific condition will be (or was) dealt with as a political problem, and any specific problem could be framed and responded to in dramatically different ways. When officials come to recognize some set of conditions as troubling, this is itself the culmination of strategic efforts to problematize a state of affairs that was initially perceived as a matter of concern by only a small group of activists. Such individuals mobilize to bring this situation to public attention and do so in ways shaped by their own subjective understandings of the problem and preferred solutions.

Activists must convey their messages to a wider audience in order to transform a cause of the few into a concern of the many. The media figure prominently in this process, and the most successful claims makers are those who can exploit preferred media templates to ensure that their messages are taken up and communicated broadly (Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1989). As a wider constituency of interested publics becomes enrolled, these causes typically start to be adopted, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, by politicians and policy makers who are in a position to commit resources to hopefully rectify the situation. Official and academic studies of the putative problem are conducted, and preliminary programming is initiated. Once introduced, these programs themselves become the subject of ongoing critical and empirical scrutiny. Evaluative studies try to ascertain what, if any, initiatives work and whether programming is being run in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Purported failures and unintended negative consequences of existing programming often become fodder for new rounds of claims making.

Surveillance is a crucial, if underacknowledged, component in this entire process. At the earliest stages in the emergence of a political problem, activists must visualize problems in ways that foster public concern about the issue. The techniques used toward this end can vary dramatically, but surveillance figures prominently in many approaches. In an increasingly media-saturated age, some of the most successful claims makers are those who can produce, distribute, and reproduce dramatic visuals of a problem that appears to demand a social response (Reinhardt, Edwards, and Duganne 2007). Claims making can include the use of heart-rending images of indigent or victimized populations (Tagg 1988) or “shocking statistics” presented in graphs that demonstrate the precipitous increase in the volume or seriousness of a political problem (Orcutt and Turner 1993).

Historically, claims makers primarily warranted their claims about the existence of a problem and the need for reform through value-laden appeals

to sin, evil, or degeneracy (Valverde 1998; Young 2006). Today, as a putative political problem starts to acquire a more pronounced public profile, the activist's emotional tone starts to be supplemented by the more measured discourse of the technicians who are tasked with trying to empirically demonstrate the exact nature and extent of the problem. Norms and values still operate, as they are the motive force for claims makers and can be transparently on display when activists make presentations to ideologically aligned audiences, but on the wider public stage there is an increased prominence of a secular discourse that aims to empirically detail the nature and extent of a problem.

Neoliberal forms of governance are contingent on the production of such official, often quantified, forms of knowledge (Haggerty 2001; Rose 1999). Before programming is initiated, both problematic situations and problem people are ideally to be known in empirical detail. Certainly, this is not to say that programming is contingent on the development of an unassailable body of evidence about the nature of a problem or the likely success of an intervention. It is also not the case that studies necessarily determine the contours of government programming in any straightforward way. Indeed, as Scott (1998) has accentuated, the state has a built-in tendency to embrace a particular form of optics conducive to ways of making problems legible to centralized authorities, culminating in efforts to document, standardize, and register the social – and natural – worlds, in the process downplaying the complexities and nuances of political problems. Hence, the routine deployment of a style of political discourse and practice that privileges appeals to certain forms of empirical facts perceived to be actionable by government officials.

Official attempts to learn about a problem involve establishing or drawing on an attendant surveillance regime. If the problem is obese children, then mobs of animated kids are to be corralled in gyms to be pinched by calipers and have their body-fat indexes recorded (see Elliott in this volume). If the problem is adolescents using drugs, then parents can compel their progeny to urinate in a bottle so that they can use home drug-testing kits to scrutinize their behaviour (Moore and Haggerty 2001). In each instance, a particular problematization prompts a political demand for more and better governmentally relevant knowledge, which, in turn, depends on a specific monitoring regime. In many cases, the causal arrow points in the opposite direction, as proponents of new surveillance technologies work to foster an official interest in the type of knowledge that their system can generate. The point, however, is that surveillance is an inevitable attribute of knowledge production – a theme I return to below. While one can generate knowledge without engaging in surveillance – through introspection or dialogue, for instance – surveillance is nearly always a component of a knowledge-generation

process. This connection is easy to appreciate in relation to sophisticated data-mining practices, but it is also true for more prosaic types of monitoring. Glancing at a stranger entails a form of mundane surveillance that can generate knowledge about his or her culture, lifestyle, and sexual orientation, among other factors. While such knowledge is always provisional and open to revision, it remains a foundational way in which we make sense of our world (Goffman 1971).

There is an expansive dynamic to the requirement for governmentally useful knowledge about a political problem. Surveillance regimes must first be established in order to learn about a potential problem. This can be as simple as adding another check-box to an existing study or as complicated as developing sophisticated new technologies to visualize heretofore invisible phenomena. At the same time, such efforts tend to be frustratingly inconclusive. In the social sciences, it is rare (perhaps impossible) to produce a methodologically perfect study of a political problem. When there is competition over the correct way to typify or respond to an issue, considerable critically motivated attention can be focused on deconstructing the methodology used to study that problem (Fuchs and Ward 1994). Hence, the inherent limitations of social scientific studies contribute to the familiar dynamic whereby researchers and state officials demand more studies, with larger samples, that collect more data on more variables over a longer period of time and wider geographic locale. Such efforts augment the production of governmentally useful knowledge about political problems while simultaneously expanding and intensifying surveillance practices.

The third way that surveillance is related to this process concerns the fact that surveillance is itself often the official response to political problems. Here surveillance is not just part of an epistemological project designed to learn about a problem but is itself seen as ameliorative. In fact, it can be the case that many situations – police interrogation tactics, political lobbying techniques – are seen as problematic precisely because they are relatively opaque. Visibility allows for the exercise of power, while invisible phenomena are ultimately outside the contours of governmentally relevant knowledge and, as such, are difficult to regulate. Hence, invisibility fosters a disconcerting sense that things are remiss precisely because they are beyond the gaze of authority. Predictably, the preferred solution to such situations is to ratchet-up official scrutiny. This is particularly apparent in relation to anxieties about different kinds of criminal or deviant behaviour. In recent years, some of the most popular anti-crime initiatives position surveillance as a key component in deterrent efforts. Advocates of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), for example, call for increased visibility of people, places, and processes through diverse measures such as cutting down shrubs around your home, building entire communities to maximize natural “lines of sight,” or increasing computerized monitoring of commercial

transactions (Gill 1995; Levi and Wall 2004). In all such instances – and a plethora of others – surveillance is itself positioned as part of the solution to a political problem.

One characteristic of such efforts is that surveillance measures rarely quench the official (or public) thirst for full transparency. Visibility is always bounded, which means that new surveillance regimes can, paradoxically, foster a perception that the groups or areas outside an existing surveillance system are now, by comparison, even more opaque. In an escalating spiral of visibility, such perceptions can fuel new demands for increased scrutiny of these people or places that have now come to be seen as disconcertingly imperceptible.

The fifth axis connecting surveillance and political problems concerns the fact that responses to problems themselves have to be monitored. In a neo-liberal society, managerial and accountability concerns are paramount. Irrespective of the type of intervention that is used to confront a social problem, there is an increased expectation of ongoing follow-up and evaluative monitoring of the success of those interventions. At the most basic level, neoliberal governance has contributed to the escalation of a managerialist audit society (Power 1997) where a staggering amount of institutional time and resources is dedicated to formally accounting for these processes.

Finally, increasingly surveillance itself is posited as a social problem. Claims makers have criticized surveillance measures because, among other things, they reduce privacy rights, are authoritarian, racializing, counter-productive, and inefficient, and involve an opportunistic power-grab by major institutions. These arguments have been advanced by assorted claims makers through formal policy reports (Surveillance Studies Network 2006) and more theatrical efforts, such as those of the “surveillance camera players” who perform their dissent in front of the closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras they oppose. Given that many of the authors in this collection, including me, have an interest in, and occasionally participate in, this form of surveillance politics, the question of how to conceptualize surveillance as a political problem deserves a bit more attention.

Reading the most popular commentaries on surveillance, one would be excused for believing that it is an exclusively negative phenomenon, a sentiment fostered by proliferating references to sinister manifestations of “Big Brother” or academic invocations of the panopticon (Haggerty 2006). This orientation is encouraged by our choice of terminology, as the expression “surveillance” is itself coded negatively to imply forms of unwanted or unjust scrutiny. Analysts augment this tendency by typically concentrating their inquiries on the most disturbing manifestations of surveillance. And while there is ample reason to be concerned, even alarmed, about the proliferation of surveillance, it is also the case that surveillance is a generalizable practice that can be used for both laudable and condemnable purposes.

Returning to the earlier point, approaching surveillance as inevitably tied to the production of knowledge can help us to finesse our normative stance toward surveillance. Consider, for example, how the tenor of our analyses would change if we simply substituted the expression “generating knowledge” for that of “surveillance.” At the broadest level, the evaluation of surveillance *tout court* would undoubtedly become more normatively agnostic, as few people would identify with the claim that knowledge production is inevitably good or bad. Some might undoubtedly follow Foucault into the realms beyond good and evil to embrace the suggestion that everything, including power-knowledge configurations, is dangerous. But given that Foucault presents *everything* as dangerous in an unprioritized fashion, such a stance is not very useful in the world of *realpolitik*, where decisions must be made about whether to support or resist specific initiatives.

If we foreground the connection between surveillance and knowledge production, it is apparent that surveillance, while undeniably dangerous, can nonetheless at times serve desirable ends, including progressive forms of governance, building inclusive urban spaces, caring for loved ones, or scientific discovery. Current attempts to increase the transparency and accountability of major organizations are, at heart, efforts to subject those institutions to greater surveillance (Fung, Graham, and Weil 2007). Moreover, as Huey notes in this volume, surveillance can also be used to make the behaviour of official surveillance agents more transparent.

This matter becomes more concrete if we briefly consider two famous, but starkly different, uses of the state’s infrastructure of population surveillance. The first example comes from eighteenth-century London, which experienced an intense process of urbanization. The city was unprepared for such a concentrated mass of humanity, and it notably lacked an infrastructure to manage the tonnes of human and animal waste that streamed through the streets and accumulated in fetid basement pools. One consequence was that cholera – a disease that can manifest itself in the rapid onset of symptoms, including the loss of litres of water through horrific bouts of diarrhea – became a recurrent problem. Cholera became even more pronounced when, in an attempt to deal with the choking stench, the city built a series of sewers to direct the waste into the Thames River, transforming London’s primary source of drinking water into a rancid cesspool.

At this time, physician John Snow fastened on the idea that cholera might be transmitted through contaminated drinking water. In an attempt to convince a skeptical scientific audience of this connection, he produced a now famous map that traced the connections between the victims of the 1854 outbreak and exposure to soiled drinking water, a document that ultimately helped to prompt politicians to construct a sewer system to direct London’s waste far out of the city centre, in the process saving innumerable

lives (Johnson 2007). And while Snow is the central protagonist in this story, his efforts relied on an extensive system of bureaucratic surveillance that was used to document the connection between cholera and fouled water. "Snow's investigations would never have been possible," Epstein (2007, 42) notes, chiding those who would see gloomy panopticism in all forms of data gathering, "without the reports produced by England's General Registry Office, the successor institution of a system of parish registers that had been tracking births and deaths throughout England since the mid-seventeenth century."

Fast-forward to the twentieth century, and we encounter a dramatically different use of a comparable bureaucracy. As the Allies marched steadily across Europe in 1945, individual soldiers were stunned by the scenes that confronted them at the Nazis' hastily abandoned extermination camps. The mounds of corpses and the gaunt stares of skeletal survivors testified to an extensive program designed to eradicate Jews, Gypsies, and other groups seen as degenerate by the National Socialists. Extermination was the culmination of a procession of detailed policies that segregated such individuals from society. Jews and members of other groups were singled out, their legal rights restricted, and their property confiscated. Barred from desirable occupations and relocated in ghettos, millions were ultimately shuttled to death camps where they were murdered. Beyond the twisted logic that motivated this behaviour, a precondition for the genocide was the German infrastructure of bureaucratic population surveillance. The National Socialists' embrace of eugenics was only the most extreme manifestation of their fascination with issues of population, a fixation that spurned increasingly detailed public scrutiny and categorization (Götz and Roth 2004). This bureaucratic power was revolutionized when the Nazis contracted with IBM, famously known by its motto "the solutions people," to lend its nascent computing power to the Nazis' "final solution." IBM held the monopoly on the early computing technology of Hollerith computing cards and machines. This technology was used at every stage in a cumulative genocidal process: "When Germany wanted to identify Jews by name, IBM showed it how. When the Reich wanted to use that information to launch programs of social expulsion and expropriation, IBM provided the means. When the trains had to run on time between concentration camps, IBM offered the solution" (Black 2001, 74). By combining the state's existing infrastructure of population surveillance with unparalleled abilities to rapidly access and sort these data, the Nazis added a vital cog in their bureaucratic machinery of death.

These dramatically different examples of the uses of the state infrastructure of population surveillance highlight the point that surveillance is neither inevitably good nor inevitably bad; rather, it is a generalized technology that can be used for a host of different government projects. None of this is

to say that we should forgo engaging in normative critiques of surveillance – far from it. Instead, it is to suggest that criticism must be directed at the precise ways in which the component parts of the surveillant assemblage are materialized in distinct configurations of visibility. This includes being sensitive to how relations of power help to configure surveillance systems in particular ways and to how these systems can, in turn, reproduce or exacerbate existing forms of social inequality. Hence, the most potent critiques of surveillance are those that detail how specific manifestations of scrutiny are directed in the wrong directions, employ inappropriate categories, encourage improper conclusions, and so on. Such critiques concentrate on how surveillance potential is instantiated in relation to particular government projects that are motivated toward specific ends and target distinctive populations.

Consequently, I am encouraged that many of the authors in this collection accentuate the particularities of surveillance, along the way raising vital questions about the political implications of distinct surveillance regimes. Nonetheless, in the wider scholarly community there appears to be a sense of dissatisfaction with such an orientation. Some want to engage in a sweeping condemnation of surveillance as inherently inequitable, as apparent in the numerous blunt charges that surveillance is a form of social control or a component in social sorting practices. By way of brusque conclusion, I want to suggest that, while such accusations are true, by themselves they do not constitute a normative critique of surveillance. Take, for example, the recurrent denunciation of surveillance as a form of social control. Such an all-encompassing accusation can only be productive if we are inclined to condemn any and all forms of social control (Lacombe 1996). In fact, governance always entails control in that it aims to steer and direct individuals, encouraging them to embrace particular behaviours. Such efforts help to foreclose alternative courses of action and as such are inevitably controlling – controls that run the gamut from the most delicate to the most repressive. We must loudly denounce unjust forms of social control, but such a critique involves moving down from the lofty heights of condemning social control *tout court* in order to specify our evaluative criteria, detailing why we should approve or disapprove of particular manifestations of control. The critique lies in the specifics – that *this* form of control is inappropriate or unjust.

The same is true in relation to Lyon's (2003b) important sociological insight that surveillance is increasingly used for forms of social sorting. As Lyon presents this claim, it is an argument about the functional operation of surveillance that increasingly combines data-processing capabilities and formal bureaucratic categories to direct people into disparate population groups in the ultimate aim of exposing them to various configurations of institutional

response. However, as the expression has permeated the scholarly literature, it has quickly become a form of blanket condemnation, with surveillance being denounced simply because it involves “social sorting.” Again, the question arises whether we are opposed to social sorting itself or to the precise ways in which this practice is manifested in different government projects. Most of us are happy to see someone sorted out of the population of insured and licensed automobile drivers if he or she has a record of impaired or reckless driving. The same is true for people who have a demonstrated history of trying to bring weapons onto airplanes, as most people would be comfortable with having such individuals singled out for special attention. It is also the case that social sorting can be used for social betterment, to single out people with special needs, for example, so that they can receive additional care and consideration. These processes can vary in terms of how fair, transparent, and coercive they are, but it is difficult to imagine how complex societies could entirely eschew social sorting. Again, we end up in a situation where we must foreground our normative criteria to accentuate why *this particular manifestation* of social sorting is unjust, unfair, or inequitable. Some of the vital political questions to ask in this regard concern whether the categories and discriminating criteria are appropriate, the sorting process is transparent to all parties, the ultimate aims of governance are just, the people are free to modify or transcend their bureaucratic identity, there is a meaningful opportunity to contest how one is classified, and so on. This is a critique not of social sorting but of the precise dynamics and manifestations of such efforts.

And while I am encouraging a normative politics that is attentive to the particularities of how each discrete surveillant assemblage is coordinated, I nonetheless retain my own nagging anxieties about the political purchase of such an orientation. When we step back from the minutiae of each surveillance system, with its unique government logics and configurations of watchers and watched, it is self-evident that surveillance is expanding across a host of different organizational contexts. We are in the midst of an amplifying but uncoordinated social experiment in transparency and are years away from being able to pronounce definitive conclusions about the total social consequences of these efforts. Such an expansion is particularly disconcerting given that a defining characteristic of the new transparency is its assemblage quality – the ability and tendency to integrate and coordinate otherwise discrete surveillance regimes, either in temporary configurations or in more stable structures. This nascent surveillance infrastructure represents an unprecedented risk to citizens because it is an unprecedented temptation for governments. In times of fear and national crisis, state officials will undoubtedly be inclined to coordinate the existing heterogeneous surveillance potentiality, to concentrate and coordinate the totality of this

monitoring such that it serves distinctively draconian government ambitions. No government – totalitarian or broadly democratic – has ever had at its fingertips the surveillance infrastructure capacity that is unwittingly being created by the countless localized decisions to augment visibility. As the public has become inured to repeated warnings about “Big Brother,” and seduced by the assorted abilities of new surveillance technologies, what prospect is there to champion a political effort to foreground the prospects of unequalled totalitarian repression that lies dormant within emergent surveillance structures?

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# Surveillance



# Introduction

*Sean P. Hier and Josh Greenberg*

Privacy International, a British-based watchdog group, has hosted the annual Big Brother Awards since 1988. The ceremonies are held in several countries to recognize national government and private sector organizations that have violated privacy rights in the preceding year. In 2007, the event was held in Montreal, Canada; it marked the first international awards ceremony. The gala drew over 200 delegates from more than eighteen different countries.

Several awards were handed out in Montreal. For example, in a tight competition for the Worst Public Official, Stewart Baker, former general counsel of the US National Security Agency (NSA) and undersecretary for policy at the US Department of Homeland Security, narrowly beat out Russian president Vladimir Putin and British prime minister Tony Blair. Putin and Blair were in the running for different reasons: Putin introduced Cold War-era surveillance practices, and Blair's tenure as prime minister witnessed the installation of millions of public-area video surveillance cameras across the United Kingdom. It was, however, the NSA's controversial domestic surveillance activities, combined with the political fallout from the US Patriot Act, that earned Baker the dubious honour of Worst Public Official for 2007.

An award was also bestowed for Most Appalling Project or Technology. A leading contender for the award was the CCTV industry for its continued success in promoting video camera surveillance systems as a viable crime control policy solution. Another leading contender was India's Ministry for Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions (MPPG). The MPPG was in the running for its policy requiring female government employees to disclose details about their menstrual cycles on job appraisal forms. Yet Privacy International decided that neither the CCTV industry nor the MPPG had done as much damage to privacy as the UN International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAS). The ICAS won the award for secretly implementing a variety of invasive policies that included the development of a biometric passport and for its role in arranging passenger data transfer deals.

The awards for Worst Public Official and Most Appalling Project or Technology attracted considerable interest and attention. But the most watched award category, and arguably the most closely contested category, was Most Heinous Government. Several nations were nominated: China, for continuing its human rights abuses and for expanding its surveillance practices beyond civil society into cyberspace (e.g., Google China); the United States, for its leading role in changing the way surveillance is carried out by governments around the world; and Tunisia, for its excessive surveillance regimes carried out in plain view of international publics. Despite the fierce competition, the United Kingdom edged out the competition for being “the greatest surveillance society amongst democratic nations.”<sup>1</sup>

The namesake of the Big Brother Awards is significant. In 1949, George Orwell published his futuristic dystopian novel, *1984*. It is replete with tales of totalitarian state control. The novel depicts the fictional superstate of Oceania. The ruling party in Oceania attempts to maintain an extreme degree of social control over the middle and upper classes (largely leaving the proles or workers to their own devices) by deploying the thought police and the telescreens. The Ministry of Truth controls mass media and other forms of information, and radical techniques of indoctrination are used to forge love for Big Brother. The point Orwell makes in *1984* – articulated to varying degrees in Franz Kafka’s (1925) *The Trial*, Aldous Huxley’s (1932) *Brave New World*, Ray Bradbury’s (1953) *Fahrenheit 451*, and Margaret Atwood’s (1985) *The Handmaid’s Tale* – is that, under certain circumstances, state authorities exploit the masses and deepen social inequalities through the appropriation and deployment of surveillance technologies and propaganda. Centralized forms of information and data gathering, Orwell warned, threaten democratic socialism and human freedom.

In twenty-first-century North America, Orwell’s novel is widely understood as a fictionalized commentary on the threat posed by totalitarian governments. While many people find the basic lessons of *1984* instructive, few people seriously embrace Orwell’s prophecy. Yet the annual Privacy International awards banquets (now nearly ten years running) indicate that concerns about Big Brother watching over citizens’ everyday activities and behaviours are not merely fictional. Big Brother has become part of the everyday discourse about surveillance. Indeed, a search of major news media reveals more than 700 articles featuring the key terms “surveillance” and “Big Brother” in headlines and lead paragraphs between 1990 and 2007. We do not wish to suggest that most people are overly concerned with centralized forms of totalitarian state surveillance resembling Orwell’s depiction. Rather, we understand the continued popularity of Big Brother as a proxy for pervasive uneasiness about certain kinds of surveillance in contemporary society. As the combined influence of the awards banquets, extensive news

coverage of the myriad dimensions of surveillance, and continuing cultural popularity of the Big Brother trope suggests, surveillance is understood not only as a response to crime and disorder but also as a potential social or political problem.

*Surveillance: Power, Problems, and Politics* presents several original theoretical and empirical essays written by Canadian scholars. The authors explore the thematic of surveillance as a cause as well as an effect of social and political problems. The overarching methodological objective of the volume is to subject surveillance practices to a form of immanent critique: to problematize present surveillance realities with the intention of envisioning a different kind of future. In doing so, we do not engage in a “politics of dreaming” about a future society that would be free of all forms of surveillance. We are keenly aware that surveillance is a central component of modern statehood (e.g., Dandeker 1990; Torpey 2000). Running through the volume, however, is a normative critique that calls into question the moral and ideological bases, as well as the differential material effects, of various surveillance practices and systems.

Although some of the chapters are more explicit in articulating normative critique than others, each chapter confronts the issue of surveillance as a problematic: a domain of acts, practices, and thoughts that poses problems for social and political order (Foucault 1984). Our purpose is to think about how to define and make possible a future where surveillance practices that have inequitable consequences for already marginalized individuals and groups are not simply taken for granted as normal or necessary features of contemporary society.

We introduce the volume with an analytical chapter that builds on debate about the politics of surveillance and visibility. The chapter begins with a general overview of the diversity of contemporary surveillance practices – ranging from popular television programs to national security concerns. It then addresses the emerging field of surveillance studies in terms of a community of scholars with shared interests and explanatory goals. We argue that surveillance studies has been largely characterized by a set of contributions informed by the panoptic paradigm, yet new explanatory orthodoxies are on the horizon. Warning against the increasing tendency to conceptualize surveillance as an assemblage of relations that contributes to the levelling of hierarchies of visibility, we formulate an analytical explanation for visibility as a moral category that manifests in inequitable material applications. To stimulate dialogue and debate, we argue that the analytical category of visibility as a political field of cultural action is one way to advance Haggerty and Ericson’s (2000, 2006) otherwise progressive and important contributions to the new politics of surveillance and visibility. We thus warn against the dangers of orthodoxy and paradigm building within surveillance studies.

The rest of the volume is organized into four parts. Our primary objective in Part 1 (“Stigma, Morality, and Social Control”) is to explain some of the historical dimensions of surveillance as a social and political problem. We present three chapters that detail how certain issues are brought into existence through surveillance practices in ways that typify them as problems requiring political and social intervention. Taking seriously Jackson’s (2004) argument that the theoreticians have dominated the field of surveillance studies, the chapters presented in this opening section contribute to filling an important empirical gap.

In Chapter 2, Charlene D. Elliott focuses on the case of childhood obesity in Canada and the surveillance mechanisms used to bring this social and political problem to light. Elliott takes issue with the theoretical argument that the human body disappears (Lyon 2001) as technological innovations in surveillance enable government and non-government agencies to adjudicate dealings and transactions at a distance (e.g., online banking). While some contemporary surveillance practices do not require human embodiment or the presence of an actual person (e.g., formulating insurance premium profiles), the surveillance practices that Elliott is interested in ultimately depend on, or return to, the visible human body. The visibility of the obese child’s body, however, is something that is produced through a set of surveillance practices. It is not something that is objectively observed independent of cultural and moral assumptions of health and fitness.

Elliott explains how obesity as a sociopolitical problem was brought into existence through a set of surveillance practices in the early twentieth century. Caught up in the historical emergence of surveillance medicine, children’s bodies were subjected to various practices of charting and mapping. The centralization of surveillance data on children’s bodies led to the normalization of age-appropriate height and weight measures, thus facilitating the creation of preventative interventions to achieve normal heights and weights in cases of deviation. Statistical averages that potentially hide as much as they reveal about children’s health, in other words, were used as evidence to intervene in, and act on, real children.

From this historical background, Elliott examines contemporary expressions of the public child and the moral foundations of good parenting. She demonstrates how surveillance works through encouraging responsible eating by practices such as body indexing, adjustments in the built environment, the production of eating report cards, and attempts to monitor and modify children’s media intake. Elliott concludes that, although these measures are in many ways about health and the ethic of caring, they are also fundamentally about the moral politics of visibility.

In Chapter 3, Kevin Walby examines the issue of male-with-male public sexual encounters in Ontario between 1983 and 1994. He is particularly interested in the use of video surveillance equipment by police in public

washrooms for the purpose of apprehending “sexual offenders” (i.e., men cruising public areas in search of anonymous consensual sex). Walby’s theoretical and conceptual interest is in exploring the role of the “governmental text” in the construction of sociopolitical problems. He is also interested in how law enforcement and media agencies colluded to construct normative standards of heterosexuality that exercised disciplinary effects on gay men.

Particularly significant is Walby’s introduction of “visual culture” into surveillance studies by demonstrating the connection between the normalization of heterosexuality and the role of photo and video surveillance. Official institutional actors authorize visual texts, Walby argues, as privileged ways of showing, and they structure the terms of debate about what is and is not a social problem. Walby’s chapter demonstrates that, although it is tempting to argue that the existence of video surveillance as a policing technique determined how male-with-male public sex would be understood and regulated, there was a more complex configuration of discourses among multiple agents and agencies of regulation and resistance. Historicizing the construction of this issue as a problem, Walby shows how it is the broader social context in which surveillance practices and technologies are introduced, not the actual surveillance techniques themselves, that has the greatest influence on the dynamics of regulatory projects.

In Chapter 4, Scott Thompson offers an empirically grounded historical analysis of liquor control processes in Ontario between 1927 and 1975. His analysis is situated in relation to the broader social and political dynamics of the temperance era, and his chapter presents a rich account of the contentious debates that accompanied the provincial government’s legalization and regulation of liquor sales. Thompson demonstrates how moralizing judgments about drinking intersected with other moralizing judgments about gender, class, and race. As he explains, women, manual labourers, and “Indians” were more likely than other identifiable social groups to be subjected to government surveillance, investigation, and discipline concerning drinking habits. Inclusion on the Liquor Control Board’s interdiction list not only altered a person’s ability to purchase liquor, says Thompson, but also had significant material effects, with implications for property rights, exposure to other surveillance mechanisms, and community relations. His investigation goes beyond a portrayal of the role of social prejudices in the application of state surveillance and disciplinary action to present an important political critique that stresses the desperate need for oversight of surveillance mechanisms, state disciplinary action, and the ability to question the acquisition and validity of surveillance data.

In Part 2 (“Environmental Design, Consumerism, and Privacy”), we present three chapters that engage the themes of visibility and privacy in substantively unique ways. In Chapter 5, Patrick F. Parnaby and C. Victoria Reed

examine the ideological and material effects that new crime prevention policies, discourses, and “natural surveillance” strategies have on groups of people who are already disenfranchised on the basis of class (homeless people) and race (black men). By natural surveillance, they mean the manipulation of situation-specific social and environmental characteristics as a means of preventing crime and disorder. Parnaby and Reed argue that natural surveillance strategies have gained in prominence with the shift away from theories that explain crime as the manifestation of structural strain (e.g., Messner and Rosenfeld 1994) toward opportunity theories that explain crime as a situational event precipitated by the coalescence of myriad social and environmental characteristics. Parnaby and Reed assert that the effects of natural surveillance are potentially experienced in a differential and not always innocuous manner. Women, homeless people, and visible minorities, they contend, are acutely aware of the potential hostilities of certain spaces in a way that members of dominant social groups are not. Thus, any modification made to social spaces will transform the social and psychic relations of inclusion and exclusion. Parnaby and Reed also assert that rendering environments more amenable to natural surveillance potentially sets the stage for more discriminate forms of monitoring and social control. While they concede that crime prevention through environmental design might contribute to the reduction of crime and disorder in certain circumstances, they also maintain the need for surveillance theorists and practitioners to address the class- and race-based implications that natural surveillance strategies intentionally or unwittingly pose.

Several chapters in the book outline that surveillance scholars have drawn much of their theoretical oxygen from the work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault. A key Foucaultian concept is bio-power, a term that relates to the concern of governments with fostering the *life* of the population. For Foucault, modern states exercise power over citizens not by the threat of death but by enabling the production of life vis-à-vis regulation of the body. While surveillance scholars have drawn on Foucault’s notion of bio-power to account for the myriad ways that states are able to coordinate and administer the activities of the population, they have focused almost exclusively on living bodies.

In Chapter 6, Joseph Scanlon explores the relationship between surveillance and privacy by focusing on the administration of the dead in the context of mass-death situations. Scanlon begins by reminding us that, when ordinary people die under typical circumstances, their deaths garner little public recognition or attention. In the context of a mass-death incident, those who lived otherwise ordinary lives become part of a mass-mediated spectacle that surpasses the extraordinary. On the one hand, Scanlon argues that surveillance and social sorting are key dimensions of managing mass death. This is especially the case in Canada, the United States, Britain, and

other Western cultures, where there is a much stronger motivation to accurately identify the deceased, and in many cases recovery of the body parts becomes a state priority. On the other hand, Scanlon shows that surveillance and the administration of the dead pose a range of privacy concerns for those who are left behind.

In a typical situation of death, the handling of the deceased's affairs is normally left to the family or an individual appointed by the deceased in a last will and testament. In a mass-death situation, administration of these affairs is handed over to the state, thrust into the public spotlight, and discussed in the public sphere through the media. In both instances, those who are normally discharged with this honour and responsibility are regularly excluded. For Scanlon, the link between surveillance and mass death is complex and contradictory. Surveillance practices are necessary in order to identify victims and bring some measure of closure to their families. At the same time, these practices are also problematic because the information-gathering and data-sharing processes open a variety of concerns pertaining to upholding personal privacy and respect for victims and their families.

In the final chapter of Part 2, Sheryl N. Hamilton engages privacy from a different angle: the focus of her chapter is on identity theft and the "construction of creditable subjects." Her chapter begins by presenting some startling statistical evidence about the increased prevalence of identity theft. She explains how more than 7,750 cases of identity theft were reported in Canada, with a net loss of more than \$16 million, in 2006. In the United States, the numbers are more dramatic: a 2003 Federal Trade Commission survey revealed that nearly 10 million Americans became victims of some type of identity theft, resulting in business losses of US\$48 million and individual losses of US\$5 billion.

Hamilton critiques the lack of theorizing about the changing nature of subjectivity in surveillance scholarship and introduces the concept of the "credible subject." Whereas the so-called data double is a digital self that is still authored by the embodied subject, she contends, the credible subject is produced through techniques of data surveillance (dataveillance): that is, the cross-referencing and data matching of giant consumer databases and the deployment of credit software designed to predict the credit performance of individuals. Identity thus no longer functions as a representation of the conscious, breathing, offline self. We are no longer the referent, Hamilton argues. Rather, identity is constituted in the credibility of the self, and the credible subject, always contingent, can be made visible only in and through its theft.

Our interest in Part 3 ("Genetics, Security, and Biometrics") is to examine the complex, troubled, and contradictory relationship between surveillance and security. The chapters in this section deal with the issues of surveillance and security in different arenas (criminal justice, state anti-terrorism, and

welfare administration), but each shares the concern that the purported applications of surveillance to enhance security have deleterious consequences that must be critically interrogated.

As casual observers of popular culture will attest, the use of DNA evidence for crime control purposes is a stable feature of the modern mediascape. Rarely does an episode of popular dramatic television programs such as *Law and Order*, *CSI*, or *Without a Trace* go by without purporting the utility and efficacy of genetic identification for crime detection purposes. Public opinion about the value of genetic identification for crime detection largely reflects this simplified and benign portrayal.

In the context of poor public understandings about the link between genetic surveillance and crime, in Chapter 8 Neil Gerlach explores how the introduction of DNA data banks is transforming the criminal justice system in Canada. Gerlach laments the lack of informed public discussion about DNA identification practices and proposes that we examine the effects of genetic identification at three levels: crime detection, institutional operation, and political process. At the level of crime detection, for example, DNA identification has arguably been a huge success. Genetic identification has been used not only to hunt down the so-called bad guys but also as the basis for emancipating the wrongly convicted (e.g., the Canadian citizen David Milgaard, who spent eighteen years in prison for a crime he did not commit). DNA identification is compelling, Gerlach argues, because it is based on the perception of objectivity at a time when public confidence in the criminal courts is low. In popular culture as well as institutional life, the criminal justice system is transforming itself to accommodate developments in genetic identification, yet lost in this process is a critical questioning about the implications for extending state power over the bodies of citizens. Gerlach challenges us to take this question seriously as well as the degree to which genetic surveillance is being “normalized” within and beyond the criminal justice arena and the extent to which individuals may be participating in their own genetic surveillance.

In Chapter 9, Dwayne Winseck examines surveillance and security in the context of the global war on terrorism (GWOT), and he focuses on the adoption of information operations (IO) as the fundamental doctrine of US military and foreign policy. According to Winseck, IO operates as a form of “soft power” that succeeds to the extent that citizens and nations can be persuaded through consent rather than coercion. His theoretical concern, therefore, is to explore the relationship between surveillance and propaganda. Operating from a political economy of communication perspective, he argues that, while the development of new communication networks has granted citizens access to previously unavailable information, the retooling of the Internet and other public communication infrastructures have also provided state and corporate actors with greater surveillance capacities than ever before.

One particularly interesting example involves the US military identifying foreign intermediaries with established credibility in their own cultural environments to be used as conduits of strategic communications. This practice involves electronic media engagement teams utilizing the full surveillance capacity of new media technologies by scouring the Internet to initiate contact with editors of websites and with journalists who cover operations in the Middle East. Once these foreign intermediaries have been identified, news releases and stories written by military officials are made available to journalists affiliated with the traditional media outlets. Where inaccuracies are found, corrections to the “record” are produced and new information provided. In another interesting example, Winseck describes the collusion that has occurred among the telecommunications industry, Hollywood, and the US military establishment and the myriad ways in which public understandings of the GWOT are being managed at various levels, from policy development to film and video-game production. For Winseck, however, neither the GWOT nor the Bush administration’s propaganda and IO operations can be considered a *fait accompli*. Resistance from within the United States, particularly from the judiciary, is generating considerable “blowback” and threatens to undermine the administration’s imperialist agenda and the country’s position in the global system.

In Chapter 10, Shoshana Magnet examines surveillance and security in the context of the American welfare system. She focuses on the material and ideological consequences of introducing biometric technologies into the administration of social assistance. Drawing on earlier seminal studies that examined state surveillance of the poor (Gilliom 2001), she challenges the accepted wisdom of publics, policy makers, and law enforcement officials that biometrics is a normatively neutral technology. Rather, she contends that the use of biometrics for welfare administration produces narrow benefits for a small group of people by situating the poor in a broader network of crime and criminalization.

Magnet’s chapter includes a valuable primer on biometric technologies, followed by a detailed history of the changing nature of the US political economy and how the emergence of neoconservative economic thinking and policy making produced a context in which biometrics could be introduced into the US welfare system. *Pace* Gilliom, Magnet demonstrates how biometrics has intensified more conventional forms of welfare surveillance, thereby automating a process of sorting out the “deserving poor” and the “undeserving poor.” Ultimately, she argues that biometrics depends on a theory of flawed economics. Its purported objective of saving the state much needed money actually does not occur, as the process of criminalizing otherwise innocent people increases monitoring and administrative costs to government while generating windfall profits for the private biometrics industry.

In Part 4 (“Participatory Surveillance and Resistance”), we present three chapters that explore how groups of people in different social locations participate in, and resist, surveillance regimes. Mike Larsen and Justin Piché introduce the section by exploring the participatory role of citizens in government-led public vigilance campaigns. Looking across national contexts, they explain that a variety of public participatory surveillance campaigns were implemented after the 11 September 2001 attacks. These campaigns ranged from centrally coordinated national undertakings to local efforts geared toward metropolitan environments. Larsen and Piché identify a common theme in all public participatory campaigns: the call for responsible individuals to constantly watch for suspicious activity and to immediately convey relevant information to authorities. For Larsen and Piché, not only are public vigilance campaigns heavily shaded by moral discourse, but they also reflect an attempt by governing authorities to reformulate their relationship with the public in a stated effort to obtain actionable information in order to prevent terrorism. Their chapter presents supporting empirical evidence from three ongoing public security advertising campaigns in New York City, Ottawa, and London, England.

In Chapter 12, Simon J. Kiss explores the relationship between participation and resistance in surveillance practices by examining how states and social movements make use of mobile technologies and how these technologies are transforming the relations between these actors. Kiss draws on earlier contributions to the study of new media technologies to describe the emancipatory potential that mobile, wireless communication provides to citizens and advocacy groups. Although Kiss acknowledges that advances in new media technologies have created new avenues for accessing information and holding powerful actors to account, he also presents a critical appraisal by reminding us that these technologies are never normatively neutral. In other words, states and other powerful actors can utilize the innovative, creative, and potentially radical applications of new media technologies by social movements as well. Kiss documents these dynamics by reviewing key case studies in the Philippines, South Korea, and the United States. He argues along the same lines as Elliott in her study of childhood obesity, noting that surveillance begets surveillance, but he also contends that it is not only surveillance practices that constantly change in response to other practices; the social relations between actors change as well.

In the final chapter, Laura Huey builds on some of the themes of social and political resistance presented in Kiss’s analysis to explore the extent to which access to information legislation qualifies as a form of counter-surveillance. Huey begins with a brief discussion of the methods she used to acquire empirical data that inform the chapter. She then examines some of the research literature on surveillance to explore definitions of counter-surveillance. Both of these are important steps and speak to the book’s broader argument

about the importance of conceptual clarity and analytical precision. Her chapter also helps us to understand the hitherto taken-for-granted concept of counter-surveillance. Drawing on a number of interviews conducted with privacy workers, Huey discovers an interesting difference between academic uses of the term “counter-surveillance” and (possibly) the politically charged meanings that anti-surveillance stakeholders associate with the concept. Her chapter concludes the volume by contemplating issues of academic accountability in terms of conceptual clarity and by problematizing the need for further work in the area of counter-surveillance and the politics of resistance.

Collectively, the chapters comprising *Surveillance: Power, Problems, and Politics* flesh out many important nuances of past and present surveillance practices. They also explicate the relationship between surveillance practices and the production and exacerbation of political and social problems in myriad locations. The original theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and empirical data presented in the volume refine our analytical resources and advance the literature on surveillance by identifying a number of ways in which surveillance itself can become a social and political problem.

# 1

## The Politics of Surveillance: Power, Paradigms, and the Field of Visibility

*Sean P. Hier and Josh Greenberg*

In the past decade, surveillance has emerged as a sustained interdisciplinary topic of investigation and theorization. Scholars in a variety of fields (e.g., sociology, political science, criminology, communication and media studies, commerce, engineering) have started to examine the importance of information-gathering and data-sharing techniques. With a special interest in the growth of computer databases and the accelerated integration of once-remote information storage systems, the field of surveillance studies has begun to document the changing character, and some of the consequences, of surveillance practices around the globe (Hier and Greenberg 2007).

In this chapter, we focus on how proliferating surveillance practices are related to a diverse set of political and social problems. Although surveillance practices are commonly rationalized as a way of addressing what are perceived to be extant problems (e.g., fraud, crime, terrorism), we argue that the implementation of surveillance systems also often leads to or exacerbates a range of other political and social problems (e.g., poverty, over-policing, suspicion, exclusion) under the guise of managing risk and reducing harm. For this reason, we conceptualize surveillance as contributing to as well as deriving from political and social problems.

The chapters in this book explore the relationship between surveillance practices and political and social problems in a number of cultural locations and institutional arenas: welfare administration, disaster management, consumerism, popular culture, policing, moral regulation and anti-terrorism campaigns, news media, and social movements. Our objective in this chapter is to critically assess the relationship between surveillance and political and social problems in the context of influential explanatory frameworks in surveillance studies. We do so to articulate a progressive political and theoretical agenda for understanding and interrogating the proliferation of surveillance practices, technologies, and institutions in the twenty-first century.

We begin by providing a brief overview of the diversity of contemporary information-gathering and data storage and sharing practices. We then

examine the relationship between surveillance and political and social problems in terms of theoretical and conceptual developments in surveillance studies. The latter entails examining theoretical developments ranging from panopticon to contemporary models that draw on poststructuralist ways of thinking. We argue that although the walls of the panopticon have been effectively scaled down – if not torn down altogether (Haggerty 2006) – the surveillance literature has not yet fully broken from the logic of visualization that is found in the panoptic model.

Specifically, we argue that Haggerty and Ericson's (2000, 2006) work on the politics of surveillance represents one of the most promising developments in surveillance theory over the past decade. We make this argument because their work offers a viable explanation for how surveillance systems work, and it attempts to theorize the nuances of diverse surveillance applications. The important insights of their work notwithstanding, we argue that they do not go far enough in theorizing the differential applications and sociopolitical effects of surveillance systems. This is due in part, we argue, to explanatory limitations that derive from predecessor selection, paradigm building, and the dynamics of intellectual communities. In the final section, we advance Haggerty and Ericson's insights into how surveillance systems manifest in different cultural and political spaces by arguing that the category of visibility, as a political field of cultural action, represents one progressive avenue to advance beyond the logic of the panoptic paradigm.

### **Contemporary Surveillance Practices**

Surveillance is commonly understood as an activity that law enforcement agencies engage in to gather information about criminals and other wrongdoers. When many people think of surveillance, images of espionage and secret policing activities come to mind. Following the 11 September 2001 attacks on Washington and New York, and the 7 July 2005 bus and train bombings in London, surveillance has also increasingly been understood in terms of border security provisions and anti-terrorism measures. Border security and formal law enforcement operations – overt and covert – are important forms of contemporary surveillance. But when surveillance is represented primarily if not exclusively as a security issue, the term fosters images of a relatively small and powerful group of people who have the means and the desire to monitor the masses (see also Haggerty's foreword to this volume).

Given that surveillance fundamentally involves a form of watching, it is surprising that the term continues to be understood in popular discussions principally as a form of one-way observation carried out for purposes of law enforcement and state security. It is surprising not least because every evening millions of people around the world turn on their television sets to watch small groups of people fight over who will cook dinner on a remote tropical

island; to scrutinize celebrity dance performances and render immediate judgments on the merits of contestants' preparedness; and to indulge in the spectacle of "cougars" (i.e., women over forty years of age) squaring off against "kittens" (i.e., women in their twenties) to win the affections of former athletes turned celebrity bachelors. Surveillance clearly entails more than small groups of powerful people watching over the unsuspecting masses for the purposes of security and social control.

The example of television as a medium of surveillance highlights the role of technology in contemporary surveillance practices. To speak about surveillance in its contemporary forms is necessarily to consider the role of technological innovations such as remote searchable databases, networked computing, high-speed communication, and an array of technical gadgets. It is also to speak about how social relations and interactions are conducted across vast distances, in the absence of co-present individuals (e.g., searching online medical records, banking transactions). But this does not mean that surveillance always or even regularly emerges from a centralized location (e.g., policing agencies), where one group of people (large or small) engages in the monitoring of unsuspecting others who play no role in their own surveillance.

A common feature of the uses of contemporary surveillance data is that those who are chased, harassed, inconvenienced, arrested, restricted, excluded, denied, and victimized actually release the information that is used against them, albeit often for different reasons and in different social locations. The uses of surveillance can be mundane: online retailers use information about customers' past purchases to advertise unsolicited products and deals. It can also be serious: law enforcement agencies sometimes wrongly include people's names on no-fly lists based on personal information submitted during the purchase of an airline ticket.

In addition to enabling hierarchical forms of surveillance, the release of personal information enables lateral or peer-to-peer surveillance (Andrejevic 2005). A relatively recent example of people's willingness to release large amounts of personal information that enables lateral surveillance is the proliferation of social-networking media such as Facebook and MySpace. Users of these media voluntarily release personal information by updating web pages with information such as photographs, recently read books, their latest travels, and the names and pictures of their newest "friends," primarily to keep the viewers of their pages apprised of their activities, thoughts, feelings, and whereabouts. Strangers and confidants are entrusted, and grant trust, to make use of personal information for any number of reasons, benign as well as deceitful.

Conventional understandings of surveillance that emphasize techniques of control and disempowerment need to be rethought in the context of

online social networking where surveillance becomes more than a mode of domination.

New forms of lateral surveillance continue to proliferate with developments in information and communication technologies (ICTs). The collection and storage of personal data, however, are not always explicitly authorized, and data do not always stay put. At least since the 1970s, ICT expansion has enabled a greater number of surveillance operations, and it has facilitated efficient, often automated data sharing and analysis of digital information. As an example of data sharing and analysis, IMS Canada – a company that provides market intelligence to pharmaceutical and health-care stakeholders – collects prescription data from retail pharmacy outlets and assembles aggregated physician prescribing profiles from public health records to be circulated as a commodity in the private sector (Zoutman, Ford, and Bassili 1999). The profiles compiled by IMS Canada are sold to pharmaceutical companies and other interested parties that manipulate public health data for, among other reasons, the manufacture of specific drug products to be marketed to individual physicians. The latter influences the Canadian public's pharmaceutical drug consumption and treatment options.

There is no contention among surveillance scholars that the number of systems used to gather, store, and share personal information in its individual and aggregate forms is growing. But not all observers agree that every information-gathering and data storage practice is tantamount to surveillance. Bennett (2005), for example, contends that much of the literature on information gathering and data storage lends itself to hyperbole when it comes to new technologies and associated privacy implications. He observes a growing tendency among surveillance scholars to make exaggerated claims about the dangers of contemporary information-gathering and data storage and sharing practices based on highly abnormal or exceptional cases (and see Haggerty's foreword to this volume). An example of exaggeration is the common tendency for surveillance scholars to lay claim to the inevitable abuses of CCTV cameras in the absence of comprehensive and comparative empirical data (e.g., Norris and Armstrong 1999).

In their efforts to explain how data circulate in interconnected or networked societies, scholars have defined surveillance in broad terms as the routine collection and storage of personal information for myriad reasons. Among the reasons for routine information gathering are law enforcement and border security as well as consumption, health care, education, and entertainment. For Bennett (2005, 132), however, "there is a fundamental difference between the routine capture, collection, and storage of this kind of personal information [primarily for the purposes of consumer convenience and bureaucratic expediency], and any subsequent analysis of that information from which decisions (benign or otherwise) might be made."

Although Bennett (2005) does not offer an alternative conceptual perspective to stipulate what actually counts as surveillance, his point about the differential applications of surveillance systems is important. In an attempt to characterize the dynamics of contemporary information- and data-gathering techniques, surveillance scholars have conceptualized surveillance in such a way that they are unable to discriminate analytically among unequal applications or differential effects of information-gathering and data-sharing techniques without falling back on broad judgments about the “caring” and “controlling” aspects of contemporary surveillance systems (see, e.g., Lyon 2001). There is merit in conceptualizing surveillance in broad terms: it helps us to move beyond the view that surveillance only involves asymmetrical monitoring, where the few watch the many. It also helps us to appreciate the extent to which surveillance data, regardless of their applications, are gleaned from the routine activities of everyday life – as potential resources in a wide range of programs, policies, campaigns, and projects. Yet conceptualizing surveillance broadly runs the risk of underestimating and, as Bennett (2005) would suggest, trivializing the asymmetrical material applications of surveillance systems – particularly the ways in which new surveillance technologies are integrated into existing institutional relations of power. As we argue below, however, analytically inflating the concept of surveillance to encompass a wide range of undifferentiated practices and applications, with only secondary interest in intention or legitimating ideology, has as much to do with how the community of surveillance scholars is organized and how knowledge about surveillance is produced as it does with the fundamental characteristics of contemporary surveillance practices.

### **Situating Surveillance Studies**

As Haggerty (2006) explains, over the past quarter century, a set of standard research practices emerged in surveillance studies. Guided by the general theoretical principles of panoptic surveillance (sketched out by Bentham and popularized by Foucault), the parameters for “normal surveillance research” were established. Researchers thus came to endorse a set of reified theories, concepts, assumptions, metaphors, standards, and expectations in surveillance research, and something approximating a panoptic paradigm took hold in surveillance studies.

Like most research traditions that cohere around a standard set of paradigmatic assumptions, surveillance scholars were eventually confronted with a set of anomalies (Kuhn 1970) that could not be adequately explained using the panoptic framework. Rather than seeking out new theories and metaphors that better explain anomalies in the empirical world, Haggerty (2006) contends that surveillance scholars overextended the panoptic model to domains where it did not apply. Not only did the overextension of the panoptic paradigm lead to the proliferation of a large number of hybrid concepts (e.g.,

electronic panopticon, super panopticon, urban panopticon), says Haggerty, but we have also come to the point where retention of the panoptic paradigm actually oppresses innovation and scholarly advancement.

In the past few years, a number of explanatory approaches have been formulated to move beyond the determinism that characterizes applications of the panoptic framework in surveillance studies. Two contributions stand out. The first contribution, David Lyon's work on the surveillance society, has exercised considerable influence over the metaphors, concepts, and explanatory frameworks used by surveillance scholars. In a series of contributions, Lyon (e.g., 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2006, 2007) sketches the broad architecture of contemporary surveillance as well as some of its implications. It is common to find references to Lyon's arguments in major surveillance contributions, especially his arguments pertaining to the Janus-faced nature of contemporary surveillance, leaky containers, data doubles, information ethics, social sorting, mobilities, and the globalization of personal data. In fact, no scholar of contemporary surveillance is cited with greater frequency in the literature on surveillance than Lyon (and this might include Foucault!). Yet it is unlikely that Lyon's work will replace the panoptic paradigm as the leading comprehensive framework in surveillance studies because it does not offer an attempt to develop an actual theory of surveillance. His work, rather, comprises a diverse set of theoretical currents in international social theory that is used to broadly explain the features and dimensions of contemporary surveillance systems.

The second contribution, Kevin Haggerty and Richard Ericson's (2000) work on the "surveillant assemblage," does have the potential to become a leading theoretical framework in surveillance studies (for a strong endorsement of the assemblage model as the guiding analytical metaphor in surveillance studies, see Lyon 2003a). Haggerty and Ericson argue that, for too long, surveillance scholars have relied on Orwell's metaphor of Big Brother and Foucault's metaphor of the panoptic prison to formulate explanations of contemporary surveillance. The problem with the Orwellian and Foucaultian imagery is that contemporary information- and data-gathering systems exist beyond the state, and they increasingly eschew asymmetrical forms of monitoring and social control. That is, scholars of surveillance have been confronted with a set of empirical anomalies that cannot be explained using centralized models of social control, and it is necessary to find more appropriate metaphors to conceptualize contemporary forms of surveillance in their collective expression.

To this end, Haggerty and Ericson (2000) use Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of "assemblages" to denote the increasing convergence of once discrete systems of surveillance. They argue that we are witnessing the rhizomatic expansion of information- and data-gathering systems. A rhizome is a plant that grows horizontally, throwing up shoots in different locations.

Rhizomes grow and expand in such a way that they cannot be stopped by breaks in a single location. In a manner very different from a centralized arborescent trunk, the rhizome's growth is continual. The metaphor of the rhizome better captures the character of contemporary surveillance, Haggerty and Ericson assert, because surveillance systems are appearing in so many institutional spaces. And these systems do not simply mark important changes in the form and intention of surveillance. Through the rhizomatic expansion of surveillance, Haggerty and Ericson argue, a partial democratization of surveillance hierarchies is taking place. This democratization involves more sectors of the population becoming susceptible to surveillance, based increasingly on the voluntary release of personal information in myriad locations.

The assemblage model is unlikely to reproduce the determinism found in many applications of the panoptic paradigm given its all-encompassing, omnipresent scope (the latter, incidentally, is an attribute shared by Foucault's conception of the panoptic function). Indeed, as Haggerty and Ericson (2000, 618) write, "no population group irrefutably stands above or outside the surveillant assemblage." But it is possible that the surveillant assemblage will reproduce (or is reproducing) the kind of uncritical scholarly acceptance that Haggerty argues characterized the panoptic paradigm. This is important because, as we explain below, the potential for uncritical acceptance and application of the surveillant assemblage is related to surveillance studies scholars' hitherto under-theorization of the material dimensions of power, surveillance, and social control (but see Dandeker 1990).

There is one key analytical difference between the institutionalization of the panoptic paradigm and the growing popularity of the surveillant assemblage, however. Whereas the panoptic paradigm became overextended and overdetermining (see Althusser 1970) to the point of stifling innovation and progress in surveillance studies, the surveillant assemblage is potentially restrictive in a different way: it threatens to underextend and underdetermine (see Poster 2001) scholarly inquiry by liberalizing surveillance theory and relativizing asymmetrical surveillant applications. This is the essence of Hier's (2003) attempt to supplement the surveillant assemblage with an explicit research agenda conceptualizing the dialectics of surveillance practices as processes of social control; of Bennett's (2005) argument that surveillance scholarship has become so broad and indiscriminate that the precise meaning and, consequently, analytical/discriminatory value of the surveillance concept are unclear; and, tellingly, of Haggerty's (2006) and Haggerty and Ericson's (2006) promotion of government rationalities and stakeholder politics, respectively, as viable perspectives for analyzing the politics of surveillance and visibility (see also Hier et al. 2007).

To summarize, contemporary surveillance practices proliferated in a variety of social and institutional locations over the past thirty years. Many of these

practices were enabled by the willing participation of the subjects of surveillance. The proliferation of diverse surveillance practices presented an empirical problem (i.e., an anomaly) for the dominant explanatory metaphor in surveillance studies: the panopticon. In an effort to better explain the architecture of contemporary surveillance, Haggerty and Ericson (2000) formulated the surveillant assemblage. It is a useful sensitizing concept to characterize the general constitution of contemporary surveillance practices, but the uncritical scholarly acceptance that led to the overextension of the panoptic paradigm in surveillance studies is now a potential threat that could morph into a form of underextension of the assemblage model.

### **Probing the Politics of Surveillance and Visibility**

Regardless of whether the metaphors used to characterize surveillance practices are overextended (i.e., the panoptic paradigm) or underextended (i.e., the surveillant assemblage), the result is the same: a compromising of the political potential of surveillance theory and research. In a manner reminiscent of the panoptic paradigm, the surveillant assemblage metaphor threatens to compromise the political potential of surveillance theory, despite the intentions of its creators, because its primary purpose is to explain the contemporary architecture of surveillance with only a secondary (descriptive) concern for the mechanisms that produce differential applications or appropriations of surveillance systems. Put otherwise, the point of formulating the surveillant assemblage was to encourage surveillance scholars to think outside the panoptic principle about contemporary surveillance. It was not formulated to offer a definitive statement on surveillance. Haggerty and Ericson (2006) are clear on this point, which suggests to us that the potential for underextension of the surveillant assemblage owes much to how the surveillance studies community is organized and how knowledge about surveillance is produced – in contemporary as well as historical surveillance scholarship.

Two primary factors are contributing to the potential underextension of the surveillant assemblage. The first is related to the way that Haggerty and Ericson (2000, 618) differentiate the form or structure of surveillance from its material applications in a wider effort to reject the argument that the mainstream of society is untouched by surveillance:

While poor individuals may be in regular contact with the surveillance systems associated with social assistance or criminal justice, the middle and upper classes are increasingly subject to their own forms of routine observation, documentation and analysis ... In the case of the powerful, this can include the regular monitoring of consumption habits, health profile, occupational performance, financial transactions, communication patterns,

Internet use, credit history, transportation patterns, and physical access controls.

Although Haggerty and Ericson rightfully acknowledge that the targeting of surveillance is never equivocal, and that observation of the powerful “is often a mile wide but only an inch deep” (618), they do not go far enough in explicating the significance of “centres of appropriation” (608), where flows of discrete information are “assembled” at nodal points along rhizomes in the assemblage and in the context of existing institutional relations of power and social control. The lack of analytical care to centres of appropriation leads them, however unintentionally, to relativize, or at least to under-theorize, asymmetrical surveillant applications.

The second factor pertains to the ways in which they understand power and visibility and how their understanding is linked to the problems inherent in historical appropriations and contemporary applications of the panoptic paradigm. One of the most problematic features of the overextension of the panoptic framework in surveillance studies is that it came at the expense of fully appreciating that the panopticon – a cultural trope born of a class-stratified Victorian society – was always materially located. The misappropriation of the panopticon that shapes the vast majority of surveillance theory can be explained in terms of the differences between Foucault’s genealogical and Bentham’s utilitarian perspectives (Goodlad 2003). Whereas Foucault (1977) conceptualized the panopticon primarily in terms of the technological function of the machine, and was secondarily concerned with who operated it and how it was applied, the panopticon’s control or ownership was central to Bentham. He conceived of the panopticon’s benefits not only as disciplinary but also as remunerative: the panopticon would turn a profit. Not merely conceived of as an architectural model to control the masses, then, the panopticon was also to be equipped with internal mechanisms of surveillance to monitor observers in the inspection tower – the great open committee of the tribunal of the world.

One of the consequences of the profound Foucaultian influence on surveillance studies scholars is that it has fostered a disproportional focus on the disciplined individual who lives under the panoptic glance to the neglect of the observer in the metaphorical inspection tower. In his genealogy of modern surveillance and control, Foucault conflates the subject positions of the observer and the observed (Goodlad 2003), and the panopticon is conceived of as a technology of power for society as a whole, regardless of any specific application. For Bentham, however, the separation of the watcher from the watched is key because the panopticon is not a general technology of power distributed throughout the whole of society. It is, rather, a materially located mechanism of social control intended to fix the place of certain sectors of the population. The important theoretical point is that power does

not circulate equally, and blurring the distinction between the relations of domination and subordination by focusing on the workings of the machine (i.e., inspection tower, assemblage) and its “visualizing capabilities” has the effect of relativizing historically recurrent asymmetries of power and surveillance at the expense of understanding visualization and perception as relations of power.

Given that Haggerty and Ericson take the panoptic paradigm as a point of departure, it is unsurprising that they seek to develop new (and important) insights into how the surveillant assemblage operates as a “visualizing device” (2000, 611). But in doing so, they inadvertently reproduce some of the problems found in Foucault’s appropriation of the panopticon by stretching surveillance to an excessively high level of conceptual abstraction. Although their recent work on the politics of surveillance and visibility offers important conceptual advances beyond the original formulation of the assemblage (Haggerty and Ericson 2006), they nevertheless reproduce some of the conceptual problems of the assemblage model. Specifically, they argue that contemporary surveillance as a general tool to accomplish any number of institutional goals has led to a proliferation of social visibility and a levelling of hierarchies of visibility such that people from all walks of life are now under surveillance (i.e., they are visible). This argument resembles their earlier contention that one of the ironies of developments in networked surveillance capabilities is that the same technologies that allow for “the disappearance of the body” also facilitate “the disappearance of disappearance,” as greater volumes of information are accumulated, coded, and manipulated for a protracted range of functions (Haggerty and Ericson 2000, 619).

As we elaborate below, hierarchies of visibility are not necessarily being levelled, and it is somewhat misleading to suggest that we are experiencing a partial democratization of surveillance hierarchies (Haggerty and Ericson 2000). It is true that more people find themselves implicated in surveillance systems with diverse interests and intentions (often without their knowledge or consent). It is also true that powerful sectors of the population are now subjected to surveillance systems, sometimes based on virtual data doubling. In Haggerty and Ericson’s treatment, however, both arguments entail a descriptive notion of visibility that inadvertently feeds into an undifferentiated theory of power.

Arguing that hierarchies of visibility are levelling assumes an implicitly normative conception of visibility as entailing those who are “touched” by surveillance systems. But visibility is as much a political field as it is an aesthetic perception. To build on Haggerty and Ericson’s otherwise important insights, we seek to formulate an analytical category of visibility that is better able to differentiate among the nuances of surveillance applications. This formulation entails differentiating two empirically related but analytically distinct research foci: one on surveillance and one on political and social

problems. While Haggerty and Ericson (2000) recognize that the projection of the virtual self is never a complete or total representation of embodied personhood, there is nevertheless a clear analytical slippage in their work whereby visibility is treated as synonymous with aesthetic vision or perception. The analytical implication is that new assemblages enable a variety of stakeholders to conduct surveillance over a greater number of people in their virtually partial or wholly embodied forms. In this regard, they understand the surveillant assemblage as a visualizing mechanism/machine to bring more people under the gaze of the machine, independent of, or secondarily influenced by, culture, politics, ideology, and vested material interests.

### The Politics of Visibility

Conceptualizing the category of visibility in terms of politics as well as aesthetics helps us to avoid the relativizing tendencies of the assemblage. It also helps us to better understand how perception mutually imbricates with cognition and cultural conditioning. As Brighenti (2007) insightfully explains, it is important to distinguish vision (undifferentiated physical observation) from the field of visibility. Visibility, as a field of cultural action, is conditioned by aesthetics (relations of perception) and politics (relations of power). The field of visibility does not simply comprise phenomena that enter into the range of physical perception; rather, it entails a more comprehensive task of constructing meaning. That is, what we perceive is influenced by how we interpret the world through cultural knowledge formats, and this always leaves human visual observation susceptible to variation across time, space, and place.

Although visibility is a form of constructed or culturally conditioned perception, this is not all that it is. Because perception and being are linked – that is, how we perceive objects in our visual fields is linked to our social and cultural contexts – visibility is a relational social process. As a relational social process that is conditioned by vested material interests and desires, reciprocal democratic vision among individuals and groups is more often the exception than the rule. While the surveillant assemblage purportedly extracts bodies from places and reconfigures them as virtual data doubles, thereby distorting or influencing human perception, it also contributes to the strengthening of asymmetries in the field of vision by reconstituting the body by using assemblages of discrete data flows (Ball 2005).

For Brighenti (2007), asymmetries in the field of vision transform visibility into a “site of strategy.” As an asymmetrical site of strategy for visualizing the population, the field of perception interestingly shifts: normalcy – understood by Haggerty and Ericson (2000) as that which is visible – becomes invisible. In the surveillant assemblage, that is, where innumerable data flows bring about the “disappearance of disappearance” in the context of ubiquitous

social monitoring, it is in fact appearance (virtual or embodied) that becomes normal, unmarked, unnoticed, and banal. The assemblage brings the entire population into the range of potential vision, implying that “invisible” phenomena are not beyond the pale of comprehension or perception but simply unmarked, common, and mundane. In the context of the surveillant assemblage as a total visualizing machine, therefore, visibility and invisibility are metonymical: they blur into one another, overlap, and become interchangeable. The invisible refers to the articulated, visible, ordinary features of everyday life that, paradoxically, render it unremarkable, commonplace, and forgettable.

Given that visibility and invisibility are metonymical, and therefore analytically indistinguishable, in the surveillant assemblage it might be more appropriate to conceptualize the surveillant assemblage as an “invisibility machine” that is produced through visualizing tendencies and comes fully equipped with visibility traps. Haggerty and Ericson (2006) are justified in arguing that the assemblage brings into perception that which is not otherwise comprehensible, but this argument is not an end in itself. Rather, as they have started to recognize, it is the place to begin asking deeper analytical questions. Why are certain groups of people more visible than others at certain moments in time? In what contexts does visibility work against democratic participation in social institutions? What is worth being seen under different government regimes? How is visibility (the ordinary/normal) intrinsic to invisibility and super-visibility (the extraordinary/abnormal)? What does the visible minority tell us about the invisible and super-visible majority at specific historical moments?

Although we are not yet in a position to provide a complete set of answers to these important questions, we offer a set of ideas to encourage critical inquiry into surveillance as a political and social problem. To gain greater conceptual understanding of the complicated relationship between visibility and recognition, it is useful to conceptualize thresholds of visibility that define the field of perception. In one sense, as Brighenti (2007) explains, there are “fair visibility thresholds”: normative standards for equitable and proportional surveillance. The surveillant assemblage is a metaphor designed primarily to address groups of people existing within the parameters of fair visibility. Groups of people falling below the threshold of fair visibility comprise the socially excluded who largely escape the field of vision and surveillance. They are the marginalized underclasses (e.g., undocumented migrants working off the grid), not worthy of the status of “invisible visibility.” While the marginalized underclasses usually remain out of the field of vision – noticed but unacknowledged – they sometimes join other groups of people above the threshold of fair visibility: the super-visible who are singled out for excessive surveillance and who are stripped of the status of

“normalized invisibility.” That is, their visibility derives from the field of the invisible masses – a field of invisibility, moreover, that is produced by the visualizing tendencies of the surveillant assemblage.

It is well established that asymmetrical forms of surveillance above the threshold of fair visibility are significantly influenced by race-, gender-, sex-, age-, and class-based distinctions. Manifestations of disproportional surveillance above the threshold of fair visibility manifest in the political economy of society and the experiential economy of everyday life. Gilliom (2001), for example, demonstrates how the interaction among race, gender, and class in the context of welfare administration reinforces cleavages in the material distribution of valued societal resources (see also Magnet in this volume). More than posing material implications, however, excessive visibility also becomes a trap when people’s awareness of their excessive normative visibility status influences self-esteem and self-image (Brighenti 2007). An example of the psychological implications of excessive visibility is Franz Fanon’s (1986) vivid exploration of the ways in which visibility can operate as a trap through the penetrating gaze of the colonial other (see also Parnaby and Reed in this volume).

Surveillance is a social and political problem at both extremes of the fair visibility threshold. Disproportional levels of surveillance above the fair visibility threshold constitute an obvious problem that is empirically well documented across a range of scholarly fields. But ignoring the marginalized underclasses that fall below the threshold of fair visibility (but remain in the assemblage) is also a problem – one of under-surveillance fostered through misrecognition, isolation, and social marginality. Importantly, the conditions that produce problems above and below the threshold of fair visibility are not typically problems of surveillance per se. Surveillance practices can exacerbate or reinforce existing problems with excessive or minimal levels of scrutiny, respectively, and they sometimes play an important role in bringing about the conditions of exclusion, denial, inequality, or deprivation. But when the analytical category of surveillance is foregrounded in studies that are primarily about social and political problems, the result is to relativize surveillant applications by confusing the material sources of political and social problems with the mechanisms of their reproduction or articulation.

It is necessary, therefore, to differentiate two analytically distinct but empirically overlapping interests in surveillance studies. The first analytical interest is in the general concept of surveillance. An analytical category of surveillance must possess defining features or characteristics. We are fully cognizant of the dangers of inflating the concept of surveillance by indiscriminately defining a wide range of phenomena as instances of surveillance. We are also aware of the dangers of deflating the concept by too narrowly restricting the range of instances that qualify as surveillance. In the absence

of a clear set of criteria to define surveillance *qua* surveillance, however, conceptual confusion will continue to detract from the analytical value and political significance of surveillance studies. By encouraging an independent analytical focus on surveillance *qua* surveillance without recourse to its applications, we are better able to address Haggerty and Ericson's (2006) frustrations with the problematic nature of a broad, undifferentiated theory of surveillance. We are also able to resist their contention that we can no longer speak of inherent attributes to identify surveillance *qua* surveillance.

The second analytical interest lies in political and social problems. It is necessary to critically assess the ways in which information gleaned from assemblages of data affect population groups in fields of visibility differentially, inequitably, and temporally. The differential applications of surveillance systems pertain to populations long disadvantaged by such systems above and below fair visibility thresholds (e.g., visible minorities, welfare recipients, children and youth, homeless people, and so on) but also to populations whose members are otherwise in privileged social positions. For example, Sheryl N. Hamilton argues in this volume that the crime of identity theft – a growing political problem – differentially affects “creditable” sectors of the population largely based on personal information stored in databases. Creditable sectors comprise people who have assets that are desirable to identity thieves. Not only does the growing prevalence of identity theft suggest to us that the traditional focus on claims making and definitional activity in the constructionist tradition needs to be supplemented with an appreciation of the significance of new technologies, assemblages, conditions, and emerging subjectivities; it also reminds us that accumulated capital, which is typically conceptualized as a marker of privilege and prestige, can create new problems by placing wealthy sectors of the population more squarely within the surveillant assemblage.

Still, we must resist the seductive dimensions of new information and communication technologies that potentially lead us to relativize surveillant applications in explanations of surveillance and political problems. As we have argued, the problems with surveillance theory and its secondary – sometimes rhetorical – engagement with political and social problems can be significantly attributed to the history of surveillance theory and how knowledge about surveillance is produced. There is a provocative literature in the sociology of knowledge that explores the ways in which intellectual predecessors are selected and excluded (Camic 1992; Hier 2001; Laub and Sampson 1991) and how sociological explanations are produced in the context of intellectual traditions, schools of thought, and scholarly paradigms. Caught up in the rise of postmodernism and poststructuralism throughout the 1980s and 1990s, surveillance studies – exemplified by Lyon's (1994, 2001) work – was essentially set on a path inspired by, but critical of,

Foucault's panoptic writings. In the process of embracing postmodern and poststructural contributions (sometimes influenced by other streams of the Foucaultian imaginary), mainstream surveillance studies lost sight of the structural foundations of surveillance. Rather than building a set of theories on the work of Dandeker (1990), Gandy (1993), Giddens (1985), and Rule (1973), , for example, exemplars of "good surveillance scholarship" were found elsewhere. One of the consequences of predecessor selection in surveillance studies has been that surveillance scholars have disproportionately focused on the workings of the machine to the relative neglect of political economy, social inequality, and social control.

### **Conclusion: A Place to Begin**

We have argued that it is important to understand the contemporary architecture of surveillance and how surveillance systems "work." Understanding how contemporary surveillance works, even if primarily descriptively, is significant. Analyses of the differential applications of surveillance systems are crucial, but we cannot underestimate the relationship between a broad conceptualization of surveillance and context-specific analyses. Put simply, if it were not for the provocative, descriptive richness of the assemblage model, our understanding of the differential applications of surveillance systems would be diminished. A major benefit of the assemblage model, therefore, is that it better prepares us to analyze context-specific applications of surveillance and stakeholder politics.

The broad sensitizing framework provided by the surveillant assemblage comprises a distinct research agenda that is empirically related to but analytically separate from the context-specific applications of surveillance. We must understand the architecture of surveillance, but it is equally important to understand how surveillance practices are related to political and social problems in the context of material relations of power and institutionalization. The relations among surveillance and political problems are not foremost relations of surveillance. Surveillance mechanisms regularly contribute to the deepening or reinforcement of political problems, but they are not fundamental causes. When surveillance practices are treated as fundamental causes of political problems, we are often left with a relativization of surveillance applications and, consequently, a reduction in the political potential of surveillance theory.

Finally, our arguments about fields of visibility and the visualizing tendencies of the assemblage model should not be taken as ends in themselves. These arguments are, rather, places to begin to think otherwise about surveillance and political problems and to refine our knowledge of how surveillance can be understood as a political and social problem. We do not wish to foster or exacerbate prolonged academic debate about how to conceptualize surveillance; academic debate is important to gain full understanding of

surveillance and political problems, but it can also work against the practical imperatives of surveillance research and social change. We therefore encourage surveillance and political problems researchers to probe deeper into the politics of surveillance and visibility.

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# Part 1: Stigma, Morality, and Social Control

