

Chapter 1

The Essentials of Surveillance

ABSTRACT

The process of surveillance has been around for a long period. Different theories of surveillance such as the notion of the panopticon were suggested to explain the ways in which surveillance can create a more controlled society. This led to the notion of the docility and surveillance where the knowledge of surveillance can create a docile society. With the availability of newer tools, surveillance becomes more widespread, which leads to a networked surveillance. All of this eventually builds up to a process of surveillance of the life story of institutions and people.

INTRODUCTION

It was a winter day in the state of North Carolina in United States when my son had turned nineteen years old and was the proud possessor of his first car. It was a relatively old Ford Mustang, a car that he had dreamed of for some time and I was able to obtain at a price I could afford. The possession of a car in America is a rite of passage that teens in the USA await with great anticipation and the guardians dread. Now, there was no holding back a young person from being able to go wherever the person wished and most teens would happily exercise the rights that the freedom and possession offered. For the guardians, it was an immediate loss of control on the life of a young loved one. It became immediately

apparent to my wife and me that our only child could now roam freely the highways of North Carolina, and perhaps even further. This, for many, is a moment of panic. The secure bubble that the youngster lived in suddenly disappeared. This was no longer the case that I would be driving him to his next music concert or to a friend's place. Now he could go alone, and we would never know where he was, and until he returned we would be holding our breath. We had lost control, and we were desperately curious to know how our child's life would change with the freedom that the Mustang heralded. In speaking to many other parents, we realized that within the confines of small-town USA, my wife and I were not alone in our curiosity and anxiety.

I needed to find out. There must be a way, I argued, by which I could know how the life of the youngster was altered by the car. I also needed to know what new relational challenges would be presented with the new freedom. We wondered if our relationship with our child would be altered because now, we would not always know everything about his life. He could be at one place, but he may choose not to disclose where he is. In the past, we always knew his location, because we would take him to a place, and we would collect him from the place. In cases he would travel with others, there would always be an "adult" involved and we could check-in with the person he was with. We were now facing a new challenge of uncertainty. The way this matter was resolved was through a credit card that my son used for some of his purchases, which now included paying for the gasoline for the car. I set up a simple tracking system, offered by the Credit Card company, that would alert me whenever the card was used for a purchase. All of a sudden a whole new World opened up. A new story was being constructed as the use of the card showed the movement of a person and the kind of places the person would frequent using the car he possessed. A curious matter happened soon. I no longer had to ask my son where he had been on a weekend evening. I knew because of the alerts, the card was, for instance, used at a convenience store in the downtown of Winston-Salem, or at fast food restaurant in Chapel Hill, or at a music equipment supply store in Greensboro – all towns within North Carolina. Not only was my curiosity fulfilled but it also gave me a sense of comfort in knowing that my son was safe and was using his

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