Who is watching over you? The role of shared identity in perceptions of surveillance

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Abstract

Two studies were conducted to investigate the role of social identity in appraisals of the purpose and acceptance of surveillance. In Study 1 (N = 112), a survey study demonstrated that there is a negative relationship between identification with one’s city and the extent to which public closed circuit television (CCTV) surveillance is perceived as an invasion of privacy. This relationship was mediated by perceptions that the purpose of surveillance is to ensure safety. Study 2 (N = 139) manipulated identity salience at the sub-group and superordinate level and the source of surveillance. Results demonstrated that surveillance originating from fellow sub-group members was perceived as less privacy invading than surveillance originating from the superordinate group, but only when that sub-group identity was salient. No differences in perceptions of privacy invasion were found when the more inclusive identity was made salient. We argue that whether surveillance is perceived as an invasion of privacy depends on the perceived social relationship with the source of the surveillance—surveillance is perceived as more acceptable when it originates from a group with which one identifies or shares an identity. Practical implications are discussed. Copyright © 2009 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

You had to live—did live, from habit that became instinct—in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and except in darkness, every movement scrutinised’. George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949, p. 7).

While surveillance is clearly not at the level portrayed in Nineteen Eighty-Four, with ‘Big Brother’ appearing on the television, rather than watching through the telescreen, levels of surveillance are at an extremely high level in modern society. For example, BBC News (2002) reported that the average UK citizen is captured on closed circuit television (CCTV) 300 times per day (see also Armitage, 2002; Short & Ditton, 1998). Much research into surveillance has focussed on its intended outcomes and assesses, for instance, the effectiveness of surveillance systems in deterring crime or in promoting productivity at work (e.g. D’Urso, 2005, 2006; Welsh & Farrington, 2003). Implicit in such research, we would argue, is the notion that people will be more accepting of surveillance if it is effective in achieving those goals. However, such a focus neglects the fact that people may be concerned about the use of surveillance for other reasons too: Many feel it implies a lack of trust, infringing privacy and civil liberties in both the workplace (Lee & Brand, 2005; Whitty & Carr, 2006) and in public spaces (Hones & Charman, 1992).

In the present research, we depart from previous psychological analyses of surveillance, in that we suggest surveillance is not simply seen as good or bad, but that its perception may be affected by additional factors. For example, D’Urso (2006) suggests that the direct relationship between increased surveillance levels and various negative outcomes such as reduced
job performance and workplace satisfaction, may be moderated by an individual difference variable, ‘perceived surveillance concern’. Even though such individual difference moderators may be important in explaining the conditions under which surveillance will be accepted, this may only explain part of the process. In an attempt to complement previous analyses, in the present research we focus on the way surveillance perceptions are affected by contextual influences relating to the source of the surveillance. The social identity approach, comprising social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) and self-categorization theory (SCT; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), provides a platform from which to understand the way in which the source of surveillance, and identification with that source, affects the acceptability of surveillance. In particular, the social identity approach helps us to predict when people may see surveillance as limiting or undermining their freedom, and when surveillance is accepted and even endorsed by those that are being watched. Building on previous research demonstrating that identification or group membership can shape the effectiveness of social influence attempts (Haslam, Powell, & Turner, 2000; Turner, Wetherell, & Hogg, 1989), we propose that the level of identification or salience of the identity can affect whether surveillance is construed as beneficial to the group, or as undermining the privacy of those being watched. Thus, rather than simply being seen as a source of control and power (Turner, 2005), under specific circumstances surveillance can be seen as an expression of group-based protection for the safety of oneself and fellow group members.

The Role of Social Identity

In order to understand when individuals will accept CCTV and when they will resist it, it is important to understand the way they see themselves and the way they see the source of surveillance. More specifically, according to the social identity approach, when people define themselves as sharing group membership, other group members are more likely to be perceived as valid sources of information about the appropriate way to think and behave in that situation. Essentially, we argue that group membership guides behaviour and attitudes. There is a large body of research that provides empirical support for this idea. For example, McGarty, Haslam, Hutchinson, and Turner (1994) demonstrated that when participants’ group membership was made salient, they were more open to persuasion from an in-group member than an out-group member and could also recall information from an in-group member more accurately than information provided by an out-group member. Furthermore, it has been found that people find something more funny if other in-group members find it funny (Platow et al., 2005). Other research has shown that individuals are more open to influence from in-group members than similar influence attempts from out-group members (e.g. Abrams, Wetherell, Cochrane, Hogg, & Turner, 1990; McGarty, Turner, Hogg, David, & Wetherell, 1992), that the way stressors are appraised depends on whether the situation is perceived as stressful by an in-group or out-group member (Haslam, Jetten, O’Brien, & Jacobs, 2004; Haslam, O’Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005), and that group-directed criticism is more accepted when it is expressed by in-group members than when the same criticism is voiced by out-group members (Hornsey, Oppes, & Svensson, 2002). Together, this research demonstrates that the same behaviour is interpreted differently depending on whether it is attributed to an in-group or out-group source. That is, whereas we assume that fellow in-group members share our values and that they will be acting in the group’s best interests, more obscure and negative motivations are attributed to out-group members’ actions.

In applying this reasoning to surveillance, Levine (2000) argued for the importance of knowing people’s group membership in order to determine how they will react to being under surveillance. Levine’s account takes as its basis the notion that reactions and behaviour following from the perception of being surveilled should vary markedly as a function of the identities of both the watcher and the watched. As Levine points out, a social identity analysis would never expect behaviour to differ merely according to whether one is under surveillance or not—what matters is who one is visible (or invisible) to. The reasoning we take from Levine, then, is that reactions to being under surveillance and behaviour resulting from this, are defined by the salience and contents of social identities. In the present research, we attempt to investigate the theoretical suggestions made by Levine (2000) empirically. That is, in order to fully understand the effects of surveillance, it is necessary to consider the relationship between those who are being watched and the source of the surveillance. More specifically, we need to assess whether the source of surveillance and those that are being watched share social identity.

Extending these ideas, we argue that whether there is a shared sense of identity between those that are being monitored and the source of surveillance will affect the degree to which surveillance is seen as an invasion of privacy. This is particularly likely to be the case when the reason for introducing surveillance is open to multiple interpretations. For example, in the case of CCTV surveillance in public settings, this may be perceived either as promoting the safety of those in the area or as motivated by a lack of trust in residents. We suggest that a shared sense of identity with the source of
surveillance is likely to encourage watched individuals to interpret surveillance in terms of benefits that exist for the group (e.g. improvements in safety). In contrast, when identity between the source of the surveillance and those being watched is not shared, it is more likely that surveillance will be perceived as control and will therefore be interpreted as an invasion of privacy. In this research, relying on social identity reasoning, we aim to identify when surveillance will be seen as the overbearing, invasive monitoring of an Orwellian ‘Big Brother’ and when it will be seen as the concerned protection of one who cares.

The Present Research

Two studies were conducted examining individuals’ interpretations of CCTV surveillance. This type of surveillance is one of the most common forms of surveillance and is particularly ubiquitous in the UK. For example, according to Privacy International (2007), the UK is categorized as an ‘endemic surveillance society’—the only country in Europe to be categorized as such. According to the same report, the UK has one of the worst records for visual surveillance, both in terms of the prevalence of surveillance and the misuse of information. BBC News (2006) reported that at this time, there were estimated to be around four million CCTV cameras in use in the UK and noted that surveillance in the UK also extends to data collected from credit card transactions, Oyster travel cards, phone tapping and health records. A report from the Surveillance Studies Network (2006) argues that the complex infrastructure of surveillance in the UK implies, by its very existence, that the gathering of personal data has become commonplace and apparently necessary. Thus, within this pervasive surveillance environment we examined the effect of identification (Study 1) and identity salience (Study 2) on perceptions of privacy infringement and appraisals of the purpose of surveillance.

More specifically, Study 1 provides a correlational examination of perceptions of CCTV surveillance within the centre of a small UK city. We examine the effect of city identification on perceptions of privacy infringement and appraisals of the purpose of CCTV surveillance. Study 2 provides an experimental investigation of individuals’ perceptions of surveillance as a function of whether their salient social identity was either shared or not shared with the source of surveillance.

We predict that if one does not sufficiently identify with the group, or if the surveillance is introduced by an out-group source, then surveillance is more likely to be seen as infringing on privacy, compared to when identification with the group is higher or if the source of the surveillance is perceived as an in-group member. Furthermore, we predict that these variations in the appraisals of surveillance will be due to different attributions about the purpose of the surveillance. If identity is shared, surveillance - such as CCTV in public spaces—is more likely to be appraised as protecting the interests of the in-group (i.e. as ensuring the personal safety of in-group members). When identity is not shared, however, surveillance is more likely to be appraised as having a malign purpose, such as limiting individual freedom. In other words, we predict that surveillance effects on perceptions of privacy invasion will be mediated by attributions about the purpose of surveillance.

STUDY 1

In the context of CCTV cameras in the city centre, we predicted that people would consider the use of surveillance as less of an invasion of their privacy the more highly they identified with their city. Moreover, we predicted that this relationship would be mediated by purpose appraisals—in particular, that surveillance is beneficial for the group because it enhances safety on the street. Specifically, we predicted that the more people identify with their city, the more they would appraise surveillance as being used to improve safety and this should decrease perceptions of privacy infringement.

Method

Participants

One hundred and twelve residents of a small city in the South-West of England voluntarily took part in the study. Participants were aged from 16 to 73 with a mean age of 26 (three individuals did not indicate their age). There were 58 males and 53 females (one individual did not indicate their gender).
Procedure

Participants were approached in the city centre and asked to complete a short questionnaire. They were then invited to read an information sheet which contained study information and contact details of the researchers. The study was presented as an investigation into how people feel about surveillance, specifically CCTV in use in their city centre. Participants responded to all items on a 7-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from (1) ‘strongly disagree’ to (7) ‘strongly agree’. After completing the measures, participants were requested to provide information on their age and gender.

Measures

**Identification** Two items (adapted from Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995) were used to assess identification with the city. The items were ‘I feel a strong sense of belonging to [the city]’ and ‘I feel strong ties with people from [the city]’, $r = .62$, $p < .01$.

**Privacy Infringement** Participants completed six items (adapted from Alge, Ballinger, Tangirala, & Oakley, 2006) on the degree to which they felt CCTV in the city infringed on their privacy. Items were, ‘It is acceptable that there is CCTV in use’ (reversed), ‘The presence of CCTV cameras is an invasion of my privacy’, ‘I have little reason to be concerned about my privacy here’ (reversed), ‘The fact that there are CCTV cameras makes me uneasy’, ‘I can completely understand why there are CCTV cameras in use’ (reversed), and ‘I feel like someone is always watching me’ ($\alpha = .73$).

**Appraisal of Purpose of Surveillance** Participants completed six items to indicate the extent to which they felt that surveillance was used for the purpose of safety. The items were ‘For my safety’, ‘For the safety of others’, ‘Because of previous incidents’, ‘To prevent theft’, ‘To prevent misbehaving’ and ‘To prevent violence’ ($\alpha = .76$).

Results

**Preliminary Analyses**

On average, participants tended not to see CCTV as an infringement on privacy ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 0.85$). Identification with the city was relatively high ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 1.41$) and participants agreed that the purpose of CCTV is ensuring safety ($M = 5.67$, $SD = 0.80$). Correlational analyses revealed that overall, identification with the city was significantly and positively related to perceiving the purpose of CCTV as safety, $r = .25$, $p < .01$, and negatively related to perceptions of privacy infringement, $r = -.19$, $p = .05$. Furthermore, perceiving the purpose of CCTV as safety was significantly negatively related to perceptions of privacy infringement, $r = -.38$, $p < .01$.

Given the varied age range of the sample, we examined whether age and gender affected responses to the main variables. Only age was negatively related to perceptions of privacy infringement, with younger people perceiving CCTV as infringing more on their privacy, $r = -.23$, $p = .02$. However, this relationship did not affect the relationships reported below and we therefore do not control for age.

**Mediational Analyses**

Following recommendations by Baron and Kenny (1986), mediational analysis was conducted to examine whether the relationship between identification and perceiving surveillance as an infringement of privacy was mediated by appraisals that the purpose of CCTV is ensuring safety (see Figure 1). Regression analysis confirmed the effect of identification on perceived infringement of privacy, $\beta = -.19$, $t = -1.97$, $p = .05$. Further analyses demonstrated that identification significantly predicted the appraisal that the purpose of CCTV was for safety, $\beta = .25$, $t = 2.64$, $p < .01$. When safety was entered into the equation, the effect of identification on perceived infringement of privacy became non-significant, $\beta = -.10$, $t = -1.07$, $p = .29$, and the belief that CCTV is for safety was negatively related to perceptions of privacy infringement, $\beta = -.35$, $t = -3.73$, $p < .01$. A Sobel test revealed that appraisal of safety purposes was a significant mediator ($Z = -2.16$, $p = .03$).
Discussion

Consistent with our predictions, those who identified more strongly with their city were also less likely to perceive surveillance as an infringement of privacy. Further analyses showed that attributing the purpose of surveillance as consistent with group interests (e.g. ensuring safety) mediated this relationship. This suggests that identifying with a group is associated with variations in the way surveillance is perceived. With increasing levels of identification, perceptions of surveillance as ensuring safety also increase, and perceptions of surveillance as invading privacy decrease.

Although the results of Study 1 provide support for our hypotheses, the correlational nature of this study clearly has its limitations. It could be argued, for example, that greater identification with one’s city is also related to other variables (such as being more law abiding, or having lived in the area for longer) that are associated with acceptance of surveillance and that these factors actually influence perceptions of surveillance. In order to rule out alternative processes that may have affected the relationship between group identification and perceptions of surveillance and to provide evidence for a causal effect of social identity on perceptions of surveillance, we conducted a second study where we manipulated identity (by way of an identity salience manipulation) to examine our research questions in a more controlled way. Another aim of the second study was to examine more closely the way in which the relation between the target of surveillance and the source of surveillance affects perceptions of privacy infringement.

STUDY 2

Study 2 was an experimental investigation of perceptions of surveillance. We examined our hypotheses in a student hall of residence at a British university. We chose a large hall of residence with a well-established identity. CCTV cameras are used to monitor the hall corridors when tutors cannot be present. In this setting, residents may view their group memberships at a number of levels. They may categorize themselves at a higher, superordinate level, by seeing themselves as a member of the university as a whole. In contrast, they may also categorize themselves at a lower level of identity, by seeing themselves in a sub-group within the university, as a member of their hall of residence. The latter identity is a less inclusive identity, nested within the former. In this study, we utilized the multi-level nature of these identities in order to test our hypothesis that shared identity with the source of surveillance would reduce infringement of privacy perceptions. In line with previous research, we predict that such attitudes will be determined by the relative salience of these identities (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Oakes, 1987; Oakes, Turner, & Haslam, 1991).

In Study 1, we assessed whether people were more accepting of surveillance when they identified more with the city it targeted. In this study, we build on this finding by manipulating identity salience and source of surveillance and hence examining the causal link. As outlined above, who is seen as an in-group member and who is seen as an out-group member depends on the level at which individuals categorize themselves. We predicted that when source of surveillance and identity salience are concerned with the same identity, surveillance is least likely to be perceived as privacy infringement.
Thus, we would predict that privacy infringement perceptions would be relatively low when the hall of residence is the source of surveillance and this identity is salient and when the university is the source of surveillance and this identity is salient. However, given the fact that the hall of residence identity is nested within the university identity, we predicted that privacy infringement perceptions would also be relatively low when university identity is salient and the source of surveillance is the sub-group hall of residence identity. This prediction is in line with SCT reasoning that these judgements are made in the context of whether there is a shared superordinate identity (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Turner et al., 1987). It is only in this condition that the source of the surveillance is part of the salient identity. In contrast, when hall identity is salient but the source of surveillance is university members, participants were predicted to experience most privacy infringement, because identity between the source and the target of surveillance is not shared.

We also predicted that the effect of both factors on perceptions of privacy infringement would be mediated by appraisals of the purpose of surveillance as ensuring safety. Initial level of identification with the hall of residence was measured alongside the dependent measures. To control for any pre-existing differences in identification that may affect the extent to which the salience manipulation is effective, we controlled for group identification in our analyses.

Method

Design

The experiment consisted of a 2(Identity salience: Resident vs. University) × 2(Source of surveillance: Fellow residents vs. University members) factorial between participants design. Both factors were manipulated and participants were randomly allocated to conditions.

Participants

Participants were an opportunity sample of 139 undergraduate students at a British university, recruited in and around the specific university hall of residence where they lived. They took part voluntarily. Participants were aged from 18 to 22 with a mean age of 18.5 years, although 19 individuals did not indicate their age. The study included 57 males and 72 females (10 participants did not indicate their gender).

Procedure

The study was presented as an investigation of residents’ perceptions of surveillance (specifically CCTV) within their residence; either naming the student’s specific residence or naming university accommodation more generally, depending on the condition. Participants then completed a manipulation task in line with this (see below), before they were provided with the source of surveillance manipulation.

Manipulation of Identity Salience  Participants were first informed that the researchers were interested in the thoughts of either residents of the specific residence or of residents of university accommodation more generally, on the presence of CCTV cameras in their residence and about living there in general. Participants were also told that members of other residences/universities were being surveyed as well (depending on condition). In order to reinforce the salience manipulation, participants were then asked to list three things that they liked about either living in their specific residence (in the residence condition) or about the university as a whole (in the university condition; Haslam, Oakes, Reynolds, & Turner, 1999). This manipulation has been used successfully in previous research to manipulate relative identity salience (e.g. Adarves-Yorno, Postmes, & Haslam, 2006; Halloran, 2007).1

1Given the close nesting of identities used in this study, a follow-up study was conducted to check the effectiveness of the identity salience manipulation in manipulating relative salience. A different sample of 35 participants living at the same hall of residence encountered the same manipulations as in the main study, then completed a visual analogue scale, where they were asked to draw an X on a line to represent themselves in the current moment. This measured from 0–13.1 cm, with hall of residence represented on the left and the university represented on the right. Analysis of variance showed that those in the university identity salience condition marked themselves significantly nearer to the university end of the line (M = 9.79, SD = 2.98) than did those in the hall of residence identity salience condition (M = 7.32, SD = 3.08), F (1, 30) = 5.25, p = .03, η² = .60.
Manipulation of Source of Surveillance  
Participants then read a short paragraph reminding them of the CCTV cameras in place in their accommodation. They were then told either that fellow residents of that specific hall had petitioned the university to have CCTV installed (in the residents source condition), or that people from various groups within the university had requested the instalment (in the university source condition).

Dependent Measures

Following the manipulations, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire containing the dependent variables. Participants responded to all measures on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) ‘strongly disagree’ to (7) ‘strongly agree’.

Identification  
Three items adapted from Doosje et al. (1995) were used to assess identification with the specific hall of residence. The items used were ‘I feel a strong sense of belonging to [hall of residence]’, ‘I feel strong ties with people from [hall of residence]’ and ‘I am happy to be a member of [hall of residence]’ (α = .80).

Privacy Infringement  
The same six items as used in Study 1 were included to assess the extent to which participants felt CCTV in their hall of residence infringed on their privacy (α = .77).

Appraisals of Purpose of Surveillance  
As in Study 1, participants rated to what extent they felt that surveillance was used for safety (α = .82).

After completion of the questionnaire, participants were thanked for their time, given the debriefing sheet and were offered a chocolate bar as compensation for taking part.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary analyses revealed that identification with the specific hall of residence was a significant covariate when analysing the effects of identity and source of surveillance. We therefore controlled for group identification in the analyses reported below.

Privacy Infringement

A 2(Identity) × 2(Source) analysis of covariance (with hall of residence identification as the covariate) was carried out on the privacy measure to assess the effects of salient identity and source of surveillance on perceptions that CCTV infringes on one’s privacy. The analysis revealed that the covariate was significant, F (1, 134) = 7.82, p < .01, η^2_p = .06. In addition, only the predicted interaction was found to be significant, F (1, 134) = 3.83, p = .05, η^2_p = .03 (see Figure 2). In line with predictions, there were no differences in privacy invasion when identity salience matched the source of surveillance. Thus, simple main effects showed that when university identity was salient, there was no significant effect of source of surveillance on perceptions of privacy infringement, F (1, 134) = 0.08, p = .77, η^2_p = .01. Furthermore, privacy infringement perceptions did not differ depending on identity salience when the source of surveillance was fellow residents, F (1, 134) = 1.16, p = .28, η^2_p < .01. However, also as predicted, privacy invasion perceptions did differ when the identity that was salient did not encompass the source of surveillance. As such, when the hall of residence identity was salient, perceptions that CCTV infringes on one’s privacy was higher when the source of the surveillance was members of the university (M = 3.56, SD = 1.40), than when the source was fellow residents (M = 3.03, SD = 0.95), F (1, 134) = 6.72, p = .01, η^2_p = .05. Finally, when the source of surveillance was the university, privacy infringement perceptions were marginally lower when the university identity was salient (M = 3.17, SD = 0.88) than when the resident identity was salient (M = 3.56, SD = 1.40), F (1, 134) = 2.94, p = .09, η^2_p = .02.

Appraisals of Purpose of Surveillance

A 2(Identity) × 2(Source) analysis of covariance (with hall of residence identification) on the perception that CCTV serves safety purposes, revealed that the covariate was significant, F (1, 133) = 22.50, p < .01, η^2_p = .15. In addition, no significant
main effects were found, but the predicted interaction was significant, $F(1, 133) = 4.65, p = .03, \eta^2_p = .03$. In line with the privacy infringement findings, when the source of surveillance was university members, participants were significantly more likely to attribute CCTV as ensuring safety when a university identity was salient ($M = 4.72, SD = 1.08$), rather than a halls of residence identity ($M = 4.49, SD = 1.28$), $F(1, 133) = 4.51, p = .04, \eta^2_p = .03$. In addition, simple main effects analysis showed that when a university identity was salient and the CCTV was requested by university members, participants were significantly more likely to appraise the CCTV as serving safety purposes ($M = 4.72, SD = 1.08$) than when the source of surveillance was other residents ($M = 4.40, SD = 1.25, F(1, 133) = 4.59, p = .03, \eta^2_p = .03$. There were no other significant simple effects.

**Mediation Analyses**

A series of regression analyses were conducted to examine whether the perceived purpose of surveillance mediated the interactive effect of identity salience and source of surveillance on perceptions of privacy infringement. In line with guidelines for conducting mediated moderation (see Aiken & West, 1991; Baron & Kenny, 1986; Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005), identity salience and source of surveillance were dummy coded and the interaction term was calculated by multiplying the two variables. As recommended by Muller et al., the independent variables were contrast coded as resident identity ($-1$), university identity ($+1$); residents source ($-1$), university source ($+1$) and the mediator (appraisal of surveillance as serving a safety function) was centred so that its mean was zero but its standard deviation remained the same. In these analyses, identification with the hall of residence was always entered at Step 1 and the main effects and their interaction were entered at Step 2. The analyses showed that the requirements for demonstrating mediated moderation were met. In the first stage of analysis, regression analyses with the independent variables, identity salience and source of surveillance and the interaction term confirmed the significant interaction between identity salience and source of surveillance on perceptions of privacy infringement, $\beta = -.17, p = .05$. Secondly, the significant interaction between identity salience and source of surveillance on appraisals of CCTV as ensuring safety was confirmed, $\beta = .17, p = .03$. A
third analysis was conducted where appraisals of CCTV as ensuring safety was entered at Step 2 with the independent variables, and with perceptions of privacy infringement as the criterion. This analysis revealed that appraisals of the purpose of CCTV as safety negatively predicted perception of privacy infringement, $\beta = -.41, p < .01$, and the interaction was reduced to non-significance, $\beta = .10, p = .22$ (see Figure 3). A Sobel test showed that the mediator was significant ($Z = -1.98, p = .05$).

Discussion

In line with predictions, we found that surveillance was perceived more as an invasion of privacy when the identity salient to the target of surveillance did not include the source of surveillance, compared to when identity was shared, or included the source of surveillance within it. Further analyses revealed that this interactive effect of identity salience and source of surveillance was mediated by the appraisal that surveillance served safety purposes.

These results build upon those of Study 1 by replicating the effects of identity on acceptance of surveillance in a context where the salience of identity was manipulated, rather than identification being measured. Study 2 also revealed some evidence that source of surveillance played a role in perceptions of privacy infringement and purpose. In particular, it mattered whether the source was perceived as sharing identity with the identity that was salient. When the source of surveillance was not part of the salient identity, but a higher order categorization, perceptions that surveillance infringes on privacy were highest. That is, even when the surveillance came from a single source (the university) it was accepted when a university identity was made salient and the source was therefore considered an in-group, but not when sub-group identity was salient and accordingly the source was considered an out-group.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The two studies presented here demonstrate that acceptance of surveillance can be understood more comprehensively by considering whether identity is shared with those who have introduced the surveillance. Study 1 demonstrated that higher identification with one’s city was associated with decreased perceptions that CCTV surveillance invaded privacy. Based on the reported mediation effect, we would argue that this is because when identification was higher, individuals tended to
believe that the surveillance was there to promote the safety of themselves and other in-group members (residents of the city).

In Study 2, we extended these findings by demonstrating that it is not just identification that is important, but also that the group needs to be contextually relevant. Even when controlling for identification, we found that identity salience, and a fit between this salience and the source of surveillance, was important. We demonstrated that when a subordinate identity was salient and surveillance originated from a superordinate group (that encompasses their sub-group); people perceived surveillance more as privacy infringement than when the source was their less inclusive identity. However, when a superordinate identity was salient and the source of surveillance was included in this identity, there were no significant differences in privacy invasion perceptions. Echoing Study 1 results, this pattern was found to be mediated by appraisals that the purpose of surveillance is to benefit the in-group by promoting their safety. By examining nested identities we were able to assess how changes in the salience of identity can affect acceptance of surveillance, even when it comes from the same source. This supports our broader point that perceptions of surveillance are not static and given, but continually changing as a function of the context.

In sum, both studies provide support for the notion that shared group membership with the source of surveillance positively affects acceptance of surveillance. In contrast to surveillance literature which suggests that surveillance is predominantly perceived as negative (Honess & Charman, 1992; Whitty & Carr, 2006), the present research demonstrates that these perceptions vary as a function of whether the perceiver identifies with the source of surveillance. This is because when there is a shared identity, surveillance is perceived as being used by the in-group in order to benefit other in-group members (i.e. their safety).

We have accounted for these findings with reference to a social identity approach (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). The present research has added to this body of literature by demonstrating that people are less likely to see surveillance as an invasion of their privacy if it is perceived as being implemented or requested by fellow in-group members. Our findings resonate with previous research which proposes that shared group membership is a precondition for mutual intra-group influence (Turner, 1987, 1991). Because people expect to agree with in-group members and assume that these group members have their best interests at heart, they see surveillance as more acceptable if it is imposed by fellow in-group members. We also provided empirical evidence in both studies that these processes underlie the effect that in-group surveillance is more acceptable than out-group surveillance.

**Future Research**

The present research raises questions that are related to, but outside the scope of those it set out to address. For example, we have shown that surveillance is seen as less privacy infringing by those who share identity with the source of surveillance, because they appraise it as benefiting the safety of their in-group. It is likely that shared identity can elicit other types of appraisals. For example, if one views the purpose of surveillance as promoting productivity (e.g. in a workplace), this could be seen as positive if one identifies with the group. However, the same surveillance would probably be seen as negative for those who do not identify with the group (e.g. leadership imposing their will, using surveillance to make employees work harder). Future research should examine the effects of surveillance on performance and productivity as a function of whether identity is shared. Furthermore, whereas our findings provide evidence for the importance of appraisals of the purpose of surveillance it remains to be examined whether these effects are limited to surveillance that is perceived as beneficial for the in-group. If it is the case that surveillance from in-group members is more acceptable precisely because we assume they are using surveillance for our own good, it may well be the case that surveillance for the greater good may not be appraised that positively despite the fact that an in-group source proposes it.

In addition to the underlying mediating processes that affect the acceptance of surveillance that we have examined here, it is worth mentioning that that there may be a host of other possible mediating factors. One other important mediator (not mentioned so far) would be differential trust as a function of shared identity with the source of surveillance—in-group sources are likely to elicit a greater sense of trust than out-group sources (Jetten, Duck, Terry, & O’Brien, 2002; Tanis & Postmes, 2005). That is, it is possible that those sharing identity with the source of surveillance consider surveillance less of a privacy invasion because of the greater trust in the source and perhaps because there is a perception that this trust is reciprocated, with in-group sources trusting other in-group members more in return. Arguably, perceptions of trust may mediate the effect of the manipulations of identity and source on the appraisal of surveillance and it is important in future research to examine this.
CONCLUSIONS

The present research advances upon previous research into how surveillance is perceived, in an attempt to move away from previous analyses that assume surveillance is seen as unacceptable and an invasion of privacy by all (see Honess & Charman, 1992; Lee & Brand, 2005; Whitty & Carr, 2006). We have applied the principles of a social identity approach (Tajfel, 1978; Turner et al., 1987) in order to explain when surveillance is seen as an invasion of privacy and when it is not (Turner, 1991; Turner et al., 1989). Those who do not identify strongly, or have a different social identity currently salient, tend to find surveillance more unacceptable and view it as an invasion of their privacy. However, for those identifying more strongly, or for whom they share a sense of social identity with the source of surveillance, surveillance is much more acceptable. Rather ironically, this finding fits quite well with the aims of CCTV surveillance from the point of view of those who implement it: Those who dislike the use of CCTV are likely to be the ones it targets because they do not share identity with us.

In sum, previous research into surveillance has not examined contextual factors, which makes it very difficult to explain why surveillance is at times perceived as unacceptable but at other times accepted as something that can benefit individuals and groups (e.g. Honess & Charman, 1992; Lee & Brand, 2005; Whitty & Carr, 2006). In line with Levine (2000), we have demonstrated that in order to comprehend how surveillance will be perceived, it is necessary to know the identities of both the watcher and the watched. It seems that if people live with the knowledge that ‘every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized’ (Orwell, 1949), they may, depending on whether identity with the source of surveillance is shared, either interpret this as the caring protection that might be expected of a parent or as an overbearing Big Brother imposing his or her will.

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