

# Chapter 9

## Graduate Students’ Perceptions of Privacy and Closed Circuit Television Systems in Public Settings

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This qualitative study used grounded theory to examine how university graduate students felt about closed circuit television (CCTV) as it relates to the privacy and safety of students on campuses. As a result of violence at a few universities, more administrators are considering the implementation of CCTV systems. Because graduate students are an important part of the university population, their views were solicited. A qualitative approach was used because of the lack of previous research on this particular topic. Themes that emerged from interviews with 10 graduate students at a large Midwestern land-grant university were identified as: right to safety, right to privacy, personal privacy responsibilities, post-CCTV sense of privacy, post-CCTV sense of safety, crime displacement, false sense of safety, and international perspectives. The findings provide insight into graduate students’ perceptions of a CCTV system and have implications for implementation decisions regarding such a system. Additionally, the findings were utilized to formulate hypotheses for a larger scale research project.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Public universities in the United States are entrusted with maintaining the safety and well-

being of students (Griffin, 2007). Undergraduate students represent the majority of the population on most university campuses, and their concerns regarding safety and privacy have been studied (Griffin, 2007). Graduate students are an important

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constituency-group at universities because they provide a significant source of revenue, are critical to both the research and teaching functions of the university, and will be the professors, administrators, and researchers of the future. Their attitudes and beliefs about safety and privacy should be explored and considered in decisions regarding efforts to protect students, faculty, and staff on university campuses. Although graduate students are a critical part of the university population, no literature was identified which involved graduate students and their concerns regarding safety and privacy.

The right to privacy in the United States has been the subject of widespread debate and invasions of privacy have been the focus of an increase in the number of lawsuits (Nieto, 1997; Nissenbaum, 1998). Furthermore, the current legal foundation of the surveillance-privacy debate rests on only a few Supreme Court decisions and amendments to the Bill of Rights. The first major electronic surveillance act (Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Street Act) was passed in 1968 and it was not changed until the 1986 Electronic Communications Privacy Act (Schlosberg & Ozer, 2007; Spencer, 2000). These two Acts form the underpinnings of the American government's core policies regarding an individual's right-to-privacy, especially with regard to electronic data capture and use. Together these Acts played a major role in establishing boundaries for the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, as well as for organizations that utilize surveillance systems (Spencer, 2000; Taylor, 2002).

In the United States, an increase in surveillance for security purposes is often perceived as leading to a decrease in privacy of individuals in the areas being monitored. The debate over security versus privacy has ensued for the last 50 years. During this time constituents from legislative bodies, law enforcement agencies, courts, businesses and industry, as well as the general public, have each sought to legitimize their interpretation of the Fourth Amendment of

the U.S. Constitution. Government and others concerned with safety or security are naturally on one side of the surveillance debate due to their organizational agenda and desire to maintain the social order (Armitage, 2002; Goold, 2004; Lyon, 2001, 2002; Nieto, 1997).

It should be noted that there are significant differences in legal protections and allowances between the U.S. and other westernized-countries; including, but not limited to the U.K., Canada, and the European Union. Much effort has been given in researching issues related to security, surveillance, privacy, and their respective laws in these countries (Armitage, 2002; Goold, 2004; Lyon, 2001; Tavani, 2008). However, this paper will focus instead of perceptions of individuals within the U.S., regardless of their international background, but within the context of U.S. culture. More importantly, however, regardless of culture or national law, it appears that surveillance and privacy issues and the research thereof are ultimately reduced to a study of both the intended and unintended social consequences their impact on law and society.

In fact, many organizations and law enforcement agencies have implemented surveillance systems, much to the dismay of civil-rights privacy advocates (Bellovin, 2005; Caloyannides, 2003). Although surveillance is a legally sanctioned activity, some who practice it have exceeded their legal boundaries (Brey, 2006; Gelbord & Roelofsen, 2002; Griffin, 2007). While technology and digital recording capabilities evolve exponentially, government and civil-rights advocates struggle to reach agreement on the privacy implications of technology (Gelbord & Roelofsen, 2002).

Recent deadly shootings such as those at Virginia State University and Polytechnical Institute in 2006, at Delaware State University in 2007, and at Northern Illinois University in 2008 have shaken students, parents, and administrators with the realization that similar events could happen on any university campus (Lipka, 2007; Hoover & Lipka, 2007). Likewise, "several tacks have been

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