

Social Surveillance in the Context of Cancel Culture

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Abstract

This qualitative study aimed to explore how people perceive and experience surveillance in the context of cancel culture. Surveillance Imaginary Theory and Moral Reasoning Theory drove the research question: how do social media users describe the construction of surveillance in the context of cancel culture? A sample of eleven individuals was recruited by convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews. Data analysis applied an Interpretive Content Analysis approach of inductive coding to generate three main themes. Social media users described the construction of surveillance as negotiating in/visibility, including weighting the benefits and risks of different audience groups, balancing the risk of exposure against social responsibility, and constructing distinctions in visibility norms.

Keywords: Social media, surveillance, visibility, cancel culture

Dedication

To Yahweh, God Almighty.

To my mother,

I could not have reached this milestone or any other without your love and support.

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Table of Content

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Dedication</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Social Surveillance in the Context of Cancel Culture</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research</i>	<i>1</i>
Introduction	<i>1</i>
Purpose of Study.....	<i>2</i>
Definition of Terms	<i>3</i>
Organization of the Remainder of the Study	<i>4</i>
<i>Chapter 2: Literature Review</i>	<i>5</i>
Introduction	<i>5</i>
Web 2.0 and Social Media	<i>5</i>
Cancel Culture	<i>9</i>
Calling-out Culture and Cancel Culture.....	<i>10</i>
Cancelling and Ostracism	<i>12</i>
Cancelling and Cancel Culture.....	<i>13</i>
Cancel Culture and Other Concepts.....	<i>14</i>
Motivation Behind Cancel Culture	<i>17</i>

Social Surveillance.....	19
Social Surveillance Practises and Response	21
Cancel Culture and Social Surveillance.....	24
Summary	25
<i>Chapter3: Theoretical Framework.....</i>	27
Introduction	27
Surveillance Imaginaries and Surveillance Practices	27
Social Imaginary	27
Surveillance Imaginaries.....	28
Surveillance Practices	32
Moral Reasoning Theory	34
Summary	36
<i>Chapter 4: Methodology</i>	37
Introduction	37
Research Design.....	37
Source of Data.....	39
Recruiting Strategy.....	41
Research Data.....	41
Data Collection and Management	44
Permission and Informed Consent	44
Recruiting.....	45
Data Collection.....	45
Data Security.....	47
Data Analysis	47

Data Organization	47
Interpretive Content Analysis	48
Ethical Considerations.....	52
Summary.....	55
<i>Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis.....</i>	57
Introduction	57
Data Preparation and Descriptive Data	57
Data Preparation.....	57
Descriptive Data.....	58
Proximity and Visibility.....	62
Friends and Family Members.....	63
Professional.....	66
Public.....	69
Cancelling and Visibility.....	76
Visibility and Moral Consideration.....	82
Summary.....	91
<i>Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion.....</i>	92
Introduction	92
Being (In)Visible.....	92
Private Broadcasting	93
Opinion Representative.....	95
Distinction as Social Capital	96
Implication	97

Theoretical Implications.....	97
Practical Implications.....	100
Future Studies.....	100
Limitations	102
<i>References</i>	<i>104</i>
<i>Appendix A: Recruitment Poster</i>	<i>121</i>
<i>Appendix B: Consent Form.....</i>	<i>122</i>
<i>Appendix C: Interview Protocol</i>	<i>124</i>

List of Tables

Table 5.1 Overview of Interview Data	58
Table 5.2 Ethnicity of the Sample	59
Table 5.3 Education Level of the Sample.....	59
Table 5.4 Current Employment Status of the Sample	60
Table 5.5 Social Media Platform Use of Participants	60
Table 5.6 Interview Participants.....	61
Table 5.7 Theme 1: Perception of visibility related to proximity.....	62
Table 5.8 Theme 2: Perceptions of visibility related to cancel culture intersecting proximity. ...	76
Table 5.9 Theme 3: Perceptions on moral consideration related to visibility and cancel culture	82

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Concepts located along two axes..... 15

Figure 4.1 Preparation, organizing and reporting phases..... 49

Social Surveillance in the Context of Cancel Culture

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research

Introduction

We live in a connected world, and surveillance is always a part of this connection. Surveillance is often referred to the image of Big Brother depicted in an Orwellian future that being watched is an instinct in the assumption every movement in every moment was overheard by a totalitarian tyrant. However, technology and consumerism not only create more surveillance but also allow people to participate in surveillance. As Lyon (2018) states, “Watching has become a way of life” (p. 17), which indicates surveillance has transformed into a form of social surveillance in which individuals actively engage in surveillance and attempt to regulate others and their own surveillance. Moreover, while engaging in surveillance, the meaning of surveillance is transformed as the surveillance technologies and practices are perceived and experienced by subjects, agents, and audiences who define, judge, and have emotions about being watched and watching others (Marx, 2017). In the same way, today’s surveillance is not limited to the uncertainty and fear introduced by Big Brother but is associated with connection, amusement, reassurance, and information (Lyon, 2018).

Therefore, today’s surveillance has everything to do with technologies and the digital world. Also, Veletsianos et al. (2019) point out that social media users’ practices are not only influenced by their preferences but also by broader cultural changes. This struggle becomes apparent when associated with what has become known as *Cancel Culture*, which is a term describing the trend towards monitoring, targeting, and punishing those with opposing views (Ng, 2020; Norris, 2021). The term “cancel culture” is a new construct with little empirical research; thus, it has no empirical definition in the literature. However, the activities related to

cancel culture are commonly associated with surveillance of social media (Haskell, 2021; Ng, 2020).

Purpose of Study

This study aims to examine how people perceive and experience surveillance on social media with an emphasis on the cancel culture. Specifically, the goal is to understand how people construct surveillance to rationalize their practices. Prior studies indicate that social networks enable social surveillance in that anyone can examine content created by other social media users and look at their own content through others' eyes (Marwick, 2012; Thurman, 2017). Also, a study examining social media users' behaviours indicates that social media surveillance is commonplace while users are rarely aware of it. However, once users are aware of the surveillance, their concerns are with the privacy setting instead of the information they share (Van der Schyff & Flowerday, 2019). Van der Schyff and Flowerday (2019) suggest more research should be done on the influence of culture on attitude and subjective norms. Similarly, a study conducted by Oz & Yanik (2022) suggests that perceived negative consequences of surveillance will decrease users' willingness to express their opinions, but people equipped with privacy-control skills would be more eager to participate in online activities. Those authors call for more research on the perception of surveillance on people's online behaviour.

Moreover, Chiou (2020) suggests that social media offers a platform to nourish the cancel culture. He comments that people who participate in cancel culture are based on a sense of moral righteousness, thus calling for research on moral cognition on decision-making in participating in cancel culture and aggressive online behaviours. In the same way, Norris (2021) suggests that cancel culture is not simply a myth or rhetoric, but many people observed and experienced a worsened cancel culture; therefore, he calls for study on different aspects of cancel culture.

Putting together, the findings indicate a gap in the literature regarding how people experience social surveillance in cancel culture.

This thesis will reply to the call and study the topic through the lenses of Surveillance Imaginary Theory and Moral Reasoning theory to understand how people imagine surveillance and arrive at practice decisions through moral reasoning influenced by cancel culture. Ultimately, this study will answer the research question: *How do social media users describe the construction of surveillance in the context of cancel culture?*

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used in this chapter and throughout the study.

Cancel Culture. The trend that semi-organized campaigns where a group of people publicly call for boycott, silence, or take away support from individuals who are considered to have said or done something offensive or unacceptable (Bezio, 2022; Ng, 2020).

Celebrity. Celebrity is a cultural construct as a genre of representation of famous people that inherently connected to a public and a notion of temporality (Rojek, 2001). With the growing of social media, influencers were also recognized as micro-celebrities (Marwick, 2015).

Performativity. Repeating performance based on the norms that have accumulated (Butler, 1997).

Public Sphere. The public sphere is conceptualized as a network of co-creating of meanings and community that make it possible to agree to shared meanings, interpretations, and goals (Benkler, 2006; Lee et al., 2018).

Privacy. Privacy is a legal concern linked to individual and collective rights of “the right to be let alone” and freedom from surveillance and scrutiny, which implies a degree of control over personal information flows (Trottier, 2012, p. 58).

Surveillance. Surveillance is defined as the “focused, systematic, and routine attention to personal details for the purposes of influences, management, protection, or direction” (Lyon, 2007, p. 14) or “the collection and analysis of information about populations in order to govern their activities” (Haggerty & Ericson, 2018, p. 3)

Social Surveillance. A form of surveillance occurs among individuals based on the premise that power is de-centralized. The practice of social surveillance is reciprocal for all participants (A. E. Marwick, 2012).

Social Media. As synthesized by Ouiridi et al. (2014), social media is “a set of mobile and web-based platforms built on Web 2.0 technologies, and allowing users at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels to share and geo-tag user-generated content (images, text, audio, video and games), to collaborate, and to build networks and communities, with the possibility of reaching and involving large audience” (p. 119).

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

The remaining chapters of this thesis are organized as follows. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature relevant to understanding the background and topics of this study. Chapter 3 further demonstrates the theoretical foundation of this study. This includes a review of Surveillance Imaginary and Moral Reasoning theory, as well as the themes of sharing, exposure, visibility, imagined audience and surveillance practices, which will be used to frame the understanding of the phenomenon. Chapter 4 explains the qualitative methodology and descriptive design of this study. Chapter 5 presents the results and analysis of the study. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the researcher’s interpretation of the findings and implications related to the theory and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter thoroughly reviews topics and themes from the literature that support the present study of how people experience and understand social surveillance in the emergence of cancel culture. First, a brief background is presented to demonstrate how the rise of Web 2.0 and social media became the technical-technological foundation of cancel culture and social surveillance. Then, I will show the current understanding of cancel culture and social surveillance in literature and demonstrate their interrelated relationship.

Web 2.0 and Social Media

Many scholars have used the term “Web 2.0” to describe the transformation of the Internet from a system oriented on information provision into a system oriented towards communication, user-generated content, data sharing, and community building (Fuchs et al., 2010). The term “Web 2.0” was defined by O’Reilly (2015) as sites and services that rely on users to create network content. It refers to the internet used as a platform for all connected devices and applications, and it offers software with constantly updated services which improve with increasing usage and data and enables users to share and use each other’s data (O’Reilly, 2015). Therefore, it was characterized by enabling people to connect not only with people familiar, such as friends, family, and colleagues, but also with people who are not in their immediate social circle offline, such as interest groups, bands, and other entities (Eiselt et al., 2013; O’Reilly, 2015). Web platforms, including X (previous Twitter), YouTube, Flickr, Tube8, Google, Blogger, LinkedIn, XVideos, etc., are typical Web 2.0 sites (Fuchs, 2010).

Moreover, since social media platforms are built based on Web 2.0, they share many characteristics. Shirky (2008) refers to social media as tools that increase individuals’ ability to

share, cooperate, and take actions outside of traditional institutions and organizations. Boyd (2005) goes further and asserts that social media is not only a tool that allows group work where participants are only editors, but participants contribute its content. As a result, social media generates a participatory culture that emphasizes human collaboration in shared spaces and the potential to connect to a network of potential collaborators (van Dijck, 2013). It also led to a “making and doing” culture, which involves collecting things online and offline to connect with other people from the social and physical world (Fuchs, 2014, p. 36). In addition, social media features, such as profiles, contacts, and interaction with those contacts, blur the distinction between personal community and broadcasting messages to the public with nobody in particular (Fuchs, 2014).

Literature shows that the function of the web has changed: although information provision is still crucial for internet users, the cooperative functions of the web, including community building, data sharing, and collaborative information production, have become an essential part of the internet and world wide web (Fuchs, 2010). In this Web 2.0 age, online technologies and websites, such as social media, were designed to connect users (A. E. Marwick, 2012). Users are enabled to connect with anyone freely and publicly as they wish (Newman et al., 2016). In this sense, Web 2.0 is characterized by globalization and dynamic interaction, allowing people to interact with each other and data and apply global knowledge in local contexts (Boyd, 2005). However, Web 2.0 services prevent users' data from moving to another platform but encourage them to depend on the service as a means of social interaction so that users and their data can be tied to the service (Berners-Lee, 2010). Similarly, the marketing campaign online has transformed from the conventional style that directly campaigns to the users to user-generated content on social media sites so that campaign information appears as a

recommendation from a friend to encourage people to trust and pay attention (Berners-Lee, 2010).

The literature suggests that Web 2.0 has brought changes for individuals to participate in political campaigns and movements (Iosifidis & Wheeler, 2018; MURTHY, 2010; Steinberg, 2015). In the Web 1.0 age, the Internet campaign was seen as a supplementary to television, where presidential candidates posed traditional spot adverts and bought up airtime until a significant change in the political campaign occurred in 2008 as Obama used Web 2.0 site, MyBo, to offer users with involvement in an online political community (Iosifidis & Wheeler, 2018). Similarly, the 2016 U.S. election was built upon candidates' presence online and the notions of reciprocity and the ability to reach out to voters via social media (Iosifidis & Wheeler, 2018). Web 2.0 in elections is also equivalent in other countries and district elections (MURTHY, 2010). The literature suggests that due to social media's openness and interactive nature, candidates have more influence on their campaigners than traditional media or web publications (Wattal et al., 2010).

Moreover, the participatory nature of Web 2.0 has transformed social media platforms as the primary distribution system for news stories (Ju et al., 2014). To adapt to this change, journalism shifts towards various forms of engagement that involve the "wisdom of the crowd" in creating news (Lawrence et al., 2017, p. 1237). This new approach to the campaign has also drawn individuals from youth groups, college students, and non-traditional political actors to work inclusively and relationally to participate in grassroots political activities (Iosifidis & Wheeler, 2018; Steinberg, 2015). Therefore, Web 2.0 websites offer platforms for citizen-centric movements where more people can participate in the democratic process (MURTHY, 2010). On the same time, famous people, or celebrities, represent an increasing significant part of culture

moved from a traditional and regulated model to one in which performers and people actively interact with fans and create a sense of closeness and familiarity between themselves and followers (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). This shifting, however, also leads to a potential problem in preserving political consensus, such as leading to emotionally charged political campaigns, resulting in fissures of modern democracy (Iosifidis & Wheeler, 2018; Kata, 2012; MURTHY, 2010; Steinberg, 2015).

The relationship between Web 2.0 and surveillance is well documented. Nissenbaum (2010) argues that technology-based systems intrinsically have the ability to perform surveillance activities, including tracking, analyzing and disseminating personal information. Similarly, since Web 2.0 websites are intended for users to build connections and interact with each other, social media providers tend to create self-designed privacy statements that allow them to collect information about users and pose information on the internet, which becomes potentially visible to every social media user (Fernback & Papacharissi, 2016; Hull et al., 2011). For instance, as a social communicative website, Buzz traces users' physical location so that it can recommend geographically nearby users or information about nearby sites, shops, and restaurants (Fuchs, 2010). Buzz also was found that its application automatically generates information from the contact list of Gmail and automatically makes this list publicly visible (Fuchs, 2010).

Similarly, other platforms, such as Google, participate as leading players in the business, where social networking sites store, analyze, and sell individual data about user preferences and behaviour for online advertising (Fernback & Papacharissi, 2016). For instance, Google claims it respects and protects the privacy of its users, and its policy promises that any information collected is not personally identifiable. Nonetheless, Google collects IP addresses and allows for monitoring users' behaving patterns for marketing purposes (Fernback & Papacharissi, 2016).

Similar patterns are also found in MSN, Real.com, and Kazaa as they not only offer services online but also require personal information and customization of function effectively for the users (Fernback & Papacharissi, 2016).

In addition, web 2.0 websites allow users to receive multimedia updates and continually investigate digital traces left by those with whom they connect through social media (A. E. Marwick, 2012; Newman et al., 2016). In other words, if one wants to formulate information about another person, all the person needs is to use Facebook or other Web 2.0 social media platforms by browsing other people's pictures and status updates (Marwick, 2010). For example, Marwick's (2012) study on Facebook stalking shows that users systematically use social software to learn about others' actions.

Cancel Culture

The emergence of Web 2.0 and the growth of social media have led to the rise of cancel culture (Haskell, 2021; Ng, 2020). It is believed that the use of digital media has increased the ability for like-minded individuals, both progressives and conservatives, to express their ideas and mobilization online due to the homogenous nature of social media platforms, especially X and Facebook, which tend to create "filter bubbles" or "echo chambers" to boost influence young people in college who are typically liberal and progressive¹ (Norris, 2021, p. 9). Due to the nature of Web 2.0, which tends to reinforce ideas among like-minded individuals, information, including elite rhetoric, leader speeches, journalists, and commentators, is amplified to the broader public through interpersonal communications, which results in the culture intensified by right-wing commentators and conservative newspapers (Norris, 2021; Lawrence et al., 2017).

¹ Due to the digital media platforms allow for collective expression and online mobilization among like-minded individuals, it allows the politics of outrage to be constantly reinforced.

Moreover, social media provide spaces for people to build and flourish communities, raising concerns about creating in-groups and out-groups, which turn into an “us vs. them” mentality (Haskell, 2021, p. 22). In this sense, cancel culture and cancelling practices are considered a reflection and reinforcement of the role of digital media (Haskell, 2021; Norris, 2021).

Although “cancel culture” and “cancelling” do not have formal definitions, they are often described as a group of people publicly calling out an individual or organization for their unaccepted behaviour or statements, which is often followed by boycott or sabotage campaigns (Bezio, 2022). As a result, cancel culture is often associated with job loss, loss of college acceptance or scholarships, and expulsion by corporations or schools of cancelled individuals (Thomas, 2020). The act of cancelling has become a seemingly daily social practice in recent years as the phenomenon was labelled as a culture. Some examples of cancel culture, such as the #MeToo movement, have led to significant social justice movements, while other cases of cancel culture do not develop into social justice movements but rather indicate the need to cancel someone due to the target’s unacceptable behaviour or message on social media (Bezio, 2022).

G. Hofstede (2005) defines culture as a system of thinking patterns, emotions, and behaviours collectively shared with people who live within the same social environment. He believes that the core of culture is shaped by values that allow people to include or exclude others from a moral circle that defines their rights and obligations (G. Hofstede, 2005). As such, norms are formed to enact the values. Similarly, norms in cyberspace may shaped by the cancel culture and interact with values and norms in the traditional culture through social interaction.

Calling-out Culture and Cancel Culture

The term “cancel culture” can be traced origin from an American film in 1991 in which a character expressed the desire to “cancel” his girlfriend after their breakup, and then this term

gained popularity among Twitter users for joking in 2015 (Romano, 2020; Tandoc et al., 2022). “Cancel culture” origins in queer communities of colour and was situated within the concepts of the public sphere, which assumes public discourse as the realm of the elites as it was the creation of Black counter publics with practices including reading, dragging, calling out, then cancelling (Clark, 2020). The cancelling practices include using web 2.0 style social media platforms to collectively discuss and morally evaluate an offending party’s unjust behaviour so that a remedy, such as being fired or choosing to resign, can be prescribed through the collective reasoning by a culturally aligned online crowd (Clark, 2020). However, although the root of Black digital discursive practices has vanished, the term “cancel culture” is still often used in a more serious context, including calling out, hating and shaming individuals for their wrongdoings (Clark, 2020; Tandoc et al., 2022).

The recent form of cancel culture is developed from call-out culture, or outrage culture, which stems from doxing: an internet-based practice of searching and broadcasting an individual or organization’s information for personal gain (Hooks, 2020). Thus, the moral and ethical framework of cancel culture is inherited from the call-out culture in which praise is also part of the blame, where individuals who blame others praise themselves (Hooks, 2020). Nonetheless, the culture of calling out and cancellation has been inspired and conflated due to the successful cases of calling out individuals, such as Harvey Weinstein (Sherwyn & Wagner, 2018). Since then, the meaning of the term “cancelled” has also changed. Before 2016 and 2017, “cancelled” referred to something that happened, not things did in the past, while since 2018, to cancel means examining one’s history of digital media for the purpose of shutting down a particular group or individual (Hooks, 2020). In other words, cancel culture is no long reactionary acts of calling out

someone doing something wrong in the present but intends to blacklist someone culturally and socially.

Cancelling and Ostracism

Although cancel culture is a newly constructed concept, its practices are not new to history. The practice of removing support or attempting to exclude individuals from social groups has a long history in the history of humankind. The core of cancel culture is an attempt to cause ostracism, or social exclusion, by public shaming. In other words, ostracism can be considered as the prototype of cancel culture. Ostracism, refers to being ignored and excluded, occurs throughout human history long before it was named as *ostrakismos* around 500 B.C. when Athenians cast their votes on a piece of clay, ostraca, to determine whether a member of their community should be banished (Williams, 2007). Ostracism has been observed in all forms of social activities worldwide, including formal relationships such as tribes, modern states, governments, armies, penal and educational institutions, and informal relationships such as playgrounds conducted by groups, children, adolescents, and adults (Williams, 2007).

Ostracism is often operationalized as one of the consequences of public shaming, which is a piece of social technology that leads groups to achieve particular ends, including expressing their value judge, ostracizing individuals, developing solidarity, deterring potential wrongdoers, and promoting cooperation among individuals for the good of the community (Frye, 2021). Frye (2021) identifies some core features of public shaming, including grounded in social norms within a community, occurring in public, needing an audience to uptake, involving with an expression of moral disapproval, and attempting to go beyond criticism but attacking the character of the person in question and attempting to place social distance between wrongdoer and other people. In this sense, cancelling is an online version of public shaming.

Canceling and Cancel Culture

A recent definition of the term “cancel culture” is defined as collective strategies by activists using social pressures to achieve cultural ostracism of someone or something accused of offensive words or deeds (Norris, 2021). Similarly, the act “cancelling” was argued as the active element of cancel culture and is defined as an expression of agency and a choice to withdraw attention and any kind of support for those who have said or done something deemed unacceptable, especially from a social justice perspective (Clark, 2020; Ng, 2020). Examples of “cancel culture” can be seen in cases involving American popular culture celebrities, such as O. J. Simpson, Roseanne Barr, and Michael Jackson. This phenomenon has also led to the downfall of many well-known media personalities, politicians, authors, books, and corporate Leaders, and it has been blamed for the cancellation of books’ deals, the resignation or firing of editors and journalists, and the targeting of public intellectuals (Norris, 2021).

However, while cancel culture is believed to bring changes or attention to some important public issues, some also raise a concern about depoliticization and decontextualization of those issues, which may promote populist ideologies and bring dangers to the liberal democratic system (Bouvier & Machin, 2021). As Eatwell and Good (2018) note, populist ideologies prioritize the culture and promise to give voice to people who feel corrupt elites have neglected them. Similarly, in the context of cancel culture, ordinary people may be attracted by the promise of cancelling as a way to deliver a political promise of restoring order when they believe the existing political establishment has abandoned them, despite cancelling itself will not be helpful to restore their faith in liberal democracy (Bouvier & Machin, 2021).

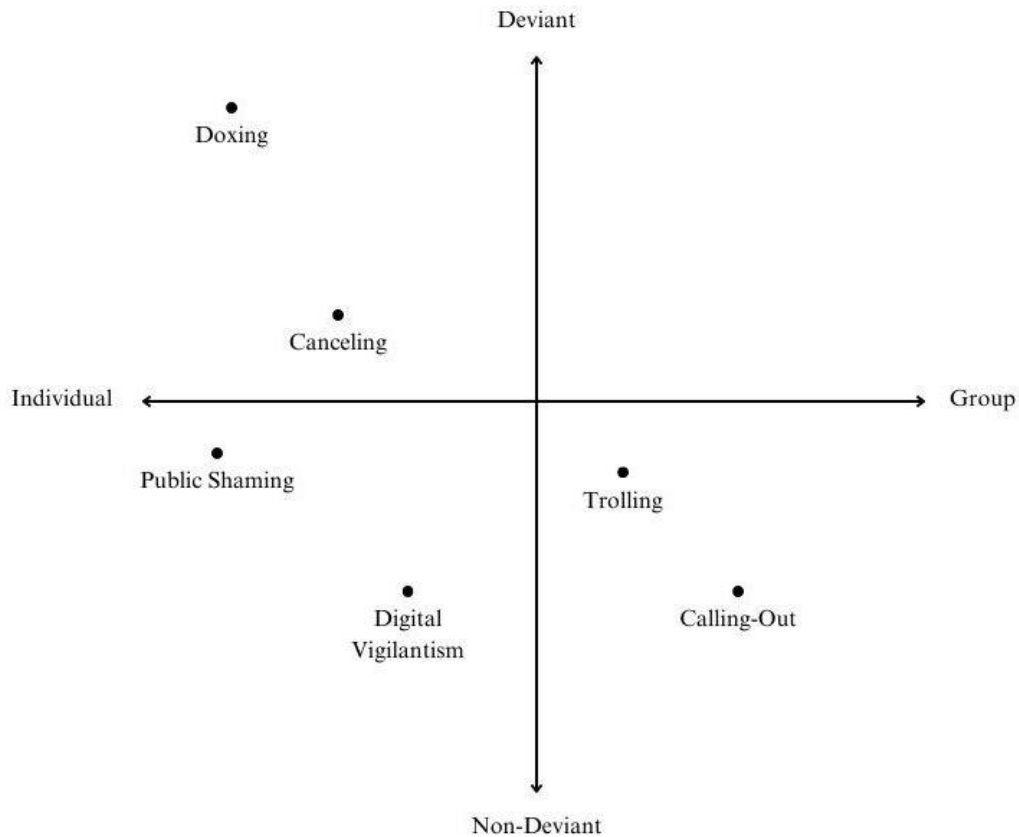
Originally, cancelling intended to bring attention to influential individuals' wrongdoings and foster a sense of unity by working together to combat social injustice (Romano, 2020). Some

argue that cancel culture may start with legitimate criticism of cases involving moral disapproval, such as sexual abuse, but then it causes a slippery slope to silence various unpopular perspectives (Simpson & Srinivasan, 2018). On the other hand, some believe that the existence of cancel culture is a myth but simply rhetoric for online backlash and criticism. Norris (2021) suggests that scholars who hold moral values and beliefs opposite to their social environment would be more likely to feel their views are attacked or excluded from serious consideration, or they feel unable to express their opinions openly without social penalty. Some also argued that the term “cancel culture” is used by individuals who face the consequences for their wrongdoings or receive criticism to delegitimize or discredit the criticisms against them (Tandoc et al., 2022).

Cancel Culture and Other Concepts

Cancel culture shares some conceptual overlaps with other previously established terms and concepts, such as online shaming, digital vigilantism, trolling, doxing, and calling out (Haskell, 2021; Tandoc et al., 2022). Figure 2.1 illustrates the concepts located along two axes.

Figure 2.1 Concepts located along two axes.



Note. The horizontal axis represents individual/group target. The vertical axis represents perceived as non-deviant/deviant.

Online shaming is defined as an individual's acts by posting photos, videos, and text on websites, blogs, forums, and portals to expose and shame uncivil and illegal behaviours of citizens (Skoric et al., 2010). While both terms share the same underlying assumption of motivations as responding to socially unacceptable behaviour, cancel culture usually involves more than one person (Skoric et al., 2010; Tandoc et al., 2022).

Digital vigilantism refers to mediated and coordinated actions triggered by moral outrage or a sense of offence towards an act that has been recorded and transmitted via mobile devices and social media platforms (Trottier, 2017). The practices of digital vigilantism often involve

assembling and publishing target individuals' personal details (Trottier, 2017). Although digital vigilantism has similar practices to cancel culture, people who participate in digital vigilantism are often unaffiliated with formal organizations, and they typically are driven by a range of motivations related to crime response, including responding, preventing, or deterrence current and potential criminal events and often, while cancel culture motivated by broader social issues and often considered resulted from partisan polarization (Norris, 2021; Trottier, 2017, 2019).

Trolling consists of activity that includes name-calling, profanity, racism, or harassment, but it is not as repeated as cyberbullying and with an intention to harm the targeted individuals (Cheng et al., 2017). Instead, trolling refers to behaviours that may be unintentional or untargeted to trigger negative reactions from others in a conversation for one's amusement (Cheng et al., 2017; Phillips, 2016). In this sense, cancel culture has a different intention to punish wrongdoings instead of amusing or provoking (Tandoc et al., 2022).

Doxing and calling out are commonly argued as practices of cancel culture, and they are often considered interchangeable (Clark, 2020). Doxing refers to online abusive behaviour that the doxxer deliberately seeks and publishes the target's personal and private information without consent and is often considered a part of practices in cancel culture (C. Lee, 2020; Tandoc et al., 2022). Clark (2020) suggests calling out and cancelling are interchangeable. However, calling out tends to focus on the target's present behaviour, while cancel culture often involves a target's past action to generate suspension and unease (Hooks, 2020).

However, cancel culture is considered to generate more server results than calling out, including suspicion, paranoia, unease, and societal frustrations (Hooks, 2020). Tandoc et al. (2020) argue that cancel culture is motivated by desiring targeted persons to not only experience consequences or penalties, such as losing employment or revenue, but also to ensure those

persons are socially banished. The core proponent of cancel culture is the cancellation of individuals, which leads to the ostracization of individuals (Saint-Louis, 2021). Hooks (2020) argued that the goal of cancel culture is not only to hold the individuals of wrongdoings responsible but also to dehumanize and discredit them. Similarly, other scholars argue that cancel culture aims for the target persons to apologize or be excluded from society (Skoric et al., 2010; Zhang & Laiu, 2020). Therefore, concerns are raised about the potential of cancel culture to ruin lives (Mueller, 2021; Saint-Louis, 2021). However, on the other side, cancelling is also considered a rhetorical act where people apply the label of cancel culture to invalidate the opposing groups' attack, controlling their realities by shaping the actions of others (Bezio, 2022).

Motivation Behind Cancel Culture

The rise of cancel culture is considered morally motivated. Chiou (2020) argues that opinions favouring cancel culture are similar to activism to use online platforms to criticize influential people; therefore, advocates of cancelling believe that they hold the moral high ground that they are entitled to disparage or humiliate someone on the grounds of political correctness. In other words, the mentality behind cancel culture has been recognized as a sense of moral righteousness, which justifies denouncing others who are morally inferior (Chiou, 2020). As such, although cancel culture is often related to labels, such as extortion, intimidation, or blacklisting, it is often associated with a sense of righteous indignation (Mueller, 2021). In this sense, people participating in cancel culture may tend to be socially responsible and aggregable but emotionally unstable (Skoric et al., 2010). Similarly, the study of Marwick (2021) suggests that networked harassment as a practice of cancel culture is often justified based on accusations of the immorality of targets. Also, these accusations of immorality are often constructed retrospectively and firmly rooted in shared values or norms (A. E. Marwick, 2021).

Moreover, cancel culture may have cultural implications. Communities in Asian countries, including Japan, Eskimo, and Singapore, are relatively closed-knitted and often share expectations of morality and behaviour (Massaro, 1997). Therefore, shaming culture is familiar in those cultures, and people adhering to Asian values are more socially responsible and more likely to participate in cancelling (Massaro, 1997; Skoric et al., 2010). On the other hand, Massaro (1997) argues that North Americans have lost their sense of shame, especially for violating social or legal norms and instead emphasize independence and individuality, which leads to the sense of “shame about shame” (p. 684). Guilt is considered associated with a feeling of responsibility and fear of the consequences of action, but it will not hurt one’s identity (Bedford & Hwang, 2003). Thus, instead of using shame in Asian culture regarding moral offences, Western society uses guilt as a mechanism of social control (Bedford & Hwang, 2003). Therefore, the social media platforms in constitutional metaphor can be seen as supreme courts where the platforms decide the guilt or innocence of its user's online behaviour, while cancel culture is the legal process of trial and persecution by public opinion without a lawyer present (Cowls et al., 2022; Ng, 2022).

Literature suggests another motivation behind cancel culture may be fear. People tend to participate in cancel culture if the cancel group emphasizes the nature of inappropriate words or actions as harmful, thus needing action to address (Walby & Joshua, 2021). The fear is also related to how individuals interpret identity threats through aggression and racism to determine whether the identity threat is serious enough for them to interpret it as oppression (Bezio, 2022). Those severe identity threats resulted in fear of humiliation, which became motivation to practise in cancel culture for cancelling those who trigger their feeling of threat (Bezio, 2022). Moreover, individuals may passively withdraw the support of someone as a practice of cancel culture due to

the fear of being cancelled as well because cancellation will damage the reputation of the cancelled persons and support of them may also be considered morally inferior (Haskell, 2021).

Social Surveillance

Surveillance is defined by David Lyon (2007) as “the focused, systematic, and routine attention to personal details for influence, management, protection or direction” (p. 14). Social Surveillance is understood as using Web 2.0 sites, including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, to investigate personal information published on the Internet to know other users’ offline and/or online behaviours (A. E. Marwick, 2012; Tokunaga, 2011). Unlike the panopticon metaphor, which is often applied to the surveillance internet, in that internet users are unknowingly subjected to surveillance from governmental agencies, social surveillance is a phenomenon where individual users engage in surveillance practices to know other users’ behaviour (Tokunaga, 2011). This phenomenon has been conceptualized with different terms, such as interpersonal electrical surveillance (Tokunaga, 2011), lateral surveillance (Andrejevic, 2002b), peer surveillance (Lewis, 2018), human flesh search (Zhu & Hu, 2017), internalized surveillance (Dennis, 2008) and social surveillance (A. E. Marwick, 2012; Ritzer, 2012).

Social surveillance differs from traditional surveillance that companies, markets, and governments use social media technologies to collect data about individual users (Nissenbaum, 2010). The typical surveillance is conceptualized as a panopticon design of a social system in which good citizenship is promoted through the threat of observation and condemnation (Lewis, 2018). The panopticon surveillance is developed by Foucault that signifies a power relation making individual subjects in a specific space (Basturk, 2017). Panoptic surveillance encompasses both an emphasis on self-discipline as the typical modern modality replacing the coercive methods and a focus on a scheme of classification that allows the sovereign power to

posit and differentiate the treatment of different people (Lyon, 2016). In the essential, panopticon signifies a type of gaze that a few watchers surveil the large population.

Similarly, Mathiesen (1997) argues for a reverse of this type of gaze, that the many see the few, where the mass media represent a parallel system of control in the form of “synopticon” (p. 221). Mathiesen’s analysis focuses on the mass media and television as the mechanism through which the many saw the few (Doyle, 2011). However, as Mathiesen gives little attention to the internet, Doyle (2011) suggests that the concept of “synopticon” may not be applicable to the age of Web 2.0 because it is a democratic space where the assumed power relations that distinguish the “many” from the “few” are not evident.

Marwick (2012) argues that social surveillance is distinguished from this typical surveillance in three ways: first, it lies on the premise that power exists in every social relationship and is de-centralized instead of dualistic or modernistic; second, social surveillance occurs among individuals instead of between organizational entities and individuals; third, the practice is reciprocal for every participant is both watching and being watched. Similarly, Tokunaga (2011) suggests that social surveillance differs from traditional surveillance due to the specific objectives for information collection, the hierarchical relationship between observer and observed parties, and the influence of the gathered information. Unlike the typical type of top-down monitoring from employers to employees or state to citizens, social surveillance is a peer-to-peer surveillance of family, friends, or other ordinary people (Andrejevic, 2002b).

Social surveillance is a form of surveillance where its practices are conducted across hierarchies or on an individual-to-individual level (Skoric et al., 2010). However, although social surveillance is often seen as a soft set of activities and inconsequential, it may contribute to social-cultural transformation (Lyon, 2018). One feature of this form of surveillance is that while

individuals actively engage in surveillance and attempt to regulate others and their own surveillance, they also engage in constructing the meaning of surveillance (Lyon, 2018). As Gray Marx (2017) suggests, surveillance technology is not just about its applications but also about how it is perceived and experienced by subjects, agents and audiences who define, judge, and have emotions about being watched or watching others.

Social Surveillance Practises and Response

Social media users generally have to encompass social surveillance practices, and surveillance has been so pervasive that the majority not only comply without questioning it but also actively engage with it (Lyon, 2017). For example, “intimate surveillance,” where parents monitor their children's messages online, has been widely normalized as part of parenting because of the opportunities afforded by digital technology (Ball et al., 2012). As that kind of normalization occurs, surveillance practices become commonplace, and both watchers and those watched seldom seriously consider the aspects of surveillance (Lyon, 2018). Similarly, with Web 2.0 technologies becoming a normal part of life, the rapidly growing surveillance through smartphones and Internet communications has been taken for granted (Lyon, 2018).

There are many reasons why individuals engage in the act of surveillance. Surveillance has become a way of observation and presence because, most of the time, it has become a daily routine (Lyon, 2017). Thus, Individuals may use surveillance through communications to examine their immediate environment, especially deviant behaviours, suspicious people or events that can cause harm (Tokunaga, 2021). In a social media environment, users engage in surveillance to form opinions about what is expected, accepted or not, and thus have a shared understanding of certain aspects of life and social relationships so that people can act accordingly (Lyon, 2017; A. E. Marwick, 2012).

Also, surveillance may be used for romantic reasons, such as investigating partners to maintain relationships or to gain information about partners early in a new relationship (Guerrero & Afifi, 1998; Tokunaga, 2011). In addition, social media platforms operate under the assumption that surveillance is expected and allow users to constantly observe and watch each other (Lewis, 2018; Tokunaga, 2011). Social media sites are considered public spaces, and even though users may think they are private or only shared with peers, the audience will still be assumed for all social media (Lewis, 2018). In other words, it is a common practice for individuals to use social media for the purpose of social surveillance rather than developing network connections (Lampe et al., 2006).

Moreover, social surveillance is related to the promise of addressing uncertainty. For example, individuals are encouraged to participate in surveillance to verify the goods or services they consume (Andrejevic, 2002b). As Lyon (1994) points out, although people may be paranoid about being constantly watched, they also have paranoia, which drives them to participate in social surveillance that always looks out and continuously monitors others. For instance, the surveillance service offered by background check websites encourages individuals to participate in the investigation that checks the background of others, including monitoring behaviours of others and themselves so that they would obtain a sense of security in their home or office from people who enter their home or even their life (Andrejevic, 2002b). As Marx (1988) suggests, surveillance allows everyone to become a private investigator or spy to categorize everyone's suspicion.

In Brin's optimistic notion of a "transparent society," where every individual will have ubiquitous access to surveillance technologies due to their diminishing size and increasing effectiveness, most people are aware of what is happening around them most of the time (Brin,

1998; Dennis, 2008). Brin argues that the increased level of surveillance, or even a completely surveilled society, would benefit individuals due to the fact that individuals could watch the watchers, and the people who abuse access to surveillance technology are as vulnerable to being attacked by others (Brin, 1998). Thus, he is led to the claim that increasing surveillance will minimize the potential abuse of surveillance technologies, and surveillance can empower individuals and groups to act with good intentions (Brin, 1998; Dennis, 2008; NAYMAN, 2000). Indeed, the common phrase “nothing to hide, nothing to fear” is featured in encouraging people to become habituated to social surveillance, accept it as part of reality, and engage in social surveillance practices.

However, a transparent society creates more visibility where anonymity is low, and information can be accessed by multiple audiences simultaneously, including friends, family, and colleagues, which leads to a setting of context collapse instead of an environment where the audience can be strictly limited (boyd, 2013). Thus, people may respond to surveillance through various practices, considering the possible consequences of being visible online (Duffy & Chan, 2018). For instance, social media can produce a “chilling effect,” which makes users cautious about their impression management through self-censorship (Lewis, 2018). Nonetheless, as more people join social surveillance, a knock-on effect may encourage more people to join social surveillance and self-censoring to avoid being exposed and unprotected (Dennis, 2008). Similarly, Marwick and boyd (2010) argue that social media users are less concerned with surveillance by the government or corporation but more concerned about surveillance from people in close social networks, such as bosses or parents. Therefore, users tend to self-monitor their online actions, an internalized social surveillance practice, to separate their private and public life (A. E. Marwick & Boyd, 2010). Similarly, Trottier (2011) suggests that being watched

by others will shape their own surveillance because their self-surveillance practises are driven by the belief that other users will contribute to their own visibility by either increasing or decreasing it.

Individuals may also resist social surveillance. The resistance practices may involve the experience of being surveilled so that they take protective measures to avoid being watched, such as installing encrypted protection from unwanted attention (Lyon, 2017). Also, the resistance may appear as self-censoring by not sharing private material or using encryption and anonymization services (Cocq et al., 2020). Users appear to desire to have control over their data and be aware of how their data is being used, but they may also be willing to share their data if for the good of society; however, users appear to tend to use simple countermeasures instead of software or services to protect personal integrity (Cocq et al., 2020). In addition, individuals may also use a privacy setting to allow a group of desirable audiences to find their content (Duffy & Chan, 2018). Also, resistance may take the form of a desire to be exposed and encourages self-exposure or self-exhibition against young people's insensitivity to the risk of digital transparency (Lyon, 2017).

Cancel Culture and Social Surveillance

Social surveillance is an essential process that leads to cancellation and thus becomes a part of practice in cancel culture (Bezio, 2022). Cancel culture, like digital vigilantism, contributes to the explicit sharing of the target's information to public scrutiny, which requires individuals to initiate surveillance practices of collecting personal data, interpreting data and social consequences (Trottier, 2017). For example, social media users engage in social surveillance to look through a user's "likes" or statements to examine potentially inappropriate content (King, 2022). Also, for participating in networked harassment or cancelling,

understanding the norm, or the moral expectation, is essential to identify the targets who violate the norms to trigger a moral outrage (A. E. Marwick, 2021). Formulating this norm, therefore, requires understanding the dynamics of surveillance and the duties of surveillance (Lyon, 2017).

Moreover, social surveillance is also used to impose negative consequences on the targets of cancelling in two ways: first, by publicizing the perceived wrongdoing or wrongdoers; second, by making threats or pressure on the employers, family members, and state to take action (Tavares, 2020). Trottier (2018) argues that exposing the wrongdoing is a form of sanctioning through mechanisms of shame through sharing information and knowledge about the target (Tavares, 2020). Also, even without identification, simply taking pictures of wrong-doers and publicizing them can constitute a form of naming and shaming to punish them (Jane, 2017). Additionally, exposure may damage an individual's reputation and lead to distancing employers, acquaintances, friends, and family, resulting in being cancelled from society (Tavares, 2020).

Summary

The literature has demonstrated that as the internet shifted into the Web 2.0 era and transferred to a system oriented towards user-generated content information, data sharing, and community building, web technologies, including social media platforms, have led to the rise of cancel culture and cancelling practices that are inherently supporting surveillance activities (Fuchs et al., 2010; Haskell, 2021; Ng, 2020; Nissenbaum, 2010). It has become a normalized part of online life that social media users engage in social surveillance by investigating personal information published on the Internet to know other users' online and/or offline behaviours (Lyon, 2007; Marwick, 2012; Tokunaga, 2011). The literature also shows the relationship between social surveillance and cancel culture, as social surveillance evidently is a part of practice in cancel culture and cancelling, which contributes to the explicit sharing of the targets'

information to public scrutiny, which requires users to initiate surveillance practice of collecting personal data, interpreting data, and social consequences (Bezio, 2022; Trottier, 2017).

Thus, the current literature focuses on two main subjects: first, the motivations and patterns of people engaging in cancelling and similar activities, of which surveillance is often exemplified as an instrument for such behaviour (Haskell, 2021; Tandoc et al., 2022; Trottier, 2017). Another is that those who engage in social surveillance target those close to them because of some form of social relationship (Guerrero & Afifi, 1998; Marwick, 2012; Nissenbaum, 2010). However, little attention was put on the perception and experience of social media users regarding social surveillance in the context of cancel culture. Therefore, this study explores the perception and experience of social media users on social surveillance in the context of cancel culture and answers the research question: *How do social media users describe the construction of surveillance in the context of cancel culture?*

Chapter3: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

Since this study explores people's experience and perception of social surveillance in the context of cancel culture, the theoretical framework will build upon David Lyon's (2018) concept of "surveillance imaginaries" and "surveillance practices" (p. 87), which is built upon Charles Taylor (2002)'s notion of social imaginaries, to understand the shared perceptions about sharing, exposure and visibility. The concept of "imagined audience" will also be discussed in relation to surveillance imaginaries and practices regarding perceived risk. In addition, moral reasoning theory will also be used as a framework to understand how people make sense of what is considered morally just in the decision-making processes (Rest et al., 2000).

Surveillance Imaginaries and Surveillance Practices

Social Imaginary

Charles Taylor (2002) draws on the concept social imaginary to describe the public's implicit or tacit understanding of how society works and what is expected (Turow et al., 2015). Taylor (2002) refers to social imaginary as not a set of ideas but as what enables through making sense of the practices of a society. He uses these terms to think about the ways in which individuals imagine their social existence regarding their relationship to each other and the relationship between social realities and phenomena with individuals and their expectations about what is normal, and the images underline those expectations (Taylor, 2007). Taylor (2007), therefore, describes social imaginaries as three characteristics: 1) social imaginary is about the way ordinary people imagine their social surroundings; 2) social imaginary is shared by large groups of people; 3) social imaginary is the common understanding that enables possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy. In other words, social imaginary

incorporates a sense of the normal expectations and common understanding that enable individuals to carry out the collective practices that make up social life (Taylor, 2007).

In addition, Taylor describes those common understandings as both factual and normative, namely the understanding of "how things usually go" and "how things ought to go" (Taylor, 2007, p. 120). In this sense, Taylor states that the central to social imaginaries is an idea of moral order, which addresses the rights and obligations of individuals regarding each other in society and their practices (Stock, 2006; Taylor, 2002). As such, Charles Taylor uses the concept social imaginary to describe a shared vision of moral order about how people imagine society and how they should live together (Lyon, 2018).

However, in an information era, those imaginaries may be considered compressed, fragmentary, and flowing due to changing understanding of the "public" (Lyon, 2018, p. 91). Taylor suggests a widespread change in modern social imaginaries involves creating and developing the public sphere (Kelly, 2011). Taylor calls those common spheres a local "topical common space," which comes together as the "metatopical common space," where people come together to pursue a common goal such as informed, rational, and public options (Taylor, 2002, p. 113). The development of common space relies on technological advances and enterprises of new forms which allow individuals to grant "direct access" to common spaces so that they can form, test, and apply social imaginary through discussion and arguments in the public sphere (Kelly, 2011; Lyon, 2018).

Surveillance Imaginaries

Building up on Taylor's analysis of social imaginary, David Lyon (2018) employs the concepts of surveillance imaginaries to provide a perceptual basis for understanding how surveillance is "imagined and experienced" (p. 2). The concepts of social imaginaries involve the

shared understanding of what surveillance is and how people should expect and engage in surveillance (Duffy & Chan, 2018; Lyon, 2017). In other words, it offers a sense that people include and embrace surveillance in their daily lives, their vision of how society is ordered, and their role within it (Lyon, 2018).

Lyon (2018) states that surveillance imaginaries are constructed through everyday involvement with surveillance as well as popular media such as film and the Internet. Over time, people build up a mental image of surveillance, including the awareness that our daily life is under surveillance, which influences the expectation of social relationships, especially the expectation of privacy and the appropriate modes of responding to surveillance (Lyon, 2018). Thus, as people spend more time interacting with technologies which enable surveillance, their attitudes and expectations toward surveillance will also change (Goold, 2019).

Sharing, Exposure, and Visibility. As such, Lyon (2017) asserts surveillance imaginaries around sharing, exposure, and visibility. He claims that sharing is the key element with the user-generated content of Web 2.0 as many people are immersed in daily activities of sharing, following, tweeting, and updating status (Lyon, 2017, 2018). As Albrechtslund (2008) observes, online social networking can be characterized as sharing, exploring, and mutual checkout of various activities, preferences, and beliefs. In this sense, the public has altered as the public and private realms have emerged through the Internet and social media (Lyon, 2018). This emergence of space has thrown additional light on surveillance imaginaries of sharing. As Bauman (2007) points out, this society has become a cult of confession, which eliminates the boundaries that once separated the private from the public, making it a virtue and obliging to share private things with the public and weeping away those who resist and refuse to share. However, Bauman (2001) sees this confessional society as both a triumph and a betrayal of

privacy, where privacy may have been invaded, but it also reaches a genuine community detached from secrecy (Lyon, 2018).

Another aspect of sharing is exposure, which involves individuals making others more visible or deliberately making themselves more visible (Lyon, 2017). Lyon refuses the notion that being watched seems negative, and people always want to hide to be private. Instead, he argues that seeing watching as unwanted and welcoming belongs together (Lyon, 2018). As Ball (2009) suggests, in social media, people may tolerate surveillance or even require it because exposure eases their anxiety, represents a patriotic participatory value, or the enjoyment of performative display overcomes the scrutiny accompanying self-disclosure. In other words, the narcissist nature of desiring to be seen is captured by the concepts of exposure in which people deliberately position themselves in a favourable light to achieve personal goals (Lyon, 2018). This is thus associated with a cultural tendency to desire exposure, and personal exposure may be accepted as desirable, normal, and harmless (Marx, 2006).

Finally, the question of visibility is another fundamental issue of surveillance imaginaries. Lyon (2018) suggests that the ideas of transparency and visibility have been transformed by contemporary surveillance processes (Goold, 2019). For Lyon (2018), transparency means that contemporary surveillance exposes the details of individual lives to organizations and each other through social media in an unprecedented way. In one sense, transparency may refer to the positive demand of those who gather and process data to be transparent about the process, justification, and outcome (Lyon, 2018). In this sense, transparency has been positive and appears as a legitimate good (Lyon, 2018). However, as Trottier (2016) points out, social media appears as a kind of dwelling that increases the social proximity of different life spheres and makes one life detail visible to all others. Therefore,

another side of contemporary transparency in the social media world is the process of lading the life details for many unknown others to see. In this sense, individuals participate in the process of being transparent, willingly or unwilling, knowingly or unknowingly (Lyon, 2018).

Thus, visibility is an important site of strategy where people wrestle with what they choose to present themselves and how they will be seen through efforts to shape and manage this process (Lyon, 2018). In a sense, being visible or invisible involves moral and practical skills; on the one hand, visibility is essential for politics of recognition and obtaining fair treatment for differences, but on the other hand, invisibility also has to do with privacy as protection which involves about the responsibilities to ourselves and others (Lyon, 2018). As such, our social relations are organized through visibility arrangements.

Furthermore, another aspect of visibility is associated with recognition, as the desire to be visible is a vital component of the social media age (Brighenti, 2007; Lyon, 2018). As Koskela (2004) points out, we believe what we see is "real," even more real than our daily life (p. 200). In other words, being seen gives a sense of authenticity of "realness"; without being seen, we cannot be recognized or identified (Andrejevic, 2002; Lyon, 2018). In addition, people want to be recognized to gain a sense of who they are, and the value given to them as identity development is shaped by recognition formed through interactions with others (Taylor, 1994). With some effort, people can make their online as well as offline lives invisible to the point of disappearance or become super-visible as celebrities (Brighenti, 2007). As such, negotiating visibility is all about surveillance. If the surveillance imaginaries in people that such recognition is desirable, it would contribute to different kinds of surveillance (Lyon, 2018).

Imagined Audience. Building up on Lyon's concepts of surveillance imaginaries, Duffy and Chan (2018) further developed the concept of "imagined surveillance" to appeal to

surveillance imaginaries of how individuals perceive surveillance in what could take place on social media and who this could create future risks and opportunities (p. 121). They suggest that how individuals perceive those risks and opportunities, as well as the responses, are based on imagined audience, a notion of mental conceptualization of the people we communicate with on social media (Duffy & Chan, 2018; Litt, 2012). Further, in a mediated communication setting, because of reduced verbal and nonverbal cues, how people perceive further interchange and communication would rely on the imagined audience (Litt, 2012; Ong, 1975). Thus, while people consistently engage with the imagined audience, the characteristics of Web 2.0 platforms have altered the boundaries and accessibility of communication partners, making it almost impossible to determine the actual audience (Litt, 2022). Also, as Trottier (2016) points out, information uploaded on the internet for any particular purpose will potentially be used for several kinds of surveillance, such as being watched by parents, friends, or potential employers. Therefore, the imagined audience interplays in the part of surveillance imaginary regarding the potential consequences of social media use (Duff & Chan, 2019).

Surveillance Practices

As noted earlier, Lyon (2018) explains that surveillance imaginaries concern not only the dynamics of surveillance but also the duties of surveillance, which provide a capacity for legitimizing people to act or engage in surveillance. To this end, Lyon (2018) uses the concept of surveillance practices to refer to things that individuals engage with or do in relation to surveillance. Also, as surveillance imaginaries are constructed through everyday involvement with surveillance, surveillance practices would, in turn, carry surveillance imaginaries and contribute to their reproduction (Lyon, 2018).

Lyon (2018) notes that surveillance practices are increasingly adding to our daily repertoire, such as adjusting privacy settings or online profiles. He claims two types of surveillance practices: responsive and initiatory. The former is associated with responsive practices to being surveilled. Examples may include enabling encrypted protection to avoid attention from national security agencies or marketing firms or wearing glasses or hoods to limit camera recognition in public spaces. Conversely, the latter is related to practices with modes of engagement with surveillance, such as using social media to check up on other people's personal details or engaging in self-surveillance monitoring temperature and health conditions on smart devices (Lyon, 2018). However, although Lyon (2018) notes that those two types of practices are analytically distinct, some practices may include elements of both.

Duffy and Chan (2019) explore further on surveillance practices concerning imagined surveillance and imagined audience. They argue that the contemporary surveillance curriculum goes beyond how much or what kinds of information we can control but also how we should organize digital traces to conform to the logic of surveillance and self-branding (Duffy & Chan, 2019). They thus suggest individuals use some strategies in surveillance practices to anticipate and potentially deflect the negative consequence of imagined surveillance, including controlling the audience, managing content, and controlling the connection to one's identity.

As Duffy and Chan (2019) explain, individuals negotiate their visibility through privacy settings to control their audiences based on their consideration and concerns for social actors who will surveil them through privacy settings to negotiate their presence among various audiences. Similarly, people engage in self-surveillance as they make decisions on concealing and revealing different content regarding their imaginary to consider the designation of acceptable or appropriate accordance with the social norms (Duff & Chan, 2019). Also, people

may conceal their real identities with fake online identities to manage the connection to their identities (Duff & Chan, 2019). However, Duffy and Chan (2018) note that although people use those practices for persistent surveillance, their acts are not resistance but rather compliance with their surveillance imaginaries which expect scrutinization of their personal files as well as permission from professional surveillance.

Moral Reasoning Theory

Moral reasoning theory is a framework for understanding how a person perceives what is considered moral or normal and how this reasoning is reflected in decisions on behaviours (Rest et al., 2002). This theory is ideal for conceptualizing the reasoning behind the judgements of surveillance practices in the context of cancel culture. It could associate perceptions about the moral order within surveillance imaginaries with individuals' everyday surveillance practices through their moral reasoning. Moral reasoning theory starts with Lawrence Kohlberg's (2008) model of moral development, which explains moral development as a continuing and upwardly progressive process (Nortey, 2005).

Kohlberg's moral development approach was presented as a universal model, and its discussion is limited to certain philosophical principles of justice and fairness (Rotolo, 2022). As such, critics of Kohlberg's approach argue it is limited in depicting an entire decision-making process and explaining moral philosophy beyond justice (Rest et al., 1999). Thus, James Rest and his colleagues restricted moral reasoning theory, which describes individuals' perceptions of "common morality," the established norms and expectations in a cultural context, in relation to behavioural decision-making (Rest et al., 1999; Rotolo, 2022). This approach is also known as the Neo-Kohlbergian approach (Rest et al., 1999).

Unlike Kohlberg's approach of universality claim, the Neo-Kohlbergian is premised on the idea that different communities have shared and unique experiences that constitute the social construction of moral perspectives (Thoma, 2014). Therefore, the Neo-Kohlbergian model focuses on the way that individuals make sense of their own experiences to conceptualize the shared moral understanding within a shared community (Rest et al., 2010). As in the context of surveillance, this shared moral understanding could be reflected in the surveillance imaginaries regarding people's expectations about surveillance.

Moral schema is central to the neo-Kohlbergian model of moral reasoning, which consists of cognitive patterns that analyze how moral thinking leads to actions (Narvaez & Bock, 2010; Thoma, 2014). The Neo-Kohlbergian postulate three schemas: the Personal Interest schema, the Maintaining Norms schema, and the Postconventional schema (Rest et al., 2010). The Personal Interest Schema (PIS) involves micro-morality perspectives, including survival, personal advantage, and impulsive cooperation (Narvaez & Bock, 2010). At this level of thinking, individuals may consider the needs of others in brief exchanges, and they are able to sacrifice momentarily as long as a result is more advantageous (Narvaez & Bock, 2010). The Maintaining Norm Schemas (MNS) concern a society-wide moral perspective where the moral basis is understood regarding society-wide cooperation (Thoma, 2014). With the MNS, individuals are able to identify the authorities and legitimated practices (Rest et al., 2010). Finally, the Postconventional Schema (PCS) concerns moral obligations based on shared ideals and are subject to the test of logical consistency and experience and coherence with accepted practices (Rest et al., 2010). At this level, individuals are able to negate rules and structures for the sake of morality and apply moral ideals to solve moral dilemmas within the community (Narvaez &

Bock, 2010). It should be noted, however, that these moral reasoning schemas may be activated or prioritized in overlapping ways in different social contexts (Rotolo, 2022).

Summary

Drawn upon Taylor's (2002) notion of social imaginary, the concepts of surveillance imaginaries provide a perceptual basis on how surveillance is imagined and experienced and offer a sense of peoples' perception of how people make sense of surveillance and how they embrace surveillance in their daily lives and their vision on the role of surveillance in the social order and their own role within it. The imaginaries around sharing, exposure, and visibility are essential elements to understanding daily activities on Web 2.0 websites in terms of moral and practical practices. Also, the concept of imagined surveillance and imagined audience shed light on how people perceive risks and opportunities associated with their surveillance practices. Further, the concept of surveillance practices explores how people's surveillance imaginaries turn into action and how it also feeds back the surveillance imaginaries formed through those practices. Finally, moral reasoning theory is used to explore the reasoning behind the judgements of surveillance practices in the context of cancel culture so that it is connected with the moral order expectation embedded in the surveillance imaginary.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to answer the research question: *How do social media users describe the construction of surveillance in the context of cancel culture?* Through exploring the perception and experience of social media users on social surveillance in the context of cancel culture. As the literature review shows, the current literature focuses on two main subjects: first, the motivations and patterns of people engaging in cancelling and similar activities, of which surveillance is often exemplified as an instrument for such behaviour (Haskell, 2021; Tandoc et al., 2022; Trottier, 2017). Another is that those who engage in social surveillance target those close to them because of some form of social relationship (Guerrero & Afifi, 1998; A. E. Marwick, 2012; Nissenbaum, 2010). However, little attention was paid to the perception and experience of social media users regarding social surveillance in the context of cancel culture. This research aims to fill the gap in the literature by investigating how social media users' shared perceptions involving surveillance are constructed through their perception of the emergence of cancel culture and their daily social surveillance practices.

This chapter presents the research design and begins with an overview of the paradigm and qualitative approach that informed the collection and analysis of the data. Then, it will present the recruitment, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

This study is situated within the post-positivism paradigm, aiming to answer the research question through exploring individuals' experiences and understanding of surveillance within the influence of the emergent cancel culture. Paradigms are frameworks that describe the underlying

assumptions and logic of philosophical conclusions about ontology (the nature of reality) and epistemology (the nature of knowing), thus guiding the methodology of study on the study design and how a question will be answered (Holden & Lynch, 2006). Since this study aims to describe and interpret a group of people's subjective and contextual experiences, it is best conducted based on the post-positivism paradigm with the logic of subjective ontology and interpretive epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Based on those ontological and epistemological assumptions, the post-positivism paradigm suggests that individual constructions can only be drawn out and refined through interaction between the researcher and respondents (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Thus, this research used description methodology to understand social phenomena from respondents' own perspectives and to describe the world as their experience (Kvale, 1996). Description methodology is concerned with the respondents' view of the world and attempts to grasp the diversity and essential meaning of their experiences by describing in detail the content and structure of the consciousness (Kvale, 1996). Therefore, this study is not intended to test hypotheses, determine correlations between variables, or conduct statistical analysis but rather to capture the perspectives of the study participants on their perception of surveillance in the context of cancel culture and provide a rich description of the phenomenon through qualitative methods.

This study employed a qualitative approach to data collection and data analysis. Qualitative methodologies are dedicated to using interpretive frameworks that explore the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals ascribe to a social problem (Creswell, 2013). Among qualitative research approaches, the descriptive study describes the common meanings of several individuals' experiences with a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

The inquiry from this approach collects data from people who have experienced the phenomenon and provides an integrated description of the nature of the experience, which contains “what” they experienced and “how” they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, the descriptive approach is well-aligned with the study’s theoretical framework in which it examines shared understanding through lived experience.

Source of Data

As the literature shows, social surveillance and cancel culture are affected by social media usage and the perception of the imagined audience of social media (Fuchs, 2010; Ng, 2020; Tokunaga, 2010). Thus, the target population for this study is social media users who have social media accounts and spend a significant amount of time on social media. Participants were recruited primarily from on-campus or recent graduates, as the majority of social media users are between the ages of 19 and 26, which is consistent with the age on campus and the age of becoming sensitive to trends on social media (Statista, 2022). Participants qualified for this study based on two criteria: 1) 18 years of age or older, and 2) participants have at least one social media account, including X (previous Twitter), Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram, and use at least one social media platform at least two hours per day. In addition, since participants spend an average of two hours per day on social media, they are able to respond to emerging themes as the interview progresses, allowing for a productive interview.

The data are collected using semi-structured, in-depth interviews based on the epistemological assumption that knowledge regarding experience is understood through communal processes (Slater, 2017). As interviews addressed the research question using probes focusing on participants’ perception and experience, the researcher asked participants to respond to questions regarding their social media use, views or practices, the types of content perceived

as appropriate, and the associated risks or rewards of social media use. Participants were also asked about perceptions of cancel culture and social media surveillance. These questions are intended to interpret how social media users think about their disclosure and the potential consequences of social media use and visibility.

The researcher recorded and transcribed interview data immediately following each interview. Transcriptions include nonverbal or emotional expressions (e.g., pauses, sighs, laughter) that may be relevant to the meaning of the recorded responses. Data were entered into NVivo to aid the coding process. In-depth descriptions of data sources, data collection, analysis and storage procedures are provided in the later sections.

The researcher set out to obtain 8 – 10 interviews for the study sample. Samples for qualitative research are generally small. This is because it is easier for the researcher to establish a close relationship with the respondents, thus enhancing the validity of in-depth interviews, and this research project is intended to scrutinize the dynamic nature of a social issue, but not for statistical analysis or generalization (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Since this project will use semi-structured interviews, sufficient sample to achieve meaning saturation, where developing a richly textured understanding of issues, is considered around 16-24 interviews (Van Rijnsoever, 2017). However, this recommended sample size assumes a funded study. Thus, given time constraints and lack of funding, this study will recruit a smaller sample size but use longer interview time and more questions to obtain more detailed descriptions and understanding. For the present study, the final sample of 11 participants were recruited exceeded expectations.

Recruiting Strategy

The researcher used a volunteer strategy to recruit a convenience sample for the initial interview and a snowball strategy to fill the sample and target information-rich cases. University and college campuses were selected as the research sites for this study because of their accessibility to eligible participants. Participants were volunteers who contacted the researcher through the contact e-mail address on the recruitment poster (see Appendix A) posted on campus, which included information about the recruitment criteria. In the text of the email, the researcher briefly indicated that the study was about “social surveillance and cancel culture” and described the researcher’s interest as “aims to understand individual’s understanding of social surveillance in the context of social media and cancel culture.” However, the volunteer recruiting effort was unlikely to fill the number of intended interviews since the recruitment happened in the summer semester and very few students stayed on campus. Therefore, the researcher utilized a snowball sampling strategy, circulating and re-sharing the recruitment message to friends and asking already recruited interviewees to circulate this information to their friends.

Research Data

Research data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews intended to capture the perceptions, experiences, and related meanings expressed by study participants, which is consistent with the qualitative descriptive design (Kvale, 1996). Specifically, the questions focused on who, what, where, and how participants contend with cancel culture and social surveillance on social media. The researcher followed the established practice of developing interviews and questions to address the topic in a manner most appropriate to the topic and target population, based on existing theoretical knowledge as well as some researcher’s personal experience (Rowley, 2014). The researcher’s own understanding of cancel culture and

social media surveillance is derived from experience as a social media user and participated in some similar acts of cancel culture. This background allowed the researcher to ask appropriate questions intended to evoke information-rich responses.

The semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix C) was developed by the researcher for this study. Interviews consisted of five sections, with twenty-three main questions followed by one or two follow-up questions. Interviews were expected to last approximately thirty to forty-five minutes. The questions in the first section addressed participants' habits and changes as well as reasons for using different social media platforms. Section two primarily addressed participants' experiences with the types of content shared or avoided and their perception of privacy settings. Next, the questions in section three addressed perceptions of social media audiences and reflections on self-image on social media. The fourth section addressed participants' perceptions of social media culture and cancel culture. Finally, the fifth section addressed participants' perceptions of the actions they would like to take in such a culture. Those topics were aligned with related qualitative studies of social media surveillance perceptions conducted with other populations (Duffy & Chan, 2018; Rotolo, 2022).

The purpose of the interview questions was to answer the research question through understanding how general social media users describe their experience in the context of social media and cancel culture, that is, how they made sense of what behaviour is appropriate and normal in an online public environment. Thus, the interview protocol aimed to address these notions from the perspective of public visibility on social media by raising questions about the perception of cancel culture and their experience of using social media in it. The researcher aimed to identify what and why participants considered as the norms and rules of social media, what perceptions they had of social media audiences, and what practices they engaged in in

response to these norms and rules. The researcher also intended to learn about participants' perceptions and definitions of cancel culture in connection with social surveillance. Finally, the researcher also added questions about how individuals' practice offline will influence their perception of social media experience to address social surveillance in offline settings. In addition, the researcher added a scenario of cancelling incidents to increase the discussion about participants' perception of cancel culture incidents and their expected behaviour.

The interview protocol was designed to consider the possibility of social desirability bias of participants that they may tend to answer in ways that are perceived to be socially acceptable, especially when asked about topics that are controversial or sensitive (Bergen & Labonté, 2019). Since the topic of surveillance within cancel culture can be controversial, this study used strategies of probing for more information and requesting stories or examples to elicit more honest answers and rich descriptions by asking follow-up questions or requesting the participants provide stories or examples to illustrate their response (Bergen & Labonté, 2019). For example, after participants answered, "How much personal information are you willing to share?" and then were asked to answer the follow-up question, "Why do you share personal information?" Also, the researcher asked, "Have you ever experienced cancelling or cancelled?" and probed questions requesting related stories.

Additional data was collected for screening purposes and to describe the sample demographics. Participants interviewed were asked to complete a short series of questions to identify their ages, genders, ethnicities, levels of education, employment status, and social media platforms they used. These data were collected to describe the sample and to aid in understanding the study results. Age was asked because it may be a factor related to online privacy. Gender and ethnicity were asked because they may be factors related to online hostility.

Education level and employment status were asked as they may associated with thought development and preference. The social media platforms used were asked to verify that the individual was qualified to participate in this study, and it may be relevant as a significant factor in usage habits and privacy expectations.

Data Collection and Management

This section will detail the steps taken for data collection and management in this study. First, the permissions and informed consent are described. Second, the recruiting and sampling process is presented in two stages. Third, the data collection procedures for the interviews will be outlined. Finally, the management and security of data procedures will be described.

Permission and Informed Consent

Before recruiting, sampling or data collection begins, the research obtained approval to conduct the study from the University Research Ethics Boards (REBs) at the University of Ottawa. The informed consent form (see Appendix B) that was signed by interview participants for this study is prepared for REBs review. The informed consent document outlined the purpose of the study, procedures of the study, expectations of risks and benefits, confidentiality and data protection expectations, participant rights, including voluntary participation and rights to withdraw from the study at any time and refuse to answer questions without any negative consequences. Interviewees were asked to sign and returned signed informed consent forms at the beginning of their interview sessions. After received REBs' approval, the researcher communicated with administrative personnel at the research site to obtain permission to post recruitment posters and discussed details, including coordinating posters with the advertisement policy, the duration of advertising, and the procedure for posting and discontinuing the poster.

Recruiting

Recruiting and sampling were conducted in two stages. The first recruiting stage consists of volunteer recruiting via recruitment posters posted at the research site. The second stage was planned to initiate snowball sampling if sufficient samples were not obtained in the first stage. In the first recruitment stage, forty-five recruitment posters were placed on the main advertisement boards in the buildings on the research site. The recruitment posters included 1) a brief description of the study; 2) information on the inclusion criteria; 3) a description of the study activities; and 4) the contact email address if interested in participating in the study. After potential interviewees contacted the researcher via email, the researcher responded with more detailed information regarding the study and scheduled the interview at the time of the participant's choice.

The second round of recruitment was decided when the result of the first stage of recruitment was insufficient. After completing the initial interviews, the researcher considered it would be too slow to reach a sufficient number of participants because the recruitment took place during the summer semester and very few people showed up on campus. Therefore, in the second stage, the researcher circulated the recruitment information through referral and direct outreach to find more volunteers. In addition, the recruitment at this stage also aimed to obtain information-rich cases and cases from diverse backgrounds.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. The researcher conducted 11 interviews to achieve a sufficient sample for data saturation in this qualitative descriptive study (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Van Rijnsoever, 2017). The researcher scheduled in-person meetings and conducted them in quiet locations, which the participants

preferred, where the conversation could not be overheard. At the beginning of each meeting, the researcher read the informed consent document to the participants and confirmed that the participants agreed to be audio recorded. After asking the participants if they had any questions, the researcher witnessed the participants sign the informed consent forms. Before proceeding to the interview, the researcher presented a QR code linked to the demographics survey. Once the survey was complete, the interview was set up, and the start button on the recorder was pressed.

The interviews lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and were proceeded according to the semi-structured protocol developed by the researcher. In other words, the discussion in each interview was guided by planned questions. However, the researcher sometimes adjusted questions or added follow-up questions based on the responses and new information provided by the participants. Therefore, each interview was unique, with not necessarily all questions or prompts being addressed. At the end of the interview, the researcher verified that the participants had completed the demographic survey and asked about referrals of friends who might be interested in participating in this study. The interviews ended when there were no further questions.

Interviews were conducted until a sufficient sample was obtained to achieve data saturation. Data saturation is defined as the point at which further sampling yields little or no new information is obtained by further sampling (Guest et al., 2006; Van Rijnsoever, 2017). The researcher determined the data saturation was achieved after 11 interviews.

After each interview, the researcher assigned the participants a pseudonym (a temporary name that is different from the individual's actual name) and an ID code to the recorded file and related documents for the purposes of transcription and quoting responses. Interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word transcription services and proofread by the researcher to

ensure accuracy. To protect privacy, identifying information, such as names and locations, in the transcriptions was removed or altered. The researcher also recorded impressions of the interview in a reflexive journal.

Data Security

Data collected were securely stored by the researcher. Informed consent documents signed by participants were stored inside a locked safe in the researcher's home. Interview recordings and transcripts were labelled with numeric codes and stored on a hard drive inside the locked safe. Documents received via email and other electronic means were transferred to the hard drive, and the originals were deleted from online. Study data will be secured and retained for five years, and all data will be destroyed after the retention period.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the research question about people's perception of social surveillance in the context of cancel culture. This research question guided the collection and analysis of data through semi-structured interviews. The following sections will outline the data analysis approach and the procedures used in this study. The researcher used the interpretive content analysis approach to code, categorize, and interpret the key themes in the data. First, the procedures for organizing the raw data are described. Then, the interpretive content analysis approach applied to this study is presented. Finally, the data analysis procedure is detailed.

Data Organization

Raw data was prepared and organized prior to the coding and analysis. Interview recordings were transcribed immediately following each interview. Nonverbal expressions, such

as hesitation and long pauses, were included in the transcription. Some filler words, such as “um” or “like,” were removed to ensure the readability of the text.

The raw data was organized as each interview was assigned with an ID number related to the date and time the interview occurred (e.g. 230733_0945, 230726_1822, etc.). Those ID numbers were also attached to all data and documents, including recordings, transcripts, demographic surveys, and informed consent forms, associated with the individual participants. Each ID number was also associated with a pseudonym for interview participants, which will be used when referring to the individual or quoting the person’s responses in the description of study results. Interview transcripts were loaded into NVivo 14, a useful computer program for data organization and management. Transcripts were organized and labelled by pseudonyms within the software.

Interpretive Content Analysis

The data are analyzed following the interpretive content analysis approach, as this approach is consistent with the epistemological assumption of this study. Interpretive content approach is known as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from text (Drisko, 2015). It allows going beyond descriptive questions of “what” and “how” but continues on inference about “why,” “for whom,” and to “what effect,” thus exploring beyond merely literal descriptive to abductive inferences (Drisko, 2015). Also, the interpretive content analysis draws inferences about intentions, thoughts, and feelings based on interview transcripts, focusing on both explicit and implicit content, and helps to determine about participants’ intentions, needs, and potential actions that are consistent with the purpose of this study (Drisko, 2015).

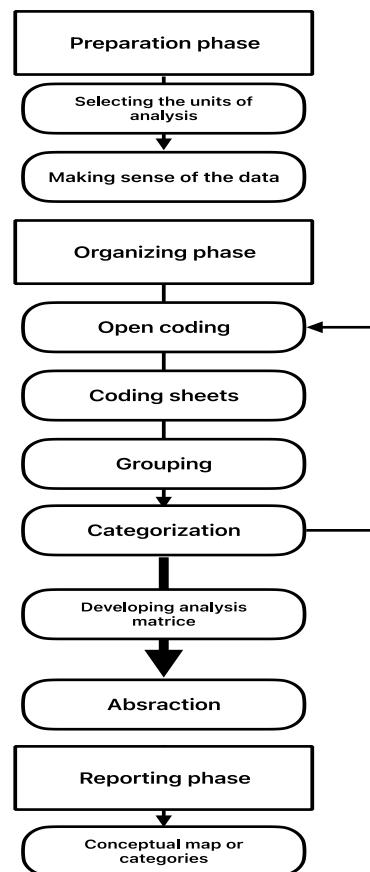
Coding was guided by the research question that the researcher intended to identify meaning related to people’s construction of surveillance in the context of cancel culture as moral

considerations associated with decision-making. Thus, codes highlighted perceptions of the audience, expectations of visibility, performance, thought processes, and motivations of practices. The coding process included two rounds of inductive phases. Themes that did not fit the theoretical frame were included to represent potential findings.

Interpretive content analysis was conducted across the entire set of data, and the analysis process was conducted in three phases, as established by Elo and Kyngäs (2008). The three phases are: 1) preparation phase; 2) organizing phase; and 3) reporting phase. Figure 4.1 represents the content analysis process.

Figure 4.1

Preparation, organizing and reporting phases in the content analysis process using the inductive approach in this study.



Preparation Phase. In the first phase of analysis, the researcher started by being immersed in the data and obtaining the sense of a whole, selecting the units of analysis, and deciding the analysis of explicit and implicit content (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). This process began with preparation and review of the collected data. The process of transcript interviews allows the researcher to be immersed in the data and be familiar with the data to form an early impression. Also, after transcription, the researcher read and re-read the interviews for clarity and correctness to enhance familiarity with the data as a whole.

The researcher considered the whole interview as a suitable unit of analysis. As Elo and Kyngäs (2008) point out, deciding what to analyze in what detail is challenging since a unit of meaning can consist of more than one sentence and contain several meanings, while too narrow analysis unit may result in fragmentation. Nonetheless, a whole interview as a unit of analysis could be large enough to be considered as a whole and small enough as a backdrop to the unit of meaning (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Finally, both explicit and implicit content were included in the analysis as hidden meaning can be analyzed. After the preparation of the data, analysis was conducted through the inductive approach.

Organizing Phase. The organizing phase for the inductive approach includes open coding, creating categories, and abstraction. In the organizing phase, the researcher worked systematically through the entire body of the data set. In the coding process, interpretive content analysis allows the use of connotative codes, which are codes based not on explicit words but on the overall or symbolic meaning of phrases and passages (Drisko, 2015). Prior to abstraction, the researcher iterated through the process of open coding, coding sheets, grouping, and categorization with the aim of exploring nuanced findings to answer the research question. After

two iterations of open coding and categorization, two sets of codes were created, which were then used to develop an analysis matrix and proceed to the abstraction step.

In the process of open coding, as Elo and Kyngäs (2008) recommended, the researcher read through the interview transcripts and wrote down as many notes and headings in the text as possible to describe all aspects of the content. In the first round of open coding, the researcher attempted to code specific statements that seemed relevant to the phenomenon or research question. In the second round of open coding, however, the researcher intended to code the data representing common patterns that appeared in the text but had little direct relevance to the research question. In both rounds, codes had clear and distinct boundaries and avoided overlapping meanings. However, sections of text could be coded under many codes. Then, the researcher collected the headings and put them on coding sheets to generate categories.

After two iterations of open coding, the researcher began to organize the codes into two lists of categories that were grouped under higher-order headings. The purpose of this step was to reduce the number of categories by collapsing similar groups of data and emerging them into higher-order categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The researcher proceeded to formulate categories based on the consideration of whether each category consisted of meaning units that were sufficiently alike and each category was sufficiently differed from the other category (Patton, 2002). The researcher first examined the volume and consistency of the coded extracts within each category and adjected or integrated categories accordingly. Then, the researcher reviewed the entire data set to ensure the lists of categories captured the full picture of the data and coded the overlooked units that corresponded to the refined categories.

The two sets of categories were then expanded into an analysis matrix by overlapping the two sets of categories, and the codes were organized based on the new categories created by

overlapping the two old sets of categories. The researcher noticed that the codes for the two sets of categories did not overlap completely. Therefore, the researcher re-coded the interview transcripts to fit the matrix of analysis. In this process, only meaning units that fit the matrix were chosen from the data, and codes were removed and adjusted accordingly.

Once the analysis matrix was developed, the analysis process proceeded to the step of abstraction step, formulating a general description of the research topic through generating main categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In this step, the researcher named subcategories with words that characterized the content and created a description of each category, taking into account that each subcategory and main category constituted an internal meaning structure and relationships.

Reporting Phase. The results of the interpretive content analysis are reported in Chapter Five. In the reporting phase, results are expected to be reported through conceptual systems, conceptual map or categories (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). In this phase, the researcher produced data summaries centred on descriptive themes to inform the participants' core view by presenting the descriptions of contents of the categories that are described through subcategories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). This reporting was supported with quotations to demonstrate the views captured in the analysis.

Ethical Considerations

This study posed minimal risk to participants and was conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the TCPS 2: CORE and with approval from the Research Ethics Boards (REBs) at the University of Ottawa. Therefore, the related ethical considerations include risk, privacy, confidentiality, and free and informed consent. In addition, the researcher aims to protect participants against any unforeseen ethical conflicts, biases, or harm to participants through the principles of autonomy, beneficence, and justice (Orb et al., 2001). The principle of autonomy

refers that research ensuring the participants were allowed to maintain personal agency during the study. The principle of justice refers to the fairness of all parties involved, including a commitment to prevent bias and be sensitive to potential vulnerability. Finally, the principal beneficences refer to the research commitment to doing good instead of no harm to protect the participants' well-being throughout the study (Orb et al., 2001).

Regarding risk considerations, this survey posed minimal risk to participants. Interviews were designed to avoid psychological or emotional harm or discomfort in order to focus on everyday experiences on social media. Interviews were designed to be conducted and completed in one hour to avoid fatigue and physical discomfort. The researcher minimized other inconveniences by conducting interviews only in the same city as the participant, allowing the participants to choose a time and location that they were comfortable with. The study was also intended to contribute to a better understanding of participants' experiences with their social media activities and the impact of surveillance. The study will also be beneficial in developing strategies to protect privacy and free speech. In addition, this study will benefit communities and societies in making informed decisions about social media use and associated risks and can contribute to those interested in developing policies to protect the privacy and safety of those who use social media.

Regarding privacy, the interviews were confidential, and the data was anonymized. Also, participants were assigned with ID codes, and the transcripts were anonymized. Pseudonyms were used for participants or other individuals or organizations mentioned to protect their identity. Personal information, including informed consents and data were secured in a hard drive locked in the researcher's house and require a password. Data collected were on a hard drive and stored inside the researcher's home. Audio recordings of interviews and other anonymized data

were held on a second hard drive and secured inside the locked safe. No one else has access to the secure safe. Emails and other electronic means were transferred to the secure hard drive, locked in the safe, and deleted from the online repository. All data will be retained for five years after the completion of data collection and will be deleted or shredded after five years.

Informed consents were obtained from all participants prior to the interview, and participants signed and returned the forms of informed consent before the interview was conducted. The informed consent explained the purpose and activities of the study and that the participation is voluntary, and they could refuse or withdraw without penalty. It also notified individuals of how their personal information will be used and who will have access to it. Based on the principle of autonomy, the researcher allowed participants to skip any questions that were difficult or discontinue participation with no questions asked. Similarly, based on the principle of fairness, data from participants who choose to withdraw will not be used.

The researcher intends to report results that fairly and accurately reflect participants' experiences. Therefore, the researcher made every effort to withhold personal bias, beliefs, and prior assumptions to avoid interfering with any aspect of this study. However, since the epistemological assumption asserts that the researcher's background and perceptions cannot be eliminated entirely; therefore, the researcher provided reflexive comments in the research report along with a description of the method and interpretations during the study process, and that can be evaluated (Burr, 2003; Orb et al., 2001). The researcher recognized that people engaging in an "editing process" tend to make their responses more socially desirable (Holtgraves, 2004). In order to minimize the social desirability bias, the researcher did not allow interviewees to review their interviews.

Summary

This study was conducted based on the assumptions and framework of the post-positivism paradigm to explore social media users' experiences and perceptions of social surveillance in the context of emerging cancel culture. The descriptive qualitative method was chosen as most appropriate to investigate the subjective personal experience, and this study does not seek to quantify, test hypothesis, or variable but intends to describe the experience of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Holden & Lynch, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 2016). The method of interview was considered ideal for producing a comprehensive description of experience in the cultural context, which aligned with this study which examines the experience of social media users in the cultural context of cancel culture (Silverman, 2017; Slater, 2017).

The target population was adult social media users from diverse backgrounds. The sample that participated in the interview consisted of 11 individuals. Recruiting of the sample was completed by volunteering recruiting strategy by advertising on recruitment posters posted at the research sites and a snowball sampling strategy through referrals and direct outreach to find sufficient participation to complete the study.

Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews. All data collection and management procedures adhered to the requirements outlined by TCPS 2: CORE and Research Ethics Boards (REB) at the University of Ottawa. The researcher developed an interview protocol guided by the theoretical framework and research question. Demographic information was collected for the purpose of screening and describing the sample.

Data analysis was performed following the interpretive content analysis approach. The process was guided by three phases of content analysis, as recommended by Elo and Kyngäs (2008), which consist of preparation, organizing, and reporting the data. Analysis was guided by

the research question and theoretical frameworks aimed at addressing the research questions. The results of the analysis were presented with a description of the content of categories using quotations from participants.

Based on the epistemological assumption of this study, the researcher views the research project as a co-product between the researcher and the respondents (Burr, 2003). Also, although this research may carry an implicit political view, this study does not have a political stance but rather is only interested in the investigation of construction itself (Burr, 1995). However, since post-positivism requires the democratization of the research relationship, thus the researcher sees the responses from the interview as valid, and interview data reflects the reality of the phenomenon and reflect the respondents' experience (Burr, 2003; Silverman, 2017). In addition, the study will not peruse the value of objectivity but rather pragmatic “usefulness” and “fruitfulness” as criteria to evaluate whether this study has a possibility to generate theory developments, novel explanations and contribute to previous research findings (Yates et al., 2001, p. 325).

Finally, this study posed minimal risk to participants and was conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the TCPS 2: CORE and with approval from the REB. In addition, the researcher protected participants against any unforeseen ethical conflicts, biases, or harm to participants through the principles of autonomy, beneficence, and justice, which allow the participants to maintain autonomy and to be treated fairly, and the researcher commits to doing good rather than no harm during the whole process of study (Orb et al., 2001).

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis

Introduction

This qualitative research aimed to explore the relationship between the perception of surveillance and cancel culture, as well as the moral reasonings and ethical issues linked with surveillance practice. Previous studies suggested that the study of surveillance ought to consider the nature and source of monitoring, perceived norms, and expectations of practices. A qualitative design was used to accomplish this study, and the data preparation process is described along with the descriptive data in this chapter. Then, this chapter presents the results of the data analysis in three sections: 1) proximity and visibility, 2) cancelling and visibility, and 3) visibility and moral-related reasonings. The interviewees' responses demonstrate their experience engaging in online social networking and surveillance.

Data Preparation and Descriptive Data

Data Preparation

The data collection took place during the period of the summer semester, from July through September. An interview protocol was used to conduct 11 semi-structured interviews with six volunteers and five referrals to achieve the target sample size. Interview participants first completed a demographic questionnaire and then volunteered to be interviewed. Interviewees were selected on a first-come, first-serve basis. No participants withdrew from the study, and all interviews were included in the data set.

Data preparation began with transcribing the audio recordings of each interview session transcribed with the assistance of Microsoft Words. Transcription was done exclusively by the researcher to ensure the accuracy of the data and to protect the privacy of the participants. Table 1 presents the overview of the interview data. The median interview duration was 37 mins, the

longest was 63 minutes, and the shortest was 32 minutes. A total of 137 pages of data were generated, with the average transcript of 12.5 pages written in double-spaced Times New Roman 11-point font. After transcription, each transcript was assigned a corresponding ID and a pseudonym to present the results.

Table 5.1

Overview of Interview Data

ID	Pseudonym	Duration	Transcript
230722_0945	Jonah	49:02	16 pages
230726_1822	Ella	37:59	11 pages
230730_1822	Amir	33:18	9 pages
230811_1510	Philip	1:03:51	16 pages
230814_1709	Emily	33:36	11 pages
230825_1252	Aaron	32:25	11 pages
230828_1307	Nathan	54:20	13 pages
230831_1616	Devin	39:38	13 pages
230911_1531	Daniel	36:10	12 pages
230914_1211	Shane	38:55	15 pages
230916_1301	Ellie	33:25	10 pages

Note. All interviews were conducted via in-person meetings. Transcripts are written in double-spaced 11pt. Times New Roman.

Descriptive Data

Descriptive data were generated from the demographic survey conducted prior to the interviews. These data were used to describe the characteristics of study participants. Of a total of 11 participants, 4 (36%) were female and 7 (64%) were male. All participants were between 18 and 34 years of age, with five (46%) between 18 and 24 and six (55%) between 25 and 34. Participants were asked to identify an ethnicity, and White (55%) is the predominant ethnic

category with Black (18%), East Asian (9%), Latin American (9%), and North African (9%) were reported. Table 5.2 presents the breakdown of the ethnicity of the sample.

Table 5.2

Ethnicity of the Sample

Ethnicity of the sample	N	Percentage
Black (African, African Canadian, Afro-Caribbean descent)	2	18%
East Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese descent)	1	9%
Latin American (Hispanic or Latin American descent)	1	9%
White (European descent)	6	55%
Other	1	9%

Note. Participant chose “other” identified ethnicity as “North African”.

All participants provided their information about highest education level and current employment status. More than half (55%) of participants have a bachelor’s degree, three (27%) have a high school degree or equivalent, and two (18%) hold a graduate degree. Regarding the current employment status, although participants may have a multiple status, such as both student and employed part-time, the demographic survey asked them to select only one of the most primary employment statuses from the list of options. The sample, therefore, consisted of early half (45%) of participants as students, with the rest divided between those employed full time (27%) and those employed part-time (27%). The breakdown of the education level and current employment status is presented in Table 5.3 and Table 5.4.

Table 5.3

Education Level of the Sample

Highest Education	N	Percentage
High school degree or equivalent	3	27%
Bachelor's degree	6	55%
Master's degree	1	9%
Other	1	9%

Note. The participant chose “other” is indicated highest education as “Law degree (JD)”

Table 5.4

Current Employment Status of the Sample

Current Employment	N	Percentage
Employed full time	3	27%
Employed Part-time	3	27%
Student	5	45%

Finally, all the participants were social media users, as this was one of the inclusive criteria for participation recruitment. Participants provided information about the platforms they used for socialization purposes. The most popular platforms were Facebook (73%), Instagram (64%), LinkedIn (55%), and X (previous Twitter) (45%). Two participants (18%) used the forum site Reddit. Two participants (18%) used YouTube as a primary socializing site, one (9%) used a instant messaging platform Discord and one (9%) used a photo-sharing site BeReal as a replacement for Instagram. Table 5.5 presents all social media platforms used by participants.

Table 5.5

Social Media Platform Use of Participants

Social Media Platforms	N	Percentage
Facebook	8	73%
Instagram	7	64%

X (previous Twitter)	5	45%
Snapchat	3	27%
LinkedIn	6	55%
Reddit	2	18%
YouTube	2	18%
Discord	1	9%
BeReal	1	9%

In summary, the sample consist of 11 participants in this study represented a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences. All participants are social media users, but the platforms they used are diverse. The sample includes a balanced representation of men and women and reflects a diverse ethnicity. The sample included full-time and part-time employed individuals and students with diverse levels of education. Table 5.6 presents a full list of interviewees.

Table 5.6

Interview Participants

ID	Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Ethnicity	Education	Social media
230722_0945	Jonah	18-24	Man	White	High school degree or equivalent	Instagram; X; Snapchat; LinkedIn; Reddit;
230726_1822	Ella	25-34	Woman	Black	Bachelor's degree	Facebook; Instagram;
230730_1822	Amir	18-24	Man	North Africans	Bachelor's degree	Facebook; Instagram; X; LinkedIn;
230811_1510	Philip	18-24	Man	White	High school degree or equivalent	YouTube; Discord
230814_1709	Emily	18-24	Woman	White	Bachelor's degree	Facebook; Instagram; LinkedIn; BeReal;
230825_1252	Aaron	25-34	Man	White	High school degree or equivalent	Facebook; YouTube

230828_1307	Nathan	25-34	Man	White	Law degree (JD)	Facebook; Instagram; LinkedIn;
230831_1616	Devin	25-34	Man	White	Bachelor's degree	Facebook;
230911_1531	Daniel	25-34	Man	Latin American	Master's degree	Facebook; Instagram; X;
230914_1211	Shane	18-24	Woman	East Asian	Bachelor's degree	Facebook; Instagram; X; Snapchat; LinkedIn; Reddit;
230916_1301	Ellie	25-34	Woman	Black	Bachelor's degree	X; Snapchat; LinkedIn;

Proximity and Visibility

Table 5.7

Theme 1: Perception of visibility related to proximity.

Sub-theme	Friends & Family	Professional	General Public
Privacy	Open	Open but limited to professional stuff	Tend to be close
Personal information	Real name, pictures, email, and address	Real name and professional connections, working experience	May use fake names passively share information if the website requires
Share Information (general)	Comments, ideas, recent significant events, sharing memes and jokes, being transparent	Job information, professional connections, tend to be transparent regarding working status and history	Less likely to comment on events, share factual or technical information, information with personal interests; tend to be anonymous
Expected Visibility from Others	They will share personal information and significant events	Others will share their professional-related information	Anonymity is justifiable, but they also may abuse it. They should be more transparent and give more details.

Self-represent	Funny	Not crazy, tend to hide personal interests (e.g. games), intelligent	Funny, intelligent, normal person, won't do anything crazy, not strong in opinion, not interested in attention
Audience	Expected to be seen by family and friends; may activity post about personal events and pictures	Separate personal life from professional platforms	Most do not seek to be seen by the public but are expected to be seen by companies through bots, algorithms and the government for security reasons. The expected audience is hostile, and the users face more hostility as they become more visible to the public.

As shown in Table 5.7, this section will discuss how people wrestle with visibility intersecting with the the proximity of the imagined audiences. The interviewees' responses illustrate their experiences with online social networking and surveillance. As shown in Table 5.7, people wrestle with visibility that intersects with the proximity of their imagined audiences. Therefore, the following section discusses respondents' perceptions of visibility based on different groups of imagined audiences: friends and family, professional relationships, and the general public.

Friends and Family Members

The data shows that respondents manage their privacy according to the proximity of the expected audience. When expecting their audience as friends and family members, respondents indicated that they tend to be open and more willing to share personal details, including real name, pictures of recent events, email address and actual address, in order to provide friends with up-to-date information and in anticipation that these friends and family will look them up on the Internet. For instance, Jonah mentioned that:

Used in high school, I was very, very privy to not sharing anything about myself, but then I made that kind of realized it was very difficult for really for anyone to find me, so recently, I have put my name on Instagram, my first name and my last name. (Jonah)

Similarly, Nathan mentioned that his purpose for sharing personal information was to inform his friends to make connections:

I share photos and travel photos. They are easier to share on social media that everyone can see instead of showing them to all friends individually and take a long time, so it is efficient. Then, I share some basic information. Just if I have a friend, you know, old friends or acquaintances are looking me up, they can find some basic information to determine who I am and then be able to reach out to me with that basic information.

(Nathan)

While sharing general information, respondents tend to target friends directly to share general information based on common interests. For example, both Aaron and Nathan stated that they share information about games because many of their friends belong to the gaming community. In the same way, Philip said that he shares information usually related to school issues because most of his online friends are also friends known from school.

Not only did they share common things about shared interests, but respondents also showed they tend to be more transparent and willing to share their opinions on social topics with friends and family as they generally shield this information from the public. Nathan mentioned that he shares his political views or opinions to tell his friend, “Hey, by the way, you could think about this issue this way.” In the same way, Philip states, “If someone wants my opinion on some subject. Yeah, I would share on Discord but not on YouTube.” Philip only shares his opinion on discord because he is “not really in Discord groups with people I do not know,” and his Discord

friends are “friends from church and old friends from school,” whom he often trusts. However, Philip described people he connected on YouTube as “I do not know them personally,” which contributes to his unwillingness to share views and opinions with the public.

Nonetheless, although respondents will share more personal information with friends and family than the public, they always share that information in a positive light. Emily states she would edit photos shared on the Internet to look good:

Of course, I add filters on Instagram. Yeah, all the time. Why? Because it is what the cool kids are doing. I am like everybody else. I want to look nice on social media. I want people to think I look good, so I will add whatever I will add. (Emily)

Nathan, however, states that he does not just post “the perfect photos of doing the perfect things” but also posts pictures of his small failures to show his humour. Similarly, both Ella and Philip said they like sharing “memes and jokes” to “make friends laugh.” On the other hand, no respondents mentioned they would post significant negative events about themselves on social media.

However, as respondents showed openness to friends and family, they expected the same openness and visibility from these audiences. Many respondents state that they would look a friend up on social media to know their recent status. For example, Emily states:

Sometimes, I will just randomly remember someone I went to high school with. I wonder what they are up to, and I will look it up —most birthdays. I want to know when their birthday is or if they started a business; sometimes some of my friends promote their business on social media, and if it does not come up on my feed. I like to look them up to see what they are up to. (Emily)

Emily's response implies her expectation of her friends and family members' visibility that they will post personal information and significant events on social media so that she can look up. Similarly, Devin also mentioned that he "might check friend's Facebook profile and see what they are thinking." Devin's statement shows an expected openness to thoughts from friends and family members.

Professional

Similar to being open to friends and family, respondents also expressed a willingness to be open to professional connections. However, this openness was limited in the professional sphere, as respondents demonstrated that they were willing to share most information related to their work history and education but to hide information associated with personal lives or interests.

Ellie stated that she felt "comfortable sharing stuff on LinkedIn" about her job positions and updates, and educational milestones to "getting people to notice you for the work that you do" because she "would classify LinkedIn as a group of professionals." Similarly, Jonah stated he had "everything" on LinkedIn, not only his job but also personally identifiable information, such as his real full name. However, he also said he actively keeps information about his personal and professional lives separate:

It is for professional stuff. My online persona and my professional persona are separate. There is no correlation between the two. So, my GitHub or my websites I have worked on, those are not connected to my Reddit account. They are connected to my LinkedIn, and that is it. And my LinkedIn is like, I have made sure to completely separate it and everything, so I just want to make sure potential employers won't trace me. I do not want them to see what video games I play. (Jonah)

Many interviewees indicated that they kept their personal and professional lives separate because they believed that publicizing details of their personal lives could have unwanted consequences. Amir states:

I do not want to keep myself like about anything I say and everything I do on social media because I think it will affect my daily life, my real life if it goes on the wrong way.
(Amir)

Similarly, Emily states that she presents herself as very professional due to being aware of the potential unwanted consequences of presenting her personal life:

It is very professional. On Instagram, I am a little more goofy, but I am not anything like crazy. I am saying even like so on my birthday, I posted a picture of me drinking a mimosa and I immediately wondered if there were going to be consequences, so I would say I am pretty professional presenting. (Emily)

On the other side, Ella indicates she presents herself as being professional as a “regular slogan” of the organization she is working for:

I think that is because I got a full-time job where it matters how we represent the organization. We have to be respectable. We cannot embarrass them or, you know, do anything that is politically incorrect. I realized not that I was doing anything wrong, but more so I need to. I am just censoring myself more because the Internet is very like unpredictable and if I would ever get into conflict with someone, I would not want it to compromise my job. (Ella)

Also, some respondents were students who were thinking about finding a job in the future may not actively hide information about their personal lives, but they present an image of being intelligent and not crazy. For example, Devin described the image he presented online as:

It is probably pretty much very close to how I present myself in general as somebody who is knowledgeable. There is not a huge persona or anything. It is just somebody who shares information on social media and information and intellectual things. When people see that, they would probably think, “Oh, I know him in real life. That is just the way he is. He is just being like that online.” (Devin)

Many respondents like Devin demonstrate that they want to persuade their audience that the image they present online is who they really are. Philip, another student, also states:

I would say people who follow me would describe me generally the same way that people who know me personally would. I do not put on a face online, so I think they would probably say that I am principled, and I care about what I believe. I take life pretty seriously. They might say I am boring. (Philip)

However, regarding the expected visibility of the audience in the professional sphere, respondents showed an interest in organizations rather than individuals. For instance, Shane mentioned that she let some organizations follow her because she can be part of those organizations’ social media portfolios. Ellie, similarly, mentioned that she follows some persons due to her interest and trust in the office that they represent instead of the individuals themselves:

I trust the organization they present, and I trust their office that they represent. So, if he is a political leader I am following like the President of my country, I trust him to do a good job in disseminating information. So yeah, I trust the office, not the individual. (Ellie)

In other words, those respondents viewed individuals as proxies for the organization they represented; thus, they expected people to behave online professionally, and their attitudes towards these individuals were not based on the individuals themselves but on the organizations.

Public

Compared to openness to their friends and family and the limited openness to individuals in professional fields, when considering the audience as the general public, the majority of respondents expressed a preference for strict privacy preservation. In other words, they often intend that their online activities will not be recognized or identified as their offline person. Amir stated that he had “a fake account” that was not related to any identifiable information. Similarly, Devin implied that using a fake account to be anonymous was a common practice and that he had another account in addition to the one using his real name. On the other hand, Shane says she doesn't see the necessity of lurking behind fake accounts, but she has observed some of her friends do it:

I do not know why you would do that. Like, I do not lurk, or I am not a lurker, but I lurk through my own account. I am not going to (create fake accounts). What I did hear someone I knew who my roommate was actually did have a fake Twitter account. They had a real Twitter account, and they had a Twitter account under anonymous thing, and they would like to post live tweeting like Love Island. So, I did not know it was a trend because I am just not posting. (Shane)

Though many respondents, similar to Shane, do not use fake accounts to preserve privacy, they preserve the information shared on social media. Philip stated using fake accounts is a “dangerous game to play” because he believes a name is tied to the identity; however, he preserved personal information from the public audience:

If friends, then sure, they will get my address and a little bit of personal information, but not really. For a wide audience, certainly, I would not share any information. Including

people I do not know. I would not be giving any significant personal information as a whole. I do not post anything. (Philip)

Aaron, however, states that although he does not “want some personal information floating around on the web,” he will share some basic personal information, including email address, if websites ask it for verification.

Outside of personal information, respondents are generally hesitant to comment on events. Emily states:

I try to keep my political opinions off social media because I find that just does not help. I do not think anyone goes on social media and just changes their mind because someone posts them. The great compelling said do not post about politics. Sometimes, I will say I do share stuff of like personal importance to me. For example, on the day, there is a special holiday in the Netherlands where Canada participated in the liberation of the Netherlands. I shared that on social media because I thought it was interesting. I do not share too much of my likes and interests on social media, aside from stuff that has a personal significant to my family or my culture. (Emily)

In a similar way, Ella stopped commenting on things in the last few years, but she stated that general information that is funny and relatable is “safe to share,” and she keeps low visibility on the internet because she “knows in my head that the Internet is forever, and our data is not always as safe as we think it is.”

However, when respondents share information, they limit their postings to either factual or professional information, and only focus on areas of interest to them. Amir says he posted “everything like Sports News and technology” on social media to help with his studies. Similarly, Aaron also states he may post “links and stuff related to the games” or “information

about a new site” related to his interests. In addition, Shane also stated that she rarely posts anything original but only sometimes reposted information, such as campaign and events advertisements, to help people she knows.

As such, respondents tend to present themselves as normal, not strongly opinionated, and not someone who does crazy or attention-seeking things. Philip stated that he had been “very careful about putting anything controversial” online. Similarly, Aaron describes himself as “not a person who goes looking for attention.” Thus, he does not “go looking for conflict” and generally does not “push the issue too much.” Nathan, on the other hand, stated that he will sometimes express his general opinion online if he feels that his opinion is reasonable. However, he also states that he is “not a celebrity or anything,” implying that he avoids public attention and conflict.

The way that respondents presented themselves may be linked to the image of their assumed audience. Many respondents indicate that they do not envision themselves being seen by the general public but rather more likely to be monitored by companies or social media platforms through bots and algorithms. Both Ella and Philip said they are aware that bots and algorithms are common on social media platforms and believe they are often used to monitor online habits in order to target advertising and sell products:

I think that the algorithm feeds people what they want to see already based on what they have already liked. I am starting to realize that there is AI on social media, robots, and I definitely completely do not engage with anyone who does not have a profile picture, and it looks like a fake name. And if they tried to follow me, my page is private, so I do not let them follow me, and I will block them. (Ella)

Algorithms and bots on YouTube are trying to check out our activity and see what we are up to. I am not sure they are finding out anything particularly interesting, so I am not very worried about it. Even like the question of like them skewing their ads to target me, I have got so many ad blockers up that I do not really deal with ads today, so it is just not really an issue. And then on Discord, I would say the biggest risk there, maybe to an extent, is they have got algorithms looking through and seeing what I am saying. (Philip)

In addition, Shane also mentioned the possibility of companies monitoring online activity as part of their services:

The actual companies monitor my activity if I use Facebook or Instagram. Mega is monitoring that somewhere, not to mention Apple is probably monitoring it because I can look at my phone and see how much time I spend on Instagram. (Shane)

Respondents also stated that they are aware that the government may be monitoring their activities for security reasons but do not believe they will be targeted because they are not well-known figures. For example, Amir stated:

I think the old states of the planet, they are watching people about what they do and what they are talking about, so it is a kind of security. There are too many in my country.

There are some people who post on social media. and then their whole lives got affected if he is talking about something bad about the state or the country. For the security, the state takes them and puts them in jail. (Amir)

Jonah also noted that while the government may be monitoring people's online activities, they will not be targeted unless their postings have something to do with extremism:

To me, I feel the government would also have just some levels of surveillance on me.

Because I do not post radical things, I do not think the government is watching me unless

I was posting very radical or very extremist right-wing. (Jonah)

While respondents expected that they were monitored by companies and governments, they also expected to be monitored by normal users. However, many respondents noted that their intended audience is hostile, suggesting that the more visible they are, the more likely they are to encounter this hostility. Devin indicated that the reason he keeps some information private was because he was aware there were some people with “malicious intent,” and he wanted to prevent them from using the information for doxing. Likewise, Ella also believed some people will intend to attack her if she posts anything:

I just found that there are a lot of contrarian behaviours in that people are playing devil’s advocate. So even if you were to comment something neutral like “I love your artwork,” there is a 50 percent chance someone is going to respond, say “I hate you,” or something negative, and that gives me anxiety. The fact is that there are people who are always ready for conflict. (Ella)

In addition, Nathan states that he avoids being seen by people who seem very active online:

I avoid certain groups of people, anyone who is just too politically active and opinionated. That can get tiring. I also try to avoid people that are stupid. They do not think or put thought into their actions or their words. And also, people that seem like their entire lives and identities are based on their social media and they are just kind of materialistic and vain, like influencer type or that sort of thing. I try to avoid that as much as I can. (Nathan)

Moreover, the majority of respondents portrayed the public as ignorant and emotional.

Emily said:

It is the abortion debate that is really hard to watch because people can get very strong and emotional and heated, and it does not take much for someone to get angry. I have seen a lot of people face a lot of criticism over that from wherever they stand. Because it is such an emotionally contested issue, people will have very strong feelings about it and people perceive that if you disagree with them, you have hated them. (Emily)

Also, Aaron stated that people seem too quick to react and tend to unfairly judge others with limited information:

If the post is about politics or anything related to it, I am going to take it with a grain of salt and raise an eyebrow. Because in this day and age, some information may does not come out yet or that may or may not be true. I can afford to wait a little bit to see what happens because I have seen cases where people will jump on the bandwagon, and it does not always turn out well. (Aaron)

Similarly, Shane also stated she thinks people tend to cause unfair judgement:

I think in a lot of situations, because we do not take context, we do not tend to look at the person holistically. As a society, when things happen, I think mob mentality happens cause when someone does something bad, everyone kind of jumps on the bandwagon, whether they care about the issue or not. (Shane)

Notably, respondents' perceptions of the audience were also formed based on screen-short style expressions rather than throughout study or interaction, and their focus was on the collective expression rather than the individual.

Therefore, many respondents mentioned they avoided the general audience not only due to their malicious intentions, but also because they were prone to unwise behaviour because of the limited information available. In other words, respondents expected others to be transparent and provide as much information as possible. Shane and Aaron commented that the context should be posted for any issues:

It is hard when we take people's comments out of context. So, a lot of times, what happens with social media, and because there are so many different social media platforms, you can see snippets of something, snippets of a conversation, snippets of a podcast, snippets of a video, and you do not see the whole thing in totality. Sometimes people say things in six seconds that are bad, and there is no context that can really absolve them of that. (Shane)

If you are recording what somebody else says or you know someone is doing something, I can understand you wanted to share that, but you kind of owe it to post the whole detail there, including anything you might have said, because people will cut that stuff up and post sections of it just to make another person look bad. (Aaron)

In addition, although the majority of respondents think anonymity is necessary, and while some use fake accounts for anonymity, they recognize that anonymity can be abused and tend to seek transparency from others. Ellie stated that she believes people who use fake accounts and seek anonymity may try "to do something that everybody would not approve of." Also, Amir said:

I have a fake account, but I do not like it. I love to see people with a real account. If you see a real picture and real information, it seems like you are in real life, and you have a

direct contact with the person. I think there are too many fake accounts, but I would like to see everybody with a real account. (Amir)

Similar to Ellie and Amir, Emily believes people should be transparent to take responsibility for what they posted online:

I think (creating fake accounts) is kind of unfortunate because I think people should be able to give their opinions without living in fear that they will be cancelled, but also, a lot of these anonymous social media accounts can promote some pretty hateful stuff, which I do not like to see. I think people should own what they say. Sometimes, it is going to be controversial. If it is hateful, you definitely need to own what you say so that you can be held accountable for it. But at the same time, I think it is too bad that people feel they have to hide. I think we need to be a bit braver and just say what we believe and take the flak for it. (Emily)

In other words, respondents expect not only transparency of posts made by others but also information about their identity that links to them.

Cancelling and Visibility

Table 5.8

Theme 2: Perceptions of visibility related to cancel culture and intersecting proximity.

	Personal	Acquaintance	Public
Knowledge about cancelling	Rarely Most experience related to platform sanctions or small-scale backlash	Rarely Most in the form of small-scale backlash	Almost always about celebrities, politicians, and influences Most in the form of larger scales backlash or losing the job

Reaction to cancelling incidents	Keeping distance or stay out of the incidents. Sometimes discussing incidents with trusted people in private.	Keeping distance or stay out of the incidents. Unfollow people who involved may with cancelling or being cancelled.	Often observe from a distance without direct involvement May seek more information about the people being cancelled
Responding practices	Being aware of the audience and avoiding being controversial. Self-censoring	Passively or actively blocked the person get involved	Dig more information
Perception of risk of being cancelled	Little immediate risk because they are not famous. The risk may increase in the future	Little risk as long as they are not high-profile	High-profile persons will always face the risk

This section will discuss respondents' perceptions of cancelling and their reactions to cancel culture (Table 5.8) concerning themselves and others. At the same time, with regard to others, respondents showed different attitudes toward acquaintances and the general public. Most respondents indicated that they were familiar with cancelling and cancel culture, but they also stated they had never had any personal experience with participating in cancelling someone or being cancelled. As shown in Table 5.8, respondents formed their perception of cancelling and cancel culture mainly from the experience of acquaintances and celebrities. When asked if he knew anyone who had been cancelled, Nathan replied, "Personally no, but I know one guy in the military" was disciplined and recourse for wearing a proud boys hoodie. Also, Jonah mentioned "I have known one or two friends who got cancelled in high school." Likewise, Philip also stated, "Not personally. I have heard of people being cancelled." The person that Philip mentioned is a famous hockey player for the NHL. In the same way, Shane replied to the same question with a list of celebrities and influencers:

Like a lot of social media influencers or Youtubers, like David Dobrick. He was cancelled. Like Shane Dawson, Jeffrey Star, who is a really controversial figure still to this day. They have all been cancelled. Yeah, tons of there. Like Aston Kutcher. The actor and his wife, Mila Kunis, are kind of being cancelled. There are some people, and then those are all celebrities. I guess I cannot think of anyone in my personal life that has been cancelled.

Notably, the form of cancelling practices differs from the experience of personal, acquaintances, and the general public. However, the respondents' impressions of cancel culture were closer to their perceptions of experiences of the general public, especially celebrities, not personal and acquaintances. For instance, Emily stated that she only witnessed “a small scale” of cancelling and described it as “just a couple of trolls coming after them online” and “there is really not a big deal.” Nonetheless, when being asked about her impression of cancel culture, she describes it as “judging a person by one of their actions, rather than really who they are and what their values are” and “sending an entire mob after” people for “one time they made a mistake.” Similarly, Devin stated he had experienced “mini cancels” that Facebook suspended his profile multiple times because his old contents violated Facebook’s newly updated guidelines, which was an apparent platform-level behaviour. On the other side, Devin’s impression of cancel culture was more on an individual-level that “it is people just wanting to avoid arguing and just imposing justice.” As such, there is an explicit discrepancy between the incident Emily and Devin described with their personal and acquaintance’s experience of cancelling and their general impressions of the cancel culture.

While each respondent's impression of cancelling was different, respondents' reactions to cancelling were very similar, regardless of the form of the cancelling practices. When asked how

they would react to a canceling incident, the majority of respondents, whether in favour or against cancelling, said they would not be directly involved in the incidents. Emily stated:

I would not post about it. I would not comment on it. I would probably just run to my husband about how crazy I thought it was, but I would not participate probably on either side. I would not touch it just because, not that I do not care, but I just do not see how anything I bring into the situation would be of any assistance. (Emily)

In the same way, Devin also said he would not be involved because he cannot bring meaningful influence on the situation:

If there was an incident, what am I going to do? I do not know if I was able to voice my opinion about it. I do not really have much agency to do anything else other than, you know, voice my discontent with somebody. (Devin)

Although respondents showed little intention to be directly involved in cancelling and cancel culture, they may actively or passively unfollow people who get involved. Nathan said if someone he follows engaged in cancel culture, he would stop following the person. In the same way, Emily perceived those people who engage in cancel culture as a potential risk against her. As she stated:

I will not let them follow me, or I will remove them as a follower if I see them posting content on my page. I strongly disagree with that person, which means there is a chance they might try to demonize me, so I am just going to remove them so they cannot see what I am posting, even though I am not posting anything political or controversial. I just do not want to give that chance.

In addition, Ellie said she would unfollow people who get cancelled because the person may deserve to be unfollowed since “there should be a reason why you got cancelled.” Ella, on the

other hand, stated that even if someone she follows were cancelled online, she would still contact that person if she knew the person “in real life,” which signifies that offline presence and relationships were perceived as more real and valuable than online.

Moreover, some respondents showed in favour of cancelling, especially towards celebrities, as it revealed the falsehoods people show online. Ellie stated:

I think cancel culture is considered when somebody does something really bad, and everybody finds out that the image they are presenting and the videos that are circulating or the posts or the tweets, or any information about them is not adding up to the image that they present online, so then you get found out that you are a fake and a fraud, so then you get cancelled. People get cancelled for being frauds and fakes. (Ellie)

In the same way, Daniel described cancel culture has the effect of exposing scandals and putting pressure on police and governments from a large audience to force them to get involved.

Nonetheless, while respondents were not interested in involvement with cancelling or cancel culture with acquaintances, the “Streisand Effect” appeared as some expressed interest when a celebrity was cancelled and said they wanted to dig up more information about the person. Shane said she would search for more information on the person being cancelled because she is curious about “what they are going to say about the issue.” Similarly, Aaron stated:

I have checked out Jordan Peterson because I heard some people were getting on his case for stuff. I mean, I do check out his stuff in there because I think he got some interesting things to say, which is a pretty weird consequence. You think trying to cancel someone but gets people to get some more attention from others. (Aaron)

On the other side, Shane also indicated that this interest has only an immediate short-term effect, but in the long run, “people forget, and then the cancel culture moves on to the next person who is going to be cancelled.”

Moreover, respondents’ reactions to cancel culture and cancelling were tied to their perceptions of the risk of being cancelled. In many responses, respondents indicated that being cancelling is a foreseeable consequence of being visible. Thus, they perceived those celebrities and influencers being cancelled as a self-inflicted outcome. As Ella stated:

I think people who use social media a lot or who share a lot and open up their lives are definitely going to be vulnerable to more criticism. People who have public pages instead of private pages. People who have very loud personalities and want to be seen or maybe antagonistic personalities. I would say like the more you engage with social media, the more open you are, the more you are kind of opening the door to everybody, and you have no idea how these people are, if they are mentally stable and what they are going to say to you. (Ella)

In the same way, Shane believed the less conspicuous one was, the less risk of being criticized:

I think if there is anyone who has a lot of followers, or a big following, will be open to more hostility than someone who does not. Like someone who is a huge social media star or a huge celebrity on social media is open to more hostility because they put more of themselves out there versus someone like me who does not post anything. It is hard to criticize someone when you do not know what they are up to. (Shane)

On the other side, while the majority of respondents perceive a low immediate risk of being cancelled due to low visibility, they are concerned that they may be cancelled in the long run. As Emily stated, she rarely faced the risk of being cancelled, but she believed “one day the

cancelled will outnumber the cancellers.” However, respondents perceived this future risk as based on the possibility of exposure from others, rather than actively raising their visibility. Daniel said that “at some point, everyone” would face the risk of being cancelled because “at some point, you may differ from the mainstream,” and it would lead to the “end of social media life.” Amir also said that he may face more risk in the future because he studies in controversial fields. In addition, Devein stated that his view may not be accepted in the future, which could lead to criticism and cancelling. In other words, they attribute the risk of cancelling to hostile others among the public.

Visibility and Moral Consideration

Table 5.9

Theme 3: Perceptions on moral consideration related to visibility and cancel culture.

	Acquaintance	General public
Fairness	Not fair to put their incidents online, should be resolved in-person	Most judgements are unfair due to a lack of information.
Trust	The more know the person in-person, the more trust.	Not trust, potential mobs outside actively finding someone’s fault. More visible, less trustworthy
Empathy	Empathy towards those being cancelled.	Less empathy: If do not want to be cancelled, the person could avoid it; the loudest not likely to be considered as a victim
Justification of cancelling	Cancelling should not be practised. If someone has done something wrong, should be sanctioned in the community	If enough evidence is revealed to the public (similar to the legal system), cancelling should be justified

Concern with the broader community	Concern about their genius repentance and welcome back to the community	Not really concerned about the consequence of individual or genius repentance. The idea of individual disappears
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While the previous sections discussed respondents' perceptions of visibility and proximity and how they related to cancel culture, this section discusses moral considerations regarding visibility and proximity (Table 5.9). The discussion will focus on perceptions of fairness to cancelling incidents, trust and empathy for the person involved, concerns regarding the legitimacy and justification of cancelling practices, and consecrations for the broader community.

When considering the fairness of acquaintances and the general public involved in the cancel culture, the respondents' emphases differed. For acquaintances, many respondents believed that even if the acquaintance had committed something wrong, it should not be brought out online or in public but should be resolved in private. Philip described that:

If someone is living a double life and you want to expose it to those close to him. If you find someone is lying to people severely and you think his spouse or parents or close family and friends should know the person is lying to them in some serious way, and you may need a video to show it. I guess there would be a place for a kind of catching what someone is saying or recording what someone is doing. But even then, it would not be posted on social media. (Philip)

Ella also stated that a person should only be held accountable by those in his or her close community, but not by "complete strangers" in the public. She implied that she thinks the general public is made of "complete strangers" who "do not know" the person, which would only lead to unfair judgments:

I think when complete strangers try to hold you publicly accountable, but they do not know you, or when complete strangers try to seek revenge on you for a bad decision that you made in your life, I think that is what cancel culture is. But complete strangers who do not know you or maybe only see the worst side of you making a mistake or wanting bad things to happen in your life. (Ella)

It is notable that the relationships described by Philip and Ella are personal, not a general knowledge about the person.

Nonetheless, when talking about the fairness of cancel culture involved with the general public, especially celebrities and influencers, although the majority of respondents indicated that fairness is associated with the knowledge and information of the person concerned, they focus on general knowledge visible online. Nathan described that he thinks people judge others online based solely on public opinions:

A lot of people on social media are saying this, and then some people just do not read into it more. They just see what people are saying but not do read more into the facts about the other side of the story and why the person did what they did. But if everyone is just saying the same thing and you are just looking on social media and you are not thinking, but going, "Oh yes, I agree. Screw that guy." (Nathan)

Also, respondents point out that cancel culture only cares about outward performance:

From my perspective, it very much feels like a lot of people do not pile on whatever they find out someone does bad things. I feel nowadays, people are more feel pressured to do the right thing instead of doing the edgy jokes and stuffs. I feel some people are also cancelled for things that are not that bad. I just know people are more polite online. I do believe they are all played online. (Jonah)

It is not encouraging ethical behaviour behind closed doors, only for the audience, for the public. I think it is a lot of reactions culture, and fear scaring people into not speaking the honest truth about what they want to say. It usually happens like there is a wave of negative comments and messages towards the people who is being cancelled, and then the corporations and businesses follow; they are like, “Ok, we want to be on the side of public opinion, so we are going to join in because we want to look good.” So that is an unfair judgement on them because you do not know them personally; you just see them on TV or the Internet. (Ella)

While the respondents differ in their emphasis on the fairness of cancel culture as it relates to acquaintance and the general public, their attitudes also differ in the level of trust and empathy for the two groups. For the majority of respondents, trust is built through personal relationships, and the additional online relationships may affect this trust. Jonah indicated that he trusts his friends and did not think anyone he knows would cancel him. Emily also said she can trust people she had interacted with because she filtered out people who cannot be trusted:

I trust them mostly because I do not think they care. I do not think I am friends with enough people that want to ruin my reputation or anything like that. But I have also never posted anything that could be used against me, so I would say I trust them often. I would like to think I have got a good filter for friends. (Emily)

Ella, on the other side, does not trust all her friends, especially new friends:

I would say I only trust eighty percent of them. Some of them are new friends, so we are not super close. I have not been in this situation with them where I have told them something, and then I can assess whether or not they kept it confidential. So, for the new friends, I would say I am still learning about them. For the family that I have known my

whole life and some of friends on there I have known since kindergarten, I trust them.

(Ella)

In other words, respondents typically tend to trust those with whom they have direct acquaintance or some personal relationships, and the longer they have known a person, the more they trust the person.

This trust is also evident in empathy for acquaintances involved in cancel culture. In all the incidents against acquaintances described by respondents, they stood by their acquaintances' side. When Nathan described his friend who was disciplined for wearing a proud boy's hoodie, he expressed empathy for his friend, trying to justify his friend's behaviour:

I know one guy actually in the military, so he was in basic training, and he wore a proud boy's hoodie. This was off hours off duty, so you can more or less wear whatever you want as long as it is not offensive, and he ended up getting disciplined and recourse for wearing the hoodie. (Nathan)

However, it should be noted that this empathy may be based not only on personal relationships in offline life but also on the same values formed by belonging to the same ethnic group. Also, Shane showed her empathy for her friend's brother got into trouble and implied this cancelling was unnecessary:

There was an issue in our town. I lived in a small town, and there was a restaurant, and his family owned this restaurant. I used to be friends with their daughter a long time ago, but her older brother got in trouble because he was managing the restaurant. So, it is kind of funny thing to see he was kind of cancelled for a little bit like he had to make a statement and apology whether it was true or not. But I do not think people care. (Shane)

On the other side, respondents expressed distrust of the general public and viewed them as potential mobs who actively seek fault with others. Aaron describes that he sees people reacting with cancelling as “the sheep following the herd” and that “no one wants to wait for more information before jumping out” on the issue. He also believes that people not only like to blindly follow others but also actively seek to cancel others:

If you are calling that somebody is doing something horrible, fair enough. But if you do not have all the information, everyone is just dogpiling up because they think, “Oh, this is a chance for me to wreck people and feel good doing it.” Without a doubt, I can easily see that some people just seem all too eager to dump on someone else. People seem eager to hurt others if they can feel right if they can feel like they are justified in doing so.

(Aaron)

In the same way, Emily commented that people who were cancelling others developed a mentality that they “just kind of develop this hive mind and they just hop in a person, and they can promote a lot of bullying and hatred just because the person made a mistake.”

Moreover, respondents also believed that famous people and influencers are less trustworthy as they have more power to influence public opinion and get involved in cancel culture incidents due to their visibility. Nathan commented that he does not believe in the people who are very vocal online:

For a lot of cancel culture, for example, oftentimes, it is the dominant group that is the most vocal and trying to cancel on behalf of marginalized people. I do not think it is necessarily empowering them. I think it is just the loudest people in the majority culture and a lot of times, they are king of empowering themselves. (Nathan)

Devin also believes that famous people have more control over the current culture and were “creating this bubble of things that are acceptable,” and took away people's responsibility to support things within that bubble.

Therefore, when confronted with strangers or celebrities involved in the cancel culture, respondents showed little empathy for them. Since respondents considered that being visible is associated with the risk of being cancelled, they implied that those who were cancelled deserved it because they could have avoided it by being less visible. Philip stated that he thinks the person being cancelled should be responsible for cancel culture:

The person being cancelled is usually responsible. You allowed people to examine your life that closely, and something wrong is going to be found, and you are going to be cancelled. Sometimes you are actually just an innocent victim, but just like the platforms that try and optimize that to be exciting and to be fun and just post everything you are doing, that is a very dangerous environment. But I would say, more often than not, the person being cancelled could have avoided it. (Philip)

In addition, although respondents know many cancel culture incidents involved celebrities, they rarely are concerned about the aftermath of those celebrities. For example, Danial mentioned a singer who was cancelled and commented, “I do not relate. I do not care.” Also, when Ellie raised two actors who involved in cancel culture, she said, “I do not know if they are still cancelled” and “I do not know if she is back.” Shane describes cancel culture as serial events of moving on different targets:

When someone is cancelled, it becomes like it will blow up like they will be a very big thing, and it can be like there could be a lot of repercussions for that person in their life,

but there it is almost like people forget and then move on to the next person who is going to be cancelled. (Shane)

Shane's description clearly shows that cancel culture incidents were treated more as entertainment rather than empathy for the person being cancelled.

Therefore, the justification for cancelling and was concerns about the impact on the broader community were also held to different standards by respondents when dealing with acquaintances and the general public. Some respondents stated that cancelling should not be justified despite someone had done something wrong, but the person should be sanctioned in the community. They were also concerned that the person who did wrong should have genuine repentance and be welcomed back into the community. Ella pointed out that she does not think cancelling is necessary because there are "people in small communities who can have conversations with each other and hold each other accountable." In addition, she thinks cancelling could not create genuine repentance of wrongdoings but performance of apology:

I think it forces people to change their behaviour on the outside, not on the inside. I actually think it could create more resentment in that person because they are not having a change of heart. They are just being forced to act like they had a change of heart. I think anybody would resent anyone that forces them into an apology instead of letting them naturally come to the apology on their own. (Ella)

Similarly, Philip disagreed with cancel culture as he was concerned that the person who did a severe wrong should get "a chance" and "a new life" after being sanctioned, so "it does not have to be broadcast through the Internet."

Conversely, when dealing with the general public, respondents believe cancelling can be justified based on standards consistent with the justice system. Especially, many of them

indicated that if a person committed a crime, this person should not be allowed to have a voice on social media:

If you committed a sort of convicted sexual assault or some sort of really grave crimes, you should be cancelled. I think there is some duty to the public when, let us say someone gets convicted and they are in a position of power. I think it is okay for that to be shared, and then a company can make their own decision, or that the individual can make their own decision on cancelling. (Nathan)

Like to align it with the criminal justice system, I do think that someone who commits a violent crime or something like that, they should not be given the platform to speak or do certain things. It also depends on if the person has taught us that they do not learn from this and keep doing the same bad thing again and again, then maybe they should not have a platform. (Shane)

Nonetheless, when it came to the influence of cancel culture, respondents primarily emphasized the impact of the cancelling on the broader society but not on the individuals. In other words, respondents were rarely concerned about the consequences of the individual involved or whether their apologies were genuine:

Cancel culture encourages unethical behaviour as well, because a lot of the time, cancel culture will be chasing after people for their moral stances, so it is not always ethical, but it encourages one's idea of ethical behaviour. (Philip)

I mean celebrities, they are exposed to that kind of thing, and they are celebrities, and they should be worried about cancel culture. But for example, if a politician is related to a drug scandal and there is enough pressure from the audience, they could force the police to act on it. Celebrities, well, that is their problem. (Danial)

It is notable that when respondents described the effect of cancel culture, they tended to address people as a group instead of individuals. Thus, respondents did not treat the general public as a group of individuals but as a collective whole.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of a qualitative study of the perception of surveillance and practices in the context of cancel culture. Three themes are described on the construction of perceptions of surveillance and moral reasoning considerations associated with various levels of relationship. The first theme, proximity and visibility, describes interviewees' perception of privacy, expected visibility, and imagined audience in the different spheres of proximity. Secondly, the construction of the perceptions of expected surveillance norms is profoundly influenced by their knowledge of cancelling and cancel culture. However, those interviewees perceived different levels of risk and reacted differently in response regarding themselves, acquaintances, and the general public as imagined audience. Thirdly, interviewees exhibited different moral standards and placed different emphasis on acquaintance and the general public. They showed more trust, empathy, and concern for personal well-being toward acquaintances but expressed indifferent toward the general public, treating them as an unfriendly whole and treating the cancel culture they engaged with more as entertainment than care about individual's welfare.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

Surveillance has undoubtedly been normalized as part of social media life (A. E. Marwick, 2012; Tokunaga, 2010). It is now common for social media users to investigate information published on social media platforms to know about other users' online/offline activities (Tokunaga, 2010). At the same time, as cancel culture emerges on social media, the perception of surveillance, an integral part of cancelling practices, is also affected (Bezio, 2022). The findings of this study indicated that people's perceptions of surveillance and surveillance practices are largely related to their perceptions of the imagined audience, which are deeply influenced by their relationship with the imagined audience. In answer to the research question, the construction of surveillance in the context of cancel culture was described as a process of balancing being visible and being invisible.

The following chapter provides a discussion based on the findings regarding people's perception of surveillance in the context of cancel culture. First, results are discussed in relation to the research question and their relevance to theory and previous research. Second, the implications of research for theory and future research in those fields are discussed.

Being (In)Visible

Visibility is an essential element of social media, where people are offered a place to share information about themselves and observe information shared by others (Lyon, 2018; Rotolo, 2022). Participants of this study similarly described their activities as mainly related to observing others and controlling how and by whom the information they shared was viewed. The following sections discuss three aspects of people's perception of surveillance in the context of cancel cultures: the first addresses how participants perceived and navigated visibility while

balancing the benefits and potential risks of confronting different audience groups; the second addressed participants' strategies of weighing the risks of overexposure against the social responsibility; and the last focused on the construction of taste of social norms of visibility.

Private Broadcasting

Being visible is a core motivation for people using social media. Lyon (2018) asserts that sharing is the key element of social media platforms, with activities such as sharing information, following, and updating status. Also, Fuchs (2014) points out that social media platforms blur the distinction between personal community and public broadcasting and make messages are broadcasted to the public without anyone in particular. In other words, people are considered to behave differently online and offline: online, people publicly broadcast private information, whereas offline, private message is shared in a private space. However, while the finding is consistent with the literature that participants engage in online social activities such as following, checking, sharing, and updating information, people do not see their behaviours as different from those of their offline lives. Instead, participants perceive that their online activities are extended based on genuine life relationships and through visibility management to share information with their intended audience group. Moreover, the findings indicate participants engaged in private broadcasts to manage the exchange of information by making themselves visible to their acquaintances and invisible to the public.

Unlike the idea of sharing information on social media in the form of public broadcasting, where the person is fully visible in the sight of the public, private broadcasting is, in a sense, having a private conversation in a public space (Fuchs, 2014). In other words, participants perceive a sense of control over the possibility of their information being seen while acknowledging that anyone can check the information they put online. This is related to their

demand for privacy control, allowing them to exclude unwelcomed members from the conversation. As indicated in the previous chapter, participants mentioned they frequently use self-censoring, using different platforms for different purposes, using pseudonymous accounts, and other measures to avoid attention from unwanted audiences. In addition, the cancel culture execrated this exclusion as participants see being visible to unknown others as unsafe and thus linked to the risk of being cancelled, which is opposite to Marx's (2006) idea that the current cultural tendency to desire exposure and considered personal exposure as harmless.

On the other side, participants did not reject exposure altogether but treated being watched as normal and sometimes desiring to be seen by people they knew offline or in professional relationships. This is consistent with Lyon's (2018) description of a surveillance culture, where being watched is not always perceived as negative but unwanted and welcomed together, especially when people may intentionally position themselves favourably. Similarly, despite participants dislike of being watched by the public, at the same time, they deliberately present themselves in a positive light to achieve approval from acquaintances and professionals. Many participants mentioned that they intend to present themselves as professional or intelligent and interesting to set themselves apart, comparing others as stupid or unprofessional. Also, participants constructed the need to share about what they are doing and check what others are doing as an extension of common practise in offline life, and social media offered them a convenient and effective method to broadcast their updates to all those they have chosen as their intended audience. In this sense, social media may not transform society to make a virtue of sharing private things with the public, as Bauman (2007) depicted, but it may lead to making a virtue of sharing information among acquaintances.

Opinion Representative

The finding indicates that participants construct sharing personal opinions as a dangerous tread that slippery slope towards being attacked by other people online or potentially negatively influencing career in the context of cancel culture. Despite participants admitting that they rarely share personal opinions or engage in public activities, they all discussed their observations of celebrities involved in current social events, issues, and trends. Participants perceived visibility as essential for political recognition and implied that visibility is desirable and dangerous (Lyon, 2018). Therefore, they render themselves invisible as vanishing but place the responsibility for engaging public issues on celebrities and influencers who retain super-visibility (Brighenti, 2007). In other words, participants perceive celebrities and influencers as their opinion representatives who may express their views indirectly so that they can avoid the consequences of expressing their opinions publicly.

Furthermore, participants in this study intend to express their public opinion by using surveillance strategies to negotiate the presence of celebrities and influencers they support or disapprove of. Many participants are in favour of cancelling celebrities who are considered to have committed crimes by withdrawing their attention or unfollowing them. At the same time, they also like to actively share information or incidents about celebrities they believed to be wrongfully cancelled. In this process, participants believe transparency is a legitimate good, as Lyon (2018) described, demanding the process of judging process and outcome be highly transparent, and thus, demanding celebrities to be highly transparent. In this sense, participants in this study believe that the participatory value that social media is supposed to create and its functions of community building and data sharing are reserved for celebrities and influences who

are representatives of ordinary people, while themselves are only outsiders and observers (Fuchs, 2010; van Dijck, 2013).

Distinction as Social Capital

Marwick (2012, 2021) states that people engage in surveillance to form their understanding of norms and act accordingly or demand others to act accordingly. However, the findings indicate that participants view cancel culture as unattractive. As such, despite participants considering the norm in the context of cancel culture, such as actively sharing, participating in cancelling or exposing one's fault, they do not act accordingly but rather distance themselves from such expected norms. Further, participants appeared to have constructed a new set of norms for legitimate online behaviours. This tendency of being distant from the norms perceived from cancel culture and replacing it with a new set of norms cannot be fully explained by Moral reasoning theory, as participants were operating on the same level of reasoning, namely Maintaining Norm Schema (MNS) (Rest et al., 2010). Therefore, Bourdieu's concepts are used to explain preference appearing in the same level of moral reasoning. This practice of distance consists of Bourdieu's (1986) concept of distinctive signs that justify being a member of a more prestigious group (Julien, 2015). Thus, participants, while recognizing that their behaviours are distanced from online norms, acted in ways that set them apart from the general online population to demonstrate their good standing in the broader social space so that they could obtain social capital, the aggregate of resources to leverage status or worth (Bourdieu, 1986).

Moreover, as Bourdieu (1998, 2000) points out, the search for distinction is not merely the motivation of behaviour; instead, this distinction has to be recognized by others. In other words, individuals desire their distinctive behaviour to be watched and valued by others as they exist and interact within a social space, which leads to the legitimization of differences in social

existence (Julien, 2015). In the same way, participants in this study tried to be invisible to the general online public. Yet, they tend to appeal to their acquaintances and professional associates to differentiate themselves from the general social media users. On many occasions, participants mentioned they presented themselves as intelligent and thoughtful, while stated general users are foolish and blind. Also, some participants mentioned they would not participate in cancel culture incidents but would like to discuss it with friends in-person, which distinguishes themselves from people who participated. As such, by displaying the distinction from general social media users through social interaction and recognition from others, the perception that those participants have a better taste than general users would be legitimized.

Implication

The results of this study provided insights into the perception and experiences of surveillance and the influence of cancel culture on social media use. These findings may be useful in guiding future research and practice in related fields. The implications of this study for theory, practice, and future study, as well as its limitations, are discussed below.

Theoretical Implications

This study applied a theoretical framework based on the surveillance imaginary theory and moral reasoning theory (Lyon, 2018; Rest et al., 2010). Since the design and data analysis of this study employed an inductive approach, the answers to the research question did not depend exclusively on theories. The results are consistent with the surveillance imaginary theory, which describes individuals engaging in surveillance practices responding to a mental image of surveillance influenced by the expectation of social relationships. The surveillance imaginaries were evident in cases where participants negotiated their visibility in the context of facing a variety of social relationships. It is also noted that the cancel culture influenced participants to

construct a surveillance imaginary by linking visibility with the risk of being cancelled and the power of participating in public affairs. The surveillance practice that responds to this imaginary is participants' proxy for public affairs participation for those who hold mage-visibility is evident.

The results are also consistent with moral reasoning theory, which describes the reasoning schemas that individuals use to determine surveillance practices according to the moral expectation embedded in the surveillance imaginary. As mentioned in Chapter 3, moral reasoning theory consists of three schemas of moral reasoning: Personal Interest Schemas (PIS), Maintaining Norms Schema (MNS), and Postconventional Schema (PCS). Those schemas may be prioritized or overlapping in different contexts (Rest et al., 2010).

To some extent, the participants in this study most reflected the PIS schemas, the basic pattern prioritizing individual needs over established norms or higher values. PIS was most evident as participants discussed self-censorship or separation of private/professional social media presentations as a strategy for protecting reputation and personal safety. PIS reasoning is also indicated where participants show sympathy towards those with whom they have affection are prioritized. In addition, PIS was evident also in the case where participants expressed their fears of online hostility, which led to their decision to withdraw from social media or avoid expressing opinions online, which may be motivated by personal interest at the expense of higher value principles.

At the same time, the MNS was evident when participants described how they presented themselves and appealed to professional standards. In addition, the MNS was demonstrated when participants questioned the legitimacy and authority of cancelling practices, comparing cancellation culture to the criminal justice system. Also, PCS reasoning is evident in participants'

resistance against norms associated with cancel culture by appealing to values such as justice, reason and freedom of speech. However, although that higher-level reasoning was evident in participants' consideration, participants prioritized PIS reasoning over norms and values that prioritized self-protect.

However, moral reasoning theory cannot fully explain the preference that participants choose to follow one set of norms rather than another set of norms operating at the same level of reasoning schema. Therefore, Bourdieu's (1986) concept of distinction signs and social capital is used in the discussion to shed additional light on participants' preference for one norm over the other at the same level of reasoning. This preference is evident as participants expressed a negative attitude toward established online norms but favoured norms that they believed should hold a higher degree of prestige. Thus, it suggests that Bourdieu's other concepts or other theories can be used in future studies to further understand the construction of normality.

As discussed in the previous chapters, people are encouraged to habituate to social surveillance by accepting it as a reality and engaging in surveillance practices. Also, social surveillance promises to address uncertainty by constantly monitoring others. However, the constant emergence of online hostility used by social groups to maintain norms and order exacerbated people's fear of being surveilled so that they tend to promote personal interests at the expense of postconventional values. Also, people may reinforce their negative perceptions of strangers as engaging in surveillance as it gives the authenticity of realness (Koskela, 2004). This implication suggests that future research is needed to understand how surveillance affects the social relationships of individuals with social groups to which they do not belong.

Practical Implications

This study found that people's construction of social surveillance is influenced by their perception of the imagined audience and social media. Participants promoted self-protective strategies, including withdrawing from participating in public affairs, as they were concerned about the role of social media in the cancel culture and their tolerance of online hostility. These findings have practical implications for social media platforms. Participants discussed their distrust of social media platforms that did not fairly deal with cancel culture incidents, and social media platforms often exacerbate the situation. Many participants mentioned that they were aware that being surveilled is a default in social media as the platforms always collect their information to promote advertisements. Moreover, participants considered social media platforms failed their responsibility by allowing bots to spread misleading information or be used to attack someone. The findings of this study indicate that social media is anticipated to play a role in monitoring bots and protecting users from online hostility.

Future Studies

This study has implications for future research on the intersection of surveillance culture and cancel culture with different contexts and other populations. First, the target population in this study was a sample of social media users; thus, the participants were not selected based on demographics or other criteria beyond the time average used on social media. Therefore, future research could use purposeful sampling to further investigate potential differences in experiences with surveillance.

Age was noted as a significant factor in these participants' perceptions of surveillance. Because a convenience sample was recruited, the majority of the participants were young adults. It was evident that most participants expressed their concerns about surveillance related to an

early stage of professional and career development. Many participants mentioned the reason they do not post on social media is that they are still students and fear losing future employment opportunities or that they have recently gotten a job and fear the repercussions. The results suggest that perceptions of surveillance and cancellation culture may differ depending on social position and length of life experience. Thus, it would be useful to compare the perceptions of people of different ages.

Another factor that influenced participants' perception of surveillance was their cultural background. Because the sample contains several international students and professionals from authoritarian cultures, it was evident that those participants were concerned about government surveillance but favoured social surveillance, especially for the purpose of exposing the wrongdoings of celebrities. The result suggests that people from a cultural background where formal criminal justice is lacking perceived cancel culture as a positive way to hold people accountable for wrongdoings that cannot be addressed by the formal justice system and that surveillance from the government is more dangerous than surveillance from the general public. Thus, further research should explore the differences in the surveillance and experience of people from different cultural backgrounds.

The implications of this study also relate to future research on other populations. The majority, if not all, of the participants in this study, perceive themselves as "watchers" rather than "watched". Most of them, who indicated that they spend significant hours on social media, described the majority of their activity as viewing the posts of others rather than posting. In addition, the findings indicate that celebrities and influencers are considered more likely to face the impact of cancel culture because they are more exposed to the public view. As such, while this study explored the indirect effects of cancel culture on people's perception of surveillance,

further research should investigate the different experiences of surveillance in populations that actively expose their lives online.

Limitations

This study is based on a qualitative method and a descriptive design to address the research question about a phenomenon. However, the results of qualitative research are not generalizable but reflect the phenomenon only through the experiences of participants of this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The use of convenience sampling and snowball sampling strategies is also a weakness that limits the transferability of findings. Data collection based on self-reports cannot be verified by the researcher, and participants may be subject to social desirability bias, where they answer interviews in ways that are perceived as socially acceptable or what they think the researcher wants to hear (Bergen & Labonté, 2019). In addition, data analysis was conducted following the Interpretive Content Analysis approach, which relied on the researcher's subjective interpretation of data and anticipated bias in the process (Drisko, 2015). The researcher mitigated those weaknesses by checking the accuracy of transcripts, using quotations from participants to support analysis description, and engaging in peer consultation during the design and analysis phases of this project.

In reflecting on the process of this research, the researcher identified areas that would benefit future work on a similar study. First, the research found the use of semi-structured interviews proved effective for a qualitative study. The open-ended questions, as prompts followed by one or two following questions, produced a wealth of data for analysis. The researcher would add some demographic and personal identifiers, such as cultural background or political affiliation, in the future to allow for a better examination of the data, which may add additional value to the analysis. The research also found that the interpretive content analysis

approach was an effective method for conducting an inductive data analysis and was manageable for a small sample. However, this approach focuses only on the state of constructions rather than the process of social constructions (Schreier, 2012). The researcher would consider exploring an alternative approach to qualitative analysis when tackling more complex social analysis. Finally, a descriptive approach was most practical and appropriate for this study due to constraints of time and resources. However, the research would consider a narrative or phenomenological design that provides a rich description and reflections of the life stories of participants, which would allow future further interpretive examination.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Poster

 uOttawa

Research Participants Wanted: Participants à la recherche recherchés:

For a study explore the experience of social media users on surveillance.

Pour une étude sur l'expérience des utilisateurs de médias sociaux en matière de surveillance.

Participants will be ask to share experience through a semi-structured interview lasting approximately 30-45 minutes at a time and place of convenience to you.

Les participants seront invités à partager leur expérience dans le cadre d'un entretien semi-structuré d'une durée d'environ 30 à 45 minutes, à un moment et dans un lieu qui vous conviennent.

Are you ...?

- A Social Media User
- Using social media more than two hours a day

Êtes-vous ... ?

- Un utilisateur des médias sociaux
- Utilisant les médias sociaux plus de deux heures par jour

If interested, Please contact:
Si vous êtes intéressé, veuillez contacter

Anything you share will be remain confidential and anonymous. Participants will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis.

Tout ce que vous partagerez restera confidentiel et anonyme. Les participants seront sélectionnés selon le principe du premier arrivé, premier servi.

Appendix B: Consent Form



Consent Form

Title of the study: Cancel Culture and Social Surveillance

Claire Wang (Principal Researcher)

Department of Criminology

Faculty of Social Science

University of Ottawa

Email:

Professor David Murakami Wood (Supervisor)

Department of Criminology

Faculty of Social Science

University of Ottawa

Email:

I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study for Master's Thesis conducted by Claire Wang, a Master's student in the Department of Criminology at the University of Ottawa and who is under the supervision of Professor David Murakami Wood.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to understand individuals' understanding of social surveillance in the content of social media and cancel culture.

Participation: My participation will consist of an online socio-demographic survey that will ask about my age, gender, race, education, employment, and use of social media sites, and an in-person interview lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes where I will be asked about my experience of using social media. The entire interview will be audio-recorded.

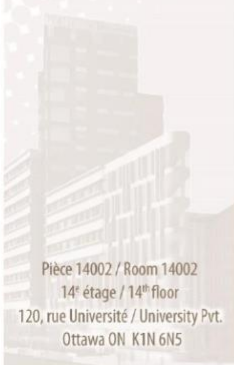
Risks: My participation in this study will entail that I may discuss issues for which, I might feel emotional and/or psychological discomfort, distress, or anxiety as a result of reflecting on any negative experiences or memories. I have received assurance from the researchers that every effort will be made to minimize these risks including taking a break if and whenever I choose to. I have also been advised that I may choose to withdraw consent at any time, or refuse to answer any questions, without facing any consequences.

Benefits: My participation in this study will be beneficial, as it will be used to better understanding experience on social media activities and the impact of surveillance and help to develop strategies to protect the privacy and freedom of speech.

Confidentiality and Privacy I have received assurance from the researchers that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for the purpose of this research and that my identity will be protected. The researcher has assured me that a pseudonym will be used instead of my real name. The researcher has notified me that only the principal researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data.

Conservation of Data: The data collected (audio-recorded interviews, transcripts, and signed consent forms) will be kept in a secure manner. During data collection, all digital data will be stored in Claire Wang's password protected and encrypted hard drive inside locked safe at the researcher's home. After the research is completed, all electronic data will be retained for five years. After the retention period is over, all the data will be deleted.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be removed from the dataset and not used in the study.



If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or their supervisor. If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity via email (ethics@uottawa.ca) or telephone (613-562-5387).

It is recommended that I keep a copy of this consent form for my records.

Acceptance: By selecting the consent statement below, I agree to participate in this research study.

Yes, I want to participate.

Name: _____

Email/Telephone number: _____

No, I do not want to participate.

Signature of the interviewee

Date

Signature of the researcher

Date

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Section 1: Platform

1. How frequently do you utilize social media?

Follow up: Which platform you use the most?

Follow up: Why you chose to use this platform?

Range these reasons: Communication Entertainment Networking

Information sharing Marketing Self-expression Other: _____

Follow up: Why did you range in this way?

Section 2: Information

2. How often you search for information on social media?

Follow up: What type of information do you search for?

Follow up: Why you search this type of information?

3. How much do you trust the information you read on social media? (Option: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always, or Depends on different situation)

Follow up: Why?

4. Do you share information on social media?

Follow up: What kind of information do you share on social media?

Follow up: Why do you share this type of information?

5. (If previous answer did not mention personal information) Do you share personal information on social media?

Follow up: How much of your personal information are you willing to share?

(Option: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always, or Choice to share with different groups)

Follow up: Why do you share personal information?

6. Do you modify information shared on social media?

Follow up: How much do you modify it?

Follow up: How do you modify it?

Follow up: Why do you modify it?

Section 3: Interaction

7. How many people you are following?

Follow up: What kind of people you are following?

Follow up: Do you know them? (Option: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always)

Follow up: How much do you trust them? (Option: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always)

Follow up: Why?

8. How many followers do you have?

Follow up: Who are your followers?

Follow up: Do you know them? (Option: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always)

Follow up: How would the people who follow you describe who you are and how you present yourself?

Follow up: Have you changed how you use social media i.e. in the last few years? Why?

Follow up: Are there any groups (or people) you try to avoid on social media? If so, why?

Section 4: Cancel Culture

9. Have you ever heard of “canceling” or “canceled”?

Follow up: Do you know who has been canceled?

Follow up: Have you had experienced “cancelling” or “canceled”?

Follow up: Have you ever heard of “cancel culture”?

Follow up: What do you think can be considered as “cancel culture”?

Follow up: Have you ever experienced or witnessed a cancel culture type incident?

10. *Scenario of cancelling:* In February 2021, Harrison faced criticism after he defended a contestant on the show who had been shown a photo of her at “Old South” themed party in college. During an interview, Harrison says that people should have "a little grace, a little understanding, a little compassion" for the contestant. His comments were widely criticized for downplaying the seriousness of the issue and for appearing to side with the contestant over those who were offended by her behavior. In response, many viewers of the show called on social media for Harrison to be fired by employed the #FireChrisHarrison, and some called for a boycott of the show. Harrison ultimately apologized and stepped down from his role as host.

Do you think Harrison should be canceled? Why?

11. Do you think cancel culture has an effect? (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always)

Range those potential effects: [] Promoting accountability; [] Encouraging ethical behaviour; [] Empowering marginalized groups; [] Limiting free speech; [] Unfair judgements; [] Mob mentality; [] Other: _____

Follow up: Why do you range this way?

12. In what situation, you think someone should be canceled? Why?

13. Do you think that your social media activity could be monitored by other people?

Follow up: Do you think individuals face hostility over their social media posts?

Follow up: Which topics would risk more hostility on social media? Are certain groups more the focus?

14. When you are offline, do you ever think what you say might be captured and posted on social media?

Follow up: Have you ever heard about that happening to anyone?

Follow up: Who might do something like that? Why?

Follow up: Have you heard about people using their phones to record others and posted on social media?

15. Do you think you may face the risk of being canceled? (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always) Why?

16. Who do you think should be responsible for cancel culture? (Option: a. The person being canceled, b. The users who practise cancelling, c. The social media platforms; d. No one; e. Other: _____) Why?

Section 5: Future Action

17. Does cancel culture changes what information you read on social media?

Follow up: If yes, what changes?

18. Does cancel culture changes what information you share on social media?

Follow up: If yes, what changes?

19. Does cancel culture changes who you follow?

Follow up: If yes, what changes?

20. Does cancel culture changes you view on your followers?

Follow up: If yes, what changes?

21. Have you ever changed something you were going to say because you thought maybe your words would end up posted on social media?

Follow up: What did you change? Or think about changing?

22. Are you familiar with the trend of people creating “fake” social media accounts as a way to use social media anonymously?

Follow up: Have you ever used an account under a different name? why?

23. Is there anything else you’d like to add about using social media?

OK, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me today. You have been very helpful, and I really appreciate it.

One more thing—would you happen to have any recommendations of friend I could contact for an interview? Perhaps someone who would like to talk about [this topic]? If yes, obtain name/contact information for referral.

If that’s all, then I’ll let you get back to your day. You can feel free to contact me anytime by email if you have any questions. Goodbye!