

2007

The Nanny State — It Takes A Village

Timothy Zick

William & Mary Law School, tzick@wm.edu

Repository Citation

Zick, Timothy, "The Nanny State — It Takes A Village" (2007). *Popular Media*. 201.
https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/popular_media/201

- Concurring Opinions - <http://www.concurringopinions.com> -

The Nanny State — It Takes A Village

Posted By [Timothy Zick](#) On October 15, 2007 @ 2:26 pm In [Privacy](#) | [12 Comments](#)

In yet another sign of just how timely Dan's [new book](#) ^[1] on privacy and reputation is, yesterday's *New York Times* featured [this story](#) ^[2] about citizen surveillance of nannies across the United States and in Canada. The blog [ISawYourNanny.blogspot.com](#) ^[3] collects commentary — and photos — of nannies others deem to have violated norms of caregiving. [This is similar to the "warning wires" drivers can post about the actions and habits of other drivers (see [this post](#) ^[4] by Frank).] The surveillance undertaken in private homes (teddy-bear cams, etc.) is now being supplemented by forms of public surveillance. In the age of the "public Panopticon" (or, perhaps, the "citizen Stasi"), snitch-sites seem to be gaining in popularity. Apparently, it takes a village to police nannies.

My sense of the basic costs and benefits of this sort of surveillance are similar to Frank's regarding driver surveillance. On the one hand, parents may learn of nanny negligence — or worse — that otherwise probably would have gone undetected. Prospective parent-employers will have yet another source of information on which to rely in making important hiring decisions. On the other hand, inaccurate or vindictive postings can lead to loss of present and future employment for some "innocent" nannies. Libel may thrive in these, as in other, snitch spaces. And the "spotted" nanny will have no real means of defense (short of an expensive lawsuit — and that, for reasons stated earlier [by Dave Hoffman](#) ^[5], is not likely to be very effective). Reputations can be lost in the time it takes someone to click a camera and create a post, which will then "live" in cyberspace for eternity.

It is undeniable that, as Dan's book suggests, we have arrived at a critical juncture regarding our "privacy." I want to read the book before coming to any firm conclusions about the harms and general repercussions associated with citizen surveillance and cyber-permanence. But my initial reaction to nanny surveillance is one of substantial concern. Surely there are better means of enforcing norms and proper behaviors than spying on one another 24/7 and publishing our findings on the Web.

Article printed from Concurring Opinions: <http://www.concurringopinions.com>

URL to article:

http://www.concurringopinions.com/archives/2007/10/the_nanny_state.html

URLs in this post:

[1] new book :

http://www.concurringopinions.com/archives/2007/10/the_future_of_r_2.html#comments

[2] this story: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/14/nyregion/thecity/14nann.html?_r=1&oref=login

[3] ISawYourNanny.blogspot.com: <http://www.isawournanny.blogspot.com/>

[4] this post:

http://www.concurringopinions.com/archives/2007/01/welcome_to_the_14.html

[5] by Dave Hoffman:

http://www.concurringopinions.com/archives/2007/10/whats_going_on_1.html#comments

Copyright © 2010 Concurring Opinions. All rights reserved.