School Surveillance in Context: High School Students’ Perspectives on CCTV, Privacy, and Security

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Abstract
This study examines high school students’ perceptions of school closed-circuit television systems (CCTVs). It draws on interviews conducted with 83 adolescents recruited from 10th- to 12th-grade classes at 39 Israeli schools. The findings indicate that students’ perceptions of CCTVs are embedded in their overall opinions about their school, particularly concerning relationships and trust between students and educators. The various metaphors that students used to describe their relational position regarding school CCTVs highlight that surveillance has become part of the organizational–educational experience. The findings also show that students’ scrutiny of school CCTVs reflects a conflict between privacy and security concerns. Students resolve this conflict by resorting to various balances, which echo general constitutional principles but were also anchored in the students’ personal schooling experiences. While building on Nissenbaum’s framework of contextual integrity for assessing privacy violations, we challenge its assumption of a uniform set of informational norms within a given context.

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Introduction

The cameras are totally for spying on us and not for our security. . . The teachers actually try to catch us for every little thing. Generally, it feels that the teaching staff and the school leadership don’t trust us. (S58, 16-year-old girl)

This study examines the perceptions of Israeli high school students about school surveillance and, in particular, closed-circuit television systems (CCTVs). We focus on how students conceptualize school surveillance and address intrusions into their privacy. There has been a growing scholarly interest in school surveillance. However, the literature on students’ perceptions of surveillance is scant. As school CCTVs become increasingly common, it is important to understand how students experience them. The introductory quotation from a 16-year-old girl exemplifies one of the core findings of our study regarding how students tie school CCTVs to their schooling experiences.

We begin with a literature review on school CCTVs, students’ perceptions of school surveillance, and the right to privacy. The section on the right to privacy elaborates the study’s conceptual framework, building on Nissenbaum’s (2010) work on contextual integrity (CI). The following section describes the research design, which draws on semistructured interviews conducted with 83 adolescents in Israel. The findings indicate that students’ perceptions of school surveillance are a manifestation of their overall opinions about their school. The findings also show that students are inclined to resolve conflicts between security and privacy by resorting to balancing competing considerations, which echoed general constitutional principles but were also anchored in the students’ personal schooling experiences. The final section discusses the findings and elaborates our conclusions, which challenge Nissenbaum’s framework in light of the multiple perspectives and norms characterizing students’ perceptions of school CCTVs.

Literature Review

School CCTV

School CCTVs have become one of the most common measures for addressing school crime and violence (Fisher, Higgins, & Homer, 2019). CCTVs
were one of the first surveillance technologies introduced in schools, now followed by biometric identification, radio frequency identification tags, and metal detectors (see Deakin et al., 2018). In Israel, the site of our study, CCTVs were the first and still the only surveillance technology used in schools. Hence, unlike other locales, where several surveillance technologies have been implemented, the Israeli case enables us to examine the transition of schools into a surveillance arena, before surveillance becomes an acknowledged and unchallenged routine.

The typical official justification for the use of school CCTVs cites external security threats (Hope, 2009; Perry-Hazan & Birnhack, 2016). However, in many cases, CCTVs installed for security purposes are used for monitoring and investigating students’ minor disciplinary violations (Hope, 2009; Perry-Hazan & Birnhack, 2018; Taylor, 2011) as well as teachers’ behavior (Perry-Hazan & Birnhack, 2019). This process of surveillance creep (Haggerty, 2012; Taylor, 2012) corresponds to a recognized phenomenon discussed in privacy studies; function creep, that is, when a measure implemented for one purpose is then applied to other purposes (Bennett & Raab, 2006; Haggerty & Ericson, 2007). The law prohibits incompatible secondary uses, as we will further explain below.

Large-scale quantitative studies showed that school security measures do not affect students’ misbehavior (Fisher et al., 2018; Fisher, Higgins, & Homer, 2019; Servoss, 2017; Tanner-Smith et al., 2018). Another set of studies examined the relationships between school security measures and students’ perceptions of safety. Mowen and Freng (2019) found that school security measures, including CCTVs, were linked to decreased perceptions of safety. Johnson et al. (2018) found that, whereas a moderate presence of cameras outside the school was related to higher student perceptions of support, greater use of security cameras inside the school was related to lower perceptions of safety, equity, and support.

Studies have raised various concerns regarding the ways school CCTVs undermine an ethos of growth and the development of trust (Rooney, 2010; Warnick, 2007), and criminalize school discipline (Hirschfield & Celinska, 2011; Hope, 2009; Kupchik & Monahan, 2006). In a study drawing on interviews with school principals, we argued that CCTVs produce a hidden human rights curriculum, by which students learn that their rights are intertwined with power relations (Perry-Hazan & Birnhack, 2018). Fisher, Gardella, and Tanner-Smith (2019) sought to quantify the ramifications of school surveillance by exploring the associations between school security measures—including CCTVs—and students’ perceptions of their relationships with educators and the fairness and consistency of school rules. The results indicated that whereas the presence of security personnel in schools was
associated with poorer student–teacher relationships, other school security measures produced no significant effects relating to student–teacher relationships or students’ perceptions of school rules. As for CCTVs, the authors contended that more research is needed to understand how their effects might vary across school contexts. The current study addresses this issue by showing how students’ perceptions are intertwined with their overall schooling experiences.

**Students’ Perceptions of School Surveillance**

Several qualitative studies have explored students’ perceptions of school surveillance. Only two of these focused on CCTVs. Taylor (2010), drawing on focus groups with 21 British adolescents, found that most students claimed that CCTV affected their privacy and viewed surveillance as an expression of mistrust. Some students expressed resignation to the fact that within the school environment, they had little power to object to the surveillance. In another study derived from the same data, Taylor (2011) noted that students’ initial concerns had soon dissipated as the cameras became assimilated into the school’s everyday life. A study on young children’s perceptions of school CCTVs, which drew on focus groups with 57 Israeli elementary school students, showed a tension between normalization and resistance (Birnhack et al., 2018).

Other studies exploring students’ perceptions of school surveillance did not focus on specific security measures. Bracy (2011) conducted an ethnographic study in two U.S. secondary schools. Her findings indicated that, whereas students felt that many of the school’s security strategies were unnecessary, these strategies had become a routine element of the school’s environment, so that the students did not challenge them.

Additional studies revealed more criticism and resistance from students. McCahill and Finn (2010) conducted focus groups with 85 British adolescents to explore their perceptions of surveillance inside and outside the school. The students’ responses to surveillance varied across their social positioning. Whereas students enrolled in a private school perceived themselves as immune to much of the surveillance targeting, marginalized students enrolled in a city school endured a range of surveillance practices that monitored and punished them. These students shaped the surveillance regimes by evading, negotiating, and resisting them. Weiss (2007) conducted an ethnographic study to explore the responses to school surveillance by youth of color in New York. Findings revealed various resistance practices, including avoidance and protests. These latter studies fit other studies showing that, despite common contentions about the death of privacy in the digital
age, children and adolescents value their privacy, especially when the intruders into their privacy are adults (e.g., Agosto & Abbas, 2015; Ballesys & Coll, 2017; Marwick & Boyd, 2014; Soffer & Cohen, 2014).

The Right to Privacy

Normative framework. School surveillance affects first and foremost students’ privacy and, whereas privacy studies and surveillance studies do not fully overlap (Cohen, 2015), privacy law comprises the legal framework for both. Privacy is a fundamental human right in many jurisdictions (e.g., European Union, 2000), as well as in Israel, where it is a constitutional right (Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty, 1992, Art. 7). However, privacy is not an absolute right. The Council of Europe (1950), for example, requires respect for private and family life, the home, and correspondence (Art. 8(1)). The European Convention on Human Rights allows a public authority to interfere with the exercise of the right if it is in accordance with the law, furthers a legitimate aim, and is necessary in a democratic society (Council of Europe, 1950, Art. 8(2)). The latter condition contains, under the European Court’s jurisprudence, the principle of proportionality (see, for example, A.-M.V. v. Finland, 2017), namely, that the interference with privacy should be proportionate to the legitimate aims pursued (e.g., Segerstedt-Wiberg v. Sweden, 2006).

Similarly, Israeli law permits public authorities, including schools, to intrude on one’s privacy (which is broader than private and family life, home, and correspondence) if the intrusion is anchored in the law, serves a legitimate purpose, and is proportional (Basic Law, Art. 8). The Law, Information and Technology Authority issued guidelines regarding the use of CCTVs in public spaces (Israeli Law, Information and Technology Authority, 2010, 2012), and the Ministry of Education (hereinafter MoE, 2015) issued rules about school surveillance. The rules concretize the general constitutional principles to the school context. An important privacy principle, which the MoE rules repeat as well (ss. 2.4.1(d), 2.4.2(c), 7.4.4), is that of purpose limitation, that is, that data—including video footage—collected for one purpose should not serve another purpose. This is a fundamental principle in Israeli privacy jurisprudence (see IDI Insurance Co. Ltd. v. Database Registrar, 2012; Privacy Protection Act, 1981, s. 2(9)), reflecting the Fair Information Practices (see also General Data Protection Regulation [GDPR], 2016, Art. 5(1)(b)). It is meant to prevent surveillance (and privacy) creep.

Conceptual framework. Privacy serves critical psychological and social needs, such as facilitating trust (Waldman, 2018). Privacy also serves as an important mechanism that manages the private–public interface (Altman, 1976)
and, at the same time, holds social value to society at large (Regan, 2002). Numerous diverse theoretical justifications have been offered regarding the right to privacy: Westin (1967) promoted privacy as control, Gavison (1980) emphasized privacy as a limited access to a person, and Solove (2008) found that these and additional theories are either overbroad or too narrow, instead suggesting a taxonomy of privacy. Nissenbaum (2010) suggested CI as a framework to conceptualize privacy violations. She argued that technology has a social meaning that is context-relative, thus defining context as the central concept of her framework. Nissenbaum defined context as a social setting with characteristics that evolve over time. Examples include educational settings, health care, and voting, but there may also be complex settings, involving multiple social contexts. According to CI, once each context has been identified, we need to turn to its informational norms. Changes in these norms should be evaluated against the values and goals of the particular context. Thus, CI entails sociological, contextual, observation, and moral evaluations. If the new practice generates changes in actors, attributes, or transmission principles, the practice is flagged as violating entrenched informational norms and constitutes a prima facie violation of CI.

Research Design

Research Objectives

This study examines high school students’ perceptions of school CCTVs in Israel. It focuses on how they conceptualize school surveillance and address the limitation of their privacy. Only scant knowledge is available regarding students’ perceptions of school CCTVs. Qualitative studies that explored students’ perceptions of school security measures revealed a tension between normalization and resistance (Bracy, 2011; McCahill & Finn, 2010; Taylor, 2010, 2011). Only one of these studies (McCahill & Finn, 2010) examined the intersection of students’ perceptions and the school context, and its focus was on students’ social positioning. Quantitative studies exploring students’ perceptions of school security measures chose to focus on specific aspects (Fisher, Gardella, & Tanner-Smith, 2019; Johnson et al., 2018; Mowen & Freng, 2019) and pointed to the gap in the literature regarding the effect of CCTVs in different school contexts (Fisher, Gardella, & Tanner-Smith, 2019).

Methodology

The study used a qualitative methodology. Participants were 83 adolescents (41 males, 42 females), aged 16 to 18, recruited from 10th- to 12th-grade
classes at 39 Israeli schools equipped with CCTVs. The schools were diverse in several aspects: population sector (Jewish/Arab/Druze), legal status (public/private), number of students, the socioeconomic status of the student population (according to the MoE index), and the socioeconomic status of the municipalities (according to Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics).

The research tools encompassed 33 individual interviews and 21 group interviews, with the latter comprising two or three participants. Both individual and group interviews were conducted to balance the strengths and weaknesses of each methodology. Whereas groups are less intimidating and more likely to facilitate interaction among adolescents, individual interviews are less susceptible to peer pressure and typically comprise a more comfortable setting for sharing sensitive information (Cohen et al., 2011; Liamputtong, 2011).

We recruited the participants through personal contacts or through schools. The procedures and research tools were approved by the institutional review boards (IRBs) of our universities and by the MoE, which facilitated access to schools. All participants signed consent forms, and students under 18 also provided parental consent.

The interviews were carried out during the 2017–2018 school year. They were conducted in the participants’ homes, schools, or public places. The interview protocol included general factual questions regarding CCTVs and open questions, eliciting the participants’ opinions regarding the CCTVs’ installation and usages. Only then, we queried the participants regarding whether and how the CCTVs have affected their privacy and education. All participants were aware of the presence of CCTVs in their schools. Among the participants, only 11, who were enrolled in nine different schools, indicated that the teachers informed them about the cameras. The remaining 72 participants were not informed by the staff and only became aware of the cameras by noticing them in the school.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. To ensure reliability, each of us read the transcripts and independently designed a coding scheme. We compared and discussed the categories and agreed on a coding scheme reflecting all the themes emerging from the data. We used Dedoose software to analyze this coding scheme. For the second round of analysis, we reviewed the coded transcripts and discussed possible analytical paths. The analysis showed that of the 83 participants, 11 opposed the CCTVs, 28 supported and normalized the systems, and 44 resisted some aspects of the CCTVs’ usage while justifying others. As other studies focused on students’ normalization of school surveillance or resistance to such surveillance (Birnhack et al., 2018; Bracy, 2011; McCahill & Finn, 2010; Taylor, 2010), we chose not to focus on these three opinion groups, but rather on two primary themes that emerged from the
transcripts: students’ contextual conceptualization of school surveillance and how students addressed conflicts between privacy and security concerns. The latter theme was further distinguished by two subthemes: (a) legitimate aims of school surveillance, and (b) proportionality, referring to means-to-end, cost–benefit, spatial, and temporal balances. We formulated these themes and subthemes together, consulting the literature and negotiating their content (Campbell et al., 2013). As both themes highlight the intersection of surveillance and the broader school context, we conducted a theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2008) and decided to apply Nissenbaum’s CI theory, which emphasizes contextual norms. The following section presents the findings, according to the two identified themes. Interview extracts are identified by the letter S (indicating Student) and a serial number (1–83).

Findings

**Surveillance and the Broader School Context**

*Contextualization of students’ opinions.* When we asked students for their opinions regarding school CCTVs, they framed their perceptions within their overall schooling experience, particularly as it relates to relationships and trust. This tendency to contextualize the answers characterized almost all participants, regardless of their normative opinion on school surveillance. For example, S23 criticized the installation of CCTVs because in her school, “there are teachers,” who “give students a feeling that they are against them because they don’t trust them.” She contrasted her own school to the open school at which her brother was enrolled and noted that in the open school, “the teachers are special,” “there are close student–teacher relationships,” and “students don’t feel mistrusted.” Similarly, S30 resisted the CCTVs due to the “strict” approach of her school principal, “who doesn’t know how to use the cameras and how to treat people.” She provided various examples of his surveillance and disciplinary practices, such as using Bluetooth to locate students who brought their cellphone to school, and noted that his behavior was “humiliating” and “insulted even the teachers.” Other examples of contextual criticism of the CCTVs included the following:

There’s no trust [in this school] . . . everything is about fear and deterrence and not about trust and humanism. (S62)

The cameras are like a book with a cover, in that you see only what’s on the outside . . . I experienced it many times that teachers formed opinions about me—for example, that I take drugs and drink—because of my dress style and piercing. (S10)
Some students referred to their positive schooling experiences when they reflected on the normative aspects of school CCTVs. For instance, S61, who viewed CCTVs as important, said that she highly appreciated her school for the “freedom” that it allowed in coming to school without a school uniform, wearing frayed jeans, and hugging her boyfriend “without someone pointing an accusing finger.” Similarly, S38 supported the installation of CCTVs for security reasons because he felt comfortable going to the teachers’ lounge and speaking with his homeroom teacher and the school principal whenever disturbed by something. S59, who had mixed perceptions of CCTVs, said that although a camera recorded the school’s entrance, it was never used to follow students who left school in the middle of the day or skipped classes, because the school’s policy was “open gates,” “not to ask where we’re going . . . just say ciao . . . have fun and go to eat.” S67 said that cameras might prove that “the school doesn’t trust the students,” but in her school, “it’s not like that,” as this was a “charming” and “adorable” school.

Students’ use of metaphors to describe the context. Upon elaborating their views regarding the interface of CCTVs and the school’s culture, some students suggested various metaphors, reflecting two polarized perceptions. The first kind used positive metaphors such as “family” and “home” \((n = 14)\). For instance,

This is a small school that feels private and homey . . . it’s more intimate [than public places], with your friends and the teachers and principals always around you. (S35)

The school is like my second home. I feel that the teachers are part of my family. (S39)

I behave at school like I’m at home . . . We all belong to the same shared environment; we live together. (S44)

A second kind of metaphor conjured negative images of the school as a “prison,” “military,” “factory,” “machine,” and “reality show,” and of the students as “guinea pigs” and “robots” \((n = 16)\). These metaphors described how the students perceived their schools, what it was not and what it should be. For example,

We feel like we’re in the army. In prison . . . The principal should trust us. (S48)

A school should be, as the teachers say, our second home. And no, it doesn’t feel like a second home when you’re filmed and mistrusted. (S9)
Children shouldn’t feel at school like guinea pigs. School [time] is the golden years. We’re adolescents, who can do crazy stuff, and that’s fine . . . not something like hitting or stealing . . . if [educators] are always watching each and every second to see whether someone is smoking outside, it wouldn’t help anyone. (S10)

In sum, students did not construct their perceptions of CCTVs in isolation of other considerations, preferring to conceptualize school surveillance within the broader perception of their school experience and climate. Expressions of resistance to CCTVs reflected feelings of alienation and mistrust, while expressions of support for school CCTVs reflected trust in their educators and school at large.

**Resolving Conflicts Between Privacy and Security**

Students often understood the need for CCTVs as a means of achieving security. Recall that most students were not informed of the system’s purpose; thus, they sought to decipher these objectives. After assuming objectives viewed as legitimate (typically security), students pointed to a conflict between security and their privacy concerns. Here, we first outline the students’ views of the legitimate goal for using school CCTVs, and then focus on the ways in which the students sought to make sense of the dilemma. Students indicated several kinds of balancing of the various considerations and the restrictions on the use of CCTVs, intuitively echoing constitutional and privacy law principles that delineate proportional derogation of rights. However, these general principles were anchored in the students’ personal schooling experiences that contextualized their opinions about school CCTVs.

**Legitimate aims.** Participants insisted that CCTVs should be used only for security purposes rather than for discipline. Some participants distinguished between “good” and “bad” intentions of school administration, as S1 noted: “[School administrators] should watch [the footage] only to thwart bad phenomena . . . not just watching students because they feel like it.” Participants also distinguished between surveillance, that is, “for” and “against” students:

The cameras should be used when the schools’ property is vandalized and not as a means for supervision, or in cases of a fight [among students], it should assist the police. (S42)

They place cameras . . . for security, but, in fact, it’s just an excuse to spy . . . to see that we’re not doing things they don’t like. (S58)
In addition, participants distinguished between severe and minor disciplinary problems. For instance, S68 asserted that cameras should be installed only in schools known for many cases of “rapes or sexual harassment.” Other examples included the following:

I don’t think it’s for security; it’s because of the vandalism. We told [the teacher] that it’s disrespectful, that it harms us, and that we dislike it. We asked that she speak with the principal to ask whether he uses the cameras only when something really happens, and not just keep it running to follow every move we make. It’s unpleasant. (S9)

If it’s for [detecting] smokers, it’s not that crucial. If they interfere with our privacy, it should be only for more critical situations . . . like that murder [referring to a murder of a student in her school in 2006], or schools that have a lot of violence, but only when it’s really necessary. Otherwise, it’s not worth violating students’ privacy. (S23)

These examples illustrate that, whereas the students agreed that security could justify installing CCTVs, they were skeptical whether this was indeed the case in their own school and were concerned about the cameras being used for school discipline.

Proportionality. The participants tried to resolve the conflict between privacy and security concerns in several ways that resemble the constitutional principle of proportionality. Many of them raised the issue of the fit of the means used to achieve the legitimate aims. In this context, participants contended that educational tools, rather than surveillance, are the appropriate means to address disciplinary issues. For example, S69 said that using the cameras was the “easy solution”: “instead of waiting for children to misbehave . . . simply teach them not to do so, as a school should.” Other participants discussed broader aspects relating to the goals of schooling. S21 noted that the cameras reflect the school’s “hypocrisy,” as “there’s much talk at school about values, dignity, and privacy, too.” S10 said,

We’re just high school children, and the goal shouldn’t be to follow us but to teach us so that we’ll have a basis for life. If the current situation persists . . . in 30 years, we’ll have cameras in our brains and won’t be able to think freely.

A related aspect of proportionality concerned cost–benefit analysis. In this context, many participants pointed to the ineffectiveness of the cameras. For instance, S61 noted that the school principal threatened to use the cameras when there were many thefts, but this threat did not resolve the problem. S37
asserted in this regard that threats were ineffective, as they served to alienate students and “make the student feel mistrusted.” Other participants contended that students managed to find spaces out of the cameras’ coverage to engage in prohibited activities. As S10 explained,

If we want to do something, we’ll do it somewhere . . . Cameras make it worse because we feel that [people] control or follow us. It’s like a baby that someone took his lollypop away. He still wants it . . . We want freedom . . . We’ll do it because of the cameras. It’s kind of a protest.

Another approach was spatial balance. Participants differentiated between public spaces outside the school building and those inside. The latter spaces were classified as either public or private, according to their size, the number of students present at any given time, and the intimacy they allow. For example,

[Outside], it’s most legitimate because it’s for security reasons . . . Inside, it’s annoying that they trace every step I make; there’s no privacy. I would install [cameras] in central places, and not in niches, where they would intrude on students’ privacy. (S1)

There are some places in the school that are more public, and some that are more private and personal. So yes, outside, behave normally, and where you think no one sees you—do what you want. (S60)

Many students asserted that there should be no cameras in the classrooms. S9 noted in this regard that the schoolyard and corridors “feel” like “public” spaces, while “in the classroom, you can sit, talk, and hang around for a while without being filmed, without being disturbed.” Some participants differentiated between places they pass by briefly and spaces where they remain for longer durations. For example, S57 explained,

We’re in the classroom all day. We need our privacy . . . in the schoolyard, everybody is there; it’s not private or personal . . . the breaks are so short, so it’s only in between classes [that we’re under surveillance].

The spatial balance solution was often accompanied by a temporal dimension solution. Participants noted the discomfort of continuous surveillance. For instance, S23 noted,

Sometimes, when I’m at school alone after classes, doing homework . . . I’m not even sure whether there are cameras; but if there are . . . it’s a bit unpleasant. It’s as if someone is constantly watching me.
S29 asserted that “the principal shouldn’t . . . watch students 24 hours a day, spying on students and knowing everything that’s going on,” but “it’s Ok that when something happens, he opens the cameras to see who is responsible.”

**Discussion**

This study examined high school students’ perceptions of school CCTVs. It contributes to the literature by showing that the ways students conceptualize school surveillance and resolve conflicts between their privacy and security concerns are embedded in their perceptions of their overall schooling experience. The students adopted various metaphors to describe these experiences. Their own relational position in these metaphors—as part of a “family,” as “prisoners,” or as “soldiers”—highlight the fact that that their CCTV experiences have become part of the organizational–educational experience that forms the self (cf. Shoshana, 2016). These findings imply that students’ interpretations of surveillance relied not only on previous usages of CCTVs but also on the history of the use of power and authority in school. No specific factors, such as the students’ gender, socioeconomic status, or school size, were found to be associated with these interpretations. The students’ perceptions of CCTVs were colored primarily by their perceptions of their educators and the level of trust in the school. In other words, these perceptions mirrored established relationships in school.

Our findings also showed that students pointed to a conflict between security and their privacy. This tension is common to many jurisdictions, where terror attacks and crime result in increased security measures, including the installation of surveillance systems. Israeli society is well acquainted with this dilemma. Students resolved the conflict in several ways. First, most participants emphasized that CCTVs should be used only for legitimate security aims rather than for disciplining students. This finding reinforces the importance of the legal principle of purpose limitation as a legal attempt to block surveillance creep. Second, students subscribed to various approaches to achieve a balance between privacy and security. Many students condemned the use of surveillance rather than educational tools to control students’ behavior, challenging the effectiveness of surveillance. In addition, students offered ideas regarding restrictions on surveillance—based on spatial and temporal distinctions—in ways that do not penetrate every space in the school and do not cover the entire school day. These limitations and balances echo constitutional principles, such as the legitimacy of the interest in surveillance and the principle of proportionality. A study of younger Israeli students, which focused on how students normalize or resist school CCTVs, similarly found intuitive references to constitutional balancing (Birnhack et al., 2018).
The current study highlights that students’ balancing analysis was contextual, nuanced, and anchored in everyday examples of their experiences. Thus, our findings challenge Nissenbaum’s (2010) CI framework, which assumes the presence of preexisting informational norms in a specific context. In contrast, the participants in our study portrayed diverse rules and expectations. Hence, it is difficult to speak of a unified context.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the dissonance between the students’ perspectives regarding the legitimate usages of the CCTVs and the CCTVs’ actual usages. In a previous study, based on interviews with school principals, we found that although school security was a prominent consideration in the decision to install CCTVs (Perry-Hazan & Birnhack, 2016), many principals used CCTVs to gather evidence concerning minor disciplinary infringements (Perry-Hazan & Birnhack, 2018). This function creep is prohibited by European and Israeli law (GDPR, 2016, Art. 5(1)(b); Privacy Protection Act, 1981, s. 2(9)) and specifically in the Israeli MoE’s (2015) regulations of school CCTVs. The current study indicates that many students recognize and condemn the surveillance creep in their own schools.

The mismatch of perspectives between students and principals reveals that each side of the surveillance situation has cultivated parallel sets of social norms concerning the legitimate and proportional usages of surveillance. Therefore, a CI analysis is unattainable, not only because each school is characterized by a different set of values and unique organizational culture but also because different actors within the same school hold different views as to the context itself, as well as to the legitimate aims of surveillance.

The gap between students’ and principals’ perceptive is disturbing, as a lack of fit between students’ needs and school climate may lead to negative attitudes toward school and increase problematic behavior (Booth & Gerard, 2014). This mismatch of perspectives may also lead to loss of trust. Relational trust is a key resource for schools, which binds individuals together to advance the students’ education and welfare (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Trusted adults, both inside and outside of the school, serve essential roles in adolescents’ lives (Meltzer et al., 2018). Our study reveals that educators’ decisions to use the cameras for managing school discipline may be a trust-diagnostic situation for students when they perceive it as a usage contrary to their own interests (see Simpson, 2007). As trust-diagnostic situations serve individuals to test whether their current level of trust in a partner is warranted, they may have a strong influence on relationships in school.

Study Limitations and Future Research

Whereas this study has several limitations, none pertains to its primary scholarly contribution. Supplementing teachers’ and school principals’ perceptions
with those of their students would likely have provided valuable data to this research. However, the current study focused on students’ perceptions, given the scant knowledge available regarding their views. Our sample enabled a broad overview of the perceptions of various students enrolled in diverse school settings. Future studies may adopt a case-study approach, focusing on the perceptions of students and educators in specific schools. Another limitation concerns possible local factors characterizing the Israeli context, which might limit the findings’ relevance to other countries. One such factor may be the widely acknowledged prominence of security concerns. However, we believe that our primary findings concerning students’ contextualized opinions about school CCTVs are not embedded in the Israeli context. A second factor that might limit the findings’ relevance is the national legal background, to the extent that it shapes students’ perspectives, but the Israeli constitutional balancing is similar to the European approach. An additional limitation concerns the present study’s focus on CCTVs rather than on broader aspects of school surveillance. As noted, CCTVs comprise the sole surveillance technology currently in use in Israeli schools. Comparative studies may explore additional surveillance schemes, taking into account the unique characteristics and usages of each strategy. We believe that students’ perceptions of these new surveillance schemes are likely to be contextual, as we found in the current study.

**Implications**

Our findings raise the “chicken or the egg” dilemma. It is difficult to deduce causality here: that is, is surveillance instrumental in shaping students’ overall view of the school, or does the students’ perception of the school climate affect their view of the CCTVs? These two elements are intertwined and seem to reinforce each other. Therefore, surveillance should be viewed holistically, taking into account all contextual aspects relating to a specific school. The interconnections of CCTV surveillance and students’ schooling perceptions should inform policy makers in light of the crucial role of student–teacher relationships (Roorda et al., 2011; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005) and school belonging (Booth & Gerard, 2014; Huynh & Gillen-O’Neel, 2016; Saraví et al., 2019) in promoting students’ well-being, self-esteem, school engagement, and learning. These interconnections imply that the necessity of CCTVs should be carefully considered, and their usages should be limited.

Additional implications concern participation in decision making. The current study, along with our previous studies (Birnhack et al., 2018; Perry-Hazan & Birnhack, 2016), shows that students were not consulted or even informed about the cameras. Teachers were similarly excluded from decision-making processes regarding school CCTVs (Perry-Hazan & Birnhack, 2019). As students’ concerns about CCTVs are intertwined with the broader
school context, it is crucial to develop channels by which they can express these concerns, receive answers, and participate in decision making.

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