Careful families and care as 'kinwork': an intergenerational study of families and digital media use in Melbourne, Australia

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Introduction

Jessica Chan is 19 years old and lives in the outer suburbs of Melbourne with her mother and father. She is first generation Australian, her Singaporean Chinese mother and her Malaysian Chinese father immigrated to Australia in 1989. She is baking vegetarian curry puffs, while her mother Nancy is stir-frying some chicken for their relatives who are coming over for Sunday dinner. While sharing the kitchen, they are debating whether Jessica should get the latest iPhone 7 as she is leaving for a university exchange to New York for six months, a few weeks later. The conversation is not what one would usually expect: Jessica, the teenage daughter is not asking her mother to buy her the newest iPhone. Nancy is insisting that she is going to buy it for her and she should download Facebook, Skype and WhatsApp for when she is away from home. Nancy’s mother has no intention of checking up on Jessica constantly, but she does want to feel as though she is updated with what she is doing and that she can easily contact her when she wants to.

In her studies of three generations of Italian Australians, migration scholar Loretta Baldassar (2016) has observed that in the mid-twentieth century, Italians leaving home would experience a social death – that is, they would be disconnected from their family networks due to the distance of migration. In the early twenty-first century, however, leaving Italy no longer means experiencing a kind of social death, it means that the family of the person emigrating would purchase a new computer. Similarly, Jessica’s exchanges, highlighting transnational forms of intimacy and intergenerational mobility, involve culturally and
These practices are more than just ‘social surveillance’ (Marwick, 2012), instead illustrating the complex and paradoxical weave of power and care involved in what can be called ‘friendly’ surveillance (Hjorth et al, 2016).

This chapter empirically explores the ways in which intimacy, surveillance and care are interwoven with and through digital media practices in Melbourne. While much of the initial discussion around surveillance focused upon corporate and governmental dimensions (Farman, 2013; Andrejevic, 2006) overlooking the informal, micro and social forms (Marwick, 2012), more recently literature has started to focus upon mundane, emergent practices around maintaining intimacy and care-at-distance in families (Clark, 2012; Sengupta, 2012; Leaver, 2017; Burrows, 2017). We know very little about the ways digital media practices relating to care and intimacy are being played out in everyday familial contexts.

As such, we argue that the ‘doing family’ practices – the ways that family members maintain co-presence through routines and everyday tasks (Nedelcu and Wyss, 2016) – playing out across intergenerational and cross-cultural relationships reveal textures of intimacy and boundary work that entangle with the mundane to create new types of social surveillance and disappearance. These new forms of surveillance are also intertwined with expressions of ‘caring about’, that is having affection and concern for family members and working on maintaining bonds of relationships (see McKay, 2007; Yeates, 2004; Lynch and McLaughlin, 1995). For transnational and families separated by distance, family members ‘do family’ through everyday activities that extend beyond the home including through digital media (Madianou, 2016, 2017; Morgan, 1996; Wajcman et al, 2008).

This examination of surveillance as care, locative media and intergenerational families draws on ethnographic research conducted in Melbourne with 13 households across 2015-2016 as part of a larger, cross-cultural study of locative media and intergenerational families in Melbourne, Shanghai and Tokyo. The study contributes to research on locative media (Wilken and Goggin, 2015; Wilken, 2012) that refers to the capacities of mobile devices that are utilized by applications such as Facebook Places; they can provide users information about their surroundings but also provide others with information on where the user is located.

Melbourne provides a rich context for studying the diverse meanings of families as there are a significant number of migrants for whom social media is essential for maintaining transnational relationships.
For instance, 42% of Melbourne's population was born overseas and, following English, the second most common language spoken is Mandarin (City of Melbourne, 2013). Half of our participants were born overseas and the sample also included single parents and families without children. Their experiences demonstrate changing definitions of family in multicultural, urban areas such as Melbourne. Further, our attention to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) households (four) emphasizes those working to define and redefine the meanings of kinship in Australia.

This chapter is indebted to two key ideas from recent mobile media scholarship and migration scholarship. The first is ‘friendly’ surveillance mentioned above, theorized by Hjorth et al (2016). ‘Friendly’ surveillance advances the literatures on types of social surveillance (Marwick, 2012) or what Leaver (2017) calls ‘intimate surveillance’ to highlight the complex entanglements of power and care in different familial relationships. The second is ‘kinwork’, which explores the work of kinship that is mostly enacted by women, posed by di Leonardo (1987) and investigated in depth in relation to Italian migrants to Australia by Baldassar (2016, 2007a, 2007b). We aim to advance these areas of scholarship by locating our argument in the notion of ‘digital kinship’, which has emerged from the wider, cross-cultural study (Hjorth et al, forthcoming). The chapter is therefore structured as follows: firstly, digital kinship is established within debates in scholarship that consider what it means to be ‘family’ in an age of networked media (Clark, 2012; Horst, 2012), the asymmetries that occur between family roles regarding who does the ‘work’ of the family (Baldassar, 2007a, 2007b; Wilding, 2007) and the influences of digital media.

We then explore the relationship between ‘friendly’ surveillance as an expression of care as part of digital kinship. This section highlights how discussions of digital media in relation to families often emphasize the collective noun ‘the family’ (Wilding, 2017). Instead, the notion of digital kinship attempts to critically engage with different family roles and their implications within intergenerational families. This perspective takes into account the gender and power dimensions that are inherent in relationships between family members such as between couples or between mother and daughter, for example.

The more abstract ideas we present are then illustrated through ethnographic case studies from our fieldwork in Melbourne before concluding with some of the implications of locative media practices relating to care and intimacy within intergenerational familial contexts. The ways kinship intersects with digital practices and how such a
Connecting families?

perspective has implications for intimacy, co-presence and publicness are the starting point for this chapter.

**Digital kinship: an intergenerational perspective on uses of digital media**

As the traditional focus of anthropology, kinship has remained central to understandings of culture. Here, kinship is summarized as family kin group that is determined by structure and biological relatedness, family relationships that are created and maintained (see Carsten, 2003) and the multiple meanings, tensions and negotiations that occur within different categories of family relationships.

Initially, British social anthropology viewed kinship as an organizing, political and governing structure and not only a set of relationships between people. There were clear modes of conduct between related members within the hierarchy of the family. Yet contemporary kinship studies have also extended the role of choice within relationships, where family as structure became secondary to everyday experiences, contradictions and ambivalence in nuclear, extended and separated families (Godelier, 2012; Peletz, 1995). Carsten (2000, 2003, 2007) has most notably revisited kinship, emphasizing how kinship is largely influenced by behaviour and draws attention to how kinship can be made by caring and nurturing within a relationship, whether those involved are related by blood, or not.

Ethnographic studies in migration have made significant contributions to the role of digital media in transnational family relationships and the transforming meanings of kinship. Madianou and Miller (2012) coined the term polymedia from their extensive research with Filipina mothers working in England as maids and their ‘left-behind’ families in the Philippines. A key aspect of the study was absent mothering and how the women ‘mothered’ using new media, thus approaching kinship considering how new media contributed to impacting upon behaviour and maintaining familial relationships.

In the aforementioned study by Baldassar (2016), she notes how more recent waves of migration alongside the sheer availability of digital media also transform previous understandings of cultural inflections of kinship. Previously, through letter-writing, family members were able to fulfill their expected role as a category – that is, a son abroad could portray himself as an ideal son and emphasize working and missing home, whereas digital media, and social media in particular, create a constant feeling of co-presence, where the son who has left home is more similar to the actual, individual person. As we discuss further,
the sense of co-presence and constant contact afforded by social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp, might also contribute to alleviating migrants’ feelings of guilt at not visiting relatives in their country of origin. Prior to social media, other migration scholars have noted the importance of visiting for ritual occasions and highlight the complex range of emotions that accompany attendance and non-attendance (Conradson and McKay, 2007).

Considering the ‘digital’ in relation to kinship captures some of these tensions and complexities and draws on these approaches, offering a perspective that reveals how kinship moves in and out of ‘online’ and ‘offline’ spaces (Hjorth et al, forthcoming). Further, digital kinship draws attention to how these spaces contain their own histories, connections and memories.

Digital media as ‘friendly’ surveillance and kinwork at a distance

Digital media has also influenced how some of the ‘work’ of the family is done. ‘Work’ includes micro-coordination of everyday tasks, but also showing care and acknowledgement of family relationships. As a domestic technology, the mobile phone draws attention to locality and place and redefines public and private space (Hjorth, 2008). The mobile phone also transforms meanings of publicness, experiences of intimacy and invites new forms of presence and proximity (Hjorth, 2007; Proitz, 2007). Further, locative media invites rethinking privacy (Gazzard, 2011; Farman, 2013; de Souza e Silva and Frith, 2012). Rather than approaching privacy as something that is possessed or not, for example, Dourish and Anderson (2006) highlight that privacy is something we constantly do and define through practice. As we illustrate shortly, privacy and surveillance within different kinds of family relationships are often navigated with concern for others in mind as well as acting out of individual interest and autonomy. The effort and concern invested in considering the feelings of others is only one aspect of expressing care through digital media. Concerns for surveillance and privacy within family contexts also differ from discussions about corporate and government surveillance and big data (Farman, 2013; Andrejevic, 2006; Cincotta et al, 2011).

Marwick (2012) poses a perspective on social surveillance which focuses on everyday interactions. She argues that social surveillance assumes ‘power differentials evident in everyday interactions rather than the hierarchical power relationships assumed in much of the surveillance literature’ (Marwick, 2012, p 378). Marwick identifies some of the
common notions of surveillance such as lateral (Andrejevic, 2006), participatory (Albrechtslund, 2008), social searching (Ellison et al, 2007) and social (Joinson, 2008; Tokunaga, 2011). As she notes, social surveillance differs from traditional models insofar as it is focused around micro-level, decentralized, reciprocal interactions between individuals.

More recently, in a special issue on ‘infancy online’, Social Media & Society considered some of the implications that posting infant pictures publicly, especially by microcelebrities, will have on the future of the infant. Recall the 1960s movie directed by Michael Powell entitled Peeping Tom. In the movie we meet the adult, Mark Lewis, a murdering byproduct of his psychiatrist father’s experiments that were constantly filmed. Mark frames his life and his murders constantly in and through the cinema lens. What does it mean to document a life online? Will it become like the 1998 film The Truman Show, in which the reality and screen culture merge? As Tama Leaver (2017, p 3) eloquently argues, the phenomenon of infancy online is creating new types of ‘intimate surveillance’ we are yet to realize fully.

Benign social surveillance through social media platforms enables new ways of enacting care. The locative function on Facebook, for example, allows friends (and relatives) to monitor and care at a distance. And family groups in WhatsApp allow parents to participate in conversations equally with their children (whether they choose to do so or not). Mobile media provides creative and playful ways to manage intimate intergenerational relationships at a distance that differs from previous ways of managing transnational relationships, as well as ones within close proximity.

Prior to digital media, showing care through exchange involved the circulation of goods as well as communication through letters and phone calls. Research, particularly in contexts where women make up significant numbers in transnational labour, such as the Philippines, Indonesia and the Caribbean, has explored how care has been expressed through sending barrels of branded goods to frequent use of calling cards to, more recently, ‘always on’ use of webcams (Crawford, 2003; Horst, 2006; Olwig, 2007; Madianou and Miller, 2012). Yet other scholars have noted, in contexts where women have not migrated for labour, women still invest the majority of time and effort into caring at a distance, or contribute to doing most of the ‘kinwork’ (Baldassar, 2007b; di Leonardo, 1987).

By kinwork, di Leonardo (1987, p 442) refers to the:

conception, maintenance, and ritual celebration of cross-household kin ties, including visits, letters, telephone
calls, presents and cards to kin; the organization of holiday gatherings; the creation and maintenance of quasi-kin relations; decisions to neglect or to intensify particular ties; [and the] mental work of reflection about all these activities.

She further emphasizes the time, attention and skill invested in maintaining these different, often asymmetrical relationships and the ‘sense of family’ created. Yet kinwork is also characterized by both altruism and self-interest, where the emotional consequences include cooperation and competition, guilt and gratification (di Leonardo, 1987, p 443). In relation to families separated by distance, Baldassar (2007b, p 392) extends kinwork to the efforts made in ‘staying in touch’: that is, ‘visiting, writing letters, making phone calls, organizing reunions, celebrations and holidays, keeping family albums and sharing photos, and sending gifts and cards’.

The kinds of effort invested in staying in touch and caring at a distance might also include more ‘hands on’ forms of care, including practical, financial and personal. However, our fieldwork in Melbourne revealed that caring at a distance relies less on financial assistance, gifts and remittances, and more on care as emotional and moral support, and creating a sense of intimate co-presence. In the section that follows, we detail different categories of family relationships, alongside significant findings around how social media platforms and digital media for communications were used, illustrated through stories. We wish to highlight that digital media alleviates some of the obligations related to caring at a distance and also how it intersects with gender and power relations that reside in different categories of family relationships.

### Families in Melbourne: kinship and boundary work

It has been established so far that mobile media provokes rethinking privacy, disclosure and publicness. Mobile media also allows a ‘portability of care’ that is constantly present (Baldassar, 2017). There is some continuity on the emphasis of exchange as an expression of care within transnational relationships, where instead of sending goods, it is now more common to send messages, images and links, especially within family groups on WhatsApp. Constant contact also has implications for family relationships that are more local. The frequency of interactions through banter, chatting, posting and commenting on images posted to platforms such as Facebook positively acknowledges the importance of these relationships by checking in, even when
exchanges might not be about anything in particular (see Horst and Miller, 2005).

This section provides ethnographic case studies that illustrate the different ways surveillance is intertwined with other expressions of care within categories of family relationships. We provide examples from data collection in 13 households in Melbourne. The examples we draw on here are nuclear families with parents and children living within the same household, children who are now adults living nearby and, in one household, where the teenage child has recently moved abroad.

Our first example of a relationship challenges some of the frequent observations that mobile and social media become a source of tension and jealousy within intimate relationships (Miller, 2011). Instead, navigating privacy and disclosure over social media platforms such as Facebook becomes a mode of bonding and showing concern for the respective individuals as well as the relationship. Yana and Nathan minimize what they post to Facebook, however, Yana tries to post ‘enough’ for her parents and siblings interstate to keep them updated with their family life in Melbourne.

Yana is 38 years old and has one son from a previous relationship, Mark, who is in primary school. They live with her current partner Nathan, who works in hospitality as a sous chef. Nathan generally is not an avid user of social media, he has a Facebook profile, which he rarely posts to or checks and has downloaded WhatsApp to communicate with one of his friends who lives overseas. His immediate family lives nearby, they see each other regularly and he contacts them with phone calls and text messages. Yana, on the other hand, is originally from Sydney and her parents, brothers and sisters as well as their extended family all still live interstate. As Yana notes:

‘I find Facebook as a way to connect and see what’s happening, it makes you feel less super far away. And I like to post fun stuff. Just some of Marky, Mark and I went out to eat. A friend’s wedding. I pretty much just have it because I moved from Sydney and just for my family to sort of see Mark grow up really.’

Although Yana and Mark do not see her family often, the pressure to visit appears to be alleviated through the sense of constant contact Facebook provides. Yana rarely posts photos other than family ones. Scrolling through photos on her phone, there are several food photos she has taken, but hasn’t posted to social media. “So I just took pictures of it but this won’t go on Facebook or anything like that but everyone
at work has seen it but I won’t post that because to me it’s private. It’s just, I don’t know.” Her friends at work know that Nathan is a chef and their family meals during the week are close to restaurant quality, so there is an element of self-deprecation at not wanting to come across as showing off, as Yana rarely does the family cooking. Instead, Yana frames her withholding of posting meals Nathan has cooked as:

‘It’s kind of nice to sort of stand around and talk about it rather than just display it and sort of put it out there. Because then I’ll tell them like, okay, so this here that’s a lotus flower with tuna and it’s edible flowers and they’re like, “Oh my God, wow.” So they’ll ask what each thing is and it’s just a bit of fun.’

For Yana, platforms such as Facebook are more for keeping her family connected than for nurturing her relationships with peers. She is also the ‘digital custodian’ while Mark is in primary school. For another couple, Kathy and Daniel, whose teenage daughter is now living in Canada, several platforms become the source of frequent negotiation, as both parents and daughter use social media between their different social circles.

Kathy and Daniel lived for several years as ‘digital resistors’ – that is, they opted out of using media because digital communication technologies represent a lifestyle that is in opposition to their immediate way of life and values. ‘Media refusal’ is also related to lifestyle choices, as political and social commentary on media consumption and ‘conspicuous non-consumption’ (Portwood-Stacer, 2012). Baumer et al (2015) argue that such kinds of conspicuous non-usage are also expressive of socio-cultural identity. Kathy explains:

‘We lived in her early years in quite an isolated community in Canada, and did the whole self-sustaining thing, so sustainability thing. And it was just a choice not to have a television. And then travelled for a couple of years and then it was on the south coast of New South Wales in sort of an alternative community.’

While their daughter Rita was a child, Kathy and David did not own a television, desktop or laptop. When she became a teenager and they moved to Melbourne, Kathy continues, “[we] put her into private school, put her in a warm Melbourne scene, and we had to get a television quick so that she could catch up with what the rest of the
world was doing”. Although they agreed with the ethos of sustainable living, Kathy and Daniel felt that it was unfair to disconnect Rita from her peers and so, once in Melbourne, they bought a television, laptops and smartphones.

Now Rita is 19 and has returned to Canada for a gap year, living with a family and working. Rita video calls her parents on Facetime with her iPhone every two days. Daniel and Kathy appreciate that although they would like her to have her independence, it is Rita who initiates contact with them most of the time, via Facetime or WhatsApp. Daniel commented on a call that they would leave Rita to have her space and she replied “no”. Kathy reassures him, “She doesn’t want space, she is very happy to have lots of contact”.

Having grown up with social media as a teenager, Rita also ‘fits’ calling her parents around her work travelling time. She often calls home to or from work, which is reassuring to Daniel and Cathy regarding her daily movements. Kathy and Rita also often exchange photos on WhatsApp, especially if either are shopping or eating out. Photos exchanged between transnational family members can constitute ‘evidence’ that relatives are safe, emotionally well and are meeting the aspirations of upward mobility that accompanies migration (Hall, 1991; Lustig, 2004). Yet the constant contact afforded by locative and mobile media also results in the desire to self-monitor posting content that causes tensions or envy.

For Patrick and Esther, a couple in their 60s, maintaining a sense of privacy from other family members is not as much a concern as neither of them post to social media regularly. Instead, Esther frequently looks at her daughter Jasmine’s profile even though she lives nearby, and her nieces’ and nephews’ posts as they still live in Malaysia. Esther is on WhatsApp and is part of two groups, one for her former classmates from Malaysia and one for her family in Melbourne. Members of the former classmates group frequently send old photos, memes with greetings and humour and the more local group mainly uses WhatsApp to coordinate catch-ups. Esther describes that sometimes the classmates group sends so many images across the day that it eats into her pre-paid data limit and she has to mute the conversation. Although she deletes images frequently, chats with members of the group one-to-one and seldom participates in the group chat herself, she says she wouldn’t leave the group altogether, because it would seem ‘rude’. Esther’s presence as benign hanging around resonates with other studies of cultural aspects of mobile phone usage where retaining several contacts even though there is little communication with them still acknowledges that those
contacts are included in the same social networks (Horst and Miller, 2005).

Esther is also on Facebook for Messenger, which she uses to chat and video call relatives overseas. Patrick’s relatives in India are also Facebook friends with Esther and mainly contact her when they want to enquire about him. Patrick insists he is not on Facebook, Skype or any other social media. Yet, similarly to Yana, Esther is a kind of ‘digital custodian’ for the household, where Patrick is on social media through her. Patrick describes, “Esther goes to work and I use the tablet for my crossword and so on, but I look at Facebook occasionally. Especially if [his daughter] Jasmine has put up a photo of the cats. I see some of the things my cousins’ children put up from India, but I’m not all that interested”. In Esther and Patrick’s household, there is more continuity with Esther as responsible for most of the ‘kinwork’, including staying in touch with relatives through mobile media.

WhatsApp groups were fairly common with transnational families and members of the group could span three generations. Chua is in his mid-70s and lives in the same suburb as his two daughters, whom he babysits for regularly. He has a Facebook profile, but says he doesn’t browse or post to it regularly; he is most active in his family WhatsApp with his siblings and in-laws, and nieces and nephews in Malaysia, England and the US. The group is fairly active with messages exchanged at least once a day and the most common types of images circulated of different family members together, food and travel.

Yet family members including Chua also regularly exchange links to Christian websites, with daily Bible readings and religious reflections. Although the members do not comment on these posts directly, the regular circulation of links to religious web pages also reinforces a wider sense of sociality, beyond the immediate relationships between family members. By engaging in wider sociality based on religious beliefs, Chua also maintains some of the kinwork of staying in touch, which draws attention to how digital media challenges the gender roles of who does the work of the family.

In these concluding stories, two different teenagers – Jessica who was introduced at the beginning of the chapter and Mel who is also 19 – illustrate how care at a distance is enacted by youth for whom social media was ubiquitous from primary school. These final stories highlight the importance of the future orientations for considering different implications of the intersection of mobile media and expressions of care from an intergenerational perspective. For some of the older participants described above, social media is simply an add-on to other forms of caring at a distance. For these teenagers, being embedded in various
media ecologies implies that uses of media has always been imbricated with experiences of emotions, especially in relation to platforms with visual affordances.

Growing up in Melbourne as an only child, Jessica’s parents have taken her on overseas family holidays from a very young age. She is mindful that she has travelled more than her peers at school, but also more than her cousins and older relatives overseas. In addition to her upcoming exchange in New York, Jessica says that her short-term aspirations include more travelling while she is at university. “[I want to go to] places I haven’t been, so Europe, broader Asia. And I’d like to go back, this sounds like such a spoiled kid, but I would love to go back to the Maldives. I had an amazing time there. Beaches and stuff.” She sees a lot of posts on Facebook and her classmates from high school have a Messenger group as well, but she disables the locative functions.

‘Yeah, like initially, I change the settings so like Facebook and Messenger doesn’t know the location… more for people… I don’t really feel it’s necessary that they know where I am. Like sometimes I’ll feel like I’m showing off if I show them where I am so I don’t want them to think I’m showing off because I’ve put where I am. Like one time I was in LA and I didn’t realize it was on and a friend asked you’re in LA, how is it? Which is nice because it was a nice conversation topic, but after that I turned it off. Because I didn’t really want to show off or anything.’

The concern to not come across as ‘showing off’, especially to relatives overseas who are on Facebook, counters many of the popular assumptions that teenagers are becoming more narcissistic because of social media. On the one hand, Jessica and her peers were subject to these kinds of discourses growing up, and therefore they circulate images in their Messenger group more than sharing them on their profiles.

Mel, on the other hand, uses the circulation of images, quotes and links among her meditation group friends, as a support group that facilitates self-care. Several of the women in the group are older and have children. We have included friendship as a category of relationships as much of the energy invested into friendships results in relationships that can be closer to an individual than other kinship-based relationships (Allan, 1989; Bell and Coleman, 1999; Pahl, 2000).

Mel lives with her father and has two part-time jobs, while she is saving up to go overseas. She explains, “We have a meditation group
of girls [on Viber] so I’m part of that and we just keep each other updated, like post links to meditation websites or upcoming events and things like that which are good to know about”. When inspirational quotes or memes appear on Mel’s Facebook feed, she screen captures them and saves them to a ‘Quotes’ album in her images folder on her phone. Some of these she shares to the group.

‘It makes a difference in the sense of having a security I guess. I don’t really think about it so much, but I guess if I was to stop and think about it, knowing that other people feel like this, it’s not just me. A lot of the work I do is interactive but it’s actually quote solo, so I don’t work in a team. When I’m cleaning now I’m pretty much by myself because the family’s out and the kids’ parties I’m the entertainer so I’m about facilitating, I don’t so much work side by side with somebody else. So it’s kind of good to have that dialogue in my head going it’s alright, keep going or whatever it is… or like yeah you did great.’

The circulation of these ‘handy reminders’ function in a similar way to the circulation of religious posts that appeared in the story of Chua. By tapping into a wider sociality in the sense of Benedict Anderson’s ‘imagined community’ (1991), expressing care moves beyond immediate, dyadic relationships and reinforces a sense of collective solidarity based on shared emotional experiences. This area, facilitated by mobile and social media, deserves more inquiry as to the dimensions of expressions of care within different categories of relationships.

**Conclusion**

This chapter began by establishing how surveillance and privacy have different implications within the context of intergenerational family relationships. We posed the framework of ‘digital kinship’, which provides a life course perspective to take into account the differing roles, positions, meanings and contexts over a person’s life span that impact upon and influence how an individual navigates being embedded in these wider set of relationships, through digital media. We examined the notion of kinwork to examine how women were traditionally responsible for the ritual and routine work of maintaining family bonds and suggested the ubiquity of mobile and social media might challenge these more gendered roles drawing on the example of Chua, but also,
as seen with Esther and Patrick, may present a continuity of kinwork as predominantly women’s work.

We then illustrated how care and intimacy are interwoven with and through digital media practices. Often, as seen with Yana and Nathan, surveillance and control is less about the asymmetries within dyadic or intimate relationships, but are more related to how the nuclear unit negotiated extended family and networks.

Because of the socioeconomic factors related to our sample in Melbourne, ‘caring for’, that is the provision of financial and other resources, is less prominent than ‘caring about’, where expressions of care also highlights the efforts invested in relationships between individuals who are not closely related. As platforms for media for communication increase, so too do judgements from others around how a person uses media to navigate a relationship. The intersection between expressions of care and mobile media therefore draws attention to the persistence of the moral value of preserving and constantly acknowledging different categories of family relationships.

**In brief**

1. New forms of surveillance in the context of intergenerational family relationships are less concerned about privacy and data in relation to corporations and governments and are more concerned with expressing ‘caring about’ family members.
2. ‘Friendly’ surveillance advances literatures on types of social surveillance (Marwick, 2012) and what Leaver (2017) has described as ‘intimate surveillance’ to draw attention to the complexities of power and care in familial relationships (Hjorth et al, 2016).
3. ‘Kinwork’ highlights the routine and ritual work of kinship that is mainly enacted through the efforts made by women to maintain family relationships (di Leonardo, 1987; Baldassar, 2007a, 2007b, 2016).
4. ‘Digital kinship’ draws on families based on biology and structure as well as relationships that are created and maintained (Carsten, 2003). It considers the ‘digital’ in relation to kinship, offering a perspective that reveals how kinship moves in and out of ‘online’ and ‘offline’ spaces (Hjorth et al, forthcoming).

**Note**

1 _Locating the Mobile_ is an Australian Research Council Linkage project, partnered with Intel, Keio University and Fudan University with Chief Investigators: Larissa Hjorth, Heather Horst, Sarah Pink, Genevieve Bell, PIs: Fumitoshi Kato and Baohua Zhou and researchers Jolynna Sinanan and Kana Ohashi.
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