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The Environment and Social Behavior

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higher than desired privacy—too much or too little contact—a state of imbalance exists.

3. Privacy is a *dialectic* process, which involves both a restriction of interaction and a seeking of interaction. A traditional view of privacy is that it is a shutting off of the self from others. My view is that privacy is profitably conceived of as an interplay of opposing forces—that is, different balances of opening and closing the self to others. Sometimes a person (or a group) wants to be alone and out of contact with others. At other times social interaction is desired. I believe that the whole range of openness-closedness of the person or group should be included in the idea of privacy. In fact, I shall argue that privacy is a dynamic process that has forces pushing toward a certain level of openness-closedness or accessibility-inaccessibility, with the relative strength of opposing forces shifting over time and with different circumstances.

4. Privacy is an *optimizing* process. In other words, there is an optimal degree of desired access of the self to others at any moment in time. And deviation from this optimum in the direction of either too much or too little interaction is unsatisfactory. For example, if a person wanted to have a hypothetical “fifty units” of interaction with another person, actual interaction outcomes of “zero units” or “one hundred units” of interaction would both be unsatisfactory. Thus the idea of privacy as an optimization process means that departures from an ideal in either of two directions—higher or lower—is unsatisfactory.

5. Privacy is an *input and output* process; people and groups attempt to regulate contacts coming *from* others and outputs they make *to* others. It is important to understand how people and groups regulate privacy with regard to what comes in from others and what goes out from the person or the group to others.

6. Privacy can involve different types of *social units*: individuals, families, mixed or homogeneous sex groups, and so on. Sometimes we speak of privacy in terms of one person’s blocking off or seeking contact with another person. At other times we can speak of groups’ seeking or avoiding contact with other groups or individuals. Thus privacy can involve a great diversity of social relationships—individuals and individuals, individuals and a group, groups and individuals, and so on.

7. Another aspect of my analysis concerns behavioral mechanisms used to achieve privacy goals. These mechanisms include (a) *verbal* and *paraverbal* behavior, or the content and style of verbal responses, (b) *personal space*, or the area immediately surrounding persons and groups, defined in terms of distance and angle of orientation from others, (c) *territory*, or the use, possession, and ownership of areas and objects in a geographical locale, and (d) *cultural mechanisms*, or the customs, norms, and styles of behavior by which members of different cultural groups regulate their contact with



Privacy: Definitions and Properties

Introduction

In comparison with crowding, personal space, and territory, the concept of privacy has been neglected by social and behavioral scientists. Empirical research on privacy is essentially nonexistent, whereas there are about 200 studies of personal space and several dozen studies on human crowding and human territorial behavior. However, a number of theoretical and discursive analyses of privacy exist, done largely by political scientists, lawyers, philosophers, and, recently, sociologists. This chapter attempts to elevate the concept of privacy to a central place in the environment and behavior field. To telegraph our discussion, the following features of privacy will be considered.

1. Privacy is an interpersonal boundary-control process, which paces and regulates interaction with others. Privacy regulation by persons and groups is somewhat like the shifting permeability of a cell membrane. Sometimes the person or group is receptive to outside inputs, and sometimes the person or group closes off contact with the outside environment.

2. Two important aspects of privacy are *desired privacy* and *achieved privacy*. Desired privacy is a subjective statement of an ideal level of interaction with others—how much or how little contact is desired at some moment in time. Achieved privacy is the actual degree of contact that results from interaction with others. If the desired privacy is equal to the achieved privacy, an optimum state of privacy exists. If achieved privacy is lower or

others. And, most important, these different behaviors operate as a unified system, amplifying, substituting, and complementing one another.

8. A final feature of the discussion deals with *privacy functions*. Three basic components of privacy regulation are identified: (a) control and management of interpersonal interaction, (b) plans, roles, and strategies for dealing with others, and (c) features of self-identity.

The first section of the chapter portrays privacy processes in different cultures in order to provide some concrete anchors for the subsequent discussion. Next, definitions of privacy are discussed, with an eye toward identifying some general dimensions of the term. The chapter then summarizes some representative theoretical perspectives on privacy and follows with a statement of the theoretical approach of the book.

Privacy Around the World

A good way to begin an analysis of privacy is to see how people from different cultures regulate social contact among themselves. Naturally, cultures differ widely in behavior reflecting privacy, and, on first glance, some life-styles may seem to disregard privacy. But, on closer examination, I believe that all human cultures have behavioral mechanisms for managing the social accessibility of people to one another. What is different among cultures is how they accomplish control over interaction. The following are a few examples of some of these differences.

The Mehinacu Culture of Brazil

According to Roberts and Gregor (1971), the Mehinacu are a small tribal group who reside in an isolated tropical forest region in central Brazil. They live in small villages and apparently have little privacy. Everyone seems to know a great deal about everyone else, and people can easily see and hear one another. Dwellings are shared by several families and are built around an open plaza approximately 200 feet in diameter. Anyone in the plaza is quite visible, especially since people often sit working in their doorways. Paths from the central community lead to public bathing facilities and to agricultural fields. The paths are straight, and a person can be seen coming or going for long distances. The paths are also sandy, and people know one another's footprints, so that a person's whereabouts are known even if he or she isn't readily visible. The fields surrounding the community are side by side, also making for easy observation of others. Husbands and wives' quarrels and conversations are readily observed, since they live with relatives. The thatched walls of the homes do not shut out noises or sounds; poor perfor-

mance or inappropriate social behavior is evident to all. Thus it is very difficult to conceal behavior.

Can it be said that the Mehinacu have no privacy—that individuals or groups cannot seclude themselves from others? Roberts and Gregor state that cultural vehicles do exist to permit people to have some control over contact with others. For example, although several families often live in one house, one family does not go into another family's area. Also, the men have a small building in the center of the village that serves as a combination social club and religious temple, from which women are barred. The natural geography is also used to permit people the opportunity to pace their contact with others. Roberts and Gregor describe a maze of hidden paths in the forest around the village that lead to secret clearings where people can go to hide, to make love, or to be alone.

A very elaborate child-rearing process, especially for boys, also bears on the control of social contact. A boy between 9 and 12 years of age leads a life of considerable social isolation. He stays inside the home during daylight hours, is taught social taboos and religious and food rituals, learns to speak quietly and to avoid emotionally intense behaviors and expressions, and generally has limited social contact. In addition, seclusion is a common practice on the death of a spouse and, for a man, at the birth of his first child. Roberts and Gregor estimated that a person during his lifetime can spend somewhere in the neighborhood of eight years in seclusion, in spite of the proximity and visibility of life to others. In addition, there are social norms to control contact; for example, people do not question one another about their possessions, sexual experiences, and lives; people are under pressure not to expose the inadequacies, bad conduct, or poor performance of others; falsehoods are commonly used to prevent others' knowing about one's activities.

Several features of Mehinacu life are important to this discussion of privacy. Although at first glance the Mehinacu seem to have no means for controlling social contact, a variety of cultural regulatory mechanisms exist. Moreover, the Mehinacu demonstrate the dialectic nature of privacy regulation. That is, privacy in their culture is a simultaneous blend of intrusion and nonintrusion, knowing and not knowing about others, being able to protect the self and not being able to protect the self from others. In addition, the Mehinacu demonstrate the multilevel nature of privacy regulation, which can involve the *physical environment* (knowing others' paths but also having hidden places; living together but still separating families and men from women), *verbal behavior* (limiting the probing of others, showing verbal reticence, speaking softly), and *nonverbal body behaviors* (suppressing emotional expression). Thus their privacy regulation is accomplished not by a single behavioral response but by a complex repertoire of finely tuned behaviors. Finally, the Mehinacu culture demonstrates how various social units must be included in a broad analysis of privacy. That is, individuals, families,

and sex groups are all involved in various types of privacy regulation, each having its own mechanisms to achieve control over social interaction.

The Tuareg Culture of Northern Africa

Murphy (1964) discusses the Tuareg—a Moslem nomadic pastoral group, numbering about 250,000, who live in southern Algeria and the northern parts of Mali and Niger in Africa. They tend camels, sheep, goats, and, in some instances, cattle. They are loosely organized in tribal and subtribal groups, with the fundamental social unit consisting of approximately fifty to several hundred people. The social system has dominant noble tribes, vassal tribes, and slaves.

The Tuareg wear a sleeveless under-robe, a flowing outer garment that reaches from the shoulders to the ankles, and a turban and veil. The veil cloth is wrapped first around the head and then across the face; it covers the top of the nose and hangs below the chin, with only a narrow slit revealing the eyes. Only males wear a veil, and its position on the face is an important communication cue. The Tuareg wear the veil almost continuously—when eating or smoking, at home or away, in the evening and in the morning, and sometimes even during sleep. A man first wears the veil when he approaches manhood, at a time when it is believed shameful to show the mouth to others. Concealing the mouth presumably decreases a man's vulnerability by removing an important part of himself from interaction. Murphy (1964) feels that the veil serves as an explicit boundary separating the man from others but that it can be used to change the permeability of the self/other boundary by being raised and lowered, adjusted and readjusted, and tightened or loosened at its ends. For example, the Tuareg wear the veil highest and conceal most of their face when they interact with a high-status person, and they lower the veil when dealing with a lower-status person. Furthermore, the veil is only part of a complex communication system. The Tuareg rely heavily on cues from the eyes, body, and voice to judge the meaning of communications. When interacting, they stare steadily at each other; the wrinkles around the eyes and nose are quite visible, and these and body cues are central to communication.

The Tuareg communication system is important to our analysis of privacy in several ways. First, the veil as a literal boundary is related to the theme of privacy as a process for regulating interpersonal interaction. Second, the idea of opening and closing the self is compatible with the idea of privacy as more than a shutting off of the self from others; it is a process of achieving a balance between too much and too little interaction. Third, use of the veil and sensitivity to facial cues, verbal behaviors, and body positions

illustrate the system-like quality of privacy-regulation mechanisms. That is, different types of behavior blend together to yield a profile aimed at some desired level of social contact.

Two Indonesian Societies: Bali and Java

Geertz (at a seminar presentation cited in Westin, 1970) described household privacy in Bali and Javanese societies:

In Java people live in small, bamboo walled houses, each of which almost always contains a single nuclear family—i.e., mother, father, and unmarried children. . . . The houses face the street with a cleared front yard in front of them. There are no walls or fences around them, the house walls are thinly and loosely woven, and there are commonly not even doors. Within the house people wander freely just about any place any time, and even outsiders wander in fairly freely almost any time during the day and early evening. In brief, privacy in our terms is about as close to nonexistent as it can get. You may walk freely into a room where a man or woman is stretched out (clothed, of course) sleeping. You may enter from the rear of the house as well as from the front, with hardly more warning than a greeting announcing your presence. . . .

The result is that their defenses are mostly psychological. Relationships even within the household are very restrained; people speak softly, hide their feelings and even in the bosom of a Javanese family you have the feeling that you are in the public square and must behave with appropriate decorum. Javanese shut people out with a wall of etiquette (patterns of politeness are very highly developed), with emotional restraint, and with a general lack of candor in both speech and behavior. It is not, in short, that the Javanese do not wish or value privacy; but merely that because they put up no physical or social barriers against the physical ingress of outsiders into their household life they must put up psychological ones and surround themselves with social barriers of a different sort. . . .

Now, in Bali people live in house yards surrounded by high stone walls into which you enter by a narrow, half-blocked-off doorway. Inside such a yard lives some form of what anthropologists call a patrilineal extended family. Such a family may consist of from one to a dozen or so nuclear families of the Javanese sort whose heads are related patrilineally: i.e., father, his two married sons, his two married brothers, his father. . . .

In contrast to Java, nonkinsmen almost never enter one's houseyard. . . . Within the yard one is in one's castle and other people know better than to push their way in. . . . Other patrilineal relatives of yours may come around in the early evening to gossip and in some cases a close friend or two may do so, but except for these when you are in your houseyard you are free of the public. Only your immediate family is around [p. 16–17].¹

¹From *Privacy and Freedom*, by Alan F. Westin. Copyright © 1967 by The Association of the Bar of the City of New York. Reprinted by permission of Athenaeum Publishers and The Bodley Head Ltd.

Geertz goes on to say that the Balinese home is characterized by:

... a tremendous warmth, humor, [and] openness.... As soon as the Balinese steps through the doorway to the street and the public square, market and temples beyond, however, he becomes more or less like the Javanese [p. 17].

These descriptions are important in several respects. First, they illustrate that, although Javanese society seems to have an absence of privacy, closer examination reveals a number of mechanisms by which people regulate their contact with others. Across societies there appears to be a mix of different modes of behavior—environmental, verbal, nonverbal, and psychological—that assist in the regulation of interaction. While the mix and repertoires may differ across cultures, the results are similar. People, groups, and societies use a variety of behaviors to achieve changing balances of openness/closedness and accessibility/impermeability to others.

The Strip Teaser

A final and perhaps bizarre “anthropological” analysis of the strip teaser (Silber, 1971) illustrates how a seemingly nonprivate situation may actually reflect effective interpersonal-boundary control:

The strip teaser would seem to forfeit, by virtue of her professional calling, the privacy of her body. She has, it might seem, no private parts, since she has contracted for their public display. But in the blank, dead expression on the face of the dancer one sees the closed door, the wall, behind which she hides an intense, if limited, privacy. She wears her fig leaf on her face. With eyes that disclose nothing—least of all an interest in what she is doing or in those who are watching her—she preserves some part of her individuality from public gaze. Some dancers exhibit such powers of withdrawal that they succeed in totally estranging themselves from the audience. Because she does not value the intimate disclosure of her body, because she makes her body available with such utter indifference, that rare dancer may even convey to a stupid and drunken audience the stark realization that in seeing all they have seen nothing. What is offered publicly to an audience becomes private once again [p. 228].²

Similar anthropological descriptions could be obtained for other societies, but it is not necessary to be anthropologically comprehensive. The point is to give some concrete examples of principles and themes that will be emphasized in this chapter. Beyond the themes already cited, there is an important capstone thought in regard to privacy regulation. Most societies

have evolved means for allowing persons and groups to regulate social interaction. While the mechanisms may differ across societies, there appears to be a “cultural universal” that people in groups can shut off and open themselves to contact with others at different times. A viable society probably cannot exist if many members are totally and permanently out of contact with others. But it is also probable that few societies exist where people have no barriers against others. What appears to be different among societies is not the absence of interpersonal-boundary processes but the specific behavioral mechanisms by which some degree of control is achieved. With these concrete examples in mind, we now proceed with an analysis of the concept of privacy.

Definitions of Privacy

The concept of privacy appears in the writings of several disciplines—psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, law, and architecture. But its meaning varies widely. Some writers use definitions of privacy that emphasize seclusion, withdrawal, and avoidance of interaction. For example:

“... a person’s feeling that others should be excluded from something which is of concern to him, and also recognition that others have a right to do this” [Bates, 1964].

A value to be by oneself—relief from the pressures of the presence of others [Chapin, 1951].

“... an outcome of a person’s wish to withhold from others certain knowledge as to his past and present experience and action and his intention for the future... a desire to be an enigma to others or, more generally, a desire to control others’ perceptions and beliefs *vis à vis* the self-concealing person” [Jourard, 1966b].

Avoiding interaction and intrusion by means of visual, auditory, etc. channels, and combinations thereof [Kira, 1966; Kuper, 1953].

Another group of definitions has less of a “keep-out” character and emphasizes the idea of control—opening and closing of the self to others and freedom of choice regarding personal accessibility. Such broader definitions of privacy are compatible with my theoretical framework. For example:

“... The right of the individual to decide what information about himself should be communicated to others and under what conditions” [Westin, 1970].

The ability to control interaction, to have options, devices, and mechanisms to prevent unwanted interaction, and to achieve desired interaction [Rapoport, 1972].

Obtaining freedom of choice or options to achieve goals in order to control what (and to whom) information is communicated about oneself [Ittelson, Proshansky, & Rivlin, 1970].

²From “Masks and Fig Leaves,” by J. R. Silber, in J. R. Pennek and J. W. Chapman (Eds.), *Privacy*. Reprinted by permission of the publishers, Lieber-Atherton, Inc. Copyright © 1971. All rights reserved.

"... Control of stimulus input from others, degree of mutual knowledge and separateness of people from one another" [Simmel, 1950b].

"... Control of movement of information across a boundary from person to person, person to group, group to group, or group to individual" [Shils, 1966].

For my purposes, privacy will be defined as *selective control of access to the self or to one's group*. This definition contains several properties that are central to the approach taken in this book. First, the proposed definition allows for a variety of social units—for example, individuals dealing with other individuals, individuals relating to groups, and so on. Second, it permits analysis of privacy as a bidirectional process—that is, inputs from others to the self and outputs from the self to others. Third, the definition implies selective control, or an active and dynamic process, in which privacy can change over time and with different circumstances.

Before launching into a theoretical analysis, I will briefly describe several existing approaches.

Some Theoretical Approaches to Privacy

Westin (1970) provided a systematic analysis of privacy by categorizing four types and four functions of privacy. The first type of privacy is *solitude*, whereby a person is alone and free from observation by others and, as such, is in the most extreme condition of privacy. *Intimacy*, the second privacy state, occurs when a small group—for example, a husband and wife—separate themselves from outsiders in order to be alone. *Anonymity* occurs when a person is "lost in a crowd"; he is in a public place with others present but does not expect to be recognized. The person may be in the physical presence of many other people but is still private in the sense that others do not engage in more than casual interaction. Examples include going to a movie alone or walking alone in a crowded downtown area. The fourth state of privacy described by Westin is *reserve*, which includes "... the creation of a psychological barrier against unwanted intrusion" (1970, p. 32). Here, one literally "tunes other people out." Whether in the presence of one other person or one hundred other people, we have all learned how not to listen to others and how to ignore them psychologically, often without anyone even knowing. Many of us have been in a situation with another person who chattered unceasingly but with whom we learned to cope by tuning them out and thinking about other things. (We are sometimes caught at this game when they ask us a question and we have no idea what they're talking about.)

Westin's analysis is important to our framework, because it indicates how different size social units (individuals and groups) are involved in privacy and how settings make a difference and because he suggests the operation of various mechanisms to achieve different degrees of privacy.

Westin also describes four functions of privacy. The first, *personal autonomy*, deals with the central core of the self and the important issues of self-worth, self-independence, and self-identity. As we will discuss later, both successful and unsuccessful privacy regulation help people define what they are, how they relate to the world, and where and when they can control interaction with others. *Emotional release* is a second function of privacy; it permits people to relax from social roles, to be "off stage," and to deviate from rules and customs in a protected fashion. Being alone and not worrying how one looks or dresses, relaxing in speech, picking one's nose, or doing personal things that are typically avoided in public are a part of Westin's notion of emotional release. *Self-evaluation* involves the integration of experiences and the opportunity to plan future actions. By being out of the public limelight, a person or group can assess their experiences, plan strategies for how to act in the future, and generally meditate about themselves in relation to the world. Physical separation from others facilitates the process of self-evaluation. The fourth function of privacy is *limited and protected communication*. Privacy provides the opportunity to be alone with another person or a small group of persons and to share confidences with them. The private meetings of decision-makers or confidants or the time alone spent by lovers or spouses to discuss a problem or their relationship is, according to Westin, an important function of privacy. These functions of privacy will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

Westin also stated that individuals and groups seek a balance between openness and closedness. Furthermore, too much or too little separation is undesirable. Thus, he alluded to the optimization, dialectic approach to privacy that is central to the framework of my analysis. In this regard, he and I draw on the writings of Simmel (1950b, 1950c), a sociologist who wrote near the turn of the century. Simmel emphasized the dialectic quality of social exchange and proposed that any social bond involved dialectic interplays between various forces—helping and harming, harmony and conflict, openness and closedness, and exchange of intimacies and trivia. Simmel felt that without such an interplay a social relationship could not be viable. For example, to be always intimate with another person would be unwieldy for most people. No matter how close they are to each other, most people end up exchanging trivial information and intimacies in some balanced arrangement. Similarly, close relationships probably cannot be viable without some balanced interplay of the members' being together and apart, thereby sometimes being individuals and sometimes being members of a group but never in either role *all* the time. The dialectic and optimization approach to privacy implied by Westin, which derives from Simmel, forms a central feature of my theoretical approach.

Pastalan (1970a, 1970b) extended Westin's analysis and described events that precipitate individuals to seek various forms of privacy. These

include (1) antecedent social events, such as social relations and role responsibilities, (2) organismic or personal factors, such as motivation to escape identification and desire to be free from observation, (3) mechanisms to achieve privacy, such as physical withdrawal, use of nonverbal behavior, and psychological barriers, and (4) environmental factors, such as crowdedness, confinement, and environmental arrangements. This analysis points to surrounding circumstances, such as one's status relations with others, the crowdedness of the environment, individual needs, and so on, that trip off various privacy desires. Thus, it is useful because it casts the concept of privacy in a broader context and attempts a first approximation at factors that may lead to various forms of privacy and toward selection of behavioral mechanisms to achieve privacy.

Another analysis that fits well with my way of thinking is that of Proshansky, Itelson, and Rivlin (1970). They proposed that privacy maximizes freedom of choice and behavioral options and thereby allows a person or group to have control over their activities. They also noted that important factors in maintaining options are to control space—that is, territory—and to determine what will and will not take place in territories. Proshansky and his associates (1970) stated the case perfectly when they said that “territoriality thus becomes one mechanism whereby [a person] can increase the range of options open to him and maximize his freedom of choice in the given situation” (p. 181). In agreement with their analysis, we shall approach territoriality as one of several behavioral mechanisms used to satisfy privacy needs.

Laufer, Proshansky, and Wolfe (1973) and Wolfe and Laufer (1974) extended this line of thinking by pointing to several dimensions of privacy: (1) *self-ego dimension*, which refers to the idea that social development involves the growth of autonomy and an individual's learning when and how to be with or to be separate from others, (2) *interaction dimension*, which deals with the role of privacy in coming together with others and being apart from others in a balanced sense and which deals with privacy as a boundary-control process, (3) *life-cycle dimension*, which implies that privacy is not a static process but shifts over the life history of people and as social roles and social responsibility change, (4) *biography-history dimensions*, or differences in personality and personal histories that may make people differentially sensitive to various privacy needs and regulation mechanisms, and (5) *control dimension*, or freedom of choice—freedom of access and interaction with others—which is also a central idea in my approach. As Laufer and his associates point out, control does not rule out stimulation. Rather, it is concerned with regulation and freedom to either increase or decrease contact with others. (6) *Ecology-culture dimension* refers to the way in which the physical environment can be used or not used to achieve control over interaction, (7) *task orientation* and (8) *ritual privacy dimensions* refer to tasks and

phenomenological dimension includes the idea that privacy is not only a behavioral phenomenon but also a “unique psychological experience.” I shall draw heavily on this analysis, especially in regard to self-identity functions of privacy, the idea of privacy as concerned with control and regulation of social interaction, and privacy as a dialectic—that is, an optimizational process involving the balance between increasing and decreasing stimulation from others.

The idea of control—freedom of choice to pursue or not to pursue interaction, or the ability to regulate self/other boundaries—is an emerging theme. For example, Kelvin (1973) views privacy in terms of individual independence, vulnerability, and power that others have or do not have over a person. For Kelvin, privacy involves protecting oneself from the influence and power of others. Thus social isolation is a negative state, because a person's presumed freedom and desire to have contact with others is blocked. The positive condition of “privacy” may involve the same shutoff of interaction, but the shutoff occurs in circumstances in which the person wants such a low-contact state. Our ability to regulate interaction and to achieve desired states gives others less power over us, in Kelvin's terms, and thereby makes us less vulnerable.

Much the same line of thinking has been offered by Johnson (1974), using the construct of *personal control*. Johnson deals with four aspects of personal control in privacy regulation: (1) *outcome-choice control* includes choice of a goal to be achieved or, in my terms, a desired level of privacy; (2) *behavior-selection control* deals with one's ability to select behaviors to reach a desired outcome. (My concept of behavioral mechanisms of territoriality, personal space, nonverbal behavior, and verbal behavior is identical with this aspect of Johnson's thinking.) (3) *Outcome-effectiveness control* and (4) *outcome-realization control* deal with the effectiveness of behaviors in achieving desired levels of interaction and one's perceptions and evaluations of outcomes in relation to desires. In my terms, these processes involve desired and achieved privacy levels, and determining whether one has succeeded in effectively implementing what one wanted.

Several other writers have written about privacy, and if you want to delve further you should examine the writings of Westin (1970), Pennock and Chapman (1971), Schwartz (1968), and Margulis (1974).

A Conceptual Analysis of Privacy

The following analysis is anchored around several aspects of privacy: social units (which vary from individuals to groups), the dialectic quality of privacy, the optimization nature of privacy, and privacy as a boundary-

Units of Privacy

Privacy is usually an interpersonal event, involving relationships among people. Person-to-person, person-to-group, group-to-person, or group-to-group social units can be involved. For example, college roommates (a group) studying for an exam may wish to avoid contact with other persons or groups for a period of time. Or a lonely senior citizen may join social organizations and clubs in order to be identified with a group and to meet other people. Or a family group may want to be alone to discuss a problem, or individual family members may wish to reflect on some matter alone and out of the presence of others. Thus there can be a variety of person-group social units involved in privacy. And privacy processes may or may not be similar for all these combinations of social units.

One dimension of Westin's (1970) four states of privacy deals with social units. For example, solitude (being away from others), anonymity (being lost in a crowd), and reserve (psychological separation) all relate to a single person's desires to be separate from others. However, Westin's fourth state, intimacy, concerns a group of people who wish to deal with one another out of the range of contact with others. Thus a potentially important feature of privacy concerns differences in dynamics for various social units.

The Dialectic Nature of Privacy

We become what we are not only by establishing boundaries around ourselves but also by a periodic opening of these boundaries to nourishment, to learning, and to intimacy [A. Simmel, 1971, p. 81].

It is essential that a person be able to set boundaries for himself, but freely, so that he can raise the boundaries again and remove himself from them [G. Simmel, cited in Schwartz, 1968].

These quotations say that social interaction is a continuing interplay or dialectic between forces, driving people to come together and to move apart. There are times when people want to be alone and out of contact with others and there are times when others are sought out, to be heard and to hear, to talk and to listen (upper part of Figure 2-3).³ For example, many husbands and wives work out an arrangement, explicitly or implicitly, for times in their lives to be away from each other. Sometimes this is done on a daily basis; they go to different places in the home to read, to work on hobbies, or just to sit quietly. Sometimes this is done on a longer-range basis, in the form of separate vacations or separate interests that they turn to periodically.

Permanent separation from others, especially liked or loved ones, is not

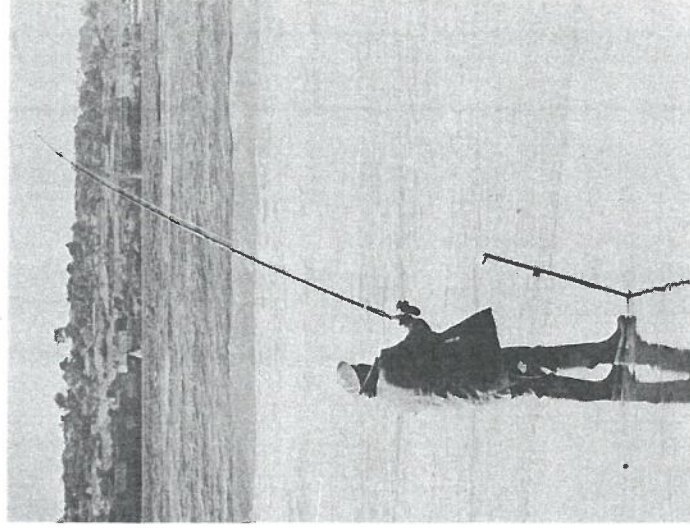


Figure 2-1. Sometimes people want to be alone and out of contact with others . . .

a wholly desirable state of affairs. In fact, forced separation, such as solitary confinement in prison, is a very serious punishment and something likely to be harmful to people in the long run. Thus, privacy is not solely a "keep-out" or "let-in" process; it involves a synthesis of being in contact with others and being out of contact with others. The desire for social interaction or noninteraction changes over time and with different circumstances. The idea of privacy as a dialectic process, therefore, means that there is a balancing of opposing forces—to be open and accessible to others and to be shut off or closed to others—and that the net strength of these competing forces changes over time.

My dialectic approach to privacy is somewhat broader than the approaches that view privacy solely as a withdrawal process—those in which people seek to avoid stimulus overload (Milgram, 1970), prevent intrusions (Schwartz, 1968), or search for freedom from interference (Jourard, 1966b, 1971b). This dialectic way of thinking about privacy is implicit in other conceptual approaches. For example, Proshansky and his associates (1970) spoke of privacy as involving freedom of choice or options to use the environment to regulate interaction. Furthermore the concept of *anomie*

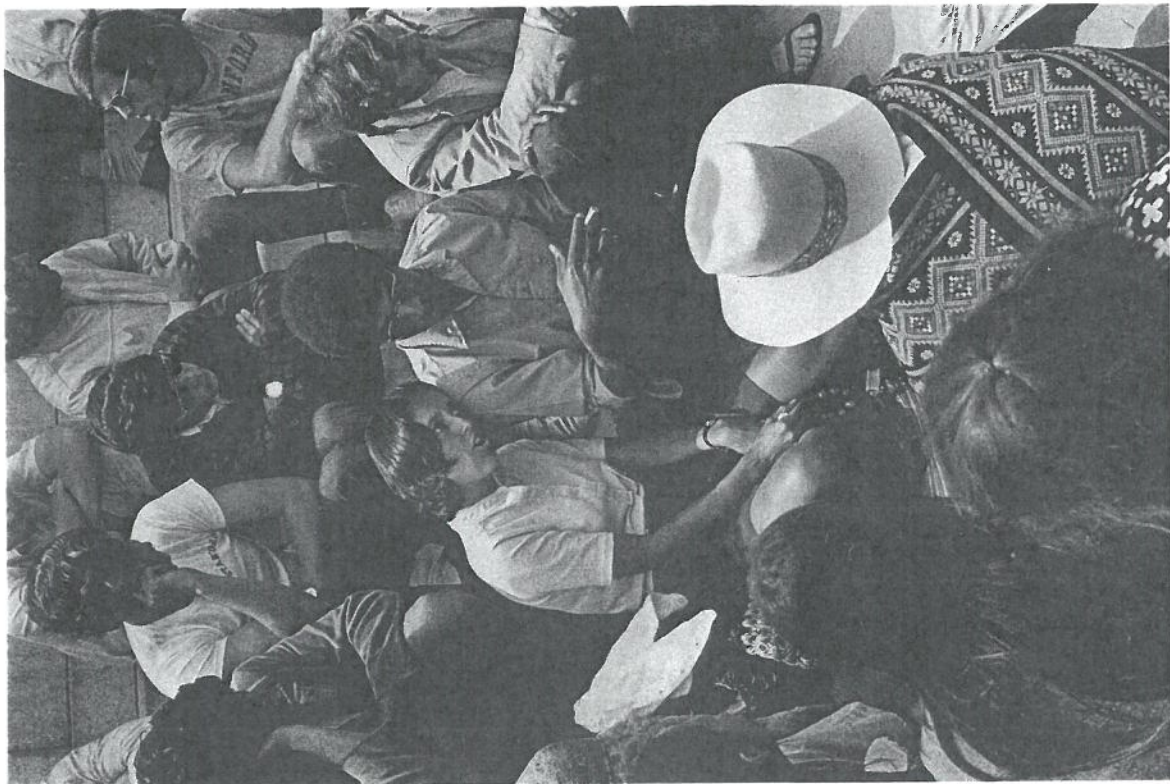


Figure 2-2. . . . and sometimes they want to be with others. (Figure 2-1 photograph by Jim Pinckney; Figure 2-2 photograph by Howard E. Harrison.)

sophical thought. The idea of good and evil as aspects of the same phenomenon is an old philosophical issue; the layman's idea of love and hate as being close together reflects a dialectic theme. In physics, the principle of there

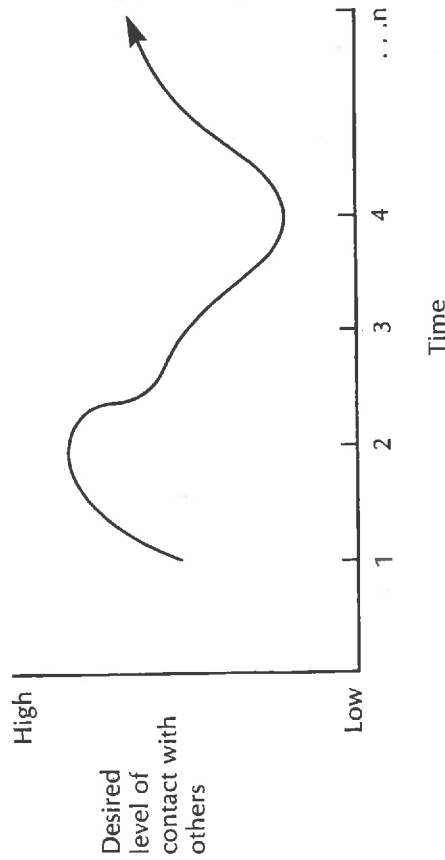
reflects the idea of opposing forces. The ancient practice of acupuncture as a medical therapy has a philosophical underpinning concerned with regulating opposing bodily forces. And Freud's basic concepts of the id as a source of primitive, negative psychic energy, balanced by the superego, or social norms and conscience, by means of an executive or regulatory ego, convey a dialectic way of thinking. In a word, the idea of dialectic theorizing is as old as human beings' conception of their own being, of the world, and of the universe and pervades scientific and philosophical theorizing. It also seems to me to be a useful way for examining the concept of privacy.

The Optimization Nature of Privacy

A related feature of privacy is that too much or too little privacy is unsatisfactory and that persons or groups seek varying optimal levels of social interaction. The lower diagram in Figure 2-3 illustrates how the optimization and dialectic properties of privacy fit together. At Time 2 in the lower diagram, for example, a person desires a relatively high level of interaction with others, which results from some net balance of forces to want and to avoid contact. If that level of desired interaction is actually achieved, then the social system is in a state of balance or equilibrium. But if *either* more or less contact occurs, then the situation is not in balance. A similar state of affairs can occur for Time 4, when a generally low level of interaction was desired. Here, also, any deviation from the optimum is undesirable. If a person desires a lot of interaction with another person and gets only a little, then he feels lonely, isolated, or cut off. And if he actually receives more interaction than he originally desired, then he feels intruded upon, crowded, or overloaded. However, what is too much, too little, or ideal shifts with time and circumstances, so what is optimum depends on where one is on the continuum of desired privacy. If I want to be alone, a colleague who comes into my office and talks for fifteen minutes is intruding and staying too long. If I want to interact with others, the same fifteen-minute conversation may be far too brief. In summary, the dialectic idea points to the net level of desired contact with others, which can be high or low. The optimization quality of privacy deals with deviations from this ideal.

Several writers proposed similar ideas. Smith, Downer, Lynch, and Winter (1969), Schwartz (1968), McGinley (1959), Bates (1964), Jacobs (1961), Jourard (1966b, 1971b), Rapoport (1972), Westin (1970), Wohlwill (1974), and others point to the need to maintain some optimum balance between seclusion and interaction, under- and over-stimulation, or social isolation and stimulus overload. In fact, adaptation level (Helson, 1964) and comparison level (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) are central ideas in psychology and involve neutral or optimum points of stimulation, above and below

1a. Privacy as a Dialectic Process



1b. Privacy as an Optimization Process

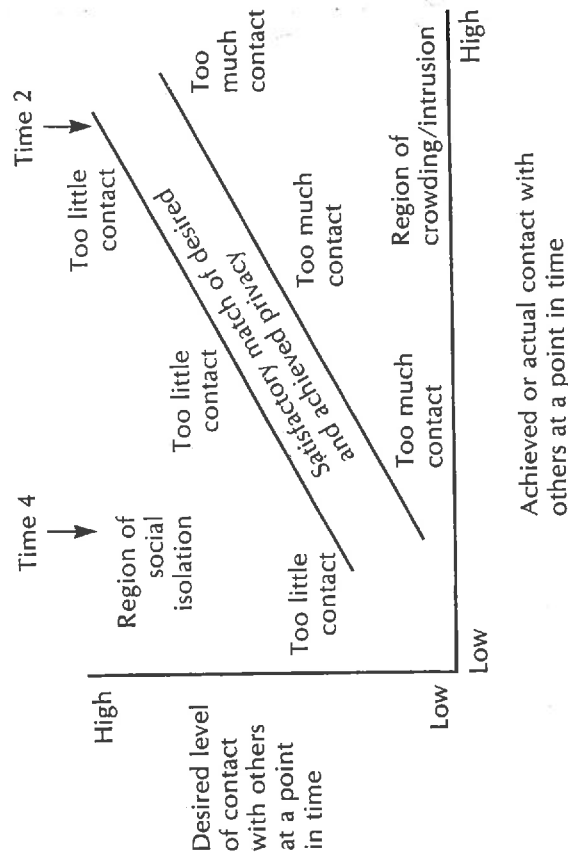


Figure 2-3. Dialectic and Optimization Properties of Privacy.

Privacy as a Boundary-Regulation Process

Many definitions of privacy use such terms as "reveal," "know about," "intrude," or "separation from others." The connotation is that privacy

(1972) terminology, there are *boundaries* or *barriers* that are used by a person or group to control access by others. An analogy is the cell membrane, the boundary properties of which vary with the state of the outside environment and with internal cell dynamics. The cell membrane is differentially permeable to the outside; its boundary properties shift to achieve a viable level of functioning. One feature of privacy proposed here is that it is an interpersonal-boundary process, whereby accessibility and openness-closedness of a person or group are regulated as circumstances change.

The notion of boundaries is not new to the environment and behavior field. For example, territory implies a bounded area that an organism defends and preserves as its own. Similarly, personal space involves an invisible boundary around the self, intrusion into which creates tension or discomfort. Furthermore, all manner of social units—families, communities, cities, and nations—define their existence, in part, by boundaries in the form of walls, fences, rivers, and natural geographical and man-made barriers. In a broad sense, the concept of boundary is a distinction between the self and non-self—literally, the interface of the self and nonself.

Some Boundary-Regulation Processes

Desired and Achieved Privacy. As a regulatory process, privacy can be viewed from two perspectives: (1) a personally defined ideal level of interaction that a person or group desires and (2) a resulting outcome or achieved amount of actual interaction, which may or may not match what was desired.

The regulation of social interaction involves various relationships between desired and achieved privacy. When achieved privacy equals desired privacy (that is, when the person obtains the ideal level of social interaction, low or high), an optimum degree of privacy exists. When achieved privacy is less than desired privacy (that is, too little privacy obtained), more contact occurred than was desired. Such situations are typically labeled as intrusion, invasion of privacy, or crowding. When achieved privacy is greater than desired privacy, one commonly speaks of boredom, loneliness, or isolation.

Input and Output Processes. My framework also hypothesizes a two-way privacy process, involving control over both *inputs* and *outputs*. Boundary regulation includes control over inputs from persons and stimuli outside the self, ranging from zero input on some occasions to maximum input on other occasions. Social inputs deal with stimulation coming from others to the self—from the outside in. Being called to the telephone, listening to a radio, and having others talk to you represent inputs from others. Privacy also

wish to have them listen to his or her views, or may enlist their help in solving a personal problem. In one sense, social outputs involve an active seeking of others to become part of the psychological environment of the self. To use the cell-membrane analogy again, I speak here of a two-way exchange with the environment—sometimes from the inside of the cell out to the environment and sometimes from the environment into the cell.

Profiles of Regulatory Processes. Figure 2-4 presents eight privacy situations based on boundary regulation, desired and achieved privacy, and input-output processes. P refers to a person or a group; E refers to another person or group or to general environmental stimulation. The boundary around P can be either closed (solid line) or open and permeable (dashed line). Cases 1 to 4 portray relationships between desired and achieved privacy in regard to inputs from others; Cases 5 to 8 deal with outputs from the self to others. In order to simplify, assume a single person (P) is relating to another person (E).

In Cases 1 and 2, P desired certain levels of contact with E and was able to achieve those levels. Thus desired privacy is equal to achieved privacy and the person should be satisfied. In Case 1, P wanted inputs from E; P opened the self-boundaries, and E entered the self-zone of P. The boundary could have been opened by P's actions (for example, opening a door and welcoming E), but it was also necessary that other events allow the boundary to be crossed (for example, the door wasn't stuck closed, E was not geographically isolated from P).

Case 2 is a prototype of the traditional successful privacy situation, in which P, viewing E's inputs as undesirable, laid down a boundary designed to be impermeable to E and succeeded in keeping E away. Again, desired privacy equals achieved privacy. Cases 1 and 2 both reflect adequate privacy situations—one in which P wanted contact and received it and the other in which P wanted to avoid contact and was successful.

In the next two cases, P was unsuccessful in achieving a desired degree of privacy. In Case 3, P was intruded upon by E; in Case 4, P was unable to achieve a desired level of contact with E. In Case 3, P closed the self-boundary, but E crossed the boundary against P's wishes. For example, P may have closed the door, but E came through the door, or P may have turned away from E to avoid interaction, but E ignored the cue and interacted with P in a way that could not be avoided.

Case 4 is a different type of boundary-control failure. Here E is viewed as a positive source of stimulation, but E did not move into the proximity of P, in spite of P's having taken steps to be accessible. E may have been prevented from interacting with P, or E may not have wanted to deal with P. From P's perspective, the achieved level of privacy is *greater* than the desired level of privacy. In summary, the optimal situations of Cases 1 and 2 reflect

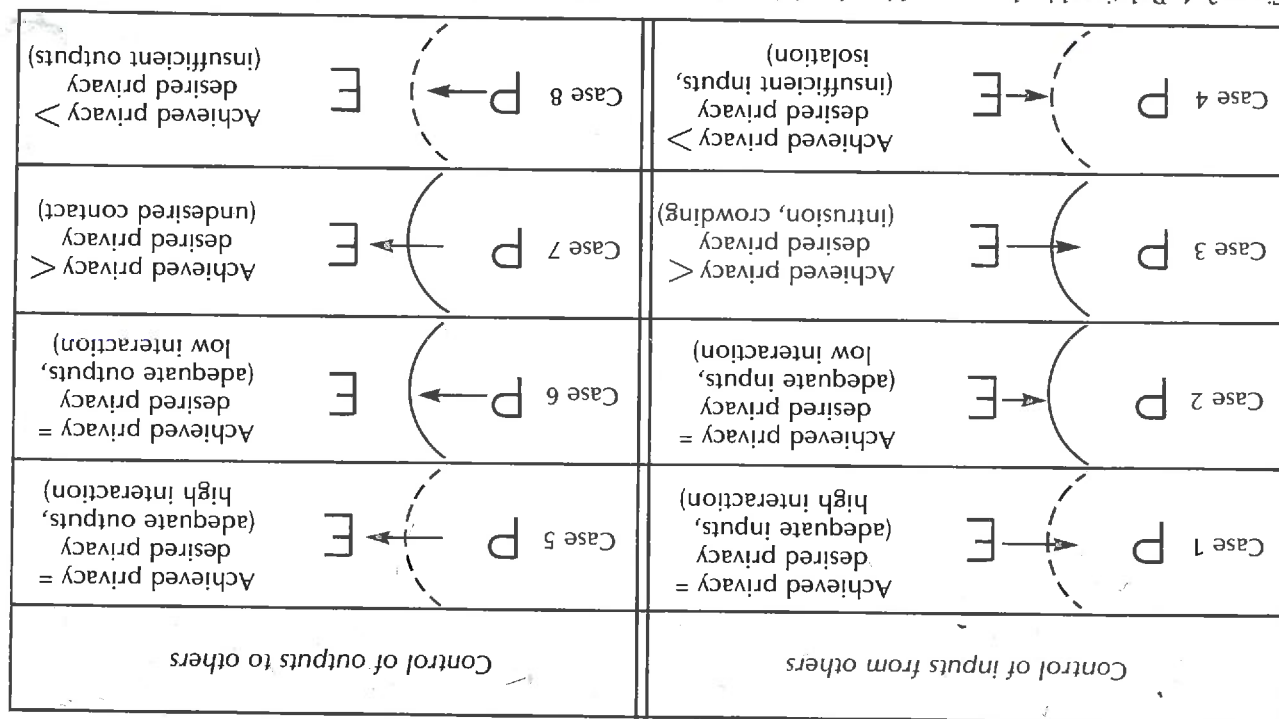


Figure 2-4. Relationships between achieved and desired privacy as a function of interpersonal boundary-control processes.

satisfactory self/other boundary-regulation processes, and the nonoptimal situations of Cases 3 and 4 reflect instances in which P was unable to regulate boundaries around the self. These examples show that satisfactory privacy is not only the successful exclusion of unwanted others (Case 2) but is also the successful inclusion of someone with whom interaction is desired (Case 1). Furthermore, privacy failures can also be viewed as either the inability to keep someone away from the self (Case 3) or the inability to interact with a person when one wants to (Case 4).

Cases 5 to 8 parallel the first four profiles but deal with P's desire to direct *outputs* to E. In Hutton's terms (1972), Case 5 involves instances in which P successfully gained access to a positive goal. An example of a successful Case-5 privacy situation is when a person telephones another person, finds that person in, and talks about a serious problem or even just chats about superficial matters. That is, P wanted to move into the area of E's self and direct outputs to E and was successful in so doing. In Case 6, P arranged a boundary system to prevent self-movement toward E. By not calling E, by avoiding places where E might be, and by being hesitant, aloof, and distant in the presence of E, P was successful in maintaining a desired low level of contact with E. Thus, Cases 5 and 6 are successful privacy-regulation situations in regard to outputs from the self to others and are directly parallel to Cases 1 and 2. Case 5 portrays achievement of high levels of output, and Case 6 reflects successful control over low levels of interaction.

Cases 7 and 8 parallel Cases 3 and 4, respectively, and all represent failures of privacy systems. Case 7 is an instance in which P hoped to avoid contact with E, but the boundary system failed, and P ended up in the presence of E. Case 7's counterpart, Case 3, involved E's actively breaking through P's boundaries, not P's moving toward E. But both cases have the same result—intrusion by E beyond P's self-boundary. Finally, Case 8 parallels Case 4, in which desired contact with a positive E was not achieved. In Case 8, P actively solicited contact with E but failed. For example, E was not at home when P called, E was not receptive to P's advances, or E was prevented from receiving outputs from P because of the presence of other people. In Case 4, P was ready to accept E's inputs, but they never materialized. Thus, both cases involve less interaction than desired.

These eight cases oversimplify the complexity of privacy regulation. At a slightly more complicated level, one can generate various privacy-management situations from Cases 1 to 8. For example, an optimum-exclusion situation exists when P arranges matters so that E's inputs are excluded (Case 2), and P is able to control outputs to E (Case 6). But a form of intrusion occurs if P is able to control outputs to an undesired E (Case 6) by, say, conveying a general distaste for interaction with E, but E manages to force P to listen (Case 3). That is, I might be able to avoid telling you about me (Case

6) but still be forced to listen to you tell about yourself (Case 3). Or consider a mix of Cases 1 and 8. In Case 1, P is receptive to E; P opens the self-boundaries, listens to E's problems, permits E access to physical areas, and so on. But in Case 8, P hopes to reciprocate; P wants E to listen in return but is rebuffed. Thus I listen to you (Case 1) but you refuse to listen to me in return (Case 8). Both of these combinations turn out to be undesirable, because P does not give or get exactly what was desired.

The conception of privacy discussed in this chapter emphasizes certain themes: (1) privacy as an interpersonal process with several classes of potential actors, (2) privacy as a bidirectional process involving incoming and outgoing contacts, (3) privacy as a regulatory process involving adjustments of self-boundaries to permit various levels of contact with others, (4) privacy as a multifaceted process involving achieved and desired levels, which fit together to yield optimal or nonoptimal privacy states, (5) privacy as an optimization process, with too little privacy represented by more contacts than desired and too much privacy reflected in fewer contacts than desired, and (6) privacy as a dialectic process, with open/closed and accessible/inaccessible forces operating in a simultaneous and dynamic fashion. The next chapter examines privacy goals and functions and privacy mechanisms used to assist in boundary regulation.

Thus privacy regulation involves a complex feedback system in which resources are mobilized over time to move the system toward a match between desires and outcomes.

Verbal Privacy Mechanisms

A main vehicle of social interaction is verbal communication; words convey all kinds of personal states and desires. Verbal behavior can be considered from two perspectives: content and structure.

Verbal content refers to the substance of verbal communications or "what" is said (for example, "keep out," "come in," "I'd like to be alone," "I'd like to have you listen to what I say"). People use verbal content to convey discrepancies between desired and achieved privacy: "You're too noisy," "Don't you know what a closed door means?" "I called you, and you didn't come when I needed you." Such statements include expressions of desired levels of interaction and assessments of outcomes. People also negotiate about privacy at a verbal level—for example, when a parent says to a child "Leave me alone now; I'll talk with you later when I finish the newspaper" or when a friend interrupts and says "Can I just have a few minutes of your time, and then I will leave." Relatively little work on verbal-content features of privacy regulation is available, although voluminous analyses of verbal interaction exist from problem-solving groups, in psychotherapy situations, and so on.

Structural aspects of verbal behavior include what have been termed paraverbal, paralinguistic or linguistic features of speech (Argyle & Kendon, 1967; Duncan, 1969; Mahl & Schultze, 1964; Birdwhistell, 1970). For example, Mahl and Schultze (1964) proposed a classification based on (1) *language style*, which includes verb/adjective ratios, parts of speech, verb tense, (2) *vocabulary selection and diversity*, which concerns the type of speech relative to the amount of output, (3) *pronunciation and dialect*, (4) *voice dynamics*, such as quality, rhythm, continuity, or pauses and intrusions, (5) *speech rates*, (6) *temporal phenomena*, such as speech duration and latency, (7) *verbal output*, (8) *voice quality*, which includes pitch, rate, and loudness, and (9) *vocalizations*, such as yawning and crying.

Only a few, general studies of verbal structure relate to privacy. For instance, Davis and Olesen (1971) observed that residents of an Israeli kibbutz often lapsed into their native languages, other than Hebrew, when they wanted to have private conversations. Other examples include parental use of a native tongue in the presence of children and children's use of pig-Latin and other spontaneous "languages," special linguistic styles, and words.

There are also analyses of structural features of verbal behavior that have implications for privacy. For example, Altman and Taylor (1973) exam-



Privacy Mechanisms and Functions

This chapter first deals with behavioral mechanisms used by people and groups to achieve ideal levels of privacy and then discusses functions that privacy serves, such as interpersonal-boundary control, the interface of the self and others, and, most important, self-identity.

Privacy Mechanisms

People attempt to implement desired levels of privacy by using behavioral mechanisms such as verbal behavior, nonverbal use of the body, environmental behaviors (for example, personal space and territory), and culturally defined norms and practices. These mechanisms operate as an integrated system in much the same way as the instruments and sections of a symphony orchestra yield an integrated result. For example, verbal and nonverbal behavior sometimes substitute for each other (a head nod can substitute for words of praise), sometimes complement each other (a smile, a head nod, and verbal praise can combine to reflect strong agreement), and sometimes conflict and thereby convey ambivalence or non genuineness (verbal agreement or praise can occur with a hostile glance or nonrelaxed body posture).

In addition, privacy mechanisms can change over time and are responsive to the situation at hand. Thus if a person cannot achieve a desired level of boundary regulation, additional mechanisms may be mobilized. For example, if a closed door is ignored, the intruder might be told to leave, might be given nonverbal cues of disapproval, or might even be tossed out bodily.

ined the development of friendships by considering how people allow themselves to become mutually accessible. The research showed increased *amounts* and *intimacy* of verbal output as relationships grew. Thus volume and quality of verbal output may reflect privacy mechanisms. Other work in the general area of verbal openness and self-disclosure has been done by Jourard (1971b, 1971c).

Another approach distinguishes between *immediacy* and *nonimmediacy* in verbal communication (Mehrabian, 1967a, 1967b, 1968a, 1968b, 1969, 1971; Mehrabian & Weiner, 1966; Weiner & Mehrabian, 1968). Verbal immediacy or closeness to another person is reflected in intense and direct personal references ("I," "we," or "ours" as opposed to "some people" or "others"), assumption of personal responsibility for feelings ("my opinion is..." or "I feel..." versus "some people think..." or "I have heard that..."), and use of active rather than passive speech forms ("I like you" versus "My feelings for you are positive"). Mehrabian also found that people who used more immediate forms of expression were better liked.

Nonverbal Privacy Mechanisms

Nonverbal behavior, popularly termed "body language," involves the use of various parts of the body to communicate. Some research emphasizes body language such as arm and leg positions, body postures, broad gestures, and head movements. Other studies do detailed analyses of specific behaviors or body areas. For example, Ekman, Ellsworth, and Friesen (1972) and Ekman, Friesen, and Tomkins (1971) examined minute facial behaviors associated with emotions of anger, happiness, and sadness. They categorized specific patterns of musculature in the forehead, nasal, and mouth areas of the face according to the role of each area in specific emotions. Ekman and Friesen (1972) did a similar analysis of hand movements.

There is relatively little direct research on nonverbal aspects of privacy, except for a few studies of reactions to spatial intrusion. For example, Paterson, Mullens, and Romano (1971) observed that the closer an invader sat to subjects in a library the greater the subjects' reactions of glaring, leaning away, blocking themselves off (placement of hands or elbows between their bodies and the invader's) and reorienting their bodies away from the intruder. In a similar study, Felipe and Sommer (1966) found that the closer an intrusion the greater the probability of flight and the greater the use of various nonverbal behaviors, such as turning away or pulling in elbows. Thus, nonverbal behaviors in reaction to unwanted "immediacy" of others reflect attempts to restore acceptable boundaries around the self. And when we inadvertently come too close to others, we use all manner of nonverbal cues to display our discomfort and often our apology. For example, in a

crowded elevator where we are forced to be close to strangers, we typically keep our hands at our sides, hold our bodies rigid and immobile, breathe quietly, and look up at the floor-designation numbers, look down at the floor, or stare blankly ahead. It is as if we are conveying the message "We are all intruding on one another, so all we can do is show our discomfort and demonstrate that we are doing our best not to inappropriately intrude on one another." Beyond these studies and examples there is relatively little research on nonverbal behavior as a privacy-regulation mechanism. However, general nonverbal research and theory are worth examining for their potential application to privacy.

Ekman and Friesen (1969, 1972) proposed a classification of nonverbal behaviors based on *origin* (how the behaviors became part of behavioral repertoires), *usage*, and *interpersonal significance*. They described five types of nonverbal behavior: (1) emblems, (2) illustrators, (3) affect displays, (4) regulators, and (5) adaptive behaviors. *Emblems* are often substitutes for words—for example, fist-shaking as a hostile communication or the silent language of the deaf. *Illustrators* complement verbal statements—for example, sketching a path or direction of thought, or pointing to objects. *Affect displays* convey emotions, and *regulators* manage and pace interaction—for example, head nods, patterns of eye contact, and postural shifts. *Adaptors*, such as covering the eyes, face, or mouth, are remnants of earlier behaviors and are unique to a person.

This schema might be adapted to understand privacy mechanisms. For example, people use many "keep-away" and "come-forward" emblems and illustrators, such as keeping their hands open and in front of their bodies in a "stop" motion as opposed to keeping their palms open and extended upward with outstretched arms. Certain regulators are associated with exclusion and inclusion, such as gaze aversion and direct eye contact, formal postures involving arm-and-leg symmetry and body rigidity as opposed to more relaxed, asymmetrical, slouching positions that reflect attraction and liking, or general body fidgeting to signal boredom or desire to terminate an interaction. And people use idiosyncratic adaptors, such as facial expressions reflecting discomfort or nervous habits and movements peculiar to them (biting pencils and the like), that others learn to interpret as signals of interest or boredom.

Argyle and Kendon (1967) described nonverbal behaviors in terms of *standing features* and *dynamic features*. Standing features change infrequently during the interaction; for example, physical distance, body orientation, and postures are relatively stable. These features set the structure within which dynamic events occur, including movements of the body, changes of facial expression, and eye contact. Eye contact, for example, has been a heavily researched area in relation to regulation of interaction. Argyle and Dean (1965) proposed several interpersonal functions of eye contact,

such as seeking information from others, signaling open channels, and providing feedback. They posited an equilibrium level of eye contact involving social approach and avoidance forces and demonstrated that eye contact and interpersonal distance form an integrated behavioral set; the closer the distance between people, the less their eye contact. That is, closeness of bodies and resulting changes in eye contact are mechanisms to maintain an appropriate level of intimacy (see also Goldberg, Kiesler, & Collins, 1969). In work related to privacy, Exline, Gray, and Schuette (1965) found reduced eye contact when persons disclosed intimate information—as if they were opening a verbal channel to the self but holding a nonverbal one closed. In another study, Exline and Eldridge (1967) found that people had greater trust in a speaker who looked at his audience and that there was more eye contact in cooperative (rather than competitive) situations. Perhaps a cooperative situation permits a lowering of personal boundaries, whereas competition leads to strong barriers between people.

In another series of studies, Mehrabian examined nonverbal behavior and interpersonal attraction (Mehrabian, 1968a, 1968b, 1969; Mehrabian & Diamond, 1970, 1971; Mehrabian & Ferris, 1967; Mehrabian & Williams, 1969). The more favorable a social relationship, the closer the distance between people. There also was greater eye contact, more smiling, and greater forward body lean. Thus being involved in a positive relationship creates more permeable boundaries around the self, as reflected in a variety of nonverbal behaviors.

In summary, there is a vast array of nonverbal behaviors that are potentially relevant to privacy regulation. The task remains to document such nonverbal mechanisms and to determine their relationship with other levels of behavior.

Environmental Privacy Mechanisms

The role of the physical environment as a privacy mechanism is quite complex. To break the problem down, I will first focus on aspects of the environment closest to the person (such as clothing), then move to personal space, and then to distant features of the environment (such as territories, areas, and objects).

Clothing and Adornment. Anthropologists and home economists have studied clothing far more than have other social scientists. It is quite evident that different age, occupational, and status groups adopt styles of clothing or “uniforms” to tell the world who they are, to help define situations, and to reflect their status roles. For example, one usually dresses formally at weddings and casually at picnics; one wears suits and ties to business offices and

informal clothing at home. Those who dress according to common standards of appropriateness convey their acceptance of a situation and their communality with others who do likewise. Those who do not dress in “good taste” indicate either their momentary misreading of the situation or their deliberate rejection of norms and customs. Status is also reflected in dress. Middle-management office workers wear shirts, ties, and jackets more often than factory workers; generals in the army have different status symbols on their uniforms from privates; teachers usually dress more formally than students; and the President of the United States and other high officials typically dress conservatively.

People also use clothing to signal their approachability. For example, as described earlier, male members of the Tuareg culture (Murphy, 1964) wear a veil to cover their face, and the veil is constantly adjusted according to the social situation—to reflect status and approachability. Goffman's (1961) analysis of life in a mental institution illustrates the lack of control allowed patients over their personal selves, clothing, and possessions. Many private possessions are taken away from patients and are made available only with staff permission; periodic inspections of personal effects can occur at any time; a patient's body can be examined by the staff at any time. This lack of personal control is also present in military training camps, where recruits' heads are shaved, wearing of personal clothing is restricted, and new clothing is provided. Such restrictions on a person's use of clothing, adornments, and possessions are infringements on privacy-regulation mechanisms. As such they prevent the self from being under the control of the individual.

Personal Space. The next layer of the self that serves as a privacy mechanism is personal space—that is, the invisible boundary surrounding the self; intrusion into this space creates tension or discomfort (Hall, 1966; Sommer, 1969; see Chapters 4, 5, and 6 for a full treatment of this topic).

In some early theorizing Hall linked four distance zones to interpersonal intimacy. (1) Intimate distance, ranging from body contact to a distance of about 18 inches, is usually appropriate to intimate relationships in private situations, permitting extensive communication involving touch, heat, sound, and smell. (2) Personal distance spans the area from 1½ to 4 feet and also permits considerable exchange of cues. (3) Social distance, 4 to 12 feet, occurs in impersonal, work, or casual relationships. (4) A public zone, beyond 12 feet, is appropriate to formal meetings and interactions with higher-status persons. According to Hall these zones are used to regulate interaction and to avoid inappropriate intrusions. For example, Hall described how people from Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cultures are accustomed to interacting at very close distances, including exchange of visual, touch, smell, and sound cues, often to the dismay of American and British people. In terms of the model described earlier, this situation represents a case in which one

party wishes to approach closely (inside the other's boundaries), and the other person attempts to prevent inputs from reaching the self. Thus personal space may serve as a privacy-regulation vehicle, sometimes opening the self to others and sometimes closing the self off from interaction.

The privacy mechanisms of clothing and personal space are literally close to peoples' bodies. Territorial behavior and the use of the more distant environment will be treated in detail in Chapters 7 and 8, and I will describe them only briefly here.

Anthropological studies of poor families in Mexico by Lewis (1959, 1961) illustrate how environments are used (and sometimes fail) to regulate privacy. In one poor family, in which parents and seven children were living in a single room, the adults located their bed, to achieve privacy, in a far corner of the kitchen area behind a wall built out of empty crates. In a second family (tenement dwellers), privacy was achieved by a norm of not visiting neighbors and a custom of always keeping outside doors closed. But inside, life was plagued by lack of privacy, especially in regard to the toilet, which was located near the kitchen and eating area. The toilet had only a half-shutter swinging door, which did not produce any real separation. A rule was developed (but never really enforced) that the bathroom was not to be used while the family was eating because of the noise, teasing, and general indecency that inevitably arose. In wealthier families (those who had more space), there was a greater variety of environmental-control options. In another poor Mexican family (Lewis, 1961), privacy was a serious problem. The family members could rarely act separately from one another—dressing or undressing, listening to a radio program, waking up and going to bed—because of the limited space and facilities and the lack of control by anyone. Using the bathroom was a major trauma because there was no visual and auditory privacy, and teasing was prevalent. In these case studies, there seems to be almost a total absence of ability to use the physical environment to shut the self off from others.

Other analyses of family life also illustrate the role of the physical environment in privacy. For example, Jourard (1966b) noted the importance of family members' having rooms of their own, where they could be alone and away from others. Hill (1969) demonstrated how bedroom windows and curtains are used to adjust noises and visual inputs; Schwartz (1968) described how such things as doors, fences, and signs are used to protect people from unwanted intrusion. Kuper (1953) analyzed an English housing development and noted that flimsy common walls between adjoining family bedrooms, and the design and location of toilets, doors, and paths made privacy difficult to manage. In a more historical vein, McGinley (1959) noted that privacy was a treasured possession and a mark of status in many earlier civilizations (as it is in contemporary society). To protect themselves from unwanted intrusion, affluent Egyptians had vine-hung gardens, Greeks used

porticoes, Romans had various enclosures, and the wealthy British had country homes guarded by stone walls and parks. We probably use other settings to achieve comparable separation—for instance, the automobile, the bathroom, or the bedroom. Along these lines, Chermayeff and Alexander (1963) suggested that homes should allow a firm boundary from the outside world and that the interior design should allow a family to have balanced contact with nature on the outside and family interaction on the inside. They also stress the importance of privately owned homes for families, areas that separate adults and children, access routes that are direct and private to various parts of the home, and acoustic and visual isolation of certain areas. Their approach is not only to establish physical boundaries between the family and the outside and among family members but to have access options whereby the members of the family can come together or go apart, depending on the circumstances.

A similar direction of thinking has been applied in other settings, such as communes, collectives, and mental hospitals. For example, Davis and Olesen (1971) observed that residents of an Israeli kibbutz developed a number of techniques to separate themselves from others. These included applying for overtime work in isolated settings, volunteering for undesirable tasks, taking meals alone, and showering or washing at times when others were not apt to be present. All these behaviors were designed to allow the person to seek environmental settings in which boundaries between the self and others could be established.

As another example, Osmond (1957) called for patient privacy as an essential feature of mental-health therapy. Ideally, he stated, patients must have sanctuaries or private places, analogous to animal nests, where they can withdraw from social pressures and stimulation. But there must also be environments that are graduated in opportunity for interaction, so that patients can achieve a level of interaction appropriate to their condition and momentary needs. That is, the therapeutic environment must have a series of boundaries that vary in their permeability and into which patients can gradually move to achieve desired interaction. This idea is analogous to Goffman's (1959) theory of front and back regions. In front regions—that is, "on stage"—people act out roles to fit their expectations about how to behave properly. In back regions—that is, "off stage" (bathrooms, bedrooms, dressing rooms)—masks are dropped and the actors relax, permitting themselves to rest and behave in ways appropriate to being "in private," where they know they are free from observation. Goffman also noted that back regions are often physically separated from front regions and are connected by passageways and doors.

In a different analysis, Goffman (1961) described how patients in mental hospitals are often unable to use ordinary environmental privacy mechanisms. For example, in the situation he observed, patients were often

forced to undress, were required to have their hair cut on schedule, and were stripped of possessions. Toilet articles were either taken away or given to the patient in circumscribed settings. In addition, patients were often unable to achieve privacy in a physical sense. Doors on toilets were often absent, urination and defecation were often scheduled by the staff, there were often no private places to store possessions, physical contact with others was often forced, and physical examinations and property inspections were conducted whenever the staff wanted. Thus, much of a patient's life and physical and personal boundaries, which most people take for granted, were no longer under the control of the patient. Another type of boundary violation, termed "looping" by Goffman, was equally pervasive. Most people are more or less able to separate the different roles in their lives; their functioning in one situation (for example, as a husband or father) is separate from their role in other settings (for example, as a business executive). Goffman found that role separation was not possible for mental patients. They were always under observation; their behavior in one situation was never separated from that in another setting. Thus they were constantly confronted with inconsistencies in their behavior and were fully accountable to the same people for all aspects of behavior. Such widespread practices may well be a deterrent to rehabilitation, because they expose the self, eliminate a number of normal self-boundary control processes, and make the person extremely vulnerable to others.

The verbal, nonverbal, and environmental mechanisms used to regulate privacy that have been described thus far have the common goal of adjusting boundaries between self and nonself in accord with a desired level of interaction. There is also another set of mechanisms that partly overlaps those discussed to this point—namely, cultural specifications of behaviors, or norms and modes of regulating privacy.

Culturally Based Privacy Mechanisms

It is easy to point to several obvious ways in which Western culture has certain norms and customs to facilitate privacy management. For example, Schwartz (1968), Kira (1966), and Bossard and Boll (1950) pointed to the sacred role of the bathroom in our culture—a place where people can be quite certain of not being intruded on when the door is closed. In a recent survey, Altman, Nelson, and Lett (1972) also found bathrooms with closed doors to have an aura of sanctity. People typically knocked on closed bathroom doors rather than barging in, and the more intimate the activity (for example, using the toilet), the less likely it was that others were permitted to use the bathroom. In fact, these writers all noted the general sanctity of closed doors to bedrooms, dens, and offices in Western culture, with the message of "leave

me alone" or "knock before entering" almost universally communicated. Thus our culture places considerable importance on physical barriers as privacy mechanisms. These include fences, hedges, and separators of various types. Furthermore, our culture emphasizes formal status as a modifier of privacy ranks. For example, children or low-status persons are entitled to fewer privacy mechanisms than higher-status persons. Thus the higher the person's rank in an organization, the more private his or her office and the more barriers (passageways, secretaries) between the person and others. In Altman and his associates' study (1972), parents' closed bedroom doors were rarely passed through without knocking. However, as Bates (1964) noted, parents typically had rights to enter young children's rooms almost at will. And (as already indicated) the staff in mental hospitals often have the right to intrude on patients' possessions and areas, although the reverse is obviously not so.

Several analyses of city life reflect how privacy norms and customs operate. The stereotype of the city-dweller as aloof, cold, uninvolved with others, and impervious to the needs of others goes back to early sociological analyses of urban life by Simmel (1951), Wirth (1938), and others. Milgram (1970) recently postulated the operation of a series of mechanisms that may give rise to such stereotypes. For example, he hypothesized that the city dweller's exposure to such intense and voluminous masses of stimulation from others leads to a general lowering of time given to others and an appearance of brusqueness because of the need to process so much information. Furthermore, the appearance of aloofness and nonconcern with others may derive from a filtering process in which only really important things are attended to and in which other less important inputs are ignored or treated superficially. Other strategies described by Milgram involve blocking inputs and preventing even minimal communication, as, for example, in the use of unlisted telephone numbers. Another mechanism is the more delimited definition of one's personal responsibility to others, which can result in a person's ignoring needs for aid by strangers. This behavior is typified by the anecdote about the big-city pedestrians who literally trample to death someone who momentarily stumbles while walking along the street. Obviously, such mechanisms need to be confirmed and analyzed empirically, but these theoretical speculations illustrate how cultures evolve ways for regulating their interaction with others.

Beyond Western culture there are also customs that have evolved to facilitate privacy regulation. Westin's (1970) analysis of privacy in other cultures is probably the most comprehensive. Most dramatic is the contrast between Western society and either those cultures that have no apparent privacy mechanisms or those that seem to have very elaborate ones. Lee (cited in Westin) reported that members of the Tikopia culture of Polynesia had little physical privacy, with people sleeping side by side in crowded conditions and only infrequently working or being alone. Mead's (cited in

Westin) analysis of Samoan culture also illustrated an apparent lack of privacy. Nudity was common, people were not alone at even birth or death, and houses had few inside or outside walls. Geertz (cited in Westin) illustrated how Javanese culture apparently had little privacy. Homes did not have walls or fences, people wandered in and out, and interiors were not strictly subdivided. Still other cultures have highly structured customs to regulate interpersonal boundaries—for example, the use of the veil around the Tuareg man's face (Murphy, 1964). Geertz reported extreme privacy mechanisms in Bali, with homes surrounded by high walls and people only infrequently entering other homes, much like Lewis's (1959) Mexican tenement families. And as Canter and Canter (1971) noted, the Japanese home is carefully designed to maximize privacy. There are high walls around homes, careful lot and site location ensure against visual access by outsiders, and shifting room and wall arrangements are designed to achieve differential privacy for various situations.

But privacy-regulation mechanisms do not always involve environmental manipulations; they often depend on general styles of behavior. For example, in Javanese society there are few physical symbols of privacy, but a variety of psychological techniques are used to maintain boundaries. Relationships are restrained, people do not express feelings easily, etiquette and politeness are important, and people speak softly. In England, people do not often have private offices or exclusive ownership of places (Hall, 1966), but they obtain privacy by a type of interpersonal reserve; they speak less loudly than Americans, they direct their voices and remarks carefully, and they use nonverbal and verbal means for achieving boundary control. And the Navajo do not use elaborate physical mechanisms to achieve privacy, but there is a pervasive norm concerning individual autonomy and freedom of decision-making (Lee, 1959). People do not coerce one another (including children); the individual is inviolate and is allowed considerable freedom from intrusion.

From such analyses, is it proper to say that some societies are highly private and others are nonprivate? According to Westin's (1970) research and to my approach, the answer is probably "no." Rather, if one examines carefully a culture with seemingly little privacy, privacy mechanisms will eventually be uncovered. Such mechanisms may be nonverbal or verbal, or they may be a blend of these with environmental techniques. Thus I believe that they exist in some form in *all* cultures. To put the point more dramatically, it might be said that mechanisms for separating the self and nonself—that is, for regulating interpersonal boundaries to achieve a desired level of privacy—are universal and present in all societies. Some cultures may appear to have little privacy, but this is probably due to a traditional view of privacy as solely a physical-environment process and not a complex behavioral system that draws on many levels of functioning.

Dynamics of Privacy Regulation

The sequential chain of events of privacy regulation includes, first, a subjective or desired level of privacy in a specific situation. Based on this subjective ideal, a mix of behavioral mechanisms is put into play to achieve the desired privacy state. These mechanisms include various blends of verbal, paraverbal, nonverbal, and environmental behaviors, as well as cultural norms and styles. As discussed earlier, actually achieved levels of privacy might match desired levels, yielding a state of balance. Or the privacy-regulation mechanisms may not have worked too well, resulting in a discrepancy between desired and achieved privacy. More achieved privacy than desired creates a situation of being isolated from others; less achieved privacy than desired creates a state of being crowded or intruded upon.

But boundary-regulation systems are not static; they change over time and have feedback loops that permit readjustments. As situations develop or as a certain level of stimulation is achieved, needs and desires for social contact may change. A person may want to be alone for a while to think through a problem, to organize thoughts, or to ponder an important incident. But after having been alone for a while, the desire to seek stimulation may grow. Thus in the normal course of events the dialectic quality of needs for high interaction and needs for low interaction will vary, and interpersonal boundaries will cycle between being open and closed. Furthermore, as permeability shifts, different blends of behavioral mechanisms may be used. For example, at one point a person may rely heavily on verbal and nonverbal behaviors; at another time personal space and verbal behaviors may predominate.

Privacy situations are not always easy to control successfully. For example, a person may seek solitude by closing a door to a room. However, intrusion may still occur if someone barges in and demands attention. In the face of such an interruption several actions are possible. The person can convey nonverbal cues of dissatisfaction (dirty looks, unpleasant expressions), ignore the intruder, or verbally express a desire to be alone. If none of these work, the person might raise his or her voice to a yell or a shriek or even leave the situation. Thus it is sometimes necessary to escalate responses and make adjustments in self/other boundaries because of misestimates of the effectiveness of the boundary or because of misreadings of the social situation. The situation can also be viewed from the perspective of the hypothetical intruder, who may have a serious problem and desire advice. By all manner of behavior—a forceful entry, pleading expressions, nonverbal behaviors reflecting deference and apology, looks of pain and worry—the intruder may try to show the openness of his boundary system and thus seek to include the other person. From both parties' perspectives, the boundary-



Figure 3-1. Responses to violations of desired levels of privacy can take many forms. Drawing by Stevenson. © 1959 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc. Reprinted by permission.

control systems were not working very well, and adjustments were made to meet individually desired levels of interaction.

One possibility to resolve discrepancies between desired and achieved privacy is to attempt to maintain the original goal—that is, to reach the originally desired degree of privacy—by expending new energies and mechanisms. Another possibility is to shift the original goal. You may discover that the achieved outcome is, in fact, rewarding. For example, giving in to the desires of the intruder in the example may prove to be quite pleasant; you might help the other person, learn more about him or her, and advance a social relationship further. Or being forced to be alone when you initially sought advice may stimulate you to solve the problem in a different and beneficial way. In summary, forces are always present to move the self/other boundary system toward greater openness or closedness, and there is continual adjustment, with shifts in the situation or in personal and group motivations.

These adjustments also require energy expenditure—“costs” and “prices.” Such costs may involve physical and psychological energy. Thus the sheer exertion of shrieking or of bodily removing an intruder requires physical energy. And there may be physiological costs such as heightened adrenal-gland functioning or excessive cardiovascular activity. Furthermore, there may be psychological costs as the boundary system fails, including stress, tension, and anxiety. If such costs are incurred over long periods of time the person may well end up in a deteriorated condition. Moreover, even if boundaries are maintained, costs might accumulate if enormous personal and behavioral resources are required. For example, when a person or group must maintain a constant vigil to keep others at a desired interaction distance or must work unceasingly to gain contact and maintain desired levels of interaction, costs may be excessive. Furthermore, these processes need to be understood in terms of an intensity-time effect. It may require little energy to maintain boundaries in an elevator or restaurant, since time in the situation is usually brief. But continual, long-term attempts to manage interpersonal boundaries—as in a home with many family members and few rooms, or in a poorly insulated, noisy, dense work situation with an intrusive, nosy coworker—in which one spends unending energy in regulating interaction, may yield very high costs to the individual.

In summary, an understanding of privacy as a boundary-regulation system requires study of mechanisms that are used to achieve privacy, changing mixes and patterns of mechanisms, and associated consequences. And very important, the privacy-regulation system is a dynamic one; properties and operation shift over time and with changing circumstances.

Functions of Privacy

Thus far we have examined privacy from three perspectives: (1) a conceptual perspective, with primary emphasis on its interpersonal-boundary properties, (2) a behavioral perspective, with emphasis on mechanisms used to implement privacy, (3) and a perspective that emphasizes dynamics of privacy regulation. Next we will consider privacy in terms of functions or goals. What needs does privacy regulation serve? What is its purpose? What does it do for individuals or groups? It will be proposed that privacy is concerned with three important goals (see Figure 3-2). These goals are: (1) relationships between a person or group and the social world, (2) the interface of the self and social world, and (3) self-definition and self-identity.

Privacy goals are hypothesized to vary on a continuum of “closeness to the self” at one end and “closeness to the social environment” at the other

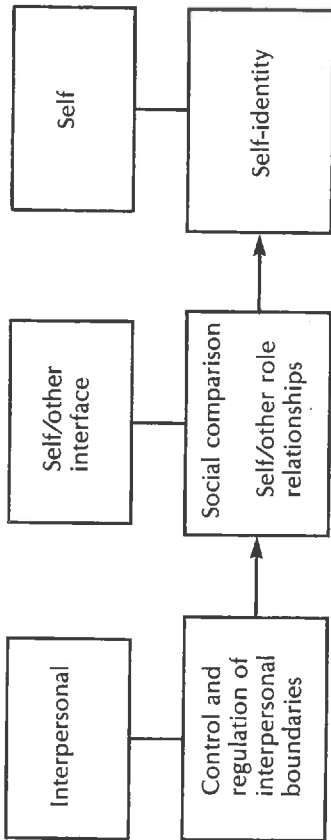


Figure 3-2. Functions of privacy and privacy-regulation mechanisms.

end. This dimension is similar to Altman and Taylor's (1973) idea of interpersonal relationships as involving inside-the-skin processes (perceptions and motivations), boundary-of-the-skin processes (clothing and adornment), and interpersonal events (such as verbal and nonverbal interactions).

We will assume that these functions are cumulative from the outside in. That is, the outermost function of privacy is to regulate interaction with others (along the lines of what has been emphasized in this chapter). This process contributes to the second function—namely, the interface between the self and nonselves, or how a person relates to others. This aspect of privacy deals with plans and strategies for relating to others. It also lays the groundwork for the most central function of privacy, the definition of the self.

Interpersonal Functions of Privacy

A major function of privacy is regulation of interaction with the social environment. While the interpersonal function of privacy is important in and of itself, it also acts in the eventual service of the very central goals of self-definition and self-identity. Self-identity is partly dependent on the ability of a person to define his or her own limits and boundaries. A child is born not knowing where it begins and where it ends. It does not discriminate between itself and the environment. It behaves as if the world revolves around it; only gradually does the child learn to separate itself from other persons. It may even be said that the beginnings of becoming a "person" occur when a child learns to distinguish between itself and other persons. This happens as a result of interaction with others, when mutual contact is controlled and regulated, when one's own behavior is separable from others' behavior, and when contacts with others are paced and regulated.

Thus the ability or failure to regulate self/other boundaries is an important contributor to self-definition because it is a source of self-knowledge

based directly on overt ongoing interaction. That is, if I see that I cannot control interaction with others in ways that I desire, then I am provided with important negative information about my competence to deal with the world. If I fail to implement my desired contact repeatedly and in many situations, then I gradually will develop a self-definition quite different (and probably more negative) than if I were reasonably successful in regulating interaction with others. Therefore, interpersonal-boundary regulation is an important privacy function, especially in its implications for more fundamental goals.

The Interface of the Self and Nonselves

Several writers suggest that privacy serves important functions in interpersonal strategies, roles, plans, and assessment of the self in relation to others. For example, Westin (1970) pointed to *self-evaluation* as a privacy goal. This means that when a person is not in the presence of others, experiences can be integrated, information received from interactions can be processed, and alternative plans for future behavior can be formulated and assessed. As Westin put it, self-evaluation is analogous to a religious retreat or to the exile of political leaders. Separation from others permits assimilation of experiences and examination of possible future relationships with others. Other writers speak of privacy as allowing thinking, reflection, interpretation, and meditation (Kira, 1966; Chapin, 1951; Chernyavsky & Alexander, 1963; Jourard, 1966b).

This self-evaluation function of privacy also fits with *social-comparison theory* (Festinger, 1954). The basic idea of this theory, substantiated by considerable research, is that people have a "need" to evaluate themselves, others, and situations. This need for social comparison is particularly evident in ambiguous situations, in which people are inexperienced or momentarily uncertain. Examples include attitudes toward others, emotional states, and reactions to new and strange situations, especially threatening ones. To test this idea, experiments were designed to generate fear, uncertainty, and unusual physical conditions in subjects. In such ambiguous circumstances, which are ever present in our lives, social-comparison theory hypothesizes that we seek other people out to help us define situations, interpret uncertainty, and check our views and opinions. We use other people to help label our feelings and define our perceptions. It might be said, therefore, that one function of privacy is to assist in the social-comparison process—at the interface of the self and others. As such, privacy regulation may enable the person to decide on courses of action, to apply meanings to various interpersonal events, and to build a set of norms or standards for interpreting self/other relations.

A specific area at the interface of the self and others concerns status relations between people. Schwartz (1968) noted that privacy assists in the maintenance of status relationships between superiors and subordinates. High-status people often have the right to intrude on others, but the opposite is usually not the case. Put in more general terms, if my status can be manifested by my ability to control boundaries, then I and others have an indication of who we are *vis à vis* one another. Conversely, a particular role relationship may have a set of agreed-upon boundaries. Hall (1966) gives an interesting example from Theodore White's *The Making of the President: 1960* of how new role relationships are translated into interpersonal boundaries. In 1960, at the time of the presidential convention, John F. Kennedy and his advisors were all gathered together awaiting the outcome of the balloting. As Kennedy came into the group after the victory news was announced, they all rushed to congratulate him but hesitated at the last moment. It was as if they suddenly realized that a new role relationship had been established, that he might become the next president, and that getting too close to him might no longer be appropriate. Only after he beckoned them toward him did they approach. Thus Kennedy had new boundary-control opportunities by virtue of his new status.

All manner of other role relationships can be reflected in boundary processes. Being a good friend implies a role relationship in which mutual boundaries are different from those of casual acquaintances. Being an aloof person implies fewer possibilities for access by others. Thus an important privacy function concerns the nature of relationships one has with other people. In summary, privacy mechanisms not only aid in the regulation of interpersonal interaction but also contribute to the development of interpersonal roles, and toward general strategies and plans for dealing with others.

Self-Identity

This function of privacy has its roots deep inside the self and has at least two aspects: *self-observation* and *self-identity*.

Self-observation involves the opportunity for persons or groups to see, describe, and evaluate themselves, usually when they are out of the presence of others. Self-observation includes the person's dropping social masks of various types, being able to try out new behaviors, and then watching the self exhibit those behaviors. This is what has been termed "being off stage" (Goffman, 1959)—the exhibiting and protecting of vulnerable aspects of behavior (Bates, 1964; Schwartz, 1968) and emotional release (Westin, 1970) and the general laying aside of social roles. An example of this process is the young child or teenager who spends time in front of the mirror trying out

various expressions and stances to convey a range of moods, as if they were being practiced alone in readiness for a crucial moment of interaction with another real person. Or intimate group members may try out various roles *vis à vis* one another in a private setting or describe themselves to one another as a basis for greater "we" feeling.

Such self-observations are in the service of self-worth and self-identity. Self-identity is a person or group's cognitive, psychological, and emotional definitions and understanding of themselves as beings. It includes persons' knowing where they begin and where they end, which aspects of the physical world are parts of the self, and which aspects are parts of others. It encompasses self-understanding of one's capabilities and limitations, strengths and weaknesses, emotions and cognitions, beliefs and disbeliefs. Furthermore, self-identity has a strong evaluative (positive or negative) component; that is, am I a worthwhile person to myself and others, and, if so, why?

Privacy in the service of self-identity appears in the writings of many people. For example, Westin (1970) described *personal autonomy*, or an individual's sense of integrity and independence and the ability to avoid being manipulated by others, as a major function of privacy and as "basically an instrument for achieving individual goals of self-realization" (p. 39). Pennock (1971), Beardsley (1971), and Gross (1971) speak of invasions of privacy as especially harmful because they destroy individual autonomy, self-respect, and dignity by taking control of a person's life away from the person and in a sense demeaning the worth of the person. Thus it is a loss of control to others that is serious, not so much the mere exposure of information.

Simmel (1971) captured well the theme of privacy and self-identity:

We need to be a part of others, of intimate circles, families, communities, nations, part of humanity, and we need to be so recognized by others, to be supported by their approval for our affiliation and our likeness to them. But we also need to confirm our distinctness from others, to assert our individuality, to proclaim our capacity to enjoy, or even suffer, the conflicts that result from such assertions of individuality [p. 73].

He goes on to say how social-comparison and self-identity processes link together:

It is in part because the self needs periodic conceptual validation from others that its sense of separateness from them is painful and it must lower its boundaries occasionally. On the other hand, because there can be no self without some boundaries, no self without some differences from . . . others, . . . the self sometimes seeks out and sharpens tensions with others [p. 74].¹

¹From "Privacy Is Not an Isolated Freedom," by A. Simmel, in J. R. Pennock and J. W. Chapman (Eds.), *Privacy*. Reprinted by permission of the publishers, Lieber-Atherton, Inc. Copyright © 1971. All rights reserved.

Goffman (1961) and Jourard (1966b, 1971a) pointed to the critical effect of a mental patient's privacy on self-identity. As described earlier, Goffman postulated that the violation of the physical and biological self of patients may well retard rehabilitation, since it contributes to the degradation of the self and to a loss and confusion of self-identity and self-esteem.

Others have also treated this theme. Bates (1964) wrote of privacy as serving self-esteem in the setting of personal goals; Proshansky, Itelson, and Rivlin (1970) emphasized the need for a place where a person could evaluate and find himself; Chapin (1951) noted the importance of privacy for self-respect and self-freedom.

In my view, self-identity is central to human existence. For a person to function effectively in interaction with others requires some understanding of what the self is, where it ends and begins, and when self-interest and self-expression can be exhibited. If one's self is perceived as worthless and if the self has no boundaries and no control over who has access, then the person is literally "nothing." It is difficult to conceive of a person with such feelings as being able to function very well. Or at the other extreme, if everything is viewed as part of the self and controlled by the self (for example, the young child who does not separate the world from the self), then there is also no sense of self-identity; the self is "everything" and knows no uniqueness or separation from others.

The essence of this discussion is that privacy mechanisms define the limits and boundaries of the self. When the permeability of those boundaries is under the control of a person, a sense of individuality develops. But it is not the inclusion or exclusion of others that is vital to self-definition; it is the ability to regulate contact when desired. If I can control what is me and not me, if I can define what is me and not me, and if I can observe the limits and scope of my control, then I have taken major steps toward understanding and defining what I am. Thus privacy mechanisms serve to help me define me. Furthermore, the peripheral functions toward which control is directed—regulation of interpersonal interaction and self/other interface processes—ultimately serve the goal of self-identity.

Chapter 3 described mechanisms or vehicles used to implement desired levels of privacy. These included (1) verbal and paraverbal behavior or the content and form of verbal behavior, (2) personal space or the use of distance/angle of orientation from others (to be reviewed in Chapters 4 through 6), (3) territorial behavior or the use of areas and objects in the environment (to be reviewed in Chapters 7 and 8), and a series of culturally based norms and customs. Thus personal space and territorial behavior function as mechanisms in the service of privacy goals. Privacy mechanisms were hypothesized to operate as a system, sometimes substituting for and sometimes amplifying one another. Thus persons and groups use different mixes of these behaviors at different times and in different circumstances.

It was also noted that privacy mechanisms sometimes fail and that intrusion and crowding occur when insufficient boundary control is achieved. (Crowding will be discussed in detail in Chapters 9 and 10.)

The privacy-regulation system is dynamic, with adjustments and readjustments occurring over time. These changes result from new desired levels of privacy and attempts to maintain desired levels when mechanisms overshoot or undershoot the mark. One effect of adjustment processes is costs of various types—physical, physiological, and psychological—which are often translated into illness, stress, and anxiety.

Chapter 3 also considered goals of privacy regulation. One goal is interpersonal and is concerned with the management of self/other boundaries. A second goal concerns the interface of the self and others—how people use social interaction to define self/other roles and to interpret the self in relation to others. Most central, with its locus in the self, is the goal of self-identity. It was proposed that histories of ability to regulate interaction and privacy contribute to an understanding of the self—where it begins and ends and its capabilities and limitations. They also contribute to the power to control and regulate one's life, and a general sense of self-esteem.

Subsequent chapters are extensions of the ideas presented thus far. Territoriality and personal space are considered vehicles in the service of achieving privacy goals, and crowding is viewed as a condition resulting from privacy goals' being underachieved or achieved at unusual costs.