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The Boundaries of Privacy in
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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT
OF PRIVACY INVASIONS
UPON THE INDIVIDUAL

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the dangers to the individuality and psychological welfare of American citizens, confronted by a world in which privacy is threatened by population growth and the expansion of technological capability, in light of the relevant studies of social scientists.

III. SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

1. Privacy is essential to the psychological well-being of Americans. Basic to first, third, fourth, fifth, ninth, and fourteenth amendment guarantees, the right of privacy is a sanctuary for learning, creativity, and freedom.

2. Modern conditions have created unique threats to the existence of privacy. The population explosion has reduced the individual's physical life space; technology endangers the most secret aspects of life.

3. Social psychologists have been slow in undertaking studies of mental and emotional adjustments to modern, urban America. Completed experiments present unclear results for such factors as the dangers of crowding and the efficacy of surveillance as a deterrence to crime.

4. Effort has been insufficient in providing means for the elimination of erroneous data and correction of faulty records in computer banks.

5. The presence of observers has varying effects for different functions. The performance of well-learned tasks is enhanced by a passive audience; an audience inhibits the learning process. Group opinion has great influence over the decisions of individuals.

6. The American public is generally unaware of the serious dangers to privacy.

III. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The federal government must initiate, in the very near future, a massive amount of psychological research, either in its own facilities, or through the sponsorship of private studies to determine:

- a. the seriousness of invasions of physical life space
- b. the efficacy of electronic surveillance as an agent of law enforcement

Does the increase of population density threaten to bring about social pathology? Is man adaptable to extremely crowded conditions? Is surveillance an effective deterrence to crime? Do the innocent suffer from surveillance?

The federal government's role as the ultimate protector, but in this issue, the largest potential threat to freedom, necessitates prompt action on questions of privacy. (17-19, 27-29)

2. All governmental agencies and private corporations or groups must be required by law to notify subjects of the presence of a personal file in the possession of that institution.

Criminals may be deterred from action realizing that someone is aware of threatening activities. Non-threatening individuals are made conscious of areas to consult in case of computer error. (7)

3. Factual data possessed by non-criminal agencies must be available for scrutiny upon request.

Subjects would be guaranteed means to correct erroneous or misleading material. (7)

4. Evaluative measures such as I. Q. tests should be made available upon request with a general analysis of the value, except where deemed psychologically unwise

Such measures would enable the individual to determine his own role in society based upon the analysis of his skills. ((7))

5. If denied employment, credit, or admission to a program, the institution must provide reasoning, upon request, for such action, including adverse results of interviews.

This would alert individuals to possible errors in records. The subjective information would be stated generally, without the author of the unfavorable opinion, to protect his privacy. ((7-8))

6. Except where provided by law, agencies must be required to obtain subject consent for transferal of data.

Data gathered for one purpose must not be indiscriminately used for other objectives. ((8))

7. Federal legislation must restrict qualification for welfare payment to economic eligibility and absence of other recourse.

This recommendation is intended to protect the privacy of the vulnerable assistance recipient. ((9))

8. Business theft should be discouraged by business and labor unions

Larceny in business releases the discontent .
The energy expended in ingenious schemes of theft
should be devoted to demands for more interesting
and profitable employment. The employer often
pays less than he would if employee efforts
were not directed elsewhere. (25-26)

9. The federal government must remain within con-
stitutional powers to guide liberty, and not inhibit the
creativity and diversity of Americans

The government must prescribe rules for the
maintenance of order in society but must not
extend this power to the maintenance of conformity
if America is to successfully meet new problems.
(19, 27, 29)

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V. DISCUSSION

American society faces a dilemma. On the one hand, there exists the desire for social interaction and, increasingly, for social conformity, while on the other, there is the demand for privacy, to abandon the role prescribed by socialization in order to release the personality traits, behavioral patterns, and ideas which, despite the disapprobation of others, are essential to the maintenance of mental and physical health. In recent years, population growth and expansion of technological capability have posed novel threats to individuality. Natural conditions allow many animals to engage in social activity while retaining exclusive territorial domains. As will be seen, interference with this balance sometimes results in abnormal behavior and even in social pathology. Is mankind so destined?

For the purposes of this study, privacy constitutes the right of individuals to withhold behavioral and personality characteristics from the demands of society, and to be confident in protection from involuntary or forced disclosure of information. To study the psychological impact of privacy invasions is to determine the ability of men to reconcile the rules of conscience with the demands of society. Modern threats to privacy can be classified as either (1) invasions of the physical life space, or (2) incursions upon the intellectual environment. The former includes the adjust-

ments demanded by the increasing concentration of the American population in urban areas. Urbanization may force individuals to participate unwillingly in social interactions. This phenomenon is often termed "crowding." Behavioral research, some of which shall be discussed later, indicates that beyond a certain level of population density rats abandon the natural instinctual mode of living. Can American society adapt to privacy invasions caused not be a deliberately snooping government and public, but by an unintentional and yet omnipresent neighbor evaluating behavior, competing for vanishing resources, and constantly infringing upon the individual's private domain? An examination of crowding is essential to a study of privacy to determine if urbanization is inimical to the privacy which underlies the uniqueness, creativity, and diversity basic to American democracy.

The latter danger, invasions of the intellectual life space, results from the surveillance and evaluation of particular members of society through wiretapping, data banks, and dossiers. While providing the government means to protect society from crime and centralize files for beneficial purposes, "technological advance poses crucial questions about the nature of human freedom."¹

Privacy is suppressed in the totalitarian state. At

¹ A.S. Miller, "Technology, Social Change, and the Constitution," The Supreme Court and the Living Constitution, p. 73.

inception, the government institutes a surveillance system to ensure that the ideology instilled in citizens is solely that of the state, discouraging expressions of internal discontent. Alan Westin views the citizen, frustrated in his quest for individuality, as focusing his energies upon the external objectives of the nation.² As S. Jourard points out, the frustration is often expended in external warfare.³ Mr. Westin adds that even in utopian experiments, in which the intent is for the benefit of the people, the denial of privacy has resulted in the failure of the enterprise.⁴

All societies, says Margaret Mead, recognize and enforce solitude in the performance of certain personal functions such as pubescence, sex, and excretion.⁵ The absence of occasional solitude may create serious physiological and psychological problems. The individual exercises restraint in revealing himself to others. He provides behavior and actions which he feels most advantageous in public circumstances. The more public or open the life, the more difficult it is to abandon the social roles. Westin reprints findings of Clifford Gertz.

² Alan F. Westin, Privacy and Freedom, pp. 23-24.

³ S. Jourard, "Some Psychological Views of Privacy," Law and Contemporary Problems, vol. XXXI, Spring, 1966, p. 313.

⁴ Westin, op. cit., p. 58.

⁵ Margaret Mead in Westin, op. cit., p. 12.

In Java people live in small bamboo-walled houses, ... There are no walls or fences around them, the house walls are thinly and loosely woven, and there are commonly not even doors. ... In short, privacy in our terms is absent...

The result is that their defenses are mostly psychological. Relationships, even within the household are very restrained, people speak softly, hide their feelings... you have the feeling that you are in the public square...

Now, in Bali, people live in houseyards surrounded by high stone walls.

... Within the yard one is in one's castle...⁶

This study indicates that the passive, expressionless members of transparent societies, described by Orwell and Huxley, may actually be the offspring of defunct privacy. What does happen when men are denied the opportunity for self-evaluation and the right to withhold embarrassing information? Westin declares that the extraction of information may lead to greater problems for the individual, and thereby society, than would continued secrecy.⁷ Jourard discusses the unhealthy results of the inability to relax in solitude or in the anonymity of crowds, to express dissatisfaction in the social role, to give way to feelings, or to evaluate life, often leading to mental disorder or physical illness. If the citizen is unable to repress individuality in a social world, the only alternative to mental or physical suffering from forced conformity, is privacy in which to resolve the conflict. Mental rehabil-

⁶ Westin, Op., cit., pp. 16-17.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

itation frequently deals with the attempt to enable patients to cope with society and its roles. It is unhealthy to surpress consciousness expanding experiences since therein lie attempts to cope with modern life.⁸

What is the function of privacy in twentieth century American democracy? Scientists are sometimes permitted to carry out unpopular research since the potential value of such work is recognized. In the recent past, the American public has discovered the importance of organizations in accomplishing social ends. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has been active in seeking equality of civil rights. Much of its success rests upon psychological assurance in the anonymity of the rank-and-file, and protection against hostile whites. Mr. Justice Harlan warned that disclosure of names would cause "... diminished financial support and membership."⁹ Not only is privacy a means of promoting social ends, but it constitutes an objective in itself. The private office and protecting secretary are status symbols of the successful executive. Most importantly, privacy is the basis of free speech, free press, freedom of religion, and virtually all fundamental rights of Americans.

Diminution of the physical life space has created

⁸ Jourard, op. cit., pp. 307-318.

⁹ National Association for the Advancement of Colored People v. Alabama, 357 U.S. 449, 78 S. Ct. 1163, 2 L. Ed. (2d) 1488 (1958).

increased pressure to conform. The public school, the shopping center, the city street prescribe behavior. Certainly the anonymity of the throng presents an opportunity of private thought, but to maintain individuality, men must be able to act as well as think in circumstances in which uniqueness is respected. A dissonant state exists between conformity and individuality. If the rewards for following public dictates and punishments inflicted for deviance are made to outweigh the individual's value of privacy, action and then thought as a unit may be crushed. The principal psychological ingredient of intellectual invasions of privacy is fear. Anonymity is sacrificed to the snooping, wire-tapping government agent who seeks to detect and crush unusual thought and behavior. The transparency of the small town in which each citizen is known by every other, and the gossips ferreting out information to the detriment of members of the community are giving way to a nation in which all citizens are individually numbered, filed, and examined for actions dangerous to the maintenance of social tranquility.

The computer has provided an inexpensive means of gathering and storing records of personal statistics, criminal arrest, and subjective interviews. Such storage, beneficial in intent, may cause the individual anxiety and frustration. He may be stigmatized as criminal for arrest during civil rights activism; he may be denied employment or credit owing to an outdated, erroneous adverse evaluation. The proposed National Data Center would constitute a means of access to

personal information by agencies having obtained no consent for disclosure from those evaluated. Consent and confidentiality must be protected in the centralization of data.¹⁰ To reduce the anxiety and uncertainty stemming from the ignorance of what information is possessed by which agencies, the following five recommendations should be adopted:

1. All government agencies and private corporations or groups must be required by law upon the initiation of the compilation of a personal file to notify the object of its existence. If the subject is threatening, the notification may deter criminal action; the non-threatening subject knows where information about him is stored and is aware of the location where errors may be corrected.
2. Factual data possessed by non-criminal agencies must be available for scrutiny by the subject.
3. Evaluative measures, such as I.Q. tests, must be made available upon request to the subject accompanied by a generalized analysis of the meaning except where deemed psychologically or emotionally unwise. Such information would be helpful to the individual in determining his skills and most profitable status in society.
4. If denied employment, credit, or admittance to a program, the institution or agency must provide reasons, upon request, for such decisions, including adverse results of interviews. The results of subjective information

¹⁰ Sawyer and Schechter, "Computers, Privacy, and the National Data Center: The Responsibility of Social Scientists," The American Psychologist, November, 1968, p. 810.

divulged must not contain the name of the person who rendered the adverse judgment to protect his privacy. But, again, it is felt, that such criticism would aid in self-evaluation.

- 5. Except where provided by law, agencies must be required to obtain subject consent before the transferal of data.

The welfare state has made demands upon the privacy of assistance recipients, requiring inspections and disclosure of information often irrelevant and unnecessary for the protection of the public interest.¹¹ The demands of society, in this area, may exceed needs for the protection of general commitment, and threaten the individuality of poor Americans. The actual effects of such demands have not been studied. It is recommended that federal legislation restrict informational demands for welfare to financial eligibility and absence of means of support.

The federal government, through computer science, surveillance devices, and enforcement agencies, now possesses greater power to legislate socialization than ever before. This socialization, though, endangers the uniqueness and personal autonomy that has been encouraged in the United States. The government is caught between the desire to protect society from internal elements and the realization that its beneficent intentions may crush the novelty and independent thinking

¹¹Wynnam v. James, 400 U.S. 389 (1971).

which have strengthened the democracy.

CROWDING

The urbanization process in the United States has too increases of population density in metropolitan areas. Are incursions upon the physical detrimental to the individual? Animal research, primarily with rats, and recently conducted, but questionable, human research have yielded conflicting results. Three major views appear below. The primary purpose of studies of crowding is to determine whether psychological and social barriers breakdown at a certain point, leading to destruction of the social members.

Calhoun, Behavior of Norway Rats, and Human Applications

John B. Calhoun has carried on a series of experiments at the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Laboratories dealing with the behavior of Norway rats in abnormally crowded conditions. Recently, he has proposed an application of his findings to human behavior. In 1962, he published a description of such an experiment,¹² and in a separate article, he discussed the significance of his work.¹³

¹²J. B. Calhoun, Ecology and Sociology of the Norway Rat

¹³J. B. Calhoun, "Population Density and Social Pathology," Scientific American, February, 1962, p. 139.

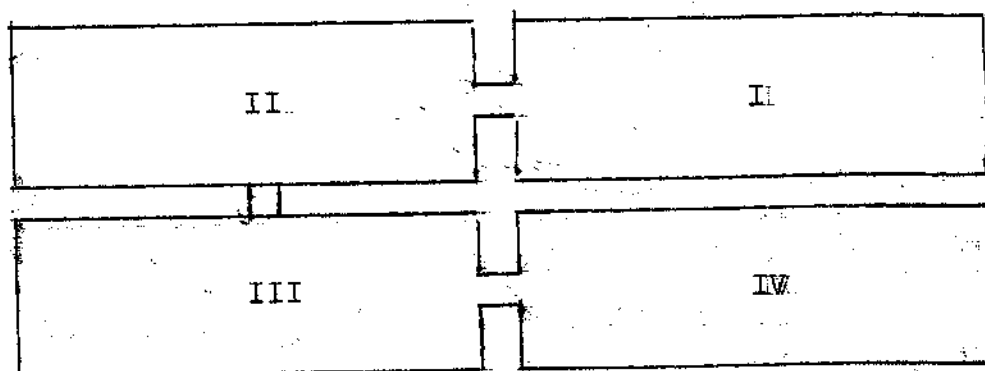


FIG. 1

In the experiment he established an initial colony in the setting shown in Figure 1. Means of access from pen to pen are indicated. The incipient population was provided sufficient food and water and kept as free from disease as possible. He found that the population concentrated in pens II and III as dominant males protected enclaves in pens I and IV. The females tended to distribute themselves throughout the pens; as the population grew, dominant males established control of pens II and IV, protected harems, and tolerated the presence of one or two males whose only sexual activity occurred with the compliant dominant males. In the more highly populated pens, the rats began to associate social contact with the rewards of food and water. Therefore, nourishment was obtained in one or two locations, leaving several virtually unused.

Calhoun distinguished four types of males in the extremely crowded environment he had created: (1) dominant, (2) pan-sexual, (3) passive, and (4) probes. The dominant

male-usually was the best fighter and established a domain of superiority possessing a group of females. The pan-sexual males, arising as crowding increased, displayed inability of discernment in choosing sex partners, attacking not only females, but immature rats and even dominant males. The passive males withdrew from society and emerged only to eat and drink. Avoiding fights, they appeared physically the most healthy, but took no part in the community. These probes were hyper-active males who would engage in unsuccessful fights and in heterosexual and homosexual activity. Abandoning the courtship process, probes would pursue females into burrows. Finding dead young, they often proceeded to cannibalism.

The crowded conditions had equally adverse effects upon the females. While in heat, they were pursued without respite by packs of normal, probe, and pan-sexual males, except where guarded by a dominant master. Continuously under stress, abortive pregnancies increased as well as infant mortality. The females began to ignore maternal duties, bearing young in the middle of the pen, abandoning them, and neglecting the nests. The population leveled off in numbers.

Removing the healthiest rats from pens II and III, Calhoun attempted to reinstitute normal social behavior through the restoration of a less crowded environment. He

found that the females continued to neglect their duties, and the rate of infant mortality remained high.

Certainly findings based upon studies with rats cannot be immediately applied to humans. However, the similarities between the above experimental conditions and today's world are striking: (1) a fixed area in which natural enemies have been virtually eliminated and disease controlled as checks upon population, (2) sufficient nourishment to allow the population to grow, and (3) greater and greater numbers competing for fixed spacial and material resources.

Calhoun differentiates between rat and human adaptability in the human ability to compensate for invasions of physical space with "conceptual space."¹⁴ As the world population has increased, he says, man has substituted expansions of intellect for deprivations of physical territory, enabling men to successfully confront conditions. The development of conceptual life space has occurred in phases - scientific, industrial, cultural ages. Calhoun views the former involvement of the young in social problems and the present trend

¹⁴ John B. Calhoun, "Space and the Strategy of Life," Behavior and Environment, ed. A. Essery, 1971.

For Calhoun's analysis, it is suggested that the reader consult this pamphlet since limitations of space and the comprehensibility of Calhoun's presentation to the author make the discussion of Calhoun's theory of the future of human society necessarily incomplete.

toward separation from society as a modern manifestation of the process. Conceptual expansion, he believes, is creative, as men develop new means of expression. The optimal population of the earth, the number at which creativity is maximized, will be achieved just after the year 2000. Today's varied departures from conventionality, he says, indicate the expansion of creativity. In the doubling following the achieved optimal population, requiring slightly more than a decade if existing growth rates continue, he sees the optimal population giving way to a world in which the young will be unable to learn quickly enough to psychologically survive the proximity of humanity. That is, the inability to create, owing to population destruction of privacy, will render destruction too man's psychological structure.

Calhoun's credibility is obviously much greater as an animal behaviorist. The predictions of a new dark age is at most dubious. However, his discussion of conceptual space as a compensating factor appears solid, and is correct in stressing the critical nature of an unrestricted world population.

In his 1962 publications, Calhoun noticed that rats, beginning in environments of higher population density, because of initial social conditioning, were able to tolerate higher final densities. It has been noted that "The Japanese seem to have developed a variety of cultural devices to alleviate the stress of high density . It has been suggested

that their very formal and elaborate etiquette may be one protection against the inevitable frictions constant in human encounter";¹⁵ in the United States, formerly space-rich, the foci of increasing population density, the urban areas, have encountered conflict and maladjustment of inhabitants.

Freedman and a Positive View

Whereas Calhoun bases his predictions for mankind, admittedly perhaps too heavily, upon animal research, Jonathan Freedman enters the field of population research with a skeptical view of the applicability of such studies to man, feeling animal research at most indicative.¹⁵ Freedman tackles the following questions: would it be preferable to spread the population evenly throughout America, or to maintain cities? In other words, would social maladies such as crime, disease, and pollution be mitigated by the amelioration of crowded conditions?

Together with Paul Ehrlich, Freedman undertook a study to measure the effects of crowding upon humans in laboratory settings. The conditions of a representative experiment follow.

... We placed groups (four to nine persons) in crowded or uncrowded rooms. The subjects generally stayed in the rooms for four hours during which time

¹⁵ Paul and Anne Ehrlich, Population, Resources, Environment, p. 205.

we observed their behavior and reactions. The rooms ranged in size from 35 to 180 square feet.¹⁵

Conditions were made as comfortable as possible. He recognizes the weaknesses of the experiment, but, it is believed, far depreciates their seriousness.

The time spent was relatively brief compared with real life. ... Another weakness was that the subjects knew they would eventually get out of the crowded environment.¹⁷

Following the sessions, subjects were questioned to evaluate their opinions of the crowding. Men were dissatisfied with all-male rooms; women enjoyed all-female environments. In mixed groups, no adverse or favorable reaction was voiced.¹⁸

From these findings, Freedman proposes that the social problems in American cities are not traceable to crowded conditions, but to the nature of the inhabitants who populate such regions - the uneducated, families with low incomes, immigrants. Urban development, he says, should not be aimed at spreading the population, but to alleviate the psychological

¹⁶ Jonathan Freedman, "The Crowd may be not so Madding After All: A Positive View of Population," Psychology Today, p. 58.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 60.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 61.

economic, and social failings of the urban poor. Freedman, however, makes no provision for the psychology of privacy. His experiments were unsuited to measure the long-term effects of invasions of physical life space and uncertainty in the intellectual life space stemming from perpetual surveillance.

Calhoun and Freedman advocate different views of population density and social problems. Calhoun declares that despite his intellectual equipment, man will eventually undergo the social pathology of animals subjected to unnatural crowding if population is not controlled. Freedman believes that man's social character will enable him to compensate for decreases in territory. Each study has a major advantage, each a disadvantage. Calhoun's study enabled him to observe the effects of mounting population density over several generations. His conclusions, though, are based upon animal, not human, research. Freedman did introduce the study of human subjects. Unfortunately, his experimental conditions in no way approached the long-term nature of psychological and emotional life. How would Freedman explain the anger and stress of the subway traveller during rush hour? Could Calhoun deny the adaptability of man's social mechanism?

It is recommended that social scientists undertake further experiments to resolve the enigma. Perhaps the model below might be followed.

Request volunteers willing to devote a week's time to a psychological experiment. A deceptive purpose

must be ascribed to the experiment to keep the subjects ignorant of the true study. For example, the experimenters might declare that extra sensory perception is to be measured before and after lengthy exposure to thought patterns.

Subjects should be divided into two groups of twenty-five people. One group is to be placed in one room with a very small bathroom. Eating, sleeping, and recreation are to be performed in that one chamber. Recreational facilities should be limited to perhaps one ping-pong table and a few books. The purpose is to see if long-term competition for limited resources in the absence of privacy leads to severe tension within the group.

The second group, of course, is the control. They should be provided with several rooms, diverse means of entertainment, and more room than the first group.

The social interaction during the week should be observed and subjects questioned at its termination to evaluate the experience.

It is hoped that the above experiment would introduce a more realistic study period in conditions more closely approaching the realities of modern urban areas, where the existence of privacy currently is most threatened. The problem of the city will be discussed shortly.

Ehrlich and Ecological Reality

Paul Ehrlich has written in regard to the question beneath all studies of population density. In essence, he asks: "Does the increase in population density threaten to destroy the psychological norms in society?"¹⁹ He relates the increase in urban criminality to greater population density. "Such qualities as friendliness and neighborliness,

¹⁹Ehrlich, op. cit., chs. 1 and 8, pp. 1-4, 199-211.

once common in this country and generally esteemed, now seem to exist primarily in rural areas...²⁰ Will increased population and decreasing resources lead men to abandon privacy and psychological health in search of sustenance?

Does increased population concentration threaten the psychological health of the private life space. The problem remains unresolved, but experimental evidence from the behavior of animals and city realities indicate that the adjustment from frontier to urban society entails very difficult psychological adaptations to new definitions of physical and conceptual privacy.

The focus between societal demands and individual privacy in the United States will be resolved in the American city. Although national population growth is nearly nonexistent, it is in urban areas, among the poor, where families are largest. Although poverty may be proportionately as common in rural areas, it is in the cities where it concentrates. Large families are born into already crowded and economically strained households. Despite the redistribution of resources through welfare programs facilitated by proximity, crimes of theft and violence are numerically increasing. In *Wyman v. James* the Supreme Court, supposedly the protector of freedom,

²⁰ Ibid., p. 206.

acknowledged the right of society to base assistance upon visitation and questioning to assure recipients behavior justifies benefits. What choice has the unfortunate, dependent upon welfare for survival, except to relinquish privacy to receive the necessary assistance? The danger is not restricted to the poor. If the rewards of conformity and the punishments for uniqueness are made strong enough, privacy may be sacrificed. Desire to belong to a group, or forced habitation therein, tends to the reduction of psychological tension, i.e. disparity of individual thought and action and general consensus.

PRIVACY AND THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE SPACE

Developments in computer science and in the technology of electronic eavesdropping have raised the issue of the government's responsibility to enforce social norms through invasions of private intellectual spheres. Must the government monitor sexual habits, behavior in solitude, and intimate telephone conversations to protect society from constituent members? From this central question arises an examination of the effects of observation upon performance and learning, and of the efficacy of surveillance in deterring actions proscribed for the protection of the people.

Social Facilitation

Social facilitation is a psychological concept

relating performance and aptitudes of individuals to group skills and influence. The man who has compiled studies in this field is Professor Robert Zajonc of the University of Michigan.²¹ Shortly after 1900, many experiments investigated muscular exertion. Measuring devices used in these experiments were called ergographs. One night, Meumann, such an experimenter, surprised a student working with an ergograph. The appearance of Meumann produced a sharp increase in performance. The improvement could not be explained by increased effort since experiment required maximum exertion. The explanation, as has since been proved, is that surprise and social situations produce adrenal secretion.²²

In 1963 Bergum and Lehrs undertook the following experiment:

The subject was placed in an isolation booth, where he found ... a circle of twenty red lamps. The lamps lit in sequence. At times a light would fail to go on in its proper sequence. The subject's task was to depress a button whenever a light failed to go on normally. First, the subjects were given 20 minutes of training, and ... were asked to monitor the pannel for a period of 2 hours and 15 minutes. Twenty subjects -- all National Guard trainees -- were instructed ... to perform the task alone. The remaining twenty subjects --- also National Guard trainees -- were told that "from time to time a Lieutenant Colonel or a Master Sergeant would visit them in the booth to observe their performance."²³

²¹ Robert B. Zajonc, Social Psychology An Experimental Approach.
²² Ibid., p. 10.
²³ Ibid., p. 11.

The results indicated that "... the superiors' visits resulted in superior accuracy."²⁴ Their findings supported previous data tending to the conclusion that observation improves accomplishment of certain tasks. Is observation, however, universally advantageous to constructive functions?

In 1933, Hess²⁵ had found conflicting results. Subjects were asked to memorize lists of nonsense syllables.

The subject learned one of the lists while he was alone, another while several spectators watched. With the audience present the subjects required an average of 11.27 repetitions in the learning of the seven-syllable lists. When alone, they needed only 9.85 repetitions.²⁵

Clearly, in this case, the presence of a passive audience inhibited the acquisition of the lists. What is the explanation?

Zajonc points out that

There seems to be only one ... consistency in these results. It appears that an audience impairs the acquisition of new responses and facilitates the emission of well-learned responses. The acquisition of new responses is called "learning," and the emission of previously learned responses is called "performance."²⁶

Generally, "The responses that the organism would normally emit in the given situation -- the dominant response -- seems

²⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

under increased motivation to be sharper, more intense and quicker."²⁷ That is, in the learning process, errors are dominant and the audience intensifies them; during performance the audience strengthens the dominant correct response.

In their evaluation of density, Ehrlich and Freedman also studied the effects of density upon the performance of various tasks.

Subjects crossed out particular digits on a sheet of random numbers, memorized words read over a loud-speaker, counted clicks sounded rapidly at erratic intervals, rearranged letters to form words... We found no effects of any kind attributable to the degree of density in the room.²⁸

At first, these findings conflict with Zajonc's tests. However, it must be noted that all tasks were performed in the presence of others and in the consciousness of observation. The apprehension of the observed was absent. Each person in the room had his own tasks to perform and was not interested in watching others. Subjects were not fearful of the critical surveillance of others.

Zajonc continues to a discussion of the effects of group influence upon the ability of individuals to make

²⁷ Ibid., p. 14.
²⁸ Freedman, Op. cit., p. 65.
²⁹ Zajonc, op. cit., p. 38.

judgments. In his experiment, Asch found amazing results.

When he entered the experimental room, the subject was told that his task, like that of the several other students present, would be to find for each "standard" line the matching one among the "comparison" lines. Unknown to the naive subject, the other seven or eight students were experimenter's confidantes and had been previously instructed what responses to make on each trial.

In the absence of a false majority, subjects were able to achieve about 93 percent accuracy in their judgments. However, subjects exposed to the false judgments of the experimenter's confidantes reached only 67 percent of accuracy.²⁹

Errors included discrepancies as significant as nearly two inches. The more difficult the judgment, the more likely is compliance.

The above discussion leads to several conclusions: First of all, the presence of an observer may be instrumental in inducing a psychological attitude improving efficiency and quality of such procedures as assembly line production. Secondly, the need for privacy in creative moments is here substantiated. Artists, scientists, and planners need privacy to escape from the psychological awareness of others in order to develop new thought patterns and new response to emotions and conditions. Finally, there is the dangerous implication of Asch's work. If a government, through surveillance and skillful use of the media, succeeds in convincing the citizens of its omnipresence in life, provides decisions, and undermines self-confidence, the public may unconsciously begin to accept the dictates of the state, affirming statements which upon examination would prove spurious. The govern-

ment which is able to establish its omniscience and destroy the confidence of men in decision-making ability poses the potential to control the psychological outlook of members of society. Such domination is contrary to the basis of American which guarantees the freedom of expression and belief. The danger here discussed may appear unrealistic, but as has been shown by the ignorance of Americans to privacy invasions, the loss of such a right occurs unconsciously through the resolution of social dissonance. Already educational institutions and the mass media, especially television, accomplish shaping of the psychological structure in Americans. The young child yields innocently to the manipulation of his mental development. The purpose of constitutional government is to prescribe the limits of liberty. It is recommended, though, that the government and socializing institutions realize that their purpose is to instill values expanding, not constraining, creativity and individuality. A belief does not constitute a legitimate threat to society merely because a majority of the community is opposed. Diversity is essential to vigor in the American system.

The Deterrence of Crime

Before decision can be made between the conflicting desires for personal privacy and governmental supervision, it must be determined if surveillance actually accomplishes its objective. That is, does the likelihood of detection and

prosecution, posed by electronic and human eavesdropping, deter the potential criminal or deviant from carrying out his plans? Unfortunately, the research undertaken in this area is very limited. The only relevant studies have been carried out by industrial psychologists concerned with employee theft.³⁰ In many businesses, the most trusted workers are daily engaging in victimizing the company for valuable merchandise. What is the reason? In those industries, work is usually dull and the employer is disinterested in making employment more pleasant or profitable for workers. Schemes for extortion of merchandise make the job more interesting, introducing a previously lacking challenge. It provides an outlet for employee discontent which would otherwise be manifested in demands for improvement of wages and/or conditions. Some companies have engaged electronic surveillance devices and detectives, but the cost of prevention in most cases exceeds the loss due to larceny. Thefts continue and the guilty claim to be proud of their actions. It has been found advantageous to allow toll booth attendants to procure a certain portion of intake to reduce the tremendous employee turn-over resulting from the monotony of the occupation.

³⁰ H. T. Zeitlin, "A Little Larceny Can do a Lot for Employee Morale," Psychology Today, June, 1971, p. 22.

The target of government surveillance is usually someone believed dangerous to society. As the dissatisfied worker finds his job inadequate, the social deviant finds his world's values or the demands of the government incompatible with his being. However, the criminal may threaten the very existence of society, and his detection deemed essential. Is surveillance a successful means of preventing and detecting crime? The imprisonment and censure risked by the criminal is much greater in magnitude than the loss of employment faced by the scheming worker. His beliefs, however, to him may justify the danger involved in behavior contrary to the general will. No serious attempt has been made to analyze the effectiveness of surveillance. The question of its usefulness remains unanswered. The recourse to the worker prevented from continued larceny is demand for better conditions or other employment. What avenue of redress is there for the alleviation of social injustice in a country in which the government is capable of monitoring the most secret plans? Surveillance carried out without concern for societal privacy endangers the individual autonomy rooted in American government. Another recommendation is that psychologists undertake study of the deterrent value of surveillance.

CONCLUSIONS AND REMAINING QUESTIONS

Invasions of the physical and intellectual life spaces present crucial threats to the fundamental concept of privacy in American society. The former presents two dangers to psychological health and individuality: (1) experimental research done by John Calhoun portends the break down of society resulting from the crowding away of privacy, and (2) group psychology indicates that if uniqueness is not encouraged, social dissonance may result in its elimination. The fear inherent in the disappearance of intellectual privacy threatens the will in men to be different.

Privacy is essential to American society. It sustains men against public pressures, enabling minority groups to achieve legal equality, businessmen to enjoy the benefits of success, and Congressmen to disappear for a time from public view to work in legislative reality. Study relating the American citizen and his psychological welfare to modern life is exceedingly sparse. Wiretapping has been instituted, computer dossiers have been assembled, and urban housing projects have been formulated without serious consideration of the individual men and women destined for the new society. The preceding discussion has attempted to clarify some aspects of psychology in relation to modern life. Some very important issues have not been concluded. The following includes cer-

tain factors which loom as unresolved questions relating to psychological welfare.. Ultimate responsibility for their solution lies with the federal government, the most powerful legislator and executor of American reality, and potentially the greatest threat to the liberty of Americans..

How serious is the problem of increasing population density? Despite the research of John Calhoun, Jonathan Freedman, and Paul Ehrlich, the extent of the danger posed by overpopulation to the psychological health of mankind is in doubt. Even if the American population is stabilizing, the problems caused by concentration of population and economic power in the cities endanger the ecological as well as the private realm. Serious crises occur when people are unable to survive reality.. Will the population explosion increase the casualty rate? Assuming that adjustments must be made, can a space-conscious nation such as the United States continue to compensate intellectual growth for shrinkage in physical life space? Can the population of the earth continue to increase geometrically, or will Calhoun's predictions of disaster materialize? Invasions of the life space must be the focus of much psychological research in the near future. How adaptable is mankind? Can the institutions of the past meet the needs of the future? Are there means available to the government to facilitate adaptability to the crowded and open world of surveillance?

It has previously been pointed out that a need exists to examine the efficacy of surveillance as a means of preventing, detecting, and punishing those who are inimical to society. If snooping is to be continued, how will it affect citizens who have no criminal intentions? Will incursions of government and private groups seeking various ends anger and frustrate men and women, and endanger individuality and contentment within the nation? If continued, can government surveillance be restrained from dominating the lives of all citizens?

Finally, is a privacy right needed, or are those who protest its violation those who are culpable to society. The government, as has been shown in the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, is capable of socializing submission. Privacy, however, is necessary, not to protect the criminal, but to provide sanctuary for the weary member of society no longer able to act the role of conformity demanded by his surroundings, for the sharing of feelings and ideas, for the chance to rationalize life. The realm of freedom is the realm of privacy.

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VI. BIBLIOGRAPHYBooks and Pamphlets

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