

## Chapter 5 Privacy & Secrecy Notes

-In the earlier days, privacy was binary—something you had or something you didn't

-Social media and other forms of technology have erased the public-private dichotomy

-Harm principle: hurting people if a matter were to remain private

Privacy is manifested in 4 ways:

1. Intrusion upon a seclusion or solitude
2. Public disclosure of embarrassing private facts
3. Publicity that places a person in a false light
4. Misappropriation of a person's name or likeness for personal advantage

The claim for privacy is different for different kinds of people. For example, public figures are subject to different standards than others, like any man who has been inaugurated as president

### The Need for Privacy

-Without some degree of privacy, civilized life would be impossible

-People need privacy to try out new poses, future selves and so on, without a fear of judgment from others

-People need privacy as a shield against the power of the state. The state gains more info about its citizens, which makes it easy to influence, manipulate and/or control the masses

-Society needs privacy as a shield against Internet sites like Facebook which demand a lot of data about a person who enters the site

-Privacy is a necessary component of democracy

### Privacy as an Ethical Construct

-Privacy is considered a need, a way of protecting oneself against the actions of others and institutions

-Privacy carries the notions of control and limited access

-Communitarian thinking links privacy and community versus seeing them as component factors

-Privacy is linked to our ability to become human and retain some element of dignity

### Continuing Conflicts

-Banks, credit companies, doctors, and attorneys all request a variety of very private info, the bulk is willingly disclosed

Four types of harms when privacy is invaded:

1. Informational harm

2. Informational inequality
3. Informational injustice
4. Encroachment on moral autonomy

## Secrecy vs. Privacy

**Secrecy:** blocking information intentionally to prevent others from learning or obtaining

Ensures info is kept from public view

Often carries a negative connotation

In actuality, secrecy is neither good nor bad

**Privacy** is concerned with determining who will gather access to the info

Controls access

**Circle of Intimacy:** the circles that determine how much info a person gives about himself, the innermost being oneself

## Discretion

-This is the ability to discern what is and is not intrusive or injurious

-Discretion demands moral reasoning

## Knowing

**Right to know:** a legal term associated with open-meeting and open record statutes

**Need to know:** originates in the realm of philosophy

Applies to what the person/public need to know for their daily lives

**Want to know:** speaks to the curiosity in all of us

What we desire (ex: celebrities in variety magazine)

## John Rawls

-Founded "veil of ignorance"

Idea that before a community can make an ethical decision, they must strip down to the original position as equals

Behind this veil, people would be willing to make and follow decisions where all statuses are laid aside

To be free of bias

Act is the weaker parties will be protected

## Class Notes

### Privacy

- Becoming a public figure means privacy goes away (ex: President Bush smoking pot)
- Privacy is limited
- Privacy is never an absolute (ex: social security, banking information)
- The only way to manage privacy is to completely control it (ex: your house)
- Credit Card = reasonable privacy
- We all expect privacy to be protected; it is not (ex: target)

Secrecy: blocks info from others (ex: whispering to someone)

Privacy: controlling info

Gov't cannot work on openness nor it can it rely on pure secrecy; needs a balance

Million-dollar question: How will the public benefit best?

To retain credibility (for a journalist) must hold a certain element of secrecy with subjects; otherwise a blabbermouth

Always have to have at least 2 sources; cannot just rely on one

Once something is out, it is out for eternity and it cannot be brought back (video/story going viral)

Social media = reason for stories skyrocketing

"Want to Know" = 70-80% of what people talk about

Veil of Ignorance: original position stripped of not knowing or making decisions

Protects the weak, the innocent, the corrupt