Solitude and Intimacy: Linking Territoriality and Privacy Experiences

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ABSTRACT: The further advancement of privacy models depends upon clarifying two issues: the relationship between privacy and territoriality and the degree to which different types of privacy have distinct behavioral and cognitive correlates. Two types of privacy experiences—solitude and intimacy—were investigated. Given the divergent function of these two forms of privacy, we expected each would be sought in different types of territories. We also expected that where people seek a form of privacy depends in part upon the quality of the immediate social environment: a territory will be used less for privacy experiences as the understandings that regulate usage of the space erode. Students were asked where they went for solitude, where they went for intimacy, and to describe their experiences in these two places. Results supported the hypotheses. In addition, a substantial and coequal linkage between privacy and territoriality appeared. A two-step process describing this linkage was suggested. Implications of the findings for a more precise conceptualization of privacy behaviors were explored.

Privacy has recently received considerable theoretical attention (Altman, 1975, 1977; Archea, 1977; Kelvin, 1973; Laufer & Wolfe, 1977; Margulis, 1977; Westin, 1967). Nonetheless, the advancement of privacy theories, while it has far outstripped the empirical accomplishments in this area, appears at present to be stalled. Further conceptual elucidation and sophistication in this arena depends upon resolving two distinct but related issues.

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Portions of a prior version of this paper were presented at the annual meetings of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, 1978. This research was carried out while the first author was affiliated with Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Research funds were provided by a small grant award from the Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The authors are indebted to Ed Krupat and Eric Sundstrom for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

0191-5886/80/1400-0227$00.95

An understanding of the linkage between territoriality and privacy is the first issue deserving consideration. Altman (1975) has suggested that territoriality serves mainly as a mechanism for matching desired and achieved privacy levels. This proposal would seem to imply that territoriality could be subsumed under privacy. Support for this perspective could be drawn from a recent field study by Taylor and Stough (1978; Taylor, Note 1) in which residents indicated that one of the most salient benefits of stronger territories was the seclusion offered. Unfortunately, while privacy and territoriality appear to be somewhat collinear in the residential environment, each appears to be associated with different experiential consequences. Edney and Buda (1976) found in a lab study that behavior under private conditions (i.e., being alone) and behavior under territorial conditions (i.e., being in "your" room) were associated with varying attributions.

The murky linkage between privacy and territoriality is due not only to contradictory evidence, but also to an incomplete or very global treatment of privacy. This brings us to the second issue blocking further advances in this theoretical arena.

It is unclear if different types of privacy have distinct experiential correlates and thus should be treated separately. Altman (1975) favors a more unitary, broad-gauged perspective, and this approach has proved empirically fruitful (e.g., Sundstrom, Burt, & Kamp, Note 2). This less unitary approach is favored by Westin (1967). He suggested the following types of privacy experiences: *solitude,* where a single person seeks exclusion from others; *intimacy,* where a person as part of a small group seeks corporate exclusion from those outside the group for purposes of confidential communication; *anonymity,* where a person in a public setting seeks freedom from identification and surveillance; and *reserve,* where a person seeks and establishes a psychological barrier against communication from others who are present. Empirical support for Westin's conceptual schema was obtained by Marshall (1972, 1974). In her factor analysis of a set of privacy items, she obtained four subscales closely corresponding to the four types of privacy suggested by Westin. (Recent evidence suggests that Marshall's factor structure may not be stable. See Ferguson and Taylor, Note 3, Note 4).

The present research effort seeks to shed light on these two issues. We focused on two types of privacy experiences, solitude and intimacy. The functions of these two types of privacy experiences are probably quite different. Intimacy provides the opportunity for members of a dyad to forge a durable relationship. The establishment of bonds requires the sharing of increasingly intimate information (cf.

Altman & Taylor, 1973), and an appropriate setting is needed for this sharing. Solitude, in contrast to intimacy, facilitates self-evaluation, the planning of future goals, the assessment of accomplishments or setbacks, and time "offstage."

The divergent functions of solitude and intimacy may require varying setting conditions. To categorize these setting conditions, Altman's (1975) threefold typology of territories is useful. *Primary* territories are places where one has more or less complete control over who has access, and what goes on in the space (e.g., dorm room, bedroom in an apartment). *Secondary* territories are semipublic spaces where one has moderate access control and is likely to see friends or acquaintances (e.g., fraternity). *Public* territories are spaces occupied for relatively brief periods of time where one has no control over who has access (e.g., beach, park). Although there are some problems with Altman's typology (Brower, 1979), it appears to have more empirical validity than other typologies which have been proposed (Taylor, 1978).

Our heuristic framework for linking territoriality and privacy and the hypotheses which stem from this outlook are couched at the level of specific types of territories. Given that intimacy and solitude experiences serve different functions, they will probably be sought in different types of territories. We assume that the dyad-other boundary which sheaths intimacy must be more secure than the self-other boundary which encloses solitude. The interruption of intimacy may result in considerably more inadvertent divulging of information, or embarrassment, than the interruption of solitude. Thus, given the territorial resources and options of college students, primary territories will be used more for the attainment of intimacy than for the attainment of solitude (H_1). In addition, in light of the benefits of stronger territories, and if the above hypothesis holds, intimacy experiences should occur more frequently, last longer and involve fewer interruptions, and fewer strangers should be seen and more feelings of control should be experienced than would occur with solitude experiences (H_2). In short, a pattern of privacy seeking, and qualities of the privacy experience, stem in part from the setting condition in which the particular type of privacy is sought.

Nonetheless, while spaces which support solitude or intimacy are often sought and obtained with few hitches, difficulties may develop. Students residing in primary territories where regulations regarding the use of space are not well established, will go more often to secondary or public territories (H_3). As roommates and coresidents become more numerous and become less compatible and less well

acquainted with the potential privacy seeker, the understandings which underpin smooth maintenance of self-other boundaries may erode or simply no longer be feasible. Increased occupancy time of primary territories by roommates may also pose potential difficulties for the maintenance of self-other boundaries.

Furthermore, inasmuch as privacy behaviors have been viewed by some as an outcome of a need state, privacy seeking and privacy experiences may in part be determined by personality variables. Thus, we expected that people would seek solitude more often and for longer periods of time as: Privacy Preference scores and anxiety increased, and well-being (viz Bates, 1964, p. 434) and extroversion decreased(H_4). Personality variables may also be relevant to intimacy seeking and experiences.

METHOD

Subjects

At VPI&SU 200 students (108 females, 92 males) volunteered to participate as subjects. Of these, 105 were living in on-campus dormitory housing and taking introductory psychology: they were contacted and signed up through the introductory psychology subject pool. The experiment was described as one exploring how people perceive and use their everyday environment. The remaining 95 subjects were students living in off-campus housing, predominantly apartments. A random sample of student names living off-campus was drawn from the student directory and yielded 74 subjects. The off-campus sample was completed with 21 additional subjects, contacted through the introductory psychology pool.

Procedure and Questionnaires

Subjects were run in groups of 3 to 15. They first completed a two-part environmental questionnaire. The first part elicited demographic and living condition information. Subjects were queried regarding sex, age, marital status, type of residence, roommates (number, how well liked, how much time roommates spent in room), and other coresidents (number, how well liked). (Roommates were defined as "people with whom you are actually sharing a bedroom," and coresidents were defined as "other people with whom you share your apartment or house." Students living in on-campus dormitories all had one roommate, and no coresidents.)

The second part of the environmental questionnaire was concerned with privacy seeking and experiences. For solitude, subjects were asked to

describe, "When you want to be alone and get away from everyone for awhile, even your close friends, where are you most likely to go?" Subjects were asked to give a complete description of this one place most often used for solitude and not to put down driving activities. They were then asked to rate the solitude experience in this location on the following dimensions: how often they went there, how much control over the setting (e.g., keeping others out) they felt they had there, whether they were likely to see friends or strangers there, how many people they were likely to see there, how likely they were to be interrupted by others, and how much time they usually spent there. Five-point scales were used. After completing these ratings, subjects were asked to describe the intimacy place where they were most likely to go. The question was, "Where do you go when you are seeking a secluded place to be away from others, where you can talk to an intimate friend?" Then, the intimacy experience in this location was described using the same dimensions: how often they went there, and so forth.

Subjects then completed several personality scales: the 44-item CPI Well-being Scale (Gough, 1957), Gough's 23-item CPI Extroversion Scale, Leventhal's 22-item Anxiety Scale (Megargee, 1972), and Marshall's 56-item Privacy Preference Scale (Marshall 1972, 1974).

Testing sessions usually lasted an hour and a quarter. At the conclusion of the session subjects were thanked, debriefed, and paid or awarded course credit.

The places described by students as those where they sought solitude or intimacy were coded by one of the experimenters as a primary, secondary, or public territory. Out of 400 descriptions, 95% were easily coded. The two experimenters conferred on the remaining 14 place descriptions and were able to reach quick agreement on how they were to be coded. A few students ($n = 8$) listed sitting in their car as a place they would go for solitude or intimacy. For most analyses, car places were coded as public territories. Additional analyses were also carried out in which car places were eliminated and these additional analyses were no different from the original.

RESULTS

Seeking Solitude and Seeking Intimacy

Type of territory where subjects sought solitude was not correlated with the type of territory where they sought intimacy (see Table 1), x^2 (4) = 1.85, NS. An interesting feature of Table 1 is that few subjects sought either solitude or intimacy in secondary territories. Thus, each form of privacy appears to dictate its own setting conditions. In addition, the likelihood of encountering friends or strangers in a secondary territory makes these spaces unlikely privacy settings.

Table 1

Type of Territory Sought for Different Forms of Privacy

		While Seeking Intimacy		
		Primary	Secondary	Public
While Seeking Solitude	Primary	24	2	35
	Secondary	3	0	4
	Public	59	8	65

Note. For this cross-tabulation, being in a car was coded as a public territory. Results were not changed when "car" territories were deleted.

Solitude and Intimacy: Mean Differences

To conduct analyses of variance on mean differences between solitude and intimacy, the 200 subjects were randomly assigned, using a random number table, into two equal-sized groups. From the first group only data concerning solitude was recorded, and from the second group only data concerning intimacy was recorded. One-way multivariate and univariate analyses of variance (solitude vs. intimacy) were conducted on the two groups, using a between-subjects design. Although this design meant "losing" half of our data, we felt it was preferable to a repeated-measures design. We were assured that our random assignment did not distort the data: the means for each solitude and intimacy variable, based on 100 cases, closely matched the means based on 200 cases. Also, the means of the two groups were closely comparable (different by no more than .1) on background variables such as age and on social environment variables.[1]

For all analyses, primary, secondary and public territories were respectively coded 1, 2, and 3. As expected, subjects were more likely to go to a primary territory for intimacy than for solitude, $F(1, 198) = 4.90$, $p < .05$. Thus, greater access control was desired for intimacy than for solitude.

Given that the privacy experience variables (frequency, perceived control, type and number of people encountered, likelihood of interruptions, and time spent) were intercorrelated, a multivariate

[1]This between-subjects design was used only in the analyses of variance; all other analyses used the full data set ($n = 200$).

analysis of variance on these variables was conducted comparing intimacy and solitude, multivariate $F(6, 193) = 3.85$, $p < .01$. Univariate F's indicated that subjects in the intimacy group, as compared to subjects in the solitude group, experienced more control over the setting, $F(1, 198) = 5.35$, $p < .05$, and spent more time in the setting, $F(1, 198) = 16.40$, $p < .001$. These results are congruent with the above finding that intimacy subjects were more likely to be in a primary territory than solitude subjects.

Predicting Type of Territory Used

To assess the role of personality and social environment in pri vacy-seeking behaviors, a series of step-wise hierarchical regressions were carried out. First, all of the predictors expected to correlate with type of territory used were entered in a regression equation. These regressions tested a "full model." A second series of regressions were then carried out, entering only the variables that had significant correlations with the criterion. From these regressions, a total R^2 was computed, based only on variables with significant β weights. These latter regressions tested a "reduced model." Both models were hierarchical in that personality and demographic variables (age, marital status, sex) were entered on the first step and thereby allowed to explain as much variance as possible. Social environment variables were entered on the second step. The results of the reduced models are reported below.[2]

The expected impact of the social environment on both forms of privacy seeking was observed. The only significant predictor of type of territory sought for solitude was number of roommates, $\beta = .21$, $F(1, 133) = 6.85$, $p < .01$. Subjects with more roommates were more likely to seek solitude in a public territory. The total R^2 for predicting type of territory was .05, $p < .01$, (adjusted $R^2 = .04$, $p < .05$). A social environment variable was also the only significant predictor of type of territory sought for intimacy. Subjects who were better acquainted with coresidents were more likely to seek intimacy in a primary territory, $\beta = -.22$, $F(1, 133) = 9.40$, $p < .01$; $R^2 = .07$, $p < .01$ (adjusted $R^2 = .06$, $p < .01$).

[2]In the pair-wise correlation matrices on which the regressions were based, several vectors were based on 135 cases, since 65 subjects had no roommates. Thus, in conducting significance tests for increments in R^2 and total R^2, a base of $n = 135$ was used. Thus, our significance tests were somewhat conservative. Also, in significance testing a Model I error term was used (Cohen & Cohen, 1975).

Predicting Privacy Experiences

Hierarchical step-wise regressions, of both the full and reduced models, were carried out for each variable of the intimacy and solitude experiences. The regressions were hierarchical in that personality and demographic variables were entered on the first step, social environment variables were entered on the second step, and type of territory used was entered on the third and final step. The results of the reduced model, reported in terms of clusters of variables, appear below. Regressions for all the experience variables were carried out. A principal components analysis of each set of experience variables indicated that four variables described the underlying dimensions of

Table 2

Predicting Components of the Solitude Experience:

Criterion	Increments in R^2 Predictors				
	Personality/ Demographic	Social Environment	Type of Territory	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Frequency			.31***	.31***	.30***
Strangers/Friends			.68***	.68***	.67***
Number	.07*	.14***	.05**	.26**	.23**
Interruptions		.10***	.07**	.17***	.16***
Control	.05*		.15***	.19***	.18***

Note. The question asked, and scale endpoints are as follows for each variable. Frequency: "How often do you go there? (Once a month or less often/ Once a day or more often). Strangers/Friends: "If you do see people there, what kind of people are you likely to see?" (Strangers/Good friends). Number: "When you are there, how many people are you likely to see?" (Nobody/A great number). Interruptions: "When you are there, how likely is it that you will be interrupted by others?" (Not at all likely/Extremely likely). Control: "When you are there, how much control over the setting (e.g., keeping others out) do you feel that you have?" (Feel I have no control/Feel I have complete control).

Note. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$. All significance tests based on $n = 135$.

Table 3

Predicting Components of the Intimacy Experience

Criterion	Increments in R^2 Predictors				
	Personality/ Demographic	Social Environment	Type of Territory	Total R^2	Adjusted R^2
Frequency	.02	.09***	.26***	.38***	.36***
Strangers/Friends	.03*	.12***	.51***	.66***	.65***
Number		.04*	.07***	.11**	.09*
Interruptions	.09**		.12***	.21***	.20***
Control		.06*		.06**	.05**

Note. The question asked, and scale endpoints are as follows for each variable. Frequency: "How often do you go there? (Once a month or less often/ Once a day or more often). Strangers/Friends: "If you do see people there, what kind of people are you likely to see?" (Strangers/Good Friends). Number: "When you are there, how many people are you likely to see?" (Nobody/A great number). Interruptions: "When you are there, how likely is it that you will be interrupted by others?" (Not at all likely/Extremely likely). Control: "When you are there, how much control over the setting (e.g., keeping others out) do you feel that you have?" (Feel I have no control/Feel I have complete control).

Note. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$. All significance tests based on n = 135.

the experiences, and the regressions for those items are reported here. In addition, the regressions for the control variable, which is of inherent theoretical interest, are reported. Complete details on the regressions, including beta weights for specific variables, are available from the first author.

The reduced-model regressions for aspects of the solitude experience are shown in Table 2, and the regressions predicting aspects of the intimacy experience are shown in Table 3.

The regressions reveal several noteworthy findings. The strongest supporter of both types of privacy experience is the type of territory in which the experience occurs. Type of territory enters into 9 out of the

10 regressions, and is the strongest predictor in 7 out of the 10 regressions. The direction of the territory variable was as expected except on the *Interruption* regression, where stronger territories were associated with increased likelihood of interruptions.

The social environment revealed a strong influence on both privacy experiences, particularly intimacy. The particular social variables that seemed most important for solitude were degree of acquaintanceship with coresidents and for intimacy, degree of acquaintanceship with roommates.

Personality and demographic variables were poor predictors. This cluster of variables, although given the chance to be the strongest, entered into only five reduced regressions.In the regressions they did enter, they were usually the weakest of the three clusters of predictors.

When Tables 2 and 3 are compared, differences are apparent. The determinants of intimacy experiences would appear to be more complex than the determinants of solitude experiences. On *Frequency* and *Strangers/Friends* all three clusters of variables were significant predictors in the intimacy regressions, while only one cluster of variables was significant in the solitude regressions. The relative simplicity of solitude experiences makes sense given that solitude, more than intimacy, is sought in public territories; thus it is less impacted by the immediate social environment.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study are circumscribed by several limitations. First, the results may be limited only to college students, who have available to them a particular set of territorial resources and have particular privacy needs. Over time, the territorial resources available to an individual shift, as do the number and type of interpersonal bonds being forged and the individual's needs for self-evaluation or long-term planning. This may alter the sites where privacy is sought as well as the frequency and type of privacy experiences desired. In addition, the rural setting at Virginia Tech means that the students could be fairly sure of achieving solitude if they sought it in outside spaces. In an urban setting people may not be so lucky, and they may seek solitude elsewhere. Second, the components of experience we investigated were closely tied to territoriality. No variables specifically *and only* related to privacy experiences (e.g., a relaxing atmosphere) were explored. Finally, the role of spe-

cific architectural features (Archea, 1977; Sundstrom, Burt, & Kamp, Note 2) in supporting privacy experiences was ignored. Nonetheless, we feel these limitations are at least partially offset by a fairly clearcut pattern of results.

In the residential environment the linkage between territoriality and privacy experiences appears undeniable. This linkage appears to be a two-step process where the particular privacy sought, considered in conjunction with the options available, leads the privacy seeker to a particular territory. Once there, the benefits of territorial control serve to support the privacy experience. In stronger, more central territories there is a stronger pattern of benefits, with one exception: in more central territories interruptions were more likely. Given that most of our subjects lived with roommates, this result is not totally unexpected. The important point may be that for this population interruptions in a primary territory are more predictable, in terms of who and when, and thus less bothersome, than interruptions of privacy experiences that occur elsewhere.

Unfortunately, while the present study demonstrates a sturdy linkage between privacy and territoriality, it does not settle the debate as to whether privacy is more inclusive than territoriality (Altman, 1975) or vice versa (Pastalan, 1970). In fact, the present study illustrates how *both* sides of this debate may be correct. At the stage of privacy seeking, the type of privacy sought dictates the type of territory needed. At this point territoriality is a mechanism to support privacy needs. However, once a territory is entered, the space supports not only privacy, but also other needs as well (e.g., providing a place where the person feels in control of social interaction). At this point solitude or intimacy is just one of many experiences which territoriality helps support. We in no way seek to obscure the fact that privacy and territoriality are conceptually distinct and may, in some cases, have differing consequences (Edney & Buda, 1976). Nonetheless, we feel that the relative comprehensiveness of privacy and territoriality vis-à-vis each other depends on the stage of the privacy-seeking process that is examined.

The present results also shed light on the privacy concept itself and lend support to the notion that distinct types of privacy have distinct correlates. The divergence between the two types of privacy experiences investigated here is apparent in that each was sought in a different type of territory, and the two experiences had somewhat different predictors, as indicated in the regressions. Future privacy studies would do well to attend to specific types of privacy experience.

In the present results the role played by the social environment is noteworthy. These predictors were overshadowed by type of territory; nonetheless, they produced very well-patterned effects. Having fewer, more compatible, and better acquainted roommates and coresidents influenced privacy-seeking behaviors and served to enhance privacy experiences. These effects fit quite well with results of Baum, Harpin and Valins (1975), who found that increasing residential group size was associated with increasing frequency of unwanted interactions but that the formation of local groupings dampened this effect. The unwanted interactions discussed by Baum and his colleagues (1975) probably include disruptions of solitude and intimacy experiences.

In contrast to the social environment predictors, personality variables appear to be weak privacy predictors. It appears that we are still somewhat at sea in terms of understanding the intrapersonal antecedents of privacy behaviors. A more criterion-oriented approach to developing privacy scales or inventories is clearly called for (Ferguson & Taylor, Note 3, Note 4). It may be necessary to develop separate inventories to predict each type of privacy behavior.

Finally, the present results lend support and help clarify the model of privacy seeking and experiences which was outlined in the introduction. When seeking privacy, people consider the demands of the specific type of privacy and the territorial resources available to them. The attractiveness of a particular territorial resource depends not only on the type of experience it is expected to support, but also on the quality of the social understandings governing the use of that space. Once the individual is in that space, the benefits of territoriality support the privacy experience, with more central territories providing stronger support.

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