

# Privacy

## Lecture 5-1

### Computers & Society (CPSC 430)

Kevin Leyton-Brown

<https://www.cs.ubc.ca/~kevinlb/teaching/cs430>

# Getting Started with Privacy

- What is Privacy?

- Work in a group.
- Come up with the best definition of the term you can.
- Try to think of
  - The example least like privacy that is still captured by your definition
  - The example most like privacy that fails your definition
- (We're not worried at this point about whether privacy ought to be a right; that's our next topic)

# Defining Privacy

- Privacy is related to the notion of access
  - Physical proximity to you
  - Knowledge about you
- Byrne: Privacy is a “zone of inaccessibility”
  - your ability to deny others access to you
- Bloustein: Privacy violations are an affront to human dignity
- Too much individual privacy can harm society
  - *Can you think of examples?*
- Key question: Where to draw the line?

# Benefits and Harms

- Harms of Privacy

- Cover for illegal or immoral activities
- Burden on the nuclear family
  - With less privacy comes more broadly shared responsibility
  - Relatedly, allows dysfunctional families to remain hidden
- Ignored people on society's fringes
  - cursed with too much privacy

- Benefits of Privacy

- Individual growth & responsibility
  - Individuation, a key psychological stage, requires privacy
  - Without privacy, you can't be considered free, hence held responsible
- Freedom to be yourself
  - not having to act as though others are watching, maintain a public persona
  - Focus your thoughts on a creative (or religious) task without interruption
- Development of loving, trusting, caring, intimate relationships
  - inconceivable without the "moral capital" of privacy

# Is There a Natural Right to Privacy?

- Morton Levine: Privacy rights stem from property rights
  - “a man’s home is his castle”
- Warren and Brandeis: An explicit “right to be let alone”
  - Noted that libel and slander laws don’t prevent people from saying mean, true things about you
- Thomson: violations of “Privacy rights” are also violations of other rights
  - So, we don’t need to treat privacy separately
- Benn and Reiman: Some amount of privacy is necessary for people to be autonomous, moral agents, to develop healthy relationships, and to act as free citizens.
  
- *Is privacy a right?*
- *Is it a “prudential right”?*
  - *worth recognizing for the good of society, though not a natural right*
- *Or do we have no such right at all?*

# Privacy and Trust

- Modern life more private
- Challenge: living among strangers
- Remedy: establishing reputations
  - Ordeal, such as lie detector test or drug test
  - Credential, such as driver's license, key, ID card, college degree
- Establishing reputation is done at the cost of reducing privacy

# Ways Information Becomes Public

- Rewards or loyalty programs
- Body scanners
- Digital video recorders
- Automobile “black boxes”
- Enhanced 911 service
- RFIDs
- Implanted chips
- Cookies
- Spyware



*...can you think of others?*