

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF PRIVACY

IN

THE ADULT BOOKSTORE

by

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PREFACE

In this study, I consider the social organization of privacy in public settings. My specific concern is with the adult bookstore, a relatively extreme situation in which the problematics of public privacy are maximal. Many of the techniques by which persons maintain privacy in the bookstores are common to all behavior in public, and could also be fruitfully studied in such situations as waiting rooms, public streets, and shopping areas. However, due to the possible stigma of adult bookstore involvement and to the essentially private nature of sex, the desire of bookstore participants for privacy is greater than in these other situations. The various factors making up the social organization of privacy are salient features of this setting.

In Chapter I, I describe the adult bookstore setting and its participants, and speculate about the reasons why persons are interested in pornographic materials. Chapter II deals with the sociology of privacy and develops the basis upon which we can expect bookstore participants to desire and work for privacy. Chapter III considers social control and its effect on privacy. The remainder of the study reports the bulk of my data, isolating organizational, ecological, personal, and interactional factors in privacy. Finally, the appendix discusses some technical aspects of my field work methods.

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CHAPTER I

THE SETTING AND ITS PARTICIPANTS

The Setting

The "adult bookstore," "dirty bookstore," or "porno shop" has become a familiar sight in American cities in the past few years. At present count there are 15 such stores in the Milwaukee area, seven of which are located in the downtown business district. Eight other stores are located in the local business districts of working class residential areas, often adjacent to other entertainment facilities such as adult movie theaters or "go go" bars. As in other cities (see U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, 1970) few stores are located in middle class locales, in black neighborhoods, or in suburban areas. The fifteen Milwaukee bookstores are the setting of the present study.

Several common features are shared by all of these stores. All but one store have opaqued windows which conceal the merchandise inside, as well as the customers, from passersby. All have signs posted restricting entry to persons 18 or over, and many have a sign at the entrance stating: "If nudity offends you, do not enter." Also common are signs which advertise "peep shows" or "adult movies" for 25¢. The names of the stores are often non-informative as to the type of material carried (such as "Midtown News," "Lisbon News" or "The Annex"). The nature of the store is discernable only by the signs prohibiting minors or by the opaqued windows. The stores (except for a few in the downtown area) are often located

in shabby run-down buildings (often for sale) in which the rent is apparently quite low. In comparison to conventional bookstores and other retail establishments, the adult bookstore is open for long hours, typically from 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M., six or seven days a week.

The interior decor and atmosphere of the stores varies considerably. Many of them might be characterized as "seedy," with somewhat dusty and worn floors, temporary or makeshift display racks, old fashioned cash registers, unfinished ceilings, and poorly constructed and possibly unpainted paneling. These stores "make no effort to create an inviting or appealing atmosphere" (Finkelstein, 1970:110). Other stores attempt to be fancier, or plush, with carpeting, pastel colors, and in one store a complete stereo system and colored lighting. The latter are located predominantly in the downtown retail areas of the city. Lighting also varies, but most stores are brightly lit with fluorescent fixtures. In most, the aisles between display racks are quite wide, allowing browsing customers much room to maneuver.

All stores are laid out in a manner such that the clerk, often sitting on a slightly raised platform behind a counter, has full view of the interior. Any possible blind spot is eliminated by mirrors. Display racks and partitions tend to be low, also facilitating the clerk's range of vision. All customers are thus somewhat suspect. The clerk is always located adjacent to the entrance to the store, allowing for easy collection of the 50¢ deposit required in most shops, and probably discouraging shoplifting. The clerk has control over entry and exit from the store, and is able to exclude minors easily when necessary.

The material available varies from store to store. All have a fairly

large selection of sexually oriented "pornographic"¹ paperbacks, usually displayed on racks in the center of the store. These are usually arranged by subject, with such delineated areas as normal heterosexual material, gay material, lesbian literature, incest, sadism/masochism ("S/M"), and bondage. The material appeals to a wide range of sexual interests. A large variety of magazines is also usually available, often displayed on peg-board paneling around the outer walls of the store. These magazines also appeal to a number of tastes, including Playboy-like material, "girlie magazines" showing little but breasts, "spread beaver" material showing the female vaginal area, and extremely explicit material featuring full-color closeup shots of fellatio, cunnilingus, and genital or anal intercourse. The most explicit material is usually accompanied by semi-academic "sex-education" texts, presumably offering "socially redeeming" content. In some stores the extremely explicit material is wrapped in cellophane, as are most magazines depicting less publicly acceptable sexual behavior such as homosexuality, sadism and masochism, and bestiality.

Prices for books and magazines vary considerably, with paperbacks which may cost 25¢ a piece to print generally selling for \$2.00 or \$2.50. Magazines range in price from \$1.00 for material such as Playboy to \$7.50 or \$10.00 for the most explicit works with color photography. The latter may be only 30 to 40 pages in length.

Other commonly available material includes several tabloids (most notably the "San Francisco Ball" and the "New York Screw," priced at 75¢

¹We use the term "pornographic" only as descriptive of sexually oriented erotic material. No moral judgement is implied in the use of this label, even though it is often charged with morally negative connotations (cf. Bell, 1971:144-170). For an attempt to distinguish "pornography" from "erotic literature" see the classic work by Kronhausen and Kronhausen (1959).

or \$1.00), 8mm films, a variety of sexual devices (dildoes, french ticklers, artificial vaginas, vibrators, and plastic life-size female dolls), and various potions and lotions. A few stores also carry used material and/or sale items at reduced prices. Some have a trade-in policy on magazines, books, and films.

Another major feature of most adult bookstores (15 out of 18 observed) is the peep show. These are coin-operated 8mm movie shows, where for a quarter the bookstore customer can see a segment of an erotic or pornographic movie in the privacy of a small booth. Over the past year and a half in which this study has been underway, I have seen a distinct change in the content of these movies. In the spring of 1972, no actual contact between sexual organs was depicted. Most of the peep show films were suggestive but not explicit in the behavior displayed. In the year since then, however, the nature of these films has become increasingly explicit, with most films now displaying closeup live action scenes of fellatio, cunnilingus, and intercourse. Possibly, these changes have accompanied the loosening legal restrictions and control of the pornography industry in general.

Peep shows are all located in a room separate from the literary area. All stores offer private individual booths from which customers can view the movies. Their construction and design varies considerably. Some booths are built so that the customer must stand in a cramped cubicle, bending over in order to view the movie, with only a flimsy, and often torn, plastic curtain to shut out light and prying eyes. Others are more roomy with a seat for the customer, a wooden, locking door (much like on a bathroom in a private home), and lights on the outside which indicate whether or not the booth is occupied. In some stores the room in which the peep show booths are located is extremely dark, with no lighting available even

inside the booth. Patrons must grope to find the coin slot in which to deposit their quarter. Other stores have well lit booths, often with a bright light in each booth which shuts off only when the movie is playing.

The stores vary in the type of pictorial materials emphasized, in how explicit or blatant the material carried is and in how the material is displayed. One local chain of at least three stores carries the most explicit heterosexual material. It is displayed openly and unwrapped, but has only a limited amount of homosexual and sadism/masochism literature. The latter is sealed in cellophane wrappers, often in the rear or in out-of-the-way corners of the stores. Another store owned and run by a somewhat eccentric middle-aged man features only mild heterosexual material of the old "girlie magazine" variety. Here, such classic paperbacks as Fanny Hill are sealed in cellophane. A third type of store is run and owned by homosexuals. It advertises in a local gay newspaper. In this store, the material is much milder than in the chain mentioned above, but there is also a much larger selection of gay material, little of which is sealed.

Participants

Adult bookstores typically have three kinds of participants. These are: the clerk, customers, and occasional "marginals" (such as wholesale distributors of pornographic materials and agents of social control). Some of these participants are further delineated into types of actor.

Two basic types of adult bookstore clerks have been delineated. The first type is the young clerk, who is usually in his twenties. This type is the most common and includes a large number of marginal drifters or dropouts. My impression is that many of these younger clerks are disproportionately involved in other "deviant" lifestyles such as homosexual-

ity and drugs. Employment in an adult bookstore is somewhat risky, as store clerks have a high arrest rate for possession and sale of "obscene" materials and the pay is rather low. So, marginal types are readily attracted to them. Proprietors tend to rely on informal means for recruitment, although occasionally an advertisement will be run in the local newspaper. Finkelstein's (1970) data corroborates most of this. He adds that criminal records for petty offenses are prevalent for these young clerks.

The other type of clerk is the middle-aged man of apparently low social class standing. These persons may actually own the store in which they are clerks. They seem to take a more conservative view of what is acceptable material to display and sell over-the-counter. In general, the stores in which these clerks work are in run-down areas of the city outside of the downtown business district. Although they may view themselves as being in the business of "providing sex satisfaction" (Massey, 1970:42), much as some younger clerks do, they are much less likely to work in stores which appear to be attempting to legitimize themselves as providing a social or psychological service. The older clerks are more likely to make the distinction between "hard-core pornography" and softer varieties, viewing the hard-core material as illegitimate, and not carrying it openly in their stores. They are more likely than the younger clerks to consider pornography as "deviant."

Clerks and proprietors from different stores often know each other. Nawy (1970:170) reports that there is a sense of comradary between them, and that this may be one reason no store will drastically cut its prices. A further observation concerning the clerks is that they tend to dissociate themselves from the material and customers in the store. After the first few days of employment, they typically reported looking only at informative store material or spending all of their free time in the store studying

if a student. Finkelstein's data (1970:143) confirm this.

Several studies done for the U.S. Commission on Pornography and Obscenity (1970) systematically focused on the characteristics of patrons of adult bookstores in various cities across the country. The portrait of the typical customer which emerges is that of a white middle class male who is married and shopping alone in a business suit or neat casual attire. Winick (1970a) reports that customer characteristics vary somewhat with the community in which the store is located, the typical customer usually being representative of persons living in the area of the store, although a large proportion are still middle-class. A small share of customers were observed to be in their twenties. They were more likely to be shopping in pairs than older customers (cf. Finkelstein, 1970:123). Kutschinsky's (1970:287) study of adult bookstores in Copenhagen gives a similar portrait of the typical customer, being middle aged, middle class, and shopping alone. Only about 30% of the customers actually make purchases, and about half use the peep shows. Those making the most purchases are over 30 years old (Massey, 1970:38). Regular customers, making up from 25% to 50% of all customers, shop approximately once every two weeks, these typifying the patron described above (Nawy, 1970:172).

My Milwaukee data on over 150 patrons gives a similar picture of the typical customer. This has been substantiated by clerks I have interviewed. Very few women are observed in adult bookstores. Those who do frequent them are usually either with a male or in groups of "gigglers" as one clerk referred to them. Younger males (18-25) also occasionally engage in this sort of behavior when shopping together, coming into the store to "yuck it up." Finkelstein (1970:123) reports that these younger shoppers are probably in the stores only "on impulse," while the older and more typical customers visit the shop with the deliberate intention of doing so.

Little is actually known about adult bookstore customers beyond the observational data documented above. Customers, as a whole, are extremely reluctant to be interviewed. Most attempts to get representative samples of them meet with failure (Massey, 1970; Nawy, 1970:200; Winick, 1970b: 246).

Various answers have been given for what motivates persons to use pornography. The most commonly mentioned one is that of sexual stimulation, pornography being an adjunct of masturbation. Wayland Young (1964:88) suggests that behind the pornography industry is the idea that "the customer shall have his money's worth, and that the purpose of the whole operation is to provide male consumers with something to masturbate over." Polsky (1967:188) suggests that pornography has become a "major functional alternative to prostitution," especially for males of the middle class. Pornography also serves an informational or educational purpose for some consumers, as Bell (1971:155) and Winick (1970b) point out. At times, pornography is used as a form of foreplay stimulating coitus (Polsky, 1968: 272), but "probably most people who read pornography with any regularity on most occasions read the materials for erotic titillation that does not lead to any physical sexual release" (Bell, 1971:155). Similarly, Massey (1971:86) reports that "sex-oriented materials can best be viewed as substitute products which take the place of real sexual satisfactions." In this context, Winick (1970:254) mentions "the direct stimulus function of 'forbidden fruit'" which pornography provides, as well as the opportunity to fantasize about sexual acts of all sorts; overt acts do not usually follow. Most of these suggestive answers are speculative, however.

Relevant here is Lofland's (1969:104-117) assertion that persons may engage in activities defined as deviant in pursuit of adventure of "pleasant fearfulness," as is the case when the

...Actor is fully apprised of the fact that an act or activity is considered deviant by Others. To create a prohibition is to create the possibility of deriving pleasant fear from violating that prohibition. The process of violation and the chance of "getting away with it" can assume the same contest character as the legitimated contests of conventional social life. Associated with this there can be the pleasantly fearful experience of making an excursion into the forbidden. The very fact of being out there, on the other side of the rule, can become a matter of excitement, of adventure, of feeling oneself to be daring and game. (Lofland, 1969:107)

Pornography, thus, may serve as a sexual stimulant for the overt sexual acts of masturbation and coitus. It may be sought as a source of sexual information. It may be used as a tool for sexual fantasizing, with no overt activity following. And, there is its possible use in the pursuit of stimulation derived from participation in "forbidden" activities in general. Nawy, (1970:222) states that 44.6% of his respondents report attending erotic movies or reading erotic books simply for "entertainment". Although his sample of bookstore customers is not at all representative, this response is a reasonable account which may actually include many of the other purposes mentioned above.

In addition to the foregoing reasons, at least one more reason for frequenting the adult bookstores was found in my Milwaukee data. In some stores, what appeared to be homosexual contacts were observed. Some adult bookstores serve as settings for "cruising." This is common to the gay bar (cf. Hooker, 1967; Achilles, 1967). "Cruising" has also been reported by clerks from two Milwaukee stores.

Available data suggest that the bookstore clientele have varying motives for patronizing the stores. Patrons use the stores for their individual ends with little concern for the adult bookstores per se. Various patrons will define bookstore situations differently, but all expect a certain amount of privacy in which to reach their own ends without in-

terference from others.

Three types of customer involvement in the bookstores are delineated. Throughout Chapters IV-VI, I will discuss the behavior of the customers in these various styles of involvement. Anticipating this discussion, I will briefly outline the variations between these styles. The "browser" is basically interested in magazines, keeps silent, may have his back turned to others, and will avoid eye contact. The peep show "viewer" often rushes through the store to the machines, then out again, stopping, if at all, only for quarters. (Possibly 40% of the peep show viewers are also browsers, going from literature to the peep show and then back to the literature without leaving the store immediately.) The typical "gay" customer is more likely to look around the store without showing recognition of persons or objects, waiting for someone to make eye contact with him. He is also likely to step over to the gay materials, slightly breaking the random browsing pattern typical of other customers.

Persons in each of the above customer categories demonstrate a need for privacy; to attempt to determine the relative degree of stigma, and consequent need for privacy which each experienced, is beyond the scope of this study. The peep show viewer is provided with a different ecological setting, offering him more physical isolation than the browser. This greater privacy offered the peep show customer may lead to a greater intensity of involvement (e.g., masturbation) than the browser, which in turn requires an even greater need for privacy and concealment. This is provided by the store. The need of the gay for privacy is also important (cf. Achilles, 1967; Humphreys, 1970), as he has much at stake, especially if he is a covert homosexual. Thus he waits for the other to make eye contact as he glances around the room, in this manner avoiding revelation of the true nature of his activity. Even the gay does not break the norms

of private involvement (See Chapter VI).

My purpose in this study is not to deal with the intensity of persons' needs for privacy but with analytic categories of organization as they affect privacy. At analytically appropriate points, the behavior of each of these types of customers is discussed.

Other participants in the adult bookstore play a more peripheral role in the behavior under consideration. Occasionally a supplier of "adult materials" will be seen in the stores, talking to the clerks and/or management in a manner which obviously communicates his status in the situation as that of non-customer. "Beat" policemen, in uniform, are occasionally observed quietly talking to the clerks or watching a clerk's television. This occurred on days when it was either extremely hot or raining. I would suspect that the officers in question were using the stores as a place to get out of the rain or heat, or to relax awhile. After one such visit by a police officer, a clerk with whom I was conversing remarked, "That's a bad scene, but there's no way we can keep them out."

Other agents of social control, both formal (i.e., vice squad) and self appointed (e.g., members of citizen's action groups) are occasional participants in the adult bookstore. Vice squad officers apparently visit the stores to keep tabs on the material and from time to time harass store personnel with threats of arrest. Informants report, however, that actual arrests normally only follow citizen's complaints. These come about when "concerned" citizens visit the stores, searching out the worst material they can find, purchasing it, and then filing a complaint with the police.

The sale, as well as possession, of "obscene material" is subject to legal sanctions. Because of this, the stores have developed various techniques by which to avoid legal entanglements. For example, some require purchasers to sign statements to the effect that they will not use material

bought to take legal action against the store. They also post signs informing customers of their right to refuse to sell material to any person likely to use it to take legal action.

A final participant in the adult bookstores under study was the researcher. My basic strategy was to visit adult bookstores in the covert role of customer, browsing through the material while actually directing my attention to the store and its customers. Immediately after 15 to 45 minutes of observation in each store, field notes were written and another store visited. Observations of customers entering and leaving the stores were made by parking my car outside various stores and taking notes as customers entered and left. Data on the behavior of over 150 customers were gathered, at various times and days of the week, from all of the 18 adult bookstores in the Milwaukee area. Informal interviews were also engaged in with clerks in many stores, both on and off the premises, some of whom were informed of my research role and some of whom were kept ignorant of it. Thus, the appearance of the researcher to most other participants was that of "just another customer" who paid his 50¢ deposit, browsed around the store, and possibly looked at the peep shows, although rarely making a purchase. (For further technical details, see "Methodological Appendix", p. 66.)

The setting of the adult bookstore is, as we have seen, often somewhat seedy and unattractive, suspicious of the customer and yet also protecting him from outsiders (by opaqued windows). The stores are located in the anonymous downtown business area or in working class neighborhoods, away from the middle class residential areas from which a large proportion of customers come. The typical customer, a middle aged, middle class, married white male may come to the stores for many reasons, often not the actual purchase of pornographic material. In the course of my research,

I have come to realize that one essential feature of this social situation is the maintenance of privacy and anonymity for and by the participants; the remainder of this paper will report the various ways by which this privacy is organized. But first, in Chapter II, privacy as a kind of behavior and event is considered analytically.

CHAPTER II

THE SOCIOLOGY OF PRIVACY AND THE ADULT BOOKSTORE

Alan Westin (1967:7) defines privacy as "the claim of individuals, groups, or institutions to determine for themselves when, how, and to what extent information about them is communicated to others." Bates (1964:429) conceives of privacy in a more reciprocal manner as "a person's feeling that others should be excluded from something which is of concern to him, and also a recognition that others have a right to do this." Similarly, Simmel (1950:330) realizes the reciprocal and social character of privacy: "The sociological characteristic of all these combinations is that the secret of a given individual is acknowledged by another; that what is intentionally or unintentionally hidden is intentionally or unintentionally respected." Privacy, or the concealment and control of information concerning oneself, is basic to all social interaction, as Simmel (1950:307-376) and Goffman (1959;1969) make clear. Privacy exists, to a certain extent, in any self, even if not desired, as there is a limit to the amount of information a person is able or willing to reveal concerning himself (cf. Bates, 1964). A minimal amount of privacy is the basis of personal autonomy, which is a fundamental characteristic of action.

Although privacy and the concealment of the self can be seen to operate to some extent in all social interaction, our specific concern here is with privacy as a protective maneuver and as an attitude deeply connected with sexual expression. Simmel (1950:345-346) writes:

The purpose of secrecy is, above all, protection. Of all protective measures, the most radical is to make oneself invisible.... The individual can properly do so only in regard to particular under-

takings or situations; as a whole, he can, to be sure, hide for certain periods of time, but his existence, except for very obtruse combinations, cannot itself be a secret.

As a protective maneuver, the desire for privacy and concealment in a specific realm arises out of social definitions of participants in that realm as suspect, unacceptable, or "deviant." Such definitions are likely to cause guilt in the individual, and will lead him to seek means by which to conceal his participation in the stigmatized activity.

Privacy may also protect from self-imposed sanctions. If a person keeps from others something which he feels might be disapproved, and cannot disown the basis on which he thinks others would take this view, he can more easily rationalize to himself, or by use of one of the other defense mechanisms escape the self-imposed punishment. He can say, "Well if they knew all the circumstances they might understand, but it's too risky trying to explain. I at least can make some case for myself." (Bates, 1964:433).

One aspect of protective privacy, then, is the protection of one's self-image or personal identity from the possible negative valuations of others. By maintaining privacy and through non-recognition of others in a social situation, a person can, to a certain extent, protect himself from any possible judgments they may make of him.

However, protection of one's social identity probably is an even more important reason for privacy and concealment. In this context, Goffman (1963:10-11) deals with "forbidden places" in which "an individual's mere presence, regardless of his conduct while present, communicates either that he possesses the entrance qualifications or that he is behaving improperly." A person's very presence in certain places can be seen to constitute an improper act, which, if known to others, can harm social identity. In general, persons attempt to withhold information concerning deviations from social expectations in order to maintain their own social and moral identity as acceptable persons (cf. Schwartz, 1968:744-745).

The less one reveals of himself in a questionable situation, the less chance there is of his being defined negatively in such a manner that the definition will carry over into other spheres of his social and personal life.

Protective privacy, then, is the concealment of various facts about oneself in order to protect one's personal and social identity from any negative valuations which may occur, and from the consequences of such valuations. Karp (1973:422), who has studied adult bookstores, concentrates on what he calls "hiding" behavior and summarizes its purpose in similar terms: "Hiding, in sum, may in its broadest sense be seen as an important interactional strategy for ensuring that others will see one as a 'proper,' 'social,' or generally 'worthwhile' person." In the case of adult bookstore involvement, absolute privacy is difficult to attain, and participants must construct means of preserving privacy in what is actually a semi-public situation. In the bookstore setting, protective privacy functions mainly to keep the participant hidden from outsiders--those not in the store itself. Before looking at the various means by which this privacy is accomplished, we will examine the general public attitude toward pornography in order to show why some participants feel the need to maintain protective privacy.

In American society, many persons are opposed to the dissemination of pornography and see it as a social and moral evil. A recent Life (10/16/72) editorial lamented a "national epidemic of pornography... offending public standards of morality and good taste...[which] helps create a social and cultural atmosphere that most Americans do not want for their communities or children." Bonniwell (1971:97) sees the U.S. as an increasingly "normless society" in which "continuing deterioration" is expected if the "emotional debasing of human behavior" continues unabated. Pornography is considered to have a "cumulative and debasing effect," and

control of it is a "socio-cultural necessity for the continuing vitality of the nation." Polsky (1967) and Bell (1971) both point out the general stigma under which the producers, sellers, and users of pornography fall in our society. According to Bell (1971:144,164):

The word pornography seems to denote to most Americans something that is obscene, sinful, and childish. As a result, almost all Americans are against pornography, and while some are indifferent there are few who are openly for it. Probably most people who use pornography with any frequency do so surreptitiously and rarely volunteer any indication of their interest.... For many Americans, to be against pornography is like being against sin.

Bell (1971:148-149) cites a 1969 Gallup poll which indicates that 81% of all men and 88% of all women favored stronger control of pornography. Even though there is marked public sentiment against pornography, private use is common. Whenever public and private acts are at odds, it is likely that there is a behavioral "problematic" between the two realms. Its organization in the adult bookstore setting is being explored in this paper.

Wilson (1971) reports that hard core opposition to pornography is limited to possibly only one-third of the population. However, even this minority opposition tends to create a climate of suspicion and stigma surrounding users of pornography. Social climates may have little or no relationship with individual sentiments.

Adult bookstore clientele, simply by their presence in the bookstore, are socially defined as "users of pornography." Persons' attitudes towards bookstore clientele may be extremely negative: I was told by one woman in informal conversation that "persons who go into those stores are perverts." A similar view has been expressed by a San Francisco Vice Squad Lieutenant who suggested that even though bookstore patrons may superficially appear

to be respectable married businessmen, they were in reality "unintelligent perverts" (Nawy, 1970:190).

Along with these negative definitions of pornography and its users on the social level, pornography is still to some extent prohibited legally. Most cities have statutes on the books prohibiting the possession and sale of "obscene" materials, and although these are largely unenforceable at present, the consequent stigma against users of pornography still exists.

Even the ecological setting of many adult bookstores reinforces the deviant image of the clientele. The location of the stores, the opaqued windows, and the signs aimed at persons who are offended by nudity all tend to give the customer the impression that he is engaged in what is at best a marginally deviant activity. And, once inside the store, the customer is subjected to the possible scrutiny of the clerk from an elevated booth. The use of mirrors tends "to place the customer on notice that he is someone who cannot conduct himself properly in the absence of continual observation" (Finkelstein, 1970:125). The seedy, uninviting atmosphere of many of these stores also probably contributes to their stigma.

There is, therefore, justification for the view taken here that the adult bookstore is a "forbidden" place in which many clientele will use various techniques to resolve the problematics of privacy. Such techniques facilitate the avoidance of the stigmatizing consequences of their involvement with the stores.

Another force is at work which leads clientele to desire privacy. I have in mind here the various cultural attitudes towards sexual involvement which demand privacy for such activity. The urgency of this aspect of privacy emerges once the customer is inside the store, where he uses various techniques to remain isolated from other clientele.

Cross-cultural data from 190 societies indicates that "in general

humans prefer to copulate in privacy" (Ford and Beach, 1951). Although actual copulation does not take place in the bookstores, a great deal of fantasizing about copulation does, and it can be inferred that the participants want and expect the privacy in which to do this (cf. Olden, 1972).

Humphreys (1970:11) makes a similar point:

At this stage in the development of American culture, at least, some sort of privacy is requisite for sex. Whether deviant or "normal," sexual activity demands a degree of seclusion.

Karp (1973:423) makes the point that "the search for and use of sexual products or services is [although not of the overt variety with which Humphreys deals], nevertheless a sexual activity" in which we can expect the participants to "share many of the concerns of persons engaged in even more 'illegitimate' sexual pursuits." As one adult movie patron reported, "It's like going to the toilet, you want to be by yourself" (Winick, 1970b: 250).

Bates (1964:432) points out that there is general acceptance of the notion that persons should have privacy for bodily functions such as sex, elimination, and sleeping. In dealing with "back region" behavior, that is, behavior which takes place in privacy and removed from the constraints of normal impression management, Goffman (1959:121) similarly points out that areas in which performers attend to biological needs are given "back-stage" status in our culture. And, although couched in moralistic terms, Simmel (1950:331) also points out the secret or private nature of some sexual behavior:

...evil has an immediate connection with secrecy: the immoral hides itself for obvious reasons even where its content meets with no social stigma as, for instance, in the case of certain sexual delinquencies. The intrinsically isolating effect of immorality as such, irrespective of all direct social repulsion, is real and important beyond the alleged entanglements of an ethical or social kind.

That it is due to the "effect of immorality as such" is a questionable assertion, but Simmel does make a valid point in suggesting that the desire for secrecy or privacy "is real and important" beyond its use to avoid stigma.

Sexual activity, whether overt or covert, is associated with the "back regions" of a person's everyday life. A person needs some degree of privacy and withdrawal from interaction even for covert fantasizing concerning sex. Going beyond Goffman's (1959) ecological conception of "back regions" as actual places, we see that certain activities are psychologically and personally defined as "back region" or private activity. The adult bookstore is a semi-public place, a "front region" which does not provide the privacy usually found in a "back region." And yet, the activity and pursuits of the customers in the store are of a "back region" nature. We then have the ambiguous and tense situation of behavior associated with "back regions," that is, essentially private behavior, taking place in a "front region," in public.

Consider an example of an empirical extreme for its analytic utility. In "total" institutions such as prisons and military barracks, privacy for elimination is absent. The participant must perform his most private physical acts in the full view of others. At early stages in such involvement, persons may develop strategies such as waiting until others are sleeping or engrossed in other activities before they will use the available toilet facilities, and will be extremely embarrassed when they must use them at other times, avoiding conversation and eye contact. However, with time, the same persons come to accept this lack of privacy and redefine their situation to the point where they can carry on a conversation while sitting on the toilet in full view of others. But in the case of the adult bookstore, involvement is only temporary or even momentary.

Since the adult bookstore is a momentary world, the psychological need for privacy is not as urgent as in "total" settings. The customer is in a "front region," and even though the others around him are engaged in the same activity, he still may feel embarrassed and uncomfortable that his "back stage" behavior is open to public revelation. Thus the phenomenon of public privacy emerges, as well as the mechanisms by which it is maintained.

The "back region" I have been discussing here is a symbolic one. Overt sexual behavior (eg. masturbation) associated with "back regions" does not actually openly occur in the store, but sexual fantasizing, also "behaviorally" private, does. The problem, then, is the symbolic "back region" in front and not acts themselves.

This symbolic association of sex with privacy can even be seen in archaic (but still used) English. Since at least the time of King James, human genitals have been referred to as "private parts." The customer in the adult bookstore spends his time looking at photographic depictions of "private parts;" to do so openly and publicly is problematic for many persons in light of this connotation.

As a forbidden place, simply being present in the adult bookstore is a norm violation which may be considered requiring a "remedial exchange" (Goffman, 1971) or the giving of an "account" (cf. Mills, 1940) to uphold one's social and moral character. To avoid this sort of interaction, bookstore customers develop strategies of privacy maintenance. This is accomplished through personal and social definition of their activity as private or "back region" behavior, even though it is taking place in public. In back regions, the impression normally fostered by a front region performance can be contradicted as a matter of course, with no need to give an account (Goffman, 1959:112). Thus by defining and communicating to

others involvement in a psychological "back region," even though in public, a person resists the need to interact and to account for behavior which violates the norms of his everyday world. Through various mechanisms (see Chapters IV-VI), privacy is communicated to others in the situation and reciprocated.

Goffman (1961:146) has shown how the mental patient, in order to resist the identity of "mentally ill person" which his presence in the mental hospital forces upon him, will refuse to interact or participate in what is going on around him. The patient

may avoid talking to anyone, may stay by himself when possible, and may even be "out of contact" or "manic" so as to avoid ratifying any interaction that presses a politely reciprocal role upon him and opens him up to what he has become in the eyes of others.

This same mechanism, although much less vivid, may be at work when the adult bookstore patron defines his situation as private or non-social. For if he is involved in a private, non-social, back stage activity, the definitions of others, who are probably also so involved, will have little consequence for him. Of course, care must be taken in such cases to behave within the limits which are set by the situation. Open masturbation, for example, would break the fragile adjustment necessary for the maintenance of public privacy. Participants thus are constrained to avoid such improprieties in their own interest. The point is to be as inconspicuous as possible, refusing to interact in any way, and at least feigning absorption in the pursuit at hand. Any "territorial offense" (Goffman, 1971) is studiously avoided, as remedial interaction would be required.

Ball (1966) examined an illegal abortion clinic waiting room in which unacquainted "situationally deviant clientele" waited their turn. He found a similar type of privacy maintenance, facilitated by the ecological setting,

in which "private islands which need not be shared" are provided. The possibility of eye-contact and interaction between clients was minimized, and individual anxieties were kept solitary. Although this is not provided for in the ecological arrangement of the adult bookstore (except in the peep-shows, which could be considered a more serious kind of pornographic activity), the privacy which customers work to maintain is of a similar nature. Perhaps the momentary involvement of "situationally deviant clientele" is an important factor in the understanding of the adult bookstore. "Situationally deviant clientele," even though all are "deviant," still want privacy and isolation from one another. In other, more prolonged deviant involvements, comradeship often develops, and subcultures emerge. Due to the fleeting and momentary nature of involvement in the adult bookstore, however, no urgent redefinition of the situation is necessary. Rather, participants actively work to maintain private worlds of involvement, remaining as hidden and anonymous as possible. Thus, there is a social organization of privacy here.

Other factors influencing the maintenance of privacy might be delineated. A certain amount of fear and suspicion of other clientele is present. Some customers seek to avoid social interaction in order to avert contact with possible homosexuals who may be "cruising" in the bookstore, looking for sexual liaisons.

We have seen that privacy is actively worked for by participants in the adult bookstore. This privacy derives both from the stigmatized nature of involvement in a "forbidden place" and from the essentially private nature of sexual activity in general. Viewing the resultant "public privacy" in the context of Goffman's (1959) front and back regions offers us some understanding of the tense and uncertain nature (problematic) of the intersection of private sexual pursuits with the world of public

visibility. The temporary and situational nature of this involvement (cf. Ball, 1964) helps to explain why no better adjustment than a somewhat precarious "public privacy" is attained.

I will now turn to an analysis of the specific techniques by which this privacy is maintained. If "social organization" is understood to exist insofar as persons work to maintain on-going patterns of interaction, I suggest that there is a social organization of privacy in the adult bookstore. This social organization exists because persons work to maintain the private nature of their own and others involvements, and not because it is imposed upon them (cf. Blumer, 1972:152-154). Although certain aspects of the situation-- what we will call the institutional and the ecological-- are given, the participants still take an active role in using and/or overcoming them for their own ends.

The various components (institutional, ecological, personal, and interactional) of this organization will be considered in the following chapters. The separation of privacy into these components is an analytic device used only for the purpose of clarity. In the real world of the adult bookstore, institutional, ecological, personal, and interactional factors are densely interrelated to form a viable organization maintained by the participants to meet the expectations and needs of those involved. As Lofland (1971:123) states:

The underlying philosophical point, perhaps, is that everything is related to everything else in a flowing, even organic, fashion, making coherence and organization a difficult and problematic human task. But in order to have any kind of understanding, we humans require that some sort of order be imposed upon the flux. No order fits perfectly. All order is provisional and partial. Nonetheless, understanding requires order, provisional and partial as it may be.

The analytic categories which make up the following chapters should be seen in this light, as somewhat artificial and overlapping divisions of sometimes fleeting phenomena.

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL CONTROL AND THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF PRIVACY

In this chapter we are concerned with the adult bookstores as a quasi-legitimate business enterprise subject to social (legal) control. The effect of this control on privacy will be examined in detail, as the legal factor is a major force in determining the operation and structure of the adult bookstore. It will be seen that the legal pressures on the business lead, in a sense, to the unwitting institutionalization of privacy.

Although I have not done extensive research specifically focusing on the local legal situation of the adult bookstore, I have gained a fairly accurate picture of the character of legal pressure from various bits and pieces of information gathered from store personnel, newspaper and magazine articles, research reports, and from an interview with a local alderman waging a campaign against adult bookstores in his district. The basic conclusion I have reached is that, presently, there is little effective legal control over material displayed and sold in adult bookstores. Significant changes have occurred even in the past year and a half, especially in the type of material openly displayed in the bookstores and shown in the peep shows.

According to clerks interviewed in the early spring of 1972, pictorial material depicting any actual contact of sex organs was legally prohibited, as were depictions of bestiality, fellatio, and cunnilingus. Suggestive material, showing sex organs in position but not in actual contact was allowed, and much of the material available was of this type.

A few stores, however, were apparently in the process of challenging this restriction, and were selling various magazines containing pictures which broke this norm; such material always contained an unrelated but academic text on sexual behavior. Apparently this was to meet the legal criteria of "redeeming social value" stemming from several supreme court decisions. At any rate, the law was specifically oriented to attempting to define the obscene, and bookstores were permitted to carry only material which was not definable as such.

The distinction between "hard-core" pornography and the more innocuous material carried in most stores was even subscribed to by clerks. After mentioning a newspaper article reporting the arrest of a store owner on obscenity charges, a clerk responded:

That guy was asking for it. You can't have stuff like that on the premises. The store's a public place, you know. We can't have any hard-core stuff.... I got a lot of it, but I keep it at home or in my car. Police can't invade the privacy of my property; the stores are public, so that's different. I got just about anything but I can't bring it in here.

The implication of this statement, and others like it, is that, although hard-core pornography is available in under-the-counter "private" transactions, it could not be openly displayed or sold in the stores without possible legal repercussions.

At that time (early 1972), the only stores which openly carried material which could possibly be judged as hard-core were those in which the actual owners were not normally present. Achilles (1967) described a similar phenomena for gay bars-- there was less sexual activity permitted in the bars where the owner actually operated his own business on the premises (like many adult bookstores) than in bars with absentee or corporate ownership.

In the year since these observations were made, the legal situation has changed considerably, at least when it comes to the application of the law. The legal criterion of what constitutes "obscene" material was (and is) extremely ambiguous, and stores which have enough financial backing to fight in court if their personnel are arrested on obscenity charges can usually beat the charge. A clerk in one store recently told me that he had just gone through a jury trial in another city which had cost \$20,000 but that he had been acquitted. All but the very small stores now have quite blatant material. A clerk from a store which belongs to a national chain, run by an anonymous corporation, told me "We have good attorneys" in response to a question I asked him concerning problems with the police. It seems to be a pattern that those stores owned by corporations are the least likely to put limits on the material they display, probably because they can afford to engage in litigation if arrested. The present legal situation seems to be such that if the stores keep their material hidden from people who don't want to see it and keep minors out, anything goes, and if arrests are made the charges can be beat in court. (This moreover seems to have decreased "under-the-counter" sales.)

A local alderman who has been waging a campaign against an adult bookstore in his district told me that due to "constitutional rights" there is little that can be done to control the bookstores now. People can do "anything" as long as only adults are present and are told not to enter if they are offended. He suggested that it has gone so far that if some "pervert" wanted to take off his pants in the busiest intersection in the city, he could if he first removed all minors and warned people of what he was going to do.

Humphreys (1970:154-162) discusses the social control of homosexual acts in public restrooms in relationship to what Goffman (1963:22) has

called copresence:

Copresence renders persons uniquely accessible, available, and subject to one another. Public order, in its face-to-face aspects, has to do with the normative regulation of this accessibility.

Humphreys (1970:158) points out that the legal restrictions on sexual behavior in most Western societies allow anything as long as it takes place in private with the free consent of those involved, none of whom are minors.

The criminological concern, then, is not merely with the regulation of copresence but with measures taken to insure the freedom of consent to copresence.... "Public sex," when perceived as a threat to society, refers to sexual acts so situated as to result in involuntary accessibility of others as sex objects or witnesses. (Humphreys, 1970:159)

The legal situation controlling the adult bookstore at this time seems basically to follow these lines, permitting anything as long as the participants' give consent to copresence. (This situation has developed not from any change in the law but through judicial decisions, most notably restraining orders issued by Federal judges.) This has produced a legal institutionalization of protective privacy and the segregation of deviance, rather than efforts to control or eradicate it.

The adult bookstore has developed several strategies to protect itself in light of this situation. The most obvious is the opaqued windows found on almost all stores, protecting the store from possible charges of displaying its goods to non-consenting adults or to minors.² But the opaqued

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Even without the legal necessity for opaqued windows, however, we would expect the store to provide some sort of shield for the maintenance of privacy from outsiders simply due to the private nature of the customer's involvements inside the store. The close functional equivalent to this would be the bars and taverns, which also have privacy shields such as curtains or a lack of windows; these shields are not as obvious as the opaqued windows of the typical adult bookstore, however, because most bars probably were originally constructed as such, while the adult bookstore is usually a converted conventional storefront.

windows serve another, possibly "latent" function, that of providing protection and privacy for the clientele inside. In many adult bookstores the windows and doors are so well opaqued that one does not even know if the store is open, much less if there are any customers inside, until he has actually gone through the door. By coping with legal pressures placed on the stores, privacy for the customer is also provided. J

Another means by which consent to copresence is assured is through the 50¢ deposit collected at the door in most stores. If a customer willingly makes the deposit, there is an initial public commitment made to the activity inside. In terms of Humphreys' (1970:161-162) analysis, "a high degree of consent to copresence is given upon entrance...the public's right to consent is guarded at the door by common knowledge." (Along with this actual monetary consent and commitment, a specific warning is usually present, telling the potential patron not to enter if nudity offends him or if he is under 18.) This is not to imply that the only reason for the 50¢ deposit is that of evidence of consent to copresence, however. Since only about 30% of all customers make purchases, this is also a means by which the store can increase the profit it makes.

The location of clerks directly adjacent to the entrance in most stores can also be seen to serve a dual function in that it makes it easier to control entry, especially of minors, and also provides some control over shoplifting. But this also serves to put the clientele under close scrutiny, which can easily lead to discomfort, as I myself have felt on several occasions in spite of the fact that I had personally defined my role as researcher and was accustomed to entering the stores.

Another result of the possibility of legal action, even though the norms of consensual copresence are enforced by the store, is that the personnel and owners of the stores attempt to remain anonymous. In the

case of clerks, only first names will be revealed in conversations. Stores which operate as chains do not openly acknowledge their affiliations in any way; in contrast, conventional retail stores use the fact that they are part of a chain, with stores in several areas, to their advantage. Corporate ownership of the several chains of stores allows them to function anonymously. If any legal difficulty arises, it is the clerk who must "take the rap." Therefore, store personnel are extremely hesitant to divulge any information about a store's ownership, and of course, about their personal identities.

One store has a sign posted stating that the clerk is forbidden to give out any information concerning the operation or ownership of the store, and that if anyone desires such information he must make his request in writing and will be contacted. In the course of this study, I attempted to get a part-time job as a clerk in several stores. Even as a job applicant, no information concerning store ownership was given to me beyond the first name of the person I was to contact at another location. A manager/clerk who had just come into town to open two new stores, apparently owned by an out of state corporation, would not even reveal the location of the chain's headquarters when probed. It was implied, however, that the store was owned by a corporation within a corporation, and that the people at the top chose to remain as uninvolved as possible.

I suspect that this anonymity on the part of corporate owners of these stores serves the same protective function as it does for the customer, who wishes to avoid the possible stigma of his bookstore involvement. Also important, of course, is the avoidance of legal difficulties-- the clerk or manager of the store must take the rap, although he may be defended by lawyers paid for by the anonymous corporation. The high cost of litigation is reportedly an incentive for independent stores

to stick to mostly innocuous materials or risk having to go out of business due to repeated arrests. At least one store has closed in the past year because of this.

At the time of this writing, Supreme Court guidelines have been handed down which may have a great effect on the trends towards greater openness in the display and sale of pornography. The essence of this decision is that local communities will be given a greater voice in the decision as to what constitutes obscenity, and that common guidelines no longer will apply to all communities across the country. This opens the way for Milwaukee to more strongly enforce its anti-obscenity ordinances, since the criteria for obscenity is no longer national. The legal problem will not be that of copresence but of arbitrary definitions of obscenity. And the persons making the definitions will most probably be police officers, and district attorneys (subject to pressure for re-election). The actual results of this decision will not be known for awhile but I would suspect the closing down of at least some of the adult bookstores in the area. Milwaukee's most well known adult movie theater already has been closed (temporarily) as a result of this decision. In spite of the present precautions taken concerning copresence, we would expect that many stores will be forced to revert to the older, more innocuous types of material prevalent in the past, and still evident in many stores alongside the more "hard-core" material.

In the next chapter I will consider the various ecological aspects of the stores as they affect privacy. Of course, the stores have some control over internal arrangements, but the ways in which space and objects in the environment are used is to some extent determined also by the customers.

CHAPTER IV

ORGANIZATIONAL AND ECOLOGICAL FACTORS IN PRIVACY

Organizational Factors

The adult bookstore, as a business enterprise in the market for profit from the sale of sexual products, does take a few steps to help the customer maintain privacy beyond those influenced by the law. I will first consider privacy-maintaining conditions which seem to be intentionally provided, and will then move on to look at various ecological factors which, although affected by the store, are not deliberately intended to be used for privacy-maintenance. They unwittingly maintain privacy. We will also consider several features of the bookstore which are inimical to privacy.

One of the most obvious institutional provisions for privacy is the plain wrapping provided for merchandise purchased. The "plain brown paper bag" enables the customer to conceal the nature and origin of his purchase once he is outside the store. This helps to maintain one's appearance as a "proper" person, which would not be the case if he were carrying a bag with the name of the store printed on it.

Another feature the stores offer is the private peep show booth. Here an actual ecological "back region" is provided for the peep show customer, as contrasted with the psychological "back region" which he may bring with him while involved in other areas in the store. The privacy afforded by a secluded booth, possibly with a locked door, is used in various ways by the customer, the most obvious of which is masturbation. That this occurs is admitted to by store personnel (cf. Karp, 1973:441) and is physically

evidenced by the crumpled tissues and handkerchiefs often found discarded in corners of the booths. However, in providing this form of extreme privacy from surveillance, a price is exacted from the customer. He must keep plugging quarters into the machine every 1 1/2 minutes, or a bright light may appear inside the booth and the "unoccupied" sign light up outside the booth. Often the lights indicating whether or not a booth is in use are in full view of the clerk; in this way pressure is put on the customer to continue to pay for his privacy along with his thrills. (Other situations in which privacy must be bought, most notably the pay toilet, are discussed by Schwartz, 1968:743.) In this manner, the store makes a profit by providing a relatively great amount of privacy at a high price. A clerk informed me that, at least in his store, the peep shows are the biggest source of profit. One might generalize that the greater the privacy, the higher the price.

The 50¢ deposit required of persons entering the store is usually not charged for peep show customers, who in the course of several minutes in the peep show, will spend much more than that. Although probably not an intended result, this gives the peep show customer who is interested in privacy an added advantage over the customer interested in the other material in the store, as the peep show customer can rush into the store and go straight to the peep show without even stopping at the clerk's desk. In this way, he interacts with no one, and can enter into the absolute privacy of the peep show so quickly that other customers get only a glimpse of him. The fact that most stores do not collect a deposit from those who go directly to the peep shows thus facilitates privacy-maintenance for the peep show customer. A typical entry from my field notes illustrates this:

Several other customers did come in while I was present, but went straight to the peep shows and I saw only "their blur" as they went quickly through the door.

In this manner, peep show customers remain hidden even from an observer intent on seeing them.

Various interactional postures are taken as a matter of course by the store's personnel which also tend to allow the customer a maximum amount of privacy and anonymity. These include no eye contact, no overt scrutiny of patrons, no initiation of conversation on the part of the clerk, and minimal conversation in business transactions. These basically interactional factors will be discussed in detail in Chapter VI.

At least one chain of stores offers its clientele a charge account. On one of my visits I picked up the application form for these accounts; the words in the largest type, and standing out the most were "ALL REPLIES STRICTLY HELD IN CONFIDENCE." These stores reassure the potential regular customer of their respect for his desire for privacy and anonymity, and guarantee that this will be maintained.

Clerks and proprietors are in the somewhat unique position of knowing the sexual tastes of various clientele, as no matter what means of privacy-maintenance (short of shoplifting) the customer uses, he must approach the clerk with his purchase before leaving the store. The impression I have gotten from attempting to get a job as a bookstore clerk is that potential clerks are carefully screened in most stores, and those who may have ulterior or potentially disruptive motives for desiring employment in the store are eliminated. One chain's application form even required the applicant to sign a statement saying he would submit to a lie detector test if requested to do so. As my research role may have been known to these proprietors (I had, in conversation with several clerks, divulged that information) I was never granted employment. The protective nature of this sort of screening may be mostly in the interest of the people owning and running the stores, but it seems to serve to protect the privacy

of the customer as well. The clerks, to some degree, share the secrets of a customer's possibly "deviant" sexual interests and are constrained to be protective of this information.

Ecological Factors

Various ecological features beyond those already discussed in previous chapters play both positive and negative roles in the maintenance of privacy in the stores which provide them. Two basic features are: (1) the location of the stores and (2) their internal arrangements.

The adult bookstores in the Milwaukee area are located in two main areas-- the downtown business district and the near West side residential/business area. No stores are located in middle class neighborhoods or in black areas. In considering this ecological distribution of stores, I first attempted to discover if any legal control, such as zoning regulations, was containing the bookstores in certain areas of the city. A check with the zoning bureau, however, indicated that such a bookstore could be established in any local business area in the city. I was especially puzzled by the location of five stores on the near West side within a mile and a half of each other. After consulting a city map, I came to realize that these stores are off the normal traffic routes persons entering the downtown area from suburbs or middle class areas would normally travel, but were, nevertheless, easily accessible to such persons. This area is probably attractive to store owners due to the low rents in the area, but for customers who wish to remain hidden, the area is also probably attractive. In the stores in this area, customers from other parts of the city can be almost completely assured that no one they know will see them enter. Also, there are few parking problems and patrons can avoid the difficulties experienced in this regard in the downtown area.

On the other hand, these stores lack an advantage of downtown stores in that persons from outside of the local area who use the stores are obviously making the bookstores an intended, premeditated stop. Persons shopping in the downtown stores always have the excuse that they were just walking by and happened to stop in on the spur of the moment. Shopping in the downtown stores, especially those on the main street, can be a revealing matter, as this street is always busy with shoppers and other persons. Hypothetically, I would expect those persons least concerned with privacy and concealment to frequent the stores on the main downtown thoroughfare, and those most concerned with it to use the stores on the West side. The limitations of my data (see Appendix) are such that I can only hypothesize concerning this function of the geographical locations of the stores.

Humphreys (1970:97) makes a similar assertion concerning the threat of recognition near tearooms:

Some men attempt to cover this threat by operating only in parks far removed from their homes and businesses; however, the vast majority stay close to their regular routes of travel, thus keeping an instant alibi in constant readiness.

Achilles (1967:243) makes a similar point concerning the location of gay bars, suggesting that a bar patron will often go away from where he lives and works, preferring locations where the streets are relatively empty and where he will not be seen by anyone who may know him.

Another important ecological feature is the arrangement of the stores' interiors. Store owners have an inherent interest in maintaining an atmosphere which will discourage shoplifting and prolonged browsing or loitering and so do not allow any real privacy shields within the stores (aside from the peep shows.) The customer is always in the open, subject to the scrutiny and surveillance of the clerk, although this is usually performed in

a covert manner. In spite of this wide-open feature, however, several aspects of the store environment help to promote the privacy of customers from one another.

The adult bookstores usually have a rather small stock compared to conventional bookstores. But in order to make the stock appear larger than it is, magazines are displayed on individual peg board racks around outside walls, usually with more than enough space between each title. Paperback books are displayed on lower racks, often in the center of the stores; in several stores, however, only a table is provided in the center and all other material is displayed around the walls. This arrangement of material around the walls allows the customers to keep their backs to the center of the store, thus shielding themselves from eye-to-eye scrutiny by other customers. The fact that the merchandise is quite spread out, and the aisles are wide, allows individual customers a great deal of room to maneuver while browsing without running the risk of bumping into one another or even reaching in front of others. Also, since the primary browsing interest is in the pictorial material, the usual location of such material around the walls allows the customer to keep his back to others, which would not be the case, say, if the paperbacks were lining the walls and the magazines were in the center of the stores.

The fact that material is usually segregated by interest category, however, is a negative feature for persons with unusual sexual tastes, since his location in the store may easily give away his "deviance." This is overcome by the random browsing pattern characteristic of adult bookstore patrons. Here, I take issue with Karp (1973:440) who asserts that a person's location in the store gives away the nature of his involvement. My own observations show that the customer will usually randomly examine material of all types, making his selection of material to purchase quickly

when no one is looking and only after having surveyed the entire range of available goods. Once he has removed his purchase from the rack, and walked away, only the clerk is aware of his interest.

The only exceptions to the random browsing pattern I have observed is in various cases of what I suspect to be homosexual pickups. In these instances, the parties (gay customers) involved will use the segregated gay section of the store to indicate their interests in one another. The following is a record of one such instance from my field notes (this incident took place in a bookstore across the street from a gay bar):

A white male, about 20, with long hair, dressed in an army jacket and jeans, entered the store. He seemed somewhat timid and reserved, voluntarily paid the 50¢ deposit with no comment. After looking at some heterosexual magazines, he went to the gay section, where he spent the remainder of his time in the store....

Another white male, about 35, who looked like a "mod" businessman, entered. He didn't pay the deposit; looked around the shop at much of the material, then went to the gay section and stood next to the previous customer. There was no spoken communication, but I did notice them exchange a glance. When I looked up again, both had left the store.

I observed several such contacts, and several times felt that I myself was the object of such overtures. Invariable, the person making such advances positioned himself near the gay material in the store and attempted to make eye contact with another patron. (Several clerks have mentioned that this use of the bookstores often is made.) Aside from the use of the gay material for this purpose, however, the browsing patterns I have noticed are such as to avoid any possible definition of a customer as to his sexual interests. Thus the segregated display of various types of material and its possible consequence as an identifying point of reference is for the most part overcome by a random browsing pattern, another means of main-

taining privacy and secrecy in spite of the ecological props of the bookstore.

The wide open nature of the bookstore proper presents several problems for impression management and privacy maintenance. There is no provision made for patrons to "check out" the store before committing themselves to remaining on the scene by physically entering the store. Often, other establishments (such as bars or restaurants) will provide small windows, alcoves, or intermediate hallways from which withdrawal can be made gracefully but in the bookstores this is not done. The customer must abruptly enter the store, not knowing who or what awaits him inside, and with no means of quietly withdrawing once through the door.

Another major problem of this nature occurs in the use of the peep shows. A person leaving the peep show area of the store abruptly leaves a very private world with little time to adjust to the new, more public setting of the store proper. His flushed face and possibly rumpled clothes can be a great source of embarrassment.

In the next chapter, we will consider these problems of impression management and privacy in detail, outlining the various personal devices persons use to maintain privacy in public. The various ecological factors dealt with in this chapter both hinder and help persons who desire this privacy. It is up to those involved in the setting to use it to their own advantage, as well as to overcome those aspects of it which may run contrary to their intentions.

CHAPTER V

PERSONAL FACTORS IN PRIVACY

The adult bookstore customer has various reasons for maintaining privacy in the course of his involvement. The bookstore setting offers privacy from outsiders to the customer once he is inside the store, but aside from the peep shows, there is little institutional provision for privacy or hiding from other customers or clerks inside the store. However, persons in the store behave in such a manner as to define for others the nature of their involvement as being a private one, which indicates that they have brought a psychological back region with them into the store that is not to be disturbed. Although not all customers are equally concerned with privacy-maintenance for themselves, reciprocal obligations are granted to those who are so concerned, thus allowing privacy to all who may desire it. The various behaviors we will describe in this chapter are typical of the behavior of many customers; some however, use the bookstore with no apparent concern for privacy-maintenance or hiding. As Karp states (1973:437)

Persons frequenting bookstores have available and use a number of devices for hiding, shielding, or obscuring the nature of their deviant involvement from "outsiders," ...as well as from persons similarly involved in buying or using pornographic materials. Although the majority of these devices are "personally" produced and used,...the management of the bookstores cooperate with the customers in the pursuit of "public privacy" by themselves making available a number of behavior shields.

Entrance to and exit from the adult bookstore are the two points in bookstore involvement at which the customer is visible to outsiders. I have observed two basic styles of entry behavior, both of which can be interpreted as devices constructed to conceal the nature of the customer's

involvement from outsiders.

The first pattern is that of hurried entry; the customer approaches the store entrance quickly, usually walking straight down the sidewalk until he is immediately in front of the door, where he suddenly turns and hastily enters it. In performing this kind of entry, the customer rarely surveys the street or passerby, making only one side glance as he turns into the store entrance.

A young black man...walked straight down the sidewalk quickly, appearing to be in a hurry to get somewhere. When he was directly adjacent to the store entrance, he abruptly veered into the store....

And another instance in front of a downtown store:

Another man, about 35, in a suit, was walking rapidly down the sidewalk. At the entrance to the store he quickly veered in, with one glance towards the street.

This hurried entry pattern can be interpreted as a means by which the customer attempts to appear as a normal passerby, with some destination in mind, blending into the usual traffic flow on the sidewalk until the last possible moment, when he quickly breaks out of the flow and hurries into the store. In this manner, the customer remains inconspicuous until the last possible moment. The side-glance typically seen could be a final check for persons which the customer does not want to see him enter.

A slight variation of this pattern has also been observed. Here, the person entering the store is more obviously intent on doing so as he approaches it, but by hurrying makes possible recognition of him by others more difficult.

A white man, about 50, dressed in a business suit, parked his car across the street from the store and quickly jay-walked, without hesitating or looking around. He walked at a fast pace; took off his glasses without breaking stride, and went straight into the store.

In this pattern, the customer's intention to enter the store is more obvious from the beginning, but by walking at a fast pace, recognition is more difficult. The fact that in this pattern the customer does not look around may be due to a desire to avoid having to grant recognition to anyone he may see. His involvement is private from the time he leaves his car, and he indicates this by not giving others a chance to interfere. This maneuver is evident in everyday interaction in situations when one wants to avoid a conversation with someone he knows who is approaching on a sidewalk. By appearing to be in a hurry, with eyes fixed straight ahead, the eye contact which would signal openness to interaction is avoided, and the encounter with the other is stopped before it starts. The bookstore customer, who does not want to be put in a position of giving an account for his involvement thus can avoid this by adopting the behavior described above.

In participant observation studies, the observer's own feelings can be examined as one possible instance of the feelings other participants may have. In this regard, the following excerpt from my field notes may shed some further light on the hurried entry patterns just described:

Often it takes me a large amount of resolution to go through with the visit and not walk or drive by the first store on my agenda. I have to force myself to stop. If parked, I must just get out of the car and walk quickly and resolutely to the store, focussing attention on that and not watching other things going on around me. Possibly this is due to the social stigma one fears feeling if he makes contact with any casual passerby, fear of what people, in general, will think. But if you don't give them recognition-ignore them-they can't affect you. You're already feeling a little strange (I hesitate to say guilty, but that may be the right word), even without letting others interact with you or affect you in anyway.

Karp (1973:434) reports similar feelings which he had in the course of his research. Even if persons who feel that they have a legitimate research

role, and who are accustomed to visiting adult bookstores, feel this guilt or apprehension, we can begin to understand the conflict which persons without "legitimizing" roles may feel. The quick entry pattern may be a result of firm resolve on the customer's part to enter the store regardless of who is around. By not checking the surroundings out it is easier for him to carry out his resolution to enter.

I also observed another (but less common) pattern of entry behavior. This is the pattern of spending time casually looking at any displays which may be in the store's window or of reading the various signs on the outside of the store, then entering the store as if curious as to what's inside. With this, the customer communicates to anyone who may be watching that his involvement is merely one of idle curiosity, an impulsive thing, and that he had not been in the area for the express purpose of entering the store. Although in many cases the impression conveyed may be an accurate image of the person's intent, we can be sure that others use this as a means of concealing the true nature of their intended involvement.

Exit from the store also shows evidence of various techniques to maintain the privacy or secrecy of the customers' involvement. Here again we have observed two distinct styles, both of which are similar to those used upon entry. The first of these, the hurried exit pattern, shows a desire by the participant to remove himself from the scene quickly, again avoiding any possible interaction or recognition from others:

³ Various studies done for the U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography (1970b) report that this pattern is most frequently used by younger customers, while the more typical middle-aged customer will exhibit what I have described as the hurried-entry pattern. This hurried entry pattern is given little attention in the various studies in the Technical Reports, and is completely overlooked by Karp (1973). My data tends to verify that it is mostly younger patrons which demonstrate the waiting pattern. This could also be explained in terms of regular and irregular customers. The "regulars" tend to be older, while the "irregulars" tend to be younger.

Another man, also appearing to be in a hurry, got out of his car and went quickly into the store.... One side glance when entering....he came out (carrying a package) just as quickly and followed same route back to his car, with no side glances.

The second type, the "waiting" pattern as Karp (1973:437-438) calls it, (he doesn't deal with the more common pattern) allows the patron leaving the store to get back to a more normal involvement (e.g. pedestrian or shopper), divorcing himself from the possibly stigmatizing identification of a bookstore customer.

A customer...came out of the store with a package, walked quickly to a store next to the bookstore, and looked into the display window. He then slowly went to a car parked nearby.

And, a slight variation of this:

A man who must have been in the peep shows while I was in the store came out quickly, but after about 20 feet paused to knock the ash out of his pipe. He then walked nonchalantly down the street.

In these sequences, we see several means by which patrons dissociate themselves from bookstore involvement after leaving the store. Usually this happens at a precise point, several feet from the store, and is signalled by a pause and then the resumption of a normal pace. One other means by which persons hid their store involvement was also occasionally observed. Here we are referring to the actual concealment of any purchase made, either before stepping out the door or immediately afterwards, accomplished by placing the wrapped purchase in an inside pocket.

In the preceding chapter I mentioned that the internal bookstore environment does not offer the entering customer any transitional area from which to survey the store setting and participants before committing himself to his presence in it. Neither is there a place provided for him to "check out and, if necessary, rearrange his body presentation to make certain nothing in his appearance will jar the image he wishes to convey" (Lyn

Lofland, 1966:100). This lack of provision of a place to check out the situation before entering, as well as the lack of a place to adjust one's impressions, can cause some conflict for the participant who may wish to conceal information about himself and/or to avoid having to face other persons inside the store. One of the means of dealing with this problem is going, immediately upon entry, directly to the peep show area without stopping at all in the bookstore proper. In this way the customer's visibility is greatly decreased-- he is only seen as a blur moving through the store to most customers who are intent on the material. It is possible that some customers go directly to the peep shows only if there are a relatively large number of others in the store, or if there is someone in particular present whom he doesn't want to face. Another strategy for adjusting one's appearance upon entry is facilitated by the location of the clerk, who collects the customer's deposit. After quickly entering the store, the non-peep show customer is required to pause to pay his deposit, at which time he will quickly and covertly check out the surroundings and adjust his appearance to one which communicates private involvement.

Exit from the peep show area presents an even more difficult transition. Often the customer emerging from the peep show has a flushed appearance and rumpled clothes, and may even have a visible erection. He is exiting from a dark, completely private world and must once again enter a bright area where the appearance of public privacy, with its demands for "proper" involvement, must be maintained. The most common strategy used in this situation is simply to get out fast, walking quickly through the store and out the door with no side glances, focusing the eyes directly on the door or on the floor. If the customer wants to browse in the store itself for awhile, however, he must in some way shield himself long enough

to readjust his appearance. Since there appears to be a strong norm against loitering in the peep show area (this has not been fully tested), the strategy usually used is that of engrossing oneself in the material in the store immediately adjacent to the peep show entrance, with one's back to the store and other customers. Here is a typical case of this, from my field notes:

A man came out of the peep show area and turned abruptly to the book rack.... He grabbed a book and leafed through it quickly, seeming to be doing this without really concentrating on it. His appearance was flushed and somewhat disordered, and he stood close to the wall with his back to other customers, turned slightly away from me. ...after about a minute he moved away to look at some magazines.

Keeping one's back to the other customers in the store is a common means of } maintaining privacy, but here it serves the special purpose of allowing the } customer who has just emerged from the peep show to readjust his appearance and regain his composure before having to turn the front of his body toward other customers, which is necessary if he wants to look at material other than that directly adjacent to the peep show entrance.

Along with keeping one's back to the store and other customers, various other personal techniques of maintaining privacy are used. The demeanor of most customers is such as to demonstrate a private world of involvement. No overt interest in the activities of other customers is evidenced, si- } lence is usually maintained, and the customer makes it obvious that he wishes to keep to himself. Customers usually will hold the material fairly close to their bodies, and will at least feign total engrossment in it. Eyes remain focused on what the customer holds in his hand, with no expression to give away the customer's response to the material. In fact, most customers appear to be completely devoid of any facial expression, other than astute concentration. Along with keeping one's back to the }

store, customers demonstrate a tendency to face slightly towards the rear corners of the store, or at any rate, away from any other browser who is nearby. When picking up material to look through, customers typically move their entire body in front of the object of interest, rather than reaching over for it. This use of one's body to shield involvement is a common technique of concealment.

In all of these techniques, we see customers making use of what Goffman has called "body gloss"-- the use of one's body to manage impressions.

The individual is concerned to manage not merely the offense he might give to others but also the defamation of himself that his current situation might produce....Body gloss, then, is a means by which the individual can try to free himself from what otherwise would be undesirable characterlogical implications of what it is he finds himself doing. (Goffman, 1971:129)

In the case of the adult bookstore customer, body gloss is used to define a private world of involvement, but an involvement which is unrevealing of the customer, his identity, or his sexual interests.

Customers tend to define a fairly large area around themselves as private or personal space. Any encroachment upon this causes them to withdraw. Several times I practiced intervention by such techniques as standing close to other customers or reaching in front of them for a magazine; the invariable response was for them to move away without actually looking up at me. The following typical sequence from my field notes demonstrates many of these devices for privacy maintenance:

Another customer was in the rear of the store. I worked my way around to where I was near him looking at paperbacks on a low rack where I could face him to get a good view without being conspicuous. He seemed to hold himself tightly together, turned slightly toward the rear corner of the store, and was leafing steadily through magazines. When I came near him, he turned slightly away from me. He had been facing the rear corner of the store

but now turned towards the front somewhat, since I was between him and the rear corner. I noticed that he was standing with his legs crossed-- was this to hide...[an erection]? I then moved to go past him on the same aisle, and he pulled himself way in against the display rack to avoid contact, but without looking at me at all. He must have picked up cues that I was coming past from peripheral sight of my body posture, since I did not notice him look away from his magazine....When I got past him he again turned towards the rear corner of the store, with his back towards all other persons in the shop.

A final area in which personally constructed devices are sometimes used to maintain privacy and communicate non-involvement or non-commitment to bookstore activity is found in the making of purchases. Although I will discuss the strictly interactive aspects of this in the next chapter, personal devices also enter in. When a customer makes a purchase, he does not usually select the material and carry it around with him until he is ready to leave the store. Rather, the typical customer will complete a random browsing pattern, then quickly select material which he has already seen and go over to the counter with it, often attempting to shield the actual item to be purchased so that other customers cannot see its nature. The customer will rarely approach the clerk with his material if another customer is at the counter, but will wait until the clerk is unoccupied, thus avoiding possibly revealing contact with other customers. At the counter, few words are exchanged with the clerk, and often attention is directed towards displays or signs in the store while the clerk rings up the sale, makes change, and bags the customer's purchase. Rarely does the customer show any interest in this process. When this has been completed, the customer will pick up his purchase and change, often without checking to see that it's the correct amount, and quickly leave the store. "Thank you" is rarely said by the clerk or the customer, and eye contact is never made:

A customer went over to the desk with a magazine, pulled out his wallet, paid for the material, and left the store. The magazine was wrapped in a black paper bag. There was little conversation in this transaction--all I heard was the clerk asking the customer for his entry receipt to get his 50¢ deposit knocked off the price. The customer did not seem disinterested, but I noticed that he did not count his several dollars change which the clerk handed to him in a pile, as one might do in a conventional store. He just put the change into his wallet, wallet into his pocket, and walked out. No "thank you's" were said, nor eye contact made with the clerk.

Karp (1973:442) analyzed such purchasing behavior and suggests that "the attempt clearly is to minimize the amount of time one must spend in making the purchase and thereby to appear as disinterested as possible." Karp goes on to suggest that bookstore behavior can be understood in terms of stages of commitment to deviance, with the actual purchase of pornographic materials being the most critical commitment. The risk of this final commitment is minimized by the various strategies mentioned above.

Massey (1970:50) mentions another, even more obvious privacy maintaining strategy which some customers use when making a purchase. This is to place the materials and enough money to cover their cost on the counter and then to move away, often turning one's back to the desk until the purchase is bagged and change made. The customer will then pick it up and hastily leave the store.

These various devices which persons develop in their adult bookstore behavior can thus be seen to provide protective privacy both from outsiders and from others inside the store. The customer, by his demeanor and by his use of various ecological features in the bookstore environment defines his private world of involvement, shielding himself from the view of other patrons and attempting to maintain an appearance of non-commitment to the behavior in which he is involved. Much of this overlaps with various, more

strictly interactive features of bookstore involvement which we will discuss in the next chapter. All of it can be seen to serve the purpose of concealment and privacy maintenance in the face of activity which could be potentially labeled as improper or deviant.

CHAPTER VI

INTERACTIONAL FACTORS IN PRIVACY

If "interaction" is defined as "the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another's actions when in one another's immediate physical presence" (Goffman, 1972:244), it can be seen that all of the processes by which persons work to maintain privacy are in some respect interactional. Even the various "personal" mechanisms we have discussed in the previous chapter are engaged in such a way as to influence the actions of others, at least to the extent that others are expected to reciprocate by allowing the person his world of privacy. The reciprocal nature of privacy indicated in the quotations from Schwartz and Simmel (Chapter II) becomes apparent. "Interaction" takes place, even when no verbal exchanges or overt recognition of others is evident.

In this chapter, we are interested in the various overt exchanges, or more precisely, the lack of them, between persons, and how these are managed in order to preserve the privacy and concealment desired by the participants in the bookstore.

Marc Olden (1972:60), in an article which appeared in a semi-pornographic publication under the title of "The Art of Hanging Out in a Dirty Bookstore," presents a general overview of the interactive style generally noticed in adult bookstores. The most salient features are silence and avoidance of eye contact, which Olden suggests are "unwritten rules" of dirty bookstore conduct:

At the top of the list is the old golden rule of "silence." You never, but never, start a conversation with anybody in a dirty bookstore....The

unwritten rule of silence also extends to the eyes. Keep them directly on whatever you have in your hand, which is hopefully literature or what other product the house specializes in....Customers need this freedom from disturbance to fantasize, and conversation could easily raise guilt feelings, since surprisingly enough, many people in a dirty bookstore are quite prudish. Talk brings them back to the world of reality and could mean loss of a possible sale to the store.

This interactive style of maintaining silence and avoiding eye contact is a direct result of the various forces leading to a desire for privacy (see Chapter II), as well as the solitary nature of the customer's involvement and his suspicion of other clientele.

Customers in the adult bookstore are almost always shopping alone. As Goffman (1971:21) points out, persons alone in any public setting are less free to approach strangers than are those who are accompanied; "withs" are also generally viewed as safer to approach than are singles. "The general rule in middle class society certainly seems to be that unacquainted persons should not strike up talk in public places..." (Goffman, 1971:26). Exceptions to these rules, of course, can be found in many settings, including conventional bookstores where, occasionally, unrelated persons may comment to one another on the merits of a book. In the adult bookstore, however, such exceptions do not occur.

Perhaps another aspect of involvement in the adult bookstore contributing to its interactive style is the lack of social support for the solitary participants. Social support for deviant involvement tends to sustain the activity, making it easier and more comfortable for the participants involved, giving them various group rationalizations for it. Group involvement in deviant activity actually changes the meaning of the activity for the individuals involved; in fact, persons involved in groups experience a separate world of relevance from that of singles. In group involvements,

a mutual decision to engage in an activity must be reached, and the member of the group has no fear of being seen as deviant or improper by those he is with. The group members constitute the individual's "significant others," and it is from their perspective that he evaluates his involvement and self. Group involvement, of course, is tacit admission to the group of each individual's deviant status. In the absence of social support, the person shopping alone will take the protective measures we have delineated in order to preserve a "proper" social and personal image of himself as non-deviant.

The few cases of persons shopping together which we have observed demonstrate the separate world of relevance the bookstore holds for them; they may quietly converse with each other, make comments to one another concerning the material, and express their reactions to the material by facial expression or other gestures. At the same time, however, these shoppers show respect for the private involvement of other customers, conversing in fairly low voices and avoiding eye or physical contact with other shoppers. In general, those persons observed shopping in groups (usually of two), appeared more at ease and less concerned with privacy maintenance.

Two males, about 30, in business suits... are shopping together. They seem at ease; move around the store freely; quietly exchange a few words; select a magazine and go over to the cash register. They seem comfortable while making their purchase. ... I noticed no distancing mechanisms or shielding behavior; aside from the quietness of their conversation they could have been shopping in any conventional store.

I have thus noticed less concern for privacy maintenance within the store for persons who are in the personal company of others. Of course, they must make it obvious to others present that they constitute persons in

company. Otherwise, they would be "annoying" in that they would appear to be blatantly violating norms of privacy.

My own experience of observing several stores with my wife also indicates how the nature of the situation is changed when one is in the company of another person:

The situation of going into the store with another person had some influence on my comfort there. It was not so necessary to engage in looking exclusively at the material, since there was someone I felt free to interact with.... I felt much more at ease.

Solitary participation, then, can be seen to qualitatively affect the nature of the customer's involvement in the bookstores, and is an important factor in understanding the absence of overt interaction typical of this (or any other) social setting.

Another important factor is the mutual suspicion which customers experience in the bookstores. Most customers are probably aware of the stereotype of the adult bookstore patron as being perverted or sexually frustrated, and although he is certain of his own identity and motives, he may be suspicious of those around him. The lack of interaction and the various devices of privacy maintenance or hiding engaged in by many participants can add to these suspicions, since others reveal nothing of themselves beyond their desire for privacy. Karp (1973:440) deals with this aspect of bookstore involvement, confirming my own observations:

The exact nature of the other's involvement always remains somewhat unclear. In contrast with many other deviant activity settings, pornographic bookstores, then, appear to be scenes of considerable mutual suspicion. Participants seem continually to be questioning one another's motives: "Is he homosexual? Is he a pervert? Does he want to pick me up?" Under these conditions of distrust, the need for self-isolation is maximized.

In my own experience in the bookstores, there were several times when I

felt that I was the object of homosexual overtures. The avoidance of eye contact,⁴ physical contact, and the silence which characterizes the interactive atmosphere of these stores can thus be partially attributed to this aura of mutual suspicion.

In a sense, these interactional features (silence, avoidance of eye or physical contact) constitute a normative structure of involvement for the bookstore patron, communicated to newcomers by the personal posture participants assume. The very nature of privacy maintenance in public is such as to communicate this definition of the situation to others. As is commonly acknowledged in the literature on social interaction, "Actors seek out definitions of events from Others" (Lofland, 1969:183), and the adult bookstore is no exception, even though overt interaction is kept to a minimum. We will now consider this normative structure in more detail, keeping in mind that these norms remain in effect only because persons feel a need for them and thus work to maintain them.

The existence of a normative structure can be tested by various types of intervention. In the course of my field work I attempted this by using several relatively unobtrusive strategies. Any attempt I made to make momentary eye contact with other customers in the stores resulted invariably in the other looking away. Every attempt I made to stand fairly close to

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Evelyn Hooker (1967:175) deals with eye contact and homosexual pickups: "It is said by homosexuals that if another catches and holds the glance, one need know nothing more about him to know that he is one of them." Humphreys (1970:64) also points out the significance of eye contact as a signal of willingness to engage in tearoom activity. In light of this, it is no wonder that eye contact is avoided by bookstore participants.

another participant resulted in his quickly moving aside. And, I was never able to bring myself to even attempt to initiate conversation with another customer, an inability which Karp (1973:440) also reports, suggesting that this, "in itself, is testimony to the strength of the silence norm."

Further evidence of the strength of the silence norm can be seen in situations which, if taking place in any public setting outside of the bookstore, would strongly call for verbal interaction in the form of an apology. In the following example from my field notes, I was not surprised at the failure of the offender to apologize for his impropriety, as I took for granted the norm of silence. Only in retrospect do I realize that in any other setting an apology would have been forthcoming.

I was standing at a rack of books next to the entrance to the peep shows. A man came out of the peep shows and turned abruptly towards where I was standing, brushing against me and nearly bumping into me. I recoiled physically, but he just remained standing next to me, turned slightly away, grabbed a magazine and began looking at it.

For the most part, customers take great care in maneuvering in these bookstores to avoid any incident of this nature.

Humphreys (1970:13-14) discusses the role of silence in the maintenance of privacy in public settings of impersonal sex:

Silence...serves to guarantee anonymity, to assure the impersonality of the sexual liaison. ...Silence in these settings is the product of years of interaction. It is a normative response to the demand for privacy without involvement, a rule that has been developed and taught. Except for solitary masturbation, sex necessitates joint action; and impersonal sex requires that this interaction be as unrevealing as possible.

The silence norm, then, serves as a very effective means of preserving the privacy, anonymity, and impersonality which persons engaged in solitary, situationally deviant activities desire. Through silence and an avoidance

of eye contact, a social setting is defined as "non-social" or private for the individuals involved. As Karp (1973:446:447) suggests, "anonymity... is the result of a normatively guided social production designed to show normlessness and the absence of social character, and hence the absence of negative complications for the social self of the persons involved [so long as they abide by the norms of private involvement]."

Another major feature of bookstore interaction is the avoidance of even momentary eye contact. I have already mentioned the role that eye contact plays in homosexual encounters. It is avoided by most bookstore participants for that reason alone. However, even beyond the fear of homosexual advances, eye contact is avoided because it typically serves as an interaction cue.

Eye contact serves to initiate any interpersonal encounter, "ritually establishing an avowed openness to verbal statements and a rightfully heightened mutual relevance of acts" (Goffman, 1963:93). In his discussion, Goffman (1963:93) offers the following quotation from Simmel:

Of the special sense-organs, the eye has a uniquely sociological function. The union and interaction of individuals is based upon mutual glances. This is perhaps the most direct and purest reciprocity which exists anywhere.... This mutual glance between persons, in distinction from the simple sight or observation of the other, signifies a wholly new and unique union between them.

This being the case, it becomes obvious that persons engaged in an activity which they wish to define as private and non-social will avoid making eye contact, thereby avoiding opening themselves up to further interaction. Again in the words of Goffman (1963:93), "It is understandable, then, that an individual who feels he has cause to be alienated [or to alienate himself] from those around him will express this through some abnormality of the gaze, especially averting of the eyes."

Another form of eye contact discussed by Goffman (1963:84-88) is that of "civil inattention."

What seems to be involved is that one gives enough visual notice to demonstrate that one appreciates that the other is present (and that one openly admits to having seen him), while at the next moment withdrawing one's attention from him so as to express that he does not constitute a target of special curiosity of design....[It] demonstrates that he has nothing to fear or avoid in being seen and being seen seeing, and that he is not ashamed of the place and the company in which he finds himself.

Civil inattention is the minimal obligatory courtesy due to persons in any public setting, but even this is avoided by adult bookstore customers, further evidence of some degree of guilt and the fear of being publicly "noticed."

Occasionally, however, I have seen customers blankly looking up from material and viewing the store and persons in it with a completely inexpressive stare.

A fourth customer was also present,...looking at paperbacks and facing the center of the room. Occasionally he would look up and stare without expression in front of him in my direction....He didn't give any overt indication of attempting communication or eye contact, but did keep watch-me....He later went to the other side of the store where he continued to examine material and glance around the store occasionally,...I noticed he did occasionally look at other customers, but didn't seem to let any cues out...

At first I interpreted this man's behavior as a case of waiting for someone to make eye contact with him for the purpose of a homosexual liaison (the man had been in the gay section of the store when I walked in). Whether or not this was his intention, thwarted by my refusal to meet his gaze, we can see another mechanism discussed by Goffman (1963:83-84,87) at work here. This is the "nonperson" treatment, an "improper" usage of the eyes in which recognition of the other's presence is not granted:

It is...possible for one person to treat others as if they were not there at all, as objects not worthy of a glance, let alone close scrutiny. Moreover, it is possible for the individual, by staring or his "not

seeing," to alter his own appearance hardly at all in consequence of the presence of others. Here we have the "nonperson treatment;"...

This treatment of others present in the bookstore as "nonpersons" is fully to be expected, given the private nature of the individual's involvement. (Even if he is attempting to make a homosexual contact, persons not making themselves available for this are outside his private world of involvement, and therefore "nonpersons" in their significance for him.) Yet even here there is a distinctly social character to the activity--by treating others as "nonpersons" in their significance to the actor, he is defining his world as one of privacy and in this way dealing with the others around him.

In the adult bookstore, customers typically focus their eyes intently on the material which they are examining. What seems to be operating here is a set of involvement "norms" developed to create the appearance of private involvement and non-concern with others in the environment. While at the same time maintaining an appearance of nonchalance and non-reaction to what one is examining. (To appear sexually aroused would be an impropriety.) The browser must maintain a balance between underinvolvement (and the consequent violation of the atmosphere of privacy and possible definition as a homosexual or voyeur) and overinvolvement (with the consequent possibility of being defined as improper.)

In considering these norms, it becomes apparent that the pictorial material preferred by browsers (in spite of fairly high sale of written material) is more amenable to the maintenance of the proper amount of involvement. To examine a book in any detail would require a degree of concentration which could easily lead to over-involvement, and is therefore avoided beyond a quick scrutiny of titles by most browsers. Also, the location of magazines in most stores is more amenable to the various shielding behaviors discussed in Chapter V. The actual manner in which

magazines are examined also demonstrates the operation of involvement norms-- the customer typically will steadily leaf through the material, spending an equal amount of time glancing at each page, apparently avoiding the overinvolvement which could occur were he to spend an inordinate amount of time examining a single page.

Here, we must not overlook the fact that these persons are "customers," constrained by the setting and their role in it to appear to be examining material with the intent of selecting a purchase. My own research activity was hindered by this fact in one store which discouraged any browsing by sealing all of their material in plastic, even going to the extreme of stapling shut the tabloids on display.

The norms of involvement, then, can be seen as adjustments made to manage the tension between various situational expectations and the pursuit of one's own ends. The store, as a store, has an inherent interest in minimizing browsing and maximizing sales; the social nature of the setting demands seemingly complete involvement for the maintenance of public privacy; and various personal motives (the desire to get "the most" out of the material, to maximize one's length of stay, and to spend as little money as possible in doing so [Olden, 1972]; along with the possible desire to use the store for the purpose of making sexual contacts) combine to create a difficult and tenuous adjustment for the customers to make.

I suspect that some customers, while appearing to meet the various norms of involvement, are not as intently concentrating on the materials as they appear to be. Some seem to spend an inordinate amount of time in certain select bookstores, and when watched closely do not appear to be as oblivious to their surroundings and the others in it as the casual observer would at first conclude. Perhaps these persons are just "killing

time" in an exciting, stimulating, and deviant atmosphere, or perhaps they are waiting to make sexual contacts. (We cannot be sure of their underlying motives.) Or, perhaps they are just somewhat paranoid but otherwise typical adult bookstore customers, maintaining the facade of "normal appearances" and proper involvement while at the same time covertly watching others to be sure they are behaving correctly and are not a cause for alarm. Goffman's (1971:238-333) essay on "normal appearances" suggests that a great deal of social behavior is of this somewhat paranoid character, and the sinister atmosphere of the adult bookstore would seem to be as likely a setting as any in which we would expect it to occur.

A final area of adult bookstore interaction to be considered is that of the clerk's behavior. The most significant aspect of this behavior is that the clerk will not initiate interaction with the customers, except to collect the fifty cent deposit if the customer does not voluntarily pay it upon entry to the store. Even in such cases the interaction is accomplished quietly and briefly, calling as little attention as possible to the customer. Although clerks do not normally initiate interaction, they will converse with customers about the material if approached. It must be the customer who initiates such transactions; clerks will never ask a customer if he can help him find something, as is common in conventional stores. (Olden, 1972, reports that an exception to this does occur in cases in which clerks feel that a customer has stayed too long in the store without making a purchase. I never noticed such exceptions in my observation, even in cases in which customers were browsing for as long as an hour.)

The surveillance of customers by the clerk, which is necessary to prevent shoplifting, is usually accomplished through covert, concealed glances or through the blank staring which characterizes the "nonperson" treatment. Even when taking money from a customer for his purchase, clerks avoid eye

contact or close visual scrutiny of the customer. The amount of conversation involved in making transactions is also minimized, apparently in cooperation with the various personal strategies used by customers to maintain privacy and minimize involvement when making purchases. Change is very rarely counted out as in a conventional store, but is simply handed to the customer in a pile. Very rarely will even a "thank you" be heard.

These strategies on the part of clerks are probably used in order to avoid the loss of sales which may occur if the privacy of customers is violated, and are again indications of the importance to the store of cooperating in the customer's desire for private involvement.

In all of these interactive strategies, we have seen that by defining their involvement as private, adult bookstore customers do in fact deal with one another. Ironically, privacy is a highly public affair. Through various behaviors, customers show mutual support for privacy and hiding, communicating to one another the private nature of their world of involvement. Through the support of these various norms of bookstore behavior, persons work together to maintain the social organization of privacy.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF PRIVACY-A SUMMARY

In this paper I have discussed the various components of "public privacy" with data collected in the empirical world of adult bookstores. The desire of bookstore patrons for privacy is reasonable on several grounds, most notably the stigmatized or "deviant" nature of such involvement and the basically private nature of sexual activity in general. Customers can be expected to desire concealment (protective privacy) from outsiders, which is partially provided by its "legal institutionalization" in the form of opaqued windows and the exclusion of nonconsenting participants. Various personal mechanisms (e.g., hurried entry) are also developed by the participants to conceal their involvement from outsiders.

Inside the store, many participants further define their involvement as private. This privacy maintenance is a result of the solitary nature of bookstore shopping, the momentary feature of such involvement, the mutual suspicion of other customers, the possible feeling of guilt experienced when engaged in looking at pornographic material, and the further fear of stigma which may result from being observed in such involvement. Various personal and interactional strategies are adopted which serve to maintain privacy and concealment for the individual. These include the use of ecological props for the shielding of one's involvement, the use of institutionalized areas of complete privacy (i.e. the peep shows), and various interactional techniques such as the maintenance of silence and the avoidance of eye contact.

Through these various strategies, participants define for themselves

and those around them a private world of involvement, made possible only by the co-operation of all. Privacy in public is a social organization in that participants work to maintain it, but also in that it has been institutionalized through various features of the legal system, of the adult bookstore setting, and by the various norms of bookstore involvement. Both persons and institutions thus exert efforts for privacy.

Throughout these foregoing chapters, we have shown how each factor in the social organization of privacy differentially affects three kinds of customers (browsers, viewers, and gays). Some of these factors have a major impact on certain types of customers and little on others. Variations in the impact of these factors on customers is reflected in the relative richness of the data discussed.

These findings are especially significant for the study of social interaction per se in that the social nature of even private involvement is apparent. Participants communicate to one another the "non-social" (private) nature of their involvement. It is apparent that even privacy behavior (if not taking place in physical isolation from others) is essentially social in character, demanding the reciprocal support of all participants involved in order to remain viable. Persons, by their very demeanor, help others to define the situation in the desired manner (specifically, as private and non-social). As Goffman (1971:137) points out

...persons present together who are not engaged together in talk, nor members of the same with, can still, of course, interact quite significantly with each other. The notion that a person is alone when he is in a crowd, an anonymous atom, has a literary truth that actual street scenes are made of. Alone he may be, a silent single, but as ready with displays as a deaf mute at a block party.

Even in a situation in which the participants have good reason to desire privacy and anonymity, social interaction (the exchange and interpretation

of meanings) can be seen to occur.

In all of this, we can see that the maintenance of public privacy necessitates the reciprocity which is the basis of all human social life. By all his actions and gestures, the participant communicates the private nature of his temporary world, and others around him reciprocate by allowing him this privacy without interference. Here we can see that reciprocity serves as the basis of "non-interaction," as well as the foundation upon which interaction itself is based. Most discussions of reciprocity deal with it only as the mechanism by which interaction is initiated, and overlook the fact that it also can be used to explain the absence of overt interaction.

My discussion of the social organization of privacy and the mechanisms by which it is accomplished indicates another important aspect of social interaction: its dialectical character. Private, nonsocial behavior at the same time gives rise to its opposite, a social statement communicating the nature of one's involvement.

APPENDIX

FIELD WORK METHODS AND THE PROBLEMS OF INFERENCE

The data reported in this paper were collected over a period of a year and a half of field work. The primary role assumed was that of bookstore customer, due to the difficulty of gaining any other legitimate role in the situation. (I attempted to get part-time employment in several adult bookstores, but was not successful in these attempts.) Observations (lasting from 15 minutes to well over an hour at a time) were made in each of the adult bookstores in Milwaukee, at varying times of the day and on varying days of the week. This technique gave my observations a somewhat random character, overcoming any possible periodicity in bookstore behavior. My basic in-store technique was to participate in browsing activity, feigning involvement in the bookstore material while actually observing the behavior of the customers and store clerks. Field notes were written up immediately after each visit, recording ecological characteristics, customer characteristics and behavior, and my own reactions and feelings as an observer and participant in the situation.

Another technique used in conjunction with in-store participation was simple observation of entry and exit behavior, usually done from my parked car immediately before or after in-store observation. In this situation I was able to take detailed notes as customers were observed.

Another method used was the interviewing of bookstore personnel. This was accomplished by using informal, nondirective techniques, often in the guise of simple conversation with the clerks concerning the bookstore and its customers. This technique was fruitful only in a few stores--in others,

the personnel are prohibited from such discussion or not open to it. Several clerks were advised of my research role, while others probably perceived me as an interested customer. These "interviews" ranged in length from five minutes to two hours per session, all but one of which were conducted on the bookstore premises. The interview data which was gathered from these sessions have been of minimal importance, since clerks are not as aware of customers' behavior patterns as I had expected them to be. As Schutz (1953) would say, they are not usually engaged in "secondary" observation.

Various methodological problems were encountered in the course of my field work which merit discussion. One of the basic problems I faced was that of the momentary nature of my legitimacy in the bookstore situations. To remain in a store for prolonged periods of time was out of the question, as involvement as a customer has definite time limits which I did not want to challenge. This difficulty was overcome in two ways. In one store I developed a certain amount of rapport with the clerk on the evening shift, who allowed me to remain in the store for several hours at a time, as long as I maintained the appearance of legitimate involvement (e.g. looking at store materials) or was conversing with him. This situation was relatively short lived, however, as the clerk quit soon after I began my field work.

Fortunately for this study, there are a fairly large number of adult bookstores in the area, and the second strategy initiated to overcome my momentary legitimacy was to visit each store in turn, spacing my visits in such a way that I was not a frequent "shopper" at any one of them. This was especially important since I rarely made any purchase. Clerks also rotate shifts, and so I was able to make two visits to any one store on the same day when this was necessary. In summary, the problem of momentary legitimacy was overcome by the availability of a number of settings in

which similar behavior could be observed. This also allowed a certain amount of store to store comparison, although these were not especially fruitful for the purposes of this study.

The major problem faced in doing my field work revolves around the involvement norms (see Chapter VI) constraining all bookstore customers. Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1970) makes it clear that only unposed natural behavior should be used in ethological research, and that man's natural behavior is altered if he is aware of being observed. I felt it necessary, then, to abide by the involvement norms of the situation to avoid changing or disrupting the behavior I wished to observe. Thus it was necessary for me to maintain an appearance of involvement in the material and also to avoid appearing to be overinvolved by looking at one page for an inordinate amount of time. I had to continually move around the store, leafing through the material, while at the same time observing the behavior of customers out of the corner of my eye or in furtive glances up from the material.

I developed several strategies by which I maintained (at least in appearance) the proper amount of involvement while also maximizing the amount of observation I could do. Of primary significance here was my position in the store. Upon entry, I would quickly survey the store's layout, looking for the best vantage points from which I could view its entirety. I would then work my way from one of these points to another, standing in one place as long as I felt comfortable, then moving around again and surveying the store from other vantage points. (One of the observer's "trials" in doing this research is that pornographic materials get extremely boring in a short time, one factor which helped me keep the length of my visits within an acceptable time limit.) A quick visit to the peep shows was also occasionally incorporated; this constant moving around gave me a chance to watch participants rather than having to con-

stantly look at material held in my hand.

The best vantage point from which to observe behavior turned out to be from behind racks of paperback books in most stores. These racks are often located several feet from the wall, so by standing in the aisle (with my back to the magazines lining the walls, which are most popular for browsers) and looking over the racks of paperbacks I was able to survey the entire store. In this way I minimized the necessity of looking over my shoulder, which was required if I was looking at the magazines lining the walls. Here again the problem of maintaining "proper" involvement was acute, since it was necessary to appear to be browsing through the paperback books, with occasional glances up and around the room. (Often I reminded myself of the classical stereotype of the detective maintaining surveillance of a suspect from behind the shield of a newspaper.)

One factor which made my observations more accurate and reliable was that there are generally very few customers in the store at one time. (A store with five customers browsing at once actually appeared to be crowded; many times no customers were present at all.) I was thus able to concentrate on periodically watching the behavior of each customer, shifting my attention from one to another and then back again. It was only when many customers came and went in quick succession that I felt my observations to be incomplete; this was especially the case if I happened to be in a poor location in the store.

At any rate, by making use of the maneuvers described above, and through repeated observation sessions, I believe that my data accurately describes the behaviors of adult bookstore customers. The actual frequencies of these behaviors, however, is not possible to determine due to the somewhat spotty nature of my observations.

Various methodological problems also arise in the analysis and report-

of data of this nature. Although most closely following the methodology of analytic induction, I cannot make the claim of an absence of negative cases which a pure inductionist's argument should do. My basic purpose was the description and analysis of specific behaviors in which persons engage; the fact that all customers do not engage in these behaviors all the time should not detract us from the reality of these behaviors. (Future research could be directed at discovering the actual frequency of occurrence of various specific behaviors, and possibly at discovering the characteristics of those who are concerned with privacy maintenance as against those who are not. It was not possible for me to do this.) What is reported in this thesis are various uniform patterns of behavior which I have observed as occurring frequently and regularly in adult bookstores. The use of verbal hedges such as "many," "frequently," "seldom," and "occasionally" in place of the reporting of absolute frequencies is necessitated by the nature of my data, and is common to research of this nature. Lofland (1971:113) makes this point clear:

the role of the...participant observer is not organized properly to deal with these quantitative questions. About the most that one can properly do is to report suggestions and impressions about frequency and correlation.

This is what I have attempted to do in reporting and analyzing my data.

The final, and perhaps most significant problem in the analysis of my data has to do with the inference of various psychological states, meanings, and intentions on the part of the bookstore participant. The fact that I could not interview customers (except through talking to various friends

⁵ Since interview data may largely be an artifact of the interview situation itself, as Phillips (1971) indicates, the lack of an opportunity to interview customers may not in itself be a negative factor, especially when we are concerned with behavior designed to maintain privacy and concealment.

concerning their own adult bookstore involvement) meant that it was necessary to infer certain motives from simple observations of behavior. Inference is necessary even in the study of the behavior of rats (cf. Phillips, 1971:144-145), and to hold to a strictly behavioristic position would be an absurdity.

One assumption guiding the inferences we have made is that, consciously or unconsciously, all human actors have a world of meaning which they bring with them into any situation in which they are involved. This world of meaning is shaped by various experiences. Another assumption is the person's desire to be seen as "proper" by situationally significant others. Persons thus develop various strategies for dealing with each other and maintaining proper appearances in the face of social involvement. We have demonstrated throughout this paper the various social influences which lead to a definition of adult bookstore involvement as "improper" as well as the possible social and psychological motives for defining such involvement as private. It is therefore reasonable to infer that the participants in the bookstores desire to maintain privacy as we have defined it.

Another approach to inference can also be taken. Analytically, if privacy maintenance exists we would expect it to be manifested in various facets of the social organization of the adult bookstore. In my observations of this social organization in its everyday operations I have seen many factors that are best understood from the perspective of privacy maintenance. I therefore feel justified in inferring that this is, indeed, what is in operation.

The fact that other researchers have come to similar conclusions concerning the same behavior can also be invoked as evidence of the correctness of our interpretations. In this regard, the research done by Karp (1973) is most notable, especially since many of my own interpretations had al-

ready developed before I became aware of his work. And, although never specifically focussing on the problem of privacy maintenance, the various "Technical Reports" of the U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography (1970b) make repeated references to the guilty and anxious appearance of many bookstore patrons, the silence, and the lack of eye contact in the situation which I feel can only be interpreted in the manner which I have done.

A final basis from which inferences concerning other's behavior can be verified is in the examination of one's own feelings in the same situation, since as human beings living in the same cultural milieu we are apt to experience similar feelings in similar circumstances. My own hesitancy to enter the bookstores in the early stages of this research, my own uneasiness while in the stores, my inability at initiating any conversation with other customers, and my apprehension about entering the bookstores when people I didn't even know were around ("What will they think of me?") all attest to the fact that privacy maintenance is a basic concern in the social organization of the adult bookstore.

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