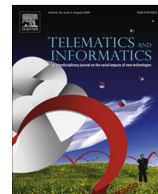




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## Does ideology matter for surveillance concerns?

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## ABSTRACT

The analysis of survey data pooled from the Pew Research Center's Privacy Panels revealed that ideological proximity influences individual concerns about government surveillance. Two dimensions of ideology—allowance for government interference in the personal sphere and in the economic sphere—manifest themselves as four types: libertarians (less allowance for interference in both spheres), liberals (less allowance in the personal sphere but more allowance in the economic sphere), conservatives (more allowance in the personal sphere but less allowance in the economic sphere), and communitarians (more allowance in both spheres). Whereas libertarians and liberals have more concerns about government surveillance, conservatives and communitarians have fewer concerns. Given the salient differences between the libertarian-liberal ideology and conservative-communitarian ideology, findings of this study revealed that government interference in the personal sphere matters more for surveillance concerns than government interference in the economic sphere. Actual control for privacy protection, information sensitivity, and perceived transparency predict significantly the level of surveillance concerns.

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## 1. Introduction

Information privacy concerns have drawn keen attention from research fields related to information systems and marketing. Most studies to date have focused on companies and advertisers as triggers of privacy concerns because these entities extract personal information from daily communications, exchanges, and transactions. Whereas diverse activities (e.g., online purchases, social media use, and messenger service use) that contemporaries engage in involve mostly the private sector, government actions may invoke concerns about information privacy. Especially, an increasing level of government monitoring is gaining greater legitimacy from some individuals but losing support from others. The level of surveillance is a matter for the citizenry to accept (or reject) and the government to justify (Dinev et al., 2006; Dinev et al., 2008; Simone, 2009).

Value judgements, in terms of individual acceptance and governmental justification, are distinguishable from privacy-related attitudes and behaviors in the business sector. As Simone (2009) claimed that government surveillance necessarily shrinks civil liberties to a certain degree, concerns about surveillance depend on the degree to which liberties are valued. Political scientists have argued that concerns and attitudes about government surveillance determine one's political stance and level of political participation (Best and Krueger, 2011; Best et al., 2006; Krueger, 2005). The evidence leads to a compelling argument that political ideology shapes surveillance concerns to some extent.

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Despite this natural line of inference, only several prior studies (e.g., Dinev et al., 2006, 2008; Lim et al., 2009; Pavone and Esposti, 2012; Smith, 2005) have dealt with information privacy concerns in the context of government surveillance; moreover, no research has referred to surveillance concerns as ideological products. This study tackles the underexplored and understudied area of ideology-driven concerns about government surveillance. The study raises the following research question: “Do individual concerns about governmental intrusion into information privacy differ based on ideological proximity?” To answer this question, data from the Pew Research Center’s Privacy Panel Survey were used.

This paper is organized into five sections, including the foregoing introduction. Based on the review of relevant literature, Section 2 establishes the ideological typology, describes theoretical predictors of information privacy concerns in the surveillance context, and proposes testable hypotheses. Section 3 introduces data, measurements, and methodology. Section 4 presents the results of the analysis and hypotheses tests. Section 5 discusses theoretical implications, research limitations, and practical suggestions. Finally, Section 6 presents the concluding remarks.

2. Literature review

2.1. Privacy and ideology

The value-based definitions of privacy involve two dimensions: privacy as a right and privacy as a commodity (Smith et al., 2011). The 19th century definition was “the right to be left alone” (Warren and Brandeis, 1890). This normative view has served as a cornerstone of court decisions for a lengthy period, raising two issues: the need to define privacy more specifically beyond the right to be left alone and consideration of the state as the protector of privacy (Smith et al., 2011: 994). On the other hand, a call for greater privacy is antagonistic toward the political economy of information markets (Bennett, 1995; Cohen, 2001). Since privacy has an economic component, its reconceptualization extends from a right or civil liberty to a commodity in exchange for perceived benefits (Campbell and Carlson, 2002).

Whereas previous research has addressed privacy as an ideological concept, the nexus between privacy and ideology requires a more elaborate understanding. Studies regarding political economy have developed the understanding of ideology in the U.S. following two-dimensional views. Fig. 1 juxtaposes three frequently cited typologies (Janda et al., 2002; Maddox and Lilie, 1984; Swedlow and Wyckoff, 2009) that Swedlow’s (2008) essay concretely describes as bi-dimensional conceptions of ideology. Maddox and Lilie (1984) suggested that “attitudes toward government intervention in the economy” and “attitudes toward the maintenance or expansion of personal freedom” are two dimensions. Janda et al. (2002) reinterpreted the earlier typology according to the order and equality axes. Swedlow and Wyckoff (2009) proposed a cross-tabulation between social and economic regulations.

As Fig. 1 illustrates, libertarians support expansion of personal freedom but do not support any type of regulation. They choose freedom over both order and equality. Communitarians, holding opposing viewpoints to those of libertarians, favor any type of government regulation, even if it diminishes personal freedom. Communitarians are willing to sacrifice freedom for both order and equality. Liberals support government intervention in economic affairs (economic regulation) but dislike

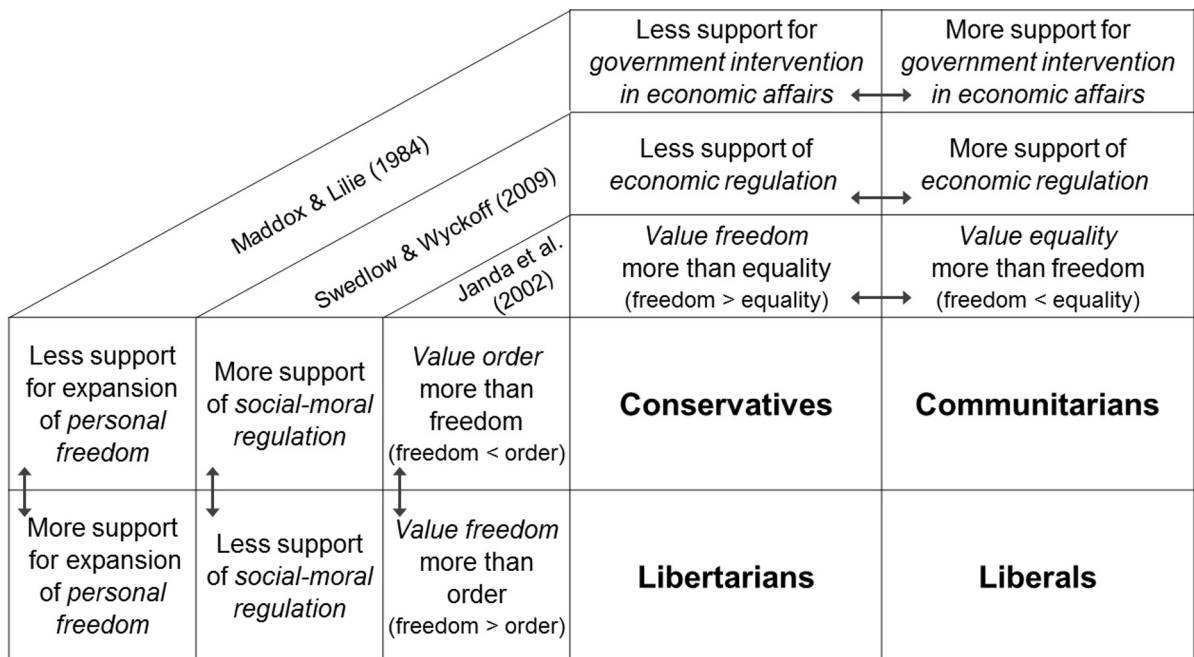


Fig. 1. The typology of ideological dimensions.

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