

## Review

Search



### The subjective value of privacy: assessing individuals' calculus of costs and benefits in the context of state surveillance

Antoine L., Springer International Publishing, Weisbaden, Germany, 2024. 241 pp. Type: Book (9783658464615)

Date Reviewed: Jul 17 2025



Internet users, software developers, academics, entrepreneurs--basically everybody is now aware of the importance of considering privacy as a core part of our online experience. User demand, along with various national or regional laws, have made privacy important. And privacy is an all-encompassing, complex topic. For newcomers to computer networking, I recommend Brian Kernighan's excellent work [1]. However, how do regular people--in our many capacities--feel about privacy? Lukas Antoine presents a series of experiments aimed at better understanding how people throughout the world understand privacy, including how this impacts views on security.

Privacy is often portrayed as a value in tension with surveillance, particularly state surveillance, in the name of security. Conventional wisdom presents the idea of the privacy calculus, that is, it is often assumed that individuals continuously evaluate the costs and benefits of divulging their personal data, sharing data when they expect a positive net outcome and denying it otherwise. This framework has been accepted for decades, and the author wishes to challenge it. This book is clearly his doctoral thesis on political sciences, and its contents are as thorough as would be expected in this kind of work.

The author presents three empirical studies based on cross-survey analysis. The first experiment explores the security justifications for surveillance and how they influence support. The second one looks at whether the stance on surveillance can be made dependent on personal convenience or financial cost. The third study explores whether privacy attitude is context-dependent or can be seen as a stable personality trait. The specific take, including the framing of the tension between privacy and surveillance, has long been studied [2]; however, as Sannon et al's 2022 article shows [3], social and technological realities require our understanding to be continuously kept up to date.

The book is for readers who want an in-depth look at the topic. I have authored several works on different aspects of privacy [4,5], but this book did get me thinking on many issues I had not previously considered. Looking for comparable works, the chapter organization in Friedewald et al.'s 2017 book seems to follow a similar thought line [6].

In summary, the conceptual and theoretical frameworks and presented studies are thorough and clear. The author is honest in explaining when his hypotheses are confirmed or disproven. My complaint concerns the attention paid to editorial aspects, for example, the sub-subsection depth is often excessive and unclear. Also, when publishing monographs based on doctoral works, it is customary to no longer refer to the work as a "thesis" and to soften some of the formal requirements such a work often has (thus producing a more readable book). This book seems just like the mass-market version of an otherwise very interesting and well-made thesis. The book includes many theoretical references, and the author does a very good job of explaining his path. However, it's a heavy read, especially for those not from the social sciences tradition.

Reviewer: [Gunnar Wolf](#)

Review #: CR147993

- 1) Kernighan, B. W. *Understanding the digital world: what you need to know about computers, the Internet, privacy, and security*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2021.
- 2) Nock, S. L. *The costs of privacy: surveillance and reputation in America*. De Gruyter, New York, NY, 1993.

#### Recommendations

★ Featured Reviewer

#### Related Topics

Browse

Alerts

Privacy (K.4.1 ...)

Add

Manage Alerts

More Alerts

- 3) Sannon, S.; Sun, B.; Cosley, D. Privacy, surveillance, and power in the gig economy. In *Proc. of the 2022 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI)* ACM, 2022, Article No.: 619.
- 4) Wolf, G. Mecanismos de privacidad y anonimato en redes: una visión transdisciplinaria. Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas, UNAM, Ciudad de México, México, 2021.
- 5) Pseudonymity and Anonymity. *XRDS: Crossroads* 24, no. 4 (2018). <https://xrds.acm.org/archives.cfm?iid=3239334>.
- 6) Friedewald, M.; Burgess, J. P.; Čas, J.; Bellanova, R.; Peissl, W. *Surveillance, privacy and security: citizens' perspectives*. Routledge, New York, NY, 2017.



Would you recommend this review?

☐ yes

☐ no

Other reviews under "**Privacy**":

**Date**

[Handbook of personal data protection](#)

Nov 1 1993

Madsen W., Stockton Press, New York, NY, 1992. Type: Book (9780333569207)

[Privacy and security issues in information systems](#)

Nov 1 1985

Turn R., Ware W., Wadsworth Publ. Co., Belmont, CA, 1985. Type: Book (9780534042578)

[Data bases](#)

Nov 1 1985

Burnham D., Wadsworth Publ. Co., Belmont, CA, 1985. Type: Book (9780534042578)

[more...](#)

[E-Mail This](#)

[Printer-Friendly](#)

**REVIEWER'S AREA**

**MASTHEAD**

**SUBSCRIBE**

**NEWS**

**TIPS**

**HELP**

**CONTACT US**

Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Copyright 1999-2025 ThinkLoud®

[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)