

PARTISAN OVERLAP IN CULTURAL PREFERENCES

A Mixed-Methods Approach

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May 13, 2020



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Motivation

- Partisans are developing diverging cultural tastes
- These apparent differences are leading to partisan cultural stereotypes
- These stereotypes are used to infer partisanship and exacerbate affective polarization
- But, the evidence for the accuracy of these stereotypes is questionable

Bertrand and Kamenica, 2018

Vavreck, 2011

Mutz and Rao, 2018

Hiaeshutter-Rice, Neuner, and Soroka, 2019

Deichert, 2018

Background

- Partisans appear to prefer different television programs, books, music, clothing, and where to live
- Academic studies have reported differences in a variety of cultural tastes, practices, and beliefs
- You can even predict partisanship reliably based on just consumer behavior

Katz, 2016

Piper and So, 2016

The Economist, 2019

Kapner and Chinni, 2019

Bishop, 2009

DellaPosta, Shi, and Macy, 2015

Mutz and Rao, 2018

Margolis and Sances, 2017

Oliver, Wood, and Bass, 2016

Bertrand and Kamenica, 2018

Background

- But, we have reason to doubt these findings
- Evidence shows that partisans do not actually sort geographically
- Results identify pathways only correlated with partisanship
- Many results based on geographic aggregation
- Prediction results are sensitive to extreme cases
- Survey methods notoriously plagued by inaccurate reporting

Mummolo and Nall, 2017

Martin and Webster, 2020

Prior, Sood, and Khanna, 2015

Bullock, Gerber, Hill, and Huber, 2015

Background

For better results:

- Collect individual level data
- Use network methods to evaluate audience fragmentation
- Remember to collect qualitative outcomes

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ: Do Democrats and Republicans have different film preferences?

H1: If Democrats and Republicans have different film preferences, then they will produce different sets of film recommendations.

H2: If Democrats and Republicans have different film preferences, then they will have different perspectives towards most films they share preferences for.

Data

- Data collected from a survey of over 2,000 American partisans in October, 2018
- Respondents asked to recommend 3 to 5 films every American should see in their lifetime
 - The distribution of the number of times each film was recommended is very long tailed
- Respondents then asked to explain their selections

Methods

- Film lists used to construct a network of respondents linked to other respondents
- Community-detection analysis
- Graph polarity between communities and partisan groups
- Network assortativity measures calculated based on respondents' number of connections, gender, race, and party affiliation

Raghavan, Albert, and Kumara, 2007

Pons and Latapy, 2005

Finn, Mustafaraj, and Metaxas, 2014

Methods

- 1,384 explanations were selected for qualitative coding
- Explanations were coded for their thematic content
- Theme use modeled on party affiliation

Results

Community Detection

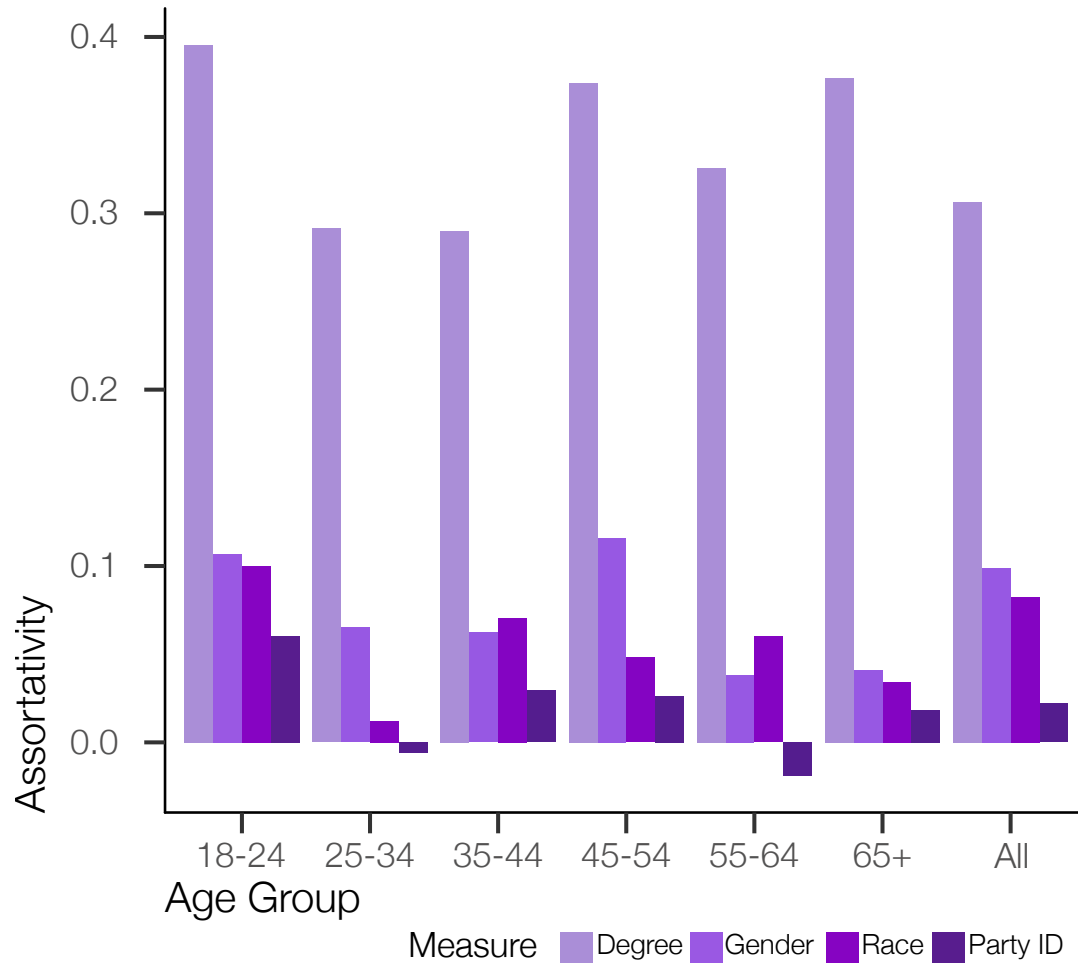
- Unable to identify party affiliation via label propagation
- Some partisan clustering in densely connected communities

Graph Polarity

- Communities identified via Walktrap algorithm not polarized
 - Graph Polarity = 0.57
- Democrats and Republicans not polarized
 - Graph Polarity = 0.52

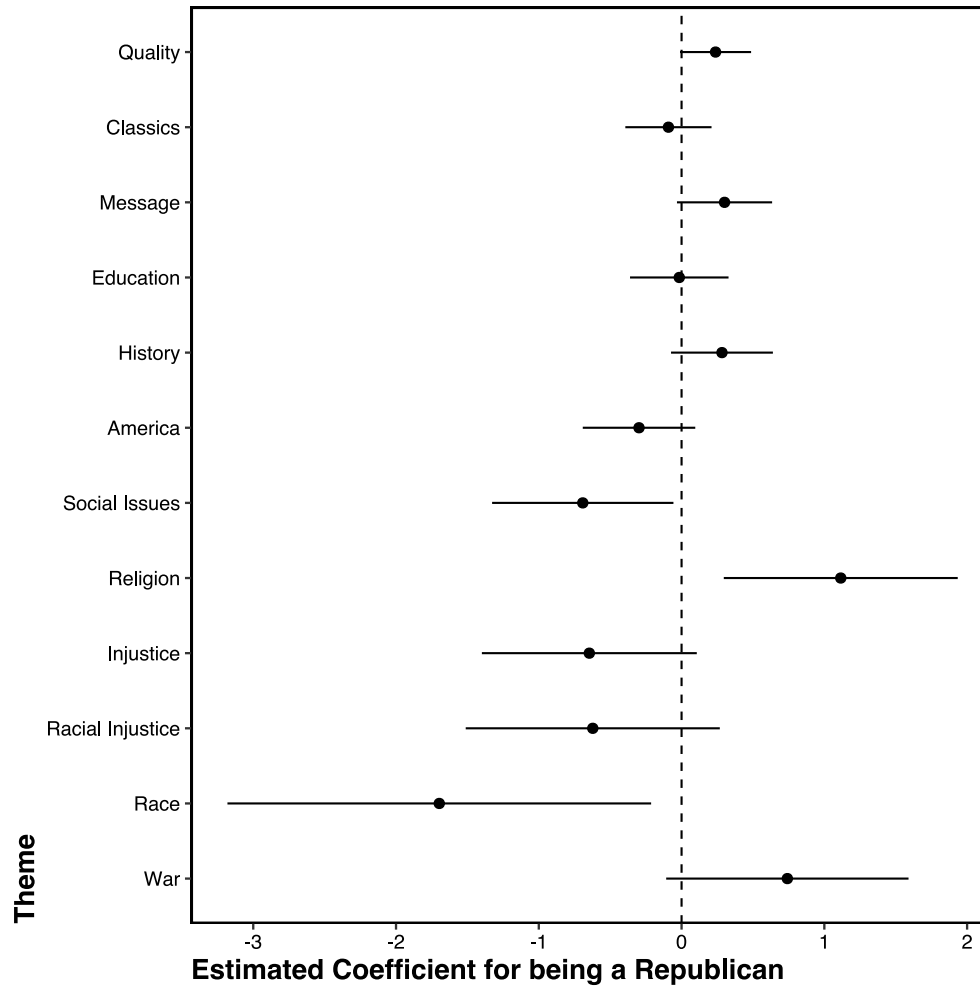
Results

Assortativity



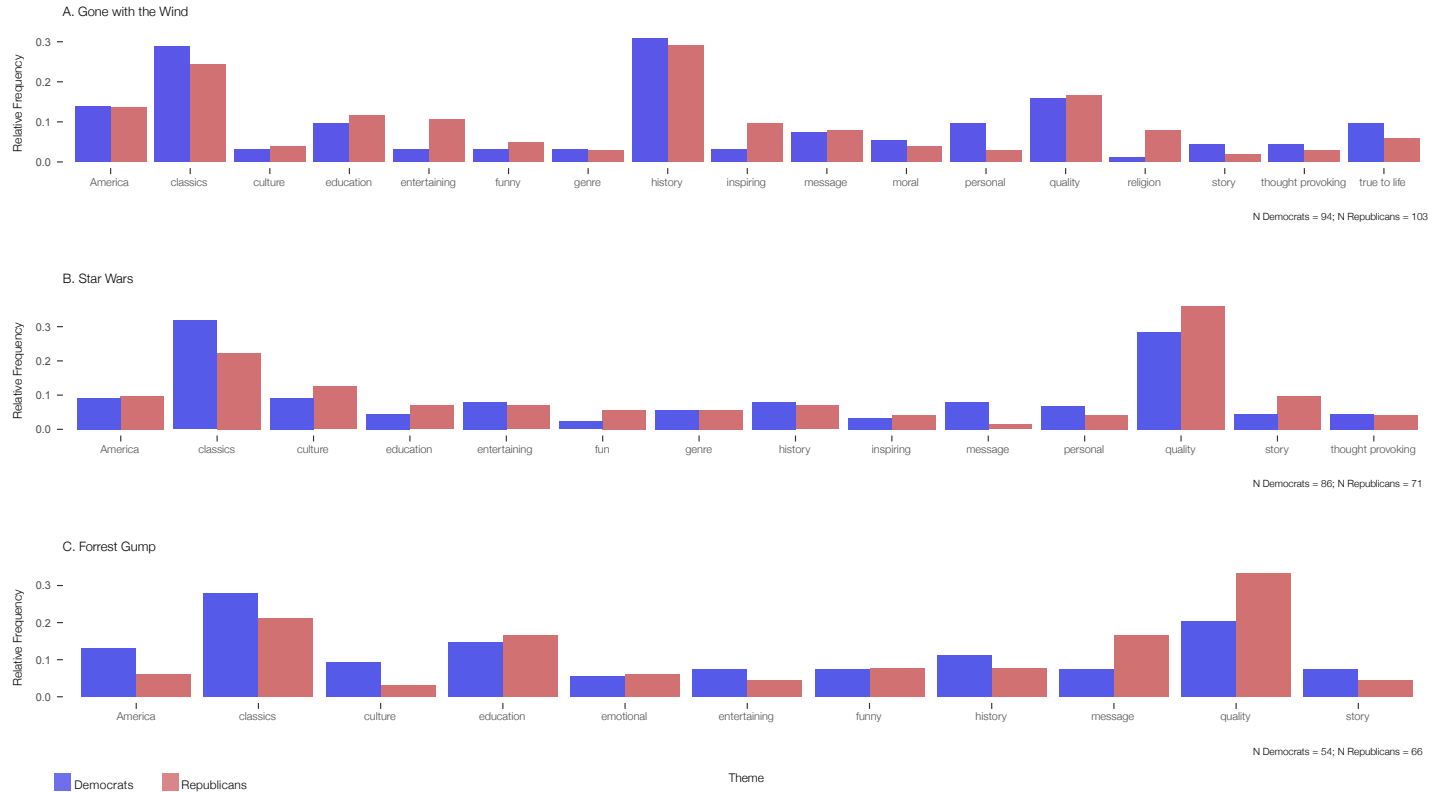
Results

Qualitative Coding



Results

Qualitative Coding



Conclusions

- Democrats and Republicans are not fundamentally polarized or divided in their film preferences
- Demographic factors like gender and race have greater associations with shared preferences
- Even in regards to **why** partisans prefer certain movies, the most common themes are not polarized
- For the most common movies, Democrats and Republicans explain their recommendations using similar thematic profiles