Red Show, Blue Show: A Content Analysis of Liberals' and Conservatives' Respective Television Favorites

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RED SHOW, BLUE SHOW: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF LIBERALS' AND

CONSERVATIVES' RESPECTIVE TELEVISION FAVORITES

by

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Under the Direction of Ben L. Kail, PhD

ABSTRACT

Ideological partisans in the United States are increasingly "sorting" themselves along cultural lines, from the cable news stations they watch to the chain restaurants they prefer. How do partisans seem to "know" how to sort themselves along ideological lines in cultural realms that offer no obvious political cues?

To investigate this question, I look to the realm of narrative television, where conservatives and liberals have certain unique favorite programs despite the programs lacking any overt political content. I employ a quantitative content analysis to demonstrate that the substance of these polarizing shows relate to the social traits of curiosity, conformity, relativism, dogmatism, tribalism, vigilance, and chastity, which have previously been demonstrated to correspond to political ideology.

INDEX WORDS: Political polarization, Ideology, Television, Pop culture, Sorting, Personality

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1   INTRODUCTION

The idea of ideological "sorting" is that people tend to "segregate themselves into their own political worlds, blocking out discordant voices and surrounding themselves with reassuring news and companions." (Bishop 2009). In realms with overt ideological messages – like political parties, media outlets, and religious denominations – it is easy to see how political partisans select the particular options that match their viewpoints. But it is much more difficult to understand the mechanisms of partisan sorting in other realms in which it has been observed, like college majors, restaurant preferences, and taste in fine art. How do partisans seem to "know" how to sort themselves along ideological lines in cultural realms that offer no obvious political cues?

To investigate this question, I look to the realm of narrative television, where conservatives and liberals have certain unique favorite programs despite the programs lacking any overt political content. I employ a quantitative content analysis to test the idea that the substance of these polarizing shows relate to the social traits of curiosity, conformity, relativism, dogmatism, tribalism, vigilance, and chastity, which have previously been demonstrated to correspond to political ideology.

Understanding the dynamics of cultural sorting along lines of ideology is important, because such sorting may well be a driving a force behind the documented increase in political polarization, a phenomenon that if left unchecked could destabilize American society. Existing research is clear: when like-minded people gather in insular groups, their shared views tend to become both more similar and more extreme. It is also useful to understand how political

behavior operates in contexts that have no obvious ideological content, because such understanding can help identify the cultural worldviews undergirding specific political beliefs.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

In my synopsis of the most relevant existing scholarship, I begin by defining some of my key terms. Next I identify some of the cultural realms in which scholars have identified partisan sorting. I describe applicable research into the social traits of ideological partisans, and suggest that what might appear to be ideological sorting in society is actually sorting along lines of social traits. Last, I link political sorting to the related phenomenon of political polarization, and explore its potential practical ramifications.

2.1   Ideology

The term "ideology" may have many meanings depending upon context. For my purposes I use the word to mean an individual's coherent set of beliefs about how the world does and/or should operate, which act to organize that individual's cognitive interpretation of the situations he/she observes, and serve to inform his/her specific political opinions. This definition borrows from Mullins's (1972) conception of ideology as having four central components: 1. It must have power over cognition ("cognitive power"); 2. It must be capable of guiding one's own evaluations ("evaluative power"); 3. It must provide guidance towards action ("action-orientation"); and 4. It must be logically coherent ("logical coherence"). My definition is also informed by Steger and James (2013) who characterize ideology as the "conceptual maps that help people navigate the complexity of their political universe and carry claims to social truth."

An individual's political ideology is most often characterized in terms of a single spectrum known as "left/right" or "liberal/conservative." In this framework, liberals are characterized by a desire for social change that addresses inequality, and an embrace of cultural diversity. Conservatives, by contrast, are identified by a general resistance to alterations of the status quo, and a belief that inherent differences among cultural/ethnic groups justifies societal inequality. (*See e.g.* Jost 2009).

2.2   Sorting

It is important to define and distinguish two related concepts that will be discussed throughout this paper: polarization and sorting.

As discussed by Baldassarri and Gelman (2008), in the context of ideology, polarization refers to the dynamics within belief systems. As will be explored in more detail later in this review, political opinions in the United States are becoming more coherent, consistent, and oppositional on each end of the conservative-liberal ideological spectrum. Each pole of the spectrum is also attracting a growing proportion of people who might formerly have been somewhere in the middle. In other words, political polarization in the United States is such that, compared to previous generations, relatively fewer people hold a mix of conservative and liberal views and relatively more people have worldviews that are consistently liberal or consistently conservative ("issue alignment"). The poles have also moved further apart, such that opposing positions on individual issues are often more irreconcilable and animus between partisans at opposite poles is increasing.

Sorting, on the other hand, is a sociological phenomenon wherein individuals whose ideologies are already somewhat coherent are separating into like-minded groups across different realms of society (Baldassarri and Gelman 2008). Sorting can most easily be observed in realms

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with explicit ideological identities, such as political parties, news outlets, and church denominations (Baldassarri and Gelman 2008; Pew Research Center 2014; Pew Research Center 2008). I'll discuss each in turn.

American political parties have only recently developed internally homogenous identities as either liberal or conservative (Baldassarri and Gelman 2008; Pew Research Center 2014). For generations, there had been a robust number of conservatives who identified as Democrats and liberals who identified as Republicans. Now, there are relatively few such people, and the number of people within each party whose views are either *universally* liberal or *universally* conservative has more than doubled in the past two decades, from 10% to 21% (Baldassarri and Gelman 2008; Pew Research Center 2014). Ideological partisans no longer face ambiguity in identifying the major political party that corresponds to their worldview.

Americans' ideological sorting is also stark in partisans' choice of news outlets. Before the dawn of 24-hour cable news networks, television news was confined to the major broadcast networks, which were restrained by the FCC in terms of content balance and which tended to compete with each other by seeking the broadest general appeal. This landscape has changed. Today, cable news networks actively cater to specific ideological demographics, with Fox News playing to conservatives, MSNBC targeting liberals, and CNN courting moderates (Shanto and Hahn 2009). This targeting tactic is working. Conservatives avoid news stories attributed to NPR or CNN while seeking out stories originating with Fox. Liberals show the exact opposite tendency. In fact, 73% of consistent liberals expressed an unfavorable view of Fox News, compared with only 5% of consistent conservatives. The numbers reversed in regards to MSNBC, where 71% of consistent conservatives reported an unfavorable view, compared with 9% of consistent liberals (Pew 2014). In the survey data used for this study (discussed in more

detail later), of the ten most-watched television programs among liberals, five are news shows; their network homes are CBS, NBC, ABC, CNN, and MSNBC. Of the ten most-watched programs among conservatives, two are news programs and both are on Fox News Channel (a third Fox News program occupies the #11 spot on the list).

Ideological sorting has been documented in a variety of social contexts. For instance, religious preference tends to sort along ideological lines. When liberals and conservatives go to church, they seem to favor religions and denominations that reinforce their political worldview. In a study sampling about 35,000 adults, conservatives outnumbered liberals in evangelical churches by 41%, Mormon churches by 50%, and Catholic churches by 18%. Liberals outnumbered conservatives by 19% among Muslims, 17% among Jews, and by overwhelming margins among Buddhists, Hindus, and "other faiths" (Pew 2008). Although the Pew study did not break down Protestant Christianity into denominations beyond simply "evangelical," "mainline," and "other," anecdotal observation suggests that there are denominations that cater largely to liberals – such as the Episcopal church – and denominations which are made up largely of conservatives – such as Baptist congregations.

It is fairly clear why ideological partisans identify a political party, news station, or church that fits their worldviews, since all three realms feature explicit and prevalent ideologies in the substance of their identities. But ideological sorting is not confined merely to such realms. Rather, it extends to realms that have no obvious political identity, like neighborhood, choice of college degree, and preferences for food and art (Gainsborough 2005; McKee 2007; Porter and Umbach 2006; Wilson *et al.* 1973; Wilson 1990; Epstein 2014).

For instance, liberals and conservatives tend to live in different places from one another. Dense cities have become demographically dominated by liberals, with outer suburbs, small towns, and rural areas disproportionately populated by conservatives (Gainsborough 2005; McKee 2007). These trends correspond with the stated living preferences of liberals and conservatives. Forty six percent of consistent liberals wish to live in an urban environment, as opposed to only 4% of consistent conservatives. The numbers are practically reversed when it comes to an expressed desire to live in a rural area – 41% of consistent conservatives versus only 11% of consistent liberals. Seventy-five percent of consistent conservatives reported wanting to live in an area where "houses are larger and further apart, [and] schools, stores, and restaurants are several miles away." Seventy-seven percent of consistent liberals felt the opposite; they prefer an environment where "houses are smaller and closer together, [and] schools, stores, and restaurants are within walking distance" (Pew 2014; *see also* Walks 2010).

The ideological divide extends to the sorts of educations people seek. For instance, political preference (along with, importantly, social traits) is a better predictor of college major than any other demographic factor. Liberals are more likely to pursue majors in social sciences and humanities, with conservatives more drawn towards hard science and business-related coursework (Porter and Umbach 2006). To the extent that college major relates to one's eventual career choice, it may be reasonable to assume that liberals and conservatives may occupy very different sorts of workplaces.

Partisan sorting pervades entertainment and leisure preferences. Wilson *et al.* (1973) found that liberals and conservatives are drawn toward different types of visual art, with conservatives expressing preference for paintings that are simple and concrete, and liberals inclined to pieces which are more complex and abstract. This may be because conservatives have

a general discomfort with the unknown (essentially the social trait that I refer to herein as "curiosity"). Testing the link between conservatism and the social traits of need for cognitive closure and intolerance for ambiguity (the traits I refer to as "dogmatism" and "relativism"), Wilson also determined that in terms of humor, conservatives disliked jokes that lacked resolution or featured incongruous elements (1990). To some extent, liberals and conservative are not even eating at the same types of chain restaurants, with liberals favoring non-American offerings like Romano's Macaroni Grill or P.F. Chang's, and conservatives preferring American-style fare like Cracker Barrel and Longhorn Steakhouse (Epstein 2014, citing Experian-Simmons data).

2.3   Social Traits

What is behind the partisan sorting in these apparently ideology-neutral realms? The answer might be found in underlying social traits.

The idea of "social traits" are sometimes used interchangeably with the idea of "personality." (*See e.g.* Smith & Williams 2016). Throughout this project, I use the term "social traits" rather than "personality," to indicate my assumption that such person-level behaviors tend to be more influenced by context and environment than deterministic biology. The exact balance of that "nature versus nurture" debate, however, is not substantively addressed here nor is it directly germane to my methods or analysis. To define "social traits," I take the description used by Specht *et al.* (2014): "Individual differences in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are relatively stable across situations and over time." Individual social traits are usually analyzed as being located on a spectrum between opposite poles. (*See e.g.* Kandler *et al.* 2014).

Although I will not endeavor to analyze the merits of such a framework in this thesis project, the general thinking of social scientists is that social traits are relatively resistant to

environmental effects, while ideology (known as "surface characteristics" or "characteristic adaptations") are more malleable and subject to social forces. (Specht *et al.* 2014 and Kandler *et al.* 2014). Arlie Hochschild (1979) has theorized that ideology serves as the mediator between a person's internal life and their exterior circumstances, providing a coherence and unity for the Self by regulating feelings and interpreting environmental events.

Studies have shown that numerous social traits relate closely with political ideology. For example: Openness to new experience vs. need for predictability (Caprera *et al.* 2009); deference to authority and/or tradition (Jost *et al.* 2008); tolerance for ambiguity (Rock and Janoff-Bulman 2010); desire for cognitive closure (Rock and Janoff-Bulman 2010); and preference for ingroup vs. tolerance for outgroups (Dambrum *et al.* 2003); are all associated with political ideology. The most important such predictor of ideology may be "negativity bias" – the tendency to notice and/or fixate on situations that are perceived to be unpleasant or threatening (Hibbing *et al*. 2014). Such traits might also relate to the ways in which we can observe liberal and conservatives polarizing in their daily environments. Comparatively little scholarship exists which attempts to accord the social differences of those on the political poles with the myriad ways in which they are demonstrably sorting.

2.4   Polarization

With partisans sorting into pervasive and non-overlapping bubbles of experience, those bubbles serve as echo chambers for a partisans' political opinions. These echo chambers ensure that partisans are less and less likely to encounter viewpoints that contrast with their own. In such homogenous realms, opinions among a group become even *more* similar, and more extreme. This is known as "group polarization," a phenomenon that has been analyzed in hundreds of studies. (*See e.g.* Isenberg 1986).

Partisans may not realize they chose their surroundings and consumption unconsciously based on social traits rather than on political ideology. Indeed, they are probably not aware that they are "sorting" at all! Nevertheless, research shows that those who are already inclined toward a particular pole along the ideological/social spectrum are likely to become more firmly and more radically entrenched as the dynamics of group polarization take hold.

Social stability depends on the assumption that, while there is widespread disagreement among the population on a variety of issues, there is substantial overlapping agreement as well (Baldassarri and Gelman 2008). Stability is therefore imperiled when the opinions of the populace are crystalized into two coherent and directly conflicting ideologies. When conservatives and liberals unconsciously sort themselves into non-overlapping physical, intellectual, and spiritual realms, and those realms serve to further polarize existing ideological differences, then the very stability of the country's identity and government may be at stake.

Recent research illustrates the extent to which these echo-chambers and ideological feedback loops may be leading to further polarization. In the past twenty years, the number of Americans who held a roughly equal number of liberal and conservative views and who were unaffiliated with a political party has shrunk from 49% to 39% (Pew 2014). The degree of overlapping opinions among Republicans and Democrats is also dwindling. The number of people within each of the two major political parties whose views are either universally liberal or universally conservative has more than doubled in the past two decades, from 10% to 21% (Baldassarri and Gelman 2008, and Pew 2014).

The ramifications of this polarization are not trivial. Animosity between the parties is growing. In 1994, 16% of Democrats and 17% of Republicans reported a "very unfavorable"

view of people in the opposing party; today those numbers are 38% and 43%, respectively. Among consistent conservatives, 73% report a "very unfavorable" opinion of liberals, with 53% of consistent liberals reporting the same feeling for conservatives. Fifty percent of consistent liberals and two-thirds of across-the-board conservatives go so far as to say that the other side is a threat to the nation. Although a majority of Americans do not hold universally liberal or conservative views, the political process is increasingly dominated by those who do. Thirty-eight percent of Democrats who identify themselves as politically active hold universally liberal views on major issues, compared with only 8% twenty years ago. Thirty-three percent of politically active Republicans show universal issue alignment, up from 10% in 2004 (Pew 2014).

Although this project involves subject matters traditionally associated with the fields of psychology and political science, my ultimate interest is in the ramifications of those subjects on a sociological scale. Indeed, issues of stratification and sorting, and the effects such processes impose upon individuals, are among the most foundational themes of the sociology discipline. The logical first step to addressing this rapid polarization is to identify the mechanisms that are contributing to the sorting that is behind it. To explore the dynamic, I will analyze certain partisan television programs for content that corresponds to social traits that are known to predict ideology.

2.5   Television

Having established the purpose behind this project, one might well wonder, "But why television?" Fictional television programs are well suited for a comparison between social traits and political partisan sorting. Because they consist of relatively lengthy narratives, they lend themselves well to content analysis. There are also many shows to compare, because hundreds

of them are available on the common basic cable package. And what, ultimately, is an ideology but a *constructed story* about the way the world operates?

Further, television viewing dominates the modern American leisure landscape. Robinson & Godbey (2008) call television "the 800-pound gorilla of leisure time." Putnam (2000) has reported that the average American household watches a collective 7+ hours of television per day, noting: "Watching TV … has become one of the few universals of contemporary American life." Social critic James Howard Kunstler (1993) opines:

> [T]elevision is the family's chief connection with the outside world. The physical envelope of the house itself no longer connects their lives to the outside in any active way; rather, it seals them off from it. The outside world has become an abstraction filtered through television, just as the weather is an abstraction filtered through air conditioning.

In terms of cultural impact and sheer time use, television is therefore an ideal proxy for the broader phenomenon of ideology-based cultural sorting.

3   METHODOLOGY

Based on the social factors identified by existing research, I have conducted a quantitative content analysis of certain television programs which have audiences that are disproportionately liberal or conservative. I measured the following attributes: presence of protagonists and antagonists with clear moral polarity; narrative closure within episodes; predictable/conventional style and story structure; diversity of cast members in positive roles; stories centered around physical danger or crime; and explicit elements of sex/vulgarity. I predicted that programs favored by liberals would tend to feature more diverse casts, less conventional story structures with less narrative closure, and more ambiguity in the morality of

its major characters. In contrast, I expected that the programs favored by conservatives would tend to feature storylines involving physical violence or crime with clearly delineated "good guys" and "bad guys," and conventional or consistent structures with story arcs neatly contained within each episode.

I will discuss three elements of my study design: the selection of the shows; the rubric by which they are analyzed; and the identities of the reviewers.

3.1 The Shows

My selection of programs was informed by private data from the National Consumer Survey ("NCS") provided to me by The Experian-Simmons Company – a large data-collection-and-analysis corporation perhaps best known as being one of the major credit reporting agencies in the United States. The annual NCS is a representative sample of approximately 25,000 Americans in which respondents complete a lengthy written questionnaire booklet exploring each respondent's demographic attributes as well as his or her habits and opinions on a number of products and services. Relevant to my project, the NCS asks respondents to self-identify their place along a political spectrum ranging from "Liberal Democrat" to "Conservative Republican." It also asks respondents to select each television program that they recently watched, from an exhaustive list of network, basic-cable, and pay-cable shows. Experian made available to me a spreadsheet which, for each television program, identified the following: (1) How many respondents in each ideological category report watching that program; (2) The percentage of that ideological category's respondents who watch that program (e.g. 15.2% of Liberal Democrat respondents watched *Community* last month); (3) The

percentage of that program's viewing audience within the sample which is comprised of people in that ideological category (e.g. The audience for *Community* in the sample is 40.2% Liberal Democrats); and (4) The probability that a given viewer of that program will be of one certain ideological category compared to the sample as a whole (e.g. A Liberal Democrat in the sample is 361% as likely to watch *Community* as the sample as a whole).

While this data allowed me to determine which television programs are most often watched by people of what ideological persuasion, my next step was to choose what *kinds* of programs to use for my research question. Since I am interested in determining whether a partisan's preference for certain kinds of narratives is related to the social structure associated with such a partisan's ideology, I confined the programs I analyzed to those of a fictional narrative quality – this excluded programs like news, sports, variety, documentary, and reality. Because I am interested in traits of recurring characters, and also storylines that extend beyond a single episode (as explained later), I required programs that have continuity of character and story. This excluded "anthology" programs like "Black Mirror," and sketch-based shows like "Saturday Night Live" or "Portlandia." In the interest of uniformity, I also excluded animated programs. So my sample of relevant shows was pulled from American live-action fictional programs with continuity of character and setting.

The NCS data revealed that, generally, Liberal Democrats prefer comedies while Conservative Republicans prefer dramas. Since comedies and dramas can have very different narrative "rules" from each other, in an effort to make a more accurate apples-to-apples comparison between the programs favored by viewers within each ideology, my sample of programs had an equal number of each type.

My next question, then, was how many programs should constitute my sample, and how many episodes of each. Existing content analysis of television programs has been inconsistent in the size of sampling frames, but a general range emerges. In an analysis of sexual content on television, Collins *et al*. (2004) analyzed between two and thirteen episodes of twenty-three different programs. In a study analyzing gender portrayals within health-related storylines on television, Hether & Murphy (2010) examined the nineteen most popular narrative programs and looked at a total of 392 episodes of those programs. In analyzing representations of police misconduct in fictional television, Dirikx *et al*. (2012) examined twenty episodes from each of four law enforcement procedural programs. Analyzing portrayals of police violence in reality-based law enforcement shows, Oliver (1994) examined a total of seventy-six episodes from five such programs. Tallying the genders of major characters on network television, Glascock (2001) viewed one episode from each of the ninety-four narrative fiction shows then on the air. Bond (2015) took two randomly-selected episodes each from twelve programs when analyzing gay and lesbian characters on television. Three episodes apiece from the twenty-seven most-watched religious programs were analyzed by Abelman & Neuendorf (1987) in a study of themes used by televangelists. Manganello *et al.* (2008) concluded that, prior to their study, there was "no 'gold standard' or tested set of practices that has been established to guide researchers" on the question of how many programs/episodes to select for an adequate content analysis. However, in testing various sample sizes against each other in estimating the number of sexual encounters per season, the researchers found that "randomly selecting just three episodes will provide a reasonable assessment of a series' content if researchers do not expect wide variation." In selecting which specific episodes to use, the researchers' data led them to recommend excluding the "premiere" and "finale" episodes of each season, since they were often unusually eventful or

gimmicky and therefore unrepresentative of the season as a whole. Following the advice of Manganello *et al*. and the example of the other referenced studies, my sample of programs consisted of three random episodes (excluding the first and last episode of a season) from a total of sixteen shows, organized in the following categories:

1. Top Liberal Comedies (4 programs)
2. Top Liberal Dramas (4 programs)
3. Top Conservative Comedies (4 programs)
4. Top Conservative Dramas (4 programs)

With three episodes from each program, this was a total of forty-eight individual episodes.

My next issue was in defining what constitutes the "top" four programs within each category. I wanted to analyze the content of programs that tend to disproportionately attract audiences of one ideological pole or the other, to the exclusion of those on the opposite end of the spectrum. In other words, I looked for shows that have audiences that are heavily skewed toward either liberals or conservatives. The NCS data identified the ideological "Index" value for each program it tracks, which is the likelihood that a particular partisan will watch a given program in comparison to the sample as a whole. For example, for Liberal Democrats and the HBO program *The Newsroom*, the Index value is 190, meaning that Liberal Democrats in the sample are 190% more likely than the sample as a whole to watch the show. But in determining which programs have audiences that skew liberal or conservative, it was insufficient to merely look at the Index value because there were a few puzzling instances where audiences on *both* ends of the ideological spectrum were more likely to watch a given program than were viewers in the middle of the spectrum. The Fox comedy *New Girl*, for example, had an Index value of 160 for Liberal Democrats, but an Index value of 125 for Conservative Republicans. So to

determine which programs had an audience that skewed to one end of the ideological spectrum and *only* one end of the spectrum, I subtracted the Liberal Democrat Index value from the Conservative Republican, to arrive at what I call an "Index Differential" value. The Index Differential identifies which programs have an audience with a one-directional ideological skew. Index Differentials less than zero indicate a liberal audience, and positive values indicate a conservative audience. The further a value is from zero, the stronger the partisan makeup of its audience.

With that in mind, I then used Index Differential to identify the specific programs to populate the categories I listed above. They are as follows, with corresponding Index Differentials in parentheses.:[1]

A. **Top Liberal Comedies**
   1. **Community (-301)**
   2. **Shameless (-107)**
   3. **Glee (-84)**
   4. **Modern Family (-73)**
B. **Top Liberal Dramas**
   1. **The Newsroom (-134)**
   2. **Scandal (-109)**
   3. **The Borgias (-66)**
   4. **Homeland (-65)**
C. **Top Conservative Comedies**
   1. **Rules of Engagement (+65)**
   2. **Last Man Standing (+47)**
   3. **Mike & Molly (+22)**
   4. **The Goldbergs (+14)**
D. **Top Conservative Dramas**
   1. **Being Human (+61)**
   2. **Longmire (+60)**
   3. **Revolution (+42)**
   4. **Bates Motel (+40)**

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[1] Note that the "Top Liberal" programs have Index Differentials that are much higher in absolute value than those for the "Top Conservative" programs. This may indicate that Liberal Democrats have a wider range of programs that they watch in comparison to Conservative Republicans, or that the shows favored by Conservative Republicans also have higher proportional viewership among non-partisans. Although interesting, this is a question for another day.

One series, the comedy *The Neighbors*, made the initial list of programs with an Index

Differential of -90, but had to be replaced because at the time of this project it was not available

via DVD or any streaming video service and therefore could not be easily evaluated. It was

replaced with the next highest Index Differential among liberal comedies, *Glee*. A complete list

of the specific episodes, along with narrative descriptions for each from the Internet Movie

Database, is included in the Appendix.

With the sample frame of programs being therefore established, I can now move on to

discuss how those programs were analyzed.

3.2 Scoring Rubric

As discussed in the literature review, there are a number of social traits that have

been demonstrated to vary based on one's political ideology. Different researchers have used

different conceptualizations and terms for such traits, such that a cursory review of the literature

initially indicates a plethora of diverse measures. However, after more careful study and

comparison, I concluded that the most compelling of the various measures may be fairly

combined and sorted into six separate (though still somewhat overlapping) traits. I classified

them as follows, each trait being a spectrum with its poles in parentheses, the liberal pole listed

first:

1. *Curiosity* **(Desire for novelty vs. Desire for predictability);**
2. *Conformity* **(Independence from tradition/authority vs. Deference to authority/tradition);**
3. *Relativism* **(Comfort with ambiguity vs. Discomfort with ambiguity);**
4. *Dogmatism* **(Embrace of deliberation vs. Need for cognitive closure);**
5. *Tribalism* **(Embrace of diversity vs. Preference for ingroup);**
6. *Vigilance* **(Assumption of safety vs. Suspicion of danger); and**
7. *Chastity* **(Irreverence/vulgarity vs. Sensitivity to disgust).**

I hypothesized that the substance of the "Top Liberal" and "Top Conservative" programs would correspond with the social traits associated with each partisan group. My next task, then, was to translate each trait into a "Story Feature" with poles that might logically be expected to correspond to the poles of the Social Traits. I made such translations as follows (with each Story Feature and its poles corresponding to the list of Social Traits above):

1. *Style* **(Unconventional structure/presentation vs. Formulaic structure/presentation);**
2. *Setting* **(Protagonists outside positions of traditional authority vs. Traditional authority figures as protagonists);**
3. *Themes* **(Characters blur line between good and bad vs. Unambiguous good and bad);**
4. *Serialization* **(Major plotlines extend beyond individual episodes vs. Tidy story conclusions within individual episodes);**
5. *Cast* **(Diversity among protagonists vs. Homogeny among protagonists);**
6. *Conflict* **(Conflict predominately social or existential vs. Prevalent themes of physical danger); and**
7. *Wholesomeness* **(Explicit vulgarity vs. Avoidance of explicit elements).**

Therefore my frame of Social Traits and Story Features looked like this:

Table 1: Social Traits and Corresponding Story Features

Social Trait	Poles	Corresponding Story Features	Poles
Curiosity	L: Desire for Novelty C: Desire for Predictability	Style	A: Unconventional Structure/Presentation B: Formulaic Structure/Presentation
Conformity	L: Independence from Authority/Tradition C: Deference to Authority/Tradition	Setting	A: Protagonists Outside Positions of Traditional Authority B: Traditional Authority Figures as Protagonists
Relativism	L: Comfort with Ambiguity C: Discomfort with Ambiguity	Themes	A: Characters Blur Line Between Good and Bad B: Unambiguous Good vs. Bad
Dogmatism	L: Embrace of Deliberation C: Need for Cognitive Closure	Serialization	A: Plotlines Left Unresolved B: Tidy Story Conclusions Within Episode
Tribalism	L: Embrace of Diversity C: Preference for Ingroup	Cast	A: Diversity Among Protagonists B: Homogeny Among Protagonists
Vigilance	L: Assumption of Safety C: Suspicion of Danger	Conflict	A: Conflict Predominately Social or Existential B: Prevalent Themes of Physical Danger
Chastity	L: Irreverence C: Purity	Wholesomeness	A: Explicit or Vulgar Elements B: Avoidance of Vulgar Elements

Reviewers were assigned three episodes of each program, and, for each episode, scored each Story Feature on a scale. There was a question of how many points should be used on this scale. There is little consistency among published quantitative content analyses in the size of reviewers' scales; common options include a simple binary and a ten-point spectrum. (*See generally* Neuendorf & Kane 2010). A number of scholars have visited the issue of the optimal number of points on a survey/questionnaire scale (*See e.g.* Cox 1980; Dawes 2008; Lee & Paek 2014). Consensus among the scholarship seems to be that a scale's validity increases with each additional point, until the increase in validity begins to quickly flatten at around 7 points. It is important to note that, in content analysis, inter-rater reliability can become more difficult as a scale increases in size (Cox 1980). Perhaps the most common of the survey scales, the Likert Scale, commonly has 5 points, with a neutral midpoint. I adopted a similar scale here. To correspond to the dichotomous poles of political ideology and match the negative/positive Index Differentials associated with the television programs, my five points ran from -2 to +2, with values corresponding to the following evaluation (with poles identified as "A" and "B" rather than "L" and "C," so as to disguise from the Reviewers any cue towards the ideological associations of the Story Features, as will be discussed later):

Value	Evaluation
-2	Strongly Tends Towards Pole A
-1	Somewhat Tends Toward Pole A
0	Tends Toward Neither Pole A nor B
1	Somewhat Tends Toward Pole B
2	Strongly Tends Toward Pole B

To guide the Reviewers, I provided each with a scoresheet that briefly elaborated on the Story Features they were to evaluate. The scoresheet provided specific questions to look for in each episode, and is presented below.

Reviewer:

Program (Series) Title:

Episode Name and/or Number:

Circle the appropriate number for each element.

STYLE

A. Unconventional Structure/Presentation
B. Conventional
Structure/Presentation

| -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 |

SETTING

A. Protagonists In Positions of
Conventional Authority
B. Outcast/Marginalized
Protagonists

| -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 |

THEMES

A. Characters Blur the Line
Between Good and Bad
B. Unambiguous Morality

| -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 |

SERIALIZATION

A. Plotlines Left Unresolved for Later
B. Tidy Story Conclusions

| -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 |

CAST

A. Diverse Protagonists
B. Protags. Not Diverse

| -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 |

CONFLICT

A. Prevalent Themes of Physical Danger
B. Risks are Non-Physical

| -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 |

WHOLESOMENESS

A. Explicit or Vulgar Elements
B. "Family Friendly"

| -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 |

In addition to scoresheets, the Reviewers were also given a Guidebook (included in the Appendix) that detailed their evaluation process and elaborated on the Story Features that they would be analyzing.

3.3   The Reviewers

I chose six total reviewers for the project, each of whom was randomly assigned eight episodes from the sample. General theory on the methods of content analysis holds that virtually anyone is competent to be a reviewer, as long as reliability is established among them (Neuendorf 2010). However, when appropriate, some studies have used reviewers with certain expertise or familiarity with the content being analyzed. For example, in using an fMRI machine to study the brain patterns of people observing images of products with varying degrees of "cool," Quartz & Asp (2015) opted to recruit design students as subjects because they were expected to have a heightened sense of style. In another example, Bond (2015) employed the use of reviewers who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual when analyzing media for LGB content, reasoning: "Because terminology exists among LGB individuals that is specific to those identifying as LGB, having coders involved with the project who identified as LGB increased the likelihood that coders would be able to decipher the context of LGB talk." Similarly, my project presented reviewers with certain concepts (e.g. "conventional" story structure) and terminology (e.g. "protagonist" and "antagonist") that may be unfamiliar to people outside of media studies and production. So rather than employ students or social scientists, I chose professional film/ television critics as reviewers. The reviewers were scattered geographically across the country,

and are employed by a variety of prestigious publications.[2] As I have spent many years involved in independent film projects, the reviewers were selected from my own social network. (I therefore cannot make claims about the generalizability of these particular reviewers to all reviewers – but fortunately, that is not the goal of this scholarship.).

It is a common practice to help ensure objectivity from reviewers by withholding from them the true nature of a project's research question (Neuendorf 2010). To increase the likelihood that the programs would be evaluated without bias, I did not disclose the thesis and hypothesis to the reviewers until after evaluations were complete. In other words, the reviewers did not know that they were evaluating the programs for traits that I deemed "conservative" or "liberal," or that the shows they were evaluating have been selected because they are favorites of one or another ideological group.

Before the reviewers began analyzing their subsample of shows, I needed to establish their inter-rater reliability. Typically this is done by having all reviewers code an identical subsample of the programs that are to be watched for the actual project, but not any specific episodes that are part of the experimental sample (Neuendorf 2010). This initial subsample (which I call the "IRR Subsample") is generally about 10% of the duration of the experimental sample as a whole (*Id.*). For ordinal-level variables, as I used here, reliability is measured by covariance, of which there are a number of methods that are debated in the literature (*Id.*). My IRR Subsample (identified in the Appendix) consisted of one episode apiece of two comedy programs and two drama programs, for a total duration of approximately four hours (approximately 11% of the experimental sample's duration). Agreement among the Reviewers for that IRR Subsample was measured by Cronbach's Alpha, for which scores above

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[2] As of this writing, the "home outlets" for the reviewers were: Thrillist; Screen Junkies; The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette (two reviewers); and The AV Club (two reviewers).

.6 are generally considered good, and scores above .8 are considered excellent. (Hallgren 2012).

Results are detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Results of Inter-Rater Reliability Test by Story Feature

Story Feature (Social Trait)	Cronbach's Alpha
Style (Curiosity)	.94
Setting (Conformity)	.69
Themes (Relativism)	.96
Serialization (Dogmatism)	.98
Cast (Tribalism)	.94
Conflict (Vigilance)	.99
Wholesomeness (Chastity)	.91

As Table 2 indicates, agreement was very high among the six reviewers, and I was therefore able to confidently assign the reviewers non-overlapping sub-samples for their analysis.

As discussed previously, each reviewer evaluated each of their assigned episodes along the seven Story Features, according to the scoresheet reproduced above. The scores for each such Feature were averaged among the three episodes for each show, and those scores were in turn averaged to give each show a "Composite Rating." Scores for both the individual Story Features and the Composite Rating had a scale from -2 ("liberal" values) to +2 ("conservative" values).[3]

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[3] Although the scores were initially randomized to either pole, they were rescaled such that all "liberal" values were assigned a value of -2, and all "conservative" values were assigned a value of +2.

I hypothesized that programs with liberal-skewing audiences would score negative ("liberal") values on each of the 7 Story Features, as well as the Composite Rating. I hypothesized that programs with conservative-skewing audiences, by contrast, would score positive ("conservative") values on those same measures.

4   FINDINGS

My index of Story Features serves as a good indicator of the audience ideology of the shows in my sample. The Composite Rating correctly predicted the viewership of seven of eight "liberal" shows (87.5%), and six out of eight "conservative" shows (75%) (81.3% total). The mean Reviewer Rating for the eight "liberal" shows was -.51, and the mean Reviewer Rating for the eight "conservative" shows was .33, for a mean difference of .85. A t-test of means reveals that difference to be significant at the .004 level, meaning that in only 4 times out of 1,000 would these results occur by chance alone.

Table 3: Shows Listed From Most Liberal to Most Conservative	
By Viewership (Index Score)	**By Story Features (Composite Rating)**
Community (-301)	Shameless (-1.14)
The Newsroom (-134)	Glee (-.81)
Scandal (-109)	Community (-.76)
Shameless (-107)	Homeland (-.62)
Glee (-84)	Scandal (-.43)
Modern Family (-73)	**Bates Motel** (-.38)
The Borgias (-66)	**Being Human** (-.38)
Homeland (-65)	The Newsroom (-.33)
The Goldbergs (14)	The Borgias (-.10)
Mike & Molly (22)	**Revolution** (.05)
Bates Motel (40)	Modern Family (.09)
Revolution (42)	**Longmire** (.24)
Last Man Standing (47)	**Rules of Engagement** (.52)
Longmire (60)	**Mike & Molly** (.52)
Being Human (61)	**The Goldbergs** (1.00)
Rules of Engagement (65)	**Last Man Standing** (1.10)

Underlined titles are those with a net liberal audience. Bolded titles have a net conservative audience.

In addition to relating to whether a given show has an overall liberal or conservative audience, the Composite Ratings also relate to the *degree* to which those audiences are liberal or conservative. In other words, the Composite Ratings from my reviewers have high correlations with the Index Scores from the NCS data.
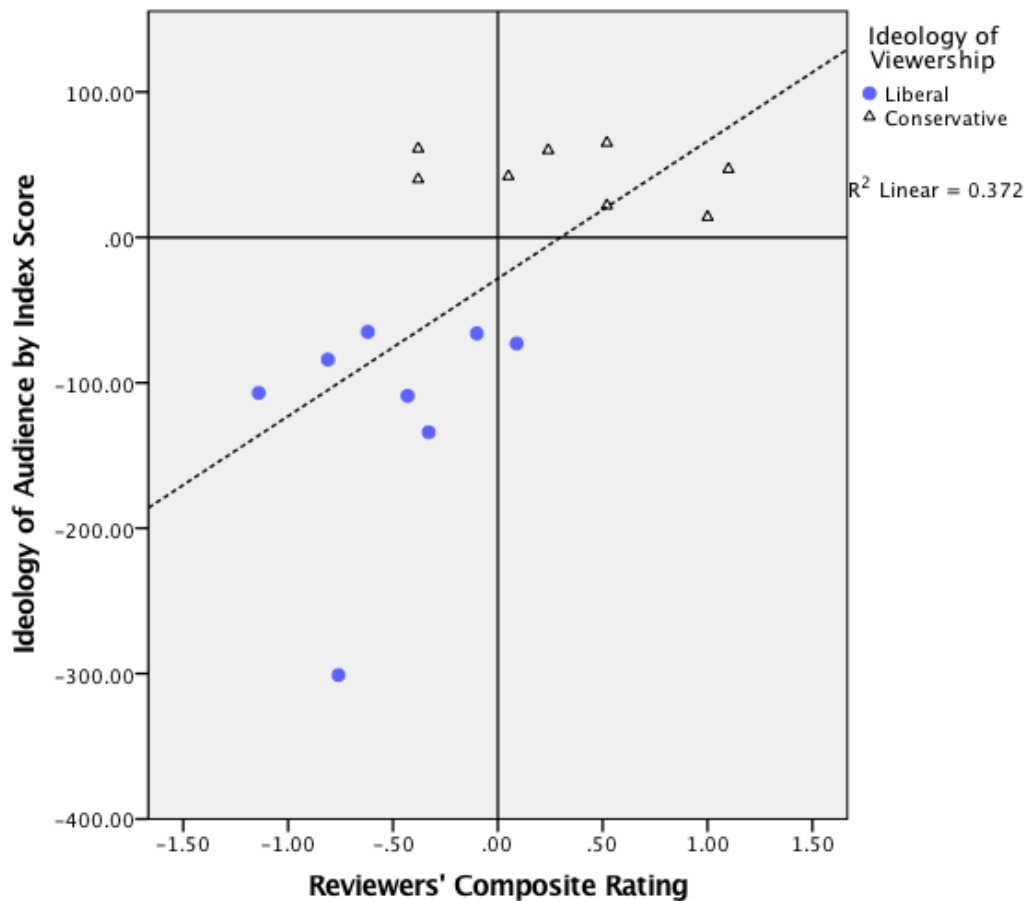
Figure 1: Scatterplot of Shows by Index Differential and Composite Rating

In Figure 1 above, the regression line indicates a general trend: As my Composite Ratings move further negative, the corresponding shows have an increasingly liberal audience. As the Composite Ratings increase further above zero, the corresponding shows have audiences that are more conservative. The regression line barely misses the dead-center intersection of the zero-value axes; this indicates that the Composite Ratings were slightly biased towards predicting liberal audiences.

So the Composite Ratings are significantly associated with the ideological tilt of my shows' audiences. But do all individual Story Traits vary by partisan viewership? No, as

Table 4 below illustrates. However, six of the seven Story Features show the trend that I expected, with five of those seven trends being statistically significant.

Table 4: Mean Ratings for Individual Story Traits Across Audience Ideology

	"Liberal" Shows	"Conservative" Shows	Difference
Composite	-.51 (.40)	.33 (.56)	.85 **
Style/Curiosity	-.46 (1.02)	1.13 (1.23)	1.58 **
Setting/ Conformity	.21 (1.32)	.50 (1.25)	.29
Themes/ Relativism	-.79 (1.19)	.17 (1.34)	.96 *
Serialization/ Dogmatism	-1.04 (1.33)	.25 (1.82)	1.29 **
Cast/ Tribalism	-.96 (1.30)	.63 (1.17)	1.58 **
Conflict/ Vigilance	.08 (1.78)	-.46 (1.74)	.54
Wholesomeness/ Chastity	-.63 (1.41)	.12 (1.12)	.75 *
	N = 24	N= 24	

** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$ using two-tailed t-test of means.
Parentheticals indicate standard deviations.

So indeed, the data shows that when it comes to style, liberals prefer novelty while conservatives prefer familiarity and predictability. Liberals are, in fact, drawn to shows with moral complexity, while conservatives avoid such ambiguity. Conservatives *do* tend to watch

programs that have tidy endings, whereas liberals like more open-ended storytelling. In general liberals prefer diverse casts, while conservatives are attracted to more homogenous ones. And indeed, statistically conservatives keep their distance from programs with explicit content, while liberals do the opposite.

Although my measure for Setting/Conformity exhibits the general trend that I hypothesized, small sample size and large standard deviations may have prevented it from achieving statistical significance among the other Story Traits. The surprise of the group, though, is the measure for Conflict/Vigilance; contrary to my expectations, among the shows in my sample, the ones with liberal audiences were actually *more* violent than the ones favored by conservatives. Future research might explore the dynamics behind this finding.

When confining the analysis to the five story traits that have a statistically significant effect (i.e. dropping "Setting/Conformity" and "Conflict/Vigilance"), the new score ("Adjusted Composite Rating") relates even more strongly to the programs' audience ideology. Table 5 illustrates these findings.

Table 5: Composite Ratings versus Adjusted Composite Ratings

	Composite Rating	Adjusted Composite Rating
Shameless	-1.14	-1.6
Homeland	-0.62	-1.27
Scandal	-0.43	-1.07
Community	-0.76	-0.87
Being Human	-0.38	-0.8
The Newsroom	-0.33	-0.67
Glee	-0.81	-0.67
The Borgias	-0.1	-0.53
Bates Motel	-0.38	-0.6
Revolution	0.05	-0.27
Longmire	0.24	-0.07
Modern Family	0.09	0.46
Rules of Engagement	0.52	0.86
Mike & Molly	0.52	1.2
Last Man Standing	1.1	1.6
The Goldbergs	1	1.73

Underlined titled are those with a net liberal audience. Bolded titles have a net conservative audience.

When analyzed according to the Adjusted Composite Rating, 13 of the 16 programs moved even further in the direction indicated by the initial Composite Rating. That is to say, generally the "liberal" shows were scored as even more liberal, and the "conservative" shows were scored as even more conservative. This is true in the aggregate as well.

Table 6: Composite Ratings versus Adjusted Composite Ratings (Aggregate)

	Mean Composite Rating	Mean Adjusted Composite Rating
Liberal Shows	-.51	-.78
Conservative Shows	.33	.46
Mean Difference	.85**	1.23**

** $p < .01$

As Table 6 illustrates, when Setting/Conformity and Conflict/Vigilance are removed from the composite measure, the difference between the content of the "liberal" and "conservative" programs is even more evident.

5   DISCUSSION

Overall, my Composite Ratings (and to a greater degree my Adjusted Composite Ratings) do vary by whether a given show's audience will skew liberal or conservative. In all but three of a possible sixteen shows, a negative Composite Rating corresponded with a "liberal" favorite, and a positive Rating corresponded with a "conservative" favorite. Of the "misses," my Ratings predicted that two shows – *Being Human* and *Bates Motel* – would have slightly liberal audiences when in fact their audiences are conservative. The other "miss," *Modern Family*, has a predominately liberal audience, but my Composite Rating characterized it as very slightly conservative.

Modern Family might be an example of a show being so polarized on one particular Story Trait that it widely turns off an audience that might otherwise enjoy the remaining elements. Specifically, *Modern Family* is an ensemble comedy centering around very diverse family dynamics, prominently including a same-sex couple. It is possible that the very premise of the show is "liberal" enough to discourage a conservative audience, even though my Ratings score the show as being very wholesome, self-contained, and unambiguous – aspects that typically attract conservatives. Additionally, unlike the three comedies most popular with conservative audiences in my sample (*Rules of Engagement, Last Man Standing,* and *Mike & Molly*), *Modern Family* does not have a "laugh track."[4] Laugh tracks can be used to help audiences deal with ambiguity by "cuing" them as to what is supposed to be interpreted as

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[4] Shows with a "laugh track" have their jokes accompanied by recorded laughter, either from a live audience at the taping or from a "canned" recording added in post-production.

comical. (Messerli 2016; Bore 2011). This cuing mechanism may be very important in making television comedies attractive to conservative audiences.[5]

According to my Composite Ratings, the show in my sample that ought to be the most appealing to liberals (or unappealing to conservatives) is *Shameless*. *Shameless* airs on pay cable network Showtime. There is an apparent pattern to this: Half of the "liberal" shows in the sample air on pay cable (Showtime or HBO), while none of the "conservative" shows do. The meaning of this pattern is unclear to me. *Shameless* is also noteworthy for this study in that it is very difficult to classify on the comedy/drama spectrum. Because it is frequently funny and vulgar, I classified it as a comedy. But it is just as often bleak and tragic, following a poverty-stricken, substance-abusing family struggling with myriad and serious issues. The fact that *Shameless* has ambiguity that permeates even its fundamental classification of comedy-versus-drama surely contributes to its liberal-heavy audience.

The show with the most *conservative* Composite Rating in my sample is *Last Man Standing*. A brief perusal of the titles of the specific episodes my reviewers analyzed (listed in the Appendix) leaves little doubt as to why the show is so polarizing. Of the plots of the three episodes, one is a defense of spanking children, one is about a teenager doing whatever she can to be admitted to a military academy, and one lampoons the scenario of an elementary school renaming itself merely because its historical namesake is revealed to have owned slaves. The

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[5] It has been argued that the very *concept* of humor depends on some degree of both ambiguity and surprise. (*See e.g.* Deckers & Kizer 1975). Others have argued that humor depends on a concept called "benign violation" – essentially, a joke providing a pleasant sensation by violating, in a non-threatening manner, some norm within the listener. (Warren & McGraw 2016). These elements – ambiguity; surprise; norm violation; muted response to threat stimuli – are of course traits negatively correlated with ideological conservatism.

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that conservatives typically avoid comedies entirely. If I had not forced comedies into my sample by separating the shows into drama and comedy, there would have been no disproportionately "conservative" comedies to consider. Out of the 10 fictional narrative shows most watched by conservatives, only one of them is a comedy (compared to 4 out of 10 among liberals), and it is a program ineligible for my sample because it is watched in fairly equal proportion between audiences of all ideological stripes – *The Big Bang Theory*. This phenomenon could easily be the subject of its own research project.

entire premise of the series is a traditionally masculine father living in a household with all females, and struggling to adapt to a modern world that increasingly challenges his hegemonic manliness. The anxiety that the father (Tim Allen in a typecast role) feels is surely quite familiar to the conservative men watching each episode.

6   CONCLUSION

I have argued that the content of certain television shows with ideologically polarized audiences is related to certain social traits, namely: curiosity; conformity; relativism; dogmatism; tribalism; vigilance; and chastity. To explore this idea, I created a scale to measure those traits (which I call "Story Features") within the narratives of the TV programs. A panel of professional television critics employed my scale in a content analysis of a sample of ideologically polarizing programs. I hypothesized that the programs with liberal-skewing audiences would score towards the liberal end of the scale for each Story Feature, and programs with conservative-skewing audiences would have Story Features that scored towards the conservative end. For 5 of the 7 Story Features, my hypothesis was confirmed. I also hypothesized that an overall Composite Rating of all 7 combined Story Features would correspond to the ideological tilt of each program's audience. For 14 of the 16 programs in my sample, this hypothesis was confirmed.

Because a person's general worldview and/or set of social traits probably predates their exposure to any of these television shows, my results seem to indicate that political partisans are drawn to cultural environments that reflect their general ideology about the world. To the extent that a typical conservative views the world as a dangerous place where one must venture with extreme vigilance into situations of novelty and ambiguity, while being guided by traditional wisdom, it makes sense that such a conservative would find pleasure or comfort in narratives with a similar viewpoint. To the extent that a typical liberal sees the world's greatest

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opportunities in the novel and unknown, and believes that security and prosperity come from cooperation among diverse peoples, it is unsurprising that such a philosophy would be found in the stories they find most appealing.

While this sorting is therefore understandable and predictable, it is not without danger. When groups form based on pre-existing ideological inclinations, the dynamics of "group polarization" dictate that those inclinations become more homogenous, deeply-held, and radical. Although it is beyond the ability of my data to prove, I suspect that cultural sorting in apolitical realms like narrative television contributes substantially to group polarization and, in turn, deeper fractures in social solidarity.

The results of this study may be important to our understanding of what motivates liberals and conservatives in their self-sorting behavior across different realms of culture. While ideological sorting may be easy to explain in cultural domains with explicit moral perspectives – political parties and church denominations, for example – the phenomenon is more difficult to understand in realms like narrative television in which there is no obvious such slant. The results of this study lead me to suspect that apolitical sorting along ideological lines – not only in media selection but also in neighborhood, choice of vocation, and more – is not a product of conscious, ideology-based choice, but rather of underlying social traits that happen to also sort us into opposing political camps. Future research may explore those additional cultural realms and determine whether the same sorts of dynamics are at play. To the extent that the findings from this study are reproduced in other cultural realms, we may have an improved ability to predict the future trajectory of partisan sorting and, should it become desirable, design interventions to address the phenomenon.

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Appendix A : List Of Episodes Evaluated

Synopses provided by the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com)

Inter-Rater Reliability Sample

The Goldbergs

Season 1 Episode 20, "You're Not Invited"

To get his little brother his first kiss, Barry hosts a "no parents allowed" birthday party in the basement for Adam - and sparks some surprisingly protective instincts in Erica.

Glee

Season 5 Episode 7, "Puppet Master"

Blaine believes he has the best plan to win Nationals, but he doesn't take the glee club's criticism too well when the students accuse him of being too controlling. Over in New York, Kurt also runs into control issues when the band disagrees over the venue of their first official gig that Kurt booked. Meanwhile, Sue reveals the story behind her iconic tracksuit and gets in touch with her feminine side.

Being Human

Season 4 Episode 6, "Cheater of the Pack"

Josh wakes up to a surprising discovery that shatters his life, as well as the future he's planned with Nora. Aidan reconnects with Suzanna and remembers the life he once had while trying to stave off his hunger. Someone from Sally's past resurfaces with news that not only sends her jumping back through time, but will also change her and the roommate's lives forever.

Bates Motel

Season 2 Episode 3, "Caleb"

Norma is disappointed to learn that she didn't get a part in the community play. She makes a new friend however in Christine Heldens who was supposed to direct the play but quit when Norma didn't get the lead. She invites Norma to a party and is introduced to new people including Christine's brother George. She also meets Nick who tells her he too is against the bypass. With Bradley Martin now believed to have committed suicide, Emma organizes a memorial at the beach but things don't quite go as planned. Norma is shattered when her brother Caleb appears unannounced. She throws him out of the house but Dylan takes a liking to him and he doesn't quite understand why she treats him so badly. She has a major revelation for him.

Substantive Sample

<u>Bates Motel</u>

Centers on a mother and son who come to a new town so that they can start over and set up a new business, but a lot of mysterious incidents happen, including the unanswered and horrible acts of the son.

Season 2 Episode 7, "Presumed Innocent"

Norman questions Norma's faith in him. Zane's thirst for revenge threatens Dylan. Romero's presented with new evidence that may change the course of Miss Watson's murder investigation. Cody's friendship with Norman reaches a breaking point.

Season 2 Episode 5, "The Escape Artist"

Norman trusts Cody with a family secret. Dylan finds himself fighting for his life as Zane's drug war escalates. Norma makes a deal with a mysterious man to help stop the bypass while Norman faces some of his childhood demons.

Season 2 Episode 6, "Plunge"

Norma works to get appointed to the council. Norman tries to get a drivers license while dealing with an incident concerning Cody and Emma. Dylan finally gets to know his boss.

<u>Being Human</u>

Three twenty-somethings share a house and try to live a normal life despite being a ghost, a werewolf, and a vampire.

Season 4 Episode 12, "House Hunting"

As moving day finally arrives, the roommates discover they aren't the only ones struggling with leaving the house, and a once-looming threat takes center stage, bringing with it a trail of death and destruction that no one is safe from.

Season 4 Episode 5, "Pack it Up Pack it In"

Aidan and Kenny have a night of drinking to help Aidan forget a recent loss in his life, while Josh and Nora throw a baby shower for their new wolf friends that quickly gets out of hand. Sally jumps around in time to learn surprising things not only about her roommates, but also about her new abilities and what they mean in regards to her future.

Season 4 Episode 2, "That Time of the Month"

Aidan and Kat's relationship moves to the next level, but an encounter with someone from Aidan's past threatens to derail it all. Meanwhile, Sally uses her newly acquired powers to help Nora try to free Josh from his wolf, but nothing is without its consequences when magic is involved.

<u>The Borgias</u>

The saga of a crime family in 16th Century Italy.

Season 3 Episode 3, "Siblings"
The King of Naples refuses to accept Lucrzia's child as part of the marriage agreement and pointedly invites Caterins Sforza and other Borgia enemies to the wedding.

Season 3 Episode 5, "The Wolf and the Lamb"
Lucrezia and Micheletto plot the death of King Ferdinand II when he refuses her her baby as Cesare's promise of an annulment for Louis XII gain him a wife and army.

Season 3 Episode 9, "The Gunpowder Plot"
Lucrezia escapes with Alfonso and her baby from Naples while the Pope corners the market in sulfur, restricting others from manufacturing gunpowder.

Community
A suspended lawyer is forced to enroll in a community college with an eclectic staff and student body.

Season 5 Episode 12, "Basic Story"
After a liability audit, the Save Greendale Committee discovered that they have, in fact, saved Greendale - until they discover that as a result of the successful audit, the school is being sold to Subway.

Season 5 Episode 11, "G.I. Jeff"
The entire group becomes part of the cast of a classic "G.I. Joe" cartoon from the 1980s, which turns out to be part of Jeff's coping mechanism as he deals with a monumental life event.

Season 5 Episode 9, "VCR Maintenance and Educational Publishing"
Whilst cleaning the storage room Jeff, Hickey and Shirley find a pile of unused hidden textbooks and plot a way to make the best out of it. Meanwhile, Annie and Abed are trying to find a new roommate.

Glee
A group of ambitious misfits try to escape the harsh realities of high school by joining a glee club, where they find strength, acceptance and, ultimately, their voice, while working to pursue dreams of their own.

Season 5 Episode 15, "Bash"
Sam and Mercedes cross difficult hurdles in the road to love. Rachel's "mid-winter critique" performance leads her to a crossroads where she has to choose between NYADA and her role as Fanny. Kurt is attacked by a group of homophobes.

Season 5 Episode 19, "Old Dog, New Tricks"

As Rachel faces criticism for being a slacker, Santana makes sure her public image doesn't degrade. Kurt feels that his friends don't support him as much as he does them and Sam adopts a dog but has Mercedes to deal with.

Season 5 Episode 4, "A Katy or a Gaga"
The members of New Directions tackle their assignment of getting out of their comfort zones and determining whether they're more like "Katy" (Perry) or (Lady) "Gaga." Kurt holds auditions for his new band and must decide if he'll let in the overly bold performer, Starchild. Meanwhile, Jake gets closer to Bree as he and Marley grow apart.

The Goldbergs
Before there were parenting blogs, trophies for showing up, and peanut allergies, there was a simpler time called the '80s. For geeky 11-year old Adam these were his wonder years and he faced them armed with a video camera to capture all the crazy.

Season 1 Episode 6, "Who Are You Going to Telephone?"
As Adam abandons Pops to go trick-or-treating with a cool new friend, Beverly dons a costume so she can keep Barry from being embarrassed at a Halloween party.

Season 1 Episode 21, "The Age of Darkness"
When Erica cannot be consoled after her boyfriend dumps her, Murray steps in to help; Barry becomes obsessed with a new arcade game.

Season 1 Episode 19, "The President's Fitness Test"
Murray intervenes when Adam seeks Beverly's help to avoid a national physical fitness test. Barry woos Erica's French pen pal.

Homeland
A bipolar CIA operative becomes convinced a prisoner of war has been turned by al-Qaeda and is planning to carry out a terrorist attack on American soil.

Season 3 Episode 3, "Tower of David"
Carrie has now been in the psychiatric ward of the hospital for three weeks back on her meds. She is on a no visitor directive. She does whatever she needs to do to get dismissed, even stating that she appreciated what Saul did for her in getting her admitted. Wanting to get out is despite she herself knowing that she is not in full control of her faculties. She also learns that someone has come by wanting to see her, that person who she is certain is Saul. However, that person has different thoughts as to Carrie's future than she probably has in mind. Meanwhile, Brody, who is on a hit list and who has a serious gunshot wound in his abdomen, is in Caracas, Venezula, being assisted by people with who he has a mutual friend. He is somewhat between a rock and hard place as all his fake ID has been stolen. He is being housed in an uncompleted high rise which has now been taken over by squatters. He doesn't fully trust the people who are helping

him, especially part of the medical treatment, he who wants to head to a mosque for sanctuary. Those helping him, however, tell him that this situation is the end of the line for him, which he may not be able to accept.

Season 3 Episode 6, "Still Positive"
While Saul pretends not to mind being passed over, nominated CIA director senator Andrew Lockhart turns to Dar Adal to 'clean out the closet'. Only Quinn is told about Carrie's triple agent mission. She's roughly abducted and fails Iranian secret service vice director Majlis's lie detector test, but plays the Venezuelan accounts fraud card. He still manages to dispose of his ex first. Jessica is relieved when Dana, who claims the Brody burden is unbearable, adopts her maiden name, but the faithless daughter leaves home to move in with another dubious new friend, Angela.

Season 3 Episode 10, "Goodnight"
Brody tries to get in Iran as an informer with the help of CIA.

<u>Last Man Standing</u>
A married father of three tries to maintain his manliness in a world increasingly dominated by women.

Season 3 Episode 10, "Spanking"
While Mike's father babysat Boyd, he gave Boyd a small smack. This sets off a debate of parenting styles from different generations. Boyd learns to take advantage of his parents who do not spank, and Kristen feels she was spanked too much.

Season 3 Episode 19, "Hard-Ass Teacher"
Eve tries to avoid a class with a tough teacher so she can get straight A's and go to college at West Point.

Season 3 Episode 14, "Renaming Boyd's School"
When tasked with researching his school's namesake, Boyd gets a little help from Kristin and Ryan and his report causes outrage, prompting the school to reconsider its name. Also upsetting Vanessa, Mike suggests reaching out to school board member and neighbor, Carol Larabee, for help. Meanwhile, Mandy enlists Blanca's expertise for a class project.

<u>Longmire</u>
Walt Longmire is the dedicated and unflappable sheriff of Absaroka County, Wyoming. Widowed only a year, he is a man in psychic repair but buries his pain behind his brave face, unassuming grin and dry wit.

Season 3 Episode 8, "Harvest"

Longmire investigates the death of a farmer who was about to be evicted from his land, Branch and Cady investigate a lead in Denver on behalf of Henry, and Vic contemplates her future with the sheriff's department.

Season 3 Episode 9, "Counting Coup"
Branch has proof that David Ridges is alive, and Longmire connects him to Jacob Nighthorse. Meanwhile, Sean makes Longmire serve divorce papers to Vic, and Henry faces another setback related to his trial.

Season 3 Episode 5, "Wanted Man"
Longmire and Lucian Connolly work together to track down three suspects in his wife's murder, Henry searches for the man who can prove his innocence, and Branch's investigation tactics nearly get him in trouble with the law.

Mike & Molly
A couple meet at an Overeaters' Anonymous meeting.

Season 4 Episode 5, "Poker in the Front, Looker in the Back"
Molly believes her suspicious next-door neighbor is up to no good and recruits Joyce to help her spy on him. Meanwhile, the guys get together for a poker game and end up sharing their dreams and aspirations.

Season 4 Episode 13, "Open Mike Night"
A confident Molly offers her wisdom to Samuel who now wants to be a standup comic. Meanwhile, Molly's advice to Harry causes him to challenge his protective mother.

Season 4 Episode 10, "Weekend at Peggy's"
Following a dramatic argument with Joyce over money, Mike and Molly move into Mike's childhood room at Peggy's.

Modern Family
Three different but related families face trials and tribulations in their own uniquely comedic ways.

Season 5 Episode 5, "The Late Show"
Jay pulled a lot of strings to get reservations at the hottest new restaurant for a family adult's night out. Unfortunately, in each household everyone is running late.

Season 5 Episode 22, "Message Received"
Mitchell and Cameron have to sell a few prized possessions to afford their wedding. Phil and Claire are the victims of a practical joke pulled off by their kids. Jay, Gloria and Manny are each forced to confront a fear.

Season 5 Episode 2, "First Days"

Manny and Luke have their first day of high school, Cam works as a substitute social studies teacher, Claire begins her new job working for her dad, and Mitchell's boss hits on Haley.

The Newsroom

A newsroom undergoes some changes in its workings and morals as a new team is brought in, bringing unexpected results for its existing news anchor.

Season 2 Episode 7, "Red Team III"

In the aftermath of ACN's Operation Genoa report, the staff who put it together face some serious blowback, not just when the government responds but also when the sources' credibility comes into question.

Season 2 Episode 6, "One Step Too Many"

Will makes an appearance on an ACN morning show. Jim meets old friends and foes when Hallie comes to visit. The ACN staff interview a general with knowledge of Operation Genoa, but Jerry's handling of the interview may prove costly.

Season 2 Episode 2, "The Genoa Tip"

After running with what the team believes is an accurate tip backfires, delivering a heavy blow to their credibility.

Revolution

Fifteen years after a permanent global blackout, a group of revolutionaries seeks to drive out an occupying force posing as the United States Government.

Season 2 Episode 5, "One Riot, One Ranger"

Aaron and Rachel speculate on the extreme effects of Nano technology. Meanwhile a figure from Miles's past reemerges.

Season 2 Episode 7, "The Patriot Act"

Miles and Company are trapped in Willoughby. When Rachel discovers some unsettling truths, Miles does what he does best to overcome obstacles before him and those he cares about. Meanwhile, Charlie shares a moment with her mom, as Neville and Jason continue their struggles between father and son.

Season 2 Episode 20, "Tomorrowland"

Empowered with authority by the President, Truman launches a mustard gas attack to kill Miles and Monroe. To Rachel's disappointment, Miles agrees to join Monroe in a ruthless plot to beat the Patriots at their own game. Meanwhile, Neville faces his own challenge from the Patriots, and Aaron grows increasingly alarmed by the power of the nanotech.

Rules of Engagement

Two couples and their single friend, all at different stages in their relationships, deal with the complications of dating, commitment and marriage.

Season 7 Episode 11, "Timmy Quits"

Timmy finds out that Russell is using a tracking device on him, Adam tries to choose a best man, and Audrey feels threatened by one of Jeff's old female friends.

Season 7 Episode 4, "Cupcake"

Jeff thinks he's having a heart attack after he unknowingly eats a cupcake that contains marijuana, and Timmy scores with a "cougar" while being forced to work as Russell's "rodeo clown."

Season 7 Episode 9, "Cooking Class"

Jeff and Adam become super-competitive when they take a cooking class with Audrey and Jennifer, and Russell's new female interest bears an uncanny resemblance to Timmy.

Scandal

A former White House Communications Director starts her own crisis management firm only to realize her clients are not the only ones with secrets.

Season 3 Episode 6, "Icarus"

Olivia faces a decision that will affect her White House relationships; Harrison's loyalty is tested; Cyrus and Mellie scheme against Josie Marcus while the team works with her.

Season 3 Episode 15, "Mama Said Knock You Out"

Fitz and Mellie's children prepare for an interview; Adnan seeks Harrison's help; Rowan warns Olivia to stop investigating B613.

Season 3 Episode 17, "Flesh and Blood"

The team must spring into action following a security breach; when Fitz's campaign stalls, he thinks about going against Olivia's suggestion; Maya and Adnan plan their next move.

Shameless

An alcoholic man lives in a perpetual stupor while his six children with whom he lives

cope as best they can.

Season 4 Episode 7, "A Jailbird, Invalid, Matryr, Cutter …"

Fiona goes on trial for her felony charge. An angry Lip tries to keep the family from falling apart. Sammy uses extreme methods to soothe Frank's pain. V and Kevin get big news.

Season 4 Episode 3, "Like Father, Like Daughter"

Fiona and Mike take a big step forward when Mike invites her to dinner with his family. She meets his parents and older brother, who is a thrill seeking ex-alcoholic. Debbie fools Shelia into thinking she is at a sleep over party, and sneaks out for an evening with the new boyfriend. Frank is setting up a "chance" meeting with eldest daughter Samantha to try to scam her into giving him a piece of her liver. Meanwhile, Carl trying to keep Frank in pain killers and the family with food on the shelves concocts a scheme to make some extra cash.

Season 4 Episode 10, "Liver, I Hardly Know Her"

Fiona goes on a heavy bender and ends up in Wisconsin and Lip has to come rescue her. Mickey and Kev start fighting over their joint venture. Bonnie and Carl steal a car. Sammi and Sheila try to find Frank a cheap liver transplant.

Appendix B: Reviewers' Guidebook

You will be watching each assigned episode and evaluating it based on the seven characteristics detailed below. For every episode, you will use one of the enclosed Evaluation Sheets and circle what you deem to be the appropriate number (running from -2 to +2) along each characteristic's spectrum. Don't forget to fill in the identifying information at the top of each sheet!

We will be conducting the evaluations in *two rounds*. In Round One, everyone is watching the same episodes of the same programs. This will establish what is called "inter-rater reliability" – the assurance that everyone is interpreting what they see in a generally similar manner. Once such reliability has been established, we will then conduct Round Two of the evaluations, in which everyone is randomly assigned different episodes from everyone else. This allows us to review a large number of episodes without duplication of effort.

For each round, when you have completed evaluations for all of the assigned episodes, please place them in the stamped envelope provided, and mail them back to me. When I have received everyone's responses for Round One, I will contact everyone and ask you to move on to Round Two. After receiving your completed evaluation forms for Round Two, I will send additional correspondence explaining details of what I hope the project accomplishes.

Here is some elaboration on the characteristics from the evaluation sheets:

....

1. **STYLE**

You are analyzing the extent to which various elements of the program – e.g. cinematography, editing, sound, narrative flow – are innovative, as opposed to conventional. Your analysis might involve such questions as:

Are there stylistic and/or structural elements which are novel, complex, or unpredictable? (Pole A);

Or,

Does each episode unfold in a very similar way? Is the structure familiar as compared with other mainstream television programs? Is the style of presentation straightforward and predictable? (Pole B)

2. SETTING

You are rating the extent to which the protagonists of the show are in roles that are traditionally viewed with deference and respect within mainstream American culture. Some considerations may be:

Are the protagonists of the show in positions that are traditionally viewed as authorities (e.g. law enforcement, military, politics, clergy)? Do they have power and respect in society? (Pole A)

Or,

Are they "underdogs," marginalized, poor, or in positions of subservience? (Pole B)

3. THEMES

You are determining how neatly the protagonists and antagonists fit into categories of "good" and "bad," and the complexity/relativity of right and wrong on the program. Relevant inquiries include:

Do the protagonists sometimes break the law or deviate from typical standards of decency without "learning their lesson" by the end of the episode? Do the antagonists sometimes exhibit sympathetic qualities, and/or have motivations that seem human and understandable? (Pole A)

Or,

Are there clear "good guys" and "bad guys"? Do the protagonists always behave in ways that might traditionally be considered good or wholesome? If not, do they suffer or learn a clear and immediate moral lesson from their mistake? Are the antagonists relatively one-dimensional in their wrongdoing and motivation? (Pole B)

4. SERIALIZATION

Some shows have episodes that are fairly self-contained units, whereas other shows have story elements that span multiple episodes or even seasons without tidy resolution. In determining which type of show your program is, you should ask:

> *Does the episode seem to require knowledge of developments from prior episodes? Are there major questions or problems remaining for the major characters that will presumably be addressed in subsequent episodes? (Pole A)*

> *Or,*

> *Is the conflict, problem, or mystery that motivates the characters at the beginning of the episode resolved in one way or another by the end of the episode? Would the episode "work" as a self-contained mini-movie? (Pole B)*

5. **CAST**

You are rating the diversity of the show, i.e. the extent to which there are significant and positive depictions of characters beyond straight, able-bodied white men. Some considerations include:

> *Are there major, three-dimensional protagonists that are from minority groups (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, religion, national origin)? Do the women protagonists have a role in the show that is completely independent of a being a love interest for a main man character? (Pole A)*

> *Or,*

> *Are the major protagonists uniformly of the same race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, religion, national origin and background? Do they largely reflect the demographics of those in positions of social dominance, e.g.: masculine; white; heterosexual; American; Christian? Are those who deviate from these demographics more likely to be antagonists? Do the women protagonists largely serve the purpose of being a love interest for a male protagonist? (Pole B)*

6. **CONFLICT**

You are analyzing the degree to which the program depicts a world of physical danger. Relevant questions include:

> *Are the protagonists or their loved ones at risk of injury, illness, or death? Does the danger require physical violence to overcome? (Pole A)*

> *Or,*

> *Are the dangers faced by the protagonists typically social (e.g. threatening their reputation, livelihood, or relationships)? Do they protagonists address their obstacles without resorting to violence? (Pole B)*

7. <u>**WHOLESOMENESS**</u>
Here you are rating the degree to which the program might be considered "family-friendly." This involves questions such as:

> ***Are there frequent and/or prominent elements of sex or vulgarity? When violence occurs, is it depicted with explicit blood and gore? (Pole A)***

> <u>***Or,***</u>

> ***Are sexual themes largely absent? Is the humor "clean"? Is violence or injury depicted in a "sanitized" manner? (Pole B)***

In making your evaluations, here are a few things to keep in mind:

A) Your programs might not exhibit any of one or more characteristics. Episodes have been assigned to you randomly from a bigger sample, so don't second-guess yourself by thinking things like, "Gee, I didn't rate any of my shows as being unusually violent, so I must have done something wrong." You probably didn't.

B) Make your ratings relative to the norms of modern narrative television as a whole. You have been chosen for your familiarity with a wide spectrum of television, and your ratings should consider the spectrum's entirety. For example, a particular program might not be "stylish" compared to the shows you watch for your own personal enjoyment, but remember that you are rating it against *all* of the fictional narrative programs that currently air.

C) Some of you are married to one of the other reviewers. It is fine to watch the programs together, and you don't need to avoid talking about them. But it is very important that you use your own judgment in making your final evaluations, rather than giving "consensus" ratings. (On the other hand, if you happen to see things the same way, that's fine too).

You may have questions as the project moves along. Please email them to me at **********, and I will answer them to the best of my ability. When appropriate, I will provide clarification to the entire group.

Thank you for your participation!