Cross-Partisan Discussions on YouTube: Conservatives Talk to Liberals but Liberals Don’t Talk to Conservatives

Siqi Wu1,2, Paul Resnick1
1 University of Michigan, 2 Australian National University
{siqiwu, presnick}@umich.edu

Abstract

We present the first large-scale measurement study of cross-partisan discussions between liberals and conservatives on YouTube, based on a dataset of 274,241 political videos from 973 channels of US partisan media and 134M comments from 9.3M users over eight months in 2020. Contrary to a simple narrative of echo chambers, we find a surprising amount of cross-talk: most users with at least 10 comments posted at least once on both left-leaning and right-leaning YouTube channels. Cross-talk, however, was not symmetric. Based on the user leaning predicted by a hierarchical attention model, we find that conservatives were much more likely to comment on left-leaning videos than liberals on right-leaning videos. Secondly, YouTube’s comment sorting algorithm made cross-partisan comments modestly less visible; for example, comments from conservatives made up 26.3% of all comments on left-leaning videos but just over 20% of the comments were in the top 20 positions. Lastly, using Perspective API’s toxicity score as a measure of quality, we find that conservatives were not significantly more toxic than liberals when users directly commented on the content of videos. However, when users replied to comments from other users, we find that cross-partisan replies were more toxic than co-partisan replies on both left-leaning and right-leaning videos, with cross-partisan replies being especially toxic on the replier’s home turf.

1 Introduction

Political scientists and communication scholars have raised concerns that online platforms can act as echo chambers, reinforcing people’s pre-existing beliefs by exposing them only to information and commentary from other people with similar viewpoints (Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Flaxman, Goel, and Rao 2016). Echo chambers are concerning because they can drive users to adopt more extreme positions and reduce the chance for building the common ground and legitimacy of political compromises (Pariser 2011; Sunstein 2018). While prior research has investigated the (negative) effects of echo chambers based on small-scale user surveys and controlled experiments (An, Quercia, and Crowcroft 2014; Dubois and Blank 2018), one fundamental question still remains unclear: to what degree do users experience echo chambers in real online environments?

One countermeasure for mitigating echo chambers is to promote information exchange among individuals with different political ideologies. Cross-partisan communication, or cross-talk, has thus become an important research subject. Researchers have studied cross-partisan communication on platforms such as Twitter (Lietz et al. 2014; Garimella et al. 2018; Eady et al. 2019), Facebook (Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic 2015), and Reddit (An et al. 2019). However, little is known about YouTube, which has become an emerging source for disseminating news and an active forum for discussing political affairs. According to a recent survey from Pew Research Center (Stocking et al. 2020), 26% Americans got news on YouTube, and 51% of them primarily looked for opinions and commentary on the videos.

To fill this gap, we curated a new dataset that tracked user comments on YouTube videos from US political channels. Focusing on active users who posted at least 10 comments each, the top-line surprising result is that most commenters did not confine themselves to just left-leaning and just right-leaning YouTube channels. Figure 1 visualizes the shared audience network between channels. The blue and red dashed circles respectively enclose the left-leaning and right-leaning channels.

Figure 1: There is a surprising amount of cross-talk between left-leaning and right-leaning YouTube channels. Each node is a channel. Node size is proportional to the number of users who comment. Edge width is scaled by the number of users commenting on channels at both ends. This plot reflects only active users, those who posted at least 10 comments.

We replicated the analyses based on users with at least 2 comments to users with at least 30 comments. The results are qualitatively similar and supplemented in Appendix A.

Copyright © 2021, Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (www.aaai.org). All rights reserved.
nels. In each circle, we show the top 3 most commented channels. Edges represent audience overlap, i.e., the number of people who commented on both channels. We find that 69.3% of commenters posted at least once on both left-leaning and right-leaning channels. Together, those users’ comments made up 85.5% of all comments. This example illustrates that a significant amount of YouTube users have participated in cross-partisan political discussions.

In this work, we tackled three open questions related to cross-partisan discussions on YouTube. First, what is the prevalence of cross-talk? The theory of selective exposure suggests that people deliberately avoid information challenging their viewpoints (Hart et al., 2009). Thus, one might expect few interactions across political lines. However, survey studies have found conflicting evidence that people are aware of and sometimes even seek out counter-arguments (Horrigan, Garrett, and Resnick, 2004; An, Quercia, and Crowcroft, 2014), and that political filter bubbles are actually occurring to a limited extent (An et al., 2011; Dubois and Blank, 2018). To address this question, we trained a hierarchical attention model (Yang et al., 2016) to predict a user’s political leaning based on the comment collection s/he posted. We find that cross-partisan communication was not symmetric: on the user level, conservatives were more likely to post on left-leaning videos than liberals on right-leaning videos; on the video level, especially on videos published by right-leaning independent media, there were relatively few comments from liberals.

Second, does YouTube promote cross-talk? YouTube’s recommender system has been criticized for creating echo chambers in terms of which videos users would be recommended (Lewis, 2018). Here, we examined whether the sorting of comments on the video pages tended to suppress cross-talk. We examined the fraction of cross-partisan comments shown in the top 20 positions. While the position bias for each successive position was small, overall comments from the opposite ideologies appeared less frequently among the top positions than their total numbers would predict.

Third, what is the quality of cross-talk? Discussions on YouTube are multifaceted—a user can reply to the content of videos, or reply to another user who commented before. The conversation quality may differ depending on whom the comments reply to and where the discussions take place. We used toxicity as a measure of quality and used an open tool – Perspective API (Jigsaw, 2020) – to classify whether a comment is toxic or not. We find only small differences in toxicity of comments targeting the video content. We find comments that reply to people with opposing views were much more frequently toxic than co-partisan replies. Furthermore, cross-partisan replies were especially more toxic on a replier’s home territory: i.e., when liberals replying to conservatives on left-leaning videos and when conservatives replying to liberals on right-leaning videos.

The main contributions of this work include:

- a procedure for estimating the prevalence of cross-partisan discussions on YouTube;
- a finding that cross-partisan comments are common, but much more frequently by conservatives on left-leaning videos than by liberals on right-leaning videos;
- a finding that cross-partisan comments are more toxic, and further deteriorate when replying to users of the opposite ideology on one’s home turf;
- a new political discussion dataset that contains 274,241 political videos published by 973 channels of US partisan media and 134M comments posted by 9.3M users.

2 Related work

2.1 Echo chambers and affective polarization

Research on echo chamber dates back to cognitive dissonance theory in the 1950s (Festinger, 1957), which argued that people tended to seek out information that they agreed on in order to minimize dissonance. Since then, there have been persistent concerns that the advances of modern techniques may exacerbate the extent of ideological echo chambers by making it easier for users to receive a personalized information feed that Negroponte (1996) referred to as the “Daily Me” or even be automatically insulated inside the “filter bubbles” by algorithms that feed users more things like what they have seen before (Pariser, 2011). Concerns have been raised that isolation in echo chambers will drive people towards more extreme opinions over time (Sunstein, 2018) and to heightened affective polarization – animosity towards people with different political views.

However, evidence is mixed on the extent to which people really prefer to be in the echo chambers. Iyengar and Hahn (2009) found partisan divisions in attention that people gave to articles based on the ideological match with the mainstream news source (Fox News, NPR, CNN, BBC) to which articles were artificially attributed to. On the other hand, Garrett (2009) argued that people have a preference for encountering some reinforcing information but not necessarily an aversion to challenging information, and Munson and Resnick (2010) found that some people showed a preference for collections of news items that had more ideological diversity. Gentzkow and Shapiro (2011) found that ideological segregation of online news consumption was relatively low and less than ideological segregation of face-to-face interactions, but higher than segregation of offline news consumption. Dubois and Blank (2018), in a survey of 2,000 UK Internet users, found that people who were more politically engaged reported more exposure to opinions that they disagreed with and more exposure to things that might change their minds. In a case study, Quattrociocchi, Scala, and Sunstein (2016) found little overlap between the users who commented on Facebook posts articulating conspiracy narratives vs. on mainstream science narratives under the same topic. In a study based on a sample of Twitter users, Eady et al. (2019) found that the most conservative fifth had more than 12% of the media accounts that they followed at least as left as the New York Times; the liberal fifth had 4% of the media accounts that they followed at least as right as Fox News.

The code and anonymized data are publicly available at https://github.com/avalanchesiqi/youtube-crosstalk.
Evidence is also mixed on the extent to which algorithms are promoting echo chambers, and whether they lead people to more extreme opinions. [An et al. (2011)] found that many Twitter users were indirectly exposed to media sources with a different political ideology. In a large-scale browsing-behavior analysis, [Flaxman, Goel, and Aakre (2016)] found that people were less segregated in the average leaning of media sites that they accessed directly than those they accessed through search and social media feeds, but there was more variety in the ideologies of individuals who were exposed through search and social media. On Facebook, [Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic (2015)] found substantial exposure to challenging viewpoints; more than 20% of news articles that liberal clicked on was cross-cutting (meaning it had a primarily conservative audience) and for conservatives, nearly 30% of news articles that they clicked on had a primarily liberal audience. [Hussein, Juneja, and Mitra (2020)] audited five search topics on YouTube and found that watching videos containing misinformation led to more misinformation videos being recommended to watch. [Ribeiro et al. (2020)] found that users migrated over time from alt-lite channels to more extreme alt-right channels, but that the video recommender algorithm did not link to videos from those more extreme channels; [Ledwich and Zaitsev (2020)] also found that the YouTube recommender pushed viewers toward mainstream media rather than extreme content.

Finally, there have also been studies with conflicting results about whether exposure to diverse views increases or decreases affective polarization. [Garrett et al. (2014)] hypothesized that exposure to concordant news sources would activate partisan identity and thus increase affective polarization, while exposure to out-party news sources will reduce partisan identity and thus affective polarization. They found evidence consistent with these hypotheses based on surveys of U.S. and Israeli voters. On the other hand, in a field experiment, [Bail et al. (2018)] found that people who were paid to follow a bot account that retweeted opposing politicians and commentators became more extreme in their own opinions, though it did not directly assess changes in affective polarization.

### 2.2 The nature of cross-talk

The impact of exposure to opposing opinions may well depend on how that information is presented. This is especially true for direct conversations between people. There is a huge difference between a respectful conversation on the “/r/changemyview” subreddit and having a troll join a conversation with the goal of trying to disrupt or elicit angry reactions (Phillips 2015; Flores-Saviaga, Keegan, and Savige 2018). [Bail (2021)] (Chapter 9) described an experiment where encounters with others of opposing views were structured to hide some ideological and demographic characteristics; this led to more moderate political views and reduced affective polarization in a survey conducted a week later.

Some but not all cross-cutting political discussion online is adversarial or from trolls. [Hua, Ristenpart, and Naaman (2020)] developed a technique for measuring the extent to which interactions with a particular political figure were indeed adversarial. [An et al. (2019)] found that Reddit users used more complex language and sophisticated reasoning, and more posing of questions in two cross-cutting subreddits than those same users did in two homogenous subreddits. More broadly, [Rajadesingan, Resnick, and Budak (2020)] reported that across a large number of political subreddits, most individuals who participated in multiple subreddits adjusted their toxicity levels to more closely match that of the subreddits they participated in.

### 2.3 Estimating user political ideology

Semi-supervised label propagation is a popular method for predicting user political leaning (Zhou, Resnick, and Mei 2011; Cossard et al. 2020). The core assumption of label propagation is homophily – actions that form the base network must be either endorsement or refutation, but not both. However, commenting is ambiguous, which may express attitudes of both agreement and disagreement. Some researchers developed Monte Carlo sampling methods for clustering users (Bail and Gagliardi 2017; Flaxman et al. 2017). Recent advancements in language modeling allow us to infer user leaning directly from text embedding (Yang et al. 2016). In this work, we implemented a hierarchical attention network model for predicting user political leaning.

### 3 YouTube political discussion dataset

We constructed a new dataset by collecting user comments on YouTube political videos. Our dataset consists of 274K videos from 973 US political channels between 2020-01-01 and 2020-08-31, along with 134M comments from 9.3M users. In this section, we first describe the collection of YouTube channels of US partisan media. We then introduce our scheme for coding these channels by types such as national, local, or independent media. Lastly, we describe our procedure for collecting videos and comments.

#### 3.1 YouTube channels of US partisan media

**MBFC-matched YouTube channels.** We scraped the bias checking website Media Bias/Fact Check (MBFC), which is a commonly used resource in scientific studies (Bovet and Makse 2019; Ribeiro et al. 2020). This yielded 2,307 websites with reported political leanings. MBFC classifies the leanings on a 7-point Likert scale (extreme-left, left, center-left, center, center-right, right, extreme-right). The exact details of their procedure are not described, but the process takes into account word choices, factual sourcing, story choices, and political affiliation. Since our focus was on the extent of cross-partisan interactions, we collapsed this 7-point classification: we collapsed {extreme-left, left, center-left} and {extreme-right, right, center-right} each into one left-leaning and one right-leaning group. We discarded 186 center media. Additionally, the first author examined the articles and “about” page of each site to annotate the media’s country. Because the ratings of MBFC were based on the US political scale, we only kept the 1,410 US websites.

[https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/](https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/)
Next, we scraped all those websites to detect YouTube links. This yielded 450 websites with YouTube channels. For the unresolved websites, we queried the YouTube search bar with their URLs. We crawled the channel “about” pages of the top 10 search results and retained the first channel with a hyperlink redirecting to the queried website. To improve the matching quality, we used the **SequenceMatcher** Python module to compute a similarity score between the YouTube channel title and website title. The score ranges from 0 to 1, where 1 indicates exact match. The first author manually checked and labeled any site with either similarity score below 0.5 or with no search result. In total, this mapped 929 YouTube channels to the corresponding US partisan websites, 640 of which published at least one video in 2020.

**Addition of channels featured on those channels.** The MBFC website has good coverage of mainstream media and local newspapers, but not of YouTube political commentators. Studies have found that scholars, journalists, and pundits regularly use YouTube to promote political positions ([Lewis 2018](https://example.com)). To expand our dataset, we crawled the “featured channels” listed on the 640 MBFC-matched active YouTube channels. Channels choose which other channels they want to feature in this way. We did not observe any channel that was featured by both a left-leaning channel and a right-leaning channel among our 640 channels. Therefore, we added these featured channels to our dataset and labeled them with the same political ideology as the channels featuring it. Our approach was validated on the 62 MBFC-matched channels that were also featured by some other MBFC-matched channels. We compared their predicted leanings to the MBFC labels and found that all 62 channels are correctly predicted. This yielded 637 additional channels.

**Addition of existing YouTube media bias datasets.** We further augmented our list of channels with three existing YouTube media bias datasets ([Lewis 2018](https://example.com), [Ribeiro et al. 2020](https://example.com), [Ledwich and Zaitsev 2020](https://example.com)). These datasets were annotated by the authors of corresponding papers. After discarding the intersections and center channels, we obtained 356 additional channels with known political leanings.

### 3.2 Channel coding scheme

The first author manually coded the collected channels by assessing their descriptions on YouTube and Wikipedia. Pew Research Center has also proposed a similar coding scheme ([Stocking et al. 2020](https://example.com)).

- **National media:** channels of televisions, radios, or newspapers from major US news conglomerates (e.g., CNN, Fox News, New York Times) and high profile politicians (e.g., Donald Trump and Joe Biden). They cover stories across multiple areas and have national readership.

- **Local media:** channels of media publishing or broadcasting in small finite areas. They usually focus on local news and have local readership (e.g., Arizona Daily Sun, Texas Tribune, ABC11-WTVD, CBS Boston).

- **Organizations:** channels of governments, NGOs, advocacy groups, or research institutions (e.g., White House, GOP War Room, Hoover Institution).

### 3.3 Video and comment collection

#### Filtering out non-political channels

We removed non-political channels (e.g., music, gaming) because comments by liberals and conservatives on these channels are often not about politics and thus are not necessarily indicative of cross-partisan communication. On the channel level, since YouTube did not provide a category label, the first author manually reviewed 10 random videos of each channel from 2020. Channels were removed if they did not publish any video in 2020 or none of their 10 randomly selected videos was relevant to US news and politics.

#### Filtering out non-political videos

Political channels sometimes published non-political videos, which we wanted to exclude from our dataset. Channels can tag each video with one of 15 categories. We kept videos that were tagged with the following six categories: “News & Politics, Nonprofits & Activism, Entertainment, Comedy, People & Blogs, Education”. Categories such as Music, Sport, and Gaming were excluded. We retained Entertainment and Comedy because we found that independent media often used these tags even when the videos were clearly related to politics.

#### Collecting video and comment metadata

Altogether, we collected 274,241 political videos where commenting was permitted, and published by the 973 channels of US partisan media between 2020-01-01 and 2020-08-31. For each video, we collected its title, category, description, keywords, view count, transcripts, and comments.

YouTube provided two options for sorting video comments—Top comments or Newest first (Figure 2). Without scrolling or clicking, the YouTube web interface displayed the top 20 root comments by default (Figure 2), making them enjoy significantly more exposure than the collapsed replies (Figure 2). We first queried the Top comments tab to scrape the 20 root comments for investigating the bias in YouTube’s comment sorting algorithm (see Section 6). We also queried the Newest first tab to scrape all the root comments and replies. For each comment,

|               | left-leaning | right-leaning | total |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|-------|
| #channels     | 462 (47.5%)  | 511 (52.5%)   | 973   |
| #videos       | 195,482 (71.3%) | 78,759 (28.7%) | 274,241 |
| #views        | 13.4B (71.7%)  | 5.3B (28.3%)   | 18.7B  |
| #comments     | 79.5M (59.4%)  | 54.3M (40.6%)  | 133.8M |

Table 1: Statistics of YouTube political discussion dataset.

- Independent media: channels that have no clear affiliation with any organization (e.g., The Young Turks, Breitbart) and content producers who make political commentary videos (e.g., Ben Shapiro, Paul Joseph Watson).
leaning channels that users subscribed to. Next, we trained and URLs in the comments, and (b) left-leaning and right-leaning for a set of seed users based on (a) political hashtags.

In this section, we first determined the ideological leaning function (CCDF) of comments per user. 16.7% of users posted at least 10 comments.

In Figure 3(b), we plot the complementary cumulative distribution of right-leaning videos with large comment volume. (PDF) of comments per video. We observe a higher proportion of left-leaning videos but fewer comments per video compared to right-leaning videos. Figure 3(a) plots the probability density function (PDF) of comments per video, disaggregated by political leanings. (b) CCDF of comments per user.

4 Predicting user political leaning

In this section, we first determined the ideological leaning for a set of seed users based on (a) political hashtags and URLs in the comments, and (b) left-leaning and right-leaning channels that users subscribed to. Next, we trained a hierarchical attention model based on the comment texts from seed users, and then predicted the political leaning for the remaining users.

4.1 Obtaining labels for seed users

Political hashtags and URLs. Hashtags are widely used to promote online activism. Research has shown that the adoption of political hashtags is highly polarized—users often use hashtags that support their ideologies and rarely use hashtags from the opposite side (Hua, Ristenpart, and Naaman 2020). We extracted 231,483 hashtags from all 134M comments. The first author manually examined the 1,239 hashtags appearing in at least 100 comments, out of which 306 left and 244 right hashtags were identified as seed hashtags.

Users sometimes shared URLs in the comments. If a URL redirected to a left-leaning MBFC website or a left-leaning YouTube video, we replaced the URL text in the comment with a special token LEFT_URL. We resolved to RIGHT_URL in the same way.

For simplicity, we used the term “entity” to refer to both hashtag and URL. We constructed a user-entity bipartite graph, in which each node was either a user or an entity. Undirected edges were formed only between users and entities. Next, we applied a label propagation algorithm on the bipartite graph (Liu et al. 2016). The algorithm was built upon two assumptions: (a) liberals (conservatives) mostly use left (right) entities; (b) left (right) entities are mostly used by liberals (conservatives).

Step 1: from entities to users. For each user, we counted the number of used left and right entities, denoted as $E_l$ and $E_r$, respectively. Users who shared fewer than 5 entities, i.e., $E_l + E_r < 5$, were excluded. We used the following equation to compute a homogeneity score:

$$\delta(l, r) = \frac{r - l}{r + l}$$  \hspace{1cm} (1)

$\delta$ ranges from -1 to 1, where -1 (or 1) indicates that this user exclusively used left (or right) entities. The same scoring function has also been used by Robertson et al. (2018).

Since we focused on the precision rather than recall in identifying seed users, we considered a user to be liberal if $\delta(E_l, E_r) \leq -0.9$ and conservative if $\delta(E_l, E_r) \geq 0.9$.

Step 2: from users to entities. We only propagated user labels to hashtags, but not URLs because most URLs apart from the MBFC websites were non-political. For each hashtag, we counted the number of liberals and conservatives who used it, denoted as $H_l$ and $H_r$, respectively. We excluded hashtags shared by fewer than 5 users, i.e., $H_l + H_r < 5$. Using Equation (1), a hashtag was considered left if $\delta(H_l, H_r) \leq -0.9$ and considered right if $\delta(H_l, H_r) \geq 0.9$.

Beginning with the manually identified 306 left and 244 right hashtags, we repeatedly predicted user leanings in Step...
and then updated the set of political hashtags in Step 2. We repeated this process until no new user nor new hashtag was obtained. This yielded 8,616 liberals and 8,144 conservatives, denoted as $Seed_{ent}$, based on an expanded set of 834 left and 717 right hashtags.

**User subscriptions.** For the 1,555,428 (16.7%) users who posted at least 10 comments, we scraped their subscription lists on YouTube, i.e., channels that a user subscribed to. A total of 476,701 (30.6%) users subscribed to at least one channel. For each user, we counted the number of left-leaning and right-leaning channels in their subscription list, denoted as $S_l$ and $S_r$, respectively. We excluded users who subscribed to fewer than 5 partisan channels, i.e., $S_l + S_r < 5$. Using Equation (1), a user was considered liberal if $\delta(S_l, S_r) \leq -0.9$ and considered conservative if $\delta(S_l, S_r) \geq 0.9$. This yielded 61,320 liberals and 86,134 conservatives from subscriptions, denoted as $Seed_{sub}$.

**Validation.** We compared $Seed_{ent}$ to $Seed_{sub}$. They had an intersection of 2,035 users, among which 1,958 (96.2%) users had the same predicted labels, suggesting a very high agreement. Given this validation, we merged $Seed_{ent}$ with $Seed_{sub}$, while removing the remaining 77 users with conflicting labels. This leaves a total of 162,102 seed users (68,883 liberals and 93,219 conservatives).

Mentioning a hashtag, sharing an URL, and subscribing to a channel are all endorsement actions. They all satisfy the homophily assumption of the label propagation algorithms. However, most users in our dataset did not have such endorsement behaviors. The coverage of identified seed users was low (162K out of 9.4M, 1.7%). For the remaining users, we used methods that could infer user political leanings solely based on the collection of comment texts.

### 4.2 Classification by Hierarchical Attention Network

Hierarchical Attention Network (HAN) is a deep learning model for document classification (Yang et al. 2016). HAN differentiates itself from other text classification methods in two ways: (a) it captures the hierarchical structure of text data, i.e., a document consists of many sentences and a sentence consists of many words; (b) it implements an attention mechanism to select important sentences in the document and important words in the sentences. Researchers have applied HAN in many classification tasks on social media and shown that HAN is one of the top performers (Cheng et al. 2019). HAN is a suitable choice for our task of predicting user political leaning, because a user posts many comments and each comment consists of many words.

**Experiment setup.** We used the 162K seed users as training set. For each user, we treated their comments as independent sentences, and we concatenated all comments into one document. We replaced URLs by their primary domains. Punctuation and English stop words were also removed. We employed 5-fold cross validation, which ensured that all seed users will be estimated and evaluated once.

**Prediction results.** The outputs of HAN are two normalized values $P_l$ and $P_r$ via the softmax activation ($P_l + P_r = 1$). The model classifies a user as conservative if $P_r > 0.5$, otherwise as liberal. Figure 4(a) shows the frequency distribution of $P_r$ for the 162K seed users. We binarized $P_r$ into 20 buckets. 91.6% of seed users fell into the leftmost ($P_r \leq 0.05$) or the rightmost ($P_r \geq 0.95$) buckets, suggesting that our trained HAN was very confident about the prediction results. We show the number of true liberals and true conservatives in each bucket as a stacked bar. In Figure 4(b), we plot the accuracy of each bucket. The accuracy was 0.943 when predicting liberal with $P_r \leq 0.05$, and 0.969 when predicting conservative with $P_r \geq 0.95$. The prediction power dropped significantly when $0.05 < P_r < 0.95$, but there were relatively few users in that range. The overall accuracy was 0.929.

In practice, some users may have no comment that can reveal their political leanings, e.g., comment spammers. Other users may have a mixed ideology. We thus divided users into three bins based on thresholds of our HAN model output: a user is classified as liberal if $P_r \leq 0.05$, as conservative if $P_r \geq 0.95$, otherwise as unknown (see Figure 4b).

After training, we had five HAN models, each trained on one fold of 80% data. In the inference phase, if any two models gave conflicting predictions for the same user, we set that user to the unknown class. This yielded known classifications for 6,370,150 users (3,738,714 liberals and 2,631,436 conservatives). Combining with the 162K seed users, we assigned political leanings for 6.53M (69.7%) users, who posted 123M (91.9%) comments. For comparison, we also implemented a Vanilla LSTM model, which achieved similar overall accuracy of 0.922. However, after setting users with $0.05 < P_r < 0.95$ to unknown, LSTM yielded a lower coverage of classified users. We thus used the classification results from HAN in the following analysis.

**Visualizing HAN.** One advantage of HAN is that it can differentiate important sentences and words. Figure 5 visualizes the attention masks for comments from a liberal user. Each line is a separate comment. The top two comments contribute the most to prediction result. Our model can select words with correct political leaning. Those include existing words in our expanded hashtag set such as joebiden2020 and trumpvirus, as well as new words such as privilege, worst, and nightmare.
5 Prevalence analysis

We studied three questions related to the prevalence of cross-partisan discussions between liberals and conservatives. We first quantified the portions of cross-partisan comments from a user-centric view, then and from a video-centric view. Finally, we investigated whether the extent of cross-talk varied on different media types.

5.1 How often do users post on opposing channels?

We empirically measured how often a YouTube user commented on videos with opposite ideologies. For active users with at least 10 comments, we counted the frequencies that they posted on left-leaning and right-leaning videos. The HAN model classified 90.1% of the active users as either liberal or conservative. Among them, 62.2% of liberals posted at least once on right-leaning videos, while 82.3% conservatives posted at least once on left-leaning videos.

Figure 6 plots the fraction of users’ comments that were cross-partisan, as a function of how prolific the users were at commenting. Overall, conservatives posted much more frequently on left-leaning videos (median: 22.2%, mean: 33.9%) than liberals on right-leaning videos (median: 4.8%, mean: 15.6%). The fractions of cross-partisan comments from liberals were largely invariant to user activity level (Figure 6a). By contrast, prolific conservatives disproportionately commented on left-leaning videos (Figure 6b). The few most prolific conservative commenters with more than 10,000 comments made more than half their comments on left-leaning videos, suggesting a potential trolling behavior. Nevertheless, even for less prolific conservatives, they still commented on left-leaning videos far more frequently than liberals did on rightleaning videos.

5.2 How many cross-partisan comments do videos attract?

We also quantified cross-partisan discussions on the video level. For videos with at least 10 comments, we counted the number of comments posted by liberals and posted by conservatives. Figure 7 plots the fraction of cross-partisan comments on (a) left-leaning and (b) right-leaning videos. We make two observations here:

First, higher fraction of cross-partisan comments occurred on left-leaning videos (median: 28%, mean: 29.5%) than on right-leaning videos (median: 8.6%, mean: 13.4%). This result provides a new angle for explaining the creation of conservative echo chambers online (Garrett et al. 2009, Lima et al. 2018). For random viewers who watched right-leaning videos and browsed the discussions there, they would be exposed to very few comments from liberals. On the other hand, users might experience relatively more balanced discussions on the left-leaning videos since about one in three comments there was made by conservatives.

Second, the correlations between video popularity and cross-partisan comments were opposite for left-leaning and right-leaning videos. When left-leaning videos attracted more views, the fraction of comments from conservatives became lower. On the contrary, the fraction of comments from liberals was higher on right-leaning videos when the videos attracted more views. This finding reveals potentially different strategies when politically polarized users carry out cross-partisan communication: while conservatives occupy the discussion spaces in less popular left-leaning videos, liberals largely comment on high profile right-leaning videos.

5.3 Which media types attract more cross-partisan comments?

Using our media coding scheme introduced in Section 3.1, we examined the extent of cross-talk in the four media types. We excluded videos with less than 10 comments and then removed channels with less than five videos. For each channel, we computed the mean fraction of cross-partisan comments
over all of its videos, dubbed $\tilde{\eta}(c)$. The metric $\tilde{\eta}(c)$ can be interpreted as the expected rate of cross-talk appearing on an average video of a given channel $c$.

Figure 8 shows the distributions of $\tilde{\eta}(c)$ in a violin plot, disaggregated by media types and political leanings. Right-leaning channels received relatively fewer cross-partisan comments than the corresponding left-leaning channels across all four media types (statistically significant in one-sided Mann-Whitney U test at significance level of 0.05). In particular, half of right-leaning independent media had fewer than 10.7% comments from liberals, exposing their audience to a more homogeneous environment. For example, “Timcast”, who was the most commented right-leaning independent media in our dataset, had only 3.3 comments from liberals in every 100 comments. This phenomenon stresses the potential harm for those who engage with ring-wing political commentary, because the discussions there often happen within the conservative echo chambers, which may in turn foster the circulation of rumors and misinformation (Grinberg et al. 2019). On the other hand, the two prominent US news outlets – CNN and Fox News – were both crucial ground for cross-partisan discussions, having $\tilde{\eta}(c)$ of 35.8% and 31%, respectively.

6 Bias in YouTube’s comment sorting

While biases in YouTube’s video recommendation algorithms have been investigated (Hussein, Juneja, and Mitra 2020), potential bias in its comment sorting algorithm is still unexplored. Presumably, YouTube ranks comments on the video pages based on recency, upvotes, and perhaps some reputation measure of the commenters, but not explicitly on whether the ideology of the commenter matches that of the channel. However, the suppression of cross-partisan communication may be a side effect of popularity bias (Wu, Kizou, and Xie 2019). For example, comments from the same ideological group may naturally attract more upvotes. Since YouTube has become an emerging platform for online political discussions to take place, it is important to understand the impacts of the comment ranking algorithm.

YouTube provides two options to sort the comments (see Figure 2). While the Newest first displays comments in a reverse-chronological order, Top comments is a black box algorithm that sorts and initially displays 20 root comments. The default view shows Top comments. In this section, we investigated the likelihood of position bias both (a) within the top 20 comments and (b) between the top 20 and the remaining comments. We selected all videos with more than 20 root comments. This yielded 64,876 left-leaning and 44,253 right-leaning videos.

Figure 9 shows the fraction of cross-partisan comments at each of the top 20 positions, as well as the overall prevalence over all sampled videos. We observe a subtle trend over the top 20 successive positions. More prominently, cross-partisan comments among the top 20 were less than the overall rate. For example, for the 65K left-leaning videos, the fraction of comments from conservatives increased from 20.5% at position 1 to 22.8% at position 20. However, overall 26.3% of comments there were from conservatives. With more than 64K left videos and 44K right videos, the margins of error for all estimates were less than 0.41%. Thus the comparisons between the top 20 positions and all positions were statistically significant. This indicates that the sorting of Top comments creates a modest position bias against cross-partisan commentary, further diminishing the exposure of conservatives on left-leaning videos and liberals on right-leaning videos.

7 Toxicity as a measure of quality

While many political theorists have argued that exposure to diverse viewpoints has societal benefits, some researchers have also called attention to potential negative effects of cross-partisan communication. Bail et al. (2018) showed that exposure to politically opposing views could increase polarization. Even when the platforms can connect individuals with opposing views, the conversation may be more about shouting rather than meaningful discussions. To this end, we complemented our prevalence analysis with a measure of the toxicity in the comments. Toxicity is a vague and subjective concept, operationalized as the fraction of human raters who would label something as “a rude, disrespectful, or unreasonable comment that is likely to make you leave a discus-

"For videos with no more than 20 root comments, the Top comments algorithm will show all their comments. Hence the display probability is 1 across all positions."

Figure 8: Analysis of media types. Local news channels attracted balanced audiences. By contrast, on right-leaning independent media, very few comments were posted by liberals. The outlines are kernel density estimates for the left-leaning and right-leaning channels. The center dashed line is the median, whereas the two outer lines denote the interquartile range.

Figure 9: Root comments from conservatives on left-leaning videos and liberals on right-leaning videos were less likely to appear among the top 20 positions. The line charts show the fractions of cross-partisan comments at each position, while the bar charts show the overall fraction of cross-partisan comments.
For example, liberals received more toxic replies from liber-
true even for replies from people who share their ideology.
Interestingly, this holds posing video generates more hostile responses than com-
vs. 15.31% on right-leaning videos). Commenting on an op-
ments had about the same toxicity when posting on left-
ments. We find that liberals and conservatives’ root com-
inted replies to other users.
Some YouTube comments are at the top level (i.e., root
comments, Figure 2b) and some are replies to other com-
ments (Figure 2c). This brings a challenge of assigning com-
ments to the correct targets. Fortunately, YouTube employs
the character “@” to specify the target (comment C in Fig-
ure 2d is such case). Hence we were able to curate two sets
of comments: one contained root comments, the other con-
tained replies to other users.
Results. Table 2 reports the frequency of toxic root com-
ments. We find that liberals and conservatives’ root com-
ments had about the same toxicity when posting on left-
leaning videos. However, conservatives posted fewer toxic
root comments on right-leaning videos, and thus slightly
fewer toxic root comments overall.
Table 3 reports the frequency of toxic replies. We find
that replies to people of opposite ideology were much
more frequently toxic, for both liberals and conservatives.
There also appears to be a “defense of home territory” phe-
nomenon. Conservatives were significantly more toxic in
their replies to liberals on right-leaning videos (17.15%)
than on left-leaning videos (15.24%) and analogously for
liberals responding to conservatives (18.24% on left-leaning
vs. 15.31% on right-leaning videos). Commenting on an op-
posing video generates more hostile responses than com-
menting on a same-ideology video. Interestingly, this holds
true even for replies from people who share their ideology.
For example, liberals received more toxic replies from liber-
als on right-leaning videos (13.42% toxic) than they did on
left-leaning videos (12.12% toxic).

8 Privacy considerations
All data that we gathered was publicly available on the
YouTube website. It did not require any limited access that
would create an expectation of privacy such as the case of
private Facebook groups. The analyses reported in this pap-
er do not compromise any user identity.
For the public dataset that we are making available, how-
ever, there are additional privacy concerns due to new forms
of search that become possible when public data is made
available as a single collection. In our released dataset of
comments, we take efforts to make it difficult for someone
who starts with a known comment authored by a particular
YouTube user to be able to search for other comments writ-
ten by the same user. Such a search is not currently possible
with the YouTube website or API, and so enabling it would
create a privacy reduction for YouTube users. To prevent
this, we do not associate any user identifier, even a hashed
one, with each comment text.

Without the ability to link comments by the authors, it will
not be possible for other researchers to reproduce the train-
ing process for our HAN model that predicts a user’s politi-
leaning. The released dataset also does not associate pre-
dicted political leanings with YouTube user ids. The political
leaning is a property predicted from the entire collection of
comments by a user, and thus is not something that would be
readily predicted from the user data that is easily available
from YouTube. Furthermore, political leaning is considered
sensitive personal information in some countries, including
the European Union, which places restrictions on the col-
lection of such information under the General Data Protec-
tion Regulation (GDPR 2016). Unfortunately, this limits the
ability of other researchers to produce new analyses of cross-
partisan communication based on our released dataset.

Instead, we are releasing our trained HAN model. This
will allow other researchers who independently collect a set
of comments from a single user to predict the political lean-
ing of that user.

9 Discussion
The results challenge, or at least complicate, several com-
mon narratives about the online political environment.
The first is the echo chamber or filter bubble hypothe-
sis, which posits that as people have more options of in-
formation sources and algorithm-assisted filtering of those
sources, they will naturally end up with exposure only to
ideologically-reinforcing information (Carney et al. 2008),
as discussed in Section 2. We find that videos on left-leaning
YouTube channels have a substantial number of comments
posted by conservatives – 26.2%. While upvoting and the
YouTube comment sorting algorithm somehow reduce their
visibility, there are still more than 20% top comments posted
by conservatives. On right-leaning videos, there is some-
what less cross-talk, but even there on average nearly two
of the top 20 comments are from liberals. Only on independ-
ent right-leaning channels such as “Timcast” do we see a
comment stream that approaches an echo chamber with only
conservatives posting. Liberals who are concerned about
these channels serving as ideological echo chambers might
do well to organize participation in them in an effort to diversify the ideologies that are represented.

Our results offer one direction for design exploration for platforms that want to reduce the extent to which their algorithms contribute to ideological echo chambers. We have shown that user political leaning can be directly estimated by the textual features. Hence it is possible to directly incorporate political ideology into the comment sorting algorithm, not in order to filter out ideologically disagreeable content but to increase exposure to it. One simple approach would be to stratify sampling based on the fraction of cross-partisan comments, hence enforcing cross-talk to some extent. A more palatable approach might be to give a boost in the ranking only to those cross-partisan comments that receive a positive reaction in user upvoting.

The second narrative is that conservatives are less open to challenging political ideas, and more interested in staying in ideological echo chambers. On personality tests, conservatives score lower on openness to new experiences (Carney et al. 2008). In a study of German speakers, openness to new experiences was modestly associated with consuming more news sources (Sindermann et al. 2020). In a study of Facebook users, those with higher openness tended to participate in a greater diversity of Facebook groups (i.e., groups with different central tendencies in the ideology of the participants) (Matz 2021).

To the contrary, we find that conservatives were far more likely to comment on left-leaning videos than liberals were to comment on right-leaning videos. More conservatives made at least one cross-partisan comment (82.3% vs. 62.2%) and the median fraction of cross-partisan comments among conservatives was 22.2%, while the median for liberals was only 4.8%. One possible interpretation is that some of the left-leaning channels that conservatives comment on are what are often considered as “mainstream” media, where people go to get news regardless of ideology. However, there is some evidence from other platforms that conservatives may, on average, seek out more counter-attitudinal information and interactions. On Facebook, Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic (2015) found that conservatives clicked on more cross-partisan content than liberal did. On Twitter, Grinberg et al. (2019) (see Figure 4) found that conservatives were more likely to retweet URLs from left-leaning (non-fake) news sources than liberals were to retweet URLs from right-leaning (non-fake) news sources. Also on Twitter, Eady et al. (2019) found that conservatives were more likely to follow media and political accounts classified as left-leaning than liberals were to follow right-leaning accounts.

An alternative narrative is that conservatives enjoy disrupting liberal conversations for the “lulz”, that they initiate discord by eliciting strong emotional reactions (Phillips 2015). Given prior research on the general tone of cross-partisan communication (Hua, Ristenpart, and Naaman 2020), it is not surprising that we found cross-partisan comments were on average more toxic. We found, though, that conservatives were not significantly more toxic than liberals in their root comments on left-leaning channels, which casts some doubt on the idea that most of their interactions on left-leaning videos were trolling attempts. It is still possible that they were very strategic trolls, baiting liberals into toxic responses without themselves posting comments that people would judge as toxic. The conservative trolls story, however, is inconsistent with the finding that conservatives were less toxic in responses to liberals on left-leaning videos than they were on right-leaning videos. While there may be some conservative trolls who delight in disruption, there seems to be others who change their style to be more accommodating when they know that they are on the liberals’ home territory.

The reality is clearly more complicated than any of the existing simple narratives. Further theorizing is necessary to provide a coherent story of when and how liberals and conservatives tend to consume challenging information and engage in cross-partisan political interaction. To move in that direction, more interview and survey studies are needed to understand the motivations of why people participate in cross-partisan political online.

10 Conclusion

This paper presents the first large-scale measurement study of cross-partisan discussions between liberals and conservatives on YouTube. We estimate the overall prevalence of cross-partisan discussions based on user political leanings predicted by a hierarchical attention model. We find a large amount of cross-partisan commenting, but much more frequently by conservatives on left-leaning videos than by liberals on right-leaning videos. YouTube’s comment sorting algorithm further diminishes the visibility of cross-partisan comments: they are somewhat less likely to appear among the top 20 positions. Even so, readers of comments on left-leaning videos are quite likely to encounter comments from conservatives and readers of comments on right-leaning videos from national and local media are likely to encounter some comments from liberals. Only on right-leaning independent media are the comments almost exclusively from conservatives. Lastly, we find that people tend to be slightly more toxic when they venture into channels with opposing ideologies, however they also receive much more toxic replies. The highest toxicity occurs when defending one’s home territory – liberals responding to conservatives on left-leaning videos and conservatives responding to liberals on right-leaning videos.

Acknowledgments

This work is supported in part by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. IIS-1717688 and the AOARD project FA2386-20-1-4064. We thank the Australia’s National eResearch Collaboration Tools and Resources (NeCtar) for providing computational resources.

References

An, J.; Cha, M.; Gummadi, K.; and Crowcroft, J. 2011. Media landscape in Twitter: A world of new conventions and political diversity. In ICWSM.

An, J.; Kwak, H.; Posegga, O.; and Jungherr, A. 2019. Political discussions in homogeneous and cross-cutting communication spaces. In ICWSM.
An, J.; Quercia, D.; and Crowcroft, J. 2014. Partisan sharing: Facebook evidence and societal consequences. In COSN.

Bail, C. 2021. Breaking the Social Media Prism: How to Make Our Platforms Less Polarizing. Princeton University Press.

Bail, C. A.; Argyle, L. P.; Brown, T. W.; Bumpus, J. P.; Chen, H.; Hunzaker, M. F.; Lee, J.; Mann, M.; Merhout, F.; and Volfovsky, A. 2018. Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarization. PNAS.

Bakshy, E.; Messing, S.; and Adamic, L. A. 2015. Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook. Science.

Barberá, P. 2015. Birds of the same feather tweet together: Bayesian ideal point estimation using Twitter data. Political Analysis.

Bovet, A.; and Makse, H. A. 2019. Influence of fake news in Twitter during the 2016 US presidential election. Nature Communications.

Carney, D. R.; Jost, J. T.; Gosling, S. D.; and Potter, J. 2008. The secret lives of liberals and conservatives: Personality profiles, interaction styles, and the things they leave behind. Political Psychology.

Cheng, L.; Guo, R.; Silva, Y.; Hall, D.; and Liu, H. 2019. Hierarchical attention networks for cyberbullying detection on the Instagram social network. In SDM.

Cossard, A.; Morales, G. D. F.; Kalimeri, K.; Mejova, Y.; Paolotti, D.; and Starnini, M. 2020. Falling into the echo chamber: The Italian vaccination debate on Twitter. In ICWSM.

Dubois, E.; and Blank, G. 2018. The echo chamber is overstated: The moderating effect of political interest and diverse media. Information, Communication & Society.

Eady, G.; Nagler, J.; Guess, A.; Zilinsky, J.; and Tucker, J. A. 2019. How many people live in political bubbles on social media? Evidence from linked survey and Twitter data. Sage Open.

Festinger, L. 1957. A theory of cognitive dissonance. Stanford University Press.

Flaxman, S.; Goel, S.; and Rao, J. M. 2016. Filter bubbles, echo chambers, and online news consumption. Public Opinion Quarterly.

Flores-Saviaga, C.; Keegan, B.; and Savage, S. 2018. Mobilizing the Trump train: Understanding collective action in a political trolling community. In ICWSM.

Garimella, K.; Morales, G. D. F.; Gionis, A.; and Mathioudakis, M. 2018. Quantifying controversy on social media. ACM Transactions on Social Computing.

Garrett, R. K. 2009. Echo chambers online?: Politically motivated selective exposure among Internet news users. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication.

Garrett, R. K.; Gvirsman, S. D.; Johnson, B. K.; Tsfati, Y.; Neo, R.; and Dal, A. 2014. Implications of pro-and counter-attitudinal information exposure for affective polarization. Human Communication Research.

GDPR. 2016. Regulation EU 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016. Official Journal of the European Union.

Gentzkow, M.; and Shapiro, J. M. 2011. Ideological segregation online and offline. The Quarterly Journal of Economics.

Grinberg, N.; Joseph, K.; Friedland, L.; Swire-Thompson, B.; and Lazer, D. 2019. Fake news on Twitter during the 2016 US presidential election. Science.

Hart, W.; Albaracín, D.; Eagly, A. H.; Brechan, I.; Lindberg, M. J.; and Merrill, L. 2009. Feeling validated versus being correct: A meta-analysis of selective exposure to information. Psychological Bulletin.

Hemphill, L.; and Schöpke-Gonzalez, A. M. 2020. Two Computational Models for Analyzing Political Attention in Social Media. In ICWSM.

Horrigan, J.; Garrett, K.; and Resnick, P. 2004. The Internet and Democratic Debate. Pew Internet and American Life Project.

Hua, Y.; Ristenpart, T.; and Naaman, M. 2020. Towards measuring adversarial Twitter interactions against candidates in the 2018 midterm elections. In ICWSM.

Hussein, E.; Juneja, P.; and Mitra, T. 2020. Measuring Misinformation in Video Search Platforms: An Audit Study on YouTube. In CSCW.

Iyengar, S.; and Hahn, K. S. 2009. Red media, blue media: Evidence of ideological selectivity in media use. Journal of Communication.

Jigsaw. 2020. Perspective API. https://perspectiveapi.com.

Ledwich, M.; and Zaitsev, A. 2020. Algorithmic extremism: Examining YouTube’s rabbit hole of radicalization. First Monday.

Lewis, R. 2018. Alternative influence: Broadcasting the reactionary right on YouTube. Data & Society.

Lietz, H.; Wagner, C.; Bleier, A.; and Strohmaier, M. 2014. When politicians talk: Assessing online conversational practices of political parties on Twitter. In ICWSM.

Lima, L.; Reis, J. C.; Melo, P.; Murai, F.; Araujo, L.; Vikatos, F.; and Benevenuto, F. 2018. Inside the right-leaning echo chambers: Characterizing Gab, an unmoderated social system. In ASONAM.

Liu, Y.; Liu, Y.; Zhang, M.; and Ma, S. 2016. Pay Me and I’ll Follow You: Detection of Crowdturfing Following Activities in Microblog Environment. In IJCAI.

Matz, S. C. 2021. Personal echo chambers: Openness-to-experience is linked to higher levels of psychological interest diversity in large-scale behavioral data. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.

Munson, S. A.; and Resnick, P. 2010. Presenting diverse political opinions: How and how much. In CHI.

Negroponte, N. 1996. Being Digital. Vintage.

Pariser, E. 2011. The filter bubble: What the Internet is hiding from you. Penguin UK.
Phillips, W. 2015. *This is why we can’t have nice things: Mapping the relationship between online trolling and mainstream culture*. Mit Press.

Preotuc-Pietro, D.; Liu, Y.; Hopkins, D.; and Ungar, L. 2017. Beyond binary labels: Political ideology prediction of Twitter users. In *ACL*.

Quattrociocchi, W.; Scala, A.; and Sunstein, C. R. 2016. Echo chambers on Facebook. *Available at SSRN 2795110*.

Rajadesingan, A.; Resnick, P.; and Budak, C. 2020. Quick, Community-Specific Learning: How Distinctive Toxicity Norms Are Maintained in Political Subreddits. In *ICWSM*.

Ribeiro, M. H.; Ottoni, R.; West, R.; Almeida, V. A.; and Meira Jr, W. 2020. Auditing radicalization pathways on YouTube. In *FAccT*.

Robertson, R. E.; Jiang, S.; Joseph, K.; Friedland, L.; Lazer, D.; and Wilson, C. 2018. Auditing partisan audience bias within Google search. In *CSCW*.

Sindermann, C.; Elhai, J. D.; Moshagen, M.; and Montag, C. 2020. Age, gender, personality, ideological attitudes and individual differences in a person’s news spectrum: how many and who might be prone to “filter bubbles” and “echo chambers” online? *Heliyon*.

Stocking, G.; Van Kessel, P.; Barthe, M.; Matsa, K. E.; and Khuzam, M. 2020. Many Americans get news on YouTube, where news organizations and independent producers thrive side by side. *Pew Research Center*.

Sunstein, C. R. 2018. *#Republic: Divided democracy in the age of social media*. Princeton University Press.

Wu, S.; Rizoiu, M.-A.; and Xie, L. 2018. Beyond views: Measuring and predicting engagement in online videos. In *ICWSM*.

Wu, S.; Rizoiu, M.-A.; and Xie, L. 2019. Estimating attention flow in online video networks. In *CSCW*.

Wulczyn, E.; Thain, N.; and Dixon, L. 2017. Ex machina: Personal attacks seen at scale. In *TheWebConf*.

Yang, Z.; Yang, D.; Dyer, C.; He, X.; Smola, A.; and Hovy, E. 2016. Hierarchical attention networks for document classification. In *NAACL*.

Zhou, D. X.; Resnick, P.; and Mei, Q. 2011. Classifying the political leaning of news articles and users from user votes. In *ICWSM*.

**Appendix I**

A Percent of users who comment on both left-leaning and right-leaning channels

![Figure 10: x-axis: minimal number of comments users posted; y-axis: portion of users who commented on both left-leaning and right-leaning channels. For users who posted at least 2 (or at least 25) comments, 39% (or 80%) of them commented on both partisan channels.](image)