Problem Set 1
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Part II
The paper used survey data to study how trends in political polarization related to respondents' propensities to obtain news or information online or from social media. They combined nine previously proposed measures to construct an index of political polarization among US adults and found that the growth in polarization in recent years was largest for the demographic groups least likely to use the internet and social media.

Their primary sources of data are the American National Election Studies' (ANES) 1948–2012 Time Series Cumulative, 2008 Time Series Study, and 2012 Time Series Study data sets. The ANES is a nationally representative, face-to-face survey of the voting-age population that is conducted in both pre- and post-election rounds and contains numerous demographic variables and political measures. Using data from ANES, the authors computed nine measures of political polarization that have been proposed in past work and that have increased in recent years.

To interpret the data, the most challenging part is to measure political polarization, the authors used nine variables including (1) Partisan affect polarization, (2) Ideological affect polarization, (3) Partisan sorting, (4) Straight-ticket, (5) Issue consistency, (6) Issue divergence, (7) Partisan-ideology polarization, (8) Perceived partisan-ideology polarization and (9) Religious polarization as an aggregate to measure the concept. These ways of measurement were proposed by related literature and have been being commonly used by scholars interested in political polarization.

Though using a bunch of math models, this study is an identification exercise. The paper mostly discussed the intricate relationship between internet and social usage and political polarization. To answer the research question, the authors adopted measurement, a kind of computational observation method to conceptualize political polarization and used the compound measurement to compare with internet/social media usage.

The authors found out the growth in polarization in the studied period is most considerable among demographic groups with least usage of internet and social media. They argued against the commonly accept hypothesis that Internet is an important promoter to exacerbate political polarization. In their words, it's difficult to draw linkage between the increasing polarization and prevalent usage of internet.

To validate the result, I suggest the authors refer to more relevant literature which might help unfold the subtle relationship between political polarization and internet usage. Though getting interesting results, the paper somewhat lacks explanatory power, which remarkedly declines its contribution. On the other hand, they should have consider more dimensions of Internet usage. Digital divide is a multi-layer stratification rather a spectrum with bi-polar ends. If they had looked into diverse online activities, they might have got more interesting results.