**Discussion**

This study proposed extending the concept of niche news beyond the original framework of market segments based on partisan motivations (e.g., Stroud 2011) to incorporate audience-level characteristics that influence one’s exposure to ideological news. Drawing on audience overlap studies (Barnidge et al., 2021; Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017; Majó-Vázquez et al. 2019, Murkerjee et al., 2018; Weeks et al., 2016), we provide a methodology for situating people within discrete but overlapping clusters, arranged by shared preferences for news and public affairs information. We can briefly summarize the results as follows: a) clustering techniques reveal three distinct niches within the broad attention network, which we have labeled *right-leaning cable and television*, *left-leaning elite press*, and *local—aggregators*; b) there is far greater variance between niches than within for both editorial valence and selection valence, and the elite press niche is decidedly more liberal at both levels than the other two niches; and c) in the hierarchical models, the average ideology of the audience within each niche is a strong predictor of selection valence above and beyond the influence of individual ideology or organizational ideology; and d) there is a statistically significant interaction between individual ideology and organizational ideology, suggesting that the influence of an individual’s ideology on selection valence is stronger where it aligns with organizational ideology. These findings point to three broad conclusions: (1) identifiable niches can be detected in the audience network; (2) other audience members within an individual’s niche affect their news selections; and (3) the various influences on individuals’ news selections exist at multiple levels, which may interact.

2) Implications for the study

a) Niches are identifiable features of the attention network, though considerable overlap between niches, so boundaries are ‘fuzzy’ and in contrast to traditional overlap studies, some support for selective exposure/avoidance theories. While cable contained the more ‘extreme’ partisan content in terms of overall variance, the audience also consumed news across the spectrum, and the overall slant in the cable niche was like that of the local/aggregator niche. In contrast, the patterns of overlap in the elite niche were decidedly more left leaning at both the individual and organizational level, providing evidence this this niche strikes a more homogeneous balance than others. In other words, niche matters for ideological content, despite no clear left/right boundary, but repertoires seem to be a better explanation than selective exposure. However, the within group variation points to discrete ecologies where people are indeed engaged in at least some channel switching across the spectrum.

b) Ecological argument: interaction b/t individual/organizations /audience: Our approach builds on existing paradigm of overlap based on network analysis. This approach provides benefits over traditional repertoire studies as the attention network represents the entire audience and therefore, we can approximately quantify position within an information ecology. System-level features seem to be enhancing one’s tendency to be exposed to ideological news, and in particular the novel finding here is that connections to the displaced audience matters for one’s personal habits/preferences.

3) Implications for field

a) A way to bridge levels of analysis and account for seemingly conflicting findings about selective exposure on one hand and overlap on the other-- and look beyond simple explanations for fragmentation, like the expectation to find clear clusters but instead complex symbiosis

b) A turn to audience-level characteristics in determining how people come across and perhaps respond to ideological news. That is, not just a matter of individual choice, but the structure is shaping experiences among groups of people (which are created by algorithms, etc.)

c) Potential role of social media in curating niches and the challenge capturing autonomy/rational choice concepts if one participates in a niche

d) Normative implications: too soon to conclude that lack of coherent filter bubbles/fragmentation means that the media does NOT play a role in polarization/contentious politics. That is, the symbiosis revealed here suggest that ideological narrative can ferment within a niche, and that niche may contain highly charged content without an anchor in traditional news, thus enforcing existing cleavages that are not necessarily reflected in one’s media diet. Future work on selective exposure may consider the ways in which counter-attitudinal narrative shapes perceptions of contentious issues, instead of focusing on locating signs of social cleavage at a structural level. A second consideration here is that ‘marketplace for ideas’ may not be the ideal solution in a system that encourages market segmentation and profits over civic/public journalism. For example, those in the local/aggregator niche are overall less ideologically charged.

3) Limitations: Self-report measures and open-ended responses (but we have some idea of the nature of this bias (XX) and open-ended responses provide advantages over discrete measures (XX). Need a complete accounting of the role of social media in creating the niche, future work should somehow address that. Would also like more information about stability of niche memberships + cross-niche and avoidance behaviors over time, perhaps multiple measurements can get at that. Clustering algorithms are not perfect, but OK for now. Finally, the rolling cross section has limitations, but provides XX benefits.

4) Conclusion