Abstract

To what extent are news audiences fragmented across ideological lines? Traditional scholarship has primarily answered this question at two levels of analysis: The selection valence of *individuals* (selective exposure research) or the overall patterns of shared attention at the *system level* (duplication studies). Despite the popularity of this work, scholarship has not examined the influence of audience-level characteristics on ideological news exposure. This omission represents a major oversight, as the mechanisms of news filtration are increasingly determined not only by individual preferences, but also by the preferences of other people with similar selection habits. To capture this phenomenon, we explicate an expanded theoretical rationale for the so-called “newsniche.” We then apply this framework to a novel empirical approach for identifying niches within an audience projection network using survey data (N = 1,965). This allows for an analysis of the nature of ideological news consumption at the individual, audience, and organizational levels. Results reveal three discrete but overlapping niches. We do not find support for fragmentation along party lines. Instead, the news consumption within a niche is more akin to a competition and symbiosis, where people consume news across the ideological spectrum. Implications for theorizing audience fragmentation are discussed.