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## Ideology and Movie Preferences

### INTRODUCTION

Most of us have likely heard that consumer preferences depend on a person's ideology or party identification. For example, the comparison is often made that conservatives are more likely to purchase a pickup truck while liberals are more likely to buy an economy car.

In order to explore this relationship, my group decided to examine whether a person's ideology had an effect on their movie preferences. We conducted a survey in which we determined what movies people were likely to watch, what their favorite movie genre is, how often they watch movies, and if celebrity endorsements of electoral candidates have an effect on their vote.

In Chapter 8 of *New Directions in Public Opinion*, a book by Adam Berinsky, we learned about the two different worldviews that people are likely to have: the fixed or the fluid worldview (Hetherington). People with a fixed worldview feel as though "our lives are threatened by terrorists, criminals, and immigrants and our priority should be to protect ourselves," while people with a fluid worldview feel as though "it's a big, beautiful world, mostly full of good people and we must find a way to embrace each other and not allow ourselves to become isolated" (Hetherington). We learned that conservatives mostly have a fixed worldview, while liberals mostly have a fluid worldview. Because of this, one of the hypotheses that my group came up with was that liberals are more likely than conservatives to watch a

movie in a different language with subtitles. Since liberals are more likely to be open to new experiences, we expected that there would be evidence for this relationship.

#### SURVEY CONTENT AND SAMPLING METHODS

Since we are making an inference about the United States population, we decided to gather demographic information from the respondents, including age, race, gender, ideology, political party, and who they supported in the 2020 presidential election in order to make comparisons between the pool of respondents and the United States population.

In order to determine movie preferences of the respondents, we asked how likely they were to watch a war movie, horror movie, and a movie in a different language with subtitles. We also asked them to choose their favorite movie genre out of action, adventure, comedy, drama, fantasy, horror, musical, mystery, romance, science fiction, sports, thriller, war, western, and war movie. We also asked how often they watched movies, in the event that there was a conclusion that could be made there. In order to determine if a celebrity endorsement of a presidential candidate would have an effect on their vote, we asked whether an endorsement from Tom Hanks or an endorsement from Clint Eastwood would have an effect on who they decided to support. We also asked if they enjoy movies with ambiguous endings and movies with happy endings.

When sending our survey out to the respondents, my group mostly chose other students, friends, and family. This nonrandom sampling process was likely biased, as we were making an inference about the United States population, but the respondents were mainly students from UNC, as well as their friends and family members. We likely sent the survey to around 200-300 people, with around half of those people responding, so finding respondents was not a challenge.

## SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Our survey had a total of 140 responses. In order to make inferences about the United States population, we need to know how representative the pool of respondents is to the population.

*Race.* The respondents were 89.63% White, 5.19% Black or African American, 2.22% Asian, and 1.48% Latino. For comparison, the United States population is 59.3% White, 13.6% Black or African American, 6.1% Asian, 18.9% Hispanic or Latino, 2.9% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and 1.3% American Indian and Alaska Native (U.S. Census Bureau).

*Gender/Sex.* The respondents were 39.26% male, 57.78% female, and 1.48% non-binary, while the United States population is 49.5% male and 50.5% female (U.S. Census Bureau). The Census does not currently ask about gender, so male and female are the only options.

*Age.* 0.78% of respondents were younger than 18 and 10.94% were 65 and older, while 27.9% of the United States population is younger than 18 and 15.8% is 65 or older (U.S. Census Bureau).

*Ideology.* Our survey was heavily liberal, with 70.37% of respondents being liberal, 9.63% being moderate, and 17.78% being conservative, whereas the population of the United States is 25% liberal, 37% moderate, and 36% conservative (Saad).

*Party Identification.* 54.81% of our respondents were Democrat, 17.04% were Republican, and 20% were Independent, while the United States population is 29% Democrat, 27% Republican, and 42% Independent (Jones).

*2020 Presidential Election.* 78.47% of our respondents supported Joe Biden and 16.15% supported Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election, whereas 51.3% of voters supported Joe Biden and 46.9% supported Donald Trump (CNN).

The statistics above show that the pool of respondents is not very representative of the United States population, and the results of the survey are likely biased.

#### SURVEY FINDINGS

*War Movies.* 50% of respondents who identified as conservative would be likely or extremely likely to watch a war movie while 41.05% of liberals felt the same way.

*Horror Movies.* 54.17% of respondents who identified as conservative would be likely or extremely likely to watch a horror movie, while 37.89% of liberals felt the same way.

*Movies in a Different Language with Subtitles.* 50% of respondents who identified as conservative would be likely or extremely likely to watch a movie in a different language with subtitles, while 70.53% of liberals felt the same way.

*Favorite Movie Genre.* Conservatives in our survey most often preferred mystery and action movies. Both liberals and moderates in our survey most often preferred comedy movies.

*Viewing Frequency.* Conservatives in our survey most often said they watch movies a couple times a month. Liberals in our survey most often said they watch movies once a week.

*Tom Hanks Endorsement.* While most respondents said that an endorsement from Tom Hanks for a 2024 presidential candidate would have no effect on them, no conservatives in our survey said it would make them more likely to support said candidate, while 14.74% of liberals said the same.

*Clint Eastwood Endorsement.* While most respondents said that an endorsement from Clint Eastwood for a 2024 presidential candidate would have no effect on them, only 4.17% of

conservatives in our survey said it would make them less likely to support said candidate while 18.95% of liberals said the same.

*Ambiguous Endings.* 50% of conservatives in our survey said that they would not enjoy movies with an ambiguous ending while only 30.53% of liberals said the same.

*Happy Endings.* 79.17% of conservatives in our survey said that they would enjoy movies with a happy ending while 73.68% of liberals said the same. Only one person, a conservative, said they would not enjoy a movie with a happy ending.

#### HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The hypothesis that I decided to test was whether or not liberals were more likely than conservatives to watch a movie in a different language with subtitles. To answer this using Stata, I ran a chi-square test to determine whether there was statistically significant evidence for this relationship. The null hypothesis was that the variables are independent, and therefore have no relationship. The alternative hypothesis was that the variables are dependent, and therefore have a relationship. Since the p-value of the test was 0.022, which is less than 0.05, we can reject the null hypothesis and conclude the alternative hypothesis. This means that there is enough statistically significant evidence to say that ideology and how likely someone is to watch a movie in a different language with subtitles are dependent on one another. Therefore, liberals, at least the ones that responded to this survey, are more likely to watch a movie in a different language with subtitles than the conservatives that responded to this survey.

## CONCLUSION

We learned that many of our hypotheses did not have enough evidence to be true. In fact, the hypothesis about the relationship between ideology and likeliness to watch a movie in a different language was one of the only ones that had statistically significant evidence. Our hypothesis for horror movies was that liberals would be more likely to watch them, as they tend to have a lower disgust sensitivity than conservatives. The results of the survey showed that this was not the case, and I think that asking about horror movies is too ambiguous. There are plenty of horror movies that do not contain typical “disgusting” things, such as blood and gore. I would have added a question about how likely the respondents were to watch a slasher movie, as this may have given us stronger results. I would have chosen more options for celebrity endorsements. It is possible that some of the respondents, especially younger ones, may not know who Tom Hanks and Clint Eastwood are, or their political beliefs. Including some younger but still popular celebrities may give us more interesting results. Overall, I think that this survey went well, despite the nonrandom sampling bias. In order to prevent this, I would like to have better sampling methods in the future in order to make the sample more representative of the United States population.

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