

# **The Potential and Pitfalls of Topic Modeling for Humanities Research**

Robert K. Nelson, Digital Scholarship Lab, University of Richmond

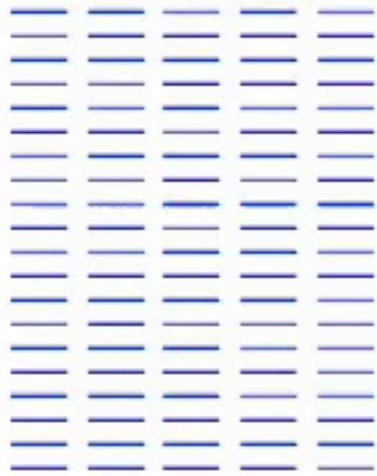
University of Virginia, February 2015



**Document 1**



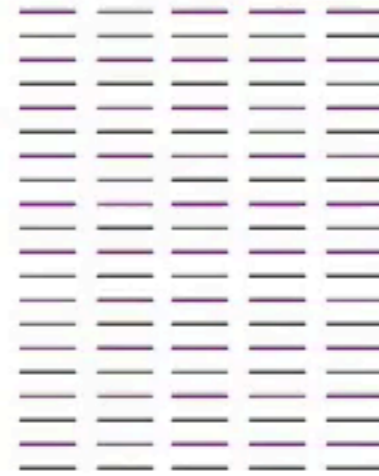
**Document 2**



**Document 3**



**Document 4**



**Document 5**



**Topic 1**

**Topic 2**

**Topic 3**



**Document 1**



**Document 2**



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**Topic 1**

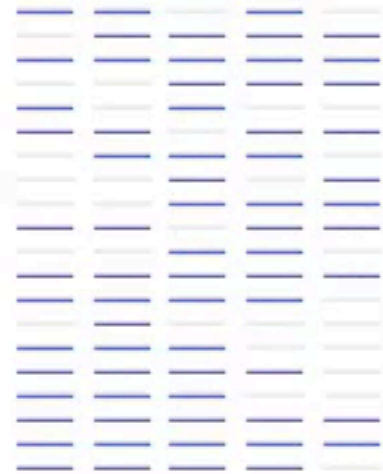
**Topic 2**

**Topic 3**

**Document 1**



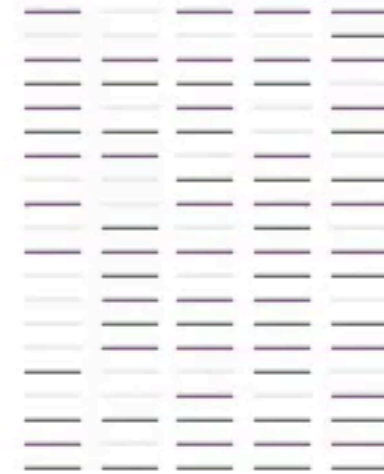
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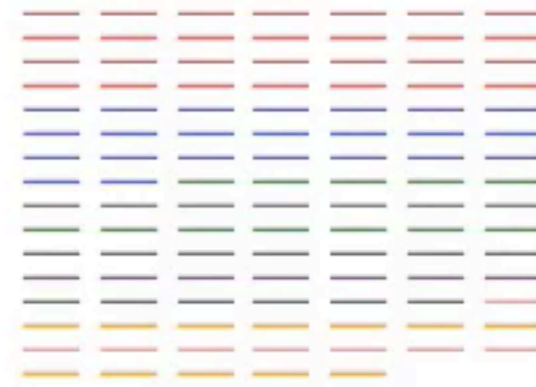
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**Topic 3**



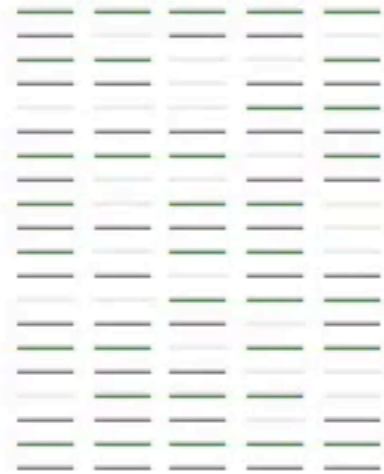
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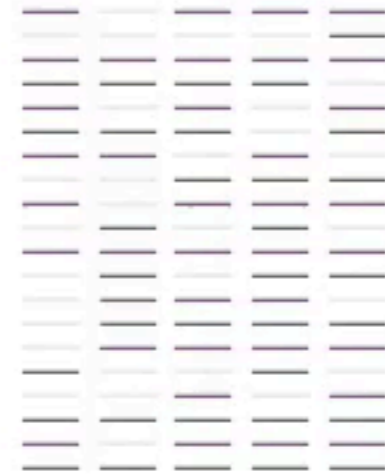
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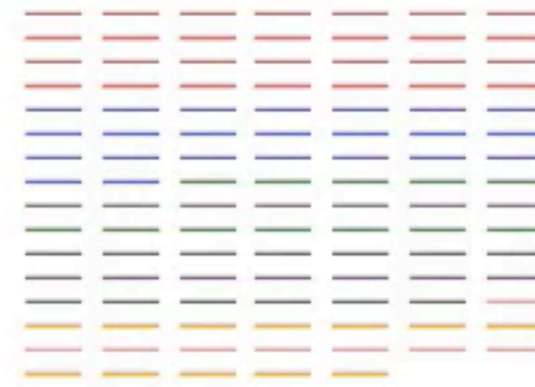
**Topic 1**



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**Topic 3**



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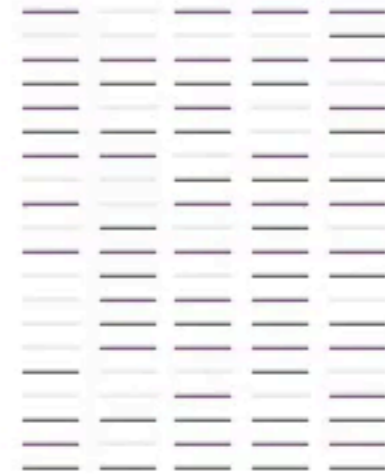
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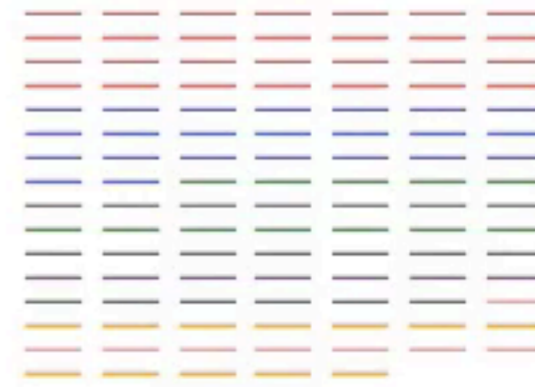
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**Topic 3**



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**Document 4**

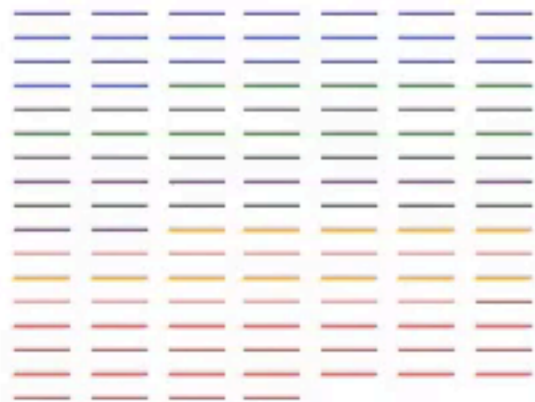


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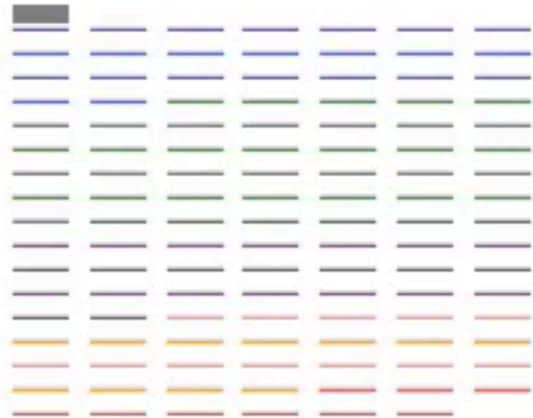


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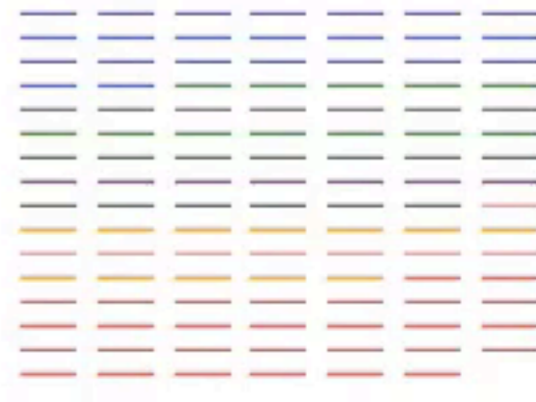
**Topic 1**



**Topic 2**



**Topic 3**





**Document 1**



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**Document 4**

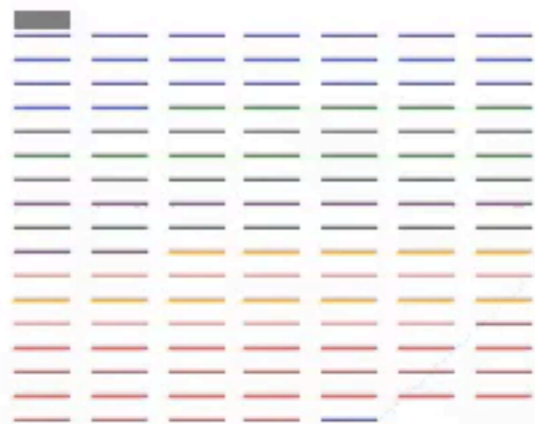


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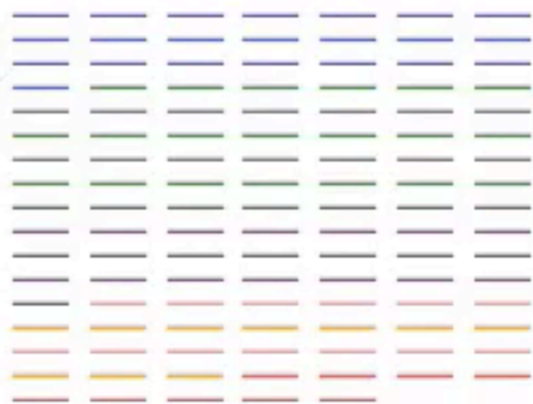


**garden**

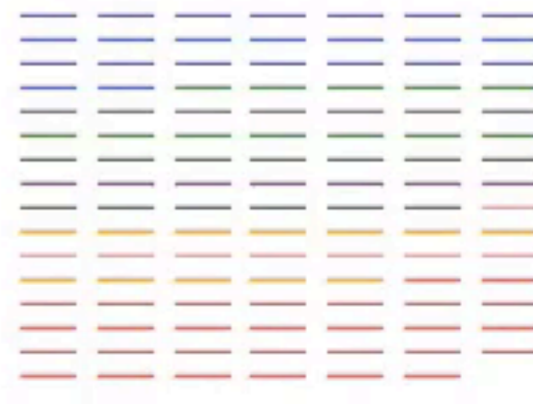
**Topic 1**



**Topic 2**



**Topic 3**

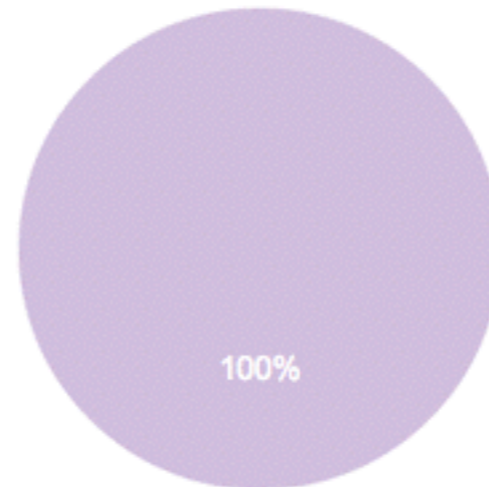






## RANAWAY

[From the Thu., Jun. 16, 1864 issue of the *Daily Dispatch*]



years feet reward high inches negro ...

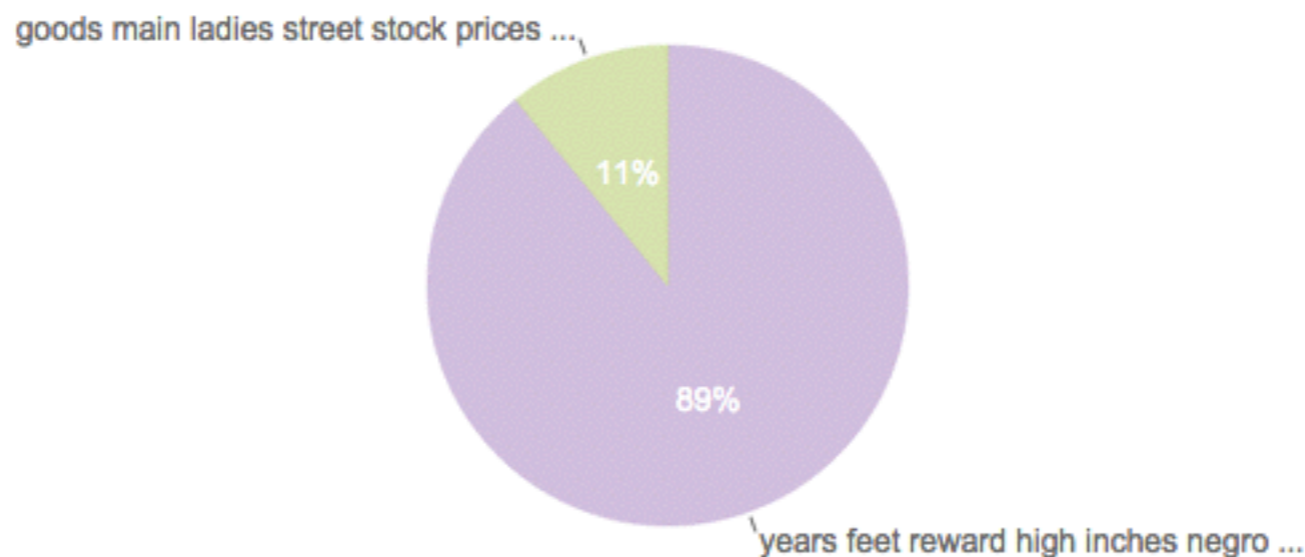
Distribution of the topics in this document in the topic model

—From my residence, on Fulton Hill, my negro man Phillip. He is about 35 years old, 5 feet 2 or 3 inches high, dark complexion, slender built, and speaks quickly. I will pay a reward of three hundred dollars or his return.

T W HÅ'NNIGER. je 9—5t\*

## TWENTY DOLLARS REWARD.

[From the Mon., Mar. 17, 1862 issue of the *Daily Dispatch*]



Distribution of the topics in this document in the topic model

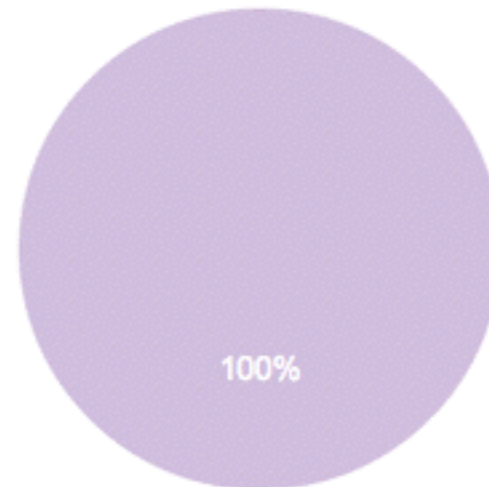
—Runaway in this city, two weeks ago, my boy, ALLEN, he is 16 years old, slender, and rather small for his age, copper colored with nearly straight hair, small, sharp features, has rather a fine, whining voice; had on when he left a black frock coat, dark drab or lead colored pantaloons, and a military cap. He is no doubt passing for a free boy and may have left the city with soldiers, they under the belief that he was free; if so, and they should see this notice, I would take it as a great favor to inform me. I will pay the above reward for his apprehension. My address is Richmond, Va., (Mayo's warehouse.)

mh 12—6t JAS. L. SCOGGIN.



## 150 DOLLARS REWARD.

[From the Mon., Jun. 6, 1864 issue of the *Daily Dispatch*]



years feet reward high inches negro ...

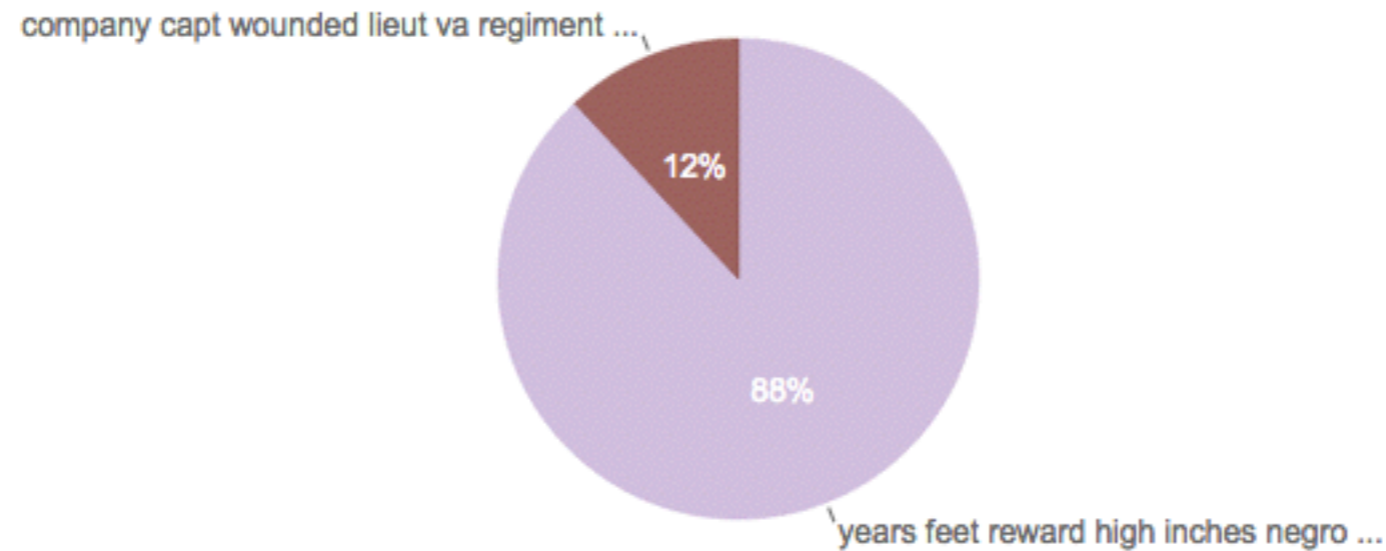
Distribution of the topics in this document in the topic model

—Strayed or stolen from the subscriber, on Saturday, the 21st inst, a pate red cow, with white back and breast; also, a little white, mixed with red, between the horns and eyes, and a little white under the belly. The above reward of \$150 will be paid for her delivery to me, on 27th st, between Clay and Leigh.

GEO. E. SMITH. my 23—12t\*

## THIRTY DOLLARS REWARD

[From the Mon., Jun. 9, 1862 issue of the *Daily Dispatch*]



Distribution of the topics in this document in the topic model

—will be and delivery at the store of the the Marine corp.

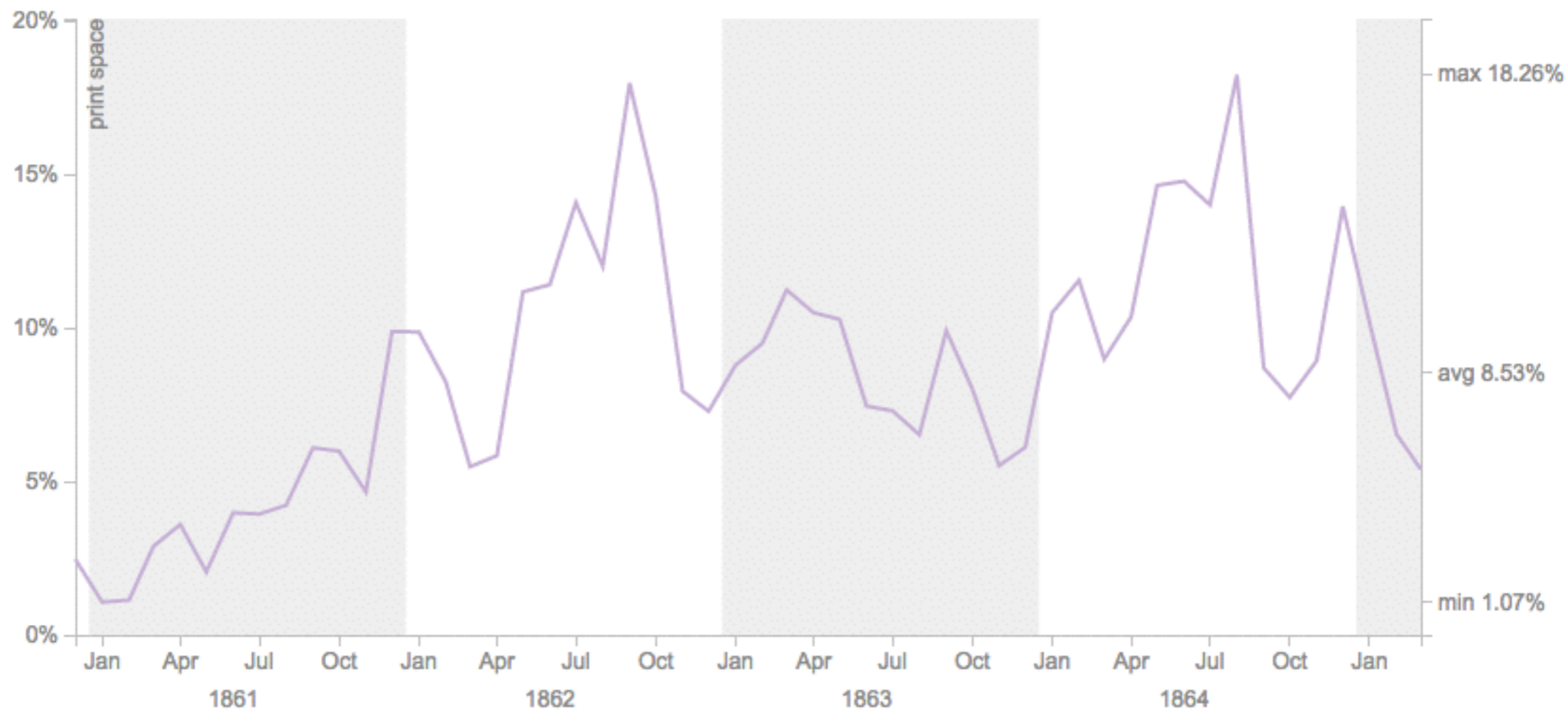
Serg't Warren, 7 years of age, 5 feet inches high, gray eyes, fair complexion.

Private JOHN RANDY, years of age, 5 feet 9 inches high, blue eyes, fair complexion.

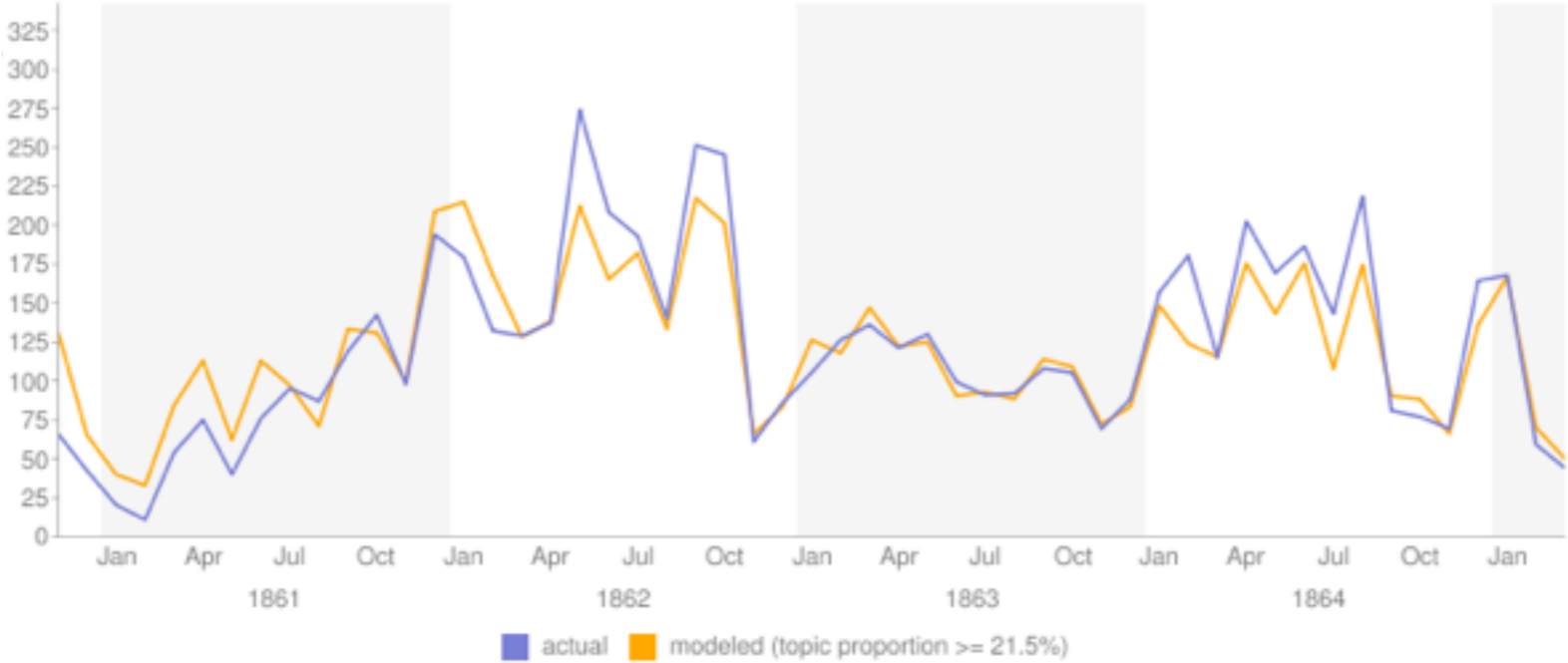
Private G. F. BURNS, 23 years of age, 5 feet 8 inches high, brown eyes, dark hair, fair complexion.

Private FRANK years of age, 5 feet 11 inches high, gray eyes, dark hair, dark complexion.

Private JAMES 21 years of age, 5 feet 5 inches high, blue eyes, dark hair, dark complexion.

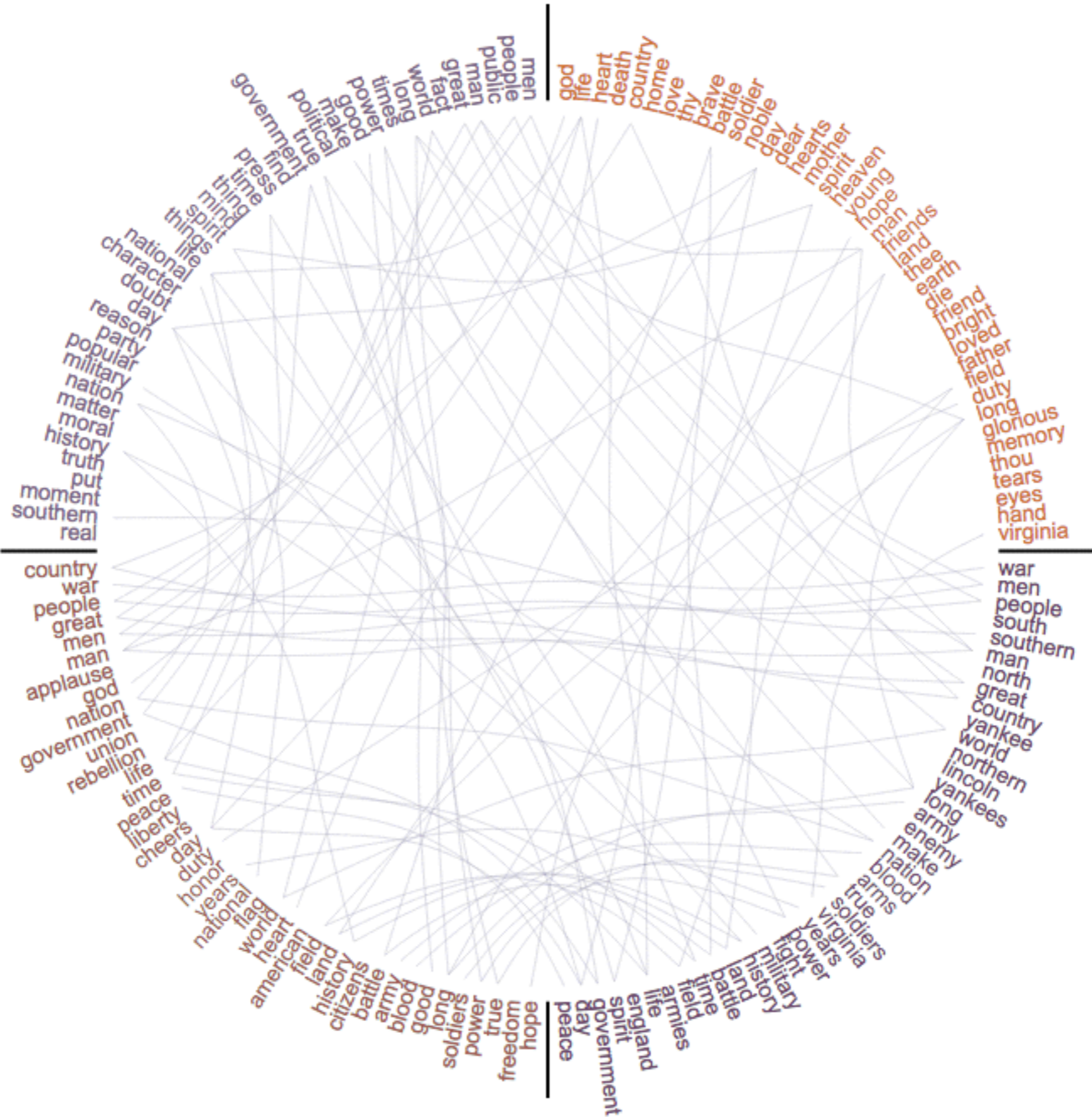


# FUGITIVE SLAVE ADS



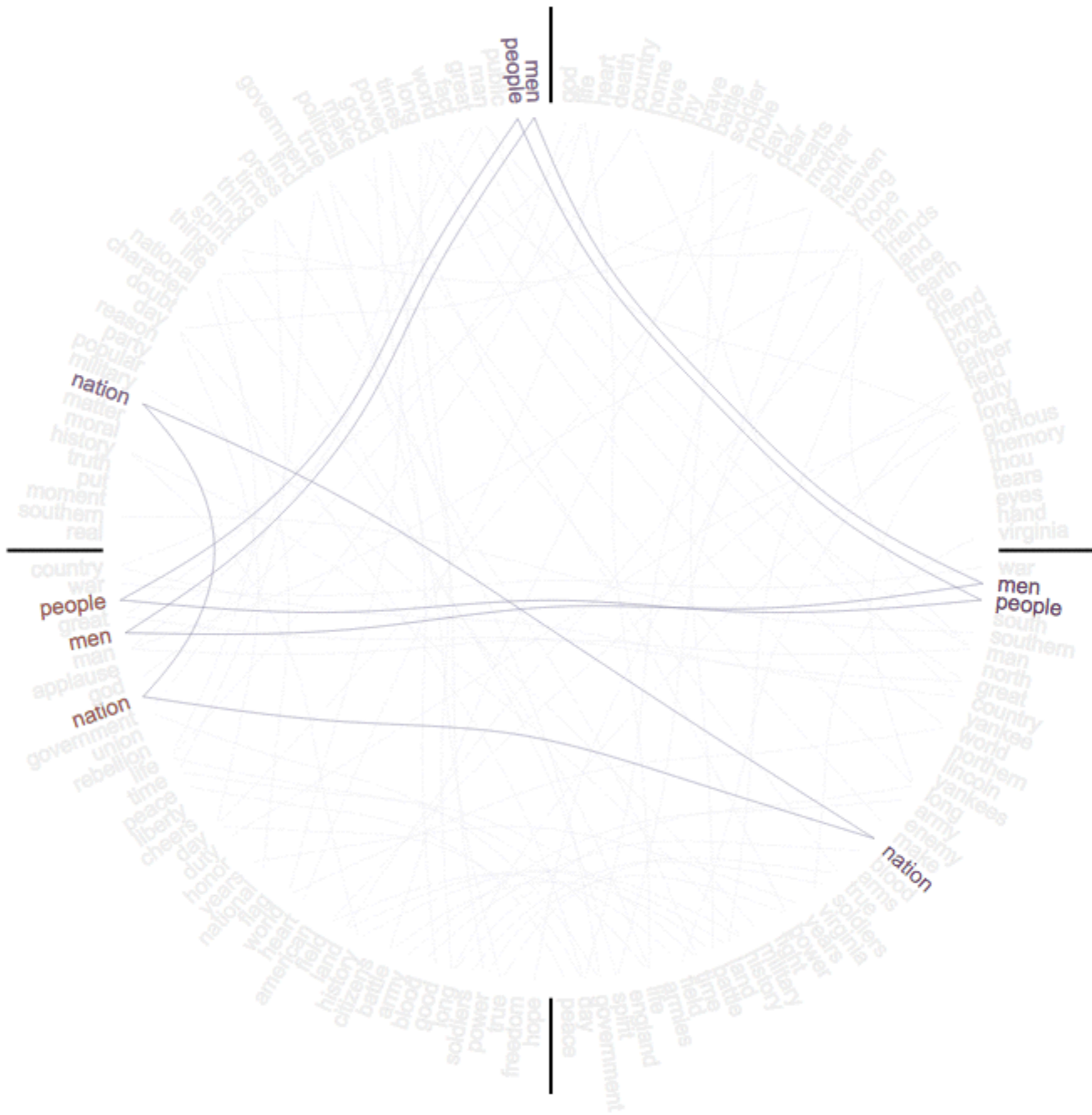


Topics from the *New-York Times* topic model



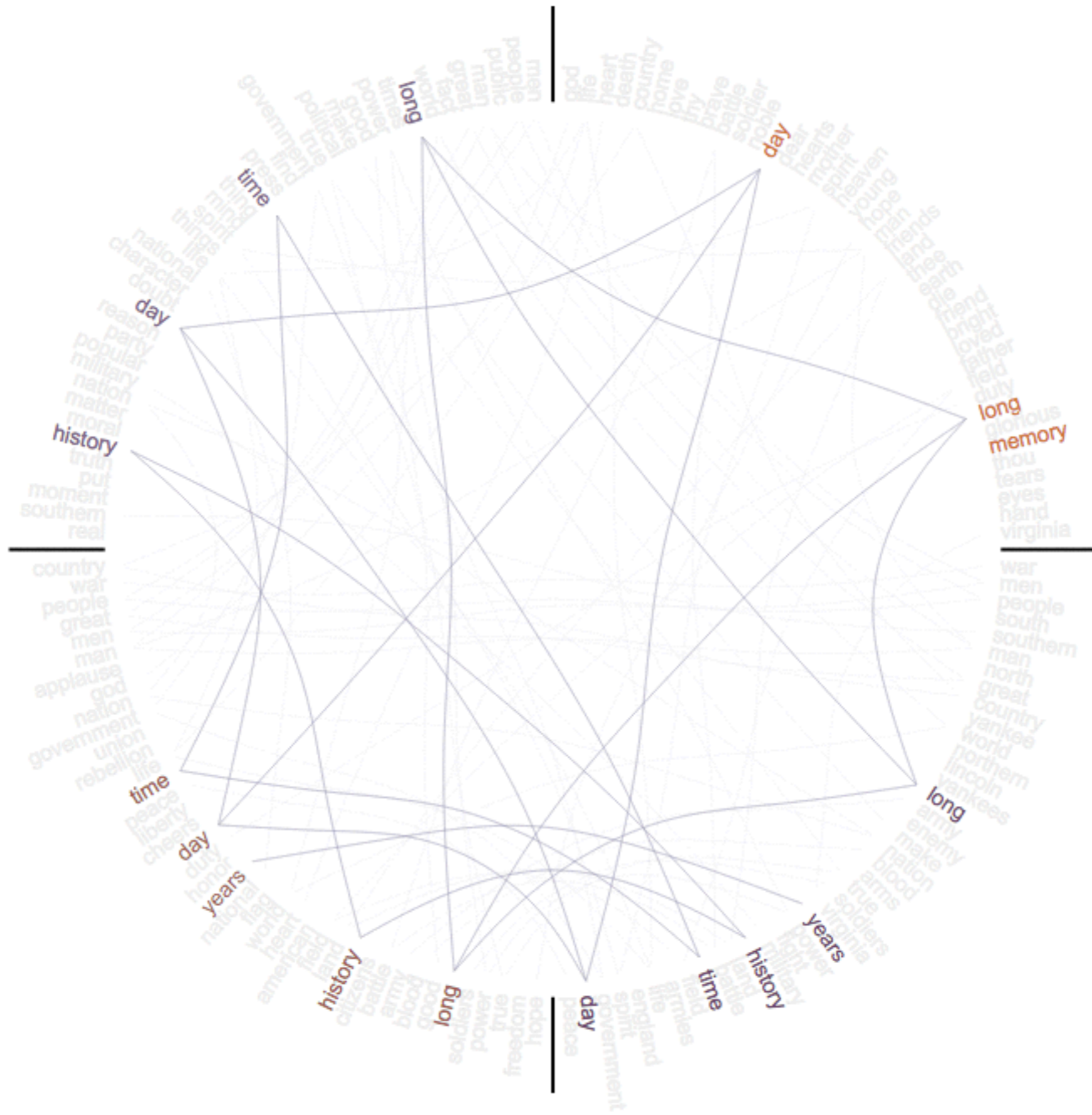
Topics from the *Daily Dispatch* topic model

Topics from the *New-York Times* topic model



Topics from the *Daily Dispatch* topic model

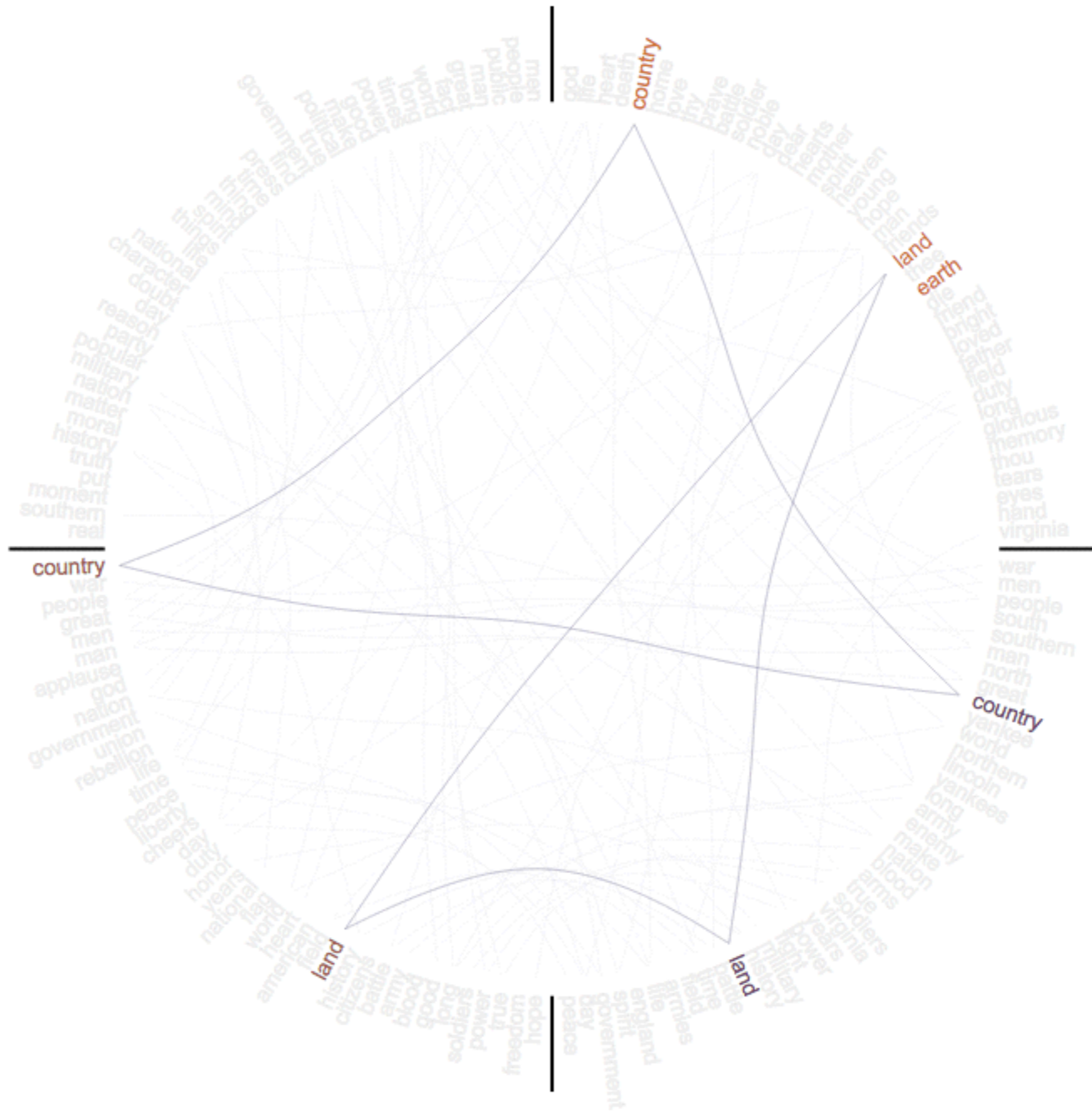
Topics from the *New-York Times* topic model



Topics from the *Daily Dispatch* topic model



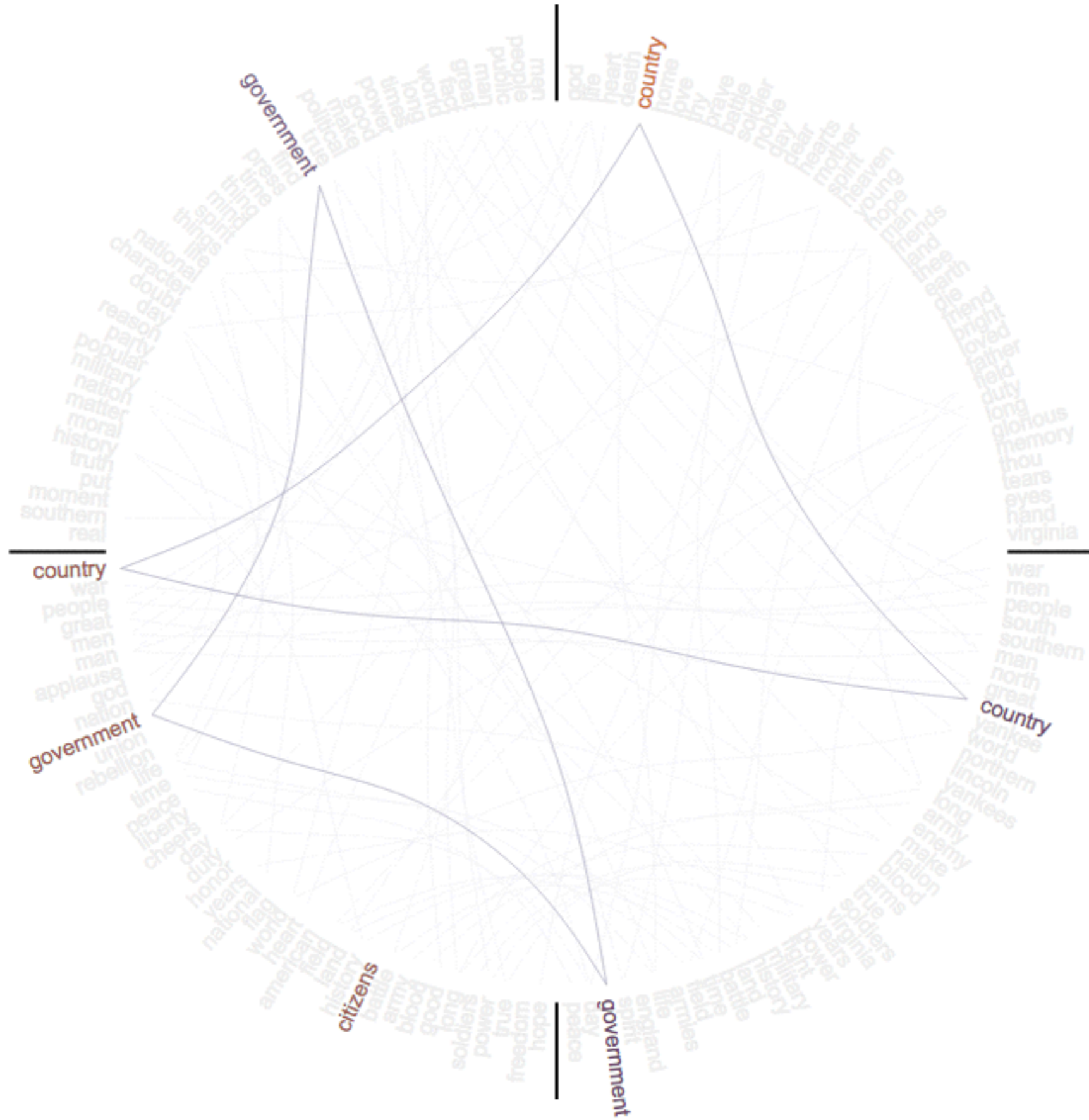
Topics from the  
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topic model



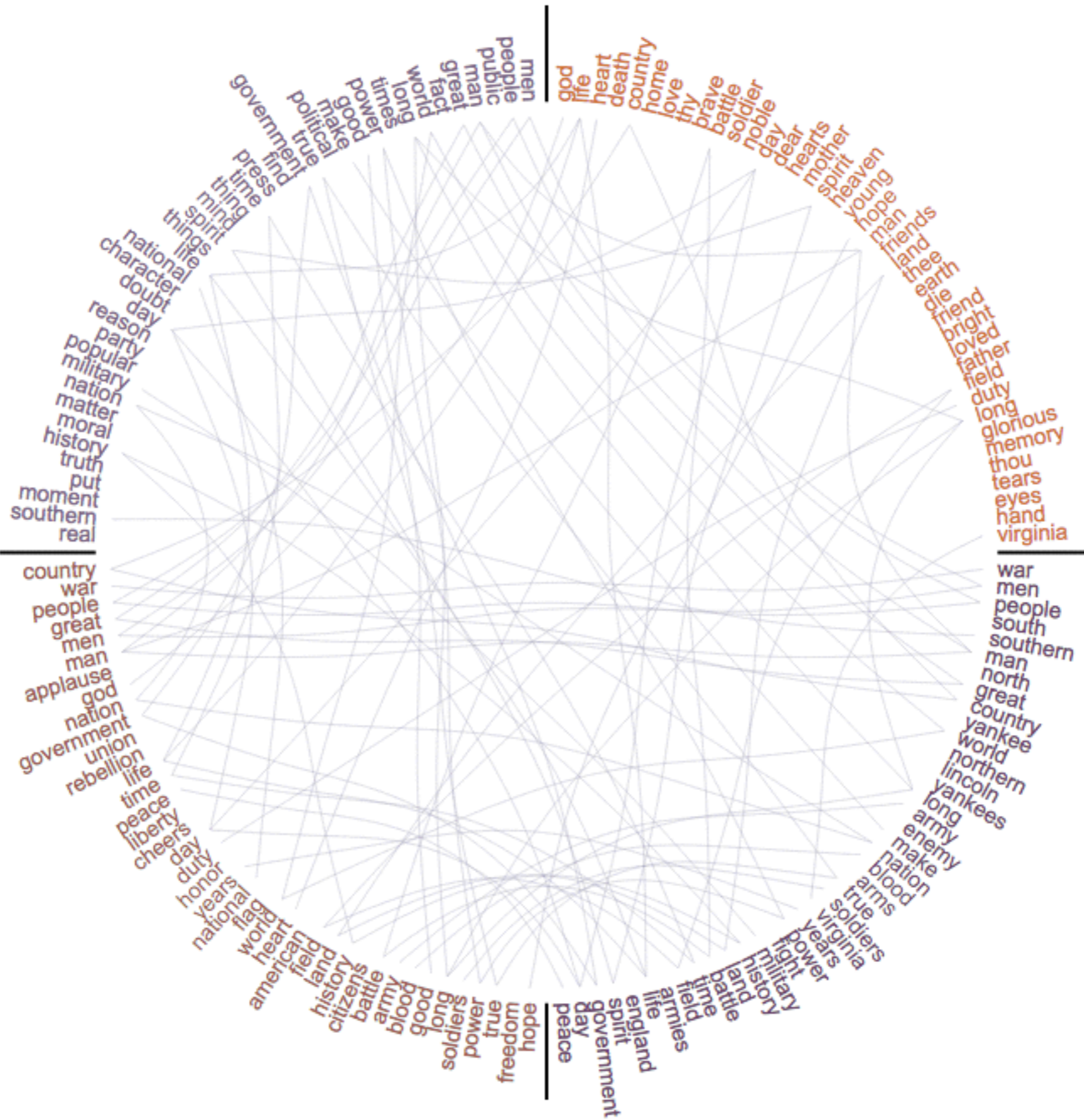
Topics from the  
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topic model



Topics from the  
*New-York Times*  
topic model



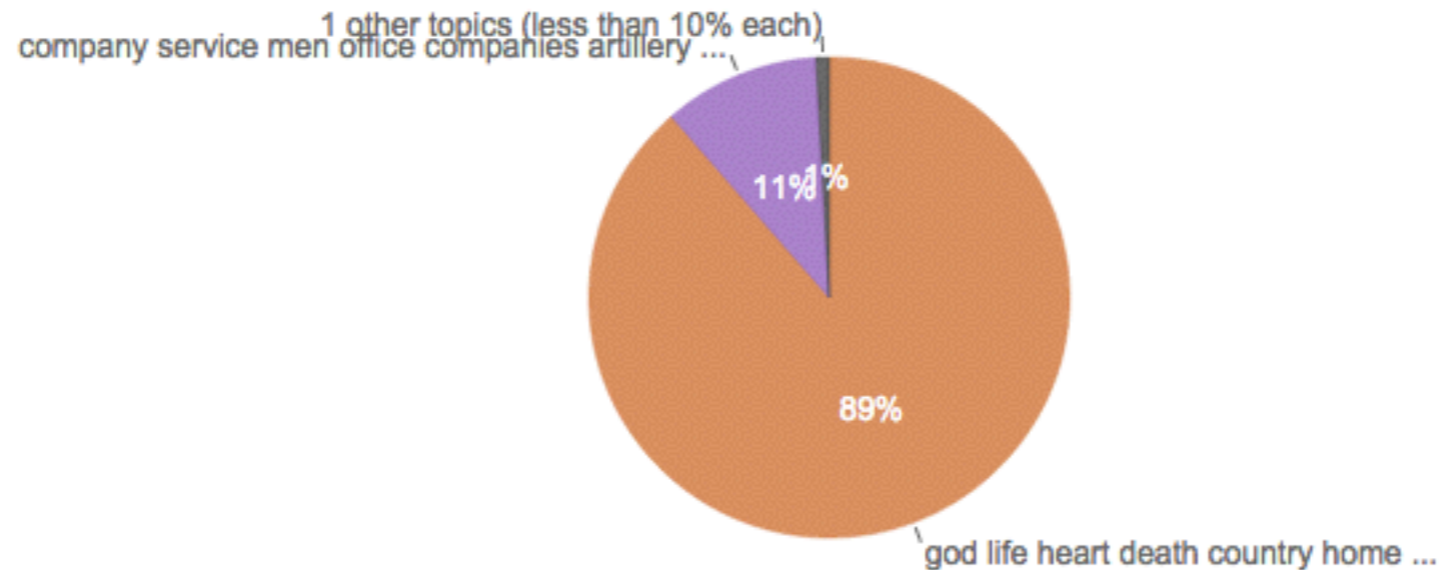
Topics from the *New-York Times* topic model



Topics from the *Daily Dispatch* topic model

## MARYLAND LINE.

[From the Wed., May. 21, 1862 issue of the *Daily Dispatch*]



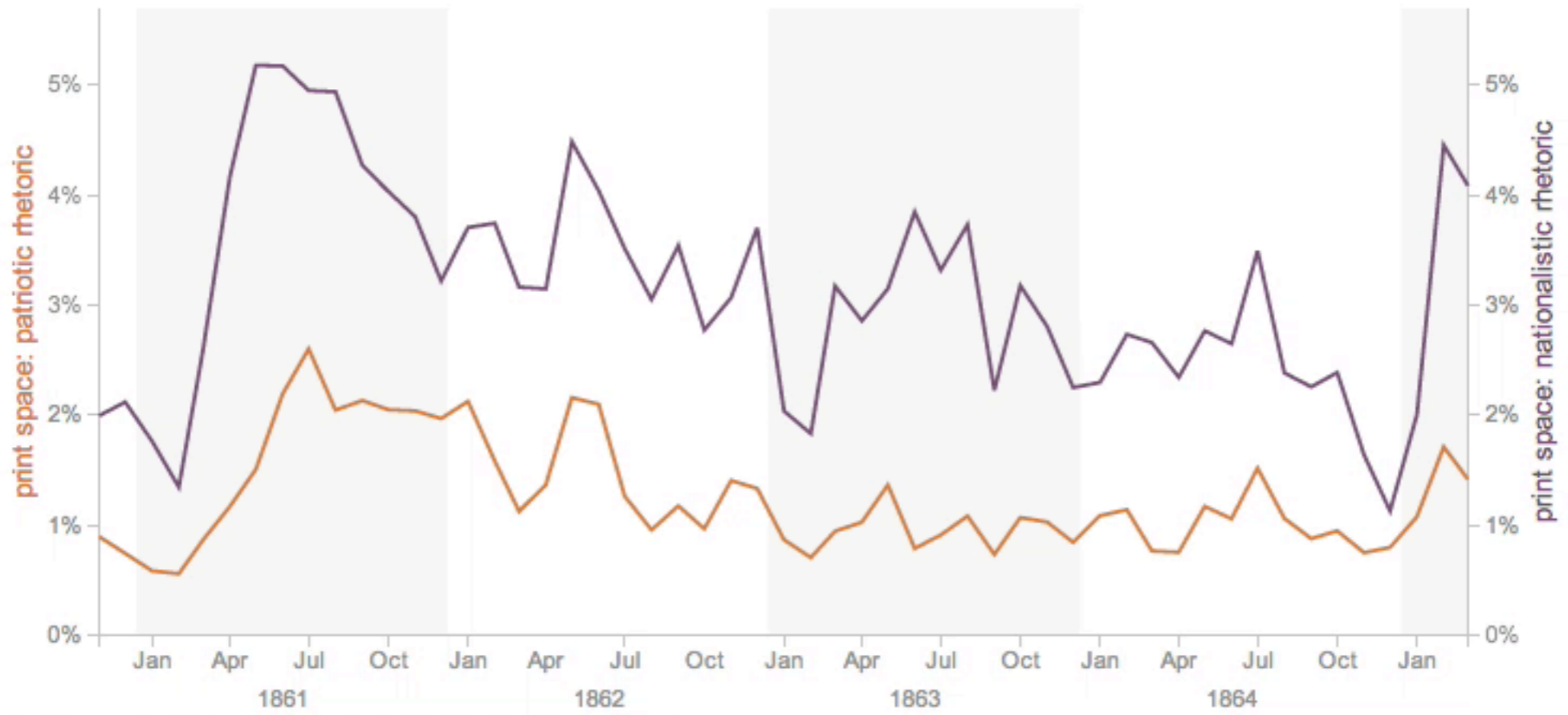
Distribution of the topics in this document in the topic model

—We are anxious to tread once more our native soil. Expectant hearts await our coming. We struggle for Freedom and the sacred shades of our sires.

We invite the untiring and undaunted to haste to rejoin the Maryland Line," which is reinforcing the heroic "Stonewall's" army in the Valley, and with them march to the rescue of our kindsmen in oppression and doubt. Soldier. 'tis the hour for immortality or obloquy.

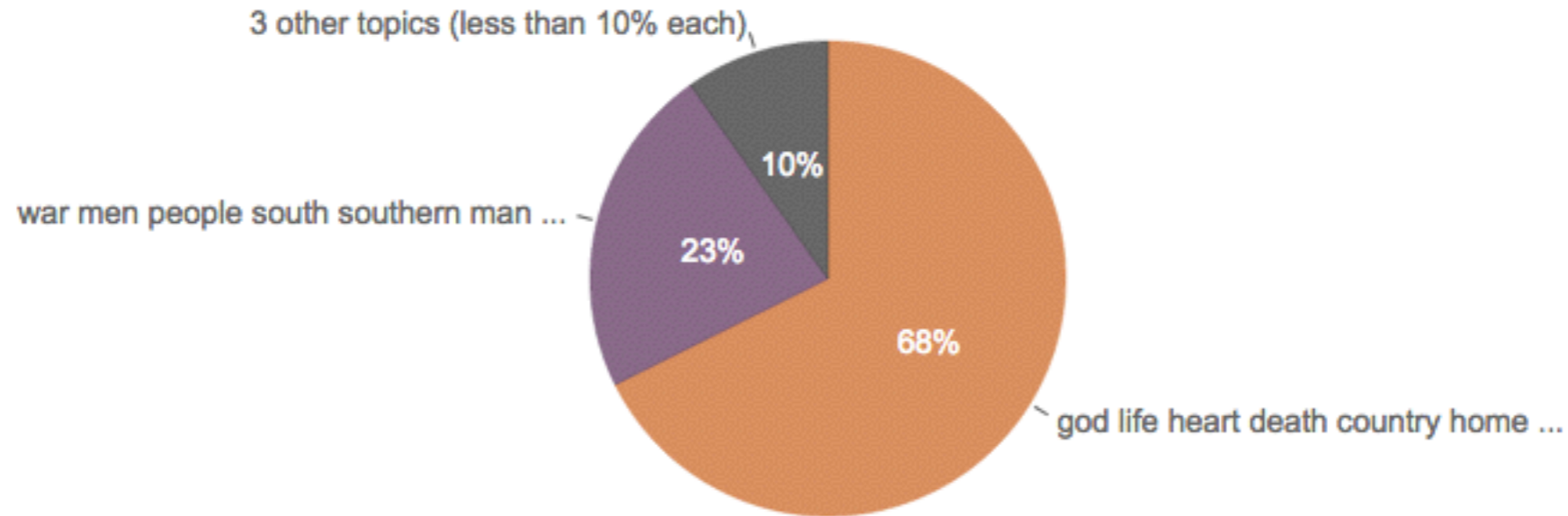
The will of the veteran is sustained by Omnipotence and the blood of the martyr shall nourish the Bay Tree of Liberty. Who falters sides with the foe—who disdain odds carves his own escutcheon, which Fame shall ponder and memory treasure. Soldier's we challenge you once more to the field. Through the earnest solicitation of many Marylanders, Capt. Edmund Barry has accepted an appointment to lead you back to your homes. Marylanders, will you go! or shall the hollow query be made. Where were they? Sons of Revolutionary







[From the Sat., Apr. 20, 1861 issue of the *Daily Dispatch*]



Distribution of the topics in this document in the topic model

**[Written for the Richmond Dispatch]**

**A WAR SONG,**

**For the Richmond Fayette Artillery.**

**(Respectfully Dedicated to Capt. H. Coalter Cabell., of R. F. A.)**

**BY W. WINSTON FONTAINE.**

Arise ye sons of proud Virginia!  
Unfurl your banner to the gate;  
Unsheathe your swords, on whose insignia  
Is seen the trembling tyrant pale.

To arms! to arms! men of the South,

And let the tyrant Lincoln know

And every son has learned from sire,  
"Give liberty, or give me death!"

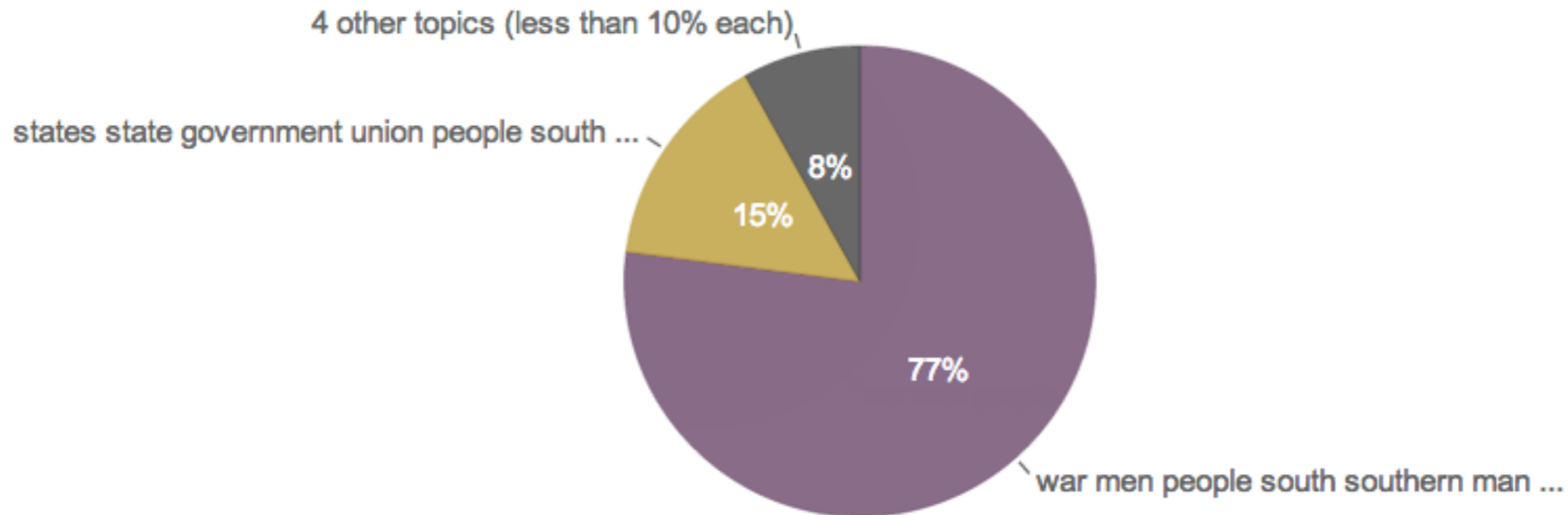
And should we fall upon the field,  
Oh, tell me not we die in vain:  
The one who falls with Freedom's shield  
Is not among the nameless slain;

For poet—sons and daughters fair—  
Of this, our own free Southern land,  
Will sing of us in plaintive air,  
And name us in the hero-band.

So, then, to arms! sons of the South,  
And let the tyrant, Lincoln, know,

## WHY THE DIFFERENCE?

[From the Thu., Nov. 5, 1863 issue of the *Daily Dispatch*]

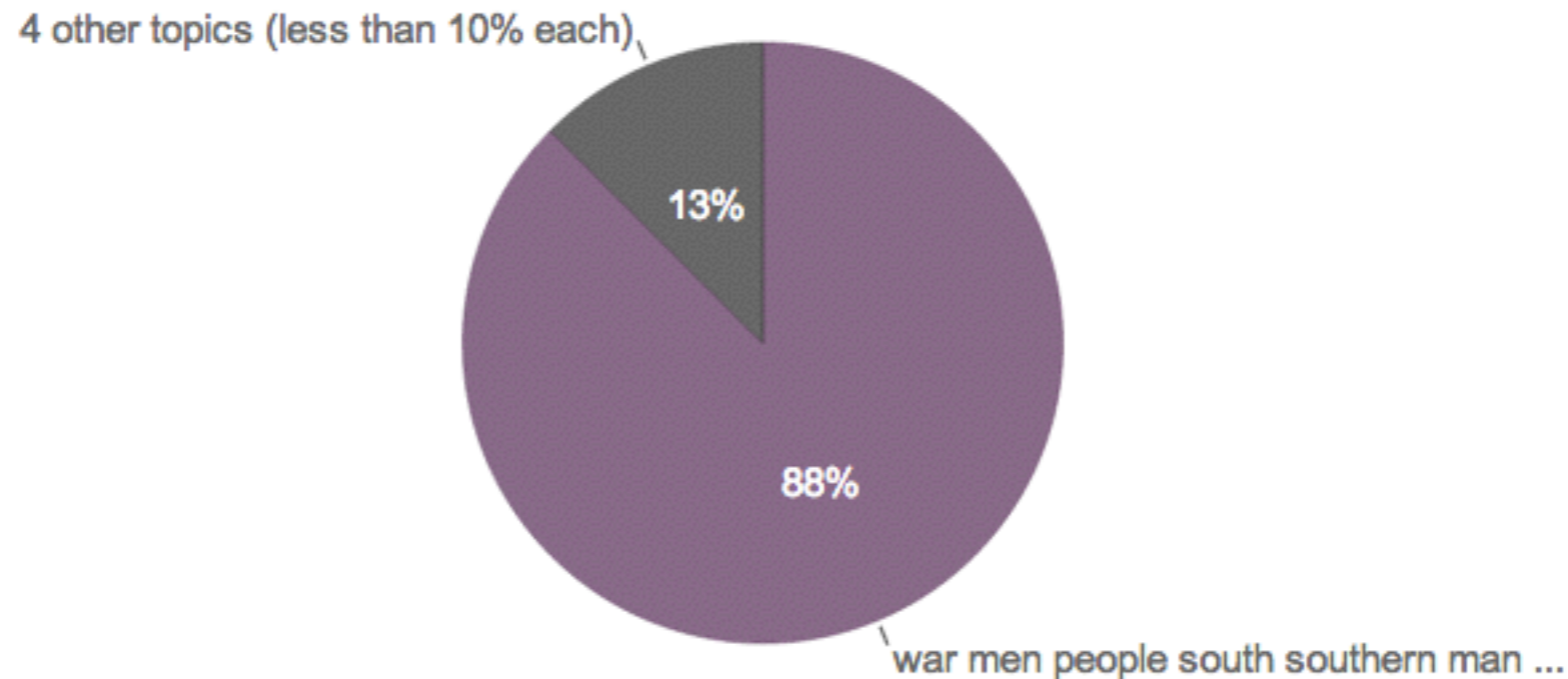


Distribution of the topics in this document in the topic model

The spirit in which this war has been conducted by the Yankee Government and people is an indelible stain upon the boasted civilization of the nineteenth century. If the war which they have made upon us had been ever so just in itself, their manner of conducting it has been such as to render the original merits of the quarrel a matter of inferior importance, and to place their enemies upon a vantage ground in which they may appeal to the justice of God and the sympathies of mankind for the success of their cause. The history of war among civilized nations may be searched

## THE CONTRABANDS.

[From the Fri., Aug. 21, 1863 issue of the *Daily Dispatch*]



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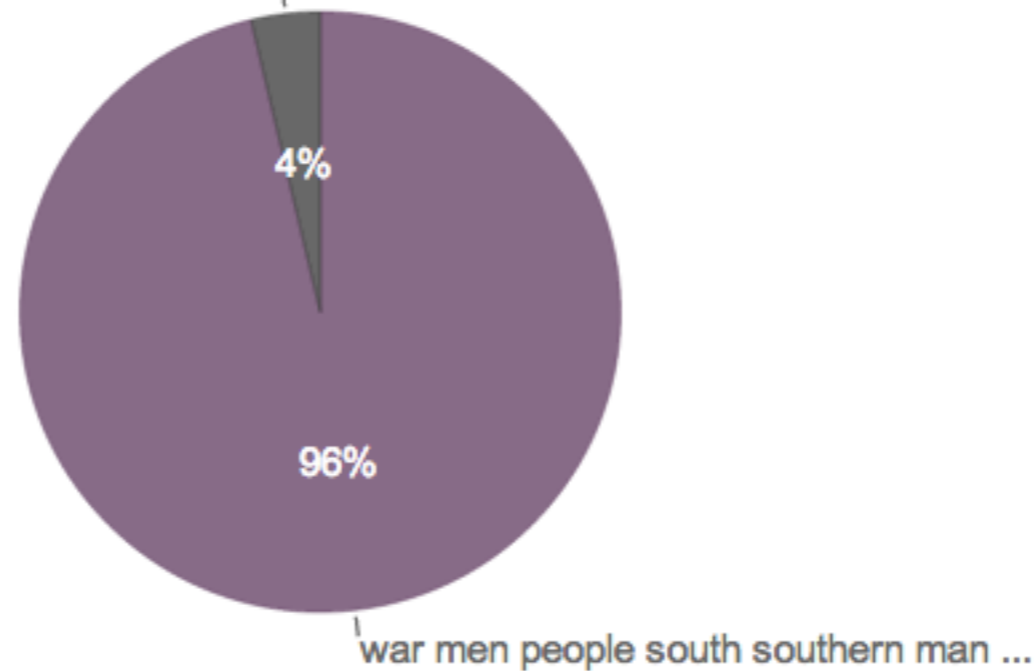
—The love of the Black Republicans for their negro allies is manifested in many extraordinary ways. But it hardly needed the developments of this war to demonstrate the hollowness of their philanthropy. It is contrary to Nature that a white man should entertain any such regard for a black man as that which the Abolitionists profess to feel. With the exception of some honest fanatics, the sentimentalism of the North on this subject is a detestable sham, an illuminated vaporising from the corruption and death that reign supreme in the whited sepulchre of Puritanism. Instead of being tender-hearted and compassionate, the Sons of the Pilgrims are in reality the most unfeeling, selfish, and cruel of mankind. In their tyrannical treatment of their own white dependents and



# FANATICISM,

[From the Sat., Oct. 4, 1862 issue of the *Daily Dispatch*]

3 other topics (less than 10% each)



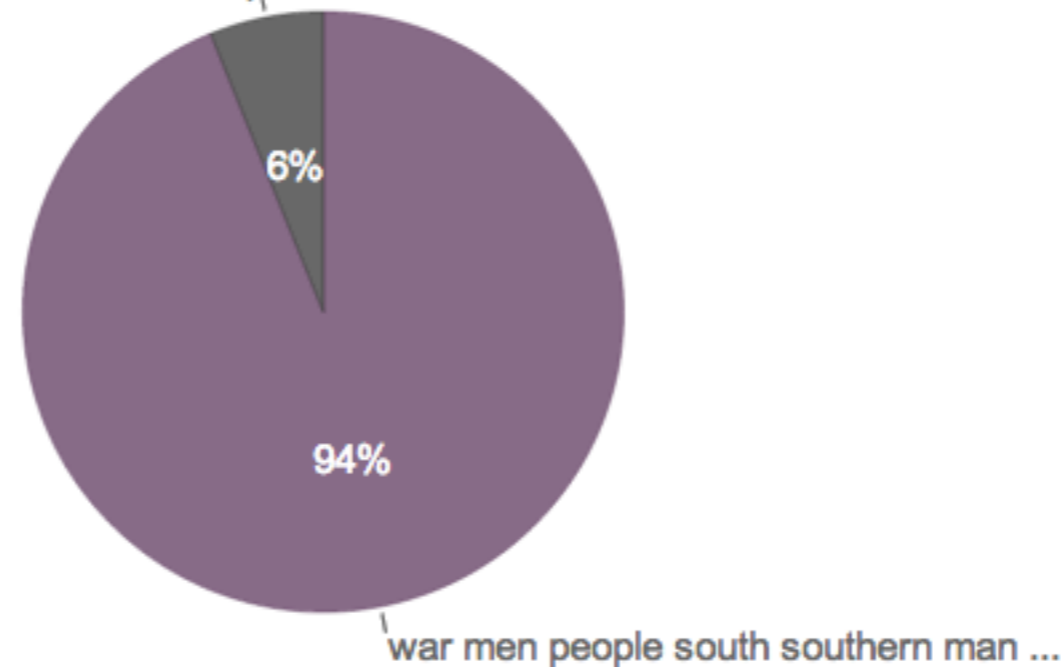
Distribution of the topics in this document in the topic model

The power of Fanaticism, which has at length taken complete possession of the Northern government, has never been more strikingly illustrated than in the present war. "Be not righteous over much," and "Let your moderation be known unto all men," are texts of the Bible always ignored by Puritan theologians. Nevertheless, there is no greater danger to religion and evil to society than fanaticism, and men of true virtue will always be on their guard against it. The excesses committed by Cromwell's fanatical soldiery in Ireland were not only as great, but in many

# THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS.

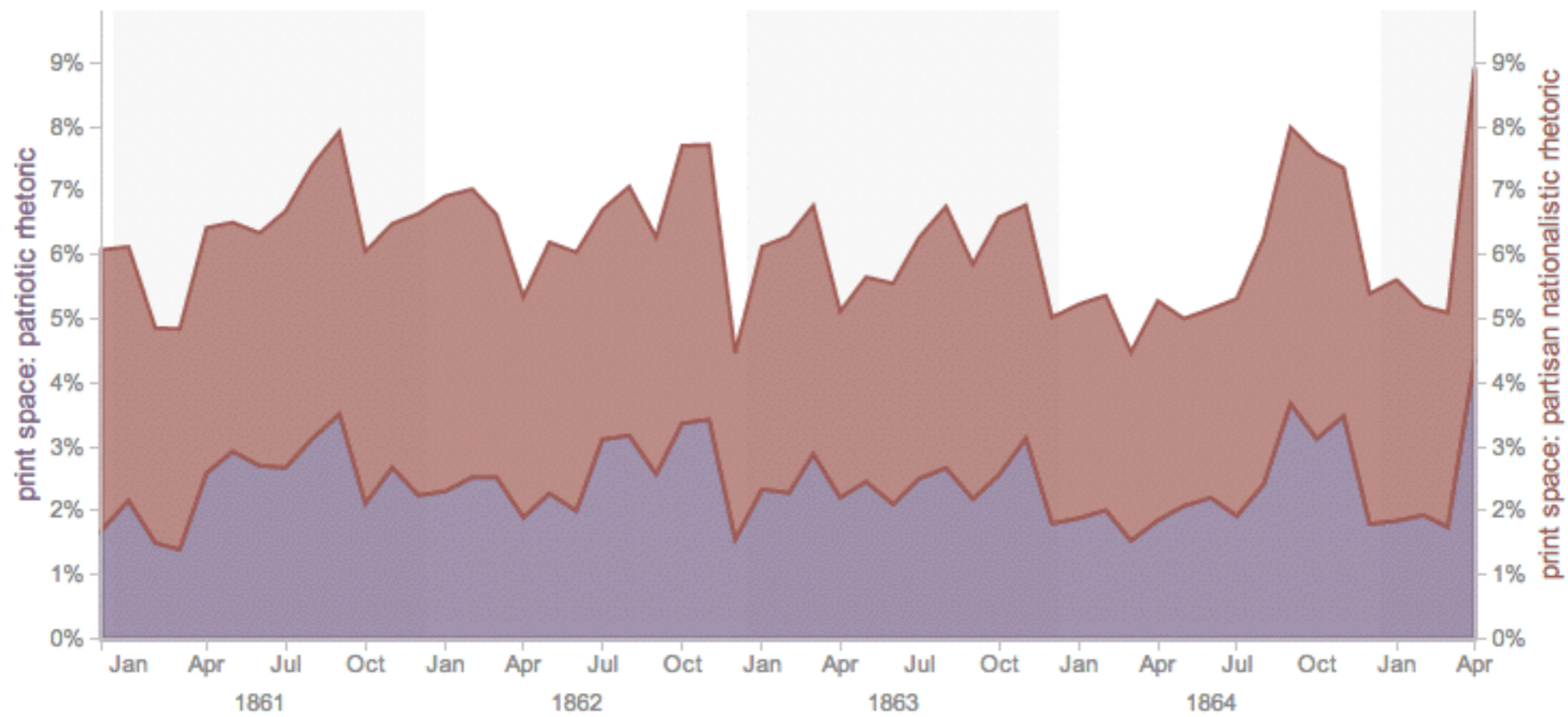
[From the Tue., May. 21, 1861 issue of the *Daily Dispatch*]

3 other topics (less than 10% each)



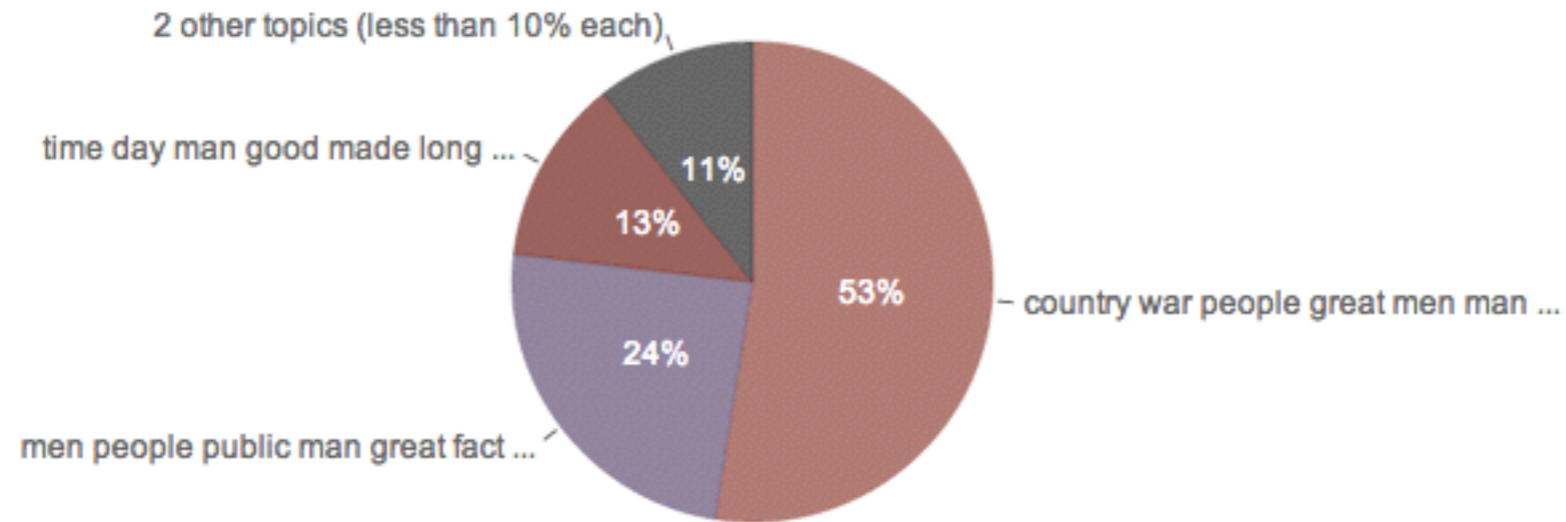
Distribution of the topics in this document in the topic model

Who can read the slaughter of the innocent women and children in St. Louis without a tear? Who can think of these helpless and unoffending ones of our own Southern family, butchered in cold blood by the foreign mercenaries of Lincoln, without indescribable Horror and rage? We had supposed that in Europe alone, where these murderers profess to have suffered from despotism, such atrocities could be committed. It seems not. They, the bloody barbarians, have introduced them in the land which gave them a refuge, as a recompense for the kindness that sheltered them



## THE SOLDIER'S PROTEST.

[From the Sun., Sep. 25, 1864 issue of the *New York Times*]



Distribution of the topics in this document in the topic model

Say, boys, do you hear what the plotters are doing, While gladly our life-blood outpours in the strife?

Do you see with what art their vile snares they are strewing.

To strangle and barter the national life?

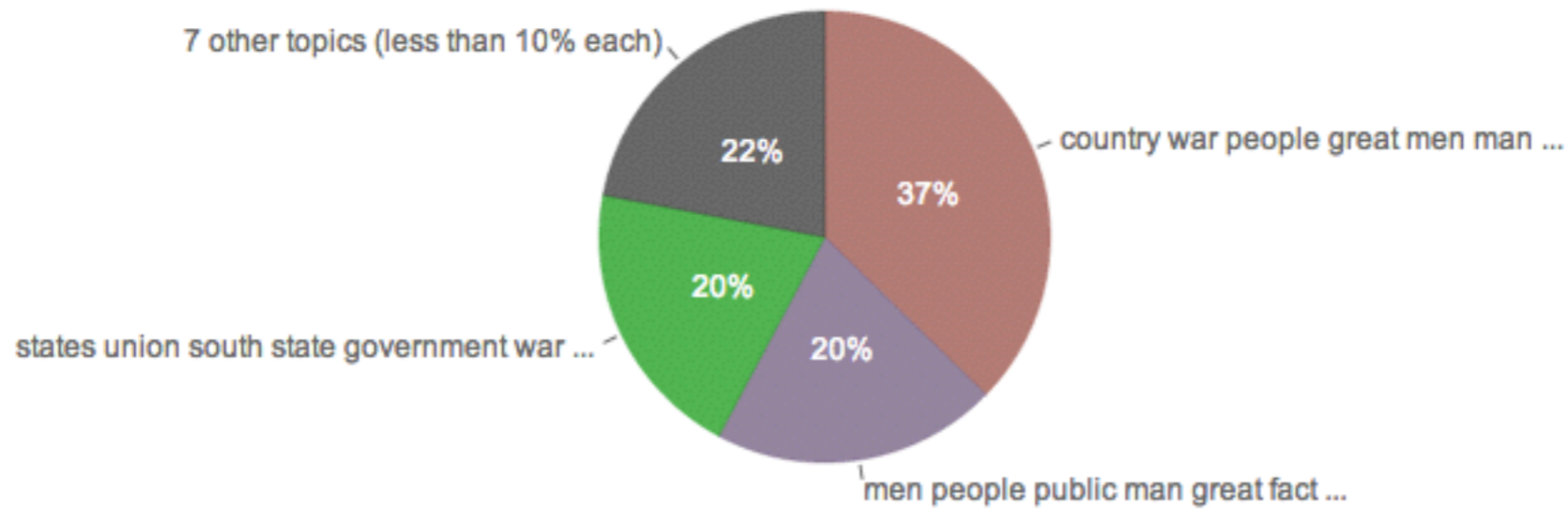
They tell us that now, while our arms are prevailing,

And victory crowns them o'er land and o'er sea,



# THE NORTHERN TRAITORS

[From the Thu., Oct. 23, 1862 issue of the *New York Times*]



Distribution of the topics in this document in the topic model

An eloquent historian and statesman, in his reply to the loyal citizens of the Eighth District of this city, requesting his consent to a nomination to Congress, wrote the following memorable words.

"I will not give a vote for any man whose election would be an encouragement to the Rebellion to hold out. I, for one, will not consent to send our sons and brothers to the battle-field and then betray them at the

$$P(Z|W, D) = \frac{\text{\# of word } W \text{ in topic } Z + \beta_w}{\text{total tokens in } Z + \beta} * (\text{\# words in } D \text{ that belong to } Z + \alpha)$$

