

Online Field Experiments

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Online Field Experiments

- ▶ “Online” survey and lab experiments: web technology is used for recruitment and sampling and that’s it.
- ▶ Online field experiments: “experiments that leverage platforms or systems that already exist on the Internet to study motivations and behaviors of individuals, organizations, and even governments”.
- ▶ “The treatments and outcome of online field experiments are often native to the online setting.” (Muise and Pan 2018, 2-5)

Cases

LETTER

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A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization

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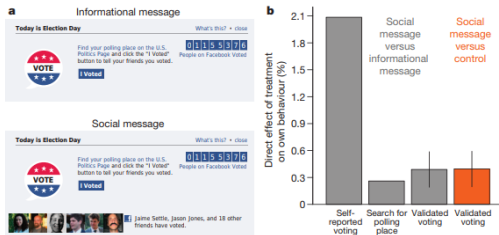
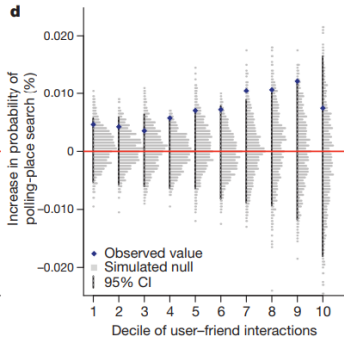
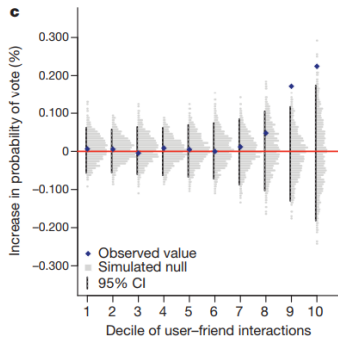
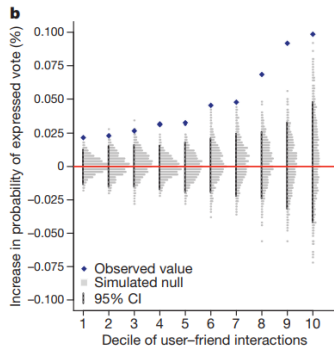
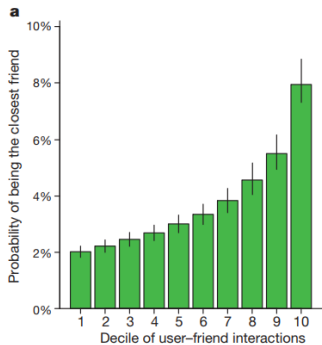


Figure 1 | The experiment and direct effects. **a**, **b**, Examples of the informational message and social message Facebook treatments (**a**) and their direct effect on voting behaviour (**b**). Vertical lines indicate s.e.m. (they are too small to be seen for the first two bars).



Sources of Authoritarian Responsiveness: A Field Experiment in China

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A growing body of research suggests that authoritarian regimes are responsive to societal actors, but our understanding of the sources of authoritarian responsiveness remains limited because of the challenges of measurement and causal identification. By conducting an online field experiment among 2,103 Chinese counties, we examine factors that affect officials' incentives to respond to citizens in an authoritarian context. At baseline, we find that approximately one-third of county governments respond to citizen demands expressed online. Threats of collective action and threats of tattling to upper levels of government cause county governments to be considerably more responsive, whereas identifying as loyal, long-standing members of the Chinese Communist Party does not increase responsiveness. Moreover, we find that threats of collective action make local officials more publicly responsive. Together, these results demonstrate that top-down mechanisms of oversight as well as bottom-up societal pressures are possible sources of authoritarian responsiveness.

Specifics

- ▶ Question: measuring the authoritarian government responsiveness
- ▶ Platform: county-level government websites (identified by the web-crawling scripts)
- ▶ Unit of analysis: county
- ▶ N: 2,103
- ▶ Randomization and treatment: the authors randomly assigned message types to county websites.
 - ▶ Treatment: 1) proxying collective action potential and 2) the threat of tattling to higher-level authorities , and party loyalty
 - ▶ Control
- ▶ Outcomes: 1) whether the message received a response, 2) how many days took to get it, 3) content of the response