Doing Political and Social Research

Week 6

Logistics

▶ Assessment

  • Quiz: Quiz 1 marking in progress; Quiz 2 open on **10 December 2024**

  • Essay: Due on **25 November 2024**

  • Proposal: Due on **10 January 2025**; examples on Moodle now

▶ Polcies and guidelines

  • Moodle

  • Office hours

  • Mitigating circumstances

Strategic reading: The Berkeley style

Preview → Annotating → Analyzing → Responding

- **Preview**: Get as much information about the reading before you actually read it

- **Annotating**: Read with a pencil and making notes as you read

- **Analyzing**: Break the reading apart to see how different parts relate to each other

- **Responding**: Think again how the reading relates the topic of each week; come up with summary, comments and questions

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Presidential Term Limit Contravention: Abolish, Extend, Fail, or Respect?

Kristin McKie[1]

Abstract

Since presidential term limits were (re)adopted by many states during the third wave of democratization, 221 presidents across Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia have reached the end of their term(s) in office. Of these, 30% have attempted to contravene term limits, resulting in either full abolition, one-term extensions, or failure. What explains these divergent trajectories? I argue that trends in electoral competition over time best predict term limit outcomes, with noncompetitive elections permitting full abolition, less competitive elections allowing for one-term extensions, and competitive elections leading to failed bids. This is because electoral trends provide informational cues to the president's co-partisan legislators and constitutional court judges (the actors who ultimately rule on constitutional term limit amendments) about the cost/benefit analysis that voting to uphold or repeal term limits would have on their own political survival. These findings suggest a linkage between political uncertainty and constitutional stability more generally.

Recap: Concepts

▶ How should we understand concepts? Do you take the classical view or the prototype/family resemblance view?

▶ What makes for a good concept?

▶ Consider a concept that you have come across in your studies.

  • Is it useful?

  • Is it contested?

  • Has it been stretched?

  • Can it be sub-divided or aggregated with other concepts? Can you move up and down the ladder of abstraction?

FIGURE 0. Process-Tracing: The Checklist
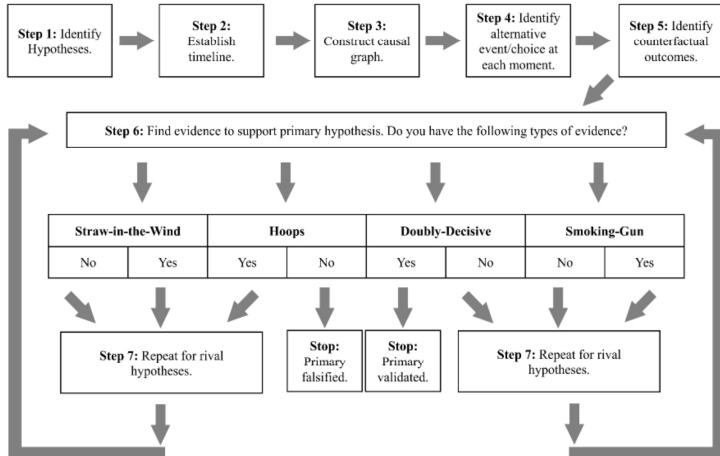
Datasets in political and social reseaech

▶ Admin data, such as social security payment records, educational attainment records, health records, court records and tax records (UK Data Services)

▶ Survey data, such as ANES and BSA

▶ Socioeconomic data, such as QoG and VDem

▶ Smart data: Text, image and sound

https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/

https://electionstudies.org/

National Centre for Social Research

British Social Attitudes

Every year the British Social Attitudes survey asks a representative sample of the population what it's like to live in Britain.

https://natcen.ac.uk/british-social-attitudes

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https://www.afrobarometer.org/
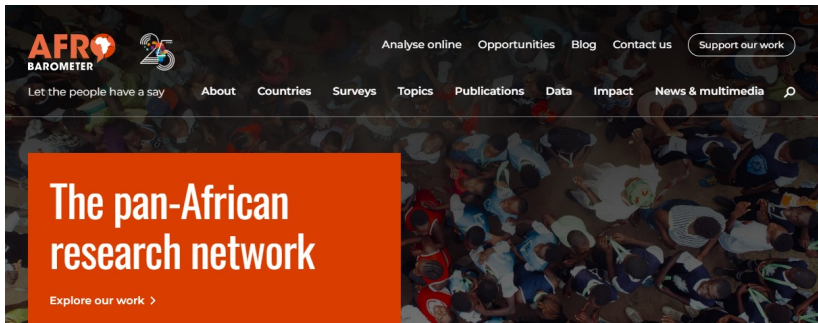
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Welcome to the World Values Survey site

Join the World Values Survey Wave 8 (2024-2026): Call for Principal Investigators

The ongoing 8th wave of the WVS, launched in 2024, addresses global issues such as political trust, climate change, and social tolerance, while also contributing to the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals. Researchers are invited to join as Principal Investigators, particularly in underrepresented regions like Central America, Sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia, and the Middle East. PIs will play a key role in overseeing national surveys, raising funds, and ensuring methodological standards, with the opportunity to access data early and include up to 40 country-specific questions. This is an invaluable chance to shape global discourse and contribute to a deeper understanding of societal values in diverse regions.

Quick Links

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Why donate the WVSA?

WVS7 data & documentation

World Values Survey Wave 7 v6.0.0 *(last updated 15-05-2024)*

WVS 1981-2022 Longitudinal File

Download the latest version of the time-series 1981-2022 v5.0 data file in different formats *(last updated 31-05-2024)*

Inglehart - Welzel's Cultural Map

https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/

Indian society in transition:
Challenges for human development

Explore Our Findings

https://ihds.umd.edu/

https://www.gu.se/en/quality-government

https://v-dem.net/

https://www.prio.org/

Smart data: Social media posts

How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression

GARY KING   *Harvard University*
JENNIFER PAN   *Harvard University*
MARGARET E. ROBERTS   *Harvard University*

*W*e offer the first large scale, multiple source analysis of the outcome of what may be the most extensive effort to selectively censor human expression ever implemented. To do this, we have devised a system to locate, download, and analyze the content of millions of social media posts originating from nearly 1,400 different social media services all over China before the Chinese government is able to find, evaluate, and censor (i.e., remove from the Internet) the subset they deem objectionable. Using modern computer-assisted text analytic methods that we adapt to and validate in the Chinese language, we compare the substantive content of posts censored to those not censored over time in each of 85 topic areas. Contrary to previous understandings, posts with negative, even vitriolic, criticism of the state, its leaders, and its policies are not more likely to be censored. Instead, we show that the censorship program is aimed at curtailing collective action by silencing comments that represent, reinforce, or spur social mobilization, regardless of content. Censorship is oriented toward attempting to forestall collective activities that are occurring now or may occur in the future—and, as such, seem to clearly expose government intent.*

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Smart data: Audio recordings

Pitch Perfect: Vocal Pitch and the Emotional Intensity of Congressional Speech

BRYCE J. DIETRICH *University of Iowa*
MATTHEW HAYES *Rice University*
DIANA Z. O'BRIEN *Rice University*

Although audio archives are available for a number of political institutions, the data they provide receive scant attention from researchers. Yet, audio data offer important insights, including information about speakers' emotional states. Using one of the largest collections of natural audio ever compiled—74,158 Congressional floor speeches—we introduce a novel measure of legislators' emotional intensity: small changes in vocal pitch that are difficult for speakers to control. Applying our measure to MCs' floor speeches about women, we show that female MCs speak with greater emotional intensity when talking about women as compared with both their male colleagues and their speech on other topics. Our two supplementary analyses suggest that increased vocal pitch is consistent with legislators' broader issue commitments, and that emotionally intense speech may affect other lawmakers' behavior. More generally, by demonstrating the utility of audio-as-data approaches, our work highlights a new way of studying political speech.

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