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Introduction to Digital Humanities

Network Analysis Assignment II

Through the method of networking I explored the news sources followed by politicians around the world. This study identifies which politicians follow the same news sources and analyzes why they might share this source.

My data set included ten politicians from the United States, Canada, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, France, Portugal, and Norway. I searched each of their twitter accounts and recorded the news sources that they followed. Next I recorded which news sources were followed by at least two of the politicians. After inputting all of this information onto a google sheet form, I was able to download the information into R studio and create various graphs. This allowed me to analyze the data in several different ways. Through this experiment I hoped to be able to identify the sources that are influencing the major authorities of our world and draw connections between these authorities based on their news sources. This experiment resembles a study of newspaper sources in eighteenth-century France which “explores how the practices that readers and publishers employed to reference print matter helped the reading public conceptualize connections between the text they were reading and the larger media landscape,” (Bond, RRCHNM, 2018). Similarly, my study seeks to identify connections between the news sources politicians follow and the policies they stand by.

There were several interesting observations I made from this project. Most politicians follow accounts that are specific to their country. This was not surprising, but it made gathering data difficult. Scott Morrison follows Buzzfeed Australia, Emmanuel Macron follows Le HuffPost, and three other global influencers followed the original HuffPost. Instead of classifying these all

as one news source, I only included the Huffpost because I figured that the other sources were providing information specific to that country and could not be counted as the same as HuffPost. They are not providing the same information and, therefore, are not influencing the politicians in the same way. Many of the politicians I researched but did not include in this study only followed news sources specific to their countries. I thought that it could be due to a sense of nationalism or a result of poor international relationships. Another surprising discovery was actually a lack of thereof. There was no obvious connection between news sources and political parties. Mauricio Macri and Erna Solberg are both conservative politicians. However, they both follow the New York Times and the Huffington Post, both of which are considered to be more liberal news sources. Do these politicians follow these sources because they believe they are more accurate than others, or are they interested in challenging their own opinions? Perhaps they haven't observed any bias in the writing and simply prefer these sources because of the way they are written. I do not have any way to answer these questions, but I found it interesting that there were no evident connections involving political parties, as I had been anticipating that.

There were several limitations I found as I carried out this project. The most significant complication was that many of the twitter accounts I investigated followed under fifty other accounts, none of them being news sources. Many political leaders follow only their family members and a few other political accounts. This makes my study less accurate because it only includes politicians who follow large numbers of twitter accounts. Donald Trump, for example, follows primarily his family and the twitter accounts of his various businesses. The only news source he follows is Fox and friends. Though this does not comply with the rest of my data, as the news source is not followed by any of the other politicians, I thought it was interesting. After reading Goldstone and Underwood's theory that certain information might not seem important but can often add meaning to a data set and "even reveal shifts of emphasis of which we were

entirely unaware,” I decided to keep it in the network (Goldstone and Underwood, JDH, 2012). Another limitation was that I gathered this data manually; it was not computer-generated. This means that there could very likely have been human errors. I easily could have skipped over a news source while scrolling through a page.

Despite the various limitations, I think this project has a lot of potential and could be improved if carried out further. If the data had been computer-generated, the human error limitation would be resolved and the data would be far more accurate and reliable. Additionally, I think the experiment as a whole would improve if there was a larger number of politicians investigated. Perhaps politicians who do not follow news sources could be included, as it could provide an explanation for why they choose not to follow news accounts. Overall I think the project was successful in providing information about politicians and the news sources they follow.