Backfair of Good Stories

The Spatial Influences of Patriotic Education Demonstration Bases in China

Hu, Yue

Department of Political Science
313 Schaeffer Hall
Iowa City, IA 52242-1409
Email: yue-hu-1@uiowa.edu

Overview

Theoretical,

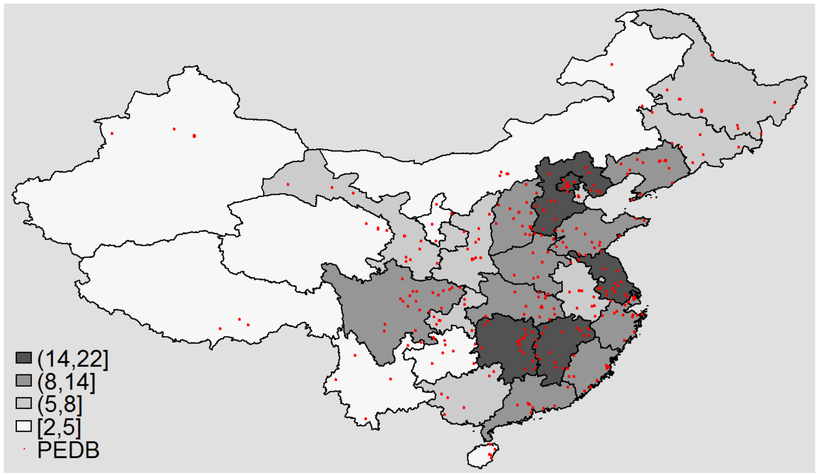
- The first time giving a systematic analysis of the impact of Patriotic Education Demonstration Bases (PEDBs).
- Offer empirical evidence for a counterintuitive "backfire" effect of PEDBs.

Methodological,

- Applying the distance-decay-neighbor method to create a spatial measure to capture the impact of informal political educations, such as PEDBs, addressing both the density effect and proximity effect.

PEDBs in Mainland China

Various memorials, museums, and relics of wars, revolutionary heroes, and traditional culture that can inspire the patriotic emotions of the public.
Total: 266(2008), 356 (2014).



Functions of PEDBs

Two Functions of Political Education:
Signaling: Delivering the signal of the strength of the authority in social control (i.e., maintaining the social stability, implementing proper policies) to the public, but not constructing or maintaining their positive attitudes towards the government and the regime.
Indoctrination: Instilling the public with loyalty and support to the authority.

The Special Function of PEDBs:
Spatial: Exposure determines to what extent an individual is impacted by PEDBs.
Complement: Reinforcing the achievement of formal political educations as "evidence."

Backfire Risk (Information Overload):
When the similar information is too frequently delivered, the receivers yield more negative attitudes (boring, distrusting, distraction, etc.). If this is the case, the more an individual is exposed to PEDBs, the less positive attitudes they will have to the authority.

Hypotheses:

H_1 (spatial): The more exposure to the PEDBs, the more an individual's political attitudes are changed.

H_2 (signaling): The individuals more exposing to PEDBs believe the authority's capacity of social control more.

H_3 (indoctrination): The individuals more exposing to PEDBs trust the authority more.

H_4 (complement): An individual's exposure to PEDBs has a positive interaction with his/her formal education duration.

H_5 (backfire): The exposure to the PEDBs has a negative impact on an individual's attitudes towards the authority both in beliefs of social capability and trust.

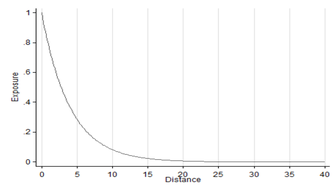
A Spatial Estimator for Exposure

Purpose: Addressing both the proximity (distance) effect and the density (how many are around) effect of PEDBs.

Approach: Distant-decay-neighbor method (Boehmke 2012; Darmofal Unpublished, 35).

Property: The individual i's exposure is constructed by summing the exponential of the product of the spatial decay parameter $-d$ and the distance, x_{ij}, between the individual and the Base j. $-d$ indicates how fast the spatially effect is reduced; the larger d is, the faster the spatial effect decays as the distance increasing. Formally,

$$Exposure_i = \sum_{j=1}^{n} e^{-d \times x_{ij}}.$$



Note: In this project, I assign a value of 0.25 to *d*. When the other values (0.05, 0.1, 0.5, 0.75, 1, and 2) are tested, the results of interest stay consistent.

Alternative:

- Individual's distance to the nearest PEDB(Boehmke 2012, Note 8): Overlook the potential density effect of PEDBs.
- K-Nearest PEDBs around an individual (Darmofal Unpublished, 31): Ignoring both the effects of PEDBs which are not quite near but relatively close to the individual and the disparity of the impact of PEDBs within the scope but with different distances to the individual.
- Distance band PEDBs (Boehmke 2012, Note 8; Darmofal Unpublished, 33): same problem as the measure of K-Nearest PEDBs.

None of these measures can fully model both density and proximity effects as the distant-decay-neighbor measure.

Empirical Analysis

Data:

- Individual: 2008 China Survey
  - Available data points 3,989; national; strata random sampling.
  - Including data of respondents' demographic conditions, socioeconomic status, and political attitudes (esp. belief of the authority's governmental capability and political trust to local and central government)
- Spatial:
  1. Department of Publicity of Chinese Communist Party: locations of national PEDBs.
     Note: The actual data points are 286, because some PEDBs are under the same title but in different geographic location. Considering the spatial effect is the focus in this study, I separate them to different PEDBs in analysis.
  2. 2008 China Survey: locations of the half-second-squares of the respondents.

Variables:

	count	mean	sd	min	max
Dependent					
Stability	3530	3.103399	.9557004	1	4
Satisfy Policy	3788	3.128036	.8191178	1	4
Trust Central	3112	3.288239	.7873252	1	4
Trust Local	2945	2.936842	.8130752	1	4
Explanatory					
Exposure	3989	.0412293	.1862026	0	2.122312
Education Duration	3989	7.041614	4.659281	0	20
Control					
Age	3989	45.98646	15.63274	18	92
Male	3989	.4823264	.4997502	0	1
Satisfy Income	3884	5.02034	2.667968	0	10
Urban	3969	.2461577	.4308258	0	1
CCP Member	1475	.2237288	.4168837	0	1
Mandarin Speaker	3913	.5249169	.4994426	0	1
Interest in Politics	3921	2.362663	.9261361	1	4
Observations	3989				

Result: Statistical

	Stability	Policy	Trust-Central	Trust-Local
Without Interaction				
Exposure	-0.433***	-0.500**	-0.233***	-0.233***
	(0.136)	(0.226)	(0.079)	(0.079)
Observations	1322	1371	1054	1054
Log Likelihood	-3.906e+08	-3.437e+08	-2.815e+08	-2.815e+08
Including Interaction				
Exposure×Education	0.063*	0.012	0.056*	0.097***
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.030)	(0.033)
Observations	1322	1371	1129	1054
Log Likelihood	-3.903e+08	-3.323e+08	-2.911e+08	-2.808e+08

Controls omitted. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

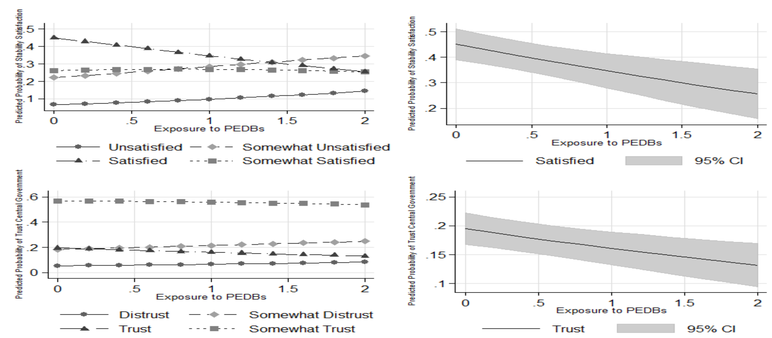
Note: 1) Clustered robust SE is used to control for other potential spatial effects. 2) CCP causes a lot missing data, while it is an important control for alternative causalities on public political attitudes of China. I tried multiple imputations. The results of variables of interest and most control variables stay consistent as the results from the original data. The coefficient of exposure is even larger in magnitude and in the same direction. On the other hand, using multiple imputations brings a lot of restrictions on postestimation, graphing, and output. Therefore, I still report the original results. I did robust checks on different age-stage samples. Although the effect of PEDBs looks stronger for young people, the significance and directions of coefficients are consistent across different samples.

Result: Substantive

First Difference:

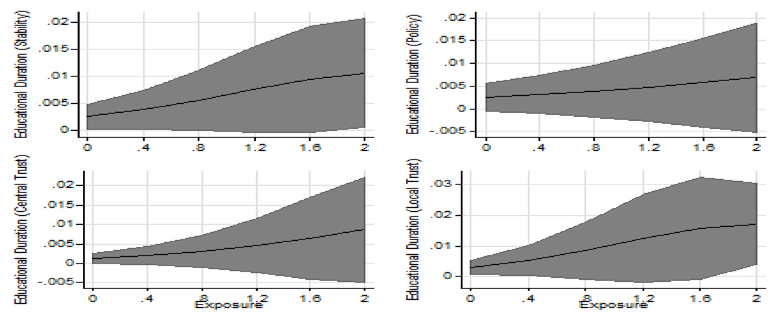
	Stability	Policy	Trust-Central	Trust-Local
Exposure	-0.029***	-0.025**	-0.011***	-0.011***

Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$



Result: Complement Effect

There is a complementary effect from PEDBs to formal political education, but not very big.



Conclusion: Backfire Plus a Slight Complement

PEDBs impact the public in a spatial manner, but not work as the authority wants them to. Not only not enhancing the positive attitudes towards the authority, it backfires–as the information-overloading theory expects while influencing more broadly comparing to the formal educations. However, PEDBs does help a little on reinforce the achievement of the formal political education.