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DATE RECEIVED: 4/3/2023 DATE APPROVED: 4/3/2023

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## APPLICATION FOR STATISTICAL CONSULTING

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YOUR PRIMARY POSITION AT PURDUE: PhD Student

Other:

(if a student) MAJOR PROFESSOR LAST NAME: Drake Maestas FIRST NAME: Cherie

PHONE NUMBER:

MAJOR PROFESSOR CAMPUS ADDRESS (BLDG & DEPT): Political Science / BRNG

MAJOR PROFESSOR EMAIL: cmaestas@purdue.edu

HOW DID YOU FIND US: Other

LIST STATISTICS COURSES TAKEN AND STATISTICAL COMPUTING EXPERIENCE:

POL 501, POL 610 (Intro to quantitative methods and Causal Inference). Nothing in the stats department.

STAGE OF RESEARCH: Analysis (all data have been collected)

IF DESIGN STAGE IS COMPLETE, WAS A STATISTICIAN CONSULTED FOR DESIGN? No

PREVIOUS CONSULTANT – INSTITUTION/DEPARTMENT:

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF CONSULTING HOURS NEEDED THIS SEMESTER: <5 hours

EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE OF PROJECT: 4/30/2023

IMPORTANT DEADLINE OR DUE DATES RELATED TO YOUR PROJECT:

I'm presenting this paper at a conference on April 6th and would love some sounding board before that

THE RESULTS OF THIS RESEARCH WILL PROBABLY BE PUBLISHED AS:

Ph.D Dissertation, Journal Article, Other part of my 3 paper dissertation

IS THIS RESEARCH SUPPORTED BY A GRANT OR CONTRACT? No

If so, give grant/contract title:

GIVE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR RESEARCH INCLUDING:

## PURPOSE:

Research shows that party reputation matters for reelection chances. So, why do parties risk their reputation by using online disinformation as a tool to mobilize voters and sway opinions? This paper develops and tests a reputational cost theory of disinformation dissemination by political elites, based on the idea that recent societal developments have altered the reputational costs for using disinformation, at the same time as the advent of social media and networked communication has lowered the bar for its spread, and thus increased its potential benefits. These changing societal incentives include political polarization and media fractionalization. I hypothesize that countries high on these attributes incentivize politicians to use disinformation, because their voters are less likely to discover- and punish undemocratic behavior. I also hypothesize that electoral systems, compulsory voting and potential legal consequences of spreading disinformation may affect politicians'™ willingness to do so.

I test my theory through OLS regression of cross-sectional time series data from the Digital Society Project, V-Dem and V-Party from 2000-2021.

## DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES TO BE MEASURED:

Since I expect politicians and parties in democracies to disseminate significantly less disinformation than in other regime types, I create a democracy variable using V-Dem's liberal democracy index. I set the cutoff at 0.42, following suggestions in the literature (Kasuya and Mori 2019). This renders me with 103 countries.

To measure the correlation between domestic opinion manipulation and my explanatory variables, I use three primary data sources. They are both either produced by the Varieties of Democracy project (V-Dem) (Coppedge et al. 2022), or by using its infrastructure.

Most of my country level data are variables from the Digital Society Project (Mechkova et al. 2021), which uses V-Dem's infrastructure for data collection. This includes my dependent variable "Party dissemination of false information domestic". The question posed to the coders were: How often do major political parties and candidates for office use social media to disseminate misleading viewpoints or false information to influence their own population?. Answers range from 0 (extremely often) to 4 (never, or almost never). These ordinal scales have been converted to intervals by the measurement model, typically ranging from -5 to +5, which I in turn have inverted to capture greater levels of disinformation with rising numbers.

Data and analysis: OLS regression analysis of cross-sectional time series data from the Digital Society Project, Poynter Institute, V-Party, Reuters Digital News Report, Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index and Democratic Electoral Systems. Some datasets are between the years 2000-2021, others only start in 2016. Haven't quite figured out what time period to focus on. The dataset with the greatest number of countries has 101 democracies and the smallest 26.

Unit of Analysis: country-year

DV: Party dissemination of disinformation domestically

IVs: polarization, media fractionalization, electoral system (categorical variable), compulsory voting, rule of law, max level of populism speech on party level, aggregated to country level. Controls: level of democracy, inequality, internet use/social media use, net migration.

Using fixed effects and panel-corrected standard errors (this is perhaps what I'd like to discuss more - what is the best model for analyzing the data?)

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS THAT YOU WANT TO ADDRESS USING STATISTICAL METHODS:

Politicians in democracies should care about reputation for re-election chances. So why risk it by disseminating disinformation?

What explains the global variation in disinformation dissemination domestically by political elites?

#### STATISTICAL ISSUES:

I'd love to discuss different ways of analyzing the data (panel corrected SEs vs clustered SEs, fixed effects, MICE for dealing with missing data etc). It would just be nice to have a sounding board/more of a methods resource to turn to.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION YOU THINK WOULD BE HELPFUL:

I'm still looking for committee members and my chair is also the head of our department and is very busy. My other committee member is in SOC and I haven't really been in touch with him for a long time.

#### ATTACHMENTS:

No Attachments