Top of Form

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Client:** | Hanna Sistek | **File:** 23-056 |
| **Dept:** | Political Science | **Faculty:**  **Student:** |
| **Date:** | 04/04/2023 | **Initial Meeting:**  **Follow-up:** |
| **Consultant and Attendees:** Bingjing Tang, Hanna Sistek, Prof. Cherie Drake Maestas, Prof. Chong Gu | | |
| **Statement of Problem:** To test a reputational cost theory of disinformation dissemination by political elites. | | |
| **Goal of this Project:** Ph.D. Dissertation and Journal Article. | | |
| **Background:** Disinformation dissemination impacts party reputation and that matters for reelection chances. Recent societal developments and the advent of social media and networked communication has altered its reputational cost and lowered the bar of its spread.  This project uses regression to investigate the relationship between the dependent variable “party dissemination of disinformation domestically” and explanatory variables such as “political polarization” and “electoral system.” The client developed a reputational cost theory of disinformation dissemination and uses regression to test it. Specifically, the client wants to test hypotheses such as do countries with high political polarization and media fractionalization incentivize politicians to use disinformation.  The client is interested in investigating what variables could explain the global variation in disinformation dissemination domestically by political elites including politicians and parties. The client would like to discuss different ways of analyzing the data, for example, panel corrected standard errors, clustered standard errors, fixed effects models, etc. | | |
|  | | |
| **Relevant information presented at meeting:**   1. The study uses the Digital Society Project dataset, which is an existing dataset based on expert surveys for 179 countries from 2000 to 2021. For each country, 3-5 experts answer over 400 different questions related to its democracy. It is per country panel data from 2000 to 2021 with 8-10 measurements for each country. The client filters the raw dataset to contain 131 countries by setting V-Dem's liberal democracy index larger than 0.42. Some variables in it may not correspond well to the concepts the client is trying to capture. Thus, she also uses other data sources that capture the concepts better. 2. The dependent variable disinformation dissemination is evaluated by aggregating over major parties in each country. Specifically, coders are asked: 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? 3. The client’s theorem is about cross-country variation in disinformation dissemination. Independent variables vary across countries and time, for example, polarization likely varies within countries over time, and whether a country has compulsory voting only varies across countries. The cross-country analysis exploits two types of variations. | | |
| **Recommendations for Design and/or Analysis:**   1. Professor Gu suggested first performing data visualization. Since the same calendar year might mean different things for different countries, calendar year probably does not make sense across countries. Instead of treating the dataset as time series data directly, the client could first take a look at some individual countries by plotting both the dependent variable and independent variables versus time to check if there are similar election cycle patterns among countries with similar political systems. If the election cycle matters, the client could look at the data by election cycles and then check the relationship between the response variable and predictors. After obtaining a general sense based on these plots, the client could integrate things across countries. 2. The client could run different models for different countries if there are enough data for each country. By doing so, interaction terms could be avoided for an easier model explanation. The client could perform quantitative analyses for each country and qualitatively tell stories across countries. Otherwise, countries with similar political systems could be merged into a larger group that share similar election cycle patterns. 3. Each election cycle might be treated as independent observations, ignoring serial correlations. 4. Suppose variables have been adjusted based on the election cycle, the client could run a linear mixed effect model by treating countries as a random effect. Prof. Gu explained mixed effects and random effects to the client. | | |
| **Who will carry out these actions?** The client will first check the election cycle pattern and the consultant will help her with the data visualization. | | |
| **Status:** Continuing | | |

Bottom of Form