

Conducting Survey Experiments on Politics in China

Abstract

Randomized controlled trial (or simply, experiment) is a central methodology across social sciences. It is beneficial for identifying the causal relationships between the treatment, such as government policy or media information, and the outcomes, such as public opinion and behaviors. However, experiments conducted in the real world (i.e., field experiments) are often associated with high costs, high political risks, and sometimes severe ethical concerns. Survey experiments, in comparison, provide a relatively safe and low-cost option for researchers to understand the effects of various treatments. In this seminar, Mr. Yang will use research on government censorship and propaganda in China to discuss how survey experimental design can help us understand political phenomena that are difficult to observe in the real world. He will also explain some challenges in measuring public opinion in China using survey questions and the limitations of survey experiments, including their external validity. The seminar will conclude by providing suggestions on how to conduct survey experiments, particularly in China.