Cyrus Samii

Descriptive quantitative work in political science

Here is a roundup of replies to a question I posted on Twitter regarding descriptive quantitative research in political science:

> ### Cyrus Samii
> @cdsamii
>
> What's your favorite example of a descriptive quantitative paper in political science—not trying to estimate a causal effect or fit a model, but rather use good measurement to challenge conventional wisdom about state of the world?
>
> 9:32 AM - May 11, 2018
>
> 25   18 people are talking about this

Outside political science, I can think of a number of examples, although I was interested in political examples per se, and particularly ones that are published as papers:

> ### Josh McCrain
> @joshmccrain
>
> Replying to @cdsamii
> i like this one quite a bit:aeaweb.org/articles?id=10…
>
> 9:34 AM - May 11, 2018
>
> See Josh McCrain's other Tweets

Cyrus Samii
@cdsamii

Replying to @joshmccrain

I can think of many in econ too—eg, "Economic Lives of the Poor", "Financial Diaries", or Bloom/Van Reenan management stuff. I am specifically wondering about poli sci though.

9:37 AM - May 11, 2018

2   See Cyrus Samii's other Tweets

Josh McCrain
@joshmccrain

Replying to @cdsamii

i did a political science version of the AER lobbying papers and is definitely descriptive:joshuamccrain.com/McCrain_Lobbyi…

9:51 AM - May 11, 2018

1   See Josh McCrain's other Tweets

Mark Shadden
@MarkShadden1

Replying to @cdsamii

Hands down: Blattman, C., & Miguel, E. (2010). Civil war. Journal of Economic literature, 48(1), 3-57.

11:04 AM - May 11, 2018

1   See Mark Shadden's other Tweets

Ye Wang
@yezhehuzhi

Replying to @cdsamii

In economics, I would say the classic "Law and Finance". In poli sci, definitely Wand et al. (2001) on butterfly ballots (is this a descriptive paper?)

11:16 AM - May 11, 2018

See Ye Wang's other Tweets

One thing that distinguishes poli sci from, say, econ is that poli sci has lots of books, many of which contain im-

portant descriptive work, as in this:

Nonetheless, I was mostly interested in work published in paper form.

An important class of measurement contributions in poli sci include dimension reduction, scaling, and latent variable estimation methods. This includes things like ideal point estimation as well as analyses of text:

- Example 1:

Claire Adida
@ClaireAdida

Replying to @etjernst @cdsamii

clearly, anything written by @mollyeroberts.

1:35 PM - May 11, 2018

1   See Claire Adida's other Tweets

- Example 2:

Ryan D. Enos
@RyanDEnos

Replying to @cdsamii

Poole and Rosenthal (1985)

10:06 AM - May 11, 2018

5   See Ryan D. Enos's other Tweets

- Example 3:

Arthur Spirling
@arthur_spirling

Replying to @cdsamii

"Democracy as a Latent Variable" by Treier and @SimonJackman is a very nice (dare I say 'important'?) piece in this area onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.111…

10:44 AM - May 11, 2018

4   See Arthur Spirling's other Tweets

- Example 4:

Tore Wig
@torewig

Replying to @cdsamii

Farris 2014 in the APSR

10:51 AM - May 11, 2018

See Tore Wig's other Tweets

Yonatan Lupu
@yonatanlupu

Replying to @cdsamii

Fariss (2014) cambridge.org/core/journals/…

11:41 AM - May 11, 2018

3   See Yonatan Lupu's other Tweets

(Chris's last name is spelled Fariss, by the way.)

Poli sci scholars have also done a lot to elaborate small area estimation techniques and use them in analyzing survey data, as with the "MRP" papers, e.g.:

Alexander Sahn
@sahnicboom

Replying to @cdsamii

public opinion papers using MRP, especially Broockman and Skovron poseidon01.ssrn.com/delivery.php?I…

11:17 AM - May 11, 2018

2   See Alexander Sahn's other Tweets

Taxonomy, that is, organizing cases on the basis of conceptual categories, is another class of measurement-related work:

Peter Loewen
@PeejLoewen

This is a nice example of simple classification. It's straightforward and improves on other classifications. We don't do too much taxonomy these days.
onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.111…

10:41 AM - May 11, 2018

See Peter Loewen's other Tweets

Sometimes descriptive work can indirectly inform causal questions:

Ethan BdM
@ethanbdm

Ansolabehere & Snyder paper showing overtime trends in inc. adv. for all statewide offices are identical to those for Congress. Purely descriptive, but suggests it's unlikely change in congressional inc. adv. is due to gerrymandering since the other offices have fixed districts.

10:01 AM - May 11, 2018

4   See Ethan BdM's other Tweets

What I was most interested in were creative contributions that don't apply especially new statistical methods, but are the result of shoe-leather effort that allows us to view important dynamics more clearly. Examples:

Michael Aklin
@MichaelAklin

Gelman/Margalit's penumbras paper has considerable amounts of interesting descriptive stats. Not exactly challenging conv. wisdom, but has interesting implications.
pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4b57/4ad5515ed….

10:07 AM - May 11, 2018

4   See Michael Aklin's other Tweets

Yphtach Lelkes
@ylelkes

Replying to @cdsamii

Converse 64

10:37 AM - May 11, 2018

3   See Yphtach Lelkes's other Tweets

Andy Hall
@andrewbhall

Replying to @cdsamii @ethanbdm

"Why is there so little money in politics?" is another great example

10:33 AM - May 11, 2018

2   See Andy Hall's other Tweets

Eric D. Lawrence
@eric_d_lawrence

Replying to @cdsamii

McDonald, M.P. and Popkin, S.L., 2001. The myth of the vanishing voter. American Political Science Review, 95(4), pp.963-974.   @ElectProject

11:29 AM - May 11, 2018

3   See Eric D. Lawrence's other Tweets

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