The Structures and Consequences of Online Political Discussion: Computational Studies Using Social Media Data

Abstract

(Normative) theorists have argued that conversation is the soul of democracy. However, political discussions might not be as ideal as the theorists envisioned. This talk summarizes a series of computational studies using large-scale social media data to examine the structures and consequences of political discussions online. Specifically, this talk discusses both the positive and negative sides: the organizational principles of web forum discussions and how they could help produce common ground among the users, how diffusion structures are related to cross-ideological interaction on Twitter, to what extent movement-related discussions on LIHKG are leaderless, and finally how to identify the causal effects of incivility such as swearing and name-calling using machine learning and text mining.

Biography

Professor Hai LIANG is an Assistant Professor of Communication at CUHK. He is also a theme co-leader of the CSS Lab. His research interests include computational social science, political communication, and public health. He has published numerous articles in top journals such as the Journal of Communication, Communication Research, Human Communication Research, among others.