

# 6SSPP357 – The Political Sociology of Social Networks

Fall Semester 2017

**Lecturer:** Dr Florian Foos ([florian.foos@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:florian.foos@kcl.ac.uk))

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**Office Hour:** Tuesday, 11.00-12.00; Wednesday, 12.00-13.00  
S2.21, Strand Building

**Lectures:** Mondays, 10.00-11.00, K0.20 KINGS BLDG

## Seminars:

Group 1: Mondays, 12.00-13.00 CHESHAM -1.04

Group 2: Tuesdays, 09.00-10.00 STRAND BLDG S2.31

## Overview

This module introduces second year students to the study of political influence within social networks, both real-live networks and networks that connect citizens online. It starts by questioning the assumption underlying classical rational choice theory that citizens take political decisions in isolation. Instead, we will look at how citizens' social environment, family, friends, neighbours, and colleagues, influence their political decisions. While citizens often choose to be close to others that are similar to them, a mechanism, which is known as sorting or selection, citizens also change their attitudes and behaviours because they interact with other citizens. But how can we be confident that citizens really influence each other's decisions? Moreover, which are the mechanisms through which influence takes place? During the semester, students will read some of the foundational works that define the social citizen from a theoretical perspective, learn about the different theoretical mechanisms through which social influence may be exerted, and gain knowledge about different methods that can be applied to identify causal effects within various types of social networks.

## Assessment

The module is assessed based on two essays:

Essay 1 (1500 words) – 30%

Essay 2 (3500 words) – 70%

Essay Question 1 (30%):

1. Compare and contrast Zuckerman's (2005) "social logic of politics" with
  - a) Sartori's (1969) political sociology

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or

b) Downs' (1957) economic theory of democracy.

How is the “social logic of politics” different?

**Deadline:** 17.00, Friday, 27 October 2017

Essay Question 2 (70%):

2. Answer the following question, drawing on both theory and empirical evidence:

Is influence mightier than selection? Discuss with reference to political attitudes and behaviour in online and/or offline social networks.

**Deadline:** 17.00, Tuesday, 12 December 2017

### Lecture Outline

1. Introduction
2. Individualistic versus social decision-making
3. Causality in social networks
4. Which networks matter?
5. Real-life networks: The household
6. Online networks: Social media
7. Mechanism I: Information
8. Mechanism II: Social norms and social pressure
9. Political Talk and Political Disagreement
10. Persuasion and Participation
11. Conclusion

### Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- Identify different types of social networks that are relevant for political behavior
- Critically compare and evaluate different theoretical mechanisms that can explain social influence.
- Name the key causal identification challenges within social networks and assess published work on how it addresses these challenges.
- Formulate relevant research questions about political influence in social networks and be able to embark on BA thesis work on the topic.

### Reading

Texts that are marked with an asterisk (\*) are **compulsory** reading for each week. I expect that everyone has read these texts *before* coming to the seminar. The short questions at the start of each week are meant to guide your reading.

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### Recommended Books

Berelson, Bernard R., Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee. 1954. *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Huckfeldt, R. Robert, and John Sprague. 1995. *Citizens, politics and social communication: Information and influence in an election campaign*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Manski, Charles. 1995. *Identification Problems in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mutz, Diana C. 2006. *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rolfe, Meredith. 2012. *Voter Turnout: A Social Theory of Political Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sinclair, Betsy. 2012. *The Social Citizen: Peer Networks and Political Behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Zuckerman, Alan S. 2005. *The Social Logic of Politics: Personal Networks as Contexts for Political Behavior*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

### 1. Introduction

- What is Political Sociology?
- What are social networks?
- How can we define influence?
- Why are social networks important to the study of political behaviour?

\*Lazer, David 2011. "Networks in Political Science: Back to the Future." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44(1): 61-68.

\*Sartori, Giovanni. 1969. "From the sociology of politics to political sociology." *Government and Opposition* 4(2): 195-214.

\*Zuckerman, Alan S. 2005. *The Social Logic of Politics: Personal Networks as Contexts for Political Behavior*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, Preface, Chapter 1

### 2. Individualistic versus social decision-making

- What are the limitations of the rational choice theory of political behavior?
- Is the social citizen rational?
- What is conditional choice?

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\*Green, Donald P., Ian Shapiro, and Ian Shapiro. 1994. *Pathologies of rational choice theory: A critique of applications in political science*. New Haven: Yale University Press, Chapters 1, 3 and 4.

\*Rolfe, Meredith. 2012. Voter Turnout. *A Social Theory of Political Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Chapter 2.

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.

Sinclair, Betsy. 2012. *The Social Citizen: Peer Networks and Political Behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chapters 1 and 2.

### 3. Causality in social networks

- What is the reflection problem?
- How can selection and sorting be distinguished from influence?
- How can we identify causal effects in social networks?

\*Fowler, James, Michael Heaney, David Nickerson, John Padgett, and Betsy Sinclair. 2011. "Causality in Political Networks." *American Politics Research* 39(2): 437–80.

\*Manski, Charles. 1995. *Identification Problems in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, introduction.

Gerber, Alan S., and Donald P. Green. *Field experiments: Design, analysis, and interpretation*. WW Norton, 2012, Chapter 7.

Manski, Charles. 1993. "Identification of Exogenous Social Effects: The Reflection Problem." *Review of Economic Studies* 60(3): 531–42.

Sinclair, Betsy, Margaret McConnell, and Donald P. Green. "Detecting spillover effects: Design and analysis of multilevel experiments." *American Journal of Political Science* 56.4 (2012): 1055-1069.

### Context of social influence

#### 4. Which networks matter?

- Does personal proximity condition social influence?

\*Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. "The strength of weak ties." *American Journal of Sociology* (1973): 1360-1380.

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\*Huckfeldt, Robert. "Networks, contexts, and the combinatorial dynamics of democratic politics." *Political Psychology* 35.S1 (2014): 43-68.

Cutts, David, and Edward Fieldhouse. 2009. "What Small Spatial Scales Are Relevant as Electoral Contexts for Individual Voters? The Importance of the Household on Turnout at the 2001 General Election." *American Journal of Political Science* 53(3): 726–39.

Gay, Claudine. "Moving to opportunity: The political effects of a housing mobility experiment." *Urban Affairs Review* (2011): 1078087411426399.

Enos, Ryan D. 2014. "Causal effect of intergroup contact on exclusionary attitudes." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111(10): 3699-3704.

Lup, Oana. *The Relevance of Micro Social Contexts for Individual Political Engagement: A Comparative Analysis*. Diss. Ohio State University, 2011.

### 5. Real-life networks: The household

- Why is the household the most important context in which social influence happens?
- Do couples influence each other?

\*Bhatti, Yosef, Dahlgaard, Jens Olav, Hansen, Jonas Hedegaard, and Kasper M. Hansen. 2017. Living Together, Voting Together: Cohabitation Causes Concordance in Turnout Behavior and Increases Turnout. Working paper.

\*Dinas, Elias. 2015. Why Does the Apple Fall Far from the Tree? How Early Political Socialization Prompts Parent-Child Dissimilarity. *British Journal of Political Science* 44(4): 827-852.

Glaser, William A. 1959. "The Family and Voting Turnout." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 23(4): 563–70.

Dahlgaard, Jens Olav. 2017. Trickle-up political socialization: The causal effect on turnout of parenting a newly enfranchised voter. Working paper.

Fieldhouse, Edward, and David Cutts. 2012. "The Companion Effect: Household and Local Context and the Turnout of Young People." *Journal of Politics* 74(3): 856–69.

Osborn, Tracy, and Jeanette Morehouse Mendez. 2011. "Two Become One? Spouses and Agreement in Political Opinions." *American Politics Research* 39(5): 783–803.

Stoker, Laura, and M. Kent Jennings. 1995. "Life-Cycle Transitions and Political Participation: The Case of Marriage." *American Political Science Review* 98(2): 421–33.

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Stoker, Laura, and M. Kent Jennings. 2005. "Political Similarity and Influence between Husbands and Wives." In *The Social Logic of Politics: Personal Networks as Contexts for Political Behavior*, ed. Alan S. Zuckerman Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 51–74.

Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Nancy Burns. 2005. "Family Ties: Understanding the Intergenerational Transmission of Political Participation." In *The Social Logic of Politics: Personal Networks as Contexts for Political Behavior*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 95-114.

Zuckerman, Alan S., Jennifer Fitzgerald, and Josip Dasovic. 2005. "Do Couples Support the Same Political Parties? Sometimes: Evidence from British and German Household Panel Studies." In *The Social Logic of Politics: Personal Networks as Contexts for Political Behavior*, ed. Alan S. Zuckerman. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 75–94.

### 6. Online networks: Social media

- Are social media echo chambers?
- Do social media help in overcoming the collective action problem?
- How important is social media in election campaigns

\*Barberá, Pablo, John T. Jost, Jonathan Nagler, Joshua A. Tucker, and Richard Bonneau. 2015. "Tweeting From Left to Right Is Online Political Communication More Than an Echo Chamber?" *Psychological science* 26(10): 1531-154

\*Bond, Robert M., Christopher J. Fariss, Jason J. Jones, Adam D. I. Kramer, Cameron Marlow, Jaime Settle, and James H. Fowler. 2012. "A 61-Million-Person Experiment in Social Influence and Political Mobilization." *Nature* 489(7415): 295-98.

Barberá, P. 2015. Birds of the same feather tweet together: Bayesian ideal point estimation using Twitter data. *Political Analysis* 23(1), 76-91.

Coppock, Alexander, Andrew Guess, and John Ternovski. 2016. "When Treatments are Tweets: A Network Mobilization Experiment over Twitter." *Political Behavior* 38(1): 105-128.

Margetts, Helen, Peter John, Scott Hale, and Taha Yasseri. 2015. *Political Turbulence: How Social Media Shape Collective Action*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

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### Mechanisms

#### 7. Information

- Do we learn more from close or from weak ties?
- How can we distinguish mechanisms?
- Is our model of how legislators make decisions outdated?

\*Bullock, John G., Donald P. Green, and Shang E. Ha. 2010. "Yes, But What's the Mechanism? (Don't Expect an Easy Answer)." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 98(4): 550–58.

\*Huckfeldt, Robert R., and John D. Sprague. 1987. "Networks in Context: The Social Flow of Political Information." *American Political Science Review* 81(4): 1197–216.

Coppock, Alexander. 2014. "Information Spillovers: Another Look at Experimental Estimates of Legislator Responsiveness." *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 1(2): 159-169

Huckfeldt, Robert R., and John D. Sprague. 1995. *Citizens, Politics and Social Communication: Information and Influence in an Election Campaign*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zelizer, Adam. 2017. Is information contagious? Evidence of peer influence from two field experiments in a state legislature. Working paper.

#### 8. Social norms and social pressure

- What are social norms?
- Is social pressure good or bad for political engagement?

\*Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. 2008. "Social pressure and voter turnout: Evidence from a large-scale field experiment." *American Political Science Review* 102(1): 33-48.

\*Sunstein, Cass R. 1996. "Social norms and social roles." *Columbia Law Review* 96(4): 903-968.

Gerber, Alan S., and Todd Rogers. 2009. "Descriptive social norms and motivation to vote: Everybody's voting and so should you." *The Journal of Politics* 71(1): 178-191.

Tiffany C. Davenport, Alan S. Gerber, Donald P. Green, Christopher W. Larimer, Christopher B. Mann and Costas Panagopoulos. 2010. The enduring effects of social pressure: Tracking campaign experiments over a series of elections. *Political Behavior*, 32(3), 423-430.

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Panagopoulos, Costas. 2011. "Social pressure, surveillance and community size: Evidence from field experiments on voter turnout." *Electoral Studies* 30(2): 353-357.

Mann, Christopher B. "Is there backlash to social pressure? A large-scale field experiment on voter mobilization." *Political Behavior* 32.3 (2010): 387-407.

Nickerson, David W. 2009. "Experimental approaches to the diffusion of norms." *Social Capital: Reaching Out, Reaching In*: 186-204.

### 9. Political Talk and Political Disagreement

- Does political talk lead to political engagement?
- Does exposure to disagreement make citizens more tolerant?
- Does political conflict lead to withdrawal from civic life or to engagement?

\*Foos, Florian, and Eline A. de Rooij. "All in the Family: Partisan Disagreement and Electoral Mobilization in Intimate Networks—A Spillover Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* (2016).

\*Klofstad, Casey A. 2015. "Exposure to Political Discussion in College Is Associated with Higher Rates of Political Participation over Time." *Political Communication* 32(2): 292–309.

Bello, Jason, and Meredith Rolfe. 2014. "Is Influence Mightier Than Selection? Forging Agreement in Political Discussion Networks during a Campaign." *Social Networks* 36(1): 134–46.

Hersh, Eitan D. and Yair Ghitza. Mixed Partisan Households and Electoral Participation in the United States. 2017. Working paper.

Huckfeldt, Robert R., Paul E. Johnson, and John D. Sprague. 2004. *Political Disagreement: The Survival of Diverse Opinions within Communication Networks*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Klofstad, Casey A., Anand E. Sokhey, and Scott D. McClurg. 2013. "Disagreeing about Disagreement: How Conflict in Social Networks Affects Political Behavior." *American Journal of Political Science* 57(1): 120–34.

Klofstad, Casey A. 2011. *Civic Talk: Peers, Politics, and the Future of Democracy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Morey, Alyssa C., William P. Eveland, and Myiah J. Hutchens. 2012. "The 'Who' Matters: Types of Interpersonal Relationships and Avoidance of Political Disagreement." *Political Communication* 29(1): 86–103.

Mutz, Diana C. 2006. *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



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### 10. Persuasion and Participation

- Is inter-personal persuasion possible?
- Is voting contagious?

\*Broockman, David, and Joshua Kalla. 2016. "Durably reducing transphobia: A field experiment on door-to-door canvassing." *Science* 352(6282): 220-224.

\*Nickerson, David W. 2008. "Is Voting Contagious? Evidence from Two Field Experiments." *American Political Science Review* 102(1): 49–57.

Bailey, Michael A., Daniel J. Hopkins and Todd Rogers. 2016. "Unresponsive and Unpersuaded: The Unintended Consequences of Voter Persuasion Efforts." *Political Behavior* 38(1):713–746.

Butler, Daniel M. and David E. Broockman. 2017. "The Causal Effects of Elite Position-Taking on Voter Attitudes: Field Experiments with Elite Communication." *American Journal of Political Science* 61(1):208–221.

Butler, Daniel M. and David W. Nickerson. 2011. "Can learning constituency opinion affect how legislators vote? Results from a field experiment." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 6(1):55–83.

Foos, Florian. 2017. First Impressions - Lasting Impressions? The long-term effects of candidate contact on voting intentions. Working paper.

McClurg, Scott D. 2003. "Social Networks and Political Participation: The Role of Social Interaction in Explaining Political Participation." *Political Research Quarterly* 56(4): 448–64.

### 11. Conclusion