

To What Degree are You Influenced by Your Friends and Their Friends?



James Fowler

Professor , Political Science Professor (Adjunct) , Family & Preventative Medicine Professor , Medicine

CURRENT RESEARCH

Explaining the dynamics of social networks and how they shape our lives

We are strongly influenced by our friends. But it's not only our friends that influence us, it goes deeper; our friends' friends' and to the third degree, their friends' friends' also impact our choices. Dr. James Fowler is studying the effects of social networks and how they sway our lives and decisions. His studies look at how everything we do or say tends to ripple through our social networks. His research will examine the degrees of influence and the effects this influence plays on our daily lives.

- He will study the impact on our friends (one degree), our friends' friends (two degrees), and even our friends' friends' friends (third degrees).
- His research suggests that if you have a friend in your social network that is obese, your risk of being obese significantly increases.
- It also suggests that generosity spreads up to three degrees of separation - every extra dollar of giving causes other people to give more, too, and the total effect is three times larger than the initial act of kindness. In other words, the network acts like a matching grant.
- It will also look at how friends influence each other to vote in real life, sighting one study that demonstrated how a single message on Facebook caused an additional 60,000 users and 280,000 of their friends to vote in the 2010 US national election as the message spread from person to person.

AFFILIATION

 University of California, San Diego

EDUCATION

- Ph.D. in Government 2003 ,Harvard University
- M.A. in Government 2001 ,Harvard University
- M.A. in International Relations 1997 ,Yale University

AWARDS

- Nifty 50, 2014
- Future-ish, 2013
- 20 Most Innovative People In Democracy, 2012
- Top 100 Global Thinkers, 2010

RESEARCH AREAS

Humanities, Sociology, IOT, Devices, Data

FUNDING REQUEST

Your contributions will help Dr. Fowler uncover compelling evidence on how a person's influence can shape another's tastes, health, wealth, happiness, beliefs, and even weight due to social network. Benefund this work to further expand our knowledge of social networks!

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