

government creation and mobilization of local vigilante groups and within the state's Crime Preventers policy. These institutions demonstrate Tapscott's four components of institutional arbitrariness: (1) the use of lawful versus exceptional violence, (2) the state's defined jurisdictional claim versus lack thereof, (3) state presence versus state absence, and (4) state fragmentation versus state consolidation. In her discussion of local vigilante groups, for example, Tapscott traces a policy whereby unemployed men are called on by the state to assist in patrolling and monitoring violence and crime in their local communities. At times these groups are trained by the police force and offered material rewards for their service. At other times, however, the state turns on these groups, arresting or killing group members who are seen as extending their power too far beyond the bounds of permissible violence. The seeming arbitrariness of this relationship contributes to an environment in which the state simultaneously engages in lawful and exceptional violence, demonstrating both its presence and its absence.

Although the bulk of the evidence supporting Tapscott's theory is drawn from northern Uganda, in one of the concluding chapters she probes alternative explanations for arbitrary governance in three other regions of Uganda. Specifically, Tapscott examines the impact of conflict legacy and political leanings on citizens' perceptions of institutional arbitrariness. In all four research locations, Tapscott finds that arbitrary governance takes different forms, but the underlying strategy of control remains the same. In closing, Tapscott explores the notion of arbitrary governance in other African countries—Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe—and finds additional support for her theory. Furthermore, Tapscott takes small steps toward connecting her theory of arbitrary governance to regimes in democratic contexts, referencing President Trump's use of unpredictability in foreign policy and the way in which police forces in the United States engage in arbitrary violence to repress minority populations.

Beyond the theoretical innovation of arbitrary governance, Tapscott offers an insightful book on the politics of Uganda itself. Helping stitch together competing explanations for the NRM's rise and continued electoral success, Tapscott adjudicates between competing interpretations of state strength and weakness, and state reach and decentralization. Institutional arbitrariness threads the needle for Uganda scholars to help explain the rationale behind the seeming unpredictability of the Ugandan state coupled with the longevity of Museveni's rule.

One of the great strengths of *Arbitrary States* lies in its engagement with community perceptions of arbitrary governance. Tapscott does an excellent job of engaging her detailed fieldwork and extensive interviews to substantiate her theoretical claims. The text includes long and descriptive quotes and stories from her respondents that

center the voices of her interlocutors in the theory and narrative of the text. In addition to its contributions to our studies of state formation and authoritarian governance, the book serves as a model for theoretically informed, participant-focused field research.

Missing from the book is a direct engagement with the intent of the actors of the regime that engages in arbitrary governance. President Museveni, for example, is suspiciously missing as a central character in Tapscott's narrative. Although she acknowledges early on that the intentionality of arbitrary governance is extremely difficult to ascertain, at times the reader is left questioning who is responsible for the bulk of the action in the narrative. The current regime is clearly benefiting from the system in places, but sometimes Tapscott seems to gloss over the very real tensions within the NRM and potential fragmentation within the regime itself. For Tapscott it is the "structure of the system itself [that] produces uncertainty among different authorities (p. 10)," but at times this claim seems to obscure the actors behind the scenes.

Moving forward from Tapscott's findings is a call to more directly engage with how individuals resist authoritarian rule, specifically rule that is inherently unpredictable. For Tapscott, the state is not only "omnipresent, but actually embodied in Ugandan citizens" (p. 147), raising questions about the forms this resistance would and could take. In Tapscott's telling, Museveni and the NRM have played a successful game in Uganda, engaging a broad network of regime informants and creating a culture of arbitrary violence that often leads to both fear and fatalism among Ugandan citizens. If this is the case, what options are left to challenge the regime? How do we overcome arbitrary governance to offer meaningful advances toward democratic aims? These are some of the important questions raised by this thoughtful and engaging book.

#### **Persuasive Peers: Social Communication and Voting in Latin America.** By Andy Baker, Barry Ames, and Lúcio Rennó.

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020. 336p. \$95.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

doi:10.1017/S1537592722000342

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A substantial body of research explores how individuals make voting decisions. Building on classic studies, most scholarship to date presents voting as atomistic: individuals independently learn about candidates and choose between them based on their personal attributes, beliefs, and preferences. Voters, however, do not acquire information and make decisions in a vacuum. In *Persuasive Peers*, Andy Baker, Barry Ames, and Lúcio Rennó contend that voters learn about politics through informal discussions with

peers and claim that those discussions influence vote choice. They deftly test their theory of socially informed voting and explore the political implications of horizontal intermediation in Latin America. This innovative and informative book elucidates how political discussions within informal social networks shape political outcomes.

In the first part of the book, Baker, Ames, and Rennó introduce their theory of socially informed voting. They contend that in Latin America trusted, politically knowledgeable individuals are “persuasive peers” who can induce their social contacts to vote differently than they would have otherwise. In other words, informal political discussions with family, friends, and colleagues shape voting decisions. In the second part of the book, the authors put this theory to the test. Drawing on interviews and unique surveys of Brazilian and Mexican voters, they demonstrate that conversations with agreeing discussion partners reinforce voting intentions, whereas conversations with disagreeing partners tend to induce preference change. Building on these results, they show that their theory of political communication explains geographic voting patterns in neighborhoods, cities, and regions. Finally, the third part of the book explores how persuasive peers affect the quality and equity of political voice. Specifically, Baker, Ames, and Rennó examine whether clientelistic party machines target persuasive peers and assess how peer influence affects the political voice of marginalized citizens. With respect to clientelism, their analysis shows that party elites do not just buy votes but also purchase influence by targeting well-connected opinion leaders. With regard to the quality of political voice, they find that members of traditionally marginalized groups, such as the poor, do not engage in informal conversations about politics as frequently as the rich and often end up supporting candidates who do not share their attitudes and policy preferences.

Research on Latin America has historically paid little attention to the impact of peer discussions on political behavior. *Persuasive Peers* convincingly shows that this historically overlooked form of communication is a critical source of political information and influence. In Latin American democracies, voters routinely talk about politics, and when they do, they seek out their politically informed peers. Importantly, voters’ politically knowledgeable peers do not always agree with them about which candidate or political party is best. Peer discussion networks in Latin America are more diverse than those found in the United States. As a result, voters often discuss politics with individuals who support other presidential candidates. Baker, Ames, and Rennó capitalize on this heterogeneity in their analysis of campaign volatility.

*Persuasive Peers* contributes to the growing literature in political science on networks. Readers, however, do not need to be familiar with social network theories or

measures to follow their analyses. The authors couple their hypotheses with quotes from interviewees and informative sociograms. Chapter 4, which includes the book’s core empirical analysis, makes use of an impressive set of original panel surveys from Brazilian and Mexican presidential elections that include repeated measures of egonets. Consistent with the theory, their results indicate that disagreement within peer networks substantially increases the probability that voters change their vote intention. Moreover, Baker, Ames, and Rennó show that the diversity of those disagreeing peers is consequential. When a voter’s discussion partners disagree with each other, the probability that the voter changes their vote intention is lower than when their peers agree with one another. Through a series of robustness checks, they demonstrate that reverse causation, latent homophily, and environmental confounding do not explain their results.

There is reason to suspect that the impact of peers on vote choice that the authors document in presidential elections is even more pronounced in less high-profile contests. In congressional and local elections in Latin America, voters are likely to be relatively uninformed about candidates and therefore turn to their more knowledgeable peers for guidance. Readers do not need to imagine how voters in Brazilian congressional elections, which routinely have more than one thousand candidates, would draw on their peers for political information. In the concluding chapter, a set of WhatsApp messages received by one of the book’s interviewees is included. It illustrates that politically uninformed voters do turn to their peers for guidance when they do not know whom to support.

The WhatsApp messages also point to one mode of communication—online communication—that receives limited attention in the book. Throughout *Persuasive Peers*, online political conversations are treated as a subset of horizontal political discussions. The authors assert that they “lose little by ignoring the distinction between online and offline discussion” (p. 45). Nonetheless, they acknowledge in the concluding chapter that the effects they uncover may differ in magnitude online. This is important considering the growing use of the internet in Latin America. In the 2018 elections, WhatsApp groups were one of the principal ways that voters shared political information and opinions. Moreover, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is reason to suspect that informal political discussions that historically occurred face to face may increasingly take place online.

Within the context of any one book, it would be unrealistic to cover both face-to-face and online discussion. The impact of online discussion on political behavior in less-institutionalized democracies, however, certainly warrants attention. Insight from *Persuasive Peers* can serve as a starting point for the study of online communication in Latin American democracies. After all, the phenomena that social network and communication scholars are

interested in, such as the spread of misinformation, occurred in face-to-face networks long before the creation of the internet.

Online discussion networks may be especially consequential for shaping the voting decisions of traditionally marginalized voters. Baker, Ames, and Rennó find that members of traditionally marginalized groups, such as poor and low-educated voters, are less likely to engage in political discussion and have smaller political discussion networks than rich and well-educated voters. The internet may provide less informed voters access to larger, more informed discussion networks and thereby the means to use their voices more effectively. Yet, not everyone whom voters engage with may provide them information that helps them vote according to their interests. If uninformed voters from marginalized groups have difficulty detecting misinformation and share it themselves, their political voice may be further distorted. In sum, *Persuasive Peers* demonstrates that informal discussions influence voter behavior but not always for the better.

**Chairman Mao's Children: Generation and the Politics of Memory in China.** By Bin Xu. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 300p. \$110.00 cloth.  
doi:10.1017/S1537592722000317

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Bin Xu's thoroughly researched monograph, the culmination of a project that began in 2007, led to fieldwork in 2013, and continued through 2018, is an impressive achievement that complements and expands on previous work on the topic of urban educated youth (*zhiqing*) who were sent to the countryside during and after the Cultural Revolution. However, Xu's greatest contribution comes from his theoretical insights that will be especially welcome to sociologists and political scientists working on issues related to generations and memory. His analysis of *zhiqing* memories is so rich and complex that a short review cannot do justice to the nuance and variation introduced throughout the book. Put simply, he tells a story of how members of the *zhiqing* generation have come to terms with their complicated past and how they resolve the tension between their desire to remember their youth and confirm their worthiness while also evaluating the unpopular "send-down" program and other political upheavals in the Mao years. Unlike much of the earlier work on the send-down program, Xu is less interested in "what really happened" and more concerned with memories of the Mao years and their "red legacies," exploring the influences and meanings of the past in the present (p. 20).

Even before it ended in 1980, the campaign to send *zhiqing* to the countryside as the Cultural Revolution was

winding down in 1968 generated considerable scholarly interest. With the sources available at the time, which included statistical compendia, official documents, the Red Guard press, and refugee interviews in Hong Kong, these studies examined the rationale for the movement and focused on socioeconomic factors such as changing demographics and labor market issues, as well as political and ideological factors associated with Mao's efforts to realize his vision of socialism. Other studies—like the volume under review—focused on the mindset and experiences of the youth themselves, rather than state policies, although these interview-based accounts were more interested in understanding the background to their performance as Red Guards, not their experiences as rusticated youth.

Bin Xu's study is much more ambitious and analytical, with three explicit goals. The first one is empirical, searching for factors that can explain the variations in memories of the *zhiqing*. Second, he seeks to incorporate theoretical insights and contribute to the "sociological understanding of memory, particularly generation and memory" (p. 7). His third goal is normative, using the empirical and theoretical analysis to examine ethical and political issues, including social inequality and historical responsibility. He uses a mixed-methods approach, drawing on 124 in-depth interviews and 61 ethnographic observations, in addition to press reports, archival sources, an analysis of literary works about the movement (chap. 3), and visits to exhibits and museums as sites of memory (chap. 4). Unlike the authors of earlier studies, he is able to accompany *zhiqing* groups at their reunions, visits their send-down places, and other trips (chap. 5 on generation and memory in groups) and to observe the interactions and controversies that occur when different *zhiqing* groups "link up" (chap. 6). A very helpful methodological appendix takes the reader through the stages of his project, offers descriptive statistics on his interviewees, explains his measurement of class and habitus and his coding frame, sets out his hypotheses and statistical analysis, and details the literary works he analyzed and the museums and exhibits he visited. He adopts a three-level frame to explore generational memory. At the *individual* level, generational memory is primarily autobiographical, which Xu explores through the life stories of his *zhiqing* subjects. At the *group/community* level, memory means mnemonic practices in the form of face-to-face interactions and communications at the local level. At the *public* level, memory means mnemonic practices in organizational and institutional settings, such as memoirs, exhibits, memorials, and museums.

His first two chapters provide a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the life stories of 87 *zhiqing*, contrasting "winners" and "losers" in the present. He notes that every life story has two distinctive components: personal experience and historical evaluation of the send-down