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Social networks and political participation in a Sicilian community context

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Abstract

This study shows the linkage between political and social participation, underlining the relevance of the motivational sphere. The aim is to evaluate politically relevant social capital by adopting a relational perspective and ego-network measures, so that we can understand the interdependence between cognitive maps, motivational factors and relational dimension, both in qualitative and quantitative dimensions.
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1. Introduction

Social scientists know that contacts with other people are important in both instrumental and socio-emotional domains (Fisher, 1982; Lin, 2001), so that it is particularly important to analyze individual interactions to understand how they influence daily life. From this point of view, we tried to study mechanisms of political influence by investigating the qualitative and quantitative features of politically relevant ego-networks, by asking respondents with whom they usually discuss political issues First of all, to study the influence mechanisms we employed Granovetter's perspective about strong and weak ties in studying political opinion networks (Granovetter, 1983). This author underlined that acquaintances (weak ties) are less likely to be socially involved with one another than are close friends (strong ties). Usually, people with a collection of close friends, most of whom are in touch with one another, have a densely knit clump of social structure. In contrast, people with a collection of

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acquaintances have networks characterized by "weak ties". This kind of net extends out of one's inner group and brings information from the outer world. It works as a pool of heterogeneous information, which can sometimes be useful and/or influential in decision-making, job-changing, and voting behavior (Granovetter, 1983; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1995). Following this literature (Burt, 1987; Granovetter, 1983; Coleman, 1988; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1995), we here suppose that people who are exposed to similar information via social interaction, who are embedded in closer networks characterized by short size, high density and kin ties, are also people less interested, less informed and less sure about their political opinions. We consider political behavior following the perspective of Huckfeldt and La Due Lacke in order to study politically relevant social capital. This is defined as collective property produced through structured patterns of social interaction, so that its consequences for individuals must be assessed according to these patterns of interaction (Huckfeldt and La Due Lacke, 1998). We take the results of Huckfeldt's work as our presuppositions, since they suggest that politically relevant social capital is generated in personal networks, that it is a by-product of the social interactions and that increasing levels of politically relevant social capital enhance the likelihood that a citizen will be engaged in politics.

2. Data and analysis

To investigate the theoretical and substantial importance of social networks in explaining participation, we selected a stratified random sample from the electoral register of Acireale, a town of 52.862 inhabitants near Catania (Sicily). Before selecting the sample we stratified the electoral register according to gender and age classes. We then drew, randomly, a number of units from each stratum proportionally to its size. We obtained a sample of 400 electors representative of the target population. The interviews were carried out during the last week of April 2009 by means of CATI technique[1]. The distribution of gender among observed units shows a greater presence of women (57.01%) compared with the real percentage of women in the electoral register (51.38%). This could be an effect of the CATI technique. In the context observed, in fact, there is a high female unemployment rate, which increases the chances of contacting a woman via telephone. The average age of the sample is 51.14 years, very similar to the average age of the population, 50.01 years.

Besides, 27.4% of respondents are more than 65 years old whereas in the electoral register people with more than 65 years amount to 24.28%. In this case too we could have an effect of CATI technique as we saw for gender distribution. Most of the interviewees are married (64.3%) while 26.7% are single. 38.7% of people in the sample have 13 years of education and 41.8% have 8 years of education at most. With regard to occupation, we note that most units are not employed (62.97%). Among the 198 not employed, furthermore, 46.5% are composed of retired, 26.8% of housewives and 13.4% of unemployed. Most of the employed, finally, consists of employees in private firms (46.6%), while 32.2% are employed in public sector and 21.2% are self-employees.

This work shows the different shape of politically relevant ties compared with main socio-demographic dimensions. We analyse the specific impact of structural, cognitive and relational factors on respondents' political identity, measured by means of two regression models predicting two different concepts of political competence: the presence/absence of a left-right placement and the individual ideological position into left-right political spectrum.

3. Measures of political involvement

The concept of political participation we adopted involves different significances, including civic oriented and campaign oriented participation, as well as general and institutional trust. We consider the Putnam thesis which links political participation with civic involvement, showing that increasing interpersonal trust and adherence to social norms makes people more likely to participate (Timpsone, 1998; Putnam, 2000; McClurg, 2003). Social trust is considered as predictor of individual sociability, it makes easier social exchange exerting a positive effect on political participation. It is important to point out that this relationship is available only when social interactions are

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[1] CATI (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing) is a telephone surveying technique in which the interviewer follows a script provided by a software application. This method constrained us to simplify questionnaire structure, particularly in the network section. In fact, a telephone interview requires short times and simple questions to avoid a huge number of non respondents. We thus reduced the alter number from 5 to 3 and restricted the number of questions about ties. Finally we collected 328 completed questionnaires.

politically-relevant (Huckfeldt and La Due Lacke, 1998; McClurg, 2003), depending on social context and surrounding social norms. This clarifies why we considered individual trust towards political institutions.

Cognitive dimension is drawn by asking respondents their opinion about politics, distinguishing among an individual positive predisposition (interested, involved) and a negative perception of politics (indifference, disgust).

The indirect political involvement is measured through individual propensity to acquire political information employing different news channels (catching more information by different point of views), naming television, radio, newspapers, posters, web sites and candidate meetings.

The direct political involvement is measured through the number of electoral act accomplished in the local context of Acireale. The index of political involvement is created by asking each respondent whether s/he has ever made seven electoral acts: signed for a referendum, pull for a candidate, presented a petition, participated to a march, accomplished party activities, persuaded somebody to vote a party/candidate, attended political meetings or listened political debates. The index is computed by adding together each of these dichotomous variables, where 1 means participation and 0 means non-participation.

Most of the respondents do not participate in any single political act. Among those who are involved, most people participate in one of the seven activities, with a decreasing trend. This means that our sample is not specifically characterized by high political involvement but it is heterogeneous, without errors linked to over-representation of particularly involved subjects. Therefore, we can analyse the relationship between the rise of political identity, individual propensity towards political engagement and shape of ego-networks.

4. Measures of interpersonal networks

Sociological theory suggests that, although social resources operate similarly to individual resources; social interaction has a second benefit because it facilitates the application of individual resources to collective behaviour, with propulsive contextual effects (Coleman, 1988; McClurg, 2003). The importance of these effects can be seen by adopting a social network perspective on the individual characteristics connected to participation. It implies that we have to consider social resources both as "how much" and "what type" of ties someone has.

We wanted to understand the relational genesis of political identity, so we focused on the politically relevant ties. In order to investigate this network configuration, each respondent is asked to name up to three people with whom s/he discussed politics and to indicate if their confidants knew each other. Although is not actually distinguishable political involvement dimension from interpersonal networks one, in this section we focused on the role of network in influencing individual political identity. Previously we took in account political participation as a set of acts (and motivations) carried out by an individual, irrespective of network measures.

Other questions are referred to tie attributes, asking respondents how often they speak of politics with their confidants, who are their confidants (kin or non kin, men or women, etc) and what kind of political discussion they have (the political competence within ego-networks, the agreement referred to political ideas, etc). Employing these variables, we analysed the shape of ego-networks considering both networks structural properties and individual ties properties. Several measures can be considered for each dimension.

The size is a measure used both as property of networks and feature of individual ties; it indicates the number of confidants mentioned by respondents. This measure is frequently adopted, probably because of its immediateness. However, it is not enough to study the relevance of networks politically relevant for each respondent.

Concerning structural properties, we measured both the central position of respondents within their ego-networks and the density of networks. There are different measures of centrality linked to different concepts. In fact the main question is: what do we mean by "having a favoured position" into a network and having "more opportunities?" There are no correct and final answers to these questions. Network analysis provided precise definitions and concrete measures of several different approaches to the notion of centrality. Four measures of centrality are widely used in network analysis: degree centrality, betweenness, closeness, and eigenvector centrality. We focused on degree and closeness centrality, excluding betweenness and eigenvector centrality because of the low number of nodes considered for each ego-network (at most, three). The simplest measure is degree centrality, defined as the number of links incident upon a node (the number of ties that a node has). Degree is often interpreted in terms of the immediate risk of node for catching whatever is flowing through the network. In this case, we tried to analyse respondent's risk to catch (directly) a flow of information surrounding his/her network, represented by the number of ties directed to the node and by the number of ties that the node directs to the others. Adopting this point of view

the more ties respondents have, the more information/competence they may have, consequently having more ties implies having greater opportunities (Freeman, 1979).

The closeness centrality is a sophisticated measure of centrality that is defined as the mean geodesic distance between a vertex and all other vertices reachable from it. Closeness can be regarded as a measure of how long it will take for information to spread from a given vertex to other reachable vertices in the network, that is how long information takes to arrive (directly or indirectly). Adopting this measure, actors able to reach other actors at shorter path lengths (or who are more reachable by other actors at shorter path lengths) occupy favoured positions.

In our research we distinguished these measures considering the respondent's position into each ego-network, whereas the density of interpersonal networks is an indicator of network concentration. Density is defined as the mean intensity of tie strength among confidants (Marsden, 1987; Miller *et al*., 2006), it is related to social support availability and it is linked to well-being, at least under some conditions (Fischer 1982; Kadushin 1982, 1983; Burt 1986). Density measures the potential strength of normative pressures towards conformity by indicating the capacity of alters to influence the respondent, because dense interpersonal environments typically contain less-diverse others (Granovetter 1973; Laumann 1973, chap. 6; Campbell et al. 1986).

Generally, the heterogeneity of alters increases with network size, but our respondents define only small politically relevant networks. Consequently, we obtained the most direct heterogeneity indicators by asking respondents about attributes of their confidants. It is important to underline that high diversity implies integration into several spheres of society, which is deemed advantageous for instrumental actions like gathering information (Granovetter 1973; Lin et al. 1981; Campbell et al. 1986). We tried to measure gender effects and opinion heterogeneity within ego-networks on individual political involvement. Moreover, we also considered the influence of heterogeneous relationships among confidants starting from the presence of kin (family) and non kin (others) ties and we selected between kin and non kin ties considering the entire range of possible relationships measured: spouses, parents, co-workers, members of associations, friends and acquaintances.

Since family members and non-kin have fairly distinct institutional bases of connectedness, it is important to split between them. Again, we considered the heterogeneity of opinion and gender within networks recognizing that the tightly connected, closed interpersonal environments tend to be made up of similar others and to provide fewer independent sources of information. Concentration into ego-networks also effects normative pressures. These features will be probably more spread into networks characterized by kin confidants and low "heterogeneity of ties".

5. Results

5.1. Social interaction as an influence on political involvement

We begin with a descriptive analysis of core discussion networks. It is evident that political ego-networks are small and a great part of respondents are "socially isolated", at least adopting a politically relevant point of view. Although the interviewees had to indicate at most three confidants, only 26% made it, while 33% indicated two or one confidant and 41% declare not to have confidants at all. These data converge with the literature about civic engagement, in particular considering Putnam's theory (Putnam, 1995, 2000, McCluerg, 2003).

Another important factor that we considered is the relationship between kin ties, shorter network size, closer nets (with high density) and lack of political involvement. We note that ego-networks with only kin confidants are smaller than ego-networks with only non-kin ties, which are also more heterogeneous (composed by different kinds of ties including friends, acquaintances, co-workers and members of associations). Consequently, people with a prevalence of non-kin confidants among their politically relevant ties will probably have access to different sources of information and they will have an increase in political competence. Nevertheless, these effects are also linked to the quality of ties, depending particularly on political competence spread inside networks. Anyway, people with only kin confidants will have access only to redundant information.

By connecting type of networks to some structural attribute of respondents it is possible to have an initial idea of contextual attributes. Referring to the gender of respondents, we found that women are less isolated and they have more ties than men, but at the same time they have closer and more personal contacts than men. Indeed, women have a higher number of kin among their nodes. Another difference is noteworthy: the vast majority of female confidants are kin, whereas the most part of male confidants are friends.

Moreover, we asked respondents about linkages among their confidants, so we could also examine the character of the interpersonal environments by examining the diversity of the people mentioned as discussion partners. Particularly, we looked at the heterogeneity of confidants in terms of sex and political opinions, noting that women have more confidants belonging to the other sex. This seems a very important contextual factor. In fact women are less involved to politically relevant nets and are more involved to closed nets, where flow of information is more rapid but also redundant, implying a context of poor political competence. This relationship remains constant in our example even controlling for educational level. Because of the huge number of housewives and students among women it is not possible to verify the impact of employment in female political attitude comparing to the male one. Since influence and affiliation inside networks are inversely proportional to increase of political information and active involvement in political life, women are less active and interested to politics. Adopting a contextual point of view, this general trend explains why women are more inclined to catch political information from men, considered as more informed (above all considering closer confidants as fathers and partners), rather than from other women. In the same way men are more inclined to catch political information from other men (above all, friends, co-workers and acquaintances). In confirmation of that, women are more influenced by their confidants than men and the political interest is more spread inside the men's networks (that is, men have more nets characterized by flow of political information).

Another structural dimension considered is the education of respondents. This is an important predictor of both individual political engagement and social involvement (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Huckfeldt and La Due Lacke, 1998). The positive relationship between education and political participation is one of the most reliable results in empirical social science. Better educated citizens are more likely to be engaged in the political process, and they are more likely to become involved in various political activities. This factor is also linked with measures of political competence within ego-networks, size of ego-networks, heterogeneity of political ideas among confidants and heterogeneity of confidants' attributes. Our analysis confirms these results and shows that highly educated respondents are less influenced by their confidants than less educated people. Another important result is connected to the increase of political interest inside the ego-networks of well educated respondents.

We would like to point out some consideration about this trend. First, the more people are educated the more they are likely to be located socially in ways that maximize their exposure to other people who also have higher levels of education (Coleman, 1988; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1993). Secondly, as a partial consequence, the possession of politically relevant human capital may be strongly correlated with the production of politically relevant social capital. Then, the individual linkage between high education and propensity towards social involvement entails a contextual effect that connects the increase of individual political engagement with attributes of interpersonal networks. In particular, individual participation in politics varies as a function of neighbourhood education, an effect attributed to social interpersonal networks (Kenny, 1992; McClueg, 2003). It seems that knowing someone who participates or who has a high political competence makes people more likely to participate themselves. However, it is important to point out the relational and structural network's properties. In fact, other researches show that the size and political orientation of networks predict electoral participation.

5.2. The pattern of political involvement

In order to obtain synthetic measures of political involvement we used a Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA). MCA is a descriptive/exploratory technique designed to analyse multi-way tables containing some measure of correspondence between categorical variables, showing two or more synthetic dimensions. The results provide information which is similar in nature to those produced by Factor Analysis techniques, and they allow to explore the structure of categorical variables included in the table, whereas traditional factor analysis needs just metric variables.

In order to analyse individual involvement towards politics and social life we extracted synthetic dimensions from these aspects. So we considered the variables linked to cognitive perception of politics as well as individual attitudes towards others and institutions. We aim at obtaining representative factors of these dimensions and at specifying a regression model, in order to estimate the relative weight of these features in comparison with the relational context and the structural attributes.

A way of looking at MCA is to consider it a method for decomposing the overall Chi-square statistic (or Inertia=Chi- square/Total N) by identifying a small number of dimensions in which the deviations from the expected values can be represented. This is similar to the goal of Factor Analysis, where the total variance is decomposed.

The variables used represent the individual attitude towards politics (cognitive dimension), the presence of social and institutional trust, the political competence, the political activism and the involvement in campaign activities.

The dimensions "extracted" are independent, orthogonal and maximize the distances between the row or column points. Subsequent dimensions "explain" less and less the inertia. Thus, the extraction of the dimensions is similar to the extraction of principal components in Factor Analysis. Looking at the percentage of inertia, we extracted the first two dimensions. It appears that, with a single dimension, 45,65% of inertia can be "explained". It means that the relative frequency values reconstructed from a single dimension reproduce 45,6% of the total Chi-square value. Two dimensions allow to explain 84% of inertia.

In order to find theoretical interpretations for the extracted dimensions we plot coordinates for two-dimensional solution. The first dimension represents socio-political involvement, distinguishing mostly between low and high political engagement. The second dimension describes mainly the negative pole of refuse/dislike towards politics and we named it political disaffection.

The latter dimension (political disaffection) splits between respondents who declare simply a lack of political interest and respondents with a real aversion towards politics. Object scores of both dimensions will be introduced as independent variables in final regression models, showing the relevance of cognitive features in explaining individual political competence and ideological involvement.

5.3. The pattern of relational involvement

In order to provide a classification of the units according to the interpersonal network's measures, as first step, we have used again a Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA). By means of MCA we obtained other two dimensions summarizing the information of all measures (described before) employed for the network analysis. Metric variables as well as closeness, degree and density have been transformed into categorical variables (low, middle, high) in order to employ them in the same factorial analysis.

The first dimension explains the 60.9% of inertia and appears more related to ties' features. In this case we observe the relevance of political competence within the network as well as the number of ties, the kind of relationship among nodes, political agreement/disagreement and gender homogeneity inside the network. As far as different kinds of network are concerned we distinguish between kin and non-kin links and homogeneous and heterogeneous ties.

This dimension points out different relational contexts according to the above-stated variable splitting between homogeneous *vs.* heterogeneous ego-networks. In light of these elements, we defined the first dimension as properties of individual ties.

In the second dimension, which explains the 41% of inertia, we note the polarisation of structural network measures: degree, density and closeness. These variables are strictly related to the configuration of the network and indicate both the centrality of each respondent in his/her own network and the degree of connection among nodes of the net.

The spread of network produces effects on the respondent's capability to influence someone or to be influenced by someone. In other words, the denser the network and the higher the communicative flow among people are, the higher is the chance to influence (or to be influenced by) other people. For these reasons we defined this dimension as network structure.

In the second step we used the dimensions extracted to classify the respondents. The object scores (the score of respondents on the two dimensions) obtained by means of MCA are used as variables in a cluster solution employing a k-means algorithm (Johnson and Wichern, 1992; Kaufman and Rousseeuw, 1990). Consecutively, the units are grouped in three clusters. Analysing the position of the clusters on the axis and observing the values of original variables we defined the groups as follows:

Cluster 1 – Isolates. The respondents classified in this group have a low degree of centrality, they have few ties and therefore less relationships. They do not act as "reference point" and the amount of information (in input and in output) is very limited. The values of other variables (nearly all equal to zero) observed inside this cluster are the consequence of such isolation.

Cluster 2 - Mixed Networks. The respondents with mixed networks, unlikely isolates, have a high degree of centrality and closeness. They have a lot of relationships and they live in very dense social networks. The amount of their ties and the density of their networks make them competent and informed. They live in a rich and various relational environment that leads them to influence and to be influenced. They discuss about political issues, not only with their relatives but also with extra familiar people and appear interested in political matter.

Cluster 3 - Homogeneous Networks. Concerning the networks' structure, we can allocate the respondents of this cluster in an intermediate position between the two previous groups. They have a considerable degree of centrality and closeness but they act in a little dense network. They do not discuss so much about politics and appear less interested in political issues. So, they do not have a real capability of influence.

6. The relevance of social involvement on political identity

We tested the hypothesis that attributes of relational context have a significant impact on the construction of political identity, considering both ideological inclination and political competence as dependent variables. Nevertheless, we hypothesize that other important predictors of political competence concern individual attributes linked to structural dimensions (sex and education) and individual motivations (trust, political interest, cognitive predisposition, and political activism).

In order to analyse the effects of relational structure on individual political competence we specify two logistic regression models (McCullagh and Nelder, 1989), controlling for socioeconomic status and politically relevant attitudes. We point out that social interaction contributes to construct or reinforce political identity when there is an exchange of political information within the networks.

The first dependent variable concerns individual political behaviour and distinguishes between politically aligned vs. politically unaligned people. We assume that people aligned will be more politically competent. To test our hypothesis we fit 3 binary logistic model (Tab. 1).

Table 1 - Logistic regression model predicting the presence of political alignment

| | *Dependent variable: political aligned* | | | | | |
| | Model I | | Model II | | Model III | |
Independent Variables:	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Age	0.004	1.004	0.006	1.006	0.003	1.003
Sex(Male)	0.798**	2.223	0.738**	2.092	1.415***	4.120
Years of education	0.088**	1.092	0.050	1.051	0.004	1.004
Socio-Pol. involv.			0.326**	1.288	0.235**	1.219
Political disaffection			0.093	1.097	0.078	1.081
CL_1(Isolates)					-1.156**	0.314
CL_2(Mixed NW)					0.565	1.759
Constant	-1.101	0.332	-0.650	0.522	-0.023	0.977
Chi-square	22.62***		37.097***		62.675***	
-2 Log likelihood	377.816		363.339		337.761	
Cox & Snell R Square	0.074		0.118		0.191	
Nagelkerke R Square	0.099		0.159		0.257	

** p-value<0.01; *** p-value<0.001

Model I illustrates the influence of the structural dimension on the dependent variable, showing a statistically significant effect of sex and education. Nevertheless the strength of relationship is greater considering sex, in so far as men have a double probability to line up in comparison with women. Model II adds indicators of socio-political involvement and political disaffection obtained by the first MCA. The introduction of these variables makes education statistically insignificant while the indicator of socio-political involvement arises. Considering the direction of the axis extracted from the MCA, we note that involved respondents have more probability to line up. Model III introduces the network dimension, employing clusters obtained previously. Controlling structural dimension and individual political interest, however, we found the incidence of belonging to relational clusters. Namely, even considering education, sex, age and individual political engagement, network structure is an important predictor of individual choice to line up. Isolated people tend to take sides not as much as people with homogeneous networks. After having observed the relationship between network dimensions and taking position, we tried, furthermore, to analyse the influence of the same predictors on the political choice. In other words, if one lines up, what side of political placement does s/he choose?

Table 2 - Multinomial logistic regression model predicting the direction of political ideology

		Model I		Model II		Model III	
	Dependent variable: political place (left-right-unaligned)						
	Independent Variables:	*B*	*Exp(B)*	*B*	*Exp(B)*	*B*	*Exp(B)*
	Age	0.005	1.005	0.007	1.007	0.004	1.004
	Years of education	0.221***	1.248	0.203***	1.226	0.148*	1.160
	[Sex=M]	0.745*	2.107	0.772*	2.165	1.648***	5.199
Left place	[Sex=F]	0	.		.	0	.
	Socio-Pol. involv.			0.867**	1.580	0.752**	1.529
	Political disaffect.			0.723***	2.062	0.735***	2.086
	CL_1(Isolates)					-0.17607	0.839
	CL_2(Mixed NW)					1.904**	6.714
	CL_3(Homog. NW)					0	.
	Intercept	-4.046***		-4.159***		-4.605***	
	Age	0.002	1.002	0.004	1.004	0.001	1.001
	Years of education	0.043	1.044	0.008	1.008	-0.037	0.964
	[Sex=M]	0.839**	2.315	0.732*	2.079	1.383***	3.991
Right place	[Sex=F]	0	.	0	.	0	.
	Socio-Pol. involv.			0.322**	1.276	0.251*	0.223
	Political disaffect.			-0.020	0.980	-0.053	0.948
	CL_1(Isolates)					-1.413***	0.243
	CL_2(Mixed NW)					0.256918	1.293
	CL_3(Homog. NW)					0	.
	Intercept	-0.880		-0.426		0.411	
	Chi-Square	38.751***		73.46***		109.432***	
	-2 Log Likelihood						
	Intercept Only	*522.875*		*613.693*		*613.693*	
	Final	*484.123***		*540.233***		*504.261***	
	Cox and Snell	0.122		0.220		0.309	
	Nagelkerke	0.14		0.251		0.353	
	McFadden	0.063		0.119		0.178	

* *p*-value<0.05; ** *p*-value<0.01; *** *p*-value<0.001

To answer this question, we specified a Multinomial logistic regression model (Hosmer and Lemshow, 2000) in order to estimate the statistical importance of each variable. Assuming 'the unaligned' as reference category we applied the same sequential procedure previously employed (Tab.2).

Observing the first model, which contains only structural dimensions, we note the importance of the education in predicting the probability to choose left side rather than right side. In this latter instance, in fact, there is not a statistical significant effect of the predictor's 'education'.

Moreover, compared with the reference category (unaligned), gender appears to be a valid predictor of both left/right political choices. Men tend to have a clear position rather than women. This confirms what was observed in the previous models and suggests that this gender difference is more present on the right side (OR: 2.315) than on the left side (OR: 2.107). Nevertheless, the introduction of socio-political indicators such as "involvement" and "political disaffection" make the significance of gender decreasing in case of the right political choice.

The second model shows the statistical relevance of political dimension and underlines a difference between the political choices. Namely, left wing-people, compared to unaligned ones, show statistically significant socio-political indicators. It points out the relevance of political judgment, both negative and positive, in determining the political choice. Political disaffection, in this case, could be seen as a form of active criticism and objection propensity towards the present political class. By contrast, right wing-people show a lower socio-political indicator compared with left-wing ones, moreover, the political disaffection indicator is not statistically significant. In other words, concerning political disaffection, the model suggests that there is not a real difference between right-wing people and unaligned ones.

The third model highlights the effects of network dimension. Network structure appears different in predicting political side. Those who choose left side are highly characterised by mixed networks (OR: 6.71), in opposition to those who choose right side. Indeed this last side is not correlated with mixed networks. Moreover, the right position tends to be more correlated with homogeneous networks (reference category) than to isolates, so that the choice of this political side could be connected with social integration within parental or "closed" nets**.**

7. Conclusion

Our data describe the relational and individual mechanisms linked to the construction of political identity, showing the relevance of these features in a Sicilian town. The analysis shows the presence of low rates of connected people and low political involvement, so that we can evidence a lack of politically relevant social capital within the area. Although women have more ties than men, their ego-network are more kin-centred, more politically homogeneous and dense. These network attributes seem linked to a lack of political engagement and we can explain the relationship with gender by referring to the traditionalism of sex role attitudes. In fact, also controlling for the relevance of education, women are less politically identified then men. We observe that people with a "mixed" network are more politically identified than both people without confidants and people with a closed structure of ego-networks. This result confirms that a lack of political identification is linked to closed, kin-centred networks. Although results have taken into account the individual characteristics and cognitive involvement, the relevance of ego-networks is confirmed also considering the individual propensity towards political engagement and the individual socio-political involvement.

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DICHIARAZIONE SOSTITUTIVA DI ATTO DI NOTORIETA'
(sull'attribuzione della responsabilità dei singoli autori di lavori congiunti)
(Artt. 19 e 47 del D.P.R. 28.12.2000, n. 445)

La sottoscritta GOZZO Simona Manuela Antonietta nata a Catania il 22/7/1979, residente a Catania (CT) via Gabriele D'annunzio n. 220, C.A.P. 95100, consapevole che, ai sensi dell'art. 76 del D.P.R. 445/2000, dichiarazioni mendaci, formazione o uso di atti falsi sono puniti ai sensi del codice penale e delle leggi speciali in materia,

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che nel lavoro a firma congiunta:
Gozzo S., D'Agata R., Social networks and political participation in a Sicilian community context, in Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences 4 (2010) 49–58. ISSN: 1877-0428
il contributo degli autori è da considerarsi paritetico sotto ogni aspetto. L'attribuzione della redazione dei paragrafi, tuttavia, è da intendersi nel seguente modo:

Gozzo S.: paragrafi 3, 4, 5
D'agata R.: paragrafi 1, 2, 6
Gozzo S. e D'agata R.: Conclusioni

La sottoscritta dichiara di essere informata, ai sensi dell'art. 10 della legge 675/96, che i dati sopra riportati saranno utilizzati nell'ambito del procedimento per il quale la presente dichiarazione viene resa.

Catania, 21/11/2016

La sottoscritta,
Simona Gozzo

Simona Gozzo