# SOCI 424 discussion questions—Oct 5, 2020

**Facilitator**:

*name*

**Secretary**:

*name*

**Other participants**:

*name*

*name*

*name*

## Prompts (try to respond to all of these)

* Discuss with your group the research question and methodological approach of Shwed and Bearman (2010). What were they trying to measure, and how did they try to measure it (data and methods)?
* Did the members of your group find Shwed and Bearman’s measure of “epistemic rivalry” convincing? Why or why not? What evidence did the authors provide that theirs is an effective measure?
* The “boundary problem” in networks refers to fact that network measures are often sensitive to the selection criteria for inclusion in a network, and underscores the importance of motivating which nodes are included in and excluded from a network analysis. Shwed and Bearman used keyword searches to select articles about known contentious topics to select the publications they study. How sensitive is their analysis to the selection method they used?
* ***Bonus question:*** *Can you think of a ‘keyword’ that might lead to a network with high modularity, but that does not represent contested knowledge (i.e. argument or rivalry)?*
* The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a large amount of ‘epistemic rivalry’ in popular discourse. As a group, come up with a few examples of pieces of knowledge about the disease or its effects that lead to disagreement in *popular* (rather than scientific) discourse—things that the public or media are divided on, whether or not scientists tend to agree. Can you think of an approach that would use Shwed and Bearman’s method to measure this disagreement? What kind of network could you use (what nodes and what relations between them) that might capture these divides in *popular* or *public* discourse?