

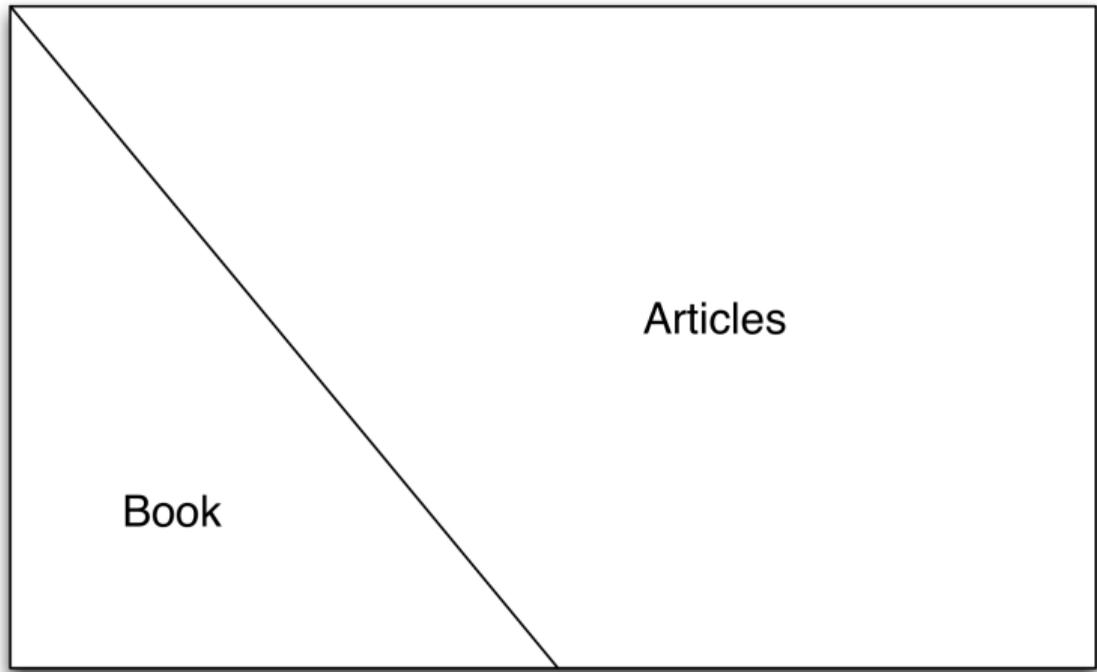
# Class 13: Strength of weak ties

Matthew J. Salganik

Sociology 204: Social Networks  
Princeton University

Monday, October 25, 2021





Midterm

Final

Concepts

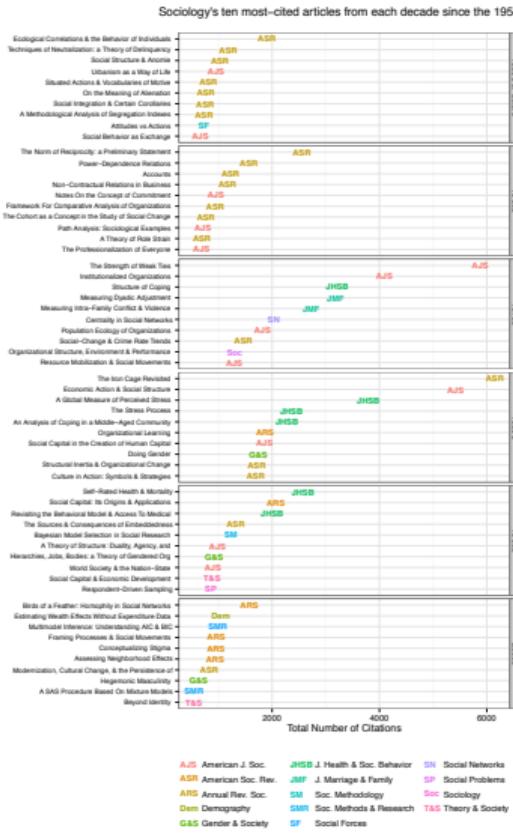
Applications

- ▶ Students will be able to *describe* the major ideas and models used in the study of networks.
- ▶ Students will be able to *describe* the interconnections between the major ideas and models used in the study of networks.
- ▶ Students will be able to *use* the major ideas and models used in the study of networks to gain insight into real-world phenomena.
- ▶ Students will be able to *evaluate* real, modern research that connects the major ideas and models of networks to real-world phenomena.

1. Granovetter, M. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*.
2. Smith, S. (2005). “Don’t put my name on it”: Social capital activation and job-finding assistance among the black urban poor. *American Journal of Sociology*.

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- ▶ one extra bit of complexity and one plausible assumption lead to surprising empirical predictions, many that turn out to be true
- ▶ connects micro rules to macro patterns (similar to Bearman et al. study of sexual networks)
- ▶ generates lots of new research

AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW

Karl F. Schuessler, Editor  
Marvin E. Olsen, Book Review Editor

Editorial Staff  
Indiana University  
Bloomington, Indiana 47401  
Telephone #12-337-3393

December 9, 1969

Mr. Mark S. Granovetter  
Lowell House N-21  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

Dear Mr. Granovetter:

Thank you for the opportunity to consider your article entitled "Heterogeneity Reassessed: The Strength of Weak Ties" for possible publication in ASR. We have completed our evaluation and reluctantly regret to notify you of our decision against publication. The reasons for our decision are set forth in suggestions prepared by our readers for your use. Perhaps these quite generous comments will be of some service to you should you resubmit your materials before submitting your manuscript for publication elsewhere.

Again, our appreciation for the opportunity to examine your paper.

Sincerely yours,

  
Karl Schuessler  
Editor

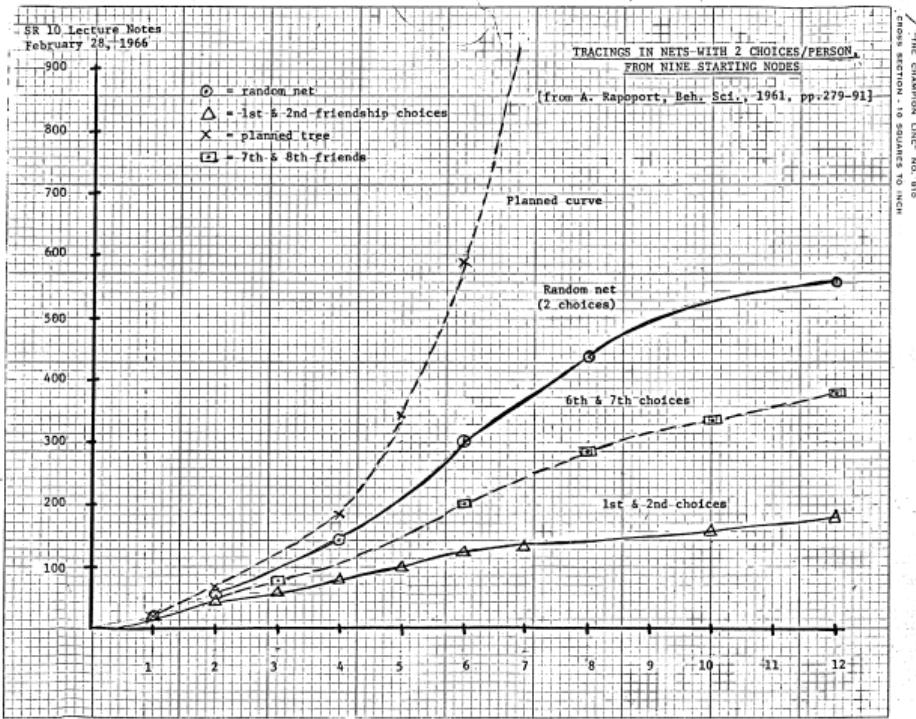
KS/ar

Enclosures: comments of two readers

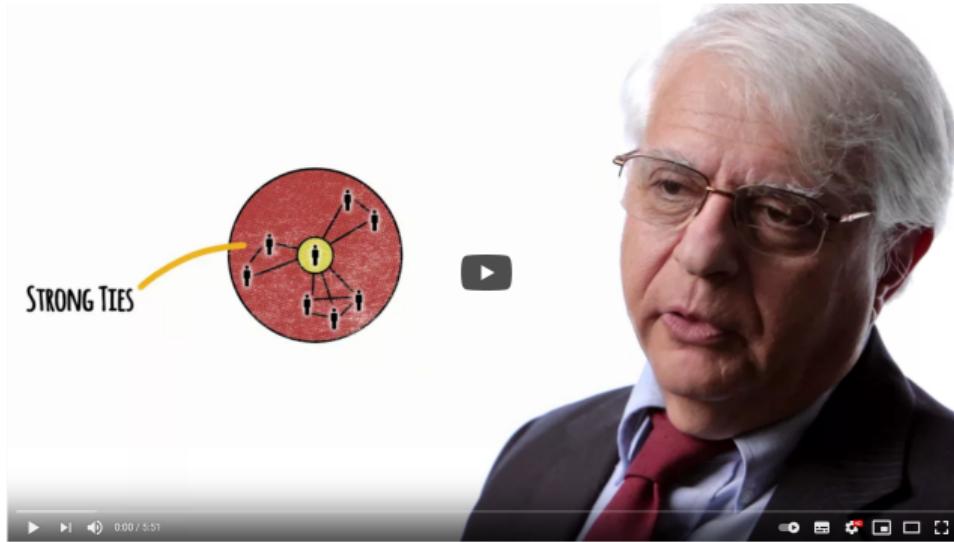
ME returned under separate cover

Official Journal of the American Sociological Association

<https://scatter.wordpress.com/2014/10/13/granovetter-rejection/>



Source: From Harrison White's class in 1966

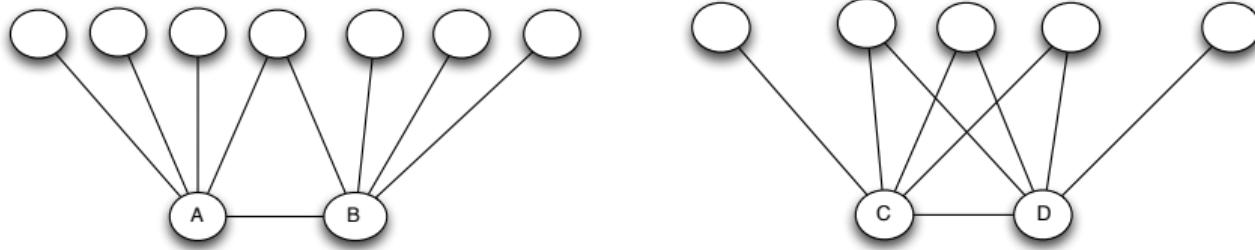


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3bBajcR5fE>

“Strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, emotional intensity, the intimacy, and reciprocal services which characterize the tie.”

Prediction:

The stronger the tie between two people, the more their friendship sets overlap.



No good data to test in 1973, but there is now (as you will see in an upcoming assignment).

For the rest of the paper, he deals with a simplification:

- ▶ Old idea: tie is either present or absent
- ▶ New idea: tie is either strong, weak, or absent

Assume no forbidden triad

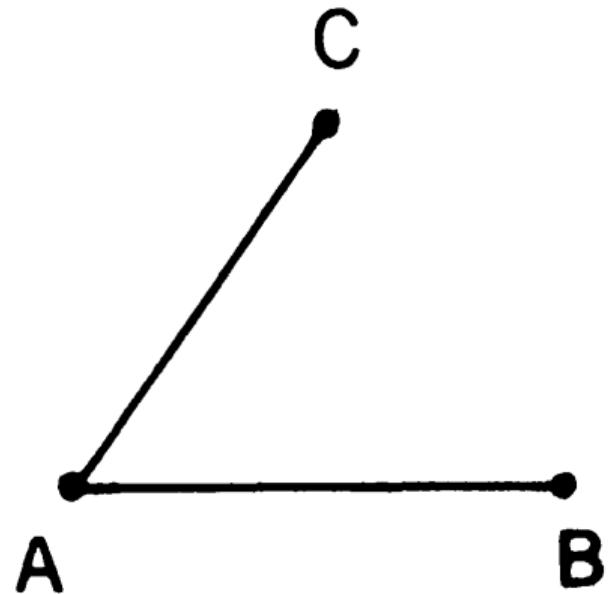


FIG. 1.—Forbidden triad

Except in weird cases, *no strong tie is a bridge*. Or *all bridges are weak ties*.

But, it is not the case that all weak ties are bridges.

Bridges are probably rare, so Granovetter talks about *local bridges*

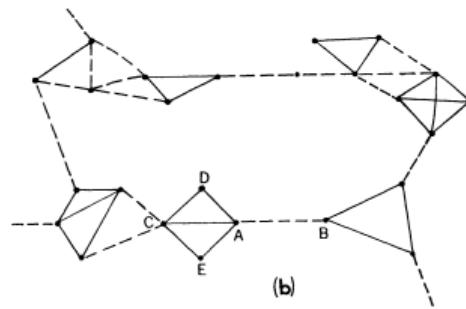
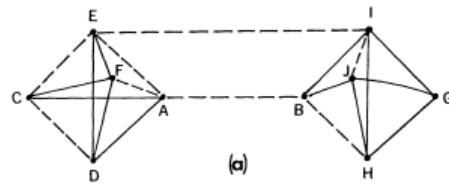


FIG. 2.—Local bridges. *a*, Degree 3; *b*, Degree 13. —— = strong tie; ----- = weak tie.

"The significance of weak ties, then, would be that those which are local bridges create more and shorter paths."

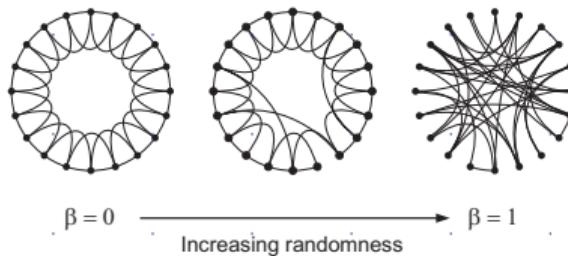
Which concept or model that we learned about does this remind you of?

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Shortcuts in beta model

3.6



Strength of weak ties for

- ▶ communities
- ▶ individuals

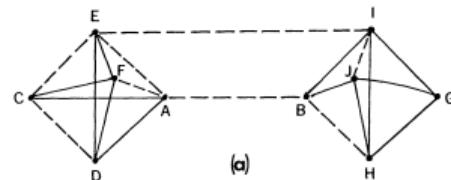
## Strength of weak ties for communities

Boston's West End was unable to resist "urban renewal", Granovetter argues that this is because of lack of short paths between people (think "caveman graph")

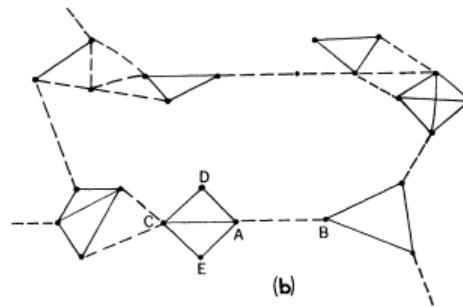
Granovetter predicts: weak ties hold communities together and enable them to act cohesively

## Strength of weak ties for individuals

Local bridges are most important for spreading new things. Therefore, weak ties are important for spreading new things and receiving information.



(a)



(b)

FIG. 2.—Local bridges. *a*, Degree 3; *b*, Degree 13. —— = strong tie; - - - = weak tie.

In the sample he studied (professionals in a suburb of Boston), of those who found a job through a contact, how often did they see the contact?

- ▶ often (at least twice a week): 17%
- ▶ occasionally (more than once a year but less than twice a week): 56%
- ▶ rarely (once a year or less): 28%

The people you see occasionally and rarely can be the most important.

<sup>15</sup> Although this corresponds only to the first of the four dimensions in my definition, supplementary anecdotal evidence from interviews makes it likely that, in this case, the entire definition is satisfied by this measure. At the time of research, it had not occurred to me that tie strength would be a useful variable.

To summarize lots of subsequent research, it is non-redundant information that is important, not weak ties.

Therefore, a better title might have been: *The strength of local bridges*

# **“Don’t put my name on it”: Social Capital Activation and Job-Finding Assistance among the Black Urban Poor<sup>1</sup>**

Sandra Susan Smith

*University of California, Berkeley*

Paper has two main parts: theoretical and empirical. For the theoretical part, this might remind you of reading Feld's paper on foci because you are entering into a long conversation.

What is social capital?

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1. physical capital

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2. human capital

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2. human capital
3. social capital

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What is the most important kind of capital that get from Princeton?

Social capital: from access to activation

"a baseline model of social capital activation (e.g., the probability that job seekers will receive job-finding assistance from job contacts with whom they are connected) would take into consideration properties of the:

- ▶ community
- ▶ the network
- ▶ the dyad
- ▶ the individual"

Note that Granovetter focused just on dyad

A bit more background about the network and community (individual and dyad are probably clear already).

Idea about networks: Social capital is higher in networks with lots of social closure because of better information and more sanctioning.

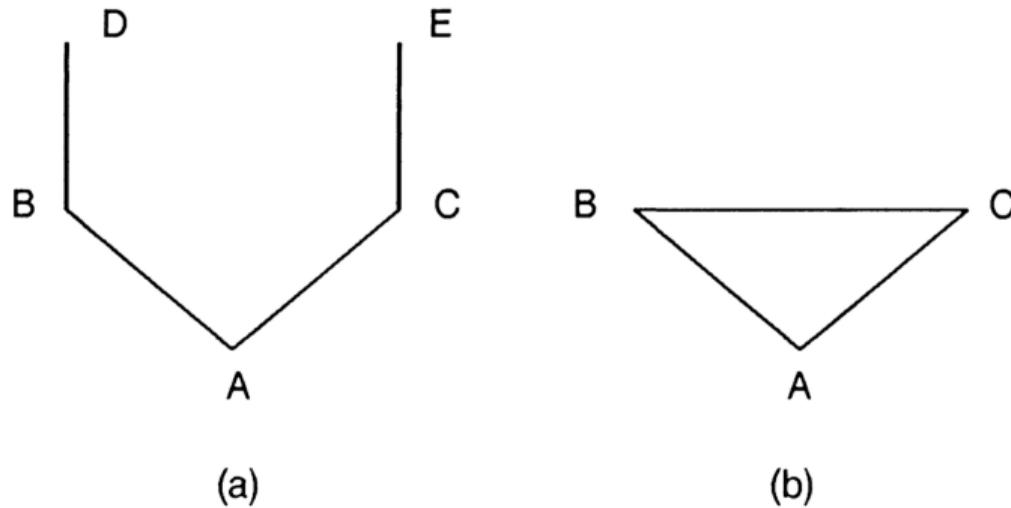
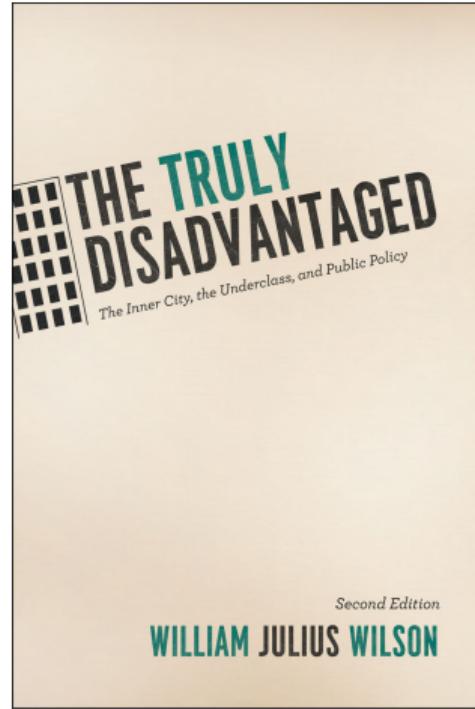


FIG. 1.—Network without (a) and with (b) closure

More information: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2780243>

Idea about community: Concentrated disadvantage leads to generalized distrust.



More information:

<https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/T/bo13375722.html>

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1. When in possession of job information and/or influence, to what extent are the black urban poor willing to assist their job-seeking ties?
2. Under what conditions are job contacts willing to extend job-finding assistance? Specifically, to what extent are decisions to assist affected by properties of the individual, the dyad, the network, and the community?

- ▶ Main data: 105 in-depth interviews of low income African-Americans from 1 social service agency in Michigan in around 2000.

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- ▶ Note the difference between in-depth interviews and surveys

## Empirical findings

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- ▶ People are more likely to help strong ties than weak ties, but they don't help all strong ties
- ▶ Offering assistance didn't seem to be related to social closure
- ▶ People in neighborhoods with concentrated disadvantaged were less open to providing assistance (relative to those in low-moderate poverty neighborhoods)

- ▶ “accessed” social capital is not the same as “mobilized” social capital. Just knowing people who have access to job information is not enough.

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- ▶ a weakness of weak ties

A study in one social setting might produce a different result than a study in a different social setting. Think back to cycles of length 4. Not common in a high school in the US. More common in Likoma, Malawi.

<sup>18</sup> Donald Light has suggested to me an alternative reason to expect predominance of weak ties in transfer of job information. He reasons that most of any given person's ties are weak, so that we should expect, on a "random" model, that most ties through which job information flows should be weak. Since baseline data on acquaintance networks are lacking, this objection remains inconclusive. Even if the premise were correct, however, one might still expect that greater motivation of close friends would overcome their being outnumbered. Different assumptions yield different "random" models; it is not clear which one should be accepted as a starting point. One plausible such model would expect information to flow through ties in proportion to the time expended in interaction; this model would predict much more information via strong ties than one which merely counted all ties equally.

Maybe people find jobs through weak ties because they have more weak ties?

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## Weak Ties, Information, and Influence: How Workers Find Jobs in a Local Russian Labor Market

Valery Yakubovich

*University of Chicago*

<http://asr.sagepub.com/content/70/3/408.full.pdf+html>

Probability of finding a job through a weak tie is higher than finding a job through a strong tie (in Samara, Russia in 1998)

Summary:

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- ▶ weak ties also help hold communities together
- ▶ ties alone might be enough if they can't be activated
- ▶ activation of ties depends on the person, the dyad, the network, and the community

We will be collecting feedback through other processes during the second half of the course.

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- ▶ Gladwell, M. (2010). Small change: The revolution will not be tweeted. *New Yorker*.
- ▶ Centola, D. and Macy, M.W. (2007). Complex contagion and the weakness of long ties. *American Journal of Sociology*.
- ▶ Centola, D. (2010). The spread of behavior in an online social network experiment. *Science*.