# Lecture 6: Foci

Matthew Salganik

Sociology 204: Social Networks, Fall 2021
Princeton University

Wednesday, September 22, 2021

Feedback on the feedback

- everything seems pretty good

Feedback on the feedback

- everything seems pretty good
- trying slightly different lights

1. Gladwell, M. (1999). Six degrees of Lois Weisberg. *The New Yorker*.
2. Watts, Chapter 4, 114-129.
3. Feld, S.L. (1981) The focused organization of social ties. *American Journal of Sociology*.

# Review

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- diseases spread more easily on networks with power law degree distribution than on other types of networks
- networks with power law degree distribution are robust to random failure but fragile to targeted attack
- "hubs" seem important

Her story connects 2 ideas: power law degree distributions and foci

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A key point is that these people don't know each other. That enables Lois to be a "broker."

**Michael Simmons**
Contributor

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*I write on authentic relationship building in the age of social media*
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**ENTREPRENEURS**    1/15/2015 @ 1:54PM    238,828 views

# The No. 1 Predictor Of Career Success According To Network Science

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It has been over three years since Steve Jobs died.

Since then, books have been written and movies have been made.

Each has celebrated his legacy and aimed to share the secrets he used to build the largest company in the world; things like attention to detail, attracting world-class talent and holding them to high standards.

We think we understand what caused his success.

We don't.

We dismiss usable principles of success by labeling them as personality quirks.
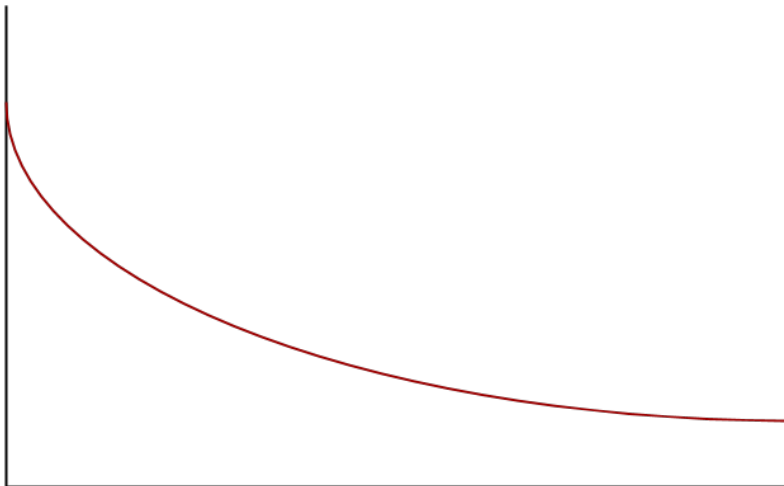
Next Post ▾

CONFERENCES AND MORE

Source: http://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelsimmons/2015/01/15/this-is-the-1-predictor-of-career-success-according-to-network-science/

**Relative Performance**
(compensations, evaluation, promotion)

**Network Constraint**

**large, open network** where you are the link between people from different clusters.

**small, closed network** where you are connected to people who already know each other.

# DILBERT
by SCOTT ADAMS

Comics **Blog** Shop

## Do Open Networks Boost Your Odds of Success?

Posted January 23rd, 2015 @ 8:46am in #success

Every time I hear of a study suggesting that doing (whatever) is important for success, I ask myself if the authors interpreted the correlations correctly.

And I rarely think they did.

Take for example this recent article describing how people with "open networks" are far more successful than those with "closed networks." In this context, it means that the more new ideas you are exposed to, the more likely you are a success.

That interpretation makes perfect sense to me. Seeing lots of new ideas is probably a good thing in most situations.

But another interpretation is that the folks with the personalities and resources to succeed are more likely to also have open networks. It doesn't necessarily mean one causes the other.

The good people manufacturing mature products, such as concrete,

Source: `http://blog.dilbert.com/post/108916425231/do-open-networks-boost-your-odds-of-success`

# STRUCTURAL HOLES

## The Social Structure of Competition

### RONALD S. BURT

How does Lois Weisberg's story—and the readings more generally—change how we should think about networks?

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Combines:

- network structure
- social structure

Affiliation network



Bipartite
Graph

# Affiliation network



Bipartite
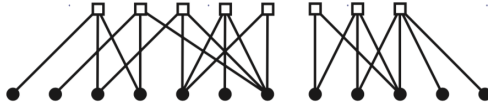Graph

- actors and movies
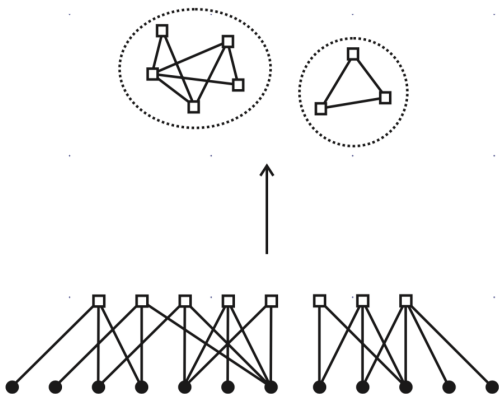
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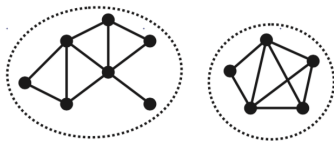- ▶ board members and boards of directors

Group Interlock
Network

Bipartite
Graph

Bipartite Graph

Actor Affiliation Network

# The Focused Organization of Social Ties[1]

Scott L. Feld
*State University of New York at Stony Brook*

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▶ you are stepping in a conversation
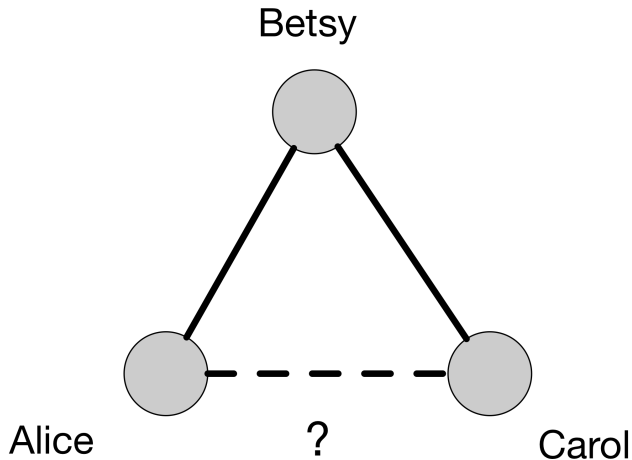
# The Focused Organization of Social Ties[1]

Scott L. Feld
*State University of New York at Stony Brook*

- you are stepping in a conversation
- a very dense—but interesting—conversation

Foci: a social, psychological, or physical entity around which joint activities are organized.

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Think-pair-share: What are some examples of foci at Princeton?

Explaining triadic closure:
- ▶ balance theory vs foci
- ▶ psychology vs sociology
- ▶ agency vs structure

Context about Feld (1981)

▶ This style of sociology (definition, assumption, proposition) is rare

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- ▶ This style of sociology (definition, assumption, proposition) is rare
- ▶ I found it striking that this was so hard to test because we didn't have the right data

Roughly speaking: you don't pick your friends, your environment picks your friends for you

# ALPHABET AND ATTRACTION:

## AN UNOBTRUSIVE MEASURE OF THE EFFECT OF PROPINQUITY IN A FIELD SETTING[1]

MADY WECHSLER SEGAL [2]
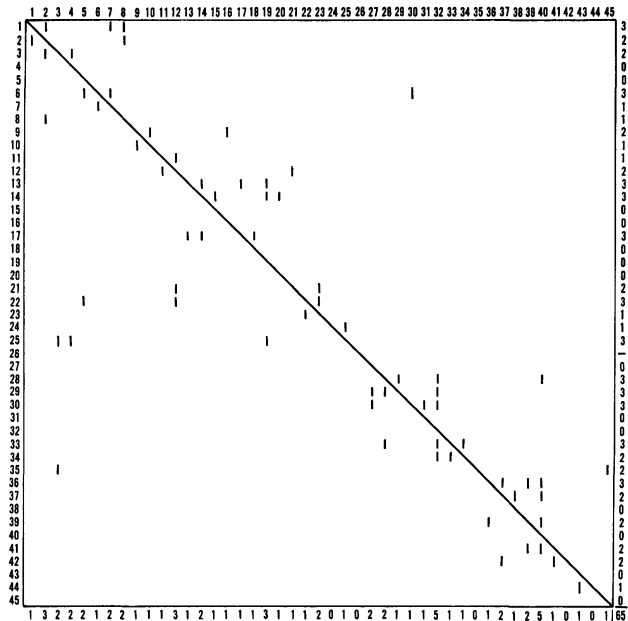
*Department of Sociology, Eastern Michigan University*

FIGURE 1. Matrix of friendship choices. (Numbers across the top of the matrix indicate place in alphabetical order of *chosen*. Numbers down the left of the matrix indicate place in alpha-

# RESIDENTIAL PROPINQUITY AS A FACTOR IN MARRIAGE SELECTION

JAMES H. S. BOSSARD
University of Pennsylvania

▶ study of 5,000 marriage licenses in which one or both applicant lived in Philadelphia (January - May 1931)

https://www.jstor.org/stable/2766455

## TABLE II

### Distribution, Cumulatively of Five Thousand Marriages by Residential Propinquity before Marriage

| Number of Blocks Apart | Number of Cases | Per Cent |
|---|---|---|
| Same address..................... | 632 | 12.64 |
| Within one block or less............. | 859 | 17.18 |
| Within two blocks or less............ | 1163 | 23.26 |
| Within three blocks or less........... | 1373 | 27.46 |
| Within four blocks or less............ | 1528 | 30.56 |
| Within five blocks or less............ | 1679 | 33.58 |
| Within six blocks or less............. | 1798 | 35.96 |
| Within seven blocks or less........... | 1889 | 37.78 |
| Within eight blocks or less........... | 1968 | 39.38 |
| Within nine blocks or less............ | 2037 | 40.74 |
| Within ten blocks or less............. | 2116 | 42.32 |
| Within fifteen blocks or less.......... | 2400 | 48.00 |
| Within twenty blocks or less......... | 2597 | 51.94 |

▶ More than one in three couples involved a person lived within 5 blocks or less.

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▶ Bossard (1932): "Cupid may have wings, but apparently they are not adapted for long flights."

► The theory of foci calls attention to the fact that many network ties are formed because of social structure.

- ▶ The theory of foci calls attention to the fact that many network ties are formed because of social structure.
- ▶ What do foci have to do with Facebook and Google+?

STEVEN LEVY

# Inside Google+ — How the Search Giant Plans to Go Social

https://www.wired.com/2011/06/inside-google-plus-social/

**THE REAL LIFE SOCIAL NETWORK**

Hi everyone, thanks for coming.

https://www.businessinsider.com/
heres-the-presentation-that-inspired-google-2011-7

More about Google Plus:

- Paul Adams *Grouped: How Small Groups of Friends are the Key to Influence on the Social Web*
- "Google Plus: a \$585 million dollar mistake":
  `https://slidebean.com/blog/startups-google-plus`
- "Looking back at Google+":
  `https://techcrunch.com/2018/10/08/looking-back-at-google/`
- `https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google%2B`

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- affiliation networks (people and groups) help us understand patterns in personal network structure
- compare and contrast psychological vs sociological explanations for network structure
- sociological principles can shape the design of technical systems

Feedback: `http://bit.ly/soc204-2021`

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▶ Watts, Chapter 5.
▶ Lee, N.H. (1969). *The Search for an Abortionist*: Preface, Chapter 1, and Chapter 5. (Available from Canvas).