

# Lecture 6: Foci

Matthew Salganik

Sociology 204: Social Networks, Spring 2021  
Princeton University

1/2: Lois Weisberg and social structure



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- ▶ “hubs” seem important



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

Source: [www.wbez.org](http://www.wbez.org)

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- ▶ the flea-market aficionados



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The No. 1 Predictor Of Ca... x


elsimmons/2015/01/15/this-is-the-1-predictor-of-career-success-according-to-network-science Search

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**Michael Simmons**  
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## 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.



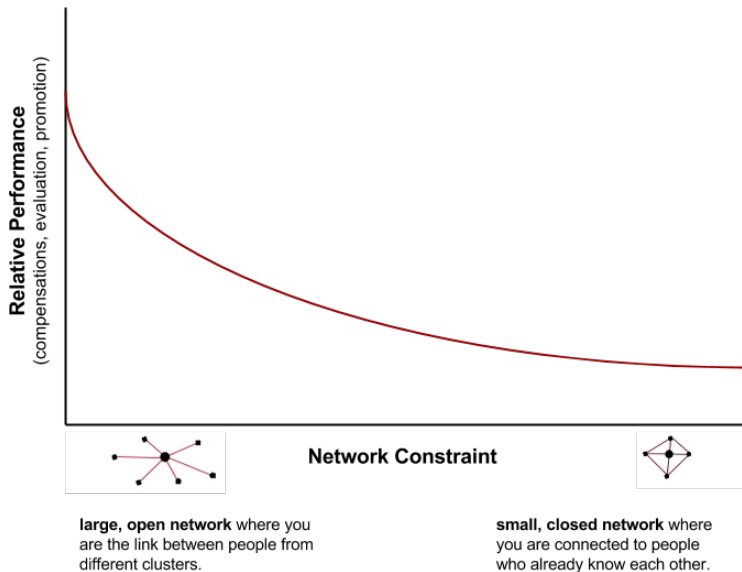
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Source: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelsimmons/2015/01/15/this-is-the-1-predictor-of-career-success-according-to-network-science/>



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Do Open Networks Boost ...

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

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by SCOTT ADAMS

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## 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

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Bipartite  
Graph

- actors and movies



## Affiliation network



Bipartite  
Graph

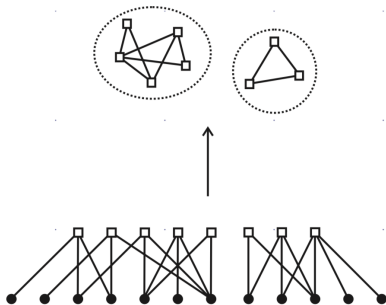
- ▶ actors and movies
- ▶ scientists and papers

## Affiliation network



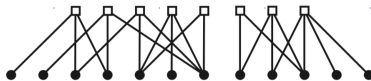
Bipartite  
Graph

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

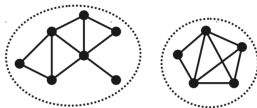


Group Interlock  
Network

Bipartite  
Graph



Bipartite  
Graph



Actor Affiliation  
Network

# **The Focused Organization of Social Ties<sup>1</sup>**

Scott L. Feld

*State University of New York at Stony Brook*

# The Focused Organization of Social Ties<sup>1</sup>

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- ▶ you are stepping in a conversation

# The Focused Organization of Social Ties<sup>1</sup>

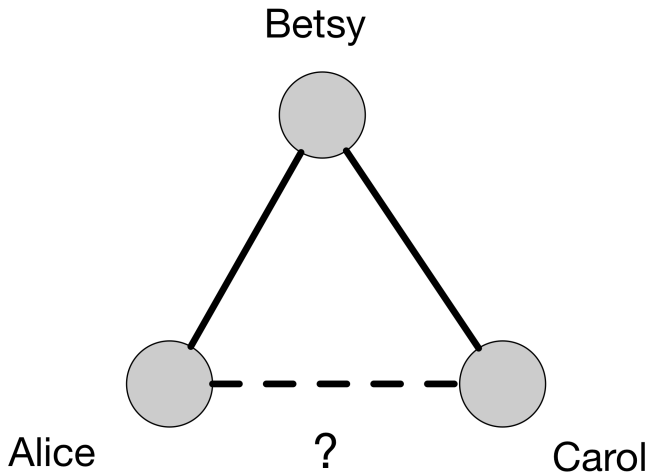
Scott L. Feld

*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.





Explaining triadic closure:

- ▶ balance theory vs foci
- ▶ psychology vs sociology
- ▶ agency vs structure

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<sup>1</sup>

MADY WECHSLER SEGAL<sup>2</sup>

*Department of Sociology, Eastern Michigan University*

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0037446>

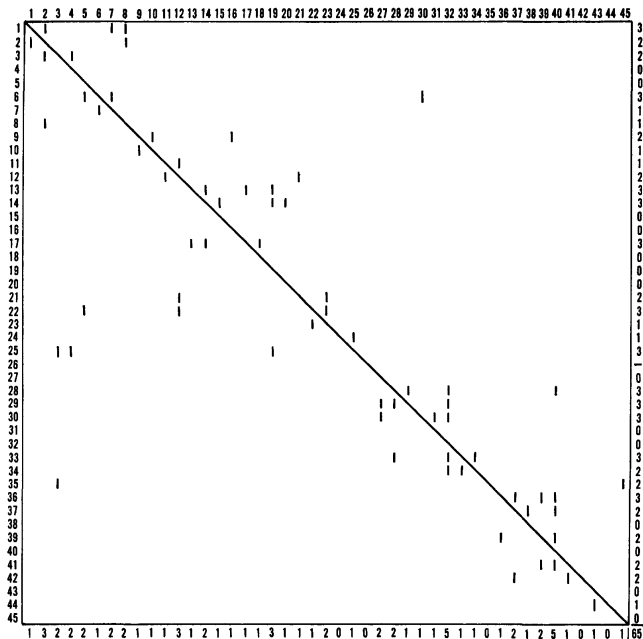


FIGURE 1. Matrix of friendship choices. (Numbers across the top of the matrix indicate place in alphabetical order of *chosen*. Numbers down the left of the matrix indicate place in alphabetical order of *chooser*.)

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

- ▶ sometimes the edges that don't exist are as important as the edges that do exist

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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

<http://bit.ly/socnet204>

<http://bit.ly/socnet204>

Monday:

- ▶ Watts, Chapter 5. (not available from blackboard)
- ▶ Lee, N.H. (1969). The Search for an Abortionist: Preface, Chapter 1, and Chapter 5. (Available from blackboard).

