

# Class 14: Strength of weak ties

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Sociology 204: Social Networks  
Princeton University

2/2 Weakness of weak ties



# **“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

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

Social capital from access to activation



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- ▶ 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.

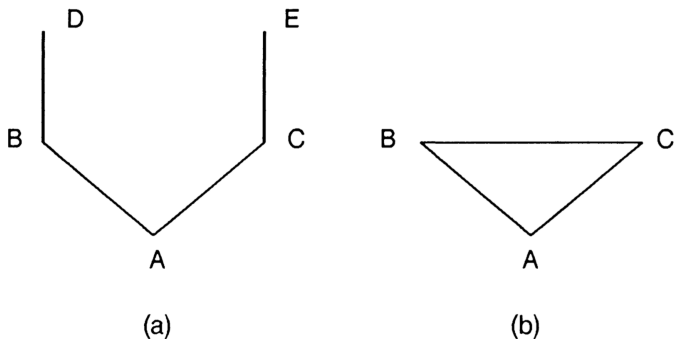
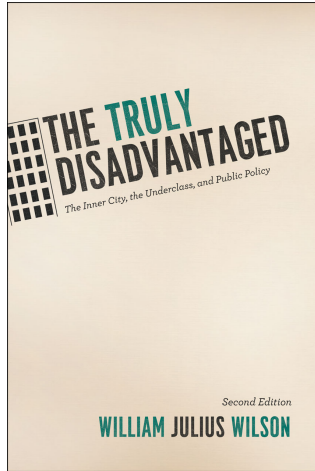


FIG. 1.—Network without (a) and with (b) closure

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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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

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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)

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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.

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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)

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- ▶ your weak ties might be your most important, but only if they are bridging
- ▶ 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



- ▶ 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*.