

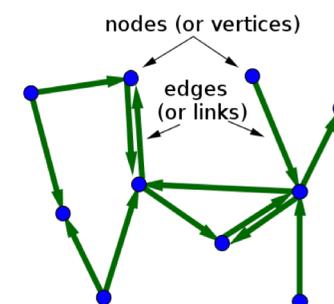
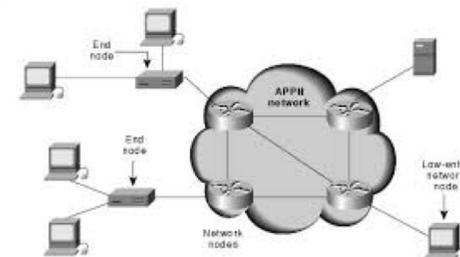
# A SOCIO COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE TO NETWORK SCIENCE

caterina suitner

Dipartimento di Psicologia dello Sviluppo e della Socializzazione  
caterina.suitner@unipd.it

# Networks

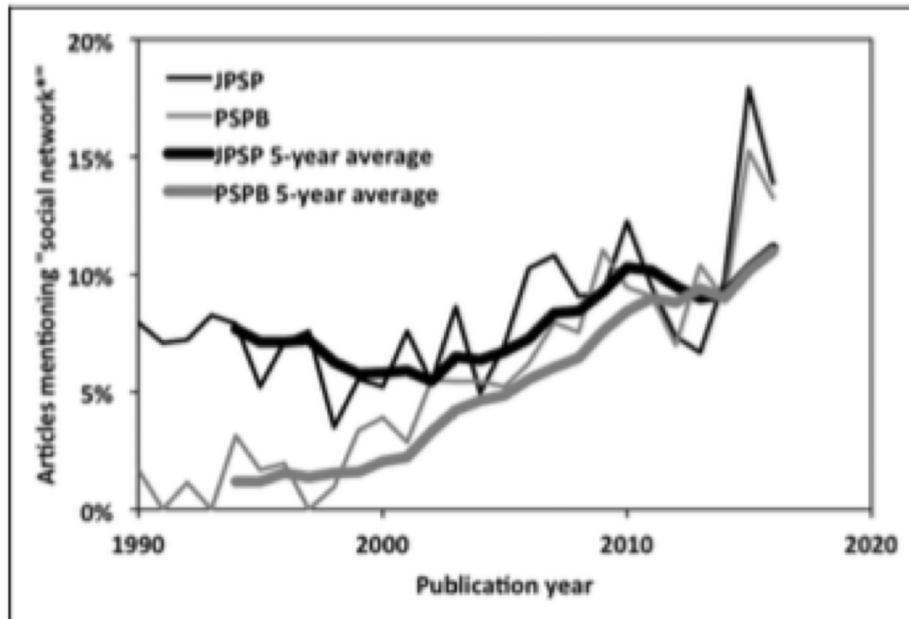
- *“network, nodes, links” = technology*
- *“graph, vertices, edges” = mathematics*
- *“brain area, neurons, synapsis” = neuroscience*
- *“group, persons, relations” = social psychology*
- *“mental representation, concepts, associations” = social cognition*



According to Gordon Allport's classic definition, social psychology is an attempt to understand and explain how the thought, feeling, and behavior of individuals is influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others.

Allport, 1954

**Social cognition** is a social psychological approach that focuses on the processes, namely on HOW people elaborate, store and apply information about other people and social contexts



**Figure 1.** Percentages of JPSP (black) or PSPB (gray) articles mentioning “social network” or “social networks” over time. Thin lines show raw data; thick lines show 5-year moving averages (e.g., 1994 reflects the average of 1990–1994). JPSP = *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*; PSPB = *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.

- Because social networks represent relationships (ties) among people (nodes) in groups, they should interest both social and personality psychologists.
- However this type of analyses is not very popular in this field (Clifton & Webster, 2017).

# RESEARCH RESEARCH METHODS + THEORY

Quantitative approaches tend to look at issues broadly but shallowly, effectively averaging out complexity to make generalizations across cases.



**QUANTITATIVE**



**QUALITATIVE**

Qualitative approaches tend to look narrowly but deeply, yielding a weaker argument for generalization to other cases but a stronger one for truly understanding the determinants of behavior in a particular case

Social networks and a relational approach promise a way to bridge the gap between scholars and employ insights derived from deep qualitative study in quantitative analysis. By examining the role that the structure of interactions between actor we can better understanding the behavior of individual actors, and, therefore, in aggregate behavior



# Mention your main sources of information

- Do you have spoken about politics in the last few days?
- If yes, list the 6 persons you have spoken with

# Mention your main sources of information

- Do these people know each other? Make a matrix

	Giulia	Marc	Oliver	Thomas	Sarah	Anna
Giulia	X					
Marc	0	X				
Oliver	1	0	X			
Thomas	1	1	0	X		
Sarah	1	1	1	0	X	
Anna	0	0	0	1	1	x

Count the  $1_s$  (min=0, max=15)

# Mention your main sources of information

- Mark in RED those who share your political ideology (rough categorization!)

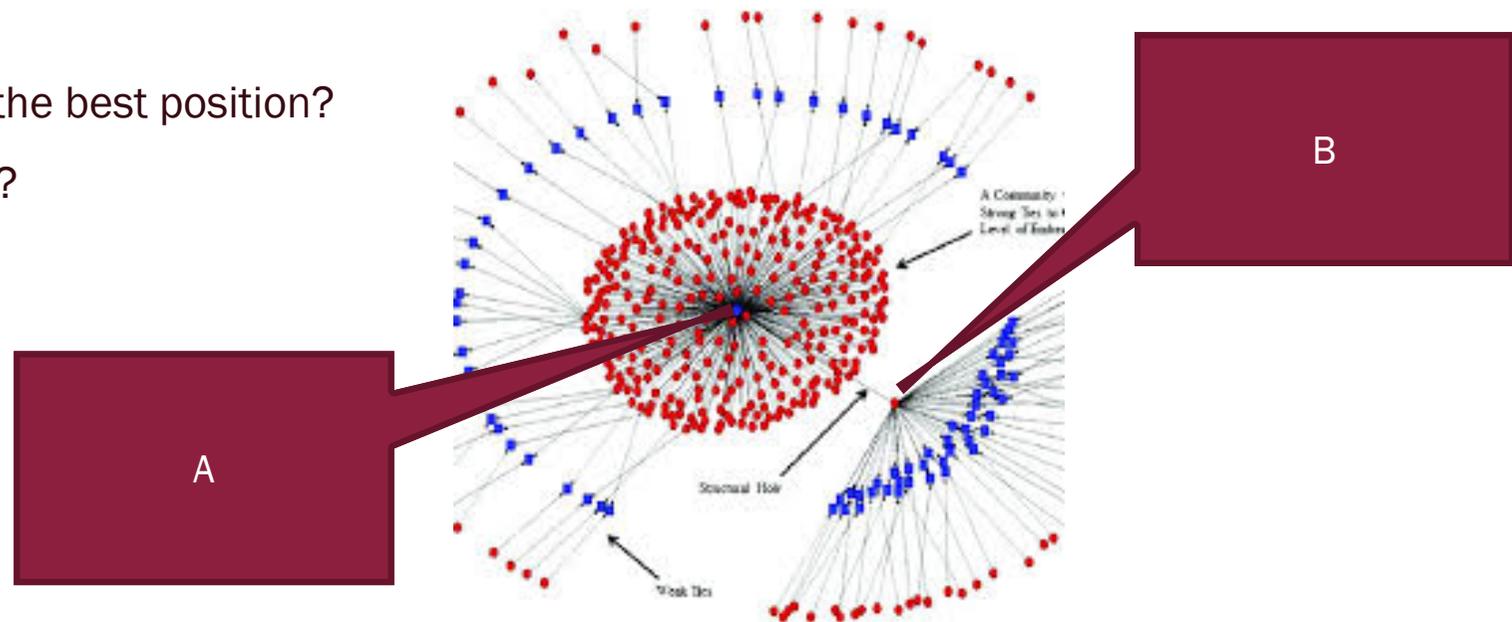
	Giulia	Marc	Oliver	Thomas	Sarah	Anna
Giulia	X					
Marc	0	X				
Oliver	1	0	X			
Thomas	1	1	0	X		
Sarah	1	1	1	0	X	
Anna	0	0	0	1	1	x

Count the 1<sub>s</sub> separately for reds and blacks

- 
- How many red (same political standing) names do you have in your network?
  - How many people in your network know each other? (number of ones?)
  - Is this number equal for red (same) and black (different political standing)?

# Social capital

- Coleman (1990) defined social capital as any aspect of social structure that creates value and facilitates the actions of the individuals within that social structure.
- Which is the best position?
- And Why?



## Social capital

### Bonding Social Capital

strongly tied individuals, such as family and close friends

little diversity

stronger personal connections

-> provides strong emotional and substantive **support** and enables **mobilization**.

### Bridging social capital

individuals from different backgrounds make connections between social networks

tentative relationships

broader social horizons or world views

-> open up opportunities for information or new resources.

# Social Group: entitativity

- **Entitativity:** Perceived unit (which distinguishes a GROUP from an aggregate of people)
- Property that makes a group appear as a coherent, distinct and unitary entity.
- A highly entitative group is relatively homogeneous (nodes resemble each other) and has an evident internal structure (ties) and has clear boundaries that distinguish it from other groups.

# High (manipulated) group entitativity....

- people **identify** more strongly with highly entitative groups because these groups contribute more easily to the individuals' self-esteem and self-efficacy and provide them with a clear understanding of who they are and of their relationships with others, satisfying their needs for inclusion and differentiation (Yzerbyt, et al., 2000)
- High group entitativity increases intergroup bias → tendency to favor the own group over the other group (Mlisky, 1993; Castano et al. 2002)
- High (vs. low) group entitativity increased behavioral and attitudinal bias (Gaertner and Schopler, 1998) i.e. behaviors of group members are explained not taking into account situational features, but rather using the group as the main cause

# Ostracism

Ostracism (to be excluded and ignored) often pervades our interactions with loved ones, coworkers, and friends. Research suggests that ostracism can have negative physiological, psychological, and behavioral effects ranging from elevated blood pressure to alienation to aggression.

-> psychological functioning (e.g., decreases in positive mood)

-> interpersonal behaviors (e.g., increases in social susceptibility or aggressive behaviors)

# Cyber ball

Cyberball is a virtual ball-tossing game that is used to manipulate the degree of social inclusion or ostracism in social psychological experiments.

The program varies the degree to which the participant is passed the ball

**Ostracized players** are not passed the ball after two initial tosses and thus obtain fewer ball tosses than the other players.

**Included players** are repeatedly passed the ball and obtain an equal number of ball tosses as the other players.

Hartgerink CHJ, van Beest I, Wicherts JM, Williams KD (2015) The Ordinal Effects of Ostracism: A Meta-Analysis of 120 Cyberball Studies. PLOS ONE 10(5): e0127002.  
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0127002>

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0127002>

## Cyber ball



<https://www1.psych.purdue.edu/~willia55/Announce/cyberball.htm>

# Meta-analysis: Hartgerink et al. 2015

200 published papers involving the Cyberball paradigm to study ostracism  
over 19,500 participants

the average ostracism effect is large ( $d > |1.4|$ ) and generalizes across structural aspects (number of players, ostracism duration, number of tosses, type of needs scale), sampling aspects (gender, age, country), and types of dependent measure (interpersonal, intrapersonal, fundamental needs).

## Social capital

### Cohesion

(Coleman 1988, 1990)

strong, close relationships characterized by trust, cooperation, mutual support, or solidarity

A measure: **degree** (n° of connections of a node with the other nodes of the NTW)

### Brokerage

(Burt 1992, 2005; Gabbay and Zuckerman 1998)).

Brokers connect unconnected parties with each other, and by means of that gain social leverage, access to resources transmitted between the parties, and hence access to non-redundant information.

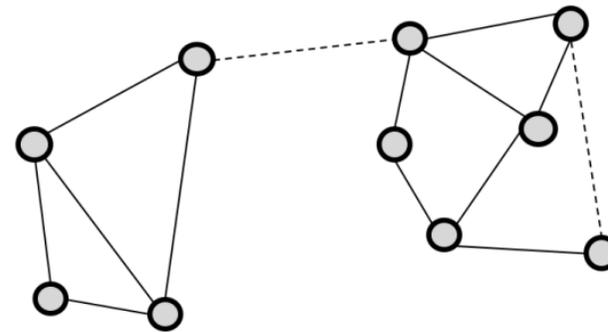
A measure: Betweenness

# Weak tie theory (Granovetter, 1973)

In his 1973 paper entitled “The strength of weak ties”, Mark Granovetter developed his theory of weak ties.

## DEFINITION

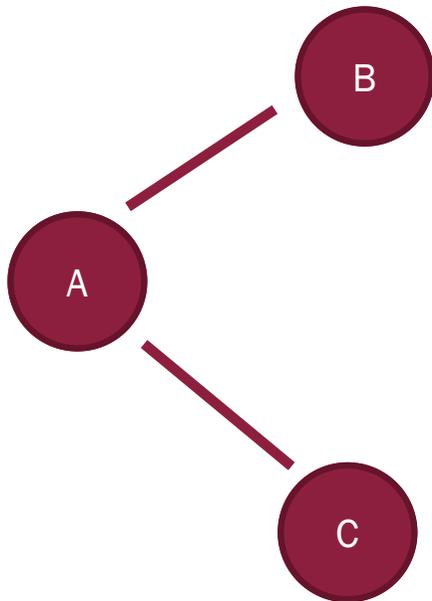
----- Weak Tie  
——— Strong Tie



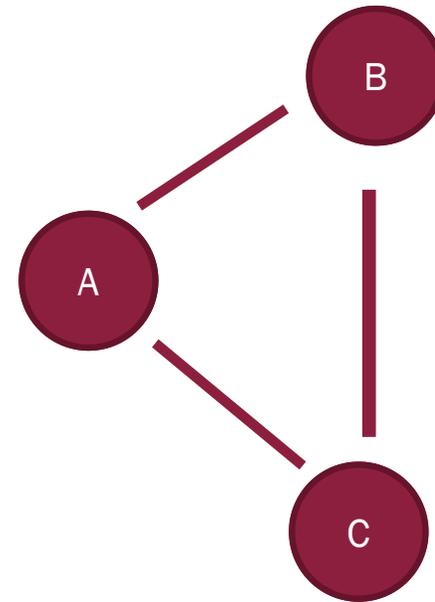
*The strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie.*

# Heider's Balance Theory

-> Need or cognitive consistency



The unlikely triad!!



# Weak tie theory (Granovetter, 1973)

## Strong Ties

emotionally intense, frequent, and involving multiple types of relationships, such as ties **WITHIN** the network of friends, advisors, and coworkers

->The information possessed by any one member of the clique is likely to be either shared quickly or already redundant with the information possessed by the other members.

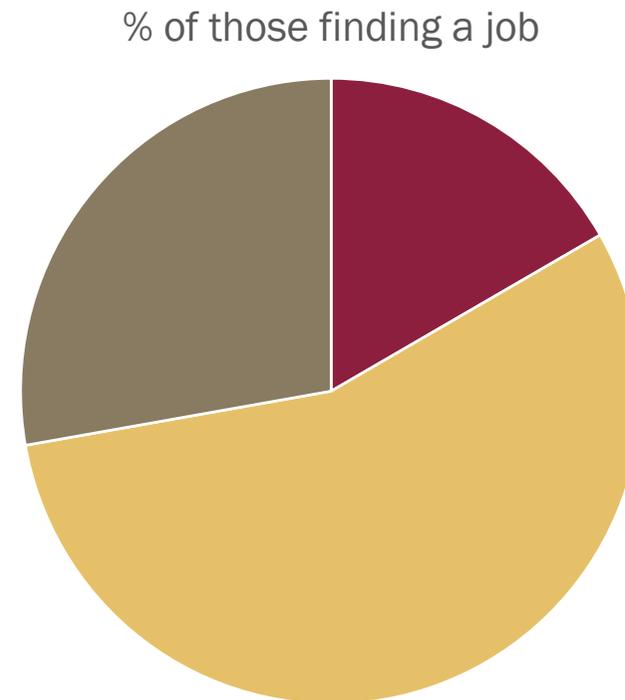
## Weak Ties

ties that reach **OUTSIDE** of one's social clique are likely to be weak (that is, not emotionally intense, infrequent, and restricted to one narrow type of relationship)

->weak ties are often a bridge between densely interconnected social cliques and thus provide a source of unique information and resources

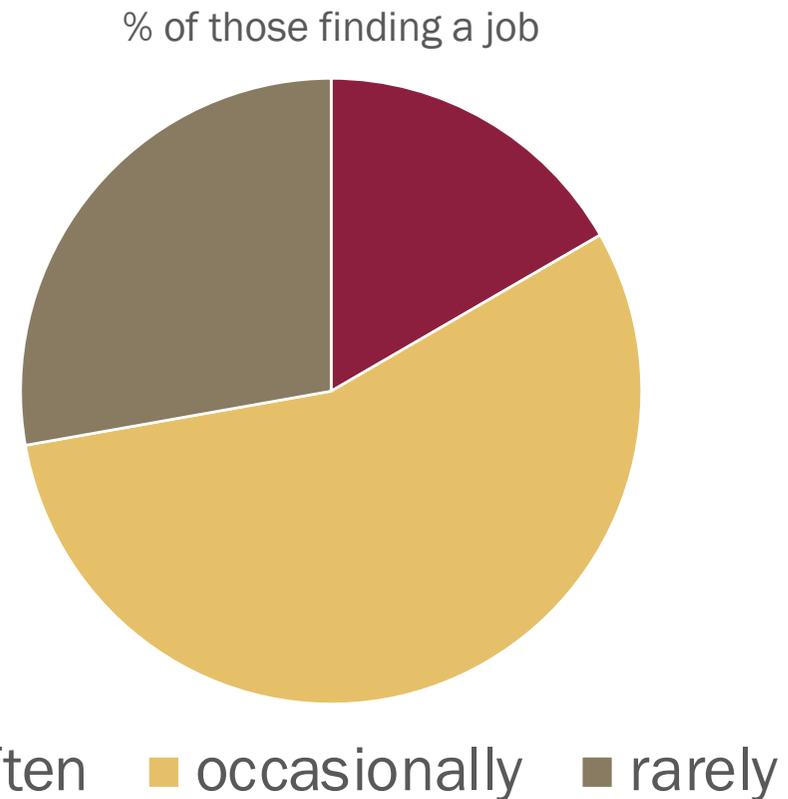
# Granowetter's Study

- Random sample of job changers
- Question: How often did you see the contact through which you got the new job?
  - *Often*
  - *Occasionally*
  - *Rarely*
- Guess: which colour represents the «often»



# Granowetter's Study

- Random sample of job changers
- Question: How often did you see the contact through which you got the new job?
  - *Often*
  - *Occasionally*
  - *Rarely*
- Guess: which colour represents the «often»



*Political Psychology*, Vol. 33, No. 6, 2012  
doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9221.2012.00906.x

## **The Effect of Social Networks on the Quality of Political Thinking**

**Elif Erisen**

*California Polytechnic State University and Bilkent University*

**Cengiz Erisen**

*TOBB University of Economics and Technology*

---

*In this article we investigate the effect of social networks on the quality of political thinking. First, the article introduces new social network concepts into the literature and develops the corresponding measures. Second, the article explores the quality of political thinking as a concept and develops its measures based on the volume and the causality of thoughts, and their integrative complexity. We make use of a survey to collect information on social networks and the experimental manipulation controls for the effect of policy frames. Our findings consistently show the significant negative impact of cohesive social networks on the quality of policy-relevant thinking. We conclude that close-knit social networks could create "social bubbles" that would limit how one communicates with others and reasons about politics.*

---

**KEY WORDS:** social networks, political thinking, political discussion

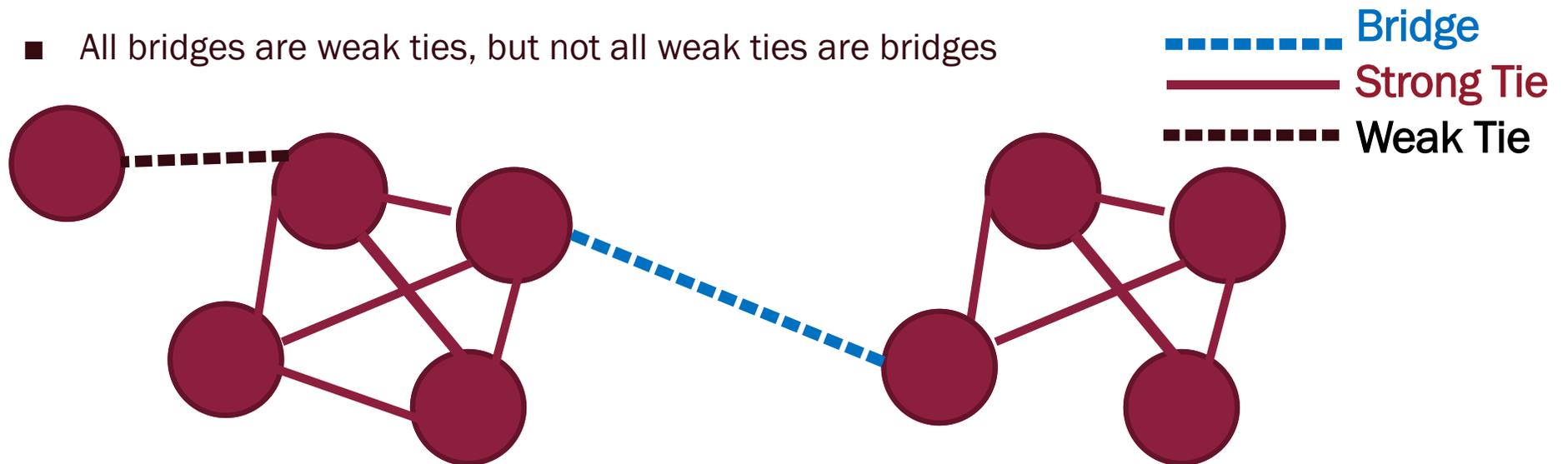
political discussion networks: self report measures of interactions

**Table 5.** The Expected Values of the Number of Thoughts, the Number of Causal Thoughts, and the Integrative Complexity of Thoughts Decrease as Network Cohesiveness Increases from Its Minimum Value to Its Mean, and to Its Maximum Value, Holding Other Variables at Their Means

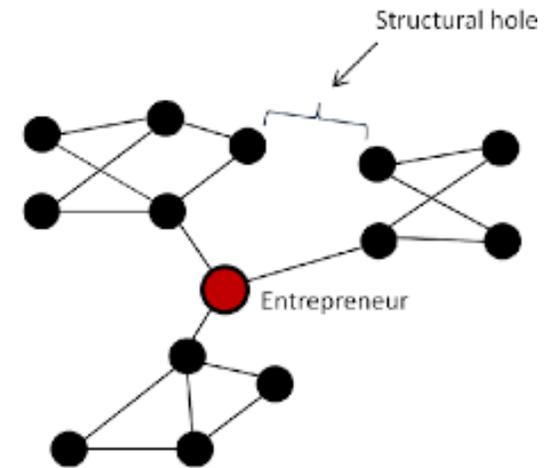
Dependent Variable	Changes in the Expected Value of the Dependent Variable		
	Cohesiveness at its minimum (A non-cohesive network)	Cohesiveness at its mean	Cohesiveness at its maximum (Extremely close-knit network)
The number of thoughts	11.3	8.2	4.4
The number of causal thoughts	5.4	3.5	1.1
The integrative complexity of thoughts	2.9	2.4	1.8

# Weak ties & Bridges

- Bridges are essential to the flow of information that integrates otherwise disconnected social clusters into a broader society” (Burt, 1992).
- This basically means that to get more out of Twitter, you need to figure out where your network is weak, and then follow those people who give you access to additional clusters.
- Building and maintaining weak ties over large structural holes enhances information benefits and creates even more efficient and effective networks.
- All bridges are weak ties, but not all weak ties are bridges



# Burt's (1992) structural holes



- A structural hole is said to exist between two alters who are not connected to each other.
- advantageous for ego to be connected to many alters who are themselves unconnected to the other alters in ego's network.
- networks rich in structural holes provide an individual with three primary benefits:
  - *more unique and timely access to information (information benefit)*
  - *greater bargaining power and thus control over resources and outcomes (power benefit)*
  - *greater visibility and career opportunities throughout the social system.*

Brokerage is theoretically and empirically associated with a competitive advantage, more likely resulting in promotions (Gabbay and Zuckerman 1998).



There are several ways to optimize structural holes in a network to ensure maximum information benefits:

- The size of the network
- Efficient networks.
- Effective networks.
- Weak ties.



# The size of the network.

- The size of a network determines the amount of information that is shared within the network.
- A person has a much better chance to receive timely, relevant information in a big network than in a small one.
- The size of the network is, however, not dependant merely on the number of actors in the network, but the number of *non-redundant* actors.
- It's not just about how many people you follow on Twitter, it's also who you follow.

# Efficient networks.

- Efficiency in a network is concerned with **maximizing the number of *non-redundant contacts*** in a network in order to maximize the number of structural holes per actor in the network.
- It is possible to eliminate redundant contacts by linking only with a primary actor in each redundant cluster.
- This saves time and effort that would normally have been spent on maintaining redundant contacts.
- What this basically means is that if you follow people who all follow each other, your network isn't very efficient and you need to get rid of some people.

# Effective networks.

- Effectiveness in a network is concerned with “distinguishing primary from secondary contacts in order to focus resources on preserving primary contacts” (Burt, 1992:21).
- Building an effective network means building relationships with actors that lead to the maximum number of other secondary actors, while still being non-redundant.
- This means that if 10 people give you access to the same network of information, only follow the most important one – their voice will be clearer and not drowned out by the others.
- Effectiveness describes the redundancy or degree of overlap between contacts and the exchanged resources in a network. Supporters who are not connected to each other might tend to share diverse opinions and information with the ego, which is therefore not redundant.
- In networks with high effectiveness, most of the contacts do not know each other. (Burt 1992) and the ego has more the possibility to connect unconnected contacts, hence to broker, and to enjoy more social capital in terms of strategic use of information and/ or contacts.
- The number of alters minus the average number of ties that each alter has to other alters.



-> to achieve networks rich in information benefits it is necessary to build large networks with non-redundant contacts and many weak ties over structural holes.

information benefits:

- *More contacts are included in the network, which implies that you have access to a larger volume of information.*
- *Non-redundant contacts ensure that this vast amount of information is diverse and independent.*
- *Linking with the primary actor in a cluster implies a connection with the central player in that cluster. This ensures that you will be one of the first people to be informed when new information becomes available.*