

# Social networks

## Advantages of networks

1. Access to private or unique information (e.g., figure out what's *really* going on)
2. Access to diverse skill sets and resources (e.g., legal or political skills)
3. Easier to mobilize others to your cause (e.g., fill a table at a fundraiser or turnout people for a city council meeting)
4. Provide the opportunity to serve as a connector for others (so that they might help you in the future)

## Networks work best when they are diverse.

1. Diversity improves quality of information, helps avoid “groupthink”
2. Diversity improves communication across groups, increasing understanding and improving the ability to solve problems
3. Diversity allows the network to further grow and diversify

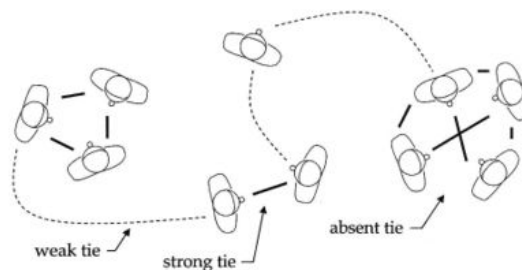
## Diversity is difficult to maintain

- People tend to connect with others who are like them (self-similarity principle)
- People tend to connect with people they spend the most time with (proximity principle); work roles, economic status, and where we live all determine who we come into contact with.

Brian Uzzi and Shannon Dunlap, “How to Build Your Network,” *Harvard Business Review*, December 2005, pp. 53-60.

## The most useful people and best information will come from your “weak ties.”

Granovetter found that most people got jobs through their weak ties—not their strong ones.



**Strong ties** are those longer-term relationships with people you spend more time with. You have strong mutual trust with them. Strong ties include friends, family, and co-workers.

**Weak ties** are with people whose name you know and with whom you have something or someone in common. Weak ties could include acquaintances, “friends of friends” or long lost roommates.

**Absent tie:** Never met, or “nodding” relationship (as with clerk at a local store)

Mark S. Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 78, Issue 6, May 1973, pp. 1360-80.

Illustration from Wikipedia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interpersonal\\_ties](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interpersonal_ties))

