

Informational benefits of social media use

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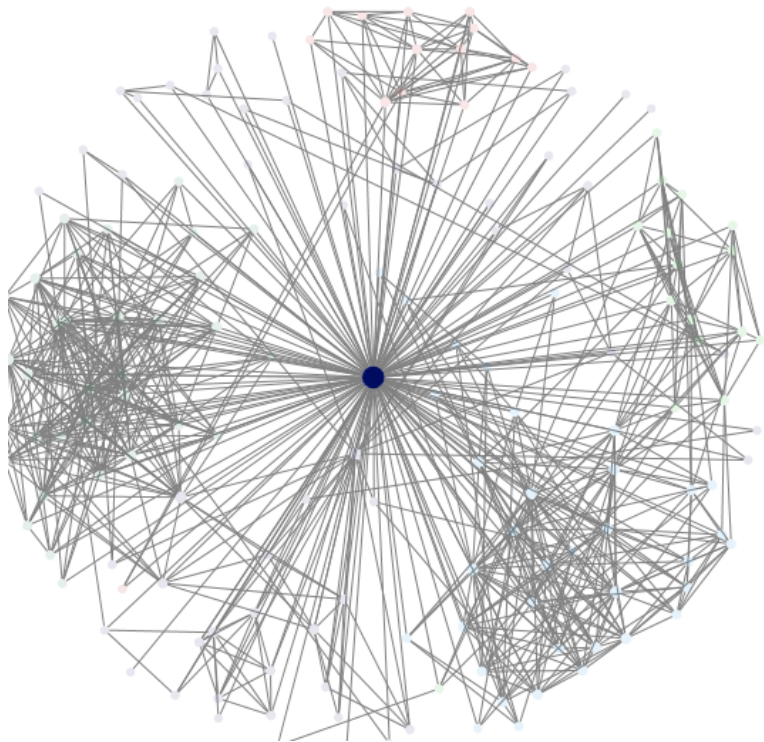
Social capital

- “the goodwill available to individuals or groups. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor’s social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor” (Adler & Kwon, 2002; p. 23)



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Informational
support

Emotional
support



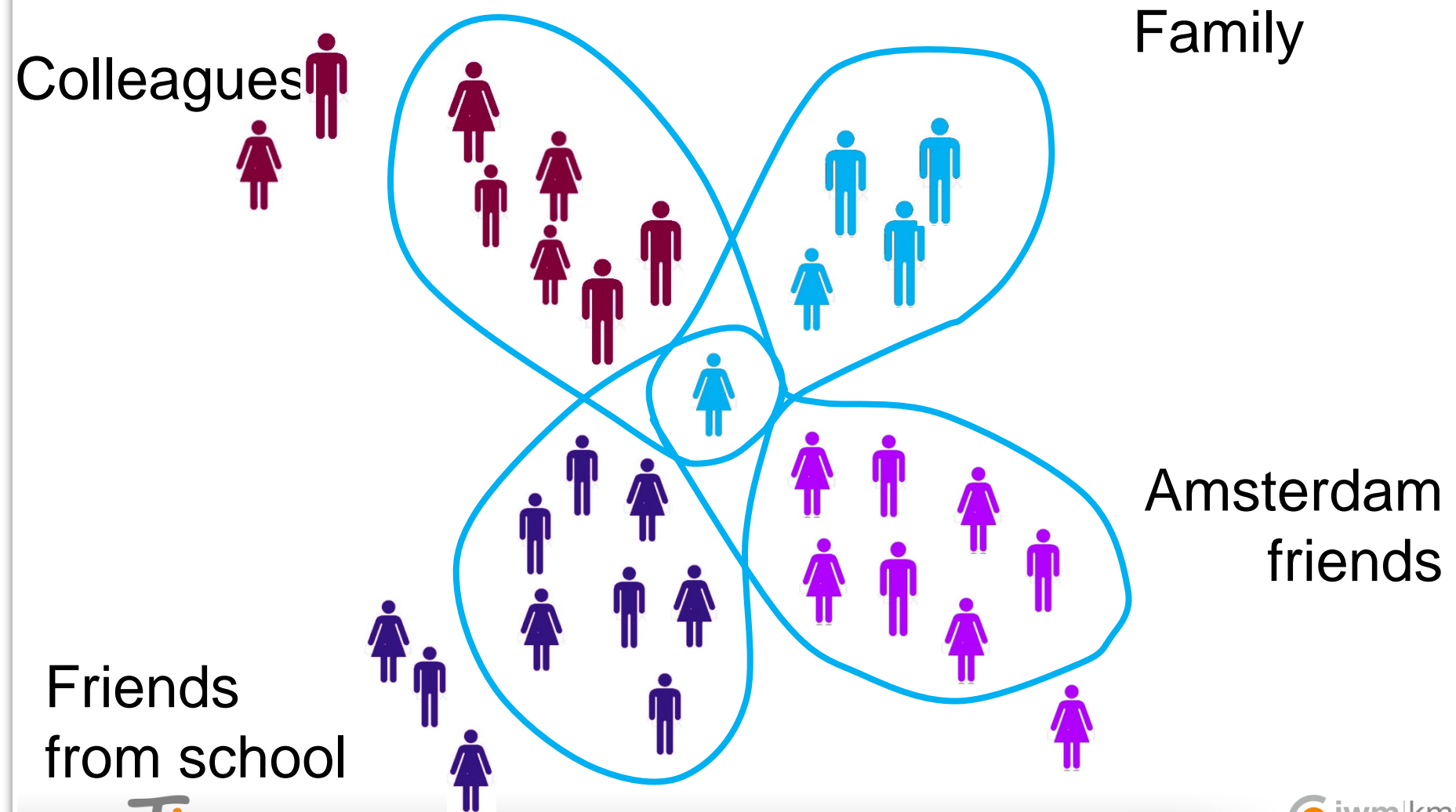


The role of social media

- change of networks
 - size
 - structure
 - content

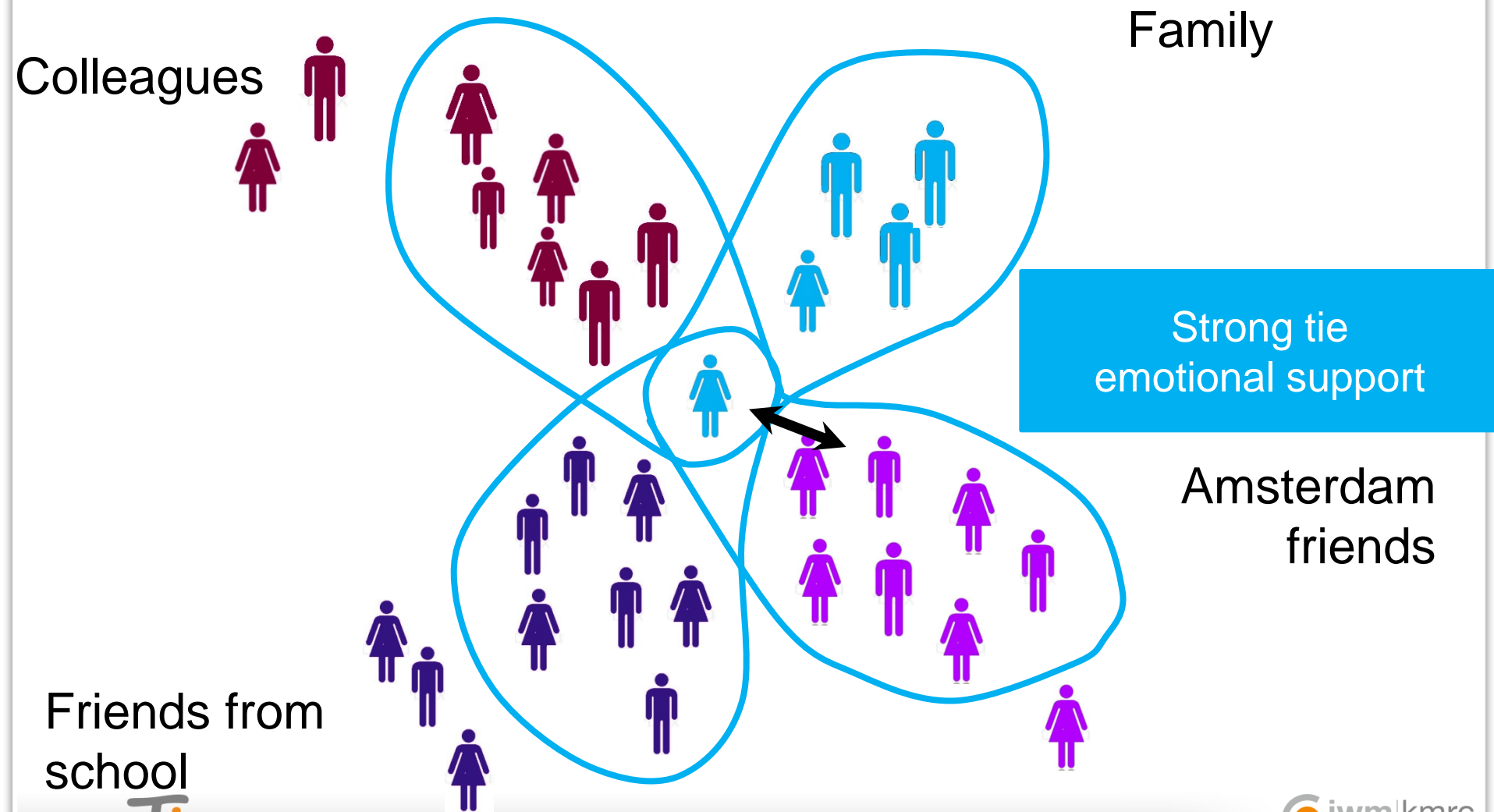


How my social network used to be in 2004



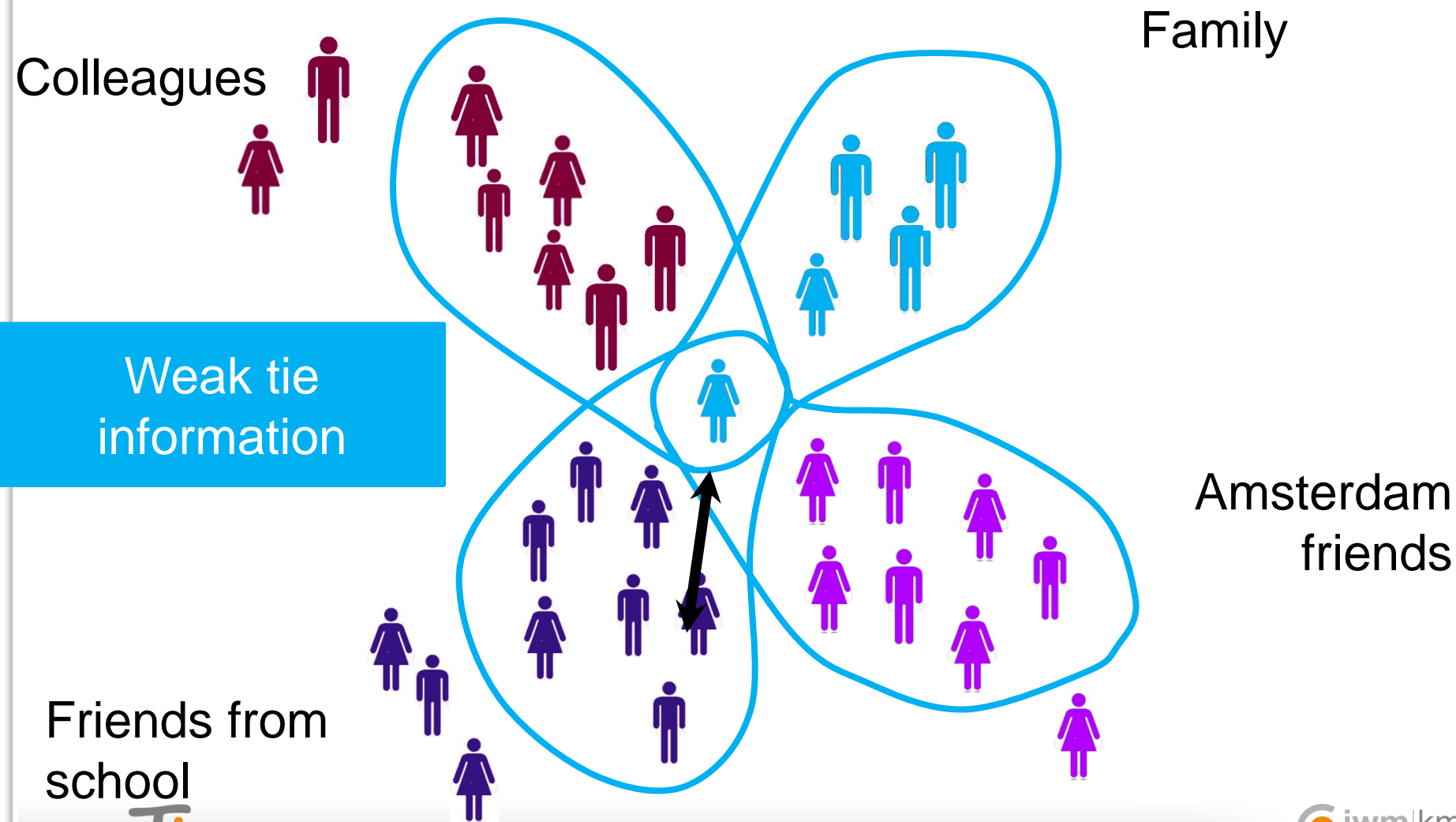


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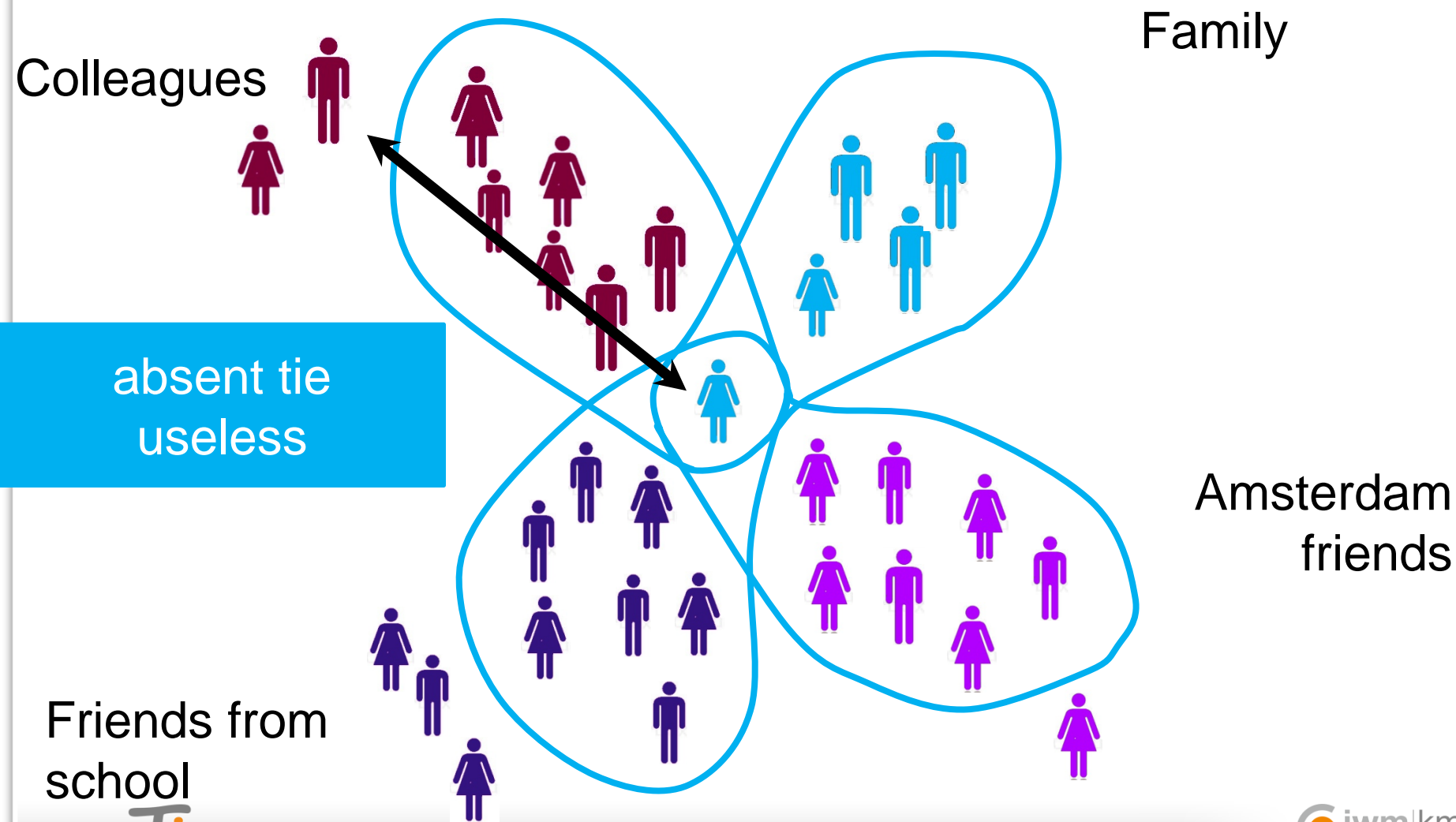


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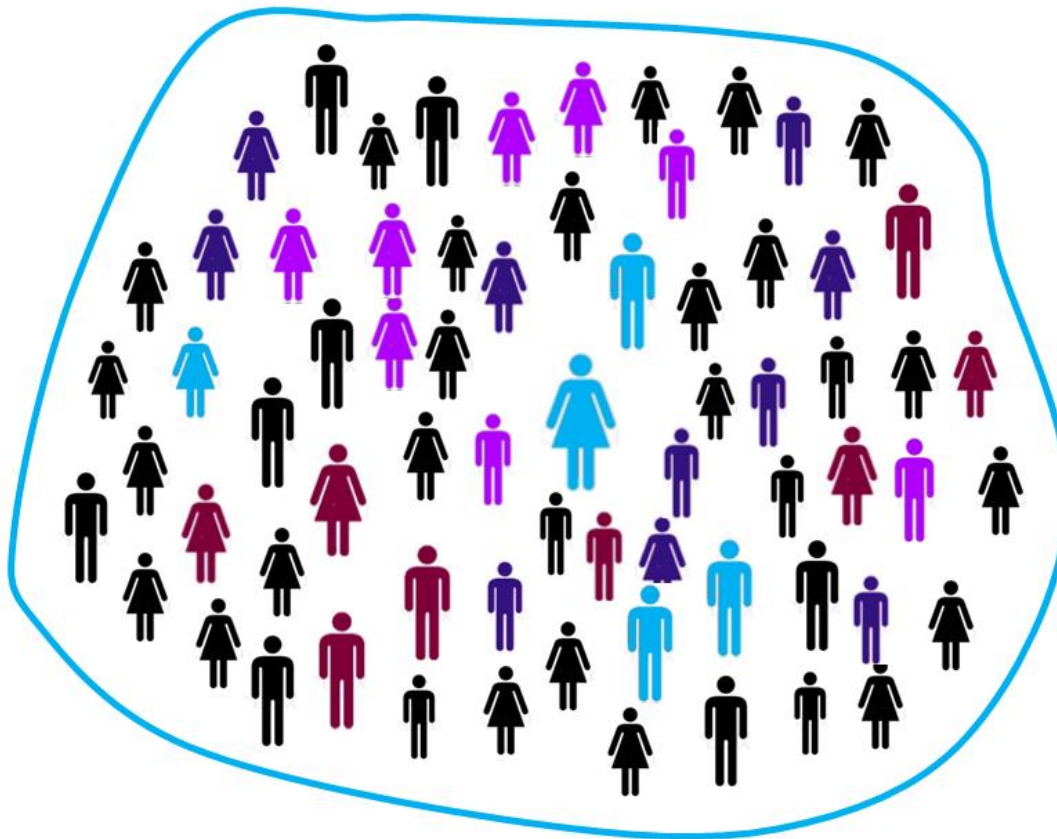




How my social network used to be in 2004



My social network today





Social media and social capital

- seminal study: Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe (2007)
 - SNS use increases mainly bridging capital
 - especially for people with low self-esteem or low life satisfaction
- meanwhile: several studies on the collective level
 - bridging vs. bonding capital (Williams scale; criticism!)
 - trust, civic/political engagement
- more recent: focus on social support
 - mainly: emotional support + mobilization requests
 - recommendations as form of informational support
 - not much on informational support in professional contexts



Informational benefits of social media use

- mostly studied/theorized on enterprise-social media (ESM)
- dominant approach: affordances approach (Treem & Leonardi, 2012)
 - visibility
 - editability
 - persistence
 - association



Possible underlying processes

- location of expertise
- trust
- motivation (by visible feedback, visible action of others)
- media stream (context awareness, social lubricant)
- mobilization of social capital
- different terms by different authors, main processes quite similar (Ellison, Gibbs, & Weber, 2014; Fulk & Yuan, 2013; Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfield, 2013; Leonardi & Meyer, 2014; Majchrzak, Faraj, Kane, & Azad, 2013; Treem & Leonardi, 2012)



Empirical evidence?

yes, but...

- mostly qualitative case studies
- small ns
- specific ESM and/or organizations
- assumed underlying processes not measured (e.g., ambient awareness, Leonardi & Meyer, 2014)

Redefining tie strength. How social media (can) help us to get non-redundant information and emotional support

STARTING GRANT PROJECT



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Basic questions

- Are there indeed informational benefits?
=> longitudinal study with a representative sample
- cause – consequence?
=> longitudinal study
- underlying processes
=> platform vs. actual use



Longitudinal study

- Planned: 8 waves, 2 waves per year
- Representative for Dutch online users with regard to age, sex, education level and urban/rural
- Social media use:
 - Facebook or other more leisure-oriented SNS
 - LinkedIn or other business networks
 - Twitter or other microblogging services
 - Frequency, self-disclosure, motives, network composition,...
- Indicators of social capital
 - Informational benefits, social support, trust, civic engagement, life satisfaction,...
- Wave 1: n = 3254, Wave 3: N = 2278, now only working subsample!



How to measure informational benefits?

“Information benefits occur in three forms: access, timing, and referrals.” (Burt, 1992, p. 13)

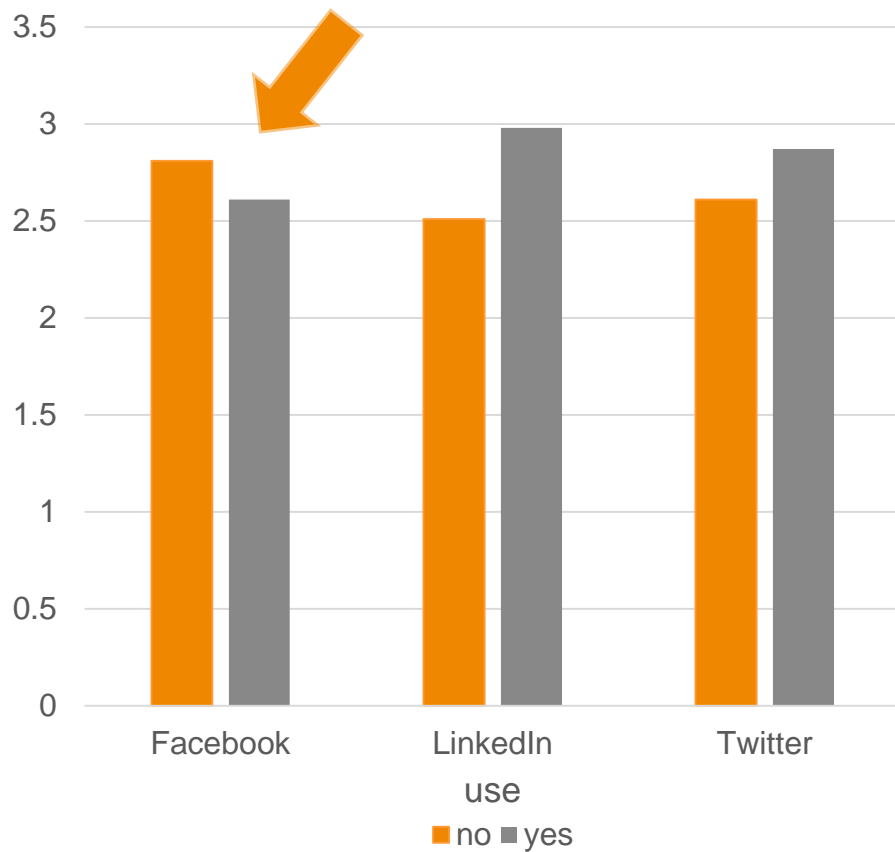
Scale of 5 items:

- I can get access to knowledge that is helpful in mastering job tasks from my network members.
- I receive information about innovations in my field from my network members, timely.
- I receive information about job opportunities from my network members.
- Contacts that I have established are essential for my career success.
- The relationships I maintain are helpful in making career moves.

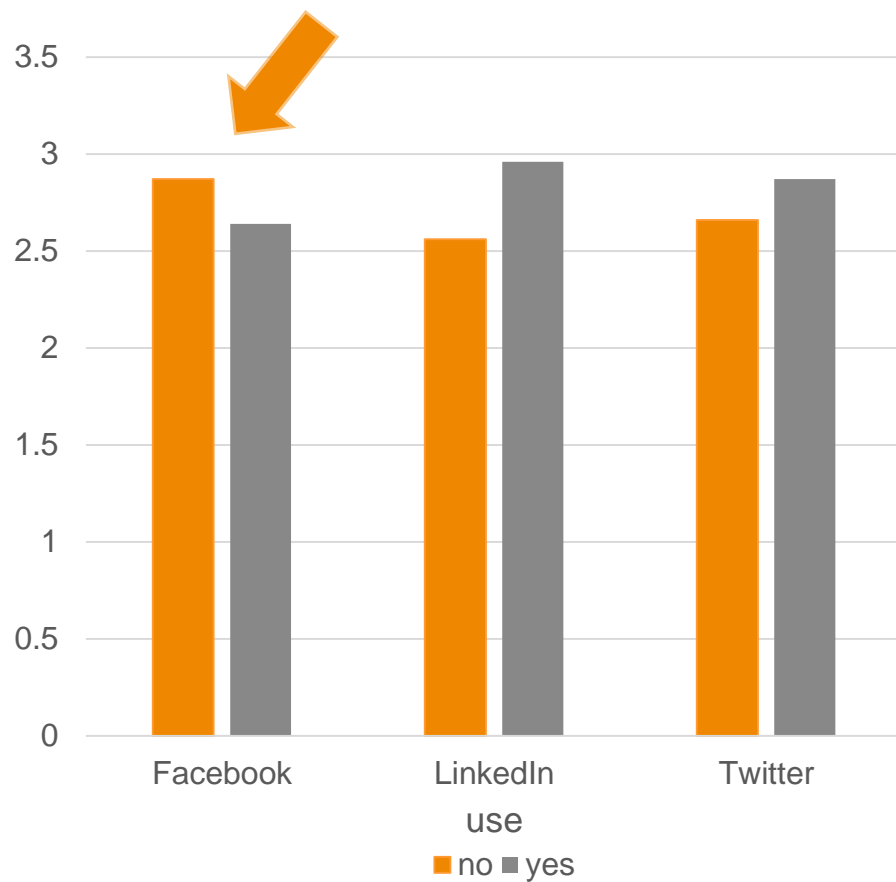


Informational benefits – effects of platform

Wave 1

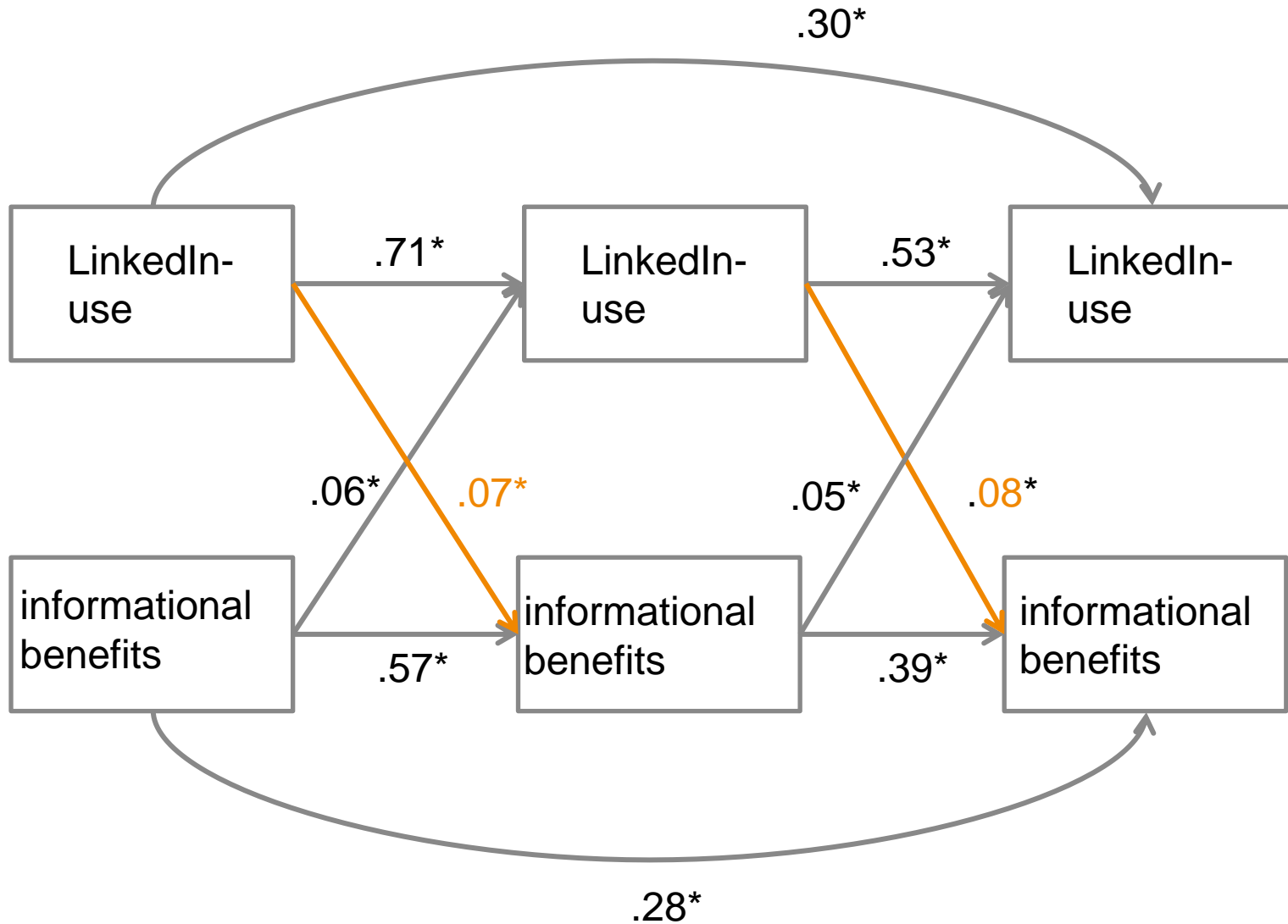


Wave 2





Cause vs. consequence?



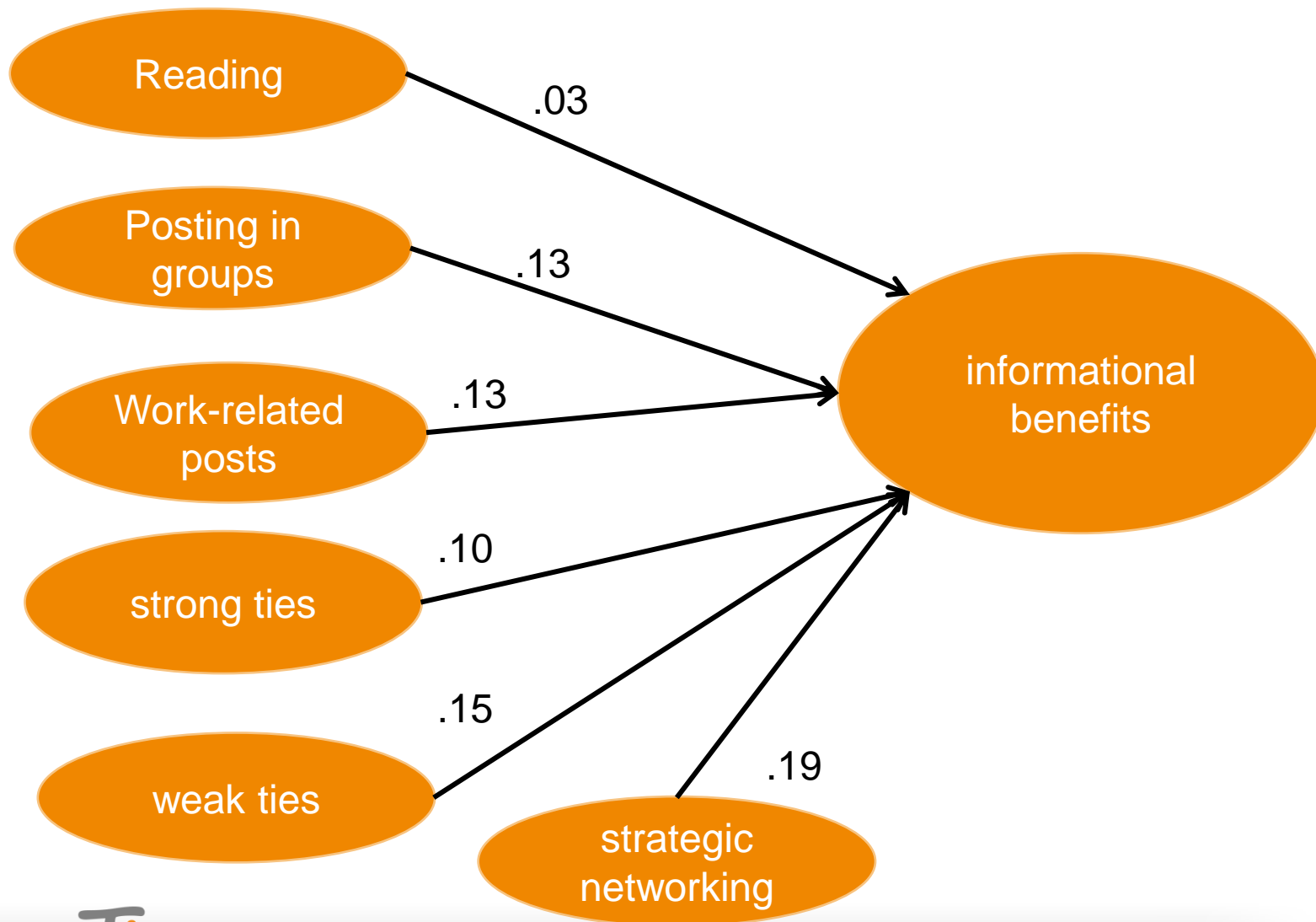


Effects of actual use

- reading
 - localisation of expertise: Who-knows-what in my network?
- posting
 - advice seeking; trusted receiver of information
- content
 - (work-related) content of posts
- network
 - composition (more weaker ties)
 - strategic networking



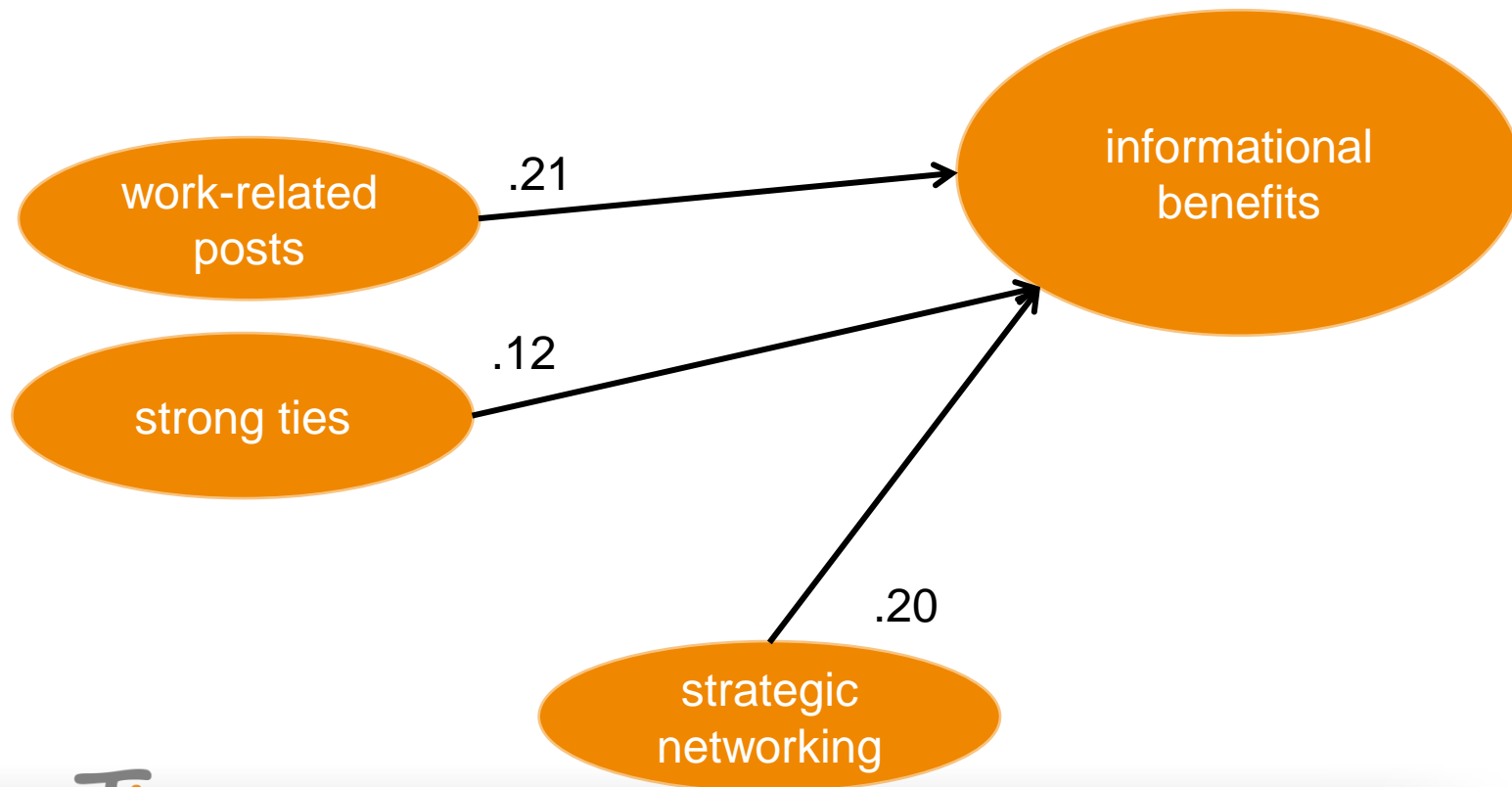
Business-networks, Wave 1: significant effects



$$R^2_{adj} = .15$$



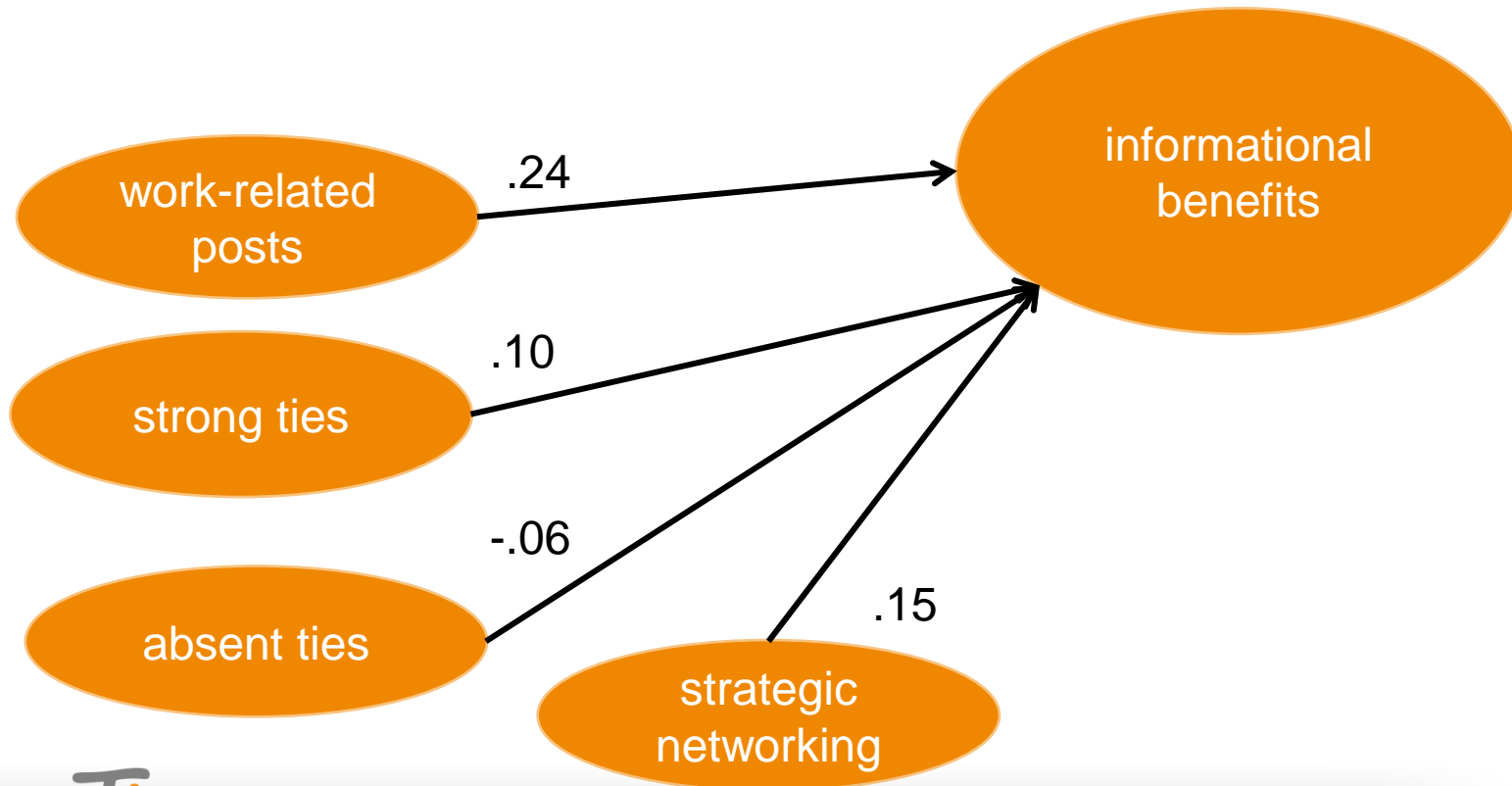
Twitter, Wave 1: significant effects



$$R^2_{\text{adj}} = .15$$



Facebook, Wave 1: significant effects



$R^2_{adj} = .19$



Summary

- social media use can result in informational benefits
 - platform effects: mainly use of business networks
 - But: actual use matters!
- consistent findings:
- posting more important than reading
 - posts should be work-related
 - strong ties matter
 - strategic choice of contacts important
- Social media not cause, but facilitator
- follow-up research
- look deeper into underlying processes => ambient awareness



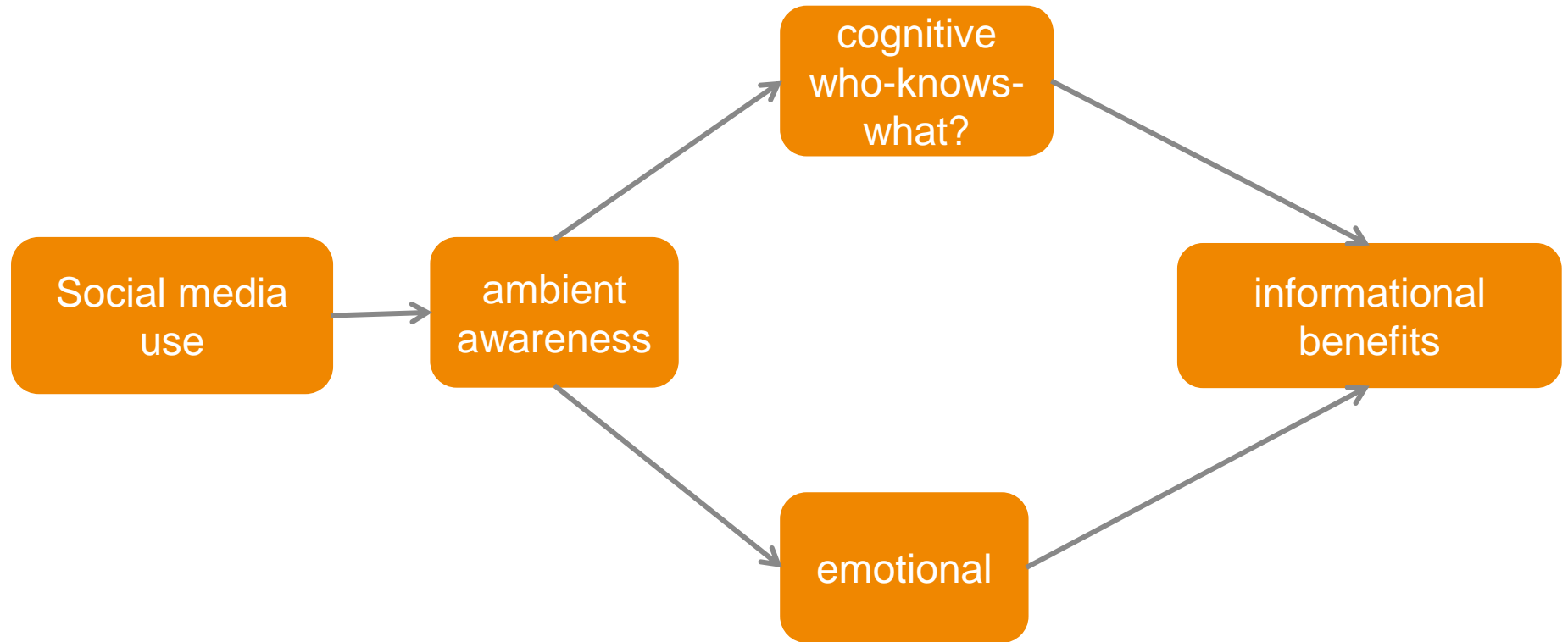
The role of ambient awareness

This is the paradox of ambient awareness. Each little update — each individual bit of social information — is insignificant on its own, even supremely mundane. But taken together, over time, the little snippets coalesce into a surprisingly sophisticated portrait of your friends' and family members' lives, like thousands of dots making a pointillist painting. This was never before possible, because in the real world, no friend would *bother* to call you up and detail the sandwiches she was eating. The ambient information

- Thompson (2008), The New York Times



PhD project Ana Levordashka => see poster





**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION!**

QUESTIONS?

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