

Social media use and social capital

Sonja Utz

Lecture in Duisburg, 05.11.14



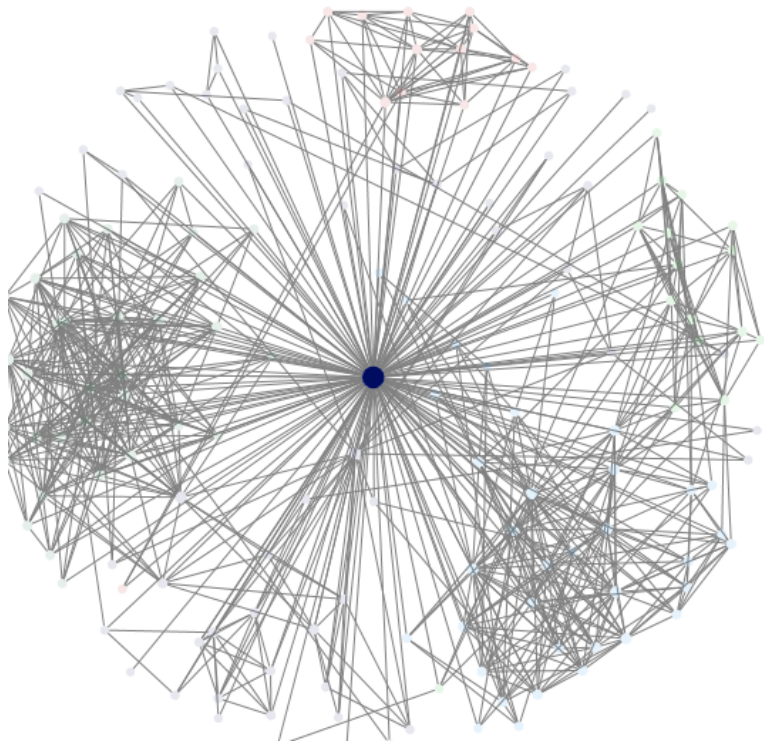
Social capital

- “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)



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)



Informational
support

Emotional
support



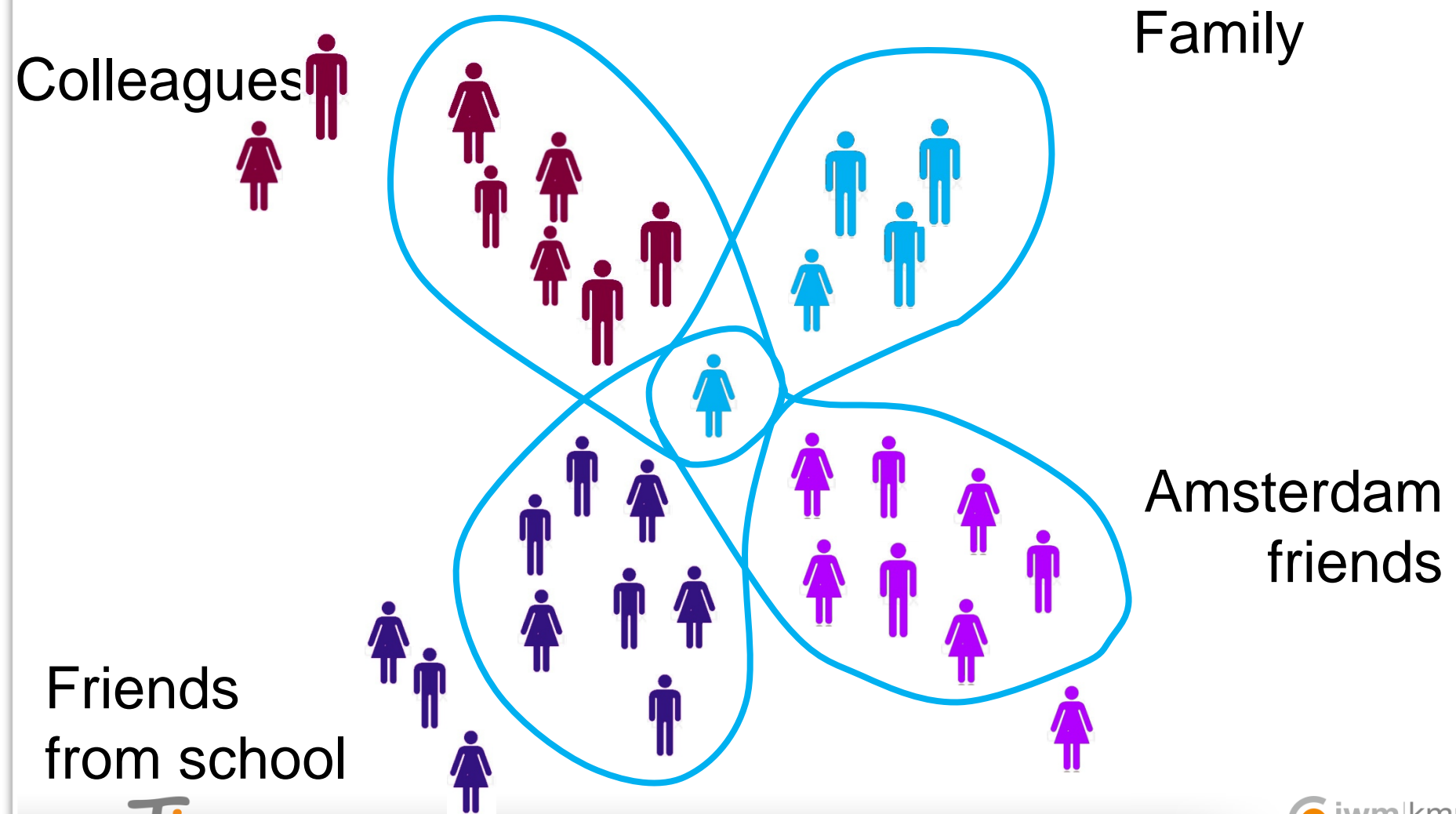


The role of social media

- change of networks
 - size
 - structure
 - content

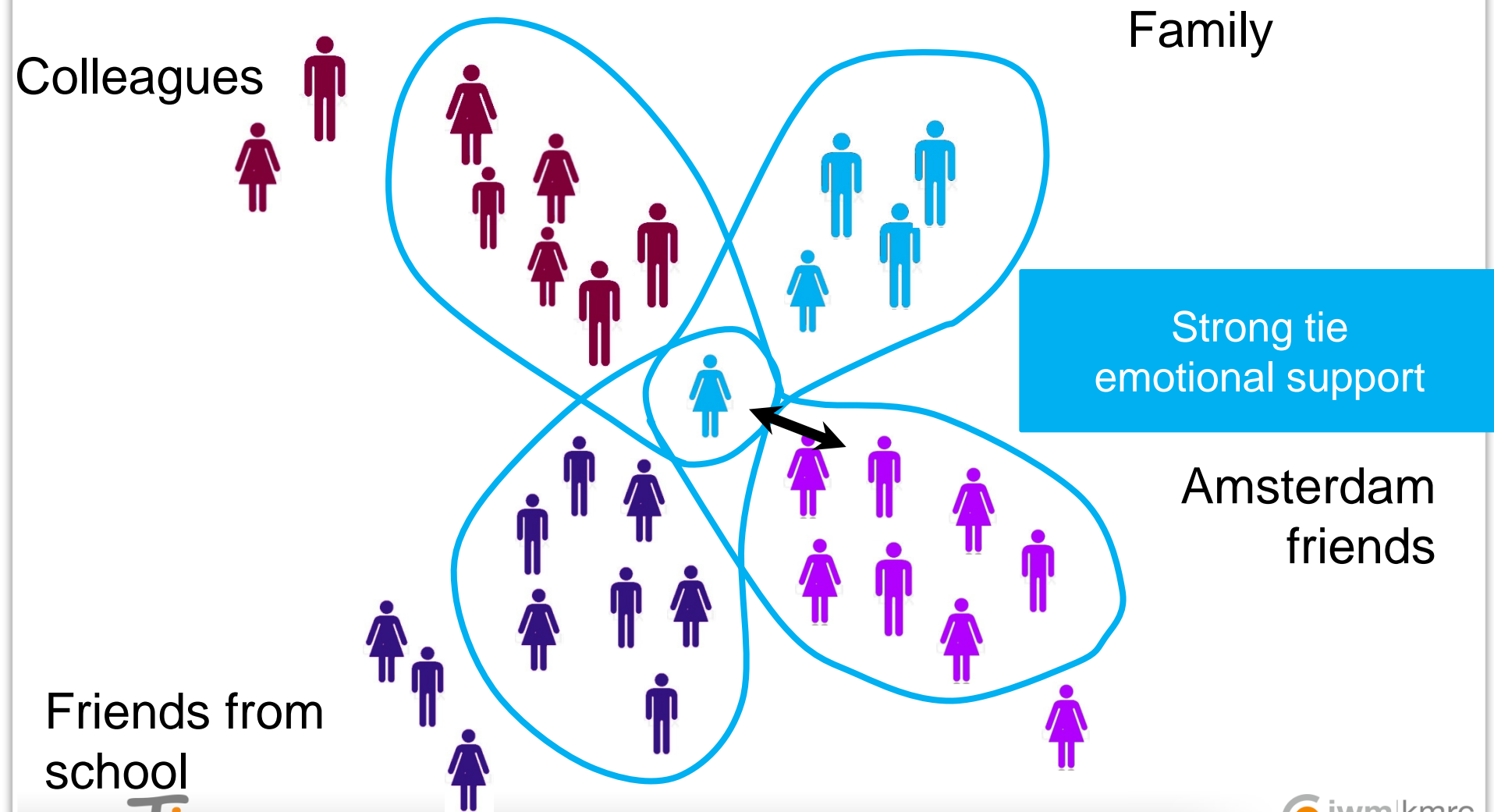


How my social network used to be in 2004



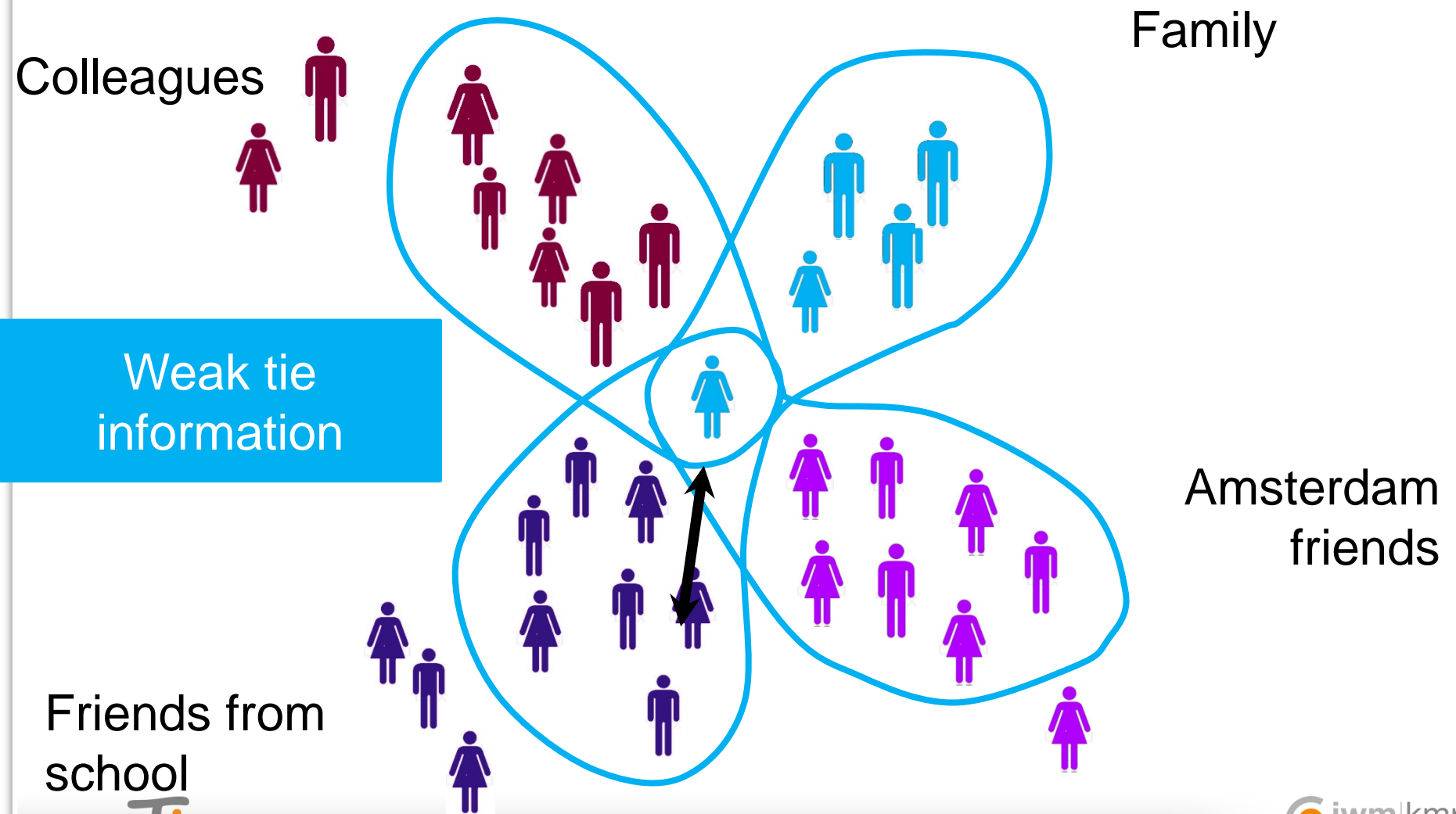


How my social network used to be in 2004



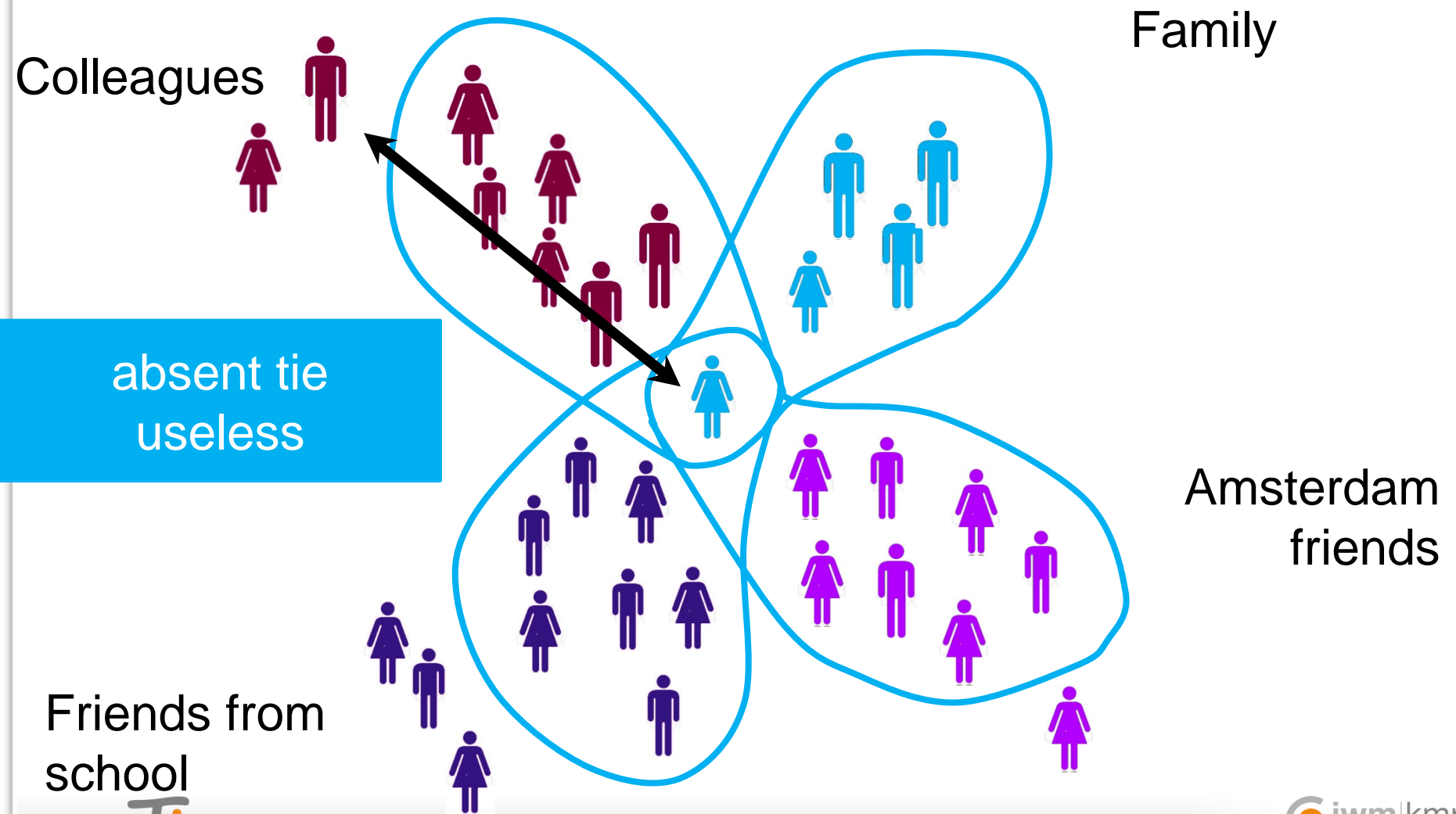


How my social network used to be in 2004



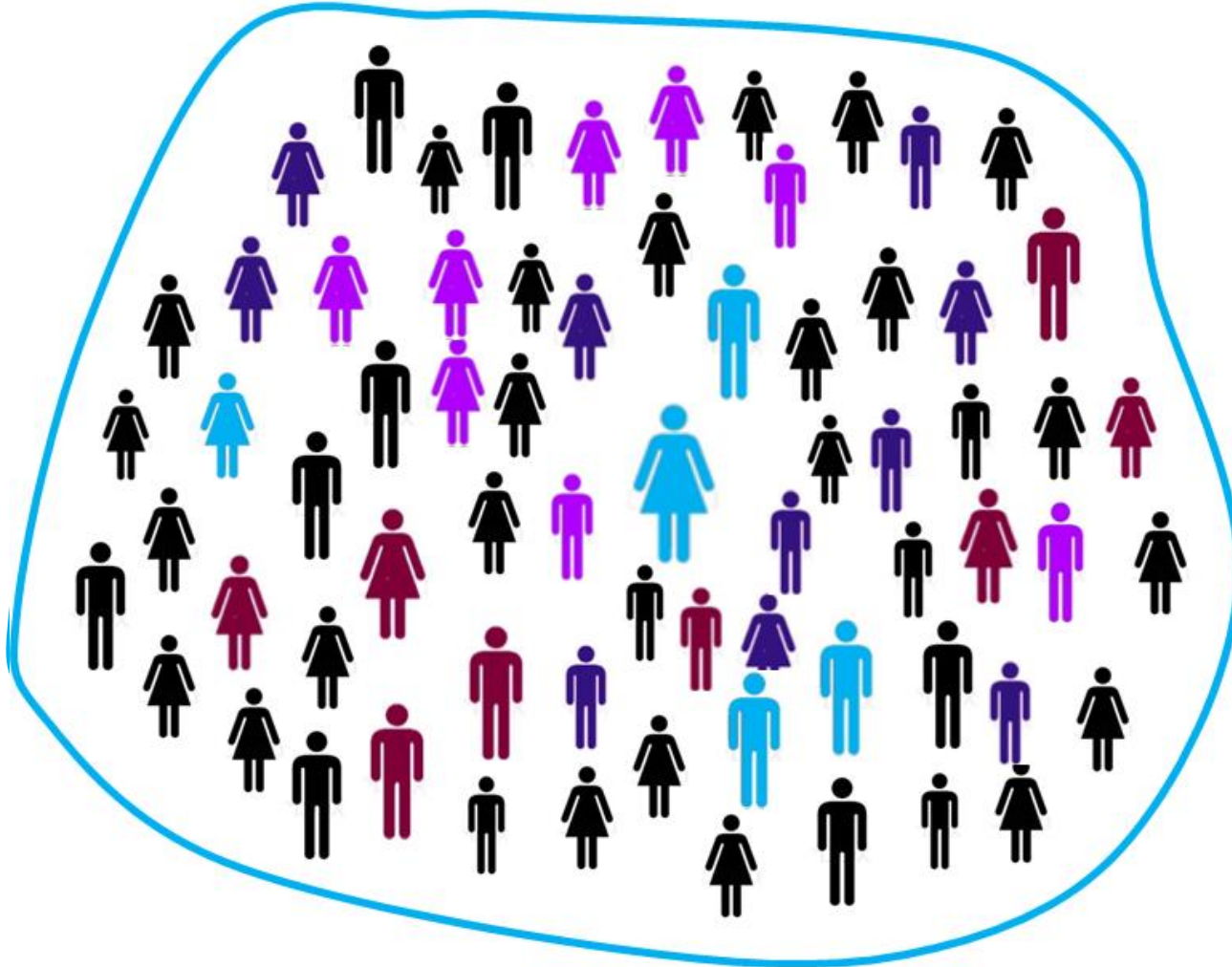


How my social network used to be in 2004





My social network today





Social media and social capital

- seminal study: Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe (2007)
- focus on bonding (strong ties), bridging (weak ties) capital and maintained capital (staying in touch via Facebook)
 - general hypothesis: Intensity of Facebook use increases all forms of social capital
 - effects stronger for people with low self-esteem and life satisfaction



Method

- Online survey among 286 students (66% female)
- Facebook intensity:
 - login frequency
 - number of Facebook friends
 - statements such as "Facebook has become part of my daily routine"
- Self-esteem: Rosenberg scale (e.g., I feel that I have a number of good qualities)
- Life satisfaction: scale by Diener, adapted to Michigan State University (MSU) (e.g., In most ways my life at MSU is close to my ideal.)
- bridging and bonding capital: scale by Williams (2006)
- maintained capital: 5 items (e.g., If I needed to, I could ask a high school acquaintance to do a small favor for me)



Bridging vs. bonding capital scale by Williams (2006)

Table 1. Bridging and bonding scale question forms with online/offline variants

Bonding Subscale

1. There are several people online/offline I trust to help solve my problems.^a
2. There is someone online/offline I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions.^a
3. There is no one online/offline that I feel comfortable talking to about intimate personal problems. (reversed)^a
4. When I feel lonely, there are several people online/offline I can talk to.
5. If I needed an emergency loan of \$500, I know someone online/offline I can turn to.^a
6. The people I interact with online/offline would put their reputation on the line for me.
7. The people I interact with online/offline would be good job references for me.
8. The people I interact with online/offline would share their last dollar with me.
9. I do not know people online/offline well enough to get them to do anything important. (reversed)
10. The people I interact with online/offline would help me fight an injustice.

Bridging Subscale

1. Interacting with people online/offline makes me interested in things that happen outside of my town.
 2. Interacting with people online/offline makes me want to try new things.
 3. Interacting with people online/offline makes me interested in what people unlike me are thinking.
 4. Talking with people online/offline makes me curious about other places in the world.
 5. Interacting with people online/offline makes me feel like part of a larger community.
 6. Interacting with people online/offline makes me feel connected to the bigger picture.
 7. Interacting with people online/offline reminds me that everyone in the world is connected.
 8. I am willing to spend time to support general online/offline community activities.
 9. Interacting with people online/offline gives me new people to talk to.
 10. Online/Offline, I come in contact with new people all the time.
-

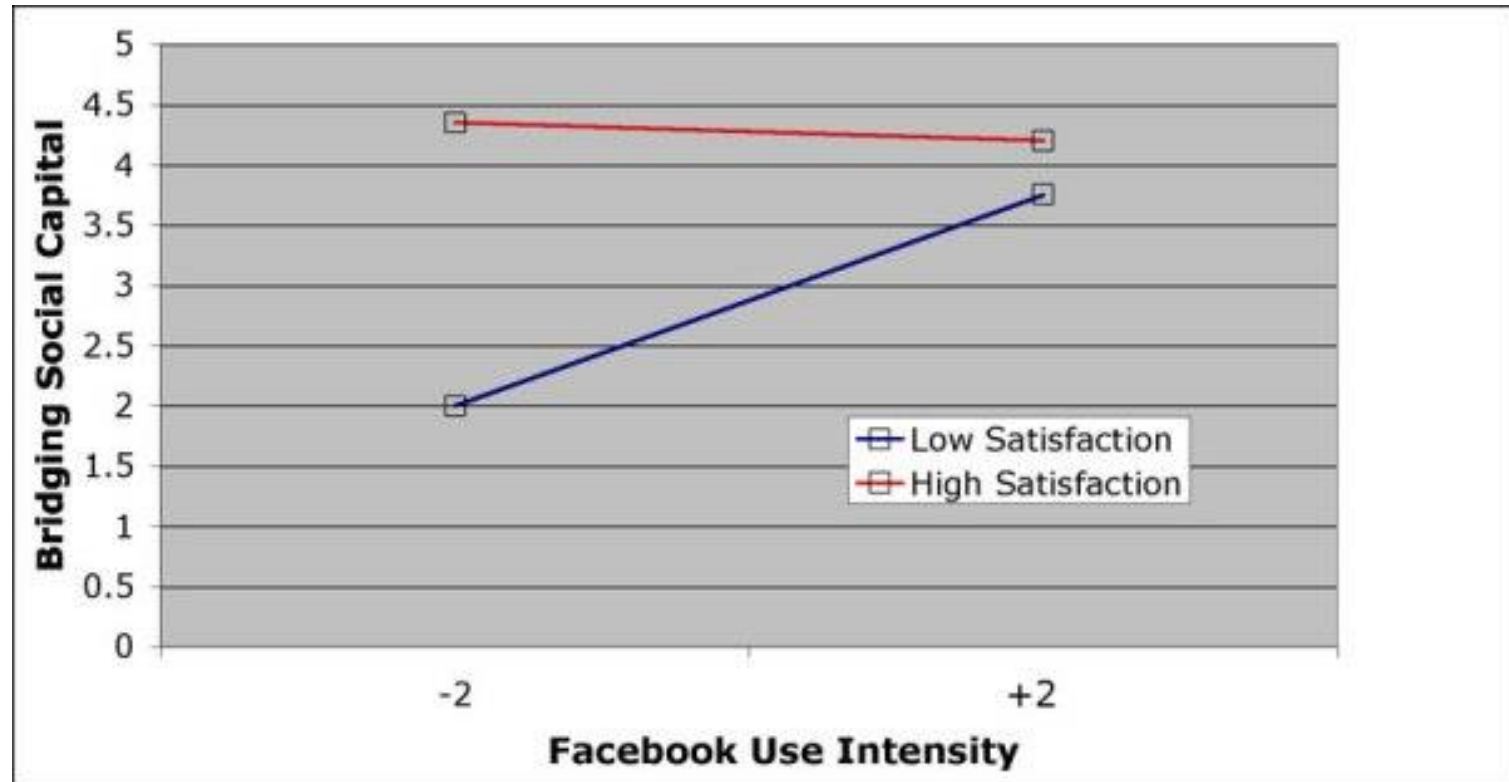


Main findings

- bonding capital predicted by Facebook intensity:
- => Facebook increases bonding capital
- Facebook use and general internet use increase maintained capital
- strongest effects for bridging capital,
 - interaction with self-esteem and life satisfaction

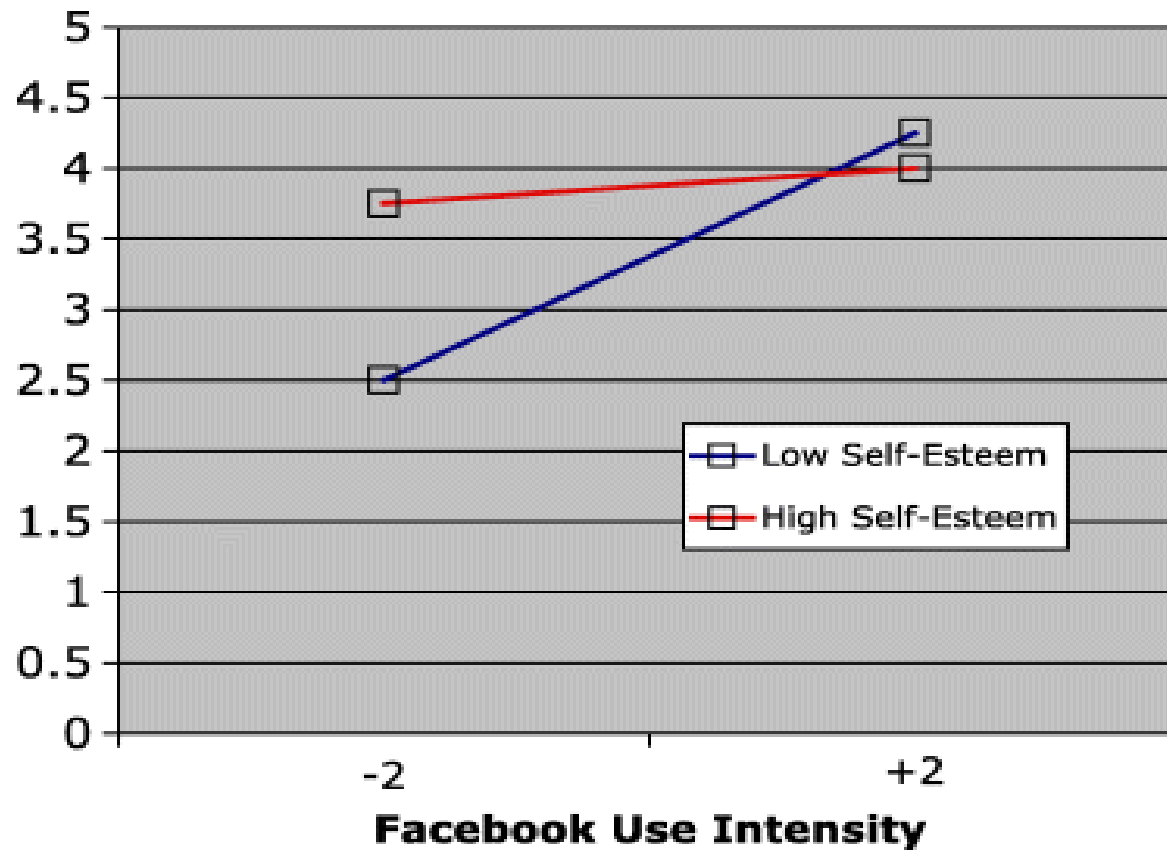


Resultats – Effects on bridging social capital





Resultats – Effects on bridging social capital





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
- basic finding replicated several times
- meanwhile: several studies on the collective level
 - trust, civic/political engagement (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009)
=> higher among (active) Facebook users
 - often used: bridging/bonding scale by Williams (2006) => recent criticism



Bridging vs. bonding capital scale by Williams (2006)

Table 1. Bridging and bonding scale question forms with online/offline variants

Bonding Subscale

1. There are several people online/offline I trust to help solve my problems.^a
2. There is someone online/offline I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions.^a
3. There is no one online/offline that I feel comfortable talking to about intimate personal problems. (reversed)^a
4. When I feel lonely, there are several people online/offline I can talk to.
5. If I needed an emergency loan of \$500, I know someone online/offline I can turn to.^a
6. The people I interact with online/offline would put their reputation on the line for me.
7. The people I interact with online/offline would be good job references for me.
8. The people I interact with online/offline would share their last dollar with me.
9. I do not know people online/offline well enough to get them to do anything important. (reversed)
10. The people I interact with online/offline would help me fight an injustice.

Bridging Subscale

1. Interacting with people online/offline makes me interested in things that happen outside of my town.
 2. Interacting with people online/offline makes me want to try new things.
 3. Interacting with people online/offline makes me interested in what people unlike me are thinking.
 4. Talking with people online/offline makes me curious about other places in the world.
 5. Interacting with people online/offline makes me feel like part of a larger community.
 6. Interacting with people online/offline makes me feel connected to the bigger picture.
 7. Interacting with people online/offline reminds me that everyone in the world is connected.
 8. I am willing to spend time to support general online/offline community activities.
 9. Interacting with people online/offline gives me new people to talk to.
 10. Online/Offline, I come in contact with new people all the time.
-



Criticism bridging-bonding scale (Appel)

- subscales correlated around .50
- scale often adapted to specific context (e.g., MSU students)
- no meaningful correlations with more established measures of social capital (name generator, position generator)
- based on measures that assess rather consequences of social capital
- but: also only moderately correlated to social support!
- “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)
- => better use different measures



- more recent: focus on social support
 - mainly: emotional support + mobilization requests
 - analyze actual status updates + responses (Ellison et al., 2013)
 - recommendations as form of informational support
- not much on informational support in professional contexts => ReDefTie project



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



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission
**Supporting top researchers
from anywhere in the world**



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)

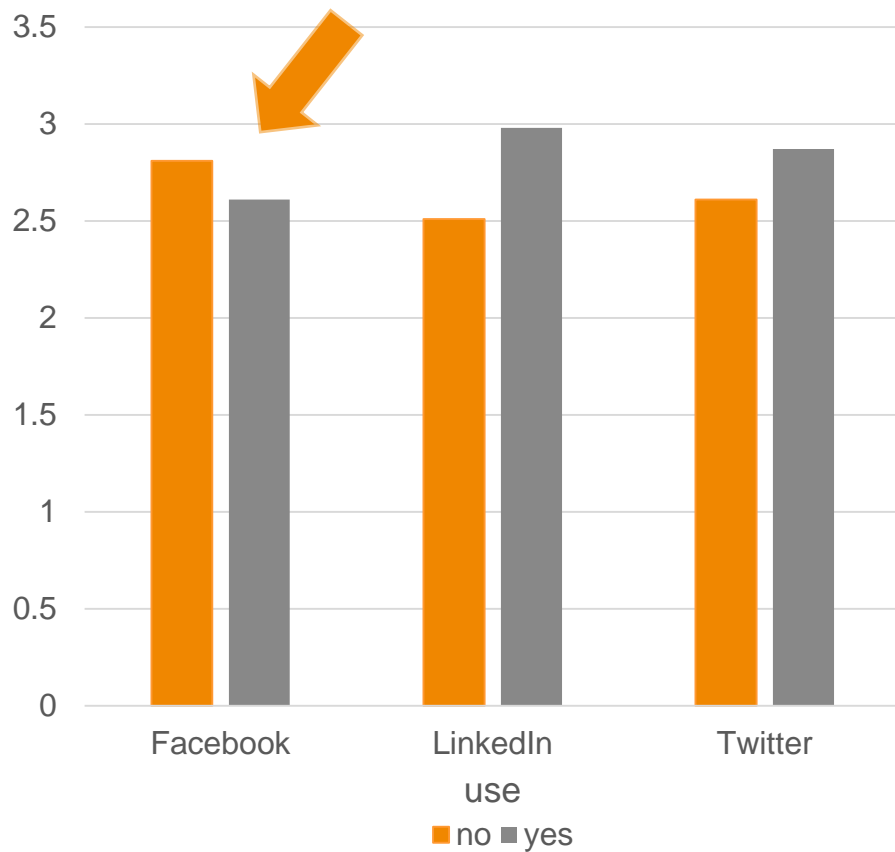
Scale of 5 items:

- 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.

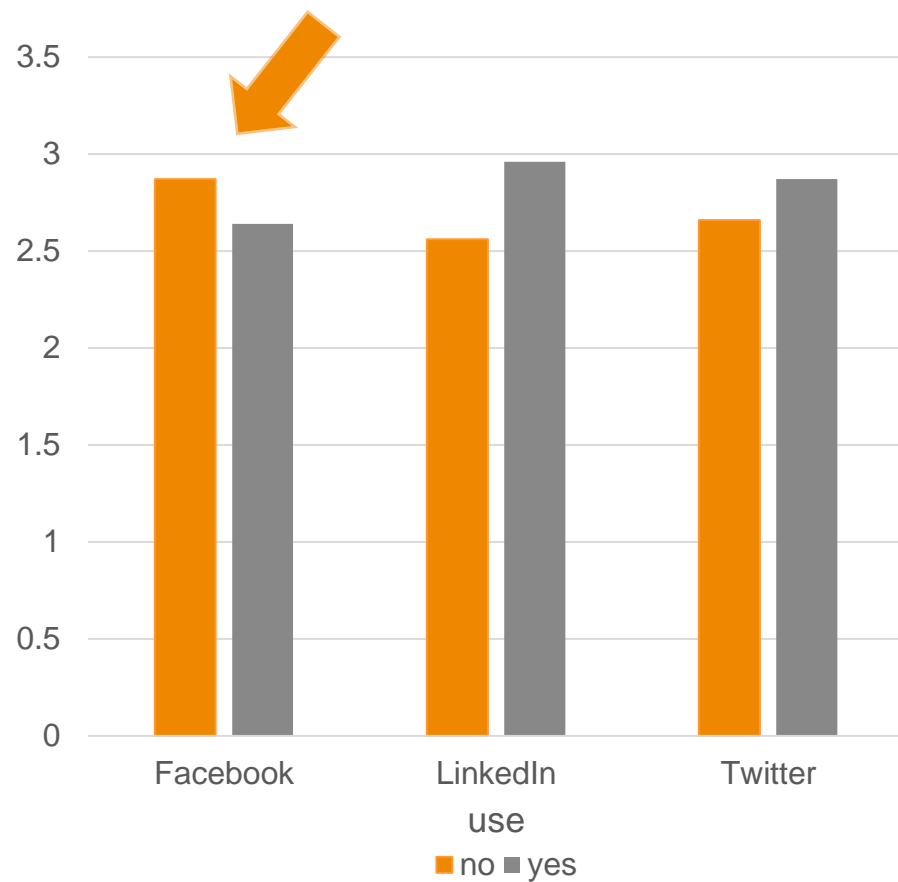


Informational benefits – effects of platform

Wave 1

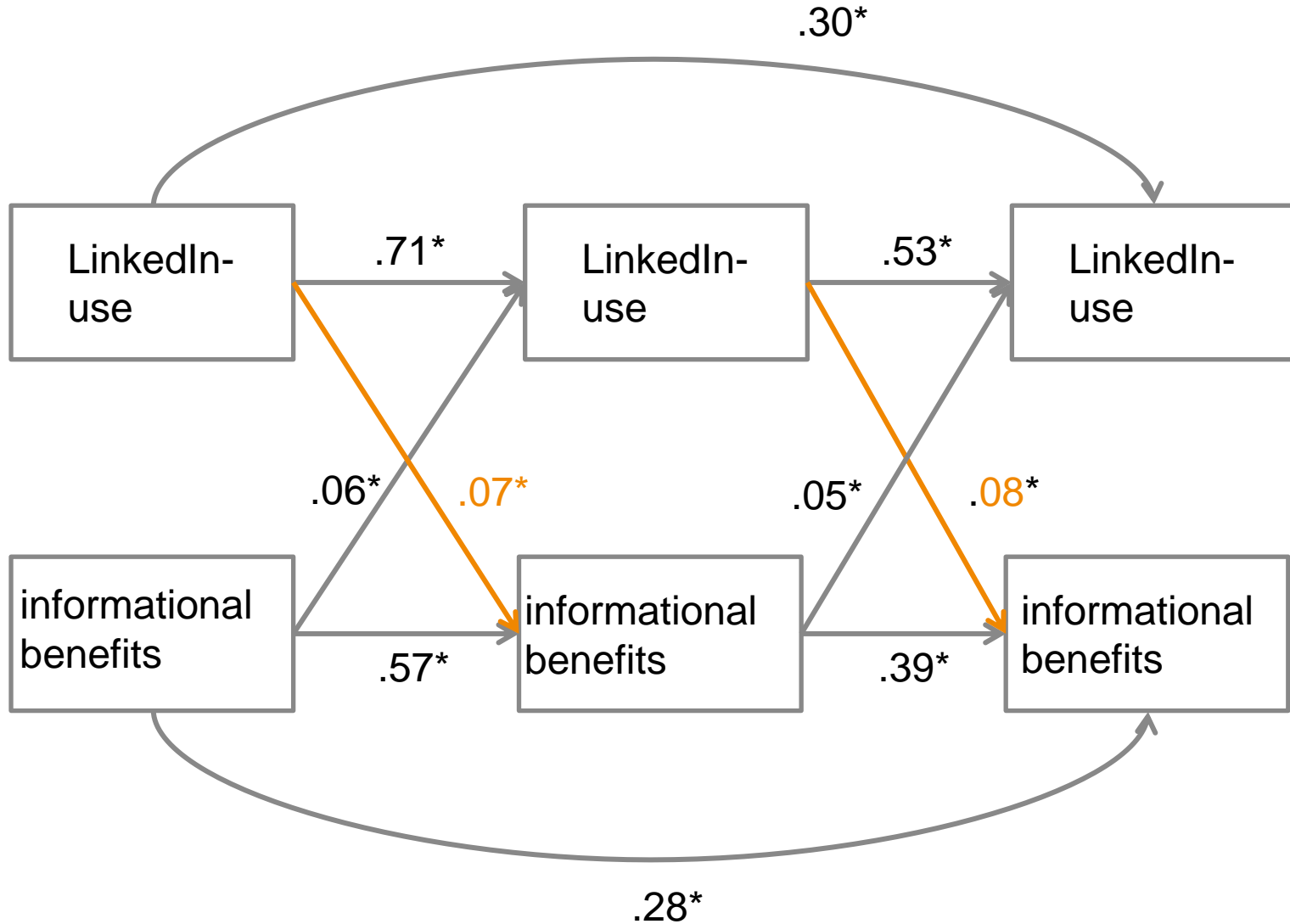


Wave 2





Cause vs. consequence?



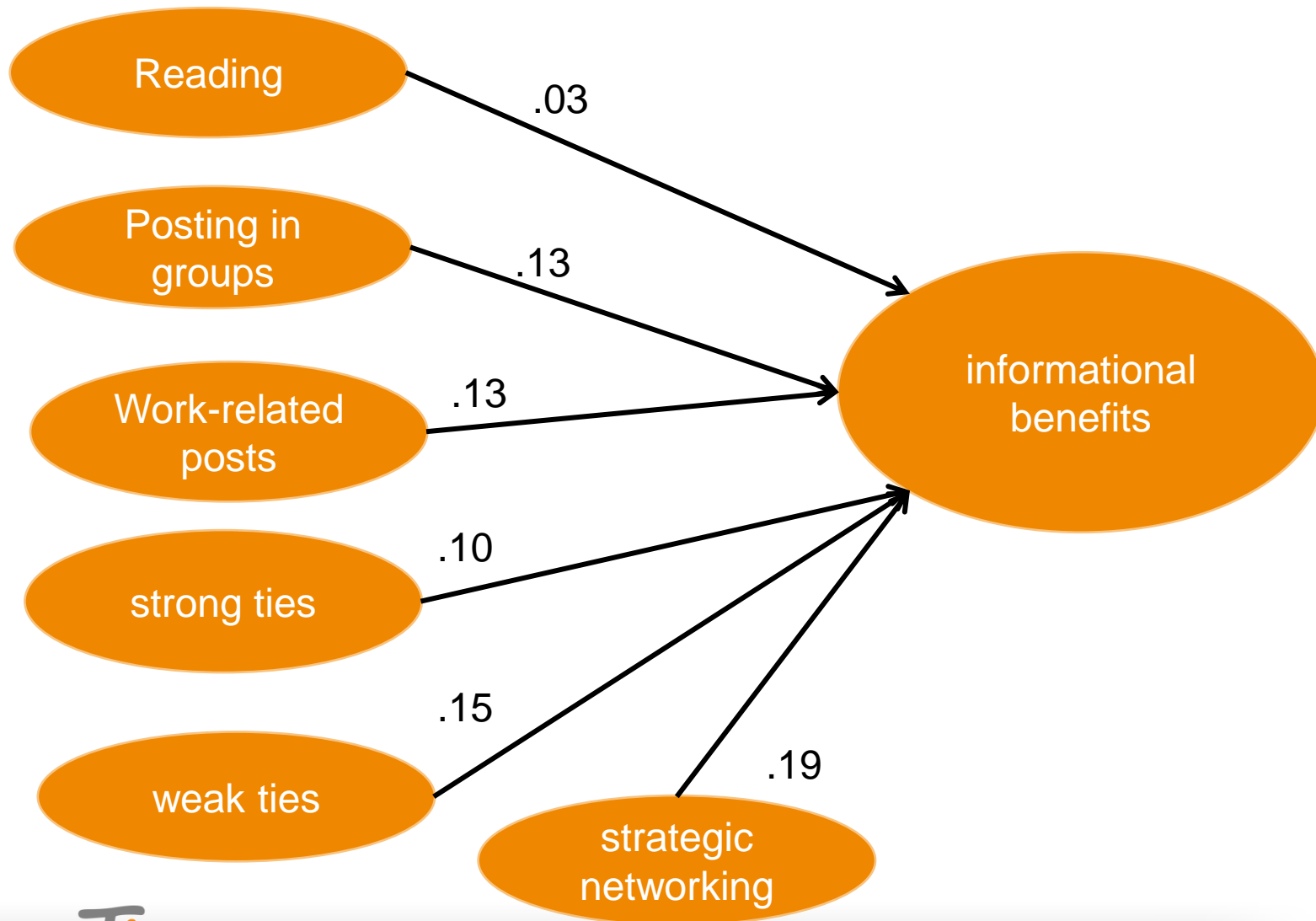


Effects of actual use

- 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



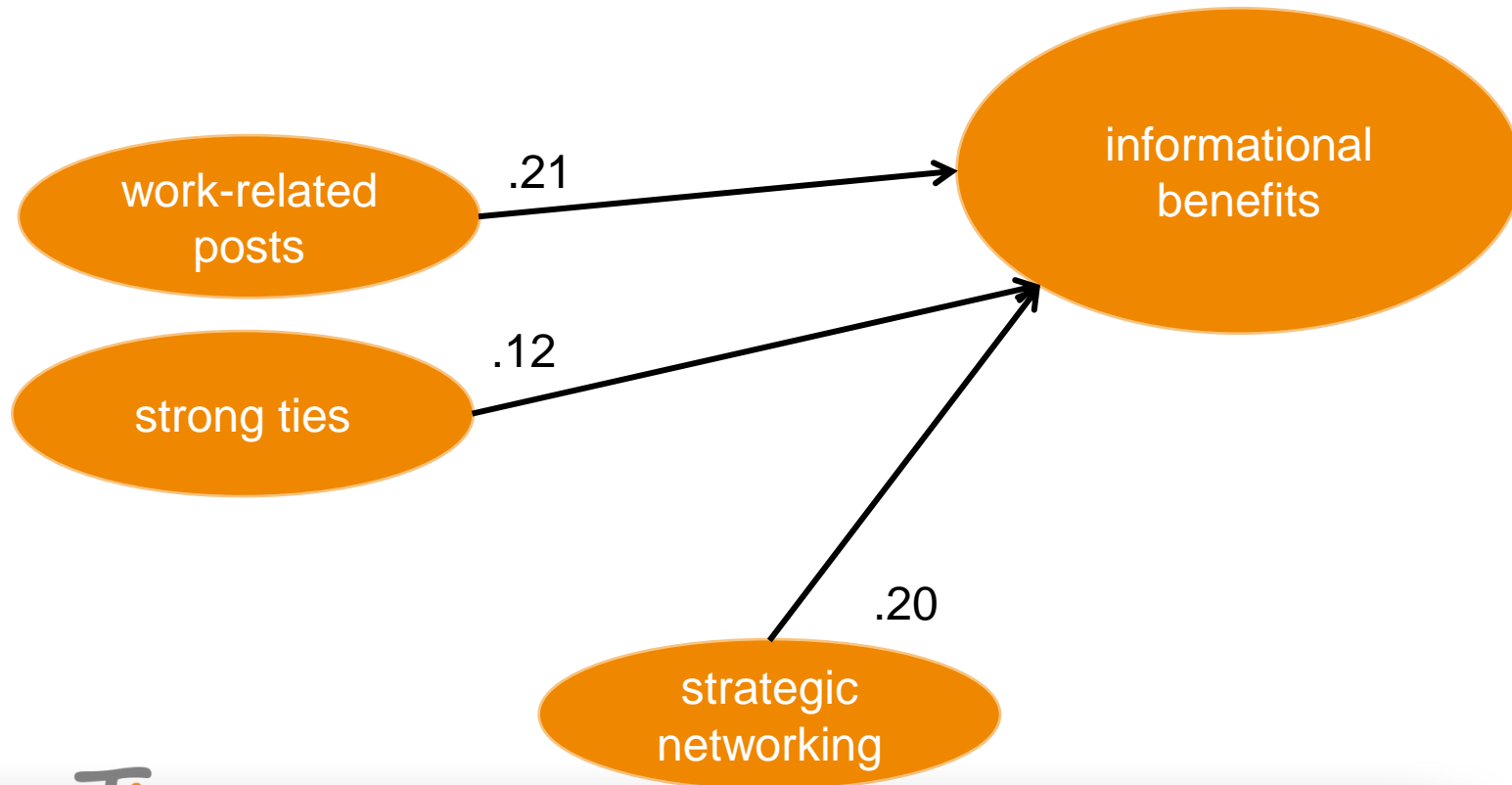
Business-networks, Wave 1: significant effects



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



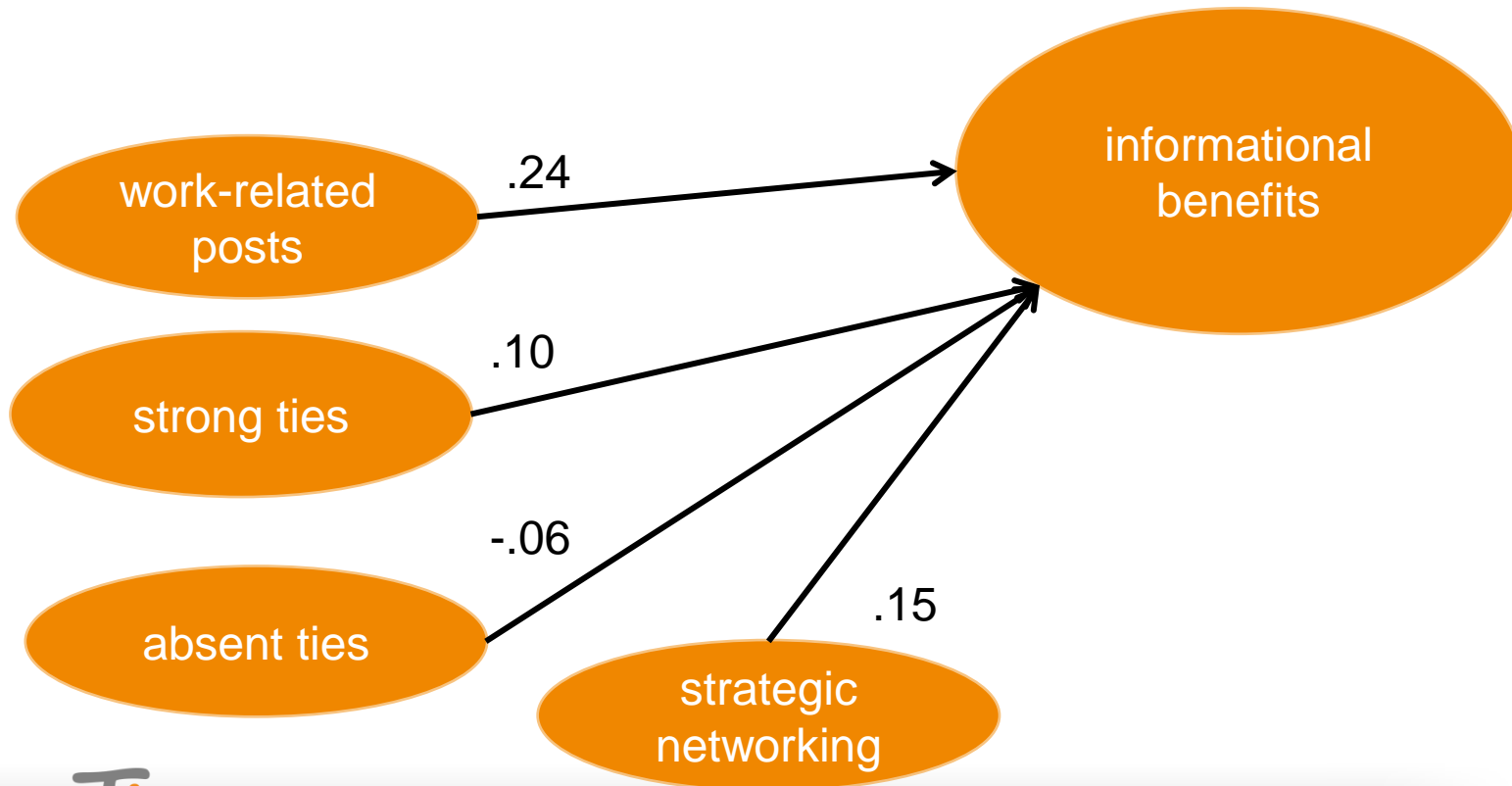
Twitter, Wave 1: significant effects



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



Facebook, Wave 1: significant effects



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



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

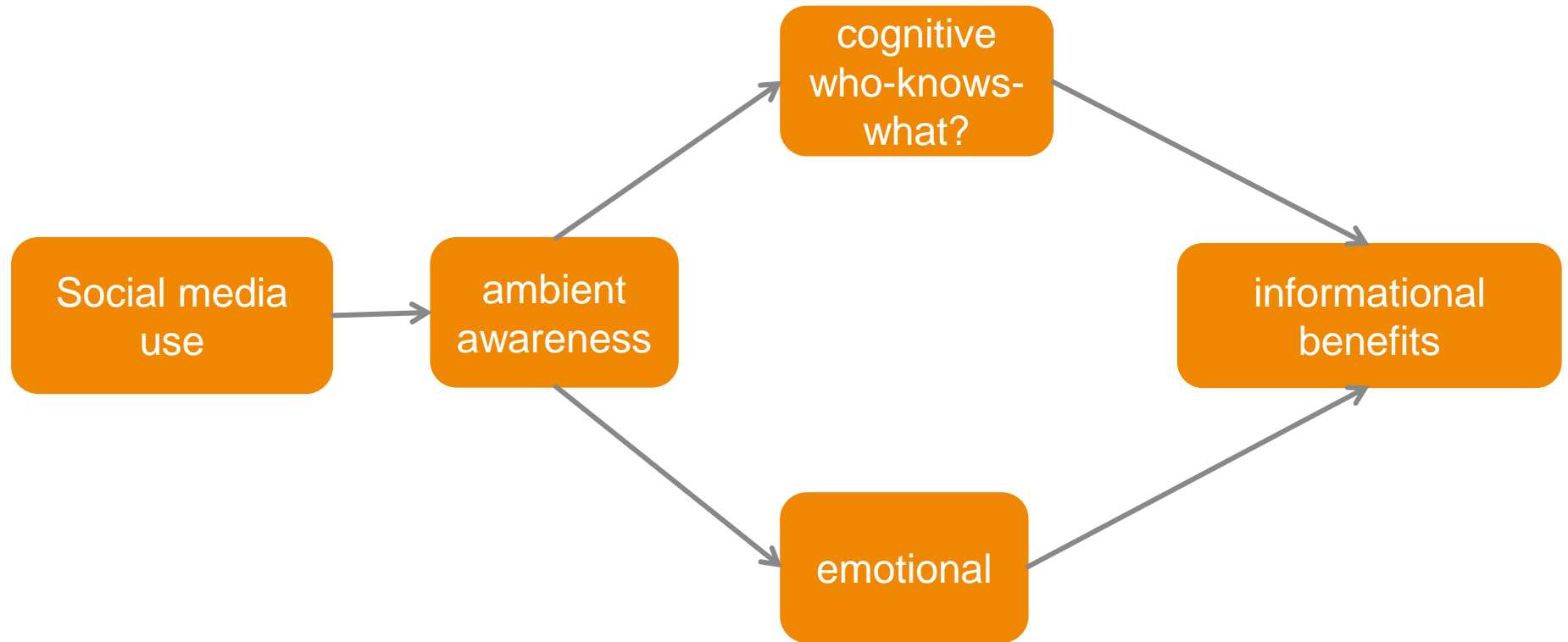


The role of ambient awareness

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

How ambient awareness might increase informational benefits





Ambient awareness

- first step: develop measurement of ambient awareness
- Do people indeed experience it?
- For whom: just a few contacts or the whole network?
- vague feeling or concrete knowledge?
- which dimensions?
- => exploratory study, PhD project Ana Levordashka



Method

- online study with active Twitter users (recruited via panel)
- informed consent, access to Twitter profile
- list of 100 randomly selected people they follow
- say whether this is
 - a) a person they primarily encounter on twitter
 - b) a person they primarily encounter outside twitter
 - c) non-human
 - d) unknown
- general measure of awareness
- measures for up to 5 twitter-contacts



General measure of ambient awareness

It is possible that when using Twitter, you develop awareness of the people whose updates you follow. Even if individual updates are short and mundane, together they might give you an idea of the person who posts them - what they are like, what they do, etc.

Do you experience such general awareness of the people in your Twitter network and to what extent?

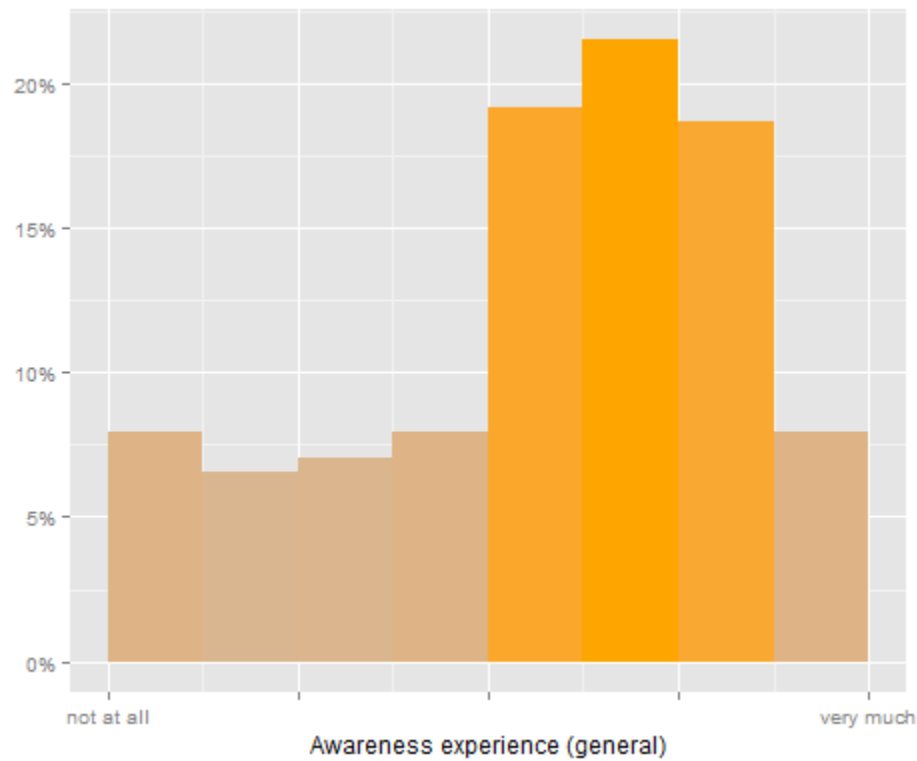


Method

- Relative to your other Twitter contacts, how well do you think you know this person?
- Not at all well -- Very well (7)
- Relative to your other Twitter contacts, how close do you feel to this person?
- Not at all close -- Very close (7)
- Have ever you gotten to know any of the following about this person (Select all that apply):
 - Hobbies and interests
 - Career related information
 - Vacation and travel plans
 - Life events
 - Daily mood and experiences
 - Sense of humor
 - Personality and character
 - Beliefs and values
 - Other. Please specify: _____
 - Not sure
- Drill down => what career, which hobbies,...

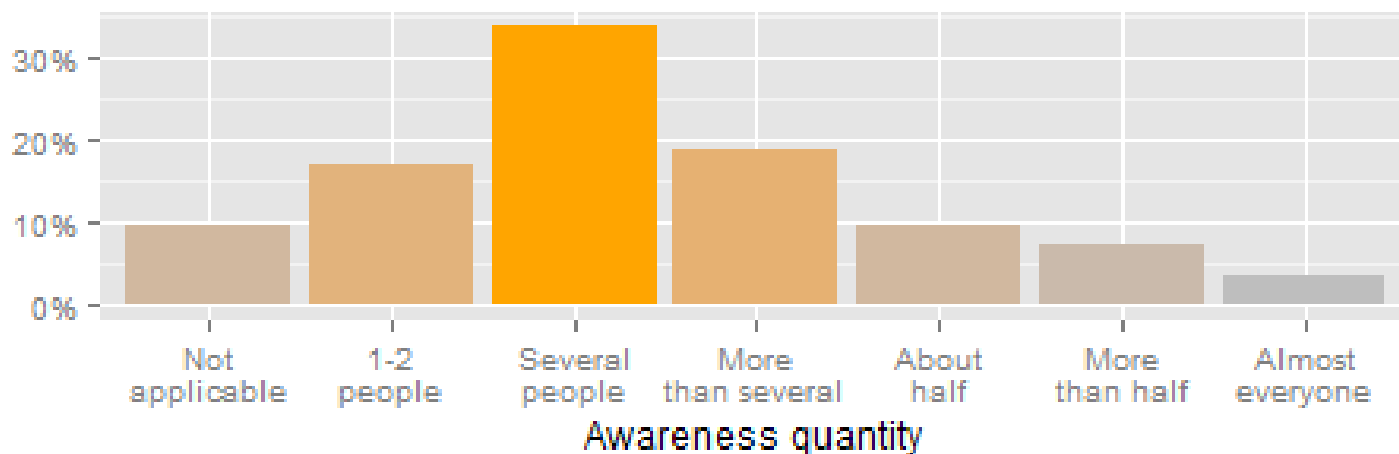


Do people experience ambient awareness?





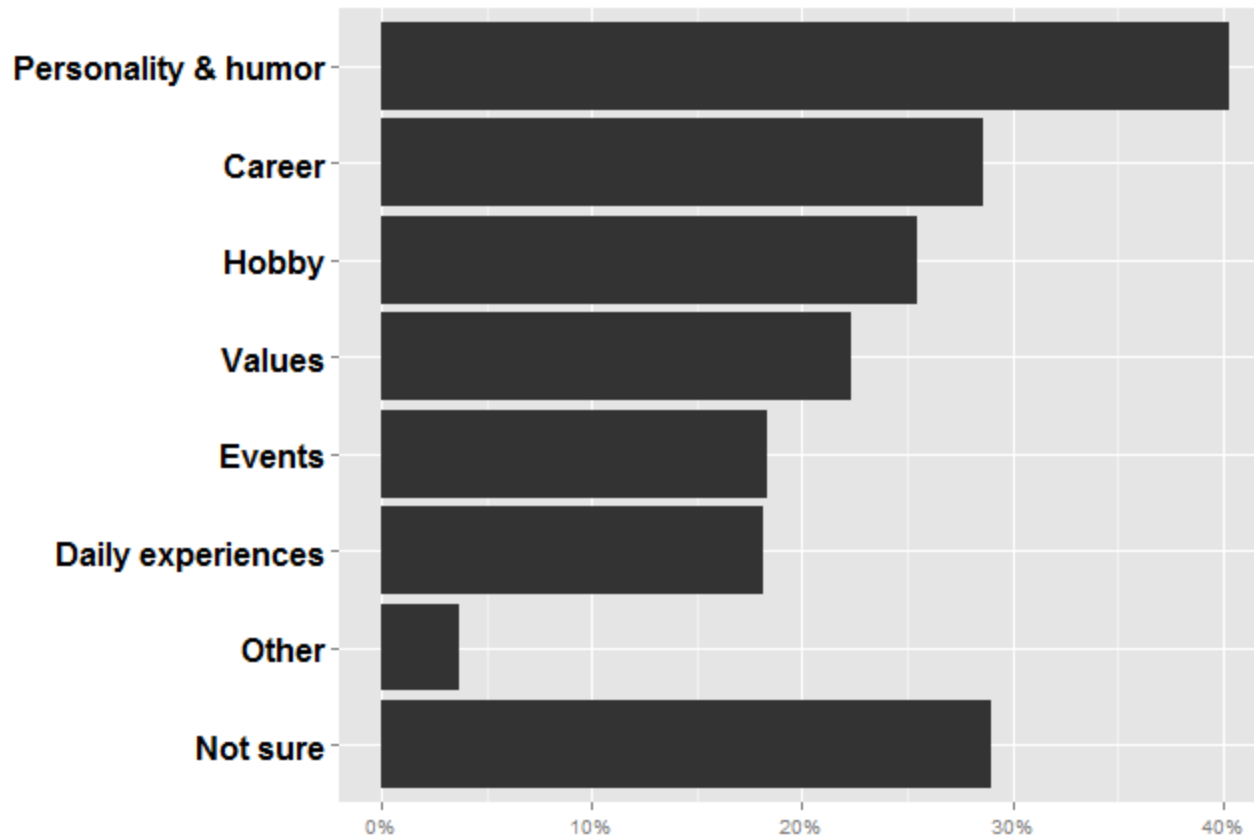
With whom to people experience ambient awareness?





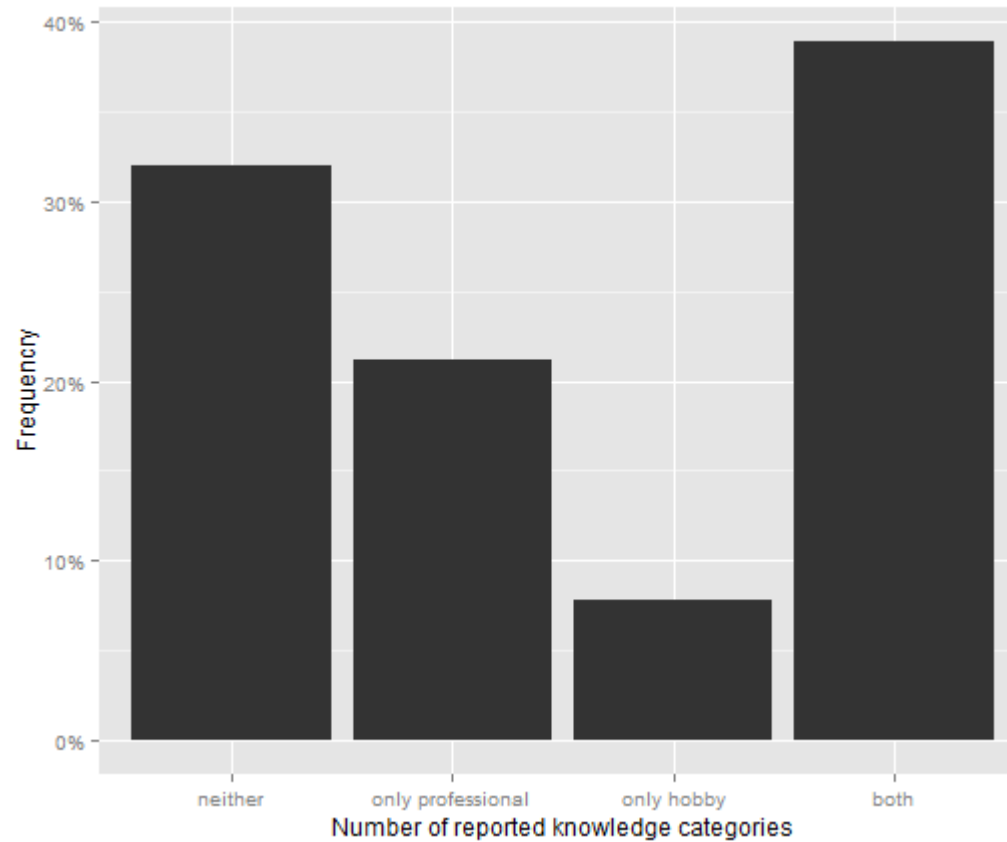
Knowledge categories

Have you ever gotten to know anything of the following about T?





Expertise-related awareness





Summary ambient awareness

- Yes, it exists!
- in most cases for several contacts
 - but: some report awareness for half/complete network => future research
- not only a vague feeling, but also actual knowledge
 - mainly about personality/humor => spontaneous trait inferences
 - about expertise => who-knows-what, informational benefits
- Future research
 - automatic or conscious process?
 - mediating role in receiving informational benefits
 - cognitive or emotional process?



Summary lecture

- social media change the size and content of our networks
- consequences for social capital
- Facebook users: mainly emotional benefits: social support, esteem support
- business networks: informational benefits
- ambient awareness as possible underlying process



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION!**

QUESTIONS?

FOLLOW US AT @REDEFTIE