

The Life of the Party:
Attraction, Opportunity and Encounter at a Business Mixer

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We recorded the incidence and persistence of encounters between guests at a party of business people, providing the first fine-grained evidence of the pattern of socializing dynamics at an unstructured event. This evidence is important because unstructured events like parties are themselves prominent in our social lives, and because encounters and conversations in these contexts are the elements of more reified relationships. To explain activity at the party, we consider attraction to similar others, or homophily, and the structure of opportunity as defined by the network of relationships between guests, both before and during the party. Both these factors mattered, but often in surprising ways. For example, the influence of structure was surprisingly strong given that the guests saw the party as a way to break out of pre-existing structures in order to meet new people. For homophily, we show that the relevance of similarity changed as guests accumulated more encounters at the party, and that there was a shift in which basis of similarity mattered as guests went from initial encounter to prolonged engagement.

The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches away from the sun, and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music, and the opera of voices pitches a key higher. Laughter is easier minute by minute, spilled with prodigality, tipped out at a cheerful word. The groups change more swiftly, swell with new arrivals, dissolve and form in the same breath; already there are wanderers, confident girls who weave here and there among the stouter and more stable, become for a sharp, joyous moment the center of a group, and then, excited with triumph, glide on through the sea-change of faces and voices and color under the constantly changing light.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Chapter 3

The manner in which groups form and break up at parties, and conversation spins itself out, deepens, loosens, cuts itself off purely according to impulse and opportunity—that is a miniature picture of the social ideal that might be called the freedom of bondage....

Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*, “Sociability”

Do people meet and begin relationships through the pull of attraction, the push of opportunity, or through the interplay between the two forces? This question, in various guises, is one of the most fundamental in the social sciences, both because it addresses the tension between self and structure that is at the heart of social theory, and because the pattern of relationships is the foundation for so many social outcomes. In this paper we examine the influence of attraction and opportunity in an “elemental” form of encounter, the incidence and persistence of conversations between individuals at a party. Such elemental encounters are worthy of study because they are the buds from which more mature relationships such as friendship grow, and indeed, may even be constitutive of those relationships (Goffman, 1961; Collins, 2004).

To explore how party “conversation spins itself out, deepens, loosens, [and] cuts itself off,” we hosted an after-work mixer for business executives. The guests numbered almost one hundred. They were accomplished managers, entrepreneurs, consultants and bankers, most based in a large American city, but some from other countries, and other parts of the U.S. On average, they had friendly relationships before the party with about one-third of the other guests; the rest were strangers to each other. As they mingled at the party, we tracked their encounters using nTags—small electronic devices, worn by each guest, which registered encounters and tracked their duration. As a result, we have second-by-second data regarding contacts at the

party, which we use to build a dynamic network that captures encounters throughout the whole event.

We analyze the “life of the party” as an aggregate system. Looking at the party as an evolving networked structure we ask what makes any two guests come together at any moment. The force of opportunity can be captured by the social structure, both that from pre-existing ties and from ties forged earlier in the party. Attraction can be captured by applying the concept of homophily, the tendency for attraction between similar people (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954). We examine these influences using two dynamic analyses at the dyadic level. One, which we refer to as the conversational encounter analysis, uses event-history methods to predict the likelihood at any moment that two guests will come together to converse. The other, which we refer to as the conversational engagement analysis, uses event-history methods to examine how long a given conversation will continue.

The encounter and engagement analyses yield results that are at the same time supportive and provocative for extant theories of network dynamics, which have all developed through a focus on mature interactions such as friendships, marriages, and even corporate joint ventures. As in those relationships, similarity helps explain encounter and engagement at the party, but the role of similarity at the party is complex, so much so that there are no “main effects” for similarity, and its influence emerges only after considering contingencies. Observable bases of similarity (sex, race, physical attractiveness) play a role in who encounters whom, but their influence shifts as the party progresses (where progress refers to the accumulation of social encounters and not the mere passage of time). Non-observable similarities (job-type and educational background) play a role in engagement, but only for a small subset of guests.

The role of network structure at the party, on the other hand, is surprising because it *is* like the role of structure in more mature relationships. Party guests were much more likely to

encounter others they knew before the party. Such direct connections may be important in mature relationships as sources of information, affect and trust, but their influence at mixer parties, which are typically viewed as arenas for meeting new people, suggests that the bounds of cumulative structure may be even more constraining than previously thought. There was also an indirect effect of structure at the party, as guests connected through third parties were more likely to encounter each other. The indirect effect, however, did not depend on the pre-party network of strong ties, but on the dynamic network of encounters that unfolded as the party progressed. Whereas indirect connections through strong ties may provide social control, we interpret bridging in the party network as evidence of sociability, a commitment to the party as a collective which makes encountering partners' partners proper behavior.

The format of this paper is influenced by the fact that there is virtually no empirical research on parties in which guests mix and mingle. The notable exception is the "sociability project" led by David Reisman at the University of Chicago (e.g., Reisman, Potter and Watson, 1960a, 1960b; Watson and Potter, 1962; Reisman and Watson, 1964), but that project did not analyze who met whom at parties, instead focusing on the content and pattern of conversations. It is more a predecessor of contemporary conversation analysis than it is of our study, although it did generate some general observations about parties which inform our arguments and analysis.¹ Given that parties are so understudied relative to their prominence in the social world, we attempt to present a broad account of party dynamics, examining both the incidence and duration of encounters, and considering a range of explanatory variables. The dearth of research on parties also affects our presentation of predictions derived from theory. The application to party encounters of arguments used to explain more mature relationships is natural in the sense that it

¹ Readers sometimes also point to the work of Robert Bales as also preceding us in the analysis of interaction at parties. Bales' work examined interaction between individuals based on fixed seating arrangements in small groups, more akin to dinner parties than cocktail parties, and Bales himself distinguishes between the types of gatherings he studied and cocktail parties (Bales, et al. 1951).

allows insight into the development of relations. Still, we are aware that there are reasons to question whether party meetings depend on pre-existing social structure and homophily. We are therefore tentative in applying structural and homophily arguments to generate party predictions, and explain also why they might not apply.

Why Study a Party?

Parties as a source of initial social contact are intertwined with many phenomena that attract research attention. Informal discussions with our guests and a pre-party survey indicated that while many were attracted by the potential for an hour or two of fun, almost all were motivated by some other, more “serious” purpose. Some told us they wanted to reinforce relations with work-group mates, others that they hoped to make new friends. Still others had lobbied the Executive MBA program in which they were students for mixers like the one we studied by claiming that “networking” with the other high-fliers was key to the success of the program, as the source of jobs and support for entrepreneurial ventures.

The point is that our party, like any professional mixer, was not *all* fun and games. Parties are forums for initiating acquaintanceships, cementing friendships, and introducing others and are therefore paths to more substantive goals. Parties may also be representative of other contexts of first encounter. It is because parties are archetypes of weakly structured interaction that Simmel called them “a social type characteristic of modern society (Wolff, 1950: 111).” Parties, therefore, may be worthy targets of social scientific analyses because they show us the modern or postmodern future of social life.

Collins (2004; Chapter 4) presents an even stronger case for the significance of elemental encounters, claiming not just that they *lead to* more mature relationships, but that they *constitute* those relations. He argues that micro encounters aggregate into networks and markets of

interactions. Network theorists lend credence to this view with the common practice of gauging the “strength” of a network contact by measuring the frequency of interaction. It is common practice, for example, for network theorists to ask how often a respondent interacts with a contact (e.g., Burt, 1992: 122; Reagans and McEvily, 2003). Typical advice for networkers seeking to build relations is to “increase the frequency of interaction” (Baker, 1994: 217).

Beyond whatever significance party encounters may have in their own right, they also provide a particularly appealing context to study the simultaneous influence of attraction and opportunity as determinants of interaction. The advantage of a party for this purpose is that (with the tools we employ) it is possible to effectively capture the social structural opportunities for contact, which amount to the network of who knew whom before the party, and the evolving network of who has met at the party. In contrast, the structure of opportunity for other relationships is often invisible and correlated with characteristics of actors that may be the bases for attraction. The need for dynamic analyses to separate these influences looms as one of the most pressing in the analysis of interaction (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001). Because we know the full and dynamic paths of contact between two individuals at our party, we are better able to distinguish the influences of attraction and opportunity in our analysis.

Yet another advantage of the party for separating opportunity and attraction is that unlike more mature relationships, encounters at a party are not predicated on some form of prior contact. For example, in their examination of the causes of homogamy, Kalmijn and Flap (2001: 1289) observe that “mating requires meeting.” The same could be said of hiring, investing, cooperating in groups, or any other mature relationships, that they are predicated, even built on prior structural contact between actors. Even when researchers have tracked relationships from early on, for example friendships between students in their first weeks of contact (e.g., Newcomb, 1961) the first observations are far after the first encounter. In contrast, the weakly

structured context of a party makes it possible that individuals may meet even if they do not know each other and don't know any of the same people. At parties (and at our party), meetings between strangers are possible, so there is nothing predetermined about the influence of either attraction or opportunity.

The Structure of Opportunity

Researchers have identified two structural factors as driving forces of network dynamics: previous direct contacts between two actors, and indirect contacts that flow through third parties connected to both. Previous direct contacts are viewed both as a source of information about and trust in a potential interaction partner, as well as positive affect towards them (Uzzi, 1996), while common third parties form a bridge along which information may travel, and also provide social closure, which facilitates social control and therefore trust (Gulati and Gargiulo, 1999). These arguments, however, have developed through analyses of more mature relationships. Much of the evidence for them comes from interorganizational contexts, and even when they have been applied to interpersonal contacts such as friendship, it has been in circumstances where trust and control are critical (e.g., Ingram and Roberts, 2000). We see some reasons to question whether they will apply at a party.

For example, while it is certain that past relationships are informative about who has positive affect for whom, individuals do not attend parties like the one we studied to talk to their friends (or at least they claim they don't). We surveyed our guests as to their goals for the party, and the least likely to be cited as most important (by only five percent of partygoers) was "To build a few close relationships/to cement the relationships I have already started." The seven more favored options were all about forming new relationships. Similarly, trust seems less important at a party, both because the exposure to malfeasance of interaction partners is small,

and because invitees are sanctioned and legitimized by the host (this varies according to the type of party, an issue we take up in the discussion).

Although the application to parties of the ideas that network dynamics depend on the history of direct and indirect ties is not trivial, we nevertheless believe it is a good place to start, not least as a way to understand the relationship between elemental and mature networks. We will therefore test the role of direct ties, that *the likelihood of encounter and engagement between two guests is greater if they knew each other before the party*, and of indirect ties, that *the likelihood of encounter and engagement between two guests is greater the more intermediaries they have in common in the pre-party network*.

Our context also allows us to examine another type of indirect tie, those that emerge at the party by virtue of two guests having spoken to the same third earlier in the event. Reisman et al. (1962) argue that the thirds in that circumstance broker connections between the two as an effort to build cohesion in the sociable spirit of the party, playing a type of hosting role. Gibson's (2005) analysis of network influences on conversation suggests another type of cohesion-driven mechanism. In what he refers to as "piggybacking" either of the two non-intermediaries may initiate a connection with each other to reinforce their relationship with the intermediary. These arguments, which suggest that *the likelihood of encounter and engagement between two guests is greater the more intermediaries they have in common in the party network*, are very different from the social control argument that lies behind the expectation of an indirect influence through the network of stronger pre-party ties.

Similarity and Attraction

Evidence from many sources indicates that interaction is more common between similar actors (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001). Marriages are more likely between

individuals with similar levels of education, religion, and race (Kalmijn and Flap, 2001). Investment links are more likely between investors and investees that function in the same geographic areas, and in the same industries (Sorenson and Stuart, 2001). Friendships are more likely between people of the same races, classes, ages, and those with similar attitudes (Verbrugge, 1977; Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954). Joint ventures are more common between organizations of similar status levels (Podolny, 1993).

There are two accounts for the attractiveness of similar others. The first and most familiar is what Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) called “value homophily”, the idea that it is more rewarding to interact with others that hold similar values. Others who see things like we do are more likely to be more empathetic and to provide us with positive feedback. Whereas Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) measured the values of their research subjects directly, subsequent researchers have taken advantage of the fact that values, attitudes and experiences correlate with individual attributes such as sex, race and education. For example, value homophily is proposed as the explanation for the tendency of organizational participants to make friends with others that are of the same race and sex as themselves, because people of the same race and sex often have similar values, attitudes and experiences (Ibbara, 1993). Given that many people attend parties in the hope of a rewarding social experience, the value homophily argument suggests they are most likely to look for these benefits by interacting with others like themselves. Thus, we expect that *there is a greater likelihood of encounter and engagement between two guests who are similar on dimensions that represent values, attitudes and experiences.*

The second explanation, which is labeled “status homophily”, reaches a kindred prediction through different mechanisms. According to this argument, interaction between similar actors is expected even if interaction partners do not prefer similar others. All that is required is a generally recognized status ordering of the attributes on which actors in the group of

potential partners differ. If some attributes are preferable to others then competition among actors who seek high status others, yet who attract those others based on their own status, results in pairings of those sharing similar status and similar attributes (Podolny, 1993). Status homophily might work at the party if there was some personal attribute that is generally viewed as better in an encounter partner. A likely candidate is physical attractiveness, as good looks have been shown to make someone a more likely choice for interaction, even in same-sex dyads (e.g., Mulford, Orbell, Shatto and Stockard, 1998). Note that we are not suggesting that physical attractiveness is an important component of overall social status, merely that it is a generally preferred trait in an interaction partner at the party. If that is true, and if there is a competition for the most preferred interaction partners, we expect that *there is a greater likelihood of encounter and engagement between two guests who are similar in terms of physical attractiveness.*

It is also worth noting that these homophily predictions are not trivial, even in the face of extensive evidence of homophily in relations such as friendship and marriage. As we have explained, studies of the structure of such relations often struggle to distinguish attraction from opportunity. Furthermore, some accounts of homophily emphasize its relevance for “strong” ties where empathy and support seem more important (e.g., Marsden, 1988). An alternative to the predictions is feasible, that people at a party may seek interaction partners different from themselves, as an inexpensive form of exploration or excitement (Wolff, 1950). Intriguingly, Reisman et al.’s (1960a) observations at parties lead them to challenge the very idea that people at parties enjoy interacting with others that are like them in obvious ways, arguing instead that the relevant bases of similarity are deep, and not reflected in characteristics such as race or job type.

Although we predict homophily will operate in both encounter and engagement, we see reasons why the bases of homophily may differ across the two phenomena. It is often difficult to know what dimensions of similarity will drive homophily in a given context (Brass et. al 2004), but at a party, some dimensions seem much more likely for encounter than engagement. This is obviously true in the instance of the potential meeting of two strangers, because many important sources of similarity will be unknown to them, because they are difficult to discern *before* the meeting. Past research cites dimensions such as sex, race, age, class, religion, education, and profession as bases of interpersonal homophily (McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987). Of these, only the first three are easily observable to strangers and attraction in first meetings can only be based on observable characteristics. Of course, some meetings at our party were between individuals who knew each other before the party, and these could be based on deeper (that is, important but non-observable) bases of similarity, but even so, the necessity to make quick decisions at a party may cause non-strangers to also rely on observables when initiating encounters. These arguments lead us to expect that *homophily will be based on observable characteristics for encounters.*

Another variation on the basic expectation of homophily depends on the dynamics of the party. A number of arguments suggest that homophily will have more influence on early encounters than later ones. Research on networks of racial-minority managers reveals that homophily decreases over time as minorities seek the strategic benefits of attachments to representatives of majority groups (Ibarra, 1993). Another line of argument, that homophily is most likely when actors face uncertainty (Kanter, 1977; Galaskiewicz and Shatin, 1981; Ibarra, 1993), as they are likely to do in the early stages of a party, reinforces the expectation that the preference for similar others will be more important for early encounters than later ones. Recent analyses of small groups support these ideas by showing that demographic homogeneity

promotes cooperation early in a group's history, but plays a less significant role as the group's work progresses (Chatman and Flynn, 2001). The reason appears to be that individuals initially consider "primitive generic categories such as race, gender, and age" when categorizing interaction partners (Messick and Mackie, 1989: 54), but subsequently, deeper characteristics gain influence.

The idea of a dynamic interplay between individual and social characteristics is particularly germane to parties. Successful parties take on a life of their own, in the sense that the common bond of membership in the party begins, at least partly, to supercede individual characteristics. Parties, when they work, are emergent phenomena where the social whole becomes more than the sum of its individual parts. To explore this melding effect that emerges as the party comes to life, we examine the prediction that *the influence of similarity on the likelihood that two guests encounter and engage at a party is greater for early encounters than for later ones*. We treat "early" and "late" in terms of the number of encounters individuals have had at the party, and not time at the party. We do this based on the logic that the social collective of "the party", and its influence on individuals, is built by social activity and not the mere passage of time.

ANALYSIS

The Party and the Participants²

The party we hosted is best described as a "business mixer". It began at 7:00 PM on a Friday evening in the reception hall of a university professional education facility in a large American city. The hall offered a square-shaped party space, approximately 60' by 60', sufficiently

² The network of the party changes second by second and thus does not lend itself to the sociographic snapshot that is often presented to illustrate a network that is being analyzed. We have, however, produced a dynamic visualization of the party network, essentially an animated movie of how the network changes over the course of the party (Moody et al., 2005). It can be accessed at <http://thelifeoftheparty.info/>

spacious for the 97 attendees to mingle freely. In the center of the room was a large table of *hors d'oeuvres*, and on the east wall there was a table with pizza. There was a bar on the north wall, which served beer, wine and soft drinks. There were no chairs in the room. The party lasted for 80 minutes, during which the guests were free to speak to whomever they wanted. The invitation explained that guests would wear an electronic tag but assured them that their only task was “Act normally. Talk to whomever you want to, while enjoying food and drinks.”

The invitees were working managers, current students in an Executive MBA (EMBA) program of the university that hosted the event. The invitation was extended to 261 students (in four classes), and 120 accepted the invitation. This acceptance rate was high, considering that the event took place on a Friday night and one of the invited classes was not on campus that day (and many of them lived outside of the city and even the country). Ninety-two (seventy-six percent) of those that accepted the invitation actually attended and participated in the event. There were five other participants in the party, guests of the inventor of the nTag technology we used to measure interaction. These five are not included as actors in the analysis below because we do not have data on their pre-party networks, jobs, etc., although their encounters at the party are included for the purpose of calculating the party network and environment (e.g., the path distance between other guests).

We use four sources of data. For demographic data we relied on “face books” published by the EMBA program, which present pictures and biographical entries for each student. We captured the pre-party network using an online survey administered one week before the party, where each respondent indicated his or her relationship (negative, no relationship, positive, strongly positive) to each of the other guests. We administered a short (sixteen-item) survey, completed after the guests arrived but before they began participating in the party, regarding what their social goals were for the party and EMBA program in general. Finally, to capture the

pattern of meetings at the party we relied on nTags, a technology originally developed in the MIT Media Lab.³ An nTag is a wearable device, technologically akin to a PDA, 4" X 6" in size, with a weight of six ounces.

For the party, the most relevant function of the nTags was their ability to register other tags that they come into contact with (two tags come into contact with each other when they face each other at a distance of less than 8', a parameter chosen through pre-testing and the experience of the nTag designers) and store those contacts in their internal memory. We used these contact records to identify encounters at the party, and to build a dynamic network of who was engaged with whom at each moment of the party. To indicate a meeting, we required two tags to be in contact with each other repeatedly over a span of at least one minute. (This parameter was set based on extensive pre-testing by the producer of the nTags). With this approach, we are confident that we record only actual encounters, and not spurious proximity such as two people walking past each other, or seeking pizza simultaneously. The nTags also had a two-line LED display that displayed a digital greeting when two people met.

Structural Opportunity Variables

To test the influence of the pre-party network on encounters and engagements, we include three variables that capture varying degrees of friendship: *pre-party dislike*; *pre-party like*; and *pre-party strong like*. The omitted category indicates dyads that had no pre-party affective relationship. The possibility of an indirect influence of the pre-party network is operationalized with a count of the *pre-party mutual friends* of the members of the dyad. To capture opportunities for referrals and bridging based on encounters *at the party* we include the

³ Since our event on November 1, 2002 the company that supplied us with the nTags, nTag Interactive, has developed and marketed them as a way to promote and measure interaction at conferences.

variable *mutual ties between A and B* which is a count of the number of intermediaries at the party that the members of a dyad share. We include *path between A and B* in case referrals and bridges occur through more extended relations. The path between two individuals is the number of links that separate them in the network of party encounters. So, two individuals that have already encountered each other at the party are separated by a path of 1; if they have not, but have both encountered the same other individual, the path between them is 2; and so on. Dyads that were not linked in the party network through any path were assigned the maximum path length of linked dyads, 14.

Similarity Variables

We relied on five variables to examine homophilous attraction, three observable characteristics and two less superficial characteristics that could only be discovered through conversation. Sex, race⁴ and physical attractiveness were observable characteristics. The other likely basis of observable similarity, age, was not available to us, but did not vary greatly among our guests. Unobservable similarity was based on whether the participants performed the same broad job function (five categories) and whether they had both graduated from an elite institution (according to the list of the twenty-five most prestigious undergraduate institutions provided by Finkelstein, 1992). Job function is relevant in this context because others who do the same type of work are a source of information regarding career opportunities and advice. The status of the undergraduate institution has been shown to be an important predictor of success for business executives and serves as an indicator of socio-economic status (Useem and Karabel, 1986). In preliminary analysis we examined other potential bases for homophily, including industry of

⁴ In the analysis reported here we use six categories for race: Caucasian (75% of guests); African (2%); Latino (2%); Middle Eastern (4%); East Indian (8%); and other Asian (9%). Given the large majority of Caucasians among the guests, we conducted supplementary analysis where we collapsed all of the non-Caucasian categories into one. Results of the two category analysis are comparable to those reported below.

employment and foreign vs. native born. Neither of these affected the incidence of encounter at the party.

Physical attractiveness was coded on a five-point scale based on pictures in the face books by a research assistant who was naive to the hypotheses. To check reliability, a second research assistant also coded the pictures; the two sets of codings were within one point of each other 98% of the time. According to Riggio et al. (1991) ratings from pictures can be used to capture “static” attractiveness, which reflects the physiognomic qualities of beauty. At the party, “dynamic” attractiveness, which also involves aspects of movement and expressive behavior, would be important. We could not code dynamic attractiveness because we did not videotape the participants, but the coders’ ratings from pictures correlated highly (0.75) with attractiveness ratings provided by instructors who had interacted with our participants in class for one semester, suggesting that they provide a fair representation of dynamic attractiveness as it might be experienced at the party.

For categorical traits, similarity is measured with indicator variables: *same sex*, *same race*, *same elite undergraduate status* and *same job function*. *Same physical attractiveness* is calculated as $4 - \text{abs}(PA_a - PA_b)$, where PA_a is the five-point physical attractiveness measure for actor a in the dyad. We will interact the similarity variables with the number of encounters members of the dyad have had so far at the party (*degree A + B*), to investigate the idea that homophily becomes less influential as guests accrue experience at the party.

Control Variables

Current guests at the party is a count of the guests at the party besides those in the dyad. We include this as a control for the competition for encounter partners (presumably when there are more guests, the likelihood that any two will encounter falls). *Current engagements A + B* is a

count of the number of alters that the members of a dyad are currently engaged with. The idea is that if the members of a dyad are both engaged with others, this decreases the chances they will come together in the next moment. Our technology captured engagements that include more than two participants (e.g., a conversation group of three or four) so this variable can exceed two. Finally, *alone* is an indicator variable which registers if one of the members of the dyad has no current engagements; this controls for the fact that encounters are more likely to be initiated by people who are currently unattached.

Method

The unit of analysis is the dyad, or pair of individuals, and we seek to estimate the likelihood that they will encounter each other (or once encountered, how long they will continue to engage) as a function of variables that capture the structure of opportunity, similarity, and control variables. An appropriate methodology for this problem is event-history (hazard) analysis, which allows us to estimate $r(t)$, the instantaneous risk that two individuals at the party who were not engaged at time t will encounter each other (or that two who are engaged will disengage) between t and $t + \Delta t$, calculated over Δt :

$$r(t) = \lim_{\Delta t \rightarrow 0} Pr \frac{(\text{encounter } t, t + \Delta t \mid \text{not engaged at } t)}{\Delta t}. \quad (1)$$

Parametric estimates of the hazard rate require assumptions about the effect of time, which in our models is duration in the status of “not engaged” for the encounter analysis, or “engaged” for the engagement analysis. We conducted exploratory analysis to choose a functional form of duration dependence, considering a number of common models. This analysis involved (1) visual examination of the pattern of duration dependence estimated as a spline function using a piecewise exponential model; (b) log-likelihood ratio tests to differentiate

between parametric models that are nested; and (c) application of the Akaike information criterion (Akaike, 1974) to differentiate between models that are not nested. This process indicated that the Weibull model was the best fit for our data, although estimates of the influence of the independent variables were consistent across a range of models (Weibull, exponential, piece-wise exponential, log-logistic, log-normal, Gamma and Gompertz). The Weibull hazard function we estimated was of the form:

$$r(t) = e^{\beta X} p t^{p-1}, \quad (2)$$

where X is the vector of covariates, β the associated vector of coefficients, p the shape parameter that captures the form of the influence of duration (t) on the hazard of encounter or disengaging.

A remaining methodological concern is the non-independence of observations. This problem is common to all dyadic analyses of network structure, as the same actors enter the data in multiple dyads. We respond to the problem of non-independence by including fixed effects for every guest at the party (Simpson, 2001; see Reagans and McEvily, 2003 for a recent application of this approach). The main disadvantage of this approach is that it prevents us from examining influences of stable individual differences, (e.g. physical attractiveness) in the dyad-level analyses (these would be linearly dependent with the fixed effects for the members of the dyad).⁵ A kindred problem is that observations may be interdependent due to the influence of encounters at the party on other encounters. We see this issue as one of social influence, so we respond by directly measuring whether members of a dyad are connected through the party network with the variables *mutual ties between A and B*, and *path between A and B*. These variables capture whether those most likely to influence A have encountered B and vice versa

⁵ Our analysis does include *similarity* in physical attractiveness to test the idea of status homophily on this dimension. This estimation is possible because similarity is a dyadic measure, not a linear function of individual attractiveness.

(Marsden and Friedkin, 1993). Related, the variable *current engagements A + B* captures the possible tendency of current interlocutors to discourage new encounters.

To allow the variables to change as guests join the party and as encounters and disengagements occur, we broke the observation for each dyad into one-minute spells and updated the variables at the beginning of each spell. In the encounter analysis there were 4574 dyads, 169980 spells, and 628 encounters. In the engagement analysis there are 628 dyadic engagements of which 547 disengaged before the end of the party; the dyadic engagements are split into 3985 spells. The average guest had about 14 encounters at the party ($628 * 2 / 92$).

Conversational Encounters: Who Comes Together?

Model 1 in table 1 includes the variables that capture the pre-party network and the structure formed by encounters at the party. Guests are significantly more likely to encounter others they had positive relationships with before the party. The likelihood was higher for dyads with strongly positive pre-party relationships compared to those who were only positive ($\chi^2_{1df} \approx 17.28$, $p < .001$). Dyads that had a negative relationship pre-party are neither more nor less likely to encounter than those with no pre-party relationship (the omitted category). The number of friends in common in the pre-party network does not affect the likelihood of encounter, but there is support for our prediction that encounter in a dyad will be more likely when its members have encountered the same others at the party, as indicated by the positive coefficient of *mutual ties between A and B*.

The magnitudes of the variables that capture the pre-party and party networks are notable. Independent variables in the Weibull model have a multiplicative effect, so the magnitude of a coefficient can be understood in terms of a multiplier of the encounter rate determined by other variables due to a change in the level of the focal variable. The coefficient in model 1 indicates

that dyads with strongly positive relationships were about 183% ($e^{1.040}-1$) more likely to encounter at any point in the party than dyads that did not have a pre-party relationship. Dyads with positive relationships were 69% more likely to encounter. As for the party network, for every encounter partner that two guests at the party have in common, the likelihood that they will encounter increases by about 16%. In addition to these effects of the opportunity structure, there are many other structural influences on encounter that we discuss below when we take up control variables.

Turning to the role of similarity, model 2 adds the five similarity measures to test for static homophily; none are significant. Model 3 adds the interactions between similarity and *degree A + B* to test the dynamic homophily arguments. In this model, *same sex* and *same attractiveness* have significant effects. We dropped the interactions with degree for the other similarity variables and estimated model 4, but again, sex and attractiveness yielded the only significant results. *Same sex* has a positive coefficient, and its interaction with degree has a negative coefficient. This demonstrates the homophily dynamic we expected, that actors are initially drawn to similar others, but as they become more invested in the party, they become more likely to encounter different others. *Same attractiveness*, however, shows the opposite dynamic, with individuals beginning the party by encountering others of different levels of attractiveness than themselves, and as the party progresses becoming more likely to encounter others of similar levels of attractiveness. Figure 1 illustrates the pattern by showing the effect of a one point increase in same sex and same attractiveness over the observed range of *degree A + B*, using coefficients from model 4.

The dynamic of increasing attractiveness homophily combined with decreasing sex homophily raises the question of whether the guests shifted their efforts towards finding romantic pairings as the party progressed. We therefore estimated models 5 and 6, which are

replications of model 4 on different sets of dyads. Model 5 includes only dyads with two men. It demonstrates the same attractiveness dynamic as model 4. Model 6 includes the rest of the dyads, those with at least one woman. In that model, there is no static or dynamic effect of similar attractiveness (although the coefficients are in the same directions as models 4 and 5, and they approach significance). Given that homophily on physical attractiveness occurs in male-male dyads, it seems unlikely to be due to the pursuit of romantic partners. We offer an explanation for this dynamic effect in the discussion. Another notable result in model 5 is the significant and positive coefficient for *same race*, suggesting that there is race-based homophily in dyads that contain only men.

The non-significance in all cases of non-observable similarities, undergraduate status and job function, fits our argument that only observable similarities should affect the chances of two people coming together at the party. All of the observable characteristics (sex, race, attractiveness) were the basis for encounter homophily at some times for some dyads, while none of the non-observable characteristics were.

The effects of the control variables are generally consistent across models. The likelihood of a given pair of guests coming together falls with the number of encounters the members of the dyad have had previously at the party (degree), suggesting a deceleration of encounter activity as encounters accumulate, perhaps due to a process of social satiation. Secondly, the likelihood of two guests encountering each other is negatively related to the overall count of people at the party, and to the number of alters with whom the two guests are currently engaged at a given point in the party, as both of these represent competition for encounter. The fact that individuals with greater path distance in the party network are less likely to encounter each other is more support for our expectation that indirect contact between individuals brings them together at the party. Finally, the shape parameter of the Weibull model

indicates that the likelihood of a pair of guests encountering each other increases the longer they have been at the party without having encountered each other, or, if they do have a previous encounter, with the time since their last disengagement.

Conversational Engagement: Who Stays Together?

Table 2 presents Weibull models of conversational engagement—the coefficients indicate the effect of a variable on the likelihood of *disengaging* from a conversation, so engagement between two interactors is indicated by negative coefficients. Model 7 includes structural opportunity variables and controls. Interestingly, variables that capture the party trajectory of a pair—*degree A + B* and *mutual ties between A and B*—do not affect the duration of their conversation. Apparently once two people meet, it is their characteristics and pre-party relationship, and not the trajectory of their recent experience at the party, that predict whether their conversation persists. People who had strong pre-party liking relationships conversed for longer when they engaged each other at the party. More surprising, people who disliked each other before the party also conversed for longer than otherwise expected, presumably for different reasons (e.g., to argue, or to sort out their disagreement). With regard to the control variables, we find that a pair engages longer when there are more people at the party. Again, this is somewhat surprising, because others at the party are alternatives to current conversation partners. One explanation is that there is a very high correlation between the number of others at the party and the time the party has been ongoing. This result may therefore indicate that engagements become longer in the later stages of the party. It may also be that crowded parties create dyadic intimacy. Additionally, we find that an engagement is shorter if the number of current engagements of the participants is higher. In other words, conversations set in groups

disengage more easily than those in dyads. Finally, the shape parameter of the Weibull model indicates that conversations become more likely to end the longer they have persisted.

Model 8 adds the similarity variables and their interactions with degree. None are significant so in model 9 we drop the interactions. Here, only same job function is significant and its coefficient is positive. This is the opposite of what we predicted: individuals sharing the same job function have on average briefer engagements.

Given the surprising non-findings regarding homophily in engagements, we wondered whether homophily affected the length of engagements *for anyone* at the party. To find out we estimated two more models that examined conversational duration for subsets of the dyads. Specifically, we examined the role of the guests' goals, because the tendency to engage with similar others may depend on what one wants to get from a party. For this, we used responses to our pre-party goal survey, specifically two items tapping homopholic goals: Whether they intended at the party (1) to seek out people with whom they have something in common; and (2) to form relationships with people that will be easy to maintain.

Recall that our fixed-effects specification prohibits us from including covariates that are aggregates of individual characteristics. We can, however, restrict our analysis to subsets of the data based on those characteristics and this is what we do in models 10 and 11. Model 10 examines engagement only for dyads where the shared endorsement of the “things in common” item was very high⁶. In these dyads, we do see evidence of homophily, as people of the same race, attractiveness and undergraduate status have longer engagements. Model 11 examines dyads with high shared endorsement of the “easy to maintain relations” item. Again, we see

⁶ By high “shared endorsement” of a goal we mean dyads for which there was an emphasis on the goal that was shared by both members of the dyad (because a continuing engagement requires the willingness of both members). We operationalized very high shared endorsement as dyads where (a) both members were above the median on the relevant goal variable; or (b) one member had the maximum response for that goal and the other was at the median. Model 10 includes the 12% of all dyads that satisfied these criteria for “things in common” and model 11 includes the 15% that satisfied the criteria for “easy to maintain relations.”

some homophily, as same undergraduate status and same job function causes these dyads to have longer engagements.

DISCUSSION

On the two big themes of structural opportunity and homophilous attraction, the former had a notable effect on encounter and engagement, while the latter influenced those processes, but in a subtle and contingent way. Network structure operated at the party much (although not completely) as it does in more mature relations, while *average* tendencies to homophily that are often apparent in mature relations were absent at the party. Both of these outcomes surprised us. *A priori*, we expected the “unstructured” context of the party to privilege dyadic attraction over network effects.

Structural Influences on Encounter and Engagement

Mixer parties are supposed to liberate you from the constraints of pre-existing social structure to meet new people; nevertheless, you still tend to talk to the few others that you were acquainted with before the party. For example, people are much more likely to converse with another at the party if they had a positive pre-party relationship. While reproduction of positive ties in this way makes sense in relationships that depend heavily on affect and trust, it is counter to our expectations for behavior at a business mixer. It is also counter to the expressed intentions of 95% percent of our guests, who emphasized before the party a goal of building new ties rather than reinforcing old ones. This puts a different spin on the common observance that network ties reproduce themselves. That pattern is often interpreted to signal the benefit of relational experience, but at the party, it also signifies the heavy weight of structural constraint.

The mixed influence of indirect structure is equally compelling. Individuals were more likely to encounter each other if they were connected indirectly from having encountered common others at the party (or through longer paths), but not through indirect ties in the pre-party network. The latter non-finding is consistent with our claim that social control, and the social closure that engenders it, would be less important at the party because encounters there represent minimal exposure to malfeasance. The relevance of indirect ties in the party network cannot reasonably be attributed to social control as third parties in this context do not provide protection or surety. Rather, we attribute the impetus to close incomplete triads in the party network to an attempt to promote social cohesion. It is in this result that our analysis resonates most with that of Reisman et al. (1962) who studied sociability as a collective product. Sociability is a shared effort to produce a *group* identity that transcended individual goals, dyadic relations, and indeed, material concerns of all types (Aldrich, 1972). Our guests were not exclusively dedicated to sociable ends but as is typical of polished professionals, they acknowledged a duty to sociability.⁷ This acknowledgement manifested itself in a tendency to social closure. At the party, interacting with a partner's partner was the decent thing to do, an act that reaffirms each member of the triad and legitimates the collective entity, the party as a social institution.

Although the influence of indirect connections through party encounters is a structural constraint, at least it is constraint created *at the party*. The importance of bridges created at the

⁷ Our impression is that our guests were more comfortable with the idea that a party might represent both a sociable occasion and a professional opportunity than were the partygoers observed by Reisman et. al (1962) in the 1950s, who saw business mixers as compromised on sociability because of the material interests in play. It may be that there has been a shift in the last half-century in the common purpose of large American parties, or at least in the common conception of their purpose, to include *both* collective and individual/dyadic outcomes. We do not suggest that these things now co-exist seamlessly: A guest who was too naked in the pursuit of business contacts at our party would offend others. And while the commingling of social and professional pursuits may be routine for contemporary business people, it is not without tension (Coser, Kadushin and Powell, 1982; Ingram and Roberts, 2000).

party operates against any claim that parties are dominated by pre-party relations. The significance of party bridges raises the question of order-dependence at a party. Because who encounters whom depends on who has encountered whom earlier, parties may take different trajectories depending on the earliest encounters. Knowing how early encounters influence the trajectory of parties and of guests would be useful for hosts and guests alike, and is a worthy topic for future research.

Similarity and Attraction

We begin with what we did not find: on *average* there was no significant tendency towards encounter or engagement between similar guests. This is a stark contrast to dozens of studies of friendships and other mature relationships that show they are more likely between similar individuals. Our non-finding does not call the evidence of homophily in mature relations into question; rather it is suggestive of alternative ways that pattern may emerge. In particular, it combines with our findings regarding structural influences on encounter and engagement to suggest that observed homophily may more likely derive from structures that bring similar people together than from a strong preference for similar others as interaction partners. Thus, our result supports McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook's (2001) claim for the primacy of structure as a cause of homophily, and derives from just the sort of dynamic analysis they call for as necessary to separate confounded accounts of the origins of network ties.

How can the micro-processes of encounter and engagement that we document be reconciled with the emergence of homophily in mature relations? First, in many contexts, the pre-existing network structure that influenced the party would itself reflect homophily, due to factors such as "geographic propinquity, families, organizations and isomorphic positions in social systems (McPherson et al., 2001: 415)." Second, our results do provide *some* support the

basic value-homophily assertion that contacts with similars may be reassuring and comfortable, in that homophilic engagement was more common for guests most interested in easy relations to maintain. While that preference was not very prevalent at the party, there is reason to expect it may weigh more heavily when individuals choose friends or colleagues (Marsden, 1988)⁸.

Third, the evidence regarding encounter processes and engagement processes can be combined to shed light on an intriguing link to homophilous networks. Our results indicate that men are more likely to encounter men of the same race (model 5), but that for most guests (all except those looking for others with things in common to themselves; compare model 10 to the others in table 2), same race does not predict engagement. If a longer conversation is a positive signal for a future relationship, one might conclude that race did not generally effect most guests' decisions to invest time, and begin building a closer relationship, with those they encountered at the party. Nevertheless, the combination of a superficial encounter process and a more substantive engagement process can result in social segregation by race—if most of the others that an individual meets are the same race as themselves, then mature relationships (e.g., friendships) may be race dependent, even if friends are selected from those met based on characteristics other than race (because the pool which is selected *from* is racially homogenous).

Our dynamic homophily effects are also useful for understanding what social occasions may lead to homogeneous or diverse relations. As we predicted, same-sex homophily operated for early encounters and decreased for later ones. Of course, even though similarity on characteristics like sex may result in rewards in terms of reinforcement of values and attitudes, there are advantages of heterogeneous encounters also, and this is nowhere as obvious as on the dimension of sex. The transition from homophily to heterophily is a manifestation of a familiar

⁸ There is evidence of this from our pre-party survey because we asked guests not only what their networking intentions were for the evening's event, but also for their Executive MBA program more generally. Forming "easy to maintain" ties and was rated as a higher priority in the program than at the party.

phenomenon, that a good party reduces social inhibitions and melds people together⁹. The existence of social constructions (in this case, the party) that transform and transcend individual components is well known, yet it is a rare thing to actually observe their emergence, to see the transition from behavior as atomistic individuals to behavior as members of the collectivity. The retreat of the self with participation in the party may be indicative of the socializing effect of other institutions such as crowds, groups, organizations, and cities. It may also provide substantive guidance for designing institutions that promote ‘networking’, particularly when the goal is to facilitate contact between different types of people.

The dynamic effect of attractiveness homophily is the opposite of our expectation, but it is no less gripping for that. Why do people move from heterophily to homophily on attractiveness, when some theory and our sex result indicate the opposite pattern? We believe this dynamic occurs because the attractiveness result is a case of status homophily, while our sex finding (and most others in the literature on interpersonal relations) are instances of value homophily. Unlike value homophily, status homophily depends on a pecking order. It may take time, or more specifically, feedback from encounters, for individuals to learn just where they fit in that pecking order. Of course, you might expect that 30+ years of social experience would have taught our partygoers where they stand in the attractiveness pecking-order. It turns out that the bias to self-enhancement operates when interaction partners evaluate their relative attractiveness. Saad and Gill (2005) analyze the self- and other-attractiveness ratings of interacting dyads and report that individuals consistently rate themselves as more attractive than their partners perceive them. Inflated self-perceptions could result in mismatching in the early

⁹ The phenomenon of eroding inhibitions brings up the topic of alcohol. Alcohol consumption at our party may have also affected the pattern of encounter. We intended to measure such consumption, but we were frustrated by a headstrong bartender who refused to stay “wired” to his nTag. Nevertheless, the shift from sexual homophily to heterophily depends mostly on the number of encounters and not the time spent at the party (our best available proxy for alcohol consumed), so we believe it is based at least partly on “social intoxication” even though we can’t deny that alcohol may have played a role.

stages of a social event, as individuals seek partners that equate to their self-images, rather than their true statuses. As encounters and feedback accumulate, we suspect, self-perceptions are deflated and individuals come to learn, or relearn, their place in the pecking order, and status homophily will emerge. This adjustment is the fate of all those beneath the elite tier of attractiveness at social and professional mixers (or so we have heard).

Generalizing from Our Party

Given the practical and theoretical significance of the findings, it is important to consider the generalizability of our study to other parties or similarly unstructured contexts for meeting. In this regard, it is necessary to realize that our innovation was not *simulating* a party but rather *measuring social activity* at a real party. It is true that we organized the event that we studied, but it was in almost all respects like others that the EMBA program hosted regularly, and if we had not initiated the event it is quite likely the program would have hosted one just like it, minus the measuring devices. Of course, our party had a given size, and a certain type of guest, and these may have influenced the patterns of encounter and engagement. One question we have heard is whether our guests may have been less prone to homophily based on demographics because they already shared an important similarity based on their participation in the same exclusive academic program. We don't see why participation in the program would reduce homophily on other dimensions, particularly given that many studies that find homophily on dimensions such as race and sex examine networks based in the same school, university class, or organizational department.

The biggest issue in generalizing from our party is how the presence of the nTags affected behavior. Our observation and the reports of partygoers indicated that the nTags made it easier to initiate contact, acting as an icebreaker, something that people could joke about to

overcome the awkwardness associated with initiating an encounter. In this respect, they played the role that nametags always do at a mixer, albeit in a more novel way.

We think that the key to understanding the effect of the measurement device on generalizability is to recognize that the presence of an ‘excuse to interact’ is a variable in parties and other contexts for sociability. Simmel makes this point when describing the effect of an invitation to a private party, such as a cocktail party (Wolff, 1950: 114). The invitation grants all attendees the legitimacy to interact with each other. Any guest can approach any other by virtue of the fact that the host has invited them all. It is considered quite rude to refuse an invitation to converse at a private party, but it is quite common to do so in non-exclusive social gathering such as a crowd on the street or in a bar. The effect of the nTags is comparable to that of the invitation—they grant the guests a justification for initiating an encounter, and provide a shield against rejection. In effect, the nTag makes our party more like an exclusive gathering, such as a cocktail party, than a mixer with a low screen on invitees would typically be. And even though we expect the *incidence* of encounter at our party to be higher than at non-exclusive social situations, we are not convinced that the *pattern* of encounter would be different between exclusive and non-exclusive contexts, as the legitimacy supplied by an invitation (or an nTag) applies equally to all individuals. This logic can be extended further, to encompass unstructured public contexts that allow the possibility for encounter, such as elevators, public parks, and airport waiting lounges. The incidence of encounter in such public contexts will be lower than exclusive and non-exclusive social contexts, but we speculate that the pattern would be much as we have documented at the party.

In closing, we return to the initial justification for analyzing a party. The importance of the party in our view is as an early and (relatively) unstructured source of interaction. We realize that encounters at a party are not as momentous as weddings, hirings, friendships, or other

mature relationships. Yet, social relations are typically path dependent and built up over time. They have to start somewhere, so contexts of first-encounter are particularly noteworthy for setting the foundation for more momentous social outcomes. And even for individuals who are not strangers, small encounters are important in the aggregate, because they are elements of reified relationships. Ours is the first investigation into the incidence of early and unstructured interactions, and into a phenomenon that looms large in our social experiences, but, so far, small in the social science literature--the party has begun!

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Table 1
Weibull Models of Likelihood of Encounter

	(7) All dyads	(8) All dyads	(9) All dyads	(10) All dyads	(11) Dyads w/ two Men	(12) Dyads w/ one or more women
Pre-Party Mutual Friends	0.006 (1.15)	0.006 (1.12)	0.005 (1.05)	0.005 (0.99)	0.021** (2.71)	-0.004 (0.61)
Pre-Party Dislike	-0.078 (0.15)	-0.075 (0.14)	-0.114 (0.22)	-0.091 (0.17)	-0.814 (0.78)	0.284 (0.46)
Pre-Party Like	0.525** (3.52)	0.530** (3.55)	0.532** (3.57)	0.533** (3.57)	0.260 (1.16)	0.756** (3.80)
Pre-Party Strong Like	1.040** (6.46)	1.048** (6.50)	1.049** (6.51)	1.057** (6.55)	0.737** (3.08)	1.273** (5.87)
Degree A + B	-0.116** (10.61)	-0.116** (10.62)	-0.150** (6.62)	-0.139** (6.62)	-0.234** (6.65)	-0.115** (4.45)
Path between A and B	-0.241** (10.52)	-0.242** (10.53)	-0.245** (10.60)	-0.247** (10.69)	-0.276** (7.40)	-0.231** (7.85)
Mutual Ties Between A and B	0.149** (4.26)	0.149** (4.28)	0.152** (4.32)	0.153** (4.37)	0.236** (4.46)	0.088+ (1.83)
Current Guests at the Party	-0.005 (1.46)	-0.005 (1.46)	-0.005 (1.47)	-0.006 (1.56)	-0.007 (1.26)	-0.006 (1.23)
Current Engagements A + B	-0.214** (5.26)	-2.13** (5.26)	-0.216** (5.29)	-0.217** (5.34)	-0.200** (3.14)	-0.235** (4.42)
Alone	0.455** (3.93)	0.454** (3.92)	0.449** (3.87)	0.447** (3.86)	0.603** (3.37)	0.329* (2.15)
Same Sex		0.001 (.001)	0.420** (2.48)	0.423** (2.49)		
Same Sex * Degree			-0.027** (2.90)	-0.027** (2.92)		
Same Race		0.184 (1.19)	0.178 (0.84)	0.197 (1.27)	0.709** (2.93)	-0.076 (0.36)
Same Race * Degree			0.001 (0.10)			
Same Physical Attractiveness		-0.098 (1.55)	-0.295** (2.65)	-0.298** (2.70)	-0.487** (2.71)	-0.211 (1.46)
Same Phys. Att. * Degree			0.012* (2.13)	0.013* (2.18)	0.021* (2.13)	0.011 (1.51)
Same UG Status		-0.001 (0.01)	-0.121 (0.62)	0.003 (0.02)	-0.271 (1.20)	0.132 (0.82)
Same UG Status * Degree			0.009 (0.84)			
Same Job Function		-0.020 (.21)	-0.233 (1.28)	-0.025 (0.26)	-0.054 (0.36)	-0.018 (0.13)
Same Job Function * Degree			0.014 (1.36)			
Constant	-24.287** (10.86)	-18.071** (12.89)	-17.482** (12.20)	-23.909** (10.57)	-20.764** (9.11)	-46.349 (0.02)
Shape Parameter (p)	2.253 (14.40)	2.253 (14.41)	2.249 (14.40)	2.246 (14.37)	2.867 (12.57)	1.990 (9.31)
Log Likelihood	-1639.77	-1637.87	-1629.95	-1631.27	-612.25	-959.40

Absolute value of z statistics in parentheses

* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%; one-tailed tests where predictions were made.

Table 2
Weibull Models of Likelihood of Ending an Engagement

	(13) All Dyads	(14) All Dyads	(15) All Dyads	(16) Dyads looking for things in common	(17) Dyads looking for easy ties to maintain
Pre-Party Mutual Friends	0.004 (0.60)	0.003 (0.55)	0.004 (0.66)	0.117 (1.76)	0.033 (0.63)
Pre-Party Dislike	-1.377* (2.25)	-1.715** (2.73)	-1.598* (2.58)	-8.794* (2.10)	-6.882* (2.33)
Pre-Party Like	-0.273 (1.50)	-0.284 (1.53)	-0.288 (1.55)	-9.286** (4.14)	0.075 (0.08)
Pre-Party Strong Like	-0.703** (3.49)	-0.719** (3.56)	-0.725** (3.59)	-5.798** (3.31)	-1.474 (1.26)
Degree A + B	-0.022 (1.78)	-0.035 (1.10)	-0.026* (2.03)	0.293** (2.68)	0.037 (0.55)
Mutual Ties Between A and B	-0.032 (0.77)	-0.030 (0.70)	-0.030 (0.72)	-0.432 (1.21)	-0.226 (1.45)
Current Guests at the Party	-0.013** (2.86)	-0.012* (2.52)	-0.012** (2.59)	-0.161** (4.28)	-0.052* (2.35)
Current Engagements A + B	0.148** (4.52)	0.159** (4.71)	0.159** (4.77)	0.464** (2.97)	0.207 (1.83)
Same Sex		-0.263 (1.04)	-0.042 (0.35)	2.013 (1.48)	0.351 (0.58)
Same Sex * Degree		0.013 (1.05)			
Same Race		0.015 (0.05)	-0.148 (0.66)	-4.391** (3.13)	-0.953 (1.08)
Same Race * Degree		-0.011 (0.90)			
Same Attractiveness		-0.163 (1.01)	-0.117 (1.47)	-1.852** (2.71)	0.601 (1.90)
Same Attractiveness * Degree		0.003 (0.41)			
Same UG Status		0.382 (1.36)	0.246 (1.58)	-2.460* (1.74)	-1.639* (1.98)
Same UG Status * Degree		-0.007 (0.53)			
Same Job Function		0.004 (0.01)	0.280* (2.27)	1.442 (1.76)	-1.506* (2.09)
Same Job Function * Degree		0.016 (1.12)			
Constant	-11.480 (0.01)	-4.699** (3.84)	-4.861** (4.34)	-2.381 (0.66)	4.272 (0.88)
Shape Parameter (p)	1.324 (8.12)	1.346 (8.54)	1.341 (8.44)	3.010 (9.43)	2.131 (8.02)
Log Likelihood	-763.86	-756.75	-758.59	-39.72	-77.09

Absolute value of z statistics in parentheses

* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%; one-tailed tests where predictions were made .

Figure 1
Dynamics of Homophily
in Party Encounters

