

Rosa Parks: Networks and the Power of Weak Ties

In this book, *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business* by Charles Duhigg, the author investigates the habits we as humans, naturally act upon in our day to day lives. A specific portion of the book references how networks of strong and weak ties influence our habits and a communities habits. Chapter 8, discusses how Rosa Parks was not the first to refuse sitting in the back of the bus, but she played a major part in her community resulting in the bus boycott in Montgomery. The major idea affect the bus boycott, was her strong and weak ties in the community. Being a highly respected member of many groups and social networks, facilitated the resulting protests after her imprisonment. The author discusses how the stronger ties or relationships that occur in a community are from “people that look like us, earn about the same amount of money, and come from similar backgrounds.” In contrast, Rosa Parks held many strong ties with individuals and groups that did not come into contact with each-other. Rosa Parks linked all the smaller social networks of Montgomery together to allow for organization of protests to occur across many sub-communities within Montgomery.

Although the author is focused primarily on the habits of a community, he does bring up a fair point on how networks of strong/weak ties brought a large ecosystem of smaller networks together to protest and boycott the buses. The specific topic from classes that was discussed within the book is Social Networks. The case of Rosa Parks is well before any involvement of Facebook, social media, or wide spread internet. Rosa Parks was involved in many different communities, groups, and organizations that spanned all economic classes and geographical neighborhoods leading to connections between many different networks that would have never existed without Rosa Parks. Prior to her bus event, many were arrested in similar cases, but none had sparked a protest quite like the one following Rosa Parks arrest.

Another curious case the author investigates in the same chapter, is our weak connections to people who we might not call friends nor would we call them strangers. A connection in our social network may exist, but said person may merely be a weak tie, with many or no mutual friends. How we act around or with said person is similarly curious. In looking at networking to gain a career or job, the author states that many job hunters receive help from “casual acquaintances” and most of the time, many of these weak ties through acquaintances results in landing a job, most of the times more successfully than if it were either a strong tie or no tie.

The power of weak ties in a social network ties back to much of what we discussed in lectures regarding social networks. The excerpt involving job hunting is a great example of how a network of weak ties results in greater actions. We as humans involve ourselves in these weak ties as they make us feel more accepted in society, and make us feel more connected and involved.

The power of weak ties can be tied back into the Rosa Park scenario because not only was her power of strong ties to many communities influential in the protests against her arrest, but the weak ties and the actions we take because of them facilitated the protests success and size. We might not realize it, but much of our day to day actions are influenced by people we may not know well. This is what many call Peer Pressure.

Sources: *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business* by Charles Duhigg

<https://blogs.cornell.edu/info2040/2015/09/21/rosa-parks-strong-ties-and-the-power-of-weak-ties/>