NETWORKING FAST AND SLOW:
THE ROLE OF SPEED IN TIE FORMATION

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ABSTRACT

Growing interest in network dynamics has led to insights about patterns of network change, drivers of tie formation, and the temporal unfolding of the consequences of networks. To this area of inquiry, we introduce networking speed – the time it takes for individuals to form a network tie – as an important but so far largely overlooked aspect. We develop a theory of networking speed that explains how different catalysts enable professionals to introduce variation into the speed with which they form interpersonal network ties. We discuss how such variation in the speed with which ties have been formed influences relational outcomes and the network returns that these ties generate. This discussion illustrates that high networking speed can entail advantages as well as pitfalls. We also explore temporal implications of networking speed, for instance the persistence of the effects of speed over time. Overall, we conceptualize networking speed as a constitutive element of how interpersonal networks function in professional settings and propose a future research program for the integration of this novel concept into organizational network research.

Keywords: tie formation; networking speed; catalysts; network dynamics; professional networks; interpersonal networks

INTRODUCTION

Individuals in professional settings, such as knowledge workers, increasingly find it necessary to proactively orchestrate and adjust their work-related networks. Aiming to access the resources they need to perform well at work, they form network ties and initiate network change, for instance when transitioning to new roles (Jonczyk, Lee, Galunic, & Bensaou, 2016) or responsibilities (Gargiulo & Benassi, 2000), to maintain creativity (Soda, Mannucci, & Burt, 2021), as a response to performance feedback (Parker, Halgin, & Borgatti, 2016), or because structural holes have disappeared (Quintane & Carnabuci, 2016). Research on network dynamics (for a recent review, see Chen, Mehra, Tasselli, & Borgatti, 2022) has uncovered various patterns of network change (e.g., Burt & Merluzzi, 2016), investigated factors affecting the likelihood of tie formation (Dahlander & McFarland, 2013), and looked into the time it takes for network returns to unfold and how long these returns persist (e.g., Baum, McEvily, & Rowley, 2012; Soda, Usai, & Zaheer, 2004).

However, this research has remained relatively silent about the speed with which new ties are formed and the consequences of such temporal variation. As far as we can ascertain, the closest engagement that organizational network scholars have had with this topic is to note in passing that networking can be time-consuming (e.g., Krackhardt, 1992; Quintane & Carnabuci, 2016) and that individuals may vary in how fast they establish new ties. For instance, Bensaou, Galunic, and Jonczyk-Sédès (2014: 38, emphasis added) describe an employee who in "*a very short time*, [..] had established a big network of contacts with partners, clients, peers, and team members." Even though entrepreneurship scholars have touched upon start-ups' efficiency, including their speed, in forming contractual relationships, such as investment ties (Hallen & Eisenhardt, 2012), networking speed with regard to professionals' interpersonal networks is essentially uncharted territory. Given that the "right" networks for a task can yield competitive advantages (Soda et al.,

2021) and that firms increasingly use mixers and *speed*-dating events to accelerate contacts among their employees (e.g., Ingram & Morris, 2007), an explicit theoretical consideration of the speed with which professionals form network ties is timely and important.

Following Ferris et al.'s (2009) account of work relationships, we focus on informal, interpersonal ties in professional domains (e.g., advice seeking, knowledge transfer, workplace friendships) and define networking speed as the time it takes for a new tie to form between two individuals, who we refer to as ego (the focal actor) and alter (a contact of this focal actor). We discuss the catalysts that we expect will enable professionals to increase the speed with which they form network ties and also elaborate the implications of networking speed. We critically examine the extent to which forming ties fast is preferable, or indeed potentially problematic, in professional settings. Challenging the assumption that high speed is necessarily beneficial (e.g., D'Aveni, Dagnino, & Smith, 2010), we illustrate that forming network ties fast can sometimes lead to disadvantages. Having derived propositions about the catalysts and consequences of networking speed, we develop a future research program for this new concept.

By putting networking speed on the agenda of scholars studying professionals' interpersonal networks, we contribute to organizational network dynamics research. In particular, we apply a temporal and agentic lens to explain *how* professionals form network ties, and specifically, how they can form those ties at varying speed. In doing so, our study speaks to and brings together recent debates in organizational network research on the role of time and the temporal unfolding of network processes on the one hand (e.g., Soda et al., 2021; Ter Wal, Criscuolo, & Salter, 2022) and on agentic networking on the other (Tasselli & Kilduff, 2021).

In addition, we develop propositions regarding the influence of the speed with which ties were formed, and of the catalysts that are used to accelerate tie formation, on relational outcomes,

such as tie strength, and on network returns, i.e., benefits that ties entail. Beyond these sets of propositions, we conjecture temporal implications of networking speed, such as the persistence of the effects of networking speed over time. These considerations illustrate how networking speed is a constitutive, fundamental, element of the way in which networks function. Insofar as the consequences of network ties are not independent from the processes, and in our specific case, the speed, that played a role in the formation of those ties, our research highlights the need to study these jointly. This idea brings together two research streams on networks that have largely developed separately, i.e., on the one hand, studies that investigate the formation and evolution of networks, and on the other hand, studies that explore the consequences of networks (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011), and is aligned with Ahuja, Soda and Zaheer's (2012: 434) admonition that "an understanding of network outcomes is incomplete and potentially flawed without an appreciation of the genesis and evolution of the underlying network."

In elaborating our theory of networking speed, we draw from widely-used network concepts that have a long tradition in the organizational network literature (e.g., similarity, common third parties, tie strength) as well as those that have entered the field more recently (e.g., cognition, agency, networking actions), showing that speed matters broadly for research on networks. By articulating the relationship between networking speed and these concepts, we lay the foundation for speed to be part of a wide array of future network studies. In addition to these conceptual considerations, from a practical point of view, there is a "contemporary imperative for speed" (Ellwood, Grimshaw, & Pandza, 2017: 514), whereby being slow in professional settings is typically taken to be associated with disadvantages and missed opportunities. With regard to tie formation and networks, narratives in the media and routines in firms, even if inadvertently, urge professionals to speed up their networking endeavors. By discussing the catalysts of networking

speed as well as its implications, our research points to factors that can facilitate or hinder individuals' attempts to network fast, and speaks to whether and when forming new ties fast is a good idea.

THEORETICAL SCOPE

We approach networking speed by concentrating on interpersonal networks that are formed in professional settings, such as problem-solving and advice-seeking networks in knowledge-intensive organizations (e.g., Brennecke, 2020), joint project work that might cross organizational boundaries, such as in creative industries (e.g., Soda et al., 2021), or co-authoring relationships in academia (e.g., Dahlander & McFarland, 2013). As network ties in these settings typically comprise both instrumental and affective components (Casciaro & Lobo, 2015), we do not distinguish between exclusively task-related relationships and social relationships that might also have task components, such as workplace friendships. Instead, we follow Ferris et al. (2009: 1379) and focus on network ties that reflect broad work relationships in terms of "patterns of exchanges between two interacting members or partners […] typically directed at the accomplishment of some common objectives or goals." The ties that we consider are informal, as opposed to formally mandated, relationships. In addition, we focus on relational states, which describe enduring relationships, as opposed to relational events (such as one time emails or meetings), which are isolated interactions between two individuals (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011).

The network ties in our scope are often the outcome of professional networking (Casciaro, Gino, & Kouchaki, 2014), which can be seen as goal-oriented behavioral efforts by ego (Porter & Woo, 2015) to create a network tie that did not previously exist[1] with another individual, i.e., alter. As per the human agency perspective, we see individuals as being able and motivated to undertake purposive actions to create social order with the aim of advancing personal or collective interests, ideals, or commitments (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Accordingly, while we acknowledge that

network ties may emerge from purely serendipitous encounters (Engel, Kaandorp, & Elfring, 2017), we assume that professionals can, and do, create network ties intentionally. A burgeoning literature that is based on the agency perspective (for a recent review, see Tasselli & Kilduff, 2021) shows that professionals are generally willing and able to proactively form ties and can shape their networks to a meaningful degree.

Even though we assume the presence of meaningful agency, we are not suggesting that ego (whose perspective we are writing from) has complete, or even privileged, control over the speed with which a tie is formed. As evident in the reality of relationships that we experience, the formation of network ties depends on an agreement or understanding between the parties who are involved in that tie. In addition, we also acknowledge that tie formation takes place within constraints. For instance, egos' embeddedness in cultural, social-structural, and social-psychological contexts (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), as well as their personality or existing network ties, might reduce their agency (Gulati & Srivastava, 2014). Even in the presence of such constraints, however, theorizing on the basis of a reasonable and meaningful level of agency can yield insights that likely remain applicable to a wide range of settings and circumstances in contemporary organizations.

CONCEPTUALIZING NETWORKING SPEED

The integration of time – through a temporal lens, as called for by Ancona, Goodman, Lawrence, and Tushman (2001) – is a nascent area of organizational network research. Such work can improve our understanding of network-related processes, such as forming new ties through networking, and also the unfolding of consequences of networks. Research in this area sheds light on the right timing and sequence of tie formation (Ter Wal et al., 2022), the value of rejuvenating one's network (Soda et al., 2021), or the persistence of network returns over time (Baum et al., 2012). In the general direction of these nascent efforts to integrate questions relating to time into

network research, we draw attention to speed as a central component of temporality (Aguinis &

Bakker, 2021). We define networking speed as the time it takes for a new tie to form between two

individuals, ego and alter. That is, we conceptualize speed at the level of the tie, allowing for both

within- and between-person variation in how fast different network ties are formed. For our

definition of networking speed, we rely on the objective view of time[2] (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002)

and, hence, the notion of clock speed. Consider a case between two individuals: all else equal, if

Charlie takes a week while Finley takes a month to establish an equivalent tie with Rosa, the tie

between Charlie and Rosa will have come about as a result of higher networking speed. In terms

of a within-person comparison, if Charlie was previously taking a month to establish a tie, but now

takes a week to establish a comparable tie, Charlie now networks faster than was the case before.

Our conceptualization of networking speed at the tie level also allows for the Charlie to show

different networking speed in ties he establishes to different contacts at the same point in time. We

rely on comparative statements, because, while there is some anecdotal evidence (Hallen &

Eisenhardt, 2012; Kram, 1983), we are not aware of generalizable, systematic accounts about how

long it takes, in absolute terms, to form an interpersonal network tie in professional settings that

can be used as a reference point.

To understand networking speed, we see it as important to consider when, i.e., at what

point, tie formation begins and when we can assume that a tie has been formed. On these matters,

we follow previous research on relationship formation that has considered different stages of the

networking process. We assume that tie formation begins with the intention of one party to initiate

a new network tie. This intention may be triggered by the receipt of information about an alter

from another source – that is, before any direct contact with the alter – or as a result of interactions,

such as serendipitous encounters, between ego and alter (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987), and is

followed by an initial series of interactions in which ego and alter start exchanging information and getting to know each other (Ferris et al., 2009). We call the end point of relationship formation "commitment" (Dwyer et al., 1987; Ferris et al., 2009). Commitment demarcates the conclusion of the tie formation process and consolidates the presence of the tie, where both parties – ego and alter – who are involved in a tie implicitly or explicitly agree on its existence. In other words, consistent with the practice in empirical organizational network research to focus on "confirmed" relationships, such that a tie is taken to be present if both parties agree on its existence (e.g., Basov & Brennecke, 2017), we assume network ties to be formed when both partners acknowledge their presence. Ties that reach commitment are typically characterized by both behavioral consistency (Ferris et al., 2009) and consistency in terms of what they mean and how they can be used (Kram, 1983). Both parties in such ties are aware of, and have sufficient mutual agreement about, the kinds of resources or information that might be exchanged or mobilized through them.

Having thus conceptualized networking speed and explained how the use of a temporal and agentic lens helps us to better understand *how* professionals can form network ties and elaborate on the implications of variation in speed, in the sections that follow we develop our propositions. We start by examining the role that cognitive network accuracy, networking actions, similarity, proximity, status advantage, and common third parties can play as catalysts for networking speed. We investigate these six factors, because they have been of substantial interest for scholars as drivers of network dynamics (e.g., Dahlander & McFarland, 2013; Jacobsen, Stea, & Soda, 2022). Following this, we turn to the consequences of networking speed to discuss direct implications of speed for important relational outcomes, i.e., tie strength, cognitive network accuracy, and tie stability, as well as for network returns, i.e., the benefits that a tie generates (for a similar categorization, see Woehler, Cullen-Lester, Porter, & Frear, 2021). Beyond these "direct"

implications of networking speed, we explain how relying on different catalysts for networking speed matters for those relational outcomes and network returns. In other words, the implications of a given level of networking speed in the formation of a tie might be different depending on the catalysts that played a role in reaching that speed. Highlighting that forming network ties fast can lead to disadvantages, this discussion challenges the assumption that being faster is necessarily beneficial (e.g., D'Aveni et al., 2010). Figure 1 summarizes our conceptual framework, including the catalysts of networking speed, direct consequences of networking speed, and the moderating effects regarding the consequences of networking speed. Beyond the above, we explore two aspects that pertain to temporal implications of networking speed: how networking speed may set in motion reinforcing or weakening cycles of network dynamics vis-a-vis different catalysts and the persistence of the effects of networking speed.

Please insert Figure 1 about here

CATALYSTS FOR NETWORKING SPEED

We speak of catalysts as factors that can accelerate networking speed. We discuss cognitive network accuracy and networking actions as individual-level catalysts, look into similarity, proximity and status advantage at the dyad level, and investigate common third parties to illustrate how mutual contacts can affect the speed with which ties are formed between ego and alter. These factors have been investigated as drivers of network dynamics, and specifically of the likelihood of tie formation (e.g., Jacobsen et al., 2022). While research on the likelihood of tie formation is mostly, and suitably, concerned with tie formation as the outcome (e.g., Brennecke, 2020; Dahlander & McFarland, 2013) – to provide an illustration, this research may show that there is an 80 percent probability for a tie to form on the basis of a particular set of factors – typically, it

does not address the networking process. Put differently, research on the likelihood of tie formation often does not investigate *how* professionals form those ties that are, for instance, 80 percent likely to emerge, and with respect to our focus, how they can form those ties at varying speed. In these senses, research on the likelihood of tie formation has not engaged with temporality as a core concern. The fact that a tie that would be 80 percent likely to emerge does not directly speak to whether this happens fast or slowly. In addition, by and large, research on the likelihood of tie formation does not investigate how professionals can actively shape the process of forming new ties (and, specifically, influence its speed) through thoughtful agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). In our theorizing, we illustrate how, holding constant the likelihood with which a tie is formed, cognitive network accuracy, networking actions, similarity, proximity, status advantage, and common third parties enable us to better understand *how* professionals form network ties, i.e., fast or slow, by applying a temporal and agentic lens.

Cognitive Network Accuracy

Although it is not a new topic for organizational network scholars (Krackhardt, 1990), research on network cognition has experienced a recent upswing, as can be seen in reviews devoted to the topic (e.g., Brands, Menon, & Shea, 2019; Smith, Brands, Brashears, & Kleinbaum, 2020) as well as in original research (e.g., Byron & Landis, 2020; Iorio, 2022). One main focus of research on network cognition is cognitive network accuracy, which refers to the correspondence between egos' perceptions of networks and these networks' actual properties. Researchers have made a distinction between egos' ability to accurately perceive larger network configurations, such as brokerage opportunities (e.g., Landis, Kilduff, Menges, & Kilduff, 2018) and egos' cognitive accuracy about a particular alter, i.e., what specific alters think of or feel about them (Byron & Landis, 2020). Being able to accurately perceive networks, whether in terms of larger network configurations or regarding an alter, tends to bring advantages, since accurate network information

can facilitate forming the "right" ties, maneuvering oneself into a favorable network position (van Liere, Koppius, & Vervest, 2008), and building powerful coalitions (Janicik & Larrick, 2005).

Moving beyond the likelihood of tie formation, we expect that professionals who have cognitive accuracy about the network or a particular alter will have higher networking speed, as that accuracy is likely to enable them to initiate new ties in a more targeted manner. With respect to egos' cognitive accuracy about an alter, for instance, egos who have an accurate perception of whether specific individuals have heard of them before, or whether they think that ego has high status (Halgin, Borgatti, Mehra, & Soltis, 2020) or a reputation for being difficult (Brennecke, 2020) are likely at an advantage when approaching and interacting with these individuals. Based on their accurate perceptions, egos might have a better understanding of the other's expectations and motives, which should help them to gain initial buy-in and build trust (Porter & Woo, 2015) and ultimately form a tie faster. Similarly, professionals who perceive larger network configurations accurately can identify common third parties or opportunities for brokerage better than professionals without such accuracy, which puts the former in a position to use such accurate information to reach higher networking speed. In these ways, knowing who is or is not connected to whom or who likes or dislikes whom, enables professionals to speed up tie formation. We suggest:

> *Proposition 1: Egos with accurate cognition about the network or an alter will*
> *have higher networking speed than egos without accurate cognition.*

Networking Actions

Networking actions are behavioral repertoires that allow professionals to proactively and intentionally shape their networks and, we argue, speed up tie formation. Networking actions have been the focus of a number of studies in the last decade (e.g., Bensaou et al., 2014; Hallen &

Eisenhardt, 2012) that are anchored in the agency perspective (for a review, see Tasselli & Kilduff, 2021).

We reason that professionals who consciously use networking actions (such as those that we discuss below) will be able to establish rapport with others and signal instrumentality of a potential tie faster, as compared to those professionals who do not use them. For instance, Vissa (2012) outlines how entrepreneurs establish interpersonal knowledge of alters to engage in what he terms network broadening actions. Such network broadening actions, as reflected in rich descriptions of professionals' behavioral repertoires for networking by Bensaou et al. (2014) and Mariotti and Delbridge (2012), can accelerate tie formation. They comprise proactively initiating interactions with new alters and gathering knowledge about their expertise or motivations, as well as finding out about mutual contacts. That knowledge, in turn, reduces the time needed to establish rapport, allowing egos to tailor their advances to alters' needs (Vissa, 2012).

To provide another example, Hallen and Eisenhardt (2012) explain how entrepreneurs rely on "casual dating" to facilitate the efficient formation of formal investment ties. Casual dating comprises informal interactions, such as discussions, and can also be applied to interpersonal tie formation. These interactions foster information exchange, and can speed up familiarization; they can also include the conscious use of general advice-seeking, which can enable egos to ingratiate themselves with and flatter alters (Gordon, 1996). Such networking actions by ego lead to positive affect, or liking, on the part of alter. As individuals tend to seek affective (in addition to instrumental) reward, even from professional relationships (e.g., Casciaro & Lobo, 2015), ingratiation is likely to increase the speed with which alters commit to a relationship.

Again in this direction, Porter and Woo (2015) discuss relationship building actions that allow exchanging richer information about a potential tie's instrumentality and a partner's

trustworthiness before a tie is formed. One of the interviewees of Bensaou et al. (2014: 39) illustrates what this may mean in terms of behaviors that allow speeding up tie formation by explaining that to build a tie, he "met with one client every morning, and we were running every morning." Based on these points, we suggest:

Proposition 2: Egos who use networking actions will have higher networking speed than egos who do not.

Similarity

At the dyad level, we start with similarity, which is a widely invoked concept in organizational network research in general (Ertug, Brennecke, Kovács, & Zou, 2022; Lawrence & Shah, 2020), and is also among the most frequently discussed factors for understanding which ties are likely to form (e.g., McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Holding constant the likelihood of tie formation, we argue that similarity is important for understanding the speed with which network ties can be formed, through a temporal and agentic lens. As suggested by the description by Dahlander and McFarland (2013: 71, emphasis added) "tie formation occurs in the context of two unfamiliar individuals meeting and seeking points of similarity, […] applying short-term strategies to *quickly* assess and forge ties on the basis of shared traits." Similarity may refer to visible characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, age or even a similar dress-style (Grossman, Yli-Renko, & Janakiraman, 2012), but also to professionals' values or perspectives, which can foster perceptions of safety (Prisbell & Andersen, 1980), trustworthiness (Levin, Whitener, & Cross, 2006), and affective closeness (Oelberger, 2019), which we expect will allow ego to form a tie faster with an alter who is more similar, compared to one who is not. We propose:

Proposition 3: Egos who are similar to alter will have higher networking speed than egos who are not.

Proximity

Following Dahlander and McFarland (2013), we distinguish (social) similarity from spatial proximity (for a review, see Rivera, Soderstrom, & Uzzi, 2010), which is a conceptually distinct factor that we expect would allow professionals to speed up tie formation. Spatial proximity leads to more opportunities for interaction. Professionals who share office locations or work on the same company site are more likely to form network ties (Kleinbaum, Stuart, & Tushman, 2013). Mixers (Ingram & Morris, 2007) or offsite events (Kneeland, 2019) are popular tools to not only facilitate (i.e., increase formation likelihood) but also speed up tie formation, as they increase proximity between individuals beyond their ordinary course of work. With respect to networking speed, proximity allows professionals to come into contact with potential new alters more quickly than would happen otherwise. It provides a fast track to approach and interact with others, providing a convenient path to accelerate the processes of information exchange and getting to know each other, which is likely to bring about commitment faster (Ferris et al., 2009), all else equal. We suggest:

> *Proposition 4: Egos who are proximate to alter will have higher networking speed than egos who are not.*

Status Advantage

Status is frequently studied in network research and has been discussed as an important influence on tie formation dynamics, in seminal early work (Podolny, 1994), in recent expansions and refinements of this direction (e.g., Cao & Smith, 2021), as well as in reviews (Jacobsen et al., 2022). We suggest that ego's status advantage over a potential alter will influence networking speed. Because status transfer is expected to transpire as a result of ties between actors (e.g., Podolny & Phillips, 1996), it will be faster for ego to establish ties to partners who are of similar-

or lower-status than ego, as compared to alters who are of higher status. The expected status transfer implies that lower-status partners would improve or at least maintain their status as a result of a tie to ego. In contrast, ego is likely to expend greater time and effort in consolidating a tie to someone who is of higher-status than ego, since this person would risk losing status as a result of their tie to ego. Due to these considerations about the status implications of the tie, we expect that it will be faster for ego to consolidate a tie with someone who is lower status than they are, as compared to a potential contact who is of higher status:

> *Proposition 5: Egos who have status advantage over alter will have higher networking speed than egos who do not.*

Common Third Parties

Having applied a temporal and agentic lens to examine how catalysts at the individual and dyadic levels of analyses can influence networking speed, we look into common third parties as an example of a factor at the triad level. Common third parties are core to one of the most prominent debates in network scholarship, around brokerage and closure, and have accordingly attracted substantial scholarly attention (for recent reviews, see Halevy, Halali, & Zlatev, 2019; Kwon, Rondi, Levin, De Massis, & Brass, 2020). Building on this research, we expect common third parties (that is, individuals who are mutual contacts of both ego and alter) to be an important catalyst for networking speed. These mutual contacts can offer recommendations to ego for how to approach potential alters or even provide a direct referral (Vissa, 2012), which are both likely to increase networking speed. Even in cases where common third parties are not actively involved in the networking process, they may still fast track a professional's networking attempts with others, allowing them to reach higher networking speed. For example, common third parties can provide a shared ground that can be used to facilitate communication between the professional and

a candidate for a new tie, promoting interactions and providing legitimacy, for instance if the professional engages in the proverbial name dropping (Vissa, 2012). Therefore, we propose:

> *Proposition 6: Egos who share common third parties with alter will have higher networking speed than egos who do not.*

CONSEQUENCES OF NETWORKING SPEED

The most basic and generic expectation regarding the consequences of networking speed is that it enables quicker access to the benefits that a tie provides (Hallen & Eisenhardt, 2012), as we will briefly discuss. Beyond this general point about network returns, however, we challenge the assumption that high speed is necessarily beneficial (e.g., D'Aveni et al., 2010) by illustrating that fast tie formation is likely to negatively influence key relational outcomes, i.e., tie strength, ego's cognitive accuracy about an alter, and tie stability. After this consideration of the direct implications of networking speed, we return to the factors that we introduced as catalysts to see how they might moderate the influence of networking speed on tie strength, cognitive network accuracy, tie stability, and the benefits accessed via quickly formed ties. Our discussion suggests that the quality of these benefits is likely to vary depending on the catalyst that was used to reach networking speed.

Direct Consequences of Speed

A consequence of forming network ties fast, which is almost true by definition, is earlier access to the benefits that these ties offer. As argued by Hallen and Eisenhardt (2012) in their study on start-ups' contractual relationships, quicker access to network returns brings a competitive advantage due to the earlier availability and usability of resources, and the fact that having that timelier access to benefits frees up capacity that can be allocated to other aspects of work. With respect to our focus on professionals, by forming ties fast, egos are able to benefit from earlier

availability of knowledge or advice that flow through interpersonal network ties (e.g., Brennecke, 2020), and which they would be able to implement into their practice earlier to achieve professional goals. Similarly, professionals who form network ties fast, rather than slow, are also likely to benefit from timelier access to advantages linked to power, status, or coordination (e.g., Ibarra, 1993), as well as higher levels of organizational (Zagenczyk, Scott, Gibney, Murrell, & Thatcher, 2010) or social (Soltis, Agneessens, Sasovova, & Labianca, 2013) support. Earlier access to these resources and advantages has the potential to enhance performance-related outcomes that have been linked to interpersonal network ties, such as creativity (Perry-Smith, 2006) or getting a promotion (Burt, 1992). It may also help professionals' well-being and reduce stress (Kalish, Toker, Westman, & Luria, 2015).

Earlier access to such network returns that results from networking speed is true almost by definition. To provide a more balanced understanding, we also discuss how forming network ties fast *can* have negative implications as well, impairing important relational outcomes. We start with tie strength, as a relational characteristic that plays a prominent role in network research. Tie strength is typically defined in terms of a combination of behavioral aspects, such as frequency of interactions, mutual confiding, or reciprocation, and affective aspects, such as emotional closeness (Granovetter, 1973; Marsden & Campbell, 1984). Even though weak ties can offer benefits for creativity and performance, insofar as they facilitate access to different social circles and serve as non-redundant connections (e.g., Perry-Smith, 2006), strong ties tend to promote the transfer of knowledge (Levin & Cross, 2004) and offer socio-psychological benefits such as emotional support (Krackhardt, 1992).

We argue that ties that are formed quickly will be weaker than ties that are formed more slowly. One reason for this is that familiarity and mutual trust, which are associated with the

affective aspects of tie strength, can be difficult to expedite. Creating closeness is likely to require time. As such, all else equal, it is more likely to happen when ties are formed more slowly than when they are formed faster. In this connection, Vanneste, Puranam, and Kretschmer (2014) report a positive association between relationship duration and trust in their meta-analysis. These effects that are associated with the affective aspects of tie strength are likely to carry over to behavioral aspects such as reciprocation and mutual confiding. For example, for ties that are formed fast, alters may be more hesitant to reciprocate knowledge transfer straight-away. Likewise, it is likely that ego and alter need time to develop a way of working together that facilitates easy transfer of useful and complex knowledge. Porter and Woo (2015) suggest that, with increased knowledge of alter, ego can ask for or receive more particularistic resources, which are presumably more useful. In sum, all else equal, networking speed has negative implications for the affective and behavioral aspects of tie strength. Thus, even when assessed at the point of consolidation, there can be variation in how strong or weak a newly formed tie is, i.e., it is possible that in some newly formed ties ego and alter perceive it as stronger than is the case in other newly formed ties. As Ferris et al. (2009: 1387) note, "relationships may be of high quality based on expectations formed during the initial encounter." We suggest:

> *Proposition 7a: Networking speed will negatively influence the strength of the tie between ego and alter.*

In our earlier discussion, we argued that cognitive network accuracy, which can refer to ego's cognitive accuracy about the larger network or a specific alter, can expedite networking speed. In addition to its role as a catalyst, cognitive network accuracy is also relevant as a relational outcome of networking speed.[3] Since we investigate networking speed at the level of the tie, we

focus on ego's cognitive accuracy about an alter (Byron & Landis, 2020), i.e., at the dyad level, which we expect is negatively influenced by networking speed.

All else equal, in forming network ties faster, rather than more slowly, egos would have had less time to process and reflect on information about alter and the fit of alter as a network partner, given their goals and needs. Put differently, for tie formation decisions that are made quickly, it is more likely that professionals would have relied on what Kahneman (2011) has characterized as "System 1 thinking" as opposed to "System 2 thinking." While System 2 thinking is slow, deliberate, and controlled, System 1 thinking is quick, automatic, and unconscious. Tie formation decisions that are based on the latter are likely to be spontaneous and supported primarily by glimpses of behavior rather than thorough and deliberate considerations (Ambady, Bernieri, & Richeson, 2000). This relative dearth of conscious and systematic deliberation, while it is expected to speed up tie formation, would be likely detrimental for ego's cognitive accuracy about alter and, hence, increase the risk of relational misperceptions (Byron & Landis, 2020), i.e. biased or incorrect assumptions about what an alter thinks or feels about ego. Accordingly, we propose:

> *Proposition 7b: Networking speed will negatively influence ego's cognitive*
> *accuracy about an alter.*

On average, we also expect networking speed to reduce tie stability. Tie stability refers to the tendency of ties to persist over time, rather than dissolve. Tie stability plays a role, for instance, in moderating the relationship between network structure and creativity, such that lower stability increases the benefits of open and heterogeneous networks (Soda et al., 2021).

As just mentioned in our discussion on cognitive network accuracy, in quickly formed ties individuals might be more likely to overlook or be insufficiently aware of relevant information

about the other person. The slower a tie is formed, the more likely it is for such information to surface before the consolidation of the tie and be taken into account for the tie formation decision. That is, in cases where a piece of information would raise concerns for ego about potential issues in the relationship later, ego might then decide to not proceed to form that tie in the first place. For ties that are formed quickly, the converse of these considerations applies, suggesting that their stability would be more at risk, since there might not have been enough time for relevant information (which might cause issues in the relationship later) to emerge and be processed. Hence, all else equal, the foundation of the relationship is likely to be weaker in ties that are formed faster, as compared to the foundation of a relationship that is formed slowly, after more deliberation. Accordingly, we expect ties that are formed fast to be less stable:

> *Proposition 7c: Networking speed will negatively influence the stability of the tie*
> *between ego and alter.*

We expect the direct consequences of speed that are articulated in Propositions 7a-7c to come about independently of the specific catalysts that professionals relied on to increase networking speed. These "on average" expectations notwithstanding, it is possible that a catalyst that played a role to speed up tie formation can also influence the effects of networking speed on relational outcomes and network returns. In other words, some of the catalysts can also moderate the relationship between networking speed and its consequences.

Moderators of the Effects of Networking Speed on Relational Outcomes

We now qualify the "on average" relationships in Propositions 7a-7c by discussing contingencies. In particular, we explain how these relationships can be mitigated as a function of ego's reliance on some of the catalysts we considered earlier. For each outcome, we revisit those catalysts for which we can make a theoretical case for their role as moderator. Table 1 summarizes

the moderating effects we propose, both those in this section (moderators of the effects of speed on relational outcomes) and in the section that follows (moderators the effects of speed on network returns).

Please insert Table 1 about here

Our expectation in Proposition 7a is that networking speed negatively influences tie strength. As a first moderator of this relationship, we return to cognitive network accuracy. High cognitive accuracy about the broader network facilitates making use of network configurations, such as referencing common third parties or making networking decisions based on knowledge about close or distant relationships between individuals. Similarly, high cognitive accuracy about a specific alter likely leads to a better judgment of this alter's perceptions of oneself (Byron & Landis, 2020). Cognitive accuracy of either of these two kinds enables more targeted interactions with others and can more quickly induce trust, closeness, and familiarity, which are central components of tie strength. Therefore, to the extent that ties are formed fast on the basis of more accurate network perceptions, the negative influence of networking speed on tie strength would likely be reduced.

Similar to cognitive network accuracy, networking actions also facilitate more targeted networking. The actions we previously discussed, such as gathering knowledge (Vissa, 2012), indicate how professionals can deliberately and consciously prepare for tie formation. Such preparation should not only accelerate tie formation (as per Proposition 2) but is also likely to mitigate the negative influence of networking speed on tie strength. Compared to cases in which egos form network ties quickly in ways that are unprepared, for instance in serendipitous encounters (Engel et al., 2017), using networking actions to form network ties fast would

presumably allow for more targeted interactions with potential network partners, which are then likely to lead to a tie that is stronger, even at the time of consolidation.

Connecting with similar alters improves communication, affect, and trust, as well as the ability to transfer tacit knowledge (e.g., Oelberger, 2019; Reagans, 2005). In short, similarity leads to higher tie strength (Ertug et al., 2022). Therefore, to the extent that the faster formation of a tie was due to the similarity between ego and alter, we expect this to weaken the negative effect of networking speed on tie strength. A similar argument applies to proximity. Opportunities to meet and the common ground that are created by proximity are likely to increase tie strength (Reagans, 2011). Accordingly, we conjecture that proximity should also mitigate the negative effect of networking speed on tie strength.

We also expect common third parties to mitigate the negative relationship between networking speed and tie strength. A prominent assumption in sociological theory is that having mutual contacts leads to stronger connections between individuals (e.g., Granovetter, 1973). As Gargiulo and Sosa (2016: 135) note, the presence of common third parties "makes actors more likely to trust and to understand each other, diminishing the uncertainty of their exchanges." Overall, we expect the above-discussed catalysts of networking speed to also function as moderators that mitigate the negative direct effect of networking speed on tie strength. Formally stated:

> *Proposition 8a: To the degree that networking speed is a result of (i) ego's cognitive accuracy, (ii) ego's networking actions, (iii) similarity between ego and alter, (iv) proximity between ego and alter, or (v) common third parties between ego and alter, its negative influence on tie strength will be mitigated.*

We expect that some of the catalysts also act as moderators that mitigate the disadvantages of networking speed for egos' cognitive accuracy about an alter. In particular, regarding cognitive

network accuracy itself, if egos already have high cognitive accuracy about an alter before tie

formation, all else equal, this should lead to a more accurate perception of what these alters think

or feel about them after tie formation. Accordingly, the negative effect of networking speed on

egos' cognitive accuracy about an alter would be mitigated to the degree that this quickly formed

tie was consolidated on the basis of already a high level of cognitive accuracy (before tie

formation) about this alter. In addition, egos' employment of purposeful networking actions, for

instance by collecting preparatory information (e.g., Vissa, 2012), implies their enhanced cognitive

engagement with alter, which should mitigate the negative effect of networking speed on the

accuracy of egos' perception of what an alter thinks of or feels about them. Common third parties

may provide information about a potential network contact (e.g., Mariotti & Delbridge, 2012) or

channel egos' attention towards a potential alter and, thereby, trigger increased cognitive

engagement with that person. Whether a mutual contact explicitly provides input or implicitly

fosters awareness of alters, we expect that the presence of mutual contacts as catalysts for

networking speed would weaken the negative relationship between forming network ties fast and

egos' accuracy about what a specific alter thinks or feels about them. In summary, we propose:[4]

> *Proposition 8b: To the degree that networking speed is a result of (i) ego's*
> *cognitive accuracy, (ii) ego's networking actions, or (iii) common third parties*
> *between ego and alter, its negative influence on ego's cognitive accuracy about*
> *an alter will be mitigated.*

We also look into whether some of the catalysts might moderate the negative relationship

between networking speed and tie stability. We suggest that higher cognitive accuracy (whether

about larger network configurations or an alter) before a tie is formed should mitigate the negative

effect of networking speed on tie stability. Better understanding network configurations allows

professionals to assess the long-term value of a prospective tie, for instance in terms of the

resources accessible via an alter's own connections. In addition, egos who accurately judge what a specific alter thinks or feels about them are less likely to overlook important characteristics of that alter and are therefore less likely to experience the (potentially stability-reducing) impairments of relational misperceptions for relationship quality that are discussed by Byron and Landis (2020). As a result, to the extent that tie formation was accelerated due to high cognitive network accuracy, this would be likely to mitigate the negative relationship between networking speed and tie stability.

With regard to networking actions, the points we outlined earlier concerning intentional preparation and more information being available upfront as a result of purposeful networking are also likely to matter for tie stability. That is, proactivity and deliberation when forming a tie at a given speed would reduce the risk that professionals later second-guess their tie formation decision. This suggests that, on average, ties formed fast in this manner would be more stable over time, compared to ties formed fast in ways that did not involve purposeful networking on ego's part, for example based on serendipitous encounters.

Regarding similarity as a possible moderator, network research shows that ties with *dissimilar* others are generally more likely to be dissolved and, if they dissolve, do so earlier on in a relationship (Suitor & Keeton, 1997; Tulin, Mollenhorst, & Volker, 2021). Extending these findings to the relationship we focus on, we expect that similarity between ego and alter will mitigate the negative relationship between forming network ties fast and tie stability. Akin to this, we again expect to see a mitigation of that negative relationship based on the common ground generated by physical proximity.

Another catalyst that we expect to mitigate the negative effect of networking speed on tie stability is ego's status advantage over alter. We expect that, generally speaking, lower status

partners are likely to see value in maintaining their relationships with those who are higher-status. Accordingly, even if some information that did not come up during the (faster) process of tie formation does come up after commitment, and might otherwise endanger tie stability, lower-status partners are likely to be more accommodating, based on their wish to continue a relationship with a higher-status partner, i.e., ego. Whether the source of potentially stability reducing information is ego or alter, or whether that information would lead ego or alter to consider dissolving the tie, the alter's greater motivation to continue a relationship with a higher-status ego would mean that the alter would likely behave in ways that would reduce the likelihood of tie dissolution, thereby mitigating the negative effect of networking speed on tie stability.

Concerning common third parties, a prominent argument in organizational network research is that mutual contacts lead to embeddedness, which might imply being "trapped in your own net" (Gargiulo & Benassi, 2000). That is, forming a network tie fast via the catalyst of common third parties would make it more difficult to end this relationship because it is more difficult to break out of a closed triad, as also invoked in research in other social network streams (e.g., Simmel, 1955). The implication is that the negative effect of networking speed on tie stability would be mitigated to the degree that common third parties played a role in the formation of that tie. In summary, we suggest:

> *Proposition 8c: To the degree that networking speed is a result of (i) ego's cognitive accuracy, (ii) ego's networking actions, (iii) similarity between ego and alter, (iv) proximity between ego and alter, (v) ego's status advantage over alter, (vi) common third parties between ego and alter, its negative influence on tie stability will be mitigated.*

Moderators of the Effect of Networking Speed on Network Returns

While we did not add a proposition about it, because it is true almost by definition, we mentioned that networking speed likely leads to the earlier availability of network returns, for example with respect to benefits such as resources, power, or coordination advantages that are typically associated with professionals' network ties. Returning to this point, we investigate whether and how the factors that serve as catalysts might also influence, i.e., moderate, the benefits that can be accessed earlier when a tie is formed fast. As different from the case for Propositions 8a-8c, where all of the factors were expected to mitigate the negative direct relationships, in this case, the moderating effects are more varied, in that some factors are likely to influence network returns in terms of generating additional advantages, while others might influence them in ways that they may not be desirable. Accordingly, forming network ties fast can entail both advantages and pitfalls and professionals need to weigh the pros and cons of a catalyst for networking speed before using it to speed up tie formation.

Considering how cognitive network accuracy might influence the benefits accessed earlier by forming ties fast, we suggest that accurate network perceptions, whether about the network or an alter, make it more likely that the ties that are established provide the specific kinds of benefits that professionals are looking for. Professionals with such accurate perceptions should be better able to analyze – even during a faster tie formation process – with whom to connect, for instance in wanting to gain bridging or coordination advantages or because potential alters are influential due to their central network position (Ibarra & Andrews, 1993). In this way, professionals should be better able to quickly maneuver themselves into network positions that are advantageous given their goals and needs. Similarly, egos' cognitive accuracy about an alter increases the likelihood for a more precise assessment of which resources they can access faster by forming a tie with that alter or how to convince those alters to provide access to their resources. Therefore, the

involvement of cognitive network accuracy as a catalyst for faster formation of a tie implies that the benefits that are accessed earlier via that tie are likely to match the professionals' needs.

> *Proposition 9a: To the degree that networking speed is a result of ego's cognitive accuracy about the network or an alter, it will lead to earlier access to benefits that have a better fit with ego's goals and needs.*

In a similar manner, the use of networking actions in reaching high networking speed is also likely to lead to a better fit between the benefits that are accessed earlier and the professionals' goals. For example, Bensaou et al. (2014) provide illustrations and interview quotes that show how professionals use different actions to bring themselves closer to their work-related goals. The contrast is with ties that are established equally fast, but were not formed proactively and intentionally by using networking actions – and hence were established based on lower levels of intent and preparation, which we suggest means that the accessed benefits are less likely to correspond directly to egos' goals and needs. Formally stated:

> *Proposition 9b: To the degree that networking speed is a result of ego's networking actions, it will lead to earlier access to benefits that have a better fit with ego's goals and needs.*

Even though we expect similarity to speed up tie formation (as per Proposition 3), the use of similarity as a catalyst would restrict an ego's potential network partners to those individuals who possess similar characteristics. As discussed extensively in the organizational network literature, even though the use of similarities in tie formation can entail advantages, they also come with disadvantages regarding the benefits that can be accessed timelier. Specifically, connecting with similar others might lead to a reduction in the diversity of resources and knowledge that one can access (Ertug, Gargiulo, Galunic, & Zou, 2018) and can keep professionals from exploring

contacts who might be more suitable in providing the resources they actually need (Ertug et al., 2022). In other words, relying on similarity as a catalyst for networking speed is likely to be detrimental for the diversity in benefits, specifically resources such as knowledge and problem-solving assistance, that can be accessed – even though these benefits would become available earlier. Accordingly, we propose the following moderation effect:

> *Proposition 9c: To the degree that networking speed is a result of similarity between ego and alter, it will lead to a reduction in the diversity of resources that are accessed earlier.*

The points about similarity also largely apply to proximity, albeit in this case concerning diversity that is associated with a different type of resources. Individuals who are physically proximate are more likely to be exposed to similar environmental influences and to have similar networks and social capital (Reagans, 2011). Thus, to the degree that proximity plays a role in the faster formation of a network tie, professionals are likely to face a trade-off between earlier access to the benefits accessible via network ties and these benefits being less diverse in terms of resources that might be influenced or constrained by location.

> *Proposition 9d: To the degree that networking speed is a result of proximity between ego and alter, it will lead to a reduction in the diversity of resources that are accessed earlier.*

With regard to status advantage, we note that to the extent that ego's status advantage over an alter was a factor in speeding up tie formation, the implication is that this alter was lower status (as compared to an alter whose status was similar to, or higher than, ego's). If alter's status was more similar to – or even higher than – ego, ego would not have a status advantage and therefore it would not be possible for it to act as a catalyst to speed up tie formation. Because status is a

signal for quality (e.g., Podolny, 2005), the quality of resources ego can access through such lower-status alters is likely to be lower on average (e.g., Castellucci & Ertug, 2010).

> *Proposition 9e: To the degree that networking speed is a result of ego's status advantage over alter, it will lead to a reduction in the quality of resources that are accessed earlier.*

If professionals form network ties fast as a result of common third parties as a catalyst, they end up in network configurations that are characterized by closure, as opposed to brokerage. Against the background of the benefits of such closed (or "dense", "cohesive") networks, as discussed extensively in the literature (e.g., Gargiulo, Ertug, & Galunic, 2009), this implies that professionals are likely to reap benefits such as greater community engagement, norm reinforcement, coordination advantages, and better predictability regarding their access to resources. By contrast, closure typically reduces access to diverse and non-redundant resources, and also limits what is known as "control advantages" in the literature on structural holes (for a discussion, see Kwon et al., 2020), as these are benefits that are typically associated with brokerage (or lack of closure). Thus, overall, the function of common third parties as a catalyst for networking speed would have implications for the types of network benefits that professionals are able to reap earlier, as well as those that they may be held back from reaping (Burt, 2005). In this sense, professionals face a trade-off, where they might need to make different networking decisions based on their goals and needs. Put formally:

> *Proposition 9f: To the degree that networking speed is a result of common third parties between ego and alter, it will lead to benefits that are associated with closed rather than open structures that are accessed earlier.*

TEMPORAL CONSIDERATIONS

The four sets of propositions we developed spell out the multiple ways in which a consideration of networking speed is relevant for and could enrich organizational network research. To outline further avenues in which research on networking speed can develop, we sketch out some conjectures regarding two temporal implications that are associated with forming network ties fast. First, we note how some of the catalysts of networking speed might yield reinforcing or weakening implications down the line for those very catalysts, as well as for other catalysts. Second, we assess how the strength of the consequences of networking speed is likely to vary with the passage of time after the consolidation of a tie.

Reinforcing/Weakening Effects of Catalysts

The use of specific catalysts for networking speed might lead to dynamics that reinforce or weaken those very catalysts, as well as other catalysts. To illustrate this idea, we look into the dynamic implications of networking actions for networking speed at the individual level, status advantage at the dyad level, and common third parties at the triad level.

Ego's use of networking actions should generally accelerate networking speed (Proposition 2). Similarly, the faster formation of ties via networking actions is likely to lead to earlier access to benefits that fit ego's goals and needs (Proposition 9b). Combining these, we suggest that earlier access to such benefits will, in turn, place ego in a position which makes subsequent agentic networking that is aimed to reach high speed easier – through the use of those benefits that are accessed earlier and which are likely to expand ego's scope of action. In this way, networking actions that facilitated networking speed at an earlier point in time can generate a situation later on in time that enables egos to be even more deliberate in their use of such actions, fast-tracking future tie formation further. This is a reinforcing cycle, where the use of a catalyst for networking speed

can be expected to yield network dynamics that enhance the potency of that same catalyst. Taking this idea further, the benefits that come from networking speed via the use of networking actions might also generate a situation in which ego's status increases. This would be the case if others are more likely to defer to ego (thereby increasing ego's status) due to the benefits ego has claimed through forming network ties fast, by relying on intentional networking actions. This is a reinforcing cycle in which the use of a given catalyst for networking speed, i.e., networking actions, can strengthen a different factor, i.e., status, that can function as a catalyst.

The degree to which ego relies on status advantage as a catalyst for networking speed allows us to illustrate the contrasting case of a weakening cycle. As we have discussed, relying on status to increase networking speed implies that ego's alters would be lower-status than ego, and also that the quality of resources ego can expect to access through those lower-status alters will be lower (Proposition 9e). Being connected to lower-status alters and working with lower-quality resources can subsequently lead to a situation in which ego's status decreases,[5] which should, in turn, have a detrimental effect for ego's ability to rely on status as a catalyst for networking speed in the future. This is an illustration of how the use of a given catalyst can lead to dynamics which weaken that same catalyst and reduce the potential for it to be used to expedite networking speed down the line.

To illustrate another reinforcing cycle, we return to common third parties as a potential catalyst for networking speed (see Proposition 6), whose use can yield for ego both the benefits and drawbacks of network closure (Proposition 9f). If the benefits of closure align well with ego's tasks, there is potential for a reinforcing cycle, by which subsequent ties – which are quickly formed via common third parties as a catalyst – sustain or increase the benefits of closed networks. Conversely, if ego's tasks would in fact benefit from brokerage and the advantages that open

network structures entail, this same cycle, leading to closure in ego's network, would then likely pose an obstacle because its reinforcing nature will require active intervention from ego to resist the use of common third parties as a catalyst for networking speed in the future. Overall, this discussion about reinforcing and weakening cycles suggests that the consequences of networking speed are not constrained to the implications specified in our propositions, but that networking speed likely has broader implications for network dynamics and for the coevolution of networks and outcomes.

Persistence of Consequences

Research on temporality and networks points to variation in how the consequences of networks unfold and how long they persist (e.g., Baum et al., 2012; Soda et al., 2004). Extending this discussion, we look into whether the consequences of networking speed vary in strength as a function of the passage of time after tie formation. We illustrate our ideas regarding the persistence of the effects of networking speed by returning to tie strength, cognitive network accuracy, and tie stability as relational outcomes.

In developing Proposition 7a, we explained why we expect tie formation speed to be negatively related to tie strength. We expect this relationship to be stronger when it is assessed soon after the consolidation of a tie and to become weaker with the passage of time after tie formation. In other words, the consequences of networking speed for tie strength may not persist indefinitely. The contrast between a fast-formed and slow-formed tie, with respect to its implications for tie strength, would be sharper soon after tie formation. As a relationship is maintained, the reasons that led us to conjecture a negative relationship between networking speed and tie strength, such as a lack of familiarity and trust, are likely to be gradually addressed and become relatively less important. Similar considerations apply to egos' cognitive accuracy about

an alter or to tie stability. For these outcomes as well, our conjecture would be that the effect of networking speed on them are likely to be most discernible soon after the formation of a tie and gradually reduce over time. Overall, our expectation is that the differences between a fast-formed and slow-formed tie for these consequences would be more prominent when assessed soon after tie formation, and reduce as time passes.

We touch upon the persistence of consequences both to note that the implications of networking speed can be explored in this manner, and to spell out another way in which the study of networking speed can fit in well with recent developments in the study of networks. For example, Chen et al. (2022) call for further research on the length of time that different network features continue to shape outcomes. As one of the few studies in this direction, earlier on Soda et al. (2004) found that the benefits of bridging ties are fleeting. In a similar manner, our reasoning suggests that some of the consequences of networking speed may be shorter-lived than others. Even where this is the case, however, studying the effects of networking speed would remain relevant, because (i) we do not know a priori at what pace these effects reduce or if they disappear altogether; (ii) due to increasing pressures for speed and network change (Ellwood et al., 2017; Soda et al., 2021), for many ties that professionals create there might not be an interest in having them survive in the long run, and some ties might well have been established for the explicit purpose of accessing the resources they make available as soon as possible, thereby making the shorter-term implications important; and (iii) nascent research points to imprinting effects (e.g., Halgin et al., 2020), such that even if differences in tie strength, cognitive network accuracy, and tie stability that are linked to networking speed are small, they might nevertheless have significant implications for important aspects of a relationship, both at an earlier point in time but also at later stages due to imprinting.

DISCUSSION

Proactively orchestrating and adjusting one's network, for instance in response to changing working conditions or to maintain a creative edge (e.g., Jonczyk et al., 2016; Soda et al., 2021), is a familiar part of working life for individuals in professional settings. As part of these efforts, professionals form new network ties and initiate network change. While studies on network dynamics have explored factors that affect the likelihood of tie formation (e.g., Dahlander & McFarland, 2013) and overall patterns of change (e.g., Burt & Merluzzi, 2016), our research introduces a theoretical consideration of networking speed – the time it takes for a new tie to form between two individuals. We conceptualized networking speed as a constitutive element of how interpersonal networks function by applying a temporal and agentic lens to discuss how the use of different catalysts enables professionals to form network ties faster. We considered the implications of the speed with which ties have been formed, and of the catalysts that have played a role, for the relational outcomes and network returns that these ties generate and demonstrated that being faster can entail both advantages and pitfalls. We also highlighted temporal implications associated with forming network ties fast to showcase the multiple future research avenues associated with the study of networking speed. We now further expand this outline of a future research program for the integration of networking speed into organizational network research, along with highlighting the more general implications of our theory of networking speed.

Implications Based on the Catalysts of Networking Speed

Moving beyond research that examines which ties are likely to form (e.g., Dahlander & McFarland, 2013), we apply a temporal and agentic lens to shed light on different catalysts that allow professionals to accelerate tie formation and thereby provide a better understanding *how* professionals form network ties. In doing so, we extend knowledge on the role of time and the temporal unfolding of network processes (e.g., Soda et al., 2021; Ter Wal et al., 2022) and

highlight that professionals have a degree of control over how tie formation temporally proceeds. We also engage with recent calls for research on the underlying agentic behaviors and processes that give rise to networks (Halevy et al., 2019; Tasselli & Kilduff, 2021). We discuss catalysts at the individual, dyad, and triad levels, building on factors that have featured prominently in network research in the past. However, our discussion is not exhaustive. Future research can explore how factors, such as personality (e.g., self-monitoring, see Sasovova, Mehra, Borgatti, & Schippers, 2010) or gender (Brands, Ertug, Fonti, & Tasselli, 2022), influence networking speed. The investigation of these factors would show whether there is variation with regards to individual characteristics. Since in our propositions we compare ego's use of a catalyst to not using that catalyst, future research can extend this to study how the greater or more extensive use of a certain catalyst (e.g., the extent of networking actions, the number of common third parties, or the degree or type of similarity) might lead to speed-accelerating effects. In addition, future extensions can move beyond our focus on speed in the formation of *new* ties to investigate speed in the activation of dormant or latent ties (Levin, Walter, & Murnighan, 2011; Mariotti & Delbridge, 2012) as well as speed in tie alteration, that is, changing tie content (Gulati & Srivastava, 2014). In line with most network research, our theory of networking speed is formulated from the perspective of ego (cf. Tasselli & Kilduff, 2021). There is growing interest to include alter-centric views when investigating the formation of network ties (e.g., Kleinbaum, Jordan, & Audia, 2015). Incorporating an alter perspective into the discussion of networking speed would enable a more complete assessment of how the different catalysts to speed function, as alters can also introduce accelerating or slowing factors into the tie formation process. Timing, as the distinct point in time when something occurs (Aguinis & Bakker, 2021), is a temporal dimension that deserves attention from scholars to develop a deeper understanding of networking speed. As there can be more or

less suitable times to establish a tie, for instance when professionals might need to access a resource or mobilize a connection (Hallen & Eisenhardt, 2012; Ter Wal et al., 2022), choosing the right timing may be an important consideration regarding networking speed.

Implications Based on the Consequences of Networking Speed

Concerning the consequences of networking speed, we explain how variation in speed, and the specific catalysts that allow speeding up tie formation, are likely to influence the relational outcomes and network returns that a consolidated network tie generates. This investigation is in line with the claim that an understanding of network consequences is substantially incomplete if we do not account for the processes that generated those networks (Ahuja et al., 2012). Few studies to date have attended to the question of whether and how the process of network change influences the consequences of network ties and structures. A handful of empirical studies on network churn, i.e., the extent to which the composition of ego's network changes from one period to the next (Burt & Merluzzi, 2016), demonstrates that churn influences future tie formation (Sasovova et al., 2010) and has implications for the performance advantages that a network provides (Soda et al., 2021). Our research outlines the reasons why, similar to network churn, networking speed would also influence relational outcomes and network returns. By bringing together this novel temporal lens on tie formation with research on network consequences, we join recent efforts (e.g., Soda, Stea, & Pedersen, 2019) to move beyond the structuralist view of networks, which has focused on the influence of individuals' network positions on outcomes without systematically accounting for variations regarding the origins of a network tie or network structure. We suggest that neglecting the tie formation process – and specifically the speed with which ties have been formed – might lead to inaccurate conclusions about why and when we expect certain network opportunities and constraints to arise as a result of a given network tie.

In terms of relational outcomes, we concentrate on tie strength, cognitive accuracy about an alter, and tie stability as consequences of networking speed that refer to the resulting tie. Under network returns, we discuss benefits that are associated with forming network ties fast. Understanding the consequences of networking speed for relational outcomes is important because these outcomes, in turn, also have significant implications for network returns, as demonstrated for instance by studies on the influence of tie strength (Perry-Smith, 2006) or network cognition (Iorio, 2022) on creativity or performance as critical network returns. Accordingly, future research can study the role of different relational outcomes as (partial) mediators of the relationship between networking speed and network returns. This research could attend to various ego-level network returns, such as performance or well-being, and also look into network-level consequences, such as overall network stability or network effectiveness. Again, with respect to the alter-centric perspective mentioned above, future research can see whether networking speed influences alters' perceptions of ego or their willingness to provide resources to ego.

As a suggestion for future research that applies to both catalysts and consequences of networking speed, we also see potential to extend the scope of the concept beyond the level of the individual tie to study the speed with which larger network configurations, such as brokerage or closure configurations, are reached. That is, there might be networking speed relating to ties, which is our focus in this paper, but also networking speed relating to structures, each with its own distinct implications for relational outcomes and network returns.

The Empirical Study of Networking Speed

A central aim of our study is to lay the theoretical foundations for future empirical research on networking speed. Research in this direction may require suitable methodologies to measure both networking speed itself but also the starting point and end point (i.e., commitment) of tie formation. Observations or diary studies, as used for instance by Kaandorp, van Burg, and

Karlsson (2020) in their study of entrepreneurs' networking efforts, might be useful in this regard and enable researchers to capture the timeframe of tie formation, including its starting and end point, and also help us understand in greater depth the mechanisms that underpin networking speed in different settings. Survey research, as a popular method to collect data on interpersonal networks, could use natural starting points for tie formation, such as a professional entering a new organization or a merger bringing together employees from different firms, and ask employees at what point they actually started collaborating or exchanging resources. We also see potential for the use of experiments, which are increasingly integrated into organizational network studies (e.g., Iorio, 2022). Vignette scenarios could be employed to manipulate the presence of catalysts, such as common third parties, and gather data about how quickly egos and alters would commit to a relationship under different circumstances. Similarly, experiments could be used to capture implications of networking speed as well, for instance with regard to others' perceptions of or reactions to egos who network fast. In terms of archival sources, data from matching platforms, for instance for founder teams, can be useful to study networking speed in entrepreneurial settings. More generally, to capture networking speed in larger-scale quantitative studies, future research can leverage the growing availability of real-time and time-stamped data generated across multiple platforms.

Beyond these suggestions for data sources and research designs, our theorizing on networking speed also has implications for other aspects of organizational network research, i.e., for empirical research on network dynamics as well as on the consequences on networks. Most research on network dynamics to date defines time as discrete waves of observations and captures snapshots of network ties (e.g., Burt & Merluzzi, 2016; Sasovova et al., 2010). This approach does not lend itself particularly well to account for variation in the speed with which network ties and

configurations are formed. Indeed, such an approach, even though it might be convenient or triggered by data limitations, may present a challenge to accumulating consistent evidence. For instance Bensaou et al. (2014) compare two sets of networks, measured 16 months apart, and link differences in size and density to different networking strategies. Yet, those different strategies may also imply that some professionals create ties slower. As a result, the picture might look quite different if the chosen time gap between observations was different. Even though we are not aware of established guidelines about how to choose such time gaps, our theory of networking speed suggests that this is not a trivial decision. A better understanding of the implications of networking speed can inform different approaches to tackling that decision.

Our reasoning that the consequences of network ties are not independent from the processes, and specifically the networking speed, with which the ties have been created, has potentially far reaching implications for network studies. Specifically, future research on the consequences of professional network ties should account for the origins of network ties and structures and, at the very least, control for networking speed, since the same tie that is established fast or slow might not have the same consequences. Therefore, not accounting for speed therefore might lead to erroneous conclusions and inaccurate generalizations.

Practical Implications

The benefits of networks and networking, particularly for professionals in knowledge-intensive settings, are widely-documented. Organizational network research indicates that individuals need to flexibly and proactively orchestrate and adjust their work-related networks in light of changing working conditions and job requirements (e.g., Jonczyk et al., 2016; Parker et al., 2016), and that they can benefit from such adaptive changes (e.g., Soda et al., 2021). In this connection, knowing how to form new network ties fast, by way of different catalysts, and being

able to anticipate the expected benefits and drawbacks is valuable information, particularly given that time is a scarce resource (e.g., Ellwood et al., 2017).

Our discussion of the potential consequences of forming ties fast illustrates that the advantages and disadvantages of networking speed need to be assessed in light of professionals' task-related goals, that is, the types of benefits they aim for. While we acknowledge that earlier access to resources is an elemental benefit of consolidating a tie faster, we also highlight that networking speed is likely to influence tie strength, cognitive accuracy about an alter, and tie stability in potentially unanticipated and undesired ways. Similarly, the use of some catalysts can lead to networks that comprise predominantly homogenous and/or closely connected partners, which are more likely to offer redundant resources, and set in motion reinforcing or weakening cycles. Overall, by providing an overview of not only the advantages but also the potential pitfalls of networking speed, our discussion can guide professionals to form network ties and benefit from their networks in a better informed and more targeted way. These insights can also be integrated in network-enhancing development programs, for instance those that are designed as part of leadership training (Cullen-Lester, Maupin, & Carter, 2017).

CONCLUSION

We conceptualize networking speed as a constitutive element of the way in which networks in professional settings function. Applying a temporal and agentic lens and investigating the consequences of networking speed to outline how and where speed matters, we traced the causal chain from the processes and dynamics of networking to the implications of the ties that are formed. In doing so, we lay the foundation for future organizational network studies to systematically integrate temporal and agentic considerations with considerations about the consequences of network ties and structures, thus acknowledging – both conceptually and empirically – that those consequences are not likely to be independent of the temporal and agency

related processes that led to the ties and structures. With respect to networking speed specifically, we show how the interplay between the different catalysts, moderators, and relational outcomes may influence the relationship between networking speed and network returns and we provide a future research program for the integration of this novel concept into organizational network research.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] We acknowledge that networking efforts may also be directed toward maintaining existing

relationships (e.g., Porter & Woo, 2015). However, our focus is on the formation of ties between

two individuals not previously connected (for a similar approach, see Dahlander & McFarland,

2013), and, therefore, on networking efforts aimed at building new ties.

[2] The contrast here is with the subjective view of time. Had we used subjective time, it could be

the case that Charlie perceives the one week it has taken to form the tie with Rosa as longer than

how long Finley perceived the month it has taken to establish a similar tie. Likewise, considering

a within person case, the one week could feel to Charlie as though it was longer than the one

month it has previously taken to form an equivalent tie. Such subjective variations, both between

and within persons, exist, and may have important consequences for the outcomes of individual

action (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Accordingly, their incorporation into network dynamics

research will continue to enrich our understanding. Given that our aim is to undertake a first

systematic attempt to bring networking speed into the study of networks, we start with a

discussion that is based on objective time.

[3] This dual role that individual characteristics can play has precedence in network research. For

example, perceptions (Schulte, Cohen, & Klein, 2012) and attitudes (Tröster, Parker,

Knippenberg, & Sahlmüller, 2019) have been shown to co-evolve with interpersonal networks,

thereby being both a driver *and* consequence of network dynamics.

[4] We do not include a discussion of similarity and proximity as moderators, because in these

cases there are arguments for both a weakening and a strengthening effect on the relationship

between speed and accuracy. On the one hand, sharing visible characteristics, values,

perspectives, or physical propinquity with another person facilitates forming accurate

perceptions of that person, such that the negative relationship between networking speed and

ego's cognitive accuracy about an alter is mitigated. On the other hand, professionals could use similarity and proximity as a heuristic, which might keep them from processing information more thoroughly and systematically. As a consequence, similarity and proximity could amplify the negative effect of networking speed on cognitive accuracy about an alter.

[5] Status hierarchies are relatively stable and do not often display radical changes. At the same time, they *can* – and indeed in many circumstances *do* – change in ways that leave an individual as discernibly higher- or lower-status than they were (Bendersky & Pai, 2018).

Table 1
Overview of Predicted Moderator Effects

Main effects / Moderating factors	Negative influence on tie strength	Negative influence on cognitive accuracy about an alter	Negative influence on tie stability	Earlier access to benefits
Cognitive network accuracy	Mitigation of main effect (P8a-i)	Mitigation of main effect (P8b-i)	Mitigation of main effect (P8c-i)	Earlier access to benefits that have a better fit with ego's goals and needs (P9a)
Networking actions	Mitigation of main effect (P8a-ii)	Mitigation of main effect (P8b-ii)	Mitigation of main effect (P8c-ii)	Earlier access to benefits that have a better fit with ego's goals and needs (P9b)
Similarity	Mitigation of main effect (P8a-iii)	No prediction	Mitigation of main effect (P8c-iii)	Reduction in the diversity of resources that are accessed earlier (P9c)
Proximity	Mitigation of main effect (P8a-iv)	No prediction	Mitigation of main effect (P8c-iv)	Reduction in the diversity of resources that are accessed earlier (P9d)
Status advantage	No prediction	No prediction	Mitigation of main effect (P8c-v)	Reduction in the quality of resources that are accessed earlier (P9e)
Common third parties	Mitigation of main effect (P8a-v)	Mitigation of main effect (P8b-iii)	Mitigation of main effect (P8c-vi)	Earlier access to benefits that are associated with closed rather than open structures (P9f)

Figure 1

Catalysts, Consequences, and Moderators of Networking Speed