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WHY 'WEAK TIES' HELP AND 'STRONG TIES' DON'T:
RECONSIDERING WHY TIE STRENGTH MATTERS[°]

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Abstract

If jobholders are more motivated to help jobseekers to whom they are strongly tied rather than those to whom they are weakly tied, why do jobholders so often help acquaintances and strangers instead of kin and friends? The strength-of-weak-ties theory holds that weak ties are more likely to be conduits for information and influence that best leads to jobs. Recent research, however, calls into question the theory's key assumption that this is because strong ties cannot act as bridges (they can). Drawing from in-depth interviews with 146 blue- and white-collar workers at a large public sector employer, in this paper I offer an alternative explanation for why weak ties matter, one rooted in cognitive and affective processes: Jobholders often know too much about their close associates' flaws and so assess the risks of making a bad match as high. They also worry more about the implications of close associates' failures for their own reputations.

INTRODUCTION

Why do jobholders so often help acquaintances and strangers to find work instead of close friends and family members? The most prominent explanation for this seemingly paradoxical discovery, the strength-of-weak-ties theory, is by now well known. It holds that, because of their unique position in network structure as bridges between dissimilar and otherwise disconnected individuals and groups, weak ties are more likely than strong ties to be conduits for the type of information—new and non-redundant—that is more likely to lead to jobs (Granovetter 1995 [1974], 1973, 1982; Lin 1999; Yakubovich 2005). For almost 40 years, this simple yet elegant theory has inspired a vast research program designed to examine how individuals' position in network structure affects access to opportunities for mobility (Lin et al. 1981a, 1981b; Montgomery 1992, 1994; Marsden and Hurlbert 1986; Coleman 1988; Burt 1992).

Despite the theory's monumental impact on the field of sociology, we have reason to question the theory's core assumption that strong ties cannot act as bridges to new and non-redundant information. A careful review of the literature indicates that they can (Bott 1957; Boissevain 1974; Laumann 1974; Burt 1992; Bian 1997)—bridging ties matter regardless of the tie strength between potential job contacts and jobseekers (Burt 1992; Bian 1997). From this insight, then, one must logically conclude that tie strength is essentially irrelevant, although incidental, for making sense of when weak ties help and strong ties don't.

This paper is an effort to resuscitate the role that tie strength plays in the allocation of valued resources. Toward this end, I offer an alternative explanation about why and how tie strength shapes the dynamics of information flow and the exercise of influence, one rooted not in network structure but instead in cognitive and affective processes. I draw from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 146 custodians, food service workers, and administrative staff

at one large, public sector employer about the deliberations they undertake to refer or not, when they were the position to do so. In so doing, this study is one of the few to attempt to make sense of the job search process from the perspective of those in possession of job information and the ability to influence hires (see also Smith 2005, 2007 2010; Marin 2012).

Interviews implicated tie strength in two ways—how jobholders assessed the risk of making a bad match, and how they estimated the costs to their reputation if matches failed. Although jobholders often cared more about their family members and friends, knowledge about intimates' problematic work histories and character flaws often led them to assess the risk of failure as high and then to withhold assistance. In contrast, what jobholders knew or imagined about people with whom they had weak ties frequently led them to assess the risks of failure as low and then to help, such as by putting their names on the line.

How jobholders assessed the potential costs of making a bad match was also contingent on tie strength. Whether weakly or strongly tied, jobseekers' behaviors reflected back on jobholders. But jobholders also thought that the stronger the tie between jobholder and referral, the greater referral's reflection on jobholder, and the greater the cost to jobholder's reputation if the new hire performed badly. In other words, if matches failed due to referrals' actions, acquaintances and strangers produced less blowback than close friends and relatives. Thus, I contend that ironies of asymmetric information and costs put weakly tied jobseekers at a competitive advantage vis-à-vis jobseeking intimates during the job matching process. By highlighting these ironic turns, I offer an alternative explanation, rooted in cognitive and affective processes, of the preference jobholders sometimes have to help jobseekers to whom they are weakly tied, and I advance our understanding of the multiple factors that shape the dynamics of information flow and the exercise of influence during the job matching process.

IS ‘TIE STRENGTH’ CAUSAL?

The 1974 publication of *Getting a Job (GAJ)*, Mark Granovetter’s seminal book about the dynamics of information flow and influence, inspired a veritable explosion of studies investigating the merits of the book’s primary theoretical intervention: that in the competition for finding jobs, weak ties offer jobseekers advantages over strong. Drawing from a sample of 282 professional, technical, and managerial workers from Newton, Massachusetts, Granovetter discovered that more than half of his respondents found work through personal contacts, and among those who did, the overwhelming majority—some 84%—were matched to their jobs by acquaintances.¹ Furthermore, these weak ties were far more likely than strong ties to put in a good word. Although figures reported from other studies vary widely, it seems clear that the use of weak ties is pervasive—anywhere from 9% to 83% (Murray, Rankin, and Magill 1981; Carson 1992; Lee 1987; Bian 1997; Yakubovich 2005).²

How did Granovetter make sense of his “troubling result”?³ Drawing from two decades of social diffusion research (see Rogers 1962), Granovetter proposed that weak ties are more efficient and effective conduits of information. The key is their position in network structure, which enables them to act as bridges between dissimilar and otherwise disconnected networks of relations. In this position, they are more likely to gain access to and

¹ The 84% was derived by adding the percentage of respondents who occasionally and rarely saw their job contacts.

² Much of the research about the effect of weak ties has not actually tested the theory’s core proposition—that weak ties increase the odds of finding work. Instead, researchers have primarily examined the affect of weak ties on income and status attainment (Lin et al. 1981a, 1981b; Bridges and Villemez 1986; Lin 1999; Smith 2000; but see Marsden and Hurlbert 1988). Data limitations have made it difficult to examine the effect of tie strength on the odds of finding work (but see Yakubovich 2005).

³ See Burt (1992) for a brief description of the history of the development of Granovetter’s theoretical insight.

pass along new and non-redundant information, the type of information that best leads to jobs (1973, 1974, 1982).

The same, however, cannot be said for strong ties. According to Granovetter, “*no strong tie is a bridge*” (1973:1364). This is because it is rare to find in a small network a mix of strong, weak, and absent ties between nodes. Indeed, Granovetter explains, if we imagine a triad including nodes *A*, *B*, and *C*, the most unlikely configuration to occur—what he calls the “forbidden triad”—is the one in which *A* has a strong tie to *B* and to *C*, but *B* and *C* have no tie with one another. “If *C* and *B* have no relationship, common strong ties to *A* will probably bring them into interaction and generate one” (1973:1362), inevitably producing a triad with strong ties between each pair of nodes. Thus, while not all weak ties are bridging ties, only weak ties can act as bridges to new and non-redundant information that enhances jobseekers’ ability to compete for labor market opportunities, and they do so by efficiently and effectively passing information between dissimilar networks of relations.

But, upsetting the heart of the strength-of-weak-ties theory, findings from previous research indicate that strong ties can, indeed, act as bridges. For instance, in *Bonds of Pluralism*, Edward Laumann’s study of urban men’s friendship networks, interviewers asked respondents, “Of your three best friends, how many of them are good friends with one another?” The lower the degree of overlap, the greater the opportunity to act as a bridge. For 69% of respondents, friendship networks were either completely or partially interlocking; all three friends were good friends with one another (27%), or 2/3 of their good friends were (42%). Thirty-one percent of respondents, however, described radial networks. Here, none of their good friends were friends with one another, and so these respondents could in theory act as bridges between their good friends. Elizabeth Bott’s classic 1950s study of 20 London families represents another example. In it, she highlighted two conjugal role-relationships—

the highly segregated and the joint conjugal—and linked these to the conjugal pairs’ network structure. While the former’s network was characterized by a high degree of connectedness—networks of close-knit ties in which everyone knew everyone else—the latter’s network was characterized as loose-knit. According to Bott, “...many of their friends did not know one another, it was unusual for friends to know relatives...” (1957:78-9). One imagines, then, that in the case of joint conjugal role-relationships, conjugal pairs were well positioned to act as bridges between otherwise disconnected friends and relatives, and, in the process, create new opportunities for exchange. And Bian’s (1997) study of jobseeking in the Chinese context indicates that strong ties are *more* likely than weak ties to act as bridges to influential control agents, who are tasked by the Communist state to make job assignments.

It is also on the issue of tie strength that Ron Burt distinguishes his structural holes argument from Granovetter’s weak tie argument. According to Burt (1992), Granovetter’s “weak tie” indicates both the strength of the relationship between ego and alter as well as their location in network structure. As a bridge, the weak tie is both “a chasm spanned and the span itself” (28). But, Burt contends, “...there is no theoretical reason to expect a strong correlation between the strength of a relationship and the information benefits it provides” (29). The causal agent is the structural hole—the relationship of nonredundancy between two nodes—spanned, because it is on this dimension that the benefits of information and influence actually differ. Tie strength is not causal, but correlative.

Given these empirical and theoretical insights, is tie strength irrelevant? In what follows, I draw from disparate literatures to propose that we resuscitate the tie strength argument.

BRINGING 'TIE STRENGTH' BACK IN

From two bodies of research, I propose different explanations for why tie strength might matter.

Information Economics and the Weak Tie Advantage

Although sociologists often deploy research from information economics to make sense of jobseekers' and employers' search behaviors, few have drawn from this body of work to make sense of job contacts' (un)willingness to act as intermediaries (Rees 1966), and to my knowledge no one has sought to make sense of why weak ties matter through the economics of information lens. Network structure theories and theories of information economics are potentially complimentary, but they understand the information problem differently. The strength-of-weak-ties theory sees the information problem as one of diffusion—How should networks be structured to pass information most efficiently and effectively? Ignored is the content and value of the information itself and how this shapes actors' behaviors. In the economics of information field, however, information is seen as a commodity whose content and thus value have implications for how individuals behave (Stigler 1961; Arrow 1996).

The class of theories that fall under the economics of information umbrella assume two economic actors—a buyer and a seller—who must decide whether or not to transact business. To do so, the buyer needs to know whether or not the seller is offering a product or service of quality (Akerlof 1970). To the extent that she lacks the information necessary to determine her risk of making a poor choice, she is faced with an information asymmetry problem. Specifically, compared to the buyer, the seller has more or better information about the product or service being offered. And information asymmetries can produce adverse selection—choosing poorly because you lack a sufficient amount of information, or the quality

of the information you possess is poor (Akerlof 1970; Wilson 2008). The threat of adverse selection can potentially bring the market to a halt, since few will want to transact if there is a high risk of making poor choices because of information asymmetries (Akerlof 1970). In the space of quality uncertainty, individuals will only act if guarantees are in place or if they have personal knowledge about the sellers in question.

Theories rooted in information economics have implications for understanding why jobholders might choose to help those with whom they have weak versus strong ties. During the job matching process, however, there are potentially three, not just two, actors—jobseekers (sellers), employers (buyers), and job contacts (advisory intermediaries).⁴ Job contacts must decide whether or not to act as intermediaries between jobseekers and employers. Who they help and how they do so will depend in great part on whether or not they perceive jobseekers to have the appropriate soft and hard skills. If they choose well, they might gain personal satisfaction and a sense of self-efficacy, but also gratitude and related rewards from jobseekers and employers who will benefit from their intervention. If they choose poorly, however, and their referrals are revealed to be of low quality, at the very least they risk tarnishing their own reputations with coworkers and bosses (Smith 2005, 2007, 2010). Thus, job contacts would want to know enough about jobseekers to determine how risky jobseekers might be if hired. Their own reputations depend on it.

We would assume that intermediaries are more motivated to help those to whom they are closer. We might also assume that information asymmetry and related adverse selection problems would seem to benefit strong ties over weak, since economic actors already have a great deal of relevant information about those with whom they are close. But this is true only to an extent. As Smith finds (2005), closeness also provides job contacts with access to

⁴ See Coleman for a discussion of the different types of intermediaries (1990: 180-185).

relevant information about friends' and family members' qualities, good and bad, and job contacts use what they know to determine whether or not their strong ties will be high risks and thus poor quality candidates. Thus, the advantage associated with bonds of affection might be lost if job contacts decide they are poor bets.

Meanwhile, job contacts might have less motivation to help acquaintances and strangers than intimates, and to the extent that job contacts lack relevant information about them, their relative odds of being helped appear even lower. However, if the information void that is more likely to be associated with weak ties is filled with information gained through signaling and screening (Spence 1973; Stiglitz and Weiss 1981; Arrow 1996), then job contacts gain information that they can then use to assess risks. In so doing, they help more weakly tied jobseekers than would have been aided had they not found mechanisms to resolve the information asymmetry problem. The relative advantage that we tend to associate with strong ties, then, might be diminished somewhat by taking into consideration information asymmetries and how these are resolved.

The Costs and Benefits of Helping Weak versus Strong Ties

Empirical research on the circumstances under which people help others might also inform our understanding of the relative weak tie advantage. Granovetter was correct to link motivation to tie strength, since social psychologists have reported for some time that people are more inclined to help those with whom they have close relations than they are to help strangers (Stotland 1969; Krebs 1975; Bar-Tal et al. 1977; Essock-Vitale & McGuire 1980, 1985; Atkinson, Kivett & Campbell 1986; Cunningham 1986; Clark, Mills & Corcoran 1989). But the helping literature also suggests that individuals can be aroused to help strangers, especially when they perceive strangers to be similar to themselves. The more that individuals

perceive similarities in appearance, personality, attitude, political ideology, and national identification, the more likely they are to develop feelings of attraction, closeness, and “we”-ness. And these feelings are highly predictive of helping behavior since they both raise the costs of not helping while also raising the benefits of helping (Dovidio & Morris 1975; Sole, Marton & Hornstein 1975; Bateson et al., 1979; Hayden, Jackson & Guydish 1984).

And despite the general trend found in the literature that individuals are more inclined to help close rather than weak ties, this is not always so. Under some circumstances, people hurt the ones they love while providing help to strangers (Tesser and Smith 1980; Tesser, Millar & Moore 1988). Through a series of experiments, for instance, Tesser and colleagues examined how tie strength mediated the effect of task relevance—whether or not doing well on a task was important for how one self-evaluated—on helping behaviors (Tesser and Smith 1980; Tesser, Millar & Moore 1988). Would subjects choose to help close friends over strangers if doing so made them look comparatively worse than close friends on tasks by which they define themselves? It turns out that they will not. The psychologists discovered that when the task was relatively unimportant to how individuals self-evaluated, they were more likely to help their close friends than to help strangers. In so doing, they would benefit from reflected glory without any loss to their self-esteem. When a task *was* important to how they self-evaluated, however, individuals were more likely to help strangers to perform well on tasks while hindering their close friends. Being comparatively worse than one’s close friends on tasks of importance to one’s self-perception was a cost too great to bear. Under certain circumstances, then, the costs associated with helping intimates relative to strangers may be too high, leading individuals to “hurt the ones they love” while helping those with whom they have weak ties.

Summary

Neither the economics of information literature or the social psychological research on helping have been deployed to make sense of how those in possession of information and influence make decisions about making referrals. Nor have these rich bodies of literature been mined for insights into why jobholders might choose to help those with whom they have weak versus strong ties. Drawing from these disparate literatures, I seek to provide an alternative explanation, one rooted in cognitive and affective processes.

THE CASE STUDY

Trained graduate student interviewers and I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 146 custodian, food service, and administrative staff workers at one large public sector employer in the state of California, which I will call CPSE.⁵ CPSE has a racially and ethnically diverse permanent and contingent workforce of about 9,000. At its worksite are approximately 1,000 facilities operations and maintenance workers (custodians), 250 food service workers, and over 2,700 administrative/clerical and related support staff (admin), among other occupational categories.

For participation in this study, these jobholders were primarily recruited through two related strategies. I first contacted department supervisors and managers to ask permission to describe the study to jobholders during staff meetings and to recruit those who expressed interest in participating. This recruitment strategy yielded approximately one-half of the interviews conducted since the study began in the spring of 2008. The other half was

⁵ To protect the identities of my respondents, all names associated with the institution and my respondents have been changed, and some details about their backgrounds and work roles have been altered. For this paper I have not included for analysis the interview material from four CPSE general managers. Interviews with GMs were focused on how they managed the hiring process as authority figures, not on how they made decisions about making referrals.

generated through respondent-driven sampling (Heckathorn 1997, 2002).⁶ I adopted this approach not because I hoped to achieve representativeness, as we might with a probability sample, but instead because I wanted to capture the range of my jobholders' intersubjective experiences to better understand how they made decisions about making referrals (Weiss 1994).

Of the 146 jobholders interviewed for this study, 32% were custodians, 39% were food service workers, and 29% were administrative staff workers. Forty-two percent of my jobholders were black, 26% were Latino, 9% were Asian, 13% were white, and 10% were multi-racial.⁷ Fifty-three percent were women, and 34% were foreign born. On average, jobholders were employed at CPSE for 10 years, worked 39 hours per week, and earned \$2,500 each month. See Table 1 for a summary description of jobholders in my sample, by occupational status.

Although between 15 and 18% of CPSE's workforce has been contingent in recent years, all of the jobholders interviewed for this study were "permanent." At CPSE, permanent and contingent workers are often employed in the same occupational categories, but workers with permanent status are significantly advantaged over those with contingent status (Kalleberg 2011). While permanent workers are protected by union membership and cannot be dismissed without cause or due process, contingent workers have no such protection. They can be dismissed at will, and after a specified period of employment, they are released from employment and made to reapply to regain employment. Reemployment,

⁶ Each respondent was asked to recruit up to three CPSE custodian, food service, and/or administrative staff workers for participation in the study. For every worker they helped to recruit, I paid respondents \$10.

⁷ Blacks are disproportionately represented in this sample, because this paper is a part of a larger research project designed to examine whether and how class shapes social capital activation for job-finding among blacks.

however, is not guaranteed. While permanent workers have regular opportunities for merit pay increases, contingent workers have many fewer such opportunities. And although permanent employees receive medical, dental, and vision insurance as well as membership in the CPSE retirement plan, contingent workers only receive medical; they are not offered dental and vision, and they cannot be members of the retirement plan.

My decision to focus recruitment on permanent workers was deliberate. Previous work has suggested that job contacts' decisions to make referrals are in part informed by their own tenuous positions in the labor market. For instance, a number of Smith's low-income black respondents expressed fear that they might be fired if they made a bad match (Smith 2005, 2007); and, indeed, some had been fired for this reason. By interviewing respondents who are objectively under no threat of job loss at CPSE if a match they facilitate goes sour (although they may have been under such threat with other employers about which we learn), we can look past this otherwise important constraint to providing job-finding assistance to identify the other factors that shape jobholders' decisions to help.

At CPSE, workers have ample opportunity to intervene during the hiring process, for permanent and contingent hires, if they so choose. Once a department has been given permission to make a hire, the manager or supervisor of the department first posts the position internally. They do so because current employees have first rights to fill vacant positions, and so jobholders know to review these announcements if they wish to transfer to another department within CPSE or if they want to get a heads-up on openings that might become available for the public. Every worker interviewed for this study reported that they knew when CPSE was hiring, and for what positions, because of the biweekly announcements that are posted in workers' common areas. Because of this practice, I am confident that few if any

current CPSE jobholders were advantaged over others in receiving timely information about new job opportunities.

If the posted position is not filled internally, staff at the Central Personnel Office publicize it by posting its details on online job sites, such as monster.com and IMDiversity.com, as well as CPSE's own website. The vacancy remains open for a specified period of time, usually two weeks, after which no applications are accepted. Applicants submit their dossier of materials for CPSE positions online via CPSE's own online application system. To aid their jobseeking friends, relatives, and acquaintances through this part of the process, jobholders can inform them that applications are being accepted, point them to the online application system, provide them with the job number for the position or positions of interest, inform them about what hard and soft skills are being sought, explain how they might best showcase their skills and talents on their resumes, and they can also give applicants permission to list them as a reference. Many of these approaches have been found to advantage referrals over non-referrals during the hiring process (Fernandez and Weinberg 1997; Fernandez, Castillo, and Moore 2000).

Once the application deadline has passed, staff members at the Central Personnel Office facilitate the review process by collating applications and sending them to relevant departments. Anticipating this, jobholders can intervene in this part of the process by approaching their managers or supervisors to advocate for their referrals, typically by asking them to "pull the application" for closer review.

After the department receives the applications, the manager or supervisor convenes a panel for review. Each panel consists of three or four members—the department manager or supervisor and two or three workers whose jobs are directly related to the position in question. Together the panelists identify from the full stack of applications a short list of

candidates to be interviewed. The interview can take place by phone, in person with the manager or supervisor, or in person with the full panel. If called for an interview, jobholders can inform their referrals about the types of questions they can expect to be asked, and they can educate them about the best answers to provide. After interviews are complete, a hiring decision is made. Although the final decision lies with the manager or supervisor, the workers on the panel are considered to be important advisors in the process.⁸

To determine how my jobholders came to help some jobseekers but not others, my team of interviewers and I asked about the kinds of job opportunities at CPSE they had learned about in the past year. If they had learned about job opportunities that they could recommend to people they knew, they were asked if they had made any effort to do so. Those who had made an effort were asked to provide details about their most recent experiences helping someone to get a job (regardless of whether or not the jobseeker actually got the job), including who they helped and how this person was related to them; what type of job they provided help to get; how the situation arose; how they decided to help the jobseeker; what qualities about the jobseeker made them willing to help and how they knew the jobseeker had these qualities; what they did to help, exactly; how they benefited personally and/or professionally, if at all; and if there were any positive or negative consequences associated with the assistance they provided, regardless of the outcome. Those who had recently decided against helping were asked a similar set of questions about the process by which they had come to their decisions not to help. Jobholders were also asked to think back as far as they could remember to times when they had tried to help someone they knew to get a job where they were working, whether at CPSE or elsewhere. They were then asked if they had facilitated a match that ended badly and also if they had facilitated a match that ended well.

⁸ Only for executive positions does the hiring process differ from what I've outlined here.

An affirmative response to either question triggered a series of probes, like those listed above, about their most memorable “bad” and “good” experiences.

Responses to these questions produced 379 detailed episodes of helping from 139 jobholders, who each reported 2.7 episodes, on average (see Table 2).⁹ Among these 379 helping episodes were 251 episodes for CPSE jobs, and 133 were episodes that had occurred recently (within the last two years). In terms of tie strength, 268 (or 71%) helping episodes were for jobseekers with whom jobholders had strong connections, and 111 (or 29%) were for jobseekers with whom jobholders had weak ties. Drawing from Marsden and Campbell (1984), I coded jobseeking strong ties as those with whom jobholders explicitly stated or could be presumed to have intimacy, emotional intensity, and relationships based on reciprocity. These primarily included friendships they described as close and family members. In general, family members were coded as close ties, including in-laws and cousins, unless jobholders specifically indicated otherwise. Because “frequency of contact” tends to overstate the level of closeness individuals feel toward neighbors and coworkers, I do not consider this variable when determining tie strength (Marsden and Hurlbert 1984). Relationships that lacked emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocity were coded as weak.

Responses to these questions also produced 90 detailed episodes of assistance denied from 58 respondents,¹⁰ each averaging 1.6 rejections (see Table 2). Of these 90 episodes, 69 were for jobs at CPSE and 31 happened recently. Fifty-four of these rejections (or 60%) were of strong ties while 36 (or 40%) were of weak ties. Combined, these 469 episodes of

⁹ Six jobholders reported that they had never helped anyone to find work, whether at CPSE or elsewhere.

¹⁰ Fourteen jobholders indicated that they had not ever decided against helping someone to find work. Included here are the five of the six jobholders who reported that they had never helped anyone to find work.

assistance and assistance denied are the basis of the analysis I have undertaken to determine why weak ties might be relatively advantaged over strong in receiving help.

Two factors, rarely discussed in the weak ties literature, emerged as crucial for making sense not only of jobholders' decision-making about whether and how to help, but also why they often help weak ties over strong. The first was whether or not jobholders had enough information about jobseekers to assess the level and nature of risks they might undertake by initiating a match between their jobseeking relations and their employers. Here I discovered ironies of information asymmetries. What jobholders knew about their strong ties often made them disinclined to assist, but what they knew or imagined about people with whom they had weak ties frequently inspired helping. The second factor was this: jobholders seriously considered the benefits associated with making a good match, but, more importantly, *the costs associated with making a bad match*. Here I discovered ironies of asymmetric costs, since how they assessed costs was contingent on tie strength. To put it simply, jobholders expected greater blowback if matches with their close friends and relatives failed than if matches with acquaintances or strangers did. In the next two sections to follow, I elaborate on both ironies.

TIE STRENGTH, ASYMMETRIC INFORMATION, AND THE ASSESSMENT OF RISK

In the weak tie literature, tie strength is relevant to the extent that it indicates something about the contact's ability to gather and pass along non-redundant information in a timely manner. But tie strength may be more important if it indicates something about the extent to which jobholders must address asymmetric information problems. Presumably, job contacts have much less relevant information about jobseekers with whom they have weak ties than they do about their jobseekers with whom they are strongly tied. Thus, in general there are

greater information asymmetries between weakly versus strongly tied contacts, and based on this alone we might expect jobholders to help strong ties more than weak.

But the calculus is more complicated than this. As I show in this section, although jobholders might be inclined to help their strong ties, with extensive knowledge about strong ties' shortcomings, jobholders often determine that they are at great risk for making a bad match. When they do, they refuse aid to those with whom they are closest, including spouses.

In general, although jobholders know less about their jobseeking weak ties than their jobseeking strong ties, their level of ignorance about their weak ties depends a great deal on the *type* of weak tie in question. There are weak ties about whom jobholders actually have a great deal of information to assess risk, based on firsthand experience, such as former coworkers. There are weak ties about whom jobholders have relevant information because of shared connections, such as friends-of-friends, who provide opportunities to gain secondhand information through gossip and the like, or who provide opportunities for jobholders to gather information firsthand through, for instance, social gatherings. And then there are weak ties about whom jobholders know little or nothing, jobseekers who, for all intents and purposes, are strangers. If information voids exist, jobholders must fill them to be able to assess risk before they can determine whether and how to help. How they fill the void, and why they would want to, depends on the type of weak tie in question. But that they seek a resolution at all begins to diminish the competitive advantage assumed to exist for close friends and relatives and gives some acquaintances and strangers chances they might not otherwise have.

Former Associates and Firsthand Knowledge

Danica Wilson was a 54-year old, black-identified woman¹¹ who had been working at CPSE as a senior cashier for nine years. Danica was from a large, tight-knit family in which it was customary for everyone to help everyone else to find work. To illustrate, she explained that one of her sisters worked at a local hospital as a nurse. That sister helped her own daughter, Danica's niece, get a position at the same hospital as a scheduler. Danica's niece soon helped Danica's brother get hired at the hospital; she also helped Danica to get an interview, although the interview did not result in a job. Through another niece, however, Danica landed a job at a luxury hotel, a job she eventually left for employment at CPSE.

Danica had a similar sense about other members of her community; most helped others find work. "Everybody's ready to lend a hand. Everyone." And Danica considered herself to be an active helper, too, since she was willing to share information about job openings and point jobseekers in the direction of the online application system. According to Danica, "When I see a job listing, I give it to them, tell them about it. I give them the job number and everything."

Danica was hesitant, however, to do much more than provide information, especially for jobseekers she thought represented a high risk of failure. A few years back, Danica had the opportunity to help a good friend get a job at CPSE, but she decided against it. She described her friend, Jacqueline, as "good at heart" and an excellent cook, and so when Danica learned about a job at CPSE that would fit Jacqueline's skill set, she initially thought, "Maybe she could get a good job. She's really good." But then she decided that she would keep the information to herself. Why? "I just wouldn't. I know her too well...I could've

¹¹ Danica's mother was black and her father was white, but Danica identified as black (or African American) and reported that most people viewed her as a black woman.

helped her, but I've been around her a little bit—there are things I—no, I don't want to. Basically, I don't want to get burned. I don't want nobody to not come to work and all of that.”

For three reasons, Danica assessed Jacqueline as high risk. Although Jacqueline was almost 40 years old, she still lived with her mother. This alone signaled to Danica that Jacqueline was not committed to self-sufficiency. Also, as far as Danica knew, Jacqueline had never held a steady job before,¹² and so Danica feared that she was not work-ready; she could not trust her friend to be reliable and responsible on the job. Worst still, Danica thought her friend had serious character flaws. To illustrate, she shared the following experience:

Well, things like I gave her a ride, clear on the other side of town. I said, “You have to give me some gas money.” She got me to the destination and she just came out with \$2. Just little character traits that tick me off—things like shady, hustle—I felt like she was always hustling. A user, and I don't want nobody working with me that's out to use people. If you're a user, you might get the job and want everybody to do your work. You know what I'm saying?

Given these three concerns, Danica decided that it was better to keep information about job opportunities at CPSE to herself. Despite her friend's good heart and impressive cooking skills, she knew Jacqueline well enough to know that Jacqueline represented a high risk of failure and a strong threat to Danica's own good reputation on the job.

Around the same time that Danica chose not to assist Jacqueline, she went out of her way to help a jobseeker with whom she had a weak tie. Years ago, Danica and Ruth had been coworkers at a luxury hotel. They lost touch after both left that job, but when Danica learned

¹² The one exception to Jacqueline's history of non-work, according to Danica, was a stint as a custodian at an organization that ironically provided support services for low-income individuals struggling with employment, housing, health and legal problems.

that her work group was having difficulty filling a cashier position, she immediately thought of Ruth:

I just had her in mind when we needed a cashier. I knew that she would be a good worker, and I have a friend that works here, and he also used to work up at the hotel, too. So, I saw him and I said, “Hey, where’s my coworker now?” And he was telling me that he knew where she was, and I was like, “Tell her about this,” because I knew I wanted a person that was dependable, so I wouldn’t have to work so much overtime, not that I’m minding, but I needed somebody to relieve me. So, I saw they weren’t getting the right person and the position wasn’t filled, so I got her. I got her.

Thus, despite the fact that Danica’s connection with her former co-worker was weak—they had not seen or spoken to one another since leaving the hotel years before—Danica was enthusiastic about the possibility that her former co-worker might join her work group. Their previous working experience together provided Danica with firsthand information about Ruth’s working habits. She knew that Ruth was very competent, dependable, and hardworking, and so she harbored no concerns about how risky it might be to help Ruth, because, based on firsthand experience, Ruth was a sure thing.¹³

And Danica’s experience was not unique. Of the 111 episodes in which jobholders helped a weakly tied jobseeker, 69 were weak ties about whom jobholders had firsthand knowledge, and most of these—49—were former coworkers (see Table 3). Thus, based on their own dealings with and/or observations of jobseekers, jobholders knew jobseekers’ working habits and could comfortably assess risks of job-matching failure and success. Also

¹³ Just as important, Danica finally had an opportunity to repay Ruth for her past generosity. At the hotel, Danica had great difficulty learning how to operate the cashiering system, which vexed her so much that she seriously contemplated quitting. Had it not been for Ruth, she very likely would have done so. Danica explained, “I guess repaying some of the training that she got me, had helped me with. Because she was there at the hotel before I was and they opened up this new art studio, and she came from the flower department and she already knew the cashiering system; I didn’t know nothing. One of the directors said, ‘I didn’t know if you was going to win or the computer,’ because I was seriously thinking about quitting. But I didn’t. I hung in there and we worked together and we had fun selling \$2000 art pieces and stuff like that [laughter].” Thus, Ruth had once saved Danica, and now Danica had an opportunity to return the favor. And her timing could not have been better; as it happens, Ruth was unemployed when she received word of the job opening at CPSE.

included in this category are former classmates (10) and former roommates (3). These were jobseekers that jobholders knew enough about to be able to speak about, to varying degrees, work ethic and personal character.

But knowledge about former associates' habits works both ways; it could also, as it did for Jose Garcia, produce a disinclination to help. Not only had the 23-year veteran at CPSE decided against helping a former co-worker, he actively *undermined* the effort. Specifically, he lied to his former colleague about how he helped: "I said I recommended him and I said I did all this stuff and gave him the number to the job, but I never gave him a recommendation. He never got hired." When asked why he chose to reject this jobseeker, Jose pointed to his former coworker's laziness, knowledge about which he knew firsthand. He explained, "Because I knew him. He tries to do the least, minimum thing possible and still have the job." But he also highlighted his former coworker's acerbic and quarrelsome nature: "[He] got fired from the last job because everybody hated him. He starts arguments with people. He's very antisocial." And so Jose torpedoed his candidacy: "And I didn't recommend him. I said I did, and I didn't. Actually went to the supervisor and told him, 'You know, this person applied here. If he uses my name, don't...you know, he's not a good worker.' So I actually did the opposite [Laughter]." Of the 36 episodes reported of weak-tie rejection, 18 were rejections of former associates—including 13 former coworkers and 3 former classmates—jobseekers for whom jobholders had firsthand knowledge from which to assess risk (see Table 3).

Because jobholders have firsthand information about former associates' professional and/or personal virtues and flaws, information asymmetries that might otherwise produce a disinclination to help are absent here. Jobholders are both in a position to know about and advocate for this type of weakly tied jobseeker, increasing the odds that jobholders become job contacts, and proactively so. But filling the information void does not guarantee that

jobholders will help former associates. Just as jobholders are strongly inclined toward helping those for whom they have firsthand knowledge of good work habits and strong character, they can be fervently opposed to helping those relations, close (as in the case of Danica) or more distant (as in the case of Jose), that they assess as high risk.

Friends-of-Friends: Birds-of-a-Feather...

“Friends-of-friends” are another type of weakly tied referral (Boissevain 1974). I use the term here broadly to include those people to whom jobholders are indirectly tied. To the extent that jobholders knew them and interacted with them, this was largely because of mutual or shared connections. About some friends-of-friends, jobholders had a great deal of information, much of which they gathered secondhand through their shared contacts. But their mutual connections also provided opportunities for direct contact, and so through these experiences and observations, jobholders developed firsthand knowledge about them as well. Thus, with these friends-of-friends, the decision to help came about in very similar ways to decisions made regarding former associates—jobholders drew from their database of knowledge on jobseekers’ work history, work habits, and personal character, gained first- and second-hand, to assess risk and decide whether or not to help, to friends-of-friends’ benefit, in some cases, and detriment in others.

Some jobseeking friends-of-friends, however, were essentially strangers. In each of these cases, the mutual friend approached jobholders to request help on their behalf. But because jobholders knew little or nothing about stranger friends-of-friends, the possibility for adverse selection was much greater, and concerns about asymmetric information were far more salient. To fill the void, however, jobholders assumed that friends-of-friends were similar in competence and deservingness to mutual friends advocating on their behalf. These

assumptions, rooted in the homophily principle (Lazarfeld and Merton 1954; Freeman 1996; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001), muted concerns about incomplete information and made it easier to act on behalf of strangers about whom they knew little to nothing.

Jacob Farber's experience was typical. The 39-year old white, executive chef helped a friend-of-a-friend by talking to his supervisor on the jobseeker's behalf. When asked how he decided to help, he responded, "I don't know. I guess I wasn't thinking at the time. But luckily, he had a good head on his shoulders. Luckily, he takes pride in what he does. Luckily, he has great work ethics and he has succeeded. He's been promoted. He now makes more money than I do."

Note that Jacob was unable to explain how he had come to help the friend of his friend. The impression one gets is that his decision was made effortlessly, with little of the internal dialogue that seemed to animate the thoughts of jobholders considering whether or not to help their closest friends. Although his decision was about a stranger about whom he knew nothing, with great efficiency it seems, Jacob decided to help, and he did so proactively. When encouraged to elaborate on his decision to refer, Jacob continued, "Because my friend, our mutual friend, had all of the same work ethics that I had, so I figured that more than likely, 9 out of 10 times, the friend of the friend will have that same mentality. Birds of a feather flock together, you know?" Thus, ignorant about this friend-of-a-friend, Jacob deployed the homophily principle and made the assumption that the jobseeker in question shared many of the same character-defining traits that he shared with their mutual friend. In so doing, he filled the information void and so could make an assessment about the jobseeker's likelihood of succeeding on the job. His decision to help hinged on this.

Of the 111 episodes in which weakly tied jobseekers were helped, 28 of these were friends-of-friends. In most of these cases (23), jobholders had first- and secondhand

knowledge about their jobseeking friends-of-friends, and they relied on this information to assess risk and determine whether or not to help. But in a few cases (5), jobholders knew little to nothing about jobseeking friends-of-friends, and so they risked adverse selection. Jobholders resolved this problem by attributing to these stranger friends-of-friends the attributes that they associated with the mutual friend (and by extension, in some cases, to themselves). With relative ease, then, jobholders were able to fill the information void and make decisions to help jobseekers with whom they had little familiarity. Although jobholders rejected ten friends-of-friends about whom they had first- and secondhand knowledge, in no case did jobholders decline to help a stranger friend-of-friends, those about whom they knew little but assumed much, after being approached by their shared connection.

Absent Ties and the Power of First Impressions

According to Granovetter, “Included in ‘absent’ are both the lack of any relationship and ties without substantial significance, such as a ‘nodding’ relationship between people living on the same street, or the ‘tie’ to the vendor from whom one customarily buys a morning newspaper” (1973: 1361). Of the 111 episodes of weak ties receiving assistance, 15 were absent ties. In each case, the respondent knew next to nothing about the jobseeker she or he recommended, but when approached by these strangers with a request for help, surprisingly, each did so readily and enthusiastically. Nine were complete strangers when they were approached for help. Six had a nodding relationship.

Given how little information jobholders had about jobseekers’ competence and deservingness, why would they help, especially since doing so would likely increase their odds of initiating a bad match and risk tainting their own reputations (Smith 2005, 2007)? How did they decide under these circumstances? In one case, the jobholder ignored the

information void in order to reciprocate a good deed done by the jobseeker in question. I will discuss this at length in the next section. In most cases, however, jobholders filled the void by making thin-slice judgments (Ambady and Rosenthal 1992; Ambady, Bernieri, and Richeson 2000; Ambady, LaPlante, and Johnson 2001). They determined whether or not absent ties were competent and worthy of help based on minimal information gathered from brief observations of behavior. Furthermore, in each case, they attached significant meaning of cultural and personal resonance to the bits of information they had. These meanings filled the information void, shaped their assessments of risk and success, and informed their actions on jobseekers' behalf.

Introduced above, Jose Garcia's experience is one of two examples that I will highlight to demonstrate the ways in which jobholders made decisions about making referrals in the absence of solid information. Jose, a 45-year old Mexican American custodial worker who had been employed at the university for 23 years, described himself as a good worker, one who goes above and beyond. Being a hard worker, a dedicated worker, was key to how Jose saw himself. To illustrate, Jose explained that, in accordance with rules and regulations, other custodial workers at CPSE would pick up trash once each week. He would pick up trash every day, however, and he did so because it made him feel as if he were "doing a better job," one that he knew his building's occupants would appreciate. And it was this commitment to hard work and dedication on the job that shaped the decisions Jose made about making referrals.

After over two decades at CPSE, Jose had not helped many people through the hiring process. In Jose's opinion, few deserved it. And so for Jose it was far easier to remember the many times he had declined to assist people he knew than it was to recall those he had helped. Recently, Jose forsook three jobseekers who sought the benefit of his aid. As described

above, because he perceived his former co-worker to be lazy and abrasive in relations with others, he declined to help him; based on how a friend from grammar school talked about his current job, Jose determined that he would not be a good worker, and so he refused to help; and Jose declined to assist his good friend because, among other criticisms, “He just seems lazy to me, so I wouldn’t help him...He doesn’t seem real motivated. I don’t think he’d like this job in the long run. He’d end up quitting or getting fired.” In all three cases, Jose saved face by either lying to the jobseeker about the existence of job opportunities so that he would not have to help, or by lying about whether he helped at all.

Despite his propensity to reject, Jose proactively helped a gas station attendant, a woman with whom he had no tie. Why would a man so committed to hard work, so skeptical of others’ dedication, and so stingy with job-finding aid be so motivated to assist a woman he barely knew? He would eagerly help because of his thin-slice assessments. During his brief trips to the gas station he observed enough of the attendant’s behavior to develop a strong appreciation for how she worked. According to Jose, “She seemed like a hard worker. She was there every day keeping busy, doing stuff...She was a cashier, I would see her mopping, and I would see her cleaning out stuff and cashiering at the same time.”

Impressed by her apparent dedication to her job, Jose did not lie when the attendant asked about job opportunities at CPSE. Instead, he readily assisted, and he did so proactively. Not only did he share what he knew about job vacancies, to expedite the job-matching process, he explained where she should go to apply online, he gave her the appropriate job number to ease the application submission process, *and* he spoke to his supervisor on her behalf. “I just said, you know, ‘She’s a hard worker; she works hard.’” Thus, although Jose had no interest in helping his friends and former coworker, and in one case actively undermined the effort, he put his name on the line for a woman he barely knew,

and he did so because he determined from thin slices of her behavior that, unlike those he had rejected, the attendant was dedicated to hard work. Like him, she would go above and beyond, and for this reason Jose deemed her worthy of the aid he could provide.

Redmond Clark helped jobseekers based on judgments made from even thinner slices of behavior. When he sat down to interview with me, Redmond, a 33-year old, self-identified white Hispanic,¹⁴ had been a senior clerk at PSE for nine months. Redmond was an extrovert, a self-described talker. He was open, gregarious, and laughed with ease, and he seemed to relish the opportunity to share his insights. The topic that seemed to inspire Redmond most on this day was his new job, or, more precisely, his new employer. Not quite one year in and he still had difficulty believing how fortunate he was to have landed a job at CPSE. Although the position was only part-time, it was the first time in his life that Redmond felt like a responsible adult. He delighted in the possibilities he imagined his new employer provided. In contrast to similar jobs he had held in the past, at CPSE Redmond's job was secure, it paid a decent wage, and it offered a host of benefits and perks. According to Redmond, "I'll say I'm really proud of my wallet right now. I've had a lot of problems like I said with credit or with—I didn't have my license for a few years or I never had a medical card since I was a kid. So now I feel like in the past months I have *this* wallet. I have an up-to-date license, I have a bank card, I have a Kaiser card, and I'm like, 'Hey, I'm an agile citizen.'"

Redmond also had time to devote to his passions, like acting and singing. Redmond explains,

¹⁴ Redmond looked like a white man, but he personally felt ethnically Italian, Mexican, and white American. His paternal grandparents were whites from Indiana, but his maternal grandmother and grandfather were immigrants from Mexico and Italy, respectively, and his childhood experiences with them strongly shaped his sense of who he was, despite his appearance.

Well, I currently am in a part-time position here, with the best benefits anywhere, and this has given me the ability to pursue—I have Fridays and Saturdays off. I’ve recently been featured as an extra in [an Oscar-award winning movie] and it gives me the ability to go and do acting, and I’ve been able to sing on a few friends’ albums as a guest on those Fridays and Saturdays, which are pretty prime days if you’re entertaining or you’re performing. The dental has given me the ability to get dental work done so I can finally take a head shot and I could potentially do more work. It’s given me also the ability to have my days, so I’ve been writing screenplays and I’ve commissioned them to a few people and I’m just kind of waiting. But this place has given me this lease on life. It’s given me the ability to gather my health—mentally and physically—and to think about what I want to do.

And just as important, his managers had shown a great deal of appreciation for the work that he did; very quickly he had come to feel like a valued member of the CPSE community. As if realizing this for the first time, Redmond remarked with wonder, “I don’t feel invisible here.” In sum, at CPSE, where, according to Redmond, “everybody gets a chance,” he was able to turn his life around, and through CPSE, he was able to become the kind of man that he had always wanted to be.

Given the transformative effect that CPSE had on his own life, Redmond believed that others like him could also benefit. Indeed, when asked if this was the type of job that he would recommend to friends and family members, Redmond responded in the affirmative. “Even people I don’t know, because it’s given me that base. It’s like this is a lot of other jobs that I’ve had, but you’re given a lot and you’re also appreciated.” Later Redmond added, “...until you get a job doing what you want to do, what you love doing, you have to do something. And this is the best of those kinds of jobs that I’ve had.”

But when Redmond had information about over three dozen vacancies, when he had the ability to influence the hiring process, and when he actually knew of a great many people, 10-15 friends in their early-to-late 20s, who needed jobs, by and large he chose not to help because he was convinced that they would not work out. Despite Redmond’s sense that CPSE was a place where transformation happens, where everyone gets a chance, and where

men come into their own, he was deeply skeptical when he considered members of his own community, whom he described as “lay-about” and “loafs.” “It’s that I just don’t believe that they could initially take a job like this seriously enough to realize what they could get from it...They’re self-destructive. They’re really kind of stuck. They got a lot of growing to do, I guess.” And so the overwhelming majority of his friends never learned from Redmond about the job vacancies they could have filled.

Eventually, two close friends were brought into the loop. Both Joanna and Bert had been fired from other jobs in the same week, and while hanging out, both begged Redmond to help them get hired at CPSE. This was the last thing Redmond wanted to do. As with his other “self-destructive” friends, Redmond could not trust Joanna and Bert to take positions at CPSE seriously. He described Bert as “a lay-about who really is kind of tragic. And I think while he may not be a drunk, I think he drinks too much.” About Joanna, he explained, “I really hate saying this, [but] she had a bad attitude. She got a real attitude and to ask her to put on a happy face—I wouldn’t want to ask that of her because that’s one of the reasons I like her—but if she’s going to do customer service, she has to.” Thus, in an industry that requires from workers a great deal of emotional labor (Hochschild 1983), Redmond determined that his friends were unfit for duty.

Despite his deep reservations, however, Redmond could not openly reject Joanna and Bert’s request for help. He informed them that CPSE was hiring, suggested that they apply, and also told them that they could use him as a reference. But he admonished, “This is my good name. Like I know this might seem like it’s just a restaurant job, but really, don’t sour it. If you get hired, like don’t...take this seriously...Even when I say that, I just feel like sometimes people are just not hearing me. So that’s why I haven’t really asked [hiring

personnel] to pull their [applications for further review]. I'll let them linger...It's better than me making a big effort."

In stark contrast, Redmond made "large-scale efforts" to help a woman he did not know. Tsega was a relatively recent immigrant from Ethiopia. Although currently employed, she hoped for something better. Her husband, Dawit, was a parking attendant at a lot in close proximity to CPSE. One day Dawit struck up a conversation with Redmond, who arrived to park his car for the day. Upon hearing that Redmond was a CPSE employee, Dawit explained that he hoped his wife might find a job there and asked Redmond to help. Redmond readily agreed and took what some might describe as extraordinary measures. The senior clerk invited Tsega to his workplace, gave her a tour, and helped her to complete the application. Furthermore, once her application had been submitted, he lobbied the hiring personnel on Tsega's behalf and regularly checked back with the personnel office to verify that Tsega's application was advancing smoothly through the process. She was fortunate that he had, because on more than one occasion, her application had gotten lost in the system. Twice Redmond's vigilance rehabilitated her candidacy. And his efforts paid off. Eventually Tsega was hired as a food service worker.

In an attempt to explain how he had come to so eagerly help the Ethiopian couple, he stated, "There's something about the nature of just how excited and about how...I was like, 'Yeah.' And I put my name full force on it for somebody I didn't know." Encouraged to elaborate, Redmond continued, "Their work ethic. If it's something that's laborious for them, if it's like something they can't...It's why my closer friends, I can't trust it. I can't say that they wouldn't screw it up. But this woman who is here and trying to make it here and very bright and just—I don't even have to ask."

Puzzled by Redmond's apparent faith in Tsega's commitment to work, given how little he actually knew about her and her husband, I followed up with: "When you say, 'She's trying to make it here,' what kinds of things have you seen her do that make you feel like she's committed?" Redmond considered this and responded, "Well, her husband runs the parking lot next to the church and also has another job, but they live in the church. I feel like they're trying to build themselves up. And she's got another job and it's like they both immigrated here. It's not because they're immigrants and they work hard. It's really just that they're willing to look at things realistically as far as building. Like there's that thing like I just believe in them. I believe that they're not so beaten down. But they are—they just don't let themselves get so down."

He believed in them. From observations of thin slices of their behavior, he became so convinced that they were committed to hard work that he did not have to question whether or not they would take the opportunity seriously.¹⁵ Unlike Joanna and Bert, indeed unlike the 10-15 friends who never learned about the job vacancies at CPSE, he sensed that Tsega and Dawit would understand and appreciate the opportunities that CPSE offered and the possibilities it symbolized. And so whereas Redmond "...let [Joanna's and Bert's] resumes in the system loom until someone decides if they want to pick them out," for Tsega he "put [his] name full force on it for somebody [he] didn't know."

¹⁵ In an attempt to resolve the asymmetry, Redmond would want to have as much relevant information as possible so as to make an informed decision about whether and how to help. But to the extent that jobseekers' chances of finding work might be harmed by asymmetric information, they might attempt to resolve the problem through signaling (Spence 1973). Dawit and Tsega, aware of how asymmetric information might foil their chances of receiving aid, might have sent signals about the types of people and workers that they are or want to be. Thus, the behaviors that Redmond observed could very well have been signals that the Ethiopian couple intended to send to ease their potential benefactor's concerns about the extent to which he might be taking on risks by helping them.

How could thin-sliced judgments so profoundly shape Redmond's (and other's) behavior? These judgments so moved Redmond to act because they had cultural and personal resonance for him. Redmond agreed to help the Ethiopian immigrant couple in part because he imagined them to be much like his own maternal grandmother and grandfather, immigrants from Mexico and Italy, respectively. According to Redmond, his grandparents sacrificed a great deal to build a better life for their family in America. They endured material hardships, without complaint, because they believed life could be better and it would improve. And just as his maternal grandparents struggled to build something better, so too did the Ethiopian immigrants.¹⁶

Furthermore, Redmond's narrative evoked emotions that aroused in him the desire to help. Whereas Redmond was disappointed and resigned by his assessment that his close friends were not yet, and may never be, ready to take advantage of good opportunities, his interpretation of Tsega and Dawit's situation filled him with hope. He became eager and excited as he imagined how a job at CPSE would help them to build their lives. And he was certain that they would understand and appreciate the opportunity that CPSE offered and the hope for something better that it symbolized. Thus, although lacking information about Tsega and Dawit to make a more "informed" decision, Redmond helped anyway.

There were only four instances in which jobholders reported deciding against helping a stranger. Underlying two of these instances were thin sliced assessments. But the data also include an episode in which a jobholder appeared to withhold assistance because she simply did not have enough information to make a determination about risk and so felt too

¹⁶ A skeptical reader might question this interpretation that Redmond's understanding of his grandparents' struggle provided the frame through which he made sense of Tsega and Dawit's circumstances, but when I called to Redmond's attention the strikingly similar language he used to describe both his grandparents and the beneficiaries of his aid, he responded, "Yeah, that's exactly how I talked about them. And that's why I believe in them."

uncomfortable to act on jobseeker's behalf. What distinguished this episode from the two rejections resulting from thin-sliced assessments was the apparent absence of judgment and the perceived high costs associated with doing more.

To summarize, when faced with information asymmetries about absent ties—complete strangers in many cases—jobholders thin-sliced. With bits of information from brief observations of jobseekers' behaviors, they created narratives about jobseekers' competence and/or deservingness. These narratives had cultural and personal resonance and shaped jobholders' determination to help. Negative constructions produced inaction or efforts to subvert. Positive narratives, however, such as Redmond's, resulted in proactive measures taken, and these narratives powerfully motivated jobholders to help jobseekers about whom they objectively knew little.

When Jobholders Ignore Information Asymmetries

Faced with questions about whether or not to help an absent tie, one jobholder also resolved information asymmetries by ignoring them because doing so allowed her to create future obligations of exchange and repay a kindness. Thirty-one year old Janice Barker was a black, never-married mother of two boys, 12 and 1. She had been working part-time as a senior food service worker at CPSE for eighteen months when she sat down to be interviewed. Janice was embedded in a network of friends and family members who both worked and had interesting hobbies on the side.

Perhaps because her friends and family members were such an interesting, industrious, and creative bunch, Janice had difficulty sympathizing with others who struggled to find work. She explained, "Well, I mean, I hear a lot of people complain. "Oh, I can't find a job." But I mean, I don't know if they're looking hard enough, even though there is a recession

going on and a lot of people are being laid off. But there are some jobs. Sometimes you have to bite the bullet a little bit and do what you wouldn't normally do and get paid a little bit less than you would normally get in order to survive. You know? So I think that might just sometimes be a cop-out or maybe it's not what they want to do. So they're figuring that it's not a job. I don't know."

On the topic of providing job-matching assistance, Janice was skeptical about how much job contacts should do. When asked how much people with jobs in her community do to help others find work, the following exchange unfolded:

JB: Like, oh, you know what? I just went past this place and they're hiring right now. I saw a sign in the window; go down there and check it out. Not as far as them working and, "Oh, my job is hiring." You don't hear that a lot. Sometimes you don't want people to work [with you].

I: That you're close to, to work with you?

JB: Not really that you're close to; the people that you don't really know that well; sometimes you wouldn't give them a heads-up on where you are.

I: So your friends and relatives—do they help each other find work?

JB: Yeah. I mean, not as far as helping. *That's a big word* [italics added]. But as far as what my cousin did for me—said they're hiring and go apply. But as far as doing all of what [jobseekers] would need to do? No, I don't think that's going to happen. Meaning as far as you know how you were saying sometimes people help fill out an application and go through the process and try to give them something to wear and all that kind of stuff? I just feel like that's up to the person. If they really wanted to work they would make it happen. I mean, sometimes people tell you this is what they want. But at the same time they're not making any effort...They want the money but they don't want to work for it.

It was a mistake that she chose not to make with her good friend, Carla. Janice explained,

I do have a friend that has worked in the medical field. I think she was like...she worked in a dentist office. I'm not exactly sure what she did, but she worked in a dentist's office and that's all she keeps saying, 'I need to find a job in a dentist office,' and I'm like...you've been saying that for months. Why don't you just try to do something else? There are other jobs that you could do if you...You know, you

worked on a computer. You know certain things about dentistry—try to do something else. And she doesn't have a job now and she's still saying, 'I'm going to go back to the dentist field,' or whatever.

Carla's unwillingness to entertain thoughts about other types of work frustrated Janice to no end, but the primary reason she chose not to share job information was because Carla seemed to look with disdain at the type of work that Janice performed. "No, the reason I wouldn't tell her is because when she asks me what I do, it's like, 'Oh, that's what you do? You serve food?' Why would I even...*at least I'm working* [emphasis added]. At least I am not complaining and I am working...She wants to kick it. She wants to chill. She wants to be laid back, and she wants to not have anybody be in her business. She wants to be in an environment to where she can do what she's comfortable with."

Despite Janice's strong note of caution about the high risk associated with helping others, including close friends and relatives, to find work, in a move that was strikingly out of character, she had once proactively helped a complete stranger get a job. As she did with regularity, Janice had been shopping at a big box department store. While at the register, her cart overflowing with goods, Janet's cashier exclaimed, "Where do you work at? I need to work where you work!" Janice interpreted the cashier's exclamation to be an earnest request for job-finding help. Despite her deep reservations about helping anyone unless she was absolutely certain that they wanted to work, in this situation, Janice shared that her employer was hiring, gave the cashier her own name and telephone number, and offered to discuss job opportunities at her own job. She then informed her supervisor to look out for the cashier's application.

Why was Janice, who tends to be so pessimistic about providing job referrals, in this instance so willing to help a stranger? "I don't know. That was just like at the instant. Because I normally don't do that. It was just how she made me feel like I was...doing

something. She made me feel like I was big at the time; like I was really doing something. I was just shopping for my son, getting the basics that we normally do. But obviously this was something big to her. So it made me feel like—wow, somebody...it made me feel good. After that I left smiling, like maybe I can help her. She just helped me—you know, boost my confidence up. So it was...it was a weird situation. And we've been friends ever since."

By contrasting the situation in which Janice decided against helping a good friend with a situation in which she decided to proactively assist a stranger, we bring into sharp relief Janice's desire or need to be respected as a working person, despite her relatively low status in the social class hierarchy, or, indeed, maybe because of it. In their interactions, Janice felt as if Carla lacked respect for the work that she did. Carla seemed to give Janice no credit at all for having a job and taking the job seriously. She seemed fixated only on *what* Janice did to make ends meet. Janice's response—"At least I am not complaining and I am working."—was an effort to both shake off the stigma of low status about which Carla hinted, to regain a sense of dignity that comes from working, and to reassert her place over Carla in the status hierarchy (Lamont 1999; Newman and Ellis 1999).

Janice did not have to work for the honor and respect she felt from the cashier, however. The cashier gave these freely and enthusiastically, and in so doing made Janice feel "big," "like she was doing something." Instantly grateful for the confidence boost she gained by the cashier's comments, Janice rewarded the cashier with help that she rarely gave to others. Essentially she ignored her lack of knowledge about this woman she decided "in an instant" to assist, because what was most important in that instance was that she repay the kindness that meant so much to her. In the process she began a series of obligations of exchange that nurtured a budding friendship.

Summary

Before signing on to help, jobholders want to know the risks that lie ahead (Stigler 1961; Rees 1966; Akerlof 1970; Spence 1973; Arrow 1996; Wilson 2008). This would seem to privilege intimates over acquaintances and strangers, since presumably jobholders know more about the former than the latter. But this is not always the case. First, to the extent that jobholders know more about their intimates, they have greater insight into their good *and bad* habits, and they are not often inclined to help those whose behaviors they find problematic. This means that strongly tied jobseekers are not guaranteed help even when jobholders have information and can influence hires.

Second, different types of weakly tied jobseekers imply different levels of ignorance. About former associates, jobholders often had enough information to make informed decisions about whether or not making referrals made sense, and so asymmetric information was not a problem. They disregarded those they knew from firsthand experience to be unfit, but they eagerly assisted those they held in high regard because of their performance on the job. This was the case as well about some friends-of-friends, specifically those about whom jobholders had first- and secondhand information.

About stranger friends-of-friends, however, jobholders were often completely ignorant, and so there was an asymmetric information problem to resolve. Jobholders did so either by assuming that friends-of-friends had qualities that were similar to those of the mutual friend, under the logic that people associate with others like themselves, or by trusting the friend's judgment about the competence and worthiness of the jobseeker in question.

Jobholders faced with requests from absent ties also had to resolve problems that could lead to adverse selection. They did so by thin slicing. With bits of information based on

brief observations, they made assumptions about their competence and worth, in the process, filling the information void. Assumptions in hand (or head), they acted (or chose not to).

But jobholders faced with the prospect of helping strangers did not always resolve asymmetric information problems. In one case, the jobholder ignored her ignorance and she did so because it gave her the opportunity to create future obligations of exchange and repay a past kindness. As a result, by drawing from first- and second-hand information, deploying a birds-of-a-feather logic, and thin slicing, jobholders gained valuable information that they used to assess risk. In so doing, they substantially increased the odds of helping jobseekers with whom they had weak ties. But this is not the only way in which weak ties might gain a relative advantage over strong. In what follows, I describe how jobholders' perceptions of costs and benefits are also informed by tie strength.

TIE STRENGTH AND THE ASYMMETRIC COSTS OF HELPING WEAK VERSUS STRONG TIES

Tie strength also affects how jobholders assess benefits, but more importantly costs, of helping. In *GAJ*, Granovetter speculated that, in addition to closeness, individuals would be motivated by several factors to act as job contacts. He imagined that by helping jobseeking friends and family members, job contacts would benefit from working with people they liked, or in contexts rife with conflict, they might gain potential allies. But in general, whether helping weak or strong ties, job contacts might gain enhanced reputations, a strong sense of efficacy, and, when available, remuneration for helping to recruit a new employee.

Granovetter also imagined a cost. Helping a close friend or family member might "complicate or strain" the relationship between the two (1995: 54).

Granovetter was not far off, at least with regard to the benefits, or gains, that jobholders perceived. My jobholders mentioned five benefits that could result from helping to

make a good match (see Table 4)—personal satisfaction (74); enhanced reputations (36); a more efficient workplace (6); future obligations of exchange and/or repayment of past kindness (6); and monetary reward (1). No jobholder mentioned the joys of working with friends and relatives.

When considering the benefits of making a good match, twice as many jobholders mentioned the personal satisfaction that comes with helping as they did the benefits to their reputation, but when considering the costs of making a bad match, twice as many mentioned the blow to their reputations as mentioned how badly they would personally feel (see Table 4). Whereas 30 jobholders described the shame, embarrassment, upset, and disappointment they would feel “about putting the department in a bad position,” 61 jobholders highlighted the possibility that their reputations would be tarnished, and an additional 16 jobholders reported that they would not likely be able to make referrals in the future, get promotions, or get assigned to prime shifts because of damaged reputations. Thus, a total of 77 jobholders feared that if their referrals proved unfit for the job, as the intermediaries who helped to make the match, they would be publicly humiliated, their own reputations with bosses and coworkers would be tarnished, and their status and corresponding influence on the job would be diminished. As one respondent dramatically proclaimed, “Your name is slandered. Your integrity is shot. Your respect is shot.” In other words, what loomed largest in their minds was the set of losses to their social standing on the job.¹⁷

Indeed, interviews revealed that jobholders weighed far more heavily the potential costs and losses associated with failed matches than the possible benefits or gains resulting

¹⁷ I should note that when asked what they either had gained or might gain from helping to make a good match at CPSE, sixteen jobholders could think of no benefit at all. This compares to eighteen jobholders, who reported that there were no negative consequences for initiating a bad match.

from successful matches (See Lynch 1979 for a discussion about how individuals weigh negative consequences more heavily than positive consequences in non-emergency situations.). Maria Hernandez was typical in this regard. During her decade as a CPSE custodial worker, Maria made numerous attempts to get friends and family members jobs. For jobseekers she deemed responsible, the 47-year old immigrant from Mexico took them to her supervisor to make introductions and to speak positively on their behalf. But just as Maria expressed unequivocal support for “responsible” jobseekers, she expressed with equal vehemence her disregard for those she perceived to be lazy. And not even her closest intimates were spared. For instance, Maria refused to help her musician husband get a job at CPSE, despite its promise of steady work, decent pay, and incredible benefits. According to Maria, “My husband has always told me: ‘Hey, I want to work there. Come on. Lend me a hand so I can get in and work there.’” But Maria had learned from her experiences with him at home. She reasoned, “If at home I will tell him: ‘Let’s start cleaning,’ he does not want to help or he does it badly. He doesn’t know how to sweep, how to mop, so how will you come here to do a job?’ In her mind, then, her husband not only lacked the skills to perform well, more importantly he lacked the motivation to do custodial work properly. Certain that he would perform badly and sully her good name, when pressed to help, Maria responded, “No, because in this case I will feel ashamed that you don’t do your job and that they will say: ‘Maria’s husband is very lazy.’ No, I would not like to be told this.” Thus, convinced that he would bring his lethargic ways to the job, and fearful that this might affect her coworker’s and supervisor’s perceptions of her, Maria refused to help.

Given Maria’s description of her husband, there seems little doubt that she would be taking a risk by referring him, but given the potential benefits to the family if he were to gain employment at CPSE and make it work, one wonders why Maria did not take that chance.

Experimental studies on decision-making in risky situations can provide insight, and they point to the importance of endowment effects and loss aversion. Endowment effects refer to “the reluctance of people to part from assets that belong to their endowment” (Kahneman and Tversky 1984: 348; see also Knetsch 1989; Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler 1990), and loss aversion is the tendency for people to value losses much more highly than objectively equivalent potential gains (Tversky and Kahneman 1991). According to Kahneman and Tversky, “Loss aversion explains people’s reluctance to bet on a fair coin for equal stakes: The attractiveness of the possible gain is not nearly sufficient to compensate for the aversiveness of the possible loss” (1984: 342). In general, because of endowment effects, individuals value much more highly the loss of something that they already have in their possession than the gain of an equivalent item that they have yet to obtain. For jobholders like Maria who must decide whether or not to help risky jobseekers, the possible gains that might accrue with a good match—feelings of self-efficacy; a reputation further enhanced; reduced workload; and/or stronger, more cohesive bonds with exchange partners—pale in comparison to the potential losses associated with a bad match—one’s own reputation, status, and thus influence on the job. Thus, after sensing high risk, jobholders seek to preserve what they already have by deciding against helping or by helping in such a way that puts distance between themselves and the job-matching process. In what follows, I show how the extra weight given to costs (versus benefits) in decision-making is amplified for strong ties and muted for weak ties. The result is that weakly tied jobseekers gain an advantage during the job matching process.

Asymmetric Costs of Helping Weak Versus Strong Ties

To illustrate how jobholders assess costs differently depending on the strength of their relationships with jobseekers, I return to Redmond’s case. Recall that Redmond’s decision to

assist (or not) was shaped by his assessments of the potential risks of doing so. Redmond imagined a multitude of benefits for his friends if they took seriously the opportunities available at CPSE; for instance, like him they could earn a decent wage, get benefits, and they could be treated with respect. As a result, they might also come into their own. He had little faith, however, that they would. He was certain that CPSE would become the most recent of a long list of employers to dismiss Joanna and Bert dishonorably. In his estimation, for both the risks of failure were quite high.

More problematic, however, were the potentially high *costs* to him of failure. He could not afford to bring his good friends, loafers and layabouts, to *this* job. They would cost him the reputation he had worked so hard to build. Remember his admonition to Joanna and Bert: “This is my good name...Take it seriously.” Given the high risks, Redmond kept his distance during the job-matching process.

With Tsega, however, not only had he calculated the risk of failure was low (see pages 33-35), more importantly, Redmond perceived the *costs* of failure to be low, too. “With this lady, say by some fluke she doesn’t want to work or something, I would be disappointed, but I wouldn’t be leveled. I wouldn’t think, “Oh well, that’s it for me....One good thing about there being so much red tape and bureaucracy [at CPSE] is that people can be caught. And just as quick as they were here, they’re gone, you know? And it wouldn’t be looming. If it didn’t work out, then it wouldn’t be something where I would have to fret about it all the time.” He perceived that his reputation would be left unscathed had this match failed. Close friends, however, would implicate him and tarnish his good name. With intimates, then, costs of failure are assessed higher than costs of failure associated with acquaintances and strangers.

But the costs of failure are further amplified for strong versus weak ties because of the potentially negative effect that the failed match will have on the relationship between referee

and referrer. A failed match with an acquaintance or stranger may very well strain and complicate the relationship between the jobholder and referral, but since the tie between the two is weak, there is not much relationship to lose. The loss here is primarily in terms of unrealized gains, of what could have been.

Not so for strong ties. Jobholders have much greater expectations as a function of the nature of the relationship. Even if referrals cannot be trusted to behave appropriately for their own benefit, jobholders expect that referrals will or should act appropriately *for jobholders' sake*. They expect trustworthiness in the encapsulated sense—their referrals will act appropriately *because of their concern with jobholder's interests and well-being*, even if not for their own (Hardin 2002). This sentiment was shared by a number of respondents, including Ellis Brand, a 47-year old custodial worker and small business owner who had been on the job less than four months. Ellis explained,

The people that I refer can do the job. They're responsible. I don't have to worry about them because they're going to go out there...*because they understand my position* and I'm going on the line [emphasis added]. And they will do whatever they can not to jeopardize my situation. And that's how it is. If somebody refers me to go do something—I don't care if it's to clean a carpet—and they're of good standing, even if I don't want to do it on my own, to have enough to do it on my own, I've got to do it for them because they went on the line to do it for me. Somebody goes on the line and loves me enough and puts themselves on the line enough to go to bat for me, *I've got to come through. Even if I don't want to. I've got to come through because of what you did* [emphasis added]. It has an impact and I don't want nothing that I do to impact you.

Jobholders viewed the failure to act in this way as a violation of encapsulated trust, and such a violation was evidence that the referral did not care about the jobholder or the relationship. Thus, the cost here is far greater for and specific to intimates—personalized hurt rooted in a sense of betrayal because their referrals thought so little of them that they would not do what was necessary to protect jobholders' reputations from harm.

This is a point that Janice inadvertently made when asked how concerned she was that her referrals might not work out. In response, Janice explained, “Because most of the time the people that I am going to give information to—it’s going to be family members or someone close to me. So it’s not going to be somebody off the street. So of course it’s going to hurt to know that they basically...I’m not going to say used me, but kind of screwed me. Because I’m putting forth the effort to let them know, okay, “I have a candidate for you. They’re really good. They’re punctual.” And then you come in every day late and it’s making me seem like I don’t know what I’m talking about, like I don’t really know you. You know?” What becomes clear in Janice’s response is that she is not only concerned about her own credibility. This matters a great deal, but she also acknowledges the pain she would feel as a result of having been betrayed by a referral she feels close to and for whom she has put her own name on the line. For Janice, then, it is not just that her credibility is in question; the relationship is, too, because of the hurt caused by the loss of encapsulated trust.

Summary

Though most prior research has focused on the benefits that accrue to job contacts for helping their jobseeking relations find work, from recent research it is clear that individuals consider the benefits *and costs* of helping before they decide to become job contacts (Smith 2005, 2007). Furthermore, jobholders weigh the costs of failure far more heavily than they do the potential benefits resulting from successful matches, and this discourages them from providing aid.

But jobholder’s calculations of costs due to failure appear to be contingent on the strength of the relationship with their jobseeking relations. Jobholders treat failed matches associated with intimates as more costly than those associated with strangers. This is for two

reasons. First, jobholders perceive that the stronger the referral-jobholder tie, the greater referrals' behavior reflects back on the jobholder, and thus the greater the costs to jobholders for helping in the event the match goes badly. Second, to jobholders, failed matches with intimates speak to the quality of the relationship, and specifically referrals' trustworthiness in the encapsulated sense. Failure means that the referral did not consider the consequences for jobholders' well being, despite jobholder's efforts on their behalf, and this interpretation produces a sense of betrayal, which threatens the referral-jobholder relationship. For these two reasons, jobholders assess the costs of failure associated with strong-tie referrals as higher, and when they do, they are not likely to help intimates relative to their acquaintances and strangers.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We are surprised that weak ties might be more beneficial at providing access to society's valuable resources, like jobs. This is in part because we do not question intimates' greater motivation to act on our behalf. It is this assumption that gives the weak tie puzzle its paradoxical quality. As the evidence presented in this paper suggests, however, there are limits to what the bonds of affection yield, because even when they can, intimates—spouses, parents, siblings, or best friends—often choose not to help. Ironically, closeness can be an obstacle to social resource mobilization, and strong ties are not as motivated as we think.

Interviews with 146 custodians, food service workers, and administrative staff revealed how tie strength shaped jobholders' decisions about whether and how to help. It mattered in two ways. First, as a part of the deliberative process, jobholders considered the risks that their jobseeking relation would perform badly; they did not want to initiate matches they thought would eventually fail. Knowledge about intimates' problematic work histories and

character flaws often led jobholders to assess the risk of failure as high and then to worry about the costs to their reputations if matches failed. When they did, they withheld assistance. In contrast, what jobholders knew or imagined about acquaintances and strangers frequently led them to assess the risks of failure as low. As a result, they were often willing, enthusiastic even, about putting their names on the line for those with whom they had weak ties. In sum, closeness brought into sharp relief intimates' flaws and produced a disinclination to help while social distance potentially concealed acquaintances' flaws and magnified their attractiveness, which inspired helping.

Jobholders also considered seriously the costs of making failed matches. Indeed, this was more important to them than the benefits of initiating successful matches. And how jobholders assessed the potential costs of making a bad match was also contingent on tie strength. Whether intimates, acquaintances, or strangers, jobseekers' behaviors reflected back on jobholders. But jobholders also operated under the following logic: the closer the tie between referral and referee, the more they might lose, in reputation and status, if matches ended badly. For this reason, too, jobholders often chose to help strangers while forsaking intimates.

Despite the findings from past research (Bott 1957; Laumann 1974; Bian 1997) and arguments about the theoretical irrelevance of tie strength (Burt 1992), I find that tie strength does matter. But unlike other "tie strength" proponents who argue for its significance from a network structure perspective, I suggest instead that tie strength matters to the extent that it is implicated in jobholders' cognitive and affective processes. Whether the tie is weak or strong shapes jobholders' assessments of risks and costs in interesting and ironic ways. Without specific attention to the deliberative process undertaken by jobholders in possession of information and influence—whose perspectives are rarely considered in studies about the

importance of job contacts (but see Smith 2005, 2007, and 2010; Marin 2012)—these processes and their ironic outcomes would not come to light. In general, when attempting to understand the dynamics of information flow and influence, future research should be attuned to this under-investigated node so central to the job-matching process.

Future research should also consider how network structure shapes and is shaped by cognitive and affective processes in ways that inform the flow of job information and the exercise of influence. Currently, theorists rooted in the network structure tradition assume that other factors, psychological and cultural in nature, do not have a systematic or predictable impact (see Granovetter 1974). Alternatively, they assume that network structure and cultural and psychological dispositions are, in a sense, one and the same. This is because the cultural or psychological desire to take advantage of opportunities would motivate actors to construct an efficient and effective network structure, one abundant with opportunities. Likewise, embeddedness in opportunity-rich network structures should inspire actors to develop the types of psychological and cultural attributes that would allow them to take advantage of available opportunities (Burt 1992). But the cognitive and affective processes that shape the dynamics of information flow and influence are not lacking in systematic or predictable impact (as I believe I have shown). Nor are they analytically inseparable from network structure. While these almost certainly shape each other, they are not one and the same. But only through future research will the relationship between network structure and the cognitive and affective processes considered here be adequately addressed.

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Table 1. Descriptive Summary

	Custodians (32%)	Food Service Workers (39%)	Administrative Staff Workers (29%)	Total
Race				
Black	.38	.36	.55	.42
Latino	.40	.31	.05	.26
Asian	.15	.06	.07	.09
White	.04	.15	.21	.13
Multiracial	.04	.13	.12	.10
Gender				
Female	.25	.58	.79	.47
Male	.75	.42	.21	.53
Foreign Born	.51	.33	.16	.34
Tenure (years)	11.8 (8.9) (.1-29)	7.5 (8.0) (.5-37)	10.5 (7.8) (.1-27)	9.7 (.89) (.1-37)
Hours/week	40.2 (1.30) (40-49)	37.8 (10.8) (10-65)	39.0 (6.5) (16-50)	38.9 (7.6) (10-65)
Monthly Salary (\$)	2,491 (702.47) (1500-5000)	2,005 (1005.22) (140-5100)	3,311 (314.54) (150-7500)	2,535 (1176.83) (140-7500)

Table 2. Summary of Episodes of Assistance Provided and Assistance Denied

	Assistance Provided		Assistance Denied	
	Number	Percentage Of Cases	Number	Percentage Of Cases
Respondents	139		58	
Episodes	379		90	
Mean Number of Episodes	2.7 (1-8)		1.6 (1-4)	
Episodes at CPSE ¹⁸	251	66.2	69	76.7
Recent Episodes	133	35.1	31	34.4
Jobseeking Strong Tie	268	70.7	54	60.0
Jobseeking Weak Tie	111	29.3	36	40.0

¹⁸ With regard to episodes of assistance, we could not determine the location of nine episodes. With regard to episodes of assistance denied, there four instances where the location of assistance could not be determined.

Table 3. Frequencies of Assistance Provided and Assistance Denied by Weak Tie Type

Total	Assisted (N=111)	Denied (N=36)
Former Associates	69	18
Coworkers	49	13
Classmates	10	3
Roommates	3	0
Neighbors	2	1
Customers	2	0
Others	3	1
Friends-of-Friends	28	10
Embedded Ties	23	10
Complete Strangers	5	0
Absent Ties	15	4
Nodding Relationship	6	4
Complete Strangers	9	0
Type of Weak Tie Unknown	-	4

Table 4. Frequencies of the Benefits and Costs of Helping¹⁹

Benefits	Frequency of Responses
Personal Satisfaction	74
Reputations Enhanced	36
Improved Workplace	6
Future Obligations of Exchange	6
No Benefits	16
Costs	
Feel Badly	30
Reputations Diminished and Related Lost Opportunities	61
No Costs	16

¹⁹ Respondents could report more than one type of benefit and/or cost.