Social Contacts and Job Searching: Does Gender of Contact Matter?

by

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Abstract: In this study, I investigate how the gender of the social contact women use to find jobs affects the gender composition of the jobs that women find. Using a subsample of women in the Metropolitan Employer Worker Survey, I test two competing hypotheses about the effects of gender of social contact using multivariate logistic regression. Controlling for a range of individual, household, occupation/industry and organization variables, the analysis shows that females are significantly less likely to find female dominated jobs when they find their jobs through male contacts, compared to female contacts. Moreover, I also show that traditional measures of contact type (weak vs. strong tie) make little difference. What is important is the gender of the social contact, not the tie strength. Additionally, I show that women who find their current job through female contacts are just as likely to find a female dominated job as women who find their jobs through advertisements, employment agencies, and other highly visible sources of information. Implications for theory and research are discussed.

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Social Contacts and Job Searching: Does Gender of Contact Matter?

In this paper I explore an interesting twist on the relationship between job matching and occupational segregation. Past studies have focused on the advantages of using informal social contacts when finding or changing jobs, as opposed to formal search methods (such as using advertisements, employment agencies, etc... see Granovetter 1995; 1974; Lin et al. 1981; Marsden and Campbell 1984; Campbell and Rosenfeld 1985; Campbell et al 1986; Marsden and Hurlbert 1988; Corcoran et al. 1980). However, the majority of these studies focus on labor market outcomes other than the gender composition of the job in question, such as earnings, job authority, industry sector, (see the work by Hanson and Pratt for exception). I believe that an equally important component of this puzzle is to examine the effects of job searching on the gender composition of the job that the individual finds. From a labor market perspective, it is an important dependent variable because gender job composition has been shown to explain a substantial proportion of the variation in current earnings (Tomaskovic-Devev 1993), and is a good predictor of future labor market outcomes (earnings, authority, autonomy). Some women who get locked into female dominated jobs often have a difficult time moving into non female-dominated positions (Roos and Reskin 1984; 1992; Reskin and Roos 1990), while others have a history of moving in and out of female dominated occupations throughout their careers (Jacobs 1989a; 1989b; Rosenfeld and Spenner 1995).

In addition to the labor market implications, this question also addresses gender differences in network structure. Past studies show that women and men have different network compositions (women more kin centered, men more work centered), implying that these differences affect access to job information (especially for women). This paper will indirectly address the question of gender differences in networks by examining to what extent women use men as contacts for job information. Furthermore, this study continues a line of research that links the network structure and labor market literatures through an analysis of women in the labor force, and an analysis of the extent to which using male contacts helps women to gain access to jobs other than those traditionally held by women.

Yes it does matter

The structural perspective on gender differences in network structure informs an argument for the proposition that gender of contact does matter. Past research shows that men
are more likely to have networks consisting of colleagues and co-workers, while women are more likely to have kin-centered networks (McPherson and Lovin-Smith 1982; 1986; Fischer and Oliker 1983; Marsden 1987; Moore 1990; Kanter 1977; Campbell 1988). Women and men have different network structures because of historical trends in gender role ideology which puts men and women in different social-structural positions in social space. Historically, men have been more likely to work outside of the home, to have higher status social positions and/or jobs, and to be unfettered by domestic responsibilities (Moore 1990; Marsden 1987; Fischer and Oliker 1983;). Women, on the other hand, have been more likely to work at home, in jobs with less status and responsibility, and to assume more domestic responsibilities (Reskin and Padavic 1994). These historical trends created a gender gap in social structural location, particularly in work structures and the labor market—where (white) males have and continue to dominate most of the 'better' jobs (Jacobs 1995).

The research on gender differences in network structures intimates that men have greater opportunities to form wider-ranging networks, which should be more instrumental in labor market mobility. Past empirical research supports this claim. McPherson and Smith-Lovin (1982; 1986) conclude that men are more likely to belong to organizations that ultimately lead to job contacts. According to Hanson and Pratt (1991), the domestic responsibilities of women in a patriarchal society structure them to think locally, and to build local support networks (friends and neighbors to be relied upon for social support). In addition, wages for the typical female worker are less spatially variable than wages for male workers. Therefore, women do not face the spatial constraint that men do to reach their reservation wage in the labor market. This encourages women to rely on 'localized' contacts to find jobs (neighborhood friends and family).

Kanter (1977) maintains that men have more ties to powerful persons in organizations. Moreover, the lack of opportunities for females in the corporate world creates a network disadvantage for women. Historically, women have been excluded from higher status jobs, and as a result, continue to have less access to the networks through which many male dominated jobs are recruited (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993; Roos and Reskin 1984; Campbell 1988; Campbell and Rosenfeld 1985). Campbell (1988) shows that among employed professional men and women, men had greater range in their networks. Men were more likely to report knowing people in a greater variety of occupations than women. However, Campbell (1988) also finds that women
and men, on average, have equal access to higher status occupations. Brass (1985) presents similar results in an analysis of employees at a large newspaper publishing company. However, Campbell (1988) concludes that even among employed professional women, personal networks are not sufficient to be of great use when searching for other employment. More importantly, she concludes that women’s networks are not sufficient to gain unsolicited job information, an important phenomenon in other studies of job matching (Hanson and Pratt 1991; Granovetter 1974; 1995).

Hanson and Pratt (1991) analyze the effects of gender on type of job found, in a descriptive analysis of women from Worcester, MA. Their analysis shows that men and women approach job searching somewhat differently. Men search for jobs through personal contacts and employment agencies, while women also use personal contacts with the same frequency as men, but are more apt than men to use other formal avenues of job information (especially newspaper advertisements). Women also report less help from using personal contacts than do men. In terms of gender and network contact, Hanson and Pratt (1991) show that women employed in female dominated jobs used formal search methods (advertisements) or other women to find these jobs. Women in male dominated jobs report using men to find these jobs, but also report that the male contact was likely to be a close family member.

The network structure argument for why gender of job contact does matter is best summarized by Campbell (1988: 183): “Women’s networks are less well-suited than men’s to job searches and subsequent occupational outcomes.” Therefore, when women use other women as social contacts in the job matching process, the result should be that women have a high probability of finding a female dominated job. However, under the assumption that males have greater access to better quality job information than females because of their positions in the social structure, if women find jobs through male contacts, then the probability of finding a non-female dominated job should be higher (compared to using a female contact).

H1. Women who use men as social contacts should have a higher probability of finding a non-female dominated job than women who use female social contacts to find a job.

No, It Does Not Matter

There are two theories I use to inform a hypothesis that gender of contact should not matter. The first is human capital theory. This model assumes that male and female labor are
perfect substitutes, that men and women have equal capacities to be productive and that men and women are equally deserving of job opportunities (Blau 1984). Women and men are allocated to jobs based on their bundle of human capital that they bargain with in the labor market. Education/training, work experience and job tenure are the most important determinants of who gets what job. Whether or not a woman uses a male or female contact should have no bearing on occupational outcome, net of the effects of human capital. The labor market operates to place people in positions which are commensurate with their qualifications and productivity (Becker 1957; Kaufman 1988; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993).

The second theory which informs this hypothesis is social closure theory (Parkin 1979). According to social closure theory, actions by members of the superordinate group can best be understood in the context of protecting their privileged position in society. White males attempt to protect their status, and their perceptions of self, by denying members of the subordinate group access to higher status positions and resources (Collinson et al. 1990; Jenkins 1986). In terms of job matching, occupational segregation results from formal and informal labor market barriers established by men to close-off female access to higher status work positions (Reskin and Roos 1990; Roos and Reskin 1984). Through the process of segregation, males reinforce the patriarchy, and retain their privileged/superior positions in the workplace and society (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993).

According to social closure theorists, males maintain their privilege by minimizing competition for higher status jobs (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993). One way of minimizing competition is to recruit informally through a network of social contacts (Roos and Reskin 1984; 1992; Campbell and Rosenfeld 1985; Hanson and Pratt 1991), which are often embedded in inter-organizational relations (Granovetter 1985; 1995). Consistent with the social closure argument is a similar notion that males should be reluctant to pass along job information about 'male' jobs to women, and more likely to transmit job information about 'female' jobs to women. Because of social closure, women should have a more difficult time connecting into male networks, through which many such jobs are purported to be recruited (Roos and Reskin 1984). Those women who do manage to connect into male networks, however, will still be at a disadvantage, because men will be reluctant to pass along job information about 'male' jobs to women.
In sum, if exclusionary forces are at work in the labor market, men should be reluctant to transmit information about higher status (i.e. male dominated) jobs to women, and more likely to relay information about female-dominated jobs to women. This action would reinforce male privilege in access to higher status positions, which is important to maintain because as females enter occupations (i.e. as occupations become feminized), the status (and pay) of those occupations decline (see Reskin and Padavic 1994). Therefore, under social closure assumptions (e.g. all activities can best be understood as attempts to protect male privilege), if a woman uses a man or a woman as a social contact, she is still likely to find a female dominated job.

H2 The gender of social contact used to find the job has no effect on the gender composition of the job in question.

Type of Social Contact.

One issue which may confound the relationship between gender of social contact and the type of job found is whether or not the social contact is a 'weak tie' or 'strong tie.' The literature on job matching shows that there are distinct advantages to learning of job information from colleagues or acquaintances (weak ties), rather than from close family or friends, or what Granovetter refers to as strong ties (Granovetter 1974; 1994; Lin et al. 1981). Weak ties are thought to be more efficacious because they act as bridging ties, which connect various groups in social space. Bridging ties gain access to information that an individual would not likely have, through connecting the individual to a distant social group. Strong ties, on the other hand, link individuals to socially similar individuals (friends and close family). It is not likely that these individuals will possess information about a job that the job searcher would not have access to anyhow, since strong ties do not generally connect people to distant social groups.

While Granovetter's (1974) initial research demonstrated the advantages of weak-ties over strong ties in job searching, there is a body of literature which shows that tie strength has less predictable effects on job outcomes. Montgomery (1992) argues with a theoretical model that what is important for individuals is their relative distribution of strong ties to weak ties. Depending upon the circumstances, some individuals may benefit more from strong ties, some from weak ties. Bridges and Villemez (1986) show that tie strength has no effect on earnings, net of human capital variables, in a representative sample of employed men and women in the greater Chicago area. Marsden and Hurlbert (1988) show that tie strength did not affect a variety of outcomes--
such as status of job found, supervisory authority on the job--in a sample of males. Granovetter (1995) cites unpublished manuscripts which show that the effectiveness of tie strength depends upon their relative position in the social structure. People higher in the social structure control more resources and are more likely to have access to valued information. Therefore, at lower-levels of the hierarchy, weak ties will be more effective, but at the top of the hierarchy, strong ties may be more effective, since your strong tie connections (people also at the top) are likely to control valuable resources.

In a descriptive analysis of men and women in Worcester, MA, Hanson and Pratt (1991) show that women who use other women (friends/family or work-related contacts) were much more likely to find female dominated occupations. Women who were employed in male dominated jobs were more likely to report that they had used a male contact to find that job, compared to a female contact. However, this male contact was much more likely to be a close friend or family member (i.e. strong tie). The type of network tie might affect the issues regarding gender of contact and the gender composition of the job found. The Hanson and Pratt study shows that the nature of the social contact (weak vs strong tie) needs to be included in the context of this analysis.

Another potentially important context is whether the social contact is work-related or not. Hanson and Pratt (1991) maintain that women have less access to male dominated jobs because they are structurally conditioned by a patriarchal society to build local linkages with friends and neighbors (for instrumental support with raising children, etc..). Furthermore, since women's reservation wages tend to be less spatially variable (i.e. closer to home), established neighborhood networks are just as effective at locating jobs than other types. If women have less access to male dominated jobs because they are more likely to have neighborhood (or communal) network structures, then women with work-related contacts (former boss or co-worker) may have greater access to other job types. Bridges and Vilemez (1986) show that men and women who use work-related contacts generally have higher salaries, but that these effects are significantly diminished once human capital variables are introduced into the equation.

The previous literature on job searching, gender and occupational outcomes leads to competing conclusions about the role that gender of contact plays in the types of jobs women find (particularly the gender composition of those jobs). In addition to the two competing hypotheses that I test in the analysis, the literature alludes to issues related to the efficacy of using social
contacts, strong ties vs weak ties, and using work related contacts within the context of gender. In the analysis I explore these hypotheses and related issues with a sample of working women in the greater Chicago area.

Data, Analysis and Measures

The data for this analysis are taken from the Metropolitan Employer-Worker Survey (MEWS). The MEWS is a 1981 representative sample of working men and women in the greater Chicago SMSA (Bridges and Villemez 1994; 1986). Eligible respondents in the sample include those working 20 or more hours per week, who were not self-employed and who were 18 years of age or older. The response rate of eligible respondents to the random-digit dial telephone sample was 86 percent. Bridges and Villemez (1986: 580) show that the sample is representative of working adults in the greater Chicago SMSA during this period.

The analysis investigates the effects of gender of social contact on the gender composition of the job in question among female employees. In the analysis, I employ logistic regression to estimate the effects of gender and type of contact on the probability of finding a female dominated job, with other variables introduced as controls. I contrast using social contacts vs other ‘formal’ search methods (advertisements, employment agencies, etc) on the gender composition of the job found. I also test whether or not using a male contact vs a female contact affects the probability that a female finds a female dominated job, and I compare all combinations of gender, tie strength and type. Finally, I compare the effects of using different types of male and female contacts vs other search methods (advertisements, employment agencies, etc) on the gender composition of jobs.

The search measure was taken from a series of questions concerning how the respondent found their job. Unfortunately, these questions were asked about the respondent’s first job with their current employer (not their current job), which will limit the analysis to those women whose first job with their current employer is also their current job. The Appendix contains analyses which attempt to measure the degree of bias this restriction introduces. This appendix analysis implies that relatively little bias is introduced.

Social Contact Measures

If the respondent claimed that they found out about their first and current job with their employer mainly through a friend or acquaintance, a relative or some other person, then the
respondent was classified as having found the job through a social contact (0,1). If the respondent claimed that they found their first and current job with their employer through an advertisement in a newspaper, public or private employment agency, or in some other way, then the respondent was classified as not using a social contact. The respondent was also asked a series of questions about the social contact: age, sex, race, and in what context the respondent knew the social contact (former boss, coworker, family member, neighbor, schoolmate, etc).  

Another major issue identified in past studies on network structure concerns the operationalization of strong and weak ties. Marsden and Campbell (1984) argue that closeness and emotional intensity are the best measures of tie strength. Relying solely upon duration and frequency of contact over-estimates the strength of the tie among people who are spatially connected, but emotionally unconnected--such as coworkers and neighbors. In addition, there may be little emotional intensity among very distant family members (i.e. those you rarely see or communicate with). Therefore, to classify relatives you rarely see as a strong tie is misleading. I employ measures of tie strength designed by Bridges and Villermez (1986), with these data. Strong ties are operationalized as follows: a non-neighbor friend or acquaintance who the respondent sees daily or at least 3 times a week, or a neighbor whom they see at least three times a week, whom they grew up with or attended school together. Additionally, a strong tie is operationalized as a relative who lives in the same household, or a relative whom they see at least 3 times per week. Weak ties are operationalized as friends/acquaintance whom they do not see at least three times a week, or a neighbor whom they did not grow-up with, nor attend school with. A relative is considered a weak-tie if they do not live in the same household, and the respondent does not see the relative at least three times a week. In this operationalization scheme, closeness/intensity help define tie strength--distant relatives are considered weak ties, along with neighbors with whom there is not a long or close relationship. Given the limitations of the data, Bridges and Villermez (1986) argue that this approach best incorporates the issues of closeness and intensity with these data.  

For each female respondent who reported that she had found her first and current job with their employer through the help of a friend or acquaintance, the social contact was classified as a strong (1,0) or weak (1,0) tie, based on the respondent's answers to the set of questions in the approach developed by Bridges and Villermez (1986), and outlined above. The social contact was
coded as work-related (1,0) if the social contact was a former boss or co-worker, otherwise not work related (family member, school-mate, neighbor, etc..).

The gender content of the job in question is operationalized as follows. Using 1980 PUMS data for Chicago, a six digit matrix, which represents a cross classification of 3 digit SIC industry codes by 3 digit occupation codes, was created. The procedure was repeated using MEWS respondent’s 3 digit SIC codes and 3 digit occupation codes. Next, for each cell in the PUMS data, a percent female was computed. The percent female from the PUMS 6-digit codes were merged onto the 6 digit industry by occupation codes from the MEWS. Each respondent in the MEWS has a 6 digit industry by occupation code, with a percent female employed in that industry by occupation category for the Chicago area (using PUMS data). To operationalize female dominated jobs, I follow the convention established by others (see Rosenfeld and Spener 1995), and create a binary variable with a female dominated job as 70% or more female.

I recognize that the gender composition of six digit industry by occupation codes do not completely represent the gender composition of the respondent’s job. There are studies which show that within occupation and job categories, there is differentiation in tasks, and that this differentiation may break-down along gender lines (Bridges and Nelson 1989; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993). However, past studies, show that much, but not all, of that variation occurs across firms in different industries (Peterson and Morgan 1995). Moreover, other studies, including the Hanson and Pratt study, have measured gender composition at the occupation level. By using industry by occupation categories, this study better approximates the gender composition of jobs by accounting for the variation in the gender composition of jobs across industry sectors. This is a better measure than relying upon occupation level data.

Control Variables

Other research from a variety of perspectives (e.g. human capital, choice theory, statistical discrimination, etc.) shows that the types of jobs women occupy can be a complex function of individual, household, occupation, industry, organization and local labor market characteristics (for excellent, recent reviews of this literature see Jacobs 1995; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993; Reskin and Padavic 1994). For example, job choice theorists point out that married women with children may seek jobs that minimize work commitment, and maximize family time. Typically, these are clerical jobs with little ‘extracurricular’ responsibilities (e.g. travel), which have historically employed
women. Therefore, some women may search for these types of jobs (typically female dominated). Similarly, statistical discrimination theorists maintain that the gender composition of jobs is based partly on employer sympathy to gender stereotypes. Managers may be reluctant to hire women into positions of responsibility (managerial jobs in particular) for fear that they will quit at some point to concentrate on raising a family. While the purpose of this paper is not to fully explain the gender composition of the job in question, I want the coefficients for the gender/tie-strength of social contact variables to be robust. Therefore, I include a number of measures from these various theoretical perspectives to control for confounding factors. In other words, after controlling for as many of the other factors which have been shown in past research to affect the types of jobs that women find, when women find their jobs through social contact, does gender of social contact affect the type of job that women find?

Individual level variables are traditional human capital measures: Education (in years), work experience (how many years have you worked), experience squared, age of respondent, how many times have you been unemployed for a year or more because of family reasons (children, marriage), a binary measure of marital status (married=1), how many children under 18 are living in the household. These variables are primary measures from human capital and choice theories. There are two binary measures of occupation: professional (1=yes); executive/managerial (1=yes). Past research shows that women are significantly less likely to be employed in these categories than men, for a variety of reasons. Whether or not the respondent is employed in the core sector of the economy (vs periphery) is a control measure from segmented labor market theory (see Corcoran et al., 1980).

The organizational level variables included are size of establishment (a natural log measure based on employer reports) and whether or not the respondent is a public employee. Public sector agencies have, by Executive Orders 11275, 11346 more fair hiring practices, which often benefit women (Bloch 1994). Similarly, larger organizations are more likely to employ women. First, larger organizations have more bureaucratic structures, and therefore employ a larger proportion of administrative personnel (particularly clerical positions), which women are more likely to occupy (Barron and Bishop 1985). Second, larger organizations have higher visibility, and are more likely to be the target of political pressure for more meritocratic hiring.
policies (Taylor 1979). This pressure leads to more bureaucratic hiring procedures, which are apt to benefit women more than informal hiring procedures.

Results

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics on how women in the MEWS subsample found their first and current job with their employer. Fifty-two percent of these women used sources other than social contacts to find their current job. Twenty-eight percent of the women who found their current job through social contacts report that they used male contacts, while 72% report using female contacts. Thirty-seven percent of those who found their current job through female contacts used female strong ties, compared to 63% who used female weak ties. Among those who found their current job through male contacts, 42% report using strong ties, while 58% report using weak ties. Thirty-seven percent of the current job finders through social contacts report using work-related contacts to find their current job, and among those who did use work-related contacts, 67% report using other women.

---Table 1 about here---

Table 2 presents the logistic regression analysis. This analysis controls for the following variables: Education (in years completed), work experience (in years), work experience squared, age of respondent, marital status (1=married, 0=other), presence of young children in home (1=yes), how many times the respondent has been unemployed for a year or more because of family reasons, professional or executive/managerial occupation (1=yes), core sector status (1=yes), whether or not they work in a government agency (1=yes), and size of establishment (natural log). Women who found their current job through social contacts are 1.57 times (1/0.638) less likely to find a female dominated job than women who found their job through other search methods (advertisements, employment agencies, other methods), controlling for the above factors. However, tie strength does not make a significant difference. When women who reported finding their job through strong ties are compared to women who used weak ties, no differences emerge. However, women who found their current job through female social contacts, compared to women who used male social contacts, are 2.8 times more likely to find a female dominated job, when these other household, human capital and organization factors are controlled.

---Table 2---
Strength of tie does not seem to have a confounding effect within the context of gender. When women who found their job via female weak ties are compared to women who used female strong ties, there are no differences in the probability of finding a female dominated job. The same finding applies to women who found their current job through male contacts. Females who used strong tie males have the same probability of finding a female dominated job as women who used weak tie males, even when all of the other variables in this equation are controlled. However, statistical differences do emerge once gender of contact is contrasted. Women who found their current job through weak tie females are 3.75 times more likely to find a female dominated job, when compared to women who used weak tie males. Additionally, women who report finding their current job via strong tie females are 3.3 times more likely to find a female dominated job than women who used strong tie males.

Work related contacts appear to benefit women once other factors have been controlled. Women who found their job through work related contacts (former boss, coworker) are 1.6 times (1/.621) less likely to work in a female dominated job than are women who used non-work related contacts. However, the gender of that contact makes a major difference. Women who found their job through female work related contacts were 20 times more likely to find a female dominated job than women who found their job through male work related contacts, even after controlling for all of the other factors in the model.

However, the analysis also shows some advantage for the use of social contacts in general. Weak ties and work contacts are more likely to lead to non female dominated jobs than are other search methods. Women who found their current job through weak ties, compared to women who used other search methods, are 1.75 times (1/.569) less likely to work in a female dominated job, after other important variables are controlled. Additionally, women who found their current job through work related contacts vs those who found their current job through other search methods are 1.82 times (1/.548) less likely to be employed in a female dominated job. There are no differences, however, when women who found their current job through strong ties are compared to those who found their current job through other search methods.

Yet gender of contact confounds these effects. Once using social contacts vs other methods are compared within the context of gender, important differences emerge. Women who found their current job through other women have the same probability of finding a female
dominated job as do women who found their job through other search methods (advertisements, etc), regardless of the nature of that contact. However, women who found their current job through men are 2.77 times (1/.361) less likely to find a female dominated job, compared to women who used other search methods. Moreover, women who found their current job through male weak-tie contacts are 3.57 times (1/.280) less likely to find a female dominated job than women who found their current job through other search methods. Women who used male work related contacts are 5.29 times (1/.189) less likely to find a female dominated job than are women who used other search methods. The only category for male contact that is not significant is strong ties. Women who found their current job through strong tie males have the same probability of finding a female dominated job as women who found their current job through other search methods.

The results support Hypothesis 1: Gender of contact does matter. When women find jobs through other women, they are more likely to find a female dominated job, even after other important factors have been controlled. The type of contact does not appear to matter. When women who found jobs through weak and strong ties are compared, no differences emerge. Likewise, when women use weak tie men and strong tie men, no differences emerge. What still matters is the gender of the contact. When women have access to male contacts, they have a higher probability of finding a non-female dominated job. Finding a job through a female social contact does not appear to benefit women to a great degree: They are still just as likely to find a female dominated job as are women who found their jobs through more formal search methods.

Summary and Discussion

The results show strong support for Hypothesis 1: Gender of social contact does matter. Women who found their job through other women report having female dominated jobs to the same extent as women who found their job through other 'formal' search methods. Moreover, when women who found their current job through female contacts are compared to those who found their current job through male contacts, the results show that women who use male contacts were much more likely to find non female dominated jobs than women who used female contacts. Furthermore, the results show that the type of contact is not as important as the gender of contact. Women who found their job through male weak ties found jobs with the same gender composition as women who found their jobs through male strong ties. However, women who
found their jobs through male weak ties were significantly less likely to find a female dominated job when compared to women who found their job through female weak ties. The same patterns emerge when contacts were classified as work and nonwork. Male work related contacts were more likely to lead to non-female dominated jobs than female work related contacts.

The primary issue which needs further explanation is why does gender of contact matter? I maintain that these results support a structuralist perspective. Men are located in positions in the social structure which are more conducive to building networks which are likely to be beneficial to career. Past studies show that men are more likely to work outside of the home, to work in higher status jobs and to belong to organizations that are more conducive to building career-related networks. Therefore, men are more likely to have access to and/or control important information in organizations, such as information about job opportunities (Kanter 1977). These gender differences in location aide or impede the development of network contacts (for women) that can lead to information about jobs other than those traditionally held by women. This argument is consistent with that proposed by Lin et al. (1981). Those located in higher status positions in the social hierarchy have access to and control more and better resources. Therefore, when women in this sample find jobs through men, they are much less likely to find a female dominated job.

Interestingly, Moore (1990) shows that once you control for the structural location of men and women in society (i.e. employment status, type of job, education, income, background, etc...), men and women have very similar network structures. The problem for women, as pointed out by Kanter (1977) and elaborated on by many others (Roos and Reskin 1990; Reskin and Padavic 1994; Jacobs 1995; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993), is that women do not have equal representation in powerful positions in the social structure in general, and in organizations and corporations in particular. The finding that the use of male contacts to is more likely to lead to a non female dominated job is consistent with Moore’s conclusion (1990). However, the analysis shows that females are much less likely to use male contacts (see Table 1), which underscores the gender differences in social networks.

I used social closure theory to inform a hypothesis that gender of contact should not matter. I worked from the position that men would be reluctant to transmit job information about non female jobs to women, under the assumption that male labor market actions/behavior could
be understood as attempts to protect male status. My results in this analysis show that for women, male contacts are much more effective at getting access to non-female dominated jobs, than are female contacts. However, these results in no way invalidate social closure arguments. First, social closure theory is somewhat unclear about the likelihood men allowing females access to non-female dominated jobs. Protecting male privilege may involve keeping women out of male dominated jobs, but not gender neutral positions. One could argue that males would be reluctant to integrate occupations, because as women move into a field, the pay and status decline (Reskin and Padavic 1994). But it is possible that men perceive gender integrated jobs as female jobs (or at least non-male jobs), and therefore may be willing to transmit information about these jobs.

Second, a direct test of social closure theory would be more appropriate when male-dominated jobs are the dependent variable. In a separate analysis, I found that while male contacts were effective at helping women find non-female dominated jobs, they were not as effective when it came to helping women find male dominated jobs (results available upon request). Furthermore, the fact that 70% of the women in the sample found their first job with current employer through female contacts suggests that women lack access to male contacts. Whether or not this lack of access to male contacts represents social closure (i.e purposeful attempts to protect male status) is not clear, and these data probably cannot answer this question. However, these results show that women lack access to male contacts, or at least rely upon other women for job information-- which is consistent with social closure arguments. Furthermore, the effects of social closure are established prior to finding a job. Social closure theory, in connection to the prevailing gender role ideology has been used to explain why men and women are located in different positions in the social structure (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993; Collinson et al. 1990). However, this analysis suggests that it may not be an optimal theory to explain the important role that gender of social contact plays, as it pertains to the types of jobs women find.

Another issue worthy of note concerns the time at which the data were collected (1980-81). It is possible that women have made greater in-roads in the workforce that would gain them greater access to male networks and non-female dominated jobs since the time that these data were collected (although there is literature that would question this hypothesis- see Tanner and Cockerill 1996; Jacobsen 1994). However, despite when the data were collected, this study has relevance for several important reasons. First, it is one of a few that have attempted to link job
matching to issues of gender differences in network structure (see also Hanson and Pratt 1991), and the only study (to my knowledge) that does so while controlling for other labor market concepts. Second, the study is relevant because it can be used to establish a base-line effect of gender context. The literature on gender occupational segregation suggests that the time at which these data were collected represented a shift in occupational segregation, where women were beginning to make in-roads into male dominated positions. These results from 1980 data will make it feasible to compare these results to future studies, so that changes in the relationship between gender of contact and type of job found (if any) can be documented over time. Third, it is possible that very little has changed since 1980. Social contacts continue to be a very important method of finding jobs (Granovetter 1995), and despite a culture which manifests greater equality and a respect for workplace diversity, research shows that the workforce in the United States is still gender segregated (Jacobsen 1994; see also a recent edited volume by Jacobs 1995). This analysis shows that the gender context in which women find jobs (i.e. using a male or female contact) can help explain this phenomenon in 1980, and implies that it is still important today.

Controls were added to this analysis to attempt to control for spurious effects. One might argue that women found female dominated jobs through women because they wanted a female dominated job and used other women to help them find that job. Therefore, the associations between gender of contact and type of job found would be spurious, and the true explanation would center on the types of jobs women choose. I added key variables identified in other studies to control for these potential effects. Gender of contact is important, even with controls in the analysis. Moreover, human capital theory maintains that male and female labor are perfect substitutes, and that men and women compete for positions based on their bundle of human capital (education, work experience, work history, etc...). Additionally, men and women are assumed to have perfect information about existing job opportunities (Kaufman 1988), therefore, who gets what job is determined by human capital and preferences for certain type of work. This analysis shows that controlling for human capital (and other factors) gender of contact still matters. Women who found their current job through male contacts were significantly less likely to find a female dominated job, ceteris paribus, than women who used female contacts.

Furthermore, the idea that women are seeking female dominated positions is not likely, given that
men and women both want positions with decent pay, autonomy, authority and task complexity (Jacobs 1989a; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993), attributes female dominated positions typically lack (Charles 1992; Wolf and Fliqistet 1979; Singelmann and Mencken 1992).

This analysis has focused on the supply-side of the job matching equation and its link to job segregation (i.e. how women find jobs). From a labor demand perspective, employer recruiting practices could play a role. There is a body of literature which suggests that employers prefer to recruit through informal channels, such as current employees (Marsden and Campbell 1990). Therefore, when employers recruit for female dominated jobs through their current female employees, they are likely to disseminate information about female dominated jobs through female networks, and vice-versa for male dominated jobs. Further exploration of how employers recruit and the implications for labor market outcomes for men and women is necessary.

This study also has implications for tie strength. My analysis shows that strength of tie does not make a major difference in terms of the gender composition of the job that women find. In general, women who use strong ties vs weak ties still found the same type of job, when these two tie strengths are compared within gender categories. The advantages of using social contacts materialized when gender was introduced into the equation. Women who used men as their social contact were more likely to be employed in a non-female dominated job. The only exception to these findings came in the model where I showed that women who use male strong ties, vs women who use other search techniques, have the same probability of finding a female dominated job, after other factors are controlled. These results support previous studies which show that tie strength did not have a lasting impact on labor market outcomes (Marsden and Hurlbert 1988; Bridges and Villemez 1986). My results show that gender of contact is more important than strength of contact. Moreover, these results used measures of emotional intensity and closeness, recommended by Marsden and Campbell (1984), and designed by Bridges and Villemez (1986) for these data. The major difference here is that there were no consistent effects of tie strength discovered in the models. Bridges and Villemez detected some tie strength effect on income, but these findings disappeared once human capital variables were controlled. My analysis shows that gender of social contact is more important than strength (or type) of contact when the gender composition of the job is at hand.
The results of my study are consistent in many ways of those presented by Hanson and Pratt (1991). Probably the most important finding is that women who used other female contacts had the same probability of working in a female dominated jobs as did women who found their job through want-ads, employment agencies and direct application. Both studies also show that male contacts are more likely to lead to non-female dominated jobs than are female contacts. My study makes unique contributions in that I directly compare the effects of women who male contacts to those who use female contacts. Additionally, I compare men and women directly within tie strength category. My results also control for other factors, including the respondent's human capital, household structure and work history, which have been shown to affect the type of job (in terms of gender composition) that women find (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993; Reskin and Padavic 1994).

The results show that gender of contact does affect the type of job found by women, even after controlling for key human capital, household, organization, industry and occupation variables. However, there are other studies which show that social contacts do not necessarily lead to jobs with different pay, autonomy and authority (Marsden and Hubert 1988; Bridges and Villemez 1986). What is needed in future research is a longitudinal approach, which will allow researchers to follow the careers of men and women, and how the use of contacts to find jobs at different stages affects subsequent labor market outcomes. In addition, more studies of this type with more recent data are needed to investigate to what extent these relationships have changed over time.
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Appendix

Unfortunately, a subsample of women was employed in this analysis (those whose first job with their current employer is their current job). There is a possibility that this introduces selection bias. In an attempt to investigate this issue, I compared the women in the subsample to all of the women in the MEWS, on a variety of human capital, household, organization and labor market variables. I assume that if selection bias is a problem, then women whose current job is their first job with their current employer should have different characteristics than women who have changed jobs with their current employer. The results are presented in Table 3. Bridges and Villemez (1986) show that the MEWS sample is representative of the workforce in the greater Chicago SMSA. The results presented in Table 4 show that the subsample of women whose current job is their first job with their current employer, and the subsample of women who found this first and current job through social contacts matches well with the total sample of women in the MEWS, which, in turn, matches well with women in the greater Chicago SMSA during this period (Bridges and Villemez 1986). There are some minor differences, but for the most part, the women in the subsamples generally reflect the women in the entire sample. Based on an analysis of these variables, it does not appear that substantial selection bias is introduced by using the subsample of women whose current job is their first job.

---Table 3---

Additionally, I performed difference of means/proportions tests for these variables, comparing women whose current job is their first job to women whose current job is not their first job with their current employer (results of these tests available upon request). There was a significant difference for two variables. One, a greater proportion of women who have changed jobs since first being hired by their current employer are working in executive/managerial occupations (21%) compared to women whose first job is their current job (14.5%). Additionally, a lower percentage of women who have changed jobs with their current employer report that they have quit a job for family reasons (18%), than women whose first job is their current job (26%). No other differences were detected.
Endnotes

1. Approximately 70 women in the MEWS did not recall the gender of the social contact used to find their first job with current employer.

2. The results of these unreported analyses show some benefit for women finding male dominated jobs through using weak ties vs formal search methods, and using male work contacts vs female work contacts.
Table 1. Percentages of Women Finding Jobs Through Social Contacts and Other Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other Methods</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Contacts</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Contact</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Contact</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Ties</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>33.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Ties</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>66.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Tie Men</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Tie Men</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Tie Women</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Tie Women</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Contacts</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Work Contacts</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Related Men</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Related Women</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Logistic Regression: Female Dominated Job Regressed on Gender and Type of Social Contact and Controls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable: Female Dominated Job</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Contact vs Other Methods</td>
<td>0.638 **</td>
<td>7.99 **</td>
<td>679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Contact vs Male Contact</td>
<td>2.81 ***</td>
<td>11.93 ***</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Tie vs Weak Tie</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female ST vs Female WT</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>0.814</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male ST vs Male WT</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female ST vs Male ST</td>
<td>3.249 *</td>
<td>5.45 *</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female WT vs Male WT</td>
<td>3.746 **</td>
<td>9.19 **</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work vs Nonwork</td>
<td>0.621 *</td>
<td>3.86 *</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Female vs Work Male</td>
<td>20.11 **</td>
<td>9.27 **</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Tie vs Other Methods</td>
<td>0.569 ***</td>
<td>10.11 ***</td>
<td>571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Tie vs Other Methods</td>
<td>0.712</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Contact vs Other Methods</td>
<td>0.548 *</td>
<td>5.31 *</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Contact vs Other Methods</td>
<td>0.843</td>
<td>0.856</td>
<td>558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female WT vs Other Methods</td>
<td>0.852</td>
<td>0.521</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female ST vs Other Methods</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.521</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Work vs Other Methods</td>
<td>0.746</td>
<td>0.883</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Contact vs Other Methods</td>
<td>0.361 ***</td>
<td>13.76 ***</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male WT vs Other Methods</td>
<td>0.28 ***</td>
<td>12.3 ***</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male ST vs Other Methods</td>
<td>0.525</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Work vs Other Methods</td>
<td>0.189 ***</td>
<td>9.78 ***</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Control Variables include: Education, Work Experience, Work Experience Squared, Age, Marital status, Professional occupation, Executive/Managerial Occupation, Presence of Children under 18 in household, Number of times respondent has quit a job for a year or more, Number of times respondent has quit a job for family reasons, Core vs periphery sector status, Government agency status, Size of Establishment

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001
Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for MEWS Full Sample and Subsamples

Female Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full Sample</th>
<th>First Job</th>
<th>First Job via Social Contacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>13.77</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>13.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Exp</td>
<td>14.68</td>
<td>12.08</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%Married</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%Child &lt;18</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%Prof Occ</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%Exec/man Occ</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Times Quit Family Reason</td>
<td>0.231</td>
<td>0.422</td>
<td>0.253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%Core Sector</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%Gov't Agency Job</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of Est.</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>