Want, Need, Fit: The Cultural Logics of Job-Matching Assistance

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Abstract
Drawing from a unique dataset based on 146 in-depth, semistructured interviews with a nonrandom sample of ethnoracially and class diverse workers at one large public sector employer, the authors link job contacts' patterns of assistance to three distinct cultural logics of job-matching assistance—defensive individualism, particularism, and matchmaking—which differed along three dimensions: (a) the primary criteria upon which help was contingent, (b) the perceived risk faced, and (c) the screening practices contacts used. These findings contribute to a small but growing body of research highlighting the cultural logics that inform where, how much, and to whom job information and influence flows.

Keywords
social capital mobilization, job contacts, cultural logics, screening practices, race and ethnicity

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Although some have called into question the causal effect that job contacts have on employment outcomes, like job finding (Mouw, 2003, 2006), a large and growing body of research indicates that having a job contact both increases the odds of finding work and has beneficial effects on wages and occupational prestige as well (Fernandez, Castillo, & Moore, 2000; Fernandez & Galparin, 2014; Fernandez & Weinberg, 1997; Granovetter, 1974/1995; Lin, Ensel, & Vaughn, 1981; Lin, Lee, & Ao, 2014; Petersen, Saporta, & Seidel, 2000). It seems clear that during the job-matching process, contacts give referrals a distinct advantage over nonreferrals.

But potential job contacts do not always help, even when they are well positioned to do so. Marin (2012), for instance, reports that when the entry-level, white-collar workers she interviewed had information about job openings and knowledge of at least one appropriate job-seeking candidate with whom they might share this information, they shared less than one third of the time. Smith (2005, 2007), too, reports that the young, low-income Black men and women she interviewed often forsook the job seekers in their networks, even as these job seekers struggled with persistent joblessness (see also Marin, 2013; Newman, 1999; Paul, 2012; Royster, 2003; S. S. Smith, 2010; Trimble-O'Connor, 2013). As these cases illustrate, access to social capital did not guarantee its mobilization (Lin, 2001); observed patterns of assistance privileged some *job seekers* over others and highlighted some of the conditions under which social capital mobilization was likely to occur.

And yet, despite the central role job contacts play in helping to determine the winners and losers of the status attainment competition, we still know relatively little about how potential job contacts make decisions about whom to help, when to help, how best to help, or whether to help at all. This decades-old neglect has resulted for understandable reasons. Granovetter's (1973, 1983, 1974/1995) counterintuitive empirical finding about the ''strength of weak ties,'' extended and refined by Burt (1992), contributed significantly to the pathbreaking theoretical insight that network structures play an important role in the efficient flow of ''market stuff.'' The network structuralist approach—as encapsulated in the *networks-as-pipes* metaphor—became the dominant lens through which to understand the role networks play during the status attainment process. But it did so in part by discounting the importance of individuals' motivations and intentions, as these appeared to have little explanatory power. In arguing for ''the primacy of structure over motivation,'' for instance, Granovetter (1974/1995, p. 54) reasoned that although close friends and relatives have greater motivations to help their job-seeking relations than do those to whom we are weakly tied,

weak ties tend to be strategically better located in social structure to do so. Burt makes a different argument. He contends that *players* may indeed be pushed to engage by motivations rooted in culture and social psychology, but they are also pulled into engagement by the opportunities afforded to them by network structure. Indeed, Burt argues that the motivation to engage in entrepreneurial activities and the opportunities to do so are much the same, because individuals who are motivated to participate in entrepreneurial activities will configure their networks to produce such opportunities, and those who, through no effort of their own, happen to be embedded in networks rich in such opportunities will be motivated to engage because that is the *way of life* among those so embedded. With this structuralist-rooted proposition, Burt is able to ''leap over the motivation issue'' altogether (p. 35). But in so doing, he also bypasses of the unspoken rules and related cultural meanings that inform individuals' patterns of job-matching help (see C. Smith, 2010, for a thoughtful critique the network structuralist approach to these and similar questions).

Recent attention to the job-matching process from the perspective of the job contact, however, has led some researchers to question the assumptions underlying the network structuralist approach. The switch from an egocentric (job seeker) to an altercentric (job contact) focus has foregrounded questions about motivations and intentions, the stuff of culture and social psychology, yet again. For instance, to better understand why Black poor job seekers were relatively infrequently matched to jobs by personal contacts, with implications for better understanding persistent joblessness among the Black poor, Smith (2005, 2007) investigated how potential job contacts engaged the process (see also Newman, 1999; Menjivar, 2000; Trimble-O'Connor, 2013). Her research revealed that potential job contacts were often not more motivated to help close friends and family members than to help acquaintances. Despite strong bonds of affection, reputational concerns led job contacts to assess the risks associated with helping to be too high. In Smith's work, the motivation that Granovetter (1974/1995) assumes to exist among strong ties was often not in evidence. Marin (2012, 2013) conducted in-depth interviews with entry-level white-collar workers to understand how contacts' network structure and composition informed their decisions to intervene in the process. Her analysis revealed that more diverse networks did produce greater opportunities to engage, as Burt (1992) would have predicted, but job contacts embedded in such networks were no more likely to share job information than were those embedded in less diverse networks; apparently,

opportunities to engage and the motivation to do so are not one and the same. While these studies are far from the first to empirically highlight the shortcomings of the network structuralist approach (see, for instance, Podolny, 1993, 1994, 2001), they are among the first to do so in the job-matching realm. As such, they represent important contributions to this area of research.

Despite the promise that such studies hold in offering a new perspective on network-based allocation processes, however, they have struggled to offer clear articulations of the underlying cultural logics that inform the decisions potential contacts make about making referrals (for notable exceptions, see Newman, 1999; Menjivar, 2000; Smith, 2005, 2007). According to Enfield (2000), cultural logics are "systems of assumptions and counter-assumptions," mutually reinforcing, that are built on cultural accounts about how the world works and about what is generally known to be true. These shared assumptions, developed, maintained, and altered in interaction with others in one's social milieu—including friends, relatives, acquaintances, and the institutions within which they are embedded—allow for group members to come to similar conclusions about others' motives and intentions. Indeed, Enfield (2000) notes,

> Culture emerges from the irresistible tendency for individuals to build convention and to establish stereotypes and other kinds of precedents, so as to form personal libraries of models and scenarios which may serve as reference material in inferring and attributing motivations behind people's actions, and behind other mysterious phenomena. (p. 37)

In so doing, culture and the logics that give them structure also motivate individuals' actions, shaping whether, why, and how they engage with others. Importantly, because cultural logics are developed and maintained within specific cultural contexts, any one event or issue can be understood through a different set of assumptions, the product of distinct cultural contexts, and thus one event or issue can also produce different behavioral responses.

It is this understanding of the job-matching process—the mutually reinforcing set of assumptions that inform potential job contacts' patterns of job-matching assistance—that continues to go unexamined in the literature. For instance, Paul (2012) enumerates the various factors associated with Filipino migrant workers' willingness to help compatriots through the migratory and job-finding process. Contingencies included, among other factors, results of migrants' past efforts to

help, prospective migrants' perceived commitment to migrating, and tie strength, both between prior and prospective migrants and between prior migrants and their employers. However, Paul's findings, while insightful to the extent that they confirm prior work about the conditions that facilitate social capital mobilization (see Menjívar, 2000; Smith, 2005, 2007), are of limited utility for making sense of her migrants' decisions because she neglects to explain why these factors mattered, and how they came to matter, to the migrants she interviewed. We learn precious little about the actual accounts, or representations of how the world works, that migrants had drawn from such that privileging some prospective migrants over others made sense. Nor are we made privy to the experiences migrants had that gave form and content to these accounts. Without migrants' accounts, Paul misses an opportunity to effectively link a set of clearly specified cultural logics with migrants' actions toward compatriots, and so she struggles to offer a solid framework about the conditions under which Filipino migrants help.

We gain greater insight into the minds of Marin's Canadian entry-level, white-collar workers. Marin (2012) reports that most opportunities they had to share information were left to wither. But when they helped, *fit* was often implicated. Job contacts were more likely to help job seekers who worked in the same industry because they were presumed to be more suitable candidates. They were also more likely to help close friends and relatives than acquaintances because they were more comfortable offering unsolicited job information and advice to those with whom they were closely tied. Because of closeness, job contacts were also better able to assess job seekers' fit with the job. These are very important findings, as they offer compelling reasons, above and beyond what the current body of research indicates, for why jobholders might be more inclined to help strong over weak ties. Marin (2012, 2013) could have gone deeper, however, to uncover the logics operating among her entry-level workers. For instance, we never learn how jobholders conceptualized fit, how potential job candidates evaluated job seekers for fit, and why fit came to be an important criterion for sorting among her job contacts? Responses to these questions would help give shape to the cultural logics that inform jobholders' behaviors and in the process would better explain why her entry-level workers so infrequently offered job-matching help even under what appeared to be the best circumstances.

Other studies offer greater insight along these lines. Smith (2005, 2007) offered a multilevel conceptual framework to understand social

capital mobilization among the Black poor, taking into consideration properties of the individuals, dyads, and communities of residence. And although she, too, enumerates factors, she linked each factor of significance to a coherent logic underlying the provision of job-matching assistance—defensive individualism. Smith contends that within the context of urban, Black poverty, friends, relatives, acquaintances, and institutions in the social milieu blame the poor and jobless for their persistent joblessness, deploying discourses of joblessness that privileges individuals' moral shortcomings and stressing personal responsibility and self-sufficiency as a panacea. In this context of pervasive distrust, potential job contacts were reluctant to help, and job seekers, cognizant of how they were viewed and of how their joblessness was understood, also embraced individualism and self-reliant approaches to job search as their own distrust toward themselves and intermediaries grew. The cultural logic of defensive individualism brought into sharp relief why the provision of job-matching assistance among and between this community of Black poor residents was lacking. Hamm and McDonald's (2015) analysis of the General Social Survey and Holbrow's (2015) analysis of data from Japan provide further support for Smith's (2005, 2007) central argument.

Outside of the context of urban, Black poverty, and persistent joblessness, however, defensive individualism as a cultural logic likely makes little sense. Indeed, Marin (2012) notes that many of the issues highlighted by Smith's respondents were irrelevant to her entry-level, white-collar workers and still, they too, more often than not decided against helping. This makes sense as logics are themselves "constructed by, and learned from within, specific cultural contexts" (Enfield, 2000, p. 40). But we know little about the logics operating in other cultural contexts that shape motivations for actions around the provision of job-matching assistance. Marin's abbreviated discussion of fit as an important criteria for assistance among white-collar workers, for instance, is promising, especially given the recent work of Ofer Sharone (2013), who notes the importance of fit discourses for job finding among middle-class job seekers in San Francisco. But much more needs to be done to develop this line of inquiry. We attempt to do so here.

The Case Study

Between the spring of 2008 and the fall of 2009, in-depth, semistructured interviews were conducted with a nonrandom sample of 146 custodian, food service, and administrative staff workers at one large, public sector

employer in the state of California, which we will call California Public Sector Employer (CPSE).[1] 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 or clerical and related support staff (admin), among other occupational categories. For participation in this study, jobholders were primarily recruited through two related strategies. Over one dozen unit supervisors and managers were asked permission to describe the study to jobholders during staff meetings and to recruit those who expressed interest in participating. This recruitment strategy yielded approximately two thirds of the interviews conducted. To maximize range and to ensure the recruitment of a diverse subset of workers (Weiss, 1994), we asked each respondent to help recruit up to three additional CPSE custodians, food service workers, and administrative staff from their networks who fit the study criteria.[2] This approach yielded one third of study participants. See Table 1 for sample characteristics.

Between 15% and 18% of CPSE's workforce has been contingent in recent years, but all of the jobholders interviewed for this study were "permanent." At CPSE, permanent and contingent workers are often

Table 1. Characteristics of Sample Respondents ($N = 146$).

	Frequency or mean	Range
Gender: % female	53	—
Race or ethnicity (%)		
Asian	9	—
Black or African American	42	—
Latino	26	—
White	13	—
Multiracial	9	—
Mean age (years)	42.5	18–68
Occupation (%)		
Custodians or maintenance	33	—
Food service	35	—
Administrative support	27	—
Mean job tenure (years)	9.7	.10–37
Mean earnings in prior month	$2,535	$140–$7500

employed in the same occupational categories, but workers with permanent status are significantly advantaged over their contingent counterparts (Kalleberg, 2011; Kalleberg, Reskin, & Hudson, 2000). The decision to focus recruitment on permanent workers was deliberate. Previous research indicates that job contacts' decisions to make referrals are in part informed by their own tenuous positions in the labor market (Smith, 2005, 2007). 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 previous 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.

Previous research has also noted the role that organizations play in constraining or expanding opportunities for network-based recruitment (Waldinger & Lichter, 2003). At CPSE, workers are given ample opportunity to intervene during the hiring process, for permanent and contingent hires, if they so choose. Once a unit has been given permission to hire, the manager or supervisor of the unit 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 for their job-seeking relations on openings that might become available to the public. Importantly, every worker interviewed for this study reported that they knew when CPSE was hiring, and for what positions, specifically because of the biweekly announcements that are posted in workers' common areas (as was the case for custodians and food service workers) or e-mailed directly to workers (as was typical for administrative staff). Further, no worker in this study reported that supervisors or managers approached them in particular to encourage network-based recruitment. Because of efforts to disseminate information about job vacancies widely and equitably, we are reasonably confident that few CPSE jobholders were advantaged over others in receiving timely information about new job opportunities (Burt, 1992).

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 2 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 job-seeking contacts

through this part of the process, jobholders can inform them that applications are being accepted and point them to the online application system. Roughly 80% of jobholders in this sample recently helped someone to find work at CPSE and 9 in 10 did so at least in part by offering this basic level of assistance. Jobholders might take it a step further and offer strategic advice—providing them with the job number for the position or positions of interest, informing them about which hard and soft skills are being sought for the positions in question, and explaining how they might best showcase their skills and talents on their résumés. Roughly 37% of jobholders did so. Jobholders can also give applicants permission to list them as a reference, which 22% of jobholders offered. Many of these approaches have been found to advantage referrals over nonreferrals during the hiring process (Fernandez et al., 2000; Fernandez & Weinberg, 1997).

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 again by approaching their managers or supervisors to advocate for their referrals, typically by asking them to ''pull the application'' for closer review. Fifty-one percent of jobholders who helped talked to hiring personnel on behalf of their job-seeking relation. After the department receives relevant 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 being filled. Together, the panelists identify from the full stack of applications a short list of candidates for interviews. The interview can take place by phone, in person with the manager or supervisor, or in person with the full panel. If referrals are called for an interview, jobholders can offer more strategic advice by informing candidates about the types of questions they can expect to be asked and educating 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.[3]

Data Coding and Analysis

To determine how jobholders made decisions about making referrals, jobholders were asked a set of questions about the climate of helping in their communities and on the job; the risks, costs, and benefits that they

imagined were associated with providing job-matching help; and the extent and nature of job-matching experiences they actually had, including their most recent experiences as well as experiences in the distant past that stand out to them as particularly problematic and particularly rewarding. With the data gathered, a general inductive approach to coding and analysis was taken, beginning the coding process with categories that jobholders had themselves identified as important and using the terms specific to their cultural contexts (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). After the first author read and coded each jobholders' responses to these questions, three dominant themes and related categories emerged as central. From a second read, the first author confirmed each set of themes and categories and then sought to unpack the layered meanings associated with each. Through a third reading of the files, the first author both sought to confirm these meanings and then to link them to generate broader conceptual frames. Three distinct logics emerged from this process.

With these three logics in mind, the first and second authors coded each respondent separately and then met to discuss the results of our respective assignments. On our first round, we achieved agreement on 79% of cases. For 10% of cases, there was no overlap in our codes. In 12% of cases, disagreement was only partial in that one coded jobholders in terms of one distinct logic (say need) and the other chose multiple logics, including one that the first coder had chosen (say need and fit). We then discussed cases on which we disagreed, drawing from the data to explain our rationale. After discussion, we came to agreement on 100% of these codes.[4] Given this, we feel reasonably confident in the three logics of job-matching assistance uncovered in the data and believe that this marks an important advance in ways of thinking about network-based job allocation processes.

Three Logics

As cultural logics of assistance, defensive individualism, particularism, and matchmaking each reflects a different set of assumptions about whether, when, how, and for whom those in possession of information and influence should intervene in the job-matching process. Logics differ along three interrelated dimensions. First, each logic is associated with a distinct primary criterion used to decide whether to help and how best to do so, based primarily on their understanding of what motivates individuals to work hard. Second, logics differ by the degree of risk of

Table 2. Dimensions of Cultural Logics.

	Defensive individualism	Particularism	Matchmaking
Primary criterion	Want	Need	Fit
Level of perceived risk	High	Low-moderate	Moderate
Screening practices	Inorganic	Organic	Combination

job-matching failure that jobholders associate with engaging in the process as personal intermediaries. Third, logics are distinguished by the nature of the screening practices that jobholders adopt to determine whether job seekers have met their criterion for help. In Table 2, we outline these differences, and later we elaborate on each logic in turn.[5]

Defensive Individualism

Defensive individualism, embraced by 28% of jobholders, combines *want* as the primary criterion for support, an elevated sense of risk of job-matching failure, and inorganic screening practices to determine whether and to what extent job seekers have met the primary criterion to receive help. As shown in Table 3, defensive individualists were disproportionately Black and food service workers. Although 43% of respondents in this CPSE sample were Black, 68% of defensive individualists were, and while 38% of respondents in the sample were food service workers, 56% of defensive individualists were. Defensive individualists were generally wary about actively engaging the job-matching process as intermediaries. Consistent with Smith's defensive individualists (2005, 2007), they anticipated that their efforts would likely fail or be wasted, because most *job seekers* they knew lacked a strong commitment to work. The perceived inevitability of failure was deep and pervasive for three reasons. First, defensive individualists were embedded in networks and communities that had relatively weak attachments to the labor market but strong ties to the welfare and criminal justice systems. Second, prior efforts to help job seekers to find work often failed because of the perception that job seekers were disengaged from the process. Combined, these first two factors caused jobholders to attribute job-matching failures to job seekers' half-hearted fidelity to work. Third, that the screening practices jobholders developed to sort risky from safe job seekers were too often ineffective only cemented further jobholders' sense of inevitable failure. Thus, they responded to requests for job-matching help by stressing job seekers' need to take personal

Table 3. Logics by Respondents' Demographic Characteristics.

	Defensive individualists	Particularists	Matchmakers	Multiple logics
Mean/median age	43/48	42/42	41/40	43/41
% Female (53.8%)	51.2	43.8	64.2	63.6
Ethnoracial categories				
Asians (9.1%)	2.5	18.8	9.6	9.1
African Americans (42.7%)	67.5	9.4	44.2	45.5
Latinos (25.2%)	15.0	71.9	3.8	36.4
Whites (13.3%)	2.5	0	28.8	0
Mixed race (9.8%)	12.5	0	13.5	9.1
Occupations				
Custodians (33.6%)	39.0	65.6	9.3	27.3
Administrative staff (28.1%)	4.9	3.1	64.8	27.3
Food service workers (38.4%)	56.1	31.3	25.9	45.5
Job tenure (in years)	8.6	10.5	9.4	9.7
Monthly income ($)	2,234	2,217	3,016	2,252
College degree or greater (%)	31.7	13.7	57.4	30.0

responsibility and to become self-sufficient, and so they encouraged many job seekers, subtly and not so subtly, to find work on their own.

Want comes from within. Defensive individualists were convinced that job-matching success largely turned on whether job seekers really wanted to work. Consequently, this was the most important factor that job holders considered when determining whether job seekers were worthy of job-matching support. George Biggs, a fairly typical defensive individualist, was a 53-year-old married father of five and at the time of his interview had been employed at CPSE for 7 years. Although a suburban resident, he returned weekly to the troubled neighborhood of his youth to visit old neighbors, and when he did, job seekers approached him often with requests for job-matching help. But George describes meeting these requests with skepticism. Most, he sensed, were not serious about wanting to work. According to George,

> Yeah, because all the cats I know are jivers, see? Hustlers and BSers. If you don't really listen, you won't hear that they're lying to you.

> It's like someone begging on the corner. You give them some money, they go buy a beer. ''I thought you was hungry?'' ''Well I'm hungry for alcohol. I didn't lie.'' I say it's like that, man.

George's analog to beggars on the corner provides an imagery that magnifies the sense of cynicism he feels whenever he engages with job seekers about the search process. And so with each approach, he considered the following,

> How sincere are you about working—that's the first thing I look at. Do you really want to work? Not just say, ''I need a job,'' but how sincere are you to come here every day and be here at a certain time, and are you going to do more than they ask you to do to prove that you really want a job.

Want came from within. Defensive individualists understood it to be a core aspect of job seekers' personalities, an essential part of who they were. As such, it represented a deep-rooted and steadfast source of job seekers' motivation to work and would reliably signal low risk of job-matching failure. To underline this point, defensive individualists often contrasted want with *need*, as they understood these to be different and used them in different ways. Among defensive individualists, want trumped need because while the former originated from and resided within, the latter had external roots. George explained narratively:

> Myself, I've got about two people up here that didn't make it. They wasn't really about working; they were just talking. I used to tell them, ''Man, how bad you really need a job?'' I mean, do you really want a job? Not just ''I need a job.'' Everybody say that, but from the heart ... From the heart, yeah. You got to want a job from the heart, not because your mama wants you to get a job or your girlfriend want you to get a job. You got to want the job, man.

Notable as well is the way in which these jobholders associated job seekers' trustworthiness with *wanting*, not *needing*, to work.

This distinction was important. Defensive individualists perceived job seekers' needs as ephemeral and so unlikely to motivate job seekers to keep working after employment was secured. After all, they reasoned, what someone lacks today could be (and often was) achieved in any number of ways tomorrow. Consequently, if job seekers' commitment to work was solely or primarily contingent on their externally rooted

needs, then once those needs were met, their motivation to work would fade as well. Many defensive individualists made note of the ubiquitous newly hired worker who expended great effort on the job until he received his first paycheck, at which point he promptly disappeared. With these experiences in mind, defensive individualists had little interest in helping those who attributed their search for work to the need to do so. When job seekers' motivations were internally rooted, however, defensive individualists felt they could be trusted to excel in their efforts to find work and to keep it, and so jobholders' efforts would not be in vain.

Helping: A risky endeavor. How did want become such a significant criterion for providing job-matching support? First, these jobholders lived in, or were raised in, neighborhoods where they perceived most other residents to be only weakly attached to the labor market. When asked what kinds of jobs people in her community held, for instance, 30-year-old senior cook, Loreen Reynolds, responded, "Well, where I live at currently they don't too much work. Not too many of them are working... Most of the women that live on my block, they're probably on AFDC." Similarly, 23-year-old Renita Wilson, a food service worker pregnant with her first child, explained that while a number of residents of her apartment building had jobs, most others from her neighborhood did not. "Most of them, I've noticed that they don't work at all," she stated. And when asked how most of the people in his community found jobs, David Jackson, a 34-year-old custodian with 4 years on the job simply replied, "How? You've got to remember: Most of the people in my community don't work." Importantly, the weak labor force attachments of community residents included defensive individualists' own close, personal ties. Relative to the personal networks of particularists and matchmakers, a lower percentage of defensive individualists' were employed (68% compared with 83% and 81%, respectively) and a substantially higher percentage had received public assistance (31% compared with 15% and 16%, respectively).[6]

But the objective fact of job seekers' relatively weak labor market attachments would not necessarily have led defensive individualists to associate want and *risk* if it were not for the following: Too often their past efforts to match friends, relatives, and acquaintances to job opportunities failed because of job seekers' perceived disengagement from the matching process or because of their poor performance on the job once hired. Although many job seekers asked for help finding work, 60% of defensive individualists complained that these job seekers often failed to

Table 4. Percentage of Jobholders With Prior Negative Job-Matching Experiences by Logics of Assistance (*N* = 146).

	Defensive individualists	Particularists	Matchmakers	Multiple logics
Jobseekers do not follow through/up	60	6	11	36
Burned in the past	47	28	25	27
Experienced at least one	74	31	28	34
Experienced both	36	3	7	27

follow through on the information they provided or take advantage of influence they wielded in response to job seekers' requests. Among particularists and matchmakers, just 6% and 11% did so, respectively (see Table 4). A higher percentage of defensive individualists also described having been burned in the past by job seekers who got jobs due in part to their efforts only to behave unprofessionally, behaviors that often led to job seekers' dismissal and to jobholders' somewhat tarnished reputations. Forty-nine percent of defensive individualists shared such experiences, but only 28% of particularists and 25% of matchmakers did. In all, while 31% of particularists and 28% of matchmakers complained that job seekers either failed to follow through or behaved unprofessionally once hired, 74% of defensive individualists did. Just as striking, 3% of particularists and 8% of matchmakers experienced both issues, but among defensive individualists, 36% did.

In an ironic turn, defensive individualists interpreted job seekers' weak labor force participation and strong welfare and criminal justice ties not as evidence that these job seekers had been socially and economically dislocated and marginalized (Kasarda, 1995; Kirschenman & Neckerman, 1991; Shih, 2002; Waldinger & Lichter, 2003; Wilson, 1987, 1996), often with multiple barriers to employment (Loprest & Zedlewski, 1999), but instead that, lacking intrinsic motivation, they had *chosen* alternative and presumably easy sources of income to make ends meet. Their experiences of job-matching failure contributed to such accounts. These alternatives to work, defensive individualists argued, made work in the formal economy one of many options from which to choose and brought into sharp relief the intrinsic motivation required to be good workers in the formal wage economy. From jobholders' perspective, then, the ability that job seekers had to choose, and how choice magnified the importance of intrinsic motivation, was at the

core of their heightened risk of job-matching failure. Thus, in a context where job seekers were perceived to have various options available to them to make ends meet, including many options outside of the formal economy, job seekers' want, a measure of their commitment to work, was a key ingredient for job-matching success; in its absence, the process would inevitably prove to be too risky to provide support, most notably proactive support.

The ironies of the waiting game. Determining which job seekers really wanted to work was much easier said than done. Defensive individualists commonly complained that many job seekers who insisted that they wanted to work eventually behaved in ways that betrayed their assertions, and so to distinguish the sincere from the insincere, the doers from the talkers, defensive individualists adopted a multistep screening process. They were particularly attuned to how effortful, intensely, and persistently job seekers engaged the search process. This information served as a proxy for how committed job seekers were to work in the formal economy.

Because lack-of-follow-through was such a common experience, defensive individualists responded to initial requests for help with passive assistance—they limited the aid they provided to confirmation that CPSE was hiring and encouraged job seekers to visit the website for more information. And then they waited. Waiting was essential because it gave defensive individualists time to gather additional information signaling the extent and nature of job seekers' commitment to work (Lipshitz & Strauss, 1997). In particular, they would note whether job seekers followed up on the information they provided, how quickly they did so, and what additional efforts they made on their own to move the process forward. Those who truly wanted to work, defensive individualists reasoned, pursued job opportunities aggressively and, some might say, shamelessly. When presented with job leads, they would, at the very least, show initiative and follow-up. But most motivated job seekers would also persistently inquire about the status of their applications and pressure jobholders to advocate on their behalf; they were relentless in their pursuit of work and so were not above harassing intermediaries for greater intervention. As 49-year-old custodian, Carl Bartlett, explained,

> If they ask me one time I'll think about it. But if they keep coming back and bugging me and bugging me about it—did you do it, did you do it? I say—okay, then I'll recommend. I'll go talk to my boss. ''Hey, the man

is harassing me every day. Can I give him your number? Let them harass you for a little while.'' That means they really want it. Yeah. And I let my boss know—yeah, he really wants it, boss.

Similarly, Julia Simon, a 50-year-old food service worker with 10 years at CPSE, explained, ''Because if they're ready, they're going to constantly ask me, 'When the job is going to call? When they're going to call? When you talk to your supervisor?''' These were the signals jobholders sought to confirm job seekers' sincerity, and these signs took time to emerge, which the waiting game allowed.

Kevin Allard's and George Biggs' experiences are illustrative. Because Kevin perceived that most job seekers in his community were not work-ready—the overwhelming majority had spent a portion of their adolescence and most of their adult years working in the informal (and illegal) economy—the 32-year-old custodian ignored almost every job seekers' request for help. His only exceptions were for those who pursued the job-matching process, and his assistance in it, aggressively and persistently. This would constitute evidence that they were serious about working. Below Kevin describes the multistage process by which he sorts risky from safe job seekers.

I just tell them straight up. I be like, ''You ain't ready.'' It depends on what they say after that, to let me know if they really interested or not. People just be saying it. ''Is they hiring?'' Yeah, you got to go to work tomorrow and you're not going to be ready to drop [the life] and go. So I just tell them straight up, ''You ain't ready to work.'' At that point they can't say nothing that is going to make me really believe them, because the gift of gab is the ruler of the streets. If I say, ''You ain't ready,'' no matter what the outcome come out, I ain't going to really take it [that they are] trying to work. [But] if every time I see them they keep on asking me, ''What's up with that job,'' then the next stage with me would be to give them a printout or something to see if they're going to go on the internet and do that. And then if they handle that and they say, ''Hey man, I filled out the application. What has happened with it?,'' I may try to give them a number or something that they can call to try and see what's going on with their application or something like that. They are going to have to really act like they're interested.

These screening practices, however, were not always very effective at sorting risky from safe job seekers. Too often job seekers performed sincerity in ways that jobholders expected serious job seekers would,

but after securing employment, they would behave unprofessionally, which not infrequently led to referrals' dismissal or to quitting, often without notice. In the recent past, for instance, George had been burned by two referrals. In one instance, he proactively helped an old friend, Ellis. George and Ellis had known each other since the fifth grade and for almost 20 years they sold drugs together. When Ellis approached George for help getting a job at CPSE, George did not hesitate. Ellis performed sincerity by begging for help, and so George "felt in [his] heart" that Ellis really wanted to work. Still, Ellis was fired after 6 months on the job. During his shift, he would disappear for long stretches. It turns out that he had not given up their old vocation after all—Ellis was selling drugs to members of the CPSE community. George's screening approach had failed to identify Ellis as high risk, and so he fretted over how, with greater care, he could have and should have screened Ellis. Both of George's recent failed matches caused him to question his own ability to discern the sincere from the "jivers" and these doubts lay behind his refusal to assist others who approached him thereafter. After his two recent failed attempts, George had decided against helping over 10 people. About the most recently rejected job seeker, a friend who had spent a considerable amount of time "in the life," George explained, "Now he wants to change. I heard that lie so many times, I wouldn't bite for that no more, okay? You got to get some new bait. I'm not biting on, 'I'm ready to change'." Although George promised this job seeker that he would try to help, he never did, fearful that he would get burned again. He recounts his thinking,

> Maybe I start grouping everybody in the same group, which is a bad thing, you know. He's always hustling these drug dealers, and he never worked out. You doing the same thing he did. You ain't going to work out either. I ain't wasting my time. I'm tired of you guys, man, lying to me. You playing me like a sucker like you played the people who buy these drugs from you, see, and I ain't that sucker, okay, friends or not.

But this new state of affairs—statistically discriminating against those who approached him for support—only deepened his sense of disillusionment. He exclaimed, "I hate that because maybe they would have worked out. See, it's crazy, because you help somebody; it don't work out. Then the person you don't help would have worked out, maybe. You don't know." Here on full display is not only George's desire to help others who really want to work but also his sense of defeat about his inability to determine who the *sincere* job seekers are and his

frustration about the regrettable consequences of his inability to do so—he now shies away from this process altogether, and as a result he frets that worthy job candidates have lost good opportunities. Thus, the failure of their screening practices to effectively sort safe from risky job seekers has fed defensive individualists' sense that providing job-matching support was inherently risky and so should be engaged with extreme caution.

Particularism

Particularism, which 22% of jobholders espoused, combines need as the primary criterion, a low-moderate degree of risk of job-matching failure and screening practices that emerge organically. Particularists were disproportionately immigrant Latino and Asian and employed as custodial workers. Whereas 25% of CPSE respondents were Latino and 9% were Asian, 72% and 19% of particularists were Latino and Asian, respectively.[7] Further, custodians were 34% of the CPSE sample, but they were 66% of particularists (see Table 3). As with defensive individualists, particularists were also wary about engaging in the job-matching process, but their perception of risk was much more muted. They were well aware that matches could go badly, but the possibilities they imagined did not rise to the level of probability typically expressed by defensive individualists. For the most part, they had reason to believe that the majority in their network of relations—people just like themselves—were committed to work because they needed to work; with few other viable options to make ends meet both within and outside of the formal economy, work, and specifically low-wage, dead-end jobs, was all there was.

Need: The motivating force. When particularists made decisions about making referrals, need, not want, was one of the primary factors they considered. Need was referenced to explain who they helped and why they helped the way they did. In contrast to defensive individualists, particularists theorized that need sufficed to motivate job seekers to search proactively and also to act responsibly once they secured a job. Their reasoning was clear: in a context where few legitimate paths to material resources existed besides work, and where work options were themselves significantly circumscribed by human capital deficiencies and documentation status, material need produced fidelity to work, because it was principally through work that one garnered the resources needed to feed, clothe, and shelter oneself and one's dependents. In other words, need produced disciplined workers—dependable, obedient,

and self-controlled—and so focusing efforts on those *in need* made engagement in the job-matching process less risky. Comments to this effect were common. When asked what he considers when deciding whether to recommend someone, Joseph Ramos implicated need's motivating force in his response: "If they're responsible, if they're married, you know that he need the job. Then you kind of leaning towards that way because you know he's going to be responsible. He's got a family." Thirty-nine-year-old Gustavo Salazar made a similar comment when asked what type of person he would be willing to support through the process: "Someone that would be really responsible, mostly. And also let's say if he has a family, I would refer him the most, because sometimes when they are singles, they're by themselves, they don't really take the job really serious." Thus, when approached for help by a friend from soccer league, Gustavo gave the job seeker strategic advice and allowed him to use his name as a reference. He did so because "as I saw him, he was kind of a good guy. He didn't drink, he didn't smoke, and he had a family. He had a wife and two kids." With family obligations, Gustavo here again indicates that job seekers could be counted on to act responsibly. Interestingly, whereas defensive individualists focused their efforts on job seekers who *lived to work*, particularists focused on job seekers who *worked to live*.

Risk and constraint. Particularists focused on job seekers' needs because they felt doing so allowed them to accurately assess the level of risk they would face. The greater the perceived need, especially material needs associated with fulfilling family obligations, the lower the sense of risk, as these jobholders could hardly imagine adults with familial responsibilities forsaking those who relied on them. One was compelled to work, and to work hard, to support the survival of family members; few alternatives to this existed. And so the risk of making failed matches was lower than it would have been had they not felt structurally constrained and culturally obligated. This is the sentiment shared by Jose Mendoza, an immigrant from El Salvador who worked as a custodian for 11 years:

> Like I told you before, when we come here, for example, from places like Central America, we come with the need to work and we have people back in our countries, so people work harder. Like what I was telling you before, they are not going to put up a big stink about what you make them do. But I'm going to be honest with you. I don't know, these are things that are difficult to say, and I don't know if I should say them, but the majority of people that I know who were born here, that are people of

color, they have, I mean, I will tell you. They know a lot about their rights, and, I mean, it is really difficult to get them to work, and the offices have more problems with them. And since we don't know, they would tell us, you have to do this floor, and you have to strip it and all of that. But sometimes we don't have the power or courage to confront them and say, "You know what? That is not my job and I don't have to do it. Someone else needs to come and do that or you need to pay me overtime."

Here Jose highlights the motivating force that family-related need has on his in-groups' commitment to work. But by contrasting the perceived experiences of Central Americans with those of African Americans (these are the people of color he references), Jose also brings into sharp relief how, relative to the circumstances of the latter, the limited options available to the former (perceived and real) force them to work hard to make ends meet and makes them vulnerable to exploitation when they do. For these reasons, too, particularists' were less likely to perceive prior experiences as riven with disappointment and betrayal. If members of their networks had to work because they had few other viable options, there was diminished need to worry about failed matches that resulted from job seekers' unprofessional behaviors. Data bear this out—relatively few particularists complained about job seekers who did not following through (6%). While half of defensive individualists reported having been burned in the past, just 28% of particularists had.

A heightened sense of risk, however, was associated with two types of job seekers. For both types, particularists wondered about the extent to which job seekers needed the jobs they had to offer. One type—*singles*, as Gustavo called them—was deemed riskier because they did not yet have familial obligations to motivate better, more responsible work behavior. Because the provider role helped to ensure fidelity to work in the context of few other options, particularists preferred to help married job seekers and those with dependents. Lacking such attachments, singles were perceived to be far less motivated and so particularists were disinclined to help them. About singles, Gustavo complained,

Sometimes they just want to get the job, get some money, and then get another job or just spend their money. Or when they get their check, they go out, they spend all the money, [and] they get drunk too much.

Gustavo's comment indicates that when the motivating force to work that familial obligations engender is lacking, particularists deemed singles too risky to help.

The second type of job seeker who caused particularists' concern was those with skill sets that qualified them for better than entry-level positions. Particularists typically only had information about and influence over entry-level positions at CPSE, which blue-collar respondents routinely described as equivalent to the types of jobs offered in the low-level service sector, such as fast-food restaurants, but with superior pay and working conditions. Because these positions were relatively attractive to job seekers who would qualify for no better than entry-level work, particularists reasoned that, lacking opportunities to do better, such job seekers would presumably act responsibly and thus constitute low risk. Indeed, Michelle Mercado intimates this when asked how she decides if she will recommend someone. The 55-year-old food service worker employed at CPSE for 24 years stated,

> I strongly encourage those who I know really don't have no skills or who are uneducated, who [don't] have real high education, or who I know probably couldn't go further because maybe their English or whatever, I encourage them to apply because I know that the money that they make here is better money than you would work at McDonald's or anybody else.

Similarly, 59-year-old Alfred Seguro identified need as one of the most important criteria when deciding to help, with particular attention to those in need of jobs that will enable them to better support their families. Indeed, for these workers, the custodian proactively recruits. When asked about the opportunities he has recently had to help, he explained,

> Probably a dozen times. Like the cleaning lady at my health club. I've seen her there for a couple of years, and then one day I started talking to her and I said how long have you been doing this, da-da-da. Because I know for a fact that we have much more benefits and she's basically doing the same thing we're doing. I said—hey, why don't you go up there and apply; you should do that. A few people like that, that I've seen around that I know from whatever I'm doing during my day. And I'll tell them. So people like that. I see them and I know them even just a little bit and I'll tell them—hey, why don't you go up here and apply?

These jobholders perceived greater risk, however, when dealing with semiskilled and skilled job seekers. Because they had a modicum of

marketable skills to offer—greater levels of education, English fluency, and hard skills in the trades, for instance—semiskilled workers also had a greater range of options available to them. Entry-level work represented one set of possibilities, but their skill set opened up other avenues for employment as well, many of which paid more than positions at CPSE fetched. Thus, although lesser skilled workers would likely appreciate blue-collar CPSE jobs because they offered better compensation than jobs they could otherwise secure, semiskilled and skilled workers would not be so impressed. Particularists reported that after securing employment at CPSE, the latter would often complain that they were not paid enough for the work required of them, and they were also frustrated by the limited paths for promotion. They reckoned they could do better elsewhere and this made them unreliable and disaffected.

Screening organically. Determining need occurred more organically among particularists than determining want did among defensive individualists. Particularists simply drew from the bank of knowledge that they had already gathered about job seekers, the product of first- and second-hand observations. Job seekers were, by and large, relatives and close friends, but acquaintances, typically former coworkers searching for alternative work arrangements, sought help as well. About these job seekers, jobholders already had a vast amount of information from which to determine need. They knew marital status, number of dependent children, and extrafamilial commitments; they knew whether job seekers were struggling to pay the rent or the mortgage, and they knew why; they knew when a single mother needed extra income to support her children after a recent marital disruption. This was information that passed easily through their network of relations, and they used this information to determine need and to assess risk. Because particularists did not perceive a similar level or type of risk, they did not adopt strategies similar to those deployed by defensive individualists, and they responded differently than defensive individualists likely would have under similar circumstances.

Matchmakers

Matchmaking, the approach favored by 37% of jobholders, combines fit as the primary criterion, a relatively moderate sense of risk of job-matching failure, and both organic and inorganic screening

practices. Matchmakers were disproportionately White and worked as administrative staff. Whereas just 13% of respondents in this study were White, 29% of matchmakers were; 44% were Black, a figure close to their representation in the CPSE sample. Further, whereas administrative staff were 28% of the CPSE sample, they were 65% of matchmakers. As with particularists, matchmakers perceived themselves to be embedded in networks and neighborhoods with very strong labor market attachments. But unlike particularists, whose ties were primarily to low-wage and low-skilled workers, matchmakers' networks were composed of highly educated individuals working in a diverse range of occupations, most especially as professionals. Importantly, given their networks' strong attachments to the labor market, matchmakers rarely wondered about the desire that their job-seeking networks had to work; about this they had no concerns. They did wonder, however, whether their job-seeking relations had what it took to work hard and to commit. As a baseline requirement, matchmakers only considered helping job seekers who had the requisite hard and soft skills to perform tasks on the job competently; in jobs that required higher levels of education and training, this mattered a great deal. But fit was not solely a matter of one's ability to do the work competently. Fit was associated with two additional layers of meaning: personal fulfillment and emotional intelligence and maturity.

Fit as personal fulfillment, as passion. Over two thirds of matchmakers associated fit with having interest in the work and saw this as key to being motivated. Matchmakers operated under a simple premise: People perform well at and commit to jobs that they enjoy doing. ''You must like what you do in order to be good at it. You need to like it,'' explained 50-year-old Bettina Bullock, a black supervisor of food service workers. Matchmakers argued that deep and enduring commitments to work resulted from doing work, specific jobs, that aligned with one's interests or passions. Because they primarily attributed work performance to job seekers' passion for or interest in the specific job in question, passion or deep interest became a primary criterion that matchmakers used to determine whether and how they would help. Where passion seemed lacking, matchmakers would question job seekers' seriousness, with implications for the extent and nature of help they would be willing to provide. Indeed, matchmakers declined or were reluctant to help those for whom a passion for the work in question was absent, even if job seekers exhibited a clear desire to work generally or

were otherwise capable of doing the work. Equating fit with love, Richard Ross suggests as much when he states,

> If you need a job and you're looking for anything, I can recommend you. But if you need a job and you're looking for something specific and that something specific comes up, then I would really recommend you and I would really pull your coattail.

This suggests a much more proactive approach to providing job-matching help. But others, like Carol Montgomery, were unequivocal—help would not be forthcoming unless job seekers clearly articulated specific interests.

Fit as emotional intelligence and maturity. Two thirds of matchmakers also associated being good, responsible, and reliable workers with emotional intelligence, maturity, and flexibility. Idealized were job seekers who were respectful or tolerant of differences, fair, friendly and approachable, and easygoing but energetic. Desired as well were those who got along well with others, worked well on teams, and listened. Job seekers who were committed to their own personal and professional growth were also viewed quite favorably. Emotional intelligence, maturity, and flexibility, seen as the underpinnings of job seekers' interpersonal skill set and style, were important not so much because they affected whether or how well referrals might get their own tasks done. In fact, a number of matchmakers highlighting the central importance of these attributes were clear in distinguishing this from referrals' ability to do the work. Instead, these attributes mattered to matchmakers because of how they might affect the work environment. Those who lacked emotional intelligence, maturity, and flexibility had the potential to significantly disrupt work processes by alienating coworkers, harming relationships, and generally making work an unpleasant place to be. Those with these attributes, however, were often described as beacons of light and goodness. Because they primarily attributed work performance to job seekers' emotional intelligence, maturity, and flexibility, these attributes became a primary criterion that many matchmakers used to determine whether they would help and how they might do so.

Determining fit. To determine fit, whether for passion or emotional intelligence, maturity, and flexibility, matchmakers primarily relied on firsthand knowledge gained from personal interactions with potential

job seekers as well as observations of job seekers in various contexts. Such interactions and observations, in some cases, directly relevant to work-related issues, in other cases much less so, gave matchmakers a sense of the type of work in which job seekers might excel, but also the type of work environment for which their personalities might be best suited. So, for instance, to explain how he determined whether job seekers had the attributes he thought important, Jason Price highlighted the importance of firsthand knowledge, stating,

> Because I usually would know the person well enough to determine that. I can really get a good sense or a good read of if they're just looking for a job just to do or that's something that really fits them and their character. It's almost like matchmaking.

And according to Carol Montgomery, firsthand knowledge was crucial to making a determination of job seekers' fit. According to Carol,

> If you have known them for any amount of time—you know what they did before, you know how they went to work, if they were a hard worker, if they were conscientious, if they were willing to learn, if they were very social. You know, where they get along with people. All those things play [a role]. Like if you make plans with this person regularly and they always cancel or flake or can't pull it together. Or they tell you stories about how they behaved at their work, which just is like appalling and inappropriate. How things work out for them normally. If you know that person well enough you...if you don't know them well enough, then of course it would be a 50-50 chance, right?

Thus, matchmakers called forth memories of their experiences with their job-seeking friends, relatives, and acquaintances that would enable them to more accurately assess the risks they faced. Although certainly not always the case, a history of positive inter-actions went a long way toward engendering confidence in job seekers' abilities, as Evelyn Kurt indicates about a job seeker who approached her for assistance.

> She had always been a pretty good friend to me in the past. I mean, we weren't super-close, but I had always found her to be very kind and generous. When I worked for her she invited me over to her home a number of times. And she was a good worker. Very hardworking. Very smart. Very talented.

And when asked how he determined a potential referral would be a good match, Karl Castle noted his observations of the subject in multiple contexts. "Because I watched him as a parent. I watched him as a musician. How he handled situations in the past when I had some jobs that I did, and he helped me out. And I was like, 'Okay'." Without these interactions and observations, matchmakers had an obscured sense of the risks of adverse selection they faced, or, as Carol suggests in her statement mentioned earlier, they assumed a much higher risk of job-matching failure and so their willingness to help in a way that might implicate them in the process was considerably diminished. Indeed, this is what lay behind Linda Ortiz's emphatic response, "If it's somebody that I just met, I wouldn't do it." This logic is also implicated in Casey Reid's remark, "...I'm not going to make a recommendation unless I've probably had some interaction with the person and gotten an idea of who they are as a person and their work ethic." Knowledge of job seekers from a trusted source, however, could effectively substitute for knowing job seekers firsthand.

Passion-focused matchmakers, in particular, also took time out, over coffee or lunch, to establish fit by discussing the job and its requirements with job seekers so that the latter could be certain of their interest in and excitement about the work required. These matchmakers also spent time reviewing job seekers résumés. Passion for specific types of work, they argued, should be reflected in job seekers' list of prior employment experiences. If matchmakers found inconsistencies, they were reluctant to move forward. This was how Richard Ross described his recent experience with a job seeker:

> He was looking for anything. It was one of those types of situations where, "I don't really care what it is; I'll do it." And I was like, "Well, we don't really have anything like that. I need something specific that you can do, that I can promote you for and say, 'Hey, this guy is really good at this.' So I tell him, 'Send me a résumé'." I look over their résumé and none of what they were doing or had done had anything to do with what he really wanted to do or what this job was. So I was like, "Okay, it's almost no point."

Given the questionable fit, Richard dissuaded his friend from applying for the position. His close attention to his friend's résumé enabled him to determine this.

When discussing how they determined fit, notably absent from matchmakers' descriptions were the methods that defensive

individualists relied on heavily to separate the wheat from the chaff. No matchmaker described behaving in ways indicative of statistical discrimination, for instance; they did not automatically exclude from consideration of individuals whose social identities aligned them with a category of people who matchmakers perceived to be risky bets. This makes sense. Among defensive individualists, statistical discrimination was noted specifically among those who lost confidence in their ability to distinguish between good and bad candidates; these were contacts who had been burned at least twice before. Few matchmakers reported having been burned at all, and among those who had been burned, none reported having been burned more than once. Without a clear pattern of such failures, they had little reason to question, at least not for very long, their own ability to accurately assess the risks they faced. No matchmaker described playing a waiting game either, creating opportunities to gather more information that would help them to assess the risks they faced. This also makes sense. Defensive individualists used the waiting game to screen out job seekers who lacked sincerity about their desires to work and so who likely would not follow through. Those who were insincere, it was believed, would eventually reveal themselves by passively engaging the job search process. Relatively few matchmakers, however, had problems with job seekers who failed to follow through. Furthermore, the issues about which they were concerned could not be reasonably addressed by waiting job seekers out.

Patterns of Job-Matching Assistance

Cultural logics would be relatively unimportant if they were not associated with distinct patterns of job-matching assistance (see Table 5). Defensive individualists' patterns are distinct in several ways. First, on average, they help a greater number of job seekers. This seems counterintuitive, given their wariness about the process, but it actually makes sense. Many defensive individualists report being inundated with requests for help by members of their community. As shown in Table 5, defensive individualists estimated that in the past year they were approached by a median of 4.6 job seekers and a mean of 13.5, a figure driven up by roughly 40% of defensive individualists who reported being approached by one to two job seekers every month or every week. But because defensive individualists often doubted job seekers' sincerity, they limited the help they provided to basic information—they informed job seekers about the status of CPSE's hiring and encouraged them to visit the website for more information. They helped

Table 5. Patterns of Helping by Logics of Assistance ($N = 146$).

	Defensive individualists	Particularists	Matchmakers	Multiple logics
Maximum number of job seekers approaching jobholders in the past year (median/mean)	4.6/13.5	4.3/13.2	2.3/7.0	2.2/2.8
% Helping recently	87	89	73	82
Average number helped	4.1	3.0	2.3	2.4
How jobholders helped: % Offering . . .				
Basic information (info only)	91 (25)	88 (9)	86 (7)	88 (27)
Strategic advice	35	36	45	38
Acted as reference	15	36	17	25
Talked to boss	47	68	55	13
% Rejecting recently	61	26	42	46
Number rejected	3.7	1.7	2.1	1.6
Approached by none	7.0	2.0	0	0
Inundated (12 or more in past year)	4.0	1.3	2.2	3.0

without really helping, as they themselves reported. Consistent with this, a higher percentage of defensive individualists *only* provided basic information to job seekers—25% versus 9% and 7% of particularists and matchmakers, respectively. Further, a lower percentage offered strategic help, acted as a reference, and talked to hiring personnel on behalf of their job-seeking relation. Thus, relative to particularists and matchmakers, the help that defensive individualists provided was more passive in nature, a likely reflection of their desire to remain somewhat distant from the process, given the level of risk they perceived that they faced.

Not surprisingly, when compared with particularists and matchmakers, a higher percentage of defensive individualists also decided against helping those they knew to be in the market for a new job—26% and 42% versus 61%, respectively—and when they did reject, they rejected a greater number of job seekers—3.7 versus 1.7 and 2.1, respectively. But even those who reported that no one had approached them recently could list a number of people they helped

and rejected. On average, defensive individualists who had *not been approached* actually helped 3.7 job seekers and declined to assist 7. It becomes clear here that one's opportunity to help or reject was not limited to the pool of job seekers actively seeking their aid.

Particularists also described themselves as inundated with requests for job-seeking help, reporting numbers similar to those reported by defensive individualists (see Table 5). But because they were less concerned than defensive individualists about putting their names on the line for the job seekers in their networks of relations, we contend that they were more proactive in their efforts to help. A higher percentage both acted as references and talked to hiring personnel on job seekers' behalf. In addition, proportionately fewer particularists rejected job seekers and those who did rejected fewer, on average, than did defensive individualists. Indeed, among particularists and defensive individualists who had been inundated with requests for help, particularists declined to assist fewer on average—1.3 ($n = 4$) versus 4.0 ($n = 9$). These averages are based on the experiences of relatively few respondents, but they suggest that differences between particularists and defensive individualists are not likely attributable to the number of job seekers who approached them or the extent of opportunities they had to help.[8]

Comparatively speaking, matchmakers were not overwhelmed with requests for job-matching help. Over the past year, they were approached by a median of 2.3 and a mean of 7 job seekers. To some extent this accounts . . . for why matchmakers helped fewer job seekers than defensive individualists and particularists. Only 73% of matchmakers reported recently helping when they had job vacancy information, compared with 87% and 89% of defensive individualists and particularists, respectively. Those who did not help attributed this to the fact that most in their networks were engaged in very different types of occupational pursuits. But when matchmakers did help, they appeared most distinct in terms of providing strategic advice. Not surprisingly, a higher percentage counseled job seekers about their résumés, suggesting ways that job seekers might better describe themselves and their prior experiences so as to emphasize fit. A significant minority of matchmakers also recently rejected job seekers—an average of 2.1 was turned away, a figure similar to the number they helped. Also, despite being approached by many fewer job seekers than particularists, matchmakers rejected slightly more. Here again, the numbers helped and rejected cannot be solely attributed to the volume of job seekers seeking

Table 6. How Jobholders Found Work at CPSE ($N = 146$).

	Defensive individualists	Particularists	Matchmakers	Combined logics	Total
Personal contact	80.0	87.1	62.3	54.5	75.0
How personal contacts helped					
Basic information	53.1	61.5	60.0	20.0	56.1
Strategic information	65.6	32.0	34.5	60.0	44.8
Reference	18.8	8.0	20.7	20.0	17.7
Talked to boss	21.9	30.8	20.7	20.0	22.7
Encouragement	6.3	4.0	13.3	20.0	8.2

Note. CPSE = Central Public Sector Enterprise.

aid, as matchmakers were approached by far fewer job seekers than were particularists.

That jobholders appear more likely to help in ways similar to how they perceived they were helped also suggests that cultural logics and related accounts are informed by their own experiences finding work.[9] As reported in Table 6, 75% of jobholders in the sample were job matched by a personal contact. Among those so matched, 56% reported receiving basic information, 45% received strategic advice, and 18% and 23% had someone who acted as a reference or talked to hiring personnel on their behalf, respectively. Although there were some noteworthy differences across logics of assistance, more important to note is that in general, jobholders were more likely to help in ways that they perceived they had been helped (figures not shown).

Discussion and Conclusion

Drawing from a unique dataset based on in-depth, semistructured interviews with a nonrandom sample of 146 ethnoracially diverse, blue- and white-collar workers at one large public sector employer, we uncovered three distinct logics of job-matching assistance, each developed within specific cultural and structural contexts. These cultural logics had consequences, as jobholders' patterns of job-matching assistance differed in noteworthy ways. Defensive individualists helped scores of job seekers, but compared with particularists and matchmakers, their efforts were more passive and they rejected as many as they helped. Particularists

helped more proactively—they were more inclined to act as a reference and to talk to employers on job seekers' behalf—and they rejected few. Matchmakers, who rejected as many as they helped, were concerned with job seekers' fit and so more inclined to provide strategic advice, especially about job seekers' resumes.

Jobholders' patterns of helping are also of consequence, as different methods of assistance yield different results. Previous research indicates that contacts' involvement in the hiring process improves the quality of applicant pools, presumably because such contacts screen out unsuitable job seekers and coach suitable ones on how to write appropriate resumes (Fernandez & Weinberg, 1997; Fernandez et al., 2000). Contacts also inform job seekers about the least competitive times to apply, which improves referrals' chances of getting interviews over non-referral competitors (Fernandez & Weinberg, 1997). Referrals are also more likely to be hired when personal contacts vouch for the applicants they refer (see also Granovetter, 1974, 1995; Neckerman & Fernandez, 2003; Newman & Lennon, 1995). There is little evidence, however, that job seekers benefit much, if at all, from receiving basic information. According to Granovetter (1974/1995), basic information affords job seekers no clear advantage in the matching process. It is the equivalent of searching through formal means, as job seekers are no more likely to know about possible openings than any other job seeker, they are not made privy to any insights that might advantage them in the process, and no one is speaking to hiring personnel on their behalf. What this suggests is that particularists, who have a greater tendency to put their names on the line, and matchmakers, who appear more likely to offer strategic advice, are more likely to give their referrals advantages during the matching process. Defensive individualists, on the other hand, who appear less inclined to offer these forms of assistance and who have a greater tendency to provide basic information only, are doing comparatively little to advantage their job-seeking relations during this process. This may explain why the overwhelming majority of low-income Blacks search for work through networks but relatively few actually get matched to jobs through these informal channels, and among those who do, most receive passive assistance—they are merely informed about the positions for which they might apply (Elliot & Sims, 2001; Falcon & Melendez, 2001; Green, Tigges, & Diaz, 1999; Smith, 2000). As we have suggested, however, this may be by design, as many potential job contacts fear the shame and embarrassment that might come with initiating failed matches. Clearly, more research is needed to investigate these relationships further, but the implication of our findings is

that by shaping whether and how job contacts engage in the matching process, cultural logics indirectly affect job seekers' odds of job-finding success.

It is possible, however, that the distinct logics that we have revealed have their roots in the very institution in which each of these jobholders are embedded—CPSE—the product of CPSE's informal and formal policies and practices (see Sharone, 2013, 2014). Unfortunately, we do not have the data to properly tease out the effects of CPSE's different policies and practices on the logics that jobholders embrace and related patterns of job-matching assistance they report. The 146 food service workers, custodians, and administrative staff were distributed across over one dozen different units and work groups, each with their own set of supervisors, managers, and general managers, and so each with potentially distinct approaches to recruitment, screening, and hiring. But what data we do have discount CPSE's central role. Because every worker reported that they knew CPSE was hiring, and for what position, because of biweekly announcements posted in workers' common areas or e-mailed directly to workers, we are reasonably confident that there are no formal or informal practices that systematically advantaged (or disadvantaged) some job holders during the process of network recruitment that would contribute significantly to the creation of the distinct logics we report.

Nor were there any tangible or material benefits or costs associated with initiating a failed match that might produce distinct CPSE-generated logics and related patterns of assistance. When asked to speak to the actual benefits they gained from helping, the overwhelming majority said they experienced no benefit at all, a finding consistent across logics.[10] The same was true of the actual costs borne for initiating failed matches; the overwhelming majority who had such experiences reported *no negative consequences*, with no apparent differences by logics of assistance. Given that, across the board, poor matches were scarcely penalized and good matches went largely unrewarded by the institution, and given that perceptions of costs and benefits differed significantly from the actual benefits and costs jobholders experienced, it is unclear how in this context formal and informal institutional practices and policies might have informed differences in jobholders' understandings of the risks and costs they faced, and, in the process, shaped their patterns of helping and rejecting.

But our findings must be placed in context. We interviewed an ethnoracially diverse sample of workers from one large, public sector employer after the Great Recession had begun. For the most part,

CPSE supervisors and general managers generally encouraged workers, as a group, to recruit from their network of relations, and as previous research indicates (Fernandez & Weinberg, 1997; Fernandez et al., 2000; but see Fernandez & Fernandez-Mateo, 2006), referrals appeared to have a distinct advantage. Interviews with workers, but also with supervisors and general managers, indicated as much. Had the organization generally discouraged referrals or did less to incentivize referral-making behavior, however, it is not clear that the same logics of assistance would have been operative, since the conditions informing these logics would be different. Without opportunities to help, the perception of risks associated with these opportunities would also decline. Similarly, if CPSE were an organization with high rates of turnover, it is likely that different logics would have emerged. CPSE is widely known in the local area to offer decent jobs with great benefits, including good retirement packages. Because of this reputation, turnover among career workers is fairly low. Once people are hired at CPSE, they tend to stay, even if they change positions within the organization. In a context where few are expected to last for long, however, there is little reason to fear risk of failure. More research is needed to clarify how organizational structures inform the logics of job-matching assistance that job contacts construct and that shape their behaviors during the job-matching process. Importantly, these logics are also strongly informed by the accounts that job contacts construct about the extent and nature of risk that their job-seeking relations pose to them, accounts that emerge as much outside of the work realm as within it (Smith, 2007). It is from these contexts combined that cultural logics emerge, informing where, how much, and to whom job information and influence flows.

made possible by generous grants from the Russell Sage Foundation as well as the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment and the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley.

Notes

1. To protect respondents' identities, we use pseudonyms for all names associated with the institution and respondents, and some details about their backgrounds and work roles have been altered.
2. For every worker they helped to recruit, respondents were paid $10.
3. Only for executive positions does the hiring process differ from what we have outlined here.
4. In 19 of 32 cases, the final codes were consistent with the first author's initial determination; in nine cases, the final codes were consistent with the second author's initial determination; and in four cases, we decided on a code that differed from both of our initial determinations.
5. Eleven jobholders (7.5%) could not be easily categorized in one of these three distinct groups. Instead, some deployed multiple cultural logics for different segments of their network of relations, which indicates that cultural logics of assistance are informed in part by the composition of their network of relations, broadly defined, through which accounts are constructed to explain the extent and nature of their labor market attachments. Some deployed different logics at different periods, consistent with their changing personal and professional conception of self. This indicates that cultural logics of assistance are also informed by jobholders' shifting positions in social structure. Five percent of jobholders could not be categorized at all due to the incomprehensibility of their responses to relevant questions.
6. To gather data about respondents' close ties, name generators are typically deployed (Burt, 1984; Marsden, 1987). Our respondents were asked to provide a list of people with whom they discussed important matters, with follow-up questions about the following: discussion partners' gender, race or ethnicity, highest level of education completed, work status, work occupation, work industry, and welfare receipt. To determine the nature of the relationship between respondents and their discussion partners, we also inquired about how they were related and the frequency of their contact.
7. About 71% of Latino respondents and 85% of Asian respondents were foreign born.
8. Of note is that for both defensive individualists and particularists, estimates of the number who approached them in the prior year far exceed the sum total of individuals they reported to have helped and rejected. What we suspect, but cannot confirm, is that when asked to recall specific instances, inundated jobholders could only remember well instances in the past year that were most recent or that stood out for some reason. Uneventful experiences, especially those more distant, were likely a blur and so did not become

a part of the record of assists and rejections, even if they were a part of general estimates of job seekers with whom they had come into contact.

9. Importantly how jobholders were actually helped in finding work probably differs for many from how they think they were helped through the process. Smith (2005, 2007, 2010) has shown that in an effort to avoid conflict and save face, it was not unusual for her jobholders to mislead their job-seeking relations about the nature of assistance they have provided; they indicated that they had provided far more assistance than they offered. It is also quite likely that many receive more help than they realize. Several jobholders in this sample reported receiving less help than their referrers—CPSE jobholders also interviewed for this study—reported providing.

10. Although CPSE once had a practice of offering bonuses to current employees who initiated successful job matches, as workers with longer tenures on the job lamented, that practice had ended in the late 1990s. Bonuses were no longer offered to incentivize network recruitment.

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