The Strength of Ties in the Polish Labor Market
How the Conditions of Local Economy Impact on Getting a Job

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dr Mikołaj Pawlak
Institute of Social Prevention and Resocialisation
University of Warsaw

mgr Michał Kotnarowski
Institute of Political Studies
Polish Academy of Sciences
Structure of the presentation

- The strength of weak ties (SWT)
- Key issues in SWT studies
- Explanations of labor market variation
- Diversity of local economic conditions in Poland
- Hypotheses
- Research design
- Multilevel structure of analysis
- Getting a job in Poland
- Methods of getting a job and the conditions of local economy
- Absolute importance of strong ties
- Relative importance of strong ties
- Conclusions
The strength of weak ties (SWT)

Summer 1969: survey among 282 male professional, technical and managerial workers in Newton (a Boston suburb) who acquired a new job in the last 5 years.

“the strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie” (Granovetter 1973: 1361).

The strength of ties operationalized by frequency of contacts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method used</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal means</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal contacts</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct application</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>282</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength of tie</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key issues in SWT studies

- Ambiguous results regarding the influence of job obtaining methods on income (Lin, Ensel, Vaughn 1981; Bridges, Villemez 1986; Marsden, Hurlbert 1988; Smith 2000; Mouw 2003; McDonald 2015).

- Jobs obtained by personal contacts increase job satisfaction (Granovetter 1995; Flap, Völker 2001).

- Ambiguous results regarding the influence of job obtaining methods on occupational status (Lin, Ensel, Vaughn 1981; Wegener 1991; Marsden, Hurlbert 1988).

- Strong ties are more often used in communist and post-communist societies (Bian 1997; Völker, Flap 1999; Yakubovich 2005). There is no difference in strong ties use between post-communist and other societies (Słoczyński 2013; Letki i Mierina 2015).

- Refining the operationalization of tie strength: perception of closeness as a better proxy of tie strength (Marsden, Campbell 1984).
Explanations of labor market variation

• Cultural context:
  • Strong ties in Mexico (Rogers, Kincaid 1981); Different meaning of friendship in Japan (Wanatabe 1987); Guanxi networks in China (Bian 1997).

• Institutional context:
  • Formal job matching institutions in communist countries (Bian 1997; Völker, Flap 1999, 2001); Significance of formal recruiters in a given labor market (Pellizzari 2010); The role of job-matching based on educational achievements (Chua 2011).

• Structural context:
  • Composition of broader networks providing access to social resources / social capital (Lin, Ensel, Vaughn 1981; Bridges, Villemot 1986; Marsden, Hurlbert 1988; Wegener 1991; Montgomery 1992); Locality context: rootedness (Hanson, Pratt 1991; Granovetter 1995) or locality size (Gerber, Mayorova 2010); Network size (Letki, Mieriņa 2015).

• Economic context:
  • Poverty correlated with informal job acquisition (Elliott 1999); Strong ties are more often used in declining industries than in growing industries (Brown, Konrad (2001); 'In recessions, word-of-mouth recruitment increases' (Granovetter 1995: 159).
Diversity of local economic conditions in Poland

- Unemployment rate
  - Min: 3.2%; Max: 34.7%; Poland: 9.0%
- Commune income (PLN)
  - Min: 2,229; Max: 48,680; Mean: 3,424
- Mean of employees income (PLN)
  - Min: 2,456; Max: 6,641; Poland: 4,004
- Rate of employment in agriculture
  - Min: 0.4%; Max: 79.6%; Poland: 11.5%
- Rate of employment in services
  - Min: 15.3%; Max: 86.7%; Poland: 58.0%

Registered unemployment rate per powiats [counties] in 2013 as of 31 XII (Statistical Yearbook of the Regions – Poland 2014, Central Statistical Office).

Data on economic conditions in Poland for 2013/2014 (Central Statistical Office).
Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: Employees are more likely to use personal contacts to obtain jobs in localities with worse economic conditions.

- Hypothesis 2: Employees are more likely to use strong ties to obtain jobs in localities with worse economic conditions (absolute importance of strong ties).

- Hypothesis 3: The relative importance of strong ties versus weak ties is higher in localities with worse economic conditions.
Research design

**Research tool:** An adaptation of the Granovetter questionnaire from the getting a job study.

**Sampling:** Subsample of respondents who acquired a job, one year prior to the interview, filtered out during the omnibus survey carried out by the Public Opinion Research Center on a nationwide representative sample, in 10 subsequent waves.

**Research execution:** July 2014 – March 2015, Poland.

**Dataset:** Resulting database of 428 observations. Questionnaire data supplemented with data from the Central Statistical Office of Poland on the economic conditions of the localities of the respondents’ residence.

**Analysis:** Statistical analyses of relations between variables, multinomial and binary logistic regressions, statistical significance < 0.05.

**Controls:** Status on the labor market, age, income, change of income, searching for a job, job satisfaction, former job satisfaction, change of satisfaction, occupational status, education.
Multilevel structure of analysis

Independent variables on the local level: unemployment rate, commune income, mean income, employment in agriculture rate, employment in industry rate, employment in services rate.

Dependent variables on the relational level: method of getting a job, tie strength (frequency and closeness).

Control independent variables on the individual level: status on the labor market, age, income, change of income, searching for a job, job satisfaction, former job satisfaction, change of satisfaction, occupational status, education.

198 trivariate regression models were estimated.
## Getting a job in Poland

### Method used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method used</th>
<th>Newton 1969</th>
<th>Poland 2014/15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal means</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal contacts</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct application</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>428</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Strength of tie

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methods of getting a job and the conditions of local economy

The probability of personal contacts use increases from 40.6% in localities with the lowest unemployment rate to 72.2% in localities with the highest unemployment rate.

Hypothesis 1 is supported.
Absolute importance of strong ties

The probability of strong ties use increases from 11.2% in localities with the lowest unemployment rate to 28.2% in localities with the highest unemployment rate. **Hypothesis 2 is supported.**
Absolute importance of strong ties

However, there is a similar pattern for weak ties: probability of weak ties use grows from 27.5% to 45.2%.
Relative importance of strong ties

Binary logistic regression.

**Dependent variable:** weak ties vs. strong ties.

**Independent variable:** Unemployment rate, controlled for effects of micro level characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unemployment rate</th>
<th>LR Chisq</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relative importance of using strong ties versus weak ties does not depend on local economic conditions.

**Hypothesis 3 is falsified.**
Conclusions

- The patterns of getting a job behavior in Poland are similar to the ones described in classic studies.

- In the localities with worse economic conditions, jobs are more often obtained via personal contacts (H1 supported).

- In the localities with worse economic conditions, jobs are more often obtained via strong ties (H2 supported).

- However, the proportion of strong and weak ties remains constant across different levels of local economic situations (H3 falsified).

- The fact that the variation of getting a job methods depends on local economic conditions puts into question extrapolations and international comparisons based on local samples.

- Future research should include data on economic conditions when making comparisons of different institutional settings.
Thank you for your attention!

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More about this research: http://mikolajpawlak.bio.uw.edu.pl/research/sociological-vacuum/