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What's in the “old boys” network? Accessing social capital in gendered and racialized networks

Steve McDonald*

Campus Box 8107, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-8107, United States

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ABSTRACT

Network processes have long been implicated in the reproduction of labor market inequality, but it remains unclear whether white male networks provide more social capital resources than female and minority networks. Analysis of nationally representative survey data reveals that people in white male networks receive twice as many job leads as people in female/minority networks. White male networks are also comprised of higher status connections than female/minority networks. The information and status benefits of membership in these old boy networks accrue to all respondents and not just white men. Furthermore, gender homophilous contacts offer greater job finding assistance than other contacts. The results specify how social capital flows through gendered and racialized networks.

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1. Introduction

Network processes have long been implicated in the reproduction of gender and racial inequality in the United States labor market. For example, in the wake of the Civil Rights movement, Loury (1977) pointed out that removing legal barriers to discrimination in the labor market would not by itself eliminate inequality. The informal processes by which people are matched to their jobs through word of mouth would almost certainly ensure that white men maintained their unequal access to high level positions. Kanter (1977) examined the “shadow structure” within corporations, revealing how women and racial minorities were often excluded from informal conversations and social activities, which effectively isolated them from access to valuable opportunities and hindered their advancement within firms. Wilson (1987) argued that residential migration of whites and middle class blacks out of urban centers decimated the social networks of the urban underclass, isolating them from job opportunities and leading to chronic joblessness.

These classic arguments coincide with longstanding beliefs about the benefits associated with access to “old boy” networks—those occupied by high status white men. It is popularly assumed that being a member these networks could significantly increase a person’s labor market opportunities (Hogan et al., 2005; Oakley, 2000; Saloner, 1985; Simon and Warner, 1992) because they can provide valuable sources of social capital. By social capital, I am referring to the resources (information, influence, and status) embedded in social network relationships (Lin, 2001). Alternatively, being locked out of the old boys club will limit one’s access to social capital and, by extension, their chances of attaining higher status jobs. A corollary to the old boy networks perspective is the “wrong networks” approach, which suggests that women and minorities are trapped in female- and minority-dominated networks that provide access to relatively few labor market resources. Differences in access to these segregated networks could therefore explain a significant portion of the persistent gender and race inequality in labor market outcomes.

While the empirical literature is generally supportive of these two perspectives, the assertions have been criticized recently for their circular logic. The presumed lack of access to social capital in female and minority networks is based on evidence of the outcomes associated with using job contacts (Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo, 2006). In other words, it is often assumed that women and minorities lack access to social resources because their use of social connections to find jobs affords them with relatively few benefits in terms of their eventual job outcomes (Elliott, 1999; Falcón, 1995; Green et al., 1999; Holzer, 1987; Parks-Yancy, 2010;
Reskin and McBrier, 2000; Smith, 2000; Stainback, 2008). It remains possible, however, that the resources accessible through female- and minority-dominated networks are commensurate with those of white men and that the difference in employment outcomes is instead due to gender/race differences in the mobilization of social capital or to differences in the responses of hiring authorities to their social capital. Most of the prior research has therefore inferred resource inequality based on outcome differentials. The studies that have examined inequality in social capital have focused almost exclusively on resource variation across gender and race characteristics of ego (for example, Ibarra, 1997; McDonald et al., 2009; McGuire, 2000, 2002; Smith, 2000) rather than resource variation across the gender and race characteristics of alters and networks. Consequently, little is known about the extent to which social capital resources are accessible through gendered and racialized networks.

This study is the first to use nationally-representative data (from the Social Capital-USA survey) on the general population to explore variation in access to employment-based social capital resources (information, influence, and status) based on the gender and race characteristics of network alters. Specifically, I examine how the gendered and racialized character of social networks are associated with the receipt of unsolicited job leads, job finding assistance, and access to high status network alters. I also offer an explicit test of three distinct ways that informal hiring practices may consolidate the labor market advantages of white men and the disadvantages of women and racial minorities. The first possibility—reflected to as the segregated networks thesis—implies that access to social resources depends on the gender and race composition of network alters. Due to segregation in informal social interaction, resources may cluster among specific gender and race groups. Networks composed mainly of white men should offer the best access to social capital. Therefore, membership in these white male segregated networks should therefore determine access to social capital resources, independent of ego’s own gender or race. Second, the homophily thesis suggests that resources may be more or less accessible depending on the gender and/or race similarity between ego and network alters. Being in a network with alters who share the same ascriptive characteristics should therefore provide the greatest access to social capital resources. The third possibility—the preferential access thesis—suggests that access to social resources through either segregated or homophilous networks will be moderated by ego’s membership in the dominant gender/race group. In other words, while white men are likely to have the greatest access to resources when they have many white male alters, women and racial minorities will receive relatively few benefits from being members of white male or of homophilous networks.

The data allow for a comprehensive assessment of precisely how access to social capital is associated with membership in white male dominated networks (versus female and minority dominated networks). Consequently, this study makes a major contribution to our understanding of the nature of network-based inequality and how such inequities get reproduced. The results provide evidence of all three explanations (network segregation, homophily, and preferential access) for resource-based inequality described in the research literature. However, access to resources depends on the type of resource (information, influence, or status) and the type of ascriptive characteristic (gender or race). While the findings paint a complex picture of how the gender and race features of networks are associated with social capital, they highlight the social benefits enjoyed by white men and the informal barriers faced by women and minorities in the contemporary labor market. Furthermore, the results allow for a more nuanced understanding of the ways that gender and race intersect with social networks to reproduce labor market inequalities.

2. Gender, race, and networked job finding

Much prior research has attempted to examine gender and race differences in the effectiveness of using networks and job contacts to find jobs. Quantitative research on hiring within firms generally finds that a reliance on informal hiring methods disadvantages female and minority applicants (Peterson et al., 2000; Reskin and McBrier, 2000; but see Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo, 2006). Research on broader samples of survey respondents generally shows disadvantage for female and minority workers (McDonald and Elder, 2006; Parks-Yancy, 2010), though there is some inconsistency (Mouw, 2002; Reingold, 1999; Smith, 2000). Ethnicographic research provides the strongest and most consistent evidence of gender and race differences in returns to informal job matching (Kasinitz and Rosenberg, 1996; Newman, 1999; Parks-Yancy et al., 2006; Royster, 2003).

The relative lack of employment benefits associated with informal job matching among women and minorities is likely linked to three distinctive features of their networks. Social networks tend to be segregated on the basis of gender and race characteristics (Marsden, 1988), which results from both structural segregation (e.g., residential and occupational segregation; see Collins, 1989; Massey and Denton, 1993) and from a preference for individuals with similar gender/race characteristics (homophily; see McPherson et al., 2001). Job seekers are therefore more likely to rely on same gender and same race individuals as job contacts than on individuals who are different from the job seekers (Hanson and Pratt, 1991). Furthermore, reliance on these gendered/racialized networks and contacts is associated with employment outcomes. People who rely on female contacts are more likely than others to be hired into female-dominated jobs (Drentea, 1998; Mencken and Winfield, 2000; Straits, 1998), just as people who use same race contacts are often hired into same race jobs (Stainback, 2008). Individuals who are referred to jobs via white and male contacts earn significantly higher wages than individuals who rely on female and minority contacts (Elliott, 1999; Falcón, 1995; Green et al., 1999; Holzer, 1987; Smith, 2000; Stainback, 2008). The common practice of relying on gender and race homophilous networks is therefore beneficial to white men while being detrimental to women and minorities.

The above evidence has led to the conclusion that women and minorities are trapped in the wrong kinds of networks. While women and minorities often rely on their networks to find jobs, their connections offer relatively low quality resources, providing them with the kinds of assistance that often lead women and minorities into segregated employment and relatively low-paying positions. Consequently, their lack of access to resource-rich, white male networks significantly hinders their employment prospects. Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo (2006) have recently argued that the wrong networks perspective is based on circular logic. Researchers have made assumptions about the quality of networks and contacts based primarily on employment outcomes. In short, researchers assume that female and minority networks are “bad” because they lead to “bad” jobs. Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo argued that it is necessary to gain a better understanding of precisely why disadvantaged social groups are “underrepresented in networks that lead to good jobs” (45). It remains entirely possible that the kinds of opportunities and assistance provided by female and minority networks are commensurate with what is available to people in white male networks.

The difference in the outcomes associated with gendered and racialized networks may instead be related to the ways that these resources are mobilized or to differential responses to these resources on the part of hiring authorities (see Lin’s 2001 discussion of returns deficits). As such, the wrong networks perspective suffers from a lack of attention to the mechanisms by which membership
in gendered and racialized social networks may affect employment outcomes. Examining the various points in the hiring process in a single firm, Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo (2006) found that minority employees refer other individuals at higher rates than whites and that minority referral applicants were hired at similar rates as white referral applicants. In short, the results offered little evidence of disadvantage associated with having black contacts.

These findings are surprising in light of the various studies that have examined gender and race differences in the character of individual networks and social resource access. On average, women and racial minorities tend to have smaller networks and know fewer high status and influential contacts than white men (Brass, 1985; Campbell, 1988; Ibarra, 1997; Marsden, 1987; McGuire, 2000, 2002; Moore, 1988, 1990; Smith, 2000). Women and racial minorities also receive less and lower quality information about job openings than white males (Huffman and Torres, 2002; McDonald et al., 2009). These findings imply that networks dominated by white men should provide greater access to resources than those composed of women and minorities. However, note that the focus of these studies has been on network resource inequality across characteristics of egos rather than alters. As such, the question of how social resource access may vary depending on the gender and race composition of networks and alters—not to mention the interaction between ego and alter gender/race characteristics—remains relatively unexplored.

The present study offers a detailed examination of these issues, building on the important work of Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo (2006). They provided an illustration of a non-circular approach to addressing the wrong networks question, yielding a number of important insights into referral hiring processes. Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo (FFM) used detailed data on a very controlled sample of individuals—similarly qualified individuals applying for entry-level jobs in a single production firm—which allowed for an in-depth analysis of processes by which network alters provide referrals. But at the same time, the study was unable to make claims on generalizability. A number of distinctive features of the sample could lead one to find very different results from what might be found in a more broadly representative sample. For example, while informal hiring tends to be more prevalent at entry-level and in production occupations than in white collar jobs (Corcoran et al., 1980; Falcón, 1995; Smith, 2000), recent studies have found informal job matching strategies to be more effective (in generating wage returns) during the middle portion of the career than during career entry (McDonald and Elder, 2006) and in higher rather than lower paying employment contexts (McDonald, 2011). Consequently, the lack of support for the wrong networks perspective in the FFM study may have been due to the exclusive analysis of entry-level production jobs. In other words, given the overall lack of effectiveness of networks in these contexts, there might be fewer opportunities for observing cross-gender and cross-race inequality in social capital resources. This possibility suggests a need for a broader test of the wrong networks proposition in the general working population.

More importantly, it is necessary to explore access to a broader set of social capital resources than has been studied in the past. Following the theoretical and empirical work of Nan Lin (2001), I refer to social capital as resources embedded within social networks that individuals invest in so that they may receive returns. He cites three ways that personal contacts benefit individuals who are looking for work. First, contacts provide access to information about job openings. Not all jobs are advertised and even those openings that are advertised will only reach a portion of the qualified candidates, so contacts can provide workers with an information advantage. Second, contacts can influence the hiring process by vouching for job candidates, as employers commonly hire individuals that are referred by current or former employees (Marsden, 1994). Third, simply being connected to another person can bring status benefits (Podolny, 2005). A contact that serves as a reference can signal to employers the quality or character of the applicant, even in the absence of any direct influence provided by the contact. It is therefore necessary to examine each of these types of network resources to clarify what specifically might be “wrong” about female and minority networks. To that end, the present study uses a nationally-representative survey data to examine the extent to which access to gendered and racialized social networks and contacts are associated with these social capital resources.

Finally, this study moves beyond the wrong networks perspective to examine distinct explanations for how gendered and racialized connections influence access to resources. The wrong networks perspective focuses on how the gender and race composition of networks influences resource access and exchange, but it is equally possible that resource exchange may be facilitated by network homophily. Furthermore, the wrong networks perspective assumes that simply being part of the old boys club would offer female and minority members the same kind of information, influence, and status benefits as white male members. White men may in fact receive preferential access to social capital over women and minorities in resource-rich networks. A more nuanced understanding of how accessibility varies across social groups would therefore require an investigation of the various ways in which information, influence, and status flow through gendered and racialized networks. These distinct explanations are discussed in greater detail below.

2.1. Segregated networks

Prior research suggests that three distinct processes could be at work. First, the gender and race composition of networks could determine the availability and accessibility of resources. Social resources tend to be distributed based on shared network affiliation in a process that has been referred to as “network-based social closure” (McDonald and Day, 2010). Burt (1998) has argued that we tend to help out others whom we consider to be mishpokh (Yiddish for “one of us”), with ingroup status being determined more by membership in the same or similar social circles than by similarity in personal characteristics. According to this perspective, network characteristics trump personal characteristics in determining access to valuable resources. Gender and race, however, influence this process indirectly, as these features shape the nature of network relationships as well as the resources available through those networks. Residential and workplace segregation, as well as preferences for connecting with similar others, lead to networks segregated by gender and race. Network segregation in turn leads to gender and race inequality in the distribution of social capital (Braddock and McPartland, 1987; Waldinger, 1995). Since white males tend to occupy structurally advantaged positions in the labor market, they are likely to have better resources on which to draw. In other words, they can provide more and better information about job opportunities, are better able to influence the hiring process for those positions, and occupy high status positions.

For example, Collins’ (1989) has found that black executives are often hired to fill non-central positions within corporations, which has effectively marginalized them from corporate decision making, inhibited their career advancement, and made them vulnerable to layoffs. Women also tend to occupy lower ranking positions within work organizations, which hinders their access to high status network contacts (McGuire, 2000). With networks being highly clustered by gender and race, access to social capital will largely depend on membership in the networks of dominant groups. This suggests that the gender and race composition of networks should be related to the quantity and quality of resources in those networks. Individuals who are in white male networks should expect
to have more social capital at their disposal, whereas people in female and minority networks will have considerably less social capital on which to draw.

The research literature provides some support for this proposition. In a survey of members of job search clubs in California, Huffman and Torres (2002) found that the proportion of job leads that came from female contacts was negatively associated with the starting salary of those jobs, suggesting that female contacts provide lower quality job information than men. They were unable to explore race differences in their data. As noted earlier, Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo (2006) found no variation in the number of referrals provided by different race job contacts. These prior findings are therefore somewhat inconsistent, with some evidence that gender (but not race) network composition affects the job information that individuals receive. Both of these samples are somewhat idiosyncratic, though. The present study can therefore provide a more comprehensive test of the segregated network hypothesis. Based on the original theorization described above, I expect to find that people who are members of networks comprised mostly of whites and males will report greater access to information about job opportunities.

Another line of research has found significant race differences in the extent of job finding assistance provided by job contacts. Black contacts tend to be more reluctant than Hispanic contacts to provide assistance to job seekers (Elliott and Sims, 2001; Smith, 2010). When they do provide assistance, black contacts are more likely to simply pass along job information than to actively vouch for job seekers. Smith (2007) has argued that members of disadvantaged social groups are often reluctant to provide assistance for fear that their reputations will be tarnished by making a “bad” referral. White males, though, are less likely to suffer from stigmatization for suggesting matches that do not work out. This suggests that the amount of job finding assistance is related to both gender and race characteristics of job contacts.

The gendered and racialized character of networks is also likely to be associated with the status of the alters that comprise those networks. On average, women and minorities are located in lower status and authority positions in the labor market (Smith, 2002). Compared to people who have many white male connections, people who maintain networks comprised primarily of women and minorities may have access to lower status contacts. One would therefore expect the average status of network connections to be lower for people with female and minority dominated networks than people with white male dominated networks.1

H1a. People with white male networks should receive more job information than people with female and minority networks.

H1b. People with white male contacts should receive more job finding assistance than people with female and minority contacts.

H1c. People with white male networks should have higher status contacts than people with female and minority networks.

2.2. Homophilous networks

Another possibility is provided by social closure theory (Tilly, 1998; Weber, 1922), which suggests that individuals reserve valued resources for others based on similarity in ascriptive characteristics. Individuals engage in opportunity hoarding by monopolizing valued resources. In the case of job allocation processes, individuals might decide to withhold job finding assistance from or provide inferior assistance to out-group members, while reserving their full assistance for individuals who share their own ascriptive characteristics. Access to social resources may therefore depend on the gender and/or race match between the job seeker and their contacts, rather than strictly on the gender/race characteristics of the contacts. Resources might therefore be expected to flow more easily through same gender/race than different gender/race networks.

The reason hinges on the role that trust plays in facilitating social exchange (Coleman, 1990; Cook, 2005; Luhmann, 1979). For example, job informants are unlikely to vouch for job seekers if the informants do not trust the applicants to do a good job (Smith, 2005). Furthermore, employers can capitalize on interpersonal trust by providing incentives for employee vouching to reduce turnover (Neckerman and Fernandez, 2003). Ascriptive characteristics such as gender and race can serve as proxies for trust in the absence of complete information about the trustworthiness of individuals (Kanter, 1977). This practice of using gender and race as signals of trust helps to reproduce the existing gender and race composition of upper management. A similar process of bounded solidarity operates among disadvantaged immigrant populations, as members of urban enclaves commonly assist each other on the basis of their similar ethnic characteristics (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993). Gender homophily is also common among job applicants and the people that serve as their referees (Fernandez et al., 2000; Fernandez and Sosa, 2005). These lines of research suggest that contacts are more likely to offer assistance to individuals who share their same gender and race characteristics. Since white males tend to have more homophilous networks and contacts than women and minorities (Ibarra, 1992, 1995, 1997; Straits, 1998), a lack of access to same gender/race networks and contacts might explain their relative deficit in available opportunities.

There are limits, though, to the utility of homophilous contacts. Granovetter’s (1973) strength of weak ties proposition and Burt’s (1992) structural hole theory suggest that maintaining weak connections to individuals who are in different social circles provides access to more and better information about employment opportunities (see also Liu and Duff, 1972). These theories cast doubt on the extent to which homophilous connections provide greater access to increased job information than heterophilous connections. Also, there is little reason to suspect that homophilous networks provide greater access to high status contacts. If anything, network diversity would seemingly help job seekers to broaden their scope of connections in order to access higher status alters. However, gender and race homophily are likely to be associated with the extent of job finding assistance that people receive. Contacts should be more likely to exert influence on the hiring process by vouching (putting in a good word) for job seekers when they share gender and race characteristics.

H2. People with same gender/race contacts should receive more job finding assistance than people with different gender/race contacts.

2.3. Preferential access to resources

The impact of network composition and homophilous relationships could also be contingent on (or moderated by) dominant

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1 A reviewer correctly pointed my attention to the fact that status is a resource that is qualitatively distinct from information and influence in that its effect is often latent. It is more difficult to measure the mobilization of network status than the mobilization of information or influence. Consequently, status is necessarily measured in this study as a network feature rather than a mobilized resource, which is how information and influence are treated. While this difference in measurement poses some analytic problems, it is consistent with the conceptual difference between status and the other resources. Furthermore, this methodological approach allows for an examination of the full range of network resources and therefore offers a more explicit test of the theorization.
group membership. According to status characteristics theory (Berger et al., 1972; Ridgeway, 1997), people engage in an unconscious process socio-cognitive stereotyping, which involves labeling and categorizing others based on personal characteristics such as gender and race. These assessments about gender and race become part of a broader set of status beliefs which place greater value on the activities of dominant groups than subordinate groups within society. Ultimately, gender and race are viewed as statuses by which people are distinguished and treated differently. Dominant group members are, on average, viewed as more competent than subordinate group members and should therefore receive preferential access to valued network resources. The predictions from status characteristics theory are also consistent with the job queueing perspective (Reskin and Roos, 1990), which suggests that employers rank workers in a job queue based on their desirability for filling position openings. Gender and race characteristics figure prominently in the sorting process (e.g., Fernandez and Mors, 2008), with white males generally being preferred over women and racial minorities for high level positions. As such, the gender and race characteristics of individuals could moderate the effect of network composition and homophilous relationships on resource access, with white males accruing the greatest benefits associated with belonging to resource-rich social networks.

The preferential treatment that white males enjoy over women and minorities is likely to translate into advantages in the receipt of job finding assistance. McGuire’s (2000) study of employees in a large financial firm indicates that women and racial minorities receive less instrumental support from their colleagues than white men receive, even after controlling for network characteristics. Findings from other research suggest that relying on black contacts may be most effective for gaining entry into high wage jobs when employers do not know the race of the contact (Kmec and Trimble, 2009). These results suggest that women and minorities with networks comprised primarily of white males might still receive less information and influence than a white male who is in a similar network. Likewise, status characteristics theory predicts that women and minorities would be less likely than white men to access high status contacts in white male network relationships, since high status white male alters would prefer to connect with dominant group members over subordinate group members. Several additional studies have shown that homophilous networks and ties are associated with better career outcomes for white men than for women and racial minorities (Day and McDonald, 2010; Ibarra, 1995, 1997). White networks are also more insular than minority networks, as white employees are more likely to refer other whites than minorities are to refer other minorities (Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo, 2006). All of this suggests that homophilous networks and contacts may offer access to more social resources for white men than for women and minorities.

H3a. White men with white male networks/contacts should have access to more information, job finding assistance, and status than women and minorities in white male networks/contacts.

H3b. White men with homophilous networks/contacts should receive more job finding assistance than women and minorities with homophilous networks/contacts.

3. Data and methods

The data for this project come from the Social Capital USA survey. SC-USA is a nationally-representative, random-digit dialed survey of individuals in the United States age 22–65 who were previously employed or employed at the time of the survey. The survey was specifically designed to garner information about the social network resources of individual respondents and is therefore well-suited to answer the questions posed by this study. The data were collected from November 2004 to March of 2005 and yielded 3000 completed interviews. The response rate was 43 percent, which is comparable to recent national RDD telephone surveys (see Groves et al., 2004). To account for potential non-response bias, the data are weighted to match the population parameters from the March 2005 Current Population Survey. Further details on the weighting procedure are available elsewhere (see McDonald et al., 2009).

3.1. Dependent variables

Table 1 provides a list of the variables used in the analysis. The original sample of 3000 respondents is limited to white, black, and Hispanic individuals. Other race individuals (n=170) were excluded due to their heterogeneity and the associated difficulty in interpreting their racial composition and homophily effects. The total base sample is 2735 respondents (after listwise deletion). This sample is used for the first part of the analysis, which examines the number of unsolicited job leads received as the dependent variable. The survey asked, “[During the last 12 months] did someone mention job possibilities, openings, or opportunities to you, without your asking, in casual conversations? (This may include face-to-face, telephone, e-mail, fax, etc.).” Individuals who answered in the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Descriptive statistics (weighted).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of job leads</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average SEI of network</td>
<td>45.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion white male (WM)</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion female network</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion black network</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion Hispanic network</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion other race network</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion same gender and race (G/R) network</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion same gender</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion same race network</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English not primary language</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>42.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full time</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job tenure</td>
<td>9.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEI of current job</td>
<td>36.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion white male in occupation</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory authority</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firm size</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensity</td>
<td>6.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact vouched for respondent</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White male (WM) contact</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female contact</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black contact</td>
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<td>Hispanic contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other race contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Same gender and race (G/R) contact</td>
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<td>Same gender contact</td>
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<td>Same race contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEI of prior job</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion white male in prior occupation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous supervisory authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous firm size</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No previous job</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
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</table>
affirmative were then asked to report how many of these job opportunities they had heard about. These two questions were used to construct a single item measure of the number of job leads received in the last year. Extremely high values (which constitute about one-half of one percent of the sample) received a top-coded value of 30. The relatively low mean value is due to the left skew of the distribution (65 percent of the sample reported receiving no unsolicited job leads). The average among people who received any job leads is about 4 leads per year.

There are several advantages to analyzing this variable. First, it offers a straightforward measure of the amount of job information that people receive from their network connections, tapping directly into one of the central resources that comprise social capital. Second, this measure serves as an indicator of the job information that someone receives from their connections without having to search for it. Compared to questions regarding the total amount of job information received, the unsolicited job leads question is less likely to be confounded by individual propensities to search for new jobs. Of course, the measure also has some drawbacks, the most important being that respondents were not asked about the quality of the job leads. Nonetheless, it is generally accepted that individuals who receive more job offers tend to have a higher quality pool of opportunities to choose from than people with fewer offers (see Montgomery, 1992). Quantity and quality of job leads should therefore be positively correlated. Furthermore, prior research has established the construct validity of the measure, demonstrating that the receipt of unsolicited job leads prior to changing jobs is positively and significantly associated with the wages of eventual jobs, even net of personal and relational characteristics (Lin and Ao, 2008). Despite the concerns about this measure, the unsolicited job leads indicator provides the best known opportunity for studying access to information about job openings.

The second dependent variable for the analysis is a dichotomous measure of job finding assistance. This analysis only focuses on individuals who had received help from someone in finding their current or most recent job. Therefore, the analytic sample is reduced to 1498. Respondents who had received help were asked about the person who “was the most important during the process of finding your [current/last] job” and what kind of help this person provided. Respondents were assigned a value of 1 if their job contact “put in a good word” for them. When contacts did not put in a good word, respondents were assigned a value of zero.

The final dependent variable is a measure of the status of each respondent’s occupational network. For this I rely on a set of questions derived from the position generator methodology, which is used to assess the range occupational contacts (Lin and Dumin, 1986; Lin and Erickson, 2008; Lin et al., 2001). Respondents were asked whether they know someone in a list of 22 different occupations (e.g., janitors, teachers, lawyers, and CEOs), designed to capture the full range of structural positions in the occupational hierarchy. Each occupational position in the generator was assigned a status score (based on the total SEI scores estimated by Hauser and Warren, 1997) and averaged across the network. This portion of the analysis relies on the full set of 2735 respondents. Respondents who stated that they did not know anyone in the 22 positions in the generator (n = 59) were excluded from this analysis as well as the analysis of the number of job leads.

3.2. Independent variables

Gender is measured with a single dummy variable which is coded 1 for each female respondent. Race dummy variables are included for blacks and Hispanics (whites serve as the reference category). Social network characteristics are measured in two ways. First, the position generator questions asked about the gender and race characteristics of the individuals that they knew in the different occupational positions. If respondents knew more than one person in the position, they were asked to report on the person who first came to mind. Based on these series of questions, I constructed measures of the gender/race proportions of occupational networks. Variables were constructed for proportion white male, female, black, Hispanic, and other race networks.² Note that while other race individuals are not included as respondents, it is still possible for respondents to report having other race individuals in their networks. The proportion variables range from a value of 0 for networks that contain, for example, no white male contacts to 1 for networks that contain all white male connections. On average, 35 percent of occupational networks are comprised of white men. Networks are evenly split by gender and 29 percent of networks are comprised of racial minorities. Measures of the proportion of same gender and race occupational contacts were calculated in a similar way. Just under 50 percent of all network members were both the same gender and the same race. On average, 56 percent of the connections mentioned in occupational networks are the same gender of respondents, compared to 87 percent of network connections who were the same race as respondents. These gender and race proportion variables are used in the analysis of job leads and network status.

Second, each respondent who had received assistance in finding their current or most recent job was asked about the gender and race of the person who helped them. This allowed for the construction of a series of dummy variables for each of the gender and race categories listed above. White male contacts provided assistance for 41 percent of respondents. Respondents relied on female contacts 44 percent of the time and minority contacts were utilized by 29 percent of respondents. I also constructed dummy indicators for individuals with same gender and race contacts. About 63 percent of respondents used gender and race homophilous contacts, compared to just over 70 percent of respondents used same gender contacts and 88 percent who used same race contacts. These gender and race contact variables are used in the analyses of the amount of job finding assistance.

3.3. Control variables

I control for several variables which have been shown to predict job leads in prior analyses (McDonald et al., 2009). Language skills are measured with a dummy variable which equals 1 if English is not the primary language spoken at home. Education is measured with an ordinal level variable with values ranging from 1 (less than high school) to 5 (graduate or professional degree). The metric for age is years. I also control for several characteristics about the respondents’ current or most recent jobs. A dummy variable indicates whether respondents were full time employed (35 h per week or more) at the time of the survey. Job tenure is measured in years. Current job status is measured by linking the occupation code to the total SEI score (Hauser and Warren, 1997). It is also important to control for occupational segregation, since employment in segregated occupations could limit access to different kinds

² Interactions for gender and race groups other than white males were tested, but are not presented as part of the results. The results from the analysis are entirely consistent with what is presented here in that they are gender- and race-specific, not interracial. (cf. Brown and Mosca, 2001). When gender effects appeared in the results, those gender effects were apparent across race groups. Likewise, race effects were consistent for men and women. The small sample sizes that comprise certain gender and race combinations for the network and contact variables produced unstable standard errors. Therefore, assessing gender and race effects separately retains maximal statistical power in the models and provides the most parsimonious presentation of the findings. Of course, the results from this analysis are available on request.
of network alters and resources. Occupational segregation is controlled for with a variable that estimates the proportion of white males that are employed in each respondent’s occupational group. These estimates were obtained by linking the occupational information to the Census 2000 EEO special tabulation. Supervisory authority is measured by a three-category ordinal variable which is equal to 1 for respondents who are not supervisors, 2 for respondents who supervise other workers, and 3 for respondents who supervise other supervisors. The firm size variable is equal to 1 for firms with less than 10 employees, 2 for firms sized 10–99, 3 for firms sized 100–499, and 4 for firms with 500 or more employees. For respondents who were not full time employed at the time of the interview, the employment variables refer to their most recent full time job. Also, the remaining missing values for firm size were estimated through multiple imputation. Finally, the analysis controls for the number of individuals that respondents mentioned in the position generator. This variable ranges from 1 to 20 (out of the possible 22 positions mentioned in the position generator), with an average of nearly 7 positions mentioned.

The analysis of job finding assistance also includes the individual characteristics control variables (language skills, education, and age). But since this analysis is focused on assistance that occurred prior to respondents starting their current or most recent jobs, it is necessary to control for the characteristics of jobs that respondents had worked in immediately prior to their most recent job transition. This ensures that the employment characteristics are temporally prior to the dependent variable. Specifically, I include measures of previous occupational status, proportion of white males in previous occupation, previous supervisory authority, and previous firm size. All of these variables are measured as described above. However, 28 percent of respondents reported no previous job information because they remained employed in their very first job. A dummy variable indicating these individuals is therefore included in the analyses of job finding assistance and their missing values on the job characteristics variables are substituted with the values for their current/most recent jobs.

4. Results

The focus of the analysis is on the relationship between the gender/race network characteristics and social resources, but it is useful to first examine descriptively how access to these resources varies across the gender and race characteristics of the respondents and their networks. Fig. 1 provides the average estimates of the three network resources for each of the gender and race subgroups. For example, the first bar in the top chart shows that white men reported that they received 1.48 unsolicited job leads on average during the last 12 months. The dotted lines show the confidence interval around those estimates, allowing for a comparison of this estimate for white men to the averages for the other race and gender groups. Means that are above the top line or below the bottom line are significantly different (at the .05 level) from those of white men. Women and Hispanics receive significantly fewer job leads (1.01 and 0.76, respectively) than white men. The job lead averages for white men are not significantly different from the job lead averages for males, for whites, and for African Americans. The middle chart in Fig. 1 shows that there is relatively little inequality in the receipt of job finding assistance. The exception is that black workers (26%) receive assistance less often and Hispanic workers (38%) receive assistance more often than white males (35%). The estimates for males, females, and whites are not significantly different from the average level of assistance for white males. The final chart shows that, on average, white men have significantly higher status networks (5E1 45.93) than the other two (45.22), blacks (44.36), and Hispanics (43.31). The average network status of white males is about the statistically similar to the average network status for all males and all whites. While these charts reveal some inconsistencies in the extent of inequality across the different types of resources, the broad patterns do provide some evidence of white male advantage in access to social capital resources.

Fig. 2 presents a comparison of the proportions of white male and homophilius alters that are present in the networks of males and whites versus females and racial minorities. The top chart examines the features of occupational networks and the bottom chart shows the characteristics for job contacts. Not surprisingly, whites and males have substantially more access to white male network connections than women and, especially, racial minorities. In the top chart in Fig. 2, note that 37 percent of the networks of men are comprised of white men, compared to 30 percent for women—a statistically significant difference. The gap in white male network alters is even larger across categories of race: 43 percent of the networks of whites are comprised of white men, whereas black and Hispanic respondents report having a very small proportion (less than 10%) of white men in their occupational networks. Each of these differences is also statistically significant. The bottom portion of the chart highlights the usage of white male contacts.
Whites and males are significantly more likely than women and racial minorities to report receiving job finding assistance from white men. About 56 percent of men received assistance from white male contacts, compared to 28 percent of women. Most white respondents (53%) also received assistance from white male contacts, compared to only 14 and 19 percent for black and Hispanic respondents, respectively.

The networks of men and whites also display relatively strong patterns of gender and race homophily. While the networks of men and women are equally comprised of same gender and race individuals (46% for men and 48% for women; not significantly different), the job contacts of men are significantly more homophilous than the job contacts of women. Network homophily is significantly stronger among whites (50%) than blacks (40%) or Hispanics (42%). Homophily among job seekers and contacts is also significantly greater among whites (64%) and Hispanics (65%) than among African Americans (51%). Overall, these results demonstrate that whites and males maintain the greatest access to white male networks and contacts. Homophily is also a common feature in the networks of white and male respondents. Consequently, white men are likely to benefit if social capital resources are associated with access to white male and homophilous connections.

Multivariate regression is used to test the hypotheses. The first part of this analysis examines how the gender and race characteristics of occupational networks are associated with the number of unsolicited job leads received by respondents. For this I employ negative binomial regression, which is appropriate for analyzing count variables (Long, 1997). Negative binomial regression is preferred instead of Poisson regression when the average count is less than its variance ($\mu = 1.29, \sigma^2 = 11.03$; unweighted). Negative binomial regression uses maximum likelihood estimation to predict the values on the dependent variable as being equal to $\exp(\Sigma(bX) + \varepsilon)$. The $b$ serves as the vector of slope coefficients, $X$ represents the independent variables, and $\varepsilon$ is the random error term. For ease of interpretation, the slope coefficients are converted to percent change scores using the formula $[(\exp(b) - 1) \times 100]$. These values (displayed in Table 2) represent the predicted percentage change in the value of the dependent variable for each one unit increase in the independent variable.

Model 1 demonstrates that white male-dominated networks provide access to more job information, net of controls for individual and employment characteristics. The coefficient for proportion white male network indicates that individuals in all white male networks receive 103 percent more (about twice as many) job leads than individuals in networks that contain no white men. This result offers support for Hypothesis 1a, suggesting that being a member of white male networks is associated with information benefits. The second model explores the gender and race features of networks separately. The results show that larger proportions of women in occupational networks are associated with the receipt of less job information. Specifically, respondents with all female networks receive 47 percent fewer job leads than respondents with all male networks. However, race composition of networks is unrelated to the number of job leads received. These results indicate that the gender differences in network characteristics are more robust than the race differences.6 Models 3 and 4 examine the extent to which heterophilous networks tend to yield more job information than homophilous networks. People in same gender/race networks receive about the same amount of job leads as people in different gender/race networks.

In order to test for preferential access to information, I interact the gender and race characteristics of respondents with the white male network variable and the same gender/race variable. Note that when assessing the composition interactions in Model 5 it is necessary to control for homophily effects, just as it is necessary to control for composition effects when assessing the homophily interactions in Model 6. This is because homophily could be driving the composition effects and vice versa. After applying these controls, the results reveal no significant interaction effects.7 Model 5 shows that the impact of white male network membership on gaining information about job opportunities is largely consistent across gender and race groups. The coefficients for the female, black, and Hispanic interaction terms are all insignificant, suggesting that women and racial minorities who are in white male networks receive about the same amount of information as white men who are in white male networks. The gender and race interaction terms in Model 6 are also insignificant, which implies that the effects of homophilous networks do not vary significantly across gender and race groups. These findings offer no support for Hypothesis 3a, which anticipated finding preferential access to information.

Several of the control variables are related to the number of job leads received. Younger respondents tend to receive more job leads than older people. People in high status jobs hear about more job opportunities than people in low status jobs. Supervisory authority is positively related to job leads. Job leads receipt is more common among occupants of large firms. Finally, the number of network contacts (extensity) is positively associated with job leads. In sum, the results from Table 2 are consistent with the segregated networks explanation for inequality. People in white male networks

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5 This should not be taken as evidence that race does not matter interactively. Note that the sum of the coefficients in Model 2 (−72.9%) does not fully make up for the difference found in Model 1 (−102.7%). This suggests that the benefits of being white alone or male alone do not fully capture the benefit of being both white and male.

6 Without controlling for proportion white male in Model 6, the female × same gender/race network interaction is significant and negative. This relationship is fully explained by the composition effects. In other words, since female networks are associated with less information, it is not surprising that the homophilous networks of women offer access to less information than the homophilous networks of white men.
and male networks in particular tend to have access to more unsolicited job information than others. The benefits of having these types of networks are not conditioned by the gender or race of the respondents, therefore offering no support for the preferential access hypothesis. Likewise, gender and race similarity between ego and alters is not related to information receipt, contradicting the homophily explanation for social capital inequality.

The next part of the analysis examines the extent to which the gender and race characteristics of job contacts are associated with differences in job finding assistance. Since the dependent variable is dichotomous, binary logistic regression is used. The slope coefficients are exponentiated and presented as odds ratios in Table 3. Odds ratios that exceed 1 indicate that higher values on the independent variables are associated with increased odds of having a job contact vouch for the respondent in the hiring process. Odds ratios under 1 indicate negative relationships between the independent variables and vouching. The first model indicates that white male contacts are as likely as female and minority contacts to vouch for job seekers. Model 2 also shows that women are as likely as men and minorities as likely as whites to vouch for job seekers. These results contradict hypothesis 1b by showing that differences in the gender and race composition of contacts are not associated with the odds of receiving vouching assistance in the job finding process. The third model examines the relationship between gender/race homophily and vouching. The odds of vouching are 28 percent greater in situations where the gender and the race of the contact is the same for job seekers and contacts than when they are different. This relationship is marginally significant ($p < .05$).

The results from Model 4 show that the type of homophily matters. Same gender contacts have about 40 percent greater odds of vouching for job seekers than different gender contacts, whereas race homophily is unrelated to vouching. These results offer qualified support for Hypothesis 2, suggesting that respondents receive more job finding assistance when they rely on gender homophilic connections than when they have gender heterophilous contacts.

Model 5 assesses the extent to which the contact characteristic effects are distinct for different gender and race groups. The findings reveal no significant differences in these effects by race, but gender does serve as a moderating variable. White male contacts are more likely to vouch for male job seekers than female job seekers. This effect is consistent with the homophily effects found in Model 4, as one would expect women to receive less job finding influence from white men given that these are gender heterophilous relationships. Nonetheless, this interaction remains significant even after controlling for gender and race homophily. This suggests that, even net of homophily effects, men receive more job finding assistance from white male contacts than women receive from white male contacts. This finding is consistent with the prediction from hypothesis 3a. The final model shows that homophily effects on vouching are relatively consistent across gender and race groups. While the effects of homophilous contacts on vouching are lower for women, blacks, and Hispanics, these differences are not statistically significant. In short, the findings from Table 3 offer only limited support for hypothesis 3b. Only one of the control variables (age) is significantly related to this dependent variable across all models. Younger people are more likely
than older individuals to report that their job contact vouched for them. Unlike the earlier results, the findings from Table 3 are consistent with the homophily thesis rather than the segregated networks thesis. Whereas the gender and race composition of networks is unrelated to the odds of having a contact vouch for a respondent, the odds of vouching increase significantly when the job seeker and the contact are the same gender. The results also offer some evidence of preferential access to job finding assistance, in that white male contacts are significantly more likely to vouch for male job seekers than female job seekers, even after accounting for homophily effects.

Table 4 presents the unstandardized coefficients from OLS regression analysis examining the occupational status of gendered and racialized networks. Model 1 shows that people in white male networks have access to connections that are, on average, roughly 4 points higher on the SEI scale. By way of reference, 4 points on the SEI scale is equal to the difference between a car salesman (34.55) and a sales supervisor (38.51). This finding supports Hypothesis 1c, which asserted that white male-dominated networks would contain higher status connections than female and minority networks. Model 2 also provides evidence of network status differences across gender and race network characteristics. All female networks, on average, are lower on the SEI scale by 3 points compared to male networks. Hispanic networks are 4 SEI points lower on average than white networks. However, black and other race networks are no different from white male networks.

Model 3 reveals that homophilous networks tend to contain lower status alters than heterophilous networks (by about 2 points on the SEI scale). This finding was not anticipated by the hypotheses, but is interesting nonetheless. The homophily status disadvantage is about as pronounced for gender homophily as race homophily— as both are associated with a 1.8 point status deficit—although only the coefficient for race homophily is statistically significant (see Model 4). None of the interaction effects presented in Models 5 and 6 are statistically significant. This suggests that there is little difference across gender and race groups in the relationship between network composition/homophily and network status.

Many of the control variables are significantly associated with the status of network members. English speakers, older individuals, and highly educated respondents all reported higher status alters. Full time employment status is negatively related to network status, but note that this occurs only once the personal, network, and job characteristics are included in the models. At the bivariate level, full time employment is positively but not significantly related to network status. People in higher status jobs and high authority jobs tend to have higher status occupational contacts. Proportion white male in occupation is negatively related to network status, but like employment status, this relationship does not exist when the other variables are excluded from the model. Extensity is negatively associated with network status, despite being positively and significantly associated with the status of network alters at the bivariate level.

Network status is therefore dependent on both the composition and the homophily of the networks. People in white male dominated networks tend to have access to higher status contacts on average than people in other kinds of networks, lending support to the segregation thesis. Heterophily, rather than homophily, is associated with higher status alters, with this effect being more robust.
for race than gender. The results show no support for the preferential access thesis, as the above results are not conditioned by the gender or race of ego.

The regression results highlight the contingencies associated with accessing to social capital through gendered and racialized networks, indicating that the processes are likely to be different, depending on the type of resource. The implications of the findings are discussed below; however, one caveat is worth mentioning here. The relatively low predictive power of the regression models in Tables 2 and 3 offers some cause for concern. Of course, it should be noted that the pseudo-$R^2$ values are not analogous to $R^2$ values and in fact offer estimates of explained variance that are far less precise. Nonetheless, there appears to be some room for further exploration of the differences in these first two outcomes.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Previous studies of network inequality have tended to focus on the outcomes of network-based hiring processes or on the network characteristics of egos. This has led to unsupported assumptions about the extent to which membership in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unstandardized coefficients for OLS regression on average status of network members.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender and race of respondent</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.200</td>
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<td>-0.751</td>
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<td>-0.550</td>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>3.847***</td>
<td>1.191</td>
<td>0.999</td>
<td>1.081</td>
<td>3.711***</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender and race of network</th>
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<td>Proportion female network</td>
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<td>Proportion black network</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion Hispanic network</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-4.314*</td>
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<td>Proportion other race network</td>
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<td>1.917</td>
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<td>Female × WM network</td>
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<td>Black × WM network</td>
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<td>Hispanic × WM network</td>
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<td>6.354</td>
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<td>Proportion same gender and race (G/R) network</td>
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<td>-2.429*</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>1.646</td>
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<td>-1.177</td>
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<td>-1.092</td>
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<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.009</td>
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<td>SEI of current job</td>
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<td>0.029*</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.028*</td>
<td>0.029*</td>
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<td>Supervisory authority</td>
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<td>0.434</td>
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<td>-0.069</td>
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<td>Extent</td>
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<td>-0.266**</td>
<td>-0.231**</td>
<td>-0.235**</td>
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<td>-0.267**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>38.688**</td>
<td>42.107**</td>
<td>41.242**</td>
<td>41.875**</td>
<td>39.960**</td>
<td>39.581**</td>
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</table>

Observations
2735 2735 2735 2735 2735 2735
R²
0.103 0.109 0.100 0.100 0.111 0.114

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* Omitted variable bias may be a problem in the analysis of job finding assistance, since few of the control variables were significantly related to the outcome. In subsequent analyses, I tested a variety of model specifications and did not find any additional theoretically-informed control variables that substantially altered the model fit statistics.

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8 Gendered and racialized networks is associated with access to social resources. I improve on prior research by (1) utilizing a nationally-representative sample of workers, (2) analyzing a broad set of social capital resources, and (3) exploring several potential explanations for how gender and race might influence access to network resources. The results suggest that the processes by which network features influence differential access to social capital depend on the kind of resource that is being studied. The gender and race composition of networks are associated with access to job information and high status network alters. Homophily is positively associated with vouching assistance from job contacts, while heterophily is associated with higher status contacts. Men tend to benefit from preferential access to influence, but not information or status. I explore the implications of the specific findings in greater detail below.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The gender and race features of network relationships are indeed associated with access to social capital resources. Overall, the findings provide evidence of resource advantages associated with being a member in white male networks, lending support to classic statements on the role of social networks in reproducing social inequality, as well as more recent assertions from the old boy networks and wrong networks perspectives. This study also adds depth to our understanding of these processes by specifying the mechanisms by which gender and race network features may influence access to social resources. Access to some resources (i.e., information and status) is facilitated by membership in white male networks. Access to influence, though, is facilitated both by the matching of gender characteristics between ego and network
alters and by being a member of the dominant gender group. Consequently, the results reveal how all three processes described by prior theories (social closure based on network membership, social closure based on ascriptive matching, and socio-cognitive stereotyping) may uniquely affect the flow of social capital.

The gender and race composition of networks is directly associated with access to network information and status. Maintaining white male network connections appears to provide significantly greater access to job information and high status contacts than female- and minority-dominated networks. As such, gender and race segregation in social networks help to consolidate the resources advantages of white men, while also limiting female and minority access to these resources. The results also show how segregated networks limit access to certain resources for certain groups. Gender composition appears to be most consequential for accessing job information. This is consistent with the prior research which shows that female contacts provide fewer job leads than male contacts (Huffman and Torres, 2002), while others have found no differences in the provision of referrals across race (Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo, 2006). Male connections maintain significant authority advantages in work organizations (Smith, 2002), making them privy to information about job openings that may or may not have been made public. Employment tends to occupy a more central role in the lives of men than of women and male networks therefore tend to be composed of individuals who have greater attachment to the labor market (Campbell, 1988; Parks-Yancy, 2010). Gender roles largely define the content of conversations (Bearman and Parigi, 2004), suggesting that women’s conversations less often focus on work-related matters than men’s conversations.

The gender and race composition of networks is also associated with access to high status contacts. Female and Hispanic networks tend to have lower status connections than networks composed of males and whites. At the same time, the absence of a status deficit for black networks is conspicuous given the black-white difference in status at the individual level. This suggests an upward bias in the selection of black connections, such that higher status blacks are more likely than lower status blacks to serve as contacts. This may be due to a greater reluctance on the part of impoverished blacks to serve as job contacts (Smith, 2005). Despite these contingencies, the findings support the wrong networks perspective, as access to social capital (in the form of information and status) is linked to the gender and race composition of networks and is associated with some resource benefits, but also some drawbacks as well. Social capital influence tends to be more common among gender homophilous relationships. Male contacts are more likely to vouch for male job seekers than female job seekers, just as female contacts are more likely to vouch for other women than for men. This may be due to the greater trust that develops among homophilous relationships and/or to greater solidarity that is generated among same gender groups (Kanter, 1977; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993). Vouching for a job applicant requires a different level of commitment than simply providing information about a job opening. Job contacts put their own reputations on the line when vouching for someone else, which requires greater trust in the competency of the person being referred and confidence that the person will do a good job. However, homophilous networks fail to provide any information on status advantages. In fact, alters in gender and race homophilous networks tend to be of lower status than alters in heterophilous networks. While this finding was not anticipated by the hypothesises, it is consistent with previous theoretical statements on the role of diversity in network relations. In particular, prior research indicates that stronger and more homogenous ties are best for bonding social relations, whereas weaker and more heterogeneous ties are best for bridging social distances and enhancing mobility prospects (Granovetter, 1973; Liu and Duff, 1972; Putnam, 2000).

I find no evidence of preferential access to information and status. In other words, the information and status benefits associated with being part of a white male network accrue to all respondents regardless of their gender or race. As such, information and status are conferred on the basis of network membership rather than membership in ascriptive groups. This implies that a unique form of social closure is operating here; one in which opportunities are reserved for others based on membership in relationships rather than for carriers of ascriptive features. In this instance, in-group membership has less to do with similarity in gender or race characteristics and more to do with being part of the same social circle.

Of course, gender and race characteristics are associated with network formation and membership (as evidenced by the trenchant patterns of network segregation), but within those segregated networks, information and status appear to be broadly accessible. This is an encouraging finding, as it suggests that reductions in network segregation may be accompanied by greater equality in access to information and status.

Then again, the results offer evidence of preferential access to influence among men in old boy networks. In other words, white men are more likely to vouch for male job seekers than female job seekers, even after controlling for homophily effects. Gender stereotypes are such that the presumed competencies of women are relatively circumscribed compared to men (Ridgeway, 1997). Stereotypes about the gender fit between applicants and job openings could therefore account for the influence advantages of men over women with white male contacts. In short, it is clear that the flow of influence is not governed by network membership alone. Rather, both the matching of gender characteristics and membership in the dominant gender group enhance the influence exerted by job contacts.

When considered together, the findings highlight the difficulties faced by women in the labor market. Men can consistently gain access to information, influence, and status by maintaining networks composed largely of other men, but the situation is paradoxical for women. Women who maintain networks composed of other women will often fail to hear about job openings, whereas women who rely mainly on male contacts may find that their connections are less willing to vouch for them. Given the tendency for the construction and maintenance of gender homophilous networks, women often forgo information and status for the sake of influence (confirmed by the lack of significant gender difference in assistance shown in Fig. 1).

In short, the findings demonstrate the importance of women maintaining a gender diverse set of social network connections in order to procure a wide variety of job information and also drawing on the helpfulness of similar others. Several other studies have noted the mobility benefits associated with homophilous connections for dominant groups and heterophilous connections for subordinate group members (Day and McDonald, 2010; Ibarra, 1995, 1997). For subordinate groups in society, gaining access to high status resources requires breaking out of existing social circles, but there is a ceiling effect for dominant group members (Lin, 2001). White men can rely on white male connections in order to mobilize high status contacts. Breaking out of their social circles would provide them with no status benefit. In fact, it may reduce the resources at their disposal. The results from the present study

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9 Unfortunately, this proposition cannot be tested directly with this dataset as respondents were not asked about the extent to which they trusted their job contacts. Homophily is significantly associated with feelings of closeness, but controlling for closeness in the models does not eliminate the effect of homophily on contact influence. Future research needs to explore whether trust or some other factors explain the link between homophily and influence.
therefore extend these prior findings by highlighting how influence access through homophilous social relations is contingent on the gender of ego. Then again, the status benefits of heterophily do not depend on the ascriptive characteristics of ego, indicating that these dominant-subordinate group differences may only apply to social capital influence.

While the gendered character of networks is strongly associated with access to resources, the relationships between race and social capital are less robust. Inequality in access to information appears to be determined more by access to male networks than to white networks. Of course, racial minorities have relatively few white men in their occupational networks and this likely serves as a barrier to accessing information and status. Also, the lack of average differences in the number of job leads received across the racial characteristics of networks may fail to capture significant race differences at the margins. Recent research has shown that blacks receive more information about job opportunities than whites when they occupy non-supervisory positions, but receive fewer job leads than whites among high-level supervisors (McDonald et al., 2009). Therefore, a more nuanced analysis of race composition of supervisory networks is likely to reveal substantial inequality. Furthermore, black job seekers receive less job finding assistance from their job contacts, despite the fact that black contacts provide no less assistance than other contacts. This finding is at odds with ethnographic research on the reluctance of black connections to provide job finding assistance (Smith, 2007). However, the results might be explained by contingencies in the economic environment, as impoverished blacks are generally less likely than blacks who are in a better financial situation to vouch for others (Smith, 2007). More quantitative research is clearly needed to explore these relationships.

Future research should also attempt to replicate these findings and explore alternative measurement strategies in order to verify and/or clarify the results presented here. The measurement of the first two dependent variables (job leads and job finding assistance) deserves special attention in the future. For example, data on job leads and job finding assistance could be collected prospectively via diary methods to reduce recall bias (see Fu, 2005). Also, additional information could be collected about the quality of the job leads (Huffman and Torres, 2002) and about the specific ways in which contacts vouched for respondents. Rather than relying on informant reports, job contacts could be interviewed about their activities.

Furthermore, the results presented here are associational and therefore should not be interpreted as causal. The associations presented here hint at a causal relationship between gendered and racialized network membership and access to social resources, but network features are endogenous with job finding processes (Mouw, 2003). This is particularly a problem for the analysis of network status, whereby occupational status could affect network status or vice versa. Future research should therefore attempt to explore the causal process in greater detail by demonstrating the temporal priority of the independent variables and employing counterfactual statistical techniques to rule out potential spuriousness (Mouw, 2006).

While this study focused on network-based explanations for labor market inequality, none of the findings rule out the possibility of discrimination on the part of hiring authorities. Even when women and racial minorities have access to social resources in similar quantity and quality as white men, hiring authorities may still respond to these resources differently by expressing a preference for the resources mobilized by white male applicants and/or discounting those mobilized by others. This point is particularly salient when assessing the results for black networks, which generally offer access to social resources that are commensurate with those of whites. Black-white inequality in the labor market may be more about differential ways that resources are mobilized and the direct discriminatory actions on the part of employers, as opposed to deficits in access to social resources. This distinction highlights the interdependencies associated with inequality in access to, mobilization of, and returns to social capital (Lin, 2001). Future research therefore needs to study the interface between these network processes and hiring discrimination in order to shed additional light on the processes by which networks exacerbate or ameliorate existing gender and race inequality in the labor market.

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