Social Capital, Labour Markets, and Job-Finding in Urban and Rural Regions: comparing paths to employment in prosperous cities and stressed rural communities in Canada

Ralph Matthews, The University of British Columbia
Ravi Pendakur, University of Ottawa
Nathan Young, University of Ottawa

Please direct correspondence to:

Nathan Young
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
University of Ottawa
55 Laurier St. East
Ottawa, ON, Canada
K1N 6N5

nyoung@uottawa.ca
1-613-841-2829 (1446)
Social Capital, Labour Markets, and Job-Finding in Urban and Rural Regions: comparing paths to employment in prosperous cities and stressed rural communities in Canada¹,²

ABSTRACT

This paper compares paths to employment (job-finding) in prosperous cities and economically-stressed rural communities in Canada. Since the pioneering work of Mark Granovetter (1973; 1974), sociologists have investigated the role of social capital in job-finding (specifically, the use of strong and weak social ties to find out about employment opportunities). To date, however, there have been few direct comparisons of job-finding in urban and rural settings (see Lindsay et al. 2005; Wahba and Zenou 2005). Using data from two major surveys and a qualitative interview project, we uncover several important differences in urban and rural paths to employment. First, we find that both strong and weak ties are used more frequently by rural residents to find a job, while city-dwellers rely more often on formal or impersonal means. Second, we find much stronger evidence of differentiation within rural regions. Long-time rural residents are much more likely to use strong and weak ties to find employment than are newcomers. However, rural residents who used weak ties as paths to employment have significantly lower incomes. None of these patterns are evident in the cities. Together, these findings lead us to conclude that job-finding in rural settings is strongly affected by constraints – in the labour market and in social capital resources – that are not present in the cities.
Introduction

Three and a half decades of research tell us that levels of social capital have a strong impact on economic outcomes (e.g., Granovetter 1973; Woolcock 1998; Lin 2001; Tiepoh and Reimer 2004). While definitions of social capital vary, there is general agreement that the concept refers to ‘the mutual relations, interactions, and networks that emerge among human groups’ (Wall et al. 1998: 304). There is solid evidence that individuals, households, and even communities and regions reap a tangible economic benefit from high levels of social capital (Putnam 1993; Reimer 1997; Narayan and Pritchett 1999; Onyx and Bullen 2000; Glaeser 2001).

Perhaps the clearest link between social capital and economic benefit has emerged in studies of paths to employment. In the 1970s, sociologist Mark Granovetter (1973, 1974) established that personal networks (or social ties) play a very strong role in job-finding. Granovetter’s research, which has generally been supported by later studies, indicated that approximately half of all jobs are filled through social connections (Granovetter 1974; Wegener 1991; Wahba and Zenou 2005). Equally important is his assertion that ‘weak ties’ are much more valuable in the labour market than are ‘strong ties’. Weak ties are infrequent connections that are typically achieved through work, neighbourhood, voluntary organizations, and friends-of-friends. Their primary value comes from broadening access to information, which is particularly important in job searches. Strong ties are important social capital resources as well, but are considered to be less useful in job-finding because strong tie networks are typically smaller and more homogeneous. While there is some dissent, most studies concur with Granovetter’s conclusion (cf. Wegener 1991). More recently, however, some scholars have argued that strong ties are important in non-standard or difficult labour markets where obligation and reciprocity play a stronger role (Bian 1997; Brown and Konrad 2001).

In this paper, we compare paths to employment in urban and rural regions of Canada. At present, few studies make this direct comparison (see Lindsay et al. 2005; Wahba and Zenou 2005). This lack of attention is striking, given dramatic recent changes in the economic and demographic composition of cities and rural regions in Canada and other advanced capitalist nations. Over the past twenty-five years, the economies and populations of large cities have grown and diversified significantly, while many rural regions have experienced outmigration and economic stagnation. In our view, the urban-rural relationship ought to be of great concern to scholars of globalization, inequality, and economic sociology. However, the impact of urban-rural differences on important economic processes such as labour market outcomes remains largely unexamined.

Our investigation draws on data from two major surveys and a qualitative interview project. From these, we find several important differences in urban and rural job-finding. First, we find that strong and weak ties are used more frequently by rural residents to find employment, while city-dwellers are heavy users of formal or impersonal means (such as help-wanted ads or submitting an unsolicited application or resumé). Second, we find greater differentiation in the rural communities among users of
strong ties, weak ties, and formal means of job-finding. This suggests that different members of rural communities have different types of job-search resources available to them – a pattern that does not emerge in the urban population. Moreover, in rural regions the use of weak ties is significantly associated with a reduction in income, even when other important variables such as age, gender, visible minority status, and social capital are controlled.

These findings suggest that paths to employment differ in urban and rural communities. To interpret this, we heed recent calls by a number of scholars to pay attention to the role of constraints in the development and use of social capital and network connections (Berkman et al. 2000; Leonard and Onyx 2003; Erickson 2004; Enns et al. 2008). According to Leonard and Onyx (2003: 202), ‘structure is as important as people’ in understanding the relationship between social capital and economic outcomes. Following this lead, we argue that rural job-finding is strongly influenced by constraints on the labour market and on social capital and networks, that do not exist in cities.

Social capital and job-finding

The link between social capital and job-finding is widely recognized, and has been confirmed by many studies conducted over the past thirty-five years (e.g., Granovetter 1974; Wegener 1991; Beggs and Hulbert 1997; Wahba and Zenou 2005). However, an increasing number of studies are also making the argument that ‘context matters’: that the effects of social capital on job-finding differ according to who is using it and under what circumstances. Part of the confusion comes from the strong influence of Granovetter’s early work on the topic (Granovetter 1973, 1974). Granovetter’s conclusions about ‘the strength of weak ties’ were based primarily on research on a specific place and group (white-collar workers in a suburb of Boston) – a fact that has sometimes been forgotten or neglected by scholars looking to build on this work. In fact, in a later article, Granovetter himself pointed to two key studies that suggest that context strongly affects the use of social capital in job-finding (Granovetter 1982). First, research by Langlois (1977) demonstrated that weak-tie use varies by socio-economic status and occupation: while managerial and professional employees are heavy users of weak ties, lower status employees tend to rely more on strong ties and impersonal means of job-finding. Second, Ericksen and Yancey (1980) found that strong- and weak-tie use varies with education, with less educated workers making greater use of strong ties in job-finding. Moreover, these authors found that weak tie use among the most poorly educated is linked with an average reduction in income, suggesting that weak ties are either a ‘most convenient’ or a ‘last resort’ means for low-status workers to find employment (see also Holzer 1988). Similar conclusions have also been presented by Lin et al. (1981a, 1981b), and by Wegener (1991), who found that highly-educated and already-successful workers were most able to connect with high-status others and leverage these networks into job opportunities.

Studies have also shown that ‘context matters’ with respect to labour markets as well. Weak ties appear to be most effective for job-seekers in the free and complex labour markets of North American and European cities (Lin 1982; Wegener 1991). In
contrast, the corporatist and hierarchical traditions of the Japanese labour market means that strong ties may be more valuable (Wantanabe 1987). Similar findings have emerged from research in China, where the white-collar labour market is tightly controlled by the state (Bian 1997). Last, micro-labour markets also appear to have a strong impact on the role of social capital in job-finding. Research by Brown and Konrad (2001) found that job-seeking differs strongly in shrinking versus growing sectors of the economy. In a growing sector, people tend to use weak ties (mostly gained in the workplace) to find new employment opportunities. However, Brown and Konrad also argue that weak ties are less useful for ‘big changes’ in career direction, such as leaving a declining industry. If an individual’s weak-tie networks are developed inside a stressed economy, then one is forced to rely more on strong ties to exit this difficult labour market. In short, these studies suggest that strong and weak ties mean different things for individuals of different backgrounds who are embedded in different labour markets.

Why urban and rural paths to employment are (likely) different

The recent emphasis on context leads us to hypothesize that paths to employment likely differ in urban and rural areas. As mentioned, few studies have made this direct comparison to date (see Wahba and Zenou 2005; Lindsay et al. 2005). However, there are extensive literatures comparing urban and rural social capital (e.g., Beggs et al. 1996; Hofferth and Iceland 1998; Onyx and Bullen 2000), and urban and rural labour markets (e.g., Bollman 1992; Wojan 2000; Alasia and Magnusson 2005). These bodies of work contain some important clues about how structure and context might differently affect the use of social ties in urban and rural job-finding.

First, existing comparisons of urban and rural social capital tell us that the latter is strongly shaped by constraints. Generally speaking, cities tend to be larger, more diverse, and more anonymous than rural communities (Hofferth and Iceland 1998). For these reasons, it is more possible for individuals in urban areas to build networks that reflect their personal choices and preferences. The structure of cities allows for extremely diverse networks (reaching many different groups, professions, and perspectives), but also the possibility of very homogeneous networks (the size and anonymity of the city allows people to avoid connecting with those that are unlike them).

The rural reality is quite different. The ‘pool’ of potential network contacts in rural communities is generally smaller, more insular, and more homogeneous than in urban areas. This means that rural networks tend to be smaller, denser, and contain more strong ties to family and longstanding friends than found in the cities (Beggs et al. 1996; Hofferth and Iceland 1998; Onyx and Bullen 2000). However, the effects of these constraints are sometimes unexpected. For instance, research by Erickson (2003: 44) finds that network diversity is actually higher in rural communities than in cities, because ‘people living in areas with small populations cannot help but meet most or all of those around them, whether these people are similar to them or not’. On the other hand, Enns et al. (2008) point out that network ties and diversity may be less instrumentally valuable in rural settings than in cities. For example, while many people in a rural community may personally know the mayor and other civic and business leaders, these connections are likely not as advantageous as in urban areas (in job-finding or otherwise). This is not
because rural leaders are less competent, but, as Tiepoh and Reimer (2004) point out, they have significantly less access to economic and bureaucratic resources than their urban counterparts. Therefore, Enns et al. (2008) argue that social ties to people outside the community (strong or weak) may be much more valuable to rural residents than ties to others within the community (see also Woolcock and Narayan 2000; Leonard and Onyx 2003). This literature suggests that rural residents may have high levels of social capital and network diversity, but that this may not translate into success in the labour market (i.e., landing ‘good jobs’).

Existing literature also suggests that urban and rural labour markets are structured very differently, and we expect that this will also have an effect on job-finding across the urban-rural divide. Rural economies tend to be less diverse than those of cities (Magnusson and Alasia 2005). Many rural regions continue to depend on primary industries, although employment in agriculture and traditional resource sectors such as forestry and fisheries is generally declining (Bollman 1992; Hayter 2000; Young 2008). At the same time, the service sector is growing in many rural areas, particularly in tourism and hospitality (Bryden and Bollman 2000). Despite this growth, there are significant gaps in rural labour markets. Strong evidence exists that rural regions have fewer high-skill and professional occupations than in urban areas (Barkley 1995; Wojan 2000; Magnusson and Alasia 2004). Bryden and Bollman (2000) highlight a particular weakness in the lucrative sectors of business-to-business services, as well as information and communications services. In an analysis of Canadian census data, Alasia and Magnusson (2005) find that professional occupations have declined precipitously in rural areas since the early 1990s following broad government cutbacks on public services, including health, education, and social services. In short, rural labour markets are much more constrained and limited than those found in cities. Moreover, they are beset by an important gap between lower-skilled jobs (which are growing) and higher-skilled jobs (which are shrinking). As we will see, this tendency plays a significant role in rural job-finding.

Data sources

We use two complementary datasets to compare urban and rural job-finding. The first, entitled the Equality, Security, and Community Survey (ESC), was conducted in 2002 by a team of Canadian researchers that includes one of the authors of this paper (Pendakur). The ESC was administered nationally, in both English and French, using stratified random sampling of households. Respondents within the household were selected by ‘most recent birthday’. This helped to achieve relative balance in gender (52% women, 48% men) and age (the average age of respondents is 43.3 years; participation was restricted to those 18 years of age and older). From the ESC, we draw a subsample of residents in Canada’s three largest metropolitan centres – Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver – as our urban population. The N for this subsample is 2,230 cases. The three cities included in the subsample are among Canada’s most prosperous, and are the heart of the nation’s manufacturing, service, and financial sectors. In 2002, Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver had respective unemployment rates of 7.4%, 7.9%, and 6.6%, and labour force participation rates of 70%, 62%, and 61%.³
The second dataset comes from a survey conducted by a group led by one of the authors (Matthews) entitled ‘The Resilient Communities Project’ (RCP). The RCP survey was administered in 2003-2004 in 22 rural communities on the Pacific coast of the province of British Columbia. The N for this survey is 2,881 cases. Identical methods of stratified random sampling and most recent birthday selection were used (again, for respondents 18 years of age or older). The gender balance is strong (49% women, 51% men). While the average age of respondents is high compared to the ESC (54.8 years), this is consistent with Canadian census data that shows that rural communities have proportionally large cohorts of youth (0-20) and mature persons (40 and above), due to the out-migration of many younger adults (Malatest 2002). The rural coast of British Columbia is a remote region with low population density that has suffered a severe economic downturn associated with declines in traditional resource-based industries. Unemployment is high in the region (12.6% in 2002, with a labour force participation rate of 55%). Most recent job losses have come in the primary industries and goods-producing sectors, with modest job increases over the past decade in service-sector employment, particularly tourism (BC Statistics 2002).

Social capital is a major theme of both surveys (see Matthews 2003; Kay and Johnston 2007). The RCP survey contains several measures of individual networks, institutional and generalized trust, involvement in voluntary organizations, and paths to employment. The ESC survey is broader in scope, and looks at issues such job satisfaction, attitudes towards immigrants, and political values – none of which are included in the RCP survey. Nevertheless, the ESC and RCP surveys contain comparable measures on important variables such as paths to employment and involvement in voluntary organizations.

Finally, we note that the RCP project involved 92 semi-structured in-person interviews with respondents in 6 of the 22 communities. Data from these interviews allow us more in-depth insight into some of the patterns uncovered using the survey instrument, and to better explain how job-finding works in rural communities.

Findings

In this section, we compare key findings from the two surveys. First, we will look at levels of social capital among the urban and rural populations. Second, we examine patterns in job-finding in each sample. Third, we will look at patterns within each survey – at who is and is not using strong and weak ties as paths to employment in the rural and urban environments. Fourth, we will compare significant variables across the surveys (using comparisons of coefficients from regression models performed on both surveys), to see if any core differences exist between urban and rural users of strong and weak ties. Last, we look at the effects of different paths to employment on income.

Social capital in the urban and rural communities

Levels of social capital can be measured in several different ways. The most common measure involves assessing individuals’ involvements in voluntary organizations (Beggs and Hurlbert 1997; Putnam 2000; Onyx and Bullen 2000; Leonard...
There is empirical support for this approach. For instance, in a factor analytical study of data from a major Australian survey project, Onyx and Bullen (2000) found that involvement in community-level organizations was the strongest contributing factor in the construction of an overall social capital scale (see also Teorell 2000, and Leonard and Onyx 2003; Erickson 2003: 39). Other possibilities include looking at the breadth of individual networks, typically using a ‘position generator’, which asks respondents to indicate whether they know people in various occupational positions (Lin et al. 2001). Some scholars use a ‘resource generator’, which substitutes skills and capacities for occupations (for instance, asking: Do you know anyone who … can repair a car, can do your shopping when you are ill, etc.) (Van der Gaag and Sniders 2003: 21). The latter measures are very valuable for measuring network reach and diversity (Erickson 2003).

The RCP and ESC surveys contain comparable measures of involvement in different types of voluntary organizations: specifically service and community organizations, recreational organizations, ethnic organizations, religious organizations, and political organizations. The RCP survey includes a position generator, however the ESC does not. We therefore use involvement in voluntary organizations as our measure of social capital.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ESC (urban)</th>
<th>RCP (rural)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service organization</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational organization</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic organization**</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious organization**</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political organization**</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Differences between urban and rural are significant to < .01 (t-test)

Table 1 indicates the percentages of respondents who indicated membership in the different kinds of voluntary organizations. We see very little difference in involvement in service and recreational organizations. However, Table 1 shows that there are statistically significant differences between city-dwellers and rural residents in involvement in ethnic, religious, and political organizations. First, urbanites are far more active in ethnic organizations. This makes sense, because cities are generally more ethnically diverse than rural regions (although many rural regions in Canada have high Aboriginal populations). Moreover, new immigrants to Canada tend to settle in the cities, and this group is most likely to participate in ethnic organizations (Breton 2003). This factor also likely contributes to the higher levels of involvement with religious organizations in the cities, as first-generation Canadians are much more likely to attend religious services than the general population (Clark 2003). Finally, we see that rural residents are significantly more likely to be involved in political organizations. There are several possible explanations for this. First, environmental and natural resource issues are ever-present in rural regions in Canada, perhaps spurring rural residents to become involved in groups representing all sides of these issues (environmental groups, landowners’ groups, etc.) Second, the small size of rural communities means that a
greater proportion of the population is involved in local government and administration (Enns et al. 2008).

In short, Table 1 shows that levels of social capital (as measured by involvement in voluntary organizations) are comparable in urban and rural regions across the modal categories of service and recreational organizations. Key differences are evident in the prevalence of membership in ethnic, religious, and political organizations. However, these differences are themselves variable – participation in ethnic and religious groups is more common in the cities, while involvement in political groups is more common in the rural communities. Later, we will ask whether involvement in these groups has an influence on paths to employment.

### Job-finding patterns in urban and rural communities

While the two surveys find (roughly) comparable levels of social capital in the urban and rural regions, they paint very different pictures of employment and job-finding. Table 2 provides basic information regarding employment among the two populations. As expected, the labour force participation rate is lower among rural respondents, although this difference is modest. More notable are the differences among the employed. A significantly higher proportion of rural respondents report self-employment than city-dwellers (16% compared with 10%). In fact, the RCP survey suggests that rural self-employment is even higher than indicated in Table 2. The survey allowed respondents to select both ‘self employed’ and ‘employed by others’, which was done in order to capture the common tendency in rural regions for residents to hold multiple paying jobs or to supplement their incomes with hobbies and other forms of casual self-employment (du Plessis 2004). A total of 110 respondents reported both self-employment and employment by others, but for our purposes they have been counted among the latter. We have done this in order to achieve mutually exclusive categories, and because the self-employed are typically excluded from analyses of job-finding (as they have created their own). Overall, Table 2 tells us that ‘normal’ employment – holding a job with wages paid by others – is more common in the cities than the rural communities (50% compared with 41% of respondents). A chi square test for the table confirms that these differences in the structure of employment among urban and rural respondents are significant (58.22, p<.01).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ESC (urban)</th>
<th>RCP (rural)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not employed</td>
<td>894 (40.0%)</td>
<td>1,243 (43.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>231 (10.4%)</td>
<td>470 (16.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed by others</td>
<td>1,105 (49.6%)</td>
<td>1,168 (40.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi square</td>
<td>58.22 (significant to &lt;.01)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 provides information on how employed respondents in the two samples found out about their current jobs (excluding self-employed persons). Immediately, we see that formal processes are much more important in urban job-finding than in the rural communities. Of employed respondents in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver, 80%
found out about their current job through a formal or impersonal channel: a help wanted advertisement, a union or other job posting, a recruitment agency, use of a government employment centre, by finding information on the Internet, or by dropping off or sending in an unsolicited application or resumé. In contrast, 47% of workers in the rural sample learned about their current job through formal or impersonal means.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Finding</th>
<th>ESC (urban)</th>
<th>RCP (rural)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal or impersonal processes</td>
<td>884 (80 %)</td>
<td>555 (47 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong ties</td>
<td>182 (17 %)</td>
<td>306 (26 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak ties</td>
<td>38 (3 %)</td>
<td>323 (27 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square = 329.23 (significant to <.01)

Table 3 also includes information on the use of social ties in job-finding. Here, we see that rural workers are much more likely than urban workers to use both strong and weak ties as paths to employment. 26% of rural workers indicated that they found out about their current job through strong ties, as compared to only 17% of workers in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. Most surprising, however, is the difference in use of weak ties. While 27% of rural respondents used a weak tie as a path to their current job, only 3% of urban workers indicated that they had found their job in this way. This contradicts Granovetter’s (1973) seminal finding that weak ties are significantly more important than strong ties in the urban labour market. However, we are not alone in reaching this conclusion. For instance, a recent survey by Rankin (2003: 291) of low-income workers in three US cities found that only 3-6% of respondents had used weak ties as paths to employment.

In the remainder of this paper, we will attempt to explain why there are such marked differences in urban and rural job-finding by looking at patterns within and across the two surveys. Before proceeding, however, we discuss a slight discrepancy between the ESC and RCP surveys. Both surveys ask respondents how they found out about their current job. On the ESC (urban) survey, a strong tie is indicated if a respondent selects ‘family member or friend’, while the equivalent category on the RCP survey is ‘family member or close friend’. It is therefore possible that some respondents to the RCP survey were more discerning with respect to indicating a strong versus weak tie. Similarly, weak ties are operationalized on the ESC survey as ‘knew someone (excludes family or friends)’, while the RCP survey operationalizes weak ties as ‘neighbour or acquaintance’, ‘friend of a friend or relative’, and ‘former workmate or employer’. These slightly different operationalizations should be acknowledged. However, in our opinion these are differences in degree of precision only, and are unlikely to have a major effect on the data or the comparability of the samples.

Who is (and is not) using strong and weak ties in urban job-finding?

In order to uncover patterns in who is using different paths to employment, we constructed multinomial logistic regression models for each sample. These allow us to measure the odds of respondents having used strong or weak ties based on other
variables, including education, age, years of residence in the community (RCP) or neighbourhood (ESC), immigration status, gender, visible minority and Aboriginal status, and membership in the different types of voluntary organizations discussed previously (service, recreational, ethnic, religious, and political). The regression models also control for interactions among the variables, so we are seeing their true effects on job-finding.

Table 4
Odds Ratios for Use of Strong and Weak Ties Among Urban Population (ESC survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Use of Weak Ties</th>
<th>Use of Strong Ties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of schooling(^7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(elementary school or Less)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some technical or community college</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some university</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University (bachelor’s)</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.27 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree or doctorate</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.32 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age(^8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 years</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30+ years</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.30 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal category</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible minority</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership in voluntary organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service organization</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>1.45 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation organization</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic organization</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious organization</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political organization</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>1.63 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant to >.05  ** Significant to >.01

We first consider patterns among city-dwellers, which are given in Table 4. Looking at the right-hand column, we see that certain types of people are more or less likely to use strong ties as paths to employment (the figures presented are odds ratios, meaning that a value under 1 is a decrease in odds, and a value over 1 is an increase in odds). First, city-dwellers with advanced education are significantly less likely than others to have found employment through strong ties. Because we are using regression-based odds ratios, these figures are relative to the excluded category (in this case, respondents with less than ‘some high school’). This means that, when all other variables are controlled, holding a Master’s degree decreases the odds of using a strong tie by 73% (0.27 – 1.00 = -0.73) compared to those with minimal schooling. Similarly, holding a
professional degree or doctorate decreases the odds by 68% ($0.32 - 1.00 = -0.68$). This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that occupations requiring advanced credentials are less open to being filled by strong tie networks (Granovetter 1982: 206). *Table 4* also demonstrates a significant effect for gender, where being male increases the odds of using a strong tie by 1.30 times. This is consistent with existing research on gender and social capital. For instance, Erickson (2003) argues that while men and women often appear to have similar levels of social capital or network connections, ‘men and women are more likely to meet others of their own gender and are more eager to turn such contacts into relationships’ (see also Bott 1971). If men are more likely to socialize and connect with other men, and ‘men have more power in the workplace, [then it follows] that contacts with men are more productive of good jobs’ (Erickson 2003: 28).

Last, we see significant effects for involvement in service and political organizations: being a member of these organizations increases the odds of using a strong tie as a path to employment by 1.45 times and 1.63 times, respectively. In contrast, urban users of weak ties do not differ in any statistically significant way from others across any variable, although the absence of effects may be due in part to the small number of respondents fitting this category (only 3% - see *Table 3*).

*Who is (and is not) using strong and weak ties in rural job-finding?*

The tendencies for the rural population, as given in *Table 5*, differ substantially from those among city-dwellers in several respects. First, in rural settings years of residency is the strongest predictor of use of both strong and weak ties in job-finding. For example, as compared to people who have been living in the community for less than a year (the excluded category), living in the community for 6-10 years increases the odds of using a weak tie to find employment by 3.29 times, 11-20 years by 3.55 times, 21-30 years by 3.27 times, and more than 30 years by 4.80 times. The effect for strong ties is even more pronounced, where living in the community for as little as a year increases the odds of using a strong tie to find a job by 4.36 times. Living in the community for more than 10 years increases the odds by 7 to 8 times. *Table 5* also shows that the effect is driven by length of residency, and not by the age of respondents *per se*. When length of residency is accounted for, age actually decreases the odds of having used strong ties as a path to employment, while having no effect on weak tie use.

*Table 5* also contains some important counter-intuitive tendencies. For instance, with other variables controlled, being an Aboriginal person reduces the odds of using a strong tie to find employment by 44%. Aboriginal groups on the rural coast of British Columbia tend to be characterized by extensive family and kin networks, and this would lead us to expect frequent usage of strong ties as paths to employment. Indeed, when we look carefully at the data, we see that 30% of Aboriginal respondents to the RCP indicated use of a strong tie to find out about their current job, which is higher than the 26% total for the entire rural population. Nevertheless, the higher percentage is explained by length of residency rather than ethnicity – to the point that Aboriginal status as an independent variable has a negative influence on strong tie usage within the overall regression model (an odds ratio of 0.56). It appears that employed Aboriginal people
who have recently moved to the communities have found their jobs through formal means – perhaps having been hired directly into local government or service-delivery.\(^9\) We will see later that this ‘newcomer effect’ is also common among non-Aboriginal persons.

### Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of Weak Ties</th>
<th>Use of Strong Ties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of Schooling</td>
<td>Some high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(lt highschool)</td>
<td>Some technical or community college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical or community college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University (bachelor’s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional degree or doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of residency</td>
<td>1-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21-30 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant (Canadian-born)</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (female)</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority (White)</td>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>non-Aboriginal minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership in</td>
<td>Service organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voluntary organization (not a member)</td>
<td>Recreation organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnic organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religious organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant to >.05  ** Significant to >.01

A second counter-intuitive pattern involves membership in voluntary organizations. On the one hand, we see that membership in a religious organization increases the odds of using a strong tie as a path to employment by 1.56 times. This tendency makes sense: religious organizations tend to be relatively homogeneous, and this ‘like-mindedness’ is associated with the development of strong ties (McPherson et al. 2001). Moreover, religious groups in rural communities are often very small, which may exaggerate this tendency to strong instead of weak tie development. On the other hand, we find that membership in a service organization (such as a Rotary Club or Lion’s Club) reduces the odds of using a strong tie by 29%. This is the opposite of what we saw in the urban population, where membership in a service organization increases the odds that one used a strong tie to find employment. This difference is not readily explainable.

Membership in voluntary organizations is a major social capital resource (Beggs and Hurlbert 1997). Involvement in voluntary organizations extends an individual’s network reach and diversity (Erickson 2003), and is an important source for the development of both strong and weak ties (Leonard and Onyx 2003). In our view, there are two possible
explanations for this discrepancy. First, as we discussed earlier, existing literature suggests that social ties inside rural communities may be less instrumentally valuable than those to the outside (Woolcock and Narayan 2000; Enns et al. 2008). It may be that in rural regions, involvement in service organizations is replicating existing ties, while in the cities this type of involvement forges new network ground. The second possibility is that service organizations are attracting different kinds of people in the urban and rural environments. If this is the case, however, it is associated with a variable that is not included among our controls.

**Comparisons across urban and rural populations**

Next, we look for significant differences across the urban and rural populations. To do so, we calculate a $t$ value for each of the variables outlined in *Tables 4 and 5*. The $t$ value is calculated by comparing the coefficients for each variable across both surveys (the odds ratios that we discussed previously are also derived from these coefficients). Calculating the $t$ values allows us to see if there are significant differences in the strength of each variable within each sample’s regression model (a $t$ value greater than 1.96 is equivalent to a .05 level of significance).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weak Ties</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong ties</td>
<td>1-5 years of residency</td>
<td>0.79 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10 years of residency</td>
<td>1.19 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-20 years of residency</td>
<td>1.27 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21-30 years of residency</td>
<td>1.84 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30+ years of residency</td>
<td>1.57 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (female)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Service organization</td>
<td>-0.35 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(not a Member)</td>
<td>Recreational organization</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religious organization</td>
<td>0.44 **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant to >.05 ** Significant to >.01

As we can see in *Table 6*, there are no statistically significant differences between urban and rural users of weak ties. However, there are significant differences between urban and rural users of strong ties. The strongest differences are on years of residency. *Table 6* indicates that long years of residency are associated with strong tie use in rural communities significantly more than in the cities. The effect for gender is the opposite. Gender is a significant variable in the cities, but not in rural communities. We expected gender to be significant in both settings, given that prior research has established that men tend to possess more ‘instrumental’ forms of social capital and networks (Erickson 2003). We will develop an explanation for the lack of a rural ‘gender effect’ following consideration of the interview data below. Last, *Table 6* shows that there are significant differences related to civic involvement. As we discussed, being a member of a service
organization is positively associated with strong tie use for job-finding in the urban sample, while it is negatively associated with strong tie use in the rural population. This is the only variable for which we see significant pulls in opposing directions (i.e. both coefficients are significant in themselves, as well as the difference between them). Involvement in recreation or religious organizations is associated with strong tie use in the rural communities significantly more than in the cities.

The effects of job-finding on income

Finally, we consider the relationship of job-finding to income. Income is not the only possible measure of success on the labour market. However, when other variables are controlled, income offers a standardized means of assessing the outcomes of job searches (cf. Jenks et al. 1988). To assess the ‘success’ of different paths to employment, we conducted multinomial logistic regression on respondents’ individual income. The regressions are based on the same variables considered in Tables 4 and 5, and therefore control for age, education, gender, visible minority status, years of residency, and social capital (membership in voluntary associations).

With these variables controlled, we find no relation between income and method of job-finding in the cities. There is no advantage or disadvantage to using strong ties, weak ties, or formal or impersonal means as paths to employment. Put another way, city-dwellers on all rungs of the income ladder were equally likely to have used strong ties, weak ties, or formal or impersonal means to find their current job (when all other variables are controlled).

Among the rural population, however, use of weak ties is significantly associated with a reduction in income (of an average of $3,000, with the other variables controlled). This indicates that use of weak ties to find a job tends to lead to worse outcomes in rural communities. There is no significant effect for strong ties. This is an important finding, because it suggests that weak tie job-searches may be a ‘last resort’ in rural environments. We will return to this question in our analysis of qualitative data from the rural communities below.

Discussion and qualitative data

Findings from the two surveys point to important differences in job-finding in urban and rural environments. First, city-dwellers were much more likely to have used formal or impersonal means to find out about their current jobs (80% versus 53% in rural communities). Second, we find much stronger evidence of differentiation in the rural regions. Two dimensions in particular stand out. The first is that long-time rural residents use both strong and weak ties to find employment much more frequently than do newcomers. This effect is very strong, and is not present in the cities. The second dimension involves income: use of weak ties is related to lower incomes in the rural region when all other variables are controlled. Again, this effect is absent in the cities, where each type of job-finding relates equally to all points on the income ladder.
This leads us to speculate that something is going on in the rural regions that is not a factor in the cities. We are reasonably confident that this has little to do with levels of social capital. As we saw in Table 1, levels of social capital are roughly comparable across the urban and rural regions (with some important exceptions). Instead, we suggest that the differences have to do with the context of job-finding. As we mentioned earlier, some scholars have recently argued that more attention needs to be paid to the role of structure and context in the development and use of social capital and networks (Berkman et al. 2000; Leonard and Onyx 2003; Erickson 2003; Enns et al. 2008). Therefore, in looking at the urban and rural differences in job-finding, we will focus on the role played by constraints.

To do so, we will compare our quantitative findings with qualitative results from semi-structured interviews conducted with 92 respondents to the RCP questionnaire across 6 rural communities. As we discussed previously, we expect that two types of constraints are particularly relevant: constraints on the rural labour market, and constraints on the instrumental utility of rural social capital.

The effect of rural labour market constraints

The major variable in rural job-finding is length of residency. As we saw in Table 5, when all other variables are controlled (including age), people who have lived in the community for six or more years are 3 to 5 times more likely to have used a weak tie to find their job than people who have lived there for a year or less. They are 5 to 8 times more likely to have used a strong tie. This suggests that there may be two major labour markets in play in the rural communities: one for newcomers, and one for longer-term residents. The interview data support this conclusion. Interviews conducted with recent arrivals to the communities suggest that two factors contribute to this pattern. First, many newcomers arrive in these communities with jobs in hand that they have typically discovered and applied for through formal means. This is particularly the case in education, health care, trades, and other professions that require accreditation or specialized skills. See, for example, the following exchange between an interviewer and a new arrival to one of the rural communities (Interview reference #164):

Interviewer: So what is it that brought you here?

Respondent: A job offer. And I had an idea — [They] actually asked me a question on the interview: ‘Are you aware that [the community] is far away?’ Thanks to me having travelled before and liking nature I was fine with that. I don’t regret that choice.

Interviewer: How did that happen? How did you go about getting this job offer? Did you know anybody here before that?

Respondent: No, no I did not. This is one of those jobs that you [apply for and] relocate from. This [is a job] where it is rare to have this kind of expertise right here in such a small community.
The second factor suggested by the interviews is that newcomers who arrive without pre-arranged employment face a ‘time-lag’ barrier. That is, job-search opportunities are restricted until roots and reputation can be established in the community (Interview reference #187):

**Interviewer:** How would you describe [this community] to someone who might want to move here?

**Respondent:** I would tell them that this is a very close-knit community but it’s closed to [newcomers] for a little while until you start to participate in the community, or [until] they see you getting involved and that you’re sticking around. I think it’s sometimes hard for someone from [away] to get a job here. You know, it took my partner 6 months. Now it’s not even an issue, we get phone calls for a job because people like to hire who they know around here.

From quotations such as these, we conclude that there is a two-way effect at work. First, people outside the community appear to have better access to formal job-finding in the rural regions than do local residents. This is a structural effect. Many skilled and professional positions are filled by formal job-postings and intra-union competitions. This also helps to explain the lack of significance of gender as a variable in job-finding in rural regions that we highlighted earlier (see Table 5). Specifically, the interviews showed that both men and women frequently come to these communities with jobs in-hand that they have acquired through formal means. Many of the men who did this were skilled tradespeople, utilities workers, and professionals; many of the women were teachers and nurses.

Second, newcomers to the communities who arrive without employment have difficulty accessing local strong and weak tie networks that might lead to jobs. Significantly, many of these newcomers are the spouses (both men and women) of people who have arrived with jobs in-hand. Feminist scholars have recently argued that research into social networks and social capital often assumes that families are unproblematic ‘wellsprings of social capital’ (Edwards 2004: 2; see also Molynieux 2002). Our findings suggest that family situation can have a strong negative impact on social capital in rural situations. For many male and female spouses of those arriving with jobs in-hand, the ‘networked’ portion of the labour market is closed. It can be argued this effect is also structural – that it has to do with the smaller, denser, and more insular networks than characterize small towns (Beggs et al. 1996; Hofferth and Iceland 1998). As such, it takes newcomers longer to build strong and weak tie networks in rural environments than in cities (Leonard and Onyx 2003), and we see that this has a strong impact on job-finding.

**The effect of rural social capital constraints**

As we discussed earlier, recent research suggests that rural social capital may be less instrumentally valuable than in urban settings (Enns et al. 2008). Members of rural
communities are likely to have high network diversity because life in a small town means that ‘one is compelled to meet all or almost all of the people around, similar or not’ (Erickson 2003: 38). However, the instrumental value of these ties is questionable if the individuals involved have limited social resources that they are likely to reserve for those with whom they have strong ties. We suspect that this may be behind the tendency for weak ties to lead to poorer-paying jobs in rural areas. Our statistical analysis found that job-finding in rural communities is related to a lower wage (an average $3,000 reduction) compared with job-finding through other means (after controlling for other important variables including age, education, and gender). There is no income effect for strong ties.

Again, the interview data shed light on what may be occurring. For instance, the interviews suggest that strong ties are important means into declining but high-wage industries. While Brown and Konrad (2001) have argued that strong ties are often used to exit troubled industries (essentially by default, as workers’ weak tie networks tend to be within the troubled sector), our interview research suggests that they are also important ways in. This is most pronounced in the resource sector, notably wood processing, which is in steep decline in the region but remains a source of relatively high wages: (Interview reference #144)

**Interviewer:** Did anybody tell you about the job, the first job that you got in the mill?

**Respondent:** My dad said they were hiring.

**Interviewer:** And he was working there at the time?

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And was there a lot of that, of dads saying to sons that there’s work at the mill?

**Respondent:** Yes. Even today a lot of the guys, a lot of the younger guys that I work with in the paper mill, their fathers worked there. Some of them, their grandfathers worked there.

Importantly, the negative influence of age in the rural regression model (see Table 5) shows that this is not a cohort effect. That is, we are not just seeing how older people found their jobs twenty or thirty years ago. The key variable for strong tie use is length of residency (roots in the community), and the negative influence of age shows that residency is even more significant as a predictor of strong-tie use among younger workers. The contemporary link between strong ties and higher-paying jobs is also expressed in the following quotation (interview reference #165):

**Interviewer:** Is the [economy] better or worse in terms of opportunities than other places around here?

**Respondent:** I guess it’s a little tighter, being that it has a [small] population. You know, you go to [the City of] Nanaimo and it has 72,000
[people], and I’ve actually seen ‘help wanted’ signs in windows of stores. Well here, unless you’re related to somebody or know somebody, you don’t get a job. You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: But that’s not totally true, because there is work here if you want it. You just can’t start at $25 an hour like some people think they can.

Job-finding through weak ties appears to work differently. For example, many respondents spoke about ‘just letting people know’ that they were looking for employment. This strategy depends on broadcasting information, as is evident in the following interview (reference #122):

Interviewer: When you were looking for jobs … how did you go about doing that?

Respondent: Well, it’s such a small town, so people know. People know everybody so you just go and –

Interviewer: So did you take resumes to places where you had heard there was a job?

Respondent: No, just around, and say: ‘Hi, if you’re interested, here I am.’

Interviewer: So go around to places where you’re kind of a known entity?

Respondent: Basically it’s places that – because you’ve lived here so long – that you know places, and you know the people.

The strength-of-weak-ties argument is based on a ‘wide net’ thesis – that generalized job searches typically lead to better outcomes. Weak ties bridge different networks, sectors, and labour markets, thus exposing an individual to a range of opportunities. The ‘if you’re interested, here I am’ strategy certainly falls into the category of a generalized search using weak ties. However, we can also see how this job-finding strategy can lead to lower incomes in a restricted labour market where opportunities are scarce. In this case, the weak tie search is a generalized search for any opportunity, rather than the best opportunity. In fact, several respondents discussed how networks of acquaintances ‘keep an eye out’ on behalf of unemployed others for any opportunity for employment (interview reference #85):

Interviewer: So, if somebody [in the community] has knowledge of a job lead or something, will they help somebody out?

Respondent: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, if anybody – I mean, I have quite often, I’ve told people that so and so is hiring. … I mean, most of the employment here is through very small businesses or ‘Mama and
Both ways of using weak-ties (the ‘if you’re interested, here I am’ strategy, and ‘looking out for others’) imply very generalized searches. There is strong evidence that this strategy can be highly successful in urban settings (Granovetter 1974; Wahba and Zenou 2005). However, our findings suggest that constraints in the rural labour market and rural social capital make these generalized job searches less effective routes to higher paying jobs. While strong ties appear to confer an advantage in accessing scarce but high-paying jobs, the efficacy of weak ties is reduced – likely because of network overlap in small communities, and likely because the social and economic resources in a rural weak tie network are less than in the cities. So while rural residents use weak ties more often than city-dwellers to find employment, these are more effective for ‘getting a job’ than ‘getting a good job’. The interview data suggest that weak tie networks are often a last resort or only resort for job-finding in these difficult labour markets.

**Conclusions**

Urban and rural regions in advanced capitalist nations have undergone significant economic and demographic changes over the past twenty-five years. While large cities have generally grown and diversified, many rural regions have dealt with population and economic decline. In our view, the urban-rural divide is fundamental to understanding inequalities in important economic processes such as labour market outcomes. Our research suggests that urban and rural paths to employment differ, and that this is largely caused by constraints that are unique to rural settings. Among our findings is that strong and weak ties are used more frequently as paths to employment in rural regions. However, this does not mean that they are used to advantage. In urban areas, we find that strong ties, weak ties, and formal paths to employment lead to all points on the income ladder (controlling for other variables). In contrast, use of weak ties in rural communities is significantly associated with poorer outcomes. Moreover, we find much stronger evidence of differentiation in job-finding in the rural region. In cities, we observe that highly educated people are less likely to use strong ties, while men and people involved in service and political organizations are more likely. These effects are dwarfed, however, by the impact that years of residency has in the rural population: where the chances of having used a strong or weak tie to find out about their current job is 3 to 8 times higher among longer-term residents.

This difference prompts us to look carefully at the role of social capital and labour market constraints in rural economies. Existing literature suggests that rural labour markets and rural social capital are constrained in ways not found in the cities. Looking
at both the quantitative and qualitative interview data, we argue that newcomers and longer-term residents are immersed in very different labour markets. On the one hand, people outside the community appear to have better access to formally-filled positions—particularly in the professions. This means that many newcomers to these economically-stressed communities are arriving with jobs secured in advance. On the other hand, newcomers who arrive without jobs have difficulty accessing strong and weak tie networks to find employment. These job-finding resources are reserved for longer-term residents who have established themselves and won access to local information and referral networks.

Attention to constraints also allows us to explain the poor outcomes associated with the use weak ties in the rural communities. The quantitative findings tell us that use of weak ties in rural job-finding is associated with lower incomes, but that there is no income effect for use of strong ties. Looking at the qualitative data, we see that strong ties are effective for landing rare high-income jobs in declining resource and manufacturing sectors. In short, it seems that in a restricted labour market, strong-tie networks that are rich in help and obligation may be more important as paths to ‘good jobs’ than broad weak-tie networks that are rich in information. Weak ties play a major role in rural job-finding, but the generalized job searches they engender are much less effective in these difficult labour markets.
References


Bollman, R., (1992), Rural and small town Canada: an overview, Statistics Canada, Publication No. 21F0018XIE.


Enns, S., Malinick, T., and Matthews, R., (2008), It’s not only who you know, it’s also where they are: using the position generator to investigate the structure of access to socially embedded resources, in Lin, N., and Erickson, B., (eds) *Social Capital: an international research program*, New York: Oxford University Press. 255-281.


Erickson, B., (2004), A report on measuring the social capital in weak ties, Ottawa, ON: Policy Research Initiative


NOTES

1 The two research projects described in this paper were both funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

2 The authors would like to thank two anonymous reviewers and the Editor of TSR for their insightful comments on an earlier version of this article.

3 These figures are for each city’s ‘Census Metropolitan Area’ (CMA). This is the same measure used by the ESC survey.

4 For more information on the ESC survey, see http://www.yorku.ca/isr/download/ESC.html. For more information on the RCP survey, visit http://www.resilientcommunities.ca/

5 Some studies make a distinction between formal processes and direct application (e.g., Beggs and Hurlbert 1997; Rankin 2003), while others do not (e.g., Ericksen and Yancy 1980; Bian 1997; Brown and Konrad 2001). We do not make the distinction, primarily because the RCP and ESC surveys measure direct application differently. Direct application is a discrete category in the ESC survey, while the RCP survey subsumes it into an ‘Other’ category. To ensure comparability, we group the categories together under the label ‘formal and impersonal processes’.

6 The RCP survey also allowed respondents to select ‘all that apply’. For instance, it is conceivable that a neighbour may also be a close friend. When these overlap, strong tie takes primacy.

7 Because odds ratios are based on regression models, we are required to exclude a category from each set of variables to serve as the constant. For schooling, this category is ‘no schooling or elementary school’, for years of tenure it is ‘less than a year’. The same exclusions are made in Table 3b.

8 Age squared is also present in the regression model. Its effects are identical to age, and is therefore not included in the tables.

9 Many Aboriginal groups in Canada have extensive service-delivery mandates, particularly in health, education, and social services.

10 The t value is calculated in the following way: \[ t = \frac{\text{coef}_{\text{ESC(urban)} \text{coef}_{\text{RCP(rural)}}}}{\sqrt{SE_{\text{ESC(urban)}}^2 + SE_{\text{RCP(rural)}}^2}} \]

11 The ESC survey makes a distinction between earnings from employment and income from all sources, while the RCP contains only the latter measure.

12 This effect is statistically significant to <.01 (t test on coefficient).