Social Capital and Its Institutional Contingency

A Study of the United States, China and Taiwan

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A Comparative Analysis Among Taiwan, China and the U.S.

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This chapter examines social resources embedded in personal contacts in job search chains and their effects on status attainment. This is an important but neglected topic in the literature. This chapter investigates the factors involved in the construction of network chains and their effect on reaching contacts with certain status resources. Past research on the use of contacts in job searches has mostly focused on direct ties, assuming that the contact is the only link between the job seeker and the employer (i.e., job seeker-contact-employer), with a few exceptions that consider the possibility that job seekers and their ultimate helpers may be indirectly connected through intermediaries, meaning there is a third party between the contact and the employer (i.e., job seeker-contact-intermediary-employer; see Bian 1997; Bian and Ang 1997). Lin (2004) pioneered an interview design that asks about and measures the full job search chains, extending beyond the two intermediary nodes referred to in previous research. With full information of the job search chains, researchers are equipped with a much more accurate measurement to assess the strength and content of the ties and resources embedded in job seekers' networks. Aggregation of such indexes and their returns offers comparisons across gender groups as well as across societies, thus gaining a better understanding of how social capital yields returns through different contacts in different groups and societies.

This chapter articulates how the notion of the job search chain would refine our understandings on tie strength, contact status and homophily–heterophily principles in the job search process. A major theme in recent studies of status attainment focuses on the utility and limitations of social networks in the job search process (e.g., Fernandez, Castilla and Moore 2000; Granovetter 1995; Lin 2000; Marsden and Gorman 2001; Chen 2006, 2009). Researchers have found that the use of social ties appears to help in finding a job, but there is no consistent and conclusive evidence that using contacts by itself offers any advantage over other channels (e.g., formal channels or direct applications) in obtaining better jobs. Findings on the associations between using personal contacts and achieving higher wages and prestige are inconsistent. For example, higher- and lower-status individuals seem to use social contacts in their job searches less than middle-status groups (Lin

1999b; Marsden and Gorman 2001). Among those who do use personal contacts to find work, their search outcomes are linked to the socioeconomic positions of the contacts; the higher the status of a contact is, the more information the contact can offer and the more influence the contact can exert on behalf of the individual seeking help (Lin, Ensel and Vaughn 1981; De Graaf and Flap 1988; Marsden and Hurlbert 1988; Bian 1997). Moreover, many studies have examined the type of relations between the job seeker and his or her contact, and much knowledge has been gained in this field. Granovetter's (1973) weak-tie hypothesis suggests that weak ties (relationships characterized by infrequent interaction or low intimacy) are wide ranging and are therefore more likely than strong ties to serve as bridges across social boundaries in the job search process. Although several studies suggest that jobs located via weaker ties or work-related contacts yield earning benefits or higher prestige, research on the effects of tie strength on status attainments remains inconclusive (Marsden and Gorman 2001).

Most research in the area of social networks and status attainment has drawn empirical evidence from Euro-American settings. Relatively little has been done to systematically examine variations across institutional contexts in the use of social networks or in their effects on the labor market outcomes. The United States and Western Europe represent a certain type of developed market institutions, whereas other regions in the world with different institutional contexts may lead to variations in the relative efficacy of strong ties and weak ties in the labor market.

Focusing on resources embedded in job search chains, this chapter aims to show the patterns and effects of social relations that mobilize social capital in a study of three societies—the United States, Taiwan and urban China. Since the data were gathered in three national surveys, we can further seek to understand whether different patterns of social relations exist across societies, and how they affect mobilization of social capital in the three societies.

ISSUES

This section presents the issues raised in this chapter. It begins with a brief discussion of two research approaches of social capital, namely, mobilized social capital and accessed social capital. Then, it briefly reviews two major mechanisms—the social resources effect and the weak-tie effect—in the mobilization of social capital. The investigation of network chains of multiple nodes in job searches is a major extension of the mobilized social capital model. I also discuss gender differences in mobilizing social capital in job searches and assess the homophily principle of seeking help. Finally, I highlight the importance of cross-national comparisons to better understand to what extent key social capital propositions vary in different institutional environments and across national boundaries.

Mobilized and Accessed Social Capital

The two theoretical approaches, mobilized social capital and accessed social capital, describe the process of how social capital is expected to generate returns in the process of status attainment. Mobilized social capital focuses on the use of a specific social contact and its resources. In this process, social capital is defined in terms of its actual use—the mobilization of a particular contact and its resources. The assumption is that the contact's status, along with the job seeker's human capital and initial position, will have an important impact in his/her status attainment process. Accessed social capital focuses on resources accessed in one's general social networks. In this process, social capital is conceived in terms of its potential capacity—the pool of potentially mobilizable resources embedded in one's social networks, which along with human capital (education, experiences) and initial positions (parental or prior job statuses) are expected to affect any attained status such as earnings, occupational status, employment sectors or authority positions (Lin 2001c). Whenever possible in the current research, both types of social capital were measured and closely examined, since neither is perfectly adequate for capturing the linkage between social capital and status attainment. Figure 9.1 illustrates the social capital model of status attainment: the first process focuses on access to social capital and the second process on the mobilization of social capital in which contact status exerts a significant effect on the attained job status.

The Weak-Tie Proposition and Social Resource Proposition

The present study measures social capital within the mobilization perspective as it examines cross-national variations of network chains of multiple nodes and their returns in the job search process. In the mobilized social capital model, Granovetter's weak-tie argument is the most prominent proposition articulated for finding better social capital. In a study of professional workers in Boston, Granovetter (1973, 1995) found that 83 percent of those who obtained their jobs through contacts used contacts that they saw infrequently. This finding leads Granovetter to define tie strength by the frequency of interactions, emotional intensity and reciprocity between the parties. Granovetter argues that ties useful for acquiring information are more apt to have roots in work-related than in communal (e.g., family) contexts. Work-related ties can provide information and access to those with the authority to hire; family/social ties typically possess information only on nearby opportunities. Granovetter suggests that weaker ties tend to form bridges that link individuals to other social circles for useful information unavailable in their own circles, and thus to finding contacts with better resources in the job market. As illustrated in Figure 9.1, the weak-tie proposition argues that in the process of mobilizing social capital, weaker ties help lead to higher-status contacts.

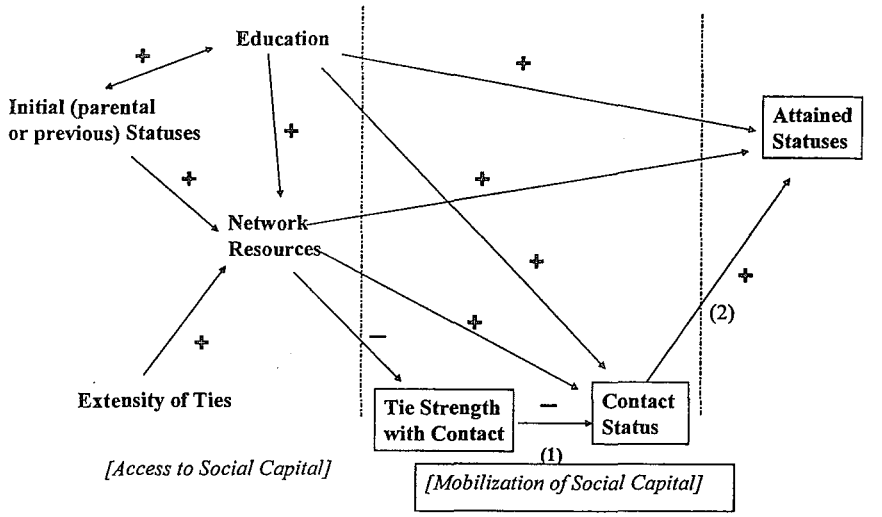

Figure 9.1 The social capital model of status attainment.
Note: (1) tie strength effect and (2) social resource effect.

Strong ties are characterized by trust and emotional involvement, which generally develop over the course of repeated interactions, whereas weak ties are more vaguely defined relationships typified by limited emotional involvement and less frequent interactions (Burt 1992; Granovetter 1973). Weak ties provide links to external actors that can facilitate the mobilization of resources across communal boundaries and provide the freedom to exploit new opportunities (Burt 1992). Consequently, both types of ties are considered vital for successful performance.

Although the weak-tie proposition is about the effect of weak ties on the likelihood of getting a job, it does not suggest that weaker ties would directly lead to better jobs (only to higher-status contacts that might help locate better jobs). The strength of the tie that leads to a job cannot alone predict the attributes of that particular job. Follow-up studies focus primarily on the effect of tie strength on the attributes of the jobs obtained, such as wage and occupational status (e.g., Lin, Ensel and Vaughn 1981; Marsden and Hurlbert 1988; Wegener 1991). Lin's (1982) social resource proposition argues that it is the social recourses (e.g., contact recourses) that exert influence on the instrumental outcomes (e.g., the attained status), representing the direct result of reaching a source-rich contact in one's social network. Relevant studies generally find that higher socioeconomic position of the contact is related to better search outcomes because the higher the status of the contact is, the more information the contact possesses and the more influence the contact can exert on behalf of the individual seeking help (Lin 1999b; Marsden and Hurlbert 1988; De Graaf and Flap 1988; Bian and Ang 1997). Aggregate measures of personal networks, such as constraint

(Burt 1992) or heterogeneity and extensity (Lin 2001c), better capture a network's capacity to transfer nonredundant information and exert influence. It is not a particular tie or its bridging property but the nature of the social resources embedded in a network that conveys the advantage and reaches someone with the type of resource required for one to fulfill his/her instrumental objectives (Lin, Ensel and Vaughn 1981). Thus, one has to know one's overall embeddedness in a relevant network to better understand his/her ability to undertake an economic action (Granovetter 1995; Montgomery 1992).

Job Search Chains of Multiple Nodes

Until recently, studies on the strength-of-tie arguments focused on a singular contact between the job seeker and the employer. However, it has long been known that chains of ties involving multiple nodes are able to provide useful information or influence (Boissevain 1974). Bian's (1999) study in China found that more than 45 percent of those who had helpers in job searches actually had a third party who helped link them to the ultimate helpers in their job searches. Indeed, it is common to see a job search chain containing more than one intermediary. This suggests that one's job search chain provides more accurate information and serves as a better indicator for one's mobilized social capital than a singular contact. More importantly, when the adjacent tie strengths are adequately measured in such chains, the implications of the weak-tie proposition can be further redefined and reassessed.

As the importance of multiple-node chains are raised, a key issue is to characterize and examine the effects of such chains on accessing better social recourses. Instead of focusing on a simple tie between the job seeker and the helper-contact, it becomes necessary to examine the relationships between each adjacent pair of nodes. As a result, the measurement and the implications of the strength-of-ties need to be extended to the chain of adjacent nodes. Apart from Lin (2004), previous researches neglected to specify possible variations in the strength of the weak-tie argument for different chain lengths. Certain social groups, such as females and ethnic minorities, are disadvantaged in their social networks. As such, they may need to cross gender and/or ethnic boundaries to reach those with better social resources. In this sense, they would need longer chains to access social resources and move ahead.

Gender Differences and the Homophily Principle

Researchers have suggested that some social characteristics such as gender and race may be associated with structural inequality in social capital, which leads to different employment outcomes. For example, studies have found that men tend to have larger networks than women, and women tend

to have more kin and neighbors in their networks than men (Campbell and Rosenfeld 1985; Marsden 1987, 1988; G. Moore 1990). Men were more likely than women to first hear about a job through a contact, to have known others at the workplace prior to being hired, and to have received assistance in getting the job (Marsden 1987, 1988; G. Moore 1990). That is, men are likely to have access to more diverse resources and more work-related ties in their social networks than women. Because work organizations are often sex segregated and male dominated, men's social networks are likely to be other men. Women are in a disadvantageous position when attempting to integrate into men's networks and thus face more constraints in mobilizing social capital through social networks. As a result, women are more likely to end up in lower-wage, female-dominated occupations (Green, Tigges and Diaz 1999; Marsden and Campbell 1990).

The explanation for women's limited access to interaction networks may be a preference for homophily, i.e., interaction with others who have similar individual attributes such as sex, race and education. Similarity of personal characteristics implies common values and interests and thus leads to forming expressive ties based on interpersonal attraction (McPherson and Smith-Lovin 1987; Marsden 1988). Social homogeneity in the workplace makes communication easier and behavior more predictable and promotes relationships of trust and reciprocity; thus it also may enhance instrumental relationships.

The homophily principle emphasizes preferences for similarity and is therefore limited as an explanation for instrumental action. In the workplace, social familiarity may not always be the principal consideration; people may like to associate with people of higher status to gain access to social resources (Lin 1982). However, demographic similarity and status are not mutually independent: ascribed attributes such as gender and race are often highly correlated with organizational positions, and thus homophily on one dimension often implies homophily on others (Blau 1977; Smith-Lovin and McPherson 1993). Therefore, when men possess higher status and resources, they are likely to conduct same-sex interaction, whereas women may prefer cross-sex interaction in order to gain access to resources. Women may obtain social support from other women but rely on male coworkers or contacts to gain access to instrumental resources (Lipman-Blumen 1980; Ibarra 1992, 1997). Researches argued that such heterophilous ties are more likely to provide support for women to get ahead when women are in the minority (South et al. 1987; Aldrich 1989). Across different societies and industries, both men and women use men as network routes to accomplish tasks and to access information (Aldrich, Reese and Dubini 1989; Benard et al. 1988).

The Effects of Country Institutional Context on Mobilizing Social Capital

Accessing and mobilizing social capital are reflected in the interactions among individuals that subscribe to social rules and norms. Institutions,

seen as the organizing principles of the interactions, can be simply defined as the rules of the game in a society and can be either formal or informal (North 1990, p. 3). A country's institutional context, which consists of relatively stable rules, social norms and cognitive structures, sets the framework for market transactions and social interactions (Scott 1995). A major assumption in institutional analysis is that the institutions affect and shape the behaviors of those taking part and thus provide the organizing principles for their actions and interactions. For example, the relative importance of strong versus weak ties in the job seeker's social network may depend on the institutional context of the country in which the job seeker is embedded. As such, a cross-national comparison of the nature of social ties and actions of networking will better explain how social institutions affect and dictate social networking and the mobilization of social capital.

A country's institutional context consists of three dimensions: normative, regulatory and cognitive (Scott 1995). Normative institutions define which behaviors and values are expected, often visible through shared values or norms regarding the appropriate behaviors. With respect to our research focus, the normative dimension determines how individuals value social networking and view such activity as a normal aspect of their instrumental and expressive actions. Regulatory institutions consist of laws, regulations and government policies that promote certain behaviors and restrict others. The cognitive dimension of a country's institutional context derives from its societal culture and is reflected in the differences in the value placed on and the role of social networks in society. The level and strength of interconnections between people in many European countries is often stronger than those in the United States (Wells and Grieco 1993), and the contrast with East Asia might be even stronger. The relative importance attached to interpersonal relations may be manifested in how individual behaviors get enacted in different institutional contexts. For example, in countries with high levels of market institutional development, relationships or social capital is important, but human capital is probably more crucial to individuals. However, in countries with low levels of market institutional development, the need to be part of a social network may be critically important for finding better jobs.

A country's institutional context may affect the extent of using weak or strong ties in mobilizing social capital. Because of weak formal institutions, job seekers from countries with lower levels of institutional development should be less likely to possess a network rich in weak ties. In this setting, a focus on strong ties appears more likely, because these ties provide rich and trusted sources of timely information that allows job seekers to make better sense of their competitive environment. The greater the environmental uncertainty, the more individuals will rely on strong personal ties when entering exchange relationships. However, as

market institutions mature and develop, individuals may find that weak ties offer more benefits than strong ties, because they are less costly to develop and maintain and provide access to more diverse knowledge and resources (Granovetter 1973). Higher levels of institutional development are usually associated with an increase in arm's-length relations, which imply less emotional involvement and more superficiality (Williamson 1994).

For example, in China's market institution, the roles personal contacts play in job mobility appear to be complex, and mixed results have been found as to the increasing or decreasing significance of contact influences (Bian 2002, 2008; Huang 2008; Guthrie 1998). The institutional transformation and cultural heritage have shaped the manner in which weak and strong ties are used in social capital mobilization. As argued by Bian and Huang (2009), in China, weak ties are more likely to relay information and strong ties to relay influence; thus, influence networks of strong ties rather than information networks of weak ties were found to increase one's opportunities of moving into higher-status jobs.

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

Data used in this study were drawn from the thematic research project "Social Capital: Its Origins and Consequences," sponsored by Academia Sinica, Taiwan, through its Institute of Sociology. This project called for a two-wave, three-site survey to be conducted between the periods 2004 to 2005 and 2006 to 2007. The three sites selected were Taiwan, urban China and the United States. These sites were selected in order to capture two different political regimes (state socialism in China and capitalism in Taiwan and the U.S.) and two different cultural groups (Chinese in Taiwan and China and Anglo-Saxons in the United States).

This study investigates data from the project's first-wave survey conducted in 2004–2005. National surveys (personal interviews in urban China and Taiwan and telephone interviews in the United States) on stratified representative samples were conducted in each society, using a standardized questionnaire. The respondents' ages were between twenty-one and sixty-four, and they were currently or had previously been employed. The total sample sizes were 3,000, 3,280 and 3,529 in the U.S., Taiwan and urban China, respectively.

The core concepts in this study are status attainment, social capital and strength of ties. The measure of *attained status* was whether the respondent holds an executive position. *Mobilized social capital*, or *social resources*, was indicated by the contact status in one's job search process. Likewise, the contact status was measured by whether the ultimate helper (the last helper in the job search chain) held an executive position.

In the survey, there were a series of questions that helped respondents reconstruct the helper chains in one's job search process. First, the respondent was asked, "Mainly through whose help did you get your current/last job?" After a helper was identified, the respondent was asked whether it was a direct or indirect contact. If it was an indirect contact, then the respondent was asked to identify all the preceding contacts leading to the mentioned helper. The respondent was then asked if this helper had contacted someone else when helping the respondent and so on. From these responses, a chain of contacts was constructed.[1]

Once the helper chain was established, the characteristics of this chain provided information for the tie strength in the job search process. I adopted three measurements of tie strength: *role relation* (kin, coworker, friend); *intimacy* (emotional closeness); and *chain length* in the job search chain. Respondents were asked about the nature of their relationship to the first node of the job search chain and the relationship between each node of the chain. There was a choice of twenty-eight role relations in the questionnaire, which were later categorized into three types of relations, as described in Table 9.3. Three kinds of relations (i.e., kinship, work relationships and friends) are distinguished in the regression equations. *Intimacy*, a measurement of formal tie strength, was indicated by the question of how close the respondent feels to the helper. *Chain length* was measured as the number of nodes in the respondent's job search chain. *Gender homophily* was measured by whether the gender of the respondent is the same as that of all the helpers in his/her job search.

Table 9.1 presents a summary of the sample characteristics. The analyses of this study focused on people who were employed and thus excluded those outside the labor market. In Taiwan, housewives were the largest deleted group, consisting of 13 percent of the respondents, whereas the U.S. and China had a lower proportion of housewives. After deleting those cases with missing values of variables in the analyses, the study sample sizes were 1,076, 1,275 and 954 in the U.S., Taiwan and China, respectively. The respondents' average age was forty-one, forty and thirty-seven in the U.S., Taiwan and China, respectively. The proportion of those who had advanced degrees (bachelor degree or higher) was 42 percent, 20 percent and 20 percent in the U.S., Taiwan and China, respectively. The respective percentage for those whose contact-helper was an executive was 31 percent in the U.S., 25 percent in Taiwan and 31 percent in China. For the attained status, the respective percentage of the respondents with an executive position was 12 percent in the U.S., 7 percent in Taiwan and 6 percent in China.

The analysis in the following sections proceeds in three phases. First, I examine the usage of personal contacts and the helper chains in the job search process and their gender differences and cross-national variations. Then I explore the effects of tie strength and gender homophily

Table 9.1 Variables and Summary of Sampled Respondent Characteristics

	U.S.				Taiwan				China			
Dependent Variable	*Total*	*M*	*F*	*Sig.a*	*Total*	*M*	*F*	*Sig.a*	*Total*	*M*	*F*	*Sig.a*
Respondents' Holding an Executive Position	12%	13%	11%	ns	7%	10%	3%	.001	6%	7%	4%	ns
N	1,073	506	567		1,275	678	597		935	440	495	
Independent Variables												
Male	47%				53%				48%			
Age (Mean)	41	41.35	40.42	ns	40.03	39.49	40.65	ns	36. 6	36	37	ns
Education				ns				.001				.001
Junior high school and below	8%	7%	8%		27%	24%	32%		27%	23%	31%	
High school and associate college	50.1	50.4	49.8		53.0	57.7	47.7		52.7	52.3	53.1	
Bachelor's degree and above	42.4	42.9	41.9		19.7	18.7	20.8		19.7	24.1	15.8	
Contact status: the last contact executive	31%	31%	31%	ns	25%	27%	23%	ns	31%	31%	31%	ns
Tie strength effect												
Intimacy between ego and the last helper (Mean)	3.41	3.46	3.37	ns	4.06	4.14	3.96	.01	4.04	4.03	4.05	ns
Role relations between ego and the first helper in the chain				ns				ns				.01
Kin	19%	18%	19%		39%	39%	39%		56%	51%	61%	
Work relationship	23.1	23.3	23.0		22.7	23.9	21.3		12.3	15.5	9.4	
Friends	58.1	58.5	57.7		38.4	37.3	39.5		31.3	33.6	29.3	
Chain length (Mean)	1.25	1.27	1.24	ns	1.25	1.25	1.25	ns	1.47	1.46	148	ns
Homophily: same-sex tie between ego and helper(s)	67%	73%	63%	.000	67%	81%	50%	.001	52%	82%	26%	.001
N	1,076	506	570		1,275	678	597		954	453	501	

a. Gender significance.

on contact status. Finally, the focus is on the returns—the status of current jobs—of contact status and their gender differences and cross-national variations.

USE OF CONTACTS AND CHAINS OF CONTACTS

As presented in Table 9.2, when respondents were asked to identify the contact person who helped them obtain their jobs, over half (54 percent) in the U.S. provided concrete information for this question, whereas a relatively lower percentage of respondents in Taiwan (44 percent) and China (34 percent) did so. Interestingly, it seems to suggest that proportionally more American job seekers used personal connections than their counterparts in Taiwan and urban China. However, it might also reflect the situation whereby the questions were interpreted differently by respondents from different societies when asked about using contacts in the job search processes. In the U.S., people may feel grateful for their achievements and most likely "overreport" help from others in the job search processes. On the other hand, in Taiwan and China, despite being common, using contacts and receiving help through interpersonal ties may be perceived as using the "back door"; hence people tend to underreport help-seeking behaviors. Nonetheless, the figures of using contacts in these three societies reflect the fact that social networks indeed played a critical role in the job search processes. Furthermore, there was no gender difference in using job search contacts in the U.S. and Taiwan, unlike in China, where more women used contacts than men did. This gender difference in China confirmed a previous research finding (Lin 2004) and could be the result of the fact that Chinese males were more sensitive to the possible taboo of using personal contacts in job searches. In the following sections, I compare the contents of job search ties, as well as their mobilization and returns, in these three societies.

Table 9.2 shows that, in the U.S., 80 percent of the respondents reported a single node in the job search chain (a single contact-helper), and 19 percent reported two nodes; less than 1 percent reported three or more nodes in the chain. Taiwan displayed a similar distribution with the U.S., with 78 percent of the respondents reporting a single node, 19 percent two nodes and 3 percent three or more nodes. The chains of contacts in urban China are longer than those in the U.S. and Taiwan. About 63 percent of Chinese respondents reported a single node, and 27 percent reported two, whereas nearly 11 percent reported three or more nodes in the chain. There was no gender difference in chain length in these three societies.

For each node in the chain, the surveys asked a series of questions about the node and the relationship it had with the preceding node. The questions included: (1) their relationship with the previous node (in the case of the first

Table 9.2 The Job Search Chain Length

Measures	*Percentage*											
	U.S.				*Taiwan*				*China*			
	Total (N = 3,000)	*Male (N = 1,383)*	*Female (N = 1,617)*	*Sig.*	*Total (N = 3,280)*	*Male (N = 1,695)*	*Female (N = 1,585)*	*Sig.*	*Total (N = 3,500)*	*Male (N = 1,731)*	*Female (N = 1,769)*	*Sig.*
Chain Length												
Using contacts in job search	54	53	54	ns	44	44	43	ns	34	32	35	.05
	N = 1,611	N = 738	N = 873		N = 1,428	N = 742	N = 686		N = 1,176	N = 550	N = 626	
Number of nodes in chain of helpers				ns				ns				ns
One node	80	78	81		78	78	78		63	64	61	
Two nodes	19	21	18		19	19	19		27	25	28	
Three nodes	1	1	0		3	2	3		7	7	7	
Four or more nodes	—	—	—		0	0	0		4	4	3	
Number of helpers	N = 1,367	N = 598	N = 769	ns	N = 1,367	N = 697	N = 670	.001	N = 1,193	N = 560	N = 633	ns
1	59	60	59		75	72	78		62	60	63	
2	26	25	26		19	19	18		23	23	22	
3	15	16	15		6	9	3		9	8	10	
4 or more	—	—	—		0	0	0		7	8	5	

node, with the respondent); (2) how close they were to each other; and (3) the node's gender, occupation, firm ownership and occupation industry.

As shown in Table 9.3, in the U.S., about 80 percent of relationships in Step 1 (between job seeker and node 1) were either work ties or friends, and 20 percent were family ties. Between nodes 1 and 2 (Step 2), work ties increased from 23 percent from Step 1 to 34 percent in Step 2, whereas family ties declined from 20 percent to 9 percent. Between nodes 2 and 3 (Step 3), work ties decreased considerably to 15 percent and normal friends (ordinary friends and indirect relationships) played a main role (69 percent). Table 9.4 shows that in Taiwan, family ties were important, accounting for 40 percent of relationships in Step 1 (between job seeker and node 1), followed by work ties (21 percent) and friends (39 percent). In Step 2 (between node 1 and 2), family ties dropped to 17 percent, whereas work ties and friends rose to 37 percent and 46 percent, respectively. In China, as presented in Table 9.5, family ties were crucial, accounting for 55 percent of relationships in Step 1, whereas friends accounted for 23 percent and work ties 12 percent. Also, there exists a clear gender difference: Chinese females relied on family members more than males did (60 percent versus 50 percent). In Step 2, family ties in China dropped dramatically to 16 percent, with friends and work ties increasing to 56 percent and 27 percent, respectively.

Figure 9.2 presents the relationships in Step 1 in the three societies, showing a contrast between the U.S. and China, with Taiwan placed in the middle. American job seekers relied mainly on ordinary friends (39 percent) and good friends (18 percent), but the major source of help in the first step for Chinese job seekers were family members (55 percent). Compared with the U.S., Taiwan saw its job seekers use a similar percentage of work relationships and fewer friend ties. On the other hand, compared with urban China, Taiwanese used fewer family ties but more work relationships.

To clarify the strengths of ties for these pairs, I drew on another item, which asked how close each adjacent pair of nodes were (how well they knew each other)—"very close," "close," "so-so," "not close," "not close at all." Although these were estimates by the respondent, they could be seen as rough but reasonable approximations, since the chains were relatively short and the most important information was that for the rate of intimacy between job seeker and node 1, in which the respondent was directly involved. As seen in the second panel of Table 9.3 to Table 9.5, the data on chain relationships in each country show that as the chain length extends further, the degree of intimacy in adjacent relations tends to weaken somewhat, but clear cross-national variations are also revealed. Here, I take the response category "very close" as an indication of a strong tie. In the U.S., the percentage of strong ties was 38 percent at Step 1, declining to 28 percent at Step 2 and climbing to 31 percent at Step 3 (Table 9.3). In Taiwan, the percentage of strong ties was 55

Table 9.3 Relationships for Adjacent Nodes and between Ego and Last Node in a Job Search Chain, the U.S.

Adjacent relationship	*Step 1(ego-node 1)*			*Step 2(nodes 1–2)*			*Step 3(nodes 2-3)*		
	Total %	*Male*	*Female*	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*
1. Family member	20	18	21	9	9	10	8	11	0
2. Work relationship	23	23	23	34	32	35	15	22	0
3. Good/close friend	18	19	18	14	13	15	8	11	0
4. Normal friend	39	40	38	42	46	40	69	56	100
N	1,611	738	873	326	163	163	13	9	4
Intimacy with the next node	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*
5. Very close	38	37	38	28	27	29	31	34	25
4. Close	24	26	23	24	24	23	15	22	0
3. So-so	22	21	23	26	25	27	38	22	75
2. Not close	9	9	8	9	7	12	8	11	0
1. Not close at all	7	7	8	13	17	9	8	11	0
N	1,611	738	873	326	163	163	13	9	4
Intimacy between ego and the last node	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*						
5. Very close	30	31	29						
4. Close	22	24	22						
3. So-so	25	23	26						
2. Not close	9	9	9						
1. Not close at all	14	13	14						
N	1,609	738	871						

Notes

1. Family member includes spouse (current or previous), parents and other relatives. Other relatives include father-in-law, mother-in-law, children, siblings, daughter-in-law, son-in-law and other relatives.
2. Work relationship includes current coworker, current boss/superior, current subordinate, client, "a person working for another firm but known through work relations" and "someone known because he/she provides a service to me or my family."
3. Normal friend includes ordinary friend, schoolmate, neighbor and indirect relationships. Ordinary friend includes compatriot, "someone from the same religious group," "someone from the same association, club or group," "someone known from the Internet" and acquaintances. Schoolmate includes schoolmate, teacher and student.

Table 9.4 Relationships for Adjacent Nodes and between Ego and Last Node in a Job Search Chain, Taiwan

Adjacent relationship	*Step 1(ego-node 1)*			*Step 2(nodes 1–2)*			*Step 3(nodes 2-3)*		
	Total %	*Male*	*Female*	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*
1. Family member	40	41	40	17	16	18	24	26	21
2. Work relationship	21	22	19	37	39	34	26	32	22
3. Good/close friend	19	21	17	26	28	25	29	32	26
4. Normal friend	20	16	24	20	17	23	21	10	31
N	1,428	742	686	311	161	150	42	19	23
Intimacy with the next node	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*
5. Very close	55	58	51	32	34	30	51	50	52
4. Close	24	23	25	27	32	22	21	20	22
3. So-so	18	17	21	30	25	36	21	25	17
2. Not close	2	1	2	5	5	5	5	0	9
1. Not close at all	1	1	1	6	4	7	2	5	0
N	1,426	742	684	306	159	147	43	20	23
Intimacy between ego and the last node	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*						
5. Very close	46	50	41						
4. Close	23	23	24						
3. So-so	23	21	25						
2. Not close	4	3	5						
1. Not close at all	4	3	5						
N	1,419	736	683						

Notes

4. Family member includes spouse (current or previous), parents and other relatives. Other relatives include father-in-law, mother-in-law, children, siblings, daughter-in-law, son-in-law and other relatives.
5. Work relationship includes current coworker, current boss/superior, current subordinate, client, "a person working for another firm but known through work relations" and "someone known because he/she provides a service to me or my family."
6. Normal friend includes ordinary friend, schoolmate, neighbor and indirect relationships. Ordinary friend includes compatriot, "someone from the same religious group," "someone from the same association, club or group," "someone known from the Internet" and acquaintances. Schoolmate includes schoolmate, teacher and student.

Table 9.5 Relationships for Adjacent Nodes and between Ego and Last Node in a Job Search Chain, China

Adjacent relationship	*Step 1(ego-node 1)*			*Step 2(nodes 1–2)*			*Step 3(nodes 2-3)*			*Step 4(node 3-4)*		
	Total %	*Male*	*Female*	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*
1. Family member	55	51	60	16	18	16	13	16	11	3	0	5
2. Work relationship	12	14	10	27	27	27	31	29	33	33	39	27
3. Good friend	14	15	13	30	29	31	23	26	20	21	22	21
4. Normal friend	19	20	17	26	26	27	33	29	36	43	39	47
N	1,176	550	626	441	199	242	123	59	64	42	23	19
Intimacy with the next node	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*
5. Very close	64	60	66	28	27	29	24	30	18	28	20	37
4. Close	25	29	22	45	49	41	36	27	44	31	35	26
3. So-so	10	11	10	20	18	21	24	27	21	23	20	26
2. Not close	1	0	1	6	4	7	9	8	10	10	15	5
1. Not close at all	0	0	1	2	2	2	7	8	7	8	10	5
N	1,138	529	609	411	180	231	113	52	61	39	20	19
Intimacy between ego and the last node	*Total %*	*Male*	*Female*									
5. Very close	44	41	47									
4. Close	29	32	26									
3. So-so	18	18	17									
2. Not close	5	5	5									
1. Not close at all	4	4	5									
N	1,058	503	555									

Notes

7. Family member includes spouse (current or previous), parents and other relatives. Other relatives include father-in-law, mother-in-law, children, siblings, daughter-in-law, son-in-law and other relatives.
8. Work relationship includes current coworker, current boss/superior, current subordinate, client, "a person working for another firm but known through work relations" and "someone known because he/she provides a service to me or my family."
9. Normal friend includes ordinary friend, schoolmate, neighbor and indirect relationships. Ordinary friend includes compatriot, "someone from the same religious group," "someone from the same association, club or group," "someone known from the Internet" and acquaintances. Schoolmate includes schoolmate, teacher and student.

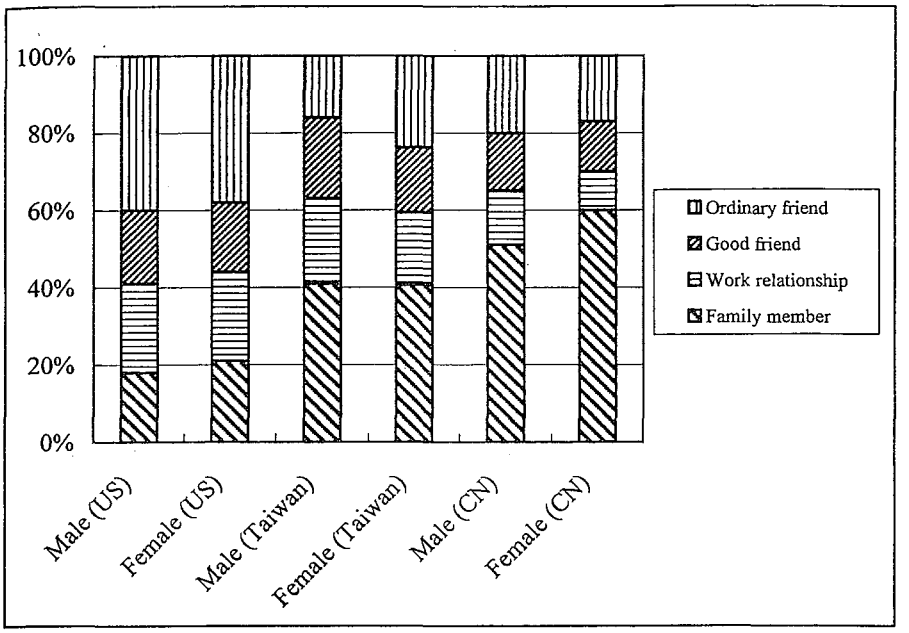

Figure 9.2 Adjacent relationship between ego and node 1.

percent at Step 1, decreasing to 32 percent at Step 2 and returning to 51 percent at Step 3 (Table 9.4). In urban China, strong ties dominated at Step 1, accounting for 64 percent, but dropped significantly to 28 percent at Step 2 and fell further to 24 percent at Step 3 (Table 9.5). Again, the differences among these three societies were evident: for the first step of finding contacts, about two-thirds of Chinese job seekers relied on strong ties (64 percent), but only about one-third (38 percent) of American job seekers did so. Taiwan stood between China and the U.S., with half of its job seekers (55 percent) using strong ties when reaching out for social contacts.

From the preceding analyses, it is logical to suggest that the relationship between job seeker and the last node should weaken as the chain length extends further. After asking about the job search chains, a separate item in the survey followed asking how close the relationship was between the respondent and the last node in the chain. The figures, shown in the third panel of Table 9.3, indicated that, in the U.S., 30 percent of the users of contacts reported they were "very close" with the contacts, and another 22 percent reported "close." In Taiwan, 46 percent of the respondents felt "very close" with the contacts, and 23 percent felt "close." In China, the percentages for "very close" and "close" were 44 percent and 29 percent, respectively. When "very close" with "close" were combined, the percentages were 52 percent for U.S. respondents, 69 percent for Taiwanese and 73 percent for Chinese, suggesting that relatively more Taiwanese and Chinese job seekers use strong ties than Americans did.

Table 9.6 Gender Homophily between Ego and All Helpers in Job Search Chains

		U.S.		*Taiwan*		*China*	
		Cross-sex	*Same-sex*	*Cross-sex*	*Same-sex*	*Cross-sex*	*Same-sex*
Female	N	214	356	296	301	370	131
	% within female	37.5%	62.5%	49.6%	50.4%	73.9%	26.2%
Male	N	138	368	129	549	80	373
	% within male	27.3%	72.7%	19.0%	81.0%	17.7%	82.3%
Total	N	352	724	425	850	450	504
	% within total	32.7%	67.3%	33.3%	66.7%	47.2%	52.8%

Table 9.6 presents the gender homophily between the respondent and all the helpers in the job search chains. In the U.S., 63 percent of females used all-female contacts; in Taiwan, 50 percent of females did so; in contrast, only 26 percent of Chinese females used all-female contacts. For males, 73 percent of American male respondents used all-male contacts, whereas 81 percent of Taiwanese males and 82 percent of Chinese males relied on all-male contacts. All in all, apparently more Chinese female job seekers sought help from males; thus, China saw a much lower percentage of same-sex job search chains, implying gender homophily might not fit in the job search experiences of Chinese females. On the other hand, Taiwan and the U.S. saw their women more likely to use female contacts in job searches, whereas males overwhelmingly used male contacts; they shared similar gender homophily experiences, with 67 percent same-sex job search chains and 33 percent cross-sex job search chains.

ACCESSING SOCIAL CAPITAL

This section proceeds to examine the effects of tie strength and gender homophily on the contact status or social capital accessed. The contact status was measured by whether the ultimate helper (the last helper of the job search chain) holds an executive position. For independent variables, I included (1) gender, age and education of the respondent; (2) three measurements of tie strength between the respondent and the first node of the chain: *role relation* (kin, coworker or friend), *intimacy* (emotional closeness) and *chain length* in the job search chain; and (3) *gender homophily*, measured by whether the gender of the respondent was the same as that of all the helpers in his/her job search chain.

As can be seen in Table 9.7, in the U.S. overall, those who were older, better educated and carrying a weak job search tie of work but not kin relationship (relative to friend relationship) were more likely to access high-status contacts. Gender homophily had no significant effects on contact status. However, for males and females, some variables showed different characteristics. For the relations between the respondent and the first node, kin ties (relatively to friend ties) were negatively related to contact status, but work relationship (relatively to friend ties) had a significant positive effect only for females, not for males. Furthermore, for females, the intimacy between the respondent and the first node was negatively associated with the contact status, reflecting the weak-tie effect that existed among females but not males. That is, for females in the U.S., social networks that were weaker and/or embedded in work relationships significantly helped their reaching high-status contacts during the job search process. On the other hand, for males in the U.S., longer chain lengths helped them reach high-status contacts.

Table 9.7 Coefficients from Logistic Regression Models Assessing Effects of Tie Strength and Gender Homophily on Whether Contact Holds an Executive Position, the U.S., 2004

	Total (N = 1,076)	*Male (N = 506)*	*Female (N = 570)*
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Male	-.004		
Age	.014*	.023*	.008
Education (junior high school and below)			
High school and associate college	1.316**	1.384	1.309*
Bachelor's degree and above	2.072***	2.581***	1.713**
Tie strength effect			
Intimacy	-.123*	-.067	-.155*
Role relations (friends)			
Kin	-.798***	-.895**	-.709*
Work relationship	.401*	.204	.579**
Chain length	.440**	.537*	.367
Homophily: same-sex tie	-.128	-.364	.022
Intercept	-3.054***	-3.815***	-2.575***
Chi-square	119.806***	80.055***	51.716***
df	9	8	8

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p<.001.

Table 9.8 shows that in Taiwan overall, being male, of higher age and high education led to accessing better contact resources. Relative to relationships with friends, kin relationships had no significant effect on contact status, but work relationship led to access of high-status contacts. Longer chains and cross-sex ties also help in accessing better contact resources. Considering males and females separately, for females, those who used all-female nodes were less likely to reach high-status contacts.

In China, as can be seen in Table 9.9, age and education help access high-status contacts in the job search process. Weak ties were positively related to accessing high-status contacts. Relative to relationships with friends, kin relationships and work relationships had positive effects on reaching high-status contacts. However, for males and females in China, factors of tie strength revealed different impacts. For Chinese males, weak ties, kin relationship and all-male ties had positive effects on reaching high-status contacts. For Chinese females, factors of tie strength were not significant, and an all-female tie would have a significant negative effect. This seems to imply that for Chinese females it was more critical is to find a cross-sex tie in order to access a better job search contact.

Table 9.8 Coefficients from Logistic Regression Models Assessing Effects of Tie Strength and Gender Homophily on Whether Contact Holds an Executive Position, Taiwan, 2004

	Total (N = 1,275)	*Male (N = 678)*	*Female (N = 597)*
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Male	.355*		
Age	.017*	.013	.010
Education (junior high school and below)			
High school and associate college	.501**	.232	.712*
Bachelor's degree and above	.920***	.808**	.895*
Tie strength effect			
Intimacy	.006	.111	-.105
Role relations (friends)			
Kin	.183	.038	.356
Work relationship	1.383***	1.437***	1.081***
Chain length	.576***	.814***	.331
Homophily: same-sex tie	-.440**	.523	-1.273***
Intercept	-3.373***	-4.166***	-2.128**
Chi-square	151.905***	96.923***	88.523***
Df	9	8	8

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Table 9.9 Coefficients from Logistic Regression Models Assessing Effects of Tie Strength and Gender Homophily on Whether Contact Holds an Executive Position, China, 2004

	Total (N = 954)	*Male (N = 453)*	*Female (N = 501)*
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Male	.078		
Age	.043***	.035**	.051***
Education(junior high school and below)			
High school and associate college	.724***	.911**	.671**
Bachelor's degree and above	.871***	1.025**	.845*
Tie strength effect			
Intimacy	-.235***	-.360***	-.146
Role relations (friends)			
Kin	.634***	.861***	.270
Work relationship	.531*	.502	.570
Chain length	.130	.176	.034
Homophily: same-sex tie	-.067	.809*	-.809**
Intercept	-2.679***	-2.889***	-2.755***
Chi-square	73.314***	50.492***	44.064***
df	9	8	8

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Table 9.10 presents a summary of factors predicting contact status for males and females across these three societies. All in all, the three societies in the study shared a common experience that personal resources, including seniority (indicated by age) and human capital (indicated by education), helped access high-status contacts. The effect of kin relationship in predicting contact status was very different across these three societies: in the U.S. it had a negative effect (relative to friend relationship) for males and females; in China the impact of kin relationship was positive for males but not significant for females; and in Taiwan kin relationship was not significant for either males or females. That is, in the U.S., relationships with friends played a more important role in bringing in useful network resources than family members did, but in China family members were more helpful than friends in finding a better job search contact. On this issue, Taiwan stood in the middle between the U.S. and China with kin relationship an insignificant factor relative to friend relationship in predicting contact status. The "strength-of-weak-ties" proposition that weaker ties might access better social resources lacks consistent empirical support. For females in the U.S. and males in China, the weak-tie proposition held as

Table 9.10 Summary of Findings: Predicting Contact Status (Holding an Executive Position)

	U.S.			*Taiwan*			*China*		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Male	ns			+			ns		
Age	+	+	ns	+	ns	ns	+	+	+
Education	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Tie strength effect									
Intimacy	—	ns	—	ns	ns	ns	—	—	ns
Role relations (friends)									
Kin	—	—	—	ns	ns	ns	+	+	ns
Work relationship	+	ns	+	+	+	+	+	ns	ns
Chain length	+	+	ns	+	+	ns	ns	ns	ns
Homophily: same-sex tie	ns	ns	ns	—	ns	—	ns	+	—

Notes:
ns: not significant; +: significantly positive effect; —: significantly negative effect.

the intimacy between the respondent and the contact was negatively related to reaching a high-status contact. However, for males in the U.S. and for females in China, as well as for both males and females in Taiwan, the overall effect of the tie strength between job seeker and the helper on the contact status was insignificant. The chain length was positively associated with accessing high-status contacts for males in the U.S. and Taiwan but was not significant for others.

In terms of gender homophily, the comparison shows that in the U.S. this factor was not significant, but in Taiwan and China it played a significant role; females needed to bridge at least one male node, getting away from same-sex ties, in order to reach higher-status contacts. In China, males also needed to stick to all-male ties in order to assure high-status contacts. For both males and females in China, and for females in Taiwan, the gender of the node was crucial—failing to reach any male node was a disadvantage in accessing high-status contacts.

RETURNS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

The next research task was to examine the effects of *contact status*, as indicated by whether the contact holds an executive position, on *attained status*, indicated by whether the respondent holds an executive position. Table 9.11 presents logistic regression models that predict which respondents in the U.S. were more likely to hold an executive position (relative to other jobs), taking

Table 9.11 Coefficients from Logistic Regression Models Predicting Attained Job Status from Respondent's Contact Status and Other Selected Independent Variables: Respondents' Holding an Executive Position, the U.S., 2004

	Total (N = 1,074)	*Male (N = 506)*	*Female (N = 568)*	
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model3*	*Model 4*
Male	.141			
Age	.024 *	.015[a]	.033	.031 *
Education (junior high school and below)				
High school and associate college	2.085 *	.613[a] *	1.766	1.556
Bachelor's degree and above	2.445 *		2.085 *	1.759
Social resources effect	.992 ***	1.126 ***		.887 ***
Intercept	-5.650 ***	-3.275 ***	-5.275 ***	-5.280 ***
Chi-square	57.913 ***	30.046 ***	13.530 **	23.818 ***
df	5	3	3	4

a. There are few female cases of executive in lower education and thus the education here is categorized into two categories: bachelor's degree and above versus the others. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

into account gender, education (representing human capital) and age (representing personal experience). The results show that contact status played a key role in helping both males and females to attain an executive position. For those who used contacts in the job search process, other things being equal, men had no advantage over women in becoming an executive. Overall, for contact users in the U.S., those who were older, higher educated and used high-status contacts were more likely to reach executive positions. However, there was a notable gender difference. For females, higher education was associated with attained executive position. However, after taking contact status into account, education made no significant contribution for their achieving executive positions, implying that it was the contact status that influenced females' chances of attaining executive positions.

In Taiwan, like in the U.S., as shown in Table 9.12, in addition to gender, age and education, contact status played a key role in attaining executive jobs. Gender differences also existed. For females, education became an insignificant factor after including contact status in the regression model, as in the U.S.

Table 9.12 Coefficients from Logistic Regression Models Predicting Attained Job Status from Respondent's Contact Status and Other Selected Independent Variables: Respondents' Holding an Executive Position, Taiwan, 2004

	Total (N = 1,282)	*Male (N = 685)*	*Female (N = 597)*	
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*
Male	1.342***			
Age	.052***	.050***	.033	.035
Education (junior high school and below)				
High school and associate college	2.230***	1.930***	1.208[a]**	.907[a]
Bachelor's degree and above	2.701***	2.396***		
Social resources effect	2.132***	2.035***		2.733***
Intercept	-8.767***	-6.972***	-5.328***	-6.728***
Chi-square	157.048***	91.858***	4.402	28.402***
df	5	4	2	3

a. There are few female cases of executive in lower education and thus the education here is categorized into

Table 9.13 Coefficients from Logistic Regression Models Predicting Attained Job Status from Respondent's Contact Status and Other Selected Independent Variables: Respondents' Holding an Executive Position, China, 2004

	Total (N = 1,043)	*Male (N = 483)*	*Female (N = 560)*
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Male	.542		
Age	.061***	.064***	.062**
Education (junior high school and below)			
High school and associate college	.921*	1.004	.836
Bachelor's degree and above	1.671***	1.483*	1.996**
Social resources effect	1.008***	1.544***	.286
Intercept	-6.864***	-6.720***	-6.569***
Chi-square	50.261***	37.465***	13.809**
df	5	4	4

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

In China, the overall picture is similar to that in Taiwan and in the U.S. with age, education and contact status significantly affecting the executive position attained. There are also important gender differences but in a different way. For females, only college education, instead of contact status, had a significant impact in attaining an executive position. It suggests that contact resources for Chinese female job seekers provided no competitive advantage; they had to rely on individual education to get ahead and acquire an executive position.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter examined details about the construction of network chains in reaching contacts with certain status resources. With the full job search chains measured, this chapter reassessed the operationalization of the "strength-of-tie" concept, the measurement of the embedded resources and the social resources hypothesis and the variations of patterns of relationships between males and females and across three societies. Overall, the social resource proposition, which argues that contact resources advance the status attained, has been largely confirmed, except for the case of females in China. However, much ambiguity has resulted regarding the weak-tie proposition, which claims that weak ties in job search processes lead to better jobs. We know that strength of ties in itself should not be expected to exert a direct effect on status outcomes (Granovetter 1995), and there might be no direct associations between tie strength and status attained (Marsden and Hurlbert 1988). By considering the chains of job search contacts, this three-society study further confirmed the proposition that weak ties access better social resources but this proposition lacks consistent empirical support across gender groups and across societies.

All in all, Granovetter's weak-tie proposition gained relatively more support in data from the U.S. than in China and Taiwan. In the U.S., overall weak ties, such as less intimate associates, work-related colleagues, nonkin relationships and helpers connected through longer chains, were found to significantly help out the job seekers to reach high-ranking contacts. When looking at males and females separately, weak ties of nonkin relationships and longer-connected chains were significant factors for males, but weak ties of less intimacy, nonkin ties and work-related relations had significant contribution for females in the U.S. The gender difference in the U.S. suggests that females who were able to reach high-ranking contacts relied considerably on less intimate ties and work-related relations, whereas these two factors were not crucial for males. This reflects a situation in the U.S. where there indeed existed gender differences of mobilizing social capital whereby social resources were embedded in different social contexts for males and females.

In China, for males, useful job search ties successfully reaching high-ranking contacts would involve less intimate ties, kin relationships and all-male

search chains, implying that kin ties that were helpful for Chinese males in job search processes were not close family members but most likely distant relatives. However, for Chinese females, tie strength was not a significant factor at all, playing no role in finding high-ranking contacts; instead the only factor of social ties that mattered was cross-sex helper ties. To reach high-ranking contacts for Chinese females, they had to rely on their individual education and locating at least one male helper in their job search chains. The findings in China reveal the coexistence of less intimate ties and kin ties in one's job search chains that seemed a paradox but did exist in reality and proved useful. As such, tie strength is not only a simple issue of degree, such as strong or weak, but also involves various kinds of relations in one's social networks.

In Taiwan, the weak-tie proposition gained less support than in the U.S. For males, work-related ties and longer job search chains were significantly helpful, and for females only work-related ties had a significant effect. Neither intimacy nor kinship had a significant effect on reaching high-ranking contacts for both males and females in Taiwan, revealing a distinctive difference from the characteristics in China, which presumably shared traditional Chinese customs and group-oriented behavior patterns.

In the U.S. and Taiwan, chain length had a significant and positive effect on contact status, particularly for males—the longer the chain of contacts, the more likely they would access high-ranking contacts. That is, searching far would be helpful for males in order to find a high-ranking contact, possibly because of the weak-tie argument that persons who are weakly linked (here, further up the chain) to a job seeker would be more likely than close associates to possess unique—and therefore valuable—information and resources.

Besides the weak-tie proposition, the social resource proposition gained support for males and females in the three societies, except for females in China. Although some previous studies found no significant difference between men and women in the effects of social capital on job search outcomes in China in the 1990s (Bian 1997; Bian and Ang 1997), this study shows that the situation had changed in the 2000s. Chinese females could not obtain useful social ties to mobilize contacts with better social standings in their job search processes and thus saw no effects of these contacts on their status attainment.

This three-society study offers some more concrete clues as to what *guanxi* actually means in Chinese societies (Lin 2001a; Bian 1994, 1999; Bian and Ang 1997). Our data would suggest that in Chinese societies, social relations principally consist of a mixture of ascribed and constructed relations, including kin, clan, school and work ties. *Guanxi*—the mixture of kin, institutional ties and friends—will evolve as the society is undergoing industrialization, as evident in the case of Taiwan. It does not go away easily and may never go away completely, but it nevertheless eases up in its configuration. It would, however, be wrong to conclude that industrialization brings about more "modern" or rational social relations. In the U.S., social ties remain important, particularly weak ties, for accessing better social capital and thus better jobs.

This study confirms the general understanding that social capital is differentially mobilized and distributed across different gender groups. Significant

differences appear in the social networks and embedded resources between females and males across the societies under study. Previous studies in the U.S. suggested that women use networks less because women's networks have more kin, fewer coworkers and more other women. Males have larger networks, affiliating with larger associations and thus enjoy the benefits of associations with other males, reflecting gender homophily. Females are affiliated with disadvantaged networks with smaller and less diverse networks, more female ties and lower-status contacts. Females are disadvantaged in mobilizing male contacts—thereby accessing worse social capital—which accounts partly for their inferior status attainment. Interestingly, this study confirms the thesis of gender-based differential mobilization of social capital in Taiwan and China, where females relied on male contacts to overcome their disadvantages of network resources in reaching high-status contacts. Gender homophily of job search ties has significant effects on contact status in Taiwan and China but has no effect in the United States for either males or females. This suggests that social institutions and labor market contexts may shape the use of ties of varying strengths and attribute homophily, which in turn would affect the status attainment process.

Mobilizations of network resources from personal contacts of varying strengths were constrained by institutional contexts in each society. In less industrial societies such as China, access to rich social capital depends to a significant extent on kin ties and less intimate ties. In more industrial societies such as the U.S., such access depends more on generalized social relations—friends, rather than kin ties. Accordingly, Taiwan, somewhere in between in the industrialization process, shows a pattern in between the two societies. This pattern had no significant preference on either friends or kin ties but relied on work ties more than others.

Last but not least, this three-society comparison confirmed that macrolevel variations would affect patterns associated with the production and returns of social capital. When aligned along an axis of political-economic regime, the U.S. and Taiwan are democratic capitalist states, and China is a hybrid of command and capitalistic regime. On this account, patterns of data from the U.S. and Taiwan should be closer to each other and different from those from China. When aligned along an axis of cultural regime, China and Taiwan presumably share deep-rooted cultural origins in which kin ties constitute the core of social relations, whereas the U.S. reflects an Anglo-Saxon tradition where kin ties have loosened their grip in the formation of social relationships. This study's preliminary findings revealed that patterns of mobilizing social capital for females and males in each of these three societies were generally different from each other—across gender groups and across societies. With only three macro units, the tests of the expected data alignments would be tentative and preliminary at best. Combining cross-society theoretical verification and societal contingencies, this study advances our knowledge as to the extent of which the theoretical propositions in the theory of social capital are universally valid, and the extent to which such validity may be contingent on political, economic and institutional regimes of the societies under study.

Table 9.14 Summary of Findings: Predicting Attained Status (Holding an Executive Position)

	U.S.			*Taiwan*			*China*		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Male	ns			+			ns		
Age	+	ns	+	+	+	ns	+	+	+
Education	+	+	ns[a]	+	+	ns	+	+	+
Social resources effect	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	ns

Notes
ns: not significant; +: significantly positive effect; —: significantly negative effect
a. Education has a significantly positive effect on holding an executive position before social resources effect was taken into account.

NOTES

1. The chain is illustrated on the questionnaire as "The helper is my _____'s _____'s _____." [Choose from the relationship below.]