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Cherchez la Femme: Women as Supporting Actors in the Russian Labour Market

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It is well known that women have inferior labour market opportunities in post-communist Russia, but little is known about their role as labour market intermediaries. This paper examines how women compare to men in this role. We base our analysis on qualitative and quantitative data, gathered in the Russian city of Samara in 1999. We find that women are more effective than men in helping their contacts into jobs, but that these jobs are lower paid than those provided by men. Our explanation is that while women's position in the labour market restricts their access to information about good jobs, their leading role in the household implies intervention in the lives of others, including as persistent labour market intermediaries.

Introduction

In her influential study of the relationship between gender roles within nuclear families and the social networks in which families are embedded, Elizabeth Bott found that women were notably more active than men in keeping up kinship ties and, in this context, were the ones who persuaded male relatives to help one another get jobs (Bott, 1971 [1957]: 135–136). Despite the prominence of both gender and network themes in the sociology of labour markets, Bott's insight went unnoticed in that literature. One exception is the work of Margaret Grieco, which, on the basis of case study research among blue collar workers in the UK in the 1980s, finds a similar pattern: 'females link the employment chances of their spouses to the male kin of their family of origin and vice versa' (1987: 36), partly by servicing and managing the ties between the two families. Other available studies consistently show the lower diversity and narrower outreach of women's networks vis-à-vis men's: they include more kin and neighbours and fewer coworkers (Marsden, 1987; Moore, 1990; Marsden and Gorman, 2001). This suggests, as Bott argues, that women are confined to a 'behind-the-scenes' role. In this article, we explore the role played by women as labour market intermediaries in contemporary Russia – a context which is significant both because of the high labour participation of women, and because of the importance of networks within the post-communist labour market.

One of the reasons for the relative neglect of gender issues in the sociology of labour markets and networks may be purely methodological. Sociologists of labour markets simply assume that the characteristics of the contact that leads to a job can serve as a proxy for the structure of the underlying network. The larger network from which these 'productive' ties emerge remains unobserved, which does not allow Bott's ethnographic observation to surface in quantitative data. The other reason is substantive. Since the middle of the twentieth century, women in the developed world have left the confines of their households to enter the public economy and have therefore become capable of assisting others in

getting jobs directly rather than indirectly through male contacts. Nevertheless, gender differences in forms of network support have begun to attract sociologists' attention. They consistently find that occupational sex segregation translates into sex segregation in the composition of job contact networks. Men obtain jobs predominantly through male contacts and women through female contacts (Hanson and Pratt, 1991; Leicht and Marx, 1997; Straits, 1998). In addition, women's networks are less useful for job seekers because they are poor in weak ties which are crucial for getting a job (Granovetter, 1995; Marsden and Gorman, 2001). In sum, the literature implies that female workers' subordinate position in modern labour markets makes their supporting role rather ineffective. This is the conclusion we seek to challenge. We argue that in the context of the Russian labour market in the 1990s, women are more effective than men as labour market intermediaries. This effectiveness is partially explained by women's role within households, as Bott's thesis suggests.

The context of the Russian transition from communism, in which we test our ideas, is better described by the term 'economic collapse' than 'transition'. The decline in Russia's GDP in the 1990s was steeper and deeper than that experienced during the Great Depression in the USA (Connor, 2000: 199; Rosefielde, 2001: 116). This has led to a devastating decline in living standards for the majority of the population; in mid-1998 statistical real wages were a little over half their 1985 level. This decline was accompanied by a huge growth in inequality,[1] implying that the position of the poorest had deteriorated even further (Clarke, 1999: 120). At the same time, unemployment was not as high as was expected, reaching 9.7 per cent in 1996, and rising to a peak of 13.2 per cent in 1998 (Goskomstat, 2003: 130). Thereafter it declined, and stood at 8 per cent in 2002 (Goskomstat, 2003), mainly because labour was so cheap and flexible that enterprises had little reason to shed staff (Clarke, 1998). Employers routinely resorted to late payment of wages, short time and enforced leave during the 1990s, and encountered little protest from workers who continued to work without pay for months at a time. Russian employees did attempt to improve their position through changing jobs, with levels of job-to-job mobility being notably higher than those found in the economies of Western and East European countries (Grogan, 2000: 39–41). But a significant fraction of this mobility was downward (Grogan, 2000: 171; Sabirianova, 2002).

Another notable feature of the post-communist Russian labour market is the importance of connections in securing access to jobs. It is widely accepted that networks are a crucial resource in contemporary Russia (Ledeneva, 1998; Rose, 1998; Lonkila, 1999; Clarke, 2002b). In the non-monetary shortage economy of the Soviet era, the creation of informal relations of mutual obligation – *blat* – was vital to secure access to the most basic items (Ashwin, 1996; Ledeneva, 1998). Although it is now possible to buy most things on the open market, one item in short supply is good jobs, and the role of connections in securing work has increased significantly during the transition era (Clarke, 2000; Yakubovich and Kozina, 2000). It is now estimated that approximately two thirds (Clarke, 2000) to 72 per cent of jobs (Yakubovich and Kozina, 2000) are obtained using contacts and therefore the supportive role played by individual labour market intermediaries is of key importance in contemporary Russia.

We examine women's role and effectiveness as labour market intermediaries through a combination of quantitative and qualitative modes of inquiry. First, we introduce the quantitative and qualitative data, both gathered in Samara, a large Russian city. They are then used to adapt Bott's argument to the contemporary Russian context and to develop testable hypotheses. Statistical tests show that women are more active than men in the role of labour market intermediaries, but that jobs gained through women are less attractive. The qualitative data suggest that the key to understanding the form of Russian women's activism lies in their traditional secondary position within the labour market and, at the same time, their primary role within households as domestic managers. The former means access to less attractive jobs while the latter implies the assistance and stimulation of the job search activities of other household and family members, as well as that of friends and acquaintances. The final section summarises our contribution, discusses its applicability to other social contexts, and outlines the agenda for future research.

Data

The quantitative data for the paper comes from a large-scale survey of hires carried out in 1999 in the local labour market in Samara, a large industrial city about 700 miles south-east of Moscow. A two-stage stratified clustered probability sample of 1143 hires in 93 organisations represented all the economic branches except for state administration and finance. The response rate was 60.4 per cent for organisations and 71.9 per cent for hires within the organisations. After the exclusion of cases with missing information on at least one variable of interest,

we were left with 1021 cases representing all the 93 organisations. We found no systematic pattern of missing data.

Detailed information about hiring practices was accumulated using structured interviews with personnel officers of the organisations sampled, workers who were hired and the people who made the hiring decisions.[2]

The qualitative data is drawn from a study designed to examine gender differences in employment strategies through longitudinal qualitative research, which traced the labour market activity of specially selected groups of men and women through a consecutive series of semi-structured deep interviews. Part of the research for this project was carried out in Samara between 1999 and 2001. Thirty male and 30 female respondents who were all registered unemployed at the beginning of the research were interviewed in their homes by trained interviewers at six-monthly intervals regarding their job search activities and related topics. Respondents were selected in order to ensure that the male and female samples were comparable in terms of education and age. In terms of age, approximately half the respondents fell into the 31–49 age group at the beginning of the research, and one quarter each into the under 30 and over 50 categories. Meanwhile, approximately 40 per cent had higher education, 40 per cent vocational education, with the remainder divided between secondary and unfinished higher. In line with the character of the city, over 70 per cent of those we selected had work experience in industry, either as engineers or workers, while another 15 per cent were accountants, managers or economists. Eighty per cent of the respondents were in reality looking for work at the beginning of our study.

Full interview transcripts were prepared in Russian by the interviewers. In each interview the two main blocks of questions concerned labour market behaviour and issues related to the household (including budgeting and the domestic division of labour). When describing their job-search activities, respondents were asked how they knew of the jobs for which they were considered, and to describe in detail the process through which they got a job. Although the level of detail provided varied somewhat, in most cases the nature of the tie, and the kind of job-search assistance provided was clear. In addition to this, the interviews also addressed the help with job search that respondents provided to others, although that information was less systematic.

The qualitative section of this paper is based on an analysis of the first two stages of interviews, which were carried out in spring 1999 and winter 1999–2000. Each interview is referred to by two numbers: the first indicates the respondent and is accompanied by the sign #, and the second, the stage of the research. Interviews were coded using ATLASti 4.1 (Scientific Software Development, 1997). For the purposes of this paper, the first step was to isolate all the instances of help with job search occurring in the data. These were identified using four codes 'male help with job search', 'female help with job search', 'obtaining a job through a male intermediary', 'obtaining a job through a female intermediary'. The second stage of coding involved dividing these codes according to the nature of the tie involved, and the form of help provided (whether it involved influence or solely information, whether it was solicited or unsolicited and so on). The sample of incidents contained both the instances of help provided to our respondents, and the help our respondents offered to others.

Theoretical Arguments

The role of women in the public economy of industrialised nations has changed drastically in the 50 years since Bott's study. Soviet Russia was a leader in this regard. By 1988 the Soviet Union had the highest female participation rate of any industrial society, with over 85 per cent of working-age women engaged in full-time work or study (Lapidus, 1988: 88). Despite the changes of the reform era, women continue to make up over 48 per cent of the economically active population (Goskomstat, 2003: 129), and, correspondingly, the labour participation of working-age women at 75.1 per cent is only marginally lower than that of working-age men at 79.9 per cent (Goskomstat, 2003: 130). Meanwhile, the female unemployment rate is marginally lower than the male, and this has consistently been the case since the first Labour Force Survey was carried out in 1992.[3] Women thus continue to be full participants in the Russian labour market.

The integration of women into the public economy has three important implications for Bott's thesis as applied to the Russian context. First, in a supporting role, women should be equally concerned about the labour market opportunities of their male and female kin. Second, being present in the labour market themselves, they should be able to offer information and advice independently, extending their supporting role beyond that of encouraging their male contacts to help each other. Finally, despite their involvement in paid work, their role as intermediaries is still likely to be structured by their role in the household. Let us discuss these implications in more detail.

To begin with the last point, Russian women take primary responsibility for running the household and its budget, a role which includes ensuring household economic survival (Ashwin, 1999; Lytkina, 2001; Clarke, 2002a). Russian women also play the leading role in maintaining contacts within the family and with shared friends. This means that women play a very important role in household-centred social networks. In the 1998 ISITO (Institute for Comparative Labour Relations Research) household survey more than two thirds of exchange partners were women (Clarke, 2002b: 201), while Clarke's analysis of this data also showed that male-headed households were much less likely both to give and receive help than were female-headed households (p. 201).

Women's embeddedness in household exchange networks could imply that they are less engaged as labour market intermediaries. But our qualitative data reveal that in their role as domestic managers women use their networks in order to assist the job-search activities of household and extended family members. This represents a modified version of the mechanism identified by Bott. Rather than simply encouraging men to help each other, Russian women, as participants in the labour market, are able to provide more direct help to male as well as female kin. Coding the first two rounds of interviews in the qualitative study yielded 88 cases in which the contact that enabled a respondent to obtain a job was identified, 42 of them hires of men, 46 of women. Of these, 37 were cases of male help leading to a job and 51 were cases of comparable female help. The cases of female help to household and family members (20 in all) highlight the way in which women's primary role within the domestic arena extends into managing household labour resources. The following example, in which a mother-in-law finds work (involving a drop in pay and status) for her co-resident daughter-in-law, so that they can arrange childcare between them, illustrates the process. As the daughter-in-law explains:

> After two years [working at a factory] I gave birth. When I went back to work the problems began. Controllers work in shifts – the problem was: with whom to leave the child? I had to put her in a kindergarten. My mother-in-law worked at the same factory in a different shop. She said that they had a place for a cleaner. I didn't have any choice, I couldn't go on working as a controller. My daughter was sickly . . . and our work was such that if I went on sick leave no one would like it, and no one would agree to keep me there. And in that sense being a cleaner was very good. There was no timetable – I could go there at any time and clean the shop. I didn't depend on anyone. My mother-in-law came home from work and I ran off to work for a maximum of one and a half hours. My daughter was always at home (#52-1).

In the context of economic crisis in which many families have been struggling to make ends meet, the role of women as domestic managers has assumed a greater importance (Burawoy *et al*., 2000a, 2000b). As part of this role, women attempt to stimulate the labour market activity of family members, and also provide them with information and assistance where they can. The qualitative evidence shows that women use all the resources at their disposal in order to do this: by providing information, by mobilising their contacts to yield more leads, and by transforming chance encounters into openings. For example, one former army helicopter pilot (#24) was helped out of unemployment by his mother's use of contacts. He got a job at a rehabilitation centre for people with hearing and speech impediments after receiving help 'from a good friend of my mother's, she knew that I was looking for work, and told her [his mother] about the place' (#24-2). Meanwhile, women's skill in transforming events into opportunities is illustrated by the following male respondent's account of getting a job: 'my wife met the foreman, . . . [with whom she and the respondent had worked before]. She met him in the street, and asked . . . "Will you take mine on?" "I'll take him" ' (#56-1). Such behaviour is in stark contrast to that of men, who do not concern themselves with household management. Although they provide help to family members when they can, there are no cases of male help with job search that demonstrate the strategic view of household labour resources evinced by female domestic managers.

Our qualitative data also show that women do not confine their attempts to organise and facilitate the lives of others to the household. The data provide many examples of women's interest in the fortunes of their friends and acquaintances, and of their tendency to intervene in others' lives by supplying assistance or advice. We suggest that this is because dispositions developed within the household influence behaviour more generally. Bourdieu (1977) sees dispositions as being 'transposable' between domains, while Sewell argues that what he calls 'schemas', procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social life (1992: 8), are defined by their transposability, the fact that they 'can be applied to a wide and not fully predictable range of cases outside the context in which they were initially

learned' (1992: 17). We suggest that women extend their disposition towards managing the lives of others from the private sphere of the family and household, to the public sphere, where they may intervene in the lives of new acquaintances if they perceive a way in which they can help.

A characteristic example of such behaviour is provided by the following middle-aged female respondent who was forced, after an accident, to spend some time in hospital:

Even in hospital – even there I found [work]. There are such grannies there! There was one – she had fallen over at home and had a huge bruise. She was at that age. They said that she was afraid to go home. Alone in a three-roomed flat. Listen, I said, if she's got relatives – hire a carer to come in, look after [her]. I know unemployed people. And they right away [said], 'Valya, we'll talk to her daughter'. Her daughter agreed. To cut a long story short, they gave me her details and said that the daughter agreed and would pay handsomely. When I left hospital and put it to my friends, well one, a teacher with higher education, said 'no, I won't do it'. I don't know what didn't suit her. For the other it was a long way to travel. In principle, I really liked that grandmother . . . it's kind of weighing on my conscience (#10-2).

In this case, the respondent's interest in those around her leads to the provision of a job opportunity for her friends. This kind of behaviour is common: there are numerous examples in our qualitative data of women offering unsolicited help, in many cases to people they do not know well. Overall, women's interventions in the careers of others are more frequent:

Hypothesis 1a. Women provide access to more job opportunities than men.

Women's bias to intervention in the lives of others often manifests itself in their adopting an informal mentoring role. Within the household, women often have very strong views about the jobs of family members and in some cases go so far as to take charge of their careers. For example, the early career of respondent #31 was dominated by her mother. As soon as the respondent left school, her mother set her up in a job at the aviation factory where she worked. The respondent left that job, which she did not enjoy, after a year, and worked elsewhere for another two years, but then her mother intervened again and brought her back to the factory 'just like the first time through people she knew in the personnel department' (#31-1). This decisive intervention was prompted by the mother's perception that her daughter was 'freezing' and vulnerable to colds because of her long journey to work.

Outside the household women behave in a similar fashion. A good example of this is provided by a woman who was coaxed into trying out the shuttle-trade by a female acquaintance at her work:

The thing is, I went to Moscow for the first time to buy myself a fur coat, and as I wanted to justify the fare I decided to buy some goods [to sell]. You see, working in our department was a lively girl who liked to take risks, and she for a whole year kept, as they say, kicking me: 'enough of playing the fool, come and do business with me'. She tried to kind of shake me up, and when I went [to Moscow] I realised that it was not scary, but possible. At the beginning I didn't sell [the goods], I was kind of embarrassed. My mother sold them because she had previously worked at a garment workshop, and they made clothes there and then went through the villages, selling them . . . Looking at my mother, I already began to sell (#32-1).

This kind of informal mentoring was a notable feature of the instances of the help provided by women, but was not visible in the provision of help by men. We again argue that such insistent attempts to influence others stem from habits learned within the household, which dispose women towards caring but also controlling behaviour.

What this implies is that women's attempts to facilitate the careers of others will not stop at providing one-off information, but will often involve coaxing and encouragement. Women's persistence is therefore likely to result in a higher take-up rate of jobs, when compared with those provided through male contacts. Together with the higher degree of opportunities generated by women (Hypothesis 1a), this implies the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1b. A worker is more likely to get a job through a female contact than through a male contact.

While women may be active in trying to help their family members and other contacts, there are reasons to believe that the jobs found by women may be of lower quality than those found by men. This stems from women's disadvantaged status in a sex segregated labour market. In line with Soviet trends, women are estimated to earn 62–65 per cent of men's monthly wages, and

71–72 per cent of men's hourly wages (Newell and Reilly, 1996; Arabsheibani and Lau, 1999; Katz, 2001). Meanwhile, the gender restructuring of employment seems to be benefiting men. The greatest declines in women's share of employment occurred in the traditionally female-dominated branches of trade and catering, banking and finance, in administration and in consumer services (Katz, 2001: 216–217) where wages have been rising (Katz, 2001: 234). Since women are likely to have most information about those areas of the economy where they themselves are active, the trends outlined imply that they are likely to provide referrals to lower paid jobs.

Another reason why female contacts are likely to provide jobs of lesser quality is that their threshold of job acceptability is likely to be lower. There is a great deal of evidence within the qualitative data to suggest that women have a pessimistic view of their labour market prospects, and thus are likely to have lower expectations. The overwhelming majority of female respondents thought that their sex was a disadvantage when looking for work, while a smaller majority of male respondents thought that their sex was an advantage. This translates into a readiness to accept poor conditions on the part of women, which can be briefly illustrated by the following quotations. First, women with dependents are ready to make enormous sacrifices in order to provide. As one respondent put it, 'I can work as a cleaner, or at a factory, maybe as a hospital orderly – whatever. It doesn't matter much as long as I can earn money and feed my children'. Second, what comes across from the comments of women, often working in appalling conditions, is their sense of gratitude for having any job at all. This is strikingly illustrated by the commentary of a young seamstress (#14) on the job she had found by the second stage of the research. She listed its disadvantages as the lack of sick leave, holiday pay, and the cramped and unheated work environment. The workshop had no window, but this thankful employee made the best of this deficiency, noting that the consequent lack of a draught was 'good'! She also noted the formal registration of the job as a 'cause for celebration' (#14-2). Such tolerance of poor conditions is widespread among women.

Male respondents demonstrate a far greater sense of their own worth. For example, one former engineer (#9) who was still unemployed by the second stage of the study commented on the jobs he had been offered:

> It's ridiculous! All of them have been blue-collar and construction jobs. That's right, I thought. All my life I've scribbled away, avoiding that, knowing that in old age it would be very hard to work with a spade. That's why I studied. . . . No, I said. I refused. Yes, and my health is already starting to play up . . .
>
> I really don't want simply to work for some uncle and be subject to commonplace exploitation. I'm open about it (#9-2).

A younger respondent (#46) in his thirties who was living with his parents and claimed that he was a manager by profession, was equally wary of what he saw as exploitation: 'The labour market as it stands, and those jobs which I realistically – realistically! – could get – taking them would mean being exploited for 1500–2000r a month.[4] I don't want to work for that kind of money. . . . ' (#46-2).

As can be seen, while men employ the concept of exploitation to justify their economic inactivity, women instead try to explain their acceptance of apparently horrendous conditions and low pay through the argument that nothing better is available. Although there is little direct evidence regarding the quality of the jobs about which women provide information in the qualitative data, there are cases which show that women consider it worth passing on information about even the most unattractive jobs. In the light of such evidence it appears reasonable to advance the second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. A job found by a female intermediary pays less than a job found by a male intermediary.

Hypothesis Testing

Dependent Variables

Multiple Offers

To measure the number of the offers a worker received we asked two questions: (1) Besides the employer who hired you, how many other employers have you contacted in the process of getting a job? (2) How many of those employers agreed to give you a job? If the answer to question 2 is greater than zero, the dependent variable is assigned a value of 1; otherwise, it is equal to 0.[5]

The vast majority of Russian workers accept the first offer they receive; in our sample, 80.1 per cent of workers did so. Among those who did not, 83 per cent considered only 2–3 jobs. At the same time, the thrust of this paper's argument entails one clarification: although multiple offers should be rare, the instances when they do occur are substantively interesting. Since job search is not an individualistic but a collective process, the presence

of multiple offers may indicate, among other things, that a job seeker's network is unusually active in assisting his/her search. The members of the network generate tips so fast that the worker has the opportunity to entertain a number of offers at once. Accordingly, 'multiple offers' is a legitimate dependent variable if we want to test whether a network's gender composition affects its propensity to deliver jobs. Note that this does not imply that the outcome of job search is better under the condition of multiple offers. Because the number of people in our sample with more than one offer is small, the major distinction should be made between those who obtained just one offer and those with multiple opportunities.

Getting a Job

For each contact in a worker's network, we code whether it is the one from which the worker first learned about the job acquired. If so, the dependent variable gets a value of 1; otherwise, it is equal to 0. By definition, a maximum of one tie may lead to the job. A total of 832 workers obtained jobs through one of their personal contacts.

To measure *Job salary*, we asked a respondent the following question: How much was your total pay, including bonuses and all supplements, immediately after getting a job? We coded the responses in roubles per month and included them in the analysis below in logarithmic form.

Independent Variables

The operationalisation of any network characteristic has to be preceded by a clear delineation of the relevant network. In network studies of labour markets two extreme methodological approaches are visible. One is to collect comprehensive information about the tie that led to the job. This approach does not really provide enough insight into the composition of the network in which the hire is embedded and, consequently, cannot shed light on the behind-the-scenes roles of the network's members. The second approach is mapping the whole social network of a respondent. This method is very cumbersome and difficult to combine with an application of network information gathered to a substantive topic, since the resulting questionnaire is very likely to be extremely extensive and exhausting for the respondent to complete. Moreover, successful capture of the job-related ties is not ensured; people use different ties for different purposes (Wellman, 1992; Hurlbert *et al.*, 2000). We choose the middle ground and utilise the concept of an action set (Mayer, 1966). In the context of this paper, an action set is the part of a worker's network involved in the process of getting a job. Specifically, it includes the people who (i) were familiar to the respondent before hiring; and (ii) were either contacted by the respondent, could have been contacted if necessary, or approached the respondent themselves.

The survey identified a respondent's action set using the following three questions. (1) Thinking back and doing a rough calculation, if you decided to enlist help from any of your relatives, friends, and acquaintances in the job search, how many of them could actually help? Tell me about them. (2) Recall those of whom you actually approached during the job search. How many people was it? Tell me about them. (3) During the period of job search, were you approached by people whom you had not asked for help? If the respondent has not searched for jobs, the interviewer had to ask about the six months prior to getting the job sampled for this study. For each contact mentioned, the respondent was asked to provide socio-demographic characteristics including sex.

To test Hypothesis 1a, we count the number of women and the number of men in a worker's action set and compare the impact of women-contacts with that of men on the likelihood of getting multiple offers. Hypothesis 1b is about the effect of a contact's sex on the likelihood of getting a job through that contact. Hypothesis 2 implies the same independent variable as Hypothesis 1b, though it refers to the contact from whom the worker found out about the job actually obtained.

Control Variables

In addition to conventional controls such as sex, age, education, previous employment status (worker, student, unregistered unemployed, and registered unemployed), occupation and sector of the job obtained, we take into account some parameters of the process of getting a job that can affect the number of offers a worker gathers. We expect that 'length of search' has a non-linear relationship with the number of offers: early on, continuing search yields more offers; however, after some time without a hire it indicates the weak labour market position of the job seeker and, accordingly, fewer options. The quadratic specification of the 'length of search', measured in days, takes care of non-linearity. The length of search is equal to 0 if the respondent indicated that he/she did not search for a job at all. In a baseline model of the likelihood of multiple offers, we control for size (the number of contacts) of an action set, which is an important parameter characterising the opportunity structure of a job seeker (Granovetter, 1974; Burt, 1992).

Since we carry out a within-subject analysis to test Hypothesis 1b, characteristics of workers and their

organizations cannot be estimated separately but are accounted for by fixed effects (see the description of the model below). Instead, the controls for the respective model include socio-demographic characteristics of contacts such as gender, age, and occupation.

Statistical Models

We model the probability of getting multiple job offers using logistic regression with additional adjustments required to account for stratification and clustering (see Data Section for details), which make observations statistically dependent. The model is often called 'survey logistic regression'. It is estimated by the pseudo-maximum-likelihood method as it is implemented in version 8 of Stata, a general statistical software package (StataCorp, 2003a: 25–41).[6] For hypothesis testing, this method uses an adjusted Wald test based on the approximate F statistic $(d-k+1)W/(kd)$, where W is the Wald test statistic, k is the dimension of the hypothesis test, and d is the total number of primary sampling units (PSUs) minus the total number of strata (StataCorp, 2003a: 90–98). In a similar fashion, we employ the survey linear regression (StataCorp, 2003a: 25) to test Hypothesis 2 with logarithm of salary as the dependent variable.

For a within-subject analysis of the probability of getting a job, we use the conditional fixed-effects logistic regression (StataCorp, 2003b: 171–187). The workers whose action sets either consist of less than two contacts or do not lead to a job contribute zero to the conditional likelihood function and therefore have no effect on the estimation. The number of observations whose contribution is non-trivial is called the effective sample size. In this case, it is equal to 690, which is 60.4 per cent of the original sample size of 1143.

Findings

The descriptive statistics of workers in Table 1 show that the Samara labour market is slightly dominated by men; women comprise 46.1 per cent of the workers hired. Differences of similar magnitude are observed in men's and women's involvement in the labour market as supporting actors. The number of men in an action set varies from 0 to 9 with an average of 1.6 while the number of women varies from 0 to 8 with an average of 1.2. In the end, 38.5 per cent of jobs are obtained through male contacts and 36.1 per cent through female contacts.

Table 2 contains the socio-demographic characteristics of workers' contacts. About 42 per cent of the contacts in this study are women; among the ties that lead to jobs their proportion increases to 49 per cent, signalling the effectiveness of women as labour market intermediaries. Most of the contacts, about 35 per cent, are managers; the second largest group, skilled workers, comprises 28.5 per cent of the sample.

Table 3 presents the logit models that test Hypothesis 1a. The coefficient estimates for the control variables included in Model 1 are generally consistent with existing theories of labour markets. People with higher education enjoy more opportunities. The effect of the 'length of search' on the likelihood of getting multiple options has an inverse U-shaped form; it increases initially, reaches its maximum for those workers who search about 4 days, and then steadily declines. Such a short period of rising odds suggests that the likelihood of multiple offers is the function of the effectiveness of a worker's personal contacts rather than her job search effort. The finding also suggests that multiple offers are more likely to result from a pursuit of a few job tips simultaneously rather than from sequential search, which is the dominant perspective on getting a job in the economic literature (Devine and Nicholas, 1991; Mortensen and Pissarides, 1999). Finally, the registered unemployed demonstrate a higher likelihood of multiple offers.

The effect of size of the action set added in Model 2 suggests that the sheer number of contacts positively affects a worker's labour market opportunities. To test Hypothesis 1a, we decompose the action set size into the male and female components in Model 3. The effect of the number of female contacts is positive and statistically significant. The odds-ratio of receiving multiple job opportunities increases by a factor of 1.19 with each additional woman in the action set. Although the respective effect for the number of male contacts is insignificant, this does not necessarily imply that it is statistically distinguishable from the effect of female contacts. To find out if this is the case, we test the equality constraint on the effects in question. The Wald test yields an F statistic of 0.75, which means it is impossible to reject the null-hypothesis that the effect of the number of male contacts is equal to the effect of the number of female contacts. Thus, Hypothesis 1a is not supported by the data.

Table 4 contains the results of the within-subject analysis of the likelihood of getting a job through a contact in a worker's action set. As Hypothesis 1b predicts, a respondent is significantly more likely to get a job through a female contact than a male contact. There are two potential reasons why this is the case. First, women's bias towards intervention in the lives of others means that they are likely to be persistent in providing follow-up help to those whom they assist with job search. This increases the likelihood that a job opening provided by a

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for characteristics of hires. Sample = 1,143 workers in 93 organizations

Characteristic of hires	Frequency	Percent of the sample
Female	527	46.1
Education		
General secondary	381	33.3
Vocational secondary	504	44.1
High	258	22.6
Previous employment status		
Working	580	50.7
Registered unemployed	144	12.6
Unregistered unemployed	299	26.2
Student	120	10.5
Occupation		
Manager	70	6.1
Professional	172	15.1
Technical worker, clerk	158	13.8
Skilled worker	525	45.1
Unskilled worker	218	19.1
Economic branch		
Manufacturing	383	33.4
Services	363	31.8
Transportation	164	14.4
Non-profits	233	20.4
Gender of job contact		
Male	440	38.5
Female	412	36.1
No contact	290	25.4
Multiple job offers	227	19.9

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Log (Salary)	6.15	0.67	4.06	8.29
Worker's age (years)	36.7	12.8	17	75
Length of search (days)				
Log (Length of search)	2.7	2.3	0	7.7
Action set size	2.6	1.8	0	9
No. of men in the action set	1.5	1.6	0	9
No. of women in the action set	1.1	1.2	0	8
Action set efficiency	0.64	0.31	0	1

woman will be utilised by the job seeker. Second, since women traditionally have lower status in the labour market, the jobs they supply are likely to be located at the lower end of the labour market, and therefore the potential for rejection by employers may be lower.

One way of assessing the relative importance of these two explanations is to examine the effects of occupational strata in Table 4. These show that managers are in the best position to help in finding a job while unemployed contacts are the least effective. Thus, the higher a contact's status, the more likely she is to help. At the same time, the effect of a contact's gender is independent of her occupational status. These findings strongly suggest that the underlying mechanism of women's greater effectiveness as intermediaries vis-à-vis men is unrelated to their labour market status but lies in the form of their helping behaviour, which we argue is rooted in the household division of labour.

Since the models in Table 4 are fixed-effect models, any individual characteristics of job getters are controlled

Table 2 Characteristics of the contacts in workers' action sets. Sample = 2546 contacts of 1143 workers in 93 organisations

Individual characteristic	All contacts		Contacts that lead to jobs	
Female	1063	41.8	408	49.0
Occupation				
Manager	889	34.9	296	35.6
Professional	368	14.5	104	12.5
Technician, clerk	236	9.3	86	10.3
Skilled worker	726	28.5	225	27.0
Semi-skilled, unskilled worker	151	5.9	78	9.4
No job	176	6.9	43	5.2
Contact leads to a job	832	32.7	832	100.0
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Contact's age	41.5	11.5	43.7	10.9

Table 3 The probability that a worker received multiple offers: pseudo-maximum-likelihood estimates of the survey logit model

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	−1.766 (0.813)*	−2.137 (0.828)*	−2.150 (0.829)*
Female	−0.252 (0.170)	−0.237 (0.168)	−0.344 (0.220)
Worker's age	−0.001 (0.044)	−0.004 (0.045)	−0.005 (0.045)
Worker's age squared	0.0001 (0.0005)	0.0002 (0.0006)	0.0003 (0.0006)
Education (general secondary):			
Vocational secondary	0.321 (0.197)	0.274 (0.195)	0.275 (0.196)
Higher	0.785 (0.226)***	0.673 (0.240)**	0.683 (0.237)**
Previous employment (worker)			
Student	−0.305 (0.310)	−0.296 (0.319)	−0.288 (0.321)
Unregistered unemployed	−0.325 (0.220)	−0.310 (0.222)	−0.312 (0.221)
Registered unemployed	0.523 (0.227)*	0.556 (0.221)*	0.559 (0.221)*
Length of search	0.479 (0.108)***	0.460 (0.113)***	0.463 (0.112)***
Length of search squared	−0.066 (0.018)***	−0.063 (0.019)*	−0.063 (0.019)***
Action set size		0.121 (0.050)*	
No. of men in action set			0.098 (0.055)
No. of women in action set			0.170 (0.079)*
F-test	5.72 (10.81)***	7.98 (11.80)***	7.55 (12.79)***

Sample = 1021 hires in 93 organisations. Reference categories and standard errors are given in parentheses.
*Significance levels: *P < 0.05, **P < 0.01, ***P < 0.001 (two-tailed test).*

for. Thus, the effect of a contact's gender is independent of the gender of the job getter; both men and women benefit from female contacts. However, the models show this only for the subsample of workers who have non-trivial action sets, defined as action sets with at least two contacts, one of which leads to the job a worker acquired. It is possible that this subsample is biased towards women and therefore the results simply replicate the finding of the match by gender between workers and their job contacts (Hanson and Pratt, 1991; Leicht and Marx, 1997; Straits, 1998). To verify whether this is the case, Table 5 reports the estimates of a logit sample selection model where the dependent variable is the likelihood of having a non-trivial action set.

The effect of gender is statistically insignificant, which suggests that men and women are equally likely to have a non-trivial action set. At the same time, differences in education cause some selection bias; workers with degrees are more likely to have a non-trivial action set than those with general secondary education. Interestingly,

Table 4 Fixed-effect conditional logistic regression of the likelihood of getting a job

Independent variables	
Female	0.847 (0.128)***
Age	0.029 (0.029)
Age squared	–0.00003 (0.0003)
Occupation (skilled worker)	
Managerial	0.375 (0.144)**
Professional	0.337 (0.177)
Technical, clerical	0.310 (0.197)
Semi-skilled, unskilled worker	0.399 (0.250)
No job	–0.770 (0.274)**
Likelihood ratio chi^2 (df)	111.35 (8)***

Effective sample = 2415 contacts of 690 hires in 93 organisations. Reference categories and standard errors are given in parentheses.
*Significance levels: **P < 0.01, ***P < 0.001 (two-tailed test).*

Table 5 The probability that a worker has a non-trivial action set: pseudo-maximum-likelihood estimates of the survey logit model

Independent variables	
Female	–0.118 (0.155)
Age	0.001 (0.040)
Age squared	–0.0002 (0.0004)
Education (general secondary)	
Vocational	0.210 (0.141)
Higher	0.563 (0.207)**
Employment status (employed)	
Student	0.278 (0.291)
Unemployed	0.218 (0.149)
Registered unemployed	0.185 (0.216)
Occupation (skilled worker)	
Managerial	0.159 (0.255)
Professional	0.259 (0.234)
Technical, clerical	0.349 (0.249)
Semi-skilled, unskilled worker	0.399 (0.250)
No job	–0.291 (0.213)
The number of relatives in the city	0.017 (0.006)**
F-test	20.69 (14.77)**

Sample = 1113 hires in 93 organisations. Reference categories and standard errors are given in parentheses.
*Significance level: **P < 0.01 (two-tailed test).*

the number of relatives in the city of Samara has a significant positive effect. This is consistent with our claim that household and family networks – in which women are linchpins – are important in job search.

Findings in Table 6 offer a test for Hypothesis 2. An average woman's salary is about 75 per cent [exp(–0.29)] of an average man's salary controlling for other key characteristics. The earning power is an inverse U-shaped function of age. In our sample, it increases until the person is about 50 years old and then declines. Wage earners benefit from higher education and work experience immediately prior to the current position. Managers and professionals earn more than skilled workers, while unskilled workers earn significantly less than their skilled counterparts. Across industries, the non-profit sector loses in comparison with the others.

Our central result is presented in Model 2. All other things being equal, a job delivered by a female contact pays about 12 per cent less than a job found by a male contact and is statistically indistinguishable from jobs obtained through formal channels. Model 3 introduces an additional control variable, whether the respondent received multiple offers or not. It is possible that alternative offers constitute a bargaining chip that the worker can use to negotiate a higher salary. Empirically, it does not turn out to be the case. Albeit positive, the effect of multiple offers is small and statistically insignificant. At the same time, the effect of a female contact holds. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is fully supported by the data.

Conclusion

We started this article with Elizabeth Bott's insight into women's behind-the-scenes role in the labour market. Our analysis suggests that the insight is applicable in the context of Russia's post-communist economy. At the same time, Bott's argument requires modification and clarification. Modern Russian women do not merely encourage male members of their extended families to help each other, as Bott argued. They are in a better position to help others independently and, in this regard, move from behind-the-scenes to the foreground of the private–public interface of economic life. At the same time, women's activism in the role of intermediaries is not likely to be matched by their status as labour market actors in their own right in the foreseeable future. This in turn means that they will continue to act as brokers for less desirable jobs.

The key to understanding why women are effective labour market intermediaries despite their inferior job opportunities vis-à-vis men lies in the household. Women's status as workers in Soviet Russia was always implicitly nested within their prior identities. First, according to Soviet ideology, they were supposed to be workers *and* mothers. Second, the desired transfer of

Table 6 Pseudo-maximum-likelihood estimates of the survey regression of the logarithm of a worker's salary

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	5.512 (0.182)***	5.558 (0.178)***	5.539 (0.179)***
Female	−0.293 (0.042)	−0.249 (0.044)***	−0.247 (0.044)***
Worker's age	0.050 (0.009)***	0.049 (0.009)***	0.050 (0.009)***
Worker's age squared	−0.0006 (0.0001)***	−0.0005 (0.0001)***	−0.0006 (0.0001)***
Education (general secondary)			
Vocational secondary	0.056 (0.041)	0.061 (0.041)	0.059 (0.042)
Higher	0.205 (0.057)***	0.203 (0.057)***	0.197 (0.058)***
Previous employment (worker)			
Student	−0.173 (0.072)*	−0.168 (0.072)*	−0.165 (0.072)*
Unregistered unemployed	−0.090 (0.042)*	−0.085 (0.041)*	−0.083 (0.041)*
Registered unemployed	−0.167 (0.049)***	−0.157 (0.047)***	−0.165 (0.048)***
Occupation (skilled worker)			
Manager	0.464 (0.070)***	0.452 (0.070)***	0.454 (0.070)***
Professional	0.153 (0.067)*	0.141 (0.067)*	0.139 (0.067)*
Technical	0.052 (0.067)	0.054 (0.064)	0.052 (0.064)
Unskilled worker	−0.350 (0.072)***	−0.345 (0.072)***	−0.343 (0.072)***
Economic sector (manufacturing)			
Service	−0.101 (0.087)	−0.090 (0.086)	−0.089 (0.086)
Transportation	−0.044 (0.108)	−0.039 (0.108)	−0.037 (0.108)
Non-profit	−0.564 (0.110)***	−0.546 (0.108)***	−0.541 (0.109)***
Job contact (male)			
Female		−0.127 (0.049)***	−0.128 (0.049)*
No contact		−0.082 (0.048)	−0.083 (0.048)
Multiple job offers			0.043 (0.042)
F-test	25.70 (15.76)***	23.36 (17.74)***	22.24 (18.73)***

Sample = 1098 hires in 93 organisations. Reference categories and standard errors are given in parentheses.
*Significance levels: *P < 0.05, ***P < 0.001 (two-tailed test).*

domestic functions to the public sphere never occurred and the norm of female responsibility for such work was never questioned. This had a strong influence on what Cecilia Ridgeway (1997) terms gender status beliefs. Given their continued link to the household, women were always seen as 'special' workers with a lower status than their male counterparts (Ashwin, 2000). The conception of women as a different category of worker continues to be taken for granted, not only by employers, but also by women themselves. Their secondary status in the labour market goes hand-in-hand with the importance women attach to their role in household management. This implies that women are more likely to see jobs as a means of household survival, rather than as a source of personal satisfaction or advancement, and therefore would be inclined to pass on any information that they have, provide any help they can, even when the job in question is of poor quality.

Women's role in the household also inclines them to active intervention in the lives of others, as they extend their managerial practices within the household into the public sphere. We see this as a particular case of the transposition of schemas or dispositions scrutinised in sociological theory. The significance of the transposition of women's household practices to the public sphere is that it blurs the boundary between strong and weak ties, transforming the latter into a source of social support. In economic sociology, it is common to perceive strong ties as a source of social support and weak ties as a source of information. The way in which Russian women offer unsolicited support to weak contacts calls into question the universality of this specification of the function of strong and weak ties.

An important question for future research is the extent to which our findings are specific to post-communist Russia. Russia has a particular gender order, which could be seen as the product of 'communist neo-traditionalism' (Walder, 1986), in the sense that it combines 'modern' elements such as the high labour participation of women, with a highly traditional household division of labour in which men play a marginal role in household

management. It is this combination which underlies the significance of women as labour market intermediaries. But Russia's specificity in this regard can be exaggerated. All social structures are a hybrid of old and new, with traditional ideas regarding gender in particular possessing what Cecilia Ridgeway and Shelley Correll call a 'devilish resilience' (2004: 523). In most developed societies, women continue to play the leading role in running households (see Thompson and Walker, 1989 for a review of the US evidence and Rubery *et al.*, 1998: 198–201 for European evidence), while there is no country in which they are in an equal position at work. It is therefore not surprising that, nearly half a century after Bott's study, the gender difference in maintaining families' social ties persists in most Western societies. For example, summarising the recent US evidence, Robert Putnam noted, 'married or single, employed or not, women make 10–20 per cent more long-distance calls to family and friends than men, are responsible for nearly three times as many greeting cards and gifts, and write two to four times as many personal letters as men. . . . Keeping up with friends and relatives continues to be socially defined as women's work' (Putnam, 2000: 94–95). This suggests our findings may have wider applicability – to those countries where women are integrated into the labour market, but at the same time continue to manage households and take primary responsibility for caring.

We suggest that testing and building on our modification of Bott's thesis in other contexts may prove fruitful. It could, for example, provide part of the explanation for the male marriage premium – the fact that married men fare better in the labour market than unmarried (Cappelli *et al.*, 2000; Hersch and Stratton, 2000). The most recent evidence suggests that Gary Becker's idea of specialisation within couples (Becker, 1965) cannot adequately explain this (Hersch and Stratton, 2000), and it may be that a focus on the role of women as mentors and intermediaries (rather than simply as domestic service providers) will prove more productive.

In Russia, the French expression 'chercher la femme' does not require translation. It is widely used and understood to refer to what is seen as the mysteriously pervasive role women play in shaping various spheres of everyday life. Our paper demystifies the importance of women in one such crucial sphere in Russia, and opens up an agenda for future research in other contexts.

Notes

1. The Gini coefficient increased from 0.26 in 1991 to 0.5 in 1993 (Clarke, 1999: 120).
2. Additional information about the survey can be found in the Appendix posted on the website http://gsbwww.uchicago.edu/fac/valery.yakubovich/research.
3. Women have always constituted a majority of the registered unemployed, since they appear to be less daunted by the stigma attached to registration.
4. Well above the regional subsistence minimum of the time, and slightly below the average wage.
5. For our argument, it is irrelevant whether multiple offers enhance the worker's bargaining position and thereby lead to a higher paid job. It turns out they do not, see our discussion of findings, which confirms that taking the first offer is a pretty reasonable strategy for the population at large.
6. We also estimated two-level random coefficient logit models, which produced qualitatively identical results.

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