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Why Blue-Collar Blacks Help Less

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WHY BLUE-COLLAR BLACKS HELP LESS[1]

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ABSTRACT

Why are blue-collar blacks less likely to help jobseekers than jobholders from other ethnoracial groups or even than more affluent blacks? Drawing from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 97 black and Latino workers at one large, public sector employer, we find that blue-collar black workers both helped less proactively and rejected more requests for assistance than did blue-collar Latino and white-collar black workers. We attribute blue-collar blacks' more passive engagement to their stronger conviction, born from personal experience, that providing help was too risky and, more often than not, a waste of time. These experiences contributed to their belief that job-finding hardships were less the result of opportunity deficits than deficits in work ethic, a position they then deployed to justify their reluctance to help in the future. We end with a discussion about how prior helping experiences shape beliefs about inequality and inform jobholders' willingness to help in the future, often to the detriment of disadvantaged black jobseekers.

INTRODUCTION

That low-income blacks are less likely than jobseekers from other ethnoracial groups to find work through personal contacts is as much common knowledge (Fletcher 2012; Ramirez 2012) as it is a subject of scholarly interest (Holzer 1987, 1988; Falcon 1995; Elliot and Sims 2001; Falcon and Melendez 1996; Green, Tigges, and Diaz 1999). Researchers have highlighted three primary causes to explain the relative inefficacy of low-income blacks' job referral networks. First, in part due to the legacy of racial oppression and the changing structure of urban economies, in relative terms blacks lack access to contacts who are well positioned to offer job information and influence the hiring process on their behalf (Loury 1977; Wilson 1987).[2] This argument is part and parcel of William Julius Wilson's social isolation thesis (1987; 1996). Second, intentionally or not, blacks are also excluded from the active, job referral networks of other ethnoracial groups[3] (Mier and Giloth 1985; Massey et al. 1987; Waldinger 1996, 1997; Aponte 1996; Hagan 1998; Royster 2003). Deidre Royster's (2003) illuminating study of the role that networks play in the early career trajectories of young, black and white men is illustrative. Third, as Neckerman and Kirschenman (1991) convincingly show, some employers adopt recruitment practices that circumvent the job referral networks that blacks do have, often purposefully (Kasinitz and Rosenberg 1996; Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991; Waldinger 1996; Wilson 1996; Lopez-Sanders 2009). Combined, these mechanisms of exclusion deny low-income black jobseekers access to productive channels of

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[2] We assume here, as much of the research does, that job referral networks tend to be ethnoracially homogeneous. This is for good reason. Previous research has shown that jobseekers are overwhelmingly matched to jobs by contacts of the same ethnoracial background (Wilson 1987; Waldinger 1996; Smith 2000).

[3] Immigrant Latinos in particular have been noted for their active, highly organized and efficient job referral networks. A disproportionate number of low-income Latinos in the U.S. are immigrants who relied heavily on personal networks to navigate the migratory process (Massey et al 1987; Hagan 1994, 1998; Menjivar 2000). Once in the U.S., they continued to rely on personal networks to find housing and jobs (Waldinger 1982; Browing and Rodriguez 1985; Bailey 1987; Massey 1986, 1987; Massey et al 1987; Bailey and Waldinger 1991; Hagan 1998). Not only do immigrant jobseekers eagerly accept jobs that they find through personal contacts, presumably to avoid lengthier searches associated with more formal methods of job search (Massey et al 1987; Hagan 1998), but they also learn about a great many job opportunities, to the extent that they exist, because co-ethnic job contacts actively inform and recruit them to fill vacancies (Waldinger 1996, 1997; Hagan 1998; Waldinger and Lichter 2003).

network-based job information and influence.

More recent research, however, suggests a fourth and complementary account: When presented with opportunities to help jobseeking friends, relatives, and acquaintances, blue-collar black jobholders are less likely to do so (Newman 1999; Smith 2005, 2007). In a study of black/immigrant competition, for instance, Waldinger (1997) queried Los Angeles employers about why they employed so few black workers. One employer complained that, relative to Hispanics, "blacks just don't refer." He was not the only employer to suggest as much. In *No Shame in My Game*, Newman (1999) notes that among the low-wage workers she studied, personal contacts were vital to the job-matching process, but assistance was not always forthcoming. Because jobholders feared that their referrals would eventually prove unreliable and compromise their own reputations on the job, they denied requests for job-matching help. And in *Race and the Invisible Hand*, Royster (2003) reports that some of her working-class black respondents thought it prudent to be selective about whom they helped because they also feared the possible negative effect on their own reputations if their referrals "messed up." None of her working-class white respondents shared this concern. These reports suggest the need for greater attention to the dynamics of information flow and influence within the job referral networks of low-income blacks.

Smith's (2005, 2007, 2010) research was the first to do so systematically. Employing in-depth interviews and survey data of 105 low-income blacks from one Midwestern city, Smith found that those in possession of job information and the ability to influence the hiring process overwhelmingly responded to requests for help with great skepticism and distrust. In *Lone Pursuit*, she reports that over 80% of respondents in her sample expressed concern that jobseekers in their networks were too unmotivated to accept assistance, required great expenditures of time and emotional energy, or acted too irresponsibly on the job, thereby jeopardizing the jobholders' own reputations in the eyes of employers and weakening their already-tenuous labor market prospects. Consequently, they were reluctant to provide the type

of assistance—personal recommendation—that best facilitates job acquisition in low-wage labor markets where employers rely heavily on informal referrals for recruitment and screening. To explain employees' decision-making, Smith (2005) developed a multi-level model highlighting jobseekers' personal attributes, jobholders' status and reputation, the strength of the tie between jobseeker and jobholder, and, in addition, the socioeconomic status of the neighborhood in which jobholders resided, because it shaped jobholders' perceptions of the risk the applicant posed. Smith's work represents one of the first studies to examine the logics that job contacts deploy to make decisions about whom to help and under what circumstances to do so (now also see Marin 2012; Paul 2012; Trimble 2012).

Although Smith's findings imply that blacks help less, her study of low-income blacks was not designed to examine whether they do and why. Two studies have since emerged, however, to address one or both of these questions directly. Both provide evidence to support the notion that blacks help less; neither convincingly explains why. As a part of a larger study to determine just how disconnected disadvantaged minority jobseekers are from job-relevant networks, Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo (2006) analyzed data from a mid-size, private employer. Their examination of employees' referral hiring behavior revealed that a higher percentage of Asian and Hispanic employees provided referrals than did blacks. Asians also produced a greater number of referrals. Whites were lowest on both counts. Smith (2010) also examined differences between blacks and Latinos in referral behavior, drawing from in-depth interviews with a small, non-random sample of blue-collar workers at the University of California, Berkeley. She reports that, compared to Latino workers, a substantially larger percentage of black workers had recently decided against helping someone from their personal network, and when they did help, they more often helped passively.

Although insightful, both studies have significant shortcomings that limit their contributions to the larger question about why blacks help less. While Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo take seriously the notion that job-matching is a multi-stage process, with

their data they were unable to examine the pre-application stage of the job-matching process, and so they have been unable to determine the extent to which ethnoracial differences emerged even before employees referred jobseekers. In addition, Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo lacked data about *how* employees aided referrals during the hiring process. This is an important omission, given that the likelihood of being hired is conditioned on how proactively employees advocate for their referrals (Neckerman and Fernandez 2003). And finally, because of data limitations, Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo (2006) could not explain *why* referral behavior differed by race and ethnicity. While Smith did examine the basis upon which jobholders decided to help (or not) as well as how they helped, to explain patterns of helping behavior, she focused somewhat narrowly on jobholders' deployment of "cultural resources" to the neglect of other important factors. Thus, while evidence is mounting that low-income blacks help less than other ethnoracial groups (Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo 2006; Smith 2010; Hamm and McDonald 2012), a satisfactory explanation for why has yet to be rendered, and so the question that motivates this study is, "Why do blue-collar blacks help jobseekers less?"

Drawing from a unique dataset, we are able to do so. Our analysis is based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 97 black and Latino blue- and white-collar employees at one public sector employer who were queried about how they responded when recently faced with opportunities to provide job-matching help. To assess ethnoracial differences, we contrast blue-collar blacks' patterns of help with those of blue-collar Latinos. To assess within-race class differences, we contrast their patterns with those of white-collar blacks. We find that blue-collar blacks both helped social contacts less proactively and rejected more requests for assistance, on average, than blue-collar, Latino employees or white-collar, black employees. More importantly, we attribute blue-collar blacks' passive engagement to their strong conviction that job-matching help was too risky and often a waste of time. Not only were they more likely to report that jobseekers routinely failed to follow up on the job leads they provided, they were also more likely to report having been burned by referrals, who gained

employment as a result of their efforts only to be dismissed so thereafter due to unprofessional and unbecoming conduct. These experiences contributed to blue-collar blacks' belief that job-finding difficulties in their communities were less the result of opportunity deficits than deficits in work ethic, a stance they then deployed to justify their own reluctance to help in the future.

WHY WOULD BLUE-COLLAR BLACKS HELP LESS?

For theoretical insight, we look to two disparate literatures, rarely deployed to understand ethnoracial differences in the provision of job finding help—information economics and beliefs about stratification. Each is useful when considering the conditions under which reciprocal exchanges and help happen.

Information Economics, Race, and Barriers to Labor Market Intermediation

Although sociologists often deploy research from information economics to understand jobseekers' and employers' search behaviors, few have drawn from this body of work to comprehend jobholders' (un) willingness to act as intermediaries (for a brief statement, see Rees 1966), and to our knowledge, no one has sought to explain ethnoracial differences in search assistance through this theoretical lens. The class of theories that fall under the information economics umbrella assumes two sets of economic actors—buyers and sellers—who much decide whether or not to transact business (Stigler 1961). During the job-matching process, however, there are potentially three, not just two, actors—jobseekers (sellers), employers (buyers), and jobholders (advisory intermediaries). Jobholders must decide whether or not to act as intermediaries between jobseekers and employers. Who they help and how they do so will depend in great part on whether or not they perceive jobseekers to have the appropriate skill set. If they choose well, they might gain personal satisfaction and a sense of self-efficacy, but also gratitude and related rewards from jobseekers and employers who will benefit from their intervention (Granovetter 1995 [1974]). If they choose poorly, however,

and their referrals are revealed to be of low quality, they place at risk their own reputations with coworkers and bosses (Smith 2005, 2007, 2010). Thus, jobholders want to know enough about jobseekers to determine how much risk to their own standing the jobseekers pose.

From an information economics perspective, blue-collar blacks' relatively passive engagement in the job-matching process would be understood as a sign that they perceive a relatively high risk of adverse selection—choosing poorly because they have too little, or poor quality, information (Akerlof 1970; Wilson 2008). The fear of adverse selection would stem from two potential factors. First, blue-collar blacks could more often lack the quality and quantity of information they need to ascertain job candidates' qualities. Indeed, Akerlof's (1970) statement on "the employment of minorities" links employers' perceptions of risk to this first item. According to Akerlof, "The Lemons Principle also casts light on the employment of minorities. Employers may refuse to hire members of minority groups to certain types of jobs. This decision may not reflect irrationality or prejudice—but profit maximization. For race may serve as a good statistic for the applicant's social background, quality of schooling, and general job capabilities" (1970: 494). Thus, in the space of information asymmetries in hiring, Akerlof sees statistical discrimination as an efficient solution for employers.

For similar reasons, blue-collar blacks might be inclined to do the same (Smith 2005, 2007). They could more often be placed in situations where they are asked to help jobseekers about whom they know little (weak ties), or they are more often asked to intervene during the job-matching process for jobseekers about whom they have unresolved concerns. In the space of uncertainty—of information asymmetries—they rely on information about jobseekers' individual-level attributes and associations as proxies for employability. But doing so might place blue-collar blacks' jobseeking friends, family members, and acquaintances at a disadvantage. It's a question of network composition. Previous research has shown that both low-income blacks and Latinos tend to be embedded in networks low in human capital. But one noteworthy difference exists. While low-income Latinos, especially immigrants, tend to be

embedded in networks of the *under*employed—jobseekers who work but receive too little pay for the work they do or work too few hours to make ends meet—low-income blacks tend to be embedded in networks of the *un*employed and discouraged, individuals with much weaker labor force attachments. For blue-collar black jobholders, these attributes might signify the risks posed to their status and reputations on the jobs if matches ended badly.

Second, blue-collar blacks could more often lack adequate guarantees to protect against negative outcomes. Research on the role that network structure plays in facilitating social capital activation is relevant here. One school of thought proposes that social capital activation is more likely to occur among those embedded in networks that are characterized by social closure (Granovetter 1985; Coleman 1988, 1990; Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). Typically found in smaller communities, social closure describes network relations that are dense, overlapping, and close-knit. According to Coleman (1988, 1990), closed communities facilitate social capital activation by promoting trustworthiness, or what he called "trustworthiness in structures." These structures allow for the emergence of effective social norms and sanctions that regulate behavior. Because ties are dense, overlapping, and close, everyone is either directly or indirectly connected to all others through short chains. The information channels that these connections create pass news and gossip throughout the network. As a result, there is little that anyone can do without having others in the network discover their actions, thereby reducing the likelihood of information asymmetries. This monitoring capacity is key if sanctions for noncompliance are to be imposed and members kept in line. And assurances of appropriate behavior reduce the risks associated with reciprocal exchanges and pave the way for extensive and long-term obligations, fertile ground for social capital activation (Bourdieu 1985; Granovetter 1985; Coleman 1988). While Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) link high levels of reciprocal exchange among immigrant Latinos to the enforceable trust that exists within these communities, Granovetter suggests that blacks' relative inability to activate social capital for job-finding is a result of blacks' "looser and free-

floating network structures" (see Granovetter's Afterword, 1995). Thus, from an economics of information perspective, we must look to differences in information asymmetries and guarantees against negative outcomes to explain why blue-collar blacks help less than other ethnoracial and class groups.

Beliefs about Inequality

We might also explain blue-collar blacks' relative disinclination to help in terms of their stratification beliefs, because, just as sociologists have correlated causal beliefs about inequality with individuals' views on social welfare policy (Lee et. Al 1990; Bobo 1991; but see Knecht and Martinez 2009, 2012), social psychologists have shown that these attributions inform individuals' orientation to help others (Piliavin et. al 1969; Weiner 1980; Dovidio 1984). The two dominant causal beliefs are individualistic, which hold that individuals' outcomes are primarily a function of their abilities, efforts, and moral strength, and structural, which highlight factors outside individuals' control, with particular emphasis on opportunity structures and fairness in allocation processes (Feagin 1975; Kluegel and Smith 1986; Bonilla-Silva 2003). Although much of the literature suggests that individualistic causal beliefs are hegemonic (Feagin 1975; Kluegel and Smith 1986), a number of studies find that structural explanations are favored in some contexts (Lee et. Al 1990; Hunt 1996, 2004), and some researchers have uncovered evidence of a kind of "dual consciousness," whereby individuals show strong support for both individualistic *and* structural causal beliefs (Feagin 1975; Nilson 1981; Merolla et. al 2011). While older, affluent, white men are more likely to favor individualism, the educated are more likely to embrace structural explanations, and dual consciousness is associated with being black, Latino, lower-income white, and residents of neighborhoods characterized by concentrated disadvantage (Feagin 1975; Nilson 1981; Hunt 1996, 2004; Merolla et. al 2011).

But causal beliefs about inequality are further complicated by a number of factors that

might also be relevant for understanding ethnoracial differences in helping during the job-matching process. For instance, researchers have noted that when asked to consider where the roots of poverty lie, respondents' attributions depend on the category of poor in question (Lee et. al 1990, 2004; Wilson 1996). While welfare recipients evoke feelings about personal responsibility, the homeless inspire structural explanations, and individualistic and structural attributions are brought to bear to make sense of migrant laborers (Wilson 1996). This is in part because respondents have racial stereotypes about who occupies these positions—welfare recipients are black; the homeless are white; and migrant laborers are Latino—and the presumed racial composition of the poor in question is a major predictor of causal attributions (Wilson 1996).

Exposure to the poor also matters (Wilson 1991, 1996; Lee et. al 2004; Knecht and Martinez 2009, 2012; Merolla et. al 2011). Drawing from a national survey of public attitudes about the homeless, for instance, Lee, Farrell and Link (2004) report that public exposure to homelessness from expert and informal sources, first hand observations, face-to-face interactions, and shared group membership is associated with greater sympathy toward the homeless, increased support for structural attributions, and to some extent declining support for individualism. Lee, Jones, and Lewis (1990) find that informal conversations with the homeless increase the odds of attributing poverty to structural constraints. And Wilson (1996) shows that friendships with the poor—welfare recipients and the homeless—also lead to structural attributions. But some types of exposure, such as exposure to panhandling (Wilson 1991; Lee et. al 1990) can lead to individualistic attributions. In general, then, when exposure is fleeting and between status un-equals, individualistic attributions are made. When exposure is long term and between equals, however, structural attributions are more likely (Wilson 1996; Merolla et. al 2011).

And causal attributions shape individuals' willingness to help. Previous research indicates that, "…people are more likely to help a person whose dependency is seen as caused

by forces beyond the individuals' control than to assist people whose dependency is seen as reflecting personal weakness" (Dovidio 1984: 378; and see Piliavin et. al 1969; Weiner 1980). How individuals understand another's situation, then, informs their decision to help.

If blue-collar blacks are less inclined than other ethno-racial groups to help jobseekers in their network of relations, drawing from the sociological literature on stratification beliefs and social psychological literature on helping, we would locate their relative disinclination in a greater embrace of individualistic beliefs and a muted commitment to structural perspectives, since these orientations are more likely to produce an unwillingness to help others. Prior research by Hochschild (1995) is in line with this interpretation. Drawing from decades of poll data, Hochschild (1995) reports that among blacks, a substantially higher percentage of the poor agree that blacks are to blame for their unhappy circumstances and should be held directly responsible for their unequal status in society (83). Hochschild interprets these poll data to mean that, despite their structurally rooted struggles, poor blacks actually believe in the American dream more than do affluent blacks. They find value in both structural and individualistic explanations, but they are more likely than their more affluent counterparts to see the stratification system as open and thus to attribute blacks' socioeconomic outcomes to individual ability, effort, and moral strength. Thus, while blue-collar blacks are at least as likely as many other ethnoracial groups (Pattillo-McCoy 1999; Heflin and Pattillo 2006) to have the type of exposure to the poor that would produce sympathy, an embrace of structural beliefs, and support for more generous social supports, it appears that they are also more likely to be close, physically and socially, to categories of the poor for whom there is generally very little sympathy, who are assumed to be personally responsible for their circumstances, and who are widely seen as undeserving of aid—nonworking and welfare recipients. Exposure to those deemed by the larger society, and the black poor themselves, to be undeserving of help might produce a greater disinclination to help among blue-collar blacks relative to other ethnoracial groups.

THE CASE STUDY

In addition to the authors, trained graduate student interviewers conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 146 custodian, food service, and administrative staff workers at one large, public sector employer in the state of California, which we will call CPSE.[4] The current study, however, is based on interviews with 97 of these jobholders—39 black food service and custodial workers (from here on, "blue-collar blacks"), 36 native- and foreign-born food service and custodial workers (from here on, "blue-collar Latinos"), and 22 black administrators (from here on, "black admin").[5] See Table 1 for a summary description of jobholders in the sample.

CPSE has a racially and ethnically diverse permanent and contingent workforce of about 9,000. At its worksite are approximately 1,000 facilities operations and maintenance workers (custodians), 250 food service workers, and over 2,700 administrative/clerical and related support staff (admin), among other occupational categories. For participation in this study, jobholders were primarily recruited through two related strategies. Department supervisors and managers were asked permission to describe the study to jobholders during staff meetings and to recruit those who expressed interest in participating. This recruitment strategy yielded approximately one-half of the interviews conducted since the study began in the spring of 2008. The other half was generated through respondent-driven sampling (Heckathorn 1997, 2002).[6] This approach was adopted not to achieve representativeness, as would be the goal with a probability sample, but instead to capture the range of jobholders'

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[4] To protect respondents' identities, we use pseudonyms for all names associated with the institution and respondents, and some details about their backgrounds and work roles have been altered.

[5] We excluded from the analysis Asian and white jobholders because their numbers were too small to make meaningful comparisons and contrasts—12 Asians (10 blue-collar and 2 admin) and 19 whites (10 blue-collar and 9 admin).

[6] Each respondent was asked to recruit up to three CPSE custodian, food service, and/or administrative staff workers for participation in the study. For every worker they helped to recruit, respondents were paid $10.

intersubjective experiences so as to better understand how they made decisions about making referrals (Weiss 1994).

Between 15 and 18% of CPSE's workforce has been contingent in recent years, but all of the jobholders interviewed for this study were "permanent." At CPSE, permanent and contingent workers are often employed in the same occupational categories, but workers with permanent status are significantly advantaged over their contingent counterparts (Kalleberg 2011). While permanent workers are protected by union membership and cannot be dismissed without cause or due process, contingent workers have no such protection; they can be dismissed at will. Furthermore, after a specified period of employment, they are released and made to reapply if they wish to regain employment, an outcome that is not guaranteed. While permanent workers have regular opportunities for merit pay increases, contingent workers have many fewer such opportunities. And although permanent employees receive medical, dental, and vision insurance as well as membership in the CPSE retirement plan, contingent workers only receive medical; they are not offered dental and vision, and they are not allowed to subscribe to the retirement plan.

Our decision to focus recruitment on permanent workers was deliberate. Previous work has suggested that job contacts' decisions to make referrals are in part informed by their own tenuous positions in the labor market. For instance, a number of Smith's low-income black respondents expressed fear that they might be fired if they made a bad match (Smith 2005, 2007); and, indeed, a few had been fired for this reason. By interviewing respondents who are objectively under no threat of job loss at CPSE if a match they facilitate goes sour (although they may have been under such threat with other employers about which we learn), we can look past this otherwise important constraint to providing job-finding assistance to identify the other factors that shape jobholders' decisions to help.

Previous research has noted the role the organizations play in constraining or expanding opportunities for network-based recruitment (Waldinger and Lichter 2003). At

CPSE, workers are given ample opportunity to intervene during the hiring process, for permanent and contingent hires, if they so choose. Once a department has been given permission to make a hire, the manager or supervisor of the department first posts the position internally. They do so because current employees have first rights to fill vacant positions, and so jobholders know to review these announcements if they wish to transfer to another department within CPSE or if they want to get a heads-up on openings that might become available to the public. Every worker interviewed for this study reported that they knew when CPSE was hiring, and for what positions, because of the biweekly announcements that are posted in workers' common areas. Because of this practice, we are reasonably confident that few CPSE jobholders were advantaged over others in receiving timely information about new job opportunities.

If the posted position is not filled internally, staff at the Central Personnel Office publicize it by posting its details on online job sites, such as monster.com and IMDiversity.com, as well as CPSE's own website. The vacancy remains open for a specified period of time, usually two weeks, after which no applications are accepted. Applicants submit their dossier of materials for CPSE positions online via CPSE's own online application system. To aid their jobseeking contacts through this part of the process, jobholders can inform them that applications are being accepted; point them to the online application system; provide them with the job number for the position or positions of interest; inform them about which hard and soft skills are being sought; explain how they might best showcase their skills and talents on their resumes; and they can also give applicants permission to list them as a reference. Many of these approaches have been found to advantage referrals over non-referrals during the hiring process (Fernandez and Weinberg 1997; Fernandez, Castillo, and Moore 2000).

Once the application deadline has passed, staff members at the Central Personnel Office facilitate the review process by collating applications and sending them to relevant departments. Anticipating this, jobholders can intervene again by approaching their managers

or supervisors to advocate for their referrals, typically by asking them to "pull the application" for closer review.

After the department receives relevant applications, the manager or supervisor convenes a panel for review. Each panel consists of three or four members—the department manager or supervisor and two or three workers whose jobs are directly related to the position being filled. Together the panelists identify from the full stack of applications a short list of candidates for interviews. The interview can take place by phone, in person with the manager or supervisor, or in person with the full panel. If referrals are called for an interview, jobholders can inform them about the types of questions they can expect to be asked and educate them about the best answers to provide. After interviews are complete, a hiring decision is made. Although the final decision lies with the manager or supervisor, the workers on the panel are considered to be important advisors in the process.[7]

Jobholders at CPSE have many opportunities to intervene in the hiring process on behalf of jobseeking friends, relatives, and acquaintances and numerous ways to do so. The question we pose in this study is whether or not blue-collar blacks help less than their Latino counterparts or the somewhat better-off black administrative staff. And, most importantly, why?

DO BLACKS HELP LESS?

To determine whether blacks help less, we adopted five measures: 1) whether or not the jobholder helped anyone in the past year; 2) how many people jobholders helped in the recent past; 3) how jobholders helped the most recent referral, since some types of assistance are more effective than others at yielding job offers (Neckerman and Fernandez 2003); 4) whether or not jobholders *decided against helping* people they knew; and 5) how many people jobholders decided against helping.

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[7] Only for executive positions does the hiring process differ from what I've outlined here.

To determine whether, how many, and how they helped, jobholders were asked if they had learned about job opportunities that they could recommend to people they knew. If they had, they were asked if they had made any effort to do so. Displayed in Table 2 is the percentage of jobholders who reported that they had recently helped someone to find work at CPSE. Whereas 90 percent of black admin reported helping at least one person with job-finding assistance at CPSE, 88 percent of native-born Latinos, and 83 percent of blue-collar blacks did. Among foreign-born Latinos, only 75 percent reported helping someone recently. By this measure, proportionately fewer foreign-born Latinos, and not blacks, helped.

Those who helped at least one person were asked to provide a list of up to five people they tried to help recently. As shown in Table 2, in this regard, too, foreign-born Latinos helped the least—1.7, on average, among helpers and non-helpers. Native-born Latinos and blue-collar blacks helped 2.3, while black admin helped 2.7 jobseekers. If we exclude non-helpers, the pattern persists, with foreign-born Latinos helping fewer and black admin helping the greatest number of jobseekers.

Jobholders were then asked to provide details about their most recent experience helping someone to get a CPSE job (regardless of whether or not the jobseeker actually got the job),[8] including exactly what they did to help. From these responses, we identified five categories of helping—providing information about job openings, which included informing jobseekers that CPSE was hiring and/or providing jobseekers with the web address for CPSE's online application system; providing advice to enhance jobseeker's competitiveness, typically by advising jobseekers about resumes as well as interview content and techniques; acting as a reference; and talking to hiring personnel on jobseeker's behalf. Ethnoracial and

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[8] We did not often learn the outcome of jobholders' job-matching efforts. We queried jobholders about their most recent experiences helping. In many cases, experiences were so recent that the jobholder had not yet learned the outcome because it had yet to be determined; that the hiring process at CPSE can extend over several months made it all the more difficult to report on outcomes of recent assists. Also, in some cases, jobholders never learned about the outcome of their efforts because the contact they helped was a weak tie, someone that they did not know well enough to stay in touch after providing help.

class differences were revealing (see Table 2). Eighty-three percent of jobholders helped by informing jobseekers that CPSE was hiring and/or directing them to the CPSE website. Here, too, blacks were above the mean, with 86 percent providing information to the jobseeker they helped most recently, compared to 80 percent of foreign-born Latinos and 67 percent of native-born Latinos.

But the devil is in the details. When we examine what percentage of jobholders provided information *only*, blue-collar blacks do not look very helpful at all. Eighteen percent of all jobholders provided information only. Foreign-born Latinos and black admin were well below the mean, with 4 and 9 percent, respectively, but over one-fifth of native-born Latinos and one-third of blue-collar blacks only provided information during their most recent assist. Furthermore, relative to foreign-born Latinos and black admin, a substantially lower percentage of native-born Latinos and blue-collar blacks gave strategic advice and acted as a reference. Just 11 percent of the former and 22 percent of the latter helped jobseekers with resumes and/or provided interview tips.

These patterns suggest that low levels of assistance are not specific to blue-collar blacks, since native-born Latinos are consistently below the mean in terms of the types of help examined thus far. But differences between native-born Latinos and blue-collar blacks emerge when we examine the percentage of jobholders who talked to their bosses on behalf of jobseekers, arguably the most effective way to give one's referrals a competitive advantage. As shown in Table 2, blacks, blue-collar and admin, are below the mean, with 39 and 55 percent, respectively, talking to their bosses during their most recent assist. In contrast, 67 and 76 percent of native- and foreign-born Latinos, respectively, talked to their bosses. The patterns discussed indicate that blue-collar blacks do not help less frequently, but they do help less proactively. They share general information, but proportionately fewer appear inclined to give strategic advice, to act as a reference, and to talk to hiring personnel on behalf of their jobseeking relations.

Blue-collar blacks also reject more. We asked jobholders if they had decided *not* to help anyone when they had recently learned about job opportunities at CPSE. If they indicated that they had decided against helping, we asked how many jobseekers they had decided against helping, who the most recent reject was, and how this decision came about. Forty-four percent of jobholders had recently decided against helping at least one jobholder. While between 50 and 55 percent of blacks and native-born Latinos had, just 19 percent of foreign-born Latinos had. But in terms of the *number* of jobseekers rejected, blue-collar blacks were the only group to fall well above the mean. Compared to foreign-born Latinos who rejected .4, native-born Latinos who rejected .8, and black admin who rejected 1 jobseeker, on average, blue-collar blacks rejected 1.7 jobseekers. If we exclude non-rejecters from this calculation, the means are 2.0, 1.5, 1.8, and 3.7, respectively. In other words, while it was typical for Latinos and black admin to list one or two jobseekers they had recently decided against helping, among blue-collar blacks, it was routine to list two or more rejected jobseekers ("Brother, nephew, nephew, and cousin" or "My godbrother, my niece, my nephew, and a friend"); general estimates of the number of jobseekers they had decided against helping ("Wow! I would say between five and ten, somewhere around there."); groups ("Just people in my neighborhood" or "members of my church"); or social categories of people ("Young, black men"). Thus, although a slight majority of native-born jobholders, black and Latino, recently decided against helping at least one jobseeker, on average blue-collar blacks rejected a greater number of jobseekers than their counterparts. Overall, these patterns suggest that compared to blue-collar Latinos and black admin, blue-collar blacks both help less proactively and reject more. In the section to follow, we explore why.

WHY BLUE-COLLAR BLACKS HELP LESS: ASSESSING THE RISK OF MAKING FAILED MATCHES

Blue-collar black jobholders helped less and rejected more because they experienced helping as a waste of time and also perceived higher risks of initiating job-matches that would fail. Not

only were they more likely than blue-collar Latinos and black admin to report that jobseeking friends, relatives, and acquaintances routinely failed to follow up on the job leads they provided (resulting in jobholders' wasted time), they were also more likely to report that they had been burned by referrals, who gained employment as a result of their efforts only to be dismissed soon thereafter due to unprofessional and unbecoming (resulting in jobholders' tarnished reputations). These experiences contributed to their belief that job-finding difficulties in their communities were much less the result of opportunity deficits than deficits in work ethic, a stance they then deployed to justify their reluctance to fully engage the job-matching process in the future.

UNEMPLOYED WORKERS AND NON-WORKERS

Blue-collar black jobholders characterized their communities as bifurcated. Those who worked steadily were placed on one side of the divide and contrasted (often in moral terms) with those who did not work. Some jobholders, like 53-year old Dwayne Harper, imagined their communities to be almost evenly split between workers and non-workers. According to the senior custodian with two and one-half years on the job,

> Well, Maplewood has a bad reputation as far as drugs and all kinds of stuff like that. But Maplewood has a good side, too. There's good, productive people in Maplewood, too. And I've been in west Maplewood all my life, so I know both sides of it. It's hard for those people on that bad side. It's hard for them to get jobs. I know a lot of people that don't work. But then the people that are good, right citizens—it's not … it's still hard to get a job, but it's not hard … If you're on that bad side of the law you're doing bad and you're going in and out of jail, and you're selling drugs—now, that's hard, to get a job. [Mimics employer:] "What have you been doing for the last ten years?" [Mimics jobseekers on the bad side:] "Oh, in and out of jail," or "Just sitting on the couch watching TV on welfare." Now, this side? [Mimics jobseekers on the good side:] "I just worked last year doing this." [Mimics employer's response:] "Okay. You worked all your life, so yeah, you can get a job here; we'll give you a chance."

Carolyn Tate, a 54-year old custodian with 28 years with CPSE, had a more sanguine image of her community, where most were working or retired homeowners. There was, however, a

segment that caused her concern. When asked how hard it was for people in her community to find work, Carolyn replied,

> I don't know. I wonder that, too, sometimes. Because a lot of the young men, they seem not to be working. The young women work. But a lot of the young men don't work. I don't know if it's just a thing going around where they don't realize that that's what they should be doing, or [if] their parents taking care of them. I don't know. I try not to interfere. But I know there's a lot of young men who are not working."

Whereas jobholders like Carolyn and Dwayne imagined communities with equal or greater proportions of workers compared to non-workers, others, like 30-year old Loreen Reynolds, could think of few in their communities who worked. When asked what kinds of jobs people in her community held, the senior cook responded, "Well, where I live at currently they don't too much work. Not too many of them are working…Most of the women that live on my block, they're probably on AFDC. [Interviewer: What are the guys doing?] Oh, I don't even see them. I couldn't even tell you." Similarly, 23-year old Renita Wilson, a food service worker pregnant with her first child, explained that while a number of residents of her apartment building had jobs, because she largely kept to herself, she did not know their occupations. About most in her community, however, she shared the following: "But most of them, I've noticed that they don't work at all. [Interviewer: What do they do?] They sell drugs. Easy money. Go to jail. Do the same thing. Come out sell drugs, go back to jail. Same thing all over again, every day." And when asked how most of the people in his community found jobs, David Jackson, a 34-year old custodian with four years on the job simply said, "How? You've got to remember like most of the people in my community *don't* work" (emphasis added).

With very few exceptions, however, neither black admin not blue-collar Latinos characterized their communities as bifurcated by labor market status. In part this could be attributed to objective socioeconomic differences in jobholders' neighborhood composition. As shown in Figure 1, jobholders resided in census tracts with relatively low rates of family poverty, moderately high rates of unemployment, and moderate rates of public welfare receipt,

but, on average, blue-collar blacks lived in census tracts with slightly higher incidences of each

of these outcomes. Given that the majority of blue-collar blacks described their neighbors and

their neighborhoods negatively, however, we expected cross-group differences in

neighborhood socioeconomic indicators to be much greater than they were. This apparent

discrepancy could indicate that blue-collar blacks' subjective sense of their neighborhoods is

disproportionately negative, a not unreasonable suggestion given prior research that indicates

that individuals' assessments of the quality of a neighborhood are contingent on the perceived

ethnoracial composition of the neighborhoods' residents (Sampson and Raudenbush 2004).

Equally likely, however, is that our use of census tracts as a proxy for jobholders'

neighborhoods has flattened characteristics of these communities, since census tracts tend to

encompass several neighborhoods, often of varying socioeconomic status, whose boundaries

are subjectively defined by residents.[9]

Potentially more important, however, were objective differences in the composition of

jobholders' personal networks.[10] Despite reporting a greater number of close contacts and high

school educated contacts than Latinos (see Figure 2), blue-collar blacks had fewer currently

employed close contacts and more close contacts who had ever received public assistance (see

Figure 3). Put another way, over 80% of Latinos' close contacts were working and less than

one-fifth had ever received public assistance. Among black admin, just under three-quarters

were working and one-fifth had ever received public assistance. But as shown in Figure 4, less

than two-thirds of blue-collar blacks' close contacts worked, and one-third had ever received

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[9] We used the home addresses that jobholders provided to locate the census tracts where they lived.
Figures presented are from the 2000 census. For relevant critiques of the use of census tract data as a
proxy for neighborhood characteristics, see Chaskin (1994) and Lee and Campbell (1997).
[10] To measure the size of jobholders' networks of close associates, we deployed a name generator instrument.
Jobholders were asked to list up to six people with whom they discuss important matters, or discussion
partners. About each partner listed, jobholders were asked about the following attributes: gender;
race/ethnicity; how the person was related to them; highest level of education; length of relationship;
frequency of contact; partners' work status; industry and occupation; and whether or not partners have ever
received public assistance, such as SSI, TANF, or food stamps. As a proxy for jobholders' network size, we
used the number of discussion partners that jobholders mentioned. We ascertained network composition by
determining the number and percentage of jobholders' discussion partners who had graduated high school
or earned a higher degree; who were currently employed; and who had ever received public assistance.

public assistance. Thus, blue-collar blacks were embedded in networks of close friends and relatives with weaker labor force attachments and stronger connections to the public welfare system.[11]

Of great importance, too, is what jobholders perceived about jobseekers from whom they received requests. Black admin and Latino jobholders generally described community members who were without work as unemployed or "out of work" *workers*. These were individuals who worked but were *currently* without a job. Despite their current status, their attachments to the labor market were assumed to be strong. For instance, Jeanette Henderson's brother, a computer automated design draftsman, had been "out of work" for 6-7 years, but because he had specialized skills and had "worked for a lot of companies" prior to losing the final job he held, the 41-year old administrative assistance with 22 years at CPSE did not question her brother's "worker" status. This depiction subtly but significantly contrasts with portrayals blue-collar blacks offered. Those without jobs in their communities and personal networks, including those who approached them for information about job vacancies at CPSE, were characterized not as unemployed workers, but instead as *non-workers*. Their attachments to the labor market were perceived to be weak, if they existed at all. Loreen Reynolds, Renita Wilson, and David Jackson's comments above illustrate this point. This distinction is critical, because it foreshadows the meanings that jobholders attached to those

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[11] With greater connections to the jobless, one might wonder if blue-collar blacks helped less proactively and rejected more because they were more likely to be inundated with requests for job-finding assistance. While this argument might hold for differences between blue-collar blacks and black admin, it does not explain differences between blue-collar blacks and their Latino counterparts. Jobholders were asked if in the past year someone had approached them for help finding work at CPSE. On average, black admin reported being approached by a range of between five and nine jobseekers. Among blue-collar blacks and Latinos, however, the ranges were between 14 and 18 and between 13 to 17, respectively. Furthermore, jobseekers overwhelmed a similar percentage of blue-collar blacks and Latinos with requests for help. Thirty percent of blue-collar blacks reported at least one inquiry per month, on average. Similarly, 32 percent of Latino jobholders reported being inundated with requests. Only one black admin reported being approached so frequently. Thus, even as the gaps between blue-collar and admin workers are notable, those between blue-collar blacks and their Latino counterparts are not. It is unlikely that differences in helping patterns can be explained by the numbers of requests they received for help, since differences between blue-collar blacks and Latinos appear to be miniscule.

without jobs in their communities and shaped the extent and nature of job-matching assistance they were willing to provide.

A MATTER OF CHOICE?

Blue-collar blacks' greater perceived risk of making failed matches was in part a function of their own understandings about how categories of workers and non-workers got constituted—their beliefs about inequality. Most took for granted that one's attachment to the labor market was primarily a matter of choice. Pervasive was the view that anyone who wanted to work could (eventually) find a job, and keeping it was only a matter of the depth of one's commitment to work. Thus, it was assumed that jobseekers who were frequently without work, or without work for extended periods of time, had little sincere interest in working. Indeed, "People don't really want to work," was one of many versions of the most common refrain offered by blue-collar blacks to account for why relatively few people in their communities worked, why work was so difficult to find, and why community members did not often or proactively help each other through the job search process, even when they could. For instance, when asked if it was difficult for members of their communities to find work, 50-year old Louisiana native, Janice Singleton, a senior food service worker at CPSE for 10 years, replied, "No, it's not. It's the people that don't want to work." Richard Moore would agree. To the same question, the 51-year old cook originally from Harlem explained, "If you get off of your behind instead of worryin', if you just get up and go look for a job, it's not hard." And 53-year old custodial worker, Morgan Smith stated, "It's how much you apply yourself. I mean, there's jobs out there. Just are you willing to apply yourself for them?"

Some jobholders took it one step further to indict specific segments of the black community, typically young, black men, for what they perceived as an apparent disinterest in work. In response to a question about why members of his community had such difficulty finding work, for instance, 55-year old Jordan Stack replied,

> My nationality, a lot of blacks don't try. The youngsters is what I'm talking about.
> They wear their pants down at their ankles. They don't try. They still stay with their
> mom and dad. And they don't try to get educated, to try to get out and find no job
> when they get a certain age. And they know they have to take care of theirselves.
> [Interviewer: So they're not competitive.] No. They're not. A lot of them are not. And
> I see that in my people. A lot of them want to hang out in groups. A lot of them want to
> kick it. They're not ready to grow up. The men. A lot of the young men.

To further highlight the role that choice plays in getting work, the custodian with 17 years on

the job contrasted young blacks' behaviors not to those of working blacks, but to immigrant

Latinos, a group he perceived as "ready to get out there and get busy." According to Jordan,

> Well, a lot of Mexicans call for their families to come down. "They got positions open."
> And they'll come stay with them and put in the applications and get hired. Because
> they're determined to work. They want to work. And in my people—black—a lot of
> them don't even try to look for no job. They don't feel like they want to be bothered
> with jobs. Everybody sells drugs, probably. But I think in my nationality that's what
> they want to do.

Similarly, although 55-year old Ronald Thatcher offered that employers continue to consider

race when making hiring decisions, to blacks' disadvantage, he also opined that, given greater

opportunities than in previous generations, blacks had choice and thus should take onus for

whatever hardships they faced. According to the senior custodian with 29 years at CPSE, "For

20 years or 25 years you've had opportunity, but you're blowing it. You're taking yourself out

of the game. And it's not always … you can't always blame race upon it. It's about your

attitude, your work ethic." David Jackson also discounted the role of larger, structural factors

to explain blacks' persistent joblessness. When asked if it was difficult for members of his

community to find work, David explained that it was not at all, even though, by his own count,

not more than 10% of the adults in his community had jobs. David explained,

> You now, I really don't see it being difficult at all. Like I mentioned before, you know,
> it's a self-motivation thing. You know, a lot of people say, "Oh, Springtown is this,"
> or, "The community is this and that." It's really not the community. It's the people in
> the community. The individuals make it hard for themselves because they're not
> taking advantage of the resources and stuff, because the jobs are there. It's just all
> about if you want it, how bad you want it and what you're going to do to get up and go
> get it, you know what I'm saying? So, that's what the issue with my community is, you
> know. The resources are there. The people are there, they have programs, they have
> tons of stuff to help the young community, but it's up to those individuals if they want
> it. So I wouldn't say it's difficult.

Thus, from the perspective of many blue-collar blacks, job-finding difficulty was not primarily attributable to structural constraints known to disproportionately shape the life chances of low-income blacks, like deindustrialization and changing structure of urban economies (Wilson 1987, 1996; Kasarda 1995), or even anti-black discrimination (Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Pager 2003). Indeed, of the 39 blue-collar blacks in this sample, only four mentioned the role of the shrinking economy, and specifically the loss of jobs; only three mentioned poor access to resources, like transportation and computers (a useful resource during job search); only two mentioned the lack of job networks; only two mentioned labor market competition, specifically with Mexican immigrants; and only two mentioned anti-black discrimination.

More jobholders located job-finding difficulties in human capital deficiencies (8), but this number, too, paled in comparison to the number highlighting the role of individual effort. A disproportionate number of blue-collar blacks highlighted the centrality of motivation— people chose not to work because they lacked this all-important attribute. Specifically in response to the question about whether or not (and if so, why) their community members had difficulty finding work, 49 percent of blue-collar blacks listed motivation deficits as at least one cause. Thirty-three percent of blue-collar blacks ONLY offered motivation deficits as their explanation. And at some point during their interviews (not just in response to the question about their community members' difficulties), 72 percent of blue-collar blacks indicated that people had difficulty finding work in part because they lacked a work ethic.

Furthermore, five blue-collar blacks suggested that those in their communities who could help often did not *because* large segments of their communities did not want to work. For instance, in response to a question about who among their kin most helped others to find jobs, 23-year old Renita Wilson replied as follows,

> That's a good question. Nobody right now. A lot of the people in the family to get it together are dead. But we still talk and we try to help people out. But it still don't

work. Because you can't help nobody who don't want to help themselves. [Interviewer: So your family members, have they kind of given up on helping each other?] Well, kind of. Like I said, what am I going to help you for when you can't even help yourself? You're not even trying. You rather wait on your check on the first and then be broke the next couple of days. That's how people do it.

In similar fashion, Ronald Thatcher asserted that black men do not often help each other to find work. When pressed to explain, he stated, "Well, they consider doing it. But it doesn't pan out because nine times out of ten people [sic] think that they don't want to go and come to work." Because of their conviction that most among the jobless chose not to work, when in a position to help, blue-collar black jobholders' default response was somewhere between rejection and passive assistance.[12]

But black admin and blue-collar Latinos thought differently. Among black admin, this was in part because fewer in their communities were without jobs—27 percent reported that members of their communities did not have difficulty finding work; most were employed in fairly stable, working class or professional jobs in the public and private sectors. But among those who perceived that some in their communities struggled, few attributed these to individuals' deficient motivation or counterproductive attitudes towards work. Of the 22 black admin in the sample, only five did, and none pointed to motivation as the primary cause. Instead, they often identified forces outside jobseekers' control, like a shrinking economy and concomitant increases in labor market competition (9). Alexandra Haney and Roland Root pointed to the most recent economic downturn to explain why some members of their community were currently experiencing difficulties. According to Roland, "Again, nowadays it's very hard. But if you look at five years ago it wasn't very hard. Even in our church we would post—hey, there are job opportunities here; there are job opportunities there. Anything that came up that we were aware of, we let people know. So it wasn't very hard." Similarly,

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[12] For many jobholders, there were few substantive differences between providing passive assistance and providing no assistance. Indeed, when asked details about circumstances in which they had chosen not to help a jobseeking relation, it was not unusual for jobholders, black and Latino, to describe how they had passed along information about CPSE's online web address because it was the face-saving approach to take, for themselves and jobseekers.

38-year old personnel affairs officer, Alexandra Haney explained, "I think it's just recently become more difficult because of the financial and economic situation and meltdown that our country is experiencing. But previously, I mean, I think that people in my community or within my circle, if they wanted to find work, they usually were able to do so." Black admin also pointed to skills mismatches (6) — with technological advances, employers increasingly require a workforce with advanced levels of education and training, and to the extent that workers struggle to meet these new criteria, they have difficulty finding work.

Monique Singletary was one of two black admin to highlight the role of racial discrimination. The 33-year old personnel officer with over one year on the job, sounded as if she had recently read Bertrand and Mullainathan's 2004 audit study of racial discrimination. She explained, "I think sometimes the name on the application itself is difficult. Depending on if the name is too ethnic, that might be an issue in terms of them being brought in on an interview. For example, I have a friend whose name just happens to be a certain thing, and it was joked about. If it's hard to pronounce, if it's an African name, if it's spelled phonetically instead of how it would be in terms of the "King's English." If it's a partial name between a mother and father's names, those types of things, where I think there's a stereotypical idea or preconceived notion of what that applicant might bring to the table, even if other components of the application or the resume may be similar in terms of achievement and education."[13]

In the five instances where black admin mentioned motivation or other types of soft skills deficiencies, only in one case did the jobholder, Maureen Glover, identify individual and cultural deficiencies as the primary cause. The cataloguer had been at CPSE for seven years when she shared her perspective:

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[13] Black admin also listed the following factors to explain why jobseekers in their communities had difficulty finding work: jobseekers' work preferences; time constraints associated with searching for work when already employed; having a criminal record; and excessive neediness resulting from ignorance about how to undertake the job search process. About the last factor listed, Anita Wells explained, "You know, I don't [help with job-finding] too much anymore just because I'm at a certain age where — like I said — if you don't have a job or don't know how to get a job, you know, you're lacking in some area. I don't want to be involved in that".

Oh, maybe the way some people are brought up. Because like I say, now [my] neighborhood is more diverse than it was when I was growing up because there were more families as I was growing up. But right now, you really don't see too many family units within our neighborhood—you know, mother, father. Because when I was growing up, most of the people in our neighborhood, there were houses. And then most of the houses disappeared and then these housing complexes—I mean, apartment complexes—go up. There's a lot of public housing. So most of the families there are really not family units. You know, there's no mother and father. There's mostly mothers. And they're in the cycle of where there was a mother who had two children, no husband. Then the children start having children, and they're still living in the same—in public housing. And most of them are on welfare. So there are a lot of kids in the neighborhood, a lot of small kids, and a lot of young women or young girls having babies. And I don't think they're in the same mindset as my generation because my—now I sound like I'm old—but in my generation you got married, you had kids. Now they're just having kids. And most of them, when they have kids, they say, "Okay, if I have kids, I have to go on welfare." They don't think about going to school and getting an education so I can better myself and get a job. They're just in the cycle of having babies and going on welfare. I've seen it over the years.

Others who attributed job-finding difficulties to individual and cultural deficiencies did so as one of many factors, with concerns for the economy and skills mismatches topping the list of explanations. For the overwhelming majority of black admin, then, to the extent that members of their communities struggled to find work, it was not because they chose a life of leisure. Instead, jobseekers were most often characterized as victims of macro-structural forces—a characterization in stark contrast to that generally provided by blue-collar blacks—and as a result, when presented with opportunities to help jobseeking relations, they did so. Although approached for help with much less frequency than their blue-collar counterparts, black admin were above the mean in terms of the percentage who helped, how many they helped, and the methods they deployed to help (with the exception of talking to hiring personnel).

And Latinos were similar to black admin in a number of ways. To the extent that members of their communities had difficulty finding work (1 in 3 reported that their community members did not have such problems[14]), they portrayed jobseekers as

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[14] Indeed, one Mexican-born jobholder, 56-year old Felipe Alfaro, explained that members of his community did not have difficulty finding work because of the extensive assistance his network of relations provided for each other: "Well, they're fighters. They're fighters and they get jobs quickly. But at the same time we help each other, recommending each other. For example, I know the manager I had at the company I previously worked in opened his own company, so I recommend people to him, or my wife recommends people to him. And he gives them jobs—part-time, full-time, or if you have a car he

disadvantaged by circumstance: Over 40 percent of Latinos, native- and foreign-born

combined, pointed to the shrinking economy; roughly 20 percent mentioned legal status and

the lack of working papers; 25 percent pointed to lack of English fluency; and 14 percent

discussed the importance of requisite levels of education and advanced skills.

Native-born Latinos highlighted the role of the economy and skills mismatches —

workers generally needed more education to effectively compete for good-paying jobs. For

instance, when asked how difficult it is for people in her community to find work, 54-year old

food service worker, Marisol Ojeda explained,

> Well, lately the people in my community have been at the same jobs for a while, and
> it's their children that are coming up that are finding it hard to find a job.
> [Interviewer: What makes it hard for them?] Well, a couple of them are students, their
> kids, and a couple of them just got out of high school, and basically they're just trying
> to get a job. And either it's fast food or some job that doesn't pay much — minimum
> wage — something that I don't see a future in. And to tell you the truth, they don't see
> a future either. So either they have to advance themselves, take a couple of classes,
> like I tell them, "Do what you got to do, stay with your parents, take a couple of years
> of college and figure it out from there, truthfully." Because back in my day you could
> get a job anytime, anywhere. Not anymore.

Whereas Marisol pointed to the changing structure of the economy as a major factor to explain

her community members' difficulty finding work, Miguel Escobar located difficulties in the

weakening economy. According to Miguel, a food service worker with one year at CPSE, "I

think it's difficult because of the way the economy is right now. There have been a lot of

layoffs. And right now it's a difficult time to find work."

Like native-born Latinos, the foreign-born also noted the importance of the economy

for shaping the employment prospects of their community members, but they also highlighted

the significance of English fluency and working skills. According to 36-year old senior clerk,

Julia Tovar, a native of Honduras, "Now it has become very difficult, more than anything

because of the legal status. Others also get affected because of the language barrier. To have a

median job, it affects them because they do not feel capable: 'No, I am not going to understand,

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sends you to jobs that are far away. If you don't, then he gives you jobs close by. It all depends on
people's resources and abilities".

I can say this but I cannot say that. I get scared that someone is going to speak to me and I am not going to understand them.'" Similarly, Mexican immigrant, Miriam Soto, a 55-year old custodian who had been employed at CPSE for 15 years, reports "No, it's not easy. Oftentimes people don't have working papers. It's not easy for them. For some it's very difficult because they don't speak English." Importantly, compared to blue-collar blacks, among whom 49 percent identified motivation as an important cause of their community members' difficulty finding work, among blue-collar Latinos, only one jobholder, Alma Perez, mentioned motivation. The 18-year old cashier explained, "It's not that hard, actually. I don't know why. Only one person [in my network] has a hard time finding a job, but then again, she's lazy. [Laughs] We don't really have difficulty finding jobs here." Because few native- and foreign-born Latinos attributed job-finding difficulties to individual and cultural deficiencies, they were more open to providing help and doing so proactively. In the next section, we explain why blue-collar blacks were more likely than blue-collar Latinos and black admin to attribute job-finding difficulties to motivation.

THE NEED TO SCREEN

Blue-collar blacks' conviction that job-finding difficulties were, in essence, a question of motivation was rooted in one or more of three sets of experiences: helping jobseekers who did not follow up on the leads jobholders provided; initiating matches that end badly and tarnished jobholders' reputation; and jobholders' own experiences of self-motivated transformation from "people on the bad side" to "good, right citizens". These experiences produced different screening devices. Those concerned about jobseekers' follow through played "the waiting game"; those who had been burned in the past required extensive information about jobseekers' work history, which they gathered through conversational interviews with jobseekers about work history and worldviews; and those who felt, because of their own personal experiences, that true metamorphosis was necessary to become workers required that

jobseekers, especially those formerly committed to street life, show evidence that they had abandoned the street and pledged their allegiance to the world of work. That jobholders adopted these strategies indicates that not all "non-workers" were forsaken. Few, however, could meet jobholders' criteria for assistance, and so relative to the numbers seeking help, few received it.

Following Through

Twenty-eight blue-collar blacks (or 72 percent) indicated that jobseekers had difficulty finding work at least in part because *they did not want to work*. Nineteen of these 28 were convinced that relatives and friends did not want to work in part because these "jobseekers" rarely followed through on requests for job-finding assistance. Loreen Reynolds was one such jobholder. The 30-year old senior cook reportedly made numerous attempts to help close contacts get jobs, but because so many of the jobseekers who requested her aid failed to follow up on the leads she provided, she decided to target her efforts at those who seemed to show genuine interest. Loreen shared this view, with a matter-of-fact expression, in response to a question about how much members of her community helped each other to find work. She explained, "Not too much. Because nine times out of ten, I look at it like usually the working people don't hang out with the not-working people. So it's like a different bubble." Here again we see the pervasive image of a community, and a personal network, divided. She drew from her own experiences to explain why.

> Yeah, for myself, I have a lot of friends that are on a totally different page. Because I work, they have more time to party and kick it. They come to my house and want to hang out. I've got to go to work in the morning. And okay, here comes Friday. "Hey, Loreen, you're off." "I'm sorry, I'm tired." "What do you mean? Okay, well, bye." Now [they're] dissed. Now they don't even call me no more.

By encouraging her "not working" friends to apply for jobs at CPSE, Loreen hoped to bridge the divide between the working and not-working. "And I tell them, 'Go apply. Go

apply. Ain't nothing like working.'" Based on their responses, however, she became convinced

that they were indifferent.

> I mean, every friend that I have that's not working, I've always said, "Hey, CPSE-dot-com. Get on there. They're hiring. They will hire you. You have experience. Da da da da." A lot of people are like, "Okay, I've got it." Then they call me about a week later. "What's the email address?" I give it to them. [Later I'll ask,] "Did you ever apply?" "I forgot." And then after that, there's a couple of my friends, I always tell them about it. "Hey get on. You'd be limited, but hey, maybe you'll become career. Just do it." They don't want to do it. And I mean, this is all the time. So they basically don't want to work. But as far as everybody else, I put it out there…Like, say for instance my sister who works here. She said, "Hey, I need to work." I'm like, "Hey, get on the internet." She did it. She got hired instantly.

From Loreen's perspective, there was no other way to explain the behavior of her

jobless friends. That they did not work, and that she was no longer willing to help them find

work, was attributable to the fact that they did not want to work. And Loreen communicated

the importance of choice in subtle and not so subtle ways. In overt terms, she highlighted the

fact that CPSE was hiring. She knew this because she had recently informed her sister about

job openings there, and her sister, who followed up on the information she received, was

quickly hired. Thus, Loreen reasoned, motivated jobseekers do find work; any of her friends

could do the same if they so desired.

But Loreen was subtle, too. Her description of the events leading up to her epiphany

were rich with juxtapositions that distinguished her working self from the non-workers that

had constituted much of her old friendship network. Her commitment to work was confronted

with an equally strong commitment to leisure. Her future orientation was cast against their

desire to live in the present. When faced with a decision to party with her friends or rest for

work, Loreen *chose* work and the disciplined life that work requires; her friends, on the other

hand, *chose* nonwork. As Loreen indicated, they were "on a totally different page."

When approached by jobseekers with dubious motives, jobholders like Loreen played

the "waiting game." This entailed watching for signs that jobseekers were sincere about

wanting to work. Jobholders reasoned that motivated jobseekers would aggressively pursue

job opportunities. When presented with job leads, they would show initiative and follow-up.

Jobholders also believed that eager jobseekers were annoying jobseekers; they were relentless

in their pursuit of work and so were not above making frequent inquiries. These were the

signals jobholders sought to confirm jobseekers' sincerity. Without these signs, they would do

little on jobseekers' behalf. For instance, because he perceived that most jobseekers in his

community were not work-ready, 32-year old Kevin Allard essentially ignored jobseekers'

pleas for help, unless they persisted in pestering him about job vacancies.

> I just tell them straight up; I be like, "You ain't ready." It depends on what they say
> after that, to let me know if they really interested or not. People just be saying it. "Is
> they hiring?" Yeah, you got to go to work tomorrow and you're not going to be ready
> to drop [the life] and go. So I just tell them straight up, "You ain't ready to work." At
> that point they can't say nothing that is going to make me really believe them, because
> the gift of gap is the ruler of the streets. If I say, "You ain't ready," no matter what the
> outcome come out, I ain't going to really take it [that they are] trying to work. If every
> time I see them they keep on asking me, "What's up with that job," then the next stage
> with me would be to give them a printout or something to see if they're going to go on
> the internet and do that. And then if they handle that and they get…" Hey, man. I
> filled out that application. What has happened with it?" I may try to give them a
> number or something that they can call to try and see what's going on with their
> application or something like that. They are going to have to really act like they're
> interested.

Similarly, George Biggs explained simply, "If you want a job, if you really serious, you bug the

hell out of me; you calling me all the time. 'Got some openings, George?' If you ain't doing

that, then I don't really too much even fool with you because you're not serious. You're not

looking for a job. Call me everyday if nothing else. Make me tired of hearing from you, okay?

He call you once a month or every four months, he not really looking for a job, man." And

David Jackson, the 34-year old senior custodian who estimated that not more than 10 percent

of the adults in his community had jobs, had recently decided against helping anywhere from

five to ten jobseekers. When asked why he had decided against helping them, he explained, "I

decided not to go the extra mile like I did with some of the other individuals that I've helped

because [the other individuals] call or they ask constantly, you know, or either they're out

somewhere trying to find another job, or just constantly looking for work; I help those

individuals. The one that's sitting there like this, 'Hey, what's up? Can I get a job?' I don't tend

to really help those." Indeed, the person that David most recently helped received his help

because, "he kept asking me and asking me about the job…he was eager, you know. He's very

eager to find work and want to work, and he asked me several times in a week about CPSE.

So, you know, when you have someone that's constantly like, 'Hey, you know, what's up?' So

that's what made me want to help him out, because he was eager." When dealing with these

blue-collar black jobholders, then, pestering paid off and nagging was a virtue. Although the

waiting game did not always produce the outcomes that jobholders desired (more on this

later), it did diminish jobholders' perception that they were embarking on a risky endeavor,

which increased their willingness to help and to do so proactively.

Matches Gone Wrong

As evidence that many in their communities and personal networks did not want to

work, and so were undeserving of more than the most passive assistance, some jobholders

pointed to prior matches gone wrong specifically because of their referrals' conduct. Having

been burned, they were far more cautious about providing assistance in the future.[15] Rebecca

Carter's experience was illustrative. The 27-year food service worker had been employed at

CPSE for 10 years. Interviewed for a position at CPSE the day after her senior prom, she

became a employee even before high school graduation. The push for employment was

initiated by her mother, who had become frustrated by her daughter's frequent requests for

money and concerned about high rates of joblessness among her daughter's peers. A call to a

CPSE-employed relative got the application process started.

Clinging to childhood, Rebecca was at first resistant to the idea of working, but her

resistance diminished after her mother convinced her that through work she would be able to

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[15] We deploy the term "burned" to signify how jobseekers' or referrals' actions on the job intentionally or unintentionally compromise jobholders' or referees' status and/or reputation. It connotes a feeling a betrayal.

earn the money she would need to achieve her long term goals. And then Rebecca discovered that work suited her. She was a good worker, a responsible worker, a worker who got things done. And her supervisor and manager took notice. Within six months she was promoted from "limited" to "career" status, and by her twentieth birthday, she became a crew leader who motivated her own charges with the mantra, "Keep it clean, keep it tight, and then we'll be all right!"

With time at CPSE, Rebecca knew that although she did not love her job, it had a number of benefits to recommend it. Not only did CPSE give Rebecca opportunities to grow professionally and personally, the job provided the flexibility that she needed to pursue the nursing degree she was working toward. She could imagine few other employers who would make such allowances. Furthermore, although she complained about the low wages offered at CPSE,[16] she was thankful for the health benefits, which, she understood, few other employers of low-wage workers offered. When her 1-year old son became ill and needed surgery, the importance of this particular benefit sunk in. The health insurance she gained with permanent status at CPSE covered the bulk of the $18,000 bill, which caused Rachelle to exclaim, "Oh, thank God for CPSE, 'cause I only paid $250." Thus, Rebecca felt that through CPSE, through *work*, not only was she able to earn enough to make ends meet (though with some struggle), she could also provide proper care for her young son, and she was given enough space to pursue professional goals unrelated to her CPSE work.

For these reasons, it was almost incomprehensible to Rebecca that anyone would *not* want to work. And so when the opportunity arose to help her friend, Justine, get a job at CPSE, the thought that Justine would not work out *because she would not want to work* had not crossed Rebecca's mind. When asked how she decided to help Justine, Rebecca responded, "Just because—she had a kid before me, but not even the fact that she had a kid, just 'cause

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[16] Rebecca earned approximately $1,800 per month, which works out to be $21,600/year, roughly 46% higher than the poverty threshold for 2-person household, placing Rebecca and her son in the category of the near poor.

everybody needs a job. *Why wouldn't you want a job?* I don't wanna wait on something, like state money and all that, to wait and have to do things and budget myself that way, so I would think you would want a job" (italics added). After her experience with Justine, however, Rebecca began to believe that some people were "complacent about where they were," and so she assumed she would be wasting her time by investing any energy to help them.

Rebecca recounted her experience with Justine in response to a question about whether or not she had the type of job that she could recommend to relatives and friends. "Yeah. I have recommended it to a couple friends, but they didn't last too long 'cause they were lazy." When encouraged to elaborate, Rebecca explained that soon after being promoted to crew leader, Justine approached her to ask about employment opportunities at CPSE. Rachelle confirmed that CPSE was hiring, encouraged her to apply, and then spoke to her manager about Justine's application. One month later, Justine was invited for an interview and hired soon thereafter. Rebecca, it turns out, would be her crew leader.

About this arrangement, however, Rebecca had ambivalence. As crew leader, she was charged with the task of verifying that the employees in her work area were where they were supposed to be, had the supplies they needed to get their jobs done, and were completing their tasks timely and adequately. And Rebecca took her responsibilities very seriously. Because of her age and friendly, chatty disposition, however, her charges assumed that she would be lenient with them. When issues arose that would interfere with their ability to meet her high expectations, they expected dispensation. But for Rebecca, the personal realm took a backseat to the professional. Her top priority was "to make sure everything's running, like a well-oiled machine because if it doesn't, that is me and my fault," and so she struggled to make clear her expectations and boundaries while at work. It is with this issue in mind that she explained to Justine, ""When you clock in, I am not your friend. So, we can 'ha-ha' on break, but when we go back to work, I am not your friend. You cannot come from your area trying to hee-haw and talk with me. Go away. I don't know you.'"

But Rebecca's efforts to establish a set of guidelines around which they would interact were to no avail. Soon after Justine's arrival, Rebecca noticed that Justine had become clingy. She would leave her own work station to follow Rebecca wherever she traveled in the workplace. Whatever the reason for Justine's clinginess, it eventually led management to fire her. According to Rebecca,

> She had to work later than me, so I think when she was coming on, I was leaving. Me and her had a mutual friend, which was my boyfriend at the time. We [were leaving] and she was like, "Well, I'm leaving with ya'll." I'm like, "Isn't this your shift right now? You can't leave with me just 'cause we 'ha-ha' buddies, no." And she left anyway and got fired, and I was like, "Come on! What'd you think was gonna happen, just 'cause you went, 'Oh, I left with Rebecca?' No."

Rebecca theorized that Justine's clinginess was a part of a larger strategy to use their friendship as leverage to avoid all but the easiest work assignments, and so she became convinced that Justine did not want to earn her paychecks. She wanted a handout, something for nothing, so that she could instead engage in trifling, adolescent pursuits. According to Rebecca, "Me and her, I can honestly say from working here with her, we are two different people. We're 27, about to be 30. You can't be still trying to hang out in the streets and be boy crazy and "ha-ha'ing" on the phone. We are adults. Be serious. You have a child yourself that you have to take care of." It was through this experience that Rebecca came to believe that not everyone was as enamored with work as she. Instead, she opined, others wanted to hold on to their youth and all but ignore the responsibilities that came with adulthood. And so while she chose work, which had given her so much, they chose nonwork, which in Rebecca's opinion offered so little.

Surprisingly, a few years later, Justine returned to Rebecca to ask about the possibility of working at CPSE again. Given her prior experience with Justine, Rebecca's response was not unexpected: "No, we're not hiring at all. No, we're not. Mm-mm, we don't have no positions open for you." But her prior experience with Justine had also shaped how she engaged the job matching process in general: "I'll act like I don't even know the person, be

like, 'This person came and said they applied, so I don't know what you should do about that.'"

Because she perceived a high risk of initiating failed matches and feared the detrimental effect

that a bad hire would have on her reputation, her default response was now to distance herself

from all applicants.

 After getting burned, not only did jobholders come to believe that few wanted to

work, they also came to question their own ability to discern the sincere from the

disingenuous. As with Rebecca, this shift in perspectives and the rise in concern about their

own ability to judge character led some jobholders to refrain from helping at all. Some stopped

helping for a period of time only to slowly and cautiously re-engage the process. But others

responded by decided against helping whole groups of people. In other words, for some,

statistical discrimination became the norm. For instance, when asked how many people he had

decided not to help recently, George Biggs explained, "Oh man, a bunch of people—over ten

people." For each, he indicated that there was a hiring freeze because, "it's the easiest way to

get rid of them sometime." To explain why he had rejected the jobseeker who had approached

him most recently, he admitted that after having been burned twice, he had begun to question

his own ability to identify quality candidates, which led him to deny jobseekers if their

attributes overlapped in any way with those who burned him. According to George,

> Because of my past—what happened in the past. The cats didn't show up. Maybe I
> start grouping everybody in the same group, which is a bad thing, you know. "[The
> old referral] always hustling these drug dealers, and he never worked out." You doing
> the same thing they did. You ain't going to work out either. I ain't wasting my time. I
> could do better with my time than get you half-way in or get you started with
> something more important.

Waldo Burton also resorted to statistical discrimination when making hiring decisions.

The 47-year old custodial worker had been employed at CPSE for just three months when

interviewed for this study, and so we focused our discussion on his experiences as an owner of

a small cleaning company, which he continued to operate alongside his full-time custodial

position at CPSE. We quickly learned that over the past two years, Waldo had not hired any

blacks, and with the exception of hiring a few older black men for temporary, odd jobs, he had

no intention of ever doing so again. In response to a question about prior bad matching

experiences, Waldo compellingly recounted the following,

> Yeah, my business. That's why I had to go to Hispanics. I would try to help my brothers to get jobs.[17] For my business. I go out there and get them a job and they don't show up; they don't call. They get paid. Some of my friends—especially if you're friends. They don't understand that you got to be the bailiff; you've go to bail them out. You've got to give them money up front to help their rent. You've got to get money because…anniversary coming up and they ain't got no money. So you do all that to win their loyalty and trust, and guess what? You've got a big job with Amtrak Saturday morning. You paid them Friday and everybody says I want to work. And guess what? The closest ones to you, they don't show up and they don't call you because they hooked up with some girl that night and they couldn't get up off of it. And then you've got brothers, young people who you try to help. I don't care if it's my son's friends or whatever, they don't even show up. You give them the job. They're cursing, they take stuff out of people's homes. I deal with all that kind of stuff. I have dealt with all of that. So what I'm saying is to be honest with you I don't hire a lot of brothers. Now, the people that I work with are people who have their own businesses—like me. And we network. But as far as working? No, I don't. Because brothers don't want to work. They want to drive Escalades and be like Puff Daddy now. They want it right now. Young people don't want to work. And I've tried to help a lot of people in my church. But they don't want to work. And what happens is you hire them and they don't…they don't go over and beyond. They will do just…they will sweat you about if you're late with their money; they'll sweat you about their money. But they come late and they expect you to understand. And so what happens is I get pissed off. The bottom line is—I don't know about you, but my business is my welfare and taking care of my family. You're supposed to show up and you don't show up then you are messing with my welfare and you're messing with my family. So we can't even kick it. We can't even kick it away from the job. Because I take it personal. I haven't really dealt with no African Americans in the last year. And those are my people. But they don't want to work. They don't want to work. Or not do what I'm doing. But they ain't in a position to do nothing else, neither. So they say they want to work. They'll sell you a rose garden, but when it's time to do whatever, they don't show up. We got a lot of issues. And a lot of it is work ethic.

But blue-collar blacks were hardly the only jobholders to have been burned by

jobseekers they sought to help. For instance, Beatriz Gallardo, a 27-year old food service

worker with eight years at CPSE, indicated that her relatives no longer provided much

assistance to one another because, as she put it, "it created a lot of problems between them, if

the work didn't turn out good." About her own engagement with the process, she explained, "I

used to help them, but now I don't." Over the past year, both her brother and her mother

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[17] Here Waldo uses the term "brothers" figuratively to mean other black men.

burned Beatriz. After pulling strings to get her brother hired as a dishwasher, he worked for two weeks and then, without a word to anyone, stopped going. Later he explained to Beatriz that he left because there was a mismatch: He was required to do too much work for too little pay. According to Beatriz, "We talked and he was like, 'It just doesn't work for me...' And I'm like, 'Okay, but you asked me for the job, you know, so if you don't like it, that's fine. Just call and tell them that you aren't going to work anymore. But my brother is one of those people that...he gets embarrassed easily and he doesn't know how to say things to your face, so he just disappears."

Just as bad was Beatriz's experience with her mother, Carmen. Carmen lost her job and soon struggled to make house payments. As her debts accumulated, she became stressed and eventually depressed, which made finding a new job that much more difficult. Beatriz intervened to facilitate her mother's employment at CPSE. Despite her great efforts, however, her mother did not take the job she was eventually offered. According to Beatriz,

> We were doing really bad. [My mother] really needed a job. [But] she couldn't pass her interview because it was in English. I really begged the coordinator, I begged the manager to call my mom, because there are a lot of people who don't speak English and they are working here. So I say, "But why, if they don't speak English, why can't my mom work here?" So I bothered them. I bothered them. So I spoke and everything and I went back and begged him, and I wrote a letter to the coordinator to please help my mom, that she was in an emergency situation and she really needed the job. So I was really like a little dog, begging at their feet. And they call my mom and she tells them no. And she doesn't tell me so I keep on thinking that they haven't called her. I come to work and go with my brother and I tell him, "Listen, do you know if they have called mom?" And he says, "Oh yeah, they called her like three times, but she told them no." Can you believe that?

Because of these experiences, Beatriz now distances herself from the process: "…I don't put a whole bunch of emphasis on it because I'm scared that my family will turn out bad when they come to work here or they won't like it and then they disappear without saying bye. I don't insist too much because it scares me." Furthermore, she reasons, if she could not rely on family members to act appropriately, she certainly could not expect better from friends and acquaintances. She would no longer help anyone. Interestingly, although Beatriz had been

distressed by her family's behavior, she did not question what this meant about their work ethic. Beatriz concluded, "They have abandoned the job, but they have been really good workers…" And despite her experiences with her family, she insists that, "where I'm from, where I come from, we are hard workers, very responsible." Not a single blue-collar black made such a declaration, especially after such disheartening experiences.

Other Latinos had also decided against helping because of a history of making failed matches. Felipe Alfaro and his wife, Patricia, were a part of an active job referral network. According to the 56-year old custodian with 16 years at CPSE, "We have gotten an infinite amount of people in, with and without papers." But, the Mexican immigrant continued, his brother, who had previously been the center of job referral activities, now shies away. "He's stopped helping a little because so many people have made him look bad. I mean, you help so many people that one or two will likely make you look bad. So he's a little hesitant right now for fear that someone will make him look bad." And so like blue-collar blacks, blue-collar Latinos have also been burned, and, even if these experiences did not alter their perceptions of Latinos' general work ethic, they nonetheless inspired their caution.

But had more blue-collar blacks been burned? To address this question, we examined jobholders' responses to the following: Thinking back as far as you can remember, have you ever tried to help someone you know to get a job where you were working—whether at CPSE or elsewhere—and it ended badly or they did not get the job? Forty-six percent of jobholders indicated that at least one prior match had failed. Surprisingly, native-born Latinos and blue-collar blacks were *below* the mean at 33 percent and 41 percent, respectively, while black administrators and foreign-born Latinos were above the mean at 50 percent and 56 percent, respectively. But this finding makes sense when we distinguish matches that failed because a referral was not hired from matches that failed because a referral was fired for unprofessional conduct or quit dishonorably. When we make this distinction, we see that among those with a prior failed match, 43 percent of foreign-born Latinos, 67 percent of native-born Latinos, and

64 percent of black administrators attributed failure to their referrals' bad behavior after getting the job. Among blue-collar blacks, however, the figure was 87 percent. As a percentage of the total in each group, 22 percent of native-born Latinos, 24 percent of foreign-born Latinos, 32 percent of black administrators, and 37 percent of blue-collar blacks had essentially been burned by a referral in the past. Furthermore, among blue-collar blacks, perspectives about why community members experienced difficulty finding work were associated with whether or not they had been burned in the past. Thirty-nine percent of blue-collar blacks who located job-finding difficulties in motivation deficits reported having been burned in the past. In contrast, only 20 percent of blue-collar blacks who did NOT attribute job-finding difficulty to motivation deficits had been burned in the past. Thus, blue-collar blacks' inclination to help less proactively and reject a greater number of jobseekers, and even their attributions about job-finding difficulty appear to be linked, in part, to having been burned in the past by referrals they sought to help.[18]

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[18] Some might theorize that blacks, both blue-collar and admin, are more likely than Latinos to get burned because they are less likely to be embedded in networks characterized by social closure. To the extent that individuals are embedded in closed social networks, commonality in social norms can be assumed, monitoring of group members' behaviors can be undertaken effectively, effective sanctions can be put into place to discourage unwanted behavior, and an enforceable trust can be established (Mitchell 1969; Coleman 1988; Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). To test this hypothesis, we examined ethnoracial and class differences in network density, a proxy for network closure that typically predicts well how well members can control others in their group and thus how much cooperation and solidarity exists among group members (Uehara 1990). We asked jobholders how well each of their discussion partners knew each other. Categories of responses included "very well," "well," "not very well," and "not at all" and were given values 1 to 4, respectively. We calculated density scores by summing the values for each discussion partner pair for those respondents with two or more discussion partners and dividing that number by the total number of discussion partner pairs that jobholders reported. Lower scores indicated greater network density; higher scores indicated lower density. On average, jobholders reported 4.9 discussion partner pairs, with an average network density score of 2.1—discussion partners tended to know each other well.

Given that blue-collar blacks helped less proactively and rejected more, and given that they were more likely to have been burned by a referral in the past, we would predict that their network density scores would be higher than those of black admin and blue-collar Latinos. But this was not the case. Blue-collar blacks' average density score of 1.98 indicated greater density, not less, than those of black admin (2.01), foreign-born Latinos (2.17), and native-born Latinos (2.28). To the extent that embeddedness in networks characterized by social closure indicates that one can be more easily controlled, these results suggest that neither blue-collar blacks nor blue-collar Latinos have an edge. It appears that network structure has little explanatory power here.

Metamorphosis: From Players to Workers

Jobholders' own stories of personal transformation, however, provided the most powerful evidence that finding work was about motivation. Three men described such transformations. Their stories had much in common. As adolescents they were lured by the trinity of the streets: quick money, illicit drugs, and easy women. With these, they were able to strike the cool pose and feed the illusion of their own power and affluence, and so they eagerly chose the street and the "bad side" over work and the side of the "good, right citizens." And then they reached a crossroads. They could continue down the path they were on, but the cool pose was much more difficult to strike when struggling with addiction and disease, when cycling in and out of prison, and when trying to elude death by gunfire. The streets, once so seductive, now began to frighten and repel them. Work, and the respectability that it afforded, became much more attractive. But the transition was a difficult one to make, and according to two of these three men, only through real sacrifice could it be done successfully.

George Biggs was one of the men to share stories of his own metamorphosis. George was a 53-year old father of five, and at the time of his interview, had been employed at CPSE for seven years. By his own account, he had become an indispensable worker in his unit. Within just two years of being hired as a custodian, he was promoted to lead. On his manager's days off, he was placed in charge. Although George had a part-time job on the side—twice a week he worked at a beauty salon as a hairstylist—he loved the work that he did at CPSE, he appreciated the opportunities he had been given to lead, and CPSE's health benefits had literally saved his life. "I'm just lucky to be here. You know, what I've been through…I'm blessed. I'm that luckiest man in the world." He planned to remain with CPSE through to retirement.

But the "good, right citizen" that George had become was not the man that he once was. During high school, George took a couple of odd jobs, like roofing, to earn money to buy a few high-priced toys. His stepfather promised to match whatever he earned to encourage his

efforts. But roofing work was tough, and the streets promised easy money. It was a promise

that he did not question, and for 10-15 years, he experienced much of what the life had to

offer, including frequent periods of incarceration. His conversion began during a spell in jail.

> What got me past that—I went to jail. I was sitting in jail and I was thinking, I said,
> "My mother raised me better than this." And a fellow told me, he said, "*You* the
> problem. You're the community's problem." And you look back, "I am the problem."
> Burnt houses, crack kids, neighborhoods…*I'm* the problem. I started crying—I grew
> up in the church; my [biological] dad was a preacher—and I got on my knees. I started
> praying and asked God to show me. I know I could do better than this. And I made a
> decision right there that either right this moment I'm going to be the best drug dealer
> in the world or I'm going to turn my life around. No matter how bad it gets—how
> tough it gets—stay on the right path. And that's what I did.

But staying on the right path was anything but easy. George had no money or a

legitimate source of income. He lacked a car, and without any money, he could not afford to

rely on public transportation. He walked everywhere. This made finding work, an already

impossible task for a black man with a criminal record (Pager 2003), so much more difficult.

He needed a job, and he needed it quickly: "If I didn't get a job, I was going to go backwards."

It was clear that if his conversion was going to succeed, he would need help.

But, doubting that he had been transformed, George's family members refused to help

him find work. Given his history, his parents and sister "didn't touch [him]." Two cousins who

worked at CPSE as custodians would not consider him. And his brother, who operated his

own house-painting business in addition to working full-time at a local college, refused to hire

him.

George's ex-girlfriend, however, took a chance and intervened. Sensing that George

was at a critical juncture, she introduced him to a small business owner who might be

convinced to hire him. Maxine operated a janitorial service and agreed to a temporary, one-

month appointment. But determined to stay longer, George worked hard to impress. In a

blink, he had gained Maxine's respect and trust. It would be five years before he moved on.

Under Maxine's guidance and supervision, George thrived. First, he learned the

janitorial trade and became an expert at floor buffing, waxing, and cleaning. Second, he

repaired his work history, which was almost non-existent in his past life. And third, with his promotion to supervisor, he gained confidence in his own ability to lead. This confidence fed a desire for more—a better-paying, stable job that could take him into retirement. It was through Maxine's boyfriend, Jesse, that George saw his next opportunity.

Jesse was a manager in custodial services at CPSE. During the years that George worked with Maxine, he noticed that Jesse had helped a number of Maxine's former employees get positions at CPSE, but Jesse seemed reluctant to help George. "I asked him about a job at CPSE and he said, 'You don't want to work up there.' But he knew my past record, so he didn't think I wanted to work…Most people with that past with a record don't want to work." George became determined to convince Jesse otherwise, and he did so in dramatic fashion. According to George,

> It was 4:00 in the morning and I knocked on the door. I said, "Jesse, I need a job today. You hired him over me, man? I've been working with Maxine for five years and you can't get me a job at CPSE? I'm not leaving here until I get a job." He said, "Are you serious?" I said, "I'm serious, man." [He said] "You're here at 4:00 in the morning, you must be serious." It was a Saturday night. He said, "Come to CPSE Sunday." I said, "On a Sunday? Wait a minute, man." He said, "Come on Sunday," and just started walking away. I said, "Ain't nobody doing no hiring on Sunday," but then I said, "If you don't go now, you're not going to ever go."

Jesse hired George. Within months of his hire, George was promoted from limited to permanent status, and within two years, he was promoted again to lead custodian. Despite the security that comes with permanent status, George refuses to take his position for granted. He *always* arrives to work early; he *never* takes breaks; he accepts nothing less than *perfection* from himself or his direct reports; and he scoffs at coworkers who see their permanent status as a license for indifference—to slow down, to loosen up, to let go—on the job. George attributed his admittedly extreme stance to his "probation mentality." By recounting a conversation with a skeptical coworker, he revealed the logic underlying this stance.

> I look at it like this: I'm always on probation. [His coworker:] "We've past probation. I'm permanent; they can't fire me, so I ain't doing nothing. I got this made. They'll never get rid…" I see a lot of cats, that's their mentality. I said, "No, no, no. They can get rid of you if they want to." So I keep in my mind [that] I'm still on probation. So

I'll be here earlier every day. I'll do my work like I'm supposed to. That keeps me focused. That keeps me grounded. "You saying you on probation? You been there five years. You're not on probation." Yes, I am. I'm always on probation—probation with myself.

By embracing a probation mentality, George was able to lay claim to a worker identity, one that he saw as the very antithesis of his street identity. Daily he proved to others, and most importantly to himself, that he was a worker, that he was willing to work, and that he was committed to going above and beyond. Work was "in his heart." In his mind, it was through work that he managed to achieve conversion, to fulfill the pledge that he made in jail to change his life for the better. But only through constant vigilance, through the daily performance as the committed worker, was he able to maintain his vow to stay on the right path.

And it is this type of commitment that George has expected from other jobseekers, especially those from the street. According to George, "When I look for a job, the most important thing was getting a job; no girls, no movies, no friends. It was getting a job and going home at a reasonable time and going to sleep so you can get up and go buzz through by the job again." Unless he saw a similar commitment from jobseekers, he assumed they were unprepared to make the drastic change required, and so he refused to help.

A growing feeling that his luck had run out inspired Kevin Allard's metamorphosis; he became convinced that his life would take a significant turn for the worse if he did not change. The 32-year old high school graduate and father of a 10-year old son had been in the life since his move to Maplewood from Arkansas at the age of 14. Within months of his arrival, he had teamed up with an older boy, a 16-year old heroin addict, and started to make money through a number of illegal hustles—stealing car radios and in-home invasions, but especially "robbing dope dealers". According to Kevin, for adolescent males under working age in his neighborhood, this was the only way to earn money. But concerned about his partner's erratic and violent, drug-induced behavior, and sensing that "robbing stuff is not for me," Kevin switched specializations and simply sold drugs. By the time he was 16 years old, he had

exhibited dominance through fighting while also developing allies among the other adolescent males in the neighborhood who lacked territory. He was able to solidify control of his neighborhood, and from there he and his crew sold drugs. Before exiting the life in 2006, he claims to have made enough money from drug dealing to be unconcerned about how much he spent. Over a three-month period, *after expenses*, he was able to save roughly $9,000 per month. His *savings* from drug dealing alone were more than three times what he earned at CPSE per month—$2,700.

Without question Kevin was lured by the promise of big money. As an adolescent he was frustrated, angry even, that his mother, then single, could not afford to provide much beyond the basics by her meager wages. Indeed, though his aunts and uncles all worked hard, they could only ever manage to make enough to survive. Needs were addressed; wants, by necessity, were ignored. Thus, as an adolescent Kevin concluded that you win no points by playing by the rules of a game rigged for the benefit of others. It was at this point that he determined that he would become rich. It mattered little to him how. "I just knew that I was hungry to get the money. It didn't matter—legal, illegal, it didn't matter. I was just destined no matter what to try not to be without."

But dealing served another purpose for Kevin. Within this domain, Kevin was also able to experience himself as a smart and capable young man. He enjoyed thinking strategically about how to expand his market and gain competitive advantage over his rivals. He saw himself as a thinker, and it was this attribute that set him apart from the others on the street. As importantly, others saw this quality in him, too, and so they sought him out for advice.

During his hustling years, Kevin did have jobs in the legal economy, but these never lasted long. He worked at McDonald's for a time; he painted houses; he did butchering at an independent grocery store; and he worked with "so-called scientists or whatever" to mix chemicals at a local company, a job that required "a bunch of mathematical stuff." But he

always quit, he explained, because these were dead end jobs that offered little in the way of advancement. "All of my jobs I end up quitting—I've never been fired or anything. I just end up leaving. After I get there for so long if it looks like I'm not going to go anywhere too much farther, I'm ready to quit." The life just seemed to offer so many more opportunities to make good money, to gain respect for one's talents, and to plot one's own path to advancement.

After almost 15 years in the life, however, Kevin sensed that his luck was running out. A rival had already made one unsuccessful attempt on his life and threatened to harm his mother and other family members. And although he had never been in trouble with the law—surprisingly no arrests, much less convictions or imprisonment—a former acquaintance had begun to share intelligence about him with the local authorities, who then put out search warrants for premises Kevin was known to frequent. Although Kevin was fairly certain the authorities did not have enough for an arrest (searches, he reported, yielded nothing), it became clear to him that it was only a matter of time before he either lost his freedom or his life. His mother, who never approved of his occupation, became increasingly terrified by these frighteningly dramatic turn of events and so pressured him to finally accept a job at her place of employment (CPSE) instead.[19] It was time for Kevin to go straight.

By the time that Kevin sat down to be interviewed, he had been out of the life and employed at CPSE as a custodian for two years. But Kevin would not likely describe what he'd gone through a metamorphosis. He was the same man doing something different because his mother, whom he adored, begged him to. His circumstances had changed, by choice, but he had not. He had always been a hard worker, no matter the context. He now worked hard in a legitimate job, although, given how little he felt appreciated for his efforts, he continued to question the wisdom of expending so much for so little.

Neither did he change the way he carried himself. By his own admission, before leaving the life he had the inscrutable countenance and distinctive style of the stereotypical

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[19] She had made this request many times in the past.

black, urban thug. Topping his tall, thin frame were mane-like dreadlocks, which draped over his characteristic, triple-XL black hoodie. His baggy jeans, large enough for a man twice his size, were just barely held up at the hipline by a belt that seemed to wrap around the circumference of his body twice. Still it produced a gait, wide and slow, meant to delay his pants' downward progression. As a teen, his presentation of self would frighten others, causing them to cross the street or lock their car doors as he passed. And although he admits to both feeling hurt by and understanding of others' fears (tears flowed as he recounted such instances), he refused to change his self-presentation to something less provocative, even after changing occupations. Why? "Because it's just not me. Bottom line—it's just not me. Certain things really just don't mean too much to me. I don't really care about fashion and things like that. So I don't know. I don't think I would change. Certain situations would cause for me to change, I guess, as far as changing careers or things like that. But I'm not trying to make nobody feel comfortable."

Kevin did have to change in one important way, however. With only a high school diploma, he knew that after his career change, he would struggle to make ends meet. He would have to accept the fact that at CPSE, at just about any legitimate job for which he was qualified, he would earn a pittance compared to what he earned as a dope dealer. That he had a great deal of money socked away helped somewhat with this mental transition. Having a steadily working partner, also employed at CPSE, also softened the blow. This made his choice to go straight easier than it might otherwise have been.

Although a couple of factors made the transition easier for Kevin, for two reasons he had little confidence that most others in his former situation could do the same. First, whether in the legal or illegal economy, he never questioned his own work ethic. Even before adolescence he had shown his willingness to work hard. But he thought that most others in the life lacked this important attribute, and that so many seemed unwilling to follow-up on the information about job opportunities that they had received was solid evidence of this. When I

asked Kevin what motivated jobseekers to ask about job opportunities that they had little interest in taking, he responded, "Because it's like…you going to have some percentage of you that's going to want to do right. No matter what you're doing. You're going to have some percentage of you that is going to want to take the right path. Even if it's just talking about it and not taking the initiative to go and do it. It's just that little bit of what's in them that wants to do the right thing, I guess."

Second, because he saved so much of the money he had earned as a dope dealer, he had a substantial cushion upon which to fall after his retirement from dealing. As a result, although he was not thrilled about the significant decline in earnings that would come with custodial work, he could live with it. He doubted, however, that others from the life could.

And so, assuming that most jobseekers were "just talking" and were not prepared for the changes required of them, Kevin refused to help unless he saw clear evidence of real change. Indeed, it was only after seeing a great deal of evidence of transformation that he decided to help a friend and mentee from the life. According to Kevin, "The person I did recommend—like I said, he sacrificed before he got this job. He said to himself before he even…before the job even came up, he was willing to stop doing whatever he was going to do no matter if he would be working somewhere else…'I'm not going to do it no more; I'm cool.' And I thought he was playing or whatever. So he actually stayed without working or hustling for maybe like two or three months before I took him seriously. [I thought] 'You really trying to leave it alone,' so I recommended him for a job here because he was serious about it." How did his friend, Travon, survive during this period of deprivation? "He just accepted being broke. He could accept living like he was a kid again, as far as I'm going to have to eat at my mom's house or…Basically, it's no more extras. It's just like going to school and coming home. That's why I say I didn't think he was going to be able to do it like that. But he really did. He just accepted it, not having no money. He was just willing not to take that route." Thus, to demonstrate that he had put the streets behind him and was now committed to work, Travon

refrained from any activity that might implicate him in the life. Given Travon's behavior, which was consistent and extended over a relatively long period of time, Kevin came to believe that he was sincere and work-ready, and so he willingly put his own name on the line and helped Travon get a job. During his year of limited employment, Travon developed a reputation as a hard worker and made Kevin proud.

Michael Holder had much in common with both George and Kevin. According to Michael, the enticements of the street made it difficult for him to commit to working in the legitimate economy. The 36-year old custodial worker-turned-animal-technician described the conflict between doing the "right" versus the "wrong" thing as follows:

> So when I started out working, it was kind of like I was pushing and pulling trying to do the right thing and still attached to doing the wrong thing—meaning the streets, the money, the lifestyle, and things of that nature…So the jobs I started out with, I remember I worked for Sears before, warehouse jobs. I even worked at a gas station before. I've had lots and lots of jobs. Different temp agencies. But I couldn't keep the job. Why? Because I was so attached to the streets, the money, the lifestyle. And it was kind of hard to try to change. It was much harder trying to change. So, jobs I would get, I wouldn't probably be on the job no more than six months at a time and go back to doing what I was doing.

And he and his friends actively discouraged others from working, too, with taunts reminiscent of those received by Katherine Newman's working poor subjects in *No Shame in My Game*. Eventually, however, Michael decided that he wanted something different and better for himself. But it took 20 years to get to this mental space. According to the father of two,

> When you're doing wrong, or you're out there in the streets—you have a lot of the young youth, they have peer pressure. You got your friends telling you, "Why are you going to work, why are you doing this?" Laughing, making jokes. So, let's say ten years ago, I was one of those guys. So I [became] the one that didn't care about what people thought about me. I didn't care if people saw me on the bus. I didn't care if people saw me walking. All that lifestyle with the material, I had to leave it all behind me if I wanted to succeed in life. So it was either going to go where was I going to pay attention to the people talking and saying things. Or what's more important, me trying to find a decent job and living right?

Michael chose the latter, and in the process, he felt transformed. He seems thrilled that he had:

> So I love the job. I love my animals. I love coming to work, playing with them, talking to them. And it's far much better than out there hustling, selling drugs, don't know where you're going to get your next dollar from, don't know if you're going to get shot,

don't know when you're going to be arrested; or when the police are going to kick down your door. So it's a blessing for me just to actually come to work and to put on this uniform, my badge and everything. It is a blessing.

After ten years at CPSE, he cannot imagine leaving, and he has encouraged his friends from the life to convert and join him: "Come up to CPSE. I'm up here. You need to come get some of this legal money and turn your life around." A few have since done so. He explained that eventually they get tired of the streets, much like he did, and they choose to turn their own lives around. It is at this point that they approach him for help, which he readily provides. Thus, despite living in a neighborhood where many young men are unemployed, Michael explains that most in his immediate circle, formerly in the life, would be good job candidates for the kind of work that he does. According to Michael, "I'd say most of my friends are ready to work, because we all work, and we all changed our lifestyle, transforming into being working community, society-wise. They're all ready."

Interestingly, unlike George and Kevin, who required strong evidence of sacrifice before they would be convinced that jobseekers were committed to working in the legitimate economy, Michael required nothing. When his friends-from-the-life shared that they were ready to move on, he believed them and eagerly did everything in his power to help, including talking to CPSE hiring personnel on their behalf. Two factors, interrelated, distinguish Michael from George and Kevin. First, they differed in terms of how they explained community members' difficulty finding work. Whereas George and Kevin attributed difficulties in good part to individuals' motivation to work (i.e., to some extent jobseekers want to do the right thing, but these desires are often overwhelmed by greater desires to do "wrong"), with an emphasis on how deeply jobseekers had internalized a work ethic (or whether the desire to work was coming "from the heart"), Michael located difficulties in the lack of personal and institutional social capital in his community. According to Michael, "Oh, I would say it's very hard now, because you don't have the positive people inside the community to help the youth. You don't have a lot of churches anymore. You don't have a lot

of programs for the youth, after-school programs. So they're not aware of the opportunities for jobs. Even summer jobs—they very rarely have programs for the youth. They cut out a lot of stuff. They used to have a program called YAP—Young Adult Project—where you would start at 13, work all the way up until 18, but they cut a lot of those programs out now." To Michael, the loss of these institutional supports has combined with the more muted presence of workers in the community (since they must travel long distances outside of the community to work), to produce a disorganized community of individualists who only look out for themselves.

Also, while Michael had never been burned by a referral, both George and Kevin had. Just as importantly, both George and Kevin had been burned by referrals who earned their sympathy by convincingly performing sincerity; they persistently asked for job information and other forms of help. As reported above, George had been burned by two referrals in the fairly recent past. In one instance, he proactively helped an old friend, Ellis. George and Ellis had known each other since the fifth grade, and for 20 years they sold drugs together. When Ellis approached George for help getting a job at CPSE, George did not hesitate. Because Ellis begged, George "felt in [his] heart" that Ellis really wanted to work. Besides that, George reasoned, "…he's done this kind of work before. He had a job; he worked at an army base. We come from working-class people, so I know you know how to work." Even still, Ellis was fired after six months on the job. During his shift, he would disappear for long stretches. It turns out that he had not given up their old vocation after all. Ellis was selling drugs to members of the CPSE community! This caused George not only to question the sincerity of jobseekers' desire to work but also his own ability to discern the sincere from the "jivers."

Kevin had also been burned recently by a referral. Although he had been skeptical about the work ethic of his long-time friend, Trevor, because Trevor "acted like he wanted to [work]"—"…kept asking me about it. He was persistent about it."— Kevin came to believe that Trevor was sincere and so spoke to his manager on his behalf. But Trevor's tenure on the

job was short. It began and ended with complaints about transportation issues. Trevor's shift began at six in the morning, but he lived 15 miles away, and without a car, he grumbled about difficulties getting to work. It was not long before he stopped showing up. Kevin was unconvinced: "He could have made it if he wanted to." Instead, Kevin theorized that because Trevor had never really held a job before, he became too intimidated by the assignment he was given—frontline of the food service station—and decided to quit. For Kevin, the nature of Trevor's problem was not structural. Instead, character was at issue. In Kevin's eyes, by quitting in the way that he did, Trevor provided more evidence that he lacked character and was, as a result, both undeserving of past assistance and not worthy of help in the future. Thus, for both George and Kevin, evidence of transformation, through sacrifice, was needed before they would help. From personal experience, they knew that personal sacrifice was necessary to fully and successfully transition into the world of low-wage work. But for both the sense that metamorphosis was needed was cemented after having been burned by jobseekers who initially seemed eager to work because they aggressively pursued job-finding assistance. Michael had not been burned at all, much less by referrals who initially seemed sincere, and so his beliefs about why jobseekers from his community struggled to find work remained unchanged. Thus, he did not require evidence of sacrifice and conversion; he took at their word his friends' declaration that they were ready to make a change. At the time of his interview, he had little reason to reconsider his approach, since none of his referrals had done anything to inspire his regret. We note that no blue-collar Latinos or white-collar blacks described experiencing such transformations themselves or required seeing evidence of such transformations among jobseekers seeking their help before committing to do so.

COSTS OF FAILURE

We also speculated that blue-collar blacks helped less proactively and rejected more because they might perceive higher costs of initiating bad matches, but the data do not support this.

When we asked jobholders to imagine the worst that might happen if they were to initiate a bad match, they offered six categories of responses. As we show in Table 3, with each type of cost, blue-collar blacks were just about at or below the mean. But a higher percentage of blue-collar blacks reported that there were *no costs* associated with initiating a bad match. If we take these findings at face value, they suggest that blue-collar blacks do not help less proactively and reject more because they perceive higher costs.[20] The weight of the evidence instead points to jobholders' perceived risk. Blue-collar blacks helped less proactively and rejected more because they perceived greater risks of making failed matches, perceptions born from individualistic understandings of inequality rooted in part in experiences in which jobseekers routinely failed to follow through and those who gained employment soon lost it because they behaved inappropriately on the job.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

To date, researchers have highlighted three factors that significantly diminish the efficacy of low-income blacks' job referral networks—their limited access to same-race working contacts, who might inform them of job opportunities and influence the matching process on their behalf; their intentional or unintentional exclusion from the active job referral networks of other ethnoracial groups; and someemployers' recruitment practices, often strategically deployed to bypass the job information channels that blacks do have. To this list of explanations we add a fourth, complementary account: blue-collar black jobholders, those best

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[20] There is an alternative explanation for why blue-collar blacks did not appear to perceive higher costs of making failed matches. When asked about the worst they imagine could happen if they initiated a failed match, jobholders might have considered this question in light of the types of assistance they actually provide. Because a higher percentage of blue-collar blacks help less proactively, by, for instance, providing information only, they might perceive fewer and less substantial costs associated with initiating failed matches. Unfortunately, because we did not ask jobholders to imagine the worst that might happen if they initiated a bad match using specific job-matching strategies, we cannot be certain about the validity (or lack thereof) of this alternative explanation, but we think this is a reasonable explanation worthy of further study.

positioned to aid low-income, black jobseekers, actually help less proactively and reject more requests for job-finding help.

Blue-collar blacks' relative disinclination is rooted in the perception that providing help is both a waste of time—because jobseekers routinely fail to follow-up on job leads they provide—and entails a high risk of failure—because referrals cannot be trusted to act professionally on the job. Jobseekers' patterns of behavior led blue-collar blacks to conclude that many jobseekers in their communities did not want to work. This assessment led to caution about whom to help and how best to do so. The trick was in targeting their efforts at those who did want to work while forsaking all others, but jobholders found that doing so was much easier said than done. Screening devices, like "the waiting game," helped but were far from full proof. As match failures mounted, jobholders became doubtful about their own screening abilities, and when they became doubtful, they either stopped helping altogether, or they engaged in statistical discrimination, refusing to help categories of people whose attributes they associated with failure. And once they came to view statistical discrimination as a reasonable strategy, they would only assist those "untouchable" jobseekers if they showed clear and incontrovertible proof of personal transformation. Anything less and jobholders would remain unconvinced that jobseekers had internalized a work ethic and were willing to put work before all else, especially the street. If few jobseekers excelled at the waiting game, fewer still could provide evidence of metamorphosis.

This study advances the literature in at least three ways. As previous research as compellingly shown, mechanisms of exclusion, typically initiated by workers from other ethnoracial groups and employers, disadvantage blacks during job search. But the data analyzed for this study suggests a cause not previously considered—networks of *internal* exclusion. Given Smith's research on the barriers to social capital activation among low-income blacks and more recent studies on the conditions that facilitate social capital activation (Marin 2012; Paul 2012; Trimble 2012), this is not surprising. But this study goes beyond

Smith and others' contributions in important ways. For instance, previous research has highlighted how knowledge about jobseekers' attributes inform jobholders' decision-making. But jobholders do not always have the information they need. We show that in the space of information asymmetries and less than fool-proof screening devices, blue-collar black jobholders engage in statistical discrimination against other blacks, effectively eliminating from consideration categories of black jobseekers, typically young, black men.

Our findings also have implications for understanding the relationship between stratification beliefs and orientations toward helping. A noteworthy finding in the social psychological literature is that one's understanding about why another is in need shapes one's willingness to fulfill that need, to help. People are more likely to help when they perceive that those in need require aid because of factors outside their control, and they are less likely to help if they attribute another's need to personal deficiencies. This association holds in this study as well. Jobholders who attributed job-finding difficulties to forces outside jobseekers' control were also more inclined to help, and to do so proactively. But those who attributed need to jobseekers' lack of effort or desire to work engaged in the process passively, if at all.

But in this study, the direction of the relationship was not always clears. For a number of blue-collar blacks, it was only after jobseekers routinely failed to follow up on job leads, as they did with Loreen, or after they had been burned, as Rachelle had, that they embraced deficient work ethic and effort as primary explanations for job finding difficulties. Thus, our findings suggest that while stratification beliefs inform helping behavior, experiences of helping also shape individuals' perspectives on inequality. They mutually determine each other.

We hope to make this point clearer by returning to one of Jennifer Hochschild's paradoxical findings. Hochschild (1993) notes that compared to middle-class blacks, a higher percentage of poor blacks now agree that success lies in one's own hands and that blacks are primarily to blame for their impoverishment. Indeed, according to Hochschild, a higher

percentage of poor blacks *than poor whites* agree with the latter statement. This trend is a reversal from the past when proportionately fewer poor blacks than middle-class blacks blamed blacks for being poor. Given this and other consistent trends in stratification beliefs, Hochschild concludes that poor blacks now believe in the American dream more than affluent, successful blacks. She does not offer an explanation, however, for this shift.

The literature offers two reasons. First, middle-class blacks' less sanguine views are attributable to the fact that they are more likely to come into contact with whites and so they are more likely to experience firsthand anti-black discrimination (Feagin 1991). Low-income blacks' greater segregation from whites at work, at home, and in public spaces diminishes this probability. Because middle-class blacks are more likely than their less affluent counterparts to perceive that they are targets of discrimination, they are more likely to attribute inequalities to structural factors.

Another view is that blue-collar blacks embrace individualistic perspectives because doing so allows them to distance, and thus distinguish, themselves from stereotypically poor blacks, with whom they are more likely to share physical and social space. Doing so justifies and legitimates their own claims to dignity and respectability (DuBois 1996 [1899]; Frazier 1997 [1957]; Anderson 1990, 1999; Newman 1999a, 1999b; Lamont 2000). The often unspoken corollary is that with the outmigration of the black middle-class from what were once vertically integrated black communities, the black middle class has not been in such close proximity to low-income blacks, and so they do not have to work as hard to distance, and thus distinguish, themselves in the way that more proximate blue-collar blacks do.

While insightful and compelling, neither account adequately addresses the question of change. Why did poor blacks *become* disproportionately more likely to embrace individualism to explain poor black disadvantage? To do so, we offer another complementary account, one that marries the two existing accounts with a perspective derived from findings reported in the current study. That the black middle class is now less likely than the black poor to blame

blacks for being impoverished—a reversal from the past—is rooted in their greater likelihood of experiencing discrimination at the hands of whites, their less intense need to make claims to dignity and respectability by distancing themselves from stereotypically poor blacks, *and* because of they no longer inhabit the same neighborhoods and maintain the same levels of contact, they have not observed what blue-collar blacks might describe as the poor's routine display of self-defeating patterns of behavior and; nor have they been as frustrated by numerous failed attempts to help their worse-off brethren. The context of their lives is such that structural explanations resonate more.

Not so, however, for blue-collar blacks. Given their relatively limited contact with whites, they don't experience anti-black discrimination as much. And their physical and social closeness to stereotypically poor blacks both leads them to lay claims to respectability and dignity by distancing and distinguishing themselves, but it also gives them ample opportunity to see evidence daily of "complacency" and to be frustrated by failed attempts to help friends, relatives, and acquaintances to make ends meet. Thus, the context of blue-collar blacks' lives is such that individualistic explanations resonate more. Structural factors are not irrelevant, but they are not the primary cause of blacks' persisting disadvantages.

That middle-class and poor blacks have switched views over the years points to a change in the social organization of their lives. We speculate that this change is ultimately the result of the loss of well-paying jobs for low-skilled workers, the weakening of the welfare state, and the punitive turn of the criminal justice system. Major shifts in each of these institutions had a devastating impact on urban, black communities, producing throughout the 1970s and 1980s neighborhoods characterized by concentrated poverty and disadvantage— high rates of poverty and joblessness, female headship, welfare receipt, out-of-wedlock births, and crime (Wilson 1987; Jargowsky 1996). In the context of such hardships, when individuals act in ways that suggest complacency, these behaviors become most salient to those most present to them for making sense of persistent disadvantage and struggle—blue-collar blacks.

Structural explanations, though acknowledged, take a back seat. Thus, we contend, to explain class differences in stratification beliefs among blacks, researchers should be attuned to how race and class intersect to condition individuals' experiences in ways that not only inform their understandings about the root causes of inequality, but that also affect the extent and nature of help they are willing to provide.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Sample Respondents

	Blue-Collar Latinos		Blue-Collar Blacks	Black Administrators	Total
	Foreign-Born	Native-Born			
% Female	51.9	44.4	42.1	73.9	52.6
% Foreign-Born	-	-	5.3	0	27.8
Mean Tenure (years)	9.3	11.6	9.8	11.2	10.2
Monthly Earnings ($)	1998.37	2444.44	2280.00	3388.91	2460.66

Table 2. Patterns of Helping and Rejecting by Race and Class

	Blue-Collar Latinos		Blue-Collar Blacks	Black Administrators	Total
	Foreign-born	Native-born			
INSTANCES OF HELPING					
% Who helped recently	75	88	83	90	83
Mean number helped					
-All jobholders	1.7	2.3	2.3	2.7	2.2
-Recent recent helpers	2.2	2.6	2.8	3.0	2.6
How helped recently (%)					
-Information	80	67	86	86	83
-Information ONLY	4	22	32	9	18
-Strategic advice	32	11	22	36	27
-Reference	32	0	17	27	22
-Talked to employer	76	67	39	55	55
INSTANCES OF REJECTING					
% Who rejected recently	19	51	50	55	44
Mean number rejected					
-All jobholders	.4	.8	1.7	1.0	1.1
-Among recent rejecters	2.0	1.5	3.7	1.8	2.6

Figure 1. Percent Poor, Unemployed, On Public Aid, and Out of the Labor Force in Census Tract

Figure 2.
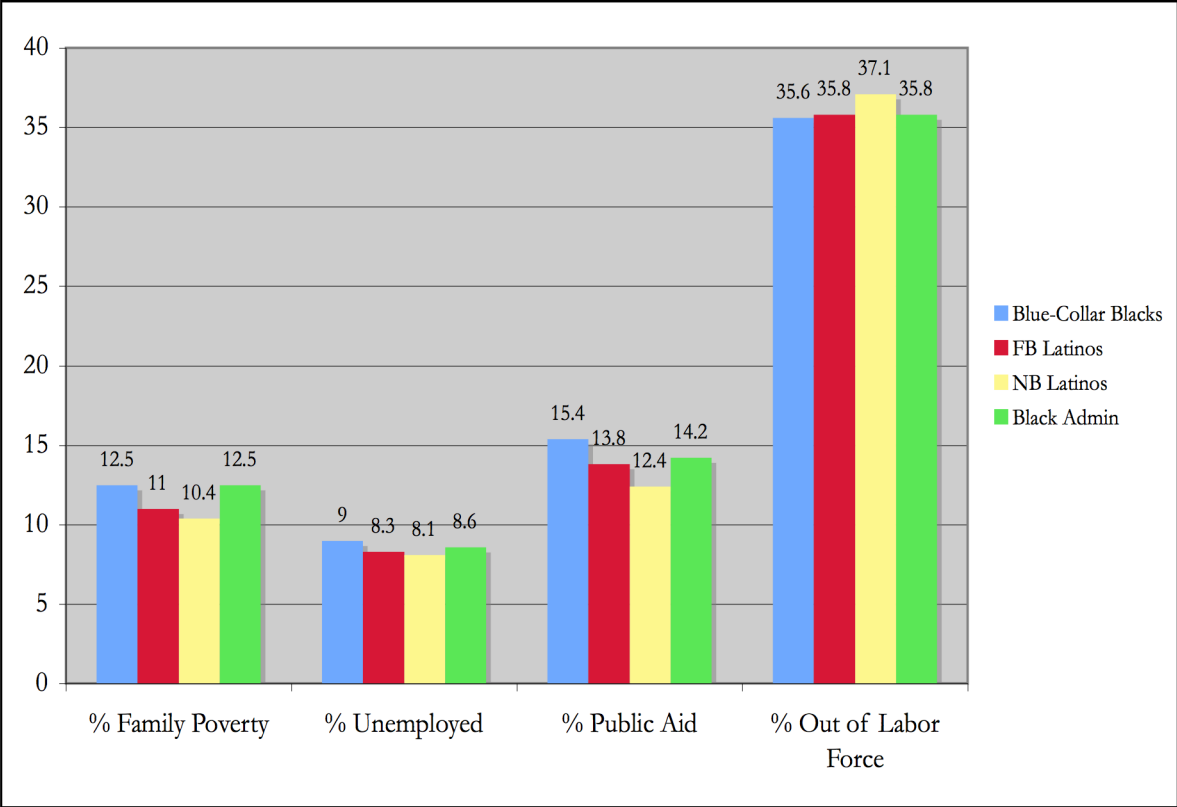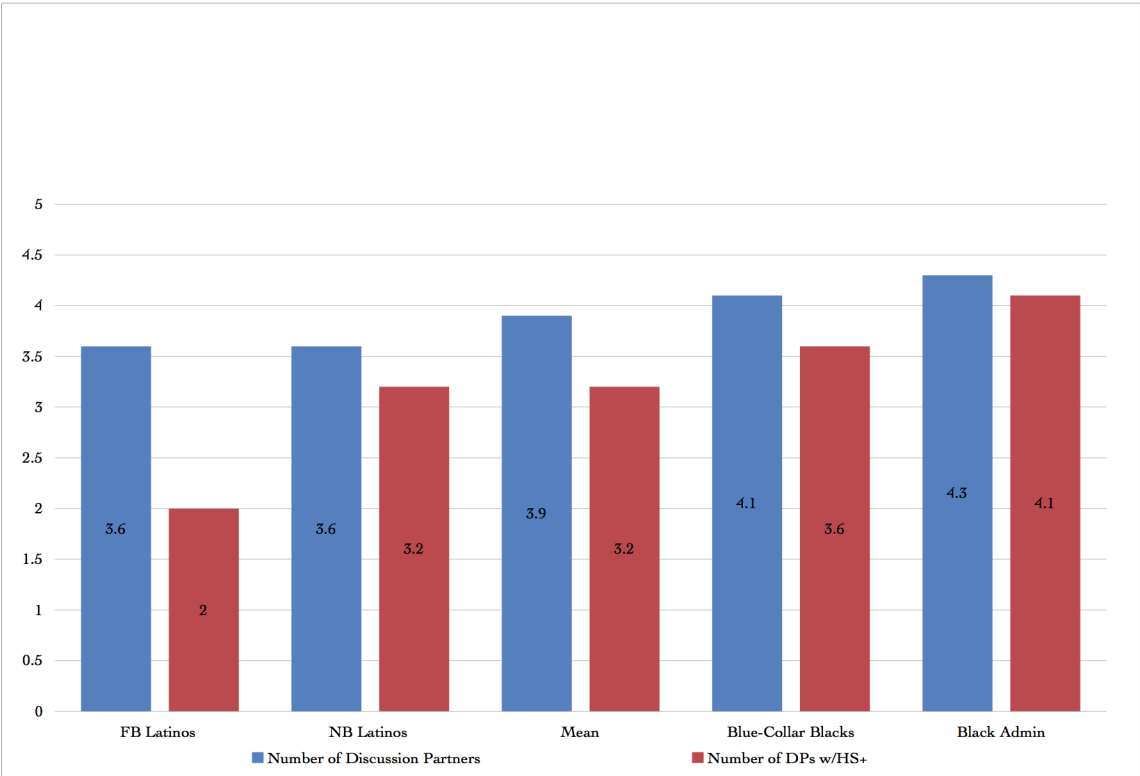**Mean Number of Discussion Partners & DPs with High School Diploma or More**

Figure 3.
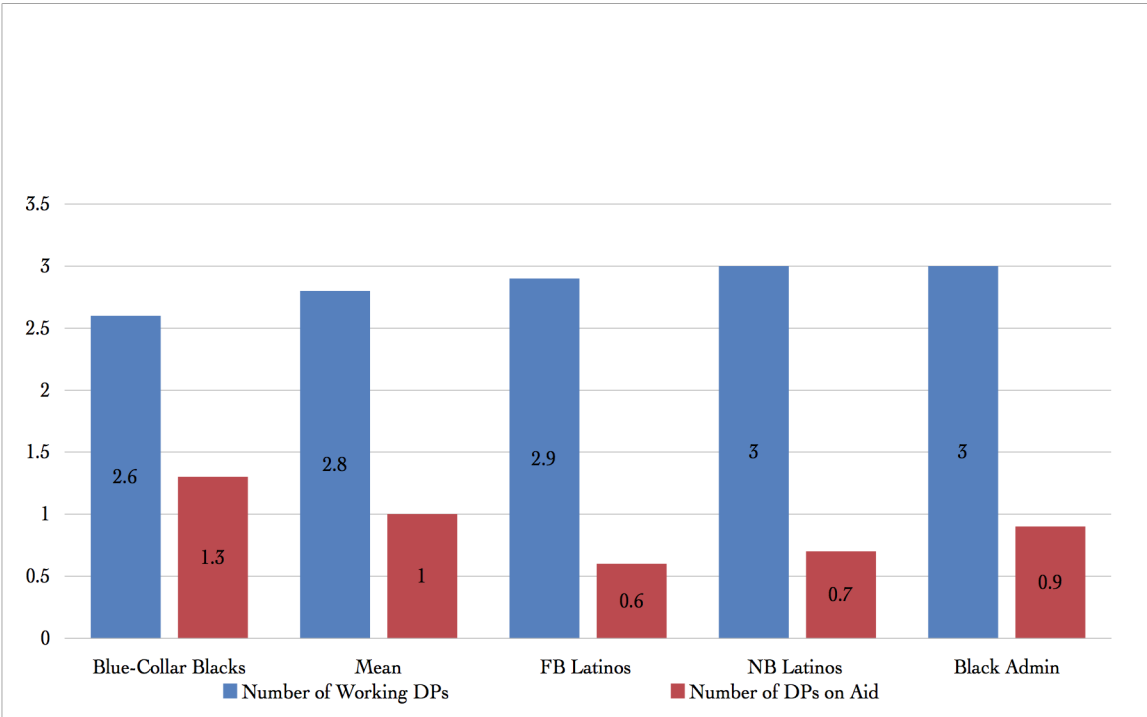**Mean Number of Discussion Partners Working & on Aid**

Figure 4.
Percentage of Jobholders' Discussion Partners Who Work & Have Ever Been on Aid
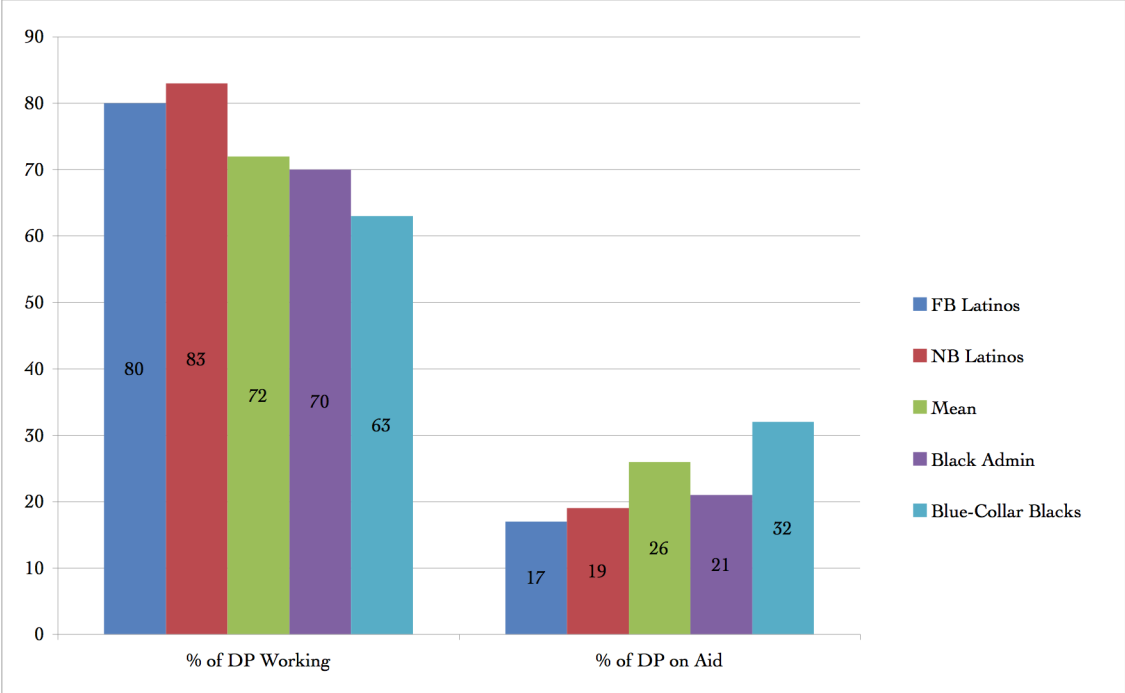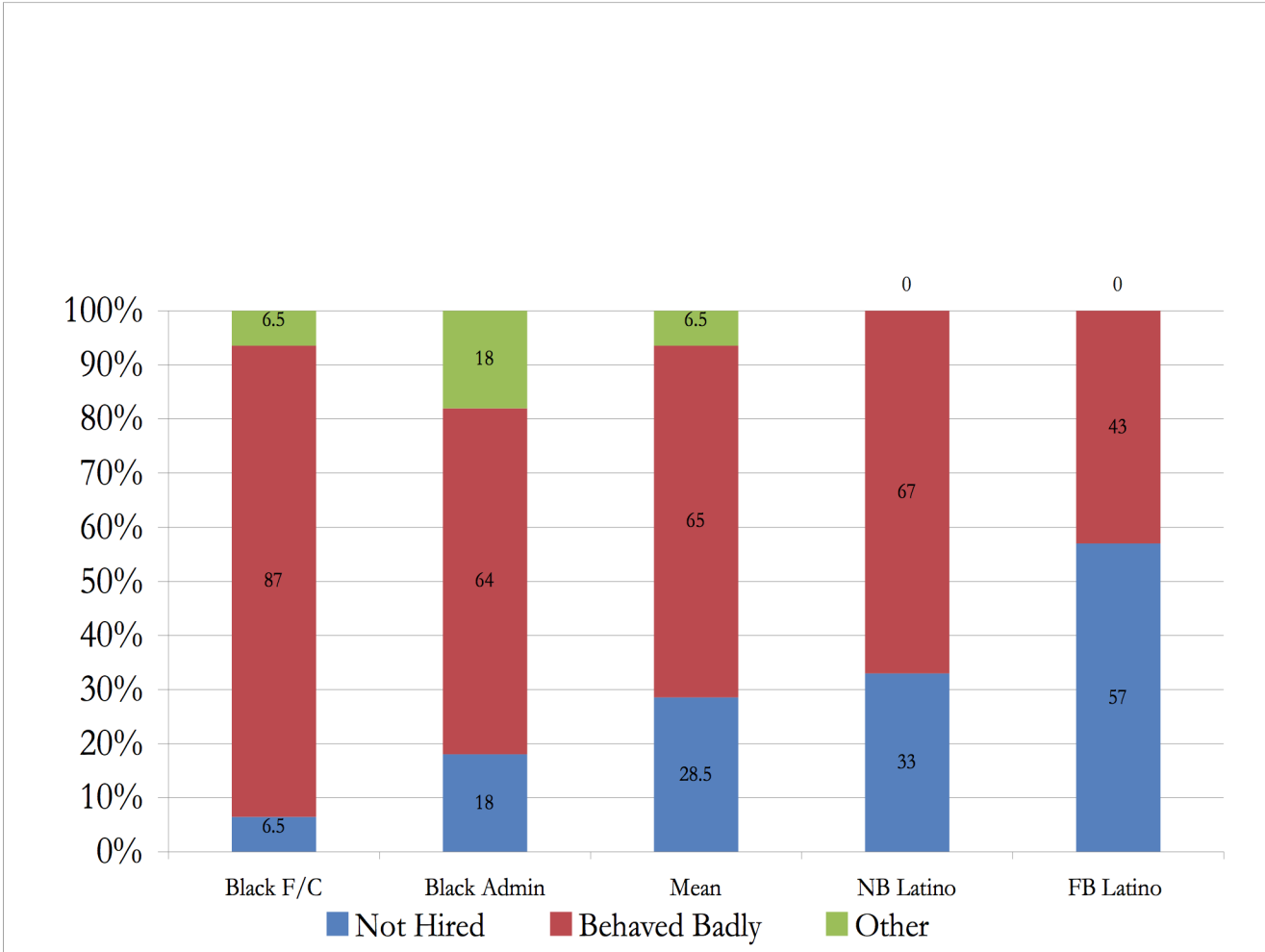
Figure 5. Why Prior Job Match Attempt Failed

Table 3. Perceived Costs of Initiating Failed Matches

	Blue-Collar Latinos		Blue-Collar Blacks	Black Admin	Total
	Foreign-born	Native-born			
Feel Responsible/Badly (%)	36.0	50.0	41.7	39.1	40.2
Hostile Work Environment (%)	0	0	5.6	8.7	4.3
Lost Reputation (%)	24.0	37.5	36.1	52.1	37.0
Concomitant Lost Opportunities	60.0	75.0	47.2	65.2	57.6
Loss of Friendships (%)	0	0	0	8.7	2.1
No Perceived Costs (%)	8.0	0	13.9	4.3	8.7
Number of Costs Mentioned	1.11	1.44	1.24	1.74	1.34