

Abstract

This study addresses the issue of motivation for brokerage. In contrast to Burt's (1992) theoretical assumptions that treat "[brokerage] motivation and [structural] opportunity as one and the same," I argue that a structural position provides opportunities for brokerage but does not directly lead to action. That is, brokerage advantages do not come to a passive actor; instead, a potential broker responds to a variety of factors that motivate brokering action. By holding structural opportunities constant, I am able to examine the ways in which motivational factors mediate the effects of structural opportunities by facilitating or hindering brokering behavior. Several relevant motivational factors are examined (i.e. monetary incentives, strength of ties, and culture). Using Peter Rossi's factorial survey methods, data was collected in America and China regarding how potential brokers reacted differently to various motivational factors in the context of employee referrals. In general, results support the argument that, conditional on the same structural opportunities, the likelihood of becoming a broker is determined by motivational factors. In particular, my analysis shows that referral bonuses, the strength of ties and characteristics of national culture (e.g. individualistic vs. collectivistic) affect motivation for brokerage.