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Strong versus Weak Ties in Migration*

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Abstract

This paper studies the role of strong versus weak ties in rural-to-urban migration decisions in China. We develop a network model that puts forward the different roles of weak and strong ties in helping workers to migrate to the city. We use unique longitudinal data that allow us to test our model by focusing on first-time migration. We address the endogeneity of weak ties using an instrumental variable procedure. Our results indicate that weak and strong ties provide different type of help and hence act as complements in the migration decision, with the interactive effect being particularly strong above a certain threshold of weak ties.

Keywords: social networks, internal migration, China.

JEL Classification: O15, J61.

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