

# Job Networks through College Classmates: Effects of Referrals for Men and Women

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## Abstract

This paper analyzes effects of referrals on labor market outcomes, as well as how these effects differ by gender. To do so, I link administrative data on community college student transcripts to matched employer-employee records to study job search through classmates. Using a novel two-step research design, I first identify classroom network effects by exploiting quasi-random variation in section enrollment within courses. Results indicate taking a class with a peer increases the propensity for a student to get a job at a firm where the peer is incumbent. While the overall propensity to use classmates in job finding does not differ by gender, students do display an increased propensity to form networks with same-gender peers. In the second step of the research design, I investigate the labor market effects of obtaining a job through a classmate. Consistent with the predictions of a referral-based job search model, workers who obtain jobs through classmates earn more and are less likely to leave the firm, with effects declining with tenure in the firm. However, while referrals benefit both genders, the earnings premium from referrals for women is less than half the premium for men. From a policy perspective, these findings suggest a key tension between increasing efficiency through referrals and increasing gender equity.

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