BACKGROUND:
• Most network research focused on resource acquisition (e.g., structural holes / centrality: Advantaged performance through information acquisition and control)
• We shift the focus from the effects of acquiring resources to the effects of providing them

RESEARCH QUESTION:
When does providing assistance to many people in one’s network improve the provider’s own performance?

THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS:
• Knowledge transfer: provide help and receive resources in exchange (i.e. reciprocity)
• Constructivist learning: create knowledge through experiences (i.e. social construction)

LEARNING RELATIONSHIPS:
Providing task-focused work assistance but NOT personal/venting work assistance facilitates learning

RESULTS:
Higher performance when helping others if (controlling for prior performance and reciprocity):
1. Opportunity: Many learning relationships (task-focused help only, not combined with personal/venting assistance)
2. Motivation: High work engagement
3. Ability: Alter in same technical domain

EXPERIMENTAL STUDY:
(n=164)
Initial Task Performance
Provide Task Assistance

Neutral-Personal Work Assistance
14% learning

Venting Assistance
14%

Performance
0 1 2 3 4
Number of Learning Ties (Opportunity)

NETWORK STUDY:
US-based mgmt. consulting firm (n=222)

Hi Motivation* Hi Ability .14**
Hi Motiv * Lo Ability .04
Lo Motiv * Lo Ability .02
Lo Motiv * Hi Ability -.01

Hi Motivation
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