

**Staging Reciprocity and Mobilizing
Networks in Working Families**

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Abstract

Based on in-depth case studies of family networks in Northern California, this article explores the conditions under which working families successfully mobilize networks, and those under which they fail. It analyzes how working parents mobilize networks to help them care for their school-aged children.

Members within the care-giving networks I studied continuously calibrated the extent to which their needs registered on a scale of importance and immediacy. Network members analyzed the context and assessed peoples' commitments, needs, intentions, and capacities in light of their own. Perceptions of value and worth were fundamental to the social construction of fairness and balance. Through this process of perception, valuation, and interpretation, they constructed reciprocity.