

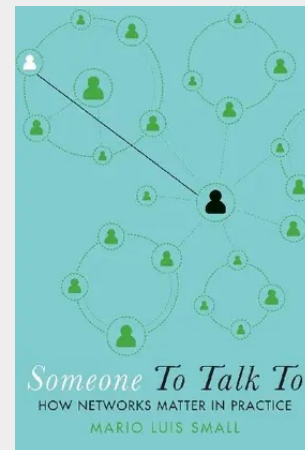
Small

Someone to Talk to

How Networks Matter in Practice

Winner of the James Coleman Award for Best Book from the Rationality and Society section of the American Sociological Society Winner of the Outstanding Recent Contribution from the Social Psychology section of the American Sociological Association Winner of the Best Publication Award from the Mental Health section of the American Sociological Association Honorable Mention, PROSE Book Award, Cultural Anthropology and Sociology, from the Association of American Publishers When people are facing difficulties, they often feel the need for a confidant. How do they decide on whom to rely? In *Someone To Talk To*, Mario Luis Small follows a group of graduate students as they cope with stress, overwork, self-doubt, failure, relationships, children, health care, and poverty. He unravels how they decide whom to turn to for support. And he then confirms his findings based on representative national data on adult Americans. Small shows that rather than consistently relying on their "strong ties," Americans often take pains to avoid close friends and family, as these relationships are both complex and fraught with expectations. In contrast, they often confide in "weak ties," as the need for understanding or empathy trumps their fear of misplaced trust. In fact, people may find themselves confiding in acquaintances and even strangers unexpectedly, without having reflected on the consequences. Amid a growing wave of big data and large-scale network analysis, Small returns to the basic questions of whom we connect with, how, and why, upending decades of conventional wisdom on how we should think about and analyze social networks.

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