Making new online contacts that help you get a job in the Internet age:

An emerging source of inequality

Uwe Matzat & Erik van Ingen
Eindhoven Univ of Tech/Tilburg Univ
u.matzat@tue.nl
http://umatzat.net

TU/e Technische Universiteit Eindhoven University of Technology

Where innovation starts

Problem background: Internet and social inequality

What we know already:

- Inequalities in access (digital divide)
- Inequalities in digital skills
- Inequalities in use of the Internet

What do you learn from this study?

→ Inequalities in outcomes (obtained gratifications, consequences)

→ Outcomes with relevance for inequality/quality of life: carrer-relevant contacts

Question: Unequal pay-offs?

Unclear: Internet usage and inequality in social capital gains

Do higher educated gain more career-enhancing social capital via the Internet?

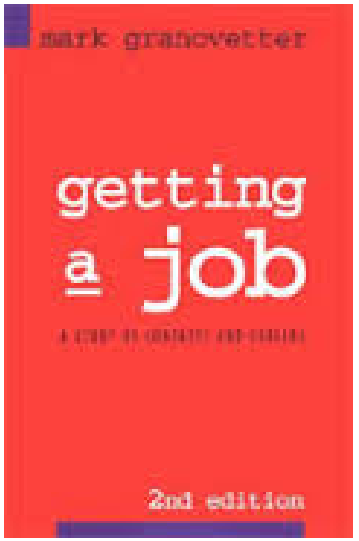
If yes, is educational inequality online smaller or larger than educational inequality offline?

Strength of weak ties theory

–Granovetter, 1973: strong ties are more likely to contain information that you already know (no bridges)

–weak ties are more suitable for access to *new* information (brigdes)

–Weak ties more useful for job search



Strength of weak ties: qualification level hypothesis

–Preisendörfer & Voss, 1988: highly educated more likely to find a new job via their social contacts, and these are more often weak ties than strong ties

–Only for highly qualified persons weak ties more advantageous than strong ties (Wegener, 1989)

–Granovetter (1983)/Ericksen & Yansey (1977): lower educated people more likely to rely on strong ties/family ties

–Lin et al. (1981, 1999): job seekers with higher SES more likley to reach out to other high status persons who, in turn, are more resourceful

Hypotheses

H1: *The higher the educational level of an Internet user the more likely the user is engaged in online professional networking.*

H2: *The higher the educational level of an Internet user the more likely the user makes new online contacts that provide access to career-relevant social resources.*

H3: *Internet users that utilize a professional social network service are more likely to make new online contacts that provide access to career-relevant social resources.*

H4: The stronger the Internet user's digital skills the more likely the user is engaged in online professional networking.

H5: The stronger the Internet user's digital skills the more likely the user makes new online contacts that provide access to career-relevant social resources.

Open question: Is educational inequality online larger or smaller than offline?

Research design: data set I

Two data sets: online and offline

1. Online survey data: random telephone survey of adult Dutch Internet users, response rate: 32%, n=647

October/November 2009

Resource generator (Snijders & van der Gaag, 2005):

-"During the last 12 months, did you become aquainted with someone on the Internet who has a university degree?"
-"During the last 12 months, did you become aquainted with someone on the Internet of whom you know that he hires new personell every now and then?"
-"..."

Descriptives

Demographic variables and Descriptions.

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Adoption of chat rooms	647	0.13	0.33	0	1
Adoption of Linkedin	646	0.06	0.23	0	1
Digital literacy	647	3.04	0.81	1	5
Age	647	47.64	13.68	18	83
Single	647	0.24	0.43	0	1
Male	647	0.48	0.50	0	1
Extravert	647	5.05	1.17	1.5	7
Interest in new people	647	5.01	1.58	1	7

Descriptives

Access to different kinds of social resources (new ties).

Social capital	n	Number	Percentage
(New) online contact	647	69	10.66
Online contact with face to face meeting	647	43	6.65
Intimate new online contact	646	39	6.04
Online local contact	643	28	4.35
Online contact in foreign country	640	21	3.28
Online contact with high education	641	51	7.96
Online contact hires new personnel	647	14	2.16
Online contact provides references	647	23	3.56
Online contact with high income	647	24	4.33

Research design: data set II

Two data sets: online versus offline

2. Offline survey data: Survey on the Social Networks of the Dutch (SSND, Volker, Flap, & Mollenhorst, 2007)

Second wave: 2008, n=947, response rate: 40%

Adult Dutch population 18-65 years

Uses (adjusted version of) resource generator (Snijders & van der Gaag, 2005)

Measurements

Social capital/ Resource generator online (Snijders & van der Gaag, 2005):

-"During the last 12 months, did you get aquainted online with someone who..

-.. .has a senior high school (VWO) education degree?

-…has a higher vocational (HBO) eduation degree?

-...earns more than 2500 Euros net income per month

-…can give a good reference when you are applying for a job

-…sometimes has the opportunity to hire people"

Additive score, alpha=.86, M=.22, SD=.82

Offline (SSND): only last two items for comparison online vs offline (dichotomous)

Professional online social networking: use of LinkedIn (dichotomous)

Hypothesis testing H1 / H4: engagement professional online social networking

Table 2
Logistic regression LinkedIn (dummy variable regular use)

	(1) LinkedIn Odds ratio / SE
education	2.108***
	(0.374)
age	0.973*
	(0.013)
male	2.421*
	(0.952)
skills	2.831***
	(0.712)
Observations	786
Pseudo R^2	.229

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001.

Hypothesis testing H2 / H3 / H5: access to career-relevant social resources

Table 3
OLS regression 5-item scale of career-facilitating social resources (CFSR-5)

	(1) career-facilitating social resources b / SE	(2) career-facilitating social resources b / SE	(3) career-facilitating social resources b / SE
education	0.041*	0.031	0.023
	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.022)
age	-0.007**	-0.006**	-0.006*
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
male	0.179**	0.161**	0.142*
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.061)
LinkedIn		0.338**	0.312*
		(0.130)	(0.132)
skills			0.054
			(0.041)
Constant	0.297*	0.306*	0.157
	(0.134)	(0.134)	(0.175)
Observations	787	786	786
R^2	.030	.039	.041

* p<.05; ** p<.01.

Open question: *Are educational inequalities online larger or smaller than educational inequalities offline?*

Table 4
Logistic regression career-supporting social resources (dummy variable: at least a contact who sometimes hires people or contact who can give a good reference)

	(1) Online Odds ratio / SE	(2) Offline Odds ratio / SE
education	1.397*	1.429***
	(0.203)	(0.077)
age	0.957**	0.969***
	(0.014)	(0.007)
male	2.740*	1.121
	(1.110)	(0.195)
Observations	787	947
Pseudo R^2	.083	.100

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001.

Summary & discussion I

–Highly educated Internet users utilize more often the Internet for careeer oriented social networking.

–Highly educated Internet users more successful in creating career-relevant social resources.

–Educational inequality online of similar size as educational inequality offline

Summary & Discussion II

–Inequality with respect to labor market relevant outcomes of Internet use. “Online does not compensate for offline.”

–Differences in line with SWT theory (qualification level hypothesis)

Implications for research & policy

–More research on inequalities of social capital **outcomes** of Internet use needed: in 2009 social media use in NL just on the rise

–Policy focus on online services that fit with the labour market needs of “poorly” educated citizens

–Digital inequality dependent on (lack of) benefits/ incentives, not lack of motivation