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Article

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Schmollers Jahrbuch – Journal of Applied Social Science Studies. Zeitschrift für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften

Provided in Cooperation with:

Duncker & Humblot, Berlin

Suggested Citation: Zochert, Andrea (2015) : Getting a Job: The Effect of Employment Sectors and Men's and Women's Networks, Schmollers Jahrbuch – Journal of Applied Social Science Studies. Zeitschrift für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften, ISSN 1865-5742, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin, Vol. 135, Iss. 1, pp. 47-53,
<https://doi.org/10.3790/schm.135.1.47>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/292459>

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Getting a Job: The Effect of Employment Sectors and Men's and Women's Networks

By Andrea Zochert

Abstract

Most jobs these days are never advertised. People find them through social networks. However, access to social networks is unequal by gender. This paper concentrates on how employment sectors that are segregated by gender affect the probability of men and women getting jobs through social networks. Furthermore, the paper reveals how men's and women's same-sex contacts are correlated with getting jobs. Based on data from the SOEP 2011 and 2012 logistic regressions, with average marginal effects, are estimated to compare the probability of getting a job through social networks for men and women.

JEL Classification: J64

1. Introduction

Most people receive information on job vacancies from social networks when searching for a job. This applies to about a third of the employed who have changed their jobs (Pischner et al., 2002; Drever/Spieß, 2006; Brenke/Zimmermann, 2007).

However, men and women do not benefit equally from their social networks (Ioannides/Loury, 2004). They work in different employment sectors and their social networks are composed different by gender. To date, these aspects were rarely considered in studies on job search and therefore need to be investigated.

This paper contributes to identify how employment sectors that are segregated by gender affect the probability of men and women getting jobs through social networks and how men's and women's same-sex contacts are correlated with getting jobs.

2. Theories and Hypotheses

According to social capital theory, social networks provide social resources, such as information on job vacancies (Chen, 2009). However, there are socio-

structural differences in gaining access to social networks. Ioannides/Loury (2004) report that the access is determined by age, education and gender. In the following, the focus is on gender differences in social networks.

Campbell (1988) maintains that men are more likely to have job-related contacts and women are more likely to have family-related contacts. Referring to Granovetter (1973), weak ties, such as job-related contacts to work colleagues and superiors at work, provide information on job vacancies rather than strong ties, such as family-related contacts to parents and siblings. He states that “[...] those to whom we are weakly tied are more likely to move in circles different from our own and will thus have access to information different from that which we receive” (Granovetter, 1973: 1371). Ioannides/Loury (2004) confirm his statement by enhancing that men benefit more from social networks in terms of getting a job compared to women.

Moreover, men and women work in different occupations, organizations and sectors (Siltanen et al., 1995). Whereas a majority of men works in manufacturing and construction sectors, a majority of women is employed in public and private services. That is the so-called labor market segregation with the result that men and women have different social contacts and therefore different sources of information. The labor market segregation could be explained by doing-gender approach that refers to gender as a social construction that is reproduced by social structures and processes.

Hence, one would expect that employment sectors that are segregated by gender may affect the probability of getting a job through social networks for men and women as follows:

H1a: Working in employment sectors that are segregated by gender increases men’s probability of getting a job through social networks.

H1b: Working in employment sectors that are segregated by gender decreases women’s probability of getting a job through social networks.

According to Mayr-Kleffel (2010), men and women tend to homophilic friendships and acquaintanceships. The concept of homophily implies social contacts between individuals with similar characteristics, such as gender. My own computations using SOEP data for 2011 show some evidence that men and women are more likely to have same-sex contacts. About 28 percent of men and 43 percent of women have same-sex contacts. This may also affect men’s and women’s probability of getting a job through social networks and therefore the following hypotheses are tested:

H2a: Having same-sex contacts increases men’s probability of getting a job through social networks.

H2b: Having same-sex contacts decreases women’s probability of getting a job through social networks.

To check the hypotheses, the following section contains information on data, variables and method.

3. Data, Variables and Method

This paper concentrates on gender differences in terms of getting a job through social networks and therefore focuses on the employed, who changed their jobs by using social networks. The effects of employment sectors that are segregated by gender and men's and women's same-sex contacts on the probability of getting a job through social networks for men and women are estimated. In the following, the empirical implementation is presented.

The analysis is based on data from the Socio-Economic Panel Study¹ (SOEP) and focuses on the employed, who changed their jobs between 2011 and 2012 by using social networks. In this study, social networks are composed by acquaintances, friends and relatives.

The dependent variable 'getting a job through social networks' is measured dichotomously. So, logistic regressions with average marginal effects (AME) are estimated to compare the probability of getting a job through social networks for men and for women (Mood, 2010).

The information about the employment sectors is based on the statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community (NACE) provided by the SOEP and is connected with data of the German microcensus file. It is a dichotomous variable that indicates whether men are working in male-dominated sectors compared to men who are working in female-dominated sectors or gender integrated employment sectors and analogous for women i.e., 1 stands for women, who are working in female-dominated sectors and 0 stands for women, who are working in male-dominated sectors or gender integrated employment sectors.

The information about men's and women's same-sex contacts comes from the generator of three best friends from the SOEP. Respondents could provide information on gender, age, education, employment status and nationality of up to three best friends. The variable is dichotomous and indicates whether men only have male social contacts compared to men with only female social contacts or male and female social contacts. The same for women i.e., 1 stands for women, who only have female social contacts and 0 stands for women, who only have male social contacts or female and male social contacts.

¹ The Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP) is representative for the German population and contains information on job search on a yearly basis since 1984 (Wagner et al., 2007).

Moreover, the analyses are controlled for age, education, employment status, type of change, whether employees were actively looking for jobs, partnership status, number of close friends, job satisfaction as well as satisfaction with friends and acquaintances and sampling region.

The following section deals with the empirical findings and is restricted to 4 models i.e., 2 for men and 2 for women. These models contain estimates without the information about the employment sectors and men's and women's networks and estimates with this information.² According to general information, the results for men and for women are presented.

4. Results

The analysis includes 381 observations, 181 men and 200 women, with an average age of 37 years, who changed their jobs between 2011 and 2012. 33 percent are getting a job through social networks and 27 percent of them are male and 38 percent of them are female.

Table 1 presents the probability of getting a job through social networks by gender. The results indicate the effect of employment sectors that are segregated by gender and men's and women's same-sex contacts.

The probability of getting a job through social networks is for men who are working in male-dominated sectors 10 percentage points higher than for men who are working in female-dominated sectors or gender integrated employment sectors. The effect is significant on the 10-percent-level. Hence, hypothesis 1a could be confirmed. However, hypothesis 1b must be rejected, because the probability of getting a job through social networks is for women who are working in female-dominated sectors 1 percentage point higher than for women who are working in male-dominated sectors or gender integrated employment sectors.

Furthermore, the probability of getting a job through social networks is for men with only male social contacts 1 percentage point higher than for men with only female social contacts or male and female social contacts. Thus, hypothesis 2a must be rejected. However, the probability of getting a job through social networks is for women with only female social contacts 14 percentage points lower than for women with only male social contacts or male and female social contacts and therefore hypothesis 2b could be confirmed. This effect is significant on the 5-percent-level.

Interpreting the regression results should consider the problem of unobserved heterogeneity. Perhaps men who are working in male-dominated sectors differ

² The full results are available from the author upon request.

Table 1
Probability of Getting a Job through Social Networks by Gender

Getting a job through social networks		Men		Women	
Age		-0.00	-0.00	0.01*	0.01*
Education ¹	<i>Low</i>	0.15*	0.13*	0.08	0.07
	<i>High</i>	0.04	0.04	-0.08	-0.06
Employment status ²	<i>Full-time</i>	-0.04	-0.06	-0.05	-0.05
Type of change ³	<i>Different employer</i>	0.35***	0.34***	0.20*	0.21**
Actively looking for jobs ⁴	<i>Yes</i>	-0.19***	-0.19***	-0.13*	-0.12*
Partnership status ⁵	<i>With partner</i>	-0.05	-0.04	-0.10	-0.08
Number of close friends		-0.00	-0.00	0.01	0.01
Job satisfaction		0.00	0.01	0.02	0.02
Satisfaction with friends		0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01
Sampling region ⁶	<i>West Germany</i>	0.00	0.01	-0.09	-0.07
Employment sectors that are segregated by gender ⁷	<i>Male-dominated sector</i>		0.10*		
	<i>Female-dominated sector</i>				0.01
Same-sex contacts ⁸	<i>Only male contacts</i>		0.01		
	<i>Only female contacts</i>				-0.14**
N		181	181	200	200
Pseudo-R ²		0.13	0.14	0.07	0.09

Source: SOEP 2011 and 2012; own calculations.

Significance levels: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

References: ¹ Middle, ² Part-time, ³ Same employer, ⁴ No, ⁵ Without partner, ⁶ East Germany, ⁷ For men: female-dominated sector or gender integrated sector; for women: male-dominated sector or gender integrated sector, ⁸ For men: only female social contacts or male and female social contacts; for women: only male social contacts or male and female social contacts.

with respect to some unobserved characteristics from men who are working in female-dominated sectors or gender integrated employment sectors that may also affect the probability of getting a job through social networks. However, the problem can not be solved by this analysis.

Moreover, for men there is no evidence that age affects the probability of getting a job through social networks, but there is for women. Thus, women are more likely to find a job through social networks with increasing age. It could be that women have to be established in the labor market to expand their job

mobility chances. Compared to men they are restricted in terms of labor market participation when they have children. When the children grow up and the time required for child care decreases women can spend more of their time working and have time to socialize.

The probability of getting a job through social networks is for men with low levels of education 15 respectively 13 percentage points higher compared to middle educated men. However, there is no similar effect for women. One may expect that less educated men must depend on their own resources. They have to look for work. However, women are not as reliant on employment because they could be supported through marriage or raising children.

One's employment status has no significant effect on the probability of getting a job through social networks either for men or for women. With respect to the type of change, the probability of getting a job through social networks is for men 35 respectively 34 percentage points and for women 20 respectively 21 percentage points higher when they started a new position with a different employer compared to when they changed positions within the same company. The effects are significant for both. Moreover, the probability of getting a job through social networks is for men 19 percentage points and for women 13 respectively 12 percentage points lower when they are actively looking for jobs than doing not so. These effects are also significant for both.

Furthermore, there is no significant effect for men and for women in terms of partnership status, number of close friends, job satisfaction as well as satisfaction with friends and acquaintances and sampling region.

5. Conclusion

The paper concentrates on how gendered employment sectors that are segregated by gender affect the probability of men and women getting jobs through social networks and reveals how men's and women's same-sex contacts are correlated with getting jobs.

Some results are not as expected. The paper indicates that there is some evidence that gendered employment sectors affect the probability of getting jobs for men, but not for women. In contrast, there is some evidence in terms of gendered network compositions for women, but not for men.

The results are in line with Ioannides/Loury (2004) who contend that men benefit more from social networks in terms of getting a job compared to women. Thus, the hypothesis from Ioannides and Loury gains support. Furthermore, this could explain that men's social contacts are more effective than women's, because they are more likely to have job-related contacts and less family-related contacts compared to women. Consequently, these contacts provide more social resources, such as information on job vacancies.

According to Mencken/Winfield (2000) the sex of the social contact affects getting a job. They indicate that women profit from male social contacts in terms of getting a job. This emphasizes that women are disadvantaged by homophilic social contacts.

However, for further research, data are still required to capture total network size and to get more information about the relationships e.g., type, duration and multiplexity.

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