Artículos / *Articles*

Inequality Beyond Networking: Personal Networks and Mobilization of Contacts by Young Job Seekers in Barcelona / *La desigualdad más allá de la movilización de contactos: redes personales y movilización de contactos de jóvenes que buscan trabajo en Barcelona*

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ABSTRACT

How young job seekers mobilize their contacts in the labour market? We look at mobilization of personal networks of young adults in Barcelona. We consider the strength of ties and status *homophily as mechanisms of personal networks as for the consolidation of social capital. Our qualitative analysis of 18 interviews with job seekers explores their personal networks and labour market trajectories. We applied Social Network Analysis (SNA). Our analysis of social capital indicates the existence of a relation between the cultural and economic capitals of job seekers and the compositional features of their networks. Results show how networks are similarly heterogeneous in terms of strength of ties, and mostly homophilous in educational levels. But these similarities in terms of social capital come with sharp inequalities in the patterns of mobilized contacts and their success in finding a job. These differences can be explained by the type and volume of capitals of job seekers. Those with better positions in the social structure and stable trajectories seem to mobilize fewer contacts more efficiently, getting better outcomes.*

Keywords: *Social Capital, Networking, Social Network Analysis, Labour Market, Inequality.*

RESUMEN

¿Cómo los jóvenes que buscan trabajo movilizan sus contactos en el mercado laboral? Analizamos la movilización de redes personales de adultos jóvenes en Barcelona. Consideramos la fuerza de los lazos y la *homofília de status* como mecanismos de las redes personales para la consolidación de capital social. Presentamos un análisis cualitativo de 18 entrevistas con jóvenes que buscan trabajo (29-34 años), explorando sus redes personales y sus trayectorias. Usamos el análisis de redes sociales (ARS). Nuestros resultados dan cuenta de la existencia de una relación entre los capitales culturales y económicos de los solicitantes de empleo y las características de composición de sus redes. Las redes son similarmente heterogéneas en términos de la fuerza de sus vínculos, y en su mayoría igualmente homófilas en los niveles educativos. Estas similitudes en términos de capital social conllevan desigualdades en los patrones de contactos movilizados y el éxito en encontrar trabajo. Las diferencias se pueden explicar por el tipo y el volumen de capitales de los solicitantes de empleo. Los que tienen mejores posiciones en la estructura social y trayectorias estables parecen mobilizar menos contactos de forma más eficiente, obteniendo mejores resultados.

Palabras clave: capital social, redes, análisis de redes sociales, mercado de trabajo, desigualdad.

INTRODUCTION

How young job seekers mobilize their contacts in the labour market? Networking, understood as the socially shared meaning of workers mobilizing weak ties, is just a small part of the reality of looking for a job. The effective use of social capital and its differential mobilization patterns are often neglected within the existing literature. Such omission contributes to the blackboxing of key concepts in social capital research such as that of *networking*, *strength of ties*, and *homophily*.

Networking can improve the status and economic position of the individuals within the social structure. But the mobilization of weak contacts might not help in finding a job, because they depend on the individual's social position, as well as on the social attributes of the members of the personal network. The same source (the social attributes of the personal network) may provide two different effects (finding a job, or not). Moreover, the mobilization of contacts, which includes but cannot be reduced to networking, is an interactional practice determined mainly by the resources available through personal networks (Lin, 2001; Bottero, 2007; De Federico, 2007).

Although the "strength-of-weak-ties" thesis (Granovetter, 1973) underlines the capacity of these contacts to facilitate richer and more diverse information for getting a job, weak ties might not be effective (Bidart *et al.,* 2011), and strong ties may be a more important source during the job search (Marsden and Gorman, 2001; Yakubovich, 2005; Vacchiano *et al.* 2018). The prevalence of strong and weak ties in successful mobilization is open for discussion. We will thus problematize the conventional take on weak and strong contacts and seek new empirical evidence for their operationalization.

More specifically, in order to know how job seekers mobilize contacts, we define the characteristics of their personal networks in terms of strength of ties, the position of their members in the social structure in terms of economic and cultural capitals, and we analyse the presence of *status homophily* (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954).[1]

Following Muntanyola-Saura (2014b), Vacchiano (2017) and Barranco *et al.* (2018), we adapt this classic concept to personal networks analysis and we understand that this occurs when members of a personal network occupy a similar position in the social structure and thus share social attributes such as gender, age, educational level or occupational status. Moreover, we pay attention to the labour market trajectories of job seekers and the weight they might have in the formation of their career expectations.

Our objectives are two: one the one hand, to analyze how young job seekers in Spain use personal contacts to look for a job, and on the other hand, how they eventually find it. Our claim is that the economic and cultural capitals of job seekers, as well as the compositional features of their personal networks, shape the mobilization patterns of contacts. Social capital mobilization spawns from economic and cultural differences between job seekers, reflecting differences in their resources and employment aspirations.

Accordingly, we present here the results from a mixed-method analysis of eighteen interviews with Spanish job seekers aged 29 to 34. The interviews were carried out with young adults living in the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona in 2014. We selected the eighteen interviews out of a sample of 250 interviews from which we collected labour market trajectories and personal networks. Moreover, we provide a detailed analysis of three selected cases with Social Network Analysis (SNA). Through these cases we describe *how* differences in the use of contacts come from economic and cultural inequalities between agents, driving the process of contact mobilization.

In the following section we develop theoretically the concepts of social capital, strong and weak contacts, status homophily and career expectations. We include a methods section in which we explain our tools for data collection and analysis. We analyse the interviews using the EgoNet, UCINET and Visone softwares and locate the mobilized contacts within the graph of the interviewees'

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1   Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) distinguish between *status homophily* and *value homophily*. The former takes into account the socio-demographic or status characteristics as criteria for analysing ties' traits, while the latter is based on common beliefs, norms and ideology.

personal networks. Our findings on the patterns of contact mobilization are explained from a relational perspective in terms of volume and density of the network, centrality measures, presence of homophily and of strong/weak ties. An analysis of the interviewees' micro-narratives shows how differences in educational level and occupational category are associated with different subjective expectations of job seekers. We discuss how the educational level and the occupational category of the interviewees shape the type and volume of successful mobilized contacts. The three types of trajectories from our findings show how job seekers with different levels of economic and cultural capitals have diverse patterns of contact mobilization. Job seekers with better positions in the social structure and stable trajectories seem to mobilize fewer contacts more efficiently, getting better outcomes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since Granovetter's (1973) work on the importance of weak ties in finding a job, the role of social networks in the labour market has attracted widespread attention. However, the literature on the mobilization of contacts is conflated with networking. In other words, networking is a subcategory that stands for a category as a whole. Contact mobilization is much more than white-collar workers mobilizing weak contacts, which is the socially shared meaning of networking From our point of view, networking is in fact what Lakoff (1987) calls a social stereotype, concretely one that follows the inequality of social structure (Muntanyola-Saura, 2014a). As Smith (2000: 530) suggests, by ignoring *how* the contact may have aided in the matching process, researchers cannot determine the extent to which job seekers were actually mobilizing and benefiting from their social resources. Behtoui and Neergaard (2010: 774) also consider that more research is needed to establish how social capital works in the career progress of individuals and in different parts of the labour market. In fact, a large portion of the service market behaves like the art market (Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2014:155). In this *winner takes all* market there is an individualistic tendency that shapes the mobilization of contacts in

white-collar sectors such as business, marketing and sales.

The concept of social capital includes that of networking. Portes (2010) redefines the exploratory power of social capital. He follows Bourdieu's, Grannovetter's (1973, 2003) and Burt's (1992) structuralism and distances himself from Putnam (2000), who considers social capital as a collective value. While Portes (2010) seems to take the strength of ties as a resolved issue, we agree with Cruz and Verd (2013) that weak contacts are still a black box. Portes considers using two types of social ties: family (or strong) ties and extra familial (or weak) ties. He claims that Bourdieu considers only weak ties as social capital, classifying family contacts as part of cultural capital. However, a detailed reading of the two Bourdieu's (1979, 1986) texts quoted by Portes (2010: 61-64) calls into question this interpretation. In Bourdieu (1979: 4), strong family ties are those that make possible a late insertion into the labour market, thus buying time towards a transitioning adulthood through higher education. The time for studying that families provide generates the institutional capital that belongs to the more general cultural capital:

"Furthermore, and in correlation with this, the length of time for which a given individual can prolong his acquisition process depends on the length of time for which his family can provide him with the free time, i.e., time free from economic necessity, which is the precondition for the initial accumulation (time which can be evaluated as a handicap to be made up)". (Bourdieu, 1986: 49-50).

Bourdieu's (1979, 1986) social capital includes also schoolmates, who are strong ties and are crucial for reaching the best jobs (Macmillan *et al.*, 2011). In addition, Bourdieu (1986) specifically delimits the three species of capitals and makes the important claim that social capital, including both strong and weak contacts, is dependent upon cultural and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986: 51). Smith (2000: 530) claims that the use of weak ties from work does not provide the same benefit to individuals of low socio-economic status as it does to those of high socio-economic status. Moreover, Obukhova and Lan (2013) show that having access to high social capital does not necessarily mean that the contacts will be mobilized. As stated by

Trimble (2013: 593), job seekers first need to access the contacts that might be resources for finding a job, and only later will they be able to mobilize them. Their contacts must have the social attributes relevant to find a job, such as educational credentials and professional experience (Lin 2001). Thus, higher economic and cultural capital comes with more efficient use of the network and better job outcomes.

Strength of ties is thus a key mechanism for consolidating social capital. And the literature connects it to another relational mechanism, that of *status homophily*. Campbell *et al.* (1986) modify Granovetter's "strenght of weak ties" proposition by claiming that the weak ties of job seekers with low economic and cultural capital are less successful because these ties are being mobilized from small, dense, homophilous networks that lack influential ties. Lin (2001) suggests that the social networks of stigmatized groups provide less access to social capital because of their dominated position in the social structure. Smith (2005) shows that job contacts from stigmatized groups fail to provide referrals from their own. Moreover, because of the homophily principle underprivileged job seekers have restricted access to social capital. The social structuring of activity encourages individuals to develop relationships with others who are similar to them (Feld, 1982). By going about our daily routines we reinforce patterns of homophily. Thus, our choices are constrained by the social sorting that occurs in bars, neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools and the like, provoking a process of *differential association.* As Bottero (2007: 815) explains, differential association "means that disadvantaged groups tend to associate with people who are similarly disadvantaged, while the privileged likewise draw more of their contacts from the privileged". Thus, differential association "helps to reproduce inequalities in social position and resources".

In terms of the social construction of expectations, Portes (2010) looks into economic decision-making, including labour market choices, as embedded in the social sphere. Portes aligns himself with his analysis of rationality as a social structure beyond individual motivation, as well as with Granovetter (2003) and with Polanyi's (1989) concept of embeddedness, which revolutionized

the field of decision-making. Moreover, Bradley and Devadason (2008), in their study of British youth (20-34 years), relate their social expectations to four types of pathways in labour market: sticking (pursuing a single type of employment); settling (after a time of uncertainties, acting to settle the career in a particular job); shifting (shifting between different jobs in order); and switching (making a conscious choice of a major change of direction). In this sense, we locate the inequality of employment expectations within the wider scope of Sennett's (2012) take on face-to-face interaction as a new form of privilege. This author explores the socialization of cooperation and defines *inequality* as a product of the internalization of isolating routines in childhood. We consider inequality by exploring the narratives of the interviewees, putting our lens on the process of contact mobilization during the labour market pathway.

Our theoretical framework suggests different patterns of contact mobilization among job seekers depending on their attributes of economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. We will thus define the position of the interviewees in the Spanish social structure, the characteristics of their personal networks in terms of strength of ties, and we analyse the presence of status homophily in their personal networks. In this way, we open the black box of contact mobilization and look into the empirical roots of social capital in the labour market. Thus, we follow Herz *et al.*'s (2015: 2) claim on the necessity to put greater attention to the subjective interpretations of social relations. So we also take into account the employment trajectories and career expectations of Spanish job seekers.

METHODOLOGY

This article follows a *"qualitative driven"* approach to mixed methods (Mason, 2006) since its objectives and research design is typical of a qualitative perspective A few cases are analyzed intensively and in detail following a case-oriented logic (Bernhard, 2018). We analize from a holistic view the joint effects of different phenomena or elements from each specific case. Consequently, the results are not intended to be statistically generalizable,

but they have *analytical* (Yin, 2014) or *theoretical* (Hammersley, 2008) *generalisation value*. It can be inferred that the detected processes and realities may exist in other cases with similar social characteristics. The data collected is narrative —thus of a qualitative nature— and numerical —or quantitative—. Coherently, we analyzed the former with qualitative methods, and the latter with quantitative analysis methods from SNA. The results have been integrated into the joint interpretations of each case. Thus, at this technical level of data collection and analysis, mixed methods are put at the service of the objectives and general orientation of a qualitative nature.

SNA studies have been mostly focused on structural analysis. Such quantitive methods have been accused of "structural determinism" (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994). Nevertheless, qualitative methodologies are necessary because these social structures are embedded in social relations that ought to be explained. The introduction of a qualitative perspective in the study of social networks seems fundamental to us to improve the understanding of the phenomenon of contact mobilization. The processes of collecting and analyzing the data carried out are explained below.

Data collection

The data for this article come from a qualitative sample of 18 interviewees from 29 to 34 years old selected from a sample of 250 young adults from 20 to 34 years old, in which all interviewees had had at least one activity event in the labour market. The sample of 250 was part of a wider research project and the interviewees were people living in the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona in 2014.[2] The subsample of 18 interviewees was balanced by gender with 10 men and 8 women who were working or looking for a job. We selected the upper age tier of the overall sample because we were looking for young adults with an active labour market tra-

jectory of at least 5 years. We applied theoretical and empirical knowledge for the selection criteria of the 18 cases by choosing the qualitative strategy of *typological sampling* (Verd and Lozares, 2016: 115-120). The objective of this strategy is to obtain a representation of the different social patterns in the qualitative sample. Since our theoretical framework suggests different patterns of contacts mobilization among job seekers depending on their attributes of economic, cultural and social capitals, we selected individuals with different features in the first two types of capitals and we expected that they will have differences in terms of social capital. This strategy provided a sample of 18 interviewees different enough among them in terms of capitals to reach our analytical objectives (see Table 1).

The data was gathered by means of a hybrid survey (Axinn and Pearce, 2006: 103-137) that combined quantitative and qualitative elements. The interviews were computer-assisted with Egonet Software. The survey asked about the atributive characteristics and socio-economic background of the interviewees. We reconstructed the young interviewee's trajectory by means of restrospective questions with the physical aid of a qualitative longitudinal life grid on paper (Figure I). Then, we collected data about the type and effective use of the interviewees' personal network, the digital media and institutional settings involved, and the degree of success in finding a job. Following the free-list *name generator* (McCarty, 2002), we asked for the personal network of the interviewee, limited to 20 contacts, including family, friends and coworkers. We also asked for the socio-demographic features of their contacts, the type of help received from them in job seeking, the context in which they met, and information about the intensity and proximity of their relationship. Finally, we did a short qualitative interview with open questions to capture their career expectations. Our methodological stance was to make explicit the bidirectional transfers between qualitative data coming from the survey and quantitative data coming from the rest of the interview (see in Figure I).

In Spain, unemployment was over 15 per cent from 1980-2014. It fell to a historic low of 8.5 per cent in 2006, increased again with the economic recession to a historic high of 27.2 per cent in
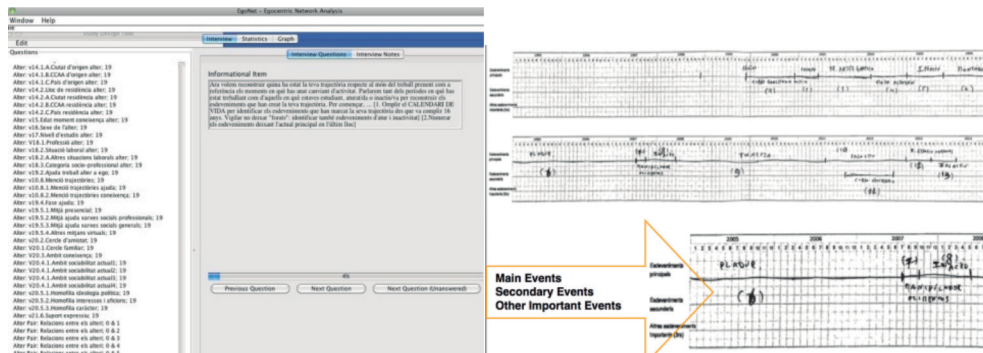
Figure 1. Interview Tools: EgoNet software and Life Grid.

2013, and remained over 23 per cent in 2014. Just before the recession, Santos (2008) estimated that the segment of precarious employment characterized by poor working conditions (low wages, temporary contracts and/or non-voluntary part-time work) included a third of the active population. Temporary employment was over 30 per cent from the early 1990s to the beginning of the economic recession and around 24 per cent from then until 2014. Unemployment and precarious employment, including temporary employment, are crucial features of Spanish labour conditions among youth, immigrants and low-skilled workers. Since 2010, unemployment among people under 25 years of age has been above 40 per cent, with peaks of over 50 per cent in 2012 and 2014, while temporary employment reached 69 per cent in 2014 (Spanish Labour Force Survey). Integration in employment of young people leading to stable employment has decreased sharply, while that leading to precarious employment continues to grow (Serracant, 2010; Castelló *et al.,* 2013: 215-216).

Data analysis

Our analysis of 18 cases explores social capital mobilization in terms of the social attributes of the job seekers and the number and type of contacts mobilized during their labour market trajectories. In Table 1 in the next section we summarize the results from our analysis, showing the differences between groups in terms of numbers of mobilized contacts, successful mobilization, number of strong ties and

presence of homophily in the network. Initially, we determined homophily in terms of the degree of commonality of educational level and occupational category between the interviewees and the members of their personal network. Because of disparity in the data, and because our sample showed significant levels of unemployment, we finally applied educational credentials. We considered a network homophilous when more than 50 % of all ties had the same educational level. Homophilous networks occupied the upper tier of the similarity table, as levels of homophily are strong, close to 80 per cent.

We identified the interviewees' position in the social structure according to their global volume of economic and cultural capitals. Bourdieu (1979, 1986) defines economic capital as personal income and properties, taking into account that this could come from both personal earnings and family inheritance. In our operationalization, we selected as indicators of economic capital the occupational category of the parents and the interviewee, their current or last occupational status and the interviewee's income availability, including both earnings and family help and resources. We grouped the interviewees' incomes and their occupational categories into three categories following the *European Socio-Economic Classification* (Rose and Harrison, 2007: 470-471). There were no significant discrepancies between the categorisations of these two variables: higher occupational categories came with higher incomes. When looking at the interviewees' and their parents' occupational categories, we applied *dominant position* criterion (Erikson, 1984) in case of discrepancies. For instance, if the inter-

viewee had a low occupational status and his parents had a middle status, we classified the interviewee as having middle economic capital and we also chose the highest occupational status between the mother and the father. As a result, we grouped the interviewees into three categories of economic capital: *low*, which include routine, lower technical and lower services occupations with incomes lower than 1000 euros; *middle,* which is composed of lower supervisory, lower technician, self-employed in non-professional occupations and small employers with incomes between 1000 and 1500 euros; *high,* lower and high grade professional, administrative and managerial occupations and large employers with incomes higher than 1500 euros.

We measured cultural capital by selecting the highest educational attainment of both parents and that of the interviewee. Following the common in labour market studies, we only took into account the completed education level. The resulting classification is composed of three categories: *low*, which includes primary or no formal education; *middle* composed by secondary education; finally, *high with university educational credentials.* We prioritzed the mother's educational level over that of fathers following Bourdieu (1979), a common trend in social stratification research (Meuret and Morlaix, 2006; Li *et al.,* 2008).

The characterisation of interviewees in terms of the global volume of economic and cultural capital allowed us to classify them into three categories of social status: the *high group* is composed by high economic and cultural capitals; the *middle group*, by middle economic and cultural capitals; the *lower group*, low economic and low cultural capitals. We did not have in our sample any contrasting cases, such as low cultural capital-high economic capital, or viceversa.

We drew up an inductive definition from the collected variables of strength of ties. Grannovetter uses duration, emotional intensity, intimacy and reciprocity, while Marsden and Campbell (1984) favour the subjective assessment of intimacy in strong links over predictors such as type of relationship. Another alternative comes from Lin (2001), who, as Cruz and Verd (2013: 169) point out, defines social capital as four resources or effects on relationships: the circulation of informa-

tion, the influence of agents, social credentials and individual status and recognition. We believe this definition confuses sources and effects because a source necessarily produces a given effect, which is far from a given. Lin's alternative to Grannovetter's definition is methodologically disappointing. Moreover, Lin (1999) conflates the binary expressivity/instrumentality with homophily and heterophily, thus considering objective status and resources as explanatory. We consider it unnecessary to take homophily as an indicator of the strength of relationships. Moreover, subjective assessment is not enough to measure a relational mechanism that comes from the interviewees' personal networks.

At this point, a claim from Cruz and Verd (2010) is useful in order to construct our own indicators. The expressive and social dimensions of relationships, that is the subjective and objective, must be separated. Moreover, we filtered the variable of subjective intimacy from our questionnaire with two more variables: the duration of the relation and the domain of the relationship. We thus combined a subjective criterion, that of intimacy, with two objective criteria, duration and the place of interaction. For instance, if the mother figured as a contact with low intimacy measures, we still considered her a strong contact because of the length of the relationship belonging to the family circle.

Using UCINET software, we analysed the centrality measures of every network and explore the interviewees' career expectations from the narrative section of the interview, categorizing subjective expectations by adapting the categories of Bradley and Devadason (2008), as cited above. Mobilized ties are taken from the number of contacts that are mentioned by the interviewees, that is, those members from the personal network who helped in seeking and finding jobs. In terms of centrality, we considered basic SNA's measures of *density*, *degree*, *closeness* and *betweenness*[3]. Higher degree,

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3   *Density* is the number of ties divided by the number of pairs, the percentage of all possible ties that are actually present; *degree* (or *Freeman centrality*) expresses the degree of inequality or variance in the network as a percentage of a perfect star network of the same size; *closeness* is commonly defined as based on the average geodesic distance, which is the mean of the shortest path lengths between all connected pairs; fi-

betweenness and intermediation come with more influence, power and connectivity, independently of subjective perception. Thus, by introducing SNA centrality measures we define the mobilization of contacts relationally and not only by social attributes. Graphs made with Visone software show alters in different colours, depending on the type of aid: green for sharing information on job opportunities, yellow for influence on the process of recruitment, red for both mechanisms. We also labelled the nodes according to the normative content of the relation: family (1), professional ties (2), associations (3), educational ties (4), neighbours (5) and friends (6). Finally, we analysed the interviewees' narratives on their career expectations carrying out a *qualitative content analysis* (Verd and Lozares, 2016: 307-308) consisting in an interpretation of these narratives from Bradley and Devadason' (2008) types of pathways expectations introduced previously.

FINDINGS

In this section we include, first, the findings for the analysis of the 18 cases of the selected sample. Then, we present a detailed analysis of three cases that illustrate *how* the interviewees mobilize their contacts and show different success patterns. The analysis of these three cases also includes the SNA measures of the personal networks and the young adults' social expectations. The rest of cases (15) have also been analyzed in these terms but we do not include their results for the sake of brevity.

General patterns of inequality in network mobilization

All interviewees in our sample mobilized their personal contacts to seek employment. This finding matches the analysis of the whole sample of 250 interviewees provided by Vacchiano (2018: 127).

It seems to it be a generalized pattern. However, there are important differences in the way in which young people mobilize their personal contacts and the results obtained. We will point out six relevant findings.

The first finding is the existence of three patterns of mobilization depending on the proportion of mobilized contacts: low mobilization, which means the job seeker mobilized a maximum of 6 contacts from his network, i.e. a third or less of her contacts; moderate mobilization, having used between 7 and 13 contacts; and high mobilization, with at least 14.

The second finding refers to the fact that these three patterns are linked to the social profiles of the interviewees according to their volumes of economic and cultural capital. Thus, a low mobilization pattern (3 out of 4 contacts) only happens among young people with the highest levels of economic and cultural capital. The moderate mobilization pattern is linked to young people with medium levels (5/6) and also, but to a lesser extent, those with low capitals (5/8); conversely, only one interviewee (1/4) with high levels of capital has followed this pattern. Finally, the high mobilization pattern appears among low levels of capital (3/8) and, to a lesser extent, among those of the middle (1/6). By comparing the groups with the extremes —high and low capital levels— we consolidate the existence of the following logic: the higher the volume of cultural and economic capital comes with less number of contacts mobilized, and vice versa, the less volume of capitals, the more number of contacts mobilized.

The third finding is that, according to our definition of strong and weak ties, it is clear that the proportion that young people have of both types of contacts in their network of 20 contacts is variable. The sample goes from those personal networks with 7 or 8 weak ties and 13 or 12 strong ties, to those with 18 strong ties and 2 weak ties. Therefore, what is relevant to our analysis is the absence of a differential pattern in the composition of the interviewees' personal networks in terms of strength of ties. So the composition of social capital is not related to the volume and type of cultural and economic capital of the interviewees, nor to the type of employment trajectory. This is an important re-

nally, *betweenness* considers the relations that are most central by locating the geodesic paths between all pairs of actors, counting up how frequently each actor follows these pathways.

buttal to the commonplace beliefs that spawn from readings of Grannovetter's (2003) classic approach to the strength of weak ties, which he links to highly qualified employees.

The fourth finding points out that having an homophilous network at the level of educational and socio-economic status has played mainly in favor of job seekers with high and medium cultural and economic capitals, and against those with low capital. Thus, the majority (7/8) of the former —high and middle— who have an homophilous network obtained a job thanks to their contacts, as in the case of Jan, which is the first case we presented in the next subsection. Conversely, none of the contacts of the interviewees with low capital and an homophilous network led them to find a job (4/6), as shown with the case of Julián, which is the second case we provide just below.

The fifth finding is that there are unequal patterns of effectiveness in the network mobilization of the network to find a job according to the volumes and type of capitals of the job seekers. Those with the highest levels of economic and cultural capital come with more successful patterns of mobilization of their contacts. All members (4/4) of the group with the highest levels of these capitals are currently employed thanks to the a personal contact, while the other two groups with less capitals show less successful results: 2 out of 6 cases among the groups of middle capitals, and 3 out of 8 among the group of low capitals.

Additionally, sticking and settling trajectories correspond to job seekers with high economic and cultural capitals and low mobilization patterns, while switching and shifting correspond to young adults with moderate and low capitals and mobilization patterns.

Table 1. Job seekers analyzed sample: Characteristics and contact mobilization.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Social Status	Pattern of mobilization (No. of contacts used)	Successful[a]	Strong ties	Homophily[b] ()
Anne	33	W	High	Low (3)	Yes	14/20	Yes
Jan	29	M	High	Low (5)	Yes	10/20	Yes
Noa	29	W	High	Low (5)	Yes	8/20	Yes
Valeri	32	M	High	Moderate (8)	Yes	15/20	Yes
Ciro	30	M	Middle	Moderate (9)	No	9/20	Yes
Tina	31	W	Middle	Moderate (9)	Yes	18/20	Yes
Quen	29	M	Middle	Moderate (8)	No	13/20	No
Mirko	31	M	Middle	Moderate (10)	Yes	11/20	Yes
Sere	33	W	Middle	High (15)	No	9/20	No
Tere	32	W	Middle	Moderate (8)	No	11/20	No
Marta	31	W	Low	Moderate (12)	Yes	7/20	Yes
Alex	29	M	Low	High (5)	No	12/20	Yes
Javier	29	M	Low	Moderate (11)	No	10/20	No
Gracia	32	W	Low	Moderate (9)	Yes	15/20	Yes
Julián	29	M	Low	High (19)	No	11/20	Yes
Nerea	31	W	Low	Moderate (10)	Yes	10/20	No
Dario	30	M	Low	High (19)	No	18/20	Yes
Miki	28	M	Low	Moderate (8)	No	15/20	Yes

a)   The interviewee is currently employed thanks to the mediation of a personal contacts.
b)   Educational homophily.

Three cases of network mobilization patterns

We present three cases that illustrate the three patterns of mobilization detected: low, moderate and high. We selected these cases following a *typical case sampling,* a qualitative strategy named by Patton (2002: 236), which consists in choosing cases that show what is "typical, normal, average" (p. 243). We applied this criterion by considering as *typical cases* the most prevalent social profile —according to their levels of economic and cultural capitals— in each pattern of mobilization. Thus, for the low mobilization pattern we chose a person with high economic and cultural capital, for the middle mobilization pattern we took an individual with middle levels of capitals, and for the high mobilization pattern we selected an interviewee with low levels of capitals. Furthermore, we selected these cases because of the richness of the data and the explanatory power of the collected narratives on the labour market trajectories.

High economic and cultural capitals with low network mobilization

Our first case is Jan, 29 years old, born in Barcelona, with high cultural and economic capital and a sticking trajectory in the labour market that began just after he graduated. Jan has mobilized the five best-positioned contacts in his network: his parents and three members of the religious cult he belongs to. He pursues a single type of employment or career (Bradley and Devadason, 2008). Specifically, his career trajectory is formed by two events: a long period of studying for a university degree, and a stable employment event as a teacher in a private university.

> I knew since I was a kid what I wanted to do. I always thought my objective was to be a teacher. I never worked in other fields, and with sacrifice and study I tried to achieve this single objective.

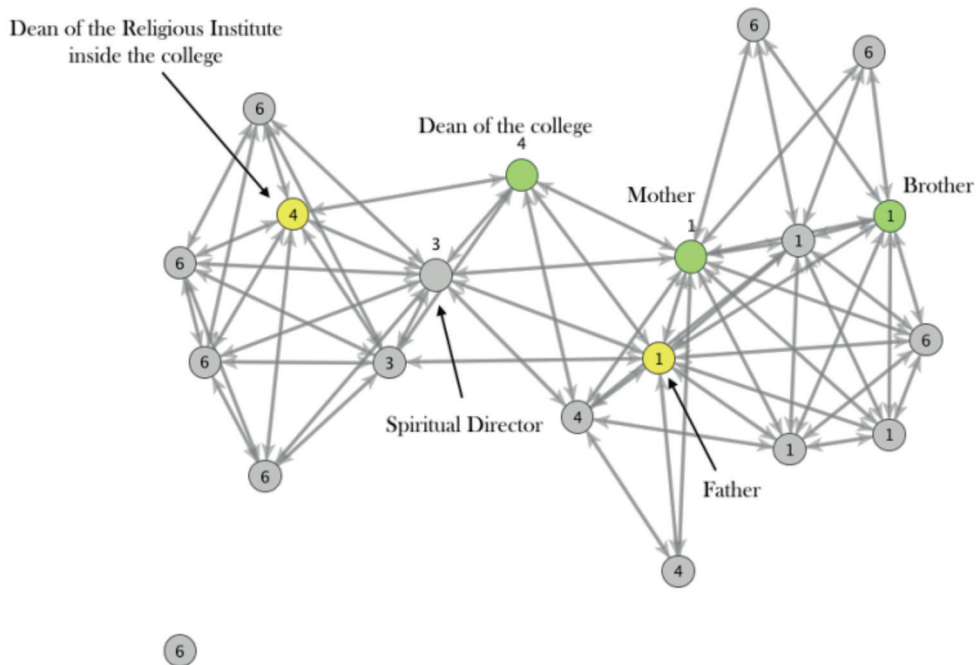Jan's father has a BA and his mother has upper secondary education. He is in business and she

Figure 2. The case of Jan, a 29-year-old male living in Barcelona with high cultural and economic capital and a sticking trajectory.

Table 2. The case of Jan. Network measures.

Mobilized Contacts	Density	Degree	Closeness	Betweenness	Strength of ties	Homophily
5	Central 50 %	n=6.6 32.5 %	39.6 %	21.6 % SH: yes	10 out of 20 are strong	Yes

is the manager of a medium-sized company (more than 250 employees). Jan has a monthly income of €3000 and rents a flat. The father is the key to the interviewee's mobilization pattern: he has the highest degree centrality. The mother and the dean of the university and of the seminary, two members of the cult, help with job seeking too. The centrality of the spiritual director marks visually in the personal graph the existence of a dual structure, the family and the cult. High closeness centrality revolves around three central figures: the father, the mother and the spiritual director. In terms of betweenness, we see that the dean is directly connected to both the father and the spiritual director, the two powerful pillars of Jan's personal network.

Social capital, and specifically strong ties, seems to be the key to his integration in the labour market. If we look at Figure II, we see that the dean of the college is directly tied to the father and to the spiritual director. Jan explained that his father used his prestigious professional status and authority to put in a good word with the dean. Therefore, his highly homophilous personal network (in terms of high cultural capital and economic capital, see Table 1) come with educated contacts that are useful for his employment aspirations since they lead to a successful mobilization. Family and religion seem to be counterpowers: we consider all of these contacts as strong ties because of their equivalent status, duration of ties, and subjective assessment (they are classified by the interviewee as very close or close). Following Jan's narrative, strong ties are key to the transmission of institutional cultural capital. Thus, this corresponds to the type of family with high economic and cultural capital that, according to Bourdieu (1979: 4), can be a safety net that allows their children to study and be part of the formal educational institutions as long as possible, pushing back their transition to adulthood and the age of their first job.

My family allowed me to focus on what I wanted to do. I never had to work in anything else. My father was the general director of a French Bank and thanks to his contacts and his power, he got the dean of the university to consider me ideal to go directly from student to teacher.

Medium economic and cultural capital with moderate network mobilization

Tere is 32 years old and is originally from another Spanish region. She has a medium economic capital and cultural capital and a shifting trajectory. She shows a moderate network mobilization during her career pathway, mobilizing 7 of 20 contacts. She is studying for a BA in Cultural Mediation and her parents have primary education. Her father owns a small business and her mother is not active in the job market. Despite low cultural capital and medium economic capital, she speaks English and is a university student, so we classified her as medium cultural capital. She earns around €1200 a month, receives no money from her family, and lives in a shared flat.

Tere's career is characterized by a rapid shift between different occupational categories: she has worked as a flight attendant, retail shop owner, bartender, waitress, and so on. Job switching made for an accumulation of social capital in terms of weak contacts. Moreover, she made clear the strong support received from her family in terms of economic capital. Her family had an important role in providing her initial institutional capital, in the same way as Jan. Her subjective expectations are aspirations of social mobility, following the middle-class "cultural good will" in terms of Bourdieu (1979).

I always decided everything. Everything [...] Economically, I've had the backing of my parents.

[...] If I hadn't had the funding from my parents I wouldn't have been able to decide half of what I have done. I never thought twice about quitting a job. Having this freedom is very important to do what one wants.

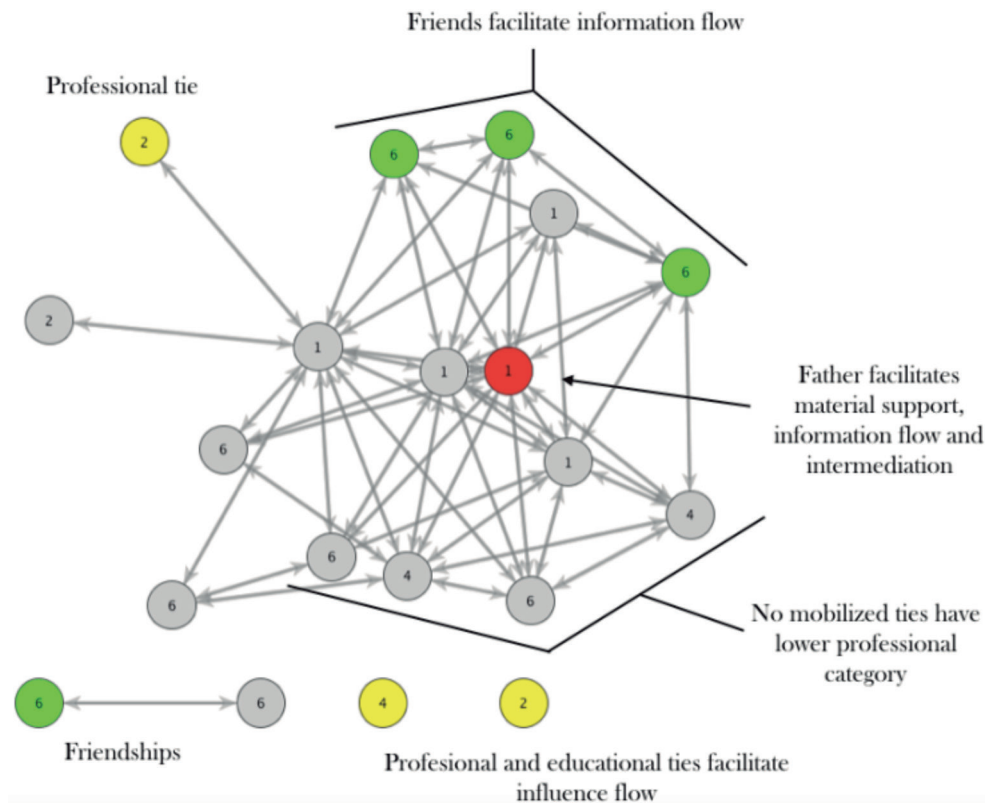Tere has a social capital mobilization pattern characterized by moderate mobilization based on the use of contacts with higher status and higher resources in terms of professional category. Her father used his capacity of recruitment as a small business owner to help Tere. This type of aid within a small family business is a common characteristic in the Spanish labour market (Aina and Nicoletti, 2014). Tere also mobilized managers and owners from the work environments, who helped her getting a job in a sector of employment completely new for her, fashion design.

Figure 3. The case of Tere, a 32-year-old female living in Barcelona with medium economic and cultural capital and a balancing trajectory.

Table 3. The case of Tere. Network measures.

Mobilization	Density	Degree	Closeness	Betweenness	Strength of ties	Homophily
7	52% & 34%	n=5.3 45.7%	47.1%	21.5% SH: yes 2 units	11 out of 20 are strong	No

Tere's network has low density and four components. Her partner, with the highest degree centrality, marks a structural hole that gives him the highest betweenness. Father and mother follow him closely in terms of degree centrality, while other contacts are less connected: two isolated contacts, a dyadic component and the main network. Closeness centrality includes her father but also her mother, a close friend and her ex-boyfriend: all strong ties. Betweenness centrality is low. Mother and father also have a role of intermediation between different parts of the network. The rest of the contacts are weak, recent and from work. Her network is dual in relation to homophily: she is more qualified than her family and close friends, who are the main components of her network, but she mobilizes homophilous links with her weak contacts from work. Absence of homophily might be an indicator of the low cultural capital of her strong contacts, which is complemented with higher cultural capital from her weak contacts.

According with these dual compositional features, Tere mobilizes both strong and weak ties from different social domains: the family provides material support, information and direct place-ment, playing a crucial role in building a safety net. Tere uses the contacts with the best resources in her network to reach job vacancies that allow her to build a satisfactory balance between life and work.

> [Family's resources] took away my fear of losing a job. [...] I made 3000 euros as a flight attendant and quit the job. [...] For most people the job marks their life. For me it's the opposite. I've been looking for jobs that matched my life

Low economic and cultural capital with high network mobilization

Our third case is that of Julián, a 29-year-old male, born in Barcelona, with low economic capital and cultural capital. Julián shows a high mobilization of his social capital, having mobilized practically every single node in his personal network: 19 out of 20. He has completed primary education, like his parents. He is unemployed, his parents have low-skilled jobs, and he receives about €600 euros in unemployment benefit plus €300 from his parents. Julián's trajectory is characterized by sev-
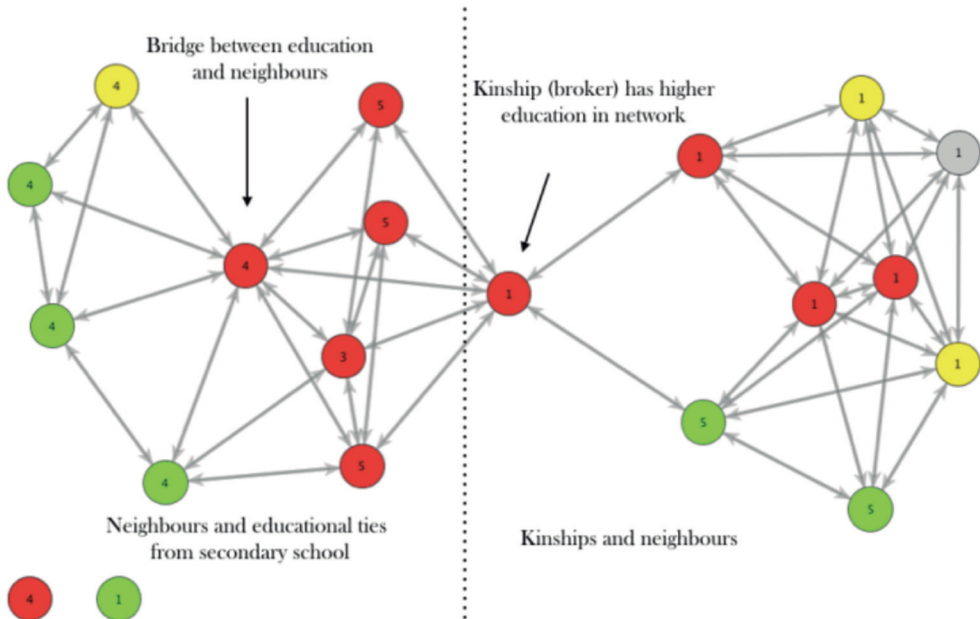

Figure 4.   The case of Julián, a 29-year-old male living in Barcelona with a low economic and cultural capital.

Table 4. The case of Julian. Network measures.

Mobilization	Density	Degree	Closeness	Betweenness	Strength of ties	Homophily
19	40 % to 60 %	n=4.6 25%	55 %	39 % SH: yes	11 out of 20 are strong	Yes

eral episodes of unemployment, alternating with low-skilled and precarious jobs. This is a type of trajectory very common within this social profile in Catalonia, as Castelló *et al.* (2013: 210) show. According to his narrative, his career trajectory has been shaped mostly by economic necessity, with no particular expectations in terms of occupational category and employment conditions. Social capital seems to be crucial in job seeking and job finding. Along his trajectory he has shared information and mobilizing contacts from different social domains, such as kinships, neighbours and educational ties. As he stated,

> Family has always been there, but work has come from contacts, acquaintances, friends, and friends of friends.

Julián's network measures show low to moderate density, as their contacts have few relationships compared with the other networks. Julián claimed that everybody helped during his trajectory, indicating that he relies on his weak social capital to move forward in his labour trajectory. There are several structural holes that empower contacts that have a higher educational level than Julián. We see that there are two actors who could act as brokers: 11 and 9, a neighbour and a family member (not his parents). In the sense, "power" is unequally distributed in this network and there is a high level of disaggregation.

This is a very different network from the two previous ones. Everyone is a helper or informer, but there are two actors who seem to channel the weight of the personal network interaction. If we look at their attributes, we see that one broker has primary education, while the other has upper secondary vocational training, so he is more qualified than the job seeker. The rest of the network does not go beyond secondary education, so there is edu-

cational homophily in the network. This is a working class network with low cultural capital, so the interviewee gets less from his family and friends in terms of job seeking than the other two cases, despite their help.

Strong ties are prevalent in Julián's network. Family, neighbours and educational ties from secondary school create a "network of proximity" that Julián exploits to achieve information on job opportunities or to get a bridge with employers, through forms of intermediation. Julián is also sharply aware of his lack of educational credentials, and talks of his need for certification and his late start in the educational system, which probably came after dropping out of school as a teenager.

> I let myself go with life. Last year, when I finished secondary school, I got A's and B's: What have I done with my life, you know? There was nothing that I felt passionate about. (⋯) I need certificates (⋯).

Julián's mobilization of social capital is higher than that of any other case study considered. This intense mobilization, prevalently homophilous in terms of educational level, seems to lead to labour market segregation, enclosing him in the secondary segment of the labour market. Recalling Bourdieu's (1979) take on social capital, having social capital in this case is not synonymous with networking and finding a job, but is strictly related to the educational and occupational credentials of the members of the network, that is, "what kind of contact do we know?" Hence, Julián's high mobilization does not correspond to an efficient use of the network. On the contrary, the social stereotype of networking mentioned further up applies only to specific mobilization of weak contacts in qualified trajectories such as that of Tere's.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

We analysed the process of social capital mobilization of 18 young adult job seekers and presented a detailed analysis of three cases. After locating the interviewees in the social structure in terms of economic capital and cultural capital, we analysed their use of personal contacts thought both qualitative and quantitative data, using a SNA perspective.

We found three mobilization patterns in terms of contacts: low mobilization, moderate mobilization and high mobilization. These three patterns, without knowing their respective social weights, are present within job seekers living in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, but also in the rest of Spain given that the regulatory and institutional framework of labour market and social stratification of other areas are also similar.

Our empirical exploration of the social capital of job seekers indicates the existence of a relation between the cultural and economic capitals of job seekers and the compositional features of their networks. Results show that their networks are similarly heterogeneous in terms of strength of ties, and mostly homophilous in educational levels. But these similarities in terms of social capital bring about sharp inequalities in their patterns of mobilized contacts and also in their success in finding a job. Differences in success can be explained by the type and volume of capitals of job seekers.

We found that individuals with the highest levels of economic and cultural capital mobilize fewer contacts but are more successful in getting a job thanks to mediation of a personal contact. On the contrary, job seekers with less economic and cultural capitals mobilize more contacts but are less successful in getting a job thanks to a personal contact. Consequently, interviewees with better positions in the social structure and stable trajectories seem to mobilize fewer contacts more efficiently, getting better outcomes.

The principle of educational homophily, present in most of the analyzed personal networks, explains this different outcome. Homophily favours interviewees with high and medium levels of economic and cultural capital and goes against those with lower levels. By differentiating sources and effects,

as explained in our theoretical section following Portes (2010), we can isolate two particular sources for this unequal effect in finding a job. First, contacts with higher social status usually have more useful contacts that help in looking for a job (Trimble, 2013), thanks to being or meeting people with more power in the workplace and, therefore, with more information and ability to influence the hiring process. This result matches the analysis that Vacchiano *et al.* (2018: 129-130) made of the complete survey we partially work with here, specifically for the interviewees' contacts with medium and high labour categories. Second, unemployment might have a greater impact on job seekers with lower educational status during the years of crisis in which the fieldwork took place.[4] Therefore, their educational homophily would be associated with a personal network with more unemployed contacts, with a lower capacity to provide information on jobs because they were not employed at that time in any company nor they belonged to any economic sector, as Russell (1999) showed in UK.

Additionally, the concept of strong/weak contacts and the place of the mobilization (where and through which medium) were not to be taken as given, but rather as products of empirical interaction. The narratives show *how* contact mobilization is associated with employment expectations of job seekers. While the mobilization of weak ties is variable, strong ties are paramount across the personal networks of job seekers from all social status. Thus, the family plays a central role in helping youth in the Mediterranean context (Aina and Nicoletti, 2014; Holdsworth, 2004).

Over and above the social stereotype, networking is a particular type of mobilization of patterns of contacts. This is a real phenomenon for higher education trajectories with switching or balancing professional trajectories such as in Tere's case. Job seekers in particular positions in the social structure with mid-cultural capital and economic capital (conventionally young, educated middle class people), might benefit from exercising a specific social skill, that of mobilizing weak contacts from their diverse job experiences, which is what the manage-

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4   This trend has been shown by several labour market studies, e.g. Alós and Lope (2015)

rial and airport literature calls networking. This is a trajectory that involves a high level of expectations and a highly efficient use of the resources available in the personal network. Savage *et al.* (2013) give the name "emergent service workers" to their new model of class in contemporary Britain, a youthful urban grouping with limited savings, middle-class origins and high amounts of emergent cultural capital, such as music, sports and social networking services, but with low highbrow cultural capital. This class is marginal in terms of its economic capital, but its social and cultural capital is high. It is relatively young and has a high proportion of ethnic minorities within it. This finding should be followed up by future research to confirm if it can be extrapolated as general social trends among Spanish young adults. We problematized the conventional take on weak and strong contacts and opened up a new direction of work.

In all, our analysis of personal networks goes beyond the blackboxing of networking. Building of social capital as a valued resource to find a job is dependent, as Bourdieu (1979, 1986) also claims, on other types of capitals. We operationalized the strength of ties beyond the social stereotype of networking followed by Grannovetter (1973, 2003) and Lin (2001), taking into account the differences between the sources and the effects of contact mobilization. Moreover, successful contact mobilization of job seekers is a social effect that is shaped by their social status.

In all, our empirical findings go in line with our central theoretical claim: namely, that networking does not correspond to the totality of the existing patterns of social capital mobilization. Following Sennett's (2012) rationale of amplifying the scope of analysis of inequality, the mobilization of contacts is also another form of privilege. Furthermore, the inequality in terms of the social status of their personal networks widens the inequalities that come with social structure, as claimed by Bottero (2007). In terms of further work, while we included the variables of cultural capital and economic capital here, we should explore fully the variables of gender and origin. Finally, more can be done to explore the structures of feeling related to young job seekers in terms of agency, trajectories and biographical perspectives. We need to do more work on the place and

type of social capital that comes with networking. Only then will we be able to explain *how* young job seekers look for a job and eventually get it.

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