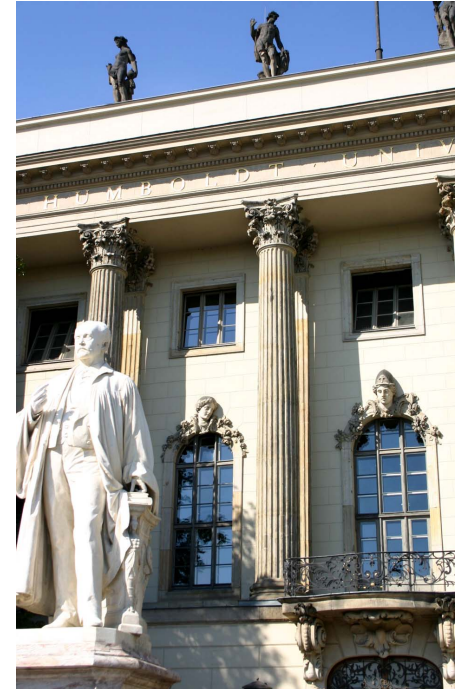# Discussion of:
"How Can Entrepreneurs Build Social Capital? An Experimental Study of Online Mentoring"

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Summary

▶ How social capital may be acquired?

▶ Which mechanisms can encourage entrepreneurs in searching for the mentor?

▶ Which mechanisms can help in establishing of a "deep" mentor-mentee connection?

▶ RCT with a non-profit online mentoring platform

  ○ Video message

  ○ "Chat buddy" with some "practical" advise on how to use available tools

  ○ "Chat buddy" with a sample text for the first contact

  ○ "Business as usual"

Preliminary results

▶ **Likelihood having a conversation** increases from 64% to 100%

▶ **Likelihood of having a longer conversation** of at least 4 messages <u>seems</u> to remain unaffected (20-25%)

Major contribution

▶ The causal empirical evidence in the research topic of 'social capital' and how it can be acquired is extremely rare

▶ This study paves the way for understanding of how social capital can be acquired by entrepreneurs in an online environment and what drives this acquisition

▶ It shows, that whereas the meaningfully designed chat-buddy welcome messages can motivate entrepreneurs to contact a mentor, it is not enough to ensure the establishment of a meaningful relationship

Understanding the effects

▶ The treatments vary not only in the channel of the advise how to contact a mentor but also in the content of the video message and automated mails

Treatment	Channel	Advisor's name	Entrepr.'s name	Bonnie & Travis	Sample text message to mentor
Group 1	Video			✓	
Group 2	Chat	✓	✓		
Group 3	Chat	✓	✓	(✓)	✓

Treatment interventions have a <u>positive effect</u> on the probability of having a conversation

Potential explanations

▶ Costs of contacting a mentor are reduced by a chat-buddy message

▶ The mentee's messages became more professional

Treatment interventions have <u>no positive effect</u> on the chances of establishing a meaningful relationship

Potential explanations

▶ Lack of **incentives** for mentors to deepen the relationship

▶ Mentees invest to **little effort** / do not follow up because they underestimate the **success chance** of the meaningful relationship or the **value** of mentorship

▶ Rich data-set needs further **statistical exploration**

Suggestions for further investigations

▶ Since any relationship requires two – focus also on **mentors**

▶ **Survey** mentees/mentors to identify what motivates them (not) to contact a mentor/mentees, and what are the typical barriers for establishing a meaningful connection

▶ Identify characteristics of the **mentors** who are more likely to respond

▶ Manipulate the set of **recommended mentors** (either more similar or more distant to entrepreneurs own experience)

▶ Vary the match of the language for **Spanish native speakers** (English or Spanish chat-buddy)

▶ What can increase **mentors' motivation** to respond? (e.g. reminders, rankings, feedbacks, cockpit statistics)

Suggestions for empirical analysis

Current dependent variables

▶ Having a conversation

▶ Having a meaningful conversation

▶ Exchange of the contact information

▶ Sentiment of the conversation

Control variables

▶ Gender

▶ Age

▶ Native language

Possible dependent variables

▶ Number of contacted mentors

▶ Who ends the conversation (doesn't contact back)?

Potential control variables

▶ Similarity between sent-out and provided sample messages

▶ Interact the native language with the treatment variable

▶ Characteristics of the mentees (e.g., education level, previous experience in the business)

▶ Characteristics of the mentors
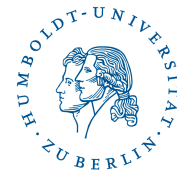
Thank you!

Suggestions for empirical analysis

▶ To motivate randomization: Make a graph with time on the x-axes and number of subjects enrolled in each treatment on y-axis

▶ To enable a meaningful interpretation of the logit regression: report marginal effects

▶ Reduce sample in the model (2) only to those who have established a contact (or use 2-step regression / hurdle model)

▶ See a list of control variables on page 7

▶ Check the impact of the online-training (use of online tools) on the success

P.S.: I don't quite understand why this social capital is altruistic. From the mentors side- yes, but from the side of mentee- it is instrumental.