

## **Dissertation Defense**

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### **“Intra-Organizational Mobility: Movers, Incumbents, and Communication Networks”**

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322 GSIA

A growing body of research suggests that intra-organizational mobility represents an important source of value creation and retention. Internal hires who are embedded in organizational social networks have greater resources and experience than external workers who are less socially connected. Notwithstanding the great practical and theoretical interest in the benefits of intra-organizational mobility at the organizational level, little is known about how individuals’ intra-organizational careers unfold and the influence of social networks toward that end.

In separate projects, I investigate the phenomenon of intra-organizational mobility. To do so, I focus on the mechanisms underlying the phenomenon—the structural factors that explain why people move within an organization, how movers and incumbents do or do not benefit from mobility, and the individual differences in network behavior for mobility.

More specifically, in the first chapter, I examine how pre-existing communication contacts affect the mover’s performance upon joining the new group. I expect that movers are more likely to join business units to which they have pre-existing ties. Nonetheless, the ties that facilitate movers’ joining business units are oftentimes not those that help them to perform well subsequently. In the next chapter, I explore gender differences in network behavior as they impact on intra-organizational mobility. I argue that when a mover retains ties to the working unit that is being left, it improves the mover’s post-move performance. And women are more likely to maintain such persistent social ties, whereas men are more likely to establish new ties. In the final chapter, I assess the effects on the receiving group when a mover joins, and I argue that low-ranking incumbents embedded in stable performance hierarchies suffer from the introduction of high-performing newcomers and the induced unfavorable social comparison.

I test my predictions using time-series data on the internal inter-branch transfers of retail sales employees at a US-based financial institution between November 2014 and April 2016. The dataset is composed of individual demographics information, monthly performance metrics (in dollars), and meta email communication among all employees. The data permits several methodological advancements, chiefly: (1) the use of objective and consistent performance measures; (2) an analysis of the temporal changes in the networks of the movers and their contacts; (3) an analysis of communication network and its impact on performance, and (4) robustness checks that apply instrumental variable techniques. The approach taken in the dissertation adds a new perspective on the relationship between intra-organizational mobility and competitive advantage.