

EMPLOYEE INTER-AND INTRA-FIRM MOBILITY

Taking Stock of What We Know,
Identifying Novel Insights and Setting
a Theoretical and Empirical Agenda

Edited by Daniel Tzabbar and
Bruno Cirillo

ADVANCES IN STRATEGIC
MANAGEMENT

VOLUME 41

EMPLOYEE INTER- AND INTRA-FIRM MOBILITY

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AND EMPIRICAL AGENDA**

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INTRODUCTION: AN INTEGRATED PERSPECTIVE OF EMPLOYEE INTRA- AND INTER-FIRM MOBILITY

Daniel Tzabbar and Bruno Cirillo

Over the past decade, scholars in economics, management, organizational behavior (OB), human resource management (HR), and sociology have been paying increasing attention to the implications of internal employee mobility such as lateral and vertical promotions, and of external employee mobility including within and between industries, moves to rivals and employee entrepreneurship. Despite common interests, the mobility literature lacks a unifying conceptual structure within and across these domains, which limits our ability to formulate comparative insights regarding the varying effects of the various mechanisms associated with each type of mobility. Does the diversity of perspectives on mobility enrich or fragment our understanding of them? Alternatively, does it undermine our understanding by encouraging a proliferation of uncorroborated ideas?

The diversity of theoretical lenses, contexts, and methods in prior research motivates the current volume in *Advances in Strategic Management*, whose goal is to create a critical theoretical integration. We seek to describe the disciplinary divide, to identify new theoretical and empirical directions for the study of employee mobility and, thus, to invite open reflection and debate among scholars from various fields. To accomplish these goals, we created this volume to initiate a multidisciplinary conversation with several senior scholars in the fields of economics, management, OB/HR, and sociology whom we invited to contribute conversational essays and commentary on theoretical and empirical issues.

The volume is organized into four parts. The first part provides a critical analysis of the state of the employee mobility literature, highlighting the structural divide that exists between disciplines and arguing about the necessity and opportunity to bridge such a divide. The second part challenges existing conventions associated with intra-firm mobility. The third part discusses nuanced mechanisms associated with inter-firm mobility. Finally, the fourth part focuses on employee entrepreneurship as a form of external employee mobility.

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PART I: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN MICRO AND MACRO PERSPECTIVES ON EMPLOYEE MOBILITY

In Part I, we investigate the structural divide between different disciplines. In Chapter 1, Cirillo, Tzabbar, and Seo conduct a bibliometric and topic modeling analysis to provide a detailed account of the extant employee mobility research. They show that research on the topic has proliferated across the fields of economics, management, OB/HR, and sociology over the past decades. However, studies in these fields have also evolved independently from each other, as reflected in the limited number of cross-disciplinary citations. Notwithstanding this divide, the authors show that these disciplines focus on common topics of interest. Their analysis also provides some encouraging signs of a scholarly dialogue across disciplines in the form of specific journals and individuals who serve as bridges for cross-disciplinary fertilization. These findings call for scholars from different disciplines to have an open discussion about their differences and complementarities.

To accomplish this goal, in Chapter 2 we invited two prominent scholars to engage in an open, multidisciplinary conversation on the origins and evolution of the employee mobility literature: Rajshree Agarwal – from the human capital research perspective – and Matthew Bidwell – from the human resource management research tradition. While Bidwell concludes that employee mobility has been proven to have largely negative effects at the individual and firm level, Agarwal highlights its positive effects. Despite their differences, they agree on and point to the areas of research that merit additional attention, and on the existing research streams that need to be fully exploited to interpret the current state of the art in employee mobility research.

Given the centrality of firm-specific human capital (FSHC) in our thinking about employee mobility, in Chapter 3 we invited Coff, El-Zayaty, Ganco, and Mawdsley to review this issue from different angles. We asked them to discuss its role as a mobility friction in value appropriation for established firms, in the transitions between paid employment and entrepreneurship, and in the views of practitioners. They concluded that theorizing about firm-specific human capital on its own might not be enough to explain value capture, employee mobility, and observed patterns in the factor market. Thus, they debated about some of the critical conditions that enable firms and individuals to capture value from firm-specific human capital. In his commentary, Brian Silverman (Chapter 4) considers implications of their debate for three topics in strategy research and pedagogy: learning-by-hiring, employee entrepreneurship, and the need for FSHC-focused material in MBA core strategy courses.

In Chapter 5, Jay Lee challenges our ability to make inferences about value capture from firm-specific human capital by providing a critical review of the empirical issues associated with employee mobility. He points to the fact that, while we may have the theoretical toolbox to explain the heterogeneity of firms associated with firm-specific human capital, mobility research has to deal empirically with five broad challenges before we can make further theoretical

advances: the identification of mobility, the timing of mobility, the outcomes of mobility and their operationalization, model identification, and selection. Thus, he identifies the issues that were tackled in prior research and the current research flows and suggests areas of improvement for future empirical choices.

Finally, Jeffrey Greenhaus (Chapter 6) identifies an area that can invite an interdisciplinary perspective by discussing employee mobility in the context of sustainable careers. In the face of volatile economic and technological environments, Greenhaus proposes an alternative view to employee careers by focusing on employees' happiness, health, and productivity throughout their life course as factors that help employees and firms capture value. Consistent with Agarwal and Bidwell, Greenhaus highlights the importance of the fit between the employee and the job. Specifically, he argues that the degree of congruence between individual needs and values, work opportunities and rewards, and individual abilities and work requirements constitutes the key contributors to career sustainability. In his view, inter- and intra-firm mobility can serve as a mechanism to improve this fit, creating more value for individuals and firms.

PART II: INTRA-FIRM MOBILITY

We devoted the second part of the volume to a cutting-edge understanding of intra-firm mobility. In Chapter 7, using a game theoretical approach, de Figueiredo, Cameron, and Lewis present the dual contracting problem of civil servants employed in public organizations. They propose that, given that contracts cannot be written based on the employee's (agent) effort and the politician's (principal) forbearance, agreements on wage scales and promotion standards must be drafted between the two groups, not the individuals. This situation can be used strategically to attract "zealots" (who value policy and wages) and differentiate them internally from "slackers" (who value only wages), even in the face of the meddling problem. In his commentary on these findings, Capelli (Chapter 8) highlights the importance of making self-selection a central argument in economic models of hiring and, in turn, of explaining the fit between new hires and the unique concerns of the organization.

In Chapter 9, Matthew Bidwell challenges existing conventions on how organizations fill existing vacancies. He theorizes about two factors – the stimuli that trigger decisions and the criteria that are used to make those decisions. Hugh Gunz (Chapter 10) identifies the contribution to be "Bidwell's marrying of two ideal types – one 'job-pull' (based on vacancy chains) and the other 'person-push' – to produce a much more encompassing, nuanced model of intra-organizational mobility." Bidwell argues that person-push is more likely when organizations need flexibility to cope with an unpredictable, changing environment. He also maintains that individual performance should have a greater effect on promotion in a person-push system than in a job-pull one. His arguments align with those of de Figueiredo and colleagues about the need to understand agency and employment contexts as determinants not only of intra-firm mobility, but also of its potential outcomes for organizations.

In Chapter 11, Choudhury proposes that intra-firm geographical mobility can mitigate the coordination failure between spatially dispersed agents in firms that are in multiple places. He notes that employees' short-term intra-firm relocation can create value for the company by promoting the transfer of tacit knowledge across locations, the socialization of geographically dispersed organizational members, and the efficient allocation of geographically dispersed intra-firm resources.

In Chapter 12, Balachandran and Wezel link inter- and intra-firm mobility. They show that opening the traditionally closed employment relationship in the direction of a quasi-open relationship, as reflected in individuals holding multiple jobs, reduces the chances of losing an employee to less established organizations. Hence, offering flexibility to workers is an effective mechanism to preserve talents for firms lacking legitimacy in the labor market. By implication, and counter to prevailing views, they demonstrate that agency and employee opportunism can serve to keep talents. In her commentary, Lisa Cohen (Chapter 13) adds that holding multiple jobs can also "facilitate external movements by providing opportunities to achieve higher levels of intrinsic motivation and information about employee-job matches and working conditions elsewhere or otherwise reduce information asymmetries."

PART III: INTER-FIRM MOBILITY

The third part of this volume provides nuanced views on the consequences and contextual factors of inter-firm mobility. Building on the knowledge-based view of the firm, Anderson and Haas (Chapter 14) argue that a co-worker's departure can influence the remaining employees' performance depending on whether their pre-mobility relationship either provided or blocked access to valuable intra-firm knowledge resources. Moreover, these effects are attenuated when this relationship persists after the move. In her commentary, Gina Dokko (Chapter 15) recognizes the examination of the dyadic relationship between the mover and the co-workers, and the conditions through which mobility can influence knowledge flows within the organization as an important contribution to the micro foundation of strategy research and to our understanding of the interdependencies between individuals and organizations.

In Chapter 16, Goossen and Carnabuci examine how firms protect their existing intellectual property in the face of inventors' inter-firm mobility. They demonstrate that both the source firm and the hiring firm are more likely to extend the validity of their mobile inventors' patents – after mobility – than to do so for their non-mobile inventors' patents. They also provide evidence that this effect is most pronounced when the risk of knowledge spillovers via inter-firm mobility is most intense. Thus, they explicate the role of patent renewal as a strategic deterrent against intellectual property appropriation in the face of inventors' inter-firm mobility. In her commentary, Karin Hoisl (Chapter 17) acknowledges the importance of the simultaneous consideration of strategic decision-making at both the source and the destination firms of mobile inventors.

Thus, she identifies the need for future research to delve deeper into the underlying strategic mechanisms at the intersection between intellectual property rights and a firm's management of its knowledge spillovers into the industry.

In Chapter 18, Kryscynski, Coff, Campbell, and Mallory consider matches between employee and firms that provide workers with private, non-pecuniary utility arising from either the workers' preferences for unique attributes of the firm or its idiosyncratic resources. They find that the value of NBA superstars joining a hometown team, as a form of a player's non-pecuniary utility, is shared by the employee (i.e., the superstar player) with the firm (i.e., the hometown team) in the form of lower wages – as superstars are willing to accept lower salaries when playing for their hometown teams – and of additional revenue for the firm – as enthusiastic local fans are willing to pay more to come to the games. In his commentary, Joe Broschak (Chapter 19) suggests that, “The idea that individuals rather than firms can be the primary recipient of the value created through worker-firm complementarities” represents an important shift in the theoretical approach through which mobility research should view the match between employees and firms.

Finally, Groysberg, Lin, and Serafeim (Chapter 20) examine how corporate financial misconduct affects the future compensation of mobile employees not implicated in the wrongdoing. Drawing on stigma theory, they argue that, even if the workers left the organization years before the misconduct, they experience a compensation penalty. The stigma effect increases in relation to the proximity of the employee's former job to the misconduct, its recency, and the employee's seniority. These results extend the connection between stigma theory and settling up in labor markets by highlighting that misconduct may bring hidden costs in the form of weakened bargaining power and, thus, lower compensation for job switchers. Gino Cattani (Chapter 21) highlights the important counterintuition of this study. He notes that negative career effects may come not only from the prospective employer's motivation to avoid association with stigmatized companies when hiring, but also from the opportunity to offer less pay to those executives who are associated with the misconduct.

PART IV: EMPLOYEE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A FORM OF MOBILITY

The last part of this volume explores the link between labor market frictions, opportunities, and value capture through mobility in entrepreneurial contexts. In Chapter 22, Campero and Kacperczyk examine the impact of homophily on hiring processes in high-tech entrepreneurial firms. They show that female job candidates are more inclined to apply for jobs at startups that have a high proportion of female founders than otherwise. However, startups with a high proportion of female founders are not more likely to hire female candidates than others. In her commentary, Lisa Cohen (Chapter 23) discusses about the generalization of their findings to other non-labor markets, such as the market for financing, and to larger and more established firms.

In Chapter 24, Tong, Tzabbar, and Park contribute to our understanding of job market frictions by proposing that employees' financial concerns shape their social and psychological motivations to start a new venture. In particular, the authors highlight that relative wages, meaning how much one earns compared to a broad reference group, have informational value that allows workers to infer their own abilities relative to comparable others in the broad labor market. Thus, they show whether and how this comparison affects employees' choices between pure entrepreneurship – meaning, starting a new venture as a full-time job – and hybrid entrepreneurship – meaning, simultaneously maintaining their current employment. In his commentary, Benjamin Campbell (Chapter 25) discusses the authors' results as evidence of how multiple market frictions, such as the heterogeneity of employees' abilities and the information asymmetry about the value of such abilities, interact to shape individuals' career choices.

In Chapter 26, Raffee, Ganco, and Campbell investigate the relationship between the composition of initial spinout teams and spinout survival. They find evidence that adding spinout team members from the founder's prior firm is positively related to spinout survival. Furthermore, this effect increases with the members' prior earnings or wages. In contrast, adding spinout team members from other firms has a positive association with spinout failure. However, this effect disappears when the added team members' prior earnings are high. In his commentary, Clint Chadwick (Chapter 27) discusses how the distinction between value creation mechanisms and mechanisms that influence spinout survival makes an important contribution. He then delves into the challenge of associating wages with human capital (both generic and firm-specific) and value creation.

Zhang, Reuer, and Morales (Chapter 28) examine how new ventures can benefit from signals emanating from their ties to VCs and alliance partners and attract high-quality inventors to join the firm. The benefits of such signals are greater when new ventures are at the earlier financing stages. In addition, the signal value of the prominence of the new venture's alliance network is longer lasting than that of VC prominence in later rounds. They show that, as the new venture enters into subsequent investment rounds, the gap in the asymmetry of information between the new venture and the labor market narrows. In his commentary, Andrew Shipilov (Chapter 29) elaborates on this study's contribution to research on the social embeddedness of economic action but challenges its assumptions with a discussion of plausible alternative explanations.

CONCLUSION

We organized this volume into four categories: bridging the disciplinary divide, intra-firm mobility, inter-firm mobility, and employee entrepreneurship. Several interesting observations emerged from the contributions in this volume, which we summarize in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Map of the Contributions in This Volume of *Advances in Strategic Management* on Employee Mobility.

Part	Chapter	Authors	Individual		Firm		Job Market		Matching	Value	Opportunity
			Selection	Treatment	Selection	Treatment	Selection	Treatment			
Bridging the disciplinary divide	1	Cirillo, Tzabbar, and Seo									
	2	Agarwal, Bidwell, Cirillo, and Tzabbar	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	3	Coff, El-Zayaty, Ganco, and Mawdsley		✓		✓		✓		✓	
	4	Silverman		✓		✓		✓			
	5	Lee	✓	✓						✓	
	6	Greenhaus	✓	✓					✓	✓	
Intra-firm mobility	7	de Figueiredo, Cameron, and Lewis	✓						✓	✓	
	8	Capelli	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓
	9	Bidwell		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
	10	Gunz		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
	11	Choudhury				✓				✓	
	12	Balachandran and Wezel		✓		✓					✓
Inter-firm mobility	13	Cohen		✓		✓			✓	✓	
	14	Anderson and Haas				✓				✓	
	15	Dokko				✓				✓	
	16	Goossen and Carnabuci				✓				✓	

Table 1. (Continued)

Part	Chapter	Authors	Individual		Firm		Job Market		Matching	Value	Opportunity
			Selection	Treatment	Selection	Treatment	Selection	Treatment			
Employee entrepreneurship	17	Hoisl				✓				✓	
	18	Krscynski, Coff, Campbell, and Mallory		✓		✓			✓	✓	
	19	Broschak		✓		✓			✓	✓	
	20	Groysberg, Lin, and Serafeim		✓		✓	✓				
	21	Cattani	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
	22	Campero and Kacperczyk	✓		✓		✓		✓		
	23	Cohen	✓		✓		✓		✓		
	24	Tong, Tzabbar, and Park	✓				✓			✓	✓
	25	Campbell	✓				✓			✓	✓
	26	Raffee, Ganco, and Campbell			✓		✓			✓	
	27	Chadwick			✓		✓			✓	
	28	Zhang, Reuer, and Morales			✓		✓				
	29	Shipilov			✓		✓				