



# Department of Sociology

## Seminar

### Switching Sides: Market Transition and Job-referring in China

- Speaker:** Professor Elena Obukhova  
Strategy and Organization, Desautels Faculty of Management  
McGill University
- Date:** 22 May 2017 (Monday)
- Time:** 11 am – 12:30 pm
- Venue:** Rm 1045, 10/F., Academic and Administration Bldg.,  
15 Baptist University Road, Kowloon Tong, Kowloon

#### **Abstract**

The existing research on referrers, or those who pass on information about job opportunities to potential job-seekers, poses an important question: when do referrers refer in the interests of their employer (the demand side) as opposed to the interests of their family and friends (the supply side)? To answer this question we examine how macro-level context, and specifically market development, shapes job-referring behavior. Using a large-scale nationally representative dataset with a unique module on job-referring behavior, we show that the transition from a planned to a market economy in China is associated with a decline in job-referring in the interests of family and friends. Additional analyses reveal that the development of formal labor market intermediaries that act as substitutes for job-referrals is one mechanism that accounts for this decline. Our results have implications for our understanding of a) conflicting roles of job-referrers and b) labor market networks in transition economies.

#### **Biographical Note**

Elena Obukhova is an Assistant Professor in Strategy and Organization at the Desautels Faculty of Management of McGill University. Her research investigates when and how social networks benefit individuals and organizations, with a particular focus on China. Her studies tackle these questions by developing unique datasets primarily through the use of survey methods. Professor Obukhova was trained as an economic sociologist at the University of Chicago. Her work has appeared in *American Journal of Sociology*, *Management Science*, *Social Forces*, and other journals. She is a recipient of Fullbright-Hays Fellowship from the U.S. Department of Education and two Fellowships from the Social Science Research Council. A native of Russia, Professor Obukhova is professionally fluent in Mandarin and has been conducting research in China since 1995. She is a co-organizer of Social Networks Working Group at McGill.

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