

# Career Transitions and Trajectories: A Case Study in Computing

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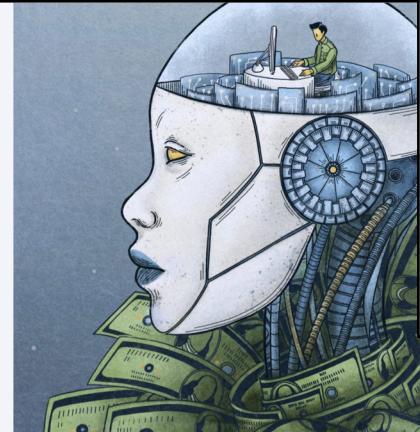


# We all know that CS research is important...

New York Times, 2017

## Tech Giants Are Paying Huge Salaries for Scarce A.I. Talent

Nearly all big tech companies have an artificial intelligence project, and they are willing to pay experts millions of dollars to help get it done.



TECHNOLOGY QUARTERLY  
AFTER MOORE'S LAW

Economist, 2016



Bloomberg

Bloomberg, 2018

Technology

## Quantum Computers Today Aren't Very Useful. That Could Change

Meet Rigetti Computing (finally) live up to the h



J. Alex Halderman [Follow](#)  
Professor of Computer Science, University of Michigan  
Nov 23, 2016 · 7 min read

Medium, 2016

## Want to Know if the Election was Hacked? Look at the Ballots

You may have read at NYMag that I've been in discussions with the Clinton campaign about whether it might wish to seek recounts in critical states. That [article](#), which includes somebody else's description of my views, incorrectly describes the reasons manually checking ballots is an essential security safeguard (and includes some incorrect numbers, to boot). Let me set the record straight about what I and [other leading election security experts](#) have actually been saying to the campaign and everyone else who's willing to listen.

How might a foreign government hack America's voting machines to change the outcome of a presidential election? Here's one possible scenario. First, the attackers would probe election offices well in advance in order to find ways to break into their computers. Closer to the election, when it was clear from polling data which states would have close electoral

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Is it true that industry is consuming most computing research talent?

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Which organizations were and are the most important, and why?

Are there any comparable studies? What about trajectories?

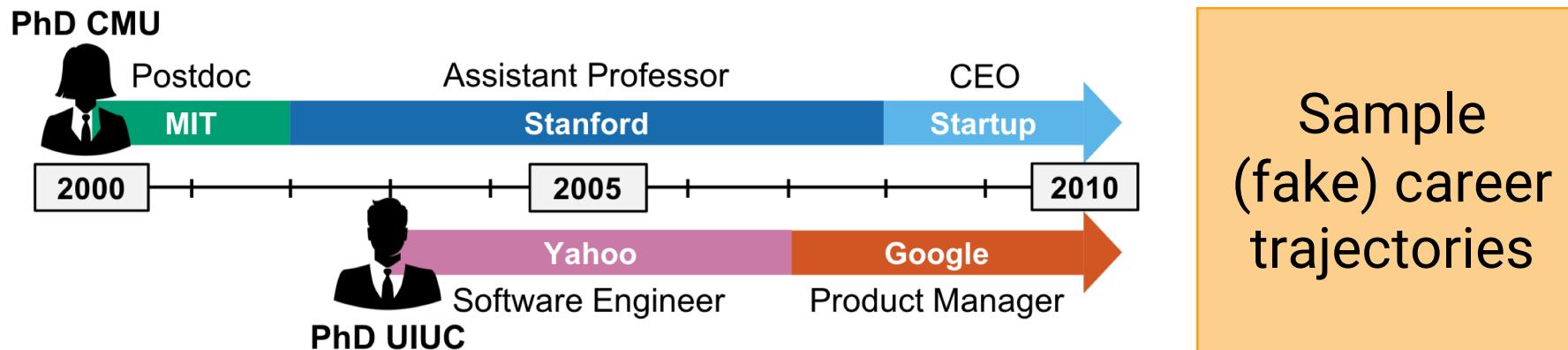
**Answer: Very little\***

Is it true that industry is consuming most computing research talent?

\*All related studies are limited to career trajectories *within* academia, or else analyze *bibliographic* data rather than career trajectory data  
[Balsmeier+ 2014] [Chakraborty+ 2018] [Way+ 2017]

# Career trajectories dataset

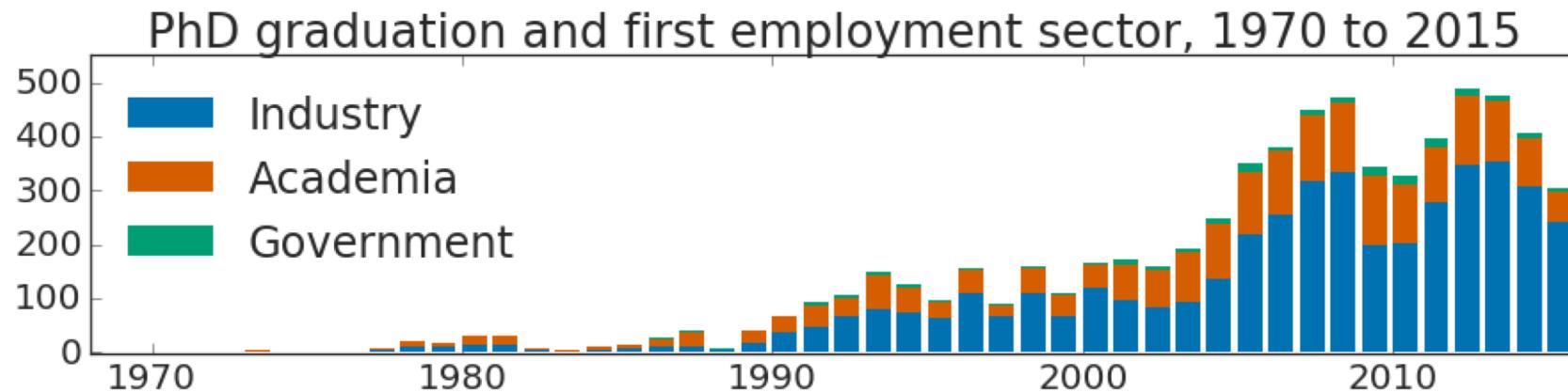
- We collected ~7k public career profiles of PhD graduates in EECS
  - 17k+ records from 1970 to 2015
  - Graduates of top 50 US computer science grad programs<sup>1</sup>
  - Categorized orgs into sectors
  - Profiles validated by ProQuest
- We made two anonymized datasets public: <http://bit.ly/2M6INoI>



<sup>1</sup> US News and World Report 2014

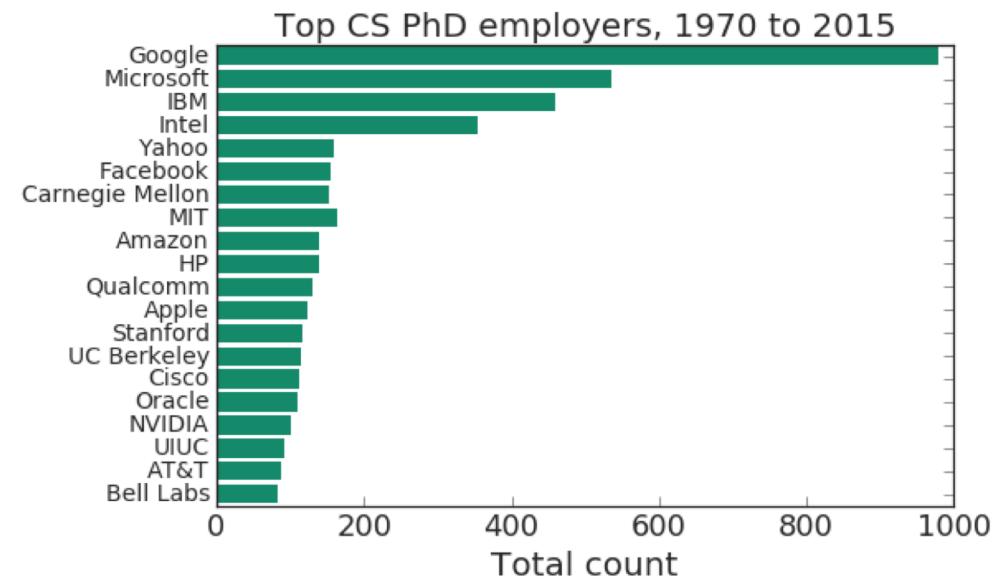
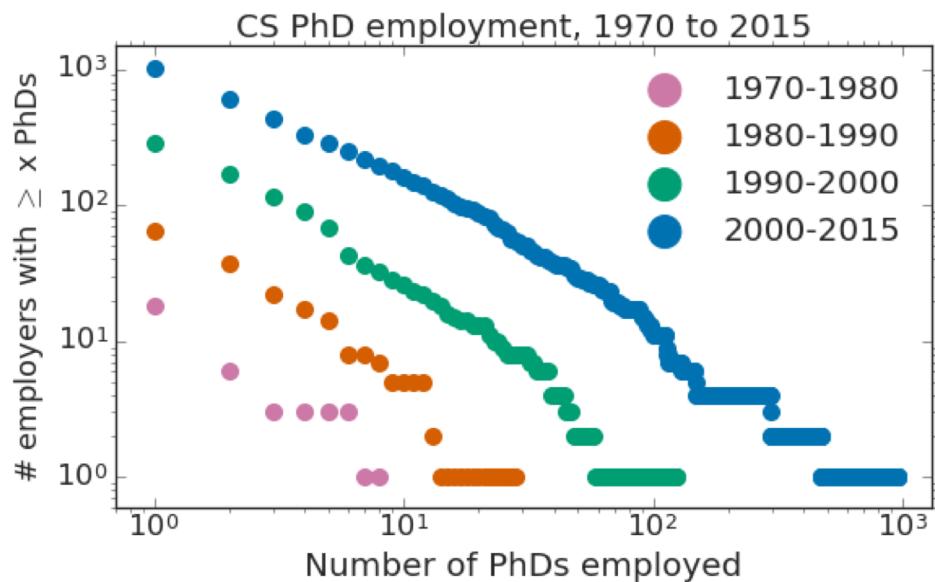
# Career trajectories dataset

- PhD graduation volume mostly on the rise since the 00's
- Trends consistent with public CRA data



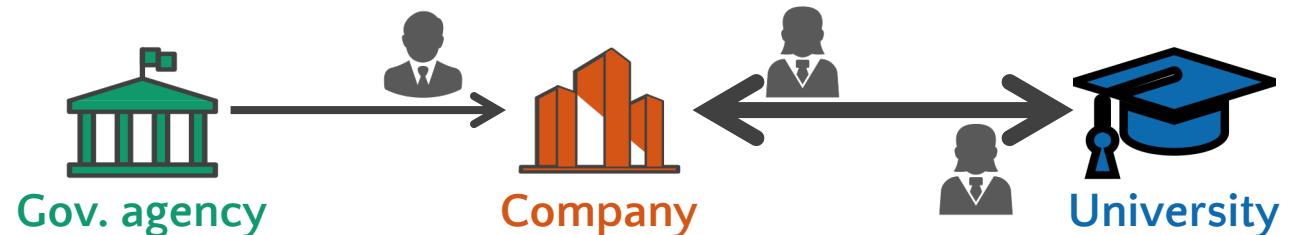
# Career trajectories dataset

- Post-PhD employment follows a power law
  - Most talent concentrates in very few organizations
- This observation will be important later



# Our goal

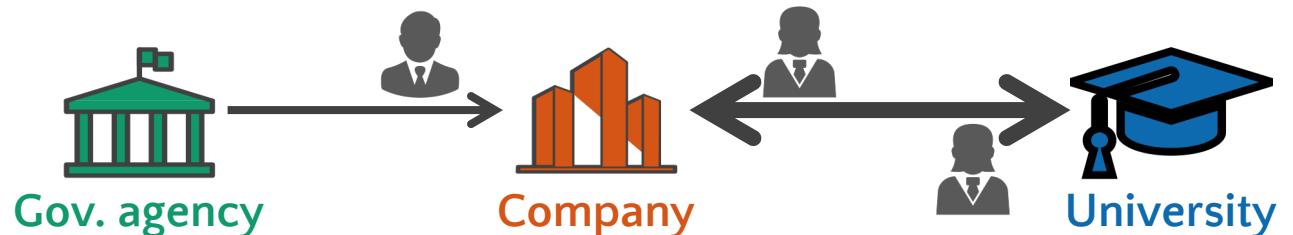
- Given these data, analyze the **evolution of computing research careers** through:
  - Individual career transitions: Movement between distinct employers
  - Organizations: Employers
  - Sectors: Academia, industry, government



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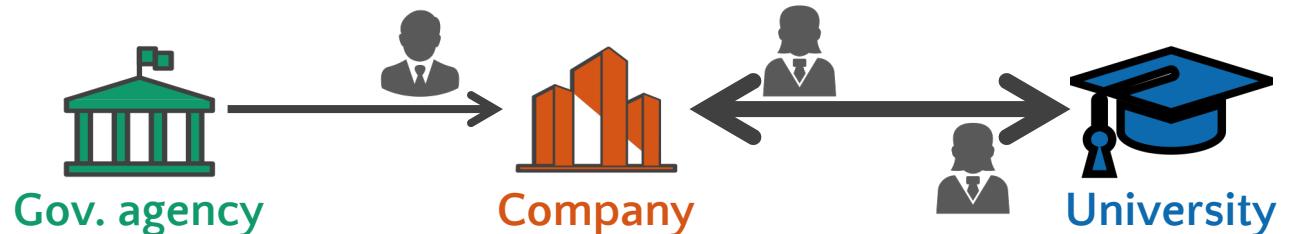
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## How to analyze these data?



# Our goal

- Given these data, analyze the evolution of computing research careers through:
  - We need an employer importance or desirability measure to anchor our analysis and quantify hierarchies
  - Individual career trajectories movement between distinct employer types
  - Organization-Employer
  - Sectors: Academia, industry, government



# Our goal

- Given these data, analyze the evolution of computing research careers through:
  - We need an **employer importance or desirability measure** to anchor our analysis and quantify hierarchies
    - Individual career trajectories movement between distinct employer types
    - Organization-specific employment
    - Sectors: Academia, industry, government
  - Natural solution: node ranking in networks
  - Two requirements
    - An appropriate **network model** of the data
    - An **organizational ranking method** that captures career-specific phenomena



# Network model

## Requirements

- 1) Network model
- 2) Organizational ranking method

- A natural first choice is the **transition network**
  - Nodes: Organizations
  - Edges: Directed, weighted by number of transitions from employer A to employer B

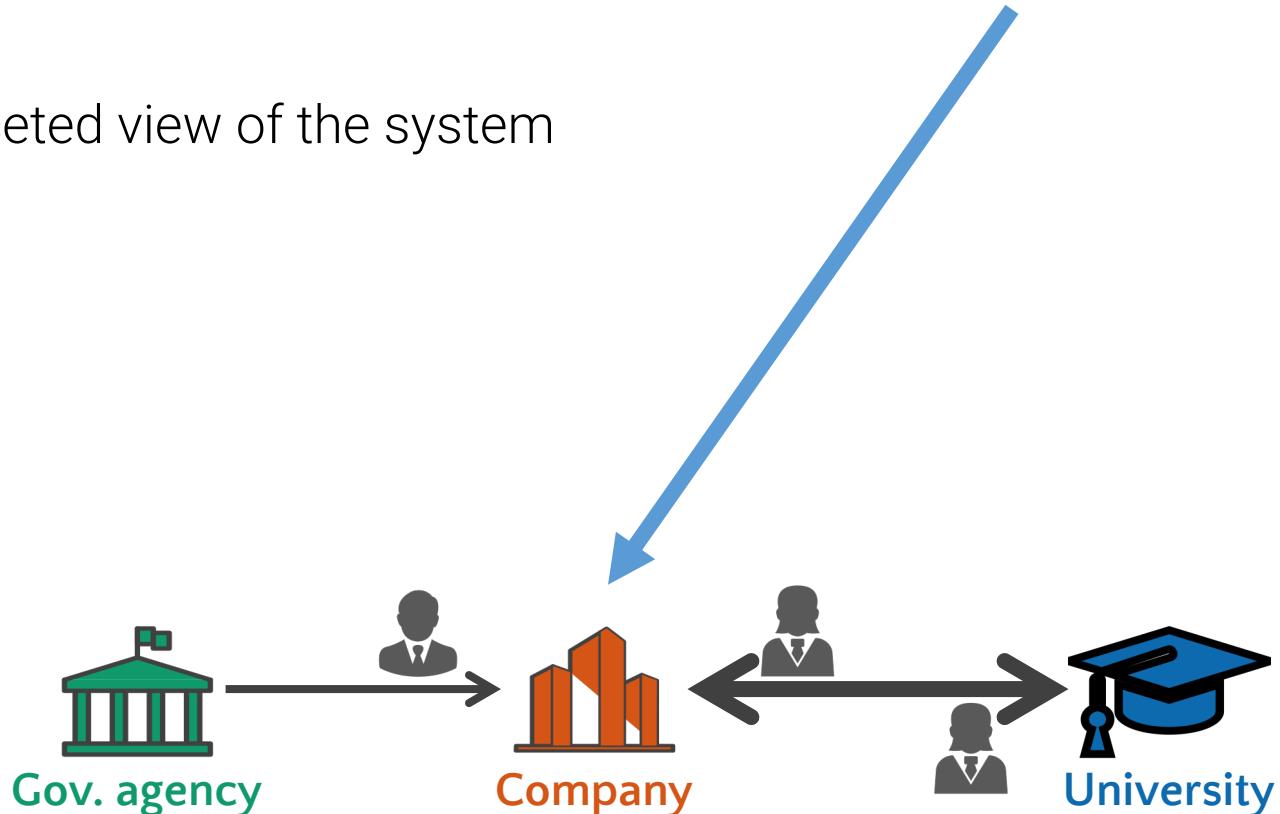


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  - Google, Microsoft, IBM, Intel...
  - We want a comprehensive, multi-faceted view of the system



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## Solution: R<sup>3</sup> network

Captures career-specific factors by transforming network edge weights



# Organizational ranking

## Requirements

- 1) Network model ✓
- 2) Organizational ranking method

- Most popular node ranking algorithms
  - PageRank [Page+ 1999]: cares most about nodes' in-links
  - HITS [Kleinberg 1999] cares about in- and out-links
- Ideally, we want to analyze both **influx and outflux** of employees

# Organizational ranking

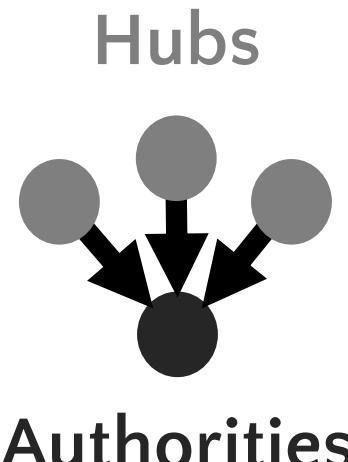
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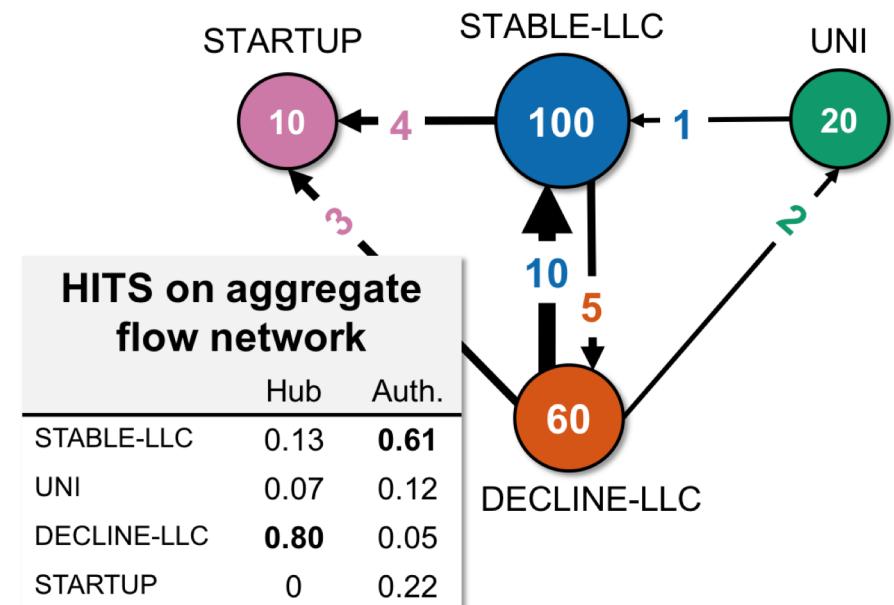
Solution: HITS on  $R^3$

Captures “hubs and authorities” in the  $R^3$  network



# Methodology: R<sup>3</sup> career network model

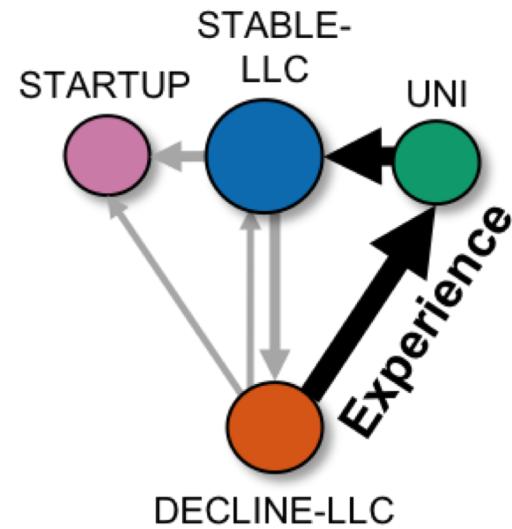
- R<sup>3</sup>: Transform network edges with:
  - Resources
  - Retention
  - Relative growth
- Each R will impact a node's HITS scores (its “importance”)



- Resources
- Retention
- Relative growth

# Methodology: $R^3$ career network model

- Resources: Which organizations hire **experienced employees**?
  - Intuition: Directors, senior engineers, full professors are valuable!
  - Compare individual's "experience level" to system-wide average
- Weight *incoming edges* according to  $R_{SRC}$  sigmoid transformation
  - Organizations gain authority with more "experienced" hires



$$R_{SRC}(p, t) = \sigma(\text{PhD } p\text{'s career length} - \text{system avg career length})$$

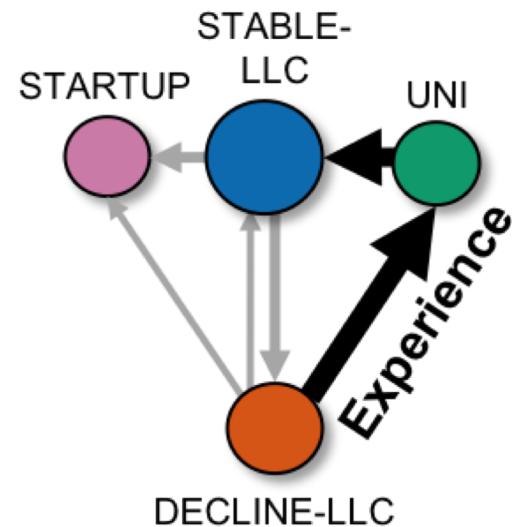
$$= \left( 1 + \exp\left[ -\frac{\ell(p, t) - \bar{\ell}(t)}{\alpha} \right] \right)^{-1}.$$



- Resources
- Retention
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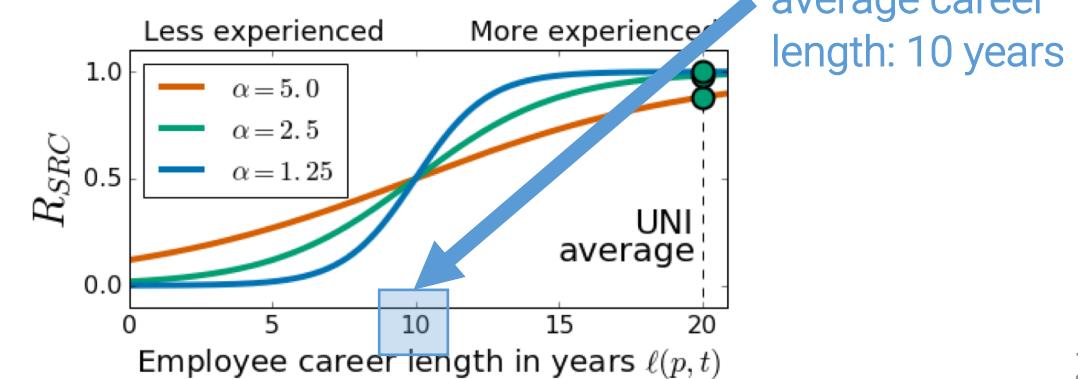
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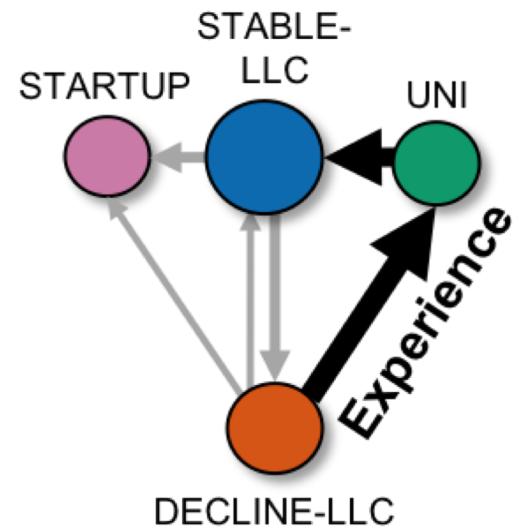
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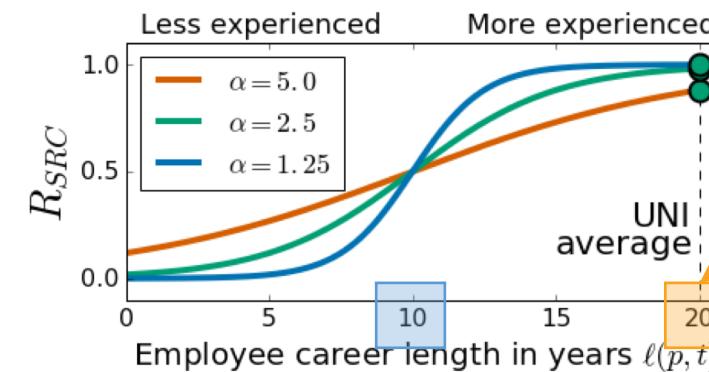
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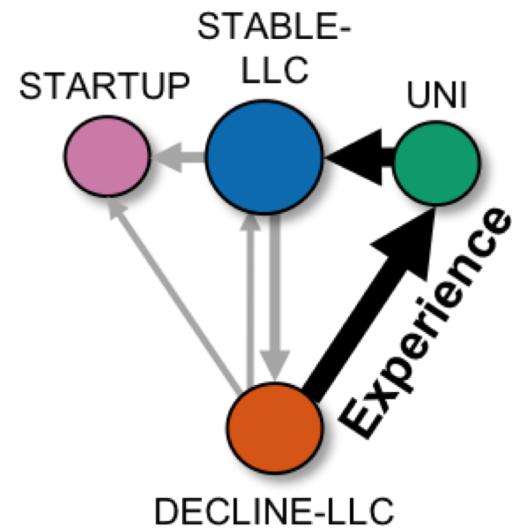


UNI's hires are, on average, more "experienced"

- Resources
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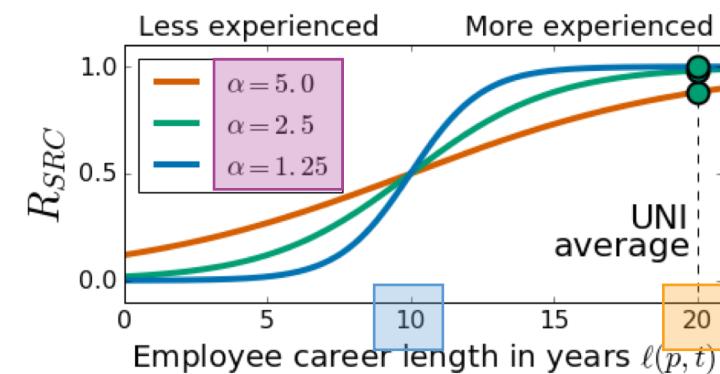
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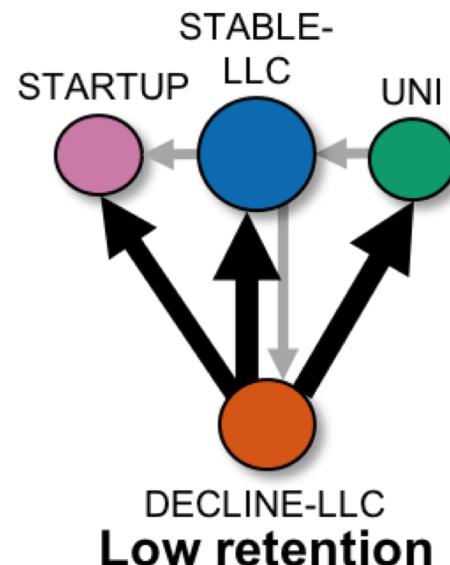
Sigmoid steepness parameter



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# Methodology: $R^3$ career network model

- Retention: Which organizations **retain PhDs longer** than average?
  - Intuition: High turnover may indicate lower desirability or longevity, and vice versa
  - Compare organizational retention to sector average
- Weight outgoing edges according to  $(1 - R_{TN})$  sigmoid transformation
  - Low-retention “stepping stone” organizations gain hub-ness



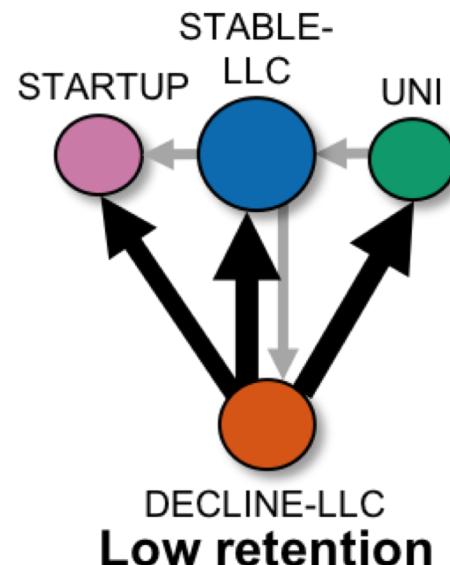
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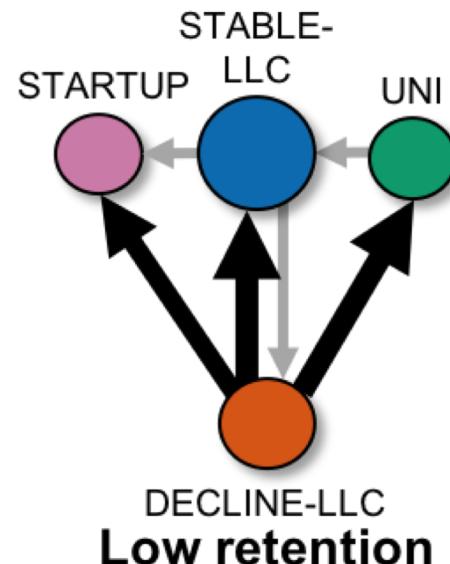


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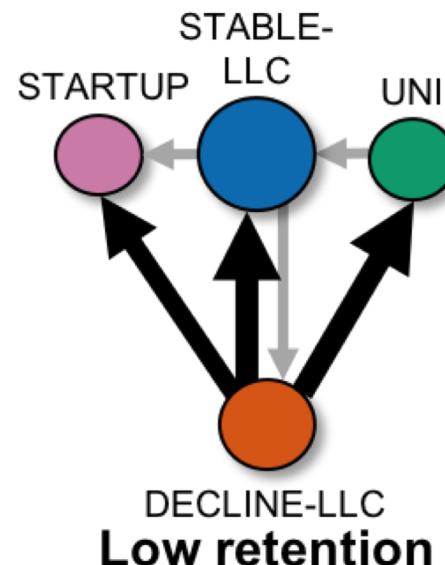


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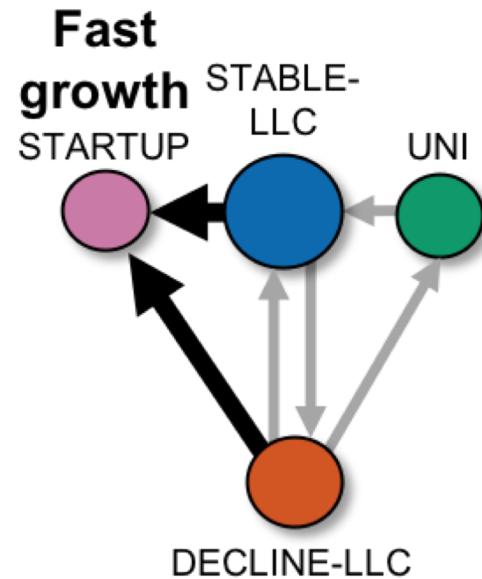


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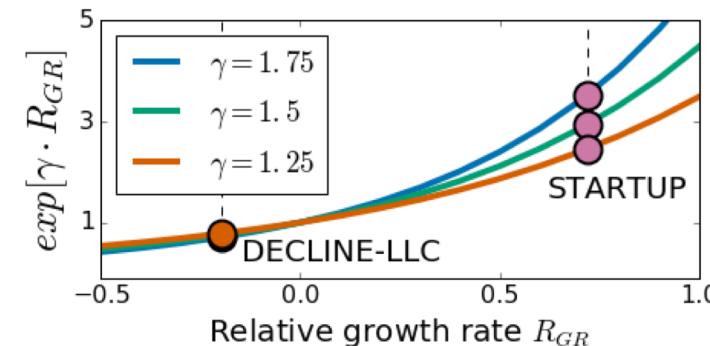
Sigmoid steepness parameter

# Methodology: $R^3$ career network model

- Relative growth: Which organizations are **growing fast** relative to size?
  - Intuition: A small but fast-growing organization is “buzzworthy”, like a tech startup
  - Compute relative growth from econ log-return [Martí+ 2017]
- Weight *incoming* edges according to exp of  $R_{GR}$ 
  - High-growth organizations gain authority

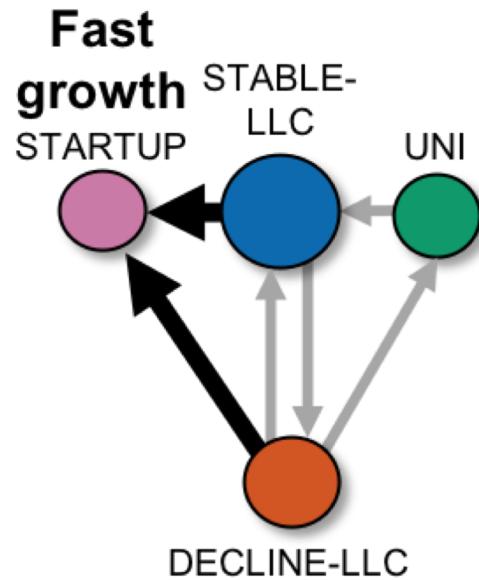


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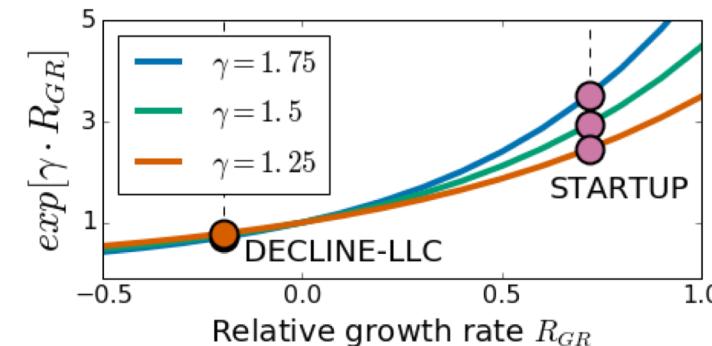


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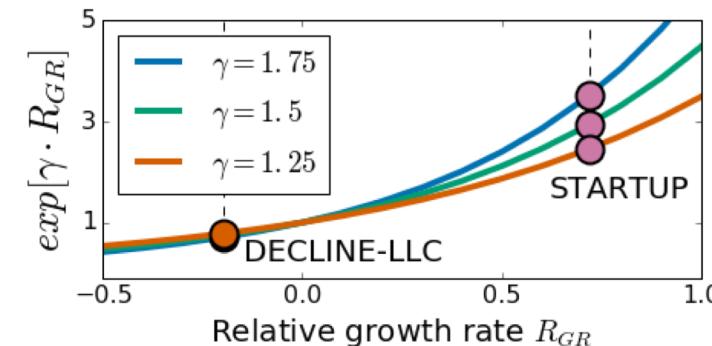
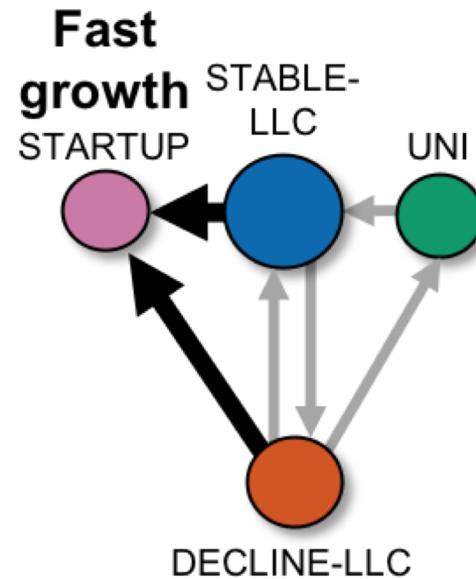
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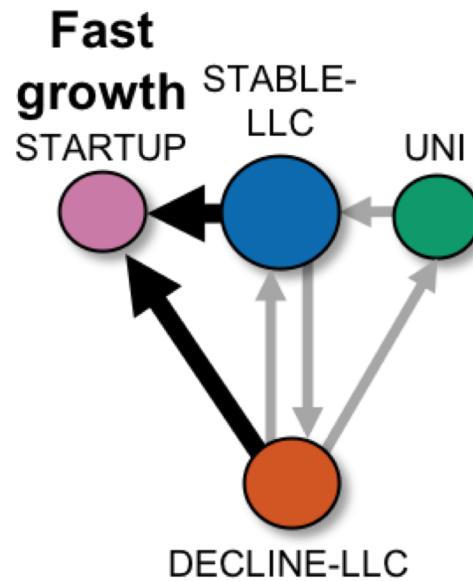
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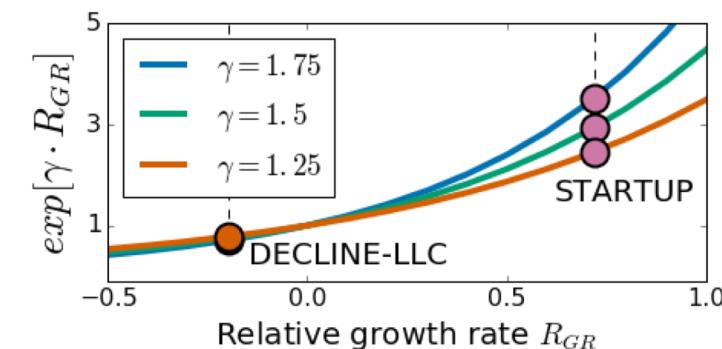
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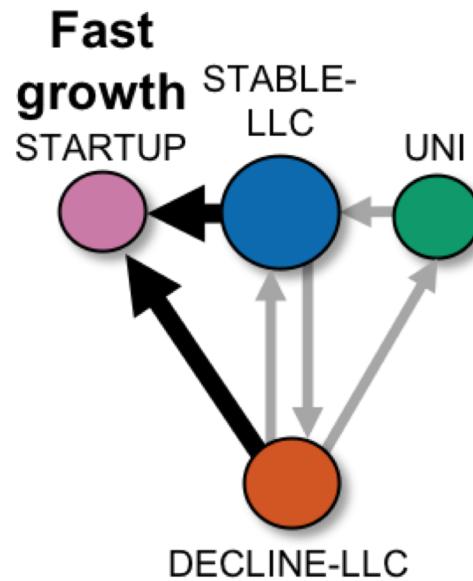
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Number of PhDs in our dataset at the organization during year  $t$

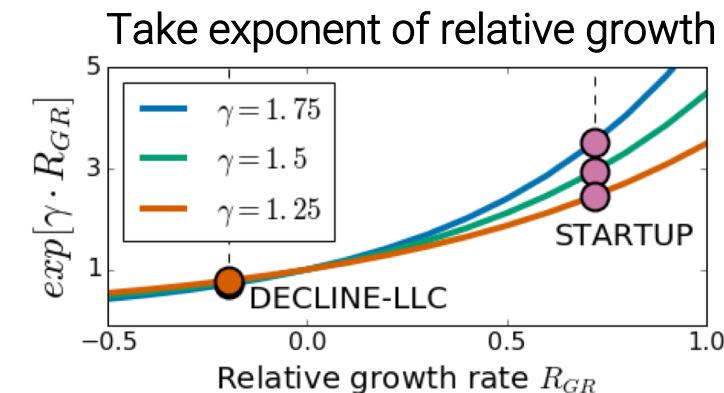


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## Analysis

- Organizational
- Sector
- Individual

# Analysis: System-wide evolution

Which organizations does R<sup>3</sup> reveal as important, and why?

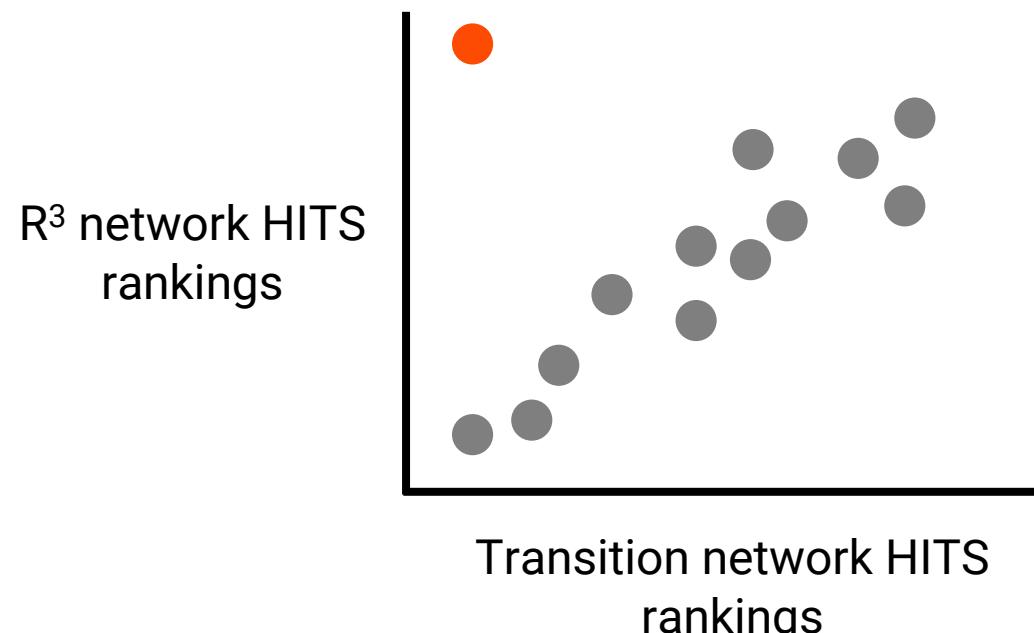
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# Analysis: System-wide evolution

- Compute HITS in 5-year intervals on the transition and  $R^3$  networks
- Regress pairs of HITS rankings and identify high-deviation, high-ranking nodes
  - Compare HITS results on  $R^3$  against “standard” HITS results

## Transitions within 2000-2005

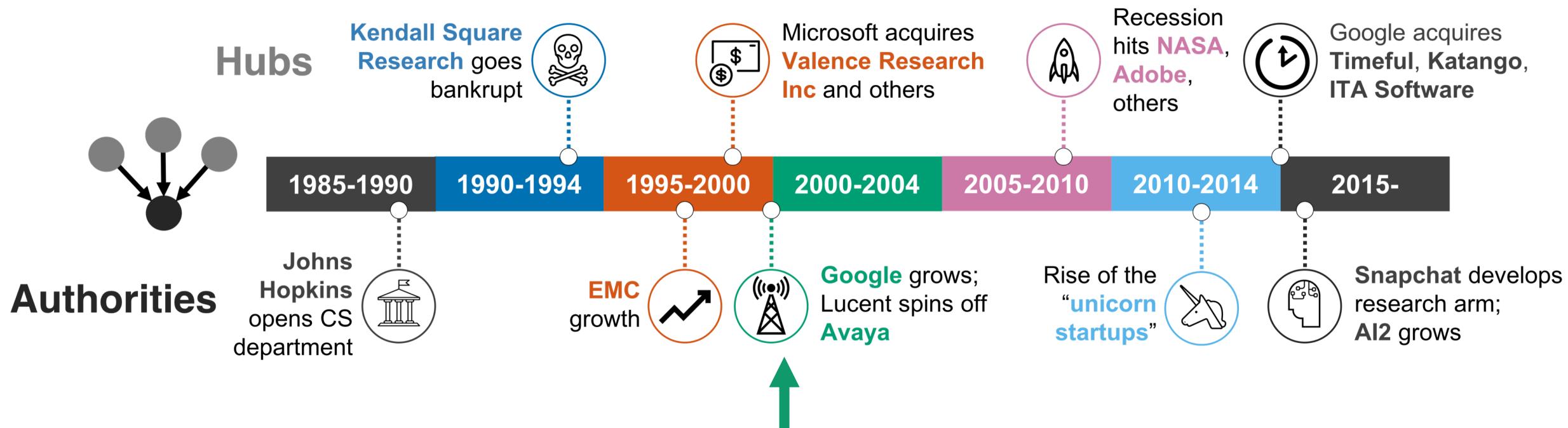


## Analysis

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# Analysis: System-wide evolution

- In each 5-year interval, R<sup>3</sup> discovers hidden “important” organizations
  - Acquired startups, new CS departments, recession-hit organizations
  - Reminder: Hubs out-link to authorities, authorities receive in-links from hubs



Even Google is “discovered” by R<sup>3</sup> in 1999!!!

## Analysis

- Organizational
- Sector
- Individual

# Analysis: Cross-sector career movement

What does R<sup>3</sup> reveal about how people move between sectors?

## Analysis

- Organizational
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# Analysis: Cross-sector career movement

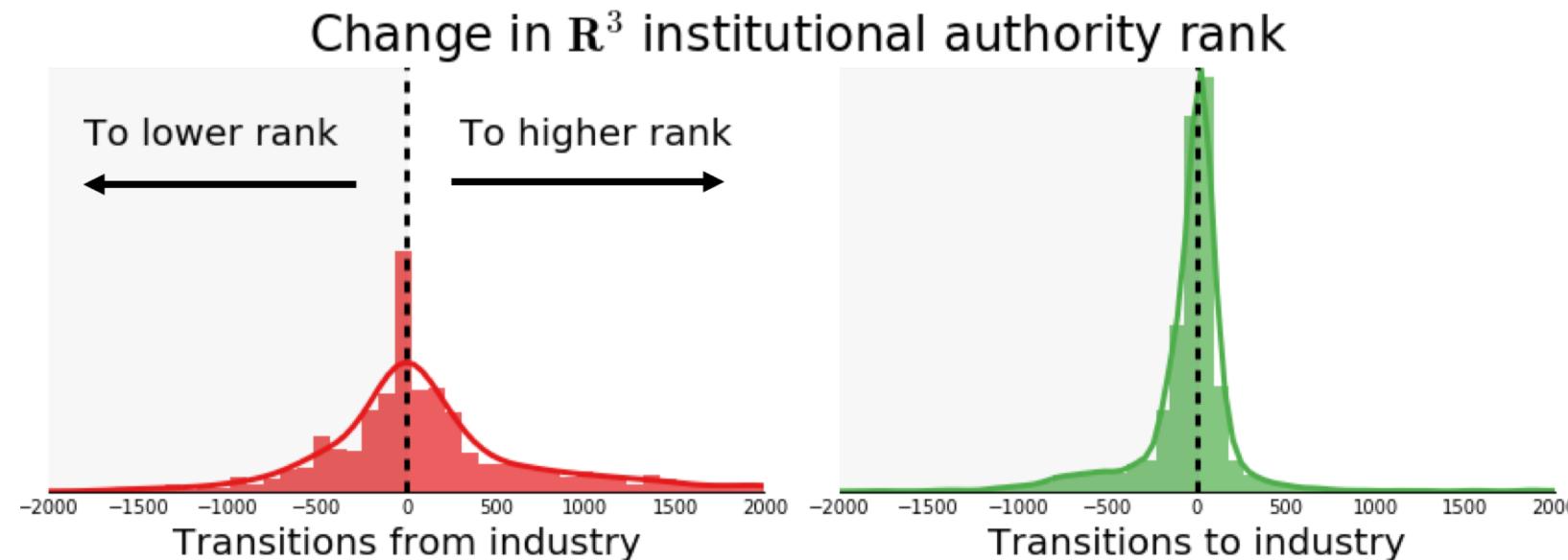
- Use rankings from previous analysis on both networks

## Analysis

- Organizational
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# Analysis: Cross-sector career movement

- Two-thirds of transitions are academia → industry
  - But people *move up in rankings in industry* → academia transitions
  - These transitions often happen later: ~9 years in (excluding postdocs)
- **Significant asymmetry in these transitions!**

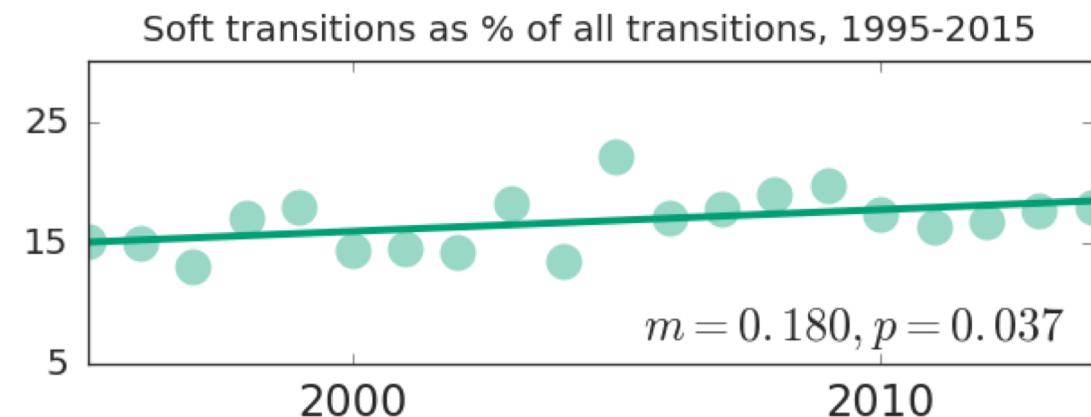
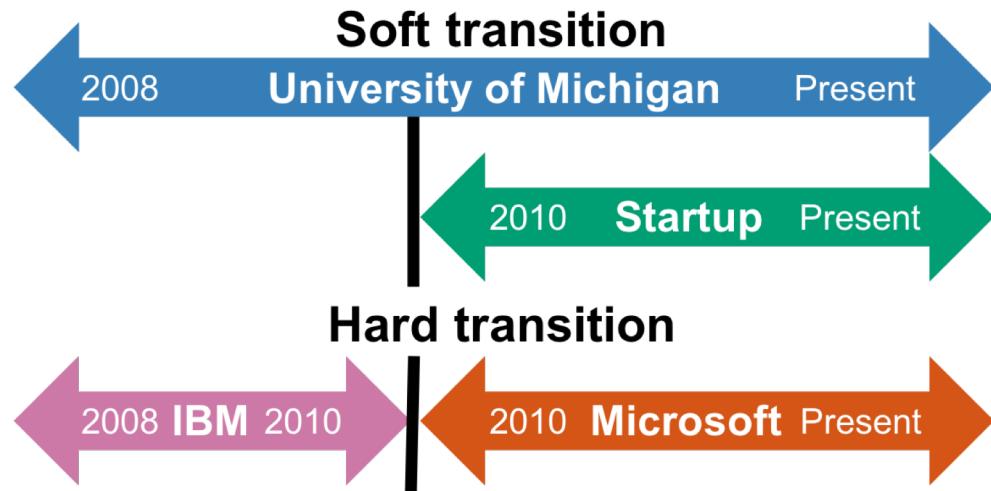


## Analysis

- Organizational
- Sector
- Individual

# Analysis: Cross-sector career movement

- Many cross-sector transitions are “soft”
  - New job while continuing previous employment
  - Percentage of soft transitions in dataset increasing (slightly) overall
- Industry people become visiting professors, professors take on startups
  - Could it be because soft transitions allow for riskier leaps?



## Analysis

- Organizational
- Sector
- Individual

# Analysis: Individual predictions

Can we predict when individuals will transition using R<sup>3</sup>?

## Analysis

- Organizational
- Sector
- Individual

# Analysis: Individual predictions

- Extract features in groups
  - IND: Individual career trajectories (years in workforce, num jobs, etc)
  - $G_f$ : Transition network HITS rankings and scores
  - $R^3$  HITS rankings and scores
  - ALL three above feature groups

## Analysis

- Organizational
- Sector
- Individual

# Analysis: Individual predictions

- Adding network-related features improves performance significantly!
  - Validates initial choice of representing data as a network
- Performance best with IND + R<sup>3</sup> features

IND: Individual career trajectories (e.g., num jobs)  
G<sub>f</sub>: Transition network HITS rankings and scores  
R<sup>3</sup> HITS rankings and scores  
ALL three above feature groups

		Features	n = 1	n = 2	n = 3	n = 4	n = 5
AUC	IND	0.625 ± 0.00	0.637 ± 0.00	0.654 ± 0.01	0.644 ± 0.01	0.656 ± 0.02	
	IND + G <sub>f</sub>	0.639 ± 0.01	0.660 ± 0.02	0.666 ± 0.02	0.658 ± 0.03	0.663 ± 0.03	
	IND + R <sup>3</sup>	<b>0.656 ± 0.01</b>	<b>0.675 ± 0.02</b>	<b>0.677 ± 0.02</b>	<b>0.665 ± 0.02</b>	<b>0.670 ± 0.03</b>	
	ALL	<b>0.649 ± 0.01</b>	<b>0.668 ± 0.02</b>	<b>0.674 ± 0.02</b>	<b>0.664 ± 0.02</b>	<b>0.669 ± 0.03</b>	
F1	IND	0.357 ± 0.05	0.459 ± 0.01	0.536 ± 0.01	0.574 ± 0.01	<b>0.601 ± 0.04</b>	
	IND + G <sub>f</sub>	0.396 ± 0.00	0.473 ± 0.01	0.542 ± 0.00	<b>0.577 ± 0.01</b>	<b>0.601 ± 0.04</b>	
	IND + R <sup>3</sup>	<b>0.404 ± 0.01</b>	<b>0.488 ± 0.01</b>	<b>0.549 ± 0.01</b>	0.576 ± 0.01	0.595 ± 0.03	
	ALL	<b>0.398 ± 0.01</b>	<b>0.488 ± 0.01</b>	<b>0.550 ± 0.00</b>	<b>0.578 ± 0.01</b>	<b>0.610 ± 0.03</b>	

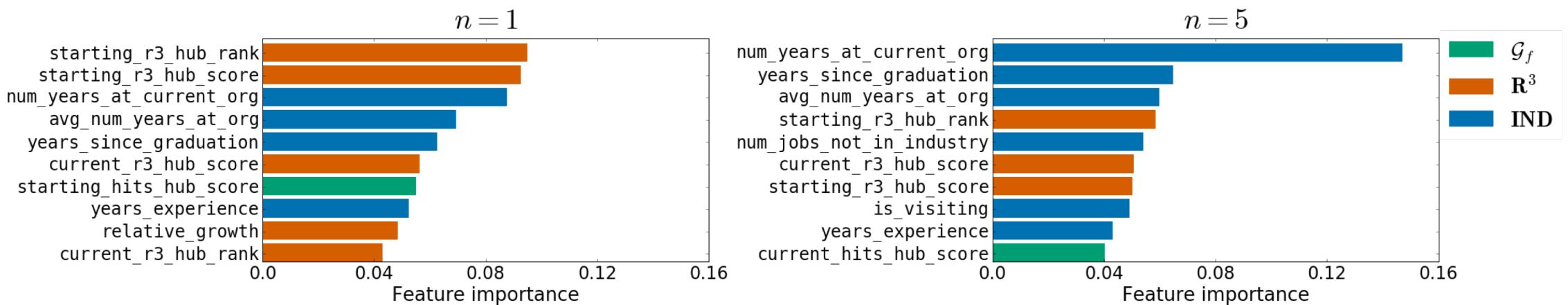
Predict transitions n years from now

## Analysis

- Organizational
- Sector
- Individual

# Analysis: Individual predictions

- $R^3$  features most important
  - Especially for small values of  $n$
  - Difficult prediction task!



We all know that CS research is important, and now we know more about career trajectories in the field

Still...

# We all know that CS research is important, and now we know more about career trajectories in the field

What about people with PhDs outside the US? Those without PhDs?

How to merge bibliographic data with career trajectory data?

Finer-grained analysis of different subgroups, like postdocs?

# Thank you + questions

Also presented at KDD ADS poster reception [PID 94]  
21 August, 7 – 9:30 PM, ICC Capital Hall

# References

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[Slide 2] <https://medium.com/@jhalderm/want-to-know-if-the-election-was-hacked-look-at-the-ballots-c61a6113b0ba>

[Slide 2] <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-08-07/quantum-computers-today-aren-t-very-useful-that-could-change>