

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

Elizabeth L. Campbell

“Gender and Sponsorship in Organizations”

Tuesday, December 4, 2018

10:30 am

Tepper Quad 5219

Despite considerable progress regarding sexism in organizations and society more broadly, there are still notable differences in career trajectories and representation in top management positions. To explain these differences, prior research has often focused on how the gender of the individual seeking advancement influences his or her ability to do so, such as gender differences in personal career choices or gender biases that influence evaluations of employees. While this perspective has yielded valuable insight, this viewpoint overlooks a critical component of the advancement process: the effects of third-party advocates, or sponsors. In this dissertation, I propose to theoretically and empirically explore gender differences in sponsorship, which is a form of professional advocacy that is provided by high-status, influential organizational members (sponsors) and is designed to facilitate the career advancement of junior employees (protégés).

In three chapters, I seek to highlight that sponsorship is an inherently dyadic process. As such, it is important to consider the interplay between the sponsor and the protégé in order to fully understand the nuances of how gender affects protégés' and sponsors' behaviors, decisions, and outcomes. In Chapter 1, I first define and differentiate sponsorship from another closely-related form of workplace support: mentorship. I also propose to develop a theoretical framework that considers how the sponsor's gender and the protege's gender can, together, lead to inequity in sponsorship. In Chapter 2, I empirically examine how the sponsor's gender influences the protégé's career outcomes. I first present the results of two studies (survey and archival datasets) that found protégés of male sponsors were associated with better career outcomes compared to protégés of female sponsors, regardless of the gender of the protégé. I also discuss initial experimental evidence that found the sponsor's gender had a causal effect on the sponsor's effectiveness, and propose next steps to better isolate the mechanism underlying this effect. In Chapter 3, I propose to study gender differences in the social and reputational benefits sponsors experience from being associated with highly-successful protégés. I propose to test for these gender differences in two studies using a multi-methods approach.