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על ידי יובל שפיגלר

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Does Transparency Breed Meritocracy?
Networks, Gender and Promotions in a Virtual Technology
Organization

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Favoritism in the workplace affects workers' careers and organizational efficacy. Scholars, since Weber, have been contemplating the ideal organizational form to ensure meritocracy, with clear measures of performance and transparency being key components. These two organizational qualities seem to be increasingly central in new organizations, wherein transparency in criteria and processes of evaluation are built into their organization of work. Have such organizations succeeded establishing a full meritocracy? This research examines meritocracy and favoritism in promotion decisions in an open-source, virtual organization with clear meritocratic promotion criteria and visible promotion decisions that can be subject to scrutiny at all times.

I explore the effects of performance, network ties, gender and the interactions between them, on promotion. While researchers often see networks as a catalyst of organizational rewards, most studies on bias and inequality at work have not looked at networks as a source of favoritism. In a virtual organization, where all interactions happen online, network ties can make a significant difference, especially when initial uncertainty is high (as social cues are few). In this study, I therefore examine whether network ties lead to favoritism, and whether these patterns are different for men and women.

In an analysis of original longitudinal data of about 3,000 code contributors in a 13-year period, I find favoritism to be strongest predictor of promotion. First, network ties increases the odds for promotion, more so than actual merit. Second, men and women have different paths for promotion. While for men, either code contributions or networks increase promotion odds, for women, contributions have no significant effect on promotion in the absence of network ties. This study explores mechanisms through which favoritism is maintained and demonstrates that even with very high levels of transparency workplace meritocracy might remain elusive. This study contributes to research on social network and gender and provides a first insight into the working of favoritism in virtual organizations.