



SÉMINAIRE

PEER EFFECTS AND THE GENDER GAP IN CORPORATE LEADERSHIP: EVIDENCE FROM MBA STUDENTS

4 February 2025

Lemma - Salle Maurice Desplas

4 rue Blaise Desgoffe

75006 PARIS

Lemma is hosting a seminary and welcomes Ashley WONG who will present « **Peer Effects and the Gender Gap in Corporate Leadership : Evidence from MBA Students** » (with Menaka HAMPOLE and Francesca TRUFFA).

Abstract :

Women continue to be underrepresented in corporate leadership positions. This paper studies the role of social connections in women's career advancement. We investigate whether access to a larger share of female peers in business school affects the gender gap in senior managerial positions. Merging administrative data from a top-10 U.S. business school with public LinkedIn profiles, we first document that female MBAs are 24% less likely than male MBAs to enter senior management within 15 years of graduation. Next, we use the exogenous assignment of students into sections to show that a larger proportion of female MBA section peers increases the likelihood of entering senior management for women but not for men. This effect is driven by female-friendly firms, such as those with more generous maternity leave policies and greater work schedule flexibility. A larger proportion of female MBA peers induces women to transition to these firms where they attain senior management roles. A survey of female MBA alumnae reveals three key mechanisms: (i) information sharing, especially related to gender-specific advice, (ii) higher ambitions and self-confidence, and (iii) increasing support from male MBA peers. These findings highlight the role of social connections in reducing the gender gap in senior management positions.