

Wednesday, December 3 (12.00-13.30) followed by lunch

Room: Brussels, Arroyofresno garden, Madrid

Online: <https://escp-eu.zoom.us/j/98547940399>

Playfulness for Professional Equity Interacting Across Sex and Status Differences

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Networking is critical for career development, yet homophilous tendencies often shape these interactions even before they occur, reinforcing workplace inequities. We theorize that contexts which are more playful (i.e., spontaneous, pleasurable, and interactive) can disrupt these tendencies by fostering perceived similarity among professionals. Integrating insights from social and cognitive psychology, we propose that playful contexts override the extreme salience of sex and status in professional contexts, activating more similar social comparisons as people recognize more of the features they share with their potential interaction partners; as a result, professionals engage in more heterophilous interactions and networking across sex and status differences. To develop and test this theory, we triangulate results across qualitative evidence from leaders, field data with alpine marathon runners, archival Twitter data, as well as pre-registered recall and immersive vignette experiments ($N_{\text{total}} = 3,041$), replicated by two Large Language Model-based behavioral simulations of 3,800 synthetic leaders. Across these diverse methods, we show that playful contexts facilitate more heterophilous interactions and networking. By introducing playfulness as a novel contextual feature of networking, we advance scholarship on intergroup relations and play in organizations, offering new insights into how organizations can better mitigate bias and foster more inclusive professional interactions.

About Jamie Gloor

Through her 2-decade journey across 4 continents, this curious, enthusiastic, and award-winning academic has explored the psychological underpinnings and effects of communication, work design, and behavior in organizations. She is most passionate about leadership and its nexus with topics such as AI/technology, sustainability, diversity & inclusion, and humor/playfulness. Gloor and her collaborators craft sought-after articles, workshops, courses, and keynotes for various outlets, for- and non-profit organizations, and their work is featured in top, international academic (e.g., Journal of Applied Psychology, Academy of Management Review, Nature Human Behaviour) and popular (e.g., Harvard Business Review, Forbes, The New York Times, TEDx) outlets.

