

**Washington State University**

**College of Education**

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**Will defend the dissertation**

**Date: April 7, 2020**

**Time: 10:00 A.M.**

**Location: Pullman – Cleveland Hall 160A**

*Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend.*

**"You Don't Have to Become a Man to Succeed in STEM":  
A Critical Discourse Analysis of STEM Faculty Women's Participation in an External  
Mentor Program**

Chair: Paula Groves Price

Gender and racial equity in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) is a serious concern. The absence of girls, women, and people of color in STEM has a deleterious effect on the livelihood of all communities. Thus, broadening participation in STEM has become a major focus of U.S. organizational and institutional policy. Initiatives include efforts to broaden underrepresented groups' participation in academic STEM, including focused attention on recruiting and retention of women at the faculty rank. Therefore, mentoring programs have served as one way to enrich the experience of STEM faculty women in higher education.

While a number of studies have articulated positive outcomes of mentoring, scant attention has been paid to the socio-cultural context of STEM. Thus discourses surrounding mentoring programs for faculty women in STEM are replete with unchallenged assumptions about knowledge, power, and identity. This study used critical theory, an application of institutional theory, and Foucault's articulation of power to qualitatively assess the various discourses that frame the experiences of STEM faculty women who participated in an external mentor program at an R1 University in the Pacific Northwest.

Ten faculty women and five department chairs (all men) were individually interviewed to gauge their experiences with the mentoring program. Using critical discourse analysis as a methodological framework, three main discourses surfaced to frame the way faculty women and male department chairs spoke of the mentoring program: Discourses of Competition, Discourses of Collaboration, and Discourses of Gender. Results indicated that these discourses may actually serve to propagate competition in STEM environments, reify deficit views about women's capacity in STEM, and perpetuate a formal and traditional structure of academic STEM that benefits mainly white men. Implications of this study rearticulate the necessity of viewing STEM 'participation' as a spectrum to benefit all humans.