

Washington University in St. Louis

## Washington University Open Scholarship

---

Volume 12

Washington University  
Undergraduate Research Digest

---

Spring 2017

### The University Features Gothic Collegiate Architecture and a Glass Ceiling: Gender Inequality, Numbers Game Logic, and Top-to-Bottom Moral Licensing in American Academia

Alisa Caccamo

*Washington University in St. Louis*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/wuurd\\_vol12](https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/wuurd_vol12)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Caccamo, Alisa, "The University Features Gothic Collegiate Architecture and a Glass Ceiling: Gender Inequality, Numbers Game Logic, and Top-to-Bottom Moral Licensing in American Academia" (2017). *Volume 12*. 23.

[https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/wuurd\\_vol12/23](https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/wuurd_vol12/23)

This Abstracts A-I is brought to you for free and open access by the Washington University Undergraduate Research Digest at Washington University Open Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in Volume 12 by an authorized administrator of Washington University Open Scholarship. For more information, please contact [digital@wumail.wustl.edu](mailto:digital@wumail.wustl.edu).

---

TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF...

THE UNIVERSITY FEATURES GOTHIC COLLEGIATE  
ARCHITECTURE AND A GLASS CEILING:  
GENDER INEQUALITY, NUMBERS GAME LOGIC,  
AND TOP-TO-BOTTOM MORAL LICENSING  
IN AMERICAN ACADEMIA

*Alisa Caccamo*

*Mentor: Eileen G'Sell*

This research examines the glass ceiling of academia, with particular emphasis on gender inequity at elite American universities as it pertains to tenure and promotion for female faculty and administrators, respectively. Drawing from sociological research on concepts such as tokenism and moral self-licensing, interviews with female faculty at Washington University in St. Louis, and data regarding female leadership at America's top 89 colleges and universities, this work asserts that a glass ceiling does exist for women in academia, and is exacerbated by *numbers game logic and top-to-bottom moral licensing*. Numbers game logic refers to the tendency of universities to specifically hiring women to achieve quantitative gender balance. Top-to-bottom moral licensing occurs when having a female in a top leadership position can breed complacency on gender inequality in other areas of the university. This research provides an alternative framework for understanding persistent gender inequity in higher education, as it challenges common misconceptions regarding the causes, consequences and best courses of action when it comes to understanding and combating discrimination in academia.