Description: Despite the rise of women’s labor force participation over the last 60 years, the technology industry remains highly segregated by gender. Engineers often think of their work as purely technical. Yet this study highlights the importance of social relationships for career advancement. Drawing on interviews with tech workers, it finds that men without relevant STEM degrees are informally coached to learn technical skills from their coworkers and transition from non-technical to technical roles. Women, however, are excluded from these coaching opportunities and steered out of technical roles, effectively barring them from some of the most lucrative positions in the industry. At the same time, many women – and particularly women of color – are tasked with uncompensated diversity work within their companies, which they do in addition to their paid work. Together, these findings trace the unequal career trajectories of men and women and highlight social closure mechanisms that reproduce gender inequality in the tech industry.

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