

Leadership Excellence and Gender in Organizations

Contextual buffers of the negative effects of sexism on women in male-dominated majors

Laura Y. Kooiman
lykooiman@bsu.edu

Katie M. Lawson

Cassie Aker

Jenna Stroup

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgg>



Part of the [Communication Commons](#), [Human Resources Management Commons](#), [Organizational Behavior and Theory Commons](#), [Political Science Commons](#), [Psychology Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kooiman, L.Y. (2016). *Contextual buffers of the negative effects of sexism on women in male-dominated majors*. Paper presented at Closing the Gender Gap: Advancing Leadership and Organizations. DOI: 10.5703/1288284316066

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

In some traditionally male majors, women remain numerical minorities. One reason could be sexism, which has been observed to negatively influence women's academic achievement (Koch, Konigorski, & Sieverding, 2014), physical health (Salomon, Burgess, & Bosson, 2015), and psychosocial health (Baretto & Moya, 2010; Calogero & Jost, 2011). The current research examines whether contextual factors buffer the negative effects of sexism on female college students pursuing male-dominated majors. We hypothesized that women from male-dominated departments with more perceived peer support, more supportive faculty, more academic advising time, and higher percentages of female faculty, are less likely to experience deleterious effects of departmental sexism on their health and academic achievement. We recruited 57 female students in eight male-dominated majors from a mid-sized Midwestern university. Participants completed an online questionnaire. Controlling for between-major variance, the experience of sexist events was associated with decreased psychosocial health. In departments where students reported less academic advising time, academic advising may buffer women from negative effects on psychosocial health. Sexist events predicted lower GPA in departments where more academic advising time occurred, and more physical health symptoms in departments with fewer female faculty. Main effects were not observed, suggesting the importance of context. Research findings indicate that female students in male-dominated majors can experience deleterious outcomes related to sexism, with implications for departments and companies seeking to retain women in these fields.