

Women in Male-Dominated Careers: Interactions Between Early Career Experiences of Tokenism and Future Career Trajectories

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While the number of women in the workforce continues to increase, research suggests their mere presence does not necessarily equate to influence within organizations. Research also highlights a culture of psychological gender inequity which permeates many organizations. My research aims to build on this foundation of gender inequity research by linking early career “token” status to future career decision making. To do so, I developed a survey targeting young professionals (5-10 years out of college), which assessed gender inequity measures (tokenism, “bro” culture, acceptance, inclusion, etc.) in connection to future career trajectory decisions (planned pivots, gender consideration of new organizations, industry switches, etc.). The objective of my research is to identify linkages between these two areas that may increase our understanding of potential best practices for further developing inclusive organizational culture.

Through my research, I found that women in male-dominated fields were more likely to consider gender balance of their new teams when changing jobs, compared with women in more balanced gender environments and males in male-dominated fields. Furthermore, I found that gender makeup predicts gender balance preferences through the experience of tokenism.