

Janette Hughes



janettehughes.ca/lab

HOW TO HARASS WOMEN IN STEM -- A RESEARCH-BASED GUIDE

Derogate. Repeat.

Belittle.

Undermine.

Sabotage.

Deny responsibility.

“Harassment generally is repeated or persistent treatment that pressures, provokes, frightens, intimidates, humiliates, or demeans a person (Adams & Bray, 1992; Brodsky, 1976; Einarsen, 2000).” (Berdahl, 2007, p. 641)

For a Good Reason.

STEM is a man’s world.

Let’s keep women in their place.

Especially successful ones.

Make men great again!

“In a male-dominated environment, a man may harass a woman coworker in these ways because she poses a distinctiveness threat to his sex-based status. By undermining her, he may restore his sense of status as a man who can do the job better than a woman and may enhance his status among other men” (Berhdal 2007, p. 649)

Blame the Victim.

It’s her fault.

Obviously.

Why else would it be happening?

Cry-baby!

“... even when presented with fairly stark experimental evidence of gender bias, many commenters responded by denying the evidence or justifying the existence of gender bias. This suggests that people may seek to avoid the threats associated with acknowledging that gender bias undermines the fairness of the existing academic system (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2004) and that they may be likely to trivialize evidence of gender bias (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Gulker et al., 2013).” (Moss-Racusin et al. 2015, p. 204)

Succeed.

She is excluded.

Has no voice.

Does not feel safe.

Becomes sick.

Leaves.

“The challenges women face in male-dominated workforces have been well documented in recent years (Barbulescu & Bidwell, 2013; Cha, 2013; Gauchat, Kelly, & Wallace, 2012; Wright, 2014), and reports by Singh et al. (2013) suggest that approximately 30% of women who enter engineering, a male-dominated field, ultimately leave the profession. Of those women who left the engineering field, 30% cited organizational climate as a primary motivator. These statistics are not surprising considering women in male-dominated workforces are faced with an increased likelihood of harassment (Gutek & Cohen, 1987), biases related to their leadership abilities (Bartol, 1999), and hostility if they raise concerns regarding unfair treatment (Collinson & Collinson, 1996).” (Dresden et al., 2018, p. 460)

OR, STOP THE CYCLE

Admit there is a problem.
Become the change you want to see.

“Gender based mistreatment is harmful not only to women directly targeted but also to women who witness the mistreatment of other women.” (Settles et al., 2012, p. 179)

“When men view their department as sexist towards women, they may perceive their department or university to be unfair or unjust. If so, then men may fear that they will be the targets of unjust policies in the future.” (Settles et al., 2012, p.187)

“... high personal responsibility leaders most frequently named their male colleagues as concurrently responsible, with far fewer mentions of female faculty. ... the reverse pattern was observed in low responsibility leaders; this group did not frequently name men but, instead, often described women as responsible for needing to change in order to achieve greater inclusion in STEM fields.” (McClelland & Holland, 2015, p. 220)

AND, LET’S LISTEN TO WOMEN’S STORIES

The “How to Harass Women in STEM” guide is based on research and lived experience. Since starting this work, so many women have shared their own struggles. These stories need to be heard.

I’m collecting them as chapters for an edited book. Please consider contributing. Chapters may be anonymous.

Please contact Laura Morrison at laura.morrison1@uoit.net

References

- Berdahl, J.L. (2007). Harassment based on sex: protecting social status in the context of gender hierarchy. *The Academy of Management Review* 32(2), 641-658.
- Dresden, B.E., Dresden, A.Y., Ridge, R.D. & Yamawaki, N. (2018). No girls allowed: women in male-dominated majors experience increased gender harassment and bias. *Psychological Reports* 121(3), 459-474.
- Handley, I.M., Brown, E.R. Moss-Racusin, C.A. & Smith, J.L. (2015). Quality of evidence revealing subtle gender biases in science is in the eye of the beholder. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 112(43), 13201-13206.
- McClelland, S.I. & Holland K.J. (2015). You, Me, or Her: Leaders’ Perceptions of Responsibility for Increasing Gender Diversity in STEM Departments. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 39(2) 210-225.
- Moss-Racusin, C.A., Molenda, A.K. & Cramer, C.R. (2015). Can evidence impact attitudes? Public reactions to evidence of gender bias in STEM fields. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 39(2), 194-209.
- Settles, I.H., Cortina, L.M., Buchanan, N.T. & Miner, K.N. (2012). Derogation, discrimination, and (dis)satisfaction with jobs in Science: a gendered analysis. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 37(2), 179-191.