Using WAGES to Raise Awareness of and Reduce Sexism

Matthew J. Zawadzki, Stephanie A. Shields, and R. Neill Johnson

The Pennsylvania State University

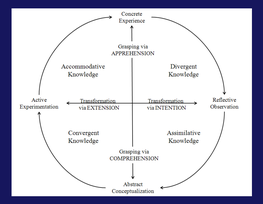
Introduction & Hypotheses

Laws and people's general good intentions have done much to decrease overt sexism in the academic workplace, but the impact of minor biases still accumulate over time, hindering women's advancement (e.g., Valian, 1998).

-Simply telling people about bias is ineffective as much of the bias is unintentional or unconscious, or people can react negatively to a direct message.

Experiential learning provides knowledge in a concrete way that participants can then use to form the basis for abstract ideas that will influence future behavior.

-In doing so it raises knowledge, but also encourages seeing issues from new perspectives and having flexibility in thought



Kolb's(1984) model of experiential learning

We tested the effectiveness of experiential learning, using WAGES, to raise awareness of the cumulative effects of apparently minor bias that women face in the academy.

-Experiential learning should increase participants' awareness and knowledge about the issues that women face and elicit empathy.

-This greater knowledge and empathy should translate to changes in attitudes where the status quo is challenged (i.e., less endorsement of modern sexism and system justification).

Methods

Design: 2 (condition: WAGES vs. control) x 3 (time: pre-test, main study, follow-up) mixed design

-Control group played Chutes & Ladders and discussed how to improve group dynamics.

Participants: 144 undergraduates (87 women, 55 men, 2 unreported; aged 18-27, *M*=19.23; self-identified primarily as Caucasian (117, 81.3%) and Asian-American (10, 6.9%))

Materials: Knowledge of Gender Equity (KGE) measured at all time points

-KGE measured with 28-item questionnaire (Zappe, 2005): e.g., "Gender has no influence on the results of workplace evaluations.(reverse scored)" using 1 (Very True) to 5 (Very False) scale (α's=.77-.91).

Gender-Specific System Justification (GSSJ) measured at pre-test and follow-up

-GSSJ measured with 8-item scale (Jost & Kay, 2005) using 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree) scale (α's=.74-.81).

Empathy measured during main study.

- "Right now I feel empathy." Assessed on a 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very Much) scale.

Modern Sexism (MS) measured at follow-up.

-MS measured with 8-item scale (Swim et al., 1995) using 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree) scale (α=.80).

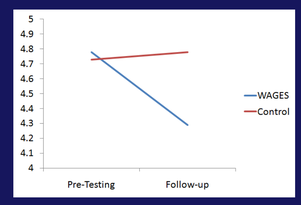
Procedure: Testing over three time-points

(1) Baseline measures of KGE and GSSJ were taken two-months prior to the study.
(2) In main study, participants were randomly assigned to WAGES or control group; after participating, KGE and empathy was assessed.
(3) Participants contacted 7-11 days later and KGE, GSSJ, and MS were assessed online.

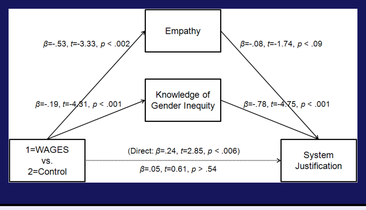
Results – System Justification and Sexism

Gender-Specific System Justification

H3: WAGES decreased endorsement of system justification from baseline to follow-up, $F(1, 113)=5.28$, $p < .03$, $\eta_p^2=.05$

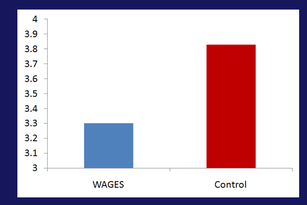


- Increased knowledge and empathy mediated the effect of WAGES vs. control on system justification.

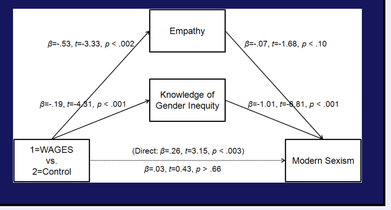


Modern Sexism

H4: WAGES decreased endorsement of modern sexism at follow-up, $F(1, 113)=9.91$, $p < .003$, $\eta_p^2=.08$



- Increased knowledge and empathy mediated the effect of WAGES vs. control on modern sexism.



Workshop Activity for Gender Equity Simulation

Four core learning objectives (Shields, Zawadzki, & Johnson, *under review*):

(1) Apparently minor biases accumulate to negatively affect women's career advancement.
(2) Gender-relevant factors may be more significant at one stage in work life than in others.
(3) Women need to exert more effort for their achievements to be seen as equivalent to men's.
(4) Patterns are the most visible indicators of gender inequity in the workplace.

Participants play a game-board type activity taking turns drawing cards to advance through the academic ranks.

-Players are broken up into Green vs. White team and read team specific cards.

-Players must accumulate enough "credit" chips to be promoted.

A senior faculty member congratulates you on your skill in completing a big grant proposal on time. *Earn 3 credit chips as you await your reviews. Move 1 space forward.*	A senior faculty member congratulates you on your good luck in completing a big grant proposal on time. *Earn 2 credit chips as you await your reviews. Move 1 space forward.*

Sample items for Green and White players at the Assistant Professor Level

We predict that compared to a control group, WAGES will:

H1: Increase knowledge about gender issues in the workplace.

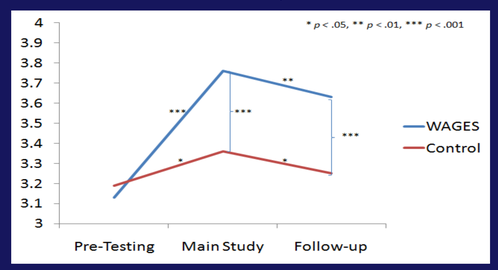
H2: Elicit feelings of empathy.

H3: Decrease endorsement of system justification, because WAGES increases knowledge and elicits empathy.

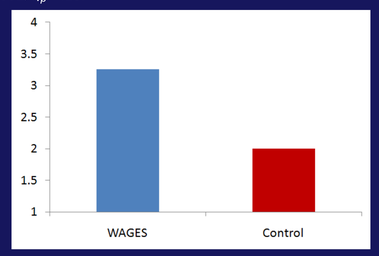
H4: Decrease endorsement of sexism, because WAGES increases knowledge and elicits empathy.

Results – Knowledge and Empathy

H1: WAGES increased knowledge of gender equity relative to baseline, which was sustained one-week later, $F(2, 222)=15.34$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2=.12$.



H2: WAGES elicited more empathy compared to the control group during the main study, $F(1, 142)=21.96$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2=.13$.



Discussion

Summary of Results:

WAGES was effective in (1) increasing knowledge about gender issues in the workplace, (2) eliciting empathy, and (3) decreasing endorsement of gender-specific system justification and modern sexism.

-Furthermore, increased knowledge and empathy mediated the effect of WAGES vs. Control on decreased endorsement of system justification and modern sexism.

-WAGES was equally effective for women and men and for players on both teams.

Future Directions:

WAGES increased participants' knowledge and changed attitudes. Follow-up work will examine WAGES' effectiveness to influence observed behaviors.

We also will continue to examine the effect of WAGES on varieties of sexism (e.g., benevolent vs. hostile sexism; Glick & Fiske, 1996)

To test the effect of experiential learning, we will compare WAGES with a condition that receives the same information in a straight-forward, non-experiential learning format (e.g., PowerPoint).

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Questions & Comments please e-mail Matthew J. Zawadzki at mjz172@psu.edu or Stephanie A. Shields at sashields@psu.edu
For more information about WAGES please go to http://wages.la.psu.edu/