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.

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 (67 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 (Zapf, 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=.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=.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 (Jost et al., 2000) 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

H3: WAGES increased endorsement of system justifi cation from baseline to follow-up, F(1, 113)=5.28, p<.03, η²=.05

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

H4: WAGES increased endorsement of modern sexism at follow-up, F(1, 113)=15.51, p<.005, η²=.13

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

Results – Knowledge and Empathy

H1: WAGES increased knowledge of gender equity relative to baseline, which was sustained one-week later, F(2, 220)=15.34, p<.001, η²=.12

H2: WAGES elicited more empathy compared to the control group during the main study, F(1, 142)=21.86, p<.001, η²=.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; Gick & Fiske, 1996).

To test the effect of experiential learning, we will compare WAGES with a condition that receives the same information in a straightforward, 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/