SEXUAL HARASSMENT TRAINING AND GENDER BELIEFS

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National Academy of Sciences Workshop on Sexual Harassment
March 28, 2017
Effect of Policy Training on Gender Beliefs

• Antiharassment policy training often reinforces traditional gender stereotypes and negative attitudes about women

• Why should we care?
  • Sexual harassment is
    …gender discrimination
    …a manifestation of power (Uggen et al.)
    …still pervasive
Quantitative Methods: Analysis of survey data of U.S. federal employees

- How are policy training, gender, age, occupational status, and beliefs about sexuality in the workplace related to how broadly people define sexual harassment?

- Data: U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board Study, 1994 (N=5902)

Qualitative Methods: Interviews and Participant Observations

- How do people articulate their concerns about the enforcement of sexual harassment law?

- Participant-observations of policy training sessions at a university (mock trial, acting troupe, scenario-based discussions, online video) and interviews with policy officers

- Interviews with 40 college students

Methods: Experimental

- How does policy training affect beliefs about men and women?

- Sample: Men and women undergraduate students, 20+/condition

- Design: 2 conditions (Policy intervention or control)

- Measures
  - Unconscious bias (Implicit Association Test showing association of men with careers and women with families)
  - Explicit gender beliefs (self-reported ratings of men and women)
Measures

• Unconscious gender bias – Implicit Association Test (IAT)
  • Stronger association of men with careers and women with families

• Explicit gender beliefs (self-reported ratings of men and women and gender attitudes scales)
Some Findings

- Policy training activates gender stereotypes and backlash against women (Tinkler et al. 2007; 2012; 2013)

- This effect is strongest among men committed to traditional gender norms (Tinkler 2013)

- Women often feel disempowered by policy training (Tinkler 2008; 2012; 2013)

- The gender of the trainer matters (Tinkler et al. 2015)
Male Subjects' Unconscious Bias
(association of men with careers and women with families; N=44)

Male Subjects’ Ratings of Women's Likability (N=44)

Agree that Women Tease Men Sexually (N=100)

Some Findings

• Policy training activates gender stereotypes and backlash against women (Tinkler et al. 2007; 2012; 2013)

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• The gender of the trainer matters (Tinkler et al. 2015)
Unconscious Gender Bias (gender aggregated)

Ratings of Women's Likability

Ratings of Women's Likability (gender disaggregated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Policy Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional Men</strong></td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Egalitarian Women</strong></td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
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Male Subject's Unconscious Bias (N=83)

Male Subjects' Ratings of Women's Likability (N=83)

Baseline vs. Policy Intervention

Female Trainer vs. Male Trainer

Implications

• How can we improve policy training?
  • Be attentive to threats to gender norms of interaction
  • Be attentive to threats to men and women’s status
  • Men’s role in policy enforcement

• How can workplaces reduce sexual harassment and avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes?
  • Policy training is not a panacea (Kalev et al. 2006)
  • Create opportunities for disconfirming stereotypes (Ridgeway 1997)
  • Less hierarchical work groups along gender lines (Green and Kalev 2008; Whittington and Smith-Doerr 2008; Kalev 2009)
• **Survey data of Federal Employees (1994)**
  

• **Participant-observations of policy trainings and in-depth interviews**
  

• **Experimental data**
  
  
  
THANK YOU
With this blindfold on, I cannot see or do anything that could be construed as sexual harassment, and there is no way you can accuse or associate me with it.

Your dog is ogling me.
Activates gender stereotypes

• “You are trivializing your friendship with her. If you are somebody’s best friend, you should go punch him (Jack) out. She may have been really stupid in the car (for kissing Jack) on the 2nd date, but he is a real jerk and you should punch him.” (65+ man)
Injurious and should be illegal

- Unwanted Sexual Joking is Harassment
- Unwanted Sexual Joking is Not Harassment

1994, U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board Study (N=5902)
Resistance to Enforcement

People are too quick to take offense at looks and remarks

Women

Agree 50%

Disagree 50%

Men

Disagree 42%

Agree 58%

1994, U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board Study (N=5902)
Resistance to Enforcement

Women
- Agree: 24%
- Disagree: 76%

Men
- Agree: 37%
- Disagree: 63%

People often misinterpret normal attraction for sexual harassment

1994, U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board Study (N=5902)
Perceive Threat | Perceive No Threat
---|---
% Chance of Labeling Sexual Jokes as Harassment

1994, U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board Study (N=5902)
Male IAT Effect (Implicit Association of Men with Careers and Women with Families)

- **Gender Traditional**
  - Baseline
  - Policy Intervention

- **Gender Egalitarian**
  - Baseline
  - Policy Intervention

**Gender Interaction Norm Conformity**

- **IAT Effect Size**
  - 0.1
  - 0.2
  - 0.3
  - 0.4
  - 0.5
  - 0.6
  - 0.7
  - 0.8

**Policies and Gender Interaction Norms**
Female IAT Effect (Implicit Association of Men with Careers and Women with Family)

- Gender Traditional
- Gender Egalitarian

**IAT Effect Size**

- Baseline
- Policy Intervention

**Gender Interaction Norm Conformity**
Threat to status of women

- ML estimates from ordinal probit: defining sexual harassment to include jokes and remarks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People overly sensitive</td>
<td>-.21 (.09)***</td>
<td>.02 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>.01 (.07)</td>
<td>-.18 (.07)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor*overly sensitive</td>
<td>-.03 (.08)</td>
<td>-.15 (.09)**</td>
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Threat to Status of Women

Females: Stereotypes of women as virtuous and in need of male protection

Gender Interaction Norms Conformity

Gender Traditional
- Baseline: 2
- Policy Intervention: 3

Gender Egalitarian
- Baseline: 1.5
- Policy Intervention: 0.5

Ratings on a 6-point scale