
A PROACTIVE PERFORMANCE APPROACH TO PEER EDUCATION

The Efficacy of A Sexual Assault Intervention Program*

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Susan stands center stage with her eyes focused straight ahead. She appears to be in a state of crisis. There are 10 people surrounding her, all audience members who have agreed to create physically frozen images/statues on stage. One image is directly behind her, pointing at Susan's face and yelling, "This is all your fault." Another image, down stage left and a few feet from Susan, is shrugging her shoulders and saying, "Nobody will ever believe you." A third image is seated directly in

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front of Susan, hands over bowed head, whispering, "If he loves you, it isn't really rape." A constellation of these images surrounds Susan, all frozen in place and repeating lines that might be going through a woman's head after surviving a sexual assault. The lines, all designed to create doubt and fear in Susan's mind, blur into a choir of antagonistic voices. When the scene ends, the facilitator holds the silence for a few seconds before asking the audience members to explain what they have just witnessed. A number of hands are raised and the dialogue begins.

This scene is part of a sexual assault intervention program utilized by interACT, a university-based performance troupe under the direction of Marc Rich since 2000. The program was developed in response to the high incidence of sexual assault on college campuses, which, as Simon (1993) noted, "is now at near epidemic proportions" (p. 289). *Sexual assault* can be defined as "forced sexual aggression or contact with or without penetration against a victim" (Black, Weisz, Coats, & Patterson, 2000, p. 589). The impact of sexual assault and postassault trauma has gained significant attention from contemporary researchers because, as Resick and Schnicke (1992) explained, "sexual assault is a major life-threatening, traumatic event from which many victims never fully recover" (p. 4; see also Crabtree & Ford, Volume 1). The statistics regarding the number of women who have been raped or sexually assaulted are staggering. According to Black et al. (2000), "24-50% of women have been or will be sexually assaulted during their lives" (p. 589). In the weeks, months, and years following sexual assault, survivors may experience depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts or attempts, and poor self-esteem (Butterfield, Barnett, & Koons, 2000). The most common serious effect of sexual assault is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): In the first week after a sexual assault, 94% of women will meet the criteria for a full diagnosis of PTSD; 90 days after the crime is committed, 47% of survivors still meet those criteria (Resick & Schnicke, 1992).

Date or acquaintance rape is especially prevalent among college students "because they live in communities where many factors related to date or acquaintance rape, such as age, alcohol use, and rape-tolerant behavioral norms, converge" (Holcomb, Sarvela, Sondag, & Holcomb, 1993, p. 159). In a frequently cited study, Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1987) found that 27% of college women had experienced rape or attempted rape, 25% of college men were involved in some form of sexual aggression, and 8% of men since the age of 14 had raped or attempted to rape a woman. Men who participate in fraternities or organized sports are most likely to assault women, with an astounding 35% of men in fraternities reporting forcing someone to have sex with them (Bohmer & Parrot, 1993). Although males may know that raping a woman is wrong, they "choose to do it because they know the odds of being caught and convicted are very low" (Bohmer & Parrot, p. 21).

In the vast majority of college rape situations, the survivor knows the assailant. According to Mann, Hecht, and Valentine (1988), "Date rape is such an epidemic on college campuses across the nation that more college women are now raped by dates and boyfriends than by strangers" (p. 269). The result, in addition to the serious physical and psychological impact that rape has on college students, is that "many women who are assaulted drop out of school" (Bohmer & Parrot, p. 1).

To address this epidemic, several sexual assault intervention models have been developed, implemented, and evaluated on college campuses. The majority of these models, however, are didactic, typically consisting of lectures, videotapes, or traditional theatrical performances, and, therefore, are consistent with passive learning models. For example, Lanier, Elliot, Martin, and Kapadia (1988) conducted a study in which audience members were exposed to six didactic, scripted scenes that illustrated concepts, such as the use of alcohol in date-rape scenarios and the notion that going to someone's home is not an agreement to have sex. In another didactic intervention program designed by Hanson and Gidycz (1993), participants were provided with information regarding rape statistics, watched a videotape illustrating variables related to sexual assault, and viewed a second videotape highlighting ways to prevent sexual assault. Although these intervention programs show statistically significant results, they are not aligned with proactive models that engage the audience to facilitate personal agency and social change.

One particular intervention model that recently has grown in popularity on college campuses (Raynor, 1993), and is the subject of this study, is *peer education*, which involves students taking an active role in the education of their cohorts. In peer education, students may, among other activities, present information in a formal or informal manner, perform in educational plays, or serve as mentors to their peers. According to Black et al. (2000):

The effectiveness of peer education stems from the fact that peer educators convey information and communicate with their contemporaries in ways that professionals cannot. Most importantly, peer educators live among their constituents, have access to students, and are privy to students' personal lives. (p. 593)

Although peer-education programs are popular, unfortunately, such programs typically remain didactic and focus entirely on debunking rape myths without regard for what happens to a woman after she is assaulted. It is common for peer educators to promote an inactive audience role by using lectures, traditional performances, and films/videos. In a critique of this approach, Frankham (1998) argued that most peer troupes employ these

"very didactic teaching methodologies," and, as a result, peer educators often are "disappointed by the level of participation on the part of those being 'educated'" (p. 183). Although didactic programs may help to debunk rape myths and disseminate information about sexual assault, audience members are not challenged to prevent assaults or taught how to comfort a woman who is victimized. Most peer-education programs, thus, lead audience members to remain passive rather than encourage them to take an active stance.

Because of their tendency to perpetuate an educational climate in which students are passive learners, Freire (1993) referred to didactic modes of instruction as "banking education" because "the students are depositories and the teacher is the depositor. . . . The scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing deposits" (p. 53). Freire called, instead, for a more dialogic approach to education, a "problem-posing education" in which multifaceted, student-centered problems are posed by instructors and students who are critically engaged in the learning process. As Freire explained:

Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality. Students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge. (p. 62)

The call to develop and employ dialogic, problem-solving approaches to education has been taken up by performance studies scholars, who are interested in "the process of dialogic engagement with one's own and others' aesthetic communication through the means of performance" (Pelias, 1992, p. 15). As noted by Stucky and Wimmer (2002), "One characteristic of performance studies pedagogy is its emphasis on embodiment. . . . A substantial development in performance studies pedagogy has been a consistent attention to enactment, to experiential learning in the classroom" (p. 3). This experiential learning through performance places the audience in an active rather than passive role, for, according to Pelias and VanOosting (1987):

The level of audience participation within any theatrical event may best be seen on a continuum from inactive to proactive. When defined as "inactive" . . . the audience's task is simply to receive what is given. . . . "Active" audience members' imagination flesh out the skeletal suggestions of a performer. . . . The next level of participation might be described as "interactive." At this point, both performers and audience

are seen as coproducers, each contributing to the artistic event. . . . At the far end of the continuum, the audience might be identified as "proactive." Given this maximum participation, status of performer is conferred on all participants. (p. 227)

The interactive and proactive end of the performance studies continuum is consistent with Freire's (1993) problem-posing pedagogy. In both problem-posing pedagogy and proactive performances, students and audience members are challenged to assume an active role in their learning. Furthermore, instructors in problem-posing classrooms, and facilitators in proactive performances, seek to democratize the learning experience by providing a safe space for dialogic exchanges.

By democratizing the learning experience through the creation of a safe space for dialogic exchanges via performance, performance potentially serves the purpose of promoting social change. As Cohen-Cruz (2001) explained, it is "the crucial interaction of art and social circumstances that renders an activist theatre project efficacious" (pp. 95-96). There, thus, exists in theatre and performance studies a rich history of scholar-artists dedicated to facilitating social change. As Kushner (2001) noted, "American artists have been working for social change for many decades, whether the issue was labor, civil rights, poverty, disarmament, women's rights, gay/lesbian liberation, homelessness, AIDS, cultural diversity, or commercial globalization" (p. 64). Performance as a means for enacting social change, which stands in contrast to didactic, disembodied pedagogical techniques, "entails a shift of emphasis from product to process [that] . . . decenters, destabilizes, undermines, and deconstructs any view of a 'finished world' that is given to us for passive consumption" (Conquergood, 1986, pp. 38-40). Proactive performances, thus, fundamentally are a form of activism in which audience members use theatre to fight oppression and promote social change.

Although proactive performances for the purposes of promoting social change have been employed for many years, and the theoretical reasons for why they potentially work are well understood, researchers to date have not measured the outcomes of such performance-based activist activities. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to assess the outcomes associated with a peer-education intervention that fosters a proactive performative audience stance for the purpose of promoting social change. Specifically, we explore the efficacy of the proactive sexual assault intervention program utilized by interACT. We use the terms *interACT scene* and *interACT performance* interchangeably to refer to the enactment (by trained actors) of a potential sexual assault episode, and the likely aftermath of that situation. This scene or performance is deemed a proactive intervention because the audience members actively participate in the unfolding situation, on stage, with the actors. This interACT scene is the centerpiece of our intervention program.

Having conducted this specific sexual assault scene over 75 times on and off our college campus, we are committed to using proactive performance as a prevention strategy not only because of its potential for reducing sexual assault but also because this approach is situated within the larger context of performance as activism for social change. Although we have witnessed qualitative changes in audience members (our target group) and received ongoing positive feedback from them, we are interested in more formally assessing the efficacy of this program. Therefore, this study attempts to measure proactive performance from a quantitative perspective. Because this study represents the first attempt to quantify such effects, we opted not to compare the efficacy of proactive performance to another pedagogical modality (e.g., a lecture, video, or didactic performance focusing on sexual assault). Hence, we are not concerned at this stage with whether this method is the most efficacious means of peer education; instead, we are most interested in discovering what theoretically relevant outcomes are connected with social activist theatre and potential ways to measure the impact of participatory performance on audience members.

In the next section of this chapter, we provide a brief overview of Boal's social activist theatre and how it informs interACT's intervention. We then describe our research study and offer quantitative research evidence that suggests the efficacy of our sexual assault prevention program. We conclude the chapter with lessons learned about proactive performance as communication activism.

AUGUSTO BOAL'S SOCIAL ACTIVIST THEATRE

Boal's (1979, 1992, 1995) work first garnered international attention after the publication of *The Theatre of the Oppressed* (TO), a book in which he critiqued Aristotelian theatre, which is the basis for contemporary theatre produced in traditional settings, as being inherently oppressive and elitist. Boal argued that Aristotelian theatre separated spectators (the people) from the actors (the elite) and taught audience members that going against the status quo would have dire consequences. By shattering the imaginary fourth wall separating audience members from actors, and placing theatre in the hands of the people, Boal believed that "spect-actors" could use dramatic techniques to better themselves and their sociopolitical standing; as Boal (1979) explained, "The barrier between actors and spectators is destroyed: all must act, all must be protagonists in the necessary transformations of society" (Foreword).

Boal (1979) argued, in particular, that *catharsis*, a device used in Aristotelian plays, purges audience members of their desire to initiate social change because:

The character follows an ascending path toward happiness, accompanied empathically by the spectator. Then comes a moment of reversal: the character, with the spectator, starts to move from happiness toward misfortune. . . . The character recognizes his error . . . [and] through the empathic relationship . . . the spectator recognizes his own error . . . his own anticonstitutional flaw. . . . The character suffers the consequences of his error, in a violent form, with his own death or with the death of loved ones The spectator, terrified by the spectacle of the catastrophe, is purified of his hamartia [anticonstitutional flaw]. (p. 37)

Hence, through empathizing with the protagonist and her or his tragic life, spectators are purged of their desire to fight against the status quo, which leads to a feeling of catharsis. For Boal, Aristotelian theatre, thus, is a coercive mechanism designed to disempower people and teach them to stay passive in the face of oppression.

In contrast to Aristotelian theatre, when a protagonist in Boal's theatre is treated unfairly, audience members are encouraged to take the stage and attempt to break the oppression. On the continuum developed by Pelias and VanOosting (1987), Boal's TO techniques, which can be used with scripted scenes and traditional plays or in an improvisational manner to create scenarios based on audience members' stories, are proactive and represent the highest level of audience involvement. Similar in nature to Freire's (1993) concept of "participatory education," Boal believes that people should use the theatre to empower themselves. According to Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz (1994a), "Influenced by Paulo Freire's dialogic philosophy of education, Boal's vision is embodied in dramatic techniques that activate passive spectators to become spect-actors—engaged participants rehearsing strategies for personal and social change" (p. 1).

The nature of the work created by Boal and Freire were both shaped by the political landscape of their home country (Brazil), and TO is a natural extension of Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed. During lectures and workshops, Boal consistently has spoken of Freire's influence on TO. For Freire, the classroom is a politicized space of potential liberation; for Boal, the theatre, when democratized, enables spect-actors to rehearse for real-life scenarios within the relatively safe confines of the theatre.

Although Boal's earliest work was used as a "rehearsal for revolution," following his imprisonment, torture, and subsequent exile from Brazil for creating plays that were considered dangerous by an oppressive military regime, he began to develop additional techniques that are more therapeutic than his original work (*The Rainbow of Desire*) and oriented toward enacting political change (*Legislative Theatre*). In particular, he began to consider psychosocial issues, such as fear, depression, and emptiness, and, consequently, "began to realize the depth of pain these oppressions produced"

(Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 1994a, p. 4). In response to what he called "cops in the head," internalized oppressors linked to external antagonists and overt power structures, Boal (1995) developed a series of psychosocial performance techniques, known as "The Rainbow of Desire," "to discover how these cops got into our heads, and to invent ways of dislodging them" (p. 8). Even his most psychosocial techniques, however, are designed to move from the individual to the group level and from the local to the global perspective. For example, a woman who begins a performance by focusing on a specific man who sexually harassed her may come to understand the broader implications of a male-dominated society in which women are oppressed in a variety of ways by various antagonists.

Boal's techniques have been used in educational, communal, and therapeutic contexts throughout the world, and a number of scholars have documented the use of these techniques in those contexts. As examples, a 1990 edition of *The Drama Review* contained two articles by Boal (1990a, 1990b) and articles about Boal's work by Cohen-Cruz, Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman, and Taussig and Schechner. Similarly, Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz's (1994b) text, *Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism*, provides case studies, as well as cross-cultural aspects, of Boal's techniques, and a sequel, *A Boal Companion: The Joker Runs Wild* (edited by Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman, 2006). A number of contemporary scholar-artist-activists also have discussed Boal's impact on their understanding of performance and social change (Alexander, 2001; Fung, 2001; Paterson, 2001). For instance, in response to traditional performances at a conference on HIV and AIDS, Jones (1993) noted that "the focus on educating the audience lacked an essential action step" (p. 23) and suggested, as a remedy, that the more proactive approach offered by Boal would "move the traditionally passive theatre audience into an active posture" (p. 24). Practitioners also have described using Boal's techniques in the specific contexts of "privileged" classrooms (McConachie, 2002) and healthcare environments (Brown & Gillespie, 1997) and with new police recruits (Telesco, 2001) and homeless youth (Westlake, 2001). Given this understanding of Boal's philosophy, techniques, and impact, we turn to a description of the interACT scene.

THE INTERACT PROACTIVE PERFORMANCE

The interACT scene begins with three college men, one of whom is Jeremy, enjoying a night of drinking and fun. When the conversation shifts to Jeremy's girlfriend, Susan, and accusations are made by the other men about his inability to "keep her in check," tempers quickly flare. Three women, including Susan, enter the scene, and Jeremy starts to ask pointed questions

about Susan's whereabouts and attire. Susan tries to respond, but Jeremy becomes increasingly agitated and verbally aggressive. After asking everyone to leave the apartment, Jeremy becomes even more antagonistic toward Susan. He critiques what Susan is wearing, accuses her of flirting with other guys, and reprimands her for making him look bad in front of his friends. The scene ends with Jeremy grabbing Susan's arm and exclaiming, "This will never happen again."

The second scene begins the next day, with Susan explaining to her friends that Jeremy "forced himself" on her after they left the apartment. One of her friends becomes quite emotional, urging Susan to go to the hospital immediately and then press charges against Jeremy. The second friend says that Susan is acting like a "drama queen" and subsequently blames her for making Jeremy angry.

Following these first two scripted scenes (lasting approximately 10 minutes in total), four proactive scenes are created with the audience. The first scene (described in the opening of this chapter) is based on Boal's (1995) notion of "cops in the head" and involves audience members identifying and embodying the negative voices that are present in Susan's head after she is assaulted. After 8-10 voices are identified, the audience members create a constellation of images around Susan. If audience members believe that they are representing a dominant, loud voice in Susan's head, they stand close to Susan; softer voices are spread out across the stage. All of the voices begin speaking at once, enabling audience members to better understand why women often are so confused after an assault, and why friends need to demonstrate compassion and empathy toward them.

The second and third proactive scenes utilize Forum Theatre, Boal's fundamental strategy for inducing audience participation. In Forum Theatre, a scene in which a protagonist is oppressed or unable to achieve her or his objectives is performed, either scripted or not, in its entirety. The scene then is performed again with audience members replacing the protagonist and attempting to change the outcome of the performance. Forum Theatre typically generates a boisterous audience response as audience members are able to watch their peers come face-to-face with difficult antagonists. The goal of Forum Theatre is not to arrive at the "perfect solution" but, rather, to generate a set of assertive communication strategies that potentially can be utilized in real-life situations. In the first Forum, audience members replace one of Jeremy's friends in an attempt to prevent the sexual assault and, therefore, the second scene from occurring. During the second Forum, audience members replace Susan and try to get a more compassionate response from her friends. As audience members become more assertive, the antagonists become increasingly problematic. Hence, Forum Theatre encourages audience members to enact multiple interventions. In the final proactive scene, audience members replace Susan's friends and make an

effort to be more patient and understanding with her. This scene is quite challenging because Susan is convinced that she is somehow at fault or that nobody will believe her if she reports the assault to the authorities. Thus, audience members are faced with actual challenges of enacting behaviors that are empathic and helpful within the context of a highly charged human drama.

Following the performance, information sheets are passed out to the audience that include rape statistics and rape crisis phone numbers. The interACT scene has been performed for high school and college students, nonprofit organizations, and populations that include adults in drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers and juveniles in prisons. Most audiences consist of approximately 40 members; however, the scene has been done for as few as 10 people, and as many as 800. Having performed this scene over 75 times on and off campus, we believed we were making a positive impact as evidenced by audience members' participation and their willingness to discuss sexual assault after participating in the performance. By designing a study to measure the efficacy of the performance, we hoped to learn more about the value of the interAct program and, more generally, the potential efficacy of proactive performance methods as communication activism.

THEORETICAL RATIONALE FOR STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Three theoretical perspectives germane to communication research helped to guide this study. First, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) was used to explicate the potential role of value-relevant involvement and issue-relevant thinking in audience members' responses to the interACT scene. Second, the affective learning model (Rodríguez, Plax, & Kearney, 1996) was employed because it explains the role of affective and cognitive learning in the college classroom. Third, the egoistic and altruistic models were used because they illuminate the role of comforting communication in interactions that involve responses to distressed others (Stiff, Dillard, Somera, Kim, & Sleight, 1988). Each of these theoretical perspectives is explained next.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model: Involvement and Issue-Relevant Thinking

According to the ELM, there are two general routes to persuasion: the central (systematic) and peripheral (heuristic). When processing a persuasive

message via the central route, individuals are said to engage in *issue-relevant thinking*, which, according to O'Keefe (1990), occurs when people attend to and reflect on the issues embedded in a message, a process termed *elaboration* (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Petty and Cacioppo argued that this process of elaboration is central to the ELM. To do this type of thinking, persons must have the capacity and motivation (involvement) to think about the issue in question.

One form of involvement connected with issue-relevant thinking is *value-relevant involvement*, which Johnson and Eagly (1989) defined as "the psychological state that is created by the activation of attitudes that are linked to important values" (p. 290). Once important values and attitudes are activated, people generate specific thoughts (e.g., favorable or unfavorable views of the issue) that are influenced, at least partially, by the strength or quality of the arguments presented in a persuasive message. For instance, the ELM predicts that strong arguments (defined as logical and persuasive) should lead to the generation of favorable thoughts, which then should lead to persuasion in the direction the source intended. Conversely, weak arguments should lead to the generation of unfavorable thoughts and little or no persuasive effects.

When processing via the peripheral route, individuals are said to engage in little or no issue-relevant thinking. In this mode of processing, persons rely on simple decision rules or mental heuristics, such as the attractiveness or credibility of the source. Put another way, persuasion via the peripheral route occurs without scrutinizing the quality of the arguments presented in the message and, generally, is more short-lived than persuasion via the central route.

Using the conceptualization of value-relevant involvement, along with the predictions of the ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), we argue that individuals who report high levels of value-relevant involvement are more likely to engage in issue-relevant thinking than individuals who report low levels of value-relevant involvement. Hence, if an audience member cares about an issue, he or she is more likely to reflect or think seriously about that issue. Regarding the efficacy of the interACT performance, we argue that the negative depictions of aggressive behavior and insensitive comments in the scripted scenes might induce greater value-relevant involvement in audience members than in individuals who are not exposed to the scripted scene. Hence, focusing audience members' attention on negatively valenced consequences that are likely to occur if assertive action is not taken during a sexual assault episode should induce this high level of value-relevant involvement. With this heightened level of value-relevant involvement, audience members may be more likely to engage in issue-relevant thinking about sexual assault. For this reason, questions regarding audience members' value-relevant involvement, as well as their issue-relevant thinking, are

central to understanding and determining the potential impact of these two variables on other theoretically relevant outcomes (e.g., perceived argument quality and subsequent attitude change). With this goal in mind, the following research questions were posed:

- RQ1: Does the interACT performance have an impact on audience members' value-relevant involvement and issue-relevant thinking?
- RQ2: Is audience members' value-relevant involvement related to their issue-relevant thinking?

Affective Learning Model: Affective and Cognitive Learning

According to Rodríguez et al. (1996), "*Affective learning* [italics added] has been conceptualized as a process involving the acquisition or modification and maintenance of positive or negative attitudes toward the subject or teacher" (p. 295). Rodríguez et al. showed that affective learning is an important predictor of *cognitive learning*, defined as the self-perception of how much one has learned (Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney, & Plax, 1987).

Rodríguez et al. (1996) further argued that instructional behaviors, such as teacher immediacy (teachers' display of warmth and caring toward students), increases student affective learning, which leads to cognitive learning. Put another way, the relationship between empathic instructional behaviors and cognitive learning is mediated by affective learning. We were interested, therefore, in discovering if the proactive and empathic qualities stressed by the interACT performance induced affective learning and subsequent cognitive learning. Consistent with this objective, the following research questions were advanced:

- RQ3: Does the interACT performance have an impact on audience members' affective and cognitive learning?
- RQ4: Does audience members' affective learning impact their cognitive learning?

Altruistic and Egoistic Models: Comforting Communication

Communication scholars increasingly have become interested in the comforting messages that individuals engage in to assist distressed others (see,

e.g., Burleson, 1983, 1984; Burleson & Samter, 1985). According to Stiff et al. (1988, p. 210), *comforting* involves individuals responding with helpful behaviors, such as listening or "saying the right thing," when they are in the presence of an emotionally distressed other.

Stiff et al. (1988) explained the production of comforting messages using two theoretical perspectives. The *altruistic model* argues that other-oriented or selfless motivations to comfort distressed others originate from a desire to improve the condition or state of the distressed individual. In contrast, the *egoistic model* claims that the motivation to comfort distressed others arises from self-centered or solipsistic predispositions, such that people comfort distressed others not out of concern for the other person's welfare but, instead, for the purpose of meeting their own ego needs as helpers. Although we are not interested in the motivation to comfort per se, we find these explanations helpful in understanding the potential role of comforting in the distressing aftermath of sexual assault. For this reason, a final research question was posed to assess participants' willingness to comfort in response to the interACT scene:

RQ5: Does the interACT performance have an impact on audience members' willingness to comfort sexual assault survivors?

METHODS

Participants

Four hundred fifty-eight participants were recruited from two sections of the same introductory, mass lecture communication course at a large urban U.S. university. Students from these two sections (an 11:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. section) were randomly selected to participate in one of the two conditions, with a comparable number of participants in each condition ($n = 228-230$). A total of 458 students participated in the study during a regular class period. There were 162 males and 296 females; 270 freshmen, 105 sophomores, 59 juniors, and 24 seniors; and participants ranged in age from 17-32, with an average age of 19.12 years. As a group, ethnic minorities accounted for approximately 56% (the majority) of this sample, with 201 Anglos, 124 Asians, 96 Lationa/os, 28 African Americans, and 9 others/declined to state ethnicity. Participation was voluntary, and no incentive or reward was offered. Rich, as a skilled facilitator, was responsible for introducing the interACT performance, setting up the proactive scenes, and encouraging audience members to come on stage with the peer educators.

Design and Procedures

This study constituted a quasi-experiment using a random selection, posttest-only, control group design, with an experimental condition (the interACT scene) and a control condition (a lecture/demonstration).¹ In the experimental condition, participants first were told that the researchers were interested in "getting your opinions and reactions to a peer-education demonstration," and then were exposed to the proactive performance by interACT. Following the performance, participants were asked to report their levels of value-relevant involvement, affective learning, cognitive learning, issue-relevant thinking, and willingness to comfort. Before participants were dismissed, the purpose of the study was explained in detail.

In the control condition, participants listened to a lecture and demonstration on how to use a web-based instructional program germane to the course content.² The lecture demonstrated (via a live online hook-up) how to use this program to access course assignments, course notes, exam results, and general course information. Following this presentation, participants were told that the researchers were interested in "getting your opinions and reactions to a demonstration," as well as their evaluation of other relevant campus issues (e.g., sexual assault), and participants completed the same instruments administered to the members of the experimental group. Before participants were dismissed, the purpose of the study was explained in detail.

Instrumentation

To test the dimensionality of all of the measures, we analyzed these data using the form of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) developed by Hunter and Gerbing (1982) and operationalized in Hamilton and Hunter's (1991) CFA computer program, which provided the output presented in this section. Consistent with this type of CFA analysis, three criteria were used to evaluate items: (a) item content, (b) internal consistency (whether items measuring the same underlying construct relate to one another in the same way), and (c) parallelism (whether items measuring the same underlying construct relate to other variables assessed in the study in a similar manner). This procedure showed that the measurement model for each instrument (the number of items or indicators per instrument) varied. Specifically, CFAs resulted in the retention of three items on the following scales, which had 4-5 original items: comforting, affective learning, and cognitive learning. The measurement models for the other instruments were unchanged and, consequently, all of the original items were maintained. Results of the tests for internal consistency, parallelism, and reliability are summarized

next. In all cases, participants responded to the items using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Disagree Strongly*, 5 = *Agree Strongly*), with higher scores reflecting more of the variable assessed. Coefficient alpha was used to estimate reliability.

Involvement. The value-relevant involvement scale was comprised of four items: (a) "I care about the issues presented in the demonstration," (b) "The topic of the demonstration was important to me," (c) "I care about the issues presented in the demonstration," and (d) "The topic of the demonstration was valuable." This scale passed the test for internal consistency, with factor loadings ranging from .66 to .92, items were parallel, total test for flat $\chi^2(33) = 4007.38$, $p < .001$, and the reliability of this scale was .76.

Affective learning. To measure affective learning, participants reported the degree to which they liked the demonstration with regard to three items: (a) "I liked the demonstration," (b) "The demonstration was pleasing," and (c) "I enjoyed the demonstration." This scale passed the test for internal consistency, with factor loadings ranging from .76 to .96, items were parallel, total test for flat $\chi^2(33) = 182.48$, $p < .001$, and the reliability of this scale was .86.

Cognitive learning. To assess cognitive learning, participants reported the degree to which they learned something from the demonstration with regard to three items: (a) "I learned from the demonstration," (b) "The demonstration taught me something," and (c) "The demonstration was educational." This scale passed the test for internal consistency, with factor loadings ranging from .84 to .89, items were parallel, total test for flat $\chi^2(33) = 281.68$, $p < .001$, and the reliability of this scale was .79.

Issue-relevant thinking. To measure issue-relevant thinking, participants reported the degree to which the demonstration caused them to think, with the scale comprised of four items: (a) "The demonstration caused me to think," (b) "The demonstration caused me to reflect," (c) "The demonstration caused me to ponder," and (d) "The demonstration caused me to contemplate." This scale passed the test for internal consistency, with factor loadings ranging from .75 to .93, items were parallel, total test for flat $\chi^2(33) = 154.48$, $p < .001$, and the reliability of this scale was .90.

Comforting. To assess this final variable, participants reported their willingness to comfort someone who has been sexually assaulted with regard to three items: (a) "I can comfort a person who has been sexually assaulted," (b) "I could comfort someone who has been sexually assaulted," and (c) "I know how to comfort someone who has been sexually assaulted." This scale passed the test for internal consistency, with factor loadings ranging from .66

to 1.00, items were parallel, total test for flat $\chi^2(33) = 189.39, p < .001$, and the reliability of this scale was .84.

RESULTS

We computed independent sample *t*-tests, as well as correlation coefficients and linear regression analyses to provide an estimate of the effect sizes for these variables. We believe that reporting both the significance and magnitude of effects is important for two reasons. First, given that significance tests are influenced greatly by sample size, an effect may be statistically significant but relatively trivial in terms of magnitude, as determined by the correlation size. Thus, we report effect sizes to be able to identify weak and strong effects. Second, for meta-analytic reasons, we report effect sizes so that future researchers may be able to compare these results with similar studies on performance as communication activism.

The independent sample *t*-tests showed that audience members in the interACT condition ($M = 16.41, SD = 3.05$) reported higher levels of value-relevant involvement than those in the control group ($M = 15.74, SD = 3.12$), $t(455) = 2.33, p = .02, r = .11$. In the interACT condition, linear regression analyses showed that the impact of value-relevant involvement on issue-relevant thinking was significant and substantial, $t(227) = 9.08, p < .001, r = .52$. In addition, individuals in the interACT condition ($M = 13.61, SD = 1.81$) reported higher levels of affective learning than those in the control group ($M = 10.92, SD = 2.61$), $t(456) = 12.83, p < .001, r = .52$. Respondents in the interACT condition ($M = 17.68, SD = 3.90$) also reported higher levels of cognitive learning than those in the control group ($M = 15.67, SD = 3.24$), $t(456) = 6.00, p < .001, r = .27$. In the interACT condition, linear regression analyses showed that the impact of affective learning on cognitive learning was significant and substantial, $t(227) = 6.56, p < .001, r = .40$. Audience members in the interACT condition ($M = 16.51, SD = 3.40$) also reported higher levels of issue-relevant thinking than those in the control group ($M = 11.79, SD = 3.87$), $t(456) = 13.85, p < .001, r = .54$. Finally, individuals in the interACT condition ($M = 13.93, SD = 2.18$) reported higher levels of willingness to comfort than those in the control group ($M = 11.63, SD = 2.80$), $t(450) = 9.76, p < .001, r = .41$.

DISCUSSION

In this study, we examined theoretically relevant outcomes associated with the interACT performance about sexual assault. The results showed that the

participants exposed to this performance, in comparison to control group participants exposed to a lecture and demonstration, found the performance to be more involving, enjoyable, educational, and thought-provoking, and reported a greater willingness to engage in comforting behaviors with someone who has been sexually assaulted. These results have important implications for the efficacy of proactive performance as communication activism. Most importantly, the significant and substantial outcomes connected with the interACT scene demonstrate empirically the efficacy of this performative intervention. These results, however, also need to be understood in relation to the limitations of this study.

Implications

The proactive performance scene may be aptly suited to leading audience members to see the importance of sexual assault by presenting an embodied, interactive human drama. The embodied nature of this process is novel and unexpected because students, especially in educational contexts, are accustomed to more didactic presentations, such as lectures. In our view, the novelty of *praxis*³ demonstrated by the performance not only punctuates the perceived importance of sexual assault but also casts the performative and ultimately transformational elements of this craft on center stage where they belong.

The transformational elements of performance activism may be explained, at least partially, by exploring how the effects of issue-relevant thinking with regard to sexual assault are driven by novelty and task importance. For instance, research shows that a variety of contextual factors affect the likelihood of issue-relevant thinking; two of these conditions are the importance of a task and exposure to unexpected message content (Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991). We believe that the interACT scene provides both of these contextual features, with the relatively unexpected mode of message presentation (the interACT scene), which dramatizes the importance of sexual assault, inducing issue-relevant thinking. Although these two features could be induced in a variety of other ways (e.g., by presenting anecdotal or statistical evidence didactically), we believe that they lend themselves efficaciously to proactive, performance-based interventions, such as the interACT scene.

Also of interest is the fact that both cognitive and affective learning were affected in a significant and substantial manner by the interACT scene. Moreover, affective learning influenced cognitive learning in a manner consistent with previous research (Rodríguez et. al., 1996). These findings are important because they illustrate that a pedagogical modality that is performance based (the interACT scene) and not didactic can influence these

bottom-line instructional goals. Put another way, these results demonstrate that nontraditional, performance-based social activism can lead to important and theoretically relevant learning outcomes. These findings are of particular import considering that traditionally, the teacher has been cast in the all-important, antecedent position of power in the causal chain that leads to cognitive learning (Richmond et al., 1987; Rodríguez et al., 1996). In light of this traditional approach to learning, our findings with regard to affective and cognitive learning are refreshingly seditious. Indeed, this study shows that self-perceived learning can occur when the traditional teacher role is "absent." This finding bodes well for future efficacy studies of nontraditional, performance-based approaches to communication activism.

In terms of comforting women who have been sexually assaulted, this investigation has significant theoretical implications for future research on performance for social change, as well as applied value. In the interpersonal literature, for example, comforting has been linked theoretically to prosocial characteristics, such as empathy (Burlinson & Samter, 1985; Stiff et al., 1988). Specifically, Stiff et al. (1988) showed that when individuals understand (engage in perspective taking) and care about the welfare of another person (demonstrate empathic concern), they are more likely to comfort that person. This result was explained using the altruistic model, with other-oriented motivation as a key predictor of such comforting behavior. In contrast, individuals are less likely to comfort another when they experience emotional responses similar to the distressed other (emotional contagion), a result that was explained using the egoistic model, with self-centered motivation being the key predictor of the lack of engaging in comforting behavior. Given these two results and corresponding explanations, we speculate that because willingness to comfort as a result of exposure to the proactive performance was high in this study, participants were operating from a more altruistic than egoistic motivation.

Within the context of social change and sexual assault, these potential causal chains may explain why individuals do or do not comfort distressed others in the aftermath of sexual assault. In this way, empathy and comforting may be useful within the context of performance-based sexual assault interventions by providing theoretically meaningful conclusions about social change in this specific domain of inquiry. Thus, for theoretical reasons, it would be highly fruitful to further investigate the relationship between empathy and comforting within the context of performance-based sexual assault interventions.

Second, from an applied perspective, future research may help scholars, practitioners, and performance artists to create and enact a model of relevant constructs (specifically, perspective taking, emotional contagion, empathic concern, and comforting) that facilitate the increased demonstration of prosocial behavior in encounters that involve potential sexual assault. With

this knowledge in hand, the research process potentially could go in a number of important directions. For example, if we learn that the interACT scene, or others similar to it, generate empathic concern on the part of audience members, we could begin to map the specific processes that lead to comforting behaviors in potential sexual assault episodes and identify potent prevention variables (e.g., empathic concern and perspective taking). Moreover, by mapping these processes, we may discover that some intervention models do not facilitate empathic concern and, consequently, suffer in terms of efficacy. These interventions then could be reshaped to account for the role of empathy in facilitating prosocial behaviors, such as comforting, in the aftermath of sexual assault. These types of adjustments based on research evidence would yield a well-informed model of performance-based communication activism regarding sexual assault.

The role of value-relevant involvement also was significant, but the size of the effect ($r = .11$), reflected in mean differences, was not large. This result may be explained by the fact that the control group was exposed to a lecture and demonstration germane to course content (the use of web-based instructional software); hence, student involvement seems reasonable, as the topic was personally relevant to students and aligned with their values/needs (e.g., getting a good grade in the course). For these reasons, the results simply may demonstrate that when compared to highly relevant instructional topics, the interACT scene may not be deemed as engaging as topics that are perceived as low in value-relevant involvement (e.g., a lecture students deem to be irrelevant). Viewed from this perspective, the results for involvement may be seen as consistent with what would be expected when an audience is exposed to more "natural" control conditions, as opposed to sterile ones (e.g., an irrelevant lecture) or no stimulus at all (e.g., students simply filling out the posttest measures).

The results related to value-relevant involvement also may be attributed to the specific content or wording of the instrument used to measure this variable. We created a measure of value-relevant involvement aligned with traditional definitions of ego-involvement (i.e., issue involvement or personal relevance). Johnson and Eagly (1989), however, argued that different types of involvement have different types of effects in persuasion research. Specifically, in their meta-analysis, Johnson and Eagly identified three types of involvement. In addition to value-relevant involvement, *impression-relevant involvement* refers to a person's desire to express socially appropriate attitudes and *outcome-relevant involvement* refers to the degree to which an individual believes that an attitude object is related directly to her or his personal goals. Johnson and Eagly demonstrated that "with outcome-relevant involvement, high-involvement subjects were more persuaded than low-involvement subjects by strong arguments and less persuaded by weak arguments" (p. 305). Research participants, thus, were not persuaded as much in

conditions of value or impression-relevant involvement as they were in outcome-relevant conditions.

Based on Johnson and Eagly's (1989) work, outcome-relevant involvement may be better suited than value-relevant involvement for measuring the impact of the interACT scene. More specifically, outcome-relevant involvement has been linked with persuasive outcomes in studies that induce accountability for judgments (Chaiken, 1980) and enhance the importance and consequences of behavior (Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991). Because the interACT scene makes both of these issues salient (i.e., accountability and consequences), we suspect that a measure of outcome-relevant involvement may prove more fruitful than focusing on value-relevant involvement. Interestingly, however, value-relevant involvement had a significant and substantial effect on issue-relevant thinking ($r = .52$) and, therefore, seemed to be a strong predictor variable in this study. Regardless of the particular form of involvement measured in the future, outcomes related to accountability and consequences may be particularly important to assess in performance-based models of communication activism.

Limitations

Although this project revealed some substantial findings regarding the efficacy of proactive performance models, there are several significant limitations to this study that must be acknowledged. The first limitation stems from the use of a quasi-experimental design. One could argue that other factors may have caused these results because we used intact or cohort groups and did not measure them beforehand, and the results, therefore, could be due to the unique characteristics of these groups. Although this may be the case, we attempted to address this concern in several ways. First, every attempt was made to minimize threats to internal validity. For example, the data were collected at the same time period, meaning that there is little to no reasonable effects to be expected with regard to maturation, history, and mortality. Second, the participants came from quite large cohort groups ($n = 228-230$), and they were recruited from a large general education course that services a richly diverse student population, including African American, Latina/o, Asian American, Anglo, and other ethnic groups. Our sample also was diverse in terms of age, class standing, and sex. Thus, idiosyncratic group differences that might have a significant impact on the results with small samples (typical in traditional psychological research) are not as likely in the present study, meaning that a threat in terms of selection also is unlikely.

A second limitation of the study is that we do not know what specific features of the interACT scene produce the observed effects. One could

argue, for example, that the effects observed in the study simply are a function of a change in presentational format (a lecture and demonstration vs. a performance). One also could argue that the observed effects are caused simply by the presentation of sexual assault material in one condition and not in the other; in other words, we would get the same results if participants experienced a lecture or other didactic pedagogy about sexual assault. Given the current data, there is no way of assessing the validity of these potential, alternative interpretations. We do, however, feel confident that the effect sizes reported in the study—(a) $r = .11$, value involvement; (b) $r = .52$, value-relevant involvement and issue-relevant thinking; (c) $r = .52$, affective learning; (d) $r = .27$, cognitive learning; (e) $r = .40$, affective and cognitive learning; (f) $r = .54$, issue-relevant thinking; and (g) $r = .41$, comforting—are of a large enough magnitude to merit serious consideration and further exploration. We also feel confident that we demonstrated that the interACT scene affected theoretically relevant outcome variables in a manner consistent with previous research (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Rodríguez et al., 1996). We think that these latter results are significant given that this project is the first attempt at quantifying Boal's techniques in action. For this reason, we believe that questions regarding ambiguous causal attribution and message features can be answered best by future research that directly compares performance-based interventions with more didactic approaches to communication activism.

The third limitation of the study concerns the difficulty of measuring behaviors and behavior change with regard to sexual assault. Like most studies on this topic, we did not measure actual behavior or behavior change but, rather, participants' perceptions of their involvement, issue-relevant thinking, cognitive learning, affective learning, and comforting. Even if we attempted to measure behavior in the present study (e.g., asking audience members to count the adaptive or functional intervention behaviors they observed during the scene), we do not know what a person would do during an actual sexual assault scenario. We decided to accept this limitation and attempted to assess outcomes based on participants' responses to an interactive, audience-centered simulation of a scene that could lead to sexual assault, as well a scene depicting the aftermath of dating violence.

One could argue that the absence of behavioral data is problematic because the impact of the interACT performance on observable behavior is empirically "unknown." This claim, although potentially valid from the limited perspective of the data presented here, is shortsighted within the larger context of the qualitative dynamics of proactive performance, as well as the currently undefined or latent quantitative dimensions of this phenomenon. Simply put, actual observers of the interACT performance probably would be reluctant to report that supportive behavior was not observed or that no change in behavior (i.e., from unhelpful to helpful) was witnessed during the

performance because they see members of the audience coming up on stage and intervening effectively numerous times during the scripted scenes. Indeed, observers of the interACT performance could be asked to count the number of times they observed a participant come on stage and change one of the characters' or his or her own behavior from unhelpful to helpful.⁴ Although this specific type of behavioral data was not collected in the study, that does not mean that supportive and effective actions were nonexistent in the interventions that were attempted on stage by participants during the scripted scenes. On the contrary, supportive and effective behaviors were present; they simply were not documented empirically. Given these limitations, the conclusions of this study might best be characterized as tentative, yet highly encouraging. One of our major goals in this preliminary study was to collect quantitative data and demonstrate that performance outcomes could be measured efficaciously. With this goal in mind, our study may be viewed as a humble first step in a long-term plan of programmatic research.

LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT PERFORMANCE AS COMMUNICATION ACTIVISM

From this study of proactive performance, we learned pragmatic and philosophical lessons about communication activism. From a pragmatic perspective, we note that Boal's techniques originally were conceived as a tool for revolutionary practice with homogenous populations, who usually can come to a consensus about their oppressive conditions. In contrast, we work with a heterogeneous population of students who may or may not be aware of issues related to sexual assault. Hence, there naturally is little agreement among members of this population about the dynamics of sexual assault, and a lack of clarity about who the oppressors are in the scenes. For example, it is not unusual for students to initially empathize with the boyfriend (Jeremy) and state that he basically is a good guy who gets "riled up" by his antagonistic friend. It is tempting in these moments to fall into a didactic teaching mode and explain to students why they are "wrong." We have learned, however, that audience interventions best illuminate the true nature of the characters.

Second, participatory education can be messy, and a skilled facilitator is needed to ensure that the performance does not become too convoluted. Facilitating proactive performance is a unique skill because one needs to understand theatrical techniques, be comfortable facilitating discussions about controversial topics, and be able to project a level of energy and enthusiasm that fosters an interactive environment. When opportunities for graduate students to facilitate these programs have been provided, a rigor-

ous facilitator training program is needed. To meet this goal, we have recruited graduate students during their first semester of study to work with interACT.

Third, preparing to do proactive performance is a time-consuming task. As Uno (2001) explained in his discussion about the essential aspects of performance and social change, "The first [essential aspect] is paradoxically the easiest and the hardest: being present over a long period of time, enough to establish a commitment and continuum as the work moves forward" (p. 71). This study represents the culmination of 5 years of research and development. Over that period, we have learned that interACT performers need time to learn the scripted scenes, become proficient in improvisational skills, and learn about sexual assault. When students audition for interACT, they understand that they are signing on for a 1-year commitment. Because interACT consistently has a number of returning students, new members typically do not perform until their second semester in the troupe. We believe it is problematic to perform proactive scenes without being knowledgeable about sociopolitical issues. In the worst-case scenario, peer-education groups can perpetuate the very attitudes they are attempting to change. Although interACT attracts students who are committed to social change, many of them still initially hold beliefs that are counterproductive to confronting the problem of sexual assault. We believe it is unethical and, quite frankly, disingenuous to put students on stage who believe, for instance, that women somehow are at fault for their victimization. Students, thus, prepare to perform by learning about sexual assault through reading essays, attending lectures, keeping journals, and rehearsing the scenes during the semester before participating in a performance.

In addition to the pragmatic lessons learned, we were faced with philosophical issues as well. As the first researchers who have attempted to quantitatively measure Boal's techniques, we have come to understand that some performance scholars are not in favor of such research. For example, Jackson (1995) argued that:

As far as I know, no one has yet attempted any follow-up study after a [Boal] workshop: such an initiative would probably be doomed to failure, as we are often dealing with unquantifiable changes which resist statistical analysis; the observable changes are qualitative. (p. xxiv)

In a similar vein, Schutzman (2003) stated that "I find the efficacy yardstick disturbing and inappropriate in realms of art (and I believe that Theatre of the Oppressed lies there fundamentally)" ("Post Workshop Reflections," ¶ 4). It is understandable that these and other performance studies scholars are reticent about embracing the positivist model because performance practitioners are most interested in embodied methodologies—most notably,

ethnography, phenomenology, and autobiographical and performative writing—and quantitative studies can reduce the body to numerical data and, thereby, render it invisible.

Considering the perceived binary distinction drawn between quantitative and more embodied methodologies, perhaps it is not surprising that scholars in performance studies may view quantitative researchers as the “other,” a position that may be warranted but limits dialogue—and possibilities—nonetheless. We believe that quantitative analysis need not be conflated with positivism, and that there is great potential for using both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore performance efficacy. In fact, as Bavelas (1995) explained, the “Yin and Yang” of these diverse modes of inquiry can be complementary:

The set of quantitative versus qualitative research is usually constructed as consisting of only two elements in a relationship of opposition. . . . These differences are socially constructed, and to the extent that we insist on maintaining them, we will severely limit the number of approaches we can invent to explore our common interests. (pp. 51-52)

Although we are sensitive to the concerns of our performance studies colleagues, we ultimately concluded that the heuristic value of measuring performance efficacy, combined with the opportunity to potentially reduce sexual assault, outweighed the potential downfalls. For scholar-artists who facilitate proactive performances, it may be useful to consider the impact of these techniques using quantitative measures to know whether this pedagogy facilitates sociopolitical change. As performance studies scholar Park-Fuller (2003) argued, “Community action research must include the gathering of hard data on which we can base our claims” (p. 290).

We are deeply interested in employing a variety of methodological techniques—both qualitative and quantitative—to discern the impact of the interACT program. In direct response to Schutzman’s (2003) argument that art and efficacy should not be conflated, Logan (2003) noted:

My view is that art—like any symbolic action—is inherently efficacious in that it somehow influences an audience who experiences it. I believe this is inescapable. Thus, I believe that where TO lies is not an either/or proposition, it is both art and politics, that we need not choose between these poles of an imagined continuum. (“Expanding the Boundaries of Joking; Kudos and Some Cautions,” ¶ 5)

We agree with Logan’s assertion and argue that the prohibition in performance studies against using quantitative methods is an arbitrary one.

What emerges in our work is a third worldview—a space where quantitative research and performance *praxis* meet to enact and assess a perspective of social change and activism in everyday life. From this perspective, the objective stance of quantitative assessment combines with the intersubjective and embodied experience of proactive performance. These two worldviews, thus, can coexist in a dialectical tension, such that each provides a profound perspective that can be discerned only by holding both of them in awareness. This “holding in awareness” of two supposed alternative truths is the core element of a third worldview that leads to communication activism and social change as informed by these two complementary truths. Perhaps most interestingly, by employing this worldview, our work has produced quantitative results that demonstrate the types of effects that performance scholars have known intuitively all along—showing that “the proof is in the pudding.”

CONCLUSION

Considering the devastating impact that sexual assault has on college campuses, proactive peer-education programs are worth implementing and evaluating. After conducting a study on a traditional prevention model, Borden, Karr, and Caldwell-Colbert (1988) concluded that “didactic [sexual assault] training is insufficient to change attitudes. This study would support the need to introduce new, more dynamic, vivid interactive program formats to enhance the desired effects of consciousness raising, attitude change, and empathy toward rape” (p. 135). The interACT performance is one such attempt to employ a proactive performance to change people’s attitudes and behaviors toward sexual assault and those who are victims of it.

One week after a recent interACT performance, we were contacted by two audience members, who revealed that a close friend of theirs had been sexually assaulted, and that they knew how to respond appropriately as a direct result of the interACT performance. We also have heard from numerous audience members who have intervened in situations that could have led to a sexual assault. We contend that the feedback we have received from audience members who respond in proactive ways to prevent sexual assault and help sexual assault survivors are not isolated incidents but, rather, a validation of the findings of this study.

Kushner’s (2001) quote provides a nice frame for considering the potential of performance as communication activism to promote social change: “Art is not merely contemplation, it is also action, and all action changes the world, at least a little” (p. 62). When students are challenged to become communication activists, to be proactive and prevent sexual assault during an

interACT performance, it is our great hope that they will be transformed into agents of change in their community.

NOTES

1. We employed intact group assignment (Campbell, 1969), in which one of two aggregate sample groups rather than individual participants were randomly "selected" for exposure to the interACT scene, and the other aggregate group was exposed to a lecture/demonstration. Random selection was operationalized by assigning each group a number (1 for the 11 a.m. section and 2 for the 12:30 p.m.), and then drawing these numbers from a hat. The first number drawn represented the group exposed to the interACT scene; the next number referenced the lecture/demonstration group. We did not employ random assignment at the individual participant level because the logistics of randomly assigning 458 students to two conditions would have presented several challenges that we wanted to avoid. For instance, students potentially would be required to come to class at an hour other than their regularly scheduled class time, creating scheduling conflicts for some students because they had another class at that hour. Equally important, students may have become confused about or forgot what time they were supposed to show up because their randomly assigned time was inconsistent with their habitualized class schedule. The likely results of these problems would have been a lower overall sample size and a potential validity threat related to selection because students would self-select out of the study for reasons beyond our control (e.g., scheduling conflicts, confusion, and forgetfulness).
2. This type of control condition was used because it is consistent with the vast majority of control conditions employed in the research on sexual assault reviewed for the purposes of conducting this study (e.g., Black et al., 2000; Borden et al., 1988; Frazier, Valtinson, & Candell, 1994; Holcolmb et al., 1993; Lanier et al., 1988). By using this type of control condition, the results from this study can be generalized most efficaciously to the existing body of literature on sexual assault.
3. This term is used in a manner consistent with dialectical materialism, which postulates that comprehension, prognostication, or forecasting of life events is determined primarily through enactment or behavioral practice instead of deduction (Reese, 1993). From this perspective, *praxis* is defined as "action in the world for a specific purpose, or goal-directed activity" (Robins, Schmidt, & Linehan, 2004, p. 34).
4. One reason we did not ask audience members to report "perceived" behavior change in these ways is because we were under enormous time constraints. The class sections used in our sample met for only 50 minutes, and the interACT scenes took up all of that time. Furthermore, we had to pass out and collect over 200 questionnaires in a timely manner for each section. Thus, we had to ask the participants to stay an extra 10 minutes to complete the posttest measures. Given these time constraints, we decided to keep the measures as short as possible.

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