

**QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT:
ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCREAM THEATER
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Department of Sexual Assault Services & Crime Victim Assistance
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SCREAM THEATER: QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes the background, methodology, and findings for a research study conducted by the Department of Sexual Assault Services and Crime Victim Assistance at Rutgers University. This study assessed the effectiveness of a peer educational theater program in changing first-year students' attitudes and behaviors related to sexual violence. The final sample analyzed for this report included 1981 first-year students for the pre-test and 987 first-year students for the post-test. A quantitative survey was administered before and after viewing SCREAM Theater. Results indicate that SCREAM was effective in changing students' attitudes and behaviors related to sexual violence, and that this change was demonstrated across many demographic variables. Limitations of the study will also be discussed as well as suggestions for further research.

Literature Review

Sexual assault on college campuses is not a new phenomenon. According to statistics compiled by Koss, Gidycz and Wisniewski (1987), 20-25% of all college women will experience rape or attempted rape. A decade after this landmark publication, studies indicate that sexual assault is still a serious problem on college campuses. A 1998 study by the National Institute of Justice found that 29.4% of women victimized by rape were between the ages of 18-24 at the time of the incident. The National College Women Victimization Study (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000) estimates that approximately 5 percent (4.9%) of college women are victimized in any given calendar year. The study also estimates that during their stay at a four year college the percentage of completed or attempted rapes might climb to between one-fifth and one quarter.

Many of the researchers who focus on the interpersonal causes of sexual assault have identified problematic attitudes towards sexual relationships among college students as a major factor in sexual assault cases (Baier, Rosenzweig, & Whipple, 1991;

Bostwick, DeLucia-Waack, & Watson, 1995; Briere and Malamuth, 1983; Sandberg, Jackson, & Petretic-Jackson 1987). Harrison, Downes, & Williams (1991) found evidence that "some students may believe that there are circumstances when sexual aggression may be justified or that the victim may be responsible" (Harrison et al., 1991, 131). Similarly, Bostwick et al. (1995) found that men give certain reasons used to justify forced intercourse.

As a result of the belief that student attitudes are related to the incidence of sexual assault, many prevention programs have been designed to address these attitudes. Several researchers have provided evaluations and descriptions of various sexual assault prevention programs that specifically attempt to change student attitudes about gender stereotypes and sexual assault (Abbey, 1991; Baier et al., 1991; Berkowitz, 1994; Borden, Karr, & Caldwell-Colbert, 1988; Bostwick et al., 1995; Earle 1996; Foubert and Marriott, 1997; Hanson and Gidycz, 1993; Harrison et al., 1991; Holcolmb, Sarvela, Sondag, & Holcomb, 1993; Lenihan, Rawlins, Eberly, Buckley & Masters, 1992; Schaeffer and Nelson, 1993). Many of these studies utilized a pre-test, educational intervention, post-test design to determine if the program was successful in achieving its outcomes; such as changing rape supportive attitudes (Lenihan et al., 1992), increasing awareness of the occurrence of sexual assault (Holcomb et al., 1993), augmenting empathy and sensitivity towards rape victims (Borden et at., 1988), and changing prevailing attitudes of university students towards rape (Harrison et al., 1991). Many of these programs focus on changing student's adherence to "rape myths", defined by Burt (1980) as "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists" (Burt, 1980, 217).

Project description and purpose

Beginning in 1998, The Department of Sexual Assault Services and Crime Victim Assistance at Rutgers University began a two-year project to assess the effectiveness of its primary educational program, SCREAM Theater. SCREAM (Students Challenging Realities and Educating Against Myths) Theater is a peer educational, improvisational

theater program used to facilitate discussion about issues of interpersonal violence. SCREAM is designed to change student attitudes and behaviors about sexual violence by presenting facts about the issues using interactive theater. The program is reality based, as students create scenes that depict situations common to the audience and discuss the myths that many people hold about violence. The program also includes an opportunity for audience members to question the peer educators both as the characters they play in the scene and as the students they actually are. This aspect of the program allows audience members to challenge what they have seen and the performers to present accurate information on the issues, resources, and on their commitment to educating against interpersonal violence.

Although it was clear to many people on campus that SCREAM was having an impact, this had never been documented nor had the program been formally assessed. Grant funding received in January 1998 allowed for the design of a two-year, quasi-experimental study to assess the effectiveness of SCREAM in changing the attitudes of first-year students at Rutgers.

Based on a review of the literature about effective sexual assault prevention programs and the assertion that student attitudes about interpersonal violence are directly linked to the occurrence of sexual violence, this assessment was designed primarily to measure student attitudes about sexual assault. However, a gap in previous evaluations has been to focus exclusively on student attitudes without also assessing the impact of programs on student behavior. Therefore, this study was designed to also measure the impact of SCREAM on self-reported behaviors related to sexual violence. Additionally, the principal investigator designed the study to determine if SCREAM impacted all students in similar ways, or whether different demographic groups responded in varied ways to the program.

In summary, the principal investigator designed the research study to assess the impact of SCREAM Theater and to answer the two following major research questions:

- Does SCREAM have a positive impact on students' attitudes and behaviors towards sexual violence?
- Are there differences in the effectiveness of SCREAM based on gender, race, age, participation in athletic or fraternity/sorority organization, exposure to previous programming on sexual assault, or knowledge of a person being assaulted?

Methodology

This study used a quantitative, quasi-experimental pre-test, post-test, and follow up post-test design to assess the impact of the program. The study was conducted with two separate samples: students from the incoming class of Rutgers College in Fall 1998 and Fall 1999. Each sample was administered the survey three times. The first administration was conducted on the first day students were in the residence halls prior to seeing the SCREAM Theater performance at New Student Orientation. All students were administered the same test at the same time of the day. Residence hall staff read a script written by the principal investigator instructing students how to complete the inventory. Students completed the inventories anonymously, and to comply with university protocol governing human subjects testing, students completed an informed consent but these were separated from the inventory immediately. Students were guaranteed anonymity in the directions read by the residence hall staff and again in the informed consent. All inventories, completed and incomplete, were placed in a sealed envelope and collected that day by the principal investigator.

The administration of the first post-test was conducted immediately following the viewing of SCREAM Theater the next day at orientation. The second post-test was administered in mid-November, allowing a 2.5 month period to determine if SCREAM's impact on attitudes and behaviors could be maintained.

The same test administration schedule was followed in Fall, 1999 with one exception. The second post-test was not administered until January, when students

returned to campus for the Spring semester. This was intended to ease some of the difficulties encountered in actually administering the test and also allowed for a 4-month interval between the treatment (SCREAM) and the testing.

Instruments

Attitude and behavior change were measured through the administration of three surveys: the Scale for the Identification of Acquaintance Rape Attitudes (SIARA) and the two-part College Date Rape Attitude and Behavior Scale (CDRABS).

The SIARA is an unpublished inventory developed specifically for use in evaluating a peer education theater program. The Scale for the Identification of Acquaintance Rape Attitudes (SIARA) was designed to measure attitudes about acquaintance rape, including individual beliefs about dating, sex and rape (Humphrey & Hillenbrand-Gunn, 1996). The scale is composed of thirty-three items and is measured by a six point Likert scale from (0) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Examples of individual items include: “after a woman agrees to have sexual intercourse, it is OK for her to change her mind”; “any time a woman dresses seductively, she is indicating that she is willing to have sexual intercourse”; and “when women claim they were raped, it is usually because they have regrets about letting sexual activity go too far.” The SIARA was developed to address some of the problems identified in other measures of rape attitudes, particularly those in Burt’s (1980) Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Humphrey & Hillenbrand-Gunn, 1996). Based on a review of the literature, acquaintance rape was defined as “nonconsensual sexual activity between persons who are engaged in a platonic, dating, marital, professional, academic or familial relationship” (Humphrey & Hillenbrand-Gunn, 1996). A higher score on the SIARA indicates a greater acceptance of rape-supportive attitudes, with a potential range for a total score of 0 (lowest acceptance of rape supportive attitudes) to 165 (highest acceptance of rape supportive attitudes).

The CDRABS was published in 1997 and contains two separate inventories. The CDRABS- A was designed to measure attitudes about dating and sexual violence. This measure contains twenty items and is measure on a five point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Examples of individual questions include, “Males and females should share the expenses of the date”, “If a woman asks a man out on a date then she is definitely interested in having sex”, and “In most cases when a woman is assaulted she was asking for it”.

The CDRABS- B was designed to assess individual behaviors associated with sexual violence. This inventory contains 7 items and is also measured on a five point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Examples of individual questions include, “I stop the first time my date says ‘no’ to sexual activity” and “I won’t stop sexual activity when asked to if I am already sexually aroused”. Unlike the SIARA, a lower score on both CDRABS-A and CDRABS-B indicates attitudes or behavior that are more rape-supportive. The potential range in total scores for the CDRABS-A is 22 (highest acceptance of rape supportive attitudes) to 110 (lowest acceptance). For the CDRABS-B, the range for a total score is 7-35.

Both the SIARA and CDRABS were selected by the principal investigator because they were relatively new, had reasonable reliability and validity, and were among the few assessment tools available for this type of evaluation (see Appendix 1 for a copy of the instruments).

Sample

The sample consisted of students from Rutgers College on the New Brunswick campus. The choice not to include other colleges at Rutgers University was made by the principal investigator to maximize return, guarantee a balanced gender sample and to allow accessibility for follow-up testing later in the academic year. The sample was also limited to those students living in residence halls.

Due to a variety of reasons, the final sample that was able to be analyzed statistically included the pretest and first posttest from Year 1 only. The reasons why the other surveys could not be included in data analysis included difficulties with administering the surveys consistently; failure of subjects to provide an identification number which did not allow matching; incomplete surveys; failure to complete informed consent; data entry errors; and small response rates for the three month post test. The combination of these complications rendered the other samples too small and problematic to be considered valid. These obstacles will be further discussed under “Limitations”. While smaller in scope than originally intended, the final sample still provided helpful information about the attitudes about violence held by students and the impact of SCREAM.

The final sample used for analysis included 1981 students for the pretest, and 989 students for the posttest. The demographics of the two samples are described in Table 1. Both samples were strikingly similar in the distribution of demographics.

Table 1 Descriptive Categories		Pretest	Posttest
Gender	Male	49%	50%
	Female	51%	50%
Ethnicity	White	56%	57%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	25%	24%
	Black	6%	6%
	Mexican American/ Hispanic	6%	7%
	Multiracial	2%	2%
	American Indian/Alaskan Native	<1%	<1%
Age	Mean	17.86	17.90
	SD	0.56	0.57
Athlete (participating in intercollegiate, NCAA sports)		12%	12%
Intending to pledge a fraternity/sorority		6%	7%
First in family to attend college		28%	29%
Previously attended a sexual assault program		34%	33%
Know someone who was sexually assaulted		35%	36%

Results

The data was carefully reviewed and cleaned prior to analysis. Total scores were computed for each individual for each of the three inventories: the SIARA, CDRABS–A, and CDRABS-B. Descriptive statistics were run according to each demographic variable.

Overall, the change in mean scores between the pre-tests and post-tests indicate that SCREAM had a positive impact across the board on student attitudes and behaviors related to sexual violence. For the SIARA, a positive change in attitudes was indicated by a decreased score. The overall pretest mean score for the SIARA was 51.0, and after viewing SCREAM, the post-test mean decreased to 44.5.

For the CDRABS surveys, a positive change in attitudes and behaviors was indicated by an increased total score. For the CDRABS-A, the overall pretest mean was 78.5 and the post-test was 81.0. For the CDRABS-B, the pretest was 25.8 and the post-test was 26.6. These changes in mean scores indicate that viewing SCREAM Theater did have a positive impact on attitudes and behaviors related to sexual violence.

Comparison of the change in means from the pre-test to post-test on the SIARA and CDRABS by demographic variables indicates that positive changes in attitudes and behaviors occurred virtually across the board. Analysis of all categories under each demographic variable (ethnicity, age, athlete status, intention to pledge a fraternity or sorority, first or not in family to attend college, previous attendance at a sexual assault program, and knowing someone who was sexually assaulted) indicated a positive change in attitudes and behaviors as measured by the SIARA and CDRABS.

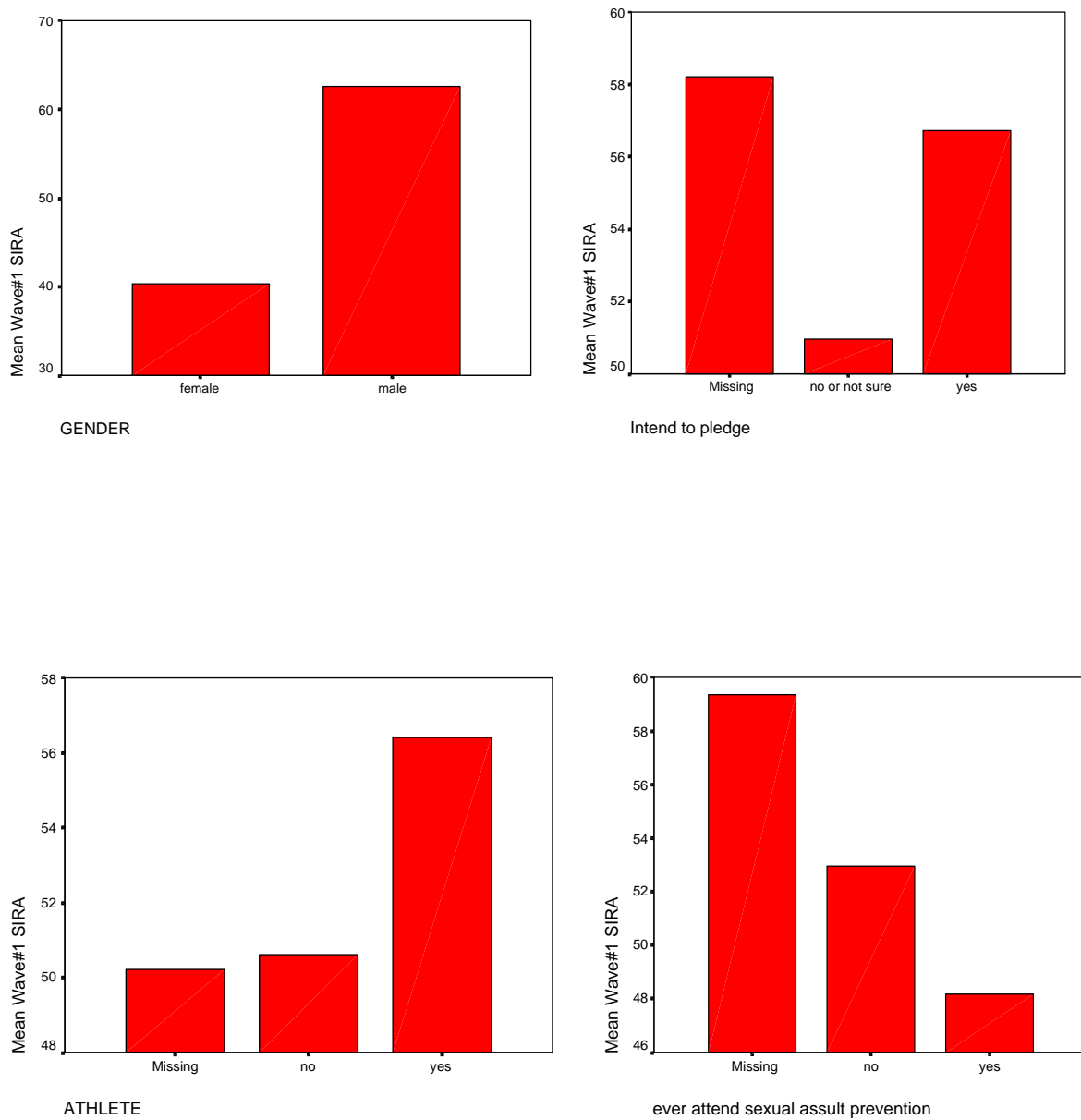
The one exception to this finding was gender. SCREAM Theater did not seem to impact female attitudes in the desired direction. As demonstrated in Table 2, female attitudes on the post-test SIARA increased from the pre-test, and decreased on the CDRABS-A post-test, which indicates an increased acceptance of rape supportive attitudes after viewing the program. However, the changes were small, and additionally,

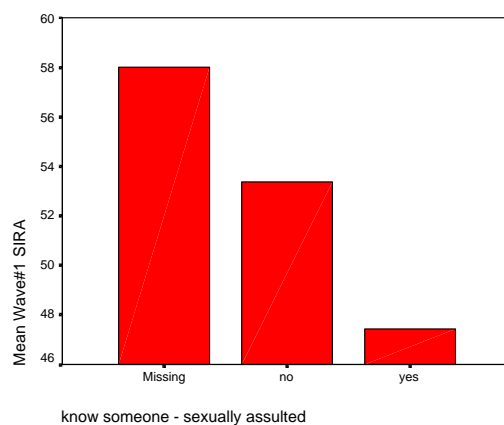
the results from the CDRABS-B, which measures behaviors, indicates that females did change in the desired direction. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted with the sample and confirmed that gender was the only variable that contained different responses to SCREAM.

Table 2 Pre-test to post-test mean scores by gender			
Instrument	Gender	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean
SIARA	Total	51.0	44.5
	Male	61.7	44.6
	Female	40.4	44.3
CDRABS- Behavior	Total	25.8	26.6
	Male	25.6	26.7
	Female	26.0	26.5
CDRABS- Attitude	Total	78.5	81.0
	Male	73.8	81.0
	Female	83.1	80.8

Another interesting finding was that certain groups scored higher on the pre-test, indicating that they came into Rutgers holding a higher acceptance of rape-supportive attitudes. Males, athletes, those intending to pledge a fraternity or sorority, those who had not previously attended a sexual assault program, and those who did not know someone who was sexually assaulted all provided higher means on the SIARA pre-test than their counterparts (see Figure 1). These differences were not as significant for the CDRABS.

Figure 1: SIARA pre-test scores by demographic variables
("Missing" category indicates the mean score of those who did not identify in this category)





Discussion

The results of the pre-test and post-test indicate that SCREAM Theater did have a positive impact on student attitudes and behaviors related to sexual violence. The positive impact applied across the board, as these results manifested even when controlling for various demographic variables such as ethnicity, age, and status as an athlete or Greek pledge. Therefore, on a basic and general level, this assessment supports the notion that SCREAM Theater is an effective tool for impacting the attitudes and behaviors of first-year students at Rutgers University.

The one exception to these results is that SCREAM did not have a positive impact on female attitudes, as demonstrated by both the SIARA and CDRABS-A results. While the changes were small, the results indicate that female attitudes actually changed in the direction opposite of the desired outcome. It is important to note that despite this finding, female scores still reflected a significantly lower acceptance of rape-supportive attitudes than male scores. However, it is a point worth investigating further to discover why females do not seem to react in the desired direction. Possibilities may include that the SCREAM presentation causes females to feel more vulnerable to sexual violence and therefore espouse increased victim-blaming attitudes as a reaction of self-protection (i.e. “If the victim was drinking, it was her fault, and since I don’t drink, I can’t be a victim”). It could also be that the scenes are not as realistic to female members of the audience.

These are all hypothetical possibilities and further research needs to pinpoint the reasons.

Another interesting finding was that certain groups reflected a significantly higher acceptance of rape supportive attitudes and behaviors on the pre-test; namely, males, athletes, those who intended to pledge the Greek system, those who did not previously attend a sexual assault program and those who did not know someone who was sexually assaulted. Members of these categories held significantly different scores than their counterparts. This is an important finding because it suggests that certain cultures (such as those of masculinity, athletes, fraternities) may be more rape supportive than others. This has certainly been discussed in previous research studies, and this study serves to confirm the existence of this difference. It is important to further investigate why these populations have a higher acceptance of rape supportive attitudes and to possibly integrate this into audience-specific programming. For example, further research on why athletes may hold more rape supportive beliefs may generate information that could be useful for creating specific programming to address these issues for athletes.

The finding that those who had previously attended a sexual assault program held lower acceptances of rape supportive attitudes and behaviors suggests that prevention programming does have a positive and long term impact. However, the information is not detailed enough to provide a firm conclusion- we do not know what type of programming the students viewed previously, nor when it was viewed. Additionally, it is possible that previous programming gave students the “right” answers to provide on the survey.

The fact that those people who know someone who was sexually assaulted held lower acceptances of rape supportive attitudes and behaviors is also an interesting finding. It suggests that making the connection that this can happen to someone you know may be important. This may also suggest that programs that include personal testimony of a peer may have a positive impact on attitudes and behaviors, although this is a type of programming that obviously needs to be handled in an extremely careful and

protected way to avoid exploitation of victims. However, this is a finding that would serve as an important topic for further investigation.

Limitations

This study had several limitations that deserve attention. First, the problems with sampling obviously narrowed the focus of the study. The inability to use the follow-up post-test did not allow us to measure any long-term impact of SCREAM on attitudes and behaviors. This long-term measurement is important to determine, as it is possible that the effects of programs like SCREAM are only temporary. Future studies should examine the long-term impact.

The inability to use the second year of data was another obvious and major limitation. It is critical to the reliability and validity of research findings to be able to replicate findings, and having a second wave of data for analysis would have strengthened the findings. However, the reality of conducting a major research study over two years proved overwhelming and provided lessons for future studies to focus on a more feasible sample.

Another limitation was that the study did not use a measure for social desirability. While there were noteworthy variations in the scores of different demographic groups (i.e. males versus females), overall, the scores indicated fairly low acceptances of rape supportive beliefs. A closer analysis of the SIARA indicated that for both males and females, variability among the responses of most of the thirty-three items was low and the skew was high. This indicates that either students actually overwhelmingly adopt socially correct attitudes and our prevention efforts are unnecessary, or there is a response bias present. Assuming the latter, the biased results of this study suggest some revisions for future development of instruments to more accurately measure student attitudes about issues of sexual assault.

For a serious issue like sexual assault, students may feel pressured to give the politically or socially “correct” answer rather than what they truly feel. This raises questions about both the administration and design of the instrument. The fact that the students in this study knew that the survey was being administered through the Department of Sexual Assault Services may have increased their likelihood to provide socially desirable responses. The department’s sponsorship of the study was clearly conveyed to each respondent at the time the survey was distributed and also appeared on the cover letter. Perhaps administration from a more “neutral” source would be beneficial.

In addition to the process of distributing the survey, tools are available to assess the true impact of social desirability upon responses. The issue of social desirability has been extensively examined by several researchers (e.g. Crowne and Marlowe, 1964; Paulhus, 1984) and applied to the measurement of similar sensitive issues such as intimate violence (Sugarman and Hotaling, 1997); HIV (Latkin and Vlahov, 1998); and sexuality (Meston, Heiman, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 1998). Researchers have recognized the impact of social desirability and have accounted for this in the design of the instrument through the employment of mechanisms such as the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne and Marlowe, 1964). The social desirability research should be consulted when devising future sexual assault measurement instruments to build in appropriate tests for social desirability so that the results reflect greater accuracy.

Second, the need for a guarantee of anonymity for respondents is emphasized by these results. While the administration of this survey included explicit statements that students would remain anonymous, they were still required to sign an informed consent form and provide the last four digits of their social security numbers. While they were told that these numbers were unidentifiable information and would only be used to match first, second, and third wave responses, perhaps the submission of even the slightest self-identifying information causes suspicion by respondents and therefore biased responses. This suggests that the request for demographic information and any other self-identifying information be kept to an absolute minimum. For the purposes of matching pre-tests and post-tests, perhaps students can be given a random number or

some other meaningless code. Identifying information could be eliminated entirely if the change in groups was measured rather than in individuals. Informed consent is a more problematic issue but perhaps more creative means can be explored.

Lastly, according to this study, a six point Likert scale may provide too wide a range of possible answers. Instead, respondents mostly used 0, 1, 2, and occasionally 3 to answer questions. This supports the use of a four or perhaps five point scale in the future.

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