

**SCREAM Athletes: Assessing the impact of participation in a peer
education, interpersonal violence prevention program**

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of this exploratory study is to examine the impact on peer educators of participation in a student-athlete university sexual assault prevention program, Students Challenging Realities and Educating Against Myths (SCREAM) Theater. This research is following up on a previous study conducted with members of the non-athlete SCREAM Theater program to determine the impact of participation in a peer education program. This study sought to explore similar themes, such as how peer educators who deliver prevention programs are affected by this work, and the impact peer educators' role in prevention has on their interactions with students outside of these programs. In particular, this study explored whether the peer educators perceived the program and their participation as positively affecting their teams and the larger student-athlete culture.

Participants in this study were fourteen peer educators responsible for delivering an innovative improvisational theater program designed to challenge student-athletes' attitudes about interpersonal violence, including emotional abuse, physical violence, and sexual assault. Qualitative data regarding the impact of the program on peer educators and on their interactions with students were collected using structured, in-depth interviews with this sample of peer educators.

METHODOLOGY

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with fourteen former or current members of SCREAM Athletes to determine their perception of the program as well as its impact on a variety of variables, including participant's skills, leadership ability,

knowledge base about interpersonal violence, and own intimate relationships. The interview guide was created by the researcher in conjunction with the Director of the Sexual Assault Services Department and the interviewer. Some of the questions were based on a previous study conducted with peer educators in the “sister” SCREAM program to determine if results would be similar for the two programs.

A combination of purposive, criterion-based and convenience sampling was used to gather respondents. All active current and past members were included on a master list and then those with contact information were invited to participate. Active membership was defined as belonging to the program for at least one year, including participating in performances as well as training meetings. Members were initially only recruited from the current program (1998- 2003). Twenty-two participants were identified as active members, and contact information was available for fifteen members and of those, eleven agreed to participate.

Because of the small sample size, members of the original program started in 1992 were also recruited using a convenience sample. Of the five original members, four were located and three agreed to an interview. Therefore, the total sample was fourteen.

Interviews were conducted by a trained graduate student and all were audio-taped. Each interview lasted approximately one and one-half hours. When possible, the interviews were conducted in person at one of the student centers on campus. Phone interviews were conducted with six participants who graduated and lived a distance.

Cross-case analysis was conducted using content analysis to identify the major themes emerging from the data (Patton, 1990). The author first reviewed the transcripts of each interview, using the three research questions as sensitizing concepts. Interview transcriptions were used for 19 of the interviews. Emerging themes were identified and categories of findings were created based on identified themes. The data were then coded according to theme, and frequencies for each theme were calculated.

RESULTS

The interviews covered a range of topics, including questions about being a part of the SCREAM Athletes program as well as the personal impact on peer educators. The results fall under the following categories: perspectives on the program and performing; reactions of others to the peer educators' involvement in the program; impact on skill and knowledge development, and the affect on interactions with peers outside of the program.

I. PROGRAM AND PERFORMANCES

Peer educators were asked about being a part of the SCREAM Athletes program and what their experience was like performing skits on sexual assault and dating violence for audiences. Specifically, they were asked about why they joined and stayed involved in the program, how they experienced the process of playing various roles in the skits, and how they perceived audience reactions to the skits.

Joining SCREAM Athletes

One set of questions posed to interviewees concerned joining SCREAM Athletes. Respondents discussed why they joined the program, what fears and barriers they encountered, why they stayed involved, and their perceptions of the group dynamics.

Most of the respondents (n=8) joined the program because they were invited to a SCREAM Athletes meeting by another member. Out of those, four respondents reported that they were invited by a teammate and four said that they were invited or “dragged” by one of the Coordinators of the program who were also on their team.

Four other members said that they joined because they saw a performance, were interested and decided to sign up afterwards for more information, and another person heard about it through a friend and went to a meeting.

One man reported that he joined because his college girlfriend had been raped and he wanted to take some form of action and help others. He said, “...it really started out as my concern about my girlfriend at the time, having been sexually assaulted and not resolving it, and uh, wanting to learn more to help her”.

When asked about their fears about joining, seven respondents indicated that they were nervous about acting and/or getting up in front of people to speak. More specifically, they were anxious about acting out the intimate scenes, wondering if they would be effective, and nervous especially about acting in front of peers and people with whom they had a personal connection.

Once they joined the program, members felt overwhelmingly that the major barrier to their involvement was the time commitment. Of the ten people asked about barriers they perceived, nine said it was finding enough time to do something in addition

to sports and academics. Additionally, one person cited the need for consistent income as a barrier to being more involved.

When asked why they stayed involved after joining, eleven respondents mentioned feeling that they were making a positive impact on other students. One graduated member said, "...we all really cared, I think, about the program and just like, making a difference. I think we all thought we were making a difference". Some respondents talked about their membership in SCREAM Athletes as a process, and admitted that they first joined because they were interested in acting or it seemed like an interesting activity, but as they became involved they learned more about the issues and felt it was important to educate others. For example, one Woman's Crew member said, "Like at first I think it appealed to me as a way to do something else...it is fun to act and all that stuff but now at this point I think the issues are really most important and trying to get people involved".

Six respondents reported that the camaraderie they shared with the other athletes in the program was a reason they stayed involved, and three people cited acting as a reason they continue to participate. Two people said that they have become so involved in the program as coordinators that it is part of their identity, as one man commented that SCREAM Athletes "is just part of me now".

When asked about the dynamics of the group in SCREAM Athletes, thirteen members felt they were positive, based on a sense of teamwork. One member said he would characterize it instead as a "working relationship". However, eleven other respondents said that they felt "very close" to the other members of the group, using descriptions such as "having a close bond", "like a family", and "camaraderie". Most of

the members felt that they all shared the goal of making a difference, specifically for the student-athlete community. For example, one woman commented, "...everyone who does it, they seem to get along very well and I guess part of it too is because obviously if you're here, you want to make a difference...It's just the chance to step it up, and get rid of you know, stigma that surrounds us as athletes".

Four respondents commented that there were sometimes conflicts, ranging from people showing up late to certain people dominating the group in terms of ideas about the skits. None of these four respondents felt that the conflicts were unmanageable, however.

Getting into character

Interviewees discussed the process of playing various characters and their likes and dislikes about the roles, as well as the impact on them personally. The men spoke about playing the roles of the abuser and rapist, while the women talked about being the victim and victim's friends.

Four of the men discussed playing the abuser and/or rapist. Three of the four men reported that it was "difficult", "really hard", and "uncomfortable" to play these roles. Two men described how challenging it was to play a character who was so different from them, and how it felt wrong to be displaying abusive behaviors, even though they knew they were acting. For example, one man explained,:

I could feel like every curse word I say at the girl, or every name I call her, every comment I make that I know puts her down, I know inside, deep down, it's wrong. It's not even deep down, it's right there. It's like I know, and so the fact that I keep going and going and going, you know I do get in the heat of the moment and it's like, constantly attacking her. Once I get off the stage, once my scene is done, anybody who's been in the skit with me knows I'm shaking at the end

because I'm just like, "Oh man", you know. I'm like, "That's just wrong, I can't believe I did that". So after the skit's over, I always go up to the girl I'm abusing and say, "I'm so sorry", this and that, "I didn't mean a single thing".

Another man said that "the most difficulty in that role [abuser] is that it's not me". He also found it difficult to play the rapist because it brought up issues for him regarding the sexual assault of his girlfriend, as it reminded him of what happened to her.

Additionally, three men felt that the physical aspects of playing the rapist- such as becoming physically intimate with another member of the group in front of an audience- were uncomfortable and one man said for that reason, he really disliked playing that role.

Two men felt that playing the role of the abuser was upsetting because it pointed to the reality that everyone has the potential to act in this way. One man explained,

I think the part that is always hard to swallow with that, you know, it was comfortable because I knew it wasn't me, but at the same time, it's all of us. You know, we all have the potential, men and women alike, to be assailants, to be perpetrators, and so there's that dissidence, "Well it's not me", cause I know it's not me, but at the same time, it could be me, it could be her, it could be anyone.

Similarly, another man described how he could relate to the abuser because of his own violent upbringing, and how it frightened him that he felt some of the same emotions he expressed during the skit in his own life. He said, "I hate to say it, and I'm also guilty of it too. Like I realize it...somebody really irks me, I'll just go off for a minute, and then I'll just never realize what happens, and then I'll just come out of it and be like, 'I'm sorry, I really didn't mean to do that'".

At the same time that the men expressed discomfort with playing these roles, they also discussed their belief that playing these characters was crucial because it

provided an important message to the audience. They liked that they were able to play these roles in ways that engaged the audience members and opened up the opportunity to educate their peers. One man said, "I'm a nice guy, don't worry, but you know, you really want to send a message out, and a lot of times I think I could send it out... You really have to get into that bad guy thing which no one wants to see, you know, things that people don't want to talk about".

Four of the women discussed their experiences with playing the role of the victim of dating violence and/or sexual assault. All four liked to play this character because they felt it was an opportunity for the audiences to learn more about the impact of abuse on a victim. One woman said, "I really liked the challenge of trying to get the audience to you know, in a ten-minute time span, feel how much it hurts to be put down all the time". Another woman said that she particularly liked to reveal to audiences what emotions a victim might experience, such as self-blame or doubt.

All four of the women who played the role of the victim also felt that it was challenging and difficult. One woman explained that it was emotionally draining to play the victim, as she said:

You're very friendly with them [person playing abuser] and it takes a lot out of you. And it also takes a lot out of you to be without self-esteem for the audience. You know, I had to pretty much wipe my self-esteem away to play that character effectively and that's, it's exhausting.

Another woman recalled a performance where the baseball team was asking a lot of questions to her character that felt blaming, and she said, "When they were trying to make the victim more responsible, when people blamed her, that was really challenging".

Five women spoke about playing the role of the friend of the victim, including two women who also played the victim as well as the friend. All five women liked playing the role of the victim-blaming friend because they felt that a lot of audience members could relate to her beliefs and that they were important to challenge.

Audience Reactions

Respondents were asked about the perceptions of audience reactions to their presentations. They commented generally about audience responses, as well as their favorite and least favorite audiences.

In general, all fourteen of the respondents felt that SCREAM Athletes had a positive impact on audience members, and in particular, student-athlete audiences. They based their perceptions of the audience reaction by how many audience members asked questions during the interactive, in-character segment, by the reactions they heard from audience members such as laughter, and by the fact that people approached them after a performance to either ask a question, comment on the performance, or seek a referral. One man commented:

When we get done, they do talk about it for awhile. I have heard the aftermath of some of the students, they're like, 'wow, did you see what he said to him" or, "I can't believe he did that to her". So the fact that they are talking about it after the whole thing's over to me is just a sign that, okay, they obviously paid attention, did take it seriously, and remembered something from it.

Twelve of the respondents felt that the audience reaction really ranged depending on the group. Six of the members felt that responses varied based on team membership. They felt that teams have different "character" and that some are more attentive than others. In particular, they believed that men's teams were less

responsive. Two people felt that performing for the football team was particularly intimidating because it was the entire team. They felt, however, that although they had to work harder to engage the football team, that they were receptive and involved by the end of the presentation. One woman felt that the coaches' support of the program is directly related to the team's response. She talked about recruiting several teams to join the program, and said that some coaches barely acknowledged her or the program, while other coaches were "practically pushing people at my sign up sheet".

One woman made an interesting observation that she believed it was more difficult to engage teams that attended the presentation together. She said,

...if there were a lot of their team members there, it became a little more difficult, because if you're there with all of your team members, you kind of have this like, you know they would be joking around, or they may be a little more comfortable with their team members, so that they couldn't step outside of their comfort zone with their team, and really become engaged.

She later added that she also believed the attitudes of the team leaders made a difference, as she commented, "...there's some people who stand out- whose names stand out -on certain teams...and if they're engaged, I think the other teammates were more engaged".

Two other respondents also commented that just one person making a rude comment or asking a "dumb" question during the in-character segment could influence the tone of the entire audience response. Four respondents said they enjoyed performing more for first-year student athletes because it was new for them, and the novelty had worn off for sophomore and juniors. Two respondents enjoyed performing for student-athletes at other colleges and universities, and two commented that they liked performing at professional conferences.

II. Reactions to participation

Peer educators were asked about the reaction of others to their participation in the program, including friends, family, team members, and coaches. They also commented on whether they felt the program had an impact on the student-athlete culture in general.

Reactions from others

Respondents discussed the reactions they received about their participation in SCREAM Athletes from others around them, including their team, coaches, family and friends.

Thirteen respondents felt that their involvement in SCREAM Athletes had a positive impact on their team, and that their teammates were supportive of their participation. One man felt that his team was mostly impartial about his involvement, although he noted that his team captain did express support.

One way in which respondents felt that their involvement in the program positively impacted the team is by getting other teammates to join. Eight respondents reported that they convinced other teammates to attend a SCREAM Athletes meeting. Members of Men's Track and Women's Crew all talked about how their teams have historically been involved with the program and that they take pride in having their teams so involved.

Five respondents from three different teams said that because of their involvement in SCREAM, there has been discussion about the issues of interpersonal violence that may not have otherwise occurred. One male respondent explained that his

involvement in the program offered opportunities to challenge the derogatory “locker room talk” that occurred:

We certainly made an impact and they [teammates] recognized that we were serious, and they recognized that we were committed to it, it wasn't a joke anymore. Guys talk, in fact, we base our scenarios around locker room talk, cause that's what happens...I always had the locker room talk with everyone else...folks were challenged. They thought twice about certain things, certain language, certain behaviors.

Members from two different women's teams said that because of their involvement in the program and that of their teammates, they had noticed certain abusive behaviors in other teammates' relationships and had been able to intervene. One woman explained, “We've become more aware, and unfortunately, have noticed things from different people that I don't think any of us would have noticed before without having had the SCREAM stuff. Which is kind of eye opening to all of us on the team”.

One person from a men's team felt his coach was indifferent to his involvement in SCREAM, but ten of the respondents (representing four different teams) felt that their coaches had been supportive and reacted positively to their participation. Members from one women's team said that their coach talks about the program periodically to the team, and encourages members to attend the presentations and also to join the program. He also gives the coordinators time during practice to discuss the program and issues with the rest of the team.

A men's team also expressed the unconditional support that they have received from their coach, including that he has excused them from practice to attend a SCREAM performance. He has also conveyed to the team that he is proud of the

team's historical involvement with the program and encourages them to join, as part of their responsibility as an athlete. One member of the team said, "He's real proud about that...He says, 'Look, we've been in this since the get-go and so we want to keep this thing going'. He also talks about how we as athletes in general have a responsibility to do [this]".

All fourteen respondents reported that their friends were generally supportive of their involvement, although to different degrees. Some said that their friends come watch performances or come to rehearsals to show their support, and three members said that their friends know that SCREAM Athletes is a really important part of their lives. Others said that their friends were supportive, but don't really care too much or sometimes even joke about their involvement (n =2).

Ten respondents said that their parents are supportive of their involvement in the program, know what they are doing and are proud of their participation. Two said that their parents are proud but don't really understand the issues, and two said that they do not think their parents even know they are involved.

Impact on student-athlete culture

Respondents were asked about whether they believe that SCREAM Athletes has had any impact on the general student-athlete culture at Rutgers University and if so, to provide a description.

Twelve respondents expressed the belief that the program has had at least some positive impact on student-athlete culture. Generally, they felt that it impacted certain individuals more than others. Seven of those respondents felt that minimally, student-

athletes in general know what SCREAM Athletes is and that it is an accepted part of their experience on campus. Ten of the respondents said that they have been recognized by other student-athletes on campus because of their involvement in SCREAM Athletes.

Six respondents felt that because of the program, student-athletes in general gained information about sexual violence, increased their awareness of the problem, and learned about what to do if something should occur. Three respondents said that they believe the program gives student-athletes a different perspective and way to look at issues of interpersonal violence.

Two respondents from the original group of SCREAM Athletes felt strongly that the culture of student-athletes was positively changed by the program. One woman commented that the innovative approach to the programming and in particular, the involvement of peer male athletes, had a significant impact on the culture of student-athletes:

The audiences I think were interested in what was going on because it was different than what they had been exposed to before, and I also think again, having the peers involved, having your own teammates involved, that made it personal for other people as well. So um, I think it did change the culture of the athletes in general.

Another man from the original group of SCREAM Athletes said that he noticed a shift in the student-athlete culture, as he observed a "...change in the nature of the dialogue, you know, change in the seriousness of it, and that's not to say that the folks were all changed, um, but folks were challenged. Um, they thought twice about certain things, certain language, certain behaviors".

One woman from the original group commented that she did not observe any real impact on student-athlete culture but that it might have been because the program was brand-new when she was involved so there wasn't time to witness the results.

III.SKILL AND KNOWLEDGE IMPACT

Peer educators believed that overall, the program had a positive impact on their development of interpersonal skills, leadership skills, knowledge, and empathy. They also commented on whether participation in the program affected their perceptions of the media's portrayal of interpersonal violence, and their course and career choices.

Skill development

Respondents were asked about the impact of participating in SCREAM Athletes on personal skill development. All fourteen interviewees felt that belonging to the program had a positive impact on their skill set, ranging from public speaking to time management.

Improved public speaking skills was cited by eleven respondents as a direct results of participation in SCREAM Athletes. They felt that they learned to speak more clearly and articulately, and that their fears or anxiety about speaking in front of large groups were diminished. Greater confidence about public speaking and appearing in front of crowds was reported by ten of those interviewed.

Five respondents mentioned having increased interpersonal skills as a result of participation in SCREAM Athletes, and five also reported improved organizational skills. Time management was cited by three respondents as an area of skill development.

Other skills mentioned by respondents that were directly impacted by participation in the program included: training skills, patience with colleagues, sensitivity skills, taking a public stand on an issue, effective communication, and improvisational and acting skills.

Leadership development

Nine of the respondents considered themselves leaders on campus, and thirteen believe that they are leaders on their team (the fourteenth respondent was not asked this question in the interview). Nine respondents were clear in stating that their involvement in SCREAM was at least part of the reason why they identified themselves as leaders on campus or on their team.

Six respondents talked about the importance of “silent leaders” or “leading by example”. They believed that their participation in SCREAM Athletes was a vehicle for leading by example, and that their willingness to take a stand on issues of interpersonal violence provided a leadership example for their teammates and other people on campus. One man explained:

You lead by example, and folks will follow. Cause, I didn't tell my roommates, I didn't tell my family. It was just something I felt needed to be done and I did it. And folks followed. You know, other members of the Track and Field team, other student involved when we did it off and on campus...The Forrest Gump [reference], “stupid is as stupid does”, it's leadership is what leadership does...I'm sure folks followed my example, and if that's what they did, that's what I wanted them to do.

Along similar lines, respondents also talked about taking initiative and action as an important part of leadership. One woman explained, “I also think it's [leadership] taking what you learned from the skits in SCREAM Athletes and if you're seeing

something happen, it's talking to somebody about it. If you feel that one of your teammates is in trouble, or yourself maybe, it's taking the initiative to approach somebody. “

Impact on knowledge and empathy

Throughout the interview, respondents discussed how participation in the program increased their knowledge about various aspects of interpersonal violence, as well as their empathy for victims.

Some of the specific knowledge acquired by respondents that was mentioned throughout the interviews included myths about sexual assault and domestic violence; cycle of violence; dynamics of abusers and victims; victim-blaming behaviors; the importance of providing options to victims of domestic violence and sexual violence; the actual options available to victims (police, department, and doing nothing); and how to refer a person to our department.

In addition to gaining knowledge about the issues of sexual assault and dating violence, many respondents (n = 11) said that their work with the program had challenged their own victim-blaming attitudes and had increased their empathy with victims. For example, one woman explained:

I would say coming in that I wasn't very tolerant of how people stayed in circumstances like that. I didn't understand how you would keep coming back for more abuse, and by playing that character, and having to say lines like, “Well he didn't break any bones”, “He didn't hurt me really bad”, and “Look it's just a little bruise, it will heal”, that kind of stuff, I believe, I understood much better, how those kind of situations continue and the different factors that contribute to them. And for that reason this was a really, really educational experience for me.

Another woman said:

It's interesting because I think I progressed. In the beginning it was easier for me to play the victim's blaming friend, cause those were closer to the attitudes I came to the program with. But as I got more involved, I learned more about it...it was a lot easier for me to play a victim.

One of the men talked about how he realizes how pervasive sexual violence is and how it impacts victims. He said:

I think the main thing about sexual violence is it happens everywhere. It's happening now, probably within a mile of here...and there's a chance that nobody will ever find out about it. And there's also probably a chance that the girl or whoever the victim is, I should say, is not going to ever forget about it. You know, sometime it will be a rainy day, it might pop into their mind and they'll have a shitty day because they thought of it. And I definitely realize that it goes on a lot more than I originally thought, and I see the big picture now.

Reactions to media portrayal of interpersonal violence

Respondents were asked if the knowledge they gained in SCREAM Athletes impacted how they reacted to the portrayal of interpersonal violence in the media and in their classes. Twelve respondents said that their participation in the program definitely made them more sensitive to the ways in which interpersonal violence is depicted around them. For example, one woman said that she "sees it [interpersonal violence] more" now, and talked about how she can't believe that the "romance novels" she used to read are really about rape: "I see it with these romance novels that I used to love, and I look back now and I'm like, 'Oh my god, like what are you doing?'...the first time they talk about sex in the book, the guy's usually raping the girl...I can't read those books anymore".

Other respondents mentioned being more aware of the dynamics of interpersonal violence and speaking up about it during discussions with family and friends about current issues such as the Kobe Bryant case, or in movies or jokes.

Two respondents said that even though they are more aware of the issues, they feel that sometimes entertainment is just entertainment, such as Eminem, and that they are not bothered by the violence mentioned in his lyrics or in certain other forums.

Impact on course selection or career choice

Of those interviewed, only five respondents felt that their involvement in SCREAM Athletes had impacted their course selection and/or career choices. Of those five, three felt that they were already interested in the issues addressed by the program so their involvement solidified their decisions. Two of the respondents felt that their participation in SCREAM Athletes had definitely influenced their course selection and career path. One woman who already graduated said that SCREAM Athletes was one of the reasons she was pursuing the field of Social Work. Another woman currently in school said that because of her involvement in the program she had taken more Women's Studies classes and that as a hopeful librarian someday, she would find ways to weave issues of interpersonal violence into her work, such as having displays about domestic violence.

IV. Impact on interactions with peers outside of the program

In addition to the impact peer educators have on audience members during performances, respondents were asked about whether the program impacted their

interactions with others outside of the program. Themes covered in this section include serving as a resource, impact on perception of peers' relationships, and impact on personal relationships.

Serving as a resource

As a result of the information they gained, most of the respondents felt that they do or could serve as a resource for their peers on issues of interpersonal violence.

Thirteen respondents felt that they had gained enough basic knowledge about both sexual assault and dating violence that they could effectively respond to someone seeking assistance. Seven respondents reported that they had actually used the knowledge they gained in SCREAM Athletes to provide someone with information about sexual assault or dating violence. One man explained how surprised he was the first time he was approached, as he said, "I've never thought of myself as that person [resource], especially when I first started doing SCREAM...but then, I think I got the biggest shock when somebody came up to me and started talking to me about it...I basically coached her the best I could".

Four of the respondents said that they were approached regularly by friends who knew that they were involved in the program and needed assistance. One woman reported that she was approached a few times by friends needing information so she started to carry brochures from the department with her at all times, and said that she gave them out on numerous occasions.

Impact on perception of peers' relationships

All fourteen of the respondents reported that after participating in SCREAM Athletes, they view their peers' relationships differently, with increased awareness of potentially abusive situations. Comments included that they "are more observant of abusive behavior", "notices verbal and emotional abuse more often", "more likely to question behavior", "opened eyes to things going on in people's relationships", and "more likely to recognize abusive patterns". One woman said, "I don't think I would probably even notice half the things as problems that I notice now".

Related to this finding, respondents also expressed that they were willing to intervene in their peers' relationships as a result of their involvement in SCREAM Athletes. Nine of the respondents said that they had intervened in peers' relationships because they observed abusive behavior. Most of these situations involved approaching the victim, and respondents reported that they knew how to calmly approach their friend, provide information and referral, refrain from victim-blaming statements, and remain patient. Three of the respondents specifically mentioned confronting abusers, including one man who confronted a teammate about stalking, one who confronted a hall mate about emotional abuse, and one woman who has confronted a few emotional and physical abusers. She explained, "I generally try to engage the abuser. In some sort of conversation, I try to underhandedly make him realize what he's doing, or the way he sounds, at the very least".

Those who had intervened in their peers' relationships said it was a difficult and challenging task. One woman said, "It's so hard, having all this advice to give, and not always having people listen to it. So you just got to try. You've gotta say what's on your mind, but sometimes you have to plant a seed, like 'What are you getting out of this

relationship?', make them think about it. And they will, and that's you know, when change is made. But you can't come out and say, 'Why are you staying with him?'"

Another woman talked about the experience of approaching a friend who was in an abusive relationship:

I became more aware, but then it happens to you, right in front of you, and it took awhile to be like, wait, this really is happening, this is a serious issue, and now everything that you ever said to anyone else about this issue...now you have to start taking the action with it. I guess when it hits close to home it and it was really involving somebody, it was like, wow, almost wipe all that off and this is the time where everything you've told everyone else to do, you have to start holding to those measures too.

Three respondents reported that they would be willing to intervene but have not had the opportunity. One woman said, "Like if there was a situation where a person was experiencing violence, I would definitely be more apt to intervene...I could act as a starting point of you know, 'You know I'm in the SCREAM program, so here's what I see and just to let you know' kind of thing. But that opportunity never did come up". One woman said she was still feeling unsure of the best way to approach a friend in an emotionally abusive relationship.

Impact on own relationship

All fourteen respondents felt that their participation in SCREAM made them more aware of how to treat their romantic partners respectfully, although five people said that they were already comfortable with how they treated their partners and SCREAM just confirmed or enhanced that for them.

Five respondents commented that SCREAM has taught them to be more conscious of the language they use and the impact of words. For example, one man

said that especially when he is angry, he is more aware of being careful of the way he expresses himself and that he tries not to be disrespectful to his partner during arguments.

Two men said that their participation in SCREAM has dramatically impacted the way they conduct themselves in their relationships. One man explained,

I don't say a lot of things anymore. I was pretty bad with some of the stuff I would say. But like, I would say it jokingly. Like I would say things to be funny, but then I look back at it now, and I realize, that's not funny...So I mean, I've definitely cut out a lot of stuff I've said. I'm more aware of you know, how, well I don't know how girls think, but I mean I am more sensitive.

Another man talked about his own violent upbringing and how being in SCREAM is helping him break the cycle of violence by changing his own behavior. He said,

Because of my family upbringing I have a little bit of a temper, like everybody else in my family, and it helps me realize when my temper is about to go, when I'm with my girlfriend it's like just make sure you're not going to do something that you're really going to regret. You know, like violate her personal space. I'm actually really grateful that I was in SCREAM for two or three years before I actually got into a serious relationship, and now I am already aware when the situation can happen, to just stop.

DISCUSSION

In building upon the previous study conducted with SCREAM Theater peer educators, this study with SCREAM Athletes members clearly indicates a positive impact on those who are actively involved in the program. Peer educators believed that overall, the program had a positive impact on their development of interpersonal skills, leadership skills, knowledge regarding interpersonal violence, and empathy for victims/survivors.

SCREAM Athletes peer educators also believed that they positively impacted their peers' attitudes and behaviors around issues of sexual violence, both during the actual SCREAM Athletes performances but also outside of the presentation in their other roles on campus such as teammates, roommates, and members of a general student-athlete community. As revealed by their recognition on campus and the conversations they had with teammates, friends, and roommates, SCREAM Athletes propelled discussion about these issues. This finding is especially important, as it offers a unique approach for gaining access to what is often perceived as an “impenetrable” athletic community.

The results also clearly indicate that the program is effectively impacting student-athlete culture. While a slower and more gradual form of social change, this approach is more comprehensive than many band-aid solutions that superficially address issues of interpersonal violence. The approach offered by SCREAM provides a model for incremental, effective change by challenging community standards that support violence, and starts dialogue that can then be continued after the performance by peer educators in their other roles.

This study was obviously limited by a very small sample size, so this type of study needs to be conducted with a larger group of peer educators. Additionally, the perspective of the peer educators needs to be complemented by the perspective of audience members. Is the program as realistic and effective as the peer educators perceived, or is their view biased because of their role?

Further research needs to be conducted on programs like SCREAM Theater to assess their impact on changing attitudes and behaviors about sexual violence on

campuses. SCREAM offers a potentially powerful model for peer educational sexual assault prevention programs that can be translated and adapted to fit the needs of other settings and communities. Results of this study suggest that using peers is an effective tool, and that the impact is far-reaching beyond the actual intervention or program.