

EDUCATION FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION: WHICH TRAINING TECHNIQUE WORKS BEST?

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Education has been legally mandated and widely accepted as a key tool for prevention of sexual harassment.¹ There has been scant literature, however, identifying which type of training is better suited to helping students understand the behaviors of sexual harassment.

William E. Hauck Catherine Amoroso Leslie provided guidelines for training teenagers and college-aged individuals in sexual harassment.² They suggest that training be interactive, inclusive of popular culture, and to ensure understanding, be extremely clear. In addition, training must communicate channels for reporting incidents and should engender trust so students feel comfortable reporting incidents.

The Hostos Community College's Sexual Harassment Awareness and Intake committee (SHAIC) determined that the student training component would consist of workshops that included all three guidelines enumerated above. In order to determine which workshops educated students best about sexual harassment, I conducted a study during the fall 2007 semester.

STUDY

The SHAIC organized two large-scale student workshops during the semester. Different students attended each workshop. Students at each workshop were asked to complete the same questionnaire before the training workshop and the same questionnaire after the training. The survey consisted of 10 items and was grouped as follows: the definition of sexual harassment, two types of sexual harassment, and miscellaneous characteristics. The statements required a true or false response. Attached hereto is a copy of the questionnaire

One educational workshop is entitled, "Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Are not About Sex". The workshop consists of six role plays performed by Hostos students who play students, faculty and staff in various situations. The scenarios depict ambiguous sexual harassment behavior such as one student repeatedly asking a fellow student out on a date. They also demonstrate unfamiliar components of the law, such as a third party claim of sexual harassment against two students being romantic

in a lounge/study area and sexual harassment of a teacher by a student, etc. The role plays elicited information about the definition of sexual harassment, the two types of behaviors and gray areas of the law. A question and answer period about the scenarios afterwards leads to a discussion lasting half an hour with the audience. In total, the session lasted one hour.

The second educational workshop is entitled, “The Sexual Harassment Awareness and Intake Committee’s version of Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?” It is modeled after the television game show “Who Wants to be a Millionaire?” The questions asked of the volunteers brought out information about the definition of sexual harassment and the gray areas of the issue similar to the role plays. Several of the questions included scenarios. The workshop proceeded as follows: There were 8 questions about sexual harassment in total posed to four volunteer students. A question was posed to student #1 of the student participants. If a wrong answer was given, then student #2 was asked the same question. A correct answer was equal to one point and the student with the most points won. A new question was asked to student #2. Each student could use one audience member lifeline to assist with one question. The correct answer was provided and a short discussion with the audience followed. The session lasted one hour.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

There were a total of 83 surveys collected. Some questions were not answered and were coded as “Missing Value.” Q4, for example, received the most missing values and also had one of the highest rates of incorrect responses. It is believed that this question is confusing to respondents.

Table 1 shows the percentage of correct responses, and it can be seen that 92.30% of respondents who took the pre role play survey answered the question correctly. Further, 82.30% of all questions from all respondents from the pre role play survey were answered correctly, as can be seen from the “Total” row at the bottom of the chart. The “N” under the title of each survey represents the number of surveys collected for that survey (13 surveys were collected for pre role play).

	Pre Role-Play	Post Role-Play	Pre Millionaire	Post Millionaire	Control
	N 13	N 14	N 26	N 18	N 12
q1	92.30%	85.70%	96.20%	100.00%	100.00%
q2	84.60%	85.70%	80.80%	83.30%	100.00%
q3	90.00%	92.90%	88.50%	88.90%	100.00%
q4	84.60%	84.60%	64.00%	61.10%	75.00%
q5	84.60%	78.60%	91.70%	94.10%	100.00%
q6	84.60%	92.90%	84.60%	88.90%	91.70%
q7	76.90%	78.60%	80.00%	72.20%	66.70%
q8	53.80%	92.90%	73.10%	94.40%	60.00%
q9	100.00%	92.90%	100.00%	94.40%	100.00%
q10	76.90%	78.60%	84.00%	38.90%	83.30%
Total	82.83%	86.34%	84.29%	81.62%	87.67%

Table 1: Percentage of Correct Responses

Table 2 shows the differences in correct responses between studies. For example, the percentage of correct responses to q1 from the pre to post role play surveys actually decreased. In other words, after the role play the percentage of correct answers to q1 actually decreased. However, looking at the “Total” row for pre to post role play shows that overall the percentage of correct responses increased by 3.51%. In other words, it could be said that the role play condition *increased* the respondents’ correct answers by 3.51%. On the other hand, the Millionaire condition *decreased* the respondent’s correct answers by 2.67%.

	Pre & Post R	Pre & Post M	Pre R & Pre M	Post R & Post M
q1	-6.60%	3.80%	-3.90%	14.30%
q2	1.10%	2.50%	3.80%	-2.40%
q3	2.90%	0.40%	1.50%	-4.00%
q4	0.00%	-2.90%	20.60%	-23.50%
q5	-6.00%	2.40%	-7.10%	15.50%
q6	8.30%	4.30%	0.00%	-4.00%
q7	1.70%	-7.80%	-3.10%	-6.40%
q8	39.10%	21.30%	-19.30%	1.50%
q9	-7.10%	-5.60%	0.00%	1.50%
q10	1.70%	-45.10%	-7.10%	-39.70%
Total	3.51%	-2.67%	-1.46%	-4.72%

Table 2: Differences in Correct Responses Between Studies
(R = Role-Play; M = Millionaire)

DISCUSSION

Since the role play/discussion treatment *increased* the respondents’ correct answers by 3.51% and the Millionaire treatment *decreased* the respondent’s correct answers by 2.67%, it would appear that the role play/discussion treatment was superior. I conclude that this training method is a superior method for teaching about sexual harassment, but that the use of true/false questions of a broad nature may not be the best approach to evaluate the two treatments.

There was very little difference between the students’ answers before and after the training in each treatment and little difference between the students’ answers between the studies. However, the students learned more after the discussion that followed the scenarios that were visually role-played. By observing the situations and engaging in an extended discussion after the scenarios, I conclude that the students in the role play/discussion were better able to recognize sexual harassing behavior and recognize that the identification of such behavior is relationship-based and situational. I will develop a new survey to evaluate the two treatments, which will be composed of questions with more specific scenes and more room for comments.

Sexual harassment involves relationships and nuances of behavior. Students in both trainings were presented with scenes; but the actual interactions, rather than the questions with depictions, more potently demonstrated relationships and their intricacies. The role plays are better able to bring across those inherent subtleties such