

## Interactive Theater

RAISING ISSUES ABOUT THE CLIMATE  
WITH SCIENCE FACULTY

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INTERACTIVE THEATER can be used to raise political consciousness, provide therapy, even develop legislation (Boal 1997). In a recent pilot study, Chesler and Chesler (2005) found it an effective tool for building community among female faculty in engineering, and Brown and Gillespie have used it to confront what they call (following ethicist Andrew Jameton) “moral distress” in the university—situations in which “we believe we know the right thing to do, [but] feel constrained from doing it because of stultifying demands or practices over which we have little control” (1999, 36).

At the University of Michigan, we have found that interactive theater techniques can offer a surprisingly effective way to raise issues about the climate with science and engineering faculty. Sketches illustrating how faculty interactions shape and reflect the climate—portrayals of discussions of job candidates in department meetings, efforts of senior faculty to advise and mentor junior faculty, and committee meetings evaluating tenure candidates—have been used with a range of audiences to stimulate actor-audience interactions that raise key issues about how gender, rank, ethnicity, and other aspects of power relations influence the climate and faculty morale.

Imagine that you are a fly on the wall at a department’s faculty meeting, observing conversations about the relative merit of two candidates

for an open faculty position: one is an innovative junior woman just finishing a postdoc, the other a man on the verge of tenure, working very successfully in the mainstream of his discipline. The only woman faculty member at the table is suffering repeated interruptions of her well-articulated arguments on behalf of the female candidate while receiving support only from one junior male colleague. Many aspects of the discussion are familiar, some of them perhaps painfully so.

Imagine, now, that you become visible to the people at the table and they invite you to ask them why they did what they did and said what they said during the course of the meeting—a chance, in other words, to bring into the open the personal motivations, group dynamics, and political subtexts that usually remain unexplored and unacknowledged during conflicts among faculty who must work together on a daily basis. Imagine telling the department chair that he isn't doing his job very well when he allows his male colleagues to keep interrupting their female peer. Imagine that you do this without putting your own career or anyone else's at risk.

Interactive theater can simulate such an experience; and, intriguingly, the fact that the faculty meeting is neither “real” nor a traditional dramatic performance that can be passively witnessed may be of great advantage; the audience is asked to be aware of itself observing and participating in a staged conversation for the purpose of thinking about problems that are difficult to engage in the abstract.

In sketches presented by the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) on behalf of ADVANCE at the University of Michigan, brief but complex scenes encompassing common faculty dynamics are enacted for audiences of faculty and administrators. Following the scene, a facilitator invites the audience to ask questions of the actors, who remain in character. At first, the actors respond as they would if they were still in the presence of their colleagues, but “time-outs,” during which an actor is invited to respond as if his or her character is the only one at the table, allow for more frankness.

Audience members often disagree with one another's interpretations of the scene. Some regard the climate in the hypothetical department as toxic and sexist, while others may assert that the female faculty member simply needs to be more aggressive. The facilitator keeps the dialogue moving, with certain directions in mind, and may conclude the discussion with some reframing to ensure that audience members have clear ideas to think about later. Audience members are also given folders containing relevant reading material to take home with them.

An example may help illustrate how the process works. Consider the following exchange from the faculty meeting sketch:

MARLENE: Yes . . . there are very different reasons for hiring people of different talents at different places in their career trajectory. Yes, we need to acknowledge that they are in different places. And it is because we are acknowledging this that we need to really think about—

FRANK: (*Speaking over* MARLENE) Well, Professor Young is at a place in his career that does make him much more sought after and much more influential. . . . The prestige he will bring to this department is unparalleled. We need to think about how our department will be perceived . . .

(MARLENE *looks at* TERRANCE *as she and* FRANK *overlap. He does nothing.*)

MARLENE: (*To* FRANK) Excuse me, I am not done speaking. (Steiger 2004, 5)

In response to this scene, one audience member may ask Marlene (who, the audience knows, is tenured) whether she has ever considered looking for a position elsewhere, while another might ask why she doesn't simply speak up more. Alternatively, someone might ask Frank why he interrupts Marlene so much, or ask Terrance why he doesn't direct the discussion in a way that allows everyone to be fully heard.

If the conversation portrayed in the sketch reveals as many complex social dynamics, power relationships, and apparently “individual” concerns as are embedded in an actual faculty meeting in the real world, it presents a web of problems its audience cannot easily solve or dismiss. Engaging in conversation with actors playing the roles of faculty members may sound childish to many faculty at first, but those who might quickly dismiss certain characters as buffoons or exaggerations are forced to think differently when they address those characters directly and are confronted with intelligent and complex justifications for their behavior. For example, an apparently “unassertive” Marlene may rebuke an audience member who accuses her of passivity and challenge audience perceptions that she just needs to be “more assertive” in order to solve her own problems. The success of the theatrical interaction depends, like most academic exchanges, on argument.

## The CRLT Theatre Program

In addition to the faculty meeting sketch described above, the CRLT Players have developed a sketch about faculty mentoring and another about tenure evaluations on behalf of ADVANCE, but work related to ADVANCE and its goals is only part of the group's repertoire. The CRLT Theatre Program has historically focused on classroom dynamics, and most of its sketches were designed to help instructors, whether faculty or graduate students, improve their teaching. Those sketches focus on gender, race, and disability in the classroom, among other topics.

Established in 1962, CRLT was the first teaching center of its kind in the United States. The CRLT Theatre Program began in 2000 with just one sketch. At that time, Jeffrey Steiger served as the director in a full-time position. Its initial budget, contributed by the deans of the College of Engineering and the College of Literature, Science and the Arts (LSA), amounted to forty thousand dollars per year. Today, CRLT Theatre employs not only Steiger but also an assistant director on a full-time basis. The troupe's repertoire includes fourteen sketches and its yearly budget has grown to \$250,000.

Because collaboration with the CRLT Theatre Program was part of Michigan's NSF grant proposal, UM's ADVANCE Institutional Transformation project commissioned a set of sketches from CRLT immediately upon receiving its grant in January 2002, and committed funds to support the development and performance of three theater sketches over a five-year period. To date, the theater program has developed four sketches for ADVANCE. The first was discarded, for reasons that will be discussed below. The second and third are being performed regularly, and the fourth was rolled out for regular performances during fall 2005.

The sketches CRLT has developed for ADVANCE have been based on two kinds of research: written academic work and experiential role-play. While ADVANCE and CRLT's own research staff are able to provide Jeffrey Steiger with studies on gender, science, and the academic climate for women faculty, this sort of data serves more as a source for fact checking and revision than as a well of inspiration during the creation of a sketch.

The first sketch Steiger developed, which was later dropped, portrayed a woman faculty member's difficulties in establishing authority in an all-male (or nearly all-male) classroom. This sketch was similar to other sketches the CRLT Players were already performing in that it

focused on the teacher–student relationship. It drew from a campus climate study, and particularly from ADVANCE interviews with women faculty, for its understanding of the problems women might face in such a situation. This sketch also used a specific interactive technique drawn from Forum Theatre (Boal 1997)—one that CRLT often employs—of inviting a member of the audience to replace the actor playing the part of the woman faculty member on stage and play the role differently, in the hope of generating a better outcome.

All CRLT sketches undergo a preview process during which the actors and director receive feedback from knowledgeable audiences. Does the language in the sketch ring true? Are the characters persuasive? Are the facts correct? Do the actors, when they interact with the audience, give appropriate responses to various questions?

Women who previewed the first sketch felt victimized by the way it worked; it was, in effect, set up to “blame” the woman faculty member’s character for the difficult dynamics in her classroom and to invite audience members to feel superior to her as they “corrected” her approach during their turn on stage. This revealed a potential drawback to the Forum Theatre approach; most of the later sketches have involved direct interaction between all of the actors and the audience rather than replacement of actors with audience members.

### Script Development

Steiger discovered, as he began to develop a new sketch—the faculty meeting, which includes no student characters—that while he and the other actors understood how faculty–student relationships worked because all of them had been (or were still) students, they did not know what life was like for faculty outside the classroom. They did not grasp the spoken and unspoken rules of academia. They did not understand the basic facts of how departments function.

Further, in the classroom sketches, the actors work to understand their characters as individuals in the classroom context, pinballing off of, and connecting to, one another as students involved in a temporary relationship within a climate created by the instructor. In contrast, in the ADVANCE sketches, the performers need to understand the long-term relationships among characters behaving in accord or opposition within the “whole” of not only the department, but the entire university. Each character, connected to both micro and macro levels of the institution, is a personality operating within a hierarchy.

Steiger thus developed a new method for creating the ADVANCE sketches. He now begins by meeting with a group of faculty who can talk to him about what their world is like and help him identify a scene that will resonate with a faculty audience. He then stages a role-play involving actors who know the environment that is the focus of the sketch. (The theater program employs professionals with formal theater training, students, research staff, and others as actors in the troupe.) Not everyone involved in the role-play has to be part of the world portrayed, as long as some of the participants are familiar with the norms and language typical of that setting. The initial role-play used to develop a sketch on faculty mentoring, for example, involved two members of the ADVANCE staff. If the participants have seen moments that are representative of the interactions the sketch will ultimately portray, they will naturally enact the subtleties of their experience of those situations and bring them to life in ways that are both intentional and unintentional. (An additional benefit to using faculty in the role-play is that those involved in the process become allies of the sketch and the program in general. This is one way the CRLT Theatre Program creates a network of supporters for its work.)

Armed with what he has learned from observing the role-play, Steiger is able to give the acting troupe an overview of the story they will portray and the culture in which it takes place. Actors are assigned parts in a script created from a transcript of the original role-play. Steiger also asks his actors to engage in exercises or workshops that Anne Bogart (2001) might call *source work*; a series of activities done at the beginning of the rehearsal process to connect intellectually and emotionally with the script. Actors presenting a scenario on gender dynamics in a science classroom, for example, may participate in an experiential exercise that instructs them to list adjectives that are most associated with or best describe the traditional roles of a man or a woman. Players may be asked to share experiences they had growing up that carried their first “lesson” regarding gender roles.

Actors, like everyone else, have biases and limitations based on their own particular backgrounds and experiences. By engaging in source work with their fellow actors, they become more able to view their own characters in a more three-dimensional way, rather than through the lenses of their own individual presumptions and predilections. They are also better able to understand the forces that prevent change or empathy in an individual character by exploring their own resistance and presumptions, and through this process, better able to push an audience that

may have points of view similar to those the actor held before engaging in the exercises. Doing the source work also improves relationships among the actors—a necessarily diverse group—within the theater troupe itself. Before Steiger began using source work, his troupe suffered a much higher rate of actor turnover, leaving him repeatedly with groups that were all white. Using source work has reduced turnover and enabled the troupe to retain actors of color.

Simply including an actor of color as a cast member changes an audience's reaction to the faculty meeting sketch in more and less subtle ways. When one of the male faculty members in the sketch is African American, for example, race tends to arise as a topic of conversation in the audience interaction, while race is unlikely to be discussed when the same character is played by a white actor. This occurs despite the fact that the scripted lines are the same no matter who is cast in the role. The frequent assumption on the part of a mostly white audience is that the character of color is “selling out” or shirking a race-based responsibility. This perception can initiate an enlightening and contentious discussion regarding assumptions about race, power, and culpability.

### The Role of Feedback in Sketch Development and Promotion

Once the characters have been developed and the parts learned, the troupe is ready to collect feedback from carefully selected critics. CRLT staff, ADVANCE staff, and members of a faculty advisory committee now called Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence (STRIDE), another ADVANCE intervention devoted to improving recruitment and hiring practices in science and engineering at the UM, serve as test audiences. As discussed in another chapter in this volume, the members of STRIDE are all well-respected senior men and women in science and engineering fields who have studied social science literature on gender in academe and who have become activists on behalf of women science and engineering faculty. Because STRIDE members not only thoroughly understand the goals of ADVANCE with respect to these sketches, but also have a well-developed sense of how their science and engineering colleagues are likely to respond to various aspects of the performances, their feedback is particularly valuable during these preview sessions. STRIDE members attend performances of all ADVANCE sketches, if possible, to ask useful questions if discussion is slow in getting started and keep it moving should it lag.

During a preview, the facilitator asks the audience to interact with the characters as a real audience would and to ask specific questions that might be difficult for the performers to answer. This conversation is itself a kind of training for the actors, who discover things they still don't know about their characters' lives when they run up against questions they can't answer. At the end of the preview, the facilitator asks the audience to step back and give feedback about how the sketch might be improved. In addition to providing necessary information to the CRLT Players, this process helps create faculty buy-in, because faculty who see a sketch at this early stage feel like consultants involved in its creation and take ownership of it.

Another key preview audience for the sketches is the Network to Advance Women Scientists and Engineers—an informal network, supported by ADVANCE, that includes all tenured and tenure-track women science and engineering faculty at Michigan. Typically, the network is invited to an informal dinner at which the sketch is performed. Again, this is a key audience for the sketch; it best represents those the sketch is ultimately designed to help, and it is able to point out aspects of the performance that might unintentionally portray women faculty in ways that could be counterproductive or put them at risk, as in the case of the discarded teaching sketch.

All ADVANCE sketches were also previewed by the Academic Program Group (APG), which includes the provost, associate provosts, and deans. University of Michigan president Mary Sue Coleman also attends some APG meetings and came to the one at which the faculty meeting sketch was performed. The sketch was well received at this presentation, which both affirmed the CRLT Players' sense that their performance was convincing and enabled ADVANCE principal investigator (PI) Abby Stewart and CRLT director Connie Cook to promote the sketch by referring later to its positive reception by the University's provost and president. President Coleman, in fact, was quite enthusiastic about the sketch, and has since promoted it at national meetings of educational leaders. The APG preview, then, legitimized the sketch in multiple ways. Finally, during the period in which it was developed and rolled out, the faculty meeting sketch was also previewed for LSA's dean, along with his entire staff; as a result he and the ADVANCE and CRLT staffs strategized about how to use the sketch most effectively in his college.

Preview audiences are also asked for advice about the composition of future audiences. For example, the faculty meeting sketch was deemed to be potentially explosive if performed in a department because of the



likelihood that the issues portrayed on stage could be mapped onto real and ongoing conflicts in the department. Thus, with one exception to date, audiences for this sketch have been drawn from multiple departments. LSA began by having the sketch performed for all of the department chairs in the college, with the idea that chairs might be willing to help promote the sketch to their faculty. This performance raised new issues. First, the importance of setting was underscored by the fact that the sketch was presented (as a result of building renovations) in a room that was uncomfortably small for the group. Even more importantly, despite the facilitator's valiant efforts to engage the chairs in a fruitful discussion of the group dynamics in the meeting, the discussion remained focused on procedural and mechanical issues. In retrospect it seemed clear that the "real" chairs were not willing to point out the crucial inadequacies of the chair's performance in the sketch situation.

### Strategies for Framing the Sketch

The experience with the chairs underscored the importance of framing of the sketch, and providing a context in which the discussion could be relaxed and fruitful. The dean of LSA decided personally to invite faculty in the LSA science departments to dinners at which they would view the sketch. Three dinners were held, and forty senior faculty members from natural science departments were invited to each one. Faculty were seated at tables that ensured mixing of faculty across departments, and an effort was made to include at least a couple of women faculty at each table, as well as at least one person familiar with the sketch and associated with ADVANCE efforts within the University.

At the beginning of each dinner, the dean pointed out that tables had been deliberately mixed because faculty so seldom meet those in other departments, and he asked each person to stand up and introduce him- or herself. He framed the dinner as an effort to create more community, and the performance as an effort to pay more attention to the community's climate. He also made concluding comments at the end of each evening, pointing out dynamics he noticed in the sketch that he found particularly illuminating with respect to issues he had encountered in real life. The dean's presence at these events and active engagement with the sketch was extremely validating. LSA faculty responded to these performances with thoughtful and positive comments, often focusing on how convincing the portrayal had been and mentioning issues they had continued to think about afterward, like whether they themselves were

truly “equal opportunity interrupters” or interrupted women more often than men.

In our experience, the sketch has been less well received in settings in which unit leaders did not attend the performances themselves, or when the sketch was performed in a less hospitable setting, absent a meal and an opportunity to interact with colleagues. In such cases, faculty can view their attendance as simply fulfilling another onerous work obligation, and the impact of the sketch is reduced. It should be noted, though, that we have learned that it is important to be open to experiment with the sketches.

Despite the fact that there were concerns about showing the sketch within a single department, one LSA science department chair requested a performance for his department. He believed it might offer his faculty an opportunity to critique both their own group dynamics and his behavior as chair, and he was interested in encouraging that kind of reflection. In fact, when the audience was invited to interact with the actors, he asked the first question, and voiced clear criticism of the chair. His active questioning enabled the women assistant professors who attended the performance to ask many questions of their own. While not every member of the department attended, those who came were very engaged and continued to discuss the issues raised long afterward. The chair also reported later that he received useful feedback from his faculty over the subsequent two weeks. This was perhaps an unusual case, because this particular chair was interested in identifying and addressing his own limitations. This experience also underscored the importance of the form of participation engaged in by the visible leaders at these presentations.

### Other ADVANCE Sketches

Two additional sketches are still in a process of being “deployed” on campus, though they are at different stages. The second sketch portrays a male senior faculty member attempting to mentor a junior woman. Understandably busy, the senior faculty member doesn’t really clear much time in his day to talk to the junior woman, nor does he read her work or even her vita very carefully before she arrives in his office, despite the fact that she sends it to him well in advance of the meeting. The advice he gives her, though well intentioned, is entirely discouraging, and the meeting is interrupted by a junior male faculty member with whom the senior male clearly has a more cordial relationship.

After very positive receptions from the preview audiences, and a general sense that this sketch evoked much less defensiveness among faculty than the faculty meeting sketch had, an effort was made to collaborate with the LSA dean's office in presenting this sketch as part of a multiyear effort to improve mentoring practices in the College. The sketch was presented in the successful dinner format at multiple dinners for all department chairs in the College. These discussions were intended to lay some groundwork for a more explicit consideration of mentoring policies and practices in the departments. Chairs were provided with copies of a new *Faculty Advising Faculty Handbook* that had been developed by Professor Pamela Smock of Sociology and ADVANCE staff member Robin Stephenson, and they were encouraged to share the handbook with senior and junior faculty members in their departments.

A follow-up workshop was held at which the dean, ADVANCE PI Stewart, and Professor Smock gave presentations on the contents of the handbook, and participants worked in small groups to develop templates for departmental mentoring plans that would maximize good mentoring outcomes and minimize bad ones. This required extensive discussion of what would count as good and bad outcomes, so the participants generated a list that allowed the workshop leaders to develop a template to send back to everyone who attended. Departments were then asked to use the template to generate more specific departmental mentoring plans and given a year to do so. All departments have at this time submitted mentoring plans, and during the upcoming academic year departments will be encouraged to present the mentoring sketch to their faculty as part of an effort to increase awareness of effective mentoring practices. The mentoring sketch, then, was presented in the context of a larger project that gave those who saw it reason to take it seriously and make use of what they learned soon afterward. This kind of framing is critical if the sketches are to be absorbed and used by those who see them, rather than merely watched and forgotten.

Finally, the tenure evaluation sketch was developed to address problems of evaluation bias in the tenure process. Because the faculty meeting sketch and the mentoring sketch had already been so well received, there was widespread agreement among university constituents, including the provost, that the CRLT Theatre Program was the appropriate tool to use, and Jeffrey Steiger readily agreed to develop a script. In order to do so, he asked senior faculty to enact a role-play of a tenure discussion for him, which he observed to gain a sense of how the process works. Members of STRIDE and other supportive senior faculty per-

formed the role-play, and afterward, Steiger asked them what *hadn't* happened in the role-play that usually happens in tenure discussions. All of them agreed that nobody had taken the part of the “bean counter,” the person who always wants to tally up numbers of publications, status of publication venues, and citation rates in order to make a decision. Bean counting was thus integrated into the sketch. Steiger also asked follow-up questions about differences in practices between different colleges and at different levels of review, and received extremely detailed answers that worked their way into his script.

At this writing, this sketch has been shown to preview audiences and the rollout has begun; it has been performed for the Academic Program Group, and in two performances for key tenure decision-makers in LSA: the Executive Committee, members of the three divisional review committees, and department chairs. In this way it quickly reached a large number of the people involved in tenure decisions. Subsequent performances will be offered to groups in the College of Engineering, as well as people on department-level tenure committees, perhaps again accompanied by dinners, in order to prompt thinking about relevant issues before this year's tenure cases come up for evaluation. At all presentations a handful of journal articles addressing issues of gender bias in evaluation processes will be distributed.

Intriguingly, this sketch invites the kind of audience participation that was unhelpful in the discarded teaching sketch, but with a twist: rather than replacing any of the faculty members at the table, audience members are invited to add themselves to the table and intervene in the discussion. They are thus invited (in small groups) to think of ways to redirect the conversation without having to decide that any particular person already at the table is responsible for its failings. In the process, they are given an opportunity to practice ways of intervening in a tenure discussion that has gone awry. This strategy helps mobilize audience members' awareness that their actions (and inaction) matter in these situations, while giving them an opportunity to work with the group on identifying strategic interventions that might be effective.

## Evaluating the Sketch

Evaluation of the sketches serves at least three goals: providing feedback to the theater program; offering assessments of, and justification for, the theater program; and offering assessments of and justification for the use of theater for purposes of institutional transformation. Both CRLT and

ADVANCE collect survey data regarding audience responses to each performance. This kind of aggregate data can provide a sense of the immediate impact of a performance—and assessments of performances of the faculty meeting and mentoring sketches to date show that the sketches are generally well received and thought-provoking.

We have quantitative ratings of sixteen performances of the faculty meeting sketch and seven of the faculty advising faculty sketch. Overall, 519 individuals, of whom 322 were from UM, rated the faculty meeting sketch, and 276, of whom 206 were from UM, rated the faculty advising faculty sketch. About half of the audience rated the sketches (53% of UM audiences for faculty meeting and 46% for faculty advising). Three items invite audiences to rate the usefulness of the issues and topics raised in the sketch, in the interactive session, and in the printed materials. The average ratings by sketch of the first two, on a five-point scale, is above 4 (see table 1 for these results). The average rating of the printed material is somewhat lower (about 3.6). None of these six ratings reveals a gender difference in audience members' ratings.

In contrast, the next three questions ask about the degree to which the issues raised reflected audience members' personal experiences, experiences of "my colleagues," and "behaviors/issues I have observed at UM." Ratings of these items average 2.80–3.53 for men, and 3.38–3.91 for women; all of these gender differences are highly significant statistically.

Finally, the last two items ("The audience/actor interactive discussion enhanced my understanding of the issues" and "The balance between giving information and encouraging discussion in the presentation as appropriate") yielded high ratings (averaging 4.0 or higher) for both men and women, with only one significant gender difference.

Before the tenure sketch (called "The Fence") was rolled out, we revised the items in our evaluation questionnaire, and decided to collect more qualitative data. The five closed-ended questions are variants of the previous ones and are also included in table 1. We only have data from ten women and seventeen men (for a 36% response rate), but the ratings are uniformly high (all above 4.15, and the overall effectiveness of the sketch 4.85). There were no gender differences in response, perhaps because the ratings were so high, but also perhaps because of the changes in the item wording.

Overall, then, the quantitative data suggest that the sketches are valued highly by both male and female audience members, but female audience members find two of them more personally resonant. Though

useful for identifying overall responses, these data are not helpful in determining what long-term effects the sketch might have on those who have seen it. Some of the most revealing data we have along these lines were collected by simply asking key informants to respond via nonanonymous email queries about what worked best, what worked least well, and how to make performances more useful in the future. Some examples of responses to email about the faculty meeting sketch will offer some flavor of the responses. One male faculty member wrote,

What I found myself thinking about most after the skit was the issue of interruptions. I tend to interrupt people a lot—though it's usually to finish their sentences, not to contradict them, and I think I'm an equal opportunity interrupter, interrupting men and women equally. My reason for thinking more about this point [was that] I began to reflect on ways to make the picture "women get interrupted more" more precise. For example, how does status enter the picture? That is, are women interrupted more because they are (at least subconsciously) perceived as having lower status than men even when they have the same academic rank? Are female professors interrupted more by their grad students and postdocs (a situation where the rank differences is big enough to presumably outweigh subconscious biases) than male professors are? . . . I see I'm describing a research project . . . so I'll stop here.

Another male faculty member wrote,

Our faculty meetings are not like that because none of our female professors can stand to come! I think that the skit raised a number of points about departmental dynamics. Certainly every member of departmental executive committees should see it. It simply helps people be aware of the pitfalls common to interpersonal communication.

A faculty member from a different department raised an interesting issue about the limitations of the cross-unit strategy:

This play made me immediately reflect on the dynamics among faculty in my own department and of course "my" specific role in all of it. I thought a lot about this play after the evening gathering

**TABLE 1. Average Ratings of ADVANCE Sketches**

	Female		Male		Overall		Significance <sup>a</sup>
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	
Faculty Advising Faculty							
<i>Scale: Not useful (1) ... Highly Useful (5)</i>							
The issue/topics raised in the actors' performance of the sketch	67	4.33	25	4.08	92	4.26	ns
The issue/topics raised in the audience/actor interactive discussion of the sketch	66	4.39	25	4.16	91	4.33	ns
The printed materials provided as resources for this presentation	29	3.55	16	3.69	45	3.60	ns
<i>Scale: Strongly Disagree (1) ... Strongly Agree (5)</i>							
The issues raised in the performance reflected my personal experiences	67	3.60	25	2.80	92	3.38	**
The issues raised in the performance reflected experiences of my colleagues	65	4.09	24	3.42	89	3.91	**
The issues raised in the performance reflected behaviors/issues I have observed at UM	65	3.78	25	3.24	90	3.63	*
The audience/actor interactive discussion enhanced my understanding of the issues	66	4.09	25	4.04	91	4.08	ns
The balance between giving information and encouraging discussion in the presentation was appropriate	66	4.23	24	4.42	90	4.28	ns
Faculty Meeting							
<i>Scale: Not useful (1) ... Highly Useful (5)</i>							
The issue/topics raised in the actors' performance of the sketch	52	4.31	117	4.05	169	4.13	ns
The issue/topics raised in the audience/actor interactive discussion of the sketch	52	4.33	118	4.09	170	4.16	ns

The printed materials provided as resources for this presentation	32	3.81	58	3.53	90	3.63	ns
<i>Scale: Strongly Disagree (1) ... Strongly Agree (5)</i>							
The issues raised in the performance reflected my personal experiences	51	3.92	118	3.28	169	3.47	***
The issues raised in the performance reflected experiences of my colleagues	48	4.06	110	3.52	158	3.68	***
The issues raised in the performance reflected behaviors/issues I have observed at UM	49	3.98	114	3.58	163	3.70	*
The audience/actor interactive discussion enhanced my understanding of the issues	50	4.12	117	3.90	167	3.96	ns
The balance between giving information and encouraging discussion in the presentation was appropriate	50	4.54	117	4.20	167	4.30	*

	Female		Male		Overall		
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	Significance <sup>a</sup>

Tenure: The Fence

<i>Scale: Strongly Disagree (1) ... Strongly Agree (5)</i>							
Please rate the overall effectiveness of the CRLT sketch and interactive presentation	10	4.90	17	4.82	27	4.85	ns
The issues raised in the performance are important	10	4.90	17	4.53	27	4.67	ns
The performance made me think about some familiar interactions and situations in new ways	10	4.20	17	4.29	27	4.26	ns
The issues raised in the performance reflected issues I have observed at UM	10	4.20	17	4.41	27	4.33	ns
The audience/actor interactive discussion enhanced my understanding of the issues	10	4.50	17	4.00	27	4.19	ns

<sup>a</sup>ns = not significant. \* $p = .05$ , \*\* $p = .01$ , \*\*\* $p = .001$ .



but I really didn't have an opportunity to talk about it with anyone who was there for many days. I think it might be more useful to have this play performed within a department where colleagues have more opportunities to reflect informally.

In an interesting confirmation of this point, one female faculty member wrote,

I think this presentation is excellent, right to the point, and I find it way more effective than any statistics/graphs that I have seen on work climate for women/minorities. I can't help noticing that among some colleagues I spoke with, male colleagues do not perceive it in the same way as females. I have come across responses from shrugging shoulders to "it's a bit heavy handed, isn't it?" to "it was good, but our department is not like that" (not joking). Why that is, is probably part of the issue.

Her message was inadvertently directed to the entire group of people who had been queried, and one of her male colleagues responded,

I should probably confess that I am likely one of the people who said . . . that I found the sketch a bit heavy-handed. . . . I expect that the sketch was probably more powerful if you yourself have suffered from some (or all) of the injustices portrayed and I definitely should have been more sensitive to that.

He concluded his lengthy reflections by wondering about the impact of his own behavior interrupting female and junior male colleagues:

I guess it also made me wonder if there is any disparity in my behavior or if my interrupting may have a more negative impact on female colleagues given the general climate issues.

While it is certainly valuable to collect anonymous, aggregate data, direct email queries have produced many responses that provide us a richer understanding of the process of reflection during and following the presentations.

We have learned that we cannot expect the sketches to have uniform impact, either from one individual to the next or from one department or college to the next. (For example, the sketches have been utilized

more often and responded to more positively in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts than in other colleges.) Aggregate assessments are best equipped to reveal uniform outcomes, but we are also interested in finding ways to document outcomes that are unusual but important, such as the success of the faculty meeting sketch when it was performed for a single department (rather than a cross-departmental group) in LSA.

One of the difficulties involved in measuring the impact of something like the CRLT sketches is that what is easiest to measure is impact upon individuals, but what we really want to know is what impact the sketches may have had upon the entire system that is academic science and engineering at the University of Michigan. And, as with any ADVANCE intervention, it is difficult to single out effects from a single intervention when so many other interventions are taking place concurrently under ADVANCE auspices.

## Conclusions

LSA's successful use of the theater sketches points to the importance of embedding such interventions in a larger agenda and engaging highly placed administrators like deans if the interventions are to have any lasting impact. Framing—giving the target audience a reason to care about and a way to make use of the information given—is crucial, as are setting and audience composition. Relatively homogeneous groups may often be best equipped to have the most constructive discussions. Those who are in a position to make tenure decisions, for example, will have a different perception of the tenure evaluation sketch than untenured faculty, who might find it threatening or overwhelming. It is important that the context in which the sketches are shown be a safe one for the audience, one that allows for receptivity and open-mindedness rather than defensiveness. Thus, despite the success of the faculty meeting sketch within one department in LSA, we still recommend showing that sketch to groups that cross departmental lines rather than using it within individual departments.

We remain open to experiment, however. And we believe that we have only begun to tap into the possible uses of interactive theater for addressing issues of academic climate. In summer 2005, CRLT held its first Summer Institute, a three-day seminar at which the players demonstrated the basics of source work, role-play, actor-audience interaction, facilitation, and other aspects of sketch creation and performance to thirty-three avid participants from sixteen other colleges and universi-

ties. The Summer Institute received rave reviews, and will be repeated. In addition, ADVANCE hopes to hold summer seminars specifically for scientists and engineers that will bring the CRLT Players and STRIDE together to mobilize faculty activists. We are certain that the CRLT Theatre Program will continue to collaborate with UM ADVANCE in finding new ways to foster discussion, reflection, and transformation in the academy.

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