

**2025 Public Description of Work for
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in
Higher Education**

Yale University

**Initial Efforts to Use Novel Methods to Evaluate a Peer-Led
Sexual Violence Prevention Workshop**

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

1. Evaluation: Evaluating Prevention Programs; Qualitative Research; Other Evaluation

Description of Work:

Purpose and Goals:

The purpose of this program was to use novel methods to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of Yale's workshop on sexual consent for first-year students from 2015-2024. Using novel statistical methods and emergent Artificial Intelligence technologies, we aimed to assess a yet-untapped source of data. This relates to the rubric area of Evaluation: Evaluating Prevention Programs because it will allow us to evaluate the impact of our educational programs and adjust them as needed in the future.

Background Information:

This project was conducted by the Yale Office of Gender & Campus Culture (OGCC). OGCC, housed within the Yale College Dean's Office, strives to foster a safe, positive, and equitable sexual climate and end sexual violence at Yale College (the undergraduate school of Yale University). OGCC's primary work is to oversee and implement the Communication and Consent Educator (CCE) program. The CCEs are a diverse, highly-trained group of peer educators and change-makers who work together to foster a positive sexual climate at Yale. This work includes, but is not limited to, delivering programming intended to prevent sexual misconduct. The CCEs work in many formats, mostly through embedded work within their own campus communities. In addition to their embedded work, the CCEs facilitate interactive workshops, which are required for all Yale College first-years.

Since 2012, all Yale College first-years have participated in a 90-minute, interactive workshop called "The Myth of Miscommunication." This workshop draws on research in linguistics and psychology to debunk the common notion that sexual assault happens as a result of a miscommunication or a misunderstanding. The CCEs then extend discussion to sexual pressure. The CCEs distinguish pressure from coercion or force, noting that pressure to engage in sexual activity alone may not violate Yale's disciplinary policies. Still, sexual pressure is disrespectful and unkind, and the CCEs encourage students to take pressure seriously. Finally, the CCEs invite students to consider "ideal sexual encounters"—encounters that are not only consensual, but are marked by respect, enthusiasm, and mutuality. While not a disciplinary standard, this "higher bar" is an important aspiration for students at both an individual and a community level.

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Each of these workshops is facilitated by a (usually mixed-gender) pair of CCEs—that is, highly-trained undergraduate peers. All first-year students attend the workshops in person, in groups of about 15 students, along with their first-year counselor (a peer leader similar to an RA with additional responsibilities for personal and academic advising).

Although the Myth of Miscommunication workshop has been in place since 2012, Yale has not yet conducted a full-scale evaluation effort of the program. Some of the workshop's pedagogic strengths pose real challenges for evaluation. For example, rather than focusing on teaching students university policies alone, the CCEs engage students in an open-ended discussion of their own values and aspirations for campus sexual culture. Additionally, rather than focusing on sexual assault alone, the workshop considers assault in the broader context of sexual culture. While facilitators have, in the moment, found this capacious conversation helpful, we have found it challenging to know how to evaluate the program's impact.

The Current Program:

Since 2015, the CCEs have closed each session of the workshop by distributing blank index cards to each of the first-year participants. The CCEs then ask the first-year students to anonymously share one take-away from the workshop. These index cards are collected by the CCEs and given to the program director for review. Our office has retained these index cards—and so, as of 2025, had a collection of many thousands of individual pieces of student feedback from almost a decade of workshops.

Starting in the Fall of 2024, our office engaged a graduate student worker to lead efforts to use the existing index card exit tickets to evaluate the Myth of Miscommunication workshop. Our primary objective was to understand students' key takeaways from the workshop from 2015-2024. With this understanding in place, we could answer important evaluation and research questions—for instance, how students' takeaways compare to the workshop's stated learning objectives, or how students' core takeaways have changed over the past nine years.

We began by digitizing the index cards. Our graduate assistant manually transcribed 12,434 index cards, each representing an individual student's feedback on the workshop. This included index cards from 2015-2024 (with no index cards from 2020, as the workshop was not offered during orientation due to the coronavirus pandemic). We also recorded any associated metadata (such as the names of workshop facilitators). Because of the way that the index cards were stored, we were mostly able to keep them separated by workshop session.

Once the data were digitized, we then used two novel methods to analyze them: Yale's secure AI tool, "Clarity," and Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA, a statistical method). Each of these novel methods showed some promise and some shortcomings, and both merit further investigation and application.

To use the Clarity tool, a student worker uploaded the transcribed index card responses into Clarity. She then prompted Clarity to provide a summary of students' most common takeaways from the workshop. The workshop script includes a brief overview of its core argument for facilitators; the student compared Clarity's list of core takeaways with the points of this core argument. Promisingly, there were many areas of overlap. For example, Clarity listed "Effective

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Communication of Social and Non-Verbal Cues” as a core takeaway, which maps closely onto the workshop argument “We have basic communicative competency; we are highly attuned to signals of acceptance or rejection.” Similarly, Clarity generated “Cultivating a Supportive and Pressure-Free Campus Environment,” which tracks closely with the argument “Disregard should be taken seriously. No one should have to put up with being pressured—it’s just not okay, even at low levels.” While broad, these are promising early findings, as they suggest that students are retaining some of the workshop’s most important arguments.

Clarity also helped to illuminate some areas of the workshop that stand out to students. For example, Clarity generated “Awareness of Alcohol’s Impact” as one of students’ key takeaways. While the Myth of Miscommunication workshop does include a discussion of alcohol, it is only one small part of the workshop. However, Clarity’s finding echoes our anecdotal observations: for many students, learning about the interplay of alcohol and consent is new, and therefore students find this part of the workshop especially memorable.

The Clarity AI tool was not without shortcomings. While we found it helpful for quickly synthesizing a very large data set, its findings were not always reliable—that is, if we ran the same analyses twice we sometimes got different feedback. We found Clarity most useful for selecting representative index cards (for example, it responded well to prompts such as “Show me 10 responses that talk about the relationship between alcohol and sexual consent”). However, these prompts were only effective for capturing quite simple, content-based prompts—Clarity did not respond well to prompts such as “Show me responses from students who did not like the workshop.”

In addition to the AI tool, we also used LDA to analyze the index cards. LDA is a topic modeling algorithm that can help to uncover the underlying topic groups in a data set. For each topic cluster, the algorithm could generate a list of terms and sample index cards from the topic. Using this information, our staff could make reasonable guesses about the overarching topic emerging. For example, one topic included the following terms: “yes, communication, key, clear, ambiguity, should, parties, body, language, importance, non, verbal, attention, all, signs, understanding, both, positive, ambiguous, enthusiasm.” Based on these terms, as well as sample index cards from this group, our staff approximated the topic as “Communication is both verbal and non-verbal; it’s important to pay attention to these signs and look out for clarity and enthusiasm.”

In some ways, LDA required more guesswork than the topics generated by Clarity AI. The LDA topics, however, held more nuance. For instance, while Clarity AI generated the topics “Effective Communication of Social and Non-Verbal Cues” and “Importance of Clear and Enthusiastic Consent”—two topics that seem to match the list of terms generated by LDA—they miss some of the texture of the responses. The LDA list includes more words that emphasize students’ responsibilities—terms we can approximate as “[both] parties,” “[pay] attention” and “should.” Overall, we found it most helpful to use Clarity in combination with LDA, and to have both sets of results reviewed by staff with a strong understanding of the workshop’s content and common student feedback.

It is important to know that this is not a comprehensive evaluation effort for the Myth of Miscommunication workshops. The exit tickets only represent a moment-in-time snapshot of

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students in the immediate aftermath of an educational intervention. They do not allow us to track change over time, or to see the ways that the attitudinal changes students report after the workshop do or do not translate into behavior change. Most importantly, this tool does not allow us to capture the impact of the workshop on the prevalence of sexual misconduct. The real utility of this analysis is in *hypothesis generation*. By helping us document students' own perceptions of the core takeaways from the workshops, we are able to identify areas for further investigation, evaluation, and programming. For instance, a surprising number of students identified facts about alcohol as their core takeaway from the workshop. We are in the process of using this finding to revisit our alcohol safety education for incoming first-years, both through the Office of Gender & Campus Culture and the Alcohol & Other Drugs Harm Reduction Initiative.

Implications for Peer Institutions:

This evaluation effort is promising for peer institutions for a number of reasons. First, it shows the potential promise of emerging tools, including AI and LDA, for evaluating the impact of educational and/or prevention programming. As exit tickets or open-response feedback are such common tools, we anticipate that many peer institutions have data sets that they could analyze using these tools. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we started this project believing that we did not have any data to use to assess more than a decade's worth of Myth of Miscommunication workshops. However, with creativity and collaboration with talented students, we were able to conduct rich analyses of 12,000 data points. Our greatest insight was that rich data is often available, if we know where to look and how to effectively analyze it.

Novelty:

This work was innovative because of its application of AI tools and statistical modeling to education and prevention practice on a college campus. The incredible rate of development of AI tools mean that new tools are available at the time of this writing than existed just a few months ago when we conducted our analyses of the index cards; surely more will be available by the time of publication. As AI tools continue to develop, we hope to explore their application to our practice on campus. Secondly, while LDA has been used in research on sexual violence in the past, we are excited to apply it to our educational workshops. Finally, we are excited that this project centered students' own voices and perspectives.

Current Status of the Work, Plans for Evaluating Success, and Next Steps:

We have completed initial analyses of the index cards using both Clarity AI and LDA. We have started sharing these findings with core stakeholders, including the CCEs who facilitate the Myth of Miscommunication workshops and campus partners. We hope that this will allow us to begin to evaluate the effectiveness of this project by comparing the core topics that students identified in their responses with our hopes for the workshop.

Our next steps are:

1. To use both Clarity AI and LDA to analyze the feedback from the 2025 Myth of Miscommunication workshop—and ideally, to put these responses into conversation with the CCEs who facilitate these workshops. For instance, if Clarity suggests that one workshop session had a particularly strong focus on alcohol, we would like to meet with the student facilitators to see if this matches with their perceptions.

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2. To expand this digitization and evaluation process to other sources of student feedback, including index cards collected after our Bystander Intervention workshops or NCAA workshops for student athletes.
3. To explore options for students to share their feedback digitally (such as by completing a Qualtrics form) rather than handwriting index cards that we must then transcribe.
4. To use the topics generated by Clarity AI and LDA to guide future evaluation efforts with a multi-method approach (for example, focus groups, longitudinal evaluations, pre-/post-surveys, etc.).

Website for further information (if applicable): <https://cce.yale.edu/>

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