

Abstract

The ability to work effectively on a diverse team is important, and simply working together can enhance this ability, but... we hypothesized that it can be improved by having students:

- ▣ Individually reflect on personal experience with teams
- ▣ Observe ineffective and effective team interactions
- ▣ "Get into the minds" of the members of the team
- ▣ Debrief the issues in pairs and as a class
- ▣ Generate effective teamwork strategies as a class

Working with the U-M Educational Theater Company and the CRLT Players Troupe, we incorporated these ideas into an interactive theater sketch. This project addresses the question:

What is the impact of the sketch on students' self-reported ability to work effectively in teams?

Logistics of the Performance

- The sketch is performed during a regular ENGR100 class, w/ instructor present, so content can be integrated into course
- A facilitator introduces the sketch and prompts students to reflect individually on previous team experiences
- The performance is followed by a discussion which includes
 - ▣ Q+A between actors (in character) and students
 - ▣ Pair sharing and large group discussion
 - ▣ Generation of strategies for improving the situation
- A re-enactment incorporates student-generated strategies

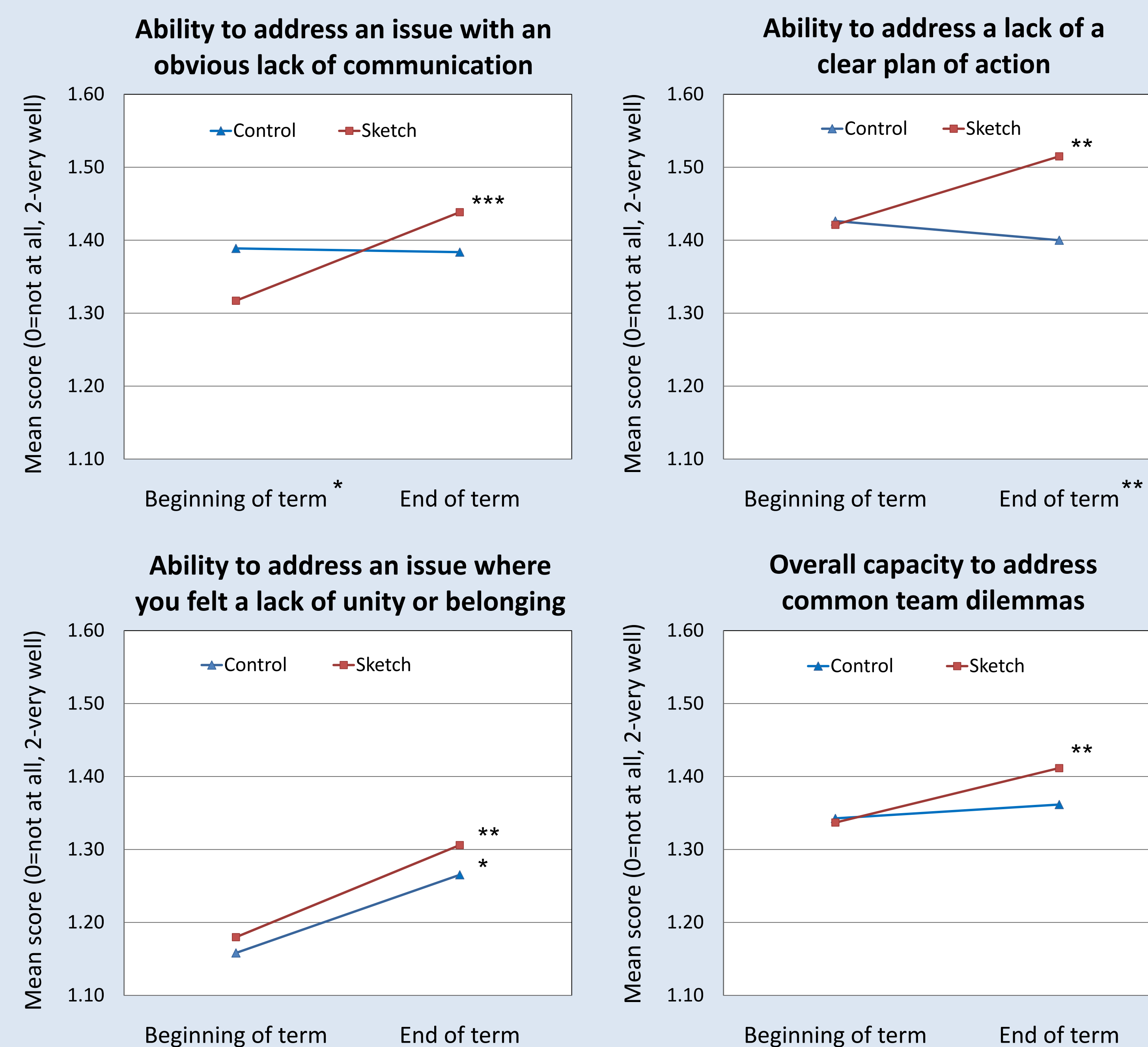


Content of the Sketch

- Team of four undergraduates
 - ▣ Dan: Male student who doesn't do his share of the work
 - ▣ Joe: Male student who doesn't finish assigned tasks
 - ▣ Beth: Shy female student
 - ▣ Rob: Dominating, overachieving male student
- Unclear assignment and ill-defined project specifications
- Common team dilemmas
 - ▣ Gender dynamics
 - ▣ Poor communication
 - ▣ Lack of follow-through
 - ▣ Frustration about unsatisfactory group dynamics



Results (*p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001)



- Students who saw the sketch showed significant gains in their ability to address some specific teamwork issues as well as their overall capacity to address common dilemmas
- Students in the control group did not achieve the same gains

Discussion and Implications

- Interactive theater is one useful tool for increasing students' ability to work effectively in teams
- Probable key elements of the process:
 - ▣ Individually reflecting on personal experiences on teams
 - ▣ Observing ineffective and effective team interactions
 - ▣ Pair sharing and whole class discussion about team dilemmas
 - ▣ Using students' collective expertise to generate strategies

Ways to Achieve Similar Goals

- Be honest with students about challenges of working on diverse teams and about how to resolve these challenges
- Create simple scripts depicting common team dilemmas and invite students to role-play for the class
- As a class assignment, ask teams to reflect on characteristics of successful teams, discuss challenges they have encountered, and list strategies for resolving conflict
- Engage the class in conversation about possible ways to address common dilemmas
- Schedule the sketch in your own course

	# sections surveyed	# beginning of term surveys	# end of term surveys
Control group	5	373	245
Sketch group	9	634	536