

## Introduction

### Rationale

Sexual harassment and assault is widespread and university campuses are significant sites for preventative action<sup>1,4</sup>. There is also a strong need for research on young people's perceptions of consent.

One means to increase awareness and reduce perpetration is by focusing on initiatives related to increasing knowledge and awareness about sexual consent. While there has been some work in this area, there remains a paucity of research surrounding student's understanding of consent<sup>2,3</sup> and relevant processes and procedures within Higher Education<sup>5</sup>.

We used gamification to encourage discussion around sexual consent and related issues. For Consent: The Game, students constructed cards outlining educational consent-related scenarios. Cards focused on creating discussions around consent, healthy relationships and exploring the boundaries of where appropriate behaviour and criminality lie.

### Aim

This project aimed to understand game developer and players' understanding of consent before, during and after game development and playing.

## A study into using gamification as a strategy for teaching university students about sexual consent.

Project by: Dobrzynska, K., Jones, E., Hill, K.M., Cartwright, N.



## Discussion

### Gamification via using Consent

The Game was found to be effective in teaching the both the game developer and game players about sexual consent and related topics regarding sexual health, and starting a discussion about them.

Game developers found the opportunity to develop this card game with the aid of a knowledgeable instructor extremely useful for improving their own knowledge on the topic area.

Importantly, having student facilitators and peer groups allowed student game developers to openly discuss their own attitudes and perceptions in the area, as well as what they thought would be important to share with others.

Game players found the game novel and enjoyed playing the game. All players felt that 'Consent: The Game' was a flexible approach to teaching a wide range of audiences about issues like this which are often stigmatised.

Implications and challenges included recruitment difficulties, particularly for male game developers and players. While using peer groups to co-construct the game is important, it is also important to have a knowledgeable facilitator to guide discussions.

**Table 1:** Main and Sub-Themes from the Thematic Analysis with Supporting Quotes

Theme 1: Educational awareness	Theme 2: Gamification	Theme 3: Health consequences and outcomes	Theme 4: Societal attitudes
<p><b>1a: Knowledge of the consequences of non-consensual acts</b></p> <p>"...before we started, I didn't know there was such a thing as official consent that needs to be in place..." (M)</p>	<p><b>2a: Impacts of the game</b></p> <p>"As a group...It opens up conversation" (F)</p>	<p><b>3a: Signposting and advice</b></p> <p>"I think one of the main things is that sometimes even the victim doesn't know that she's been raped, or that he's been raped..." (F)</p>	<p><b>4a: Diversity and inclusion</b></p> <p>"...[The Game] can be modified for age ranges... and experiences that are relatable..." (F)</p>
<p><b>1b: Knowledge of the law regarding consent</b></p> <p>"Where would you get [a rape kit from] from" (F)</p>	<p><b>2b: Learning opportunities within the game</b></p> <p>"Schools teach sexual education but they don't actually teach consent... it should be compulsory to every school" (F)</p>	<p><b>3b: Sexual health</b></p> <p>"I really think sexual health being free and you have like clinics and everything I think it's great, but I think it should be spread..." (F)</p>	<p><b>4b: Normative beliefs</b></p> <p>"...I think it's normal that somebody touches your arse when you're at parties. It's normalised... I don't think any girl has not been touched in a party..." (F)</p>
<p><b>1c: Social media</b></p> <p>"...I just played what I would have read on the internet and whatever I would have read in the newspaper" (M)</p>	<p><b>2c: Logistics of the game</b></p> <p>"I think that the game is really interesting and I think it could be very useful if it is widespread in schools..." (F)</p>	<p><b>3c: Wellbeing</b></p> <p>"...if you're doing something you're uncomfortable with, that's not a healthy relationship" (M)</p>	
	<p><b>2d: Players attitudes and attributes</b></p> <p>"It takes your mind off the subject matter and off the stigmatism" (F)</p>		

## Method

### Participants

Five game developers (5 female and 1 male) were Law students recruited from The University of Northampton. Game players took part in a game development workshop, followed by a focus group on their experiences of developing the game.

Five game players (2 male and 3 females) were recruited from the general student population from The University of Northampton. Game players were involved in a game playing session, followed by a focus group on their experiences of playing Consent: The Game.

### Analysis

The game development workshop, game playing sessions and both the game developer and game playing focus groups were recorded, transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis.

### Ethics

This project had full ethical approval from the Faculty of Business and Law Ethics Committee.

## Next steps

Report write up and dissemination of research

## Glossary

**Gamification:** applying game playing strategies to teaching

**Thematic analysis:** Analysing themes and patterns in qualitative data.

## References

- Association of American Universities (2015) Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct.
- Crofts, M., Hill, K.M., Prokopiou, E., Barrick, R., Callaghan, J., & Armstrong-Hallam, S. (2018). *New Spaces: Safeguarding Students from Violence and Hate*. Report produced for the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).
- Hill, K.M., & Crofts, M. (2018) "It is simply a part of life": Creating on-Campus Conversations about Consent, Sexual Violence and Alcohol-Related Sexual Activity. [in review].
- National Union of Students (2014) *Hidden Marks: a study of women students' experiences of harassment, stalking, violence and sexual assault*, NUS.
- Universities UK (2016) *Changing the Culture: Report of the Universities UK Taskforce examining violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students*, Universities UK