Game Changer:
evaluating "What It Is", a game challenging sexual violence against youth

METRAC
Metropolitan Action Committee on
Violence Against Women and Children

Game Changer: Evaluating "What It Is", a Game Challenging Sexual Violence Against Youth

October 2012

Find "What It Is" game and resources:

Visit www.challengesexualviolence.org

Funding support:

Note: images in this report are from the "What It Is" digital game.

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Introduction

About "What It Is"

"What It Is" is METRAC's digital quiz game that challenges sexual violence against youth across Canada. It has been downloaded and played over 85,000 times globally since its official launch in November 2010.

"What It Is" can be played in English or French online at www.challengesexualviolence.org. It is also available for download on Java-based mobile phones, iPhones, Blackberry phones and Android phones by visiting www.challengesexualviolence.org. A special Facebook version of the game will be released in late 2012.

"What It Is" is geared toward young people who have experienced sexual violence or may be at risk of sexual violence, particularly those aged 12 to 25. High scoring players of the online or mobile game can win a song track entitled "Zalaura" by Shi Wisdom and Myk Miranda (produced by EMJ; engineered by Ron Davis; spoken word recorded by Definitive Sound).

"What It Is" was funded by TELUS and the Department of Justice Canada. Its content was guided by youth and the online and mobile versions were developed by ZMQ Software Systems. The Facebook version is currently being developed by volunteers at TELUS.

"What It Is" highlights:

- what sexual assault and sexual abuse are and their differential impacts on diverse young women and young men;
- what consent is in the context of Canadian law;
- myths and realities of sexual violence;
- needs, rights and common concerns of those who experience sexual violence;
- issues of healthy and unhealthy relationships and how they relate to sexual violence;
- how youth can best support victimized peers; and
- resources, community services and supports available to survivors of sexual violence.

Visitors to www.challengesexualviolence.org can find the "What It Is" game for play online on their phones, public service announcements and other resources on the issues.

The following statistics summarize the process of creating and releasing the game:

- seven youth of different ages, ethno-racial backgrounds, abilities, sexual identities and income levels led project activities as Youth Advisory Team members;
- 52 youth tested and contributed to game content through four participatory focus groups across the Greater Toronto Area;
- 8,800 youth-targeted handbills were distributed to 95 schools and service providers across the country to distribute to youth they serve; and
- representatives from three media outlets attended the official media launch on November 25, 2010.

About METRAC

Founded in 1984, METRAC is an award-winning, community-based organization in Toronto, Ontario that prevents violence against diverse women and youth through innovative public education, legal information and training, peer youth violence prevention, community safety initiatives, policy and research.

For more information about METRAC, visit www.metrac.org.

About the evaluator

Michelle Dagnino, MA, LLB is the Principal of Michelle Dagnino & Associates. She has 10 years of not-for-profit experience in the areas of organizational assessment, strategic planning, youth engagement and outreach, evaluation and training. Michelle and her associates provide meaningful, independent reflection on the success and relevancy of programs, and findings are supported by multiple lines of evidence. Michelle is one of Canada's leading experts on youth engagement and outreach and has been internationally recognized for her expertise on enhancing meaningful youth participation in public spaces.

Evaluation background

Defining sexual violence

The definition of sexual violence as discussed with evaluation participants and as used in this report includes any form of unwanted sexual touching, rape and attempted rape, unwanted sexual remarks and other forms of sexual harassment. While official definitions vary, sexual violence prevention initiatives typically address a wide range of behaviours as part of a continuum, and sexually harassing and degrading behaviours are often highlighted as risk factors for rape and sexual assault. Since sexual violence is a gendered crime perpetrated primarily by men against women, most sexual violence prevention programs target attitude and behavioural change associated with man-on-woman sexual violence (Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008; Jewkes et al., 2002; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). However, prevention initiatives often include an analysis of sexual violence in same-sex contexts, as well as sexual violence against young men and trans youth.

Facts about sexual violence against youth

"Sexual assault is one of the most under-reported crimes. According to the [General Social Survey], fewer than 10% of sexual assaults in both survey years were reported to the police" (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Statsitics Canada (2006) notes that "the vulnerability of youth to sexual violence is emphasized by the fact that, overall, youth under 18 represented 22% of the Canadian population in 2004 but made up 58% of victims of sexual offences". According to a national household survey on crime, young women aged 15 to 24 experience the highest rates of sexual violence (Perreault & Brennan, 2010). Sexually aggressive behaviours against young women are common occurrences on high school, college and university campuses.

- One-quarter of female high school students in Alberta reported experiencing at least one incident of indecent exposure or unwanted sexual remarks, threats, or touching (Bagley et al., 1997).
- Seven percent of girls in a Toronto high school identified being forced to have sex on school property. Twenty-nine percent reported experiencing other types of unwanted sexual contact (Falconer, 2008).
- Five percent of female students in one university and one college in Southwestern Ontario described their most significant negative social experiences as sexual incidents other than rape; three percent described their most significant negative social experiences as rape (Tremblay et al., 2008).
- In just one year in Canada, 427,000 women over the age of 15 reported being sexually assaulted. Since only about 10% of all sexual assaults are reported to the police, the actual number is much higher (Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008).
- Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16. (Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008).
- Surveys of college and university students in Canada and the United States consistently estimate that one-quarter of female students have experienced rape or attempted rape and 90% of these experiences involve an attacker known to the woman (Fisher et al., 2010; DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993).

While "What It Is" is relevant to all youth, it was developed with strong attention paid to the unique needs of young women with respect to sexual violence. Many programs and policies intended to prevent assault often collapse the needs of girls and young

women into generic categories of "youth" and "children". For instance, many school-based victim support programs are targeted to young people in general. An emphasis on "bullying" and "neighbourhood safety" often substitutes the reality that sexual violence is gender-based, usually directed at girls and expressive of their lesser social power. Not only does a generic approach obscure different experiences of young women depending on factors such as income level, where they live and racial background, it also masks the reality that young women are most likely to experience sexual violence in Canada (Gropper & Froschl, 2000; Pepler & Craig, 1997).

Evaluation of current initiatives

Most program evaluations on sexual violence initiatives stem from programs developed on college and university campuses in the United States. This is largely due to legislation passed by the U.S. Congress in 1990 that mandates federally-funded colleges and universities to collect and publish crime statistics; make public their policies about awareness and prevention of sexual violence on campus; and provide basic rights for sexual assault victims (Fisher et al., 2000).

With no such legislation in Canada, there has been little incentive or funding for colleges, universities and other publically-funded institutions to report on sexual violence reduction activities or to conduct public evaluations of prevention efforts. Few evaluations of youth initiatives have been conducted and even fewer have been done on prevention and intervention work outside of the school setting.

More recently, the Ontario Government released a helpful best practice guide for effective sexual violence public education campaigns, which includes a review of available literature on "what works" (Haskell, 2011).

Impact of technology

New technology tools – mobile phones, internet and social media communication, global positioning system (GPS) devices, wireless cameras and other digital devices – are increasingly used by perpetrators of sexual violence to frighten, stalk, monitor, harass and control. Rapid expansion and availability of these technologies poses new threats to those who are victimized and new challenges for advocates and service providers (Southworth et al., 2005). They can create new forums for gender-based violence to occur and they may also work together to further the acceptance and perceived normality of this violence (Maltzahn, 2005).

While Canadian-specific research on the issue is difficult to identify, research from around the world provides clues about how social media and communication technologies interact with gender-based violence.

- The United Nation estimates that 95% of aggressive behaviour, harassment, abusive language and images in online spaces are directed towards women by current or former male partners (Association for Progressive Communications, 2010).
- A survey in India found that victims of cyberstalking aged 18 to 34 were mostly female (Association for Progressive Communications, 2010).
- Research in Argentina showed that a woman's mobile phone was one of the

"The high incidence of sexual assault among women, especially young adolescents, coupled with the fact that it is severely underreported is a cause for serious concern" (Vopni, 2006, p. 109).

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first items to be destroyed by a violent partner (Association for Progressive Communications, 2010).

- A study in Pakistan found that 94% of women respondents received harassing messages and calls from men they didn't know (Association for Progressive Communications, 2010).
- In Malaysia, women's groups have cited the use of intimate images to blackmail young women into staying in a relationship (N. van der Gaag, 2010).
- Adolescent girls are particularly targeted for abuse following online solicitation, and vulnerable girls appear to be most at risk. A Latvian study found that young women aged 10 to 22 years from impoverished regions were the most vulnerable to online solicitation. A US study found that youth who are isolated, feel misunderstood and depressed, and lack familial support are most at risk of solicitation and are more likely to give away their personal information (N. van der Gaag, 2010).

New technologies can allow for: action at a distance, where identifying and calling the abuser to account is difficult; easy production and propagation, where textual and audio-visual content is cheap to create and distribute; and automation, where a person's whereabouts and actions can be easy to track by virtue of the devices they use (The Association for Progressive Communication, 2010).

Social media and communication technologies can be used to perpetrate existing forms of violence against women in new ways. For instance, the Association for Progressive Communication (2010) notes that, in situations of intimate partner violence, women's use of text messaging and emails can be controlled and monitored by abusive partners. Intimate photos and videos can be used for blackmail to trap women in violent relationships, and tracking of a woman's whereabouts through GPS technology is a risk. In situations of sexual harassment, women can receive persistent, unwanted and threatening calls and messages on their mobile phones, email accounts and social media accounts. There have also been cases where women's photographs were manipulated and posted online for harassing purposes and where fraudulent online advertisements with women's personal information led to physical and sexual abuse. With respect to trafficking and the sex industry, emerging research demonstrates how traffickers use the internet to recruit victims, and intimate pictures and videos have been distributed and sold without permission of women and girls involved. *Because I am a Girl: The State of the World's Girls: Digital and Urban Frontiers* notes how offenders use online mechanisms to solicit girls, "grooming them" for real-life contact and physical, emotional and sexual harm (N. van der Gaag, 2010).

The Association for Progressive Communication (2010) notes why new technologies can be ideal for the perpetration of abuse. They allow for:

- action at a distance, where identifying and calling the abuser to account is difficult;
- easy production and propagation, where textual and audio-visual content is cheap to create and distribute; and
- automation, where a person's whereabouts and actions can be easy to track by virtue of the devices they use.

As organizations continue to educate and mobilize, they do so knowing that technology brings challenges along with benefits. New media can increase young peoples' vulnerability and exposure. It simultaneously allows them to craft new connections with one another while rendering them more open to victimization by friends, acquaintances and strangers.

However, there are many indications that technology can also be harnessed as a sexual violence prevention and victim support tool.

- The US Department of Health and Human Services and White House Office of Science and Technology Policy collaborated with the Office of the Vice President to launch an "Apps Against Abuse" contest in 2011. The competition challenged developers to create innovative apps to empower university and college students to prevent sexual assault and dating violence. They encouraged developers to create apps that would allow users to do real time "check-ins" and designate trusted friends and emergency contacts for a crisis.
- Take Back the Tech is a yearly global and collaborative campaign that encourages participants to use technology to end violence against women. Daily actions are initiated between November 25 and December 10 to explore issues of violence against women and their interconnection with communication rights such as the right to privacy, freedom of expression and the right to information. Actions utilize different communication platforms (www.takebackthetech.net).
- A study in Uganda identified that some women purchase two SIM cards to avoid domestic violence. One card is used at home to communicate with a controlling partner, and the second is used outside of the home to stay in contact with others and decrease isolation.
- "Keep Your Chats Exactly That!" is a campaign launched in Johannesburg, South Africa that aims to ensure that young people are empowered to use cell phones and the internet for positive, safe self-expression and are free from harassment and abuse (www.girlsnet.org.za/keep-your-chats-exactly).
- Hollaback! is a movement dedicated to ending street harassment using mobile technology. Stories and pictures about harassment against women, girls and other vulnerable groups are collected and shared in a safe way by users' own mobile phones (www.ihollaback.org).

Over the past five years, METRAC has also harnessed and addressed the power of social media, mobile technology and digital gaming. "What It Is" is one example. Others include RePlay: Finding Zoe/ReJouer: Où est Zoé?, METRAC's award-winning online game on healthy relationships for youth 8 to 14 years of age, and Not Your Baby, METRAC's iPhone app to help people deal with sexual harassment and share their stories and ideas. METRAC also co-authored "Power to the People: Anti-Oppressive Game Design", a chapter in *Designing Games for Ethics: Models, Techniques and Frameworks* to support digital game developers in creating games with equity, violence prevention and social change goals (Schrier & Gibson, 2011) .

More quantitative and qualitative studies are needed to determine the role of technology in perpetrating and ending abuse, as well as more projects that use technology to promote prevention and intervention in violent situations. Research is also required to assess outcomes and develop guidelines for best practices, which will support more effective prevention initiatives and provide easier access to accurate information (Southworth et al., 2007). The "What It Is" digital game, along with this evaluation, represents one small step in the right direction.

Evaluation process

This report is the outcome of a series of evaluation activities to explore the efficacy of "What It Is". It identifies connections between the issue of sexual violence against youth and tools for prevention, and proposes recommendations for other sexual violence prevention and intervention initiatives.

The evaluation was conducted to answer three key questions.

1. Is the game effective in making the issue of sexual violence against young women visible?
2. What do young people identify as the major issues when discussing sexual violence?
3. How can we make the game and other similar initiatives better in the future?

Evaluation questions were explored using a multi-method approach.

- Interviews were conducted with three key informants who had been part of the game development process.
- A survey asking young people questions about the game and their knowledge of sexual violence was posted on METRAC's website and on www. challengesexualviolence.org. The survey was also distributed through listserves, school board contacts, community partners, service providers and METRAC's Twitter and Facebook profiles.
- Focus groups comprised of teenagers and young adults were conducted to gain further insight on youth experiences with the game and their conceptualizations of sexual violence.

Online survey

The survey was posted online between April 11 and June 22, 2012. Respondents were asked optional questions about gender, age and location to get a broad sense of their demographics. The rest of the questions were grouped under two main headings: questions about the game and questions related to sexual violence (Appendix A). Completion of the survey was voluntary, and respondents who chose to leave their email address were eligible for a prize draw.

In total, 136 people responded to the survey. Eleven percent were in the 12 to 14 age bracket, 28% were in the 15 to 18 age bracket, and the majority (61%) were 19 to 25 years old. Eighty-eight percent of respondents identified as female, three percent identified as male, and nine percent did not respond to the question. Seventy-two percent of respondents identified living in the province of Ontario and the remaining percentage were evenly distributed across Canada.

Focus groups

Focus group sessions were held in five locations in City of Toronto, Vancouver and Ottawa. A total of 62 youth participated, including 32 high school students, 18 youth

outside the school system and 12 university students. Participant recruitment ran from March to April 2011 through high schools and community agencies that work with youth. Service providers were invited to participate as "silent observers" if they were bringing youth to the group. Three were held in English with high school students – two with a mix of genders and the other with girls from an all-female school. Another group was held with youth in a Toronto drop-in centre, and the last was conducted in French with young women recruited from a university and community agency partner.

Focus groups engaged participants in discussions about the game, their knowledge of sexual assault and ideas for future initiatives. They were semi-structured, guided by flexible and open-ended questions, and facilitated by a member of the evaluation team. Questions were developed based on previous research and the team's knowledge of sexual assault and common sexual assault myths (Appendix B). Sessions began by having participants play the game if they had not done so before.

Participants provided informed consent and signed a confidentiality agreement after being provided with full details about the purpose of the study and their role. Participants under age 18 were required to seek parental consent. All participants were told their involvement was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw consent at any time.

Participants were also assured their responses were anonymous, but school-based focus groups included teachers as "silent observers". This likely impacted the range of responses and comfort level of participants. Three focus groups were videotaped, but only questions about usability and effectiveness of the game were recorded. Visit METRAC's YouTube channel for a clip (www.youtube.com/user/metracorg).

Evaluation findings

Overall impression and usability

Overwhelmingly positive responses were given about the game's usability and content, including its length, usability and ease of play.

A recurring comment from participants was that the game seems targeted to younger youth. Seventy-four percent of respondents felt that the game was targeted to youth between the ages of 12 and 14, and only five percent felt it was targeted to the "oldest" target age group, 22 to 25 year olds. One young woman said, "It's an easy game to play, but some of the questions were challenging. It looks like a game for younger teens, but the topics it touches on are not generally talked about until you get to college or university, if at all."

"'What It Is' such a creative way to talk to youth about sexual violence. I'm glad it exists." (Evaluation respondent)

Some students expressed an expectation that "What It Is" would be a more active, movement-oriented game and include advancing levels to progress through. When it was described as a "simple quiz game", some participants asked why characters did not maneuver around the screen in ways reminiscent of more complicated video games. For example:

- "This would be good with more levels."
- "I thought that it would be more interactive."
- "I didn't see the point of having to move the players around."
- "It could have just been structured as questions and answers without the role-playing."

Without being asked the question directly, the majority of respondents expressed that the game's length is just right. Fifty percent of respondents disagreed with the statement, "The game was too slow", and 16.7% agreed. Another fifty percent of respondents disagreed with the statement, "The game was too long", and another 16.7% agreed.

General comments gleaned from the evaluation include the following:

- "I wish there were more games like this."
- "I thought it was cool that we got a prize at the end."
- "It would be great if there was a teaching or school version of this."
- "It totally makes sense to have a game like this. My friends and I spend almost all our free time on the internet."
- "Because there is such a cost and expertise to developing technology-based multimedia, embarking on these types of initiatives is rare. More of these types of games and apps should exist."
- "Prevention initiatives usually target older age groups. This project can be very valuable for younger teens."
- "'What It Is' such a creative way to talk to youth about sexual violence. I'm glad it exists."

Learning about sexual violence

The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that the game is informative, applicable to all genders and addresses the right topics. They indicated that it is an effective tool for raising discussions about sexual violence.

Sixty-nine percent of respondents felt that the game taught them something new. For example, one respondent said, "I didn't know I had to ask a friend for permission to report her sexual assault." Seventy-four percent of respondents felt that the game raised thought-provoking issues. For example, a young woman said, "The game raised questions that I wouldn't normally had thought about on my own. Most of the time when I hear about sex assault, it's on television."

"I didn't know I had to ask a friend for permission to report her sexual assault." (Evaluation respondent)

In general, respondents thought playing "What It Is" is better than reading an article on the subject or being given a presentation.

- Fifty-five percent of respondents agreed with the statement, "After playing the game I now feel like I can talk to my friends about sexual assault". About 10% disagreed.
- Ninety-five percent of respondents felt they knew more about issues of sexual violence after playing the game.
- Ninety-one percent of respondents stated that the game was important for people of all ages and genders. Only four percent of respondents stated the game seemed targeted only to girls.
- Ninety percent of respondents agreed with the statement, "I thought the game addressed the right topic".

Participants also indicated other topics they would have liked the game to address - nearly three percent wished the game addressed body image. Another three percent wished the game addressed dating violence, and five percent wished the game addressed family violence.
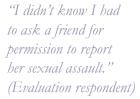
Knowledge about sexual violence

Sexual violence was understood in varied ways. When asked about attackers, many participants alluded to the common trope of "a stranger lurking in the dark". Although youth expressed an intellectual understanding that sexual assault can happen anywhere and that it is often perpetrated by people who are known, "stranger-danger" references were dominant. For instance:

- "The image in my head is a man with a knife and a crying woman in an alley, you know. When people hear the word 'rape' and 'sexual assault' they think of a man forcing sex on a woman against her will." (Young woman)

Many participants demonstrated an understanding of the gendered nature of sexual violence – that men are most often the perpetrators and women are often victimized. Overall, participants were divided into two camps, the first of which believed sexual assault to be the act of rape against a woman. For example:

- "I think [sexual assault is] specifically rape. Involving women. I know it happens to

men but it is far less frequent." (Young woman)

- "I think that sexual assault is more, like, rape. And mostly to women. I know people say there's men, but I've never heard of a man being [sexually] assaulted." (Young woman)

The second camp, a smaller subset, understood sexual violence as a broader set of behaviours that could include verbal and emotional violence. Some described it in general terms, such as "being forced into something sexual you don't want to do".

- "Yeah, even verbally. You can sexually harass and assault someone emotionally and psychologically. It is not confined to physical acts." (Young woman)
- "I guess it happens mostly with women and it's not only rape. It's any kind of unwanted touching or any way that the woman doesn't feel like she's being respected." (Young woman)

Almost all respondents (92.9%) said the following statement is "not true at all": "It's not sexual harassment unless there is physical touching".

In general, respondents were highly knowledgeable about sexual violence myths and many understood the realities. For example, all respondents stated that sexual assault is "never a woman's fault". Almost all respondents (92.9%) said the following statement is "not true at all": "It's not sexual harassment unless there is physical touching". The remaining eight percent said the statement is "usually not true".

Consistent with research on widespread ideas about sexual assault and consent, the statement, "If I don't drink alcohol I can't be sexually assaulted" was the only one that elicited "it depends on the situation" responses.

Alcohol and sexual violence

Youth addressed the relationship between alcohol and sexual violence, and many discussions focused on bar and club environments. Certainly, "sexual violence prevention literature identifies alcohol as a risk factor at multiple levels: at the level of individuals and interpersonal relationships where peers influence attitudes and beliefs about risk and responsibility pertaining to sexual violence in drinking contexts" (Johnson & MacKay, 2011). One youth expressed that assaults in home environments were less likely to be framed as assault because young women believe those to be safer, more controlled spaces.

Some participants spoke to the intersection of sexual violence and "getting drunk" and "hooking up". For example:

- "It's not forced on anyone, right, like if everybody is sharing and drinking then you don't know anymore what's what. There isn't a point where somebody said, 'I was made to drink' or 'I was encouraged to drink'. Everybody's doing it and everybody's just getting more and more into it, it's like this kind of whirlwind or spiral and, uh, and then after that it all kind of falls apart." (Young man)

Some participants addressed how alcohol may impact perpetrators of sexual violence. For example:

- "I think also that alcohol can definitely affect the perpetrator, like affect their

judgment significantly. The alcohol can control you, in a sense. It's definitely not an excuse, but it's a contributor." (Young woman)

- "You know what is wrong and what is right. But what is wrong might seem a little less wrong as you get more wasted, you fall victim to your own desires, right." (Young man)

Conversely, participants primarily discussed women's responsibility in consuming alcohol. For instance, they continuously admonished women to "know their limits" and take precautions to guard against sexual assault while drinking.

- "If a guy bought me drinks to get in my pants, I'd take the drinks. I wouldn't let him in my pants; I'd make it clear." (Young man)
- "The girl should know her limits, like when to stop drinking so that when the time comes she can think clearly. So he can't take advantage of her by being in charge of her mind. She has to know her limits too." (Young woman)

Many participants believed that silence or intoxication can be interpreted as consent. They suggested that women who are assaulted while intoxicated are at fault for making themselves vulnerable and putting themselves in high-risk situations.

In many ways, participants seemed to allude to a kind of "time out" that may seem to apply when drinking.

In many ways, participants seemed to allude to a kind of "time out" that may seem to apply when drinking. For some participants, visibly drunk women were seen as "easy targets". While some were careful to note that drinking does not reduce the perpetrator's responsibility, women's consumption of alcohol and subsequent "poor judgment" was the centre of many focus group conversations.

Risk and responsibility

Similarly, much of the discussions about risk and responsibility centered on women victims. Although some participants were clear that a woman is never responsible for sexual violence she experiences, the majority of participants suggested that it is a woman's responsibility to clearly communicate "no". This reflects an understanding of sexual behaviour where the expectation of consent, especially in a "party" or sociable environment, is considered a given until "no" is expressed.

The concept of "lines" continually surfaced in focus group discussions. Youth addressed "crossing boundaries" and some described situations where the line between consent and assault is blurred:

- where a woman's clothing invites sexual attention;
- where a man buys a woman drinks;
- where women are intoxicated and drunk men cannot control themselves; and
- where a woman's dancing provokes men.

For instance, several participants indicated being in a situation where a woman "invited a guy's attention".

- "Sexual assault is never justified but I've seen my girlfriends totally flirt with a guy, lead him on, and then just when they hooked the guy said that they weren't interested

anymore. I can see why some girls get a rep as a cock tease." (Young woman)

One participant said that a woman who wears a miniskirt to a bar is "asking for it", especially if she leaves the bar with a man. Others suggested similar ideas:

- "[If she is going out dancing] I don't want to say she's asking for it but she is putting herself in a situation where she's going to be surrounded by guys that are drinking too much. So things could happen. " (Young man)
- " … a lot of girls out there actually look for it. Not look for it, but I am pretty sure that they're old enough to actually know what's good and what's wrong. I mean if you go out almost naked, get drunk, wasted and then try to walk home, what else could happen, right?" (Young woman)

The mix of sexual violence myths and gender stereotypes of proper, expected and "natural" behaviour for women and men seemed to make it difficult for many participants to disentangle the realities they said they believed in.

As the above examples suggest, there was debate and contradiction when it came to identifying women's "risk and responsibility". For example:

- a participant expressed that clothing isn't the issue and that women could be naked if they want to, as long as they're not sending the "wrong message".
- another participant stated that a woman drinking should not mean she's openly available for sex, but that women should not put themselves in high-risk situations where assault is inevitable.
- another expressed that women do "ask for it" but assault doesn't happen unless a man decides to act.

The mix of sexual violence myths and gender stereotypes of proper, expected and "natural" behaviour for women and men seemed to make it difficult for many participants to disentangle the realities they said they believed in. Many clearly communicated the idea that sexual violence is never justified, yet struggled with the notion that women are responsible for assaults they experience and "ask for it" by their behaviour, drinking or clothes.

In contrast, unless the situation fit a "stranger-danger" or "boogie man" scenario of sexual assault, many participants expressed difficulty placing responsibility on the perpetrator. One young man noted that other young men may genuinely not understand consent and may unintentionally commit assaults because they do not know better.

- "[Responsibility] depends. I mean if she told the guy to stop or gave any sign of 'I don't want any more of this contact' and he continued, then it's incorrect. But if she didn't communicate - effectively communicate - to that individual, I really don't think that would be construed as sexual assault … If he's making advances that would be considered appropriate in that situation and she doesn't communicate to him, no, I wouldn't see it as sexual assault. But if she does and he continues, it is." (Young man)

Other participants also expressed that young people may not understand consent and that the distinction between consent and abuse is all the more complicated by new technology and social media. For instance, some participants expressed uncertainty about being able to say "no" at any time while flirting in person or through texting or social media. They alluded to a pressure and expectation to "following through". This notion of a "grey area of consent" may have contributed to participants' difficulty in identifying the difference between assault and consensual sex, myth and truth, as well as where

responsibility for an assault lies.

- "You could probably prevent a lot of sexual assaults that wouldn't have happened if people knew what consent was, how to determine what is consensual. I think a lot of people getting drunk and being taken advantage of might not happen because guys might not know when to stop and what not to do. A lot of guys might not be actively trying to sexually assault somebody; they might just not understand that they're not supposed to be doing this right now because she is in no condition to be consenting to it." (Young woman)

There was consensus that the right technology can empower individuals and communities to prevent and heal from sexual violence.

Importance of technology

Across all evaluative methods, respondents indicated that the game was an important, needed and innovative method of reaching out to youth. There was consensus that the right technology can empower individuals and communities to prevent, deal with and heal from sexual violence. Participants noted that:

- the "What It Is" game has the potential to identify factors that contribute to and influence sexual and gender-based violence;
- the game can be a prevention tool in and of itself and does not need to be targeted to one particular audience in the way traditional strategies such as forums, workshops and in-class curricula often are;
- technological activities can have a much wider range and can be aimed at potential perpetrators, survivors and those who may assist them;
- other countries, particularly the United States, seem to be ahead of Canada in using technology to combat sexual violence; and
- the game has the potential to be expanded into a series with other types of targeted prevention messaging.

Conclusions

New mobile, social and online platforms offer exciting opportunities to heighten awareness, shift attitudes and strengthen knowledge among youth about sexual violence. Educators are increasingly tapping into data-rich learning opportunities, but the use of interactive new media tools to combat sexual violence is relatively new.

Through the evaluation of "What It Is", it appears that the game is an excellent tool for education and has significant potential to prevent and intervene in situations of sexual violence by promoting healthy, equal gender roles, gender equality, healthy relationships and healthy sexuality.

Moving forward with "What It Is", the game should be developed for alternative platforms and expanded to include increasing levels and a reward system for players such as badges and leader boards. Future design should also incorporate more active moment

Key findings and recommendations

"What It Is" is an excellent tool for education and has significant potential to prevent and intervene in situations of sexual violence by promoting healthy, equal gender roles, gender equality, healthy relationships and healthy sexuality.

1. The multi-pronged approach in development of "What It Is" was very useful. Sexual violence prevention and intervention benefits from the insight of a wide range of stakeholders including schools, community agencies and youth-serving organizations., and is everyone's responsibility.

   Recommendation: continue a multi-pronged approach in developing games by establishing partnerships with significant stakeholders in the lives of youth.

2. The strength of the game is due in part to the heavy involvement of youth in its design and testing.

   Recommendation: continue to involve youth in the development and implementation of future digital initiatives.

3. The game's design was informed by anti-oppression principles, leading to the reflection of diversity in its reach and content.

   Recommendation: continue to ensure efforts are culturally competent and reflective of diverse experiences of youth based on their identities so all young people can relate and be reached by them.

4. While respondents recognized sexual violence as an issue that affects everyone and acknowledged perpetrators' responsibility, they debated women's "fault" in their victimization, especially in partying and drinking contexts. They struggled with the notion of women's freedom to have a social life and behave, act and dress as they choose. This tension between perpetrator responsibility and victim-blaming is indicative of prevalent social myths about gender roles and rape. Young people are not exempt from the impact of widespread stereotypes and tropes about gender roles and who is to blame for sexual violence.

   Recommendation: sexual violence prevention and survivor support campaigns must engage all genders, at the same time highlighting the gendered nature of sexual

violence and promoting the message that sexual violence is not the fault of the victimized.

Recommendation: programs and campaigns must take into account the reality of how youth grapple with widespread myths about gender roles and sexual violence. Efforts must address drinking, socializing and using social media and mobile technology to interact and flirt, as well as gender expectations and dating and sexual scripts. Efforts must also support a strong understanding of the law and matters of consent, especially when it comes to so-called "grey areas" and "time out" situations where sexual violence occurs.

Additional resources

- *Building Prevention: Sexual Violence, Youth and Drinking*, H. Johnson and Jenna MacKay (2011): http://www.crimepreventionottawa.ca/uploads/files/publications/bullding_ prevention_final_report.pdf
- Circle of 6 app, The Line Campaign: www.circleof6app.com
- "Creating a Violence Prevention Video Game: Literature Review and Research Summary for METRAC's RePlay Project", METRAC (2007): www.metrac.org/ resources/resources.htm
- *Key Best Practices for Effective Sexual Violence Public Education Campaigns: A Summary*, L. Haskell (2011): www.sexualviolenceforum.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/SVAP_Best_ Practices_Eng..pdf
- Love Is Not Abuse app, Liz Claiborne Inc.: www.loveisnotabuse.com
- Not Your Baby app, METRAC: www.metrac.org
- OnWatch app: www.onwatchoncampus.com
- "Power to the People: Anti-Oppressive Game Design", A. Gunraj, S. Ruiz and A. York (2011): www.metrac.org/resources/resources.htm
- RePlay: Finding Zoe/ReJouer: Où est Zoé? game, METRAC: www.metrac.org
- Safety Siren app, YWCA Canada: www.ywcacanada.ca

Appendix A: online survey questions

1. What is your gender?

2. What is your age?

3. What city do you live in?

4. I learned something new after playing the game.
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Not Applicable

5. The game was too slow.
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Not Applicable

6. I felt that game was targeted to youth between the ages of:
   - 12-14
   - 14-18
   - 18-22
   - 22-25

7. The game was thought-provoking.
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Not Applicable

8. The game was too long.
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Not Applicable

9. After playing the game I now feel like I can talk to my friends about sexual assault.
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Not Applicable

10. I know more about sexual violence after playing the game.
    - Disagree
    - Neutral
    - Agree
    - Not Applicable

11. After playing the game I have more information about where to go for help or information about sexual assault.
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Not Applicable

12. I wish the game had addressed other topics.
- Body-image
- Self-esteem
- Dating violence
- Family violence
- I thought the game addressed the right topic

13. This information in this game is most important for:
- Boys ages 13-15
- Girls ages 13-15
- Boys over age 16
- Girls over age 16
- Youth living in the city
- Youth living in rural towns
- Youth living away from home
- Girls only
- This game is important for important for everyone to play

14. It's not sexual harassment unless there is physical touching.
- Not true at all
- Usually not true
- Depends on the situation
- Mostly true
- Completely true
- Not Applicable

15. Women ask to get assaulted when they go out late at night, wear sexy clothes, or dance close to someone.
- Not true at all
- Usually not true
- Depends on the situation
- Mostly true
- Completely true
- Not Applicable

16. Women make up assault to get attention or cover up that they wanted to have sex.
- Not true at all
- Usually not true
- Depends on the situation
- Mostly true
- Completely true
- Not Applicable

17. If I don't drink alcohol I can't be sexually assaulted.
- Not true at all
- Usually not true
- Depends on the situation
- Mostly true
- Completely true
- Not Applicable

18. It's not rape if the couple is dating or is married.
- Not true at all
- Usually not true
- Depends on the situation
- Mostly true
- Completely true
- Not Applicable

19. Only women can be sexually assaulted.
- Not true at all
- Usually not true
- Depends on the situation
- Mostly true
- Completely true
- Not Applicable

20. What is the most important fact about sexual assault that you learned from playing the game?

21. Do you have any other comments?

Appendix B: focus group questions

1. What did you think about the game?

Probing questions:
- What age group is most suited for the game?
- Did you find the questions easy? Hard?
- Was the game fun? Would you recommend it to your friends?
- How about ease of play?

2. When sexual assault was asked about in the game, what did you understand sexual assault to be?

Probing questions:
- Do only women experience sexual assault?
- Do you currently know of community resources that you would access if a friend told you that he or she had been sexually assaulted?
- Did the game provide you with new information about sexual assault?

3. Is everybody equally vulnerable to being sexually assaulted?

Probing questions:
- Are girls and women more likely to be sexually assaulted?
- Are there places that are more dangerous than others?
- Can women alter their behaviour to draw less attention to themselves?
- Is it hard to make good decisions when you have been drinking?

4. Who carries the most responsibility for ending sexual violence?

Probing questions:
- Is it the perpetrator? Victim?
- Is it more of a woman's issue than a man's?
- How do games like What it is help? Do you think they have any impact?

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