Research to Practice: Utilizing Data from Sexual Consent Focus Groups to Inform Programs, Services and Policies

Katye R. Miller, Ph.D., MCHES
Michelle M. Bangen, MPH, CHES

College of Education and Human Ecology, Human Development and Family Science
The Office of Student Life Student Wellness Center
Today’s Session

• Focus group methodology
  - Plan
  - Implement
  - Analyze

• Sexual consent focus group findings

• Research to practice
Focus Group Methodology – Plan

- Determination of need
- Partners
- Literature review
- IRB
Focus Group Methodology – Implement

• Recruitment
Focus Group Methodology – Implement

• Recruitment

Let’s Talk...About Sex!
Seeking Focus Group Participants for Research Project

WHO: OSU Columbus Campus,
Undergrad Students, 18+ years

WHAT: Your ideas about sexual consent
to understand student views and shape programming

WHEN: Various Dates WHERE: RPAC

Questions? Email Michelle Bangen at bangen.1@osu.edu

Register at go.osu.edu/consent-f-g

$10 & Free Pizza For 2 Hours
Focus Group Methodology – Implement

• Recruitment

---

Student Wellness Center
OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

Consent Focus Groups

Participants Wanted!

S10 and pizza for 2 hours of your time. The Student Wellness Center is conducting a research study through focus groups around sexual consent with OSU undergraduate students. We would love to hear your thoughts on what consent means to you and how consent should be given and received. Your input from the focus groups will be confidential and will help the SWC develop better programming for OSU students.

For more information, email Michelle Bongen at bongen.1@osu.edu.

To sign up for a convenient date and time, please check focus group availability at [WEBSITE LINK].

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-875-8251.
Focus Group Methodology – Implement

• Recruitment
• Registration
• Logistics
• Execute focus groups
Focus Group Methodology – Analyze

• Verbatim transcription
  - 11 focus groups (5 male; 6 female) (n=42)

• Data Analysis
  - Analysis plan based in research
  - Utilized a form of “constant comparison”
Social Ecological Model for Violence Prevention
Focus Group Topics

• Understanding of consent
• Info received from the University
• Communication of consent
• Gender differences in the perception of consent
• Sexual precedence (length/type of relationship)
• Understanding of seduction vs. coercion
• OSU’s Sexual Misconduct Policy
Summary of Findings
Individual: Definition of Consent

“Explicit and/or implicit refusal or granting to have sex or any sexual contact with another person whether it be explicitly said or implied by body language or actions.”

“It has to be mutual, I guess, understand between them that something is going to happen and they both understand that there are consequences and they both have to be in the right state of mind.”
Individual: Definition of Consent

“I mean, maybe legally you have to say ‘yes’, but I don’t think you have to specifically [say] ‘yes, I want to engage in sexual conduct’. I feel there are other ways that a ‘yes’ can be given and you have to… if it’s not specifically said, then you have to understand that what is being said does mean yes.”

“But, a ‘no’ is definitely a no.”
Individual: Understanding of Coercion (Female)

“I don’t know if force is coercion, but I feel like forcefulness… could kind of be coercion… It’s become more of a suggestion of ‘this is going to happen anyway, you can kind of make the most of it or not…’ I don’t know if that’s coercion or if that’s just full on rape.”

“Trying to change their mind.”

“It’s not always just forcing them down verbally; it can be, like, physical aggression also.”
Individual: Understanding of Coercion (Male)

“It’s a big continuum with the extreme being, like, raping someone, physically putting yourself inside someone else when she does not want it. Or continually asking someone, relentlessly, if they wanna do something and when they say ‘no’ you just keep going with it, like, keep asking, keep pressuring. That would be at the other side of the spectrum.”

“Persistent attempt on one partner’s side to convince another partner to engage in a sexual activity that he or she does not… by means of persuasion, persistence, drugging.”
Individual: Understanding of Seduction (+)

“It’s the fun part… it’s, like, the part where you get to, like, flirt and get to know somebody. It’s the fun part.”

It’s, like, what you find charming or attractive.”

“Talk to someone sexually.”

“That’s that whole courting process again, like flirting and, like, kinda just, like, your actions and your words and just tryin’ to display that you’re what they want and hopefully they respond to it.”
Individual: Understanding of Seduction (-)

“Seduction is just another word for persuasion, but it has a negative connotation and also a sexual connotation.”

“Persuading somebody to have sex.”

“I feel is one partner who has a goal in mind of making the other person the other partner want to engage in a sexual act and they do this by arousal, they want to make the other person think about it a lot more and eventually with the end game of, like, the sexual encounter.”
Individual: Fears

“You also run the risk of getting rejected big time, whereas if you’re more subtle about it, if you’re rejected it’s like ‘oh, well, I didn’t put my entire self out there, I just kinda put a hand in’. But, if you’re, like, explicitly stating what you wanna do and like offering that hand, then I guess it’s more embarrassing and a little more humiliating if you’re rejected.”
“It goes back to, I mean, most guys wouldn’t come out and say ‘let’s have sex’, but, like you said, girls are more, sort of they like to just go with things and it’s a big part of being rejected. Most people are scared to be, like, ‘ah, man, like, she said no. I’m not going to do it again.’ So, like, the next time he comes across the situation, his whole mood’s gonna change. He’s gonna be more subtle and stuff like that. So, it’s all about rejection, I think.”
Individual: State of an individual

“Alcohol, influences communication with I think some people who are intoxicated they assume consent more often than people who are not intoxicated.”

“Level of tiredness… exhaustion, fatigue.”

“Well, if they drink that could be one way if they, other drugs in general, or if they are sleepy or tired and they are not in the right state of mind, they’re not really, they don’t really know what’s going on then that’s on way, factor, I guess.”
Relationship: Nearly all communication is done with non-verbal cues or abstract-verbal communication

- Non-verbal communication
  - Reading a person’s “vibe”
  - “You can just tell”
  - “If you’re really into it and not like pushing away…I feel like that’s a signal”
- “Acting flirty”
Relationship: Nearly all communication is done with non-verbal cues or abstract-verbal communication

- Abstract-verbal communication
  - “Do you have a condom?”
  - “Do you want to get out of here?”
  - “Do you want to come to my place?”
  - “Do you want to go upstairs?”
  - “Are we good?”
Relationship: Verbal consent is “awkward” and “kills the mood”

“Because it’s supposed to be an intimate moment…no one wants to ruin that.”

“Just by asking, ‘oh, do you have a condom?’ some people think that’s one way, but also think that that’s a mood killer or something. But I think saying “Do you want to have sex?” some people might also think that’s a mood killer, so they don’t say it…I guess body language is the best way.”
Relationship: Withdrawal of consent at any time

“I think you just have to be aware that person, your partner, can change their mind at any time. You have to be aware of that, and not just take one signal and run with it.”

“If you don’t want that, it’s like you have to say no.”
Relationship: Consent at the stage of relationship, Casual hook-ups

Females: “It’s all about reciprocation… that’s how people get clues.”

Males: “Well, it definitely has to be given… if they don’t agree to it then that’s just rape, but asking for it, uh, definitely motioning toward the idea of, I guess vaginal or anal sex, I am not sure exactly how they would directly say ‘hey, we are going to have sex’, that would be not… nonverbal would be the best.”
Relationship: Consent at the stage of relationship, Long-term relationships

“It kind of just becomes a, I don’t want to say a mutual understanding (others agreed), yeah I mean, assuming there’s no pressure, or like any type of power struggle, or anything like that, then normally the number of instances occur ‘oh, we’ve already done this so like…if you’ve never said you’re uncomfortable with it, or that you don’t like it.’ So it’s kind of assumed that we still have this comfortable relationship, where we feel comfortable doing that.”
Relationship: Consent at the stage of relationship, Long-term relationships

“By the time you’re in a relationship with someone for a very long time, you come to a point where verbal consent isn’t really a part of it. It is more like ‘oh, we’re both into it,’ you know what I mean.”

“Her body language is where the sexual consent happens.”
Community: Almost no one had seen the Sexual Misconduct Policy; few recall receiving any info

“This is my first time seeing this…I’ve read the academic code of conduct…but I’ve never seen this…I think OSU, or whoever is in charge of this, needs to make sure it’s publicly seen.”

“I just didn’t know this is what our Sexual Misconduct Policy said until now…This might be a nice thing to maybe hand out to people…”
Community: Perceptions of the policy

“I love this code, it’s really well laid out and I think it covers all of the bases. And I think that it makes clears to people what is and isn’t consent…”

“I think that it’s pretty clear…but, one thing that I draw issue with is ‘substantially impaired’ because I feel like, how you determine that for specific people?”

“I like the last statement…prior sexual activity does not constitute consent, which I think is a good thing to have…”
Community: Consent is rarely discussed unless “newsworthy”

“It’s a very personal thing…people don’t want to talk about it…I think people don’t really ever talk about it, especially between the two people because you don’t talk about consent, because, like, the consent, enough is enough…It’s not something that gets talked about.”

“[This issue is] definitely not addressed… unless there’s something in the public that happens like the big rape case in Steubenville…[those] are the only times we discuss it.”
Societal: Most held traditional views of sexuality and gender expectations (Male)

“I mean, it all really is part of the whole process I guess, it’s like guys like to hunt and girls like to be hunted. I guess, I mean, that’s, like, a bad example, but, like, that’s basically what’s happening, like, at parties and things like that. So, I don’t know, I feel like it’s all part of the process.”

“I feel like, yeah, guys are more physical and girls are more... nonverbal, like emotions and things like that.”
Societal: Most held traditional views of sexuality and gender expectations (Male)

“Guys, I would say, are usually more proactive or going for sexual activities and stuff. So, they are more, I guess, more upfront and, like, ‘Let’s do this’, when girls, I guess, … they are more flirtatious.”

“We’re gonna, you know, put the work in, so if she says ‘yes’, I mean that’s, like, icing on the cake, so it’s like, I get the cake and now I get the icing on it…”
Societal: Most held traditional views of sexuality and gender expectations (Male)

“It’s more of the guys’ responsibility to kind of… push the issue. Not necessarily in a violent or aggressive way. But, we’re the ones, in my opinion, that are responsible to initiate the first kiss. To initiate…basically everything… the person who is pushing the envelope, if you will, you might take it that the lack of negative or positive response…as more of a positive… So, I think in that regard, there is a difference between mentalities because men are the ones that are trying to accelerate it more than females are. So, if you have an accelerating mentality, you might take any gray area as a positive.”
Societal: Most held traditional views of sexuality and gender expectations (Female)

“I think males give women the responsibility to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’… they make it our responsibility to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’; if you don’t say ‘yes’ or ‘no’, then it’s a ‘yes.’”

“It’s like the lack of a ‘no’ is almost like a ‘yes’ because of the way that women see their role in sexual activities as more passive…Inherently, by positioning and…by the give-and-take or the ‘chase and the catch’…I think there’s all these systems…behind it that make women feel as if it’s their job to respond and not necessarily initiate…”
Societal: Most held traditional views of sexuality and gender expectations (Female)

“I think society makes it awkward for you to be like, ‘yes, I consent to having sex with you’, because… as a female, I feel like if you were to say that society’s going to be like, ‘she is promiscuous’…but, in reality, if I’m telling each guy I’m with, ‘yes, I consent’, like, that’s a great thing. I’m open with you. I’m communicating with you that I partake in whatever relationship we’re about to have right now. But, then…society points the finger at us, like, ‘oh, that’s bad’…‘you shouldn’t do that because you’re supposed to be “virtuous”’. So, I think that’s why, as a female, we don’t say, ‘yes, I consent’, because we’re worried about the perception that we’re sleepin’ around.”
Societal: Rape myth acceptance and victim-blaming attitudes were high

“Girls just don’t say anything and then stuff happens…I know sometimes you’re drunk or intoxicated. You still have to have the willpower and the strength to say ‘no’ if you don’t want it to happen.”

“If you’re at a bar by yourself, like a woman’s there by herself, then chances are that she’s there to be taken home.”
Societal: Rape myth acceptance and victim-blaming attitudes were high

“If you’re at a party or something, the person will say, ‘do you wanna get out of here?’… implying that something’s going to happen. So, at that point, I mean, if you’re in public, it’s up to you to make that decision whether you want to do that, knowing that that’s a possibility.”

“You are taking that risk by going with them, but it doesn’t mean that it should happen.”
Societal: Legal issues

“I also think...when it comes to rape and sexual assault, it’s heavily male... Males are the ones constantly in the legal trouble. Whether that is because of male behavior... But, because we tend to be on the stricter side of the law, I think guys are more straightforward and more, obvious.”

“I think that’s where it gets blurred [reaching for a condom as consent], and just that if she were to say she was raped, like, her argument would be ‘I didn’t say yes’, but his argument is valid as well, ‘well, you didn’t say no either.’”
Societal: Other notable findings (Media)

“For guys, like, when I see, like, in a typical TV show or something, like, the guy goes up to the bar and says, ‘hey, do you want to go home with me?’ and she’s, like, ‘sure’. And then that’s enough for them. And, like, a girl, I think, like, if she wants to go home with him then it doesn’t – they they don’t really need anymore consent.”

“I think the way it’s talked about in hip hop, and now even in some mainstream pop. It’s alluded to about, like, smackin’ bitches up and doing crap like that, and I’m not blaming it on hip-hop…”
Societal: Other notable findings (Media, Culture, Skills)

“We live in a culture where the media surrounds us with images of sex…and especially women being sexualized. But like we’ve all said like there’s…pretty much no, or very little sexual education in schools. We don’t have the tools coming to college…or past college to know how to talk about these things. And that’s a problem.”

“People aren’t taught how to communicate about sex and what to say, and how to feel about what they say.”
Limitations

- Self selection
- Small picture
- Facilitators were all female
- May Session
- Researcher transitions
  - Modified analysis process
Research to Practice

• Re-design skills-based workshops
  - Lack in knowledge
  - Practice skills
  - Address norms
Alcohol and Consent Continuum

- Totally Sober
- Passed Out
Scenario 1

Sam and Taylor had been going out for several months. They had “hooked up” in the past. Sam has expressed to Taylor on several occasions the desires to remain a virgin until marriage. They often sleep at each other’s rooms, in the same bed. On some of these occasions they kiss and hold each other. On at least one occasion the touching went further to touching genital areas. On this night, Sam and Taylor decided to take their relationship to the “next” level. They began to engage in oral sex. Both parties were actively enjoying this activity. Taylor then proceeded to intercourse. Sam stared blankly off and became silent.
Yes Means Yes!

- Mildly relaxed
- Possibly lightheaded “buzzed”
- Sensation of warmth, rosy cheeks, flushed
- Slightly less inhibited

Proceed With Caution

- Warm and relaxed
- Possibly mild sense of euphoria
- May be less shy
- Good moods are better/bad moods are worse
- May talk louder and act bolder than usual

Effective Consent Cannot Be Given

- Slurred speech
- Dizziness/trouble maintaining balance, walking or standing
- Forgetfulness/memory impairment/forgets # of drinks consumed
- Confusion/disorientation
- Nausea or vomiting
- Passed out
Buckeyes
Got Your Back!
Why are people afraid to ask for consent?

Why would you want someone to ask YOU for consent?
How to turn your partner on

• Is this ok?
• Do you like ______?
• What do you want to do?
• Is it OK if I take off my shirt/bra/pants?
• Do you like it when I do this? Would you do it to me?
• It turns me on when ______. What turns you on?
• I really feel like ______ with you. Would you want to?
• Have you ever ______? Would you like to try it with me?
No is not yes. Drunk is not yes. Not sure is not yes. Silence is not yes.

Get consent. Ask First.

Respect yourself. Respect your partner.

Yes is Yes!

go.osu.edu/consent
Be sure your partner wants you as much as you want them.

Ask first, “Is this OK with you?”

Respect yourself. Respect your partner.

Consent. Get Some.

gooseu.edu/consent
If consent is enthusiastically given, it’s clear that both people desire each other.

Now that’s sexy!

Respect yourself. Respect your partner.

Why so Sexy?

go.osu.edu/consent
Being asked what I like or want to do sexually is hot!

When you want to move to the next level, just ask!

Respect yourself. Respect your partner.

Consent is Sexy!

go.osu.edu/consent
Research to Practice

- Prepare facilitators to bust rape myths and stop victim-blaming language

Dominant vs. True Story
Causes of Rape
Research to Practice

• Widely distribute SM Policy and resources
Available Resources

- RE-AIM Model
  - http://www.re-aim.org

- CDC Continuum of Evidence Effectiveness
  - http://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/evidence/#&panel1-8
References


Thank You!

Katye Miller | miller.1572@osu.edu
Michelle Bangen | bangen.1@osu.edu

(614) 292-4527
swc.osu.edu
go.osu.edu/sves