

'The workshops provided activities and scenarios that allowed me to come to my own conclusions'

Smart Consent Workshops- The DCU Model

A report on the pilot project
providing Sexual Consent
Workshops to incoming first
year students in DCU (2017)

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April 2018

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Section 1: Why run consent workshops?

1.1 Background

Studies carried out on the student population in Ireland have demonstrated the need for education on the issue of sexual consent. In 2015, Trinity College Dublin Students' Union (TCDSU) released the results of a survey of 1,038 students on sexual consent, of whom 1 in 4 women and 1 in 20 men had had an unwanted non-consensual sexual experience ranging from verbal to physical sexual assault. This TCDSU survey data aligns with the results of the *Say Something* survey conducted by the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) in 2013. The SAVI Report shows the higher *lifetime prevalence* rate of 42% of women and 28% of men experiencing an unwanted sexual experience. (McGee at al., 2002) Reasons for poor reporting of sexual assaults are outlined in the USI's *Say Something* survey, i.e. a) not seeing the incident as non-consensual (although defined as such in Irish Statute); b) fear of not being believed or taken seriously; c) fear of backlash from the assailant or of jeopardising their lives. The impact of sexual violence has lifelong consequences for the victims, and for all within their university and society. This issue is best tackled through a bottom-up, student-led approach rather than a top-down approach (state or higher education authorities, policing, or criminal justice system). (Devine, 2017) Therefore harnessing more effective education and empowerment strategies, including sexual consent workshops, is the way forward to positively transform the 'next generation' sexual consent culture.

1.2 Rationale: DCU Strategic Plan 2017-2022

Our commitment to our students is that we will prepare them well to flourish in the world outside the university: in their personal lives, in civic society, and in the rapidly evolving workplace. The Smart Consent Workshops complement the current suite of services available to students through Student Support and Development.

1.3 The DCU Initiative and Model

The DCU Smart Consent Initiative was created by the following four members of staff in DCU: Podge Henry (SU VP for Welfare and Equality), Sinéad Mc Grath (Student Health Centre Nurse and Midwife, RGN, RM, HDip), Tracey Harrington (Lecturer Children's Nursing- School of Nursing and Human Sciences) and Karen Devine (Lecturer in International Relations-School of Law and Government).

Trinity College Dublin held a Smart Consent Workshop Report Summary launch on the 6th July 2017 which was attended by Tracey Harrington, Podge Henry and Sinéad Mc Grath who had all expressed an interest in the issue. Sinéad McGrath had previously attended two lectures in June 2017, firstly a lecture given by Debbie Marshall from the Sexual Assault Unit in Mullingar, Co. Westmeath and secondly a lecture at the CSSI conference which included a talk on Sexual Consent by Dr. Siobhan O'Higgins from National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG). Karen Devine had presented at the ECPR ECPG conference on the 8th June 2017 on the issue of

Sexual Assault on Campus and had expressed an interest in this area. On the 10th July 2017 Tracey Harrington made contact with Podge Henry to organise a meeting on Smart Consent Workshops for DCU.

Sinéad sent an email to Dr. Claire Bohan, Director of DCU SS&D on the 12th July 2017 offering to be involved in an exploration of setting up Smart Consent Workshops in DCU. Dr. Bohan responded by giving approval to Sinéad McGrath to investigate the viability of running workshops and to make contact with interested parties in the University. Contacts were then made between Podge Henry, Tracey Harrington, Sinéad McGrath and Karen Devine to form an informal committee to develop the project, and the first meeting was held on the 26th July 2017.

The Smart Consent Team thereafter contacted Dr. Claire Bohan Director of SS&D for formal approval of the project formulated during weekly meetings, and thereafter Dr. Bohan informed the relevant authorities of DCU about the details in July 2017.

The Smart Consent committee engaged with interested parties from the University, specifically the SS&D services, counselling services, lecturers with a particular interest and, as we felt students were more likely to respond to their peers, the student body itself. Damien Mc Clean (Student Union Welfare Officer, TCD) also met with the team to advise on the project based on his experience of delivering Smart Consent Workshops to TCD students in 2016-2017.

A decision was made to pilot workshops for incoming first year DCU students during week two of semester one 2017. These workshops would be based on work that had been carried out by the SMART¹ project team at the School of Psychology at National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG) including Dr. Pádraig MacNeela and Dr. Siobhán O'Higgins. To this end, training was provided by NUIG to a team of facilitators made up of DCU staff and students. The workshops with students then took place in the evening, from Monday to Thursday of week two, operating in two campuses (St. Patrick's Campus and Glasnevin Campus) with a total of twelve workshops delivered. Funding for this pilot project came from DCUSU and SS&D headed by Dr. Bohan.

1.4 Did the consent workshops address the issues?

Research from the Workshop Evaluation Form helps to address the question of whether the consent workshop addressed consent in meaningful way for participants and had an enabling and empowering effect. The Workshop Evaluation Form was filled out by a majority (184) of the 253 participants, which covered three factors: a) Student Feedback, b) Consent Preparedness, and c) Positive Attitude [towards sexual consent], and provided research data on attitudes to consent.² The Smart Consent Team in NUIG collated this data into an SPSS dataset and provided some helpful analysis based on the final valid number of 171 completed evaluation sheets. Approximately four-fifths of the students who filled out the evaluation sheet were

¹ SMART refers to All **S**exual orientations, state of **M**ind, all forms of sexual **A**ctivity, all **R**elationships and **T**alking

² Eighty-five Research Consent sheets were also gathered from participants for future follow-up research on the impact of the workshop for students as they navigate their way through first year of university life, subject to funding and DCU Ethics Approval.

female. This research on the pilot implementation of consent workshops at Dublin City University provides positive evidence of the acceptability and impact of the SMART Consent workshop, with the key 'take home' messages presented here and in a more detailed write up included in a Research Appendix to this report.

Of the eleven consent items, agreement on asking for consent saw the most important change between students' pre- and post-workshop attitudes, which arguably shows that the workshop had an empowering effect on female participants' in terms of confirming their right to seek and expect mutual consent to avoid any misinterpretations. Roughly half of all female participants, pre-workshop, strongly agreed with the statement "Asking for sexual consent is in my best interest because it reduces any misinterpretation that might arise" (56%), rising to three-quarters of all female participants (76%), post-workshop (see Table 1a below). Male participants were seemingly already empowered in this respect, as 3 in 4 males strongly agreed that asking for consent was in his best interest, pre-workshop.

TABLE 1a: Attitudes to Consent "Asking for sexual consent is in my best interest because it reduces any misinterpretation that might arise" by Gender, Pre- and Post-Workshop (%)

Gender	Stage	TOTAL (n)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Male	PRE	36	0%	0%	0%	28%	72%
	POST	35	0%	0%	0%	20%	80%
Female	PRE	143	1%	0%	8%	35%	56%
	POST	131	0%	0%	5%	19%	76%

In terms of gaining real-life usable skills to deal with sexual consent, the results (Table 1b) show the workshops had a tremendously positive effect on both male and female participants. Roughly half of the participants prior to the workshops either agreed or strongly agreed they had the skills, whereas, nearly all participants (99%) left the workshops in agreement that they had the skills to deal with sexual consent.

TABLE 1b: Attitudes to Consent "I have all the skills I need to deal with sexual consent" by Gender, Pre- and Post-Workshop (%)

Gender	Stage	TOTAL (n)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Male	PRE	36	3%	11%	33%	42%	11%
	POST	35	0%	0%	3%	29%	69%
Female	PRE	143	1%	8%	34%	43%	14%
	POST	131	0%	2%	2%	36%	63%

Notably, there was a sizeable shift in the "strongly agree" category, as roughly 1 in 8 participants strongly agreed they all the skills prior to the workshop, but after the workshop, 2 in 3 strongly agreed that they had the necessary skills.

Further data analysis is available in the Research Appendix at the back of this report.

Section 2: The Logistics of the 2017 Workshops

2.1 Workshop Facilitators

The four-member Smart Consent Committee came to a decision that the workshop sessions would be facilitated by a two or (preferably) a three person team comprised of one staff member, one student, and one 'runner' (either staff or student) to help facilitate the workshop. Both staff and student facilitators were to be trained in a one-day training event led by the SMART team from NUIG [see section 2.3 Training].

2.1.1 Student Facilitators

Because of the sensitive topic of the workshops, it was decided that only students who had experience in active listening and students who expressed an interest in the topic would be invited to apply to facilitate the workshops. Applicants were asked to indicate experience and qualifications in these areas in a dedicated section of the on-line application form. We sought to select a group of facilitators that reflected diversity in terms of gender, sexual orientation, age, and life experiences.

2.1.2 Staff Facilitators

The staff facilitators came from university services such as Lecturers, Nursing staff, Counsellors, and staff from SS&D and the Students' Union (SU).

Student facilitators noted having staff facilitating alongside them as 'helpful', with many describing that having a more experienced person assisting them in the running of the workshop made them feel more at ease. They also believed that students would feel more comfortable attending a workshop whereby there was a professional also facilitating. There were some concerns that the staff facilitators would control the workshops, so the student facilitators were encouraged to lead the workshop when at all possible and the majority were happy to do so.

2.2 Smart Consent Project Costs

The costs for the Smart Consent project were as follows.

Activity	Days	Costs (€)
Training workshop for 27 DCU participants given by three NUIG staff	1 per participant	1200
Facilitators' lunch at training day		216
Workshop Stationary i.e. Flipcharts /post its, markers, ribbons, name stickers, laminated percentage sheets and thumbs up signs	0.5	150
Marketing and PR: On campus posters- design and print, directional posters	1	n/a absorbed by DCUSU budget
Refreshments Pizza		900
Room Hire	0.5	n/a; absorbed by DCU
Workshop Handouts (Sign In sheets, Workshop Evaluation sheet, Support Service Contact Details sheet, Consent for Research sheet)	1 (half day per two Committee members)	n/a; absorbed by Student Health/School of Law and Government
Clean Up Post workshop	1 hour per workshop per Facilitator	n/a; Facilitators cleaned up
Laptops /projectors and flip chart stand	0.5 (quarter day per two Committee members)	n/a; supplied by Facilitators/Student Health/SS&D
Delivery of 12 workshops across two campuses, Monday-Thursday	4 hours * 12 workshops * 2 volunteers = 96 hours	n/a; time by staff and students given on a voluntary basis
Total Costs (€)		2466

The costs in terms of time for each of the Committee members varied between an average of a quarter of a day to two days per week from July to September 2017.

2.3 Facilitator Training

Facilitator training was organised to be held on one day in an attempt to make it more accessible to students and staff and to lower the amount of time staff facilitators had to be absent from work. Training began at 9:30 on the 11th September 2017 in the Henry Grattan Building, Glasnevin Campus, and ended at 16:30hrs. It involved firstly all facilitators being 'workshopped' as active participants, all of whom found this experience to be very beneficial, before all facilitators practiced and then delivered the workshop to their training day peers.

It was an enjoyable and informative day in which all facilitators were critiqued on their delivery for improvements. The facilitators left the workshop training confident in their ability to deliver the workshops. All agreed of the need to practice the delivery several

times in their allocated partnerships to ensure of an optimal quality delivery “live” to the student participants. Most facilitators enthusiastically met up to practice delivering the workshops, and to prepare materials, over a three week period before the scheduled workshops.

2.4 Workshop content

The consent workshop content was designed by SMART Consent NUIG. Content was as follows:

1. INTRODUCTION

The two facilitators introduced themselves and outlined the nature and purpose of the workshops. The workshops did not normally commence until all students had completed the first page of the Evaluation Sheets. Secondly, a contract was designed and approved by all facilitators and students, to ensure confidentiality of anything said in the workshops. It was emphasized that the workshop was not about students’ personal experiences, but rather an open discussion on the topic of sexual consent. It was emphasised that there were no right or wrong answers.

2. ICE BREAKERS

When signing up, students were encouraged to complete and wear a first name badge. Students were divided into groups and provided with A5 flip chart sheets and coloured markers. Their task was to come up with formal and informal words for either a) sexual body parts, b) sexual activities, and c) sexual orientations. The latter (c) was not used by most workshop facilitators. It is worth noting that a small number of facilitators expressed having personal difficulty with this part of the workshop in the feedback survey carried out in October 2017. Sheets were swapped around the groups and then reported back to everyone in the workshop, which provoked a lot of laughs. The ice was broken. On rare occasions, facilitators modified this section, using “post-its” on a wall, rather than the sheets.

3. WHAT IS CONSENT?

Three prepared flip chart sheets were placed on the wall of the room with the following headings: 1) *What is Consent?*; 2) *Barriers to Consent*; 3) *What facilitates Consent?* Students were asked to write their answers to these questions on post-its and to place them on the relevant sheets on the wall. The facilitators went through the answers with the students and facilitated discussion of same. Students could see how their own definitions of consent compared with those of their peers and gained understanding of others’ perspectives.

4. THREE STORIES / SCENARIOS

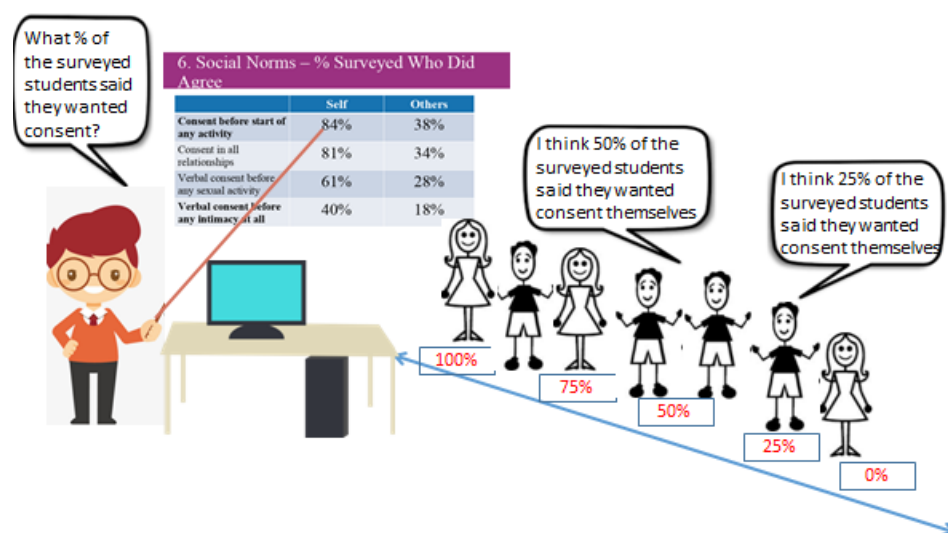
The next section of the workshop focused on descriptions of three scenarios of situations involving the issue of sexual consent; these three stories (“vignettes”) covered same-sex and heterosexual relationship scenarios provided by the NUIG Sexual SMART Consent Project Team. The facilitators read out each scenario described on a powerpoint slide projection to the students, who in turn, discussed

the issues around sexual consent among their groups. Using the ‘thumb’ laminated sign, each group decided if there was mutual sexual consent, if they were unsure or if there was no consent in each of the scenarios, as the scenarios allowed multiple interpretations. There was time allocated for in-depth discussion of the reasons behind the conclusions drawn by the students on the presence or absence of mutual, on-going sexual consent. The notions of multiple interpretations and ‘grey areas’ were explored in open discussions, with facilitators emphasising the idea of “no right or wrong answers”.

5. RIBBON /ROPE TASK – SOCIAL NORMS

The facilitators laid out a long piece of ribbon from the top of the room to the other end, with A4 laminated sheets of 0%, 25%, 50%, 75% and 100% placed at appropriate intervals alongside the ribbon. Some results from a student survey conducted earlier that year by NUIG Smart Consent (MacNeela et al., 2017), about attitudes towards sexual consent, verbal and non-verbal forms, were presented to the workshop participants. The workshop students were asked to guess, firstly, what proportion of students surveyed agreed or disagreed with an affirmative statement (“I feel that...”), i.e. the workshop students were asked to guess the surveyed students’ positions, and to stand on the relevant location reflecting the percentage of surveyed students answering in the affirmative. (See Figure 1a below) The survey result was read out by the facilitator and students were asked to move along the ribbon to the appropriate laminated % figure. During these moves, students were voicing their reactions to the results, compared with their own initial thoughts and expectations.

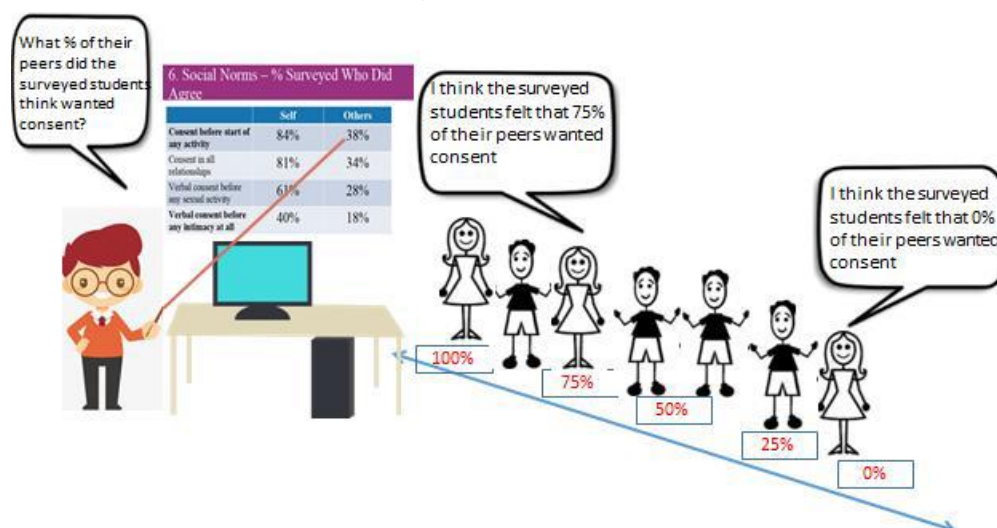
Figure 1a: Asking the workshop participants to guess what proportion of surveyed students wanted consent for [scenario/activity]



The second related question asked about what answer the surveyed students’ peers would give (worded as “Most other students feel that....”) and our workshop students were asked to stand on the relevant location reflecting their guesses at the percentage figure (see Figure 1b). The survey result was read out by the

facilitator and students were asked to move along the ribbon to the actual percentage figure reported in the research. This prompted a discussion on students' prior perceptions and the actual results. For example, the results of the exercise showed the difference between the number of students who wanted consent to be given before an experience themselves (84%), versus these students' perceptions of how many of their own peers wanted consent (38%), i.e. "I want consent but I didn't realise everyone else felt the same way!"

Figure 1b: Asking the workshop participants to guess what proportion of the surveyed students' peers wanted consent for [scenario/activity]



In next section of the workshop, the students returned to their seats and the facilitators read out further survey results about sexual activity in a 'hook up' situation. This exercise allowed discussion of peer pressure based on students' somewhat erroneous perceptions of what others (in particular females) are comfortable doing in hook up scenarios, i.e. what is the social 'norm' (See Figure 3 below).

For example, the results illustrated that surveyed male students' own personal comfort levels with giving and receiving oral sex were similar to their percentage estimates of their peers' comfort levels (see Figure 2a and 2b).

In terms of a scenario of sexual intercourse, the results showed that whilst 60% of surveyed male students reported feeling comfortable with sexual intercourse in a hook up scenario, they thought that 78% of other students were (see Figure 3). The follow-up discussion enhanced the possibility of effecting a reduction in perceived peer pressure to engage in those activities.

Figure 3: 'Hooking Up' Social Norm

6. 'Hooking Up' Social Norms

	Single Men – Personal Comfort	Single Men – Perception of Other Men	Single Women – Personal Comfort	Single Women – Perception of Other Women
Giving Oral Sex	60%	67%	29%	54%
Receiving Oral Sex	71%	79%	33%	55%
Sexual Intercourse	60%	78%	38%	64%

Figure 3a: Asking the workshop participants to guess what proportion of the surveyed students were comfortable with doing [activity] in a hook-up scenario

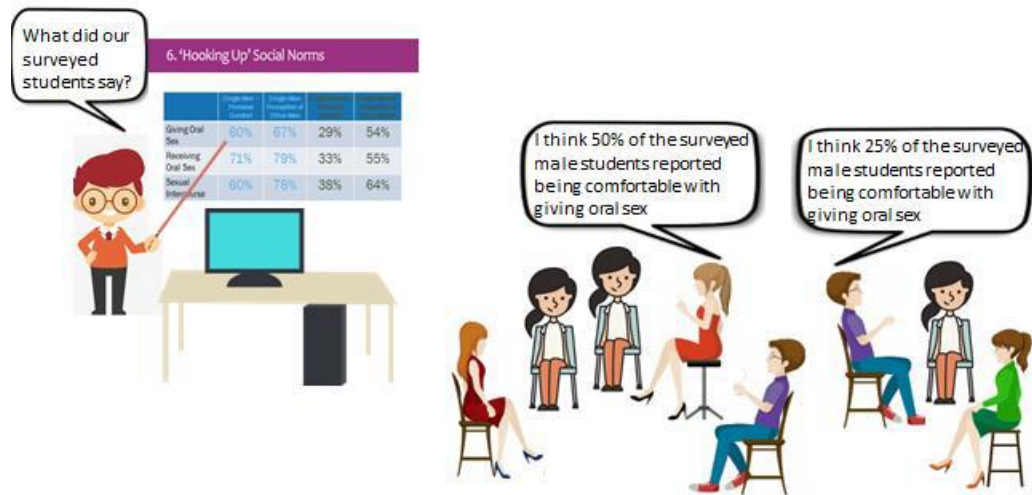
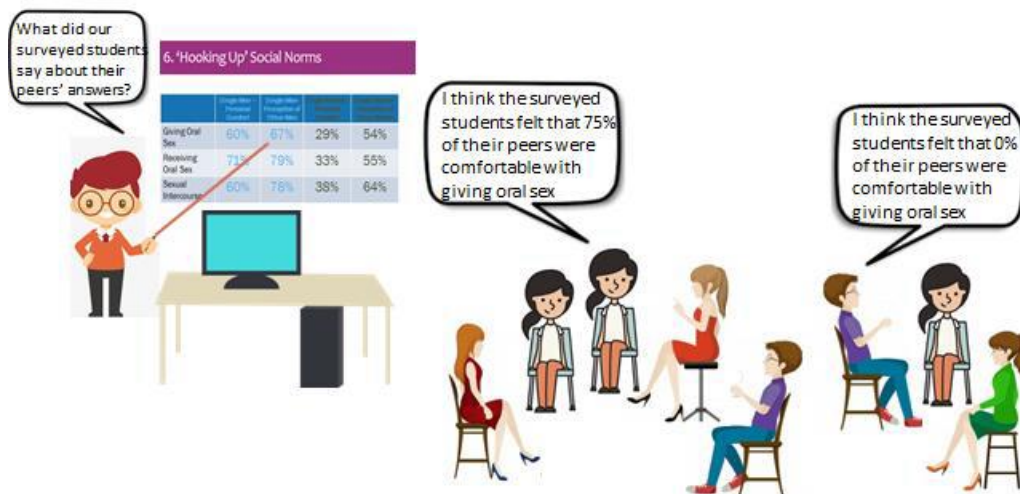


Figure 3b: Asking the workshop participants to guess what the surveyed students' estimates were of the percentage of their peers who were comfortable with doing [activity] in a hook-up scenario



Gender differences were highlighted when the female responses to the same survey questions were discussed in the workshop. The surveyed female students thought that much more of their peers were comfortable in giving and receiving oral sex and engaging sexual intercourse in hook up scenarios, than the levels they themselves reported. Again, the discussion of these figures among our workshop participants served to reinforce the message that “not everyone is doing it” and that peer pressure should not affect their choices in a scenario.

Given the complexity of asking our workshop students to guess the answers of a survey of students' own attitudes, and the answers the surveyed students gave about other students' attitudes, there was some confusion among facilitators and students regarding the delivery of this task. We refer to this issue in the recommendations section of this report.

6. WRAP UP

The wrap up included research results on how students showed sexual consent, and highlighted the so-called ‘grey areas’ that can affect mutual and on-going sexual consent. Most students were asked to fill in the other side of their evaluation sheet and some to consider filling out a Consent Form for further research. Facilitators emphasised that the latter was entirely voluntary. All workshop students were given a Support Services sheet with contact details of relevant agencies, and were provided with a Certificate of Attendance. The facilitators also verbally summarised the support services within DCU that are available to students including the Student Health Centre, Student Counselling Services, the Student Advice Centre and the Students' Union. The workshop participants left the venue still in lively discussions of the topics covered in the workshops, reflecting their superb engagement and interest throughout the evening.

2.5 Project work

The tasks involved in the delivery of the DCU Consent Workshops project from July to September 2017 are outlined below, so that this information can guide a team that have never undertaken the running of the Smart Consent programme before:

Task	Completed by
Recruitment of staff and student facilitators	Smart Consent Committee
Designing & distributing application form to potential student facilitators	SU Welfare Officer Podge Henry
Reviewing application forms and selecting facilitators	Smart Consent Committee
Organising volunteer training	Tracey Harrington
Informing the facilitators of the training day, printing materials, booking rooms	Podge Henry and Sinéad McGrath
Social Media and PR campaigns, including putting up posters and signage	Smart Consent Committee
Altering content of workshops to be in line with DCU's aims	Smart Consent Committee
Funding of SMART Consent training	DCU SU and SS&D
Scheduling and pairing of facilitators	Smart Consent Committee
Ordering/purchasing workshop materials	Sinéad McGrath and SS&D, Karen Devine
Creating sign-in sheets & Support Services sheets and Research Consent Form	Sinéad McGrath, Sian Cullivan (SS&D), Karen Devine
Room-booking for Smart Consent Workshop Week 2 St. Pats and Glasnevin and check-in of facilitators	Sinéad McGrath and SS&D (Caroline Bowe and Mary Jones)
Organisation of materials and equipment for delivery to booked workshop rooms (laptop, flipcharts, etc.)	Sinéad McGrath, SS&D (Caroline Bowe), Karen Devine
Certificate of Attendance	SU Welfare Officer Podge Henry
Facilitator Feedback Survey	Tracey Harrington
Student Feedback Survey	Podge Henry
Data Analysis	Karen Devine
Report Writing	Karen Devine, Sinéad McGrath
Report Editing	Karen Devine, Sinéad McGrath Tracey Harrington

2.6 Timing

The workshops for students were offered at 5pm-6.30pm on Glasnevin Campus, with pizza booked to arrive at 6pm; and 6pm-7.30pm on St. Patrick's Campus with pizza ordered to arrive at 7pm, Monday to Thursday inclusive, Week 2 of teaching in Semester 1 (25th - 28th September 2017). All of the workshops were popular and well attended, as 253 attended in total, out of 477 who registered on-line to attend. Some attendees hadn't registered on-line beforehand and came along with their friends.

2.7 Location

Locating the workshop sessions on campus had many benefits. In general, the facilities available were adequate. For Glasnevin Campus, the rooms in the vicinity of the Henry Grattan Building [Annex]/"The Street" were preferred due to centrality of the location, whereas Science or Nursing block rooms provided an optimal physical environment, being modern and bright, but these rooms were slightly peripheral in terms of distance/location. It is important for the smooth-running of future workshops that the rooms are booked well in advance.

Options were limited in terms of securing the type of room required for the workshop (FLAT rooms were required) as fixed-seat lecture theatre-style rooms were inappropriate, and the size of the room needed to be at capacity of 40- 50 people. For the St. Patrick's Campus, the type of room (FLAT) required is more prevalent than in Glasnevin, and the rooms booked were more accessible for students around the St. Patrick's campus.

Students' general knowledge of the campuses is understandably limited given the majority were first years, and some confusion was evident regarding the location of the rooms. Our signage posted on the walls with arrows and directions, and Snapchat posts on social media with directions helped with this problem.

Finally, the venues had to be cleaned and tidied each day which was undertaken by members of the Smart Consent team. Our briefing from the TCD Students' Union Welfare Officer Damien McClean was instrumental in our preparation for the workshops, including planning the room locations, timings and clean up.

2.7 Attendees & recruitment

At every point and in all communications to students, University, and the media, it was made clear that these workshops were being offered on a voluntary basis. However, it was clearly the intention and in the interest of DCU and the Smart Consent Committee that as many students as possible would attend. As a result, the marketing of the workshops was most importantly clearly seen as driven by the DCU SU, supported by the Smart Consent Committee, including SS&D.

The DCUSU made full use of their social media presence (especially *Snapchat*) to advertise and highlight this project. The result of this intense campaign was the generation of a culture of expectation that each first year student would attend a workshop.

The advertising was very positive such that students were led to believe that the knowledge would enhance their sexual experiences during their time in college. It is likely that the Certificate of Attendance sheets also had the effect that students felt that it was worthwhile to attend, especially for the teacher-training students.

Section 3: Feedback, Recommendations and Future Plans

In summary and viewed overall, this pilot project was a success with regards not only to the interest seen through nearly 500 students registering on-line to attend, and the actual numbers attending, but also the response of students as measured by the SMART NUIG 'Evaluation Sheet' research carried out with the DCU Workshop participants. The model of the DCU Student Union led initiative with the official support of DCU can also be considered a success.

Summary of Student feedback and experiences of the workshops

1. Open-Ended Comments on Evaluation Sheets - **Not Heteronormative**

It was welcomed by many students that the content of scenarios was not heteronormative and included scenarios from a range of sexual orientations. This was a positive way to have a very open discussion on the nature of consent and variation between different people with regard to what is consent and how it is given. "Interactive – not heteronormative"; "Group Work and clarification about not heteronormative"; "avoided stereotypes"; "Situations avoided stereotypes".

2. Open-Ended Comments on Evaluation Sheets - **Group Work**

It was felt that the small group exercises worked very well – "small groups, less awkward"; "Group work clarification"; "the whole structure just worked out well and was easy and fun"; "Interaction within Groups [enjoyed]" "Group Work, comfortable setting, relaxed atmosphere"; "Group worked, comfortable to have own opinion"; "Group work – no judgement"; "helps reduce awkwardness"; "Small Groups"; "Open talking within group – no judgement".

3. Open-Ended Comments on Evaluation Sheets - **Overall**

The student feedback comments were very positive overall and aligned with the facilitators' impressions of how the workshops were experienced by the participants - "Nice Atmosphere"; "Safe Atmosphere"; "Great experience. Very Enjoyable. Learnt a lot. Comfortable Environment"; "Open forum"; "Whole structure worked well – easy"; "Great atmosphere"; "Interaction"; "Showing research what other students thought (studies)"; "Well presented"; "Free Pizza"; "Food"; "Engaging Activities, excellent, works"; "Learned about giving consent and not being afraid to"; "Consent Phrases"; "The Slides/Presentation"; "Post-Its".

4. Open-Ended Comments on Evaluation Sheets - **Scenarios**

Students also appreciated the realism of the three scenarios described through stories of possible consent situations - "I think the stories worked really well, and put the grey

area into context”; “Scenarios worked really well”; “Provided scenarios that allowed me to come to my own conclusion”.

5. Open-Ended Comments on Evaluation Sheets – **Recommendations**

Many students felt that the workshops should be mandatory which would also deal with some students’ observations of the lack of male participants - “Should have been mandatory”; “Mandatory”; “Maybe have workshops involved in Orientation Week”; “More Laughter – Jokes help reduce awkwardness”; “More Stories to Discuss”; “More Stories to Describe”; “More [in number] Detailed Scenarios”; “more advice re: grey areas”; “Slightly sexist views against the male side of things; had of being gender-neutral virtual scenarios, people would have changed their views, which I feel is wrong and sexist”; “Timing”; “[Missed] Talking about Interpretations of Consent in relation to clothes she’s wearing, i.e. short – she’s up for it”; “Mixed Groups of Males and Females [not enough males]”.

Summary of Facilitator feedback and experiences of the workshops

1. On-line facilitator survey, Open-Ended Comments - **Ice-Breakers**

Due to the sensitive nature of the ice-breakers, some facilitators found them difficult to deliver, however, the ice-breakers were well received and great fun from the students’ perspectives and fulfilled their purpose - “The language-based ice-breakers worked well”; “The Group work, primarily women, which enabled conversation more readily”; “Ice breakers were good”; “Maybe hard for some facilitators to manage, depending on comfort levels”; “You could see the awkwardness of one facilitator who wanted to skip this section completely”; “Good engagement among the group. I think that our group leaders were too pushy, too forceful in persuading, encouraging students to come up with names. Overall it worked though”. “Ice-breakers really helped and encouraged students to be comfortable with the subjects straight away”.

2. On-line facilitator survey, Open-Ended Comments - **What is Consent**

The open ended questions of what is consent were well received by the students - “This part was well received and the majority of the elements of consent were understood and offered by students. It is useful to emphasise the need for on-going consent, which seems more ambiguous and contested”; “The idea of getting the students to fill out the “post-its” is good, but the aim/outcome of the task is easily lost. The facilitator needs to keep an eye on time also”. “Worked really well, but our group leaders nominated students to read out responses. It would have been better to ask for volunteers for this section”.

3. On-line facilitator survey, Open-Ended Comments - **Scenarios**

Similar to the student experience, the facilitators also praised the realism and worth of the three consent scenarios and stories - “It worked really well, the group really broadened their perspective and understanding of consent in same sex relationships”; “just worked well”; “scenario stories were good, again made the subject real, students really related to each given situation”.

4. On-line facilitator survey, Open-Ended Comments - **Ribbon Task/Statistics**

As noted earlier in the report, most facilitators found this the most challenging task of the workshop to deliver - “This section was a little confusing. I think the number of people in the room, the small room and the wording of the statistics meant that it didn’t run as smoothly as it should have”; “I think the group got the message around the fact that many students assume that other students are having more sex and are open to having many sexual experiences. It also highlighted the fact the male and female concept of sexual drive, consent, etc., is different”; “the phrasing of the questions asked to students here is awkward, but hard to revise”; “this could be shortened, students get the idea after two to three stats, also stats can be confusing, need to be simplified. Focus more on the stats that show how we think others feel vs how we feel ourselves. Could be a separate exercise?”; “I think should be taken out altogether, if they were taken out, more depth and time could be given to the definition of consent and key messages section”.

5. On-line facilitator survey, Open-Ended Comments - **Feedback**

The majority of facilitators indicated that they would be willing to facilitate the workshops again and one felt that demand and supply level should be managed so that no students are turned away or prevented from registering their interest on-line. “Given the interest from hundreds of students registering to attend the workshops, and the actual numbers that turn up each day at the workshop, registration for workshops should not be closed down on-line, but contingency plans put in place, should more than half of those registered, attend a workshop on any given day.”

Some staff facilitators expressed concern that student facilitators lack the professional finesse and experience in leading a workshop. There is a balance to be struck between lecturers attending feeling the need to intervene and the more confident students being allowed to their job well. The last question asked whether the facilitator would be happy to facilitate workshops in the future: eleven said ‘yes’, three said ‘maybe’, and two said ‘no’. The others didn’t answer.

3.3 Recommendations

This review of the piloting of Smart Consent DCU suggests the following:

Establish the Smart Consent Workshops as permanent feature in DCU

a. The overall recommendation from facilitators and student participants was to hold the workshops again, with some changes suggested. The Smart Consent team is aware that the NUIG Smart team since amended some of the aspects of the workshop content and delivery methods. The huge interest registered by the students within a very short timeframe clearly indicates the aspiration for the standardisation of this workshop for all incoming DCU first year students. It is essential that registration for the workshops remains open regardless of the numbers committed to each workshop because attrition and spontaneous attendance balances out the final number of those who attend on the day, for example, 253 of 477 registered students

attended in person. The Smart Consent Workshop should be incorporated into the DSU Student Planner for 2018-2019.

Create a permanent official Smart Consent Workshop Steering Committee

b. An official Steering Committee with permanent representation from DCUSU, SS&D, and interested academic staff is required for the facilitation and administration of future workshops, with input from members of the original Smart Consent Team/Committee where appropriate. Ideally, a lead person responsible, such as a DCU Health Promotion Officer, would be appointed with a remit to develop this project, and have the role of Chairperson of the Steering Committee. In order for Smart Consent to be part of the future of DCU, there needs to be more formal, core, permanent structures in place, so that every rotation of incoming DCU SU officers, organisers and facilitators have an available point of contact that retains continuity over the years. Smart Consent, as a practice, needs to be marketed through the DCU SU given the peer-to-peer, and peer-led ethos of Smart Consent that is vital for its success.

Allocate an annual budget to the Smart Consent Workshop Project within DCU

c. Funding is required to support this next step, rather than relying on the volunteerism and generosity of all involved (e.g. reams of printing within Student Health and Law and Government) in delivering the Project in 2017-2018. The Smart Consent Committee carried out the work detailed in this report on a voluntary basis whilst continuing to engage fully in their official duties and normal roles. The Committee was very aware that if members had less commitments and more time, even more could have been achieved.

Supporting On-Going Research for Evidence-Based Practice

d. The value of the data generated through the workshop evaluation forms and further research consent forms cannot be underestimated and it is recommended that all facilitators do their utmost to ensure that all data is collected and every workshop group has the opportunity to fill out both the evaluation and research consent forms. The importance of the Support Services information sheet should also be emphasized, given the evident lack of student knowledge about services available to them and students' appreciation of this information provided as part of the Smart Consent experience, which builds upon the ethos of 'Make Every Contact Count'³ (MECC).

Make the Smart Consent workshops mandatory for all incoming first years

e. Finally, it is recommended that Smart Consent should be mandatory for all incoming first year students in DCU. It is also worth considering a roll-out to all students including Postgraduate and Mature Students.

³ MECC involves a wide range of health and social care employees, local authority staff, private and third sector employees who are provided with the information and skills they need to offer brief, appropriate advice, such as 'signposting' services, as part of their everyday contact with members of the public. The ultimate aim is to make health related behaviour change interventions commonplace in a wide range of settings within and beyond the Health Service. (Nelson, Payne and Kelly, 2013).

3.4 Future Plans: Next actions

1. The DCU 2017/18 Quality Improvement and Development (QuID) Fund awarded €1320.00 for the proposed "Smart Consent - enhancing education through on-line access" on 23rd November 2017. Dr. Tracey Harrington is expected to deliver this project to completion with DCUSU and student involvement prior to October 2018.
2. Proposed quantitative-qualitative follow-up research will be carried out by July 2018 comparing the Smart Consent participants who agreed to further research with non-participants who have never been through a Consent workshop acting as a control, to evaluate the long-term effects of the workshop by Dr. Karen Devine, subject to approval by the DCU Research Ethics Committee, to complement on-going research into the issue of sexual assault on campuses.
3. The Smart Consent Committee will engage in further discussions with DCU SU, SS&D and the relevant stakeholders and authorities to plan the future of Smart Consent within DCU with a focus on setting up the appropriate bodies (such as those outlined under '3.3 Recommendations' point b).
4. The ultimate goal is to ensure that DCU is able to offer further enhanced Smart Consent workshops to all incoming first year students in September 2018, in collaboration with the Smart Consent team in NUIG. These Smart Consent Workshops will undoubtedly help to transform the current nebulous sexual consent culture among students to empower the next generation to enjoy healthy, safe, consensual sexual relations which will reverberate through and transform wider societal culture in the years ahead.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have happened without the essential and on-going support from the NUIG Smart Consent Team, especially Dr. Pádraig MacNeela, Dr. Siobhán O'Higgins, and Kate Dawson, as well as Neil Delaney from the School of Psychology who provided the workshop research dataset. We thank the DCU authorities for supporting this project, President Brian McCraith, Dr. Claire Bohan, Niall Behan, Helena Aherne and Jessie Byrne. Profuse thanks to the student and staff facilitators, Alannah Kearney, Anna Brosnan, Anna Keogh, Aoife Kelly, Barrie McEntee, Caroline Bowe, Dr. Denise Proudfoot, Fiona Hudson, Jack Gilligan, Dr. James Gallen, Dr. Kay Maunsell, Margaret Lamont, Martin O'Connell, Megan Quinn, Meghan Devaney, Rebecca Collins, Ruan Kennedy, Siobhán McTague, and Thomas Dorian, for their sterling intensive work delivering the workshops to the students. Special thanks to those who attended Committee meetings to offer advice including Damien McClean, Trinity College Dublin, and Dr. Rita Glover, DCU. We thank the DCU SU staff for their the unwavering support and enthusiasm, especially Martina Browne, Marketing and Communications Co-Ordinator, and all staff from SS&D, including Caroline Bowe, Sian Cullivan, Mary Jones and Deirdre Moloney, who always responded with enthusiasm to the Committee's long list of requests! To the student

participants who are the change-makers in their community, and will ensure that Smart Consent lives on through future generations.

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RESEARCH APPENDIX**1) Student Feedback**

Student Feedback was highly positive about the workshop experience overall. Nearly all students (98%) expressed some form of agreement (either '4' or '5' on the 1 to 5 scale) with the statement "Overall I had a positive experience". (see Table 2)

There is a noticeable gender difference, as 9 in 10 females, compared with 7 in 10 males, exhibited the strongest level of agreement (i.e. '5' on the 1 to 5 scale) with having a positive experience of the workshop, indicating that the workshops were tailored well towards and particularly beneficial for this more vulnerable (in terms of rates of victimisation) group.

Table 2. Overall Experience at Workshop, by Gender

	TOTAL (n=146)	GENDER	
		MALE (n=33)	FEMALE (n=113)
Overall I Had A Positive Experience (1-5 scale where 1=disagree and 5=agree)	%	%	%
disagree	0	0	0
	0	0	0
neutral	2	3	2
	14	27	11
agree	84	70	88

2) Consent Preparedness - Skills and Information

Consent preparedness was measured using a 5-point "agree-disagree" scale for six statements, covering the skills and levels of communication, support, and information participants felt they (and their peers) possessed. Scores on all of the items improved significantly after the workshop, indicating that the workshop enhanced students' skill sets in relation to sexual consent.

Skills

The percentage of participants strongly agreeing ('5' on the 1 to 5 point scale) with the statement "I have all the skills I need to deal with sexual consent" rose from 13.3% pre-workshop to 62.2% post-workshop (see Table 3). There was little difference in scores between the genders: 11.6% of males strongly agreed with the statement pre-workshop and 68.6% strongly agreed post-workshop. A similar increase is seen among female participants, from 13.9% strongly agreeing pre-workshop to 61.5% strongly agreeing post-workshop. This strength of agreement indicates an enhanced level of confidence the participants have in their ability to negotiate consent as a result of taking the workshop.

Information

A hugely significant shift occurred in participants' sense of being well informed about consent in the wake of the workshop, jumping from just 11% of students feeling well informed pre-workshop to 78% of students post-workshop (Table 3). Most of the 1 in 3 expressing ambivalence on their level of information prior to the workshop, felt well informed after the workshop.

Table 3. Consent Preparedness - Feeling Informed and Having Skills.

	I have all the skills I need to deal with sexual consent		I feel well informed about sexual consent	
	PRE-workshop (n=181) %	POST-Workshop (n=171) %	PRE-Workshop (n=181) %	POST-Workshop (n=171) %
Strongly Disagree	1.7	0.0	2.7	0.0
Disagree	8.3	1.2	11.0	1.2
Neutral	33.7	23.9	34.6	4.1
Agree	43.1	33.7	40.7	16.4
Strongly Agree	13.3	62.2	11.0	78.4

3) Attitudes towards Consent - Communication and Importance

Workshop participants were asked about three main consent issues, (1) the importance of consent and communication about consent (four items), (2) verbalising sexual consent (five items) and (3) obtaining consent before any sexual activity or intimacy (six items).

Talking about sexual consent

Table 4 shows four items on consent importance and communications mean scores pre- and post-workshops and the statistical tests of differences (p-values).

Table 4. Consent Importance and Communication, Pre and Post Workshop (mean scores).

	PRE (n=181)	POST (n=171) [^]
Consent Preparedness Items		
I have all the skills I need to deal with sexual consent	3.58	4.57***
My peers think that sexual consent is an important issue	3.93	4.16***
I feel well informed about sexual consent	3.46	4.72***
I would be confident talking about sexual consent with my peers	3.70	4.27***
People my age would think that talking about consent with a partner is odd (reverse scored)	3.03	3.14
I'd find it difficult to talk about consent with a romantic partner (reverse scored)	3.03	3.97***

[^]n=172 for first item "I have all the skills I need..." post-workshop estimation

p-values: *** = statistically significant difference at 0.01 level; ** = at 0.05 level; * = at 0.10 level

Participants are markedly more confident about talking to their peers and partners about consent after the workshop. There is an increase in perceptions of the

importance of consent for others, which enables students to feel confident initiating communication with others on the subject.

Verbalising consent and the importance of obtaining consent before any sexual act
Comparing pre- and post- workshop results, 7 of the 11 items in total on asking for consent before intimacy and the importance of consent for all forms of intimacy demonstrated significant positive change at some level, across both types of items.

In particular, presuming that sexual consent is not present at the outset, and needing consent for all sexual activities showed statistically significant change (Table 5). Females, especially, improved their agreement on assuming the absence of consent when initiating sexual activity, post-workshop, equaling average male scores.

The changes in scores pre- and post-workshops reflect a breaking down of important problematic structures of gendered norms, such as (a) gender roles (males initiating, females gatekeeping) as females become more positive on requiring consent for each form of sexual activity (4.41 to 4.64; 3.61 to 4.02) and prior to initiating sexual activity (3.88 to 4.27), and (b) oppressive patriarchal systems (traditional silencing and passivity of females) as females agree more strongly with the notion that intimates would want her to verbalise consent (3.91 to 4.19), and that both partners are responsible for ensuring consent is obtained (4.57 to 4.69). These workshops would appear to have enhanced the agency of females in dealing with sexual consent.

Table 5: Attitudes to Asking For and Obtaining Consent - Pre / Post-Workshop Mean Scores

	TOTAL (n=165)		MALE (n= 35)		FEMALE (n= 127)	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Sexual consent should always be obtained before the start of any sexual activity	4.59	4.62	4.60	4.63	4.59	4.62
Asking for sexual consent is in my best interest because it reduces any misinterpretations that might arise	4.51	4.73***	4.71	4.80	4.46	4.72**
It is equally important to obtain sexual consent in all relationships regardless of whether or not they have had sex before	4.60	4.63	4.51	4.63	4.65	4.63
Verbally asking for sexual consent should occur before proceeding with any sexual activity	4.23	4.16	4.23	4.34	4.23	4.11
When initiating sexual activity, you should always assume you do not have sexual consent	3.93	4.28***	4.11	4.31	3.88	4.27***
It is just as necessary to obtain consent for genital fondling as it is for sexual intercourse	4.41	4.62***	4.37	4.54	4.41	4.64**
Most people that I care about feel that asking for sexual consent is something I should do	3.96	4.19**	4.11	4.17	3.91	4.19**
Consent should be asked before any kind of sexual behaviour, including kissing or petting/shifting	3.64	4.02**	3.74	4.00	3.61	4.02*
It is the responsibility of both partners to make sure sexual consent is established before sexual activity begins	4.58	4.71**	4.66	4.80	4.57	4.69*
Before making sexual advances, you should assume 'no' until there is clear indication to proceed	4.22	4.37*	4.37	4.54	4.21	4.32
Not asking for consent some of the time is ok (Reverse scored)	3.95	3.95	4.00	3.97	3.96	3.93

p-values: *** = statistically significant difference at 0.01 level; ** = at 0.05 level; * = at 0.10 level

Conclusion

The pilot implementation of consent workshops at DCU in September 2017 was evaluated positively by workshop participants. This is an encouraging result and suggests that the facilitator training of student peers and DCU staff was successful.

From these results we can see a definite improvement in students' understandings and attitudes toward sexual consent after completing the DCU Consent Workshops; in particular, self-perceptions of preparedness and feeling knowledgeable about engaging in sexual consent were significantly higher after the workshop.

Students' impressions of the workshop project as a whole were very positive, seen through the high ratings of the workshop components, indicating their engagement in and enjoyment of the workshop activities. Thus, it is fair to state that the workshops impacted our students incredibly positively, and on the whole equipped them with the tools they needed to have more positive, consensual, sexual experiences.

ⁱ Some facilitators referred to the 2017 Sexual Offences Act definition of consent. The Act of 1990 is amended by the substitution of the following section for section 9: "9. (1) A person consents to a sexual act if he or she freely and voluntarily agrees to engage in that act. (2) A person does not consent to a sexual act if—(a) he or she permits the act to take place or submits to it because of the application of force to him or her or to some other person, or because of the threat of the application of force to him or her or to some other person, or because of a well-founded fear that force may be applied to him or her or to some other person, (b) he or she is asleep or unconscious, (c) he or she is incapable of consenting because of the effect of alcohol or some other drug, (d) he or she is suffering from a physical disability which prevents him or her from communicating whether he or she agrees to the act, (e) he or she is mistaken as to the nature and purpose of the act, (f) he or she is mistaken as to the identity of any other person involved in the act, (g) he or she is being unlawfully detained at the time at which the act takes place, (h) the only expression or indication of consent or agreement to the act comes from somebody other than the person himself or herself. (3) This section does not limit the circumstances in which it may be established that a person did not consent to a sexual act. (4) Consent to a sexual act may be withdrawn at any time before the act begins, or in the case of a continuing act, while the act is taking place. (5) Any failure or omission on the part of a person to offer resistance to an act does not of itself constitute consent to that act."