

Appendix P1-G: Study Information Letter_Playtester_v6_2025.10.03

Project Title: *Designing Gender-Transformative Digital Games to Create Attitude Changes*

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This letter explains what the study is about, possible risks and benefits, and your rights as a research participant. You may print/save a copy for your records. If you do not understand something in the letter, please ask the student investigator, Veen Wong at veen.wong@uwaterloo.ca, before consenting to participate.

Project Summary:

This study will create a digital game aimed at shifting social and gender norms that are related to intimate partner violence. We are interested in recruiting young heterosexual cisgendered men as play testers for a new in-development game that can be used to prevent intimate partner violence and to share their experiences of playing the game.

For this study, participants will be asked to complete a demographics survey, and a pre-playtest survey. After completing the two surveys, participants will be asked to test early versions of the game to identify usability or design issues. Depending on the stage of development, you may be asked to engage with low-fidelity prototypes (e.g., sketches, storyboards, or paper mock-ups), medium-fidelity prototypes (e.g., interactive digital wireframes or partial builds), or more complete versions of the game. The prototype engagement session will be audio-recorded, video-recorded and/or photographed. Participants will also be asked to complete a post-playtest survey

and participate in an interview to explore your experiences of playing the game. The interview will be audio-recorded and your identity will be kept confidential.

Procedures:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Participation involves playtesting an in-development game and an individual interview to discuss the playtesting experience. A description of each activity follows.

Surveys: You will be asked to complete a demographic survey which will ask you for information on your age, gender, ethnicity, educational background and other relevant information. You will also be asked to complete a pre- and post- playtest survey. These surveys will contain statements that will look at your attitudes towards gender and/or social norms. The statements will ask you to rate your feelings to each statement on a scale. They may contain statements that some individuals may find the content upsetting/sensitive. Samples statements include:

- There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten; or
- The husband is responsible for the family so the wife must obey him; or
- Men are always ready to have sex

You can also choose to not answer any of the questions in the surveys.

Prototype/Playtesting Sessions:

Depending on the stage of the game's development when you participate, you may be asked to test or co-design low-, medium-, or high-fidelity versions of the game. **These prototype/playtesting sessions will be held with you and the research team and can be facilitated online (e.g., via Zoom) or in-person at the Games Institute on the University of Waterloo campus.** Each version represents a different stage of development:

- **Low-fidelity** sessions involve sketches, storyboards, and paper mock-ups.
- **Medium-fidelity** sessions involve interactive wireframes, digital mock-ups, or partial builds.
- **High-fidelity** sessions involve more complete versions of the game.

Below is a description of what each type of session involves:

Low-Fidelity Co-Design Sessions: You may be invited to participate in an early-stage co-design session, where you will interact with or help create sketches, storyboards, or paper prototypes of the game. In these sessions, you may be asked to walk through draft scenarios, suggest dialogue or decision points, or brainstorm alternative storylines and characters. These sessions are expected to last about 1 to 1.5 hours. Sessions will be audio-recorded, and the research team may

also take notes and photographs of the prototypes created during the session (without including your face or identifying information).

Medium-Fidelity Prototype Testing: At a later stage of development, you may be invited to test interactive wireframes, digital mock-ups, or partial builds (for example, a single chapter of the game). These sessions are expected to last about 1 hour. You may be asked to navigate the prototype, comment on the narrative flow and characters, and identify points of confusion or difficulty. For digital prototypes, sessions may be video-recorded and/or screen-recorded, and the research team will also take notes. Your data will be used to revise the prototype and improve the game's usability and impact.

High-Fidelity Playtesting: You will receive an introduction to the study and the in-development game. This playtesting session is expected to take 1 hour and then you will be asked to identify any bugs/issues with the game through a "think-aloud" method. Your playtesting session will be video-recorded and screen-recorded to help debug any issues with the game. A researcher will also observe the playtest and take notes on the gameplay. Your data will be used to update the game in order to improve the gameplay.

Post-Playtest Interview: Immediately after the playtest session, you will be asked to join an individual interview to discuss your playtesting experience. Each session will take about 1 hour and will be audio-recorded. You may decline to answer any questions if you wish. The audio-recordings will be transcribed using a transcription software (e.g. Otter.ai) and identifiable data will be encrypted or redacted.

You may withdraw your participation at any time without penalty by notifying the researchers. If you wish to withdraw your study data after participating, please contact the researchers. You can request your data be removed from the study up until the end of your post-playtest interview as it is not possible to withdraw your data once it has been incorporated into the updated game.

Confidentiality and Data Security:

Your identity will be confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study; however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. In these cases, participants will be referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2, ... (or P1, P2, ...). Data collected during this study will be retained for at least seven (7) years. Electronic data will not include personal identifying information such as names.

You will be explicitly asked for consent for the use of video/audio/visual data, captured from the video recordings and/or photographs, for the purpose of reporting the study's findings. If consent is granted, these data will be used only for the purposes associated with teaching, scientific presentations and publications and your identity will remain confidential.

All data will be securely stored in the research team's University of Waterloo's OneDrive as the security of the files are managed by the University of Waterloo's Information Services and Technology. Data that was captured on devices (e.g., videos-recorded on devices) will be transferred into the research team's OneDrive immediately after the data collection event and destroyed from the recording devices. Similarly, the audio-recordings from the post-playtest interview will be deleted after the transcription has been completed. The transcription will be cleaned of any identifiable data and will be saved in the research team's OneDrive.

You may be participating in a study that uses Qualtrics. These platforms have implemented technical, administrative, and physical safeguards to protect the information from loss, misuse, and unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration, or destruction. However, no internet transmission is ever fully secure or error free.

Duty to Report:

The student investigator, Veen Wong, is a registered social worker in Ontario and had the legal obligation to break confidentiality under certain circumstances such as:

- If you disclose information indicating that you wish to harm yourself or others; or
- Disclosures of child abuse and/or neglect.

In the unlikely event that these circumstances arise, the student investigator may need to breach confidentiality in order to notify relevant authorities.

Remuneration:

You will receive remuneration for your participation in this study, for a total of \$30.00 in digital gift card of your choice from Amazon, Starbucks or Uber. The amount received is taxable. It is your responsibility to report this amount for income tax purposes. If you choose to withdraw your participation from the study prior to study completion, you will be remunerated at the following rates:

Session	Hourly Rate	Remuneration for 1 hour of participation
Prototype/Playtesting	\$15/hour	\$15.00
Post-Playtest Interview	\$15/hour	\$15.00

Expected Total Remuneration \$30.00

Risks and Benefits:

There are no direct benefits to you from participation. However, the results of this research may contribute to a new intimate partner violence prevention tool.

There are risks that you should be aware of:

- This game/prototypes includes themes of intimate partner violence, which can cause negative emotional and/or psychological responses.
- The pre-/post-playtest surveys include statements that some may find triggering or upsetting, which can cause negative emotional and/or psychological responses.

If you experience a negative response during the study, you are free to withdraw from the study and still receive the remuneration. If you develop any negative reactions, or are concerned that you may, please contact the student researcher, Veen Wong at veen.wong@uwaterloo.ca. You may also contact Dr. James Wallace, Associate Professor, School of Public Health Sciences, james.wallace@uwaterloo.ca; and Dr. Cayley MacArthur, Assistant Professor, Stratford School of Interaction Design and Business, cayley.macarthur@uwaterloo.ca

We also want to ensure that you have access to support resources should you find yourself in need of assistance or support after participating in the study. Below are some local resources that specialize in providing support:

- 1) **Here 24/7:** 1-844-437-3247
- 2) **Good2Talk:** 1-866-925-5454
- 3) **EmpowerMe:** <http://www.studentcare.ca/dialogue>
 - Account creation needed (UW students only)
- 4) **UW Counselling Services:** 519-888-4096
 - Call to book an appointment (UW students only)

Please remember that it is okay to seek help if you are experiencing any distress or if you simply need someone to talk to. Your well-being is of utmost importance to us.

Research Ethics Clearance:

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB # 45951). If you have questions for the Board, contact the Office of Research Ethics at 1-833-643-2379 or reb@uwaterloo.ca.

For all other questions regarding this project please contact the student investigator, Veen Wong (veen.wong@uwaterloo.ca).

Thank you for your interest in this project.

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