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Catcall: Card Game to Trigger Conversations about Sexism and Gender Stereotypes

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Abstract: Sexism has been ingrained as a part of daily life through culture and social values. Often people don't realize that their words or actions are actually fortifying sexism and gender stereotype. On top of that, this issue is not a common conversation topic, even sensitive, especially in Asian countries like Japan. To tackle those issues, a card game about sexism and gender stereotype was proposed. Taking the name "Catcall", which is a form of street harassment, players are encouraged to reflect on their experiences, past actions, and words, by facing themselves with sexist situations that occur in daily life and call out those behaviors through funny, educational, or sarcastic answer cards. Evaluation result shows player's changes of mindset and increased awareness towards sexism in both workshop and casual environments. Furthermore, discussions about sexism were also generated during and after playing the game.

Keywords: card game; conversation starter; gender stereotype; sexism

1. Introduction

Humans experience sexism in everyday life. It is mostly ingrained and rooted deep in the society and culture; hence people see sexist behaviors as the norm. Gender issues are rarely brought up in casual conversations. This is especially common in Asian countries, including Japan, which is ranked 110th among 149 nations in the Global Gender Gap Report 2018 by World Economic Forum (2018). Gender stereotypes such as "boys don't cry" or "girls are not good with math" are often reinforced early in the family and can easily be found in the media. They are harmful to all genders and should not be normalized. Conversations need to be encouraged to raise awareness about sexism and gender stereotypes.

Generating conversations regarding sexism and gender stereotype is a challenge, especially in a more "traditional" society where social values get passed on actively. There needs to be a way to trigger conversations about gender that is not too intrusive and acceptable for many people. To reach a wider audience within multiple environments, creating a fun and entertaining way to communicate a social issue is usually more favorable. This paper aims



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to illustrate the process of creating a card game as a conversation tool to raise awareness of sexism and gender stereotype, while also realizing own's bias towards gender.

2. Sexism and Gender Stereotypes

According to Lexico, the definition of sexism is prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex ("Sexism," n.d.). Further explanation by Encyclopædia Britannica states that even though originally created to raise the consciousness of oppression towards women and girls, nowadays, sexism has expanded to include oppression towards any sex, which includes men and boys, intersexual people, and transgender (Masequesmay, n.d.).

Different term but within a similar theme, according to the Office of the High Commissioner, United Nations Human Rights [OHCHR] (n.d.):

"A gender stereotype is a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives."

2.1 Ambivalent Sexism Theory

Sexism is usually only perceived as harmful behaviors, although there is another aspect that projects subjectively positive feelings toward women and often goes together with sexist hostility. Peter Glick and Susan Fiske developed the ambivalent sexism theory, which states that there are two kinds of sexism: hostile sexism and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Hostile sexism promotes hostility towards women while enforcing traditional gender roles. While its counterpart, benevolent sexism, sees women as delicate and "fragile." Hostile sexism represents negativity, male power and domination, degrading women, and promotes conventional gender roles. Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, seems subjectively positive because it promotes a chivalrous attitude of protection and care towards women while still enforcing male domination (Glick & Fiske, 1997).

2.2 Everyday Sexism

In April 2012, Laura Bates initiated The Everyday Sexism Project that became one of this research's primary inspirations. It is a website where people share their experiences on daily occurrences of sexism, in hopes that others who never experienced sexism first-hand would be able to see what is happening in real life (Bates, 2014). Many stories got submitted since then, and came from women of all ages, backgrounds, sexuality, race, and religion. In her book "Everyday Sexism," Laura Bates stated that sexism is an invisible problem, albeit the scale. The amount of evidence that stated sexism exists is the same as the protest to the contrary. People didn't want to acknowledge, to talk about, or to believe that sexism exists. The people who took this view are not only men but also women (Bates, 2014).

3. Media

3.1 Cards for Conversation Starters

While there are many tools to prompt conversations, cards seem to be a popular one. Organizations and companies use cards to prompt discussions for a better product or service.

The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS) is a Scottish charitable company that focuses on improving the quality of social services in Scotland through research, resulting in a better experience for the users. The company developed some tools to generate conversations. One of them is "Relationship Matters," which is a set of cards to prompt discussions between practitioners that care for young people, to reflect their values, and come up with better ways to improve their services (Rice, 2016).

Feedback on the cards indicated that it successfully generated conversations about continuing care, especially the practical elements that are often overlooked by companies. It raised the user's awareness of their own and others' views and practices regarding the question in the cards (Rice, 2016). Based on this, it can be said that card is an effective tool to generate conversations.

Another example of card usage is *The Thing from the Future*, designed by Situation Lab. It is a deck of cards to exercise imaginations and discuss artifacts that may exist in the future. It is also a tool to help in prototyping, a scenario generator, and a game. (Candy, 2018).

We tested a version of *The Thing from the Future* within a workshop with high school students to talk about the future city with speculative design, and we got positive receptions from the students. It makes a complicated and abstract idea, the future, easier to imagine and talk about. These cards can be used for icebreaking, help exercise the imaginations, and works as an introductory guide to speculative design. But most importantly, the cards provided an engaging topic, which helped spark discussions between the students.

Aside from the above examples of cards being used as conversation starters, we can also associate cards with other uses, such as games.

3.2 Games as Learning Tool

Over the years, games have evolved to become not only a form of entertainment, but also a powerful learning tool (Koster, 2013). The combination of a non-entertaining purpose with a game structure can be classified as serious games (Djaouti et al., 2011). These games let the players gain an understanding of real-world issues through playing. Game is an excellent media to communicate and share understanding about social problems because players can experiment and think about possible solutions in a safe setting. In a multiple player environment, they can share opinions and experiences (Swain, 2007).

Tiltfactor is a game design lab located in Dartmouth College, dedicated to studying and design of games for social impact. Using a thorough research methodology in both their design and user study, Tiltfactor produced several games relating to health issues, metadata,

and reducing biases.

One of Tiltfactor's game is related to the topic of girls in STEM. Awkward Moment, a social card game, is part of a National Science Foundation (NSF) funded project called "Transforming Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) for Women and Girls: Reworking Stereotypes & Bias." Designed primarily for middle school students, it aimed to reduce stereotypes and biases in the STEM field. The resulted outcomes are increased player's association in women and science and more assertive response to social bias (Tiltfactor, n.d.). They implemented an "intermixing" strategy, by mixing bias-related and neutral content, using a more stealthy approach for embedding persuasive message about stereotype and bias (Kaufman et al., 2016). Intermixing is one visible approach to design games for social change. But since the bias-related content itself becomes so little compared to the neutral content, it might not be a suitable approach to achieve the goal of this research.

4. Design

An initial user study was conducted to see the outcome of a gender-related discussion in a structured and controlled environment. With a total of 20 people, the participants were asked to get into groups of 5. Participants came from 7 different countries (Japan, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Thailand, Oman, and Korea). Most of them are women; only two men were present at that time. For 5 minutes, participants reflected and wrote down their personal experiences about gender stereotypes into sticky notes. For the next 25 minutes, participants discussed and shared their experiences within the small group, and gave each other advice on what to say or do when facing stereotypical situations. Afterwards, a 15 minutes big group sharing was conducted. Some insights from the activity were:

- For some people, what classified as a stereotype is not always bad. They agreed that, for example, men should take care of women.
- The topic of gender stereotype is interesting but difficult because stereotypes differ among cultures.
- Everyone experienced stereotypes in their life, but not many talk about it casually. It is nice to have a conversation about that and realizing that they can relate to other's problems.

4.1 Concept

Based on literature reviews, related works, and user studies, a card game can be a suitable tool to communicate about sexism and gender stereotype in a fun way, in both formal and informal situations. Referring back to one of the related works, the card game "Awkward Moment" took the approach of mixing neutral and bias-related contents. This research focused more on being direct and relies on a straightforward approach. From the start, players will know that this card game is focused on combatting sexism.

The game is based on sexist situations that happened in real life, experienced by real people, directed towards both women and men.

GAME MECHANISM

Taking inspirations from Awkward Moment and some other card games out there with “matching” mechanism like Apples to Apples (“Apples,” n.d.), two types of card were designed, later dubbed as “situation card” and “callout card”. Players are expected to “converse” through the cards and build empathy with the element of roleplaying. The “situation card” provides sexist situations the players have to face. Then, players are required to act upon that by choosing an answer or action from provided “callout card”. We want to encourage the players to actively stand up against sexism by actions or words.

“Callout cards” were pre-made to give the players inspirations on what to say or do when dealing with sexism. When faced with sexist situations, more often people would not say or do anything. Through this, we want to normalize calling out sexist behaviors. “Callout card” acts as a guide and trigger for players to think about ways to call out sexism, with the hope that ultimately players can creatively come up with answers by themselves. With these 2 elements, players will have a base for further conversation and discussion.



Figure 1 The concept of gameplay flow.

NAMING

After further considerations, “Catcall” was chosen as the game name. It is an English word which, according to Lexico, means a loud whistle or a comment of a sexual nature made by a man to a passing woman (“Catcall,” n.d.). Catcall itself is a form of street harassment and is one form of sexist behavior.

Research shows that harassment like catcalls, whistles, or stares done by strangers can result in woman’s self-objectification, thus promoting psychological and behavioral problems (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008). After playing the card game, people are expected to be more aware of sexism and gender stereotypes, even the ones internalized in themselves.

TONE AND MOOD

The cards were designed to be simple, with text-only contents. It was meant to eliminate all biases and to avoid leading the players on, as everyone regardless of their gender can be sexist. It's up to the player's perception and personal experiences to understand the context of each card.

The mood and feeling of the game should be fun, playful, encouraging, and open. We want to normalize conversations on sexism and encourage calling it out. Players are free to express their opinion and share experiences. By playing this game, we're creating a safe space for players to exercise it. A suitable set of rules was designed to cater these characteristics.

4.2 Rules

The number of players recommended is four to six, but highly flexible based on situations. Gameplay duration is around 30 minutes. The rules are not made to constrict, but rather to help create conversations and generate interaction between players.

1. Separate the situation cards and callout cards
2. Shuffle both decks
3. Each player draws 7 callout cards
4. One player begins as the judge. The judge draws one situation card and reads it out loud
5. Everyone else gives an answer or response to the statement on the situation card by submitting one callout card face down to the judge. It can be a response from a bystander, or from someone who was involved directly in the situation
6. The judge shuffles the callout cards and reads the combinations one by one. The judge picks one best answer. It can be the funniest, the most educational, or anything the judge likes. Whoever submitted it gets a point and keeps the situation card
7. After the round, someone else becomes the judge, and everyone draws back up to 7 callout cards
8. Play again until someone wins the game with 5 points

There is a different dynamic when playing in a casual and formal environment. The basic rules are suitable for any situation, but sometimes in a formal classroom environment, a different gameplay mechanism could be needed. For example, having a facilitator instead of a judge, and implement a "voting" mechanism to determine the winner. Each round, all players vote for the best callout card. Alternative rules can also increase the replay value of the game.

4.3 Situation Card

The contents of the cards are divided into two main categories: situation cards and callout cards. To elevate the "fun" part, some humor were added within the contents. Initially designed in English, later the cards were translated to Japanese for validation purposes with

Japanese-speaking users. Some differences had to be made when translating because of the nature of both languages.

A situation card consists of conversation happening between a few people or a sentence containing sexist language or gender stereotypes we often see in daily life. Some are explicit; some are more ambiguous. The deck is a mix of hostile and benevolent sexism contents. Some cards have a more specific context, with additional information such as where does the situation takes place or who says it.

All the situation cards are based on real-life experience. A survey was conducted to gather people's experiences on sexism and gender stereotype. The survey includes a brief description of the project followed by questions about demographics and experiences regarding sexism within the workplace or educational institution, and within everyday life. While the primary purpose is to collect experiences, the survey stated that 65% of the respondents said they had witnessed sexism in the workplace or educational institution. 74% stated they experienced sexism in everyday life, and 82% witnessed it.

Some situations were taken from stories online, primarily the everydaysexism.com website. As the creator of the site, Bates explained about the validation of submitted stories. While there is no way to confirm the truth behind the stories, there is nothing to gain out of fabricating entries in the site. Since so many accounts are registered, posting a fake entry will gain the poster no fame. They also manage the site to remove troll posts. Moreover, the fact that similar stories were submitted by thousands of girls and women from different backgrounds, each of them with the same theme, it is too big of a coincidence for everyone to make up similar stories (Bates, 2014).

The amount of sexism towards women is dominant compared to sexism towards men, which portrays real-life conditions. It is also strengthened with the survey result; women are more likely to submit their experiences rather than men, both as a witness or first-hand experience. While the conversations that's written in the cards may not be 100% accurate with the submitted situation, the main idea is not modified. Some sentences were created to have a humorous tone in it.

<p>“Guys are such a mess. Stop, don’t try to clean, just leave it and let the girls clean.”</p>	<p>“C’mon man, stop whining! Are you a girl or what?”</p>	<p>RANDOM GUY ON THE STREET “Hey sweetie, why don’t you give me a smile?”</p>
<p><i>Office</i></p> <hr/> <p>“We understand that you just came back from maternity leave. So we re-distributed your work with the big clients to others so you don’t have to work too hard.”</p>	<p>MALE FRIEND “You don’t want to have children? But women can’t be happy without children.”</p>	<p>“ALL MEN ARE EVIL AND SHOULD BURN IN HELL!!”</p>

Figure 2 Examples of situation cards. The contents were created to be as broad as possible. However, some cards were given more contexts than the others to eliminate confusion.

4.4 Callout Card

A callout card is used as an answer to the situation cards. Players can choose between answering the sexist situation in an educational, passive, aggressive, assertive, or humorous way. The callout card contents are more free compared to the situation cards, and most can be paired with many situation cards. There are, in total, 295 callout cards.

Some callout cards were designed to be specific; these cards will only make sense when paired with the corresponding situation card. This system was implemented to enhance the replay value of the game. If all the cards can be paired with everything, the game can get mundane fast. The sources for designing the contents for callout cards are survey, interviews, personal experiences, and some internet memes to add humor.

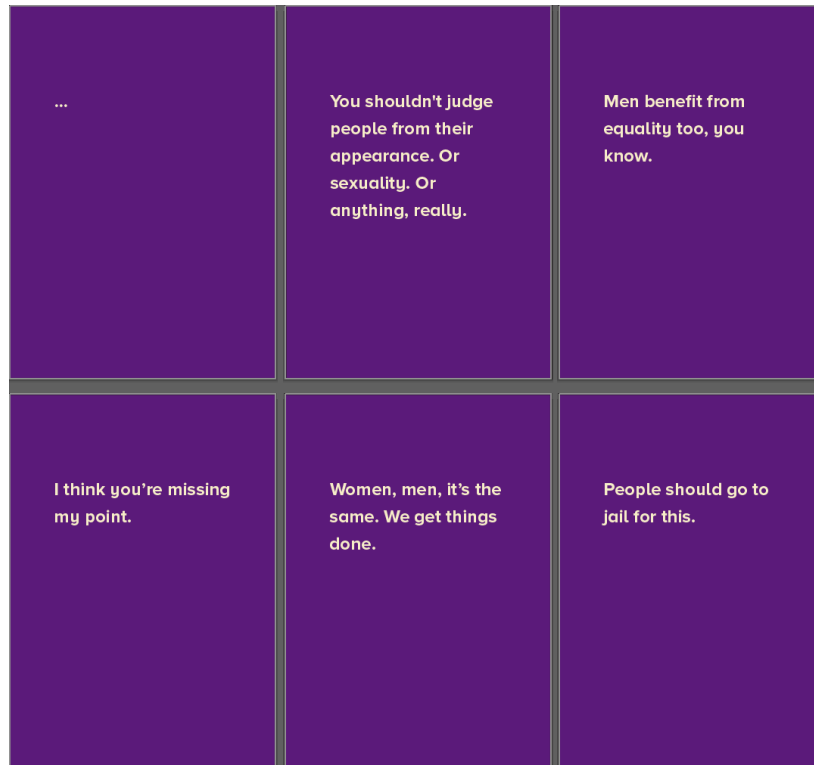


Figure 3 Examples of callout cards. Within 295 cards in total, different tones and moods were incorporated. Ranging from funny, intellectual, straightforward, savage, even a few internet memes.

5. User Test and Validation

The way to validate this research is through playing the game within different groups. There were two different conditions for the test. The first one is using the game in a workshop setting, with facilitators and a more formal atmosphere. The second one is playing in a casual setting, with no facilitator and a more relaxed atmosphere. This was done to look at the card game's versatility.

Within the workshop setting, a survey was distributed at the end of the sessions to get feedback from players. While in casual environments, interviews and group discussions were conducted after playing the game. Observations were also performed in both settings. Methods aside, the main points to evaluate were users' experience with the game, contents of the cards, and the topic of sexism and gender stereotype.

5.1 Workshop Settings

The first user test setting was conducted in a single session gender workshop with a Japanese human resource start-up. The game was used as an ice-breaking tool. 11 participants were divided into two teams of 5 and 6. Each team was assigned with one facilitator. Players picked the winner by voting for the best callout card each round.



Figure 4 Incorporating Catcall as an icebreaker within a gender workshop. Each group consisted of five participants and one facilitator.

The second user test was conducted in an event. For its correlation with SDG number 5, gender equality, the card game had a chance to be showcased in SDG Game Show for Youth and Educators, hosted by Kanazawa Institute of Technology (KIT) with Keio Media Design, Global Education project as co-host. Majority of the visitors were educators and teachers.

In both occurrences, participants who are mostly Japanese, were encouraged by the facilitator to discuss and think about the situations and answers alike. Based on observations, the game can be difficult to start because participants do not know each other and are hesitant to speak up.



Figure 5 Catcall in SDG Game Show for Youth and Educators, supported by UNDP Japan. Participants had a chance to try playing the game.

Based on the feedback, the majority thinks that the game was fun, the contents were funny, and they enjoyed playing it. One stated that the cards gave them inspirations on what to say if faced with harassment or sexist situation. Other said that it made them think of what would they do if faced in certain kinds of situation. Moreover, it had been a good lesson for them since they never thought about things like sexism and stereotype.

Because players do not know each other, a participant said that they hesitated a bit while playing. It was challenging to say what they wanted to say openly. However they said that, the contents, especially the situation cards, were relatable. They also expressed a wish to write their own answers in the callout card. Out of several groups participating, one consisted of two female adults, one male adult, and one boy. They enjoyed the game even though there was an age difference between some participants. While playing, they also discussed how real the situation cards were, and some shared their own experiences in similar situations. One male participant expressed that it was a good opportunity to understand women's feelings. Someone else reflected that in real life, calling out and saying "it's wrong" directly might not be taken well by others. But because it's packed in a game, players can be straightforward.

After playing this game, some participants realized how sexist they are, but unaware of it before. They did not realize what they said or did were discriminating towards gender. Through this game, the participants had a chance to reflect on their actions and how they reinforced gender bias unconsciously.

Finally, some of the participants expressed their interest in using this card within their community. Some wanted to play in a diversity training workshop, corporate training session, class meeting, even drinking party.

5.2 Casual Settings

In casual settings, the participant's demographic data was collected to see if it affects their way of perceiving sexism. The data consists of age, gender, nationality, occupation, and religion. During the playtesting session, there was no facilitator, and the participants were presented with a sheet of paper containing game descriptions and rules. They were asked to read and understand the rules by themselves. After a winner was determined, interviews and group discussions were conducted.

There were three different user test sessions with all different participants within different environments. The first playtest was done with members of a university female empowerment club. Second session was done with a group of master students from the same department, and the third session was done with roommates from different countries. The session were held in English.

The common feedback that came up after every sessions was the game was fun. A participant said that the sarcasm and humor worked well. In the case of female empowerment club members, more discussions arose during the session. This might be due to their perspective on gender issues are stronger than other people, being in a club that discusses such issue. They suggested creating one more card category as a winning "decider," as one participant said she hesitated to use the non-funny callout cards because she wanted to win. Another suggested implementing a penalty system for players who said something sexist. It is also an excellent practice to call out sexist behavior instead of brushing it off. Another aspect that they liked is the simplicity of the game and how easy it is to play.



Figure 6 Playtesting session with members of a university female empowerment club.

In the second session, all participants are of Asian background, with the majority being Indonesian. One student expressed that they felt pressure at the beginning of the game; they were not sure whether it's okay to give a funny response as sometimes people might take it

differently. A male participant said he could not relate that much to the situation, as most are directed against women, and he never experienced them. But later understood that such arrangements are based on real life situation. While on the other hand, a female participant said that the cards made her realize men can also experience sexism, not only women.

Participants for the third session were all male roommates within a similar age range (the 20s); one of Asian background and two others were European. Based on observations, the participants knew each other really well and were comfortable around each other. They enjoyed it and decided to play for two rounds. Participants said that the cards were well-designed and looked lovely. They wished for additional numbers of funny callout cards, jokes, and internet memes, as it was often the winning card.

During the post-game interview, the Europeans said that they could not relate to most of the situations that appeared. They felt like their generation is not like that anymore, and a lot of the cards would have a more significant impact on the older generation. However, the other disagreed, and he witnessed a lot of similar situations that were written on the cards. One participant followed that even though the situations seemed unreal, the fact that someone out there experienced those kinds of sexism, made him think about it. Even more as men, he often did not realize if sexism occurred, nor experienced it daily.

After the interview, one of the participants began to tell a story of his own experience with sexual assault, which is one of the topics covered by the situation cards. Initially, he thought it is not normal for guys to experience sexual assault, so no one talked about it. But after playing the game, he realized that it is fine to talk about sexual assault and did not matter if it's man or woman, people experienced it nonetheless.

5.3 Result and Discussions

Generally, the card game received good feedback from the validation processes. Players in both formal and casual settings said the game was, first and foremost, fun. It works as a game and can be played in different situations with different people. The game received a lot of praise for the simple, sleek design and straightforward mechanism that doesn't require a lot of preparation or set up.

Based on observations, when playing in a formal environment, players will less likely to joke around and would pick a right, safe answer. It also requires a facilitator to keep conversations flowing, especially since most of the time, the players do not know each other and might be hesitant to express their opinion. However, after a while, players would start opening up and play more casually.

As stated early in the design chapter, sexism and gender issue differs significantly among cultures. The game had a more prominent impact on Japanese people and other Asian countries compared to non-Asians. Feedback from participants with Asian background stated that playing the game made them think about their previous actions and mindset, how sometimes the things they did were unintentionally sexist and biased. Non-Asian players, however, were surprised by the fact that common sexist stereotypes still exist. For them,

sexist behaviors are a thing of the past. They were unaware that people are still experiencing it. All of these thoughts were generated and shared after playing the game.

Looking back at the design process, it is true that people from an Asian background submitted most of the experiences collected. This was proven to have a high impact on participants from Japan or other Asian countries when playing the game. The game might have to be altered according to nationalities or cultural background to have the best impact. In the future, if the cards are to be used by other people with different cultural backgrounds, it is best to alter the contents according to the user.

On the other hand, playing the cards with participants who are not from the same cultural background can still generate good results. Participants get to know what is happening on the other side of the world, and while sexism is not prevalent in their daily life, it is still happening in other countries. It raises their awareness of gender issues.

Since playing the game, some of the participants that the researcher still has close contacts with, showed more awareness towards sexism in daily conversations. On some occasions, they wondered if a particular statement was sexist, and a discussion was started because of that.

6. Conclusion and Future Possibilities

Sexism and gender stereotype is a challenging, sensitive topic, especially in Asian countries like Japan. At the same time, it is important to talk about sexism and call out sexist behaviors to reach gender equality. Through this card game, people shared their past experiences. They reflected on their attitudes. They were aware of different sexist situations in everyday life. Those were shared through conversations, within or after playing the game. Conversations were generated naturally, with the players sharing their personal opinion towards a certain topic within the cards.

It is beneficial to communicate social issues as fun and natural as possible. Catcall as a simple, straightforward card game is effective to raise awareness of the player's own biases. The "matching" mechanism is easy to familiarize with, and the text-only content serves its purposes. The message was delivered, although some players expressed that they would prefer some illustrations or visual guides to help them imagine the situations. A further research needs to be done on whether illustrations would help in this case.

There were certain limitations regarding player's cultural background and experiences. The design of the cards should cater to the target audience's cultural background. While not all the results are perfect, the cards meet the initial goal of creating conversations about sexism in a fun way. However, only that does not solve the gender equality issue. Men and women of all ages need to work together to solve this global problem together. This game works as an introduction to the bigger picture.

Until this paper is written, we have conducted some more workshop sessions utilizing Catcall to talk about gender biases. The inputs received were valuable to determine the next steps

in this project's development. The near-future plan is adjusting the balance of the game and create better localizations. We want to develop the contents to cater to more people from different backgrounds and age range. There have been requests from schools in Japan to conduct a gender workshop utilizing Catcall, and it would require some adjustments within the card contents, as some might not be relatable for high school students. Likewise, we also got requests from companies for a gender-training workshop, which would also require modifications of the contents. A possible co-creation workshop for content creation is also on the list.

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