

Researching Interventions For Sexual Violence on Campus

Mon, 08/29/2022 - 00:00

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This summer marks my fourth semester working as a research assistant for Drs. Katherine Johnson and Alyssa Lederer and their ongoing research on the effectiveness of curricular interventions—specifically Tulane’s GESS 1900 (Sex, Power, Culture) and SOCI 2100 (Sociology of Sexuality)— in addressing sexual aggression on college campuses.

My primary role this summer was to review and analyze existing literature to ensure our survey questionnaire remains as effective in addressing our research questions, and to strengthen our understanding of the methodology we use in collecting data. I will use the information I have collected and organized this summer to help edit and add to our ongoing papers, including an internal report.

We used vignettes in the fall semesters of 2018, 2019, and 2020 to assess students' reactions to an ambiguous encounter between two acquaintances, specifically looking at rape myth acceptance. To prepare for the team to write papers on the data collected from these vignettes, I examined studies that have used vignettes to understand college students' beliefs about sexual violence. The research I read presented the strengths and weaknesses of using vignettes generally, as well as using different forms of vignettes (videos, audiotapes, and written). Our questionnaire used written scenarios, with both an open-ended question and the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. Vignettes allow researchers to collect normative data about beliefs and moral issues by prompting context-related responses to hypothetical scenarios.

I also examined studies with questionnaires designed to measure college students' alcohol consumption and behaviors with alcohol. We are re-evaluating the items we want to include in our questionnaire to measure alcohol use.

Performing these literature reviews has given me additional insight into the process of developing and administering a survey. The team is currently preparing to administer the survey to our Fall 2022 cohort – we are making final decisions on questionnaire items and scheduling times to administer the survey in-person during the first weeks of classes.

Two professional goals that I plan to continue to work on through this internship are gaining experience with analyzing and organizing the data we've collected, and developing a guide or some educational component for students based on the findings from our data. I feel like we have collected some very fascinating data, and while we are still in the process of cleaning the data to prepare to analyze and publish it, I would love to create some sort of education resource for Tulane students to highlight common rape myths or beliefs from their fellow students. I am also looking forward to taking a more active role in analyzing our data, as I will be using subsets of this data for my honors thesis.

I am looking forward to another great semester with this internship!