

Measures of Growth: Working as a Research Assistant with Tulane Professors

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This summer I began working as a research assistant for Drs. Katherine Johnson and Alyssa Lederer and their ongoing research surrounding Tulane's GESS 1900 (Sex Power Culture) and SOCI 2100 (Sociology of Sexuality) courses. Their research centers on evaluating whether these semester-long courses impact students' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior about gender, sexuality, and sexual violence. The hope is that courses such as GESS 1900 might expand students' understanding

of concepts directly related to the perpetuation and continuation of sexual violence on Tulane's campus.

The findings of the fall 2018 survey (administered to only GESS 1900 and a comparison course) are published in the American Journal of Health Promotion. Our team worked on refining the measures and structure of the previous survey and investigating new comparison courses, before submitting to Tulane's IRB (Institutional Review Board) for approval to administer to students in the fall semester.

While I have participated in other research, I had never developed a survey before this internship, and was initially worried that I lacked the skills to serve as a helpful member of the research team. Out of the four-member team, I have the least experience with data collection, evaluating survey measures, and data analysis. However, I have learned so much from our weekly team meetings, both from listening to the thought processes of Drs. Johnson and Lederer and our graduate RA, and from learning by their example and asking clarifying questions. I have gained confidence in my abilities to adapt and learn, even when I feel I have less expertise than others! I also increased my professionalism in writing and analysis, both through developing/reviewing the modified version of the survey, and through my communication with other members of the team.

The most gratifying part of this internship was watching the revised survey come together and receiving approval from the IRB in less than a week! Several of the measures I found and analyzed are incorporated into the revised version of the survey, which is exciting!

My long-term goals are to complete a Master's in Psychology or Neuroscience through Tulane's 4+1 Master's program, and to attend graduate school to work toward a PhD in Neuropsychology. My role as a research assistant has motivated me to go into research in my career, at least partly, as I found the survey development very rewarding and enlightening, and I am so excited to see it distributed in the fall and follow through/revise before the second round is administered.

My short-term goals are to continue to grow strong professional relationships with Drs. Johnson and Lederer (as I will be continuing my internship in the fall) and to continue to keep an open mind toward new educational and professional experiences.

I am excited to continue working with this research team in the fall and to analyze the data we collect!