

Thesis Proposal

XXXX XXXXX

Working Title

Exploring the Relationship Between Alcohol, Sexual Assault and Religiosity on College Campuses.

Project Importance

The purpose of this thesis is to explore whether institutions of higher education that maintain a policy of a dry campus, that is, a campus free from alcohol, also report fewer instances of sexual assault. Further, this thesis will seek to find whether there is a significant variance in reported rates of sexual assault among religious institutions maintaining a dry campus policy compared to secular institutions maintaining a dry campus policy. Rates of sexual violence on college campuses are higher than among the general population. Further, intoxication has been found to be a significantly correlated factor in cases of sexual assault and violence. Developing a better understanding of the relationship between alcohol, sexual assault, and administrative policies that mitigate the two may help to reduce incidences of sexual violence and protect students in higher education.

Project Overview

Background. Incidence of sexual assault on college campuses are frequent. Research estimates between one in four and one in five female students are victims of some form of sexual assault or rape during their time at college (Exner & Cummings, 2011; Gidycz, Orchowski, & Berkowitz, 2011; Katz, Colbert & Colangelo, 2015; McMahon & Banyard 2012). Females are not the only victims, with estimates showing between one in ten and one in twenty male students being victims of sexual assault (Exner & Cummings, 2011; Gidycz et al., 2011; Katz et al. 2015). The

American College Health Association issued a White Paper to call attention to the problem, with the White House establishing a special task force to address the issue and assess the campus environment (McMahon, 2015). The US Department of Justice has defined sexual assault as “any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient” and rape as forced sexual intercourse (“Sexual Assault”, 2017). These are the definitions which will be used in this study.

Katz et al. (2015) find that intoxication from alcohol and drugs play a role in a significant number of reported sexual assaults and that the party culture of college campuses increases the likelihood of sexual assault occurring. As the effects of alcohol consumption include impaired judgment, drowsiness, and changed emotional state, individuals under the influence of alcohol have a reduced ability to consent to sexual activity and are thereby at a higher risk of being sexually assaulted. In addition, college campuses may be at a higher risk of developing a rape culture, defined by McMahon and Farmer (2009) as a social environment where “fundamental attitudes and values are supportive of gender stereotypes and violence against women”. College campuses contain several subcultures, such as fraternities and athletic teams, which are prone to reinforcing rape culture due to their collective language, practices, rituals, and traditions (McMahon and Farmer, 2009).

Within the higher education system of the United States, there are a number of colleges and universities which have adopted policies of a dry campus culture in which consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited, on or off the institutions property, or at official events of the institution. Brigham Young University, a religiously affiliated institution in Provo, UT is famous for their reputation as a dry campus, maintaining the title of the “Most Stone Cold Sober” campus in the United States for over 20 years. Utah State University, a publicly funded campus

in northern Utah also maintains a policy of a dry campus., with many other campuses across the country having similar policies.

The purpose of this thesis research is to gather data on several hundred campuses, both dry and wet, and conduct a statistical analysis to determine whether dry campus policies may impact the rate of reported sexual assaults. It is hypothesized that dry campuses will have a significantly lower rate of reported sexual assault than campuses which allow consumption of alcohol.

Methods. Data will be collected from university websites. The data to conduct this analysis is all publicly available on university websites, however it has not yet been collated, indexed and analyzed. Several online resources maintain lists of dry campuses and these will be used to build a sample of dry campuses. For the purpose of this study, dry campuses will be those campuses with policies excluding alcohol consumption on campus and at campus sponsored events. A comparable sample of campuses with wet policies will be drawn by selecting campuses that are geographically close to dry campuses. For example, if a dry campus is located in City X, State Y, then a wet campus that is also in City X, State Y will be selected for inclusion. However, if there is no matching campus within a reasonable distance (defined as 50 miles) then another campus will be randomly selected from a pool of institutions of the same size and general location (ie, urban, rural, suburban, etc.).

Each campus will be scored on the number of sexual assaults reported per year for the past 3 years, with this data being gathered from publicly available resources, such as campus police websites and Clery Campus Security reports. In addition, each campus will be evaluated on the presence of sexual assault prevention programming, accessibility to women's resources offices and Title IX violations. These additional categories may help to address some of the

compounding variables which may affect sexual assault reporting rates. Further analysis of dry campuses will include drawing two subsamples comprises of religious and secular institutions, with their scores being further analyzed for to find any potential significant differences.

Following the collection and classification of data, statistical analysis will be conducted to determine the relationship between campus policies and sexual assault. Given the nature of the data that will be collected, ANOVA will be the preferred test to measure for variance between group scores and means. Depending on the outcome of this statistical analysis, further statistical tests may be conducted.

Importance. McMahon and Farmer (2009) estimate that over 1.5 million rapes occur annually in the U.S. and that the vast majority of these rapes go unreported. Furthermore, women on college campuses are at a higher risk level than women not on campus (Banyard et al. 2009). Research indicates that a variety of factors may contribute to college campuses having an environment that is conducive to and fosters opportunity to commit rape and sexual assault. If this research finds a significant correlation in institutional policies regarding the consumption of alcohol and the rate of sexual assault, it could provide a new means of educating the student population and lead to the integration of more efficient and effective campus programming to prevent sexual assault.

Qualifications of Thesis Committee

Advisor, Dr. Niwako Yamawaki

Dr. Yamawaki is Associate Chair and Associate Professor of the Psychology Department. Her primary research focus examines sexism and traditional gender roles as they relate to violence against women. Recent research publications include topics such as rape myth acceptance, bystander engagement as a prevention for campus sexual assault, and college students'

perceptions of violence against women. I am currently in my third semester as a research assistant in Dr. Yamawaki's gender research lab.

Reader, Dr. Megan Sanborn Jones

Dr. Jones is Associate Chair and Associate Professor of the Theatre and Media Arts Department.

Dr. Jones is also an affiliate faculty member of the BYU Women's Studies and has taught Introduction to Women's Studies and an Unexpected Connections Course with an emphasis on identity formation, featuring units on both gender and religious identity. I took both courses from Dr. Jones and was a teaching assistant for Unexpected Connections for three semesters.

Department Coordinator, Shawn Gale

Project Timeline

November, 2017- Proposal submitted and approved, background research completed, sample of institutions drawn, initial data gathering, compilation, and analysis.

December, 2017- Statistical analysis of data and interpretation of results, first draft of thesis, submit drafts to advisor and reader, and rewrite.

January, 2018- Continue to rewrite and review.

February, 2018- Final draft, thesis defense submission.

March, 2018- Submit finalized thesis to Honors Office.

Culminating Experience

The subject of this thesis is highly applicable to the safety and security of students on campuses across the nation. As such, it would be ideal to have meaningful results published in an academic journal with the intention of influencing policy making on campuses around the country.

References

- Exner, D., & Cummings, N. (2011). Implications for sexual assault prevention: College students as prosocial bystanders. *Journal of American College Health, 59*(7), 655-657.
doi:10.1080/07448481.2010.515633
- Gidycz, C. A., Orchowski, L. M., & Berkowitz, A. D. (2011). Preventing sexual aggression among college men: An evaluation of a social norms and bystander intervention program. *Violence Against Women, 17*(6), 720-742. doi:10.1177/1077801211409727
- Katz, J., Colbert, S., & Colangelo, L. (2015). Effects of group status and victim sex on female bystanders' responses to a potential party rape. *Violence and Victims, 30*(2), 265-277.
doi:10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-13-00099
- McMahon, S., Banyard, V. L., & McMahon, S. M. (2015). Incoming college students' bystander behaviors to prevent sexual violence. *Journal of College Student Development, 56*(5), 488-493. doi:10.1353/csd.2015.0050
- McMahon, S., & Farmer, G. L. (2009). The bystander approach: Strengths-based sexual assault prevention with at-risk groups. *Journal of Human Behavior In The Social Environment, 19*(8), 1042-1065. doi:10.1080/10911350902990304
- McMahon, S. (2015). Call for research on bystander intervention to prevent sexual violence: The role of campus environments. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 55*(3-4), 472-489. doi:10.1007/s10464-015-9724-0
- Sexual assault. (2017, June 16). Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/sexual-assault>