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A SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF SEXUAL ASSAULTS ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS: A CASE STUDY OF PENN STATE UNIVERSITY FROM 2014 TO 2017

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ABSTRACT

Nationally, 55% of sexual assaults occur at or near a victim's home. Yet, the narrative developed by Penn State's Sexual Assault Task Force emphasizes safety measures (such as avoiding rides and walks with strangers) as a main prevention strategy. The recommendations of the Task Force are sound, yet the strategies laid out only go partway in preventing assaults on campus and in protecting vulnerable students. It is a complex issue that requires a multi-layered approach, one that emphasizes both awareness and pro-active prevention. This research attempts to provide another layer of understanding in our attempt to combat sexual violence.

Although there have been a number of academic reports that focus on university policies with regard to sexual assault, this issue has not been analyzed through a spatial lens in the last decade. Studying campus sexual assaults through a geographic perspective is a neglected area of research that could improve university policy and community understanding.

Since February of 2014, sixty nine "Timely Warning" notifications have been sent out to Penn State students and university employees regarding incidents of sexual assaults on campus. This research utilized these police records and Campus Climate Surveys from February 2014 to February 2017 to map frequency and temporal analyses of sexual assault occurrences on the Penn State University campus. By extracting location data from 45 of the incidents, a heat map of locations was created. It was found that the majority of the sexual assaults took place in oncampus dormitories. The remaining 25 reported assaults did not have location data, and therefore could only be used for a separate temporal analysis.
Penn State is not representative of all universities, but the trends observed there could hypothetically be applied to other large research universities as well. It is imperative that the rhetoric and focus of Penn State’s sexual assault education is changed in order to reflect reality. Currently, Penn State is not providing their students with enough location data, and is therefore failing to advise students properly about protecting themselves. As the research that follows shows, place is an important data point that should be incorporated into the university’s strategy to combat sexual assault. If this problem is addressed at one university, it can potentially serve as a model for other college campuses across the U.S.
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1.

Introduction

**Campus Sexual Assaults**

Every 98 seconds, an American citizen is sexually assaulted. Sexual assault occurs among every demographic group, yet college women between the ages of 18 and 24 are at an even higher risk of facing sexual violence. According to national statistics, a little over 10 percent of all undergraduate students, both male and female, “experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation” ("Campus Sexual Violence: Statistics."). The number for sexual assaults is much higher specifically for females, as averages of 23.1 percent of undergraduate women have experienced this violent act while in college (Sinozich & Langton, 2014).

Proactive solutions to campus sexual assault are dependent on mass data collection, comprehensive education of student-bodies, mandatory bystander-intervention trainings and prioritization of survivors’ voices. Many organizations, such as Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), the American Association of University Women (AAUW), along with campaigns such as “It’s On Us” and “NotAlone.gov,” are working to prevent the epidemic of campus sexual assaults. Despite the nationwide recognition of the issue, assaults are still occurring at high rates, especially for undergraduate students. Universities across the country are failing in their efforts to provide the education, prevention, and support needed to combat sexual assaults.

Student activists, however, have spurred a national conversation and have demanded further investigation into sexual assault cases. The White House and Congressional leaders
formed multiple groups to look into complaints after a number of campus sexual assault stories received nationwide attention (Wilson, 2014).

By November of 2014, the Department of Education had added eighty-six colleges and universities to their list of higher institutions being investigated for Title IX concerns and violations ("U.S. Department of Education Releases List of Higher Education Institutions with Open Title IX Sexual Violence Investigations."). Penn State was included on the list.

**Understanding Current National Policy**

There is a quote from Vice President Joe Biden from a speech given in 2014 on the opening page of *The First Report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault* that sums up the importance of responding to the crisis of sexual violence:

> “Freedom from sexual assault is a basic human right... a nation’s decency is in large part measured by how it responds to violence against women... our daughters, our sisters, our wives, our mothers, our grandmothers have every single right to expect to be free from violence and sexual abuse.”

While this quote may seem unquestionably true, the reality is that nearly a quarter of undergraduate women have not had the privilege of freedom from sexual assault. The Obamaera White House encouraged much stricter guidelines for sexual assault prevention and punishment at colleges and universities than any previous presidents. However, many of the acts pertaining to campus sexual assault prevention and reporting were signed into law in the early
1990s and many have not been updated with the times. In order to better understand Penn State’s campus climate with regards to sexual assault, it is easier to first look at historical federal interventions and reporting requirements.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the nation was becoming increasingly aware of campus sexual and violent crimes. Many reputable news sources and academic journals such as the Boston Globe and Gender and Society began writing pieces on the extreme stories of sexual assault that were coming out of large research universities at the time. Similarly to the present day, during this time there was a heightened sense of student engagement and frustration with university administrators handling of sexual assault and general campus crime cases (Germain, 2016). In 1986, an incident took place which finally forced the federal government to take action.

At Lehigh University, a student by the name of Jeanne Anne Cleary was tortured, raped and killed in her campus dormitory. Following a string of other brutal campus sexual assaults, this “tragedy of Clery’s…assault and murder drew national attention and became a symbol for the movement to reform campus rape laws” (Germain, 2016). Her parents quickly became advocates for the movement and mounted pressure on the federal government to respond appropriately.

By the late 1980’s campus crime was eventually pushed to the top of congressional agendas and in 1990 President George H. W. Bush signed into law the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act. Later amended in 1998, the law became known as the Clery Act in memoriam. The original aim of the act was to “strengthen the rights of victims of dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking on college campuses. Institutions will be required to collect and disclose statistics of crimes reported to campus security authorities and local police agencies that involve incidents of dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault,
and stalking. This will improve crime reporting and will help ensure that students, prospective students, families, and employees and potential employees of the institutions will be better informed about each campus’ safety and security procedures. Ultimately, the improved reporting and transparency will promote safety and security on college campuses” (Federal Register Rules and Regulations).

When Congress passed the act, it was stated that “all postsecondary institutions participating in HEA’s (Higher Education Act of 1965) Title IV student financial assistance programs [must] disclose their campus crime statistics and security information” (The Handbook for Campus Safety and Security Reporting).

Title IX, a portion of the United States Education Amendments of 1972, is another piece of legislation aimed at campus sexual assaults and other crimes. Title IX prohibits sex discrimination in all educational programs or activities that receive federal funding ("Title IX and Sex Discrimination."). This law applies to nearly every institution in the United States, as both private and public schools have students that receive some form of federal funds. The official words of the amendment read "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” ("Title IX Frequently Asked Questions.").
Understanding Pennsylvania Law

Prior to the *Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act*, Pennsylvania tried to tackle the issue of sexual assault crime reporting on a state level. In 1988, the Pennsylvania state legislature passed the nation’s first campus-security reporting law. One year later, sixteen other states had followed suit (Germain 11). Eventually, the issue was addressed on a federal level, and state-by-state reporting laws were no longer needed.

Different states, however, still have differing legal definitions of what constitutes a rape versus a sexual assault. According to Pennsylvania state law, rape is a first-degree felony defined as “when the person engages in sexual intercourse with a complainant: (1) By forcible compulsion; (2) By threat of forcible compulsion that would prevent resistance by a person of reasonable resolution; (3) Who is unconscious or where the person knows that the complainant is unaware that the sexual intercourse is occurring; (4) Where the person has substantially impaired the complainant's power to appraise or control his or her conduct by administering or employing, without the knowledge of the complainant, drugs, intoxicants or other means for the purpose of preventing resistance; and (5) Who suffers from a mental disability which renders the complainant incapable of consent.” ("Title 18 DEFINITION OF OFFENSES.").

Sexual assault is a second-degree felony defined as when “a person commits a felony of the second degree when that person engages in sexual intercourse or deviate sexual intercourse with a victim without the victim’s consent” ("Sexual Assault Laws in PA.").
Understanding current policy at Penn State

Penn State University (PSU) is located in the city of State College in Central Pennsylvania with a student population of approximately 46,000 ("Campus Facts."). Founded in 1855, the University is a public institution. There are 22 other smaller Penn State branch campuses, while the flagship campus in State College is referred to as ‘University Park’. The campus size is around 8,556 acres and a map depicting the size and buildings on campus can be seen below in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Map of Penn State University Park Campus (Penn State, 2016)](image)
As a result of the campus crime reporting acts passed by Congress, Penn State is required to disclose all information regarding campus crime statistics on campus property or affiliated buildings (including fraternity houses). Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, these statistics were available to the public in the form of annual security reports. While crime statistics are still compiled at the end of every academic year, Penn State has begun to send out individual reports in a more immediate manner.

In the fall of 2014, Penn State Campus Police began sending out “Timely Warnings” whenever there was a ‘possible threat to the community.’ Every time there is a crime, the student body and staff are alerted via text message or email. Following the guidelines required by the Clery Act, a ‘possible threat to the community’ is defined as anything that happens to Penn State students or staff on campus property. This relatively narrow definition excludes any crimes that happen to Penn State students or staff on off-campus property.

The Department of Education’s *Handbook for Campus Safety and Security Reporting* states that “[institutions] “must disclose statistics for reported Clery Act crimes that occur (1) on campus, (2) on public property within or immediately adjacent to the campus, and (3) in or on noncampus buildings or property that your institution owns or controls. The definitions for these geographic categories are Clery Act-specific and are the same for every institution regardless of its physical size or configuration.”

Considering that Penn State is located within an urban setting, and only first year students are guaranteed on-campus housing, this definition leaves quite a few students unprotected and many crimes being unreported. Crimes that do not occur within the Clery Act geography are not included in the “Timely Warning” notifications, regardless of whether university students are involved. Specifically, out of the 46,000 undergraduate students that
attend the main Penn State campus, approximately 13,700 live in dormitories on campus property (“Campus Facts”).

As is the case with Penn State, “if [the] institution has more than one campus, each campus must comply independently with all of the Clery Act and the fire-and safety-related HEA requirements described in this handbook, including publishing its own annual security report” (The Handbook for Campus Safety and Security Reporting). Each year, all Penn State branch campuses are required to compile their own annual security reports, with statistics relevant to the specific locations. These reports can differ markedly from one campus to another, as not all campuses have on-campus, residential housing for students.

Currently, there is no system in place to keep track of all sexual assault statistics for crimes that happen to Penn State students off-campus. Though the Penn State title IX Office does have a database to keep track of all off-campus incidents being reported to them, it is not currently available to the public or to Penn State students.

**The Penn State University Response**

In 2014, Penn State President Eric Barron called for the creation of a Task Force on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment. His formal reasoning behind the Task Force, announced at the group’s first meeting on August 7th, was to urge “the university to become the benchmark by which other universities are judged when it comes to sexual misconduct prevention and response” (Cromwell et al., 2015). The purpose of the Task Force was to examine all university
activities related to sexual assault or gender-based harassment, and evaluate areas where further work could be done.

One of the 18 main recommendations that the Task Force decided on was a Penn State campus-wide anonymous survey to study student’s feelings and responses to ongoing problems of sexual assaults. This was first encouraged from the Obama Administration in 2014, and then was adopted by many research institutions as a model to work off of.

Other recommendations from the Task Force included ways in which the community and student body could become more informed on issues of consent, and to raise awareness about the many resources available to those who had experienced some degree of sexual violence (Cromwell et al., 2015). The complete list of recommendations can be seen in the appendix.

The Task Force first encouraged Penn State to appoint a full time Title IX coordinator for the university, along with a full staff to investigate crimes and educate the student body. The second recommendation was for every employee at Penn State to be considered a “confidential” or “responsible” reporter in regards to disclosures of sexual misconduct. This means that the “majority of Penn State employees the obligation to report sexual misconduct when they become aware of it” (Cromwell et al., 2015). Alongside with being a reporter, all employees must complete a sexual violence training course on an annual basis.

Other recommendations were more general, such as replacing the current sexual assault hotline by something “more effective and efficient” or restructuring the student conduct process so that it fits more of an investigative model for handling sexual misconduct cases (Cromwell et al., 2015). After the creation of the Task Force, they also recommended establishing a Title IX review panel specifically to help the university when determining proper courses of action after a victim chooses to withdraw from the process after a report has already been made.
As mentioned prior, The Task Force suggested “that the University administer a climate survey this spring to better understand the scope and nature of the problem at Penn State” and urged the allocation of resources from University Park to all other satellite campuses in order to address the issue and make victim support resources more widespread. Educational and prevention programs were additionally recommended to be aimed at particular student populations, such as fraternity and sorority members and athletes.

Most relevant to this research, the Task Force also endorsed the idea that the university release annual or semi-annual data having to do with sexual misconduct, and going beyond what is just required from the Clery Act. They emphasized the importance of informing the community of any sanctions imposed on students who are accused or found guilty of sexual misconduct crimes. As of the summer of 2017, Penn State has not implemented all of the recommendations.
2. Literature Review

This literature review provides more background on Penn State’s current system aimed towards campus sexual assault prevention. First, I will examine the Timely Warning notifications sent out by the campus police. Second, I will review Penn State’s “AWARE” module, about dating and sexual violence on the college campus. Third, I will look at published articles and papers focused on gendered campus crimes and crime geographies. Lastly, I will argue that the current Penn State language on reporting and prevention do not do enough to inform incoming students of the realities of sexual crimes on campus.

The type of crimes reported through the “Timely Warning” notification system range from burglary to forcible sex offenses. Typically, the emails are broken down by date and time of the incident, the report type (forcible sex, aggravated assault, etc.), incident number, reported offense (description of the incident stating whether the assailant was known to the victim) and the location description. It is a direct result of the Clery Act that Penn State Campus Police send out the Timely Warning notifications with as much detail as they can allow.

Penn State campus police do send out safety tips whenever a Timely Warning incident report is emailed. While all of the safety tips are important precautions to follow, none of them address the fact that assaults can oftentimes come from acquaintances, happen in private dorm rooms, and are never the fault of the victim. Some examples of these tips are as follows:
• Do not accept rides or walking accompaniment from people you don't know well or trust.

• Perpetrators are responsible for sexual assaults. Perpetrators take advantage of vulnerability and seek opportunities to commit sexual assaults.

• Sexual Assault is a second degree felony in the state of PA. Sentencing can include up to 10 years in prison, fines, and psychiatric treatment.

• Keep doors and windows locked. Report inoperable locks and latches to the appropriate maintenance personnel.

• Don’t feel obliged to do anything you don’t want to. “I don’t want to” is always a good enough reason.

• Get verbal consent from your partner, and don't assume you know what the other person wants.

• Listen to your partner. If you are getting unclear messages, stop.

An example of a Timely Warning email notification can be seen below in Figure 2.
Penn State also currently runs an online module for freshman students titled “AWARE”, focused on sexual and dating violence. The video begins with two students explaining the goals of the program, and why this is important to show to the student body. Sexual violence is defined as everyone’s issue, not just something women should have to think about (AWARE Relationship and Sexual Violence Education).
The “AWARE” module breaks down into different sections focused on dating violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment and stalking incidents. The video quickly defines what rape and sexual assault are, and then highlights that 90 percent of rapes at universities are committed by someone the victim is acquainted with. The word ‘consent’ is explained as “a clear, knowing and voluntary agreement to engage in mutually agreed-upon sexual activity” (AWARE Relationship and Sexual Violence Education). The module also outlines how date rape drugs and especially alcohol are oftentimes used in instances of sexual assaults.

While the online module geared towards freshman is helpful to students who are unfamiliar with sexual violence terms and sexual assault statistics, Penn State is not providing their students with a complete picture of what is taking place on campus. After students watch the interactive video, there is no follow up on making sure students understand or remember the terms and statistics over their four years at Penn State. For a student majoring in something unrelated to women’s studies or criminology, they may never again come in contact with this sexual assault information.

Both the Timely Warning notifications and the AWARE module are the two most common platforms in which Penn State students will receive sexual assault prevention strategies and information. The end result of Penn State’s language and online modules is that it does not necessarily reflect what is happening on campus with regards to sexual assaults. The fact of the matter is that the large majority of these assaults are taking place in residence halls, during the first couple months of the fall semester, with people that the victims are familiar with. This is largely not an issue of ‘stranger danger’, though there is little language being presented by Penn State to back up that claim.
Penn State, however, is not the only institution to mislead or be misled regarding geographies of sexual assaults. Rachel Pain, a social geographer whose research focuses on fear, violence and community safety, wrote about this issue in the journal *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* in 1997. Her research draws on an older piece written by Gill Valentine, who “first highlighted the spatiality of women’s fear of violent crimes… [and] argued that the attachment of fear to public places, and the precautions which women take as a result, constitute a ‘spatial expression of patriarchy’, reproducing traditional notions about women’s roles and the ‘places’ which are considered appropriate for them to use” (Pain 231). Ultimately, women’s fears of violent acts dictate which spaces are considered suitable and safe for female bodies.

Using this background research, Pain conducted a study assessing women’s fear of violent crimes in a British city. She also touches on the problem of mapping and highlighting areas with violent crimes against women, as it is so severely underreported. Pain emphasizes that “the vast majority of incidents of violence against women take place in the home or other private and semi-private spaces. An accurate map of urban rape would highlight far more bedrooms than alleyways and parks” (Pain 233).

In a piece titled “A Multidimensional Examination of Campus Safety” featured in “Crime & Delinquency” journal, perceptions of gendered crimes were examined through survey data at a large university. The paper stated that “actual violence against women is largely intimate partner violence, yet that acquaintance violence takes place in a culture that touts the dangers of random, stranger-perpetrated violence (Wilcox, Jordan & Pritchard, 2007)

It is also a well-established fact that rape is one of the top unreported crimes, with around only around 32 percent of incidents being reported to authorities (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). In
a 2007 study funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, it was found that over 50 percent of sexual assault victims interviewed “did not think [the incident] was serious enough to report”, and around 36 percent of the victims said it was “unclear that it was a crime or that harm was intended” (Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2007).

With increased education on consent, sexual misconduct, and sexual crime location data, comes increased reporting and a further understanding of what constitutes a rape or instance of sexual assault. Knowing and fully comprehending the legal definitions of sexual misconduct can help students to understand what is and is not legally considered to be a crime. The goal is that the more students are informed about consent over their own bodies, the more agency they will have.

This thesis examines individual reports of sexual assaults on the Penn State campus, as well as contextualizing those findings within the broader scope of national figures. The research proposes that the majority of Penn State campus sexual assaults are committed by an acquaintance at or around a private residence (dormitory). In other words, the geography of sexual assaults statistics at Penn State are similar to those nationwide.

If Penn State students are educated on the realities of rape culture and campus sexual assault statistics at the beginning of their college career, then they may become better-equipped to recognize their own agency in terms of consent. Drawing on Pain and Valentine’s groundbreaking work in spatialization of women’s fears of violent crimes, I argue that Penn State’s campus serves as a model for the continuation of misconceptions surrounding sexual assault on the college campus. The language being used by Penn State administration and campus police oftentimes perpetuate these spatial stereotypes.
3. Methodology

The problem of campus sexual assaults is certainly not specific to Penn State, but the data collected during this project looks exclusively at offenses that have taken place at the University Park campus. The data collected are the result of federal laws intended to make colleges and universities more transparent with their crime reports.

Location data for this thesis was extracted from Penn State’s Campus Police Timely Warning notification system. During the time this project was started, the Timely Warning Notification archives could be accessed from Spring of 2014 through a Penn State email account and the Campus Police website. The current, updated campus police website, however, only features the records from Spring of 2015 on. For the purpose of this thesis, the Timely Warning incidents were examined over a period of three years, from February 2014 to February 2017. Incidents were then categorized in a document, broken down by the incident number, report type, the date and time, location description, gender of the victim, and whether the perpetrator was known by the victim.

Prior to the Spring semester of 2014, Penn State had kept some record of sexual assault data in the form of annual security reports. Few sexual assault report notifications were sent out in 2012 and 2013, and those which were had little to no location data to map. As a result of the low volume of reported assaults during this time, this research focused specifically between the Spring of 2014 through the beginning of Spring of 2017. Over this three year period, sixty-nine Campus Police Timely Warning notifications were sent out with regards to ‘forcible-sex
offenses.” Out of these reported sexual assaults, 45 incidents contained specific enough data that they were able to be mapped.

The location descriptions of the sexual assaults were used to map forcible sex offenses on and around the Penn State University Park campus. Some Timely Warning notifications were more detailed than others. For example, one report alerted students of a “forcible sex offense” that took place at Stone Hall in the East Dormitory Complex, while another one warned of an assault within a dorm at the East Dormitory Complex. For the latter incident that contained more general location data, I considered the assault location to be the main East Dormitory Complex building, Warren Commons. Therefore, in the final version of the map of sexual assaults on Penn State’s campus, many of the main dormitory complex buildings are shown to have a disproportionate numbers of assaults versus the other smaller dorm buildings around them. This does not necessarily mean that Warren Commons had more assaults than Stone Hall, but with the limited location data provided by the Timely Warning notifications, this was a necessary step. Reasons for why location data was not provided by the Campus Police ranged from protecting the victims’ privacy to the police themselves withholding information as a result of ongoing investigations. The low levels of reporting and even lower levels of location data have made it difficult to make generalizations of Penn State sexual assaults as a whole. Using the Timely Warning notification system was the only way to get PSU sexual assault location data. A portion of the Timely Warning emails do not list the particular dormitory or building name where the assault took place in.

Three of the reported sexual assaults had no location information whatsoever, while another fifteen assaults happened at an “undisclosed fraternity house,” making it impossible to map. Both on-campus and off-campus fraternities are counted in Timely Warning reports since
they fall within the definition of “Clery geography.” A further six of the Timely Warnings mentioned that assaults had happened in a Penn State residence hall, but did not give the name. These cases presented certain challenges and were emblematic of the absence of supporting data for the assumptions that have resulted in some misconceptions regarding college sexual assaults. The first map created for the purpose of this thesis simply plotted the points based on the location data provided by the Timely Warning notifications. The second map was created using a kernel density analysis in order to assess the density of sexual assaults from high to low. Darker colors represented geographically dense incidents of assaults while lighter colors meant less and more geographically separate incidents. The last map was made by dividing campus up into different geographic zones based on the general area and performing a hot spot analysis. This was done in order to assess which areas and dormitory complexes were most ‘high risk’ for sexual assaults. All maps were made using the ArcMap program.

Where there was no location data, the time and dates of the incident reports were used to form two charts in order to find temporal patterns centering on month and time of day. A separate bar graph was created in order to assess what percentage of the assaults took place with victims that were familiar with the assailant. All charts were created using Microsoft Excel. Results from the 2015 Penn State Campus Climate Survey were examined to form qualitative observations. These observations served as supplemental information in comparison and alongside the mapped data.
Results

Spatial and Temporal Analysis of Penn State Campus Sexual Assaults

Through the investigation and mapping of Penn State’s Timely Warning records, it was revealed that 36 of the 66 incidents (approximately 55 percent) with any location data took place at residence halls. That number rises to 51 out of 66 (77 percent) if fraternity houses are counted as residence halls.

Only 45 of the reported campus sexual assaults had specific enough location data to be mapped. When solely those are considered, 30 out of 45 (approximately 67 percent) of the incidents happened in residence halls. These results matched with the hypothesis that the majority of sexual assaults happen in or around private residences or, in this case, dormitories. The result of the reported sexual assault maps can be seen below in Figures 3 through 5.
Figure 3: Reported Campus Sexual Assaults Map
Figure 4: Reported Campus Sexual Assaults Map 2
As can be seen in the three Reported Campus Sexual Assault Maps above, there are certain clusters were reported campus sexual assaults can be seen. These clusters are largely in dormitories, which are shown as the black buildings on campus. Specifically, in the third map, the areas with the highest number of reported incidents are all residence halls with large populations of freshman students.

After assessing the data through a separate temporal analysis, it was revealed that September and October were the most common months for assaults to take place and be reported.
on the PSU campus. This matched with the national campus sexual assault statistics that report the beginning of the fall semester to be the most dangerous for rapes and assaults (Kimble, Neacsiu, Flack & Horner, 2008). This evidence can be seen below in the form of a bar graph in Figure 6.

![Figure 6: Bar Chart of Reported Sexual Assaults by Month](image)

As far as time of day, the early mornings between the hours of 12 AM to 7 AM were when the most instances of sexual assaults were reported to have taken place. Creating a graph based on times proved to be most difficult since many of the reports mentioned the assaults
taking place over a period of time. For example, one Timely Warning report listed a “forcible sex offense” taking place on August 30/31 between 11:41PM and 1:02 AM. Since I had divided up the times by early morning (12 AM-7 AM), morning (7 AM-12 PM), afternoon (12 PM-5 PM), evening (5 PM-9 PM), and night (9 PM-12 AM), many of the incidents happened over the span of two time periods. In order to account for all times being reported, all time periods mentioned were counted. For that example, both early morning and night were counted for the incident on August 30/31. Around 25 incidents, or 36 percent of the total Penn State reported campus sexual assaults took place (at least partially) during the early morning. However, this data based on time-of-day is only partially revealing since 30 incidents, or 42 percent of the reported assaults happened at an “unknown” time. The data can be seen in the form of a bar chart below (Figure 7).
The last analysis performed on the Timely Warning records was to see if Penn State sexual assault data matched with national data in terms of the victim’s relationship with the perpetrator. It is known that nearly 90 percent of all campus sexual assaults are committed by someone familiar to the victim. Unfortunately, all Timely Warning records from before 2015 have been removed from the campus police website, and the email records from that time do not have enough info to be able to determine if the perpetrator was known by the victim. After 2015, the emails became more detailed and were stored in the campus police archives, so data could be extracted for the last two years. From January 2015 to February 2017, the records indicate that for 26 of the 40 incidents (65 percent) the perpetrator of the crime was known to the victim. A separate 16 records did not indicate whether the victim and assailant knew one another. The results of this analysis can be seen in Figure 8.
2015 Penn State Campus Climate Survey

In 2015, one year after the Task Force recommended a campus climate survey, the Penn State administration complied. The Campus Climate Survey was seen as part of a broader university-wide and nation-wide initiative aimed at ending sexual violence related crimes. According to the Penn State Summary Report, “the survey used was a modified version of the Administrator Researcher Campus Climate Collaborative (ARC3) survey. This effort brought together academics who focus their research on topics of sexual assault and sexual misconduct as well as administrators from institutions across the country” (2015 Penn State Sexual Misconduct Climate Survey). In order to distribute the survey in a statistically sound manner, 11,023 undergraduate and 4,000 graduate/professional students were randomly selected to receive the survey via email. All of the undergraduate students were 18 years or older and were enrolled full-time in the Fall of 2015.

At the University Park campus, the response rate for the Campus Climate Survey was 26.7 percent (N=2,945) among undergraduate students and 40.9 percent (N=1,637) for graduate students. The responses were considered to be completed if at least ninety percent of the survey was filled out (2015 Penn State Sexual Misconduct Climate Survey).

The survey was aimed to uncover student’s general opinions around Penn State and sexual assaults. The questions ranged in topic from whether students believe that the school would take a report seriously, to whether the student themselves had ever been a victim in a sexual assault. In 2016 the survey was made public to students, and it was found that 18.1
percent of undergraduate and 6.7 percent of graduate students at Penn State reported “being the victim of at least one instance or attempt of sexual assault” (2015 Penn State Sexual Misconduct Climate Survey).

The numbers changed drastically when the data was broken up by gender. Around 27.5 percent of undergraduate women on the Penn State campus were the “victim of at least one instance of completed or attempted oral, vaginal, or anal sexual assault” (2015 Penn State Sexual Misconduct Climate Survey). That number was 6.2 for undergraduate males.

When students were polled if they felt safe from sexual violence on the Penn State campus, 61.6 percent of female students and 90.9 percent of males said yes. When asked the question, “There isn’t much need for me to think about sexual misconduct while at college”, 5.7 percent of females and 19.6 percent of males said they agreed with that statement.

Roughly half of both male and female students reported knowing the definitions of types of sexual misconduct. Less than fifty percent of both male and female students said they knew “how to report an incident of sexual misconduct” or “where to go to get someone help if someone you know experiences sexual misconduct” (Penn State Sexual Misconduct Climate Survey). These numbers are low despite Penn State requiring all incoming freshman to take the online module AWARE focused on dating and sexual violence on the college campus.

For all groups, the most commonly cited reason for not reporting to an official was that it would cause more trouble than it was worth. Only 30.6 percent of females and 19.1 percent of males reported campus as the location of their sexual assaults as being on campus, yet that is the only data that is reported through Timely Warnings.
Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

Although this project is not a complete picture of the geographies of sexual assault at Penn State, it is the beginning of visually uncovering gendered violence at a large-research institution. This project may be continued over a longer period of time in order to see if the current trends hold true both on and off the campus. At the present, Penn State does not release location data of assaults on any other platform than the warnings released by campus police. According to the Title IX office, they are currently hoping to make their records public to students sometime in the upcoming years.

The focus of this thesis is narrow, centering around collection and mapping of data that demonstrates that the realities of sexual assaults do not match with the cultural narrative associated with. Both rape and sexual assaults are commonly thought of as violent acts committed by strangers in dark alleys. Yet, the data presented at Penn State, and nationally, show that assaults are occurring on campus (dormitory or private residences) and often by individuals known to the victims.

Other areas of investigation needed would focus more on in-depth collection and analysis of data pertaining to student sexual assaults on off-campus property. As mentioned prior, only a small fraction of the Penn State student body actually lives on campus. In order to paint a more complete picture of the geographies of sexual assaults at Penn State, one must also consider all upper class-men and graduate students who live off campus.
For the 13,700 undergraduate students that do live on campus, reporting levels are still extremely low. When the Timely Warning notifications are compared with the Penn State Campus Climate Survey’s sexual assault levels, it becomes apparent just how little location data there is on the topic. According to the anonymous survey, 27.5 percent of women and 6.2 percent of men “said they had been the victim of at least one instance of sexual assault or attempt” (Penn State Sexual Misconduct Climate Survey). When added together that means that 33.7 percent of Penn State undergrads have experienced at least one sex-related offense worthy of reporting to campus police. If every one of those 33 percent who were victims filed a report with the police, it would have resulted in 15,165 Timely Warning alerts. 33 percent of all undergraduates living on campus would produce about 4,617 reports. Even after factoring out all students that do not live on campus property (in other words separate from the Clery geography), the numbers of reports should be in the thousands.

Over the course of three years, between February 2013 and 2017, only sixty nine reports were sent out. This is, of course, a very small sample of the sexual assaults that are taking place at Penn State. In order for this research to be able to make concrete conclusions on the general geographies of sexual assaults at Penn State, Timely Warnings must be looked at over a longer period of time.

For Penn State to get a more complete picture of student perceptions of sexual assaults, they also must continue to poll students using the campus climate survey framework in regular or semi-regular intervals of time. After assessing the 2015 campus survey, it became apparent that levels of student understandings over definitions of sexual misconduct and resources on campus are low. Additionally, according to anecdotal research, students cited feeling more
sexually vulnerable on dimly-lit paths than dormitories. This appears to demonstrate the misconnections associated with campus sexual assaults.

Overall, this research is important not only within the scope of Penn State’s culture but for all large-research universities dealing with rape culture and crime misconceptions. It appears that the only published scholarly work that assess campus sexual assaults and gendered geographies of fear through a spatial lens took place in a small, private college campus in the 1990s. This area of study is relevant to the ongoing and larger conversation of how we discuss rape and sexual assaults, and educate incoming students on the realities of crime on their campus.

**Conclusion**

This thesis has used Penn State’s Timely Warning notification system and Campus Climate survey as a lens to explore the geographies of campus sexual assaults. Informal interviews and responses of Penn State’s Title IX Office, Office of Student Affairs, Center for Women’s Students and Campus Police have provided insight into the inner workings of PSU’s crime notification system, as well as challenges that the university faces in terms of making all reports accessible to students. In every case, sexual assaults had to take place on Penn State’s campus (or within what is defined as the Clery Geography) in order to be made public to the community. This geographical selectivity is demonstrated through low reporting numbers and a lack of data for off-campus assaults.

During a time of tension between student activists and university administrators with regards to handling of sexual assault cases, Penn State has maintained some privacy when
reporting student crime. However, over the last couple years the university has grown its Title IX Office staff, providing more support to survivors and making it easier for students to file official reports.

With the numbers that were available at the time this research was being conducted, it was discovered that Penn State on-campus sexual assaults overwhelmingly took place in student dormitories between the years of 2013 and 2017. The vast majority of survivors also reported being attacked by someone they knew. Around half of Penn State students were also never given proper education on different types of sexual misconduct and the official definitions.

If Penn State educates their incoming freshman on the realities of campus sexual assaults, it could potentially lead to higher rates of reporting and lower rates of assaults. In order to change the culture surrounding campus sexual assaults, Penn State University must expand the conversation.
Appendix

Complete List of Recommendations by the Penn State Task Force on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment

1) The Task Force recommends the appointment of a full time Title IX Coordinator for the University, with accompanying staff, including an investigator, a prevention and education coordinator, and a deputy coordinator for the Commonwealth campuses, as well as other staff and funding sufficient to effectively coordinate these many obligations at all Penn State locations and ensure the University’s national leadership on this front.

2) The Task Force recommends that each employee at the University be designated either “confidential” or “responsible” in relation to their obligations to respond to disclosures of sexual misconduct. This recommendation would impose upon the majority of Penn State employees the obligation to report sexual misconduct when they become aware of it.

3) The Task Force recommends that all employees, whether designated as responsible or confidential, be required to complete training on an annual basis, so that they understand the issues involved in sexual misconduct, know the available campus and community resources, and honor their reporting responsibilities.

4) The Task Force recommends that the current sexual assault hotline be replaced by a more effective and efficient means for receiving reports and requests for information or services.

5) The Task Force recommends that the student conduct process at each campus move away from the traditional hearing process and embrace instead an investigative model for resolving sexual misconduct cases.

6) The Task Force recommends establishing a Title IX review panel and written guidelines to assist University authorities in determining the proper course of action when a victim or reporter requests confidentiality, does not want a case investigated, or chooses to withdraw from participation in the process after a report has been made.

7) The Task Force recommends that the University pursue memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with police departments serving Penn State campuses other than University Park, where such MOUs may not already exist, and review any MOUs that do exist to ensure that they include appropriate references to the respective responsibilities of law enforcement agencies in the management of sexual misconduct.
cases. The Task Force also recommends consideration of similar MOUs between relevant University administrative entities and sexual assault service providers in the communities in which the University’s campuses are located.

8) The Task Force recommends that the University administer a climate survey this spring to better understand the scope and nature of the problem at Penn State, and that it conduct regular surveys on sexual assault in succeeding years to give it the knowledge required to create and sustain effective programs, services, and policies.

9) The Task Force recommends the allocation of the resources required at the campuses other than University Park to establish the full complement of victim support services necessary for a model response to these issues across the institution.

10) The Task Force recommends a careful analysis of sanctions for sexual misconduct issued by the student conduct process to determine whether the consequences match the offenses, and, if possible, how many of these cases might benefit from the use of a restorative justice approach.

11) The Task Force recommends that all advocates, clinicians, and other University employees working directly with victims of sexual assault receive training on services for male victims, international students, students victimized in same-sex interactions, and students of color, and that particular attention be given to educational and prevention programs aimed at particular populations, such as fraternity and sorority members and athletes.

12) The Task Force believes the Coalition to Address Relationship and Sexual Violence (CARSV) has served a significant purpose, and recommends that it be convened more often than it has been in recent years and that every reasonable effort be pursued to increase or strengthen the various partnerships between University Park services and local providers in the State College area, as well as similar relationships between the Commonwealth campuses and services in the communities they inhabit.

13) The Task Force recommends the creation and implementation of various educational experiences for students that reflect their evolving developmental needs during the course of their college experience, including a required course for all first-year students that explores issues of student wellbeing and safety, with an emphasis on building positive relationships and preventing sexual misconduct and alcohol misuse.

14) The Task Force recommends the development of an initiative designed to encourage members of the University community to effectively intervene whenever they witness actions that undermine the community of care and concern required in response to sexual and other misconduct.
15) The Task Force recommends that the University consider the annual or semi-annual release of aggregate data on sexual misconduct at the University, beyond merely data included in the annual Clery report, including information about student conduct sanctions, so that the University community is better informed about disciplinary and other actions taken in the interest of safety and civility.

16) The Task Force recommends that the University undertake a comprehensive review of all policies and procedures that are relevant to the issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment, updating those that require update, clarifying any that require clarification, and incorporating any elements of the Task Force recommendations that may require the establishment of new policies or procedures.

17) The Task Force recommends that resources be allocated for the purpose of assessing all programs and services that target the issue of sexual misconduct within the University community for their effectiveness, compliance, relevance, and efficiency.

18) The Task Force recommends that the University’s commitment to being a national leader in addressing these issues and ensuring that its students and employees are fully engaged in this effort be noted and celebrated by a day designated for that purpose.


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**Education**
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, Schreyer Honors College August 2017
*Dean’s List: 8/8 Semesters*
Bachelor of Science in Geography
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Thesis Title: A Spatial Analysis of Sexual Assaults on a College Campus: A Case Study of Penn State University from 2014 To 2017
Thesis Supervisor: Lorraine Dowler

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**Work Experience**

**Community Advocacy Intern, Planned Parenthood**
*January 2017-Present*
- Train new volunteers, reach out to community members from Centre County and organize events with local and state legislators

**Undergraduate Researcher, Geography Department, GeoVista Center**
*College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, University Park, PA September 2016-Present*
- Assist Professor Clio Andris in the study between Census data and historical records in Singapore
- Use ArcGIS and RStudio to visualize findings in the data and create informational maps

**GIS Intern, Penn State Libraries Data Learning Center**
*Pattee and Paterno Library, University Park, PA October 2015-Present*
- Help with GIS and data consultation meetings, make interactive web maps, and work with shapefile metadata

**Undergraduate Researcher, Department of Women’s Studies**
*College of Liberal Arts, University Park, PA February 2016-August 2016*
- Responsible for assisting Professor Lorraine Dowler with her research on gender and militarization
- Research was used for an application grant to the American Association of Geographers (AAG) Conference
Undergraduate Researcher, Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology and Education  
*College of Agricultural Sciences, University Park, PA May 2016-August 2016*  
- Assisted Professor Kathryn Brasier with research on community and economic effects of Marcellus Shale development  
- Analyzed Pennsylvania county community survey data with Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS

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**International Experience**

**Participant in the Center for Advancement of Undergraduate Studies and Experience (CAUSE)**  
*College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, University Park, PA January 2016-December 2016*  
- Studied wetland systems in Peru and Alaska

**Participant in South Africa Parks and People Program**  
*Department of Geography January 2015-March 2015*  
- Worked with local communities throughout South Africa to promote environmental education

**GREEN Program in Iceland studying renewable energy and sustainability**  
*May 2015*  
- Studied geothermal power plants and renewable energy sources at Reykjavik University

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**Leadership Experience**

**Certified Pennsylvania Literacy Corps English Tutor**  
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**Iota Iota Iota Women’s Honors Society, Member**  
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**Fair Trade Penn State, President**  
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