Population, Frame, & Nonresponse Plan

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Target Population

Our target population is all undergraduate students at Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh who have experimented with the consumption of alcohol.

Sampling Plan

Our goal is to obtain a comprehensive stratified random sample of students from both Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh (i.e. we want to survey as many different types of students as possible). For Carnegie Mellon, we first would like to stratify our sample in an effort to get all demographics of college: we assume surveying outside near Doherty Hall (standing by the clock) would give us a good mix of primarily Science, Engineering, and Humanities & Social Science students, the cafe Taza de Oro (to the right of the “helix”) in the Gates-Hillman Center would help cover primarily Computer Science and Mathematics students, and the Zebra Cafe (to the right of the entrance door) in the College of Fine Arts would help cover Art and Design students. Furthermore, we would like to survey near general areas of traffic like Kirr Commons (by the revolving doors near Student Activities) and the corner of Forbes and Morewood (on the Carnegie Mellon side, at the stairs near the base of Walking to the Sky) where we expect to receive sufficient cover of students of all demographics including, but not limited to: age, gender, and Greek life orientation.

Once we are situated at our sampling locations, we will approach every third person that passes us on our right side. Likewise, our plan for surveying the students at the University of Pittsburgh is very similar. We believe students of all classes and Greek life orientation are commonly located at Schenley Commons (to the left of the entrance on the Fifth Avenue Side), Soldiers and Sailors Hall (at the base of the center stairs, between the cannons), and the campus Starbucks (outside on the right side of the door). Because we believe these areas cover our population quite well, we plan to solicit survey responses near these areas. Additionally, by surveying students near the Petersen Events Center (to the right of the main center stairs) we assume we will also cover students enrolled in the university honors program. Again, once are at our sampling locations, we will approach every third person that passes us on our right side. In general, we believe these specific areas of the University of Pittsburgh campus may cover all demographics of students sufficiently.

For both campuses, we plan to survey the locations at multiple times on different days, at various times during the day. By doing so, we hope to increase the chances of covering a sufficient portion of our population’s demographics. In this manner, we hope to obtain a stratified random sample that is representative of our target population. Because we do not have easy access to a contact book of email addresses or telephone numbers for both campuses, we will be soliciting responses in person. We will use the Carnegie Mellon University C-Book and the University of Pittsburgh’s equivalent contact book as reference material of the population percentages for school demographics. This will allow us to make sure our sample is representative of demographic sub-populations. This tactic can be done in a common manner for both campuses by having the survey be self-administered on paper. In the locations and the manner described above, we will randomly ask students (e.g. every third student that passes by on our right) if they would take a minute to fill out our survey. We will provide them with the necessary items to fill out the survey (e.g. a writing utensil, something to write on). We may also consider providing an unbiased, short, and optional reading with background information on the subject of alcoholic energy drinks for each possible subject to consider before filling out the survey. In an effort to ensure anonymity of our subjects’ answers, when the individuals are finished, we will have them fold up their papers and put them in a box where we will keep all of the completed surveys.

Nonresponse Plan

For our study, the difficulty with tracking nonresponders is that we do not have any information on those individuals who choose to not fill out our survey. Therefore, we have no way of contacting individuals for a follow-up evaluation. Also, our survey is designed to be anonymous, so there is no way of knowing who has or has not participated.

Because our survey involves approaching people randomly at selected locations, we will not be able to follow-up with nonresponders. This is further confounded because we will not be consistently sampling at the same location, time, or day of week.

If we believe our sample is not representative of the target population, we will adjust our sampling plan to survey the underrepresented population. For example, suppose the Carnegie Mellon University undergraduate population consists of 60% male students and 40% female students. If our sample from Carnegie Mellon consists of 30% male students and 70% female students, we can alter our sampling plan to select every third male that passes us on our right at the selected locations in order to correct for the underrepresentation of male students.