But It's a Party School: The Impact of Alcohol Culture on Student Initial College Choice

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to determine if a perceived alcohol culture impacts a student’s initial college choice. This study uncovered students’ motivations regarding their college choice. Discovering these motivators allowed for a better understanding of how students perceive the alcohol culture on a campus and how much it affects their decision to attend an institution. Lifestyle choices can affect why a student chooses to attend or not attend an institution. Research consistently shows a majority of students choose to use alcohol in college (Yu & Sackett, 2001; Boyle & Berkeloo, 2009; Crawford & Novak, 2010). This information led to a need for an examination of why students select a college based on perceived drinking culture of that institution. This study offers an insight into why first-time students in the fall of 2013 decided to attend a private four-year institution as it relates to the perceived alcohol culture of the university. Discovering these motivators will allow for a better understanding of how students perceive the alcohol culture on a campus and how much it affects their decision to attend an institution.

**Research Questions**

**Does the alcohol culture positively affect a student’s decision to attend an institution?**

**Does previous drinking behavior affect perception of alcohol culture on campus?**

**Methods**

- CoGoDoc Form used to create survey and collect data
- Distributed to first-year students at Institution (approximately 1,800)
- Survey consisted of multiple-choice and open-ended questions
- Completion of survey indicates consent to participate
- Statistical procedures include correlated tests

**Findings**

- Students who drank prior to attending this specific institution are more likely to consider social life a deciding factor when selecting an institution.
- Students who drank alcohol with their parents were more likely to drink more alcohol in college.
- A majority of respondents were not influenced by peer-reviews or national reports/media.

**Conclusions**

- There was a positive relationship with students who drank alcohol in high school and visiting the student neighborhood during their visit to the institution. The student neighborhood represents the institution’s alcohol culture.
- Students who did not drink in high school and noted social life as a college choice influencer were more likely to start drinking in college than those that did not note social life as a college choice factor.
- Students were more likely to be influenced by student reviewed sites (e.g., BroBible, IMDb, etc.) if they considered social life to be a top factor in selecting a college.

**Future Directions**

- Limitations to this study include:
  - Convenience sampling from first-year students at University of Dayton
  - Sample only includes first-year students; sophomores, juniors, and seniors may provide more inclusive data
  - Study was conducted nearly one year after student’s visit and/or decision to attend institution was complete; it was not longitudinal
  - Research on students who visited campus, but chose to attend elsewhere would be helpful in better understanding the impact of alcohol culture.
  - A qualitative study of students to define social life and alcohol culture at the institution will allow for a better understanding of how it affected their college choice.

**References**


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