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

Leah Shamblin
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Abstract
The purpose of this study was to decipher if a perceived alcohol culture impacts a student’s initial college choice. This study uncovered students’ motivators 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 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
• CoGoedoc 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-reviewed or national reports/media.

64% Students considered social life to be an important aspect in their college choice
32% Students visited student neighborhood during campus visit
47% Students drank in high school: 11% drinking same amount
50% Students more in college than they did in high school

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, 11PM/5AM, etc) if they considered social life as 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 made; 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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