

Am I Part of The Community? Perceived “fit” of non-drinkers at UD

Alex McSwain

Advisor: Savio D. Franco, Ph.D.

Abstract

Alcohol consumption is a lifestyle choice embraced by a majority of students on most college campuses. According to the Princeton Review (2016), the University of Dayton (UD) is the number two institution in the nation based on the amount of beer consumed by students. If alcohol consumption is such a key aspect of the student experience, this begs the question on how students who abstain from alcohol consumption perceive their sense of belonging on campus. By sampling a specific portion of the population at UD (undergraduate, White, domestic, full-time, residential, male students), the experiences of seven students were collected and analyzed through personal interviews. Themes were identified, looking at factors that contributed or detracted from the students’ sense of belonging on campus. One of the greatest contributing factors to these students’ sense of community and belonging came from their experience and involvement with Campus Ministry. Overall, most students expressed a satisfactory experience at UD, although abstaining from alcohol consumption, at times, did make them feel out of place among their floor or residential community.

Literature Review

Norms Surrounding the Drinking Culture

- Roughly 80% of college students will experiment with drinking while in college (Litt, Stock, & Lewis, 2012)
- Alcohol is often a tool used for socialization in the American college setting (Hoops, 2012)

Impact “fit” has on retention

- Successful institutions invest in their students by creating high satisfaction through ensuring perceived student “fit” that leads to higher retention and graduation among students (Billups, 2008)
- “Student centeredness”, “campus climate”, and “instructional effectiveness” has the greatest impact on student satisfaction (Elliott & Healy, 2001)

Experience of students who abstain from alcohol consumption

- Those abstaining from alcohol consumption self-reported feeling of being left out in the college social environment (Cortner, 2002).
- Some college students choose to hide their non-drinking identity as a way to pass as a “drinker” (Romo, 2012)

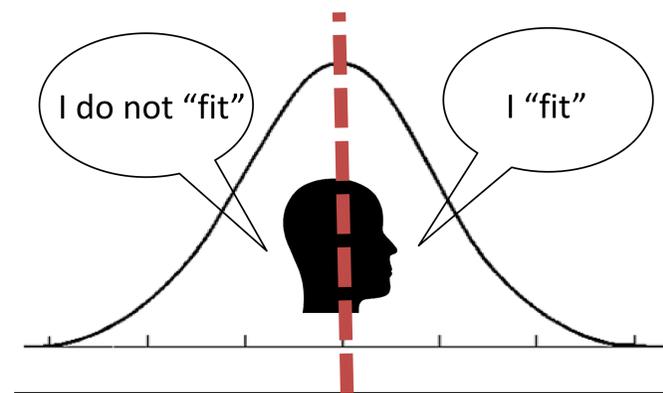
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Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore and understand the perceived “fit” of undergraduate students who abstain from alcohol consumption during their time as an undergraduate student at the University of Dayton.

Perception of “fit” based on non-drinking identity



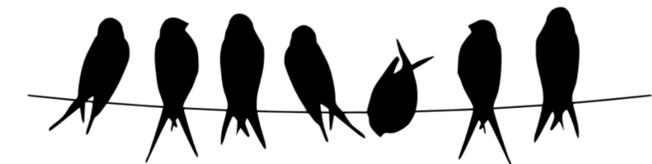
What separates perception of “fit”?

Research Methodology

- Qualitative: Phenomenology guided by Creswell (2013)
- Sampling: Criterion and Snowballing Sampling
 - Seven full-time, domestic, undergraduate, male students living on campus who identify as White
- Interview length: 10-35 minutes, one 50+ minutes

Key Findings

- Six of seven participants felt part of the community at UD
- Identified **finding community in residential hall** community or through involvement with **Campus Ministry/faith based groups**
 - Three participants noted finding community in **student organizations** which they served as an officer in that organization
- Social settings, where alcohol was present, **the role of the alcohol had a direct impact on level of comfort the participants felt in that setting**
 - If **alcohol** was the **central focus**, participants **did not find value of**, and at times **felt uncomfortable** in that setting.
 - If the **central focus** was on **something else** (i.e. card/video game(s), dancing, sporting event, etc.) and alcohol happened to be present, participants **felt comfortable** in that social setting
- Every participant noted not feeling an overbearing or pressure to drink
- Several noted, once their **identity** as a “non-drinker” **was revealed**, some of their peers **treated them differently**
 - After this part of their identity was **exposed**, **peers would abstain** from talking about alcohol/going to “parties” and would be **less inclined to invite them** to a party



Conclusion and Limitation

- **Abstaining from alcohol consumption did not impact perceived fit but these students sought community building opportunities outside of the “drinking/party” culture**
 - These participants found community in their residence hall or with campus ministry/faith life
- To account for factors that could influence perceived “fit”, the participants in this study were a representation of the majority student population at UD.
 - Voices from historically marginalized communities were not collected; therefore, this study does not represent the entire student community