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All we do is Drink: Impact of Alcohol Culture on First-Year Experiences at a Private University

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All we do is Drink: Impact of Alcohol Culture on First-Year Experiences at a Private University

John Reynolds
Advisor: Nasser Razek

Abstract

The alcohol culture at higher education institutions create and perpetuate unrealistic expectations regarding the collegiate experience for many incoming students. First-year students assimilate into college with various external factors impacting their decisions; among these is whether or not to participate in high-risk alcohol consumption. The research for this study focused on connections that students made between environment, peers, and personal development as it relates to alcohol use and abuse.

Introduction

Factors Impacting First-Year Alcohol Consumption

Students develop through four phases: 1) following external formulas, 2) crossroads, 3) becoming author of one’s own life, and 4) using internal formulas. As first-year students continue to attend college campuses, habits are often “particularly vulnerable to perceived pressures to drink and typically consume more than their older students peer groups.” (Borsari & Carey 2001)

Methodology

- Phenomenological Qualitative Study
- Seven Female Students/ One Male
- Five First-year / Three Sophomore

Literature Review

Most students entering into their first-year of college are believed to be absolute knowers: experience impacted by external environment (Magolda, 2001)

Method

Qualitative

Thematic Analysis

8 Interviews

Demographic Survey

Purpose

Lack of research focusing on how high-risk drinking behaviors and alcohol culture impacts the student’s ability to be involved, engaged, and supported throughout their first-year

Findings

Perceptions of Peers/Family

Campus “Community”

Early Alcohol Educational School’s enforcement

Behaviors

Campus Exposure

Mantra

Accessibility

Mantra

Development

• Maturity/ Independence contingent on relationship with parents

Environment

• Students are impacted by the initial exposure to university’s alcohol culture

Peers

• Student’s personal values influenced by referent group

Interventions

• Early education establishes norms for first-year students

Future Research and Limitations

Following students throughout their college experience utilizing findings from the current study to identify year to year use of alcohol and its impact on student’s experience

Selected References


Acknowledgements

First off, I would like to say thank you to my wife Morgan, if it was not for her support and encouragement I would have never been able to make it through these last two years. I would also like to thank you to my family, they have been here for me. I would like to thank my professors (Molly, Michelle and Nasser), you all have encouraged, challenged and pushed me further than I ever thought I could be pushed. Finally, I would like to say thank you to my supervisor, Zach Hosten. Zach has been my biggest support throughout this entire experience. I feel that I have grown exponentially because of the time and guidance he has given to me.

Conclusion

“Lack of research focusing on how high-risk drinking behaviors and alcohol culture impacts the student’s ability to be involved, engaged, and supported throughout their first-year experience”

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