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Personality Effects on Social Event Experiences in Hospitality and Business Students

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Abstract

As society progresses to adapt workplace settings, new and creative outlets such as fun in the workplace are increasingly common. Researchers have begun to study this trend and what fun in the workplace entails, as well as who it affects. Similarly, personality has been studied for decades for various purposes, including how humans react to certain stimuli and situations. This study combines these two concepts to observe how student personalities react towards fun activities in event settings. The present study offers the idea that social and professional events do not always appeal to both introverts and extraverts. Thus, the research within this paper works to determine if this idea is true, and if it is, helps to suggest how fun in the workplace may help with this issue. The study gathers information from a sample of university students studying business or management degrees. Using critical incident surveys from various students, it was found that introverts and extraverts do experience social settings differently, and significant differences include familiarity of other attendees, presence of fun activities, and feelings of anxiety or overwhelmingness. The study discusses various implications and suggestions for future research as this survey reflects significant data suggesting introvert struggles with social events.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent years, organizations have begun to incorporate more “fun” in the workplace tactics. Fun in the workplace can boost organizational success as well as individual growth and enjoyment within an organization. With companies like Ben and Jerry’s using mottos such as “If it’s not fun, why do it?”, it is seen that organizations believe that fun leads to “increased productivity, higher morale, and fewer human resource problems (Ford, et al., 2004, p. 117). As more and more organizations test “fun” concepts, it continues to indicate a good addition to workplace environments. Employees of companies using fun feel valued and taken care of and their workplace becomes a more welcoming and exciting place to come each day. These activities also increase levels of trust between employees and their managers. Workplace fun can act in many different forms, from birthday celebrations for employees to karaoke nights. Companies like Hershey or Guinness have instituted “company picnics and family sports days” (Bolton & Houlihan, 2009, p. 558). Sometimes managers implement more wacky and creative ideas for fun, while other times it is more typical fun like going out for drinks after work. Many organizations, such as Ben and Jerry’s and The Walt Disney Company, have undertaken these strategies to boost employee-management relations and morale.

Not only is fun being seen more in the workplace, but it can translate into work related social events, such as networking events or workshops. Managers and recruiters may use similar behaviors to connect with people at social events. Networking and socializing can be tiring and unenjoyable for many people, so fun tactics are used to liven these settings and improve the moods of those attending. In some cases, social work events feel forced and inauthentic, so

attendees want to be engaged and workplace fun methods may help with this. However, not every person responds well to fun in the workplace techniques.

The value of these fun activities is sometimes lost by more introverted individuals. Introverts tend to be less social beings than extraverts, with a more introspective approach to life. They often “focus on internal thoughts rather than external stimuli...and be more socially anxious and inhibited” (Nussbaum, 2002, p. 184). This social anxiety may lead to these individuals disagreeing or not engaging in fun in the workplace activities. In the eyes of more introverted people, some of these behaviors are seen as tacky, over-the-top, or a distraction from getting their work done. Additionally, some of the wackier activities may feel disingenuous and forced by management rather than meaningful. While extraversion and socialization can be very beneficial and important to use at work and events, it can also be exhausting for those who identify as introverts (Balsari-Palsule and Little, 2020). These people require a type of escape in which they can restore their social energy, rather than diving fully into fun in the workplace.

There is a wide array of knowledge regarding personality and introvert behavior, as well as several studies following fun in the workplace. However, more information is needed to understand social event effectiveness and value. This paper argues that to successfully improve these social events for all, we must gain more insight about what social networking truly offers to attendees and look deeper at the desirability of events through the eyes of introverted and extraverted students.

The purpose of this study is to determine how to better structure work related social events for students, specifically those who are introverted. The study will look at professional events and social gatherings and how they are structured currently that may not be enjoyable for student attendees and what would make students attend and engage at these events more. Once it

is established that these events are important for student success, it will be important to suggest changes that will allow all students to feel comfortable and utilize the resources offered through these settings.

The following study will include a critical incident survey that will establish participants' personalities and specific recollections of social networking or event experiences. The survey will establish the engagement levels of students and what is enjoyable or unenjoyable to anyone who has gone to a recent social event. The results of the data collected will assist in making conclusions and recommendations for how to better structure social events in a way that will be fun and beneficial for anyone involved.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Fun in the Workplace

To fully understand fun in the workplace and the effects of it, it is important to study the history of it. Over the course of the past couple of decades, fun in the workplace has been increasingly prevalent in organizational settings, including in companies such as Walt Disney World (Michel et al., 2019). Several reasons this phenomenon has become more common can be noted, including generational needs and positive organizational outcomes. When reviewing the current knowledge of fun in the workplace, it is seen that millennials are a large portion of the workforce now, meaning the older generations are being pushed out from their jobs more and more (Tews et al., 2015). This is important when understanding the rise of workplace fun because millennials have shown higher work expectations, including priorities of work-life balance, personal relationships, and more time with family and friends (Aslop, 2008; Carless and Wintle, 2007).

Some studies have shown that while the newer generation of workers provides many positives to their companies, they also tend to be more easily bored of their work and can be disloyal to their employers, in which they have reported higher levels of turnover intent than those older peers of them (Hill, 2008). When these organizations face such employee turnover, they also experience reduced production quality, lower employee morale, and higher costs on recruiting strategies (Allen et al., 2010). With the goal of retaining these employees, many organizations have invested in fun in the workplace tactics and focused on increasing job satisfaction (Lamm and Meeks, 2009; Lundin et al., 2000). After evaluating this need for fun in the workplace, more research has begun on the boost of fun in the workplace over the last two or three decades.

In addition to the various needs of a newer generation, many studies that have been conducted have shown significant positive results from workplace fun initiatives. Organizations and researchers who have implemented fun in the workplace have seen positive relations to job satisfaction, trust in supervisors and management, and service quality (Karl & Peluchette, 2006). Karl and colleagues have also found negative relationships with emotional exhaustion and employee turnover. Researchers who have expanded on the current knowledge of fun in the workplace have defined this concept several ways, including characterizing it as “work environment that intentionally encourages, initiates, and supports a variety of enjoyable and pleasurable activities” (Ford, McLaughlin, and Newstrom, 2003). Additionally, McDowell (2004) notes that fun in the workplace are often activities not relating to the job itself.

Looking deeper at what fun in the workplace really is, there are many breakdowns of the types of fun that organizations can implement. For one, it must be explained that fun in the workplace is different from having fun, as workplace fun relates to aspects of work and fun typically represents an individual positive experience (Watson, Clark, & Tellegan, 1988). Within workplace fun, there are fun activities that can occur to enact positive organizational outcomes. Fun activities have been defined as social activities set up by organizations to create enjoyment, such as celebrations and team outings (Michel et al., 2019). In a study done by Chan (2010), four types of fun activities were identified, including staff-oriented, social-oriented, supervisor-oriented, and strategy-oriented activities. Staff oriented activities may include celebrations of employee milestones or employee appreciation initiatives, whereas social oriented activities could be holiday parties and social gatherings to further relationships. Supervisor oriented activities may mean having lunch with one’s supervisor, and strategic activities may include family benefits or dress down days (Chan 2010). Fun in the workplace can also be differentiated

by packaged or organic fun. Packaged fun reflects more planned and organized fun activities with a goal of organizational success and organic fun is a more natural, individual experience to activities (Bolton and Houlihan, 2009). Fun activities have begun to span a wide variety, from simple happy hours with coworkers to more creative and unique experiences like karaoke or specially designed offices.

Fun activities and workplace fun hold various results within organizations and individuals. As mentioned, it is shown how fun in the workplace can boost employee attitudes and lower turnover. This is a known reaction and pairs with ideas such as the Blau's (1964) social exchange theory which claims that the quality of exchange between people and their management relates to higher levels of trust between them. Thus, when managers decide to implement activities and rewards for their employees, trust becomes a motivating factor, thus it generates a greater level of job satisfaction (Chan and Mak, 2016). Not all people in organizations react as positively to workplace fun, though.

As more wacky forms of fun in the workplace act, employees may find that their organization is providing rewards they do not care about. Additionally, workplace fun may feel like a distraction from properly performing their job or be miserable for those who would prefer not to participate (Bolton and Houlihan, 2009). This poor reaction has been seen less in the current literature on fun in the workplace but can be explored more by studying personality impacts. After seeing that fun in the workplace is a growing strategy for organizational success, further research must be done to observe how it continues to progress and what benefits it may serve to various situations and people.

When is Workplace Fun Beneficial?

As it has been determined that fun in the workplace and fun activities can hold value for organizations and their success as well as for individuals, researchers must also determine where these activities can make a lasting impact. As fun activities can help with recruitment and retention of employees, it may be beneficial to study the effects these activities could have in social event settings. Social events entail professional, social gatherings of people with a similar purpose of attending, usually which is developing or maintaining relationships with others. Events can have many different purposes, but as defined in current literature, “Planned events are all created for a purpose, and what was once the realm of individual and community initiatives has largely become the realm of professionals and entrepreneurs” (Getz, 2008). In some cases, these events have a heavier focus on networking or relationships, whereas other events may lean on learning and development of skills. Regardless of the event’s focus, researchers have studied deeper what makes an event successful and the knowledge of fun activities may be able to play a role in event success.

Several studies have been performed to determine the most important factors of event success. In one study with 242 responses from various organizations, results showed the highest preferences for events were those that had food offered, celebrations of milestones, and workplace outings, while the least preferred were more of the wacky games and skits at events (Karl et al., 2005). This study helps to establish the overall idea that not all fun in the workplace is always equal. Looking further at what event attendees wish to get at these social gatherings, basic human needs such as physiological needs, limited financial concerns, and freedom tend to get better responses from people (Ding et al., 2018). Each person attending a social event may have a different reaction or level of satisfaction, which is reflected by Lazarus’s (1991) theory of appraisals, saying that individuals’ reactions to events are determined by how they interpret such

events. Further, people may value an event more or less based on the attendees surrounding them and how much they may get along or know each other. For fun activities, individuals may engage more when they are participating with others they feel familiar with rather than random attendees (Michel et al., 2019).

Yet another factor that determines event success and satisfaction could be the level of freedom those who attend have. As mentioned before, this sense of autonomy and basic human needs are valued highly in social event settings. The self-determination theory supports that individuals experience greater value when they are granted more autonomy, thus events may consider offering this to boost success (Gagné and Deci, 2005). Fun activities and events offer people several benefits when executed well. With more networking, individuals can grow their social capital and relationships, as well as boost their access to more information and resources (Batistic and Tymon, 2017). Positive affect from fun in the workplace activities can also have benefits. For example, Frederickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory posits that over time, the positive affect people may experience from fun helps them to think creatively, develop new relationships, and further develop their intellectual and physical resources (Michel et al., 2019). While social events and workplace fun activities may have positive results in certain situations, there is room to expand on this knowledge as well as a need to examine which people may not respond as well.

Who Does Not Like Fun Activities?

Since it has been established that fun in the workplace and fun activities do carry benefits and reflect well with many individuals, it is necessary to determine why some individuals may not enjoy these fun concepts as much. This differing opinion can be seen by organization

managers as well as individual people within organizations. Beginning with managerial hesitations, a survey conducted by the Society of Human Resource Management found that eighty-three percent of their respondents mentioned time constraints, costs, lack of management support, and potential decreased productivity all as reasons managers may not support fun in the workplace (SHRM 2002). Management teams may feel that implementing fun activities costs more for them or takes up valuable time that employees can be working, thus they are skeptical of the benefits of fun. A different reason fun is sometimes not used as much could be a dissonance in emotions, meaning how someone may feel might conflict with how they are supposed to feel. For example, event coordinators may feel more stress over fun activities due to the pressure of perfecting their event, or a manager may not be able to participate in a fun activity so they may not enjoy as much since their role is to facilitate (Michel et al., 2019). In some cases, employees may just not enjoy the activities or events. For instance, Fleming (2005) discovered that many individuals find workplace fun to feel inauthentic or forced. Some people may not engage in activities because they believe work is work (Fleming and Sturdy, 2009).

Another crucial consideration in the discussion of workplace fun not resonating is personality. Often, more introverted individuals may shy away from social activities. Introverts can be defined as individuals “in whom exists an exaggeration of the thought processes in relation to directly observable social behavior, with an accompanying tendency to withdraw from social contacts” (Freyd, 1924). Those who identify themselves as more of an introvert often focus on more internal thoughts rather than seeking out more social circumstances (Nussbaum, 2002). Thus, the individuals in organizations who prefer and seek out fun in the workplace may fall into the category of extraverts more.

However, introverts do not completely withdraw from socialization as a whole. Many utilize adaptive coping mechanisms in social settings, as extraversion has many positive traits. For example, extraversion often results in greater positive affect, increased feelings of happiness, and social and career success (Balsari-Palsule and Little, 2020). While extraversion does show these positive results, enacting extraverted behavior for those who identify as introverts can be emotionally and physically exhausting or stressful. Thus, these individuals rely on coping mechanisms such as restorative niches, which resemble moments of escape in which an individual can “recharge” themselves (Balsari-Palsule and Little, 2020). Restorative niches resemble “a stable place feature that offers opportunities to promote wellbeing” (Roe and Aspinall, 2012). While fun in the workplace seems to be a wise choice for organizations to focus on enhancing and many positive results have been found, there is still room to grow the knowledge on fun activities and how it can be best adapted for people of all situations and personality types.

Introversion and Extraversion: What We Know Already

For decades, researchers have studied personality factors and how individual personality affects decisions and choices of humans. Several models have been created and utilized, but the Five Factor Model of Personality has become significantly relevant when discussing personality. This model, also known as the “Big Five” model has become the most well-known configuration of personality, specifically observing neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experiences, and conscientiousness (Shi et al., 2018). Each of these traits is associated with different personalities and possible behaviors. For example, extraversion may be associated more with sociability and openness to experiences could be related to cognitive intellect or openness to

culture (Zillig et al., 2002). Each of the Big Five traits have distinct characterizations. Conscientiousness relates to responsibility and order, neuroticism can reflect emotional instability, and agreeableness conveys cooperation and trust between people (John & Srivastava, 1999; Barlett & Anderson, 2012). These five traits all characterize how humans behave and if they align more introverted or extraverted.

As noted earlier, introverted individuals tend to focus on internal stimuli (Nussbaum, 2002, p. 184). When exploring this prior knowledge about introverted people, there may be many factors that contribute to introvert anxiety and social tendencies. Several researchers have recognized that those who become anxious when they communicate may have an “overactive behavioral inhibition system,” meaning their brain is set to avoid punishment or situations resulting in negative stimuli (Beatty, McCrosky, and Heisel, 1998; Nussbaum, 2002, p. 184). For instance, this could take form as social embarrassment or a sense of rejection. Nussbaum (2002) hypothesizes that introverts prefer coconstructive argumentation whereas extraverts lean towards conflictual argumentation. He goes further to explain the nature of conflictual argumentation, describing it as a “disposition to advocate positions on controversial issues and to attack the position of others...” (Nussbaum, 2002). This opposes the idea of coconstructive argumentation, which is more building something together rather than an adversarial conversation. Nussbaum expresses in his research that because introverts focus on the internal stimuli more often, they may find greater enjoyment in the intellectual stimulation from arguments and the coconstructive modes offer less of a chance of the negative stimuli they worry about.

Oppositely, extraverts do not appear to show worry regarding positive or negative reactions, thus they respond better to conflict in their conversations. This idea is supported in that there is a weak but significant positive correlation between introversion and the desire to reach

consensus in group discussion, as well as a significant positive correlation between extraversion and argumentativeness (Blickle, 1996, 1997). Through Nussbaum's study, results concluded that extraverts provided more contradictions and appeared to match the idea that they enjoy conflicting conversations, and the introverts of the study demonstrated more use of design claims. Research like this further the understanding that introverts tend to internalize thoughts and ideas rather than challenge people, whereas extraverts have no worries instigating controversial conversations.

In addition, certain traits of the Big Five connect to introversion and extraversion more strongly. Neuroticism, for example, reflects on one's personal emotions and self-consciousness (Shi et al., 2018). Oftentimes, people use the terms neuroticism, introversion, and shyness all interchangeably, assuming they hold the same meaning. Several studies have worked to prove the differences between these terms, including Briggs (1988). This study differentiates between introverted shyness and neurotic shyness, explaining how introverts may prefer to be alone whereas neurotics experience anxiety about social situations (Briggs, 1988). With this differentiation in mind, Briggs performed a study with the purpose of determining whether sociability moderates shyness and neuroticism or if it moderates shyness and extraversion. The study comprised 290 completed questionnaires by students. Results from the study showed that shyness is not synonymous with introversion and neuroticism. Briggs also discovered that shyness correlated more with introversion, not neuroticism, thus shy people are not always neurotic. These terms can be significant descriptors of personality, therefore researchers have dedicated time to specifying which traits are more valid and appropriate.

A common misconception that has been spread for years is that introverts are incapable of socializing as well as extraverts. Just as research has been done to differentiate personality

descriptors or observe what personalities connect better with in conversation, there are also studies focusing on the level of agreeableness and comfortability different personality types share in conversational settings. Such a study follows 52 women grouped in pairs for two conversations, one with an introvert and one with an extravert (Thorne, 1987). The participants were not told that their personalities were the focus of the study, but instead they were asked to recall moments of their conversations and discuss them. This study resulted in introverts rating their introverted partners as less sociable and comfortable to be around, however the extraverts recalled feeling comfortable with either partner (Thorne, 1987). Regardless of the comfortability and sociability, Thorne (1987) conveyed that introverts and extroverts both talked an equal amount, which furthers the discussion of whether personality plays a role in human capabilities to socialize.

Although extraversion and introversion differ greatly in some ways, there are significant differences that are beneficial to either one. While extraverts may enjoy meeting a wide variety of people and engaging in any social setting, introverted individuals prefer deeper connections to those they interact with, thus making them strong observers (Eve-Cahoon, 2003). Research has also shown that introverts and extroverts' responses to events correlate to different areas of the nervous system. Extroverts react with the sympathetic nervous system and move quickly as a response and introverts react with the parasympathetic nervous system, which is a more slow and calm reaction (Eve-Cahoon, 2003). These differences help to explain the behaviors of various people and how they cope in stressful scenarios. It is important to note that introverted individuals are not antisocial, but instead they channel their social skills into more internal and meaningful connections (Eve-Cahoon, 2003). The existing knowledge on personality described here will further our ability to structure events in positive ways for all individuals.

Current Study

This study delves into the existing knowledge of personality and fun in the workplace to determine how social event settings can accommodate all attendees. The survey is focused on determining if introverted and extroverted students experience social events differently. Previous studies and literature about workplace fun and personality traits work together to propose a basis of knowledge for this study. These specific areas are important to explore because there is a lack of research regarding how personality reacts to social events. Thus, it is necessary to investigate how fun activities may translate into social settings. Currently, there exists knowledge about the benefits of fun activities, such as increased resources and creative thinking, positive affect, and the development of new relationships (Batistic and Tymon, 2017; Michel et al., 2019). Additionally, there is evidence that introverts and extraverts thrive in different settings (Nussbaum, 2002), which this study aims to highlight even further. However, the concept of fun being incorporated into social experiences for the benefit of introverted individuals has not been studied. The effects of certain event traits could be significant for those who struggle with large social gatherings, hence making this study an important resource.

Furthermore, this study focuses on a student population. Students must socialize and grow their careers and network, and many have different preferred styles of doing so. Those in Hospitality Management and Business focused degrees often find themselves in more social event settings than many others, making them an ideal group to focus on. This can be determined from the nature of their studies, which are “usually adopt face-to-face teaching approaches, which involve discussions and personal interactions” (Tavitiyaman et al., 2021). Students in these degrees utilize more social settings in their learning such as presentations because they require socialization for success in their careers. This study argues that those more introverted students will reflect responses showing higher levels of anxiety or negative feelings regarding

social events, while the extraverted students will thrive off the social environment and require less activities and tools to cope. The survey distributed to students works to expand on the prior knowledge, establish the student population's personality breakdown, and discover common trends within personal event recollections. Using what is already known regarding personalities, it is vital to differentiate which respondents fall into each category and observe the trends from each group. Numerous factors will be looked for within the answers, including coping tools like food, familiar attendees, music, and others. The existing literature shows that these attributes could hold significant power in event attendees' experiences and attitudes towards social events. Once the patterns within the responses are detected, they can be compared to prior studies to make conclusions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Sample and Procedure

The sample used for this study consisted of 76 students from the School of Hospitality Management and College of Business at the Pennsylvania State University. The participants used an anonymous survey link to record their personalities and experiences with social events. The survey was distributed electronically through various courses. The first section of the survey included personality identifiers selected from a previous study of the Big Five (Donellan et al., 2006). The scale of these personality questions can be seen in Appendix A as it is shown in this prior study. Various statements are listed with a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree for students to select as they feel appropriate. The current study also includes a critical incident format of questions, meaning several open-ended questions about the specific recall of a networking or social event the participant has attended within the last six months. The critical incident approach follows the idea of “gathering certain important facts concerning behavior in defined situations” (Flanagan, 1954). It is a common method for detailed data collection from recent events, typically from the memories of those involved. These critical incident questions were crafted to recall specific events and the particular factors that made such events enjoyable or not for attendees. The questions allowed respondents to write in as much detail as they preferred and explain what went well or did not go well at the networking or social event of their choosing.

Participants were university students studying Hospitality Management or similar business and management fields. Of the participants of this survey, ages varied from 19 to 39, with a majority of respondents (42%) being aged 21. The average age, however, was 22 years old. The students came from various backgrounds. The survey showed that participants

predominantly (75%) identified as white, followed by Asian (12%), Hispanic and Latino (6.5%), and Middle Eastern or mixed races (6.5%) participants as well. In addition, results show that more females (67%) participated in the survey than males (33%).

Analytic Strategy

As this was a qualitative study, most of the data was determined through analyzing the survey results and calculating simple ratios and patterns in each case. The average of each case's extraversion rating was calculated and then created into a histogram (Appendix B) to determine where the cutoff between introverts and extraverts would fall for this study, which was decided as 3.5 or less as introverts and anything above as extraverts. The average extraversion score was 3.66, showing a slight skew towards extraverts. This scale also demonstrated strong reliability ($\alpha=.82$). Additionally, each case was coded for specific variables: presence of other known attendees, presence of games and activities, good music, availability of food and if the food was good or free, availability of alcohol, small and personal interactions, positive interactions, informal structure, poor organization, and any negative or stressful feelings about the event. For each of these categories, "Yes" was coded 1 and "No/Not mentioned" was coded 0.

Chapter 4: Results

Personality Results

The students began the survey with a Likert scale of personality indicators based around the Big Five traits. The scale included four questions regarding each of the five main traits. For this study, the primary objective was to determine the level of extraversion in each case. The scale included four statements for each student to respond to:

1. I am the life of the party
2. I don't talk a lot
3. I talk to a lot of different people at parties
4. I keep in the background

Each response's extraversion scores were averaged. The second and fourth statement were both reverse scored, meaning that the higher the ranking, the more introverted that individual is. After calculating these scores, every case was assigned an average extraversion score. Based on the results from this step, it was decided to break introverts into a category of 3.5 or lower, and extraverts as 3.6 or higher. Utilizing this break point, the survey showed to have 44 extraverted participants and 32 introverted respondents. Thus, the data is skewed towards extraverts. This breakdown can be shown in Appendix B, which displays a heavy number of extravert responses in comparison to the introverts.

Critical Incident Outcomes

The student sample also completed several open-ended questions regarding their most recent social or professional event attendance. The questions allowed each student to recall an influential event and describe how it affected them in a positive or negative way. Participants had the freedom to write as little or as much as they preferred to get their feelings and main points

across effectively. This, however, allowed for numerous students to skip the open-ended section as a whole. Due to this setback, 18 of the responses contained no valid recall of an event to observe data from, 9 of which were introverts and the other 9 extraverts. This leaves the study with 23 introverts and 35 extraverts to observe patterns within. While there are more extravert results in the data collected, there are several patterns seen in the responses from introverts.

Familiarity of Attendees. A majority of all responses reflected some aspect of familiarity with other attendees. Both introverted and extraverted participants made note that they knew others at their respective event. Many people commented that they chose to attend the event with one or more friends, or they saw others they knew once they had arrived. For example, one of the introverted individuals, Case 5, from the study stated in their response “I went with a friend and spent most of the night with them and really did not interact with others”. Introverts included this information more frequently, as it is seen in 16 of the 23 introvert responses (70%) and 20 of the 35 extraverts (57%). Some extraverts also wrote about this as a positive factor, with one participant writing “The aspects that made it enjoyable for others was that you could decide what companies you wanted to talk to and to get to see friends that are in the major that you haven't seen in a while”. While extraverts enjoyed seeing people they know, introverts focused more on who they attended with for a familiar face. As many of these factors will show, the amount of extraverts may be higher, but the ratio with respect to there being more extraverts suggests that introverted people may experience this more. For extraverts, seeing other known people can be exciting, while for introverts, it is often a comfort to know others.

Presence of Games and Activities. The responses also highlighted the presence of any activities at these events. Not many people mentioned games or activities at their events, but once again the responses show that introverts noted it more often. 8 out of the 23 introverts (35%) included this information and 10 of the 35 extraverts (29%) did. While this difference does not seem crucial, it does show that introverts may respond well to events that have activities.

Good Music. Music was another factor some participants wrote about. Overall, this did not seem to be a significant aspect of events for either group, because there were only 11 total discussions that included music. Of those responses, 6 were introverts and 5 were extraverts. Although music is hardly mentioned in this study, music seems to have affected more introverted individuals. One of the introverted participants wrote in their survey response about this, saying “We played games to get to know each other and listened to music in the background which made it less awkward”.

Availability of Food or Alcohol. Food and alcohol can make events significantly more enjoyable for attendees. There are various aspects to this as well, such as if food is free or if it is good quality. Most of the survey responses did not indicate if food was available or not, but for those that did, they also discussed what the food was like. The two groups were similar in responses, with 9 of 23 introverts (39%) and 11 of 35 extraverts (31%) reporting the presence of food. Of those 20 comments on food, 8 introverts and 10 extraverts thought the food was good. Additionally, 6 of the 9 introverts and 9 of the 11 extraverts commented that the food was provided for free. Alcohol is another attribute to an event that people may enjoy. This was still not mentioned heavily overall, but some people did write about drinks. Less introverts included

comments on alcohol, with only 7 responses about it. There were 12 extraverted mentions of alcohol being served. Thus, alcohol appears to have a larger effect on the extraverts while food had a slightly larger impact on the reports from introverts. This is in line with previous research, for example one study that “...found that individuals high in extraversion reported gaining significantly greater reward from alcohol than those who were low in extraversion” (Fairbairn et al., 2015). Prior knowledge shows similar findings that extraverts receive more enjoyment of alcohol than introverts, meaning that the results found in the current study align.

Small, Personal Interactions. The types of interactions described in these answers differed as well. The responses were analyzed to see how many events had smaller, more personal interactions. This did not seem to be a significant aspect to all participants, but it was one of the more frequently described items compared to the lesser aspects like music. Several cases mentioned that they had numerous meaningful interactions during the event. For instance, one of the respondents discussed their experience, stating “My Food and Beverage Director nominated me as the only intern throughout the whole program across all the different locations to have a private lunch with the company's CEO”, deeming it to be a significant and personal interaction for this participant. Once again, the ratio of introverts to extraverts recording this trait is larger. 15 of the 23 introverts (65%) indicated these smaller interactions while 19 out of 35 extraverts (54%) did. The larger presence of introverted reports of these interactions could be due to their preference of deeper meaning in these settings than their extraverted counterparts.

Positive Interactions. The nature of events being filled with positive interactions was highly significant in almost all the survey responses. Introverts and extraverts alike discuss that the

event they attended had positive results or implications or was an enjoyable event overall. 22 of 23 introverts and 34 of 35 extraverts showed some sense of positivity in their responses. The positive results came from a variety of reasons, such as introverts reporting that “It gave me the opportunity to find a new job and expand my skill set...” to extraverts saying, “It just made me feel closer with my friends”. Both groups commented that they were able to take away more confidence and new relationships which made the events successful to them. This helps to show that introverts can enjoy and successfully participating in events as much as extraverts.

Informal Structure. The structure of the events was another factor that most participants mentioned in some fashion. The number of responses from both groups was very close and demonstrated that many events that they have been attending offer a more open and free structure, rather than a more scheduled and formal system. 18 of the 23 introvert reports (78%) commented on an informal, free structure. Similarly, 27 of the 35 extrovert reports (77%) did the same. Both groups seem to be attending similar types of events, in which they are all given more autonomy and freedom within the event instead of following a strict arrangement.

Poor Organization. One of the lesser mentioned items in these responses was how well the event was organized. Poor organization was written about by several people, including confusing check-in lines, bad timing, and other organizational issues. A total of 17 people wrote about this, 8 of which were introverts and 9 of which were extraverts. This number may not seem large, but for 17 cases of poor organization, that means a lot of events are not doing a great job with their attendees’ experiences. When asked what could have been improved, Case 17 answered “More organization when it came to signing in, waiting in line...”. Several other cases also mentioned

organizational suggestions such as spreading tables out, timing fixes, and check-in procedures. With better organization and structure at events, all attendees may feel more relaxed and able to enjoy it.

Feelings of Stress, Overwhelmingness, or Negativity. The last major component looked for in the survey results was any record of attendees feeling overwhelmed or negative from the event they were at. The background research has shown that these feelings of stress may be present in introverts more often, so the responses were searched for any comments like this. Upon reviewing the answers from each participant, 10 of the 23 introverts (43%) and 10 of the 35 extraverts (29%) included some mention of feeling overwhelmed or not enjoying the event they went to. Although the amount of each group was the same, this shows a higher proportion of the introverted participants experienced this factor. Multiple introverts recorded feeling negative emotions, including one that said “...it was overwhelming. I felt pressure to talk to everyone there” as well as another case who stated, “It was very crowded and I did not know many people because I'm new to the org, so it felt a little overwhelming and stressful”. These reports show the impact that social events may have on different personalities. This is important to note because it matches what the prior knowledge says about introverted personality types in social settings.

These findings are important to consider because they help to explain how different personality types react to social settings. Each of the 9 factors discussed here show patterns for introverts and extraverts, which helps to determine which aspects of social events are most important. After determining what introverts react well or not to, event planners can adjust their plans to satisfy

all personalities and be more successful and introverts can understand how to better cope better through events that would typically be unenjoyable.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview and Findings

Social events are a part of life that all humans experience at some point. Each person has a different personality than the next, and we as humans must learn how to cope with our given personalities. In social event settings, different aspects such as food and beverage or structure of the event can have a significant impact on different kinds of attendees. The goal of this survey was to determine if there is a difference between the event experiences of introverted and extraverted students as research would suggest. The results of this study do show that introverted students and extraverted students experience events differently and specific factors of such events deem to be more important to certain personality types. The data from the survey supports that introverted individuals may find aspects of professional or social settings to be challenging or overwhelming and require coping mechanisms that their extraverted counterparts do not rely on.

Conducting this survey allowed significant factors to be displayed. As noted in the literature review earlier, event attendees' highest preferences for events included food, limited financial concerns, autonomy, and familiarity with other attendees (Ding et al., 2018). After analyzing the results of the study, some of these factors resonate more with introverts than extraverts. For example, the presence of other known individuals was recorded in 70% of the introverted responses and 57% of the extraverts. This was one of the most notable differences between the two personality groups. It can be assumed that extraverts would comment on knowing other attendees and enjoy socializing with others, but for introverts to write about this factor so frequently proves that the comfort of knowing others is crucial for them. Additionally, factors such as good music, games and activities, and small, personal interactions were all

represented more in the introverted responses, showing that these aspects matter at events. With many of these attributes, research explains that extraverts would naturally enjoy these as well. The significance in these results lies in that the introverts outweighed the extraverts, hence demonstrating how important and helpful these traits are for these individuals to cope with. When reviewing this pattern, it matches what was found in the existing literature, that fun activities like games may increase positive feelings. Even in different age groups, games have proven to promote sociability and reduced negative behavior, displaying the benefits games can provide students (Street et al., 2004). Several items were also mostly equal between introverts and extraverts, including food, positive interactions, and informal structure. One of the few items that extraverts noted more frequently was the presence of alcohol. Previous literature does conclude this as well, with one journal's findings being that extraversion and alcohol create varying levels of positivity, which could then result in smiling, laughter, or various positive reactions (Ruch, 1994).

This study has focused on determining that introverts feel more stressed at events as such, and this is supported in that 43% of the introverted participants reported feelings of stress or being overwhelmed, as opposed to the 29% of extraverted individuals who reported it. This aligns with the previous knowledge as well, such as the idea that socialization can be exhausting and stressful for introverted individuals (Balsari-Palsule and Little, 2020). Several factors could lead to these negative feelings. For example, a higher ratio of introverts felt the event was poorly organized, which could be overwhelming for those involved. The current background research showed that often people like to have autonomy at events (Gagné and Deci, 2005). The responses of the survey conveyed that several introvert participants reported feeling pressured or constricted in some sense. These poor aspects of certain events stand out significantly to the

more introverted people. Moreover, the critical incident survey displayed patterns of fun in the workplace being important to event enjoyment and significant coping mechanisms for introverts. Additionally, trends can be seen of introverted people feeling more stress at events than extraverts, confirming that the two groups experience these settings differently.

Therefore, the research question has been answered in that the critical incident survey revealed distinct patterns between personalities. Although in recent history this question has not been studied, it has been observed that there are different personality types within this demographic of students, and fun activities do have an impact on each person differently. The literature shows that there are overarching benefits and worries about fun in the workplace (Fleming, 2005), but there has been a gap between this information and its effects on specific characters. Now, it can be seen that games or music or various other “fun” factors may be processed very differently case by case. Personality has shown to play a role in event success and enjoyment. With limited knowledge about this topic, this study helps to bridge that gap and prove ways for events to succeed in the eyes of every attendee.

Theoretical Implications

This study helps to expand on existing theories and concepts discussed. It is suggested that fun in the workplace concepts should continue to be expanded to determine the benefits they offer. For example, as discussed earlier, fun activities can be connected and rooted to concepts like the self-determination theory or broaden-and-build theory (Frederickson, 2001; Gagné and Deci, 2005). People can see many benefits to these positive activities; thus it can be encouraged to continue studying the trend. In addition, the concept of fun in the workplace can be expanded to fun in other settings as well. As for personality, this study assists in understanding the Big Five Model more closely. The results help to understand what types of restorative niches

(Balsari-Palsule and Little, 2020) people adhere to and respond well to. This research assists in discovering how personality fits into fun concepts. It is now seen more how different personalities shape different experiences, so “fun” could look different through various perspectives. Fun research can be expanded to include the personality factor. Research can also delve further into various personality theories, such as Trait theory and how diverse traits may reflect in people’s actions such as events.

Practical Implications

In terms of applying what has been learned from this study, multiple groups can benefit from the results. The study proved that personality does play a role in social event enjoyment and can differ between personality types. It also was shown that fun in the workplace ideas can be beneficial and impactful in these settings. Therefore, it can be said that the existing background research has been successful in setting the stage for this thus far. Fun in the workplace has proven to have benefits through this study, as many participants discussed the positive feelings they had towards games and activities in events they attended. It can be concluded that the work to promote the benefits of this topic should continue and can provide benefits to other groups as well.

The study also provides a basis for future steps, for both students in these categories as well as event planners and hosts. For one, introverts and extraverts can use this knowledge to succeed in social settings. While the results convey that extraverts may already do well with events, introverts can focus on and discover restorative niches that work well for them. It is suggested that introverts seek out social experiences that provide these positive attributes. They can attend events with comfortable companions or make sure to bring a snack for themselves to recharge. They can also help to educate their extraverted friends and explain how to make other

personality types feel welcomed in social scenarios. For those who are planning events or in charge of a social setting, these results can provide a guide to provide a pleasant experience for anyone invited. Food and drinks should be considered, as well as music, breaks during the event to recharge, small interactions, and the other various items people responded well to in this study. By taking these actions in future events, it sets the event and the attendees up for ultimate success.

Limitations

In all studies, there are limitations to consider. A major limitation that this study faced was lack of responses. Relating to the survey, the questions were not mandatory to be answered, so many respondents only partially filled out the survey, filled it out with little detail, or did not answer any of the questions. This was a severe issue in that it lowered the number of valid responses significantly. Another reason this could have happened is due to recall bias. Often people forget details or remember inaccurate versions of events when they happened long ago, so there could have been recall bias present in some of these cases, leading to inaccurate or vague responses. Going forward, it is important to emphasize and ensure that the participants' recollections are recent and accurate to avoid this issue.

Additionally, the pool of respondents was skewed more towards extraverts because of the nature of the School of Hospitality Management's student body. The survey was extended to students in similar business-focused majors as well, but only later into the process. This limited the diversity of personalities being surveyed which could affect the results seen. Should a similar study be done in the future, a more diverse set of students or a different population altogether may be used to avoid this issue.

Future Research

With this being one of the first bridges between events, fun activities, and personality, there is room to grow and further research is encouraged. The existing research regarding personality is extensive, but it can be expanded into different scenarios such as this.

Additionally, there is a gap in the research on social events and what currently makes an event successful or not. By utilizing fun in the workplace knowledge, this study helped to make conclusions regarding events. These topics can be further developed, though.

With more time and resources, further research could work to review this topic more. Researchers could also twist the criteria of this study in the future, such as performing a study for specific events like networking events, social events, or conferences. The population could be altered to workplaces rather than students. Personality could also be explored deeper than just introversion and extraversion, for instance exploring the rest of the Big Five traits. A different mode of research rather than a critical incident approach may be more appropriate in the future as well. Whether continued research with this topic or the slightest changes to the study's criteria, there is room for further development and learning in this area.

Conclusion

Although in the past there has been a gap between personality and social event studies, this study helps to change that and begin a focus between extrovert and introvert experiences with social surroundings. The need to understand how different people cope and react to stimuli is growing and necessary, and the results found through this survey will help to make these experiences fit all. As more research develops about fun activities and personality traits in humans, society will be able to create social outlets that suit more people. Fun in the workplace

tactics and personality are crucial to continue researching and the benefits to be discovered are only just beginning.

Appendix A

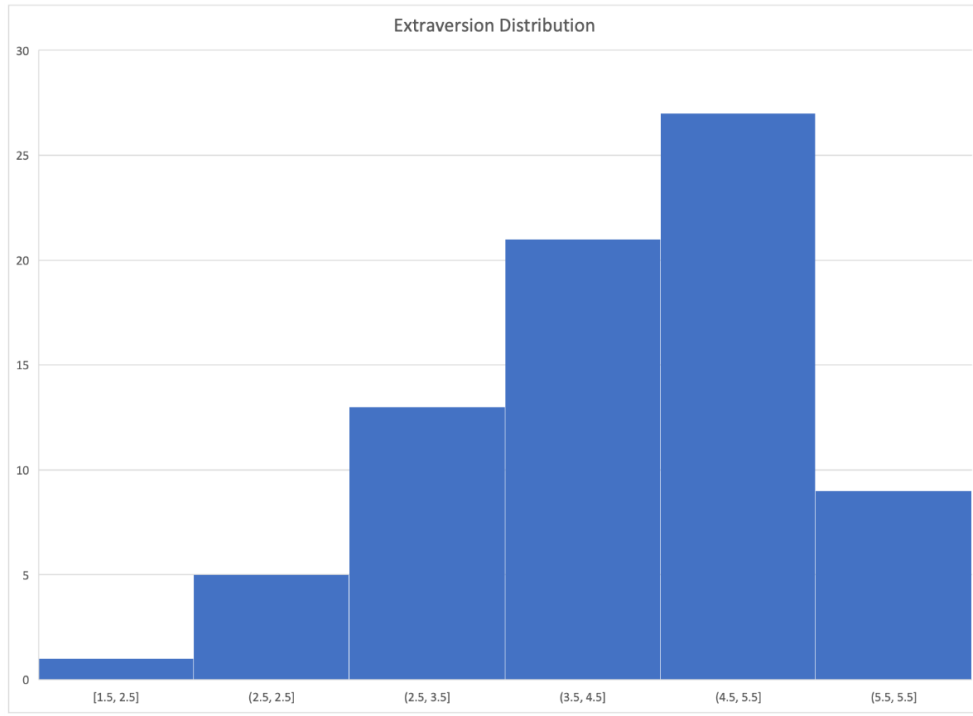
20-Item Mini-IPIP

Item	Big 5 Factor	Text
1	Extraversion	Am the life of the party
2	Agreeableness	Sympathize with others' feelings
3	Conscientiousness	Get chores done right away
4	Neuroticism	Have frequent mood swings
5	Intellect/Imagination	Have a vivid imagination
6	Extraversion	Don't talk a lot
7	Agreeableness	Am not interested in other peoples' problems
8	Conscientiousness	Often forget to put things back in their proper place
9	Neuroticism	Am relaxed most of the time
10	Intellect/Imagination	Am not interested in abstract ideas
11	Extraversion	Talk to a lot of different people at parties
12	Agreeableness	Feel others' emotions
13	Conscientiousness	Like order
14	Neuroticism	Get upset easily
15	Intellect/Imagination	Have difficulty understanding abstract ideas
16	Extraversion	Keep in the background
17	Agreeableness	Am not really interested in others
18	Conscientiousness	Make a mess of things
19	Neuroticism	Seldom feel blue
20	Intellect/Imagination	Do not have a good imagination

Donnellan, M. B., Oswald, F. L., Baird, B. M., & Lucas, R. E. (2006). The mini-IPIP scales:

Tiny-yet-effective measures of the big five factors of personality. *Psychological Assessment, 18*(2), 192–203. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1040-3590.18.2.192>

Appendix B



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ACADEMIC VITA of Kara Wohlfahrt

EDUCATION

Penn State University Schreyer Honors Scholar in the College of Health & Human Development Major: BS in Hospitality Management Dean's List Fall 2019-Fall 2022 LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/kara-wohlfahrt-4144b8218/	University Park, PA <i>Expected May 2023</i>
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WORK EXPERIENCE

Homeplate Catering & Hospitality (TD Bank Ballpark - Somerset Patriots) <i>Hospitality Operations Intern</i>	Bridgewater, NJ <i>May 2022-Aug 2022</i>
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- Responsible for guest services in three separate event areas
- Supervised event staff to ensure 100% satisfaction of ballpark guests
- Responsible for off-day support activities (cleaning, deliveries, food safety)

Penn State University Food Services <i>Internship & Crew Leader</i>	University Park, PA <i>Feb 2021-May 2022</i>
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- On-campus dining intern responsible for practicing food safety and learning front-and-back of the house dining hall procedures
- Crew leader responsible for inventory replenishment & cleaning for next service
- Manage 2-5 fellow student employees throughout meal periods
- Successfully executed themed pop-up event including menu to serve 200 guests

River House at Odette's <i>Rooms Division Intern</i>	New Hope, PA <i>May 2021-Aug 2021</i>
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- Front desk intern responsible for learning the roles of the front office, performing Guest services, and managing the housekeeping of a 38-room luxury property
- Led a team of 6-8 housekeepers in creating daily room assignments, stocking housekeeping closets, coordinating laundry deliveries, and inspecting rooms
- Rotated through various departments to learn hotel operations including back-of-the-house (BOH), Food & Beverage, Revenue Management and Marketing
- Won award for top intern project from Executive Committee at end of internship

ACTIVITIES AND LEADERSHIP

Pillar Benefiting THON <i>Family Relations Chair / Dancer / Outreach Chair</i>	University Park, PA <i>2019-Present</i>
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- Support THON families through active family visits and check-ins
- Helped raise over \$50,000 to become 9th highest fundraising organization in THON 2022
- Danced for 46 hours in THON 2022

School of Hospitality Management (SHM) Benefiting THON <i>Family Relations Chair / Social Media Chair / Merchandise Chair</i>	University Park, PA <i>2019-Present</i>
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- Team member for various fundraising initiatives funneling into THON
- Keep close contact with and support THON family as needed throughout the year
- Spread information and engage members through social media platforms

CERTIFICATIONS

-
- CHIA (Certification in Hotel Industry Analytics)
 - ServSafe Certification
 - TEAM Certification