

Cory Brown

English 212

October 19, 2018

A Local Bar

Choosing my fieldsite

The fieldsite I chose is a bar, a place where people go to have fun and step outside of their comfort zones. More specifically I chose to study a bar called 'The Grange.' In general a bar has always been amazing because it's a place where a person can go and have fun. Some people go there to get wasted, to meet new people, or even to hang out and enjoy the company of others. Once upon a time bars were made in secret, they were called speakeasies and it could only be accessed through a secret entrance. Today bars are everywhere, some people even have a local bar in their neighborhood. The bar I chose is a local bar in my neighborhood that I would frequently pass by. I chose this fieldsite because the environment of an average bar is intriguing. The environment of bars seem like its predominantly men, like a man cave. It seems like a pleasant place to be for man but for a woman I disagree. Growing up whenever I seen beer commercials it would feature a bar and women would not be seen in the commercial. The Grange stand on the front of Amsterdam avenue with bright lights and a huge neon banner with "THE GRANGE" on it. The block that The Grange is on is always full of people who might be drunk or who are about to get drunk. It always seems so lively when ever I passed by. So much that it reminded me of the time I visited New Orleans with the parades and festivals that went on. One thing that was clear at this bar was all the different subcultures within. You had the 'dress to impress woman' who were there with her girls for a special occasion, the regulars who came and

sat at the bar all day, and the guys who were out with their boys watching the game. Everyone there was enjoying their night differently. Visiting and observing this bar has opened my eyes to new ideas and realizations. Before observing I only thought that the purpose of a bar was for people to take a day off to get wasted and goof off. However once I stepped into the bar, instantly I saw everything within. For example the different subcultures, some people came there to hang out, watch the game, catch up, etc. This visit has been a true eye opener for me.

Five Senses

Walking inside the bar I saw familiar faces from around the neighborhood. I was greeted by the bartender and he asked if I wanted a drink. I felt like everyone was looking at me because I was a fresh face. I knew right away that the people at this bar knew it was my first time visiting . I walked slowly and skimmed the entire bar. I sat at one of the tables and rested my arms on the table. The table was sticky because someone spilled alcohol and it dried up. I was disgusted because now I was sticky and I had to clean my arm. It smelled like chicken and mint flavored hookah the moment started to try and smell something.. The food that was being served smelled delicious. Although I did not see a lot of people eating. There was so much going on, it was a bit overwhelming. Looking to my right, there were three 40 inch sized TVs, side by side, all on the same basketball channel. The guys were screaming because a fight had broken out between two NBA teams. The women were sitting elegantly at the dinner tables. The women were taking selfies and laughing. It seemed to be one of the women's birthday because I overheard one of them saying "I don't need to get a virgin pina colada anymore girl!" The girl was hyped because she was now of legal age. The bar gave off a very chill and homestyle like atmosphere. There

was a poster of Michael Jordan on the Bartender's wall. Two pool tables were set up in the back but it was empty. It looked like maybe a group of people had just finished playing a game of billiards because the sticks were on the table and the cue ball.

Defining Subcultures

One subculture within this bar was the guys who came to watch sports and hang out with the guys. For these guys it was essential to have a tv that was showing some type of sport. Whether it be the NFL, the MLB, or the NBA. It would be appropriate to say the TV was an artifact for the sports savvy guys at the bar. Another subculture within the bar culture was the regulars. Regulars are people who are well known at the bar and visit more than anyone else who comes to this bar. These people were concerned about one thing and one thing only. It was nothing but beer. The beer would be an artifact for the regulars. Then you have first-timers. These are people who visit the bar for the first time, they probably don't know what drink to order or where to sit. As Anna Hecht states in her blog, *The Virgin Bar Guide for Turning 21*, "23-year-old, Trista Barrick, vividly remembers her first time ordering a drink. "The bartender asked what I wanted, and immediately, I started racking my brain for ANY alcoholic beverage I had heard of, except for beer because I thought it was gross at the time. I ordered a rum and coke and nearly gagged because it was god-awful. I remember thinking to myself, Why would people drink such nasty crap for the sake of having fun? I was totally not having any fun." It happens and it's natural, eventually these first time bar-goers will be a natural at ordering drinks.

Interaction with Observation

I noticed all the women who came into the bar caught the attention from all the men. At one point I caught myself gazing at a woman for a quick second. The women were beautiful, therefore men, focused their eyes on them. Considering the fact that there is always a majority of men present at a bar, led me to conclude that women often experience unwanted groping and harassment every time they visited. A survey completed by 153 bargoers, conducted by Graham displays that "More than 75% had experienced sexual touching or persistence." Walking into a social drinking environment, unwanted groping and harassment was the first issue I assume a woman faced when going to a bar. I asked a woman sitting at a table about her experience to get a better point of view. Starting off by introducing myself and exchanging names. I then asked "Have you ever experienced unwanted groping and/or catcalling?" Yelita replied "Yes, everytime I come here. It's really annoying." However that answer seemed vague, and lacking true emotion. The next question was "So what makes you come here if you have that kind of experience every visit?" Yelitza replied "because men should be able to control themselves, it's that simple. If you can't don't come here." Based on Yelitza's response I asked a man and a woman if they agreed or disagreed with her reasoning. The man stated " I think that it is stupid to continue to go to a place where you have those kinds of experiences," The woman agreed with Yelitza saying "Why should we have to leave a place because a man can't control himself?" Those responses threw me way off because at first I agreed completely with the man and then the woman who agreed with Yelitza response changed my mind again. After I stepped back into my observation perspective, the responses caused me to zone out, and evaluate my own thoughts about the situation.

Reflection and Connection

The night concluded with me, leaving the bar with a new perspective about bars and myself. Observing this fieldsite, it dawned on me that all this time I've been looking at a bar and seeing it as just that. Never bothered to look at what lies within. Thinking that the one and only purpose of a bar was to visit and get drunk. Many other activities took place that night. Debates, bonding over sports, birthday celebrations, etc. Sometimes these men and women just need a night to step out and enjoy themselves. That's exactly what those people were doing that night at the bar. I also realized that privileges aren't only limited to race. There's privilege in age, social status, etc. Old men at the bar were just seen as weird and creepy. I have the privilege of youth to be seen as otherwise. Many young people seemed to overshadow the older people. When I simply sat down and observed I learned a lot about my self and the fieldsite. Hopefully after reading this others refrain from looking at things and people the way it appears to be. For example a library may seem like a place where you can read books and that's it. When you could also make friendships, discover clubs, etc. Or maybe the librarian could be a war veteran with a story to tell. You never know, that why nobody should ever be afraid to dig deep.

Works Cited

Graham, Kathryn, et al. "When Women Do Not Want It: Young Female Bargoers' Experiences With and Responses to Sexual Harassment in Social Drinking Contexts." *Violence Against Women*, vol. 23, no. 12, Oct. 2017, pp. 1419–1441.

"The Virgin Bar Guide for Turning 21 - College Magazine." 15 Aug. 2014,

<https://www.collegemagazine.com/5-need-to-know-tips-on-navigating-the-bar-scene/>.