

Spaces of Community in Champaign-Urbana

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INTRODUCTION

Our research question was to focus on how the research farm at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and the iconic bar KAMS on the UIUC campus town contribute to the culture of Champaign-Urbana as a whole. Being a community that represents many different cultures from many different backgrounds—we wanted to focus on these locations, which we feel best represent Champaign-Urbana.



View of the research farm at UIUC. Image: Caullin Heebner



Inside view of the KAMS space. Image: Jim Meadows Twitter: @KAMSillini

MATERIALS & METHODS

Participation Observation, Formal Interview, Informal Conversations, and Surveys.

These are the questions we asked:

Age.)
Gender.)
Occupation.)

What makes this place unique to Champaign-Urbana?

What do you think of when you think of community?

Why do you come here
a.) what do you do when you're here?
b.) how long do you typically spend here?

What do you think the community would be like without this place?

To collect our data, we visited each location and studied the people, the activities, and the environment in order to better understand our community. We interviewed/conversed with people at each location to collect our data. Our observations were documented.

RESULTS

Through our observations, interviews, and conversations we were able to get a sense of why each location is important to Champaign-Urbana and what they mean to the residents of these twin cities.

Caullin gathered that the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) research farm is revered by locals and students for the pioneering work that is carried out in effort to improve all aspects of crop production. The farm also comprises a business component as it employs a lot of people. Considering the massive agricultural presence in the surrounding area, the research farm is a centerpiece of the agricultural community. In addition, the university is known for the college of ACES, which includes a large variety of agricultural and environmental majors.

Zoey observed how individuals and groups experience bar culture and the importance of KAMS to the University of Illinois and the Champaign-Urbana area. KAMS holds a unique value to the area and the college because traditions are carried out there that indicate belonging to the UIUC community. The space managed to maintain this even after moving to a new location. Its main significance is the socialization and celebration of college events by young adults that live in the area as well as students that currently attend the University of Illinois.

CONCLUSIONS

Culture is created by visible symbols embedded in our everyday behavior and the spaces we use (Griffith and Marion, 2021), and our research confirmed that different groups found a sense of community and constructed culture in the two spaces we examined. The research farm is not well-known unless you are linked to agriculture, but it forms a strong bond between students and locals who share this common interest in a town where these two groups don't usually come together. KAMS also brings together both locals and students but does so only with a younger crowd as it is a reflection of college life and current trends. Clothing, interactions, music, Blue Guys, and even cups play a key part in KAMS culture.



Image: Jim Meadows/Illinois Newsroom; Twitter: @KAMSillini

REFERENCES

<https://perspectives.americananthro.org/>

