SOCIALIZING RITUALS AND ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION:
AN EXAMINATION OF DRINKING ESTABLISHMENTS
IN A UNIVERSITY TOWN

A Thesis
Presented
to the Faculty of
California State University, Chico

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Social Science

by
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Fall 2014
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IN A UNIVERSITY TOWN

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Cameron Shea Ellingsen
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APPROVED BY THE DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
AND VICE PROVOST FOR RESEARCH:

_________________________________
Eun K. Park, Ph.D.

APPROVED BY THE GRADUATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

_________________________________
Lyndall Ellingson, Ph.D.
Graduate Coordinator

_________________________________
Tony Waters, Ph.D., Chair

_________________________________
Charles Zartman, Ph.D.
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ABSTRACT

Drinking establishments such as bars or nightclubs are the hubs for popular culture throughout contemporary American society. This popularity attracts a wide variety of customers, all participating in commonly understood socialization rituals. These establishments focus their business on entertainment, alcohol, and socialization. This research demonstrates why such establishments have maintained their popularity through time. It focuses on a smaller college town, and participant observation of socializing rituals involving alcohol consumption. Larger nightclubs with loud music and discounted drinks, and smaller, quieter, more intimate venues are described in an effort to understand the public’s apparent fascination with these businesses. This research explores the different reasons for participating in the ritual of public intoxication, often including efforts to meet sexual partner/s, and/or seeking a temporary respite from the anxieties or limitations of daily life. This research indicates that despite ongoing controversy surrounding alcohol consumption, especially among college students, many regard drinking establishments as a necessary feature of contemporary American society.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This research seeks to explore the question of why people visit drinking establishments and examines the attitudes and conceptualizations of those who do. I have worked many years in such establishments. I myself have always been awestruck by the number of people, ranging from nine-to-five working stiffs, to full time students and others, who go out nightly and enjoy themselves in the context of alcohol culture. They are usually seeking intoxication’s cheap euphoria, the possibility of meeting someone special, the pleasures of live entertainment, or more tragically, an escape from everyday life. Clearly there are costs we all must bear as a result of the alcohol culture’s oft-mentioned properties of ‘social lubrication,’ but what, if any, are its benefits? Whatever the case may be, I am going to show the social importance of such businesses, and explain the interest society has with them.

Establishments that serve alcohol are often profitable regardless of broader economic conditions. However, this ‘counter cyclical’ phenomenon, though intrinsically interesting, serves only to emphasize the observation that such establishments frequently are the focus of unique social facts: bars, nightclubs, and pubs often engender a particular culture of their own, replete with norms and forms of behavior that do not obtain elsewhere, and frequently differ from one such establishment to the next. Most drinking establishments can boast of their regulars, customers who make the bar their home away
from home; but apart from the abject alcoholics, establishments that cater to younger at least more youthful patrons encourage attitudes and activities and social interactions that can collectively be referred to as ‘the nightlife scene,’ largely dominated by mild to severe intoxication and sexually provocative comportment.

The relevance of bars on social issue is easily observed. On any given late afternoon or evening, establishments purveying alcohol for on-site consumption are serving a steady stream of customers. These circumstances are amplified on weekends and most holidays. There are three main categories of drinking establishments discussed; bars, nightclubs, and pubs. Bars are typically smaller establishments with seating and inexpensive entertainment such as pool tables or other games. Nightclubs are larger establishments that contain a bar section, but focus on a dancing area, characteristically with louder music. Finally pubs, or restaurants that serve alcohol, are just that. They offer a bar section, but derive most of their business from the sale of food instead on alcohol. Each different enterprise has their own separate way of maintaining business, and appealing to the many different wants and needs of the ir patrons. These range from different musical genre themed businesses, such as country or techno\(^1\) to the ridiculously imaginative places such as oxygen bars or vampire clubs.\(^2\) The immense assortments of

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\(^1\) Different themes attract different customers. While most establishments will play a variety of music, many still stick to one central genre. Country bars will play country music and attract “cowboy types,” while some might play rap/hip-hop and attract a completely different crowd.

\(^2\) Typical bars and clubs involve the presence of alcohol. New establishments are opening up without that common factor of bars and still using the same description to define their business. Juice bars and oxygen bars are common examples for the health minded person.
these businesses aim to please any and all people, giving a place for everyone to go, no matter what their social status or personal requirements. These establishments consistently demonstrate their durability within the landscape of entertainment available for consumption by being the centers of popular culture, venues of Avant guard aesthetics or bastions of heteronormativity.

There are many different opinions of these particular establishments, being that everyone has their own opinion. Some view them as sinful and evil, while others use them as a place of sanctuary. However, through the theory of cultural relativism, there are no inherently good or bad cultures, instead this view changes through the eyes of the observer. While these views are personal and have evolved throughout a person’s life, they are strictly that, opinions not stated facts. When conducting research into any topic, there is no room for opinion of good or bad, instead only room for research to show the fact behind such topics, demonstrated by observations and interviews to reveal a culture without any bias. These moral distinctions are strictly the realm of politics and policy, and are entirely cultural. This research does just that, provides information into the morally debated topic of alcohol and the social establishments that focus on its distribution. The central theme of intoxication is morally suspect; however, this research will provide a detailed review of the internal being of drinking establishments. This information will not persuade the reader one way or another, but will instead give a view into the behind the scenes ideas of alcohol and the businesses that serve it. As a substitute, it will demonstrate the necessity for such establishments in this rule-bound
society, where a liberated zone of freedom is needed, and provided by these drinking establishments.

The social phenomena of nightclubs, bars, and pubs have spread worldwide, with ever growing trends throughout different generations. Bars during World War I and II were centered on military men meeting people, with big bands playing and customers dancing to the popular tunes. As time passed, sex became less of a taboo, which urged clubs to conform to social needs, playing different music, which brought with it a different type of physically closer dancing. With that came access to and interest in drugs in addition to alcohol, such as cocaine, mainly popular throughout the 70’s, through different establishments, bringing a sense of sociality by sitting together at tables, instead of spending time on the dance floor. Currently, most of those past trends have faded, but alcohol has remained the common commodity in bars and nightclubs. Drugs have left the scene, at least in the sense of being visual at all times, big band swing dancing isn’t as popular as it once was, and the scene is changing to emphasize bars for meeting potential sexual partners, whether for the night or for a long term commitment.

The changing times engender different establishments and may encourage entrepreneurs to modify the aesthetics of their businesses to attract a steady stream of patrons. Indeed, culture changes to reflect the values and ideals of its members, but despite superficial modifications, bars, nightclubs and pubs maintain themselves by selling alcohol for onsite consumption. This presents an alternative culture within our own societies, creating a special place with its own rituals and regulations for common activity. As presented, drinking establishments are always changing to fit the needs of
the customers, but the customers are also changing to fit into the popular culture throughout these businesses. Such actions may include the way customers dress, which type of music they listen to, or the general demeanor of their actions. Whatever the underlying reasoning may be, bars, nightclubs, and pubs capitalize on behavioral trends by catering to changing tastes and preferences, but are also engines driving them. And yet the question remains: Why are bars, nightclubs and pubs such perennially popular establishments? Why does one choose to go out to these businesses and spend money for the cheap and quickly fading ecstasy that alcohol brings?

With so many different alcohol related establishments opening up nationwide, especially in college towns, the social importance of my research can be seen on any weekend night. From my time in college to my time working in drinking establishments, it seems as if a large majority of people, even if these people do not drink alcohol, have most likely been to a bar. This is mostly likely done for the initiation of the 21st birthday. This typically American trend is based on the ideals of a person being legally admitted to drinking establishments after turning the legal age for consumption, which in this country, is twenty-one. This is seen as a rite of passage in many American cultures, especially with so many different businesses to choose from, many of which offer free alcoholic drinks of the night of the person’s birthday. With the attractiveness of such businesses, a variety of different research questions arise when dealing with such a socially popular, never fading trend. Throughout this research, I will analyze the different reasons people use as their justification for coming out to these establishments. Some may define their night out on meeting that special person, while others might be
only interested in intoxication. With this information, I hope to determine the reasons in which people go out to bars or clubs, stay awake later than is normal for average people, spend hundreds of dollars, get over intoxicated, deal with a hangover in the morning, and choose to go and do it again the very next night. This information of social popularity and cultural trendiness shows that my research will be a useful source for customers and business owners, as well as future scholarly research into any of the discussed topics.

My personal fascination with these businesses is what fuels my research into understanding the social phenomena. With an extensive background in alcohol related establishments, ranging from bus boy to bartender, and door man to security manager, I have seen an ample amount of interesting people, all with a different story behind their life. I have also encountered the worst of the worst when dealing with intoxication levels, with cases as extreme as death, and the embarrassing effects of alcohol. With so many different aspects of human nature being present in bars and clubs under the influence of alcohol, I feel the need to conduct this research to show why people are obsessed with these establishments and the legal drugs they provide to all of their customers.

At the current time, many studies discussing specific reasons of why people go out to drinking establishments have been done, but information on what brought those people out in the first place is scarce. There is literature about drinking statistics, sexual aggression, and even the usefulness of “pick-up lines;” but those focus on one specific idea, concentrating on detailed aspects about what might happen within a bar. However, I am looking to find the motivation people use as their reasoning for going out. Since this
is an exploratory research topic, the main question behind my research is “Why do people go to bars?” By using condensed, but still broad research questions, more research is possible while only interviewing the subject for a minor amount of time. The limited amount of time must be used in such an environment because of the suggestion that these interviewees are at the bar to socialize and enjoy their time, not to be interviewed by a Master’s degree candidate. This is based on the thoughts that interfering with certain subjects in their natural environment will obscure research and give false testimonies.

Participant observation aims to gain a familiarity with a given group of subjects in a research topic. This is accomplished by becoming a participant in the activities and rituals of the culture studied, withholding personal preferences to the extent possible, and seeking to understand the world through the eyes of those being studied.

Throughout my investigation, focusing on qualitative methods of research will obtain the most relevant and useful information of this social enthrallment with alcohol and the businesses that make a profit serving it. These methods include participant observation as a bar patron, brief subject interviews, and informal conversations with bar staff and customers, but without the interference of intoxication. By allowing myself to become part of the nightlife scene, I will not only be able to determine popular aspects of specific bars, but also identify which people or groups of people would be useful to question in my research. All aspects of this research will take place throughout a wide range of businesses involving alcohol, throughout the Chico city limits, which will include bars, night clubs, restaurants with a bar section/pubs. They will be located in the popular downtown area, concentrating mainly on college crowds, and also on the
outskirts of town which focus on customers who typically work throughout the week. Using these boundaries and variety of businesses, I can achieve a full view of all bar going patrons throughout my research, giving a more in depth idea of the social fascination and importance of these establishments in a college town.

The social relevance and importance of this topic, as previously indicated, can be seen on any weekend night, especially in a college town, which is still seen as a “party” school. In January 1987, Playboy officially ranked CSU Chico, as the number one party school in the nation. (Lore, 2013) This national ranking took place over 25 years ago, but students still brag about Chico being a party school, and hang on to the 1987 ranking; even though a lot of current students we not alive at the time of that article. Even though multiple city residents and officials are determined to change the past views of this small college town, there are still the students who try to uphold the standards of the past. With deaths caused by alcohol poisoning, fights caused by intoxication, or drunk driving accidents, the social problem of alcohol abuse is widespread. And even if this social issue can lead to tragic occurrences, there is still an infatuation of society with alcohol and alcohol related issues. This interest in alcoholic incidents can be positive, by partaking in alcohol consumption and going out to drinking establishments, or negative, by trying to get rid of such actions in a city.

The city of Chico has many supporters for stricter alcohol policies, along with a citywide control of house parties and bars. In “A Call for Community Action,” many Chico leaders, including CSU Chico officials, city officials, council members, district attorneys, sheriff officers, presidents of city organizations, and even the mayor, have
stated that Chico has an alcohol problem. Throughout an agreed upon statement for community action, these officials have asked the city to help control this alcohol and party problem. Even though the students of the colleges might not agree, and see it as a time for them to party, the city is fed up with the amount of negative incidents, ranging from assault cases and deaths, to loud parties on random nights of the week disrupting the citizens of the city. This call for community action demonstrates the negative aspects of alcohol and the establishments that provide it to its customers. While not everyone might agree with this statement, it is evident that there is a social alcohol problem within the town.

Some important terms to note throughout this research are:

1) **Drinking Establishment**-any business focusing business on the sale of alcohol
   a. **Bar**-Strictly bar area with various seating
   b. **Club (Nightclub)**-A bar with a large dance floor with typically louder music
   c. **Pub**-a bar which also serves food, with the majority of business focusing on alcohol

2) **Problem Drinking**- men as a person who consumes 2 or more drinks per day, or 14 drinks per week, and for women as a person who consumes more than 1 drink per day, or more than 7 drinks per week. (Division of Population Health, 2013)

3) **ABC-Alcoholic Beverage Control**; a federal agency tasked with the enforcement of alcohol laws and regulations.

4) **Pre-gaming**- The act of consuming alcohol at home before going to a drinking establishment. Typically done to save money and achieve an alcoholic euphoria before going out.

   Throughout the following chapters, I seek to establish reasoning behind the fascination with alcohol and the establishment that serve it. While doing this I hope to
come across customers with both positive and negative views of these businesses. Even though the majority of customers will have a positive views towards bars, mainly because they are already there, some may be dragged along with their friends and have no desire to be there. These ideas will be shown in research of different aspects of the alcohol nightlife scene, as well as my own personal interviews and observations. Pre-existing literature will be of assistance to guiding me through the important topics of my particular research question of “why do people go to bars?” This literature centers on the social aspects of drinking establishments, which is a fundamental characteristic of why these places exist in the first place. While taking advice on research from previous studies, my research will also be done using interviews and participant observations, and by becoming part of the nightlife scene.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

“Our national drug is alcohol. We tend to regard the use any other drug with special horror.”

-William S. Burroughs

Drinking Rates and Frequency

Alcohol is one of the most common beverage options for Americans, and this rate of consuming alcoholic drinks has risen in recent years. (Striker, 2006) This has caused a rise in health risks associated with heavy drinking habits, such as low red-blood cells, increased risk of cancer, high blood pressure, and nerve damage, as well as fatalities based on decisions made under the influence. Not only for people that can legally drink, but also for those under the age of twenty one, alcohol is viewed as a problem throughout the country in many people’s minds. Based on a journal by Lauren Vogel (Vogel, 2010), “Drinking rates of alcohol in the United States have hit a 25-year high.” Based in an article in a recent Gallup survey (a center for the study of human nature and behavior), the lowest point in American alcohol consumption occurred in 1958 where only 55% of American’s were reported to having an occasional drink (Newport, 2010). This percentage was even lower than that during the Great Depression and prohibition, which only hit a low 58% in 1938. These current rates of high alcohol consumption are evident in a 2010 poll of American drinking practices, where 72% or
Americans reported having an “occasional alcohol beverage such a liquor, wine, or beer” (Newport, 2010).

Not only are Americans drinking more frequently, they are drinking larger quantities when they chose to consume alcohol. Based on a poll by CBS News in correlation with WebMD, American’s are reporting that within a week they consume an average of 4.5 drinks, while this number was only 2.8 drinks per week back in 1996 (Striker, 2006). Based on research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 51.5% of adults were classified as “current regular drinkers,” having at least twelve drinks in the past year (Charlotte A. Schoenborn & Adams, 2002). Considering that this was measured over an entire year, the number of drinks consumed might seem minute based on the mutually agreed upon definition of a “heavy drinker.” The agreed upon classification is consuming two drinks per day, making the previous statistic of 12 drinks per year seem like a small comparison; with heavy drinking equaling 712 drinks per year.

While the legal drinking age in the United States is twenty one years of age, a large number of children under that legal age reported taking place in alcohol consumption. According to an extended study by SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), lasting several years, involving alcohol use among youths; while there has been a decrease of alcohol use in youths of ages 12-17, the rates are still nerve racking considering the very young ages of the respondents. In the concluding year of the research, 13.6% reported using alcohol in the past month; while in 2002 the percentage was 17.6% (SAMHSA, 2011).
While collegiate campuses offer or require alcohol education programs for incoming students, many students are not aware of these resources or educational experience, therefore there is still a large number of alcohol related incidents through colleges across the nation. Despite the fact that some students see college as a way to improve their education and prepare for the future, other students choose to take a completely opposite route and treat college like one big festivity.

Morgan Valley (2007) took the issue of collegiate drinking to the idea of perceived social norms of college drinking. Valley sent out emails to 518 incoming freshman students in which 162 replied. This survey was centered around incoming students perceptions about college drinking based on age, gender, class standing, and Greek affiliation. Throughout this survey, Valley began to find that although many would assume that the majority of college students would be focused on academics, “54.9 percent of the participants thinking that occasionally getting drunk was okay if it didn’t interfere with academics, and 29.6 percent thinking that drinking was okay, but that one should not get drunk” (Valley, 2007). However, these findings also showed that it was more socially acceptable for a male student to consume alcohol more often and more days per week than their female counterparts. On the other hand, surveys such as this one are of course academic and scholarly, but there always seems to be an issue with self-reported numbers, especially when it comes to collegiate alcohol consumption. The issue tends to be an over compensation in the estimate of the number of drinks consumed,

3 One Standard Drink is equal to one 12 ounce beer, 9 ounces of malt liquor, 5 ounces of table wine, or 1.5 ounces of hard alcoholic liquor.
based either on the idea that the alcohol might have affected the memory of any particular student, or on the idea that college student believe that the more they drink they more popular they are, and feel a need to over exaggerate that number.

Much like Valley (2007), Celia C. Lo (1995) also found many presumptions about collegiate alcohol use to be true, many of which had to deal with male versus female college students and their particular drinking habits. Out of the 808 student surveyed, 36.2% of the males and 14.7% of female respondents were deemed high-quantity drinkers; 42.1% of males and 32.9% of females drink to a blood alcohol level of .1⁴ (Lo, 1995). This statistic states that a large number of collegiate students drink to a level of intoxication where motor skills would be affected, vision would start to be impaired, and where the risk of crashing while driving is 10 times more likely than a normal non-alcohol impaired adult. This level of intoxication ranges from 3-10 standard drinks depending on the weight of the person. Based on common observations that males are generally larger than females, it would take the common female collegiate student less drinks to achieve this level of over-intoxication than the typical male student.

Along with the findings of Lo, Valley found that on the Colorado State University campus, females found if acceptable to consume close to 4 drinks in one sitting, “which is slightly below the heavy episodic drinking rate for women” (Lo, 1995). At the same time, it was acceptable for males to consume more alcoholic drinks, over five, in one sitting, which is faintly over the rate of heavy drinking for men. While the

⁴ All 50 states have a limit of .08% blood alcohol content to operate a vehicle.
rates of consumption were closely related, with females participating in alcohol consumption 3.01 days in the last month and males drinking 3.81 days. Male students might consume more alcohol in one sitting, the occurrence of drinking that level of alcohol is consistent with the rates on female students. A “problem drinker” is defined for men as a person who consumes 2 or more drinks per day, or 14 drinks per week, and for women as a person who consumes more than 1 drink per day, or more than 7 drinks per week (Division of Population Health, 2013).

Under the definition of problem drinking, many college student would qualify and be deemed an alcoholic. However, as stated before, a person’s college years is used as a period of immature actions and known as a time for experimentation. Many college students consume seven or more drinks in a single night when going out to the drinking establishments in town, but are not socially considered alcoholics. While their actions and alcohol consumption may be frowned upon, the excuse for “being in college” is often used and actions are brushed off as another college student enjoying their time in school.

The collaborative effort of six different professors from both University of California Los Angeles and San Diego State University dealt with specific settings in which drinking alcoholic beverages takes place; bars and parties, or what are referred to as “Natural Drinking Environments.” While a large amount of underage drinking takes place at house parties, especially in a college town; bars are a way for those who can legally drink to experience something new and different no matter where they go. “Measuring College Students’ Alcohol Consumption in Natural Drinking Environments,” combines studies in both house parties as well as bars throughout the community, but
centered on college student’s drinking practices. “40% of college students reported engaging in heavy episodic drinking in the past year” (Clapp, et al., 2007).

In this particular study, the parties that were observed consisted of five or more students gathered together with alcohol present. Throughout these parties, students were observed drinking from multiple sources including cans of beers, kegs, and bottles of alcohol, all of which are usually provided by the host or group of hosts. These house parties led to a great number of inebriated students due to the high level of availability of alcohol, while the sampling done at bars had a large number of intoxicated customers, but the bartenders and security staff seemed to be more intoxicated that the patrons. However, this is not the center of my research. House parties, especially in a college town, are very common and differ in many different ways. Bars on the other hand seem to remain a somewhat constant throughout the nation, in the idea that they all serve alcohol in confines on the laws and regulations of any particular state.

Comparing these drinking statistics and rates with foreign countries is comparing apples to oranges. For instance, comparing consumption regulations in Germany to those of the United States, demonstrates how other cultures and countries regulate drinking as a way to teach minors how to regulate their consumption, instead of a way to ban minors from alcohol completely, which may lead to so many alcohol related issues in college settings. Minors as young as 14 years of age are allowed to drink wine and beer in a public setting as long as their parent/guardian(s) are present. The legal age for buying and consuming any type of alcohol is 18 in Germany (Korinth, 2013), but due to the idea that they teach the appropriate way to consume alcohol in a safe way. While
this isn’t saying that Germany doesn’t have over intoxicated people or alcohol consumption issues, it demonstrates a higher level of tolerance that that of the United States. This is true for many countries other than the United States.

Only a handful of other countries have similar age restrictions, while many have different age regulations for purchase and consumption. When comparing to these foreign nations, the United States protects alcohol until a person is 21, and holds them back until the intuition ritual, in relation to alcohol consumption rituals. Countries with lowered age restrictions use alcohol consumption in a social setting, but commonly in a more casual way, letting minors have a glass of wine of a beer with a family dinner. These lowered age restrictions do not mean that minors are going out to become intoxicated like those college students in a college town, but are instead used as a way to regulate future alcohol abuse. However, American students studying abroad take advantage of these lowered age restrictions and use it to their own personal advantage, mainly because they cannot legally consume in the states.

With such high drinking rates throughout the country, both legal and illegal, multiple bars, saloons, clubs, and other drinking establishments are popping up. Even in the current recession, government shut down, and high unemployment rates, alcohol sales seem to be remaining high, or possibly growing, but why is this? With so many concerns about health and financial responsibilities; how can one afford, both financially and physically, to go out to these businesses night after night?
Gender Differences

“What I do know is that traditional gender roles are very real and flipping the norm is difficult for even the strongest, funniest, smartest men.”

-Patti Stanger

Gender differences is a widely held area of study, and the social expectancies of alcohol consumption based on gender is no different. Socially, men are typically assumed to consume more alcohol than women, both on issues of frequency and amount. “Alcohol is more relevant to the male social identity compared to the female social identity” (Lewis & Neighbors, 2004). This only provokes men to uphold their socially expected trends by being manly men and consuming more alcohol than women, or in some instances, proving their manliness among other men. While a larger amount of alcohol might contribute to aggression as seen in previous studies of aggression in drinking establishments, bars seem to uphold traditional values of masculinity.

Alcohol companies are beginning to focus their attention to a younger crowd, especially the female population. In other countries such as New Zealand, United Kingdom, and Australia, where the age restrictions are more liberal, teenage females are fixated on “RTDs,” which are ready to drink beverages (Huckle, Sweetsur, Moyes, & Casswell, 2008). Unlike beer, these bottled drinks are sweeter and easier to drink, and are known as “alcopops” around the world. While certain companies might not directly focus their attention to such a young crowd, 12-14 aged females in this study, their products are easily geared toward a group less accustomed to the taste of other alcohols. However, these “alcopops” are not usually drunken by males of any age and are typically
viewed as female drinks, even though they contain a greater alcohol percentage. The importance of this study is shown in the idea that females view these “RTDs” as designer drinks and as in most other social situations, people just want to fit in with what is hip at the time. With a specific drink geared towards a certain gender, that gender will assume that it is socially expected for them to consume and will use that to benefit their own social status.

Ideals regarding alcohol consumption in any culture are lost throughout a person’s college career in American universities. Men are still assumed to consume more alcohol than women, but both genders are observed to consume more than those who are not in college. While this is true at most universities, college students have demonstrated a large over estimated amount of the perceived amounts of drinking that takes place in both male and females. Lewis and Neighbors’ study on college student drinking levels, gave insight into the over estimation on various levels. They discovered that while men overestimated male alcohol consumption and women over estimated female consumption, they both agreed than men are the heavier drinkers. The perceptions of each gender might reflect on the idea of the “male social identity” and force the respondents to assume a much larger number than is actually true throughout statistics.

Lewis and Neighbors (2004) showed male participants over-estimated the number of drinks per week, frequency of drinking per week, and number of drinks per occasion for both males and females. While females also overestimated the amounts of alcohol consumed, it was by a much smaller difference. Men had estimated that males consume 21.92 drinks per week, with women consuming 19.79 per week. However, the
“actual sample norms held that men typically drink 13.00 drinks per week and women consuming 8.83 (Lewis & Neighbors, 2004). This information only included college student participants, but since the majority of bar going patrons in college towns, are college students, is it relevant to see the frequency of consumption. With most college experiences containing a large amount of partying and spending mom and dad’s money at local bars, drinking establishments are prominent in these areas.

While alcohol consumption has become part of the manly man description, the double standard of women who consume alcohol is that they are seen as, “having poor character and being more promiscuous” (Parks & Scheidt, 2000). These opinions about females aren’t just from a male perspective, other females also share these opinions, However, within a drinking establishment, men are very critical of all aspects of every women they notice throughout their night. Even though most men have unrealistic ideas about what could possibly happen with said females, they still manage to check out all prospects and project their own opinions to the crowd. These opinions involve judgments about the female’s physical appearance, dress, intoxication level, and sexual attractiveness. With lowered inhibitions, both genders are more sexually provocative, but females are judged more negatively for their actions. Sixty percent of women drinkers felt that drinking lowered their sexual inhibitions; and 8% felt that they had been “less particular” about choosing a sexual partner (Parks & Scheidt, 2000).

“Both men and women believe that sexual activity is more likely with alcohol consumption...and perceive the drinking woman as more sexual than the drinking man” (Parks & Scheidt, 2000). This suggestion is based on the traditional ideals of men
typically paying for the alcohol, which upholds the stereotype of men being able to “hold” their alcohol, while women feel the affects more easily. With the sexual inhibitions of females lowered buy the alcohol bought by men, there is a sense from the males, that those females need to pay back them back in a way for buying their alcohol. When these men feel that the females have not paid back their debt, the chances of sexual aggression increase, making the male feel as if he deserves sexual favors from the female, even though the act of buying a female a drink is thought to be a conversation starter, instead of a proposition for sex.

Men reported consuming alcohol in bar settings due to the social aspect of the businesses; including hanging out with friends, meeting women, and to possibly have a sexual encounter. While some men realize that females are out at bars for the same reasons, they still think less of the women who are out. “Girls who are out in a scandalous dress and really drunk aren’t as attractive in my mind,” -25 year old, sales representative.

A woman’s dress, attitude, and demeanor gives insights to male competitors as to what they might be looking for that particular night. Other clues into a woman’s psyche include the particular type of alcohol she is consuming that night. In this context, men’s opinions about women tend to be sexual. While women who are dressed more “scandalously” are viewed as sexually loose, women who choose to dress a little more conservatively are still viewed as pieces of meat to many men, but with a little bit of higher regard. This shows that while talking to a woman exposes more of her
personality, men will make their decisions on which woman to talk too based on her appearance and attitude.

Although men and women affirm going to drinking establishments for the same reasons, men seem to centralize around the social aspect of meeting potential mates. This might be due to the lowered inhibitions of female patrons, where females are seen as a sport in the competition with other males for their attention. These women are viewed as socially promiscuous based on their alcohol consumption, appearance, and conduct. Given the main reasoning behind male interest in drinking establishments, their views of women in the same environment tend to be negative and view the females as less of a person, even if their actions mirror the males. Women are seen to be immoral if they are talking to too many males, promiscuous if they are wearing too revealing of clothing, and wicked if they are intoxicated; while men are viewed as masculine if they are intoxicated and an alpha male if they are chatting up more females than other men. These double standards are upheld by the men in bars, but also by women who judge their own competition, other females, in the same manner or even more harshly.

Even though males might view sexually promiscuous females in a negative manner, they still gravitate towards them in hopes for a sexual encounter. And while females generalize going out to socialize with friends or to dance, men will still judge them based on their sexual interest. “Men over sexualize women following brief interactions” (Levesque, Nave, & Lowe, 2006), with little other personal qualities noticed. Females attributed other characteristics such as personality, humor, and character after only a few minutes of socializing with someone of the opposite gender;
while men concentrated on more sexual aspects related to physical features and sexual willingness, and would rate said females in the same manner to gauge which females have the most promising chance of a sexual encounter. This shows that men have a stronger feeling towards sexual activities, especially when at a drinking establishment.

With males having a strong interest in sexual encounters, some imply that any type of female communication is her showing sexual interest, while that is rarely the case. Men will take ambiguous cues, both verbal and nonverbal as inferring sexual interest. These actions might be as small as a slight glance across the bar to an unintentional physical touch in a crowded area. “It seems reasonable to argue that men use physical appearance as a cue for inferences of a sexual nature (Levesque, Nave, & Lowe, 2006). Males in Levesque’s study tended to rate their female partners as more sexual that the women rated the males. However, this was based on multiple thoughts that went through a woman’s mind while conversing with a male. Things such as smoothness and being able to hold a conversation were taken into account, while the males used physical attractiveness and willingness for sexual encounters as their main factors for rating females. This could possibly be based on the suggestion that “socialization practices, may discourage women from expressing sexual interest; women are evaluated more negatively than men for engaging in equivalent sexual behavior” (Levesque, Nave, & Lowe, 2006).

So while men may think of females as strictly sexual beings, the women will suppress their same desires, even though they judge men in just the same way.

Throughout a previous collegiate study of mine, I asked participants what they were first
attracted to in a potential mate. Men’s responses automatically went to physical details such as breasts or buttocks. Female’s typically responded by answering personality.

This was not the usual answer for all women interviewed, but seems to be the go to answer for women who didn’t want to seem too promiscuous. This gave them a sense of not paying attention to physical details, but instead seeming to be interested in the less sexual characteristics, even though it is difficult to determine a person’s personality from across a crowded room. These double standards are held throughout society however, with the setting of drinking establishments, where everyone is in competition with each other for sexual conquests. Women will uphold the very double standards that force them to hold back their sexual intentions, based on the negative connotation associated with those actions; even though women have reported having the same amount of sexual interest as males. These gender differences are what make drinking establishments such a captivating research topic. Seeing how each person in the conversation reacts to the other, being able to analyze what is going on in the other person’s mind while in the conversation, and watching the final outcome after all of the formalities are out of the way. While the gender differences are obvious throughout the conversation, it is captivating to witness all of the gender specific roles in place.
Social Interactions

“Do you have a Band-Aid? Because I just scraped my knee falling for you.”

-Anonymous

Gender differences do not only involve the consumption aspect of bar culture, these differences exist to a greater extent when observing social interactions, both when going out in groups or meeting someone of the opposite sex. Throughout the duration of the night in any particular bar, there are numerous amounts of these interactions occurring, which is one basis for the bar existing in the first place. Drinking establishments such as bars and clubs were made for people to interact while enjoying the availability of alcohol. In current day, many of these social interactions involve males and females, perhaps meeting for the first time due to the idea of socializing being a main attraction. The social interactions I am referring to entail males and females conversing, large groups of patrons socializing, or any other aspect of socialization in a public context with another or group. These interactions may involve flirting, buying drinks, dancing, or just having a casual conversation. All of these ideas contribute to the popularity of bars due to the idea that bars with a large crowd attract more customers opposed to those with only a few patrons.

Many studies focused around the idea of males and females meeting in a bar setting and the factors that can be part of that process. The majority of these studies establish the males as the more aggressive and sexual people in these social interactions. While females may go out to the bars with friends in a large group, to dance together or celebrate an occasion, men have been stated that their main reason for going to bars is to
find female companionship, whether for the night or a long term relationship. Since the men are expected to be the initiator in social situations, they have adapted different abilities to establish their dominance, and have also adapted their priorities while in natural drinking settings. Glenwick, Jason, and Elman discuss the idea of “idealistic versus realistic” (Glenwick, Jason, & Elman, 1978). This demonstrates the thought process in the male mind as they decide which person to attempt contact with. The idealistic views contain ideas of who the men would like to talk to and possibly go home with, but they also accept the realistic truth of who they actually have a chance with. “Men expect a greater probability of rejection from attractive women than from unattractive women” (Glenwick, Jason, & Elman, 1978).

Nevertheless, the range of the actions these men take in achieving their goal goes from innocently flirting and talking, to grabbing and making sexual remarks to or with females. Many of these social interactions can be brought back to the central idea of the infamous “pick-up line,” a conversation started with implied meanings. Whether men initially approach a female by buying a drink or touching any part of a female’s body, there has to be the opening line and conversation somewhere to initiate the interaction. Different ways in which men advance in conversation towards a woman are categorized as “flippant lines, direct lines, and innocuous lines,” according to Corwin Senko and Viviana Fyffe (Senko & Fyffe, 2010). Their study on pick-up lines focuses on which type of conversation starter works more efficiently and effectively, ranking the previous types of pick-up lines.
“Flippant” lines are those that could be used to create humor such as, “Are your legs tired, because you’ve been running through my mind all day!” However, some men who use these lines find a small amount of humor in them, and actually believe that they work while attracting females. “Direct” lines convey interest with sincerity and flattery. Examples include, “It took a lot of courage for me to approach you, so can I at least ask your name?” Finally “innocuous” lines aim to start a conversation with a casual question, which is found to be mostly widely used based on the idea of less chance of rejection from the beginning. An example of an innocuous line would be, “Where are you from? I haven’t seen you here before” (Senko & Fyffe, 2010).

Senko and Fyffe (2010) found that women saw flippant and direct lines to be less flattering, even though the line might involve the girl’s beauty or demeanor. Since so many males believe that these lines actually do work when trying to engage into a conversation with a female, they become overused and pathetic to women. On the other hand, the type of line used is not the only factor in whether a woman responds to his attempts or not. Instead, factors such as confidence level, personality, and physical attractiveness contribute to the overall success of the male engaging the female in conversation. Women in this study described that while seeking a male partner, they analyze whether the male is for a long or short-term relationship. They used the term “good dad,” to define a male that seems “willing to stay committed long-term to the family” (Senko & Fyffe, 2010); which would obviously be used by a female companion looking for more than a one night fling. Nevertheless, these attributes might add to a male’s chance of sweeping her off her feet, but it all comes down to the opening line and
meeting with one another. Despite the fact that these situations for women to analyze were fictional, and were told to imagine a scenario involving certain characteristics; they still show statistical worth.

While pickup lines might be the most common way of meeting someone in a bar or nightclub setting, it is not the only way. Other methods are more socially forward and somewhat aggressive, while others are shy attempts at gaining the attention of another. For instance, “Moore (1985) identified 52 different nonverbal courtship patterns employed by women in a singles club setting” (Huber & Herold, 2006). Women might not start a conversation with a male counterpart, but there might be slight hints to the male that the female is interested in something more than looking. Clues to the male might be as slight as a head turn or a special look from the female, less subtle moves such as dancing or leaning in towards the male, or the type of clothing the female is wearing might give males ideas of what she is intending. Different strategies used by females to gain the attention of males might include the way they dress, using eye contact, flipping of hair, or using suggestive stance to engage the male. Whatever the case may be, many studies have discovered that the male is the one who is expected to initiate the conversation, even if the female begins the flirting or initial contact. While these instances are not common for all locations or situations, they are particular to natural drinking environments.

In these over-sexualized examples, people tend to be more sexually overt with less hidden intentions behind their different flirting techniques. The idea of different behaviors in different settings is proven by R. Parker’s account of carnival in Brazil in
which “people engaged in sexual behavior and public displays of sexuality that they would not have outside of the carnival context” (Huber & Herold, 2006). This is also apparent when considering Mardi Gras in New Orleans, where women’s inhibitions are lowered, mainly due to a combination of intoxication and the general expectation that otherwise lewd and lascivious behavior is widely regarded as ‘normal’, and they decide to expose themselves to the general public, all for a set of plastic jewelry beads. “Sixty-three percent of males and 28% of females reported anticipating ahead of time meeting someone with whom to have sex” (Huber & Herold, 2006). This statistic helps to understand why people tend to view drinking establishments and culturally sanctioned celebrations or festivals as likely places to seek potential sexual partners. It is equally clear that among women respondents at least, the vast majority did not indicate such expectations.

Two female college newspaper writers, Florice and Schnyder, described that while walking around a bar they repeatedly complained of being groped by men and “feeling like overripe produce.” However, with the majority of females being involved in these behaviors, just brushing these actions off is no big deal; “these examples imply that sexually overt approaches have become accepted behaviors certain singles bar settings” (Huber & Herold, 2006). These actions shows the progression of interaction in a bar setting from harmless pickup lines to sexual “grinding” (close dancing, mainly genital to genital areas) on the dance floor and groping. However, another study took place in pubs or lounges, smaller, quieter establishments, typically more laid back and place to have a conversation with little or no dancing, that gave differences in the environment, therefore
determining which actions are deemed appropriate and not. From the results of this study, it can be seen that these sexually overt approaches to the opposite sex were not apparent at all in pubs of lounges, but instead only took place in a nightclub setting with music and a dance floor.

Sexual advances are a touchy subject. While some feel that within certain environments, it is socially acceptable, other consider the acts of sexual aggression unnecessary and uncalled for in any circumstance. However, the norms within such establishments being ambiguous and unclear, it is tough to determine what is acceptable. This leads to an “anything goes” type of feeling for some customers, but not all. While the interpersonal aggression is often heightened in drinking establishments due to intoxication, people use bars and clubs as a place to connect with others. Nevertheless, when alcohol is involved, interactions can become aggressive and even violent, especially when involving two members of the opposite sex. Males have a large amount of pressure when initiating conversations in bars, and one consequence may be aggression toward those deemed insufficiently responsive. “The initiator may react aggressively if made to feel embarrassed or rejected by a blunt refusal,” (Graham, Wells, Bernards, & Dennison, Summer 2010). While emotional harm is one form of psychological damage, mainly caused by rejection, physical fights also occur, as do sexual assaults.

Competition between men leads to aggression within a drinking establishment, where every other male is considered an opposition to their goal of meeting a potential mate. Males contending with other males are fueled more so by the
influence of alcohol and believing that he is a manlier man than anyone else; “Testosterone by the glass” (Graham, Wells, Bernards, & Dennison, Summer 2010). This show of macho bravery is especially demonstrated when there is a third party involved in the bar room aggression. Graham, Wells, Bernards, and Dennison observed an instance in which a male was in a bar with friends attempting to talk to females, until they crossed the line with one particular female who in turn pointed out her boyfriend who was observing the entire debacle. When the male who was perusing the female was confronted by the boyfriend, the event escalated into a street brawl. With members of opposing parties dispersing or sitting on the ground bloody, the bar staff treated it like any other occurrence they encounter nightly. While this action might be considered normal and acceptable within a drinking environment, it is not so much so accepted in day-to-day society.

These demonstrated social interactions are observed within the confines of a drinking establishment, and are not actually accepted by most in other settings or situations. Touching any part of a female in public could be considered a crime and sexual assault, depending on the situation. Why is it socially accepted in a bar or club? Do people go to these establishments based on the lowered inhibitions caused by alcohol, where these unacceptable behaviors are viewed as no big deal? Such businesses are built for social interaction, and encourage some actions by providing an atmosphere of loud music, a large dance floor, and a large quantity of alcohol. While such actions are not accepted by all, there is a level of understanding when partaking in such venues with
alcohol present. However, this lack of clean and unified boundaries in such establishments leads to many aggressive altercations.

Qualitative Research

You may have heard the world is made up of atoms and molecules, but it's really made up of stories. When you sit with an individual that's been here, you can give quantitative data a qualitative overlay

-William Turner

The social and behavioral sciences can take part in both quantitative and qualitative research; however, qualitative data answers the “why” question of social phenomena. Marilyn Engstrom, a late sociology professor at the University of Redlands, always forced her classes to ask, “WHY?!” Why do people act the way they do in society? Why do people conform to social norms? Why are people the way they are? Answering these questions became an issue of understanding people’s stories. The students never had a concrete set of questions, instead they had to ask in an interview, but instead would simply ask someone in an in depth interview, “Please, tell me your story.” While this lengthy method of research might not always be the prevalent way to handle an interview, it certainly shows the importance of qualitative research on social sciences, by understanding the “why” of everything; we can grow to learn the more detailed facts behind behaviors.

Qualitative research benefits the social sciences due to the fact that it should take place in a natural environment, instead of a laboratory or manufactured setting. Observing people in their natural setting gives information on how people typically act,
instead of how they react to being in different surroundings. While qualitative discoveries might be discredited by more scientific communities based on the idea that the findings are not generalizable, and differ in unlike situations. These changes in culture are what make societies interesting, and the ever changing aspects of society always give new topics of research for social scientists. With these ever changing cultural norms, observational data helps stay on top of the shifting social norms. However, the irregular characteristics of society prove that qualitative methods, with its non-generalizable facts; is the way to analyze social phenomena.

I am demonstrating the necessity for qualitative research in the social sciences, and how each type of research differs from the other. With this information, I will show the need for qualitative research in my particular topic, by demonstrating that the criteria previous studies have set forth for such research, fit hand in hand with my own personal experiences throughout this project. The main characteristic of qualitative data involves the answering of the question, “Why?” And I plan on using this information in the answering of my research question, why do people go to drinking establishments; focusing my research on the area within a college town.

While a portion of qualitative research may contain some statistics, it centralizes around explaining information in words; going back to the central idea of answering the question of “why instead of how many” (Meadows, 2003). When deciding which type of research is prevalent to one’s research, there have been reoccurring themes discovered in qualitative data which include; 1) use little standardized instrumentation, 2) an entire view of the context being studies instead of dissecting it into different smaller
categories, 3) capture individuals perceptions from the inside, participant observations, and 4) use words to analyze collected data. These common aspects of qualitative research demonstrate when such research should be conducted. Key pieces of information should focus on meanings and attitudes throughout a culture, as well as experiences and views from those involved in such communities.

Some information used within qualitative research is observations, interviews, and previous documents. These different methods help with demonstrating a particular topic within a natural setting, giving a real life look at how people interact with one another within a specific setting. However, the necessity of a natural environment is a central theme throughout qualitative data. Manufactured settings or scenarios gives sense of quantitative, and change the outcome of person’s experiences and feelings towards certain aspects of the research. Instead, interviews with a natural environment give an insight into the current mindset of the person being interviewed, which in turn gives true data into the human thinking process. In-depth interviews are also the core method in qualitative research, giving the researcher the most amount of personal information from a subject. While conducting this interview, the researcher should be, “flexible, interactive, and responsive” (Meadows, 2003). Any minor questions or comments, such as “go on,” “why?” or “please describe that more,” will still keep the interview going at a pace where information is still coming from the participant, with just a slight nudge from the interviewer.

Group discussions and interviews also give a better understanding of how groups feel about a certain topic. While this might be damaging to certain topics, due to
the idea of people reporting false data in order to fit in with the rest of the group, other topics, such as television ratings or census and focus groups, might benefit greatly from this method, depending on if the researcher is focused on people or a person. Focus groups used by larger companies for product review show how the people will react to release of that particular product. But the individual interview might give a more in depth sense of the product, by knowing exactly what someone would prefer, instead of the broad ideas a larger group might have. However, while a researcher should be very interactive within a personal interview, they should intervene as little as possible within a group discussion, and allow the group to flow and formulate their own ideas without persuading them in any certain direction. As well as in-depth interviews, participants for group discussions should be chosen carefully on which people will help give information into the topic at hand. Ranging from all age groups, ethnicities, gender, and all subgroups to give a full range of information including all opinions.

These methods of qualitative research centralize around the idea of an inductive method, meaning that conclusions and findings are driven directly from the data. With this, one must remember to not draw any conclusions until all research is completed, and the analysis is taking place; this includes personal opinions or accounts. Results should involve a full immersion into the research by re-reading all information, and simplifying all notes from interviews, group discussions, and observations. While qualitative data is typically text based data, some research may include charts and graphs to prove a necessary point, but should still centralize on text. Keith Meadows (2003) demonstrates that all qualitative data should be reviewed to make sure the following
information is contained within the research: 1) credibility; “do the findings make sense? Are they credible to the people we study?” 2) Transferability; Are results transferable to other research? How far can they be generalized?” 3) Dependability; “Is the process of research stable over time? Did the research include a full range of settings and respondents?” and finally, 4) Conformability; “Is the research free from researcher bias? “ Throughout all of this, all research in qualitative studies should be well documented, including all interviews, relevant to the research or not, the information can be omitted at the time of the results.

Ronald J. Chenail, states that in today’s research world, there is a clear definition of when each type of research should be used; a “black and white worldview.” Qualitative studies are most likely exploratory, naturalistic, subjective, inductive ideographic, and descriptive/interpretative and quantitative studies are most likely confirmatory, controlled, objective, deductive, nomothetic, and predictive/explanatory (Chenail, 2011).

With this, Chenial speaks about a new era of qualitative research, in which the field is growing to incorporate researching using this information to address new types of research issues. This is due to the idea of expanding one’s research by integrating multiple methods to prove a research topic in more than one way, being statistical or qualitative. Morse (2006) states that this provides “alternative terms of evidence,” giving more and more support to qualitative research methods. With this, Chenial offers an idea of “pragmatic curiosity,” asking new researchers to explore an array of research methodologies when undertaking a research topic; also demonstrating that new
researchers should consider all aspect of any methodologies to better understand what would benefit the topic at hand.

Throughout his article, Chenial offers ten steps to thoroughly conduct qualitative research, especially by considering his “pragmatic curiosity” approach to the overall research. These steps include, deciding a topic in what interests the researcher, develop the entire research design, and plan, conduct, and manage the study thoroughly. These steps offer a simplistic view at completing a research design for say, a master’s candidacy thesis. By offering new and in depth ways on preparing a research design, Chenial is targeting new researchers, or perhaps researches looking for a new way to demonstrate their information in a different way.

Qualitative research can be used for a multitude of topics and is not limited to the social and behavioral sciences. While other sciences, such as health and medicinal might contain strictly quantitative research, using methods from qualitative research could possibly offer a new insight into otherwise statistical information. By doing so, the information will still maintain is statistical integrity and information, but add a different quality of explanation to the data. While quantitative and qualitative have been viewed and defined as being complete opposites, where researches should maintain a view on one of the other in research, Chenial states that this is the complete opposite of what should be occurring with today’s research. This technique could be considered very useful and powerful in an array of different areas, and vice versa, where social scientists could entertain the idea of statistical information to further demonstrate a relevant and critical aspect to their research.
This information is ideal for the specific study at hand. While achieving a significant number of interviews and proving those answers as relative to the study take some quantitative information, the key information was achieved using qualitative methods, as many ethnographers before have. Becoming part of the nightlife scene, not just as an observer, but as well as a participant, is necessary in achieving a natural look into the bar culture. Interviews gave personal answers into the reasoning behind the popularity of drinking establishments, while observations proved to be most informational when discovering customer’s true behaviors and actions when at such businesses.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Some may see the availability of alcohol as a problem; businesses such as bars and nightclubs see a profit. While the overall goal of these businesses is to make money from the sales of alcohol, there is a large variety of different publicity options, themes, and overall atmosphere that come into play when trying to accomplish this goal. But with the immense availability of this legal drug, why do people choose to go to drinking establishments instead of saving money and purchasing alcohol for a much cheaper price and consuming at home? Why are such recreational businesses booming? Although many believe bars and nightclubs are essential to everyday life, the actuality is that they are not necessarily needed. However, they do serve as an outlet for people to escape the drudgery of their boring or work-filled lives. The aim of this research is to demonstrate the need for such businesses, especially in a college town, where alcohol and partying is seen as a typical aspect of college life. When analyzing the social fascination with these establishments, quantitative methods could prove beneficial; however, with this particular question of why people are so enthralled with the alcohol industry, qualitative methods will serve as the best method in reveling the feelings of the customers and why they choose to go out and spend money.
When given the open opportunity for choosing a research question for a Master’s thesis project, one can be easily stunned with the idea of having such possibilities. However, with such an extensive and varied experience in the social nightlife scene, the research developed itself. While working in a drinking establishment at the time of taking the required classes for a degree, this researcher began to think more in depth of the endless amount of people who are enthralled with the party scene, especially when those parties take place at drinking establishments. Social norms are thrown out of the window, inhibitions are lost with the presence of alcohol, and an entirely different culture is born in drinking establishments. One can act like a complete idiot and let loose with their friends, all the while, blending into the norms present at the bar. Working as a bartender and security staff, this writer has encountered many different types of people, and the best and worst types of behavior in drinking businesses. These occurrences range from huge brawls involving broken bottles and bloody faces, to alcohol poisoning concluding in a trip to the hospital. However, there have also been marriage proposals, birthday celebrations, and new love or friendships. The ever changing social attraction of bars and nightclubs pull in all aspects of life, and change them to their own different genera of memories.

Sensitive topics such as drugs, alcohol, and sex require a thorough investigation of all research. This inquiry may include protecting the identity of people involved, providing information to interviewees to show the purpose of the research and their role in it, and receiving informed consent before their participation in the research. This investigation was done by me and committee members before a final submission
was given to the Human Subjects Department in the graduate studies office. Before giving informed consent for research, each participant was given an explanation of the research and purpose, as well as a description for the necessity of their contribution. As stated on the research description\textsuperscript{5}, there was no reward for participating and no punishment for not. Participant’s information only helped me further my research into the fascination of drinking establishments and why people choose to attend their celebrations nightly. My personal contact information was also given to each interviewee in the case of them wanting to withdraw their information, none of which have done so. The information included an informed consent form\textsuperscript{6} asking for the initials, age, gender, occupation, marital status, and race of each participant. This information was used for research purposes to demonstrate the differences in the enthrallment with drinking establishments. Upon receiving approval for this specific research proposal, investigative studies were conducted in the multiple drinking establishments in the area.

With so many establishments prevalent in a college town, there is a great amount of customers attending every different type of alcohol related businesses, many, being college students. With this immense number of people walking around the downtown scene, finding interviewees was not the challenging part, finding useful information was. The sample was accessed by going out to the very bars and nightclubs

\textsuperscript{5} Appendix A

\textsuperscript{6} Appendix B
being examined, and talking to the customers in each different place. By wanting to get
the opinions of the people who are fascinated with the bars themselves, the best method
to obtaining this information was to become a part of the nightlife scene by going out,
acting like another customer, and observing the customers and staff as a participant.
While doing this, deciding which people would be beneficial to my research was easy to
determine. Considering the age, gender, demeanor, race and intoxication level of the
customers showed me which people would give useful information, which didn’t seem to
want to be bothered, or which were too intoxicated to give any relevant information at all.
This researchers lengthy stint as a bar employee also helped in determining which
customers to interview, based on my ability to determine which customers were overly
intoxicated, and which were just having a good time out at any establishment.
Throughout the various bars, this researcher contacted an entire list bar employee friends
and asked them if they could help out. Each one let this author into the front of the line
and skip the cover charge; this allowed for more time within each establishment, as well
as feeling like a V.I.P.

Throughout the first series of interviews, it was determined that some
information might be exaggerated or incorrect, due to the person’s level of intoxication,
but still did not affect the reliability of responses. With that, came the idea of
interviewing bar going customers outside of the natural environment, and hosting
interviews during the day time at a locations not serving alcohol. This was first done by
talking to customers at drinking establishments, who took place in the initial interview, to
see if they would be willing to sit down and talk the next day. However, this proved to
be very difficult based on the idea that every person interviewed either denied a second, sober interview, or others would simply just not show up, leaving this author stranded at a coffee shop off campus for an extended amount of time, hoping for their arrival. Which this first method of outside of bar interviews failed, this student researcher contacted a professor on campus and asked if it would be okay for to come in and see if any of his students would be willing to participate in the sober interviews. A long list of students signed up, totaling almost 100 willing participants, along with a few emails from students not in class. However, this once again proved to be more difficult that originally intended; especially when only twelve of those students showed up to interviews held on campus, for 3 hours, every day for a week.

Each person interviewed at the bar was assumed to be of the legal drinking age based on the door staff checking each customer’s identification upon entering the business, and each participant in the sober interviews had their identification checked by this researcher before the interview began. Even though this author is trained in checking identification, doing so before each interview at the bar would prove to be a waste of time, and take away from the interviewee’s attention span; which was already limited given the atmosphere where the interviews were taking place. However, there didn’t seem to be a rush for completing the sober interviews, and all participants were ready to sit and converse for a much longer period than those in the bars. With this, no person under the legal drinking age of twenty one was interviewed for this research. Each door staff employee and establishment manager was notified of the intentions of the study upon entering each business, showing them both a research proposal and the questions to
be used in my interviews. None of the employees were hesitant; they were instead intrigued by the research. However, some bar managers were cautious of impeding on their business by temporarily distracting customers from enjoying the establishment. However, once the managers saw the questions being asked, they all approved of this researcher’s presence and research in their business.

The large number of customers on any given night demonstrated that the initial goal of interviewing twenty customers was too miniscule. By rising the number to ninety-two this researcher achieved interviews with all ages present in the bar, both genders, all races, and varied my research from business to business; interviewing three to seven people in each place. However, since sex only has two categories, age was a main concern, especially since most customers were college students. The common ages were 21-26, but the goal was to discoverer everyone’s reasoning for going out to bars, not college students, so taking the widest range of ages was necessary. This also helped obtain useful information since many participants who had just turned 21 or 22 were too intoxicated to give any relevant information and treated my research as a joke, in which case the interview was ended and only the little bit of information gathered was used.

During the process of completing this research proposal and submitting it to the Human Subject Research Board, as required for any research involving human participants, multiple meetings with graduate advisors and committee members were held to develop research questions and determine the best steps to take in research. Throughout previous research into this topic, it was discovered that the main aspect behind these businesses for customers was to socialize or become intoxicated. The time
frame in which this researcher had to complete these interviews inside of drinking establishments was limited, based solely on the participant’s attention span. With this in mind, the questions used to obtain the most information with the smallest amount of time were developed. These questions were limited to two main ones, with a few follow up questions attached, based on the participants response.

Participants were first asked what the main reasoning was for them deciding to come out to the nightlife scene in the first place on that particular night, which was then followed up by why they chose that particular establishment. Previous research demonstrated that there would be a few common responses to this question, so the follow up questions were based on these following responses:

1) What is the main reason that brought you out to the bar tonight?
   a. Meet potential mates
      i. Why do you chose to do this at a bar or nightclub?
      ii. What are your techniques used for achieving this goal?
   b. Dance
      i. With whom to you intend to dance with?
      ii. Is this used in a practice for obtaining a potential mate?
   c. Drink/Become intoxicated
      i. Why do you plan on getting intoxicated?
      ii. Did you take place in “pre-gaming?” (Drinking at home before going out)
   d. Escape
      i. What are you escaping from?
   e. Promotion (Special Event, Discount Night, Band, Holiday)
      i. What is the specific promotion for the night? (Easily seen by advertising in the establishment)
   f. Other
      i. Describe your reasoning for going out to a drinking establishment

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7 Appendix C
2) Do you frequent drinking establishments?
   a. Yes
      i. How often?
      ii. What is the main reason (if any) for usually going out?
      iii. Do you have a different opinion of people who do not go our regularly or at all?
   b. No
      i. Why do you choose not to go out?
      ii. Do you have a different opinion of those who go out frequently?

These questions were designed to hold the participants attention span for a limited amount of time, which was still not short enough for some customers; while also obtaining the most amount of information necessary to answer the initial research question. While the anticipated response would be to socialize, the questions had to remain brief to not interfere with the natural environment or the attitude of the participant. The goal was to catch people in the natural bar or nightclub environment which is centered on alcohol and socialization. Asking elongated and in depth questions would deter from that environment and cause participants to become easily distracted or frustrated with the duration of the interview; however, with the brief set of questions used, participants were eager to participate and shocked when they realized that not much time was used for the interview.

Sober interviews, interviews outside of the nightlife scene, were held in a similar manner with some differences. The same questions were asked to students participating in sober interviews, but were instead asked to expand on their answers, by giving reasoning behind their explanations and details in which they use to justify their time out at drinking establishments. After the initial questions had been asked, a casual
conversation took place about the nightlife scene and their particular feelings toward it and other participants in nightly activities. These casual conversations were much easier to have in a quieter atmosphere with fewer distractions, and also let to more insightful information about the mindset of bar going customers, especially those who are still in college and many of which had just recently turned 21, the legal age for admittance to drinking establishments.

Upon entering each establishment, an initial observation was taken noting the population within the business, gender ratio, capacity, race, and general atmosphere of the bar or nightclub. Analyzing the atmosphere of each business gave a better perspective into what each different bar of nightclub was trying to achieve; whether it was based on the music being played, the volume of the music, decorations placed throughout the establishment, or the different types of people present. The capacity present established the popularity of the business, taking into account the atmosphere, and which social clique that particular establishment was aiming to gain business from. Throughout research, a multitude of different establishments were used in observations and interviews, ranging from a small downtown bar, with a limited amount of space and seating, to an enormous night club with a large dance floor, multiple station bar, and a capacity soaring up to the 500 person mark.

The notes taken during observations were taken as a participant in the nightlife scene. While some characteristics were observed as a researcher, becoming part of the nightlife scene to gain a better feel for the atmosphere within each establishment was necessary. Becoming part of the scene and achieving the mindset of a bar going
customer was easily achieved given the researcher’s lengthy employment at such businesses, and given the fact that this writer is still in the age group associated with most customers in each business. While this researcher did not take part in the consumption of alcohol while conducting research, time was spent observing as a regular bar customer. Qualitative research implies the necessity for participant observation to preserve the natural setting and mindset of persons involved in the research. However, the researcher inside had to take over when deciding which customers would be chosen to participate in this study.

Delicate measures were taken when participants were being selected for participation in this study, including intoxication levels, demeanor, and current level of socialization. Customers who were too intoxicated would either be too easily distracted or not be able to give any clear information; depending on the level of intoxication, some participants might not be able to be understood. If customers seemed to be in a bad mood, or carried themselves as someone who didn’t want to be bothered, they were not selected to participate in the study. Also, if the customer(s) were already involved in a conversation or, in the case of a male and female, on a date, this author let the conversation come to an end while observing other customers, then determined if they might want to take part in the research. All of these careful measurements of each person’s willingness to participate helped determine which would give a significant and constructive insight into the fascination with drinking establishments. Even though some of the observations in determining which customers would prove beneficial were completely incorrect, their information gave more insight into the research question be
providing a variety of responses from all different characters within each bar. Customers who choose to participate in interviews despite their intoxication level demonstrated an extremely talkative nature, while trying to justify and explain their reasoning for being intoxicated, and how they were feeling at the moment and throughout the rest of their time in drinking establishments.

Deciding which information would be useful in analysis was always problematic when intoxicated participants chose to partake in the research. While these types of customers were not sought after for information, due to the reliability of their responses, there was usually at least one person in a group who was much more intoxicated than the others. And while they were not specifically asked to participate, they signed the informed consent form like their friends, and tried to express their opinions, despite shushing from their sober counterparts. Even if alcohol was a factor in the interviews and participant intoxication level wasn’t at its lowest point, information used was valid and relevant. While some believe that intoxicated responses should be invalid, the social belief is that many people are more honest when inebriation has taken over and inhibitions are lowered. Those under the influence of alcohol are typically not concerned with the feelings of others or the repercussions of their answers.

The initial number of participants sought was twenty, which quickly changed to fifty once research throughout drinking establishments began. However, that number changed once again when a central theme of socializing was encountered during numerous interviews. Even though responses began to repeat and answers for presence at drinking establishments centered on the same themes, more interviews was needed to
demonstrate the importance and attraction of such business. This number of ninety-two is more than enough information was obtained to show a response for the reasoning behind societal fascination with bars and nightclubs. This number changed throughout research and continued to increase to demonstrate the varying or lack thereof in responses. The surveys were random and conducted with a multitude of different customers to gain a variety of opinions to find the real ideas behind society’s views of night clubs and bars.

After observations and interviews concluded throughout a diverse array of businesses, analysis began to be the simplest part of research. The previous sections were based on other’s research into different topics of interest, while analyzing the research for this project was held with no previous opinions or statistics. While this research was aimed at being strictly qualitative, most information will contain a semi-quantitative aspect to give a statistical reference when understanding information presented throughout the duration of research. However, analyzing the information produced during research will stay consistent with qualitative qualities, just as the research focused on. Discovering the results of this information will be done by re-reading and analyzing notes taken during interviews, as well as observations taken during time as a participant in the nightlife scene.

Information gathered throughout research will centralize on responses from business to business; responses for the main reasoning behind frequenting drinking establishments, and separated by the regularity of respondent’s attendance to such businesses. Categorizing the information into these different groups will demonstrate the information with the most amount of relevancy and validity, while still demonstrating the
differences between participants lifestyles and mindsets behind the bar industry. The goal of the research is to discover the societal fascination with drinking establishments, focusing on people instead of the person, so dividing respondents into different categories too much might draw away from the social importance of the responses. However, age plays such a key factor in reasoning for attending such establishments, it is a hard type of group to not discuss, especially when certain businesses focus their advertisements and promotions to certain ages; i.e. college students.

Analyzing the information gathered has to flow in a certain manner in which all varied ages, races, occupations, and genders are represented, which was a main concern when conducting the interviews. Although refraining from categorizing too much might prove problematic, focusing on society as a whole can be simplified by focusing on the typical responses, and attributing some to those factors in which people commonly agree upon as their reasoning. While the mind of a person is astounding and interesting, the focus of this research focuses on people and what societal factors urge people to go to such alcohol based establishments to escape the nature of their everyday life. With this fundamental understanding of human nature and how people act in a society, and as stated before, qualitative methods are a central theme throughout research and analysis of the question at hand. These qualitative methods will lead to the best demonstration of information found during research.
Establishments centered around alcohol and intoxication present themselves as a place where social norms go out the window; where people can express and enjoy themselves, within the confines of the law, but with less regard of offending someone, or behaving like a fool. Drinking establishments contain their own set of rules and regulations, which differ from everyday life in a variety of ways. This separate culture is what defines drinking establishments and their ability to entertain at any level necessary. They are the center for popular culture, new clothing trends and music, as well as a place to consume alcohol and socialize. When people go out to the trendy new bar in a popular, busy city, they want to show off their new fashion or the disk jockey wants to play that brand new song; both done to gain acceptance or popularity. This theme of a pop culture scene is evident everywhere, based on the different type of people present in each establishment. Every bar or club has the “trendy” customers, trying to express themselves with the latest thing on the market.

With living in a college town, comes a sense of partying and socialization differing from some other social scenes. Living in certain areas of town present loud and intoxicated college students, enjoying their time of not being viewed as “alcoholics,” but instead “typical college students;”
I rented a house in between the downtown bars and the bars near the fraternity houses. I don’t have to worry about driving home after a few drinks or trying to have my friends over before we go out. I have a central location, and love having a place to party in the central hub of campus.

-Bar employee/customer

However, is it socially acceptable to consume more alcohol that average just because of a person’s age? Well in this particular college city, it is absolutely acceptable, and socially expected from people of that same age group. And while majorities of drinking establishments such as bars and clubs throughout this small town concentrate their advertising and atmosphere to attract these college students, others focus on an older crowd, all the while still fixed on the sale of alcohol. These establishments vary in pricing, but still amount to paying more for drinks at a bar rather than buying from a store and consuming at home. So why in such a rough economic state, do people choose to spend money at frivolous establishments on overpriced alcoholic drinks? Socialization.

Drinking at home is associated with alcoholism, which most people seem to not want to be labeled with. However, consuming copious amounts of alcohol at a bar or club are socially acceptable, and sometimes, a main reasoning for going to such an establishment in the first place, based on multiple interviews. When asked why a particular group of younger college students decided to come out, they replied with, “We were bored at home and didn’t feel like doing any more work, so we went out to catch the game and drink.”- 21 year old male student. Nonetheless, while alcohol is a central attraction in bars, multiple motives were discovered while researching the social fascination with drinking establishments. These explanations range from escaping day to day lives, dancing, special events, and of course, intoxication. One prime example of
these customers escaping reality is the gentleman who was out with his family and planned on “calling in sick” the day after to be able to stay out longer. While some participants had a defensive attitude when asked why they chose to go out to drinking establishments, their information provided a more detailed insight to the thinking of someone who frequents such establishments on a regular basis.

There were a few customers who were at some of the smaller bar used in observations, that were sitting alone and only socializing with the staff of the bar. One of these customers was interested in the survey, but then began taking the conversation in his own way. This included him asking multiple questions, which began to seem somewhat accusing. “Why do you care about people who go out to drink? Why are you bothering people who are trying to have fun?” These questions took the interview down a negative road, and demonstrated the affects alcohol can have on ones behavior after much abuse. Considering that alcoholism holds a negative connotation, customers who were deemed to be defensive when asked about the frequency of their bar visits, seemed to fall under the category of a typical “problem drinker.”

The younger participants were observed in louder establishments, with cheap drinks and a large dance floor. Some of these participants stated that they were out on certain nights because they can be. While this might be due to the fact that they do not have a class early in the morning or a job to go to, some used this reasoning because they had just turned twenty one, the legal age for admittance to drinking establishments. “Class is cancelled tomorrow, and my writing assignment isn’t due until Friday,” was an excuse one student used on their Wednesday night out. Another student enthusiastically
stated “I scheduled my classes to end on Thursday, so I have a 3 day weekend every week!” Even though the main concentration of school is to become educated, others use it as a time to party. While they were out enjoying their time, their under aged roommates or friends were stuck at home, most likely begging their twenty one year old friends to buy them alcohol before they go out. These newly legal customers felt some entitlement because they were new to the night life scene, and needed to be the center of attention by being loud and intoxicated, but they were treated just like every other person at the bar.

I just turned 21 2 weeks ago, and have been out almost every night since, because I finally can. One roommate always comes out, but the other isn’t 21 yet, we like to rub it in that we can go out and he can’t.

-Newly 21 year old, male, student

While there were varying ages in each establishment observed, the tendency for younger customers, usually college aged of 21-26, was to act like moths and run to the loudest club with the brightest lights. This was observed on multiple nights where establishments offered very cheap discounted drinks, pricing all the way down to 25 cents a drink. This “power hour” themed promotion, which is based on a drinking game in which people took a shot of beer once a minute for an hour, drew in an entirely college aged crowd, with a few outliners who were just trying to fit in with the young kids. Other businesses offered “buck nights,” where drinks were discounted to one dollar each; or a night where a pitcher of any type of alcoholic drink cost only five dollars. Promotions such as this focus their attention to a younger crowd, who typically has a smaller budget than someone working full time.
Power hour starts in 45 minutes, but we came early to wait at the bar. We usually just have a few beers and some food while we hang out. When the bell rings, everyone rushes to the bar to take advantage of the 25 cent drinks, so it is usually better to come early and save a few seats.

-22 year old, male, student

The particular student had recently turned 22, and was accustomed to the traditions of power hour at this local bar. With the easy and cheap access to alcohol, recently twenty-one year olds, new to the bar scene, use these times to consume as much alcohol as they can within the allotted time frame for the promotion. While this may seem beneficial to the customer, employees such as door staff or security focus their attention to these over intoxicated customers, and ask them to leave the establishment when their intoxication has hit an unsafe limit.

From this researcher’s time as a security employee at multiple drinking establishments, the staff was taught the alcohol policies and enforcement laws based on ABC (Alcoholic Beverage Control); which is a federal and state level enforcement agency. This was done through numerous training classes as well as face to face meetings with ABC officials on the scene. The aim of these courses was to enlighten bar staff on the law of alcohol, especially in reference to intoxication levels. While bars and clubs serving alcohol focus their business on the sale of alcohol, once a customer’s hits a certain level of obvious over intoxication, it is the security staffs duty to remove the customers for the safety of others, as well as the customer and the well-being of the establishments. While different states have varying levels of legal BAC (Blood Alcohol Content) to operate a vehicle, these are not tested in bars and physical actions are the only
judgment staff has to go on. This may range from aggressive behavior, slurring speech, or inability to walk straight or stand up. While being intoxicated in a bar or club is tolerated, a fine line is drawn in which such actions are allowed.

While each of these businesses aimed to please a certain group of people, all variations of customers were present in almost all of them. At the small downtown pub, ages ranged from 21 to 40, while the busy nightclub aimed at college students, with loud music and bright flashing lights, contained customers into their 50’s. However, the general atmosphere of the business wasn’t the only determinate in which people chose to go to that particular establishment. Different social classes and age groups were present at many of the establishments used in this research. While some businesses were aimed at the college crowd, certain attributions drew in different crowds on particular nights. Whether this is a discounted drink night, holiday, or special event taking place at the time of interviews. Some parents were enjoying a night out with their college aged children, and forced them to go to a bar in which they normally would not go to if it wasn’t for their children being present with them.

Taking a ratio of customer’s gender, which was typically more males to females, except on ladies night, into account assisted in determining if each business was used as a place for picking up a potential mate, which included the observing the ratio throughout the bar; but a main determinate was the population on the dance floor, if there was one available.
## Sex

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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>43 (46.7%)</td>
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## Occupation

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<td>Students</td>
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<td>Full Time Employees</td>
<td>46 (50%)</td>
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## Age

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<tr>
<td>21-26 (College Age)</td>
<td>58 (63%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>27-35</td>
<td>24 (26%)</td>
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<td>35 and above</td>
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## Race

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<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>37 (40.2%)</td>
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<td>African American</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not Available (First set of interviews)</td>
<td>34 (36.9%)</td>
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## Relationship Status

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<td>Single</td>
<td>69 (75%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>11 (11.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (In a relationship or N/A)</td>
<td>12 (13%)</td>
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While larger dance clubs were used for this reason by using the dance floor for the sexualized nature of music being played, quieter and smaller businesses proved to be most beneficial if the connection of the customers was based on socialization and getting to know one another, mainly “first date” type of establishments. The larger over sexualized establishments proved to be populated with customers looking for a one night fling, instead of a meaningful relationship. This was demonstrated by the sexual dancing, intoxication levels, and responses from customers in such establishments. Typically this nature was exhibited more by male customers, which was discovered by the multitude of men using derogatory names for females, or flat out stating their intention for the night. “I just broke up with my girlfriend, and need to get laid. This is the easiest place to meet girls,” (even though a more offensive word was used). This particular male was observed throughout the bar trying different tactics to meeting women, but none of which were successful until the end of the night with intoxication levels were at a high and inhibitions were at a low. This was mainly shown by the nature of dancing on the dance floor and the attire of the customers present. Girls wearing more reveling clothing were generally only present in these larger establishments, while more “classy” dressed females were in the smaller bars, concentrating on socialization. “Classy” being defined by the participants as not being over intoxicated, scantily dressed college females, but instead acting more mature and therefore “classy,” at least in their opinions.

Not all participants fit into the expected gender roles however; a few females who participated in the interview process were using their time out as an escape from their dull lives, and demonstrated such by taking multiple shots of tequila throughout the
interview, asking me to join a few times as well. A set of three females, the “classy bitches,” meaning not over intoxicated or loosely dressed college students, were forcing themselves to achieve the “anything goes” mentality of nightlife and alcohol consumption, to enjoy their time out on the town. “The college kids downtown are always rude and touchy, we try to avoid those places,” they also stated that:

We usually stay in more mature places on the off chance that we run into one of our student’s parents. We don’t want to have a negative ‘party girl’ reputation when we have professional lives. I teach elementary school and I know I won’t run into any students, but still worry about how their parents view me.

-30 year old, female, elementary teacher.

This was done with a lot of alcohol which lowered their inhibitions, causing them to be very talkative, flirtatious, and to have a very large smile at all times during the interview. They didn’t think that they had achieved the “party girl” status, but were intoxicated and not acting as “classy” as they had stated. It is still unknown if this particular group of female participants were interested in my study, or if their lowered inhibitions caused them to be interested in this researcher. They were very flirtatious, offering a place to sit on their laps, or casual touching. While this was very flattering, it was also unprofessional with my research, but also very informational. The effects of alcohol could easily be seen, especially with an extensive background in focusing on intoxicated customers.

The theme of lowered inhibitions continued throughout observations, but seemed to concentrate on the female population. While male participants stated that reasoning for going out was to become intoxicated or “get drunk,” or meet a female, they
didn’t state doing so for any particular reason except that they like to drink and be intoxicated. One female responded by stating that she went out to socialize, by meeting up with friends and dancing, and possibly meeting someone. But this was only possible at a bar or club, due to the fact that she was very shy and quiet. “My friends always have to drag me out, but once I go out and start having fun, I enjoy being out.” This particular female, college student, respondent was interviewed two separate times, due to the fact that the first time she was interviewed, she was very unresponsive and shy. However, when a second interview was conducted, she was much more willing to talk to me and participate in the study, which was attributed to the large drink in her hand and empty shot glasses on the table. She then stated that she never really saw herself as someone who would go out a lot, but her friends go out almost four times a week. It seemed as if she was trying to fit in with her friends, and the only way she could do so in a bar, a solely social place was to drink in order to lower her anxieties of social interaction. She was then later observed dancing with friends and different male customers on the dance floor, giving a sense of happiness that she could come out of her shell and enjoy her time out. But, that feeling didn’t last long when she was seen stumbling out of the bar, having to be helped out by her two friends. Another female participant went on to say,

I have a few nights off a week, but am always doing homework. When I get the chance to go out, I make sure it’s worth it. I call all my friends I haven’t seen in a while, and go to a bunch of different places to catch up. It’s not even about drinking, but being able to hang out with everyone.

-22 year old, female, college student
The “classy bitches” referenced earlier were doing the very same thing. Two of the participants were school teachers, one preschool and the other elementary school, with the third being a graduate student in education. The teachers in the group stated that going an entire week dealing with young children deserves a break. Even though they reported going out less than once a week, they felt that due to their professional lives, they needed to justify the presence in a bar with alcohol around. The participant who reported as being a pre-school teacher stated “I feel nervous that I’m going to run into one of my student’s parents, and they will see me with alcohol.” This interview was taken on a Friday night at approximately 10 P.M. There was no presence of her students, but there was still a cautious behavior due to social judgments based on her occupation. On the other hand, the other reported teacher had zero concerns for public judgment, and continued to consume her tequila shots and extra-large margarita. She proceeded to explain her current circumstance of having a stressful job, but also recently becoming single, and using her ‘girl’s night out’ as an excuse to have fun and possibly meet someone. While the other two female respondents were either married or engaged, they went out to support her friend through her recent emotional event.

With some of these businesses focusing on a large dance floor, playing music with a sexual connotation with songs such as “I Just Had Sex,” “Sexy and I Know It,” and “Baby Got Back,” many customers, mainly male customers, spotlight their attention on finding a potential mate, perhaps only for the night. While females often mentioned going out to have a “girl’s night out” involving fruity drinks, socializing among friends, and casual dancing with no male interruption, males reported the exact opposite
intentions; especially at larger clubs where sexually suggestive music predominated. A group of females interviewed at a smaller, trendy bar, defined as one with quieter music and highly priced drinks, stated that they were out for a casual drink with their girlfriends, and chose that bar in particular because they didn’t want to go to a club to be groped and grabbed by random guys looking for a one night fling. Many businesses playing louder, sexualized music attract a certain type of customers, usually looking for a romantic encounter to only last the duration of that night; which was found to not be as attractive to some, especially females that were not in college and typically more mature than others. On the other hand, two males stated that not only were they out to become intoxicated, they were “hunting” for females, while using derogative terms in their statements, assuming that they thought they were being funny or cool by doing so. This is not the case for all males, despite what some females may believe. So much investigating has been done about social encounters in drinking establishments, that this researcher was noticing previous studies throughout my own.

When walking around and taking general observations of the entire bar, this author could notice small subtle cues of a conversation beginning between two newly acquainted people. For the most part, any time this researcher witnessed a conversation begin, it was the males initiating, with a few females being introduced by friends. During another promotional buck night men used the lowered inhibitions of females and the cheap drink prices as a way to meet that special someone, if only for a night. A common social norm is for a male to buy a female a drink. While this gesture should be done without any expectation of future events, some men expect some degree of interaction.
On a night where drinks are only one dollar, men were seen using this technique for initiation conversation all over. Left and right men were bringing women drinks at tables, ordering a shot at the bar, or just offering to buy a drink. However, some women who gave their opinions on the night weren’t as flattered as their male counterparts had hoped they would be. While this gesture might be taken as kind and well received, using the cheapness of “buck night” did not impress the females. “I go out to have fun with my friends, if a guy buys me a drink; I want it to be worth the interruption.”

Men use an enormous variety of tactics when trying to flirt with a woman and every man in every crowded establishment seemed to have the same look of determination on their face. Some might have been in a discussion with friends, or an interview with this current research, but would still notice if an attractive female walked by. Although most men report to be somewhat shy when talking to a female for the first time, the men observed didn’t seem to have much trouble, maybe due to the influence of alcohol. A few men were seen actually trying to initiate a conversation, while the majority of men just sat around noticing each and every female in the bar. In a few establishments, there are raised seating platforms on the outside of a crowded area. In each drinking establishment observed with these particular seating arrangements, men were the main ones sitting. Based on the look and actions of the men sitting, it could seem as if they were scanning the bar just like this writer, but instead of looking for potential participants in research, they were simply looking and judging every female for their own personal benefit. In one specific instance I was interviewing a male at a smaller bar, with my girlfriend sitting in the corner waiting for me to conduct my
research. Part way through the interview, this researcher noticed the very guy being interviewed, looking my girlfriend up and down, and processing her as a potential mate. The interview was concluded and we turned around to hold her hand and leave the bar, but he continuously looked at her, with the same look other men gave women in different bars.

With lowered inhibitions, people are more open to something that they normally wouldn’t be involved in, such as a cheap drink along with an obvious attempt at conversing. This especially holds true on the dance floor. The over-sexualized nature of drinking establishments, typically done with sexual music with suggestive lyrics, encourages attempts at picking up someone special, or obviously sexual dance movements. Some people, after consuming mass amounts of alcohol, were observed to be having a type of intercourse while dancing. Of course they were fully clothed, but their actions mimicked things that should not be recreated in a crowded public environment, but with the different culture within a drinking establishment, nobody else thought twice about it.

While the larger night clubs centralized dancing as a way to connect with another person, sometimes as a first contact and with dancing being such a popular activity and centralized area of the population within the bar, sexualized dancing is not the only type of dancing occurring. At a country themed bar in downtown waitresses and staff members lead line dancing lessons along with special dances throughout the night. At this same establishment a number of men go out, specifically to country swing dance with whichever female is interested. A female at a local country bar let me know that, “A
lot of guys here can dance, and you don’t have to worry about inappropriate groping or them trying to pick up on you afterwards.” Throughout the night, a few of these men were being approached by females to dance with them instead of the traditional style of the male asking. This was also seen with a male who was a fantastic salsa dancer, even to non-salsa music. This writer spoke to one of the country dancers and asked him the same questions as everyone else, but his responses always circled back around to women, dancing, and alcohol. This was your stereotypical country man, with cowboy boots, cowboy hat, and chunk of tobacco in his lip. Everything he said sounded more country than it would come from this researcher’s mouth. He let me know that this was the only bar he ever comes to, and he goes out two or three times a week, every time to the same place. He did this because he felt like the women loved his swing dancing, which they did, and it was easier for him to meet someone and start a conversation with her if he danced with her first. A lot of different people were trying to swing dance, some were decent while others were obviously just trying to fit in. Whatever the case was, men were trying to show off their moves while trying to impress whatever female he was with at the time, sometimes is was multiple women within an hour.

Different groups of people were observed around certain bars pertaining to their personal interests. One of the local businesses is centered on playing billiards with daily tournaments, which seems to draw in an older crowd, with a few younger customers participating. Another was country and cowboy themed, providing country music, beer in mason jars, and a mechanical bull in the back, giving country minded people a place to enjoy them. While there were exceptions in almost every business visited, the majority
of customers fit the typical stereotype that the atmosphere seemed to be aimed at entertaining. However, the interesting aspect that each drinking establishment had in common was a similar desire to socialize and focus those actions in a place that serves a legal drug. Different ages and genders, races, social classes and political views were always present in the same drinking environment, enjoying their time out on the town, for whatever the reason may be.

Within one of these particular businesses offering discounted drink nights, multiple customers of a younger age were witnessed to be vomiting in hidden areas throughout the bar, as well as not being coherent enough to walk from one end of the bar to the other without falling over or stumbling. While these customers could not offer any useful or audible information, they did serve as a source of entertainment, while demonstrating the “advantages” of such discounted promotions throughout town. On this particular promotional night, out of the nine participants interviewed, five responded to coming out due to the one dollar drinks available; and of those nine respondents, four were of the college age group, 21-26.

One customer stated that he only intended on going out to get extremely intoxicated because his class was cancelled. While this is a common goal of all ages present in a drinking establishment, it is particular to college aged students on special discounted nights. A female within the same group stated “I normally wouldn’t come to this bar, I don’t like their music, it’s too loud, and it takes too long to get a drink. But I come out on ‘buck night’, just for cheap drinks.”
The bar that offers a weekly “power hour” special with 25 cent drinks that go up in price by another 25 cents every 15 minutes is solely concentrated on college students. The owner and manager were observed acting extremely immature and out of the typical behavioral standards for their age. They focused their attention to customer intoxication, by pouring alcohol into customers mouths while walking on top of the bar counter. With this came the inkling that they didn’t want to let go of their youth, which is why they owned an establishment with pictures of the university plastered on the walls, along with multiple fraternity and sorority letters carved into the wall or tables. During observations throughout this bar, no obviously older customers were seen, at all. While some would judge the managers in a negative manner by not conducting themselves professionally, they were socially accepted with open arms by the numerous intoxicated college students who were enjoying themselves, possibly due to lowered inhibitions. This was the only “Greek” centered business in town, and was recognized as such by the multiple carvings and banners hung throughout the bar promoting different organizations form campus.

These two examples of discounted drink nights are not the only ones in town. Eight drinking establishments in the downtown area offer discounted drink nights throughout the week, typically on week nights, usually to encourage customers to come out on a night they typically would be studying or sleeping to wake up early the next morning. These discounted nights range in price from 25 cents to 2 dollars, and every price in between. While students are the main focus for these specials, all customers seem to participate, but the town has seemed to frown upon such discounts. These nights
encourage customers to consume as much alcohol as they can within the allotted time frame and cause intoxication levels to sky rocket compare to a normal weekend night when prices are at their highest. However, in this particular town, those prices are significantly lower than big cities. Police are in full force and paramedics are called on a normal basis, causing the town to spend more money, based solely on intoxicated actions of others, which is why bans on such nights are being proposed currently through the city council.

Besides those offering discounted drink specials, night clubs with loud music and flashing lights on the dance floor attracted a younger crowd as well. Even those customers who looked to be of an older age than the majority of the population, seemed to not being enjoying their time as much as the intoxicated college students “grinding” (close, intimate, sexual dancing, mimicking a type intercourse) on the dance floor. Some of these older customers seemed to be appalled by some of the behaviors present in some clubs and college themed bars, which was demonstrate by them either imitating such actions in a joking manner, or moving away from such actions to a more secluded section. While these particular establishments contained a mixed variety of ages, the central population was college aged. Those who were of an older stage in their life were observed moving away from sexual behavior or over intoxicated customers, which is completely understandable given that the actions of the younger crowd would be considered severely inappropriate in any other public setting. This wasn’t always the case, especially in the larger clubs and bars, where intoxication was a common factor with almost every customer, regardless of age.
Older participants typically were from 27-43. Unless a special event, mainly a child’s birthday celebration, was the cause for attendance, nobody over the age of 33 participated in this study, and were hardly visible during observations, showing that anyone over the age of 35 is considered slightly elderly in a bar or night club. Only two groups of participants reported to be over the age of 40, both of which were only out because it was their daughter’s twenty first birthday, and wanted to celebrate their rite of passage into the bar scene. While these participants were partaking in the nightlife festivities just as much as their college aged counter parts, they still kept calm and well behaved; unlike the younger customers who brought memories of children new to high school who still continue to chase each other around, cause an annoyance to others, or to talk to a girl for a friend who is too afraid to initiate the conversation himself. While this wasn’t the case for all college aged customers, there was an easily visible sense of immaturity for a majority of bar and club customers. One particular group of men at a popular, loud dance club, were observed to be jokingly dancing with random girls walking by, causing a sense of frustration for some of the females, all while the group of men were laughing at their reactions. However, even though drinking establishments have some looser regulations than typical everyday life, those particular men were escorted out of the club because of their offensive actions. While intoxication was observed to be socially acceptable in drinking establishments, the security staff at every business maintained their ability to refuse service to anyone at any time.

Smaller, quieter, and more mature establishments don’t mind if their drink prices aren’t ridiculously cheap or if their music isn’t tearing open people’s eardrums.
Instead they tend to focused on the socializing aspect of going out by quieting the music and having larger tables with multiple chairs for large groups. A pair of women at one of these smaller bars stated that they “only come to this particular bar, because it isn’t the typical college bar that is so common in this town,” typically college bars being defined as those with loud thumping music and flashing lights. These smaller bars are spread throughout the town, but are not as popular in the downtown area, which is flooded with college students, or people trying to fit into the college scene. However, when observing in these smaller bars, there was a clear definition of gender roles. Females were usually sitting at tables with other females, while the male customers concentrated on bar stools where sports could be watched on multiple screens. These observations seemed to blend in with typical social norms of females gathering to socialize, while the men enjoyed their beer and sports. At another more social establishment, a group of participants including many males and females still fit into these social expectations, even while sitting at the same table. The females were much more social while the men focused their attention at the row of televisions showing the current NCAA basketball tournament. Even though both genders stated that they were out to socialize and catch up with friends, only the females really took part in conversing, with an occasional comment from the men, mostly pertaining to the sports they were watching.

These events demonstrated the extremes people are willing to go to escape their everyday lives, or who they really truly are. Others use drinking establishments for similar reasons, maybe not to avoid a personality quality, but maybe to escape the drudgery of their less interesting lives in the working world. During that same night, an
older gentleman seemed interested in the interviews being conducted at the table next to his. After noticing his interest, this researcher proceeded to ask if he was willing to take part in the research also, and he was more than eager to agree. He was a mill worker who was out for his daughters 21st birthday. Even though he was scheduled to work the next day, he planned on “calling in sick” in order to stay out later and celebrate with his family. He said that this was the first time he had gone out to a bar of any type in months, so he didn’t see any harm in enjoying his time out a little longer and with a few more drinks than he had expected to. His wife on the other hand, seemed to be partaking in the partying rituals with great enjoyment and multiple empty glasses were in front of her. She kept chiming in to her husband’s interview, giving her opinion on what his answers should be, which was quite entertaining. In one instance she yelled saying that he wasn’t out for his daughter’s birthday, but instead was using that as another excuse to “buy me a lot of drinks and get me drunk, so we can have our own party later.” While that statement was a little inappropriate, it reflected the open sexual nature of drinking establishments.

The gentleman celebrating his daughter’s birthday justified his time out with that very excuse, but with subliminal cues that he just really didn’t want to go to work in the morning. Some use the same excuse of escaping everyday life with special events in which extremely obscene behavior is completely acceptable, such as a bachelorette party, which this researcher was fortunate enough to encounter in my research. Social traditions like bachelor and bachelorette parties are rare occasions in which typically negatively viewed actions are socially acceptable. Over intoxication, foul behavior, “adult”
entertainment, and public humiliation of the bride or groom are extremely common throughout the duration of the festivity. The females involved in this certain party were all dressed up in matching shirts with the bride’s name and “last night of freedom” printed on the front. The bride on the other hand, was dressed in a little veil, adorned with multiple figures of the male anatomy. The bride to be proceeded to explain, in full detail probably due to the talkative nature of alcohol, that she worked full time and only goes out once a month, if that. She was using her bachelorette party as an excuse to “catch up for lost time,” taking every free drink that was handed to her, while screaming for no reason at all, except to demonstrate to others that tonight was all about her, and that people needed to pay attention to her; common among these types of celebrations.

Throughout the interviews, participants were not typically alone, and usually had at least one other person with them. This was not on purpose; it is just that being alone in a drinking establishment seemed somewhat frowned upon. This may go back to the idea of being associated with alcoholism, or just that bars and clubs are social places instead of places to escape into one’s thoughts. These establishments concentrate on entertainment, and with so many people hating the social anxiety of being alone, they drag along friends to feel a sense of belonging. The last person interviewed was sitting alone at a table, playing with his phone and my thoughts suddenly jumped to him being the only solo person encountered in these interviews. When he was asked the set of questions, he responded in a depressed fashion. As it turns out, this particular male didn’t drink alcohol, at all. He worked at another busy downtown club, and was only out because his friends wanted him to come along. After his friends had had a few drinks,
they partook in the social activity of meeting women. Given the intoxication levels of everyone else in the bar, and this participant's sobriety, he decided that the best option would be to wait for his friends, then give them a sober ride home, safely. This demonstrated that while some may be mesmerized by the effects of alcohol, there are others who are immune to its magic, and choose to take care of those who consume too much.

One difficult demographic to evaluate was race. In this particular college town, certain ethnic groups tend to gravitate towards certain establishments; even though some bars held a mixed ethnicity, many seemed to contain one prevalent group. Throughout research, while college-aged students were the most popular groups at most drinking establishments used for observations, and many of which were more than willing to take place in interviews. However, while conducting interviews, not many customers of other races were as willing to participate. Many different groups took this research as a joke and viewed it as non-scholarly, but even those people still took place in questioning, even if they did not give serious answers. But when trying to achieve a goal of interviewing all ages, races, sexes, and occupations, many African American customers did not want to be interviewed at all. This event took place in multiple establishments where customers wouldn’t even dignify this researcher with an answer and would instead walk away when asked to participate. While not every person of a non-white ethnicity denied the interview, there was more reluctance from non-white customers. With all of this, the number of minority customers in the bars surveyed is miniscule compared to the Caucasian college students who flood the nightlife scene.
nightly. Not only is the number of minority customers small throughout the academic term, it dwindles to almost none throughout the summer months, which made conversing with different groups even that more difficult. This demographic also brought up the issue that it was not originally included in the first draft of this thesis project and therefore not asked for in the first set of interviews. This may cause skewed data, but will not affect the results of this investigation to the point of making it inconclusive or irrelevant.

Another difficult demographic to determine without prying questions was a person’s sexual orientation. While this researcher spent multiple nights in different LBGTA nights throughout town, no different in responses was determined. Most respondents at the bars did state going out on certain nights to particular bars because of their welcoming to the LBGTA community. While these answers specifically related to specialty nights, their answers for going out were no different than any other customer on any other night in any establishment used. A LBGTA night consisted of nothing special, but instead created an open environment where customers could enjoy their time out with not societal judgments. People were free to act how they want to without being restrained by societal norms and expectations of sexuality.

The information obtained seemed relevant and valid in most cases, even if the participant became easily distracted and the full interview was not completed. Intoxicated customers were not sought after for information, but took place with the interview anyways, typically when their friends took part in research. Even though a centralized theme throughout every establishment was intoxication, customers hit a certain level
when their information turned from useful to useless jargon, only understood by friends or other intoxicated customers. Employees of the bar in observation were also not interviewed due to their nature of gravitating towards a favoritism of the establishment in which they worked in. Even though there were some omitted responses due to intoxication, the majority of participants were very interested in the research and were more than eager to participate.

The social hub of bars and nightclubs presented a variety of characters. This writer witnessed multiple categories of people, ranging from college students, cowboys, the hip trendy females with the newest fashion, the dark and gloomy gothic crowd, and the wannabe “gangsters.” Throughout all of the interviews and observations, everyone was more than willing to participate and for the most part, and gave useful information into the societal fascination with drinking establishments. Some may have been a little less forthcoming that others, but in the end everyone’s responses proved beneficial to my initial research.

While customers in drinking establishments were willing to participate for the most part, students outside of the nightlife scene were not quite as reliable. Extra credit was offered through a previous advisor to all of his classes, to take part in interviews in the student union in the middle of the day. The initial list contained over ninety names of willing participants. An email was sent to all students giving times and days interviews would be conducted on campus, however, out of that initial ninety, only seventeen showed up to take part. Given it was during finals week, and some students had already left campus, this researcher wasn’t shocked that everyone didn’t show up, but was
surprised that so many decided to ignore the extra credit for a short interview. Also, many students who had already left campus showed interest in taking part, but over the phone or email instead of in person.

Finding a variety of participants was simple with the large population of every establishment studied. Finding individuals, couples, and groups to question helped focus the research on every aspect of nightlife attractiveness. Individuals being interviewed gave an insight into the mind of a person, while couples of groups gave a collective answer or agreed with the others in their group while completing the questionnaire. While this sometimes proved problematic by not being able to determine which answer a participant was giving, it gave a better realization into the societal thinking behind the magnetism of drinking establishments and how they receive customers, especially with so many options within the town.

Intoxication levels were the most prevalent issue when conducting interviews, however, the auditory volume within certain establishments proved problematic, only causing this researcher and interviewees to speak louder or repeat questions and responses. This was a minor issue which was easily corrected by repetition or louder speaking. Yet, while this issue was overcome with a louder speaking volume, the respondents within these establishments were more focused on dancing or the loud volume of the music. While this might reflect this author’s older age, the typical volume in these dance club environments is extremely loud and lead to limited sociability and conversing, which some believe to be the main attraction to drinking establishments. Throughout these louder, brighter establishments, the ideal customer was typically
college aged, single, and ranked on the slightly more intoxicated level of participants. Some drinking establishments used in this study contained more interviews than others due to the volume of music or the atmosphere of the bar in general. While all establishments were intended to achieve the same number of respondents, music volume and intoxication level deterred from further investigation.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

People learn to be members of the groups to which we belong. This learning process begins in utero and accelerates as we mature. But no group ever enjoys perfect conformity on the part of its members; we test established boundaries, breaking rules in doing so and thereby learning the limits of what is socially acceptable. One such limit concerns sexuality and the search for mates, and in contemporary American culture this activity is often associated with the mild euphoria of alcohol intoxication. Because of this, there is a certain allure to drinking establishments, not just in the town where this research was conducted, but also throughout much of the United States, and indeed around the world. Many people decide to go out night after night to these businesses to take part in socializing rituals revolving around alcohol consumption. People wait in lines, sometimes for hours, in order to gain access to popular clubs in big cities, and even some clubs in a small town like the one this research was conducted in. But what really is the fascination with these crowded, noisy, over-priced, and hyper-sexualized businesses?

These drinking establishments themselves are created for one main purpose, to reach a profit by creating a location for multiple people of diverse groups to socialize with the availability of alcohol. While intoxication is the goal of some customers present, they choose to take part in the ritual of intoxication at a bar or club, due to the fact that
they are not alone. Whether customers were in a pair or small group, the goal of socialization was evident for their presence in whichever establishment, based on the conversational nature throughout the customers. While participants stated that meeting a potential mate, intoxication, or celebration was their reasoning for being out at a bar, these reasons focused around the social aspect of these businesses. There was no apparent shortage of customers for any establishment observed in this study. While some are created for a smaller crowd than others, even those had a significant amount of customers present, and still held to the social aspect of drinking establishments.

Emile Durkheim wrote that a key to forming society is social interaction is when a group, will inevitably act in such a way that a society is formed. Groups, when interacting, create their own culture and attach solid emotions to it. The actions of the bride to be or the father celebrating his daughter’s birthday all did so as a social norm. These initiation rituals are part of human existence, and differ from culture to culture; it just so happens that many American celebratory rituals involves alcohol and drinking establishments. “As the number of people in a given area increase, so does the number of interactions and the society becomes more complex.” (Allan, 2005)

There are hundreds of different ways to meet someone special, especially now days with the internet and dating websites being so popular, but the social aspect of a college bar or club attracts potential mates and gives key moments for interaction is still important. Some may choose to do this on the dance floor, but others might buy someone a drink to initiate a conversation. Whatever the case may be, the pickings are not slim for customers with hundreds of potential mates present in almost every establishment. “I
grew up line dancing, so when a girl find it attractive to dance, I can us that to my advantage,” said one country bar going customer. However, another male customer used his claim to money as his ice breaker in the bar. He was casually buying groups of women drinks at the bar; making it obvious that money was not an option. One of the females who partook in receiving free drinks stated that “if a guy wants to buy a drink, that’s fine, but it doesn’t mean that he is guaranteed anything from me.” Inhibitions may be lowered, due to the availability of alcohol and the possibly cheap prices they are available at. Sexual dancing may lead to a future relationship, but if one particular person doesn’t want to partake in the same activities, there are many others to try their technique with. Through these mating rituals at drinking establishments, males are the major contributors to initiating interaction, and they know how difficult it can be. While some men stated that going out to meet a potential mate was their main reasoning for going out, others were not as forthcoming, and hid their feelings, but still maintained a visual observation of all females present in the establishments. No matter what, they choose to focus their mating rituals at bars and nightclubs because of the social popularity of such businesses and the availability of alcohol. This may also be due to the lowered inhibitions of others at the bar due to such availability.

Those who choose to go out to become intoxicated do so at a bar or club based on the idea that they are not the only ones. The idea of drinking alone at home, or drinking alone anywhere for that matter, is associated with alcoholism, a negative connotation in our society. However, partaking in intoxication at an establishment aimed at helping with intoxication is socially acceptable, and encouraged at such locations,
especially with discounted drink nights. With a number of continuously intoxicated customers, there is never a shortage of those using bars as a way to be socially accepted in their inebriated state. There might be some judgment from less intoxicated customers and staff, but less that there would be if these actions took place in a more family orientated location, such as a library or school. The idea that drinking establishments contain their own culture helps provide a somewhat safe place for socially inappropriate behaviors to become socially acceptable. While over-intoxication is frowned upon in most establishments, based on previously discussed ABC laws, that level is seldom achieved by most customers, but usually has a few that take advantage of the socially loose morals. But as before, this comes back to focus on the socializing aspect of these establishments; where typically negatively viewed actions are socially accepted, due to the fact that so many others are partaking in the same actions.

Through this research, customers interviewed typically fell into categories depending on which particular establishment they were in at the time. The younger the participant, the more their rational turned to that of other students where consuming a lot of alcohol is alright, and the older the participant, the more justified they thought they had to be with their explanation. Participants, who identified themselves with a part time job while going to school fulltime, were categorized as college students, while part time students who worked a typical nine to five job were placed into a category based on their occupational title. While a variety of differences were discovered throughout participant responses, age was the top identifier. A few times throughout observations and interviews, before realizing what age the participant had written on the informed consent
form, this researcher could tell their age and level of maturity based on their responses and demeanor. Those who were visibly intoxicated and loud were typically college students, while those who just seemed to be enjoying their time were more mature and usually older. These observations were based on actions and personality, not physical features. Of course it would be easy to tell the age of a person if they had gray hair and a walker, but despite those physical characteristics, age was easy to determine based on maturity levels.

While this type of research may just seem like a college student’s excuse to go out to bars and nightclubs, this is not the case at all. This researcher has over-done his time in drinking establishments, working in them since the cultural initiation of the 21st birthday. During my extensive stint as a bar employee, I worked at smaller bars with quieter music, to the over-crowded dance club, all the while seeing the positive and negative issues that go hand in hand with each varying establishment. I have witnessed the “regulars” coming in every night of the week, to those celebrating a special occasion for just one night; those needing medical assistance for alcohol poisoning, and those who don’t drink at all. No matter the case, society has an attraction to drinking establishments, which causes business to boom with new bars and clubs opening all the time, focused on making money on inebriation and partying. Throughout research, all of my previous experiences were evident throughout the different establishments. “Regulars” were encountered sitting at the bar having a conversation with bartender and waitresses; as well as the “out of towners” who were amazed at the discounted prices of alcohol drinks.
Even while some think that we are in an economic recession, people are still spending their hard earned money on alcohol in these different social atmospheres, presumably because it is so important to so many aspects in college socialization. This is especially true with the common view of college students being poor and working or studying 20 hours a day. But these students are flooding downtown establishments and spending hundreds of dollars a month on alcohol alone. Also people who are riding their bikes to and from work or school 10-20 miles to save money on gas, but are also out at such establishments, spending their saved money on liquid drugs. With so many people out at these establishments at any given night of the day, or even day for that matter, finding the information necessary for my research was simple. The easiest way to access this information was to go out and become part of the scene, which isn’t too much of a stretch for any college student.

Taking part in the nightlife scene was uncomplicated being a college aged customer and knowing many of the employees at drinking establishments throughout town. While I didn’t work at any establishment at the time of writing this information, employment was held at a local club for the years leading up to my study. With this lengthy employment, came a familiarity with many different establishments around town, as well as the employees, and the unusual hours. This caused both a bias towards certain locations, as well as a strength gaining access to any bar in town for research by knowing most door staff employees. Throughout research, this author was released of all bias towards each establishment instead of the forced opinions when one thinks their place of employment is the best in town. Acquaintances made throughout the multiple bars and
clubs helped my research because while this author wanted to become part of the nightlife scene, there was no desire to take part in all aspects. I didn’t want to wait in an obscenely long line, or pay a cover charge to do research. While this is a typical part of nightlife chaos, in which customers participate in night after night, it was not part of the original research plan. The attraction of clubs and bars force people to wait in lines in frigid temperatures and pay, sometimes an obscene amount, to gain entrance into the club, further demonstrating their desire for the social aspect drinking establishments bring.

While the initial goal of conversing with customers varying in all ages was achieved, college aged students seemed to be the primary customers at most establishments. “College aged” was used to describe people between the ages of 21-26. Even though at twenty-six, most students have graduated and moved on, people seem to become complacent with their lives and don’t want to lose their youth, especially in a college town. Of the seventy-five customers who participated in interviews, forty were of college age, demonstrating the popularity of drinking establishments to that age group. The number of people walking around downtown to partake in the activities in a bar or nightclub on any given night was enormous. With this, the initial number of thirty-four interviews proved to be too small for a significant investigation, even if responses seemed to repeat throughout different ages and occupations. With this, a second set of interviews was conducted and a final number of ninety-two was achieved (seventeen of which were conducted outside of drinking establishments) giving a statistically significant amount of responses to show the fascination with alcohol and the establishments that serve it.
Drinking establishments contain their own culture; outside of social reality, demonstrating that the discoveries throughout this research aren’t necessarily applicable in any other setting, especially one without the presence of alcohol. A great number of events occur inside of a bar or club that would not be tolerated in everyday life; such as over-intoxication, rude or immature behavior, or physical and sexual contact, whether wanted or unwanted. These actions are not socially acceptable; but in a crowded and loud bar, people have a sense of what is going to happen, so these actions are just brushed off and accepted as common occurrences. Drinking establishments are described as having their own culture based on these facts, where typically frowned upon actions are frequent and somewhat customary. The research is particular to these businesses, but could possibly be used in large parties where a club type scene is recreated. College parties come to mind, where alcohol is ordered by the case, music is cranked to eleven, and no identification is needed for entrance; the main difference with drinking establishments. These parties are illegal and held with no license for serving alcohol, providing some of the main factors to this particular town’s self-defined alcohol problem, along with the large number of bars and discounted drink nights, proving the sensitive nature of such studies.

There are many questions raised when dealing with businesses such as bars and nightclubs, especially when dealing with alcohol issues. However, societal issues, such as social interactions and intoxication, are much more common with the diverse customers that are out each and every night. While conducting research for this topic, this researcher came across a number of different issues dealing with more detailed
aspects of the nightlife scene within such businesses. Topics such as social interactions provide many questions due to the popularity of such occurrences at drinking establishments, and sometime the main reasoning for attendance. This certain topic can lead to a multitude of research topics including techniques for achieving the goal of meeting a potential mate, why nightclubs are so popular for such actions or customer’s opinion of such actions and if they are typically wanted or unwanted approaches. The large number of college students could lead to possible questing about the popularity of alcohol in college life, which is a delicate issue, dealing with those new to college and under the legal age for consumption. However, with the vast number of college aged customers throughout my own research, the popularity of alcohol and the establishments that serve them is overwhelming.

After conducting this research, this author suggests that any future researcher in this area narrow their research to a specific group, such as age or gender. While this researcher believes that the research was beneficial to understanding the broad view of multiple members of society, one might take this research and focus on one specific aspect. This researcher’s goal was achieved of discovering the societal fascination with drinking establishments, and was done so by obtaining information from each and every group present in society, including age, sex, race, occupation, as well as basing my research on different social groups. These included the “trendy” girls in fancy dress with make-up, to the women who just wanted to relax with their hair up and a drink; the girls who “didn’t want to go to a large club because they didn’t feel like being groped tonight;” they also included country cowboys, and the “gangster” types at clubs playing
more rap and hip hop. The question was answered by using these techniques of varying social statuses, but focusing research could benefit from understanding one particular group’s opinion on such a topic. This method of centralizing research could be utilized when considering the common occurrence of sexual aggression against women in such establishments. Why do women choose to go out to such businesses that are known for such behavior? And what make a woman feel safe when going out? Many different questions could be raised from this idea, or the idea of drinking establishments alone, being such a captivating aspect of life.

Since younger, college aged students populated many of the establishments observed on every night of the week, another topic for research would be to discover how these students, who define themselves as full time students, can afford to go out as much as they do. While there are discounted drink nights, which college students flood to, proven by my research and a recent newspaper article titled “Culture Clash: A Perfect Storm” (Lore, 2013), how do so many students who are always complaining about money, afford these establishments? Even with discounted prices, these students are going out three to four times a week, and consuming a large amount of alcohol each time they go out, as well as taking place in “pre-gaming,” (drinking at home before going out). Researching how students can afford to do this, whether it is with a part time job, “donations” from their partners throughout their college career, or any other case, could prove beneficial in discovering why so many students have a drinking problem. Discovering the factors behind college drinking could demonstrate a different way to help
the current status of alcohol consumption on this particular campus, or any other university for that matter.

Research in different areas of expertise has demonstrated a difference in opinions of participants when age, gender, and occupation are taken into account. This research was no different. While there were exceptions to the social expectations of older customers behaving more mature, and younger ones being immature, meaning older customers behaving more immurely and vice versa, the typical norms of behavior held true. The older crowd typically focused on smaller, quieter establishments where conversations and craft beers or specialty drinks were the common commodity. While the younger crowd was dazzled by loud music and bright lights, and based their judgment on the size of the population within each business. While conducting these observations and interviews, determining a customer’s occupational role was simple, dividing them into “working” or “students.” This was done by categorizing those that responded being full time students with a part time job as being students and those with a full time job and going to school part time were categorized by their occupational role. The type of group present could be estimated before seeing any customers; by the atmosphere, music, and demeanor of the establishment.

The same issue occurred when observing gender differences within these businesses. Women tended to be in groups of three or more, while men were seen as a pair or smaller groups than females, usually three of four at the maximum. Groups of mixed sexes were also observed, but seemed to be socializing as a group, with some dividing into gender specific groups throughout the conversation. Females typically
stated to be out with friends for a “girl’s night.” This was always the case with groups of females, no matter the establishment or age group, a night filled with dancing, talking, and hopefully free drinks from male customers was the goal for the night. With this, the male groups were set on talking to these females, particularly hoping for a chance of a sexual encounter, either just for that night or sometime in the future, some sort of socialization was hoped for. While females took the offer of a drink from a male as a harmless gesture, men had a different opinion about what that gesture meant. One male might just want to start a conversation, while another might have intentions of a sexual encounter, just from buying one simple drink, even if that drink only cost one dollar on a discounted night.

The social interactions between men and women were very entertaining throughout research. Men trying to talk to females, females rejecting some men, men trying everything in their power to initiate a conversation with a female, and that female doing everything she could to get a free drink, were all common observations in the variety of establishments. Females who were out with a group of friends never seemed to be focused on meeting a man, instead, intoxication and letting loose by escaping everyday lives seemed to be the common factor of their presence. However, almost every male interviewed seemed to mention females in their responses for their initial reasoning for going out. Some men didn’t just mention females in their responses; they used this as their main reasoning for going out to drinking establishments. From this, it can be seen that drinking establishments are a common location for meeting a potential mate, maybe due to the lowered inhibitions that come with alcohol. This is also probably
due to the over-sexualized nature of music being played and sexual dancing, mixed with the effects of alcohol. These aspects might lead to the terminology some men used for describing the women they intended to “pick up” at the bars or clubs, which sometimes tended to be negative when no females were present. Some males used derogatory terms to describe the type of women they were looking for, but changed their attitude and vocabulary as soon as a female was present in the vicinity. This information demonstrated that the main reasoning for men going out to drinking establishments, no matter what their age was, was to meet a potential mate, mainly for a short term relationship, usually lasting just that one night.

Sex proved to demonstrate multiple differences between customers, but the main differences were established within age categories. While this writer first thought that many different categories would be present within my interviews, there were only four, two of which were associated with younger behaviors and matched in their reasoning for going out. The younger crowd went out to become intoxicated, which was the main goal for almost the entire younger age group (21-26) interviewed. While one male was the exception because he didn’t drink at all, all of the others interviewed associated their presence at a discounted drink night, due to the availability of alcohol to achieve their goal. This was shown in the recent news article where it was stated by a local bar manager that “alcohol sales 20 years ago were 60% beer; these days hard alcohol makes up about 80% of the sales.” This particular bar manager was in charge of a few “college” bars in town, where the main occupants are college students, who focus their attention to easier intoxication with higher proof alcohol.
The younger crowd is going out every night of the week, but determining which businesses to go to was based on which drinking establishment that has the cheapest prices and the strongest drinks. This infatuation with intoxication causes many college students to ignore their studies and go out to enjoy the night with their friends. While many, but not all, students interviewed at drinking establishments stated doing this very thing by choosing to go out instead of studying, student’s interviews outside of bars or nightclubs demonstrated completely opposite opinions of schooling. While it was difficult to determine what these particular students would realistically do in the situation of choosing school or partying, they all seemed very set on the that school comes first. Many of the outside interview participants stated being a full time student with a more than part time job (20+ hours a week), giving them very little time to enjoy social outings, including bar visits.

On the other hand, the older crowd justified their presence at drinking establishments by using them as an escape from their typical working lives, and a way to release stress with a social environment. Some older customers stated that going out wasn’t a common occurrence, but was instead only used as a special occasion, making every time they do chose to go out a memorable night, instead of over doing it, like many college students do. These participants usually associated their presence with birthday celebrations or their first time out in a long while. When they stated that this was their first time out in a while, they stated that they were making up for lost time, consuming more alcohol than usual, giving them the same ideals as the younger crowd of
intoxication as a goal. However, this sample size was too small to give a broad conclusion, and focused only on a small college town.

Through all these reasons, the experience of socializing was the main goal, instead of intoxication or the chance of meeting a mate. Even if the participant reported that intoxication was a goal, when asked why at a bar, they said because of the crowds. Customers could easily have saved a large amount of money by consuming alcohol at home, but chose to go out to a drinking establishment because of the social environment. Bars and night clubs focus their attention on making money, as any other business, and with this comes the sense of making the establishment popular and as crowded as it can be, achieving the most profit. Lowering drink prices, playing popular music, and creating a social environment all help accomplish this goal of business, making drinking establishments as popular as they are. There is the chance to meet people you typically wouldn’t talk to, let loose from classic social behaviors, as be one’s self, instead of fitting into society’s expectations, especially in regards to age, sex, or occupational roles; giving a unique experience in which an environment such as a drinking establishment can only provide.

These establishments do not aim to over intoxicate their customers, but they certainly do not stop it in some cases. Discounted drink nights lead to a quicker intoxication, where customers hurry to drink as much as they can within the allotted discounted time frame. At the popular “power hour” mention earlier, customers line up at the bar waiting for the bell to ring, signaling the start of the 25 cent drink period. One college student stated, “It is crowded and people are pushing their way to the bar, and
you’re lucky to get a drink for a quarter in time, but it’s worth it to be able to spend such a small amount of money for a drink.” This is especially true in an establishment offering 25 cent drinks for fifteen minutes. This causes people to order multiple drinks or shots of hard alcohol, all for themselves. It also encourages people to celebrate special occasions at these businesses, allowing for a larger celebration by spending less money for more alcohol. Multiple deaths have occurred recently within this small college town, and while drinking establishments are not always the contributor of alcohol, they certainly do not promote the “safe drinking” ideals which college students should believe in. At a recent summit on campus involving multiple city officials, bar owners, Greek affiliated students (fraternity/sorority), and university officials, it was discovered that “a 10 percent increase in the cost of alcohol will reduce the risk of intoxication by 30 percent” (Lore, 2013).

Specific locations for socializing were present in every establishment observed, which benefitted everyone, both customers and business. This key aspect of the nightlife scene is what encourages customers to go out and enjoy their time away from the drudgery of everyday working life, or school life. While house parties are common for underage civilians, bars and nightclubs are the hub for social activity for those of the legal drinking age. By creating a place for people to enjoy themselves outside of their typical environment, drinking establishment have become the center of pop culture, once again, demonstrating their importance for creating a special experience. With such a high population throughout different establishments, people want to show off for others by wearing the hippest clothes, playing the newest music, or diverting a
conversation to a popular topic in the news. While some establishments are more popular that others, certain groups of people gravitate to different businesses, still giving them a sense of pop culture throughout the establishments. Each different establishment focuses on a different central group of customers, all creating a different experience than others. While some might be similar in being a large dance club or smaller social pub, the atmosphere, music being played and other customers create that special experience that each customer is looking for. The attractiveness of these establishments is the idea of creating special experiences that people will remember, and creating that enjoyable time that will be talked about in the future.

This research focused on different age groups, occupations, races, and sexes, but once it began, college-aged customers seemed to be the main participants in nightly bar activity, as demonstrated in statistics throughout my discussion. With this recent article discussing the university’s alcohol problem, this author hopes that this research will show different ways to help the university maintain their traditional educational values, by helping change the way people view these drinking establishments. While they are built to entertain and create an environment for escape, there is a certain amount of responsibility necessary for each customer, owner, and employee to uphold. The bars and nightclubs can only do so much to change their social views, but they can be a starting point for helping the town and university. No matter what, drinking establishments will remain a focal point in society, due to the popularity they have already achieved and maintain, but this popularity can help contribute to changes in alcohol consumption and the culture that informs such behavior.
REFERENCES


http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/w/williamsb132168.html


http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/faqs.htm#moderateDrinking


APPENDIX A
Research Information

You are being invited to participate in a research study about drinking establishments. This research is being conducted by Cameron Ellingsen of California State University Chico’s, Social Science Master’s program. The objective of this study is to attempt to understand the fascination with drinking establishments and the reasons why people decide to go to such places. It is being conducted at bars and pubs, and nightclubs throughout the city of Chico. The study will focus on all persons of the legal drinking age, using all genders, occupations, and marital statuses. This interview will take approximately 5 minutes.

There are no risks if you decide to participate in this research, and there are no costs. The information you provide will help me understand why people decide to go out and attend such establishments. The information will not benefit you directly, but what I learn will help give insight to future students, current establishments, and provide further research into the inner culture of the barroom.

This survey is completely anonymous. No one will be able to identify you, personal information, or that you participated in this study in any way. There is no reward for participating, or any punishment for not. This will only help my research to complete my Master’s degree. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and may be ended at any time you wish. If you choose to participate please fill in the table with the information needed. Any questions or concerns, or if you wish to withdraw your interview, please email at cellingsen@csuchico.edu.
APPENDIX B
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initials</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Relationship Status</th>
<th>Race</th>
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Ethnographic Research into Societal Fascination of Drinking Establishments

Questions

1) What is the main reason that brought you out to the bar tonight?
   a. Meet Potential Mates
      i. Why at a bar?
      ii. Techniques used in drinking establishments?
   b. Dance
      i. With Whom?
      ii. Used for potential mating?
   c. Drink/Get intoxicated
      i. Why?
      ii. Did you take part in “pre-gaming?” (pre-drinking before going out)
   d. Escape
      i. From what?
   e. Promotion (Event, Discount Night, Band, Holiday)
      i. What specifically?
   f. Other
      i. Details

2) Do you frequent drinking establishments?
   a. Yes
      i. How often?
      ii. What is the main reason for usually going out?
      iii. Do you have a different opinion of those who do not go out regularly?
   b. No
      i. Why not?
      ii. Do you have a different opinion of those who do go out regularly?
### Participant Demographics

#### Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Count (Percentage)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>43 (46.7%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49 (53.2%)</td>
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#### Occupation

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<th>Count (Percentage)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>41 (44.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Time Employees</td>
<td>46 (50%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td>5 (5.4%)</td>
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#### Age

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<th>Age Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>21-26 (College Age)</td>
<td>58 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-35</td>
<td>24 (26%)</td>
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<td>35 and above</td>
<td>10 (10.8%)</td>
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#### Race

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<th>Count (Percentage)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>37 (40.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>6 (6.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4 (4.3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>6 (6.5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5 (5.4%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not Available (First set of interviews)</td>
<td>34 (36.9%)</td>
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#### Relationship Status

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<th>Relationship Status</th>
<th>Count (Percentage)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>69 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>11 (11.9%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (In a relationship or N/A)</td>
<td>12 (13%)</td>
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