

Spaces of Community in Champaign-Urbana

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INTRODUCTION

Our research question was to focus on how the Champaign Public Library (pictured below), the Virginia Theater (right), and Meadowbrook Park (far right) have contributed to the culture of Champaign-Urbana as a whole. Being a community that represents different cultures from many diverse backgrounds, we wanted to focus on the contribution to this diversity of different spaces, which we feel best represent Champaign-Urbana.



MATERIALS & METHODS

Our methods included participant observation, formal interviews, and informal conversations.

These are the questions we asked consistently of all our respondents:

Age.)
Gender.)
Occupation.)

What makes this space unique to Champaign-Urbana?

What do you think of when you think of community?

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

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

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

RESULTS

Through our observations, interviews, and conversations we were able to get a sense of why each location is important to Champaign-Urbana.

Alana gathered that the Champaign Public Library is important because it provides a welcoming space for people of all backgrounds. Without it, Champaign-Urbana would be less inviting and darker.



From his observations at Meadowbrook Park, Tate gathered that the beautiful natural scenes were what distinguished the park from many others in Champaign-Urbana. With walking trails, playgrounds, and a sculpture garden, many people felt that Meadowbrook was a place truly unique to our community.

When Jacob interviewed a graduate student at UIUC, he gathered that what makes the Virginia Theater special is that it provides a way to showcase and learn about other cultures from across the country here in town. For example, with film showings and concerts.

CONCLUSIONS

From the research conducted we found that people from different cultures find a sense of community not only within each of these places, but within Champaign-Urbana itself; and our community would not be the same without them. Culture is created by visible symbols embedded in our everyday behavior, gestures, body movements, and the spaces we use (Griffith and Marion, 2021). The spaces we researched for this project illustrate this cultural construction.



REFERENCES

Images by: Jacob Alfonso, Tate Herges, and Alana Brown.

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

