Different Drinking Behavior Patterns of Asian International Students

Introduction

As I began to settle down at Champaign-Urbana this January, I soon realized that alcohol and drinking is inevitably a big part of college culture, as it is in many countries around the globe. As alcohol has played a proportional role in my life during the past few years as a college student, I soon merged myself into the drinking crowd on the campus bars mainly located on Green Street. It did not take long for me to realize that there were not that many Koreans in those bars, compared to such a huge Korean population we have here at U of I. As a matter of fact, it was hard to find many Asians in general; again, this was hard to believe considering the fact that U of I is famous for its huge International population, mainly consisted of Asian students.

Initially, the reason seemed very simple: ‘it wasn’t their thing’. For some reason, the Asian population on campus did not favor the campus bars as their favorite choice of drinking. Why do these students choose not to drink at the campus bars? While this could be attributed to many factors, maybe it’s because they weren’t feeling comfortable drinking at bars, or they were experiencing some kind of racial discrimination while drinking at campus bars. If they were, does this mean that they were racially discriminated on campus? Where do they turn their heads instead of a bar when they drink? As I began to look into my questions through various methods, I soon ran into few assumptions that seemed pretty logical. They were mainly focused on the difference overall drinking environment of bars, in terms of how the service is provided and how the interior design of the bars are structured. However, as I proceeded with my research I received some response during the interview that stood directly against my previous assumptions.
The more I was closer to concluding my research; the answers to my questions were coming back to my initial response. ‘It just wasn’t their thing.’ This phenomenon did not seem to resemble any significance in terms of racial discrimination, but the segregation was still taking place. Surprisingly, some of the reasons focused on language issues; such as the one’s ability to Speak English, even though most of them spoke fluent English to be able to survive through a rough night at any of the campus bars. It seemed like that they were not feeling very secured in an overall sense, when drinking at a bar and this is something you do not want when you are drinking to get relaxed.

Body

Background Information

The ‘campus bars’ that will be frequently referred to as throughout this research connote the public bars located throughout East Green Street in Champaign, starting from the intersection of Wright Street, all the way down to Second Street. These campus bars are the main focus of my research because this is where most of the interaction between the students takes place, meaning most of the people drinking there are students of U of I. I did not take into consideration the bars located in downtown Champaign or Urbana because those bars are located off-campus, thus host considerable portion of non-student population and cannot be easily accessed by those students without vehicles. These campus bars count up to almost twenty, and each bar tries to discriminate itself from the other bars in order to attract drinkers. Some of the bars host a stage where people can dance, while others might have live bands playing on them. Most of them feature a so-called ‘special’ day, where they promote certain kinds of alcoholic drinks and food to attract people. Most of these bars serve lunch and dinner as well, even on the Weekends, and close around three o’clock in the morning. Costs to buy drinks can range from a single dollar to infinity, depending
on the kind and amount of drink you are getting. I did not consider the financial aspect into consideration in conducting this research, in order to prevent any sensitive issues such as implying financial gaps between ethnicities and races from emerging while conducting interviews or analysis.

The initial research question started with the drinking behavior of Koreans, but as I proceeded with my research I soon realized that focusing on Koreans can be too specific, in a way that might cause limitations to my source of information. Also, it was hard to distinguish between different ethnicities among Asians from their exterior looks and this also severely limited my ability to observe only Koreans. I had to broaden my views to the overall Asian population, especially those of Northeast Asia. So whenever I refer to ‘Asian population or students’ in this research, I specifically mean students with ethnicity background in Northeast Asia.

Three methods were used mainly during the whole research process to analyze drinking behavior of Asian students: Interview, observation and analysis of other researches. Interview was done on two International Asian students and one American student from Illinois. Two observations were conducted on one of the campus bars, each at a different time frame to observe different behavior. Relevant researches were not widely available, and I was forced to relate to only certain parts of researches done on ethnography and alcohol consumption.

Analysis

Through the observation, which is responsible for the most of my earlier analysis and assumptions drawn from it, I was able to make three assumptions. They mainly focused on the differences I was able to discover between a typical Korean bar and the campus bar I’ve observed. Some of them were confirmed through my interviews and other research, but some
proved to show contrast with the interview and other research.

First assumption was that Koreans (Asians, to generalize) did not like the idea of helping themselves at the bar. Inside the bar I’ve observed, they had three places where customers can walk up to and buy drinks. In order to get food, you first had to walk up to the kitchen and place your order, come back to your seat and wait to be called. Once your number is called, you would have to walk back to the kitchen and bring back the food. In contrast, you are served at most of the bars in Korea, lessening your trouble in having to serve yourself after every drink. So I’ve assumed that having to wait in line in a crowded setting could have acted as a discouraging factor to go to bars for Koreans and possibly the Asian population that are so used to being served. However, none of my interviews pointed out this fact as a discouragement. This could suggest that a minute spent in serving yourself at bars is not a big deal to Asian students, considering the fact that people do not always drink multiple shots. The number you might have to stand up to buy yourself a drink may be five times at most usually. A few minutes over a few hours at the bar maybe aren’t a big deal.

Next assumption places its focus on the interpersonal interaction between people in campus bars. There is a lot of interpersonal interaction going on at campus bars, as it is one of the main reasons for coming out to bars and drink for many students. However, this is not the case in Korea as you are very unlikely to be encountered by a stranger wanting to drink the night with you, due to its protective aspect of the culture. The chances of the same encounter happening here is much higher. The interior set-up of the campus bars is quite different from Korea as well. Here, people are usually not fixed at a single table, but moves around to talk to interact with other, whereas in Korea you are guaranteed a table like a restaurant. Being exposed to interaction with people could have driven the Asians out of campus bars.
Last assumption that was made was about the style of drinking. In Korea, drinking is considered more like a joint activity, where people drink in similar paces with usually food at the same time. Here, drinking is totally an individual decision, and the decision to drink or not is usually up to the each individual. Plus, the hard liquor usually consumed on campus contains twice as much alcohol as the typical hard liquor consumed by Koreans. This fact focuses more on the ability to process alcohol, which does make a difference in a person’s drinking behavior. According to Makimoto, Asians tend to have a specific variant of a gene called the aldehyde dehydrogenase-2 Lys 487 than whites (qtd. In “Galvan and Caetano” 91). This gene causes the body to show symptoms such as facial flushing, nausea, headache dizziness and rapid heartbeat when processing alcohol. As these symptoms can be aggravated when drink with higher alcohol content is consumed, Asians might prefer a place where they feel comfortable such as their or their friend’s house. This could have also discouraged the Asians from going to the bars.

Another point that I’ve made after the observation was that the ability to speak English did not play a big role in analyzing my question, but when it is coupled with the second assumption which was on interaction, it does play a great role. The reason I did not acknowledge the language barrier as a limitation was due to the fact that a simple few words or even body gestures are enough to order a bottle of beer. However, the language barrier was displayed very differently to my interviewees. One of them pointed out the language barrier as one of the major reasons for not going to campus bars. During the interview, Kim replied that “You have to speak English at the bars, and you know, when you’re at a bar you drink because you want to get relaxed. It’s kind of hard for me to relax when I’m speaking English.” It turns out that due to the interaction pointed out earlier, even if you go to the bar with the friends of your same ethnicity, you end up having to speak English other than just ordering drinks. As stated above, the language
barrier approach is totally different if you take the interaction into consideration.

Then where does the Asian population usually drink? From my interviews and personal experience, I was able to confirm that they usually head to a private residence; such as their own homes, or their friends’ homes. Although they weren’t able to give a clear reason for such behavior, they both pointed out the culture difference as a major factor. None of them were feeling comfortable or relaxed at campus bars. This is probably because they were forced to situations in which they had to interact with people of different ethnicity, and different cultures. Hibbler suggests that college students prefer to have close friends of same ethnicity/race, regardless of their background in secondary schooling. This can also explain why some of the second-generation Asian-Americans do not go to campus bars often, even though they completely speak English and share the American culture. More specifically, Mallet, Bachrach and Turrisi imply in their research that college students tend to drink with friends with similar attitude towards alcohol-consumption and behavior. In order to feel secure and comfortable, the Asian students tend to drink at houses in their private environment of unique culture, without having to worry about dealing with others. This frees them from the active interaction they have to deal with at campus bars.

The Asian population on campus has chosen to segregate themselves from the campus bars and other races. What significance does this phenomenon have? This obliterates the possibility of any inter-racial or inter-ethnic relationships from forming, because this is what makes them feel uncomfortable and unsecure. As stated in RACE: The Power of an illusion, “These groups often face discrimination when they try to enter established, primarily white communities”, the Asian students deliberately chooses to stay away from bars to avoid any uncomfortable experiences. The efforts to blend into the overall atmosphere of campus bars
diminish as they keep suffer from it. However, it is hard to say that Asians are racially
discriminated in campus bars; it is the general idea of self-segregation that is similar. What is
even more interesting is that some ethnic minorities form a bar of their own. We sometimes
perceive this kind of bars as ‘black bars’. There is a so-called ‘black-bar’ in downtown
Champaign, and the majority of the people there are actually black. I’ve also heard and seen bars
mainly occupied with other ethnicities especially in big cities, where they have a greater number
of a certain ethnic minority.

Measures to promote the inter-racial relationships and interactions are being fostered at a
school level. Personally, I’ve experienced many of it as the Study Aboard Office has hosted
various events that brings together all international students to participate. Some of these events
very often end up drinking in campus bars, and for some reason I saw less and less Asian
participants than those of mainly Caucasian Europe participants. This can also be attributed to
the culture difference, as the American culture differs greatly less from the Europe culture than it
does from the Asian culture. The European students seem to have less difficulty dealing with
American culture than the Asian students.

Conclusion

Campus bars end up being not the best venue for drinking activities for the Asian
students because they do not feel secure and comfortable in such settings due to too much
interaction going on. This interaction forces them to speak English, which can aggravate the
already-worsened experience. These negative experiences are mainly attributed to the culture
difference of different ethnicities, as they play a great role in shaping one’s behaviors. As my
research was limited in both time and resource, I was unable to conduct as many interviews as I
would like to have. Due to the nature of the information I required in conducting this research, I
would have been able to make valid and accurate generalizations if I was allowed to schedule more interviews and gather more information. And as for future related studies, I would like to suggest looking into bars that hosts specific ethnic groups, like the one I’ve mentioned earlier. It would be interesting to observe how the Caucasian Americans behave in those places, and compare it with the behaviors of the ethnic minorities. Also, it would be interesting to see how the Caucasian’s drinking behavior is like in Asia, as they end up being the ethnic minority in that region.

Works Cited


Hibbler, Sharrell. "In which university spaces are students more likely to interact across racial/ethnic lines?" IDEALS @ University of Illinois, Date of Access, 12 April 2009. http://www.ideals.illinois.edu/handle/2142/1900

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Appendix I (Text Analysis)

Text Analysis

This short yet entertaining article from the notorious “the Booze News” is about a white man’s experience with a Korean man who he describes as ‘AWESOME’. Readers should take into consideration that “the Booze News” is neither academic nor formal, so a careful interpretation is required. The writer (he chooses not to identify himself, instead refers to himself as ‘someone’) deliberately uses foul language and repeats himself through similar phrases in order to amplify the entertaining feature of the writing and to keep his readers amused at the same time. This text reveals myriads of information on prejudices white men might have towards college students.” Journal of studies on Alcohol and Drugs 70.2 (2009): 178-185


Prevezer, Alice. “The Asian American Cultural Center: Its Role and Purpose at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.” IDEALS @ University of Illinois. Date of Access, 12 April 2009. http://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/handle/2142/3634

Asian men, and also shows how they can be annulled through liberating experiences.

Being a very outgoing and an alcohol-loving person, I find myself intoxicated in campus bars on weekends frequently. It did not take long for me to realize that there were not that many Koreans in those bars, compared to a huge Korean population we have here at U of I. This article was a pleasant surprise for me because it starred a Korean person who seems to have completely merged into both the white and Korean society. Equipped with the ability to drink 12 whisky shots and hang out with a bunch of newly-met people, Won is described as a ‘God among men’. In the text, the author describes his initial impressions of Koreans as ‘study-holic and bad driver’ and doesn’t forget to mention that he is not a racist. He may not be a racist, but he had prejudices towards Koreans in a negative way. Luckily, through his experience with Won these preconceptions are obliterated.

After their accidental encounter, the boys end up hanging out together at their after-hours party, where Won manages to make a stunning impression. Throughout the article, the author expresses how Won have changed his prejudiced thoughts on Koreans just over one night. It indirectly reveals his previous attitudes and prejudice on Koreans through his astonishment at Won’s ‘coolness’. Anyone can easily infer that the writer has rare relationships with Asians, judging from the way he writes. Again, this is surprising considering the huge amount of Asian students we have here on campus. Luckily, he had a chance to get a taste of the Asian culture and the both parties are extremely satisfied.

We must pay attention to the fact that the Korean guy present in the story introduced himself as ‘Won’, and once again emphasized it by saying ‘your number WON friend’. Although this may sound clearly flawless to many, this is not his full first name. For some reason, he doesn’t introduce himself in his actual name, and he even highlights his ‘alias’ to make himself
understood. This can be interpreted as a form of internalized racism, since Won introduces himself in a way that is familiar to the majority Americans, in fears of not being understood and/or remembered. Nobody acknowledges this fact in anyway, even Won himself, but we must note that this still is happening.

This text introduces a possibly the best way for two young college boys with different ethnic backgrounds to be in harmony. However, such ‘pleasant surprises’ do not always happen and inter racial settings must be deliberately established to promote such relationships. The writer doesn’t seem to have too much experience with Asians here in campus, and this is quite astonishing considering the fact that we have a very large Asian population at U of I. A little bit of liquor and bravery is enough to win new friends from different ethnic backgrounds, and this kind of relationship sure needs to be sponsored.

Appendix II (Source of Text Analysis)

MY NUMBER WON FRIEND!

THE BOOZE NEWS

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Gather ‘round, boys and girls, I’ve got a story to tell. It’s a tale of friendship, heartbreak, drama, and drunkenness. A tale of courage. A symphony of emotion. An epic of love. Alright it’s not really any of these things, but I’ll tell you what things it is: awesome. This is the story of how I met my own personal Asian friend, and all the reasons why you should too.

It was about 3 AM on a Friday night, and I was alongside the managing editor of The
Booze News. We were drunk and wasted as usual. We were on our way to some after hours party at some guy’s place who lived somewhere and whose name was something. It’s not important. But what happened on the way there was.

An Asian man approached us and asked to bum a lighter for a cigarette. We happily obliged and smoked a square with the man, who spoke of his night while we spoke of ours. But then something amazing happened. He asked if he could join us. It was like the perfect synergy of two worlds. It was ying and yang. It was an international, metaphorical Joanie-Loves-Chachi…peanut-butter-and-jelly…John Estep-and-Princess Peach (we’re in love).

His name was Won, pronounced “one”. He referred to himself as our “number Won friend,” and took about 12 whisky shots over the course of the party. He was basically a God among men. Now this sort of thing happens all the time; random meetings turning into long nights, leading to lasting friendships. I’m hardly trying to imply that we are revolutionaries, or that we’re somehow cooler than you. But what I am saying is that I’ve first of all never particularly been impressed with the Asian population here on campus. I’m not a racist--just saying. They weren’t doing it for me. Kind of like that 15-year-old girl I met the other day with the foot fetish.

But this man was a living, walking epiphany. He changed my perspective on an entire demographic. The average Korean man went from a studyholic, bad driver to a studyholic, bad driver that is AWESOME. And that’s not the only thing: later that week he invited me and a couple friends over for Korean barbeque! Which was amazing! He even bought a case of beer and taught us this comically ridiculous method of determining beer pong teams. It involved yelling some kind of super Asian phrase and karate chopping the air. I believe cartoon panda bears were also involved but I can’t be sure.
So here is my advice to you, boys and girls. Find an Asian friend. You spread your cultural horizons, get free food (and smell thickly of it for the rest of the night, which can be either a good or bad thing. I’ve heard it both ways), and just become an overall better person. It’s a liberating feeling. Just make sure that you carry your lighter with you at all times.

Appendix III (Observation)

Observation

During the past few years of my life as a college student, alcohol has become an essential part of my life like many other college students. My love for alcohol did not change much after I settled down here in Urbana-Champaign, and the few bars on campus naturally were chosen to be a part of my routine bar crawl. It did not take long until I came to the question: “where are all the Koreans? Or even Asians?” Considering the huge Asian population here at UIUC\(^1\), it was hard to believe that I wasn’t seeing so many Asians at bars. As a part of my overall

\(^1\) 4611 of 34291 identifies themselves as Asian/Pacific Islanders, and at least half of 5500 international students are Asian, making the total add up to almost 20% of the student population
research on this topic, I’ve closely observed and analyzed everything that happened at one of my favorite bars on campus.

The bar is located at a very convenient spot on Green Street, just like many other famous bars on campus. It employs the ground floor and the basement floor of a building that also hosts other facilities. This bar is particular in that it is considered to be for the upper-classmen, rather than the lower-classmen. By saying this, I imply that IDs are a must if you want to drink at this bar and you will be kicked out immediately if you are caught drinking underage. However, if you are over 19 you are allowed to “sit” at the bar, but you still cannot drink. Like most other bars on campus, the place runs on a “serve-yourself” basis. There are two kinds of seating arrangements, first there are some stools located around each tables and the other bunch of stools are rooted around the bars. There are three spots around the bar where you can buy drinks, and another spot at the kitchen to buy food. Two bathrooms exist towards the backside of the bar at opposite sides, fulfilling the needs of customers scattered all over the bar. Typical bar games like the pool table, the dart boards and a few arcade games are featured as well. I’ve performed my observation in two different timeframes, to observe distinct behavior of people in different environments.

First observation was done around 10 o’clock on a Thursday night, and I had company. As I approached the bar, I was asked for my ID. Since the bar doesn’t take other forms of ID than a passport for foreigners, I had to explain to them when I handed them my Korean Driver’s License because I wasn’t carrying my passport at the time. As this wasn’t the first time I’ve done this, they recognized my ID and allowed me to enter the bar. The place was starting to get crowded because Thursday was one of the special days at the bar where they have an event going on, so soon after I had entered I could see a queue forming outside the entrance. When I first entered the bar, there weren’t any seats available at first, so I had to wait for a while for a seat to
open up. There was a line to buy drinks, so I had to stand in line to buy my drink as well. Most people were drinking beer or drinks, it was hard to find people that were drinking shots. As I was lucky to find an empty table for me and my friends, I could notice that many people aren’t actually fixed at a single table, but are rather moving around to interact with others that are either their friends or new to them. Of all the people at the bar which surely counted over an hundred, I could barely locate around ten Asians at the bar. They seemed to be rather fixed at their table, not interacting with other groups. Majority of the people were dressed in nice clothes, nice as in a way that maximizes their attractiveness and this seemed to be same for the both sexes. People playing the pool or the darts were mainly Caucasian males, and those on the arcade games were mainly group of friends composed of both males and females.

Second observation was done around 6 o’clock on a Monday night, and I was solo. I did not encounter any ID-checks at the entrance and the place was fairly calm and there were few people sitting down at tables to eat. I myself walked over to the kitchen to buy food and located myself at one of the tables. The environment was completely different from my first observation, mainly because there wasn’t too much drinking, or even any kind of activity going on. People were in solo or pairs mainly to have dinner or a couple beers, mostly contained to themselves. In overall, it was a totally different mood indeed compared to Thursday.

Through my both observations, I could pick out certain differences in culture that might hinder Koreans from coming to bars. First, none of the people were being served inside the bar. In Korea, you will be served food and drinks in 99 percent of the bars you walk into. Having to wait in line in a crowded setting could have acted as a discouraging factor to go to bars for Koreans that are used to being served. Second, there is too much interaction in between groups. Another factor you are guaranteed when drinking in Korea is your privacy. You are very unlikely
to be encountered by a stranger wanting to drink the night with you, and the chances of the same
encounter happening here is much higher. Last but not least, the way people drink here is totally
different. In Korea, drinking is considered more like a joint activity, where people drink in
similar paces with usually food at the same time. Here drinking is totally an individual decision,
and the decision to drink or not is up to you. To sum up, the overall the drinking culture itself is
different.

I did not acknowledge the language barrier as a limitation, due to the fact that a simple
few words or even body gestures are enough to order a bottle of beer. I will try to verify my
assumptions through interviews and surveys. However, readers must keep in mind that I myself
am a Korean as well and there might be a great bias in the way I am interpreting the observation
data, meaning that I might be unconsciously manipulating the qualitative observation data to fit
my assumption and this should be acknowledged as a limitation in conducting this study.

Appendix IV (Annotated Bibliography)

Annotated Bibliography

Galvan, Frank H., and Raul Caetano. “Alcohol Use and Related Problems Among Ethnic
Minorities in the United States.” *Alcohol Research & Health* 27.1 (2003): 87-93

Galvan and Caetano conducts quantitative study focused on ethnicity differences about alcohol
usage and problems emerging from it. They analyze the collected quantitative data categorized
by race and try to define some factors that cause the difference in drinking behavior. The part on
the quantitative analysis and the analysis on the problems did not draw my attention; however
the part that explained the ethnic differences in alcohol usage can be used in my research. The
authors state that the social and cultural factors such as norms and attitudes towards alcohol usage greatly effects the way different ethnic groups drink. They also stress the biological factor, in which where Asians with a certain variant of a gene is more likely to drink less than those who do not have the gene. This study provides actual evidence behind different drinking behaviors, which will greatly assist my research.

Hibbler, Sharrell. "In which university spaces are students more likely to interact across racial/ethnic lines?" IDEALS @ University of Illinois, Date of Access, 12 April 2009. http://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/handle/2142/1900

Hibbler observes several locations on campus in order to research if there is a certain space where inter-racial/ethnic activities occur more frequently than others. She conducts several interviews and observations. It is worth noting that most of her interviewees have close friends of same ethnicity/race, regardless of their background in secondary schooling. A black female that graduated from a white-dominant catholic school states that all of her close friends are also black here at UIUC, just like how most of her friends were black back in her high school. During her observations, Hibbler gives detail descriptions of few occasions where inter-racial interactions occur. These observations and analysis based on several different locations on campus can be compared to my observations made in a campus bar in order to discover a common ground on how inter-racial settings can be encouraged.

In order to locate the main influence factor in drinking behavior of college students, the authors conduct paper-based surveys on college students. They first draw conclusions based on mathematical expressions and move onto discussions. Largely, college students tend to drink with friends with similar attitudes towards alcohol-consumption. It is worth noting that the closest friend’s attitude towards alcohol influences much heavily than the overall atmosphere or the attitude of the group. This study is helpful in that it provides actual evidence on how students shape their perceptions on drinking attitudes.


This study covers a broad range of topics such as alcohol consumption, weight status, diet, activity and their correlations. Although this study is not directly related to my research, it does show what people who do drink often are more inclined to be. As this study is more focused towards binge drinking and its problematic approach, it states that university students are prone to alcohol misusage and binge drinking. Since it also provides which students are more likely to drink, it will be interesting to incorporate this into different ethnicities.

Prevezer, Alice. “The Asian American Cultural Center: Its Role and Purpose at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.” IDEALS @ University of Illinois. Date of Access, 12 April 2009. [http://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/handle/2142/3634](http://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/handle/2142/3634)

Prevezer, who was an undergraduate exchange student at the time she conducted this research, mainly focuses on the Asian American Cultural center located on the UIUC campus. She starts by questioning the role of the Asian American Cultural center in the self-segregation of Asian
students, despite its good purposes. Through interview with the Director of the center, she draws the conclusion that the cultural center is more focused towards in its goal of allowing students to experience and ultimately to incorporate Asian American culture into the ‘cultural mosaic’ of the U of I. This research provides a detailed explanation of many activities supported by the cultural center, which helps me to understand the school’s efforts to promote inter-racial relationships. It might be interesting to integrate this in my interviews, and ask the participants whether they are aware of this cultural center.

Appendix V (Interview)

Interview

When I chose my research topic on Asians and their drinking behavior on campus, I’ve decided to put aside the interview as the last element of my research because I wanted to confirm and refine my interim conclusions drawn from the work I have until now. In order to confirm those conclusions, I’ve conducted interviews on two international Asian students. They’ve shown distinct responses, which greatly contributed to my research by providing actual answers to their behaviors. I found out that Asian students did not favor campus bars as their favorite drinking spot, mainly due to cultural and language difference.
First interviewee was an Asian exchange student from Hongkong, and this semester was his first visit to the U.S. Considering the fact that he had very little contact with the U.S. culture prior to coming here, it wasn’t surprising to find out that he pointed out the cultural difference as the main reason for not exactly naming one of the campus bars as his favorite drinking venue. "(The) Main difference would be the culture difference. Americans have more parties and some bars have sexual (interactions) and sometimes I see underage students.” The cultural difference must have been more shocking to him because he did not have any interaction with this kind of culture that is very open and public compared to his. It was clear that he wasn’t feeling very comfortable when drinking at a bar. Even though it was difficult to point out the reasons since this person is not a frequent drinker, but I was able to observe his anxiety in campus bars.

The second interviewee however had clear opinions on campus bars and also on why he did not like them. This international Korean student is 26 years old, have four years of experience living in the U.S. and is a senior here at U of I. After the interview, I realized that this person shows the typical drinking behavior of international Korean students, which is drinking at someone’s residence, instead of a bar. He stated, “Mostly, I hang out at my friend's house or at my place and I go to the bar occasionally with usually the same people, only a couple of friends who I drink with.” When I asked him the follow-up question which was, "Do they have the same ethnicity as you do?" He replied positively. He pointed out that his friend’s house is located in a convenient place, big enough to host many people and always full of drinks. Although he was unable to give any more reason for usually drinking at his friend’s place (“I’ve never thought about it.”), I immediately viewed it as ‘self-segregation’, because he was deliberately staying away from campus bars, confining himself to his close friends, without giving it too much thought. By drinking in a private residence, he was shut down from any inter-racial relationships.
that can occur in public bars. When I asked him why he did not like the campus bars, he replied "I haven't thought about it, but I think most bars are crowded with Caucasians and I don't feel very comfortable with that." When asked to elaborate more, he said "You have to speak English at the Bar, and you know, when you're at a bar you drink because you want to get relaxed. And it’s kind of hard for me to relax when I'm speaking English." This was very interesting because he seemed to speak fine English, enough to hold the interview in English. It was obvious that he was much more relaxed speaking his native tongue, and he did not find the experiences at the bars amusing because he basically had to be ‘on alert’ all the time. Also a few bad experiences at the bar made him to stay away from them, as he did state that he had those experiences but refused to elaborate.

None of the students seemed to have a clear reason for going to a friend’s place for drinking, but they did have a reason why they did not like campus bars. Both interviews weren’t really helpful in terms of confirming my conclusions drawn from the observation because none of those factors were mentioned by the interviewees. I had another interview scheduled with a Caucasian student in order to incorporate an outsider’s view, however it was deferred. I will do a follow-up interview on this student and see if he is aware of the fact that Asians do not show up in campus bars as often because they don’t feel comfortable. It will be interesting to see if they acknowledge this fact, and also how they would act if they were put in the same situation.