

## Self-Reflective Essay

Studying the Campus Recreation Center East (CRCE) for my ethnography project this semester was much harder than I thought I would be. During my first semester here, I had been to CRCE many times to play basketball. I understood that studying a field site that I had been to previously or was part of was against the wishes of my professor, so I narrowed down the field site within CRCE to a place I knew very little about. My chosen field site was the fitness area and track on the second floor of the facility.

Getting into the project took me longer than I had expected it to take. First of all, my schedule this semester was a lot busier than last semester so actually visiting CRCE had to be fit in. The first task I had to complete was getting the consent form signed by the manager at CRCE, and after I had done this I was able to take my field notes.

During my first few visits there I wasn't sure on how I should go about taking notes. I had always imagined the CRCE second floor to be packed with people working out and exercising in all different forms. My imagination wasn't too far off when I first arrived there. The place was filled with people doing all sorts of things. There were people on machines, lifting free weights, and running on the track. The second floor had a high ceiling and no internal walls so a person could see the whole floor from anywhere they were standing. I noticed this because of the early discussions I had had with my professor. These discussions were about how fitness centers were specifically designed in this way, allowing everyone to see everyone. The structure had some kind of effect on the people working out there. My initial guess for the purpose of these structures was

that since people working out could see everyone else doing the same, it gave a group motivation for everyone on the floor. Seeing other people doing the things that you are doing must have some kind of positive effect on the person's mindset. Although my early notes didn't really include this observation, I made sure to mention it in the final draft.

After visiting CRCE a couple of times, I noticed that it was much more crowded on weekdays than weekends, especially in the evening [A]. Through all of my drafts I have not been able to really analyze this fact. I noticed it early on when there was a big difference in the number of people during different times. In my final draft I was able to incorporate a quotation by a member of the subculture in order to provide the evidence that this type of crowdedness happened. Unfortunately I still wasn't able to find a good enough analysis for it.

Cleanliness was also a big part of subculture, as everyone cleaned their fitness machines after using them. I found myself surprised by this fact and immediately put it into my notes. I wasn't sure how to present this at the time, mostly because I didn't know why I had found it fascinating. At a later time I realized that it was because the people working out were the ones who had to clean up after themselves. In my final paper, I was able to mold that idea to say that by giving the exercisers at CRCE the responsibility of cleaning up after themselves, it gave these people a sense of belonging to the facility. In the long run, they were keeping the place clean for themselves [B].

Technology was also an important issue in the project. Although technology was abundant and in all different forms at CRCE, I was initially unsure of how to incorporate it into this project. The major forms of technology that I saw at the beginning of my

observations were Ipods and other music players, the digital clock hanging over the track, and the measurement features on each of the machines. Of course I later found more complicated forms of technology through research such as urethane and impact of workout. Using a comment made by a member of the subculture on music players, I analyzed the use of music while working out in the final paper.

The research I did was another major factor when writing my final paper. Some of the things I found either in journals or online gave me great insight into the technology used in the subculture that I would have never thought of. Probably my biggest find in the research was the article on urethane. Looking for what kinds of synthetic material tracks were made of, I came across two materials, urethane and tulfite. Urethane was much more popular and more widely used because of its technological advancement in relaxation time. Fortunately for me, I knew exactly what I would do with this little piece of information the moment I got it, so all I had to do was shape it and get rid of any unneeded information. By the time I reached the final paper it was easy for me to express this information in the way I wanted the reader to comprehend it.

My other major topic of research was a bit more difficult for me work with. I had learned about impact in workouts and how different machines were designed to reduce that impact to have less strain on the body. This information wasn't hard to find, but it was definitely hard for me to express it to the reader. As the project progressed, I came across a many people in the subculture who understood this concept and used the low-impact machines such as the elliptical trainer and stationary bike for that purpose. My interviewee Todd mentioned it in the interview, saying that he used the elliptical trainers instead of running whenever his knees felt weak. It was the article "Treadmill vs.

Elliptical Trainer” which gave me all the necessary information, but it was the first hand accounts given by Todd and other members of the subculture that helped me fit the low-impact concept into the paper. In the final draft I made claims for low-impact benefits and was able to provide valid evidence of its use through my interviews [C].

The next step in the project was the interview with a member of the subculture. Todd, who was previously mentioned, was the person I chose to interview. He is a legitimate member of the subculture because he goes to work out at CRCE about four days a week. From this encounter, I obtained many useful comments and his perspective on the subculture as well as the facility. Major points that I used from the interview were his feelings of connection to the subculture, his views on self-motivation, and his comment on finding one’s own rhythm. I thought these comments gave great insight into the subculture and in my Interview Analysis I tried to figure out how I could put these quotes to good use in the final paper.

One of the purposes of the project was to determine how the subculture came together and felt about each other. Analyzing Todd’s comment on how he felt about his subculture, I found it difficult to understand why he felt this way [D]. I also viewed this as a negative factor in my project, since Todd had said there was no real subculture. Taking that into account when writing the final paper, I was able to use his comment to my advantage, saying that there may be no real connection between everyone at CRCE, but while they are there, member of the subculture are all working together for their own purposes [E]. I wasn’t sure how well it would work but it was the best way that I could tie a comment that significant into the paper.

After a couple of visits, I had noticed that the routine was pretty repetitive. People on bikes, people on treadmills, and people on the track- everything just seemed to repeat itself every time I went to take notes. I even saw a lot of familiar faces every time I attended. That is when I realized what Todd was saying about rhythm. He believed that everyone had to find their own rhythm when coming to CRCE and stick with that. For me, the rhythm was boring because I was just taking notes of people working out. But for members of the subculture it wouldn't seem as repetitive as it seemed rhythmic because they enjoyed what they were doing and felt productive. I decided to use this when finishing the project because I felt that Todd's perspective was important, even if it didn't agree with a lot of my ideas.

When writing the first draft of the paper, I really wanted to try and fit everything into one day just like the example reading we had in class. I felt that this would be the best way to introduce all of the different items that I had observed throughout the semester. I also tried to design my paper so that it wouldn't have any direct analysis. My initial understanding of the project was that I was supposed to present the fact and have the reader draw the same conclusions I had come to. Unfortunately this didn't go as well as I thought it would, as everything seemed rushed and pushed together. The estimated grade on the first draft finally convinced me to drop that style of writing and try something else. I also got a lot of good advice after my meeting with the professor on how I should add analysis, at least indirectly. The paper needed more of my perspective of the subculture and how it has changed over the course of this project.

It finally came down to putting together the final draft. Since I had abandoned my earlier style of having everything in one day, I was practically writing a whole new paper,

except this time I knew what I needed to include. There was a lot of useless information in the first draft, and after reviewing it I narrowed down the topics I would talk about and analyze to a select few which I thought were necessary. These topics included information about each machine and any research found on it, the archive notes about the renovation of CRCE, urethane and technological benefits, music and television technology, the concept of marketing fitness, and more. Having fewer topics to talk about, I tried to add a lot of analysis to direct the reader and their opinions about CRCE and its subculture.

My writing style as well as perspective of the subculture at CRCE changed throughout the entire semester. After visiting and observing the field site many times my attitude about the place changed. I started to notice different things about the place and analyze them with my initial perspective. As the project progressed so did my outlook on the field site and fortunately for me, I was able to reflect that in my writing.