

# **Ethnography Paper Examples**

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Sociology 101

8 March 2007

### **Life at *The Market***

For my ethnography project I chose to study the life at the restaurant located on the two lower levels of my dormitory building. For the purposes of this paper I will refer to the restaurant as “The Market,” and I will also call the people in this report by other names so that no one in any way can be offended or embarrassed. The main focus of this ethnography is to compare the **norms** of the workers when the head supervisor is present at *The Market* and when she is absent. As defined in *Sociology: A Brief Introduction*, by Richard T. Schaefer, a **norm is “an established standard of behavior maintained by a society.”** How does the standard of behavior change when the supervisor is there keeping an eye on everything compared to when the student managers are in charge? Although the norms of the workers are the main focus of the ethnography; **hierarchy** and **gender roles** also play very important roles at *The Market*.

*The Market* is a small restaurant or market that is provided to meet the everyday food necessities of the students at OSU. It sells many different types of snacks, entrees, and drinks. As you enter *The Market*, there is a buffet in which workers stand behind and serve food. As you move on past the buffet there is a burrito bar. The burrito bar has all the items needed to make a burrito or a sandwich. In the next room there is a machine in which customers can get fountain beverages. This room also contains the soup and salad bar. *The Market* also houses a dining room in which the students can eat in. The dining room wraps around the bottom of the tower, and contains a glass window which looks out onto the campus, giving the students a clear

view of the soccer field, tennis court, and even the football stadium. In the dining room there is a table near the register that the workers sit at while they are on break. There is also a television near this table, one of three that are in the dining room. This is the main area where the observations were performed.

My observations for this report spanned over a four day period. Three of these days I observed the workers when there was no head supervisor, and the final day being when the supervisor "Traci" returned from her vacation. The first things that I took note of were the different jobs and the special tasks that the employees are expected to carry out. There are many jobs, including: four cooks (downstairs), floor cleaner (upstairs and downstairs), two entrée servers, one pizza server, one milk and beverage worker, one salad bar runner, two burrito makers and servers, one cashier, three or four dish washers, one food runner (transports food from downstairs kitchen to upstairs warmers), and a total of eight student managers (usually three different managers work a night).

As may be expected the jobs are distributed differently among the sexes, the females tending to have more of the jobs that involve serving or distributing food, for example the servers on entrée and the burrito servers. This usually involves cutting food a certain way, or making the food have a certain appearance, as with the burritos which have to be folded a certain way. There are always females doing these jobs. The males seem to get the jobs that involve more lifting, such as the milk and beverage worker, who must be able to lift five gallons of milk when it is necessary, and able to pick up the bags of syrup that are used for the fountain beverage machines. Males are also usually the food runner since this task calls for heavy lifting at times. The floor jobs also usually go to males, which involve a lot of sweeping, mopping, and the lifting

of heavy garbage bags. **Gender roles** seem to play an important role in the decision of what each employee's job should be for that evening.

*The Market* can be considered a form of **bureaucracy**. It meets the standards of the definition, since there is a division of labor, a hierarchy of authority, and written rules and regulations. As in almost any bureaucracy there is a form of **hierarchy**, meaning that **each position is under the supervision of another position**. There are really only three levels to the hierarchy, the highest level being the supervisor, the second level being the student managers who are usually watched closely by the supervisor, and then the employees who are supposed to be closely watched by the student managers. For three days there were only two levels of hierarchy, the student managers and employees due to the fact that the supervisor had been on vacation. There are also many rules to be abided by in this setting, some of the main ones include not listening to iPods while working, no talking or texting on cell phones, and no sitting on the job, especially when there are customers present.

While watching the workers the three days the supervisor was absent, their actions seemed to remain constant. When there weren't many customers, or sometimes even when there were, the entrée workers would sit on one of the tables behind the entrée bar, and move from it when a customer would want food. At the break table in the dining room, there would usually tend to be about five to six people sitting at the table, many of these people sitting for long periods of time for up to almost an hour and a half. Almost everyone had out an iPod or cell phone, despite the signs hanging all over the market that were contradicting their actions. They would watch T.V. and talk in pretty loud voices, laughing and carrying on about gossip or what was on the television. Each night seemed to have a different T.V. show that they would watch, including *House*, *Grey's Anatomy*, and *American Idol*. The people who were watching shows

tended to be the people cleaning floors, the milk and beverage worker, the food runner, and the salad bar cleaner and filler.

For this part of my study I chose to interview “Brian,” the food runner for that evening. I asked him to describe what his job for the evening was, and if he felt he performed his job differently than when Traci was around. “Tonight is actually a pretty slow night. Usually I’m standing behind the entrée bar, watchin’ the food, and making sure that nothing runs out. The warmers are pretty stocked up and I don’t really have anything to do, so I’m taking it easy ... and chillin’ with everyone at the table, and watching *Idol*.... I know that if Traci was here this wouldn’t be happening, but I’m taking advantage of the fact that she’s gone.” I asked him why her absence made this different. “Well Traci’s really big on making sure that no one leaves their spot, and our breaks are pretty limited to about fifteen minutes.... She’d also freak the fuck out if she saw me listening to my iPod and texting on my phone.” I asked if he felt he’d have this much freedom with tomorrow when she would return, and he said “Hell no! I’m sure she’ll be back to bitchin’ about every little thing like she normally does,” and then the other workers at the table laughed and a few shook their heads in agreement.

As Brian had anticipated, the next day turned out to be much different. Traci was back and she was spending most of the time making rounds to each room of *The Market*, checking to make sure pots were filled, ample amounts of food were in the warmers, and all the floors had the capability of being eaten off of. There were only about two to three people at the break table at a time, and no one stayed at the table for longer than twenty minutes. Even when people were on breaks there was not a cell phone or iPod in sight. The entrée bar had three people behind it, who were *standing* there all night, these workers being the food runner and the two entrée workers. The floor cleaners remained working (at least for the two hours I was there), sweeping

floors, emptying trash cans, and mopping (even after they had completed these tasks about an hour and a half before).

From my observations I was able to conclude that the norms, or standards of behavior, are lowered when the supervisor isn't present. The workers seem to be more relaxed, mostly because the student managers run between the ages of nineteen and twenty-one and tend to be very easy going. Although everything that needs to get done gets done (food being served, work and eating area remaining clean), the employees don't seem to take the job as seriously when Traci isn't around. The managers are very lax with the rules, and the employees seem to get away with whatever they want, including listening to music and texting on cell phones. When Traci is there, there is a lot of pressure on everyone to do their job right so as not to be reprimanded on the job. The social norms are at an all time high, everyone must "man their post" and make sure things are running smooth as possible. All rules are to be abided by, and work is strictly business and no time for play.

**In conclusion, I've found that if no one is around to enforce certain social norms, then the norms change.** Since Traci was not around to make sure the workers followed a certain standard of behavior, the standard of behavior changed. Actions like these are prominent almost anywhere, a few examples being students talking in a class room when the teacher isn't present, not wearing a seat belt on an old country road with no police enforcement, or a child not finishing a meal without a parent to monitor them. Each person had a certain social norm to live up to when Traci was around, but that feeling left when she was absent. The absence of one level of hierarchy made a lot of difference in the social norms of *The Market*. This ethnography helped me to better understand the roles of social norms, and how much a bureaucratic system helps make many different institutions, businesses, and life in general run so much smoother.

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Sociology 101

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March 4, 2007

### *Observation of a Deviant Subculture*

All societies have norms and values, be they formal or informal, mores or folkways. Society also does its best to encourage or enforce what it views as appropriate behavior while discouraging or punishing those that exhibit negative behavior. At the same time however, where there is a “right” way to behave, there is also a wrong way. In the case of societal norms, the wrong way is considered *deviant*. Deviance is behavior that violates the standards of conduct or expectations of a society. Thusly, the subculture that does not conform to the norms or common values of a given society is a *deviant subculture*. Some of the common values held in the United States include striving to get a good education, working hard, and staying away from drugs. Our norms include things like show up at work on time or dressing appropriately for your job. Most people in our society do follow these guidelines. Yet some, as I have seen first hand, do not.

When choosing a location for my ethnography study, I tried to pick someplace where I could actually see some of the big sociological topics at work. As in Ain't No Makin' It, I chose to study a group of individuals, allowing them the freedom of anonymity and interviewing and observing them in a place they frequented. In the small town I grew up in, a pizza chain moved in around 5 years ago called “Cassano’s Pizza King.” While a reputable business at first, after multiple managers and employees cycling through it fell into a state of disarray. Located in the middle of a suburban, blue-

collar town, the deviant subculture that the workers exhibit is a stark contrast. After getting permission to carry out my study from the general store manager, who I will call Kevin, I examined the workers through observation, conversation and interview. My study took place during my trips home to Monroe over the past few weeks.

Working at Cassano's on the times I visited were a total of 6 workers. First was Kevin, the store manager, a 25-year-old graduate of Middletown, Ohio. Kevin was viewed by the others as "chill" because, according to them, he did not care what the workers did as long as he didn't get into any trouble and they did their jobs. Bob and Dave were the next two men I met, 24-year-old friends who have known each other since grade school. Bob is single, attends a community college in Dayton and is a delivery driver. Dave is dating another <sup>one</sup> of the workers, Samantha, who is 7 years his junior. He also has a child from a previous relationship. The two younger workers I encountered were Chuck and Josh. Josh is a stocky 22-year-old delivery driver who has worked there nearly since the store opened. Chuck is a 17-year-old high school dropout who works as a cook.

Drug use is something against the societal norms of the United States. Most look down upon the use of narcotics, seeing it as against modern moral values. Furthermore, drug use is something certainly never to be done at one's work place. However, every one of the employees I met at Cassano's does drugs at least on occasion. In the back of the store, out of the view of the service window to the dining room, there is a door leading to the back parking lot. This is where the employees gather in between orders and deliveries. The workers had put lawn chairs and buckets outside to sit on, and informed me that this is where they met to smoke pot.

**Me:** So, Kevin lets you guys sit out here in broad daylight and smoke pot?

**Josh:** The building blocks the view from the main road and he doesn't care as long as we don't get him in trouble.

**Chuck:** The drivers smoke while out on deliveries, while the screen's clear we can chill out here as long as somebody's inside to watch the oven.

Josh and Chuck are the only two workers I met that claimed they smoked pot at least once a day and were high at work most of the time. Dave, Bob and Kevin all claimed to be "social smokers." Bob also told me that the reason he doesn't smoke much anymore is because during high school he was suspended for selling marijuana. Harder drugs such as crystal meth and cocaine were less common, but some of the workers, such as Josh and Joe (who was never working while I was interviewing) did them frequently.

Aside from drugs, a common anti-normal characteristic of the workers was appearance and relationships. Most people in American society would not think of large, half-inch holes for earrings as normal. Dave is a good example of this sort of deviance. Dave's a shorter guy with the previously mentioned earrings, a dyed pitch-black mohawk and tattoos all over the place. He's also got his eyebrow and nose pierced. His appearance is surely unlike most other 24-year-old fathers. While not an extremely rare sight, Dave's appearance is still an example of the ways in which the workers ignore the social norms. Another way is through relationships. Again, I'll use Dave as the example here, although from what I understand, Joe is in the same situation. It's customary for people in the U.S. to date people of their same age. However, both Dave and Joe are dating girls 7 years younger. When asked, he said "Me and her don't see it as a problem. What's a couple of years matter?"

Aside from the drug use, another commonplace occurrence at Cassano's was

drinking, both coming to work drunk and drinking while on the job. Many of the previous employees had been fired for drinking. One employee, George, had called off sick from work and was later found by one of the other drivers at a nearby bar drinking. On one of the weekends, I went in on a Friday night and stayed until closing time at 1:00. At around 12:00 when the orders lessened, Kevin allowed the workers to drink inside the building, filling up the paper cups from the keg in the refrigerator. Chuck, who was again 17 and therefore underage, was allowed to drink freely as well. At one point, a delivery order came in. Josh, who had been drinking, got into his car and drove off to take the order.

**Me** (to Kevin): Aren't you afraid he'll get pulled over?

**Kevin:** Nah, the cops usually don't pull over a delivery driver, they know they're in a hurry.

**Me:** What about Chuck? He's under age.

**Kevin:** He's not gonna tell anybody.

There seemed to be a completely different set of rules in this place. Drugs, even hard ones like cocaine, were no shock and done in the store during business hours. Drinking was commonplace, done nearly every weekend, according to Bob. Drinking and drug use at work are clearly not normal behavior. The workers at Cassano's did indeed seem to make up a subculture of their own. Their work attire varied from day to day, Kevin was not strict on this either. Unlike most food businesses one encounters, the workers were not required to wear certain clothes except for a Cassano's hat. Tardiness was frequent, some workers coming in an hour late or more without calling.

In Ain't No Makin' It, the boys who made up the Hallway Hangers were all from

poor families living in the projects. Stratification played a big role in the decisions they made. However, I found that most of the workers at Cassano's came from blue-collar or higher families. Chuck's parents drove a BMW and lived in a large house in an upscale neighborhood. Bob's parents paid for his schooling and lived in the suburbs. It seems that coming from more upper-middle class families did not affect their decisions toward drugs and alcohol. In other words, their deviance with regard to the norms of drug use and drinking were not related to their family status.

Education is a large part of American ideals. We are all expected to do our best and try to go to college. Education is important to most individuals in society. However, the workers at Cassano's do not take it so seriously. Chuck, as stated previously, dropped out when he was 16 years old. According to him, his brother received a 34 on his ACT test and currently attends college at Miami Oxford in Oxford, Ohio. It is surprising that in an identical environment, one child can achieve so much and the other so little – one succeed with respect to societal norms and the other becoming a deviant. When asked why he dropped out, Chuck explained. "My parents' expectations were too high. They pushed me too hard and I hate being pushed. Eventually I just quit." The values of his parents and their will for him to succeed did not have the desired effect. Besides Chuck, all of the workers I talked to had finished high school. Bob was the only one pursuing any sort of college education, which, judging by their family backgrounds, is uncommon. Perhaps like the Hallway Hangers the overall disregard for conventional success (at least at this stage in their lives) leads to their cohesion in the deviant subculture.

If you were to ask the average American living in the suburbs what he or she thought was normal behavior, they might say "going to school," "saying 'no' to drugs and

alcohol,” or “getting a job.” These are some of the most common and fundamental values we hold in our society. Work hard, get an education, stay away from drugs and you will succeed. However, as seen through observation, the workers at Cassano’s Pizza King disregard these norms, forming their own deviant subculture where drug use and drinking on the job are commonplace occurrences. The workers there have a very distorted view of what a job should be. I believe that my observations may help to determine what causes this lack of norm following in suburban areas. Social deviation and the subcultures therein are an important part of understanding the different groups that coexist in our society. From the gangs of New York to the pizza delivery boys of Cassano’s Pizza in Monroe, Ohio, deviance such as drug use is prevalent. To better understand these subcultures, we must investigate and observe their members, much as I have done over these past few weeks. Perhaps if we were to have a better grasp of where these subcultures tend to exist and how their members behave, we could work to form solutions to the problems of drinking and drug-use in our youth that a deviant subculture such as the one seen here exhibit.

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excellent!

Today's society is consumed by fitness and health care. There are thousands of articles, television commercials, and websites about the latest miracle diet and work out technique. Gyms and work out facilities are popping up all over the place and personal trainers appear to be very busy with fitness crazed clients. The no-carb and high protein diets are only a few that seem to be taking over. Lately it seems as though society is more concerned about washboard abs and toned arms than actual physical, mental, and social well-being. With all of these things taken into consideration, what are the social norms of a healthy lifestyle?

The Ohio State University has recently invested a huge amount of money into building the most state of the art fitness center. The Recreational and Physical Activity Center (RPAC) certainly has a lot to offer. The newest cardio and weight machines, several basketball, volleyball, and racquetball courts along with a track could keep an OSU student very busy. The RPAC also includes a juice bar and a food court that offers healthy dining options. Since part of a healthy lifestyle would be working out, I decided to conduct my observation at the RPAC. Over the past few weeks I have spent several hours in the RPAC observing the norms and culture of the gym. My observation focused mainly on the work out facilities opposed to the juice bar and dining area. My observation also included an interview of a student actively using the RPAC facilities.

The RPAC is a large facility so my observation focused on only one main area. I focused on the 'Upper Gym' located at the top of the steps. In general the RPAC is a very

open space. The walls that enclose the different courts are glass so both the participants using the courts and the passerby can see what is going on. The 'Upper Gym', which includes treadmills, ellipticals and bikes, overlooks the juice bar and dining area. The majority of the RPAC is windows. Almost all of the walls are glass. The inside structure is made of brown cement blocks. But for the most part the RPAC is a very open space. In the 'Upper Gym' several televisions line the walls, although they are all tuned to the same station, mtvU. The demographic that uses the facility is very diverse. The ratio of men to women is about the same. Also, there was no more of one race than the other. While working out, most wore comfortable, loose fitting clothes and tennis shoes. The typical outfit consisted of a tee-shirt and gym shorts or sweat pants. Almost all of the girls wore their hair off their face in a ponytail. The average work out time was about thirty to forty-five minutes. A general trend was the use of an ipod. Others read a magazine or book. In general, everyone used some sort of entertainment while exercising. On every machine there is a towel and bottle of spray. Almost every person wiped off the machine after their workout with these items. I only saw two people who did not wipe off their machines. In general, there is not much interaction between the people in the 'Upper Gym'. The only interaction came from people who seemed as though they knew each other. These people usually chose machines next to each other and generally did the same workout routine. I interviewed an OSU freshman named [REDACTED] *do not use identifying information* about her thoughts on a healthy lifestyle. When asked if she considered herself living a healthy lifestyle she replied, "Yes, I think I do live a healthy lifestyle. I try to work out and eat right. I also only drink on occasion." Sam works out six times a week for about an hour each time and her workouts generally consist of cardio and weight training. When asked why she works

out she replied, "I am trying to avoid the 'freshman fifteen'. I just feel better about myself after I work out." When I asked Sam if there was anything else she does that would be considered within a healthy lifestyle, she told me she rarely takes the bus because she would rather walk. She also said she prefers the stairs opposed to the elevator.

I think there are several sociological reasons that can help explain these observations. One of these sociological reasons would be that the people that regularly go to the gym could be considered their own subculture. A subculture is defined as 'a segment of society that shares a distinctive pattern of mores, folkways and values that differ from the pattern of the larger society.' Even though wiping down a machine after using it is a general folkway of the gym, one will not be sanctioned if this act is not performed. Another folkway of the gym would be the general norm of wearing tee-shirts and sweats to exercise in. Although one would not get sanctioned for wearing high-heels or dress pants while working out, they might be looked at awkwardly or be treated differently. This subculture also has conceptions of what is considered good and proper versus bad and improper. These values of the gym serve as criteria for evaluating the actions of others. These values could explain why there is little to no interaction between the people working out. It could be considered improper to interrupt someone during their run.

I believe the media plays a large role in the desire to live a healthy lifestyle. The media is obsessed with Hollywood and its young starlets. Almost all of the headlines have to do with weight. The media often portrays a healthy weight as too big or unattractive. This obsession with weight and appearance is easily transmitted to the general public. Many people would love to have the body of a celebrity but most of the

time the thought of that is quite unrealistic. This media portrayal of body image could have something to do with [REDACTED] desire to not gain the 'freshman fifteen'. Perhaps she feels she would be deemed unattractive if she gained a few pounds around her waistline. I think this mentality is largely due to the media and its emphasis on appearance and body image.

I also believe there is some sort of labeling approach that plays a role in the desire to live a healthy lifestyle. Labels that are associated with health and fitness often reshape how others treat us and how we see ourselves. It is very easy to label someone unfit or out-of-shape. At the same time it is easy to look at a thin person and immediately decide they are in shape and healthy. Often times these labels are wrong. Just because a person has a small waistline does not necessarily mean they are living a healthy lifestyle. At the same time, a person with a bigger body type could be living a very healthy lifestyle. When one is constantly labeled unfit or out of shape, it could skew a persons thought on themselves. Our society attaches negative stereotypes to labels that suggest less-than-perfect physical and mental health. I think this contributes to why the health industry has gotten such attention lately. More and more people are joining gyms or hiring personal trainers in an attempt to avoid these labels and consequences. I think this idea could be an underlying reason for why so many students actually use the RPAC. Instead of sincerely wanting to be healthy, I feel most are trying to avoid the label of 'unfit' or 'out-of-shape.'

It is very clear that our society has a fixation with health and fitness. This can be observed through the hundreds of books and articles on the best way to tone up or shave a few inches off ones waistline. It is almost impossible to go an entire day without seeing someone or something that has to do with health and fitness. Through my observations at

the RPAC, it is quite clear that Ohio State is not an exception. The student population that regularly uses the RPAC facilities can defiantly be considered their own subculture.

Within this subculture, I believe that the media and the labeling approach play a part in why these students work out so often. I believe that while many students are trying to live up to the media's standards of what is attractive and acceptable, they are also trying to avoid stereotypes and consequences that go along with being labeled out-of-shape and unhealthy. In conclusion, by observing the norms and culture of the gym, several aspects of society and social norms became apparent.

## **Health: More Than the Common Cold**

Health, as defined by the World Health Organization, is a “state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity”. When studying the concept of health and healthy lifestyles, from a sociological standpoint, this definition remains the basis for all perspectives. Health is not only a biological state, but a bounty of social occurrences, therefore ultimately being the result of a one’s social environment. In my ethnographic study of a common gym environment, this sociological concept of healthy lifestyles heavily prevails, being derived from the location, the atmosphere, and the behaviors of the population within, along with the underlying theories of peer group socialization, peer pressure, and gender roles.

The scene for my ethnographic study was Jesse Owens South (JOS) gym, located on the south edge of the Ohio State University Campus, an urban college settled in downtown Columbus, Ohio. Built in 1976 and originally costing \$500,000, this particular gym, one of 4 main recreational areas scattered throughout the school grounds, borders the majority of the South Campus dorms, including the four main “freshman” dorms. Thirty-one years later, and completely modernized with updated equipment, this facility is now a healthy getaway for roughly 10-12,000 students, who all live within a 5-10 minute walking distance.

On the inside, JOS consists of 4 main areas: free-weights, treadmills, mats, and basketball courts. A walk through the front door will place you directly in front of the free-weight section, riddled with various dumbbell and strength-training apparatuses. Directly adjacent to the free-weight section are the mats, mainly used for stretching exercises or workouts based solely on toning the body with no added weight. The treadmills, providing a

cardiovascular, pound-shedding workout, sit adjacent to the mats on a raised platform overlooking the two previous areas. Spanning the distance between the free-weights and the treadmills and lying in the back half of the gym are the basketball courts- mainly used for group activity, as they can be reserved. The gym walls are without windows or decoration of any kind. The only exceptions to this are the multiple televisions hanging in the free-weight section (tuned to MTVU, a music video television program), and the speakers placed up above the treadmills (constantly playing a loop of alternative/rock music; eg.- The Red Hot Chili Peppers, Hoobastank, Goo Goo Dolls). Overall, the facility is what most would consider a standard gym- sections devoted to different workouts, various types of exercise equipment, and some form of background entertainment.

My time spent within JOS consisted of two separate days and two separate time periods. My first session was on Thursday, March 8<sup>th</sup> from 4:00-6:00 p.m., and the second on Friday, March 9<sup>th</sup> from 7:00-9:00 p.m. My observations took place from the view of a bench overseeing the four areas, as well as time spent walking around the perimeter of each section. With the exception of 4 separate, isolated interviews, my presence in and around the facility remained completely apart from the workings of the gym. As with any sociological observation/experiment, I have taken careful notes on the overall behaviors of the gym's participants through these observations, which I will outline in the next few paragraphs.

In my first observational session, as well as the second, I noticed that most people, especially in the free-weights and mats sections, worked out in groups, rather than individually. Overall, the ratio was about 8:1 (8 groups to each individual). Within the groups, noticeable social interaction took place, not only during non-workout times, but while the exercises were

being carried out. Conversations were held, as well as vocal encouragement toward the person performing the exercise. On the other hand, most individuals working out were observed to have some sort of music device, whether it were an iPod, an mp3 player, or a CD player, playing during their intended exercise. Also, groups were observed to work out for longer periods of time. On average, a group of peers would exercise for approximately an hour and a half, while an individual would exercise for roughly an hour.

Another commonality amongst behaviors could be seen between strength training versus cardiovascular exercises. On average, well-built men spent the most amounts of time lifting free-weights and using the available strength-training machines. With cardiovascular exercises (treadmills, mat exercises, basketball courts), mainly women and skinnier men were seen performing these workouts. I interviewed 2 people during each type of exercise (cardiovascular and strength training), one man and one woman each:

**Q: Why are you exercising, and what do you plan to accomplish with these exercises?**  
(Each in separate interviews.)

**Man 1 (Cardiovascular):** *"I mainly want to just get myself in shape- I'm not really looking to get all beefy and bulky like those guys, per-say [points to the free-weight section, laughs], but just be able to say that I'm 'fit'. Ya know, be able to run a mile or lift a heavy box without sitting down for a 5-minute break right afterward."*

**Man 2 (Strength-Training):** *"I'm a sports fan. Come spring-time, I'll be out on the ovals playing football, baseball, soccer- all that fun stuff. Ever since playing on the JV football team in high school, I guess I've just carried on my workout habits to college- I want to stay in the shape I'm in and be able to do what I want to do, mainly hold my own when it comes to the field."*

**Girl 1 (Cardiovascular):** *"I want what every girl wants- to be in shape. It's that simple. Just be able to look at myself in confidence and say, 'Hey, not too shabby.' Ya know, nothin' real special. Maybe have others be able to say the same thing, too."*

**Girl 2 (Strength-Training):** *"Well, I'm on the intramural soccer team, so it's kinda important that I not only keep fit, but make sure I can keep up with any opponents that we come across. I'm not looking to be one of those huge Arnold-Classic women you see on TV, I just want to be strong enough to support my team."*

Through examination of these observations and one-on-one interviews, common sociological aspects of healthy lifestyles definitely come into play, along with quite a few minor concepts as well. First off, it is apparent that each person working out within the gym is there for a purpose: to become healthier. Now, as I've mentioned, one's health is not only the wellness of one's overall physical and mental state, but it is a reflection of the social environment. Groups of people and individuals alike had set ways of going about their exercises, which were ultimately based off their surroundings. For instance, as I stated, most individuals were observed exercising with the accompaniment of a personal music device, one that only they could listen to. Even though the gym provided forms of entertainment (TV and background music), these people chose to use their own forms, keeping them isolated from the locations given entertainment as well as any further social interaction with other people. Meanwhile, groups of people fed off each other's social encouragement to both work out harder and longer than the said individual. This is a prime example of not only the proven sociological side of healthy lifestyles, but also the impact of peer group socialization in the given environment.

Another note-worthy topic is the active effects of peer pressure on healthy lifestyles. As with social encouragement, that encouragement also turns into pressure for the active exerciser to perform well in front of his/her peers. Also, referencing back to the interviews, one can see that others, in general, influence one's determination to pursue a healthy lifestyle: *"Just to be able to look at myself in confidence and say, 'Hey, not too shabby.'" ... "Maybe have others be able to say the same thing, too."* (Girl 1). The

peer pressure of society's standards obviously remains a factor in this sociological aspect.

One last point I feel that deserves a mention is the prevalence of gender roles. As my observations state, most men were found in the strength-training area, whereas most women were found in the cardiovascular/mat areas. These occurrences go hand-in-hand with society's views on men and women: the man, being the strong, brute force, strength trains to be a crucial asset among his peer groups, and the woman, being the lean, beautiful half of mankind, uses the benefits of a cardiovascular workout to tone and shed the unwanted pounds. Again, these stereotypical roles are birthed from the whole of our society, and relating back to peer pressure as well. Both genders feel the need to play out the part they are handed.

Overall, this ethnographic study shows that the basis of healthy lifestyles depends on several sociological theories. Health doesn't only depend on whether one is physically or mentally "sick" or "well", it is more a product of one's social occurrences and surroundings. The influence of society on one's healthy actions can make or break any chance at a potentially healthy lifestyle, as each and every one of us are subject to not only our own routines, but the pressures, the support, and the standards of our peers and our world.

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