Space Audit Project

Jessica Harris, Cate Lysionek, and Priscilla Moreno

The Pennsylvania State University

Space Audit Project

The first line in Penn State's mission statement reads, "Penn State is a multicampus public research university that educates students from Pennsylvania, the nation and the world, and improves the well being and health of individuals and communities through integrated programs of teaching, research, and service" (The Pennsylvania State University, 2006). As the mission statement implies, education surrounding health and fitness plays a large part at the University Park campus. There are several workout facilities located on campus as well as the state of the art, renowned, health services building. Our group decided to take a deeper look into fitness at Penn State and audit the environment of the free weights area located in the White Building. In order to complete a comprehensive examination of this space we looked closely at the Physical, Human Aggregate, and Constructed Environment as well as the elements of the campus racial climate framework. Below we explicate our findings and offer ways to improve the environment to better serve students and align with the mission of the institution.

The Physical Environment

The area audited was a small space within the sizeable gym located in the White Building. The White Building in itself is a very difficult environment to navigate. There are hardly any signs pointing to the gym. If one is unaware of the layout, minutes can be wasted trying to figure out what stairs lead where and what floor corresponds to what facilities. When one finally finds the gym, there are several misgivings concerning entrance to the space. First, an immense desk flanks the entrance, but there is no sign of the desks purpose. Does one need to stop at it to check in, or is it simply for information when needed? We were informed that it was for information regarding the gym and advanced to the entrance of the facilities.

On a quiet Tuesday morning we were uninterrupted when entering the gym. However, on a seemingly busy Thursday evening we were promptly stopped and questioned. We were told to put our bags in the lockers located outside of the gym and change into closed toed shoes as our flip-flops were a "liability." We exited the gym confused at why we were stopped today but not earlier in the week. It was evident that this was a busier time and employees were paying more attention to the happenings in the gym. It was frustrating that we were not notified of the bag policy prior to entering the gym. While there were signs alerting customers of the policy, there were only a few and they were placed at the height for someone who is about 5" 8'; not an average height. Approaching and surveying the lockers, we noticed that several were broken and the directions for use were barley legible. After some time we found our way through this mix up and entered the gym once again and proceeded to the weight area.

Finding our way (or wayfinding) to the weight room was quite simple as it is in the middle of the gym area and recognizable upon entrance. However, there are many options for where one can go, such as the free weights section, cardio room, stretching area, etc. which implies that there is not strong architectural determinism at play (Strange and Banning, 2001). There was no signage pointing to the area, but there was no need for it as the space was in plain sight.

There were several noticeable signs in the recreation room and the majority of them pertained to safety, cleanliness, and preservation of the equipment. Several signs asked for dumbbells to be placed on the bench and not dropped to prevent wearing out the equipment. Below these were other signs that contained pictures of a three-step explanation as to how one should lift and replace dumbbells to avoid muscle strain and abuse of the equipment. Two other signs cautioned the use of chalk for lifting as well as the moving of equipment. If chalk and/or

the equipment was not properly returned to its original spots perpetrators will incur consequences. Lastly, a large sign relayed information about staff's willingness to help with any questions, concerns, or fitness plans that consumers may be in need of. Once again, these signs were placed at a rather high sight line. The signs nonverbally communicated that cleanliness, preservation of equipment, and safety is key to those managing the space. However, they relay this message to only those that can see it; those who measure approximately 5" 8'.

Other signs, symbols, and artifacts encompassed Penn State pride, enacting a "display of self to illustrate how the physical environment can be used to convey messages about individual and group ownership" (Strange and Banning, 2001, p.25). On all black free weights, the head of a blue Nittany Lion was outlined in white. The graphic was larger and more important than the actual weight of the weight. All equipment was deep aqua blue, which had stark contrast against the sterile white walls surrounding the space. The white walls were sparsely patterned with the safety and cleanliness signs and a large logo on the back wall read, "Penn State: Strength and Fitness." The same logo was emblazoned on the base of the largest machine in the room. The floor was also blue and white. The blue was the main color while the white created a circular path throughout the weight room leading people from one area of machines to another.

The layout of the machines followed the circle of white and blue inscribed on the floor allowing for movement in certain directions and paths, also known as architectural determinism (Strange and Banning, 2001). The free weights and smaller machines were located on the outside of the makeshift circle. The middle of the circle housed the larger machines with more weight load capability. In the very center of the circle stood the largest and most daunting of the machines. The conditions of the weights were moderate. However, the blue benches were torn in places and the stuffing was visibly protruding from the inside. Strange and Banning (2001)

would point this wear and tear out as a behavioral trace that the benches were used extensively and often.

There were no other furnishings in this space besides weights, benches, and machines. The lacks of seating and other comfortable furniture insinuated that this was a space where people are not meant to linger (Strange and Banning, 2010). Three students agreed by saying they don't take notice of their surroundings because they are only here to work out. The machines were laid out in a manner that allowed for an appropriate amount of space to maneuver around them in the busiest of times, but only for able-bodied individuals. In regards to proxemics, the layout of the space fostered social and public zones (Strange and Banning, 2001).

For those that are differently-abled there is little to no access to this area of the gym. After a long period of searching we located a ramp that allows access to individuals who can't use the stairs. There is no signage for the ramp. Additionally, the ramp is blocked by weight machines on either side and hidden behind a thick white cement wall. Even if someone in a wheelchair or on crutches were able to navigate their way to the weight room, it would be difficult to maneuver around the equipment-lined circle, especially during a busy period. It is apparent that equity and access was not, and continues to not be, on the mind of those running this servicescape.

Ambient conditions in the space were fairly congruent during all of our visits. No matter the time of the day, the lighting in this area was the same. It was bright and artificial. There was a bit of light coming in from windows in the back that looked out onto the pool, but no one seemed to take notice of this architectural design. Within this space, there is no way to truly tell what time of day it is (there is only one small old analog clock on the wall). When asked about the environment a student answered, "Yeah I notice the light. It's pretty bright, but I wish I could

see outside." Temperature, air quality, and odor also stayed the same throughout our observations.

One ambient condition that did change with the time of day was noise. The weight room gains significantly more customers as the day draws on. The morning was quiet, with individuals in the room almost whispering to one another. The large thud of weights (although the sign warns against it) was more audible. The music station was set to a lower volume and played soothing oldies music (93.7). Returning in the late afternoon and throughout the evening the music changed to more mainstream pop and was noticeably louder. It noisily competed with the crowd of students that came up to utilize the fitness area. During the afternoon and evening many more people interact with one another, paying less attention to the architectural determinism laid out for them.

Suggestions to Improve the Physical Environment

It is evident that the physical environment of the weight room has not been paid attention to for some time. While the purpose of the space may be lean, with elaborate equipment, there are still several improvements that can be made to serve customers (Bitner, 1992). The blue benches should be replaced with new benches that are not split open. Although the walls are starkly white, we suggest keeping them this way. The space is not meant to be too inviting that people want to hang out in it for an extended period. It is apparent that students simply want to get in, work out, and get out. Re-arranging the machines so that the largest one is not in the middle will deconstruct the power dynamic between those who use the "lesser, smaller" weights on the outskirts and those who lift more pounds in the middle. Taking out the large machine from the middle will also open up the line of sight to the pool allowing for more natural light.

Strange and Banning (2001) relay that environments encompass nonverbal language that can be both functional and symbolic. For able-bodied individuals the facilities audited are functional. However, it is symbolic that differently-abled individuals cannot navigate the space. Therefore the message sent to these customers is that they do not belong or matter in this physical environment. To improve access and dispel this message of exclusion there must be better signage leading to the access ramp. These signs, as well as all others, should be placed at varying heights for different sized individuals. The two machines blacking the ramp must be moved to another space immediately. The wall must be knocked down, or painted a different color than white so that the ramp is more visible. Lastly, employees should further audit and test the space to see if it is accessible during a peak time to those that are differently-abled. If it is not, the layout of the space must be changed to accommodate all people.

For ambient conditions, the above mention of relocating the large machine is necessary for the pool to be a focal point in the room. If we had unlimited funds I would suggest putting in a skylight to allow for natural lighting. The music stations are great, but I would keep them on a lower volume at all hours of the day as many customers bring their own music and talk over the noise. We will make one last point concerning the signage in the gym. More signs regarding the possibility to speak and train with an employee should be placed in different areas around the gym. The students pictured in the poster should represent many different backgrounds. Having these posted around should employ more community within the gym, which is important to occupants of all environments (Strange and Banning, 2001). Let us now move on to findings on the Aggregate Environment and changes that can be made to improve it.

The Human Aggregate Environment

The website for Penn State's Strength and Fitness program displays the images of several white females: one using a weight-lifting machine, a few using treadmills, and several engaged in a cardio class (The Pennsylvania State University, 2006). There is also an image of an empty pool as well as a white individual, presumably male, lifting a weight. On the site's welcome page, a particularly well-toned Caucasian woman utilizes another weight apparatus. Clicking on the link to the Beaver White building's page reveals another image of an Asian woman working on a treadmill, decidedly in stark contrast to the smaller, blurrier photograph of several white men working in the free weight area (The Pennsylvania State University, 2006). Unfortunately, the Strength and Fitness program's website is not indicative of reality in the Beaver White Fitness Center, especially after careful observation of the human aggregate environment.

In general, the amount of people present in the free weight area is dependent on the time of day. During our visits, we observed the busiest times as Thursday evening and Monday night, both having at least forty people on the floor at any given time. The slowest times were Tuesday and Monday mornings, exhibiting approximately seven to ten people, while Friday morning showed an average of the extremes.

To some extent, the type of people also depends on the time of day, though it is unclear why. We observed the human aggregate component of the Beaver White Fitness Center's free weight floor as dominated by white men during most, if not all of our sessions. The ratio of white men to everyone else remained generally the same throughout the course of each visit. The one exception was during an observation on Friday morning where we witnessed exceedingly more diversity as far as gender, race, ethnicity, clothing, and fitness levels are concerned. We noted the presence of an open lesbian couple working together. This visit was the exception compared to the others, so much so that we describe it as "feeling like walking into

an entirely different gym." Almost everyone was healthy-looking and in shape. We observed more of a variety of body types on Friday morning, whereas during the other sessions, no one was noticeably overweight. Conversely, there appeared to be a number of thin men attempting to bulk up.

We observed people both working in pairs and individually. Generally, people of the same race or gender comprised the pairs. However, there were a few instances of mixing, notably an Asian woman working with a white man on Thursday evening and an Indian man and Chinese man working together on Monday night. Most of the women either worked alone or with another female; similarly, minority students either worked alone or with another person of color. There did not appear to be much conversation between strangers and interaction between people who did not know each other was mostly limited to waiting to use weights. However, individuals working together interacted in a variety of ways, namely in a lifter-spotter relationship between males. These men often conversed, and we overheard a pair talking both about the gym regimen but also about their social lives. The spotters encouraged their partners both verbally and physically, such as articulating words of praise and patting the lifter on the back after a successful set. People stretching or exercising without using the weights stayed off to the edges in what space they could claim without interfering with others; their endeavors proved especially difficult during the crowded hours.

Most people in the gym exhibited a very typical athletic appearance during their activities. During all visits, men and women of all races were observed wearing shorts, T-shirts, track pants, sweatpants, sweatshirts, sneakers, and sleeveless muscle shirts. The clothing displayed basic, unobtrusive colors like white, grey, blue, and black. A few men wore brighter colors, such as red or pink, and one man on Thursday night donned a neon yellow muscle shirt

that definitely stood out amongst the crowd. Also, we noticed that several of the men in the tighter, sleeveless shirts lingered around the area's center, which we hypothesis is a way to show off consciously or subconsciously. Many people were dressed in clothing with a Penn State theme, and several men wore T-shirts exhibiting fraternity letters. Women tied their hair back if it was long, and some used headbands. Nearly all of the men had short hair, save for one who secured his in a ponytail, and a few wore brimmed caps. We observed people with several other items in their possession while in the area, including personal music devices with headphones, beverage bottles, weight-lifting gloves, and a back support belt. Incidentally, most of the people wearing headphones were working out alone. Some of the white men were observed with work-out manuals or journals, presumably for lifting directions or tracking progress.

Theoretical knowledge of personality types and campus subcultures can be applied to the human aggregate component of the environment in the Beaver White Fitness Center to aid analysis and draw conclusions. Specifically, the ideologies of Clark and Trow and Astin can be applied to the students, while the Myers-Briggs and Kolb styles are a bit more difficult to relate due to the nature of the environment. However, it should be noted that the following assessment is highly generalized and presumptive based on a very limited sample, but the information is intriguing nonetheless.

Based on the activities in the gym, students could likely be identified as collegiate or perhaps academic under the Clark and Trow subcultures (Strange and Banning, 2001). The individuals are clearly involved with campus life simply because they are purposely spending time at the gym. One might lean towards classifying them as collegiate based on appearance (e.g. T-shirts promoting fraternities and general Penn State affiliation) because interest in activities and athletics is a key component of that particular subtype. Furthering this assumption,

the interviews conducted on Monday night indicated every student consulted was part of at least two extracurricular activities, with some people exceeding half a dozen. While choice of major does not necessarily indicate academic success, there were several students who identified themselves as engineers or pre-med, which could classify them more toward the academic subtype. The possibility that some students in the gym might be nonconformist exists, but in comparison, it seems unlikely. Some people obviously value their individual style since they are trying to improve their appearances. However, it is hard to gauge a student's satisfaction with the institution based on attendance at the gym. The presence of the vocational subtype is doubtful, mainly because the people are working out voluntarily. Also, based on the breadth of activities represented by the interviewees, vocational does not match well.

Though the endeavor to apply Astin's personality types to people at the gym proves somewhat more difficult, our observations indicate that there is likely a good mix of scholars, social activists, hedonists, leaders, and status strivers (Strange and Banning, 2001). These classifications most easily lend themselves to the basic behavior of going to the gym and lifting weights in order to improve one's appearance and health. Sports-related and Greek life attire also suggests a higher frequency of hedonists. All of the aforementioned types suggest a personal motivation, whether it is applied to academics, helping others, or bettering one's physical self. This correlates with the desire to work out on a frequent basis, and most of the students interviewed said they like to come to the gym three to five times a week. Based on the interviews, the list of majors suggests the students have both aptitude for academic achievement and the desire to be successful outside of school. The activities mentioned indicate the students' aspiration to be part of campus life both organizationally (SMART, PsyChi, EMS Student Council, Hindu Student Council, president of fraternity) and to participate in social awareness

causes (THON, Circle K, Second Mile). While it is certainly possible that the artist, uncommitted, and no-type students use the free weight area at Beaver White, they are most likely in the minority. Artists are mostly women, of which there was only a handful at any given time during our observations, and only one person's major, psychology, corresponded with the studies outlined in the type's description (Strange and Banning, 2001). One student interviewed was currently undecided about his major, but he expressed interest in graphic design. He also articulated involvement in several activities on campus, leading one to believe he was not of the uncommitted type. No-type does not appear to match anyone observed or interviewed.

At first glance, the free weight area itself seems conducive to the goals and interests of the realistic and conventional personality types described by Holland (Strange and Banning, 2001). Both classifications are characterized by preference for activities that are ordered, systematic, and easily fit into routines. The free weight area houses several machines, which the realistic types enjoy using. Conventional types prefer working with data, and quite a few of the people in the gym were observed with books in which to write and keep track of progress. Everyone in the gym appeared to know exactly what they wanted to do while they were there, suggesting most, if not all, had established routines for which weights to use and in what order. The realistic type's description in particular emphasizes that one "perceives self as having…athletic ability," (Strange and Banning, 2001) which makes sense for people working out in a gym environment, especially considering the obvious physical condition of some men. The types of majors expressed by the interviewees also correspond with the realistic and conventional types: engineers, pre-med, meteorology, graphic design, and health policy and administration. Investigative, artistic, social, and enterprising types, as defined by Holland,

could certainly be utilizing the facility. However, the other two types not only match best with the environment, but are substantiated in the limited sample of students.

Myers-Briggs personality types and Kolb learning styles for the human aggregate are not as easily determined based on the environment and lack of formal surveying. However, one can reasonably assume that exercising, especially with a partner, might be an activity more to the liking of an extroverted person. It is not really possible to make any assumptions about the other components of Myers-Briggs types, though the people who were working out by themselves could perhaps be introverted. Kolb's ideology is less applicable to the gym and would be better served for a more academic environment.

As a result of our observations, we draw the conclusion that the human aggregate component of the Beaver White Fitness Center is highly differentiated. Caucasians outnumber people of color, while men significantly dominate the environment. In addition, there were more freshmen than upperclassmen in our sample on Monday night, though it is hard to substantiate a broader assumption about the population that frequents the gym based on one night's findings. Personal factors that were unable to be determined based on observations and the nature of our interviews included sexual orientation, religious preference, and socioeconomic status. It is possible that the high differentiation causes certain behaviors to perpetuate, such as mostly white men continuing to use the facility, people of the same race/gender working out together, and people of color and women staying in the periphery. Also, it could be true that freshmen attract other freshmen to go to White for fitness activities. It could also simply be a case of personal preference or their relative location to the facility in comparison with upperclassmen living off campus.

Without actual in-depth surveying, it is hard to deduce the differentiation of the aggregate based on personality type. For some theories (Clark and Trow, Hollard) the environment could be differentiated, whereas for others (Astin, Myers-Briggs, Kolb), it is less so. Based on Penn State's reported figures for enrollment by race/ethnicity the ratio of whites to non-whites on the free weights floor at any one time appears to be fairly representative of the campus as a whole, at least during the majority of our observations. The reported 2009 figures for enrollment by gender show that female representation in the gym is definitely not representative of their existence campus-wide (The Pennsylvania State University, 2009). The exact ratio of ethnicities, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status is unable to be determined based on the available data.

The free weights area is highly consistent because it is dominated by a single race and gender type; the white male. White men will most likely feel a positive sense of congruence with the environment due to the presence of others similar in appearance to them. Assessing the environment's consistency in terms of personality types and campus subcultures would require further study and formal survey. However, one could assume that an ideal fit for the free weights area would be collegiate (Clark and Trow), hedonist (Astin), realistic (Holland), extroverted (Myers-Briggs), and accommodator (Kolb). While women and minorities do not appear to be the most congruent with the environment based on race and gender, they share the same motivation with the white men to work toward their fitness goals, which could outweigh other feelings of discomfort. Based on our interviews, all of the students routinely returned to The White Building and did not appear inhibited by the race and gender ratios of the population. However, the fact that we observed the women and people of color as located mainly on the area's outer edges could indicate otherwise about the racial climate.

Suggestions to Improve the Human Aggregate Environment

We offer several recommendations to improve the differentiation and consistency of the human aggregate in the Beaver White Fitness Center. Female trainers should maintain a presence during peak hours to educate women about the facility as well as assist them with lifting. Moreover, flyers in parts of the building visible to women (e.g. the cardio room, gymnastics room, locker room, swimming pool) should advertise the new female trainer initiative in addition to promoting the benefits of lifting for women. Similarly, advertisements in areas populated by people of color, like the Multicultural Resource Center, could promote health and well-being achieved through weight lifting while targeting specific racial groups. Finally, photographs of an array of people working out can be positioned around the free weights area in order to portray exercise as a universal concept unrelated to race, gender, or other affiliation. We now turn our focus to the third and final environment observed, the constructed environment.

The Constructed Environment

"Examining collective personal perspectives of an environment (from inside participants as well as from outside observers) is critical for understanding how people are likely to react to those environments" (Strange and Banning, 2001, PAGE NUMBER?). Following this method of thought, observing as outsiders allowed for an objective view into the reality of the environment. The interviews collected provided us with the subjective point of view from those utilizing the facilities. From these experiences we were able to piece together the constructed perception of the White Building's weight area for a variety of individuals.

As stated above, our first audit was during the early morning at the beginning of the week. There were a limited number of persons utilizing the space. The lack of people gave the impression that students are not that concerned with lifting weights. Other explanations could be

that students are not knowledgeable on how to use free weights and thus use other areas of the gym where they feel more comfortable. An alternate, and perhaps more plausible theory is that the time of day could be the causal factor for the underutilization of the space. Regardless of the reason behind the number, given this single observation, the environment suggests that there is not a firm overarching athletic press. However, this is not to say that overall physical health is not a concern, but that recommendations could be made allowing the space to be highly utilized at all times. In terms of the constructed environment, the gym has the right intentions such as offering equipment for all different skill levels showing an institutional commitment to ensuring inclusivity for all fitness levels.

Being unable to collect demographic information for every patron utilizing the facilities, we were only able to assess the human aggregate by visible differences. For the purpose of our audit we explored "who" is using the space in terms of gender and race/ethnicity. Given that there were only a few people in the gym that morning and only one person of color for about five minutes during the time we were there, one of two deductions could be made. People of color do not feel welcome in this space and due to the small racial/ethnic minority population at Penn State it could be a coincidence that there was only one person of color present. The way one perceives their environment affects the way one behaves (Strange and Banning, 2001). If people of color do not feel welcome within the White Building, they will choose to exercise and address health concerns elsewhere; perception influences behavior.

Upon entering the facilities that morning, we encountered a group of women, whom we perceived to be members of a campus athletic team. Having a large group of women working together suggests that they feel most comfortable in the environment when surrounded by peers who are similar to them in gender but also in knowledge about fitness and/or motivation levels.

They departed very soon after our arrival and the weight area was then left with a disproportionate male to female ratio. Given that there were not many women present after that point we perceived the environment as uncomfortable for women (which is the reason women come in groups).

Recognizing our own female lens and the way we interpret the environment, we imagine that other women could identify with our sentiments to a certain extent regarding levels of comfort traveling through various areas within the weight section. It would be "socially acceptable" (in terms of gym culture and etiquette) for women to be present but mainly on the outskirts of the weight area, staying closer to the free weight section. The discomfort increases as one travels toward the center of the weight room where the equipment is larger, the area is more male dominated, and seemingly restricted to individuals maximizing their lifting. As we have explicated, the constructed environment is very much an individual interpretation, and how individuals feel about a space they are in "is a function of how they perceive, evaluate, and construct the environment"(Strange and Banning, 2001, PAGE NUMBER?). The recommendations for altering the physical environment will assist in the perceptions of individuals and their constructed environments such as lowering the safety signage to be a bit more inclusive as well as improving access for physically different-abled individuals.

Overall, the environment itself was calm that morning because of the low foot traffic. We believe that some individuals may prefer to use the facilities during this time because they also perceive it in the way explicated above. Who feels included and able to use the facilities during that time, or in general, however, is another question.

Our second visit was during a busier time around 6 in the afternoon towards the end of the week. There was more foot traffic during this time, which implies that people *are* concerned

with lifting weights but that for Penn State students, academics, work, and possibly even sleep come before exercise. The overall press of the environment is that physical health is an important aspect of the Penn State culture, although underutilized at times. Ultimately, a physical outlet is something the student body at Penn State deems important, evident simply by the fact that there are multiple workout options within the main area of campus, ensuring students' access to the facilities. If it were not at student request (purely based on the numbers of those utilizing the facilities) these numerous workout areas may not be in existence.

One observation that stuck out was the fact that so many people were working in pairs, indicating a social component at Penn State that accompanies exercising. This social aspect buttresses the notion that physical health is a deep-seeded environmental press and part of the overall community at this institution. Students were visibly working together to ensure that their partners were lifting in a correct and safe way. In addition, partners were taking note of being respectable to other students by not "hogging" the space. This encourages a community-feel and indicates an overall supportive environment, but for some this environment can still feel unsafe for many reasons. In any environment, especially one as "vulnerable" as the gym, one wants to feel supported as they work towards achieving their goals. The environment is enhanced when a friend is present. We use the word "vulnerable" because the gym environment may come with expectations or peer and social pressure. Individuals want to feel motivated but also feel free from criticism, which may be more difficult in a setting where everyone is doing the same thing, some perceivably better than others.

For women having a partner present can be reassuring. Because of the high foot traffic and the overwhelming amount of men, the environment is perceived as intimidating. A place where women feel continuous pressure to perform above and beyond their capabilities. We

observed women comparing themselves to the other women around them, constructing an unhealthy perception that equates to unhealthy behaviors. The gym has signage to encourage safe usage of the equipment, to promote accepting assistance from employees, and to address health issues and common misconceptions related to physical activity. During this time we saw many more women utilizing the weight area, and although a majority of the women were still in pairs, they were spread a little further apart across the floor instead of concentrated in one area. We also noted that more women were further into the center of the weight area, again increasing women's discomfort.

The factor that makes constructed environments so difficult to control is that every person constructs their own, and it is difficult to create an environment that everyone perceives in the same way. Although the women's behavior during this observation speaks to the comfort these individuals have within this space enhancing a positive reaction to the environment, this is not the case for all females. In our observations, there were no visible men of color for more than five minutes during our hour observation and we only saw one woman of color using the facilities for an extended period of time. These two individuals were the only persons with visible differences in terms of racial/ethnic minorities for the comprehensive audit.

Our subsequent individual observations resulted in very different outcomes than the first two observations. Overall each of us encountered a much more diverse space, this included persons of color and women. In each of our observations we perceived the environments to be much more open and welcome to all persons regardless of race/ethnicity, gender, or ability (in terms of skill-level/intensity not physical/mental ability) and encouraging of one's concern for health and physical fitness. This however, as all constructed environments are, depends on the person receiving the environment. When students of color were interviewed, some noticed that

they were marginalized in the space but deferred to the fact that it is equivalent to the overall campus, so it was nothing new. While other students of color and women who were interviewed chose words such as “invading” others’ spaces when describing the crowded environment they perceived.

"Thus developing an understanding of any environment entails asking participants what they see and feel" (Strange & Banning, 2001, p.86). Between the three of us we briefly interviewed almost 15 people with each individual being different demographically. Interestingly, many of our interviewees had common themes in their interviews. Most asserted that the space was too crowded and they felt they had to have iPods and be much more individualistic in order to “focus” on their workout. A majority of the students stated that they didn’t notice the space they were in because they were only there to work out. Many explained trying to avoid interaction with others, but when they did interact it was only to wait to use equipment. They each had varying reasons for utilizing the space and found different ways to make the space more constructive for them. One interviewee said he did notice the racial climate of the gym and stated that "like come to work out with like." He went on to retell that he had seen groups of Asians, Blacks, and several groups of Whites coming in at the same time but that it depended on the day what the racial makeup of the gym looks like.

Suggestions to Improve the Constructed Environment

It is very difficult to say how best to improve the constructed environment given that perceptions of an experience will fluctuate from person to person. The suggestions we can provide would be directed towards making the space as inclusive as possible and hoping that students perceive the space in a positive way. But as we’ve stated, it is difficult for any two persons to perceive the same environment similarly.

The White Building is a microcosm, representative of the campus, and should be inclusive to all persons regardless of gender, race/ethnicity, or ability. As mentioned in the physical improvements, the wheelchair lift should be made more visible, access signage should be better, and the layout should be more conducive for differently-abled individuals. As outlined in the aggregate environment signage must advertise to selected groups (ethnic minorities, women) and be strategically placed around campus, particularly in places like the student health center and the center for Women students. Services that focus on understanding how to best use the gym equipment as well as the benefits of free weights should be better publicized to attract more attention.

Another important aspect of the constructed environment is how the students perceive the facility staff. It is especially important to ensure that the staff members that serve as "gatekeepers" to the gym are friendly, informative, and helpful when students, staff, faculty etc. enter the gym. Having staff, female staff in particular, walking the floor area offering assistance, training, and even spotting for students will also increase the chances of women students using that section of the facility more often. The physical and aggregate environments greatly impact how one perceives their surroundings, but ultimately all one can do is make the space as inclusive as possible, and as stated earlier, hope that the individual perceives it positively.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we believe that Penn State is half-heartedly carrying out their mission for students to improve their well-being and health. Hosting several facilities around campus allows for an array of different students to gain wellness. However, as evident in our observations and ensuing report, it is only certain individuals that seek out and have complete access to these fitness areas. Our improvements for the physical, aggregate, and constructed environment will

foster congruence between the mission of the university and the environment of the weight room allowing for the entire Penn State community to feel welcome, both physically and mentally, in the White Building's weight room.

References

Bitner, M.J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing, 56*(2), 57-71.

Strange, C.C. & Banning, J.H. (2001). *Educating by design: Creating campus environments that work.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The Pennsylvania State University/ 2006. *Penn State's Mission and Public Character*. Retrieved from http://www.psu.edu/ur/about/mission.html

The Pennsylvania State University/ 2006. *Penn State Strength and Fitness; White Building*. Retrieved from http://www.athletics.psu.edu/psustrength/facilities/white_index.asp

The Pennsylvania State University/ 2009. *Penn State Fact Book*. Retrieved from http://www.budget.psu.edu/FactBook/StudentDynamic/gendersummarynew.aspx?yearcode=2009&FBPlusIndc=N).