

ETHNOGRAPHY ANALYSIS FORM

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Name: Green Dragons vs. LARP AP

Title of your study: More Meaningful fun? Green Dragons vs. LAP

Sociological Research Question: What is the power dynamic between program staff and students.

2. ABSTRACT (fill this in last)

There is a similarity between both LAP and the Green Dragons in the goal of a healthy lifestyle and habits. They have similar foundations as well both using martial arts to teach self-control and discipline to youth. But they also have different methods for having fun and different hierarchies. At the Green Dragons, the Emphasis is on gardening, healthy eating, and personal growth through those means. LAP focuses on sword combat, roleplaying, and expressing your most authentic self. The Green Dragons have no clearly defined hierarchy at first glance, outside of the instructor vs. the students. At LAP there are several more roles with students, instructors, and a midpoint called marshalls existing, and that is what can be gleaned from the first glance. But overwhelmingly they both have the same goal: to create healthier and more confident youth for the future.

3. RATIONALE & BACKGROUND RESEARCH

3a. Why have you chosen this topic? What about your life and social location drew you to this topic? (two paragraphs). Provide a story where you can.

When I was around 8 I discovered a business in Burlington at a friend's birthday party called Guard Up. They focused on storytelling and fun for youth in a custom-created world called Sidleterra. I fell in love with their program and throughout much of the rest of elementary school I participated in various summer camps they put on and soon had integrated into their community. (I was a little too much into it)



Around the time I entered Middle School I had learned about another local group that did a similar program, called LARP Adventure Program. Although swordplay and roleplay were core elements, it used martial arts as the base of its curriculum to teach self-respect, discipline, and self-control. This also had the side effect of weeding out those who lacked any inkling of self-control or willingness to commit to the program's core values. As the years went by I more identified with LAP and less with the more childish Guard up, And by Mid High School I had completely abandoned Guard Up in favor of LAP.

When we began discussing this project, the professor used the example of his business the Green Dragons, which combined martial arts and gardening/healthy eating I immediately was drawn to comparing Green Dragons with LAP due to their similar goals and methods.

3b. Find two outside sources that discuss your topic. One source should be research-based and the other can be popular (blog, internet, etc):

Research Source - title: After-School Martial Arts: A History, Perception of Academic Advantage, and Effects on Academic performance.

Enter the URL where this text can be found:

https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5980&context=gradschool_dissertations

Summarize the argument of this source and how it connects to your research question (one paragraph):

Martial Arts as an afterschool program originated from a combination of 2 major factors. First was as more Women entered the workforce they needed some sort of program to occupy their children after they got out of school but before the parents could pick them up. At the same time, martial arts had been brought over by immigrants of East Asian descent and had begun to be

popularized in the 1970s through film and culture. The result was predictable and by the mid-2000s martial arts was a common after-school program. The Research Source made a distinction between more traditional martial arts which heavily featured breathing exercises and other acts to reduce aggression while some more contemporary practices have abandoned those breathing exercises and calming actions instead to focus entirely on fighting. The big takeaway from this is traditional martial arts tend to reduce aggression while all signs point that more modern martial arts that lack these breathing techniques instead increase aggression.

Popular Source - title: The 4 main benefits of martial arts after school program

https://www.nymaa.com/martial-arts-blog/The-4-Main-Benefits-of-Martial-Arts-After-School-Programs_AE202.html

Summarize the argument of this source and how it connects to your research question (one paragraph):

After a long day at school, it might be a bit much to ask many students to continue focusing on homework like they do at school. Martial arts allow them to focus their attention away from that and on another similarly positive activity. They learn Healthy Physical Routines and can also help improve academic performance.

4. ETHNOGRAPHIC SITE PROFILES

SITE #1

4a. Describe this location, the date/time you observed, and attach a picture of you at the site: At the Green Dragons Grodojo in Lowell. I went on May 5th from 3 PM to 4:20 PM.

4b. Analysis 1

Provide a history of your site (when it was founded, what is its purpose, etc.): Green Dragons was created by Micheal Cermak to help combine healthy eating and martial arts as well as connect with urban youth and give them an opportunity to learn and do more.

Write a description of the rituals you observed, what forms of ritual are they, and why are these important for your site?

Of course, there were many traditions like taking your shoes off when entering the Grodojo. I think the closest thing to a ritual I observed was the bowing to each other when entering the Grodojo.

Summarize the levels of hierarchy you observed between people or groups at the site. What official and unofficial forms of power do people use at your site?

I saw 2 main levels of hierarchy in practice, the instructor and the students. The instructor lead the class and the students followed. This as well as the instructor owned the building and thus the location definitely was a direct form of power used.

SITE #2

4c. Describe this location, and the date/time you observed, and attach a picture of you at the site: I went to LAP from 2:50 PM to 4:15 PM on Tuesday, May 10th. It was at the Gibbs Elementary School in Arlington MA.

<https://youtu.be/WoYjle-IUoQ>

4d. Analysis 2

Provide a history of your site (when it was founded, what is its purpose, etc.): LAP started in the early 2000s as a program to allow middle and high schoolers to have an authentic experience true to themselves in an immersive environment. By the Mid 2000s LAP became centered around Arlington MA and in the following years spread to several neighboring towns bringing a world-class experience to the youth of all the towns involved.

Write a description of the rituals you observed, what forms of ritual are they, and why are these important for your site?

There were several distinct traditions I observed, including a generally accepted and mostly followed set of rules, but from personal experience, there are several rituals that occur in other classes, especially the ones focused on martial arts. The most notable would be the “Year” tests that serve as a right of passage for each stage of development with the program, as well as the more mundane ritual of always bowing to the flags and instructors at the beginning and end of each class.

Summarize the levels of hierarchy you observed between people or groups at the site. What official and unofficial forms of power do people use at your site?

The most direct hierarchy was 3 tiered from what I could see. The students were at the bottom, then the Marshalls (high schoolers and older) and the instructor. The Instructor held direct authority over everyone but delegated many tasks to the marshalls to keep things running smoothly. Of course, there were unofficial forms of power especially visible in combat where the students were always wary of fighting the more skilled marshalls or instructor, and even many marshalls acted concerned and seemed to prefer not to fight the instructor as they seemed to have the relatively fair assumption that he was a better fighter than them.

5. DISCUSSION

5a. Site Comparison

Write THREE FULL PARAGRAPHS of the most interesting social behaviors you observed in your space and how they were similar and different between the sites.

The most interesting social behavior I observed in the Green dragons was the fairly calm manner that everyone conducted themselves at all times, I almost never heard anyone raise their voice to each other and everyone seemed to have some sort of mission to not cause problems and be respectful to each other. They were all there to learn and we're completely contempt of the fact that they were going to get something out of it at the end of the day.

At LARP Adventure Program there seemed to be many times when informal alliances between different people would form when combat had begun, many times Marshalls or players would form these for various reasons. When the marshals formed these it usually was that they just didn't want to fight each other they had more interesting things to do. when the students formed an alliance it was usually to protect themselves from the scary Marshalls or instructor who were somewhat better swordsmen than them, even though they had quite similar weaponry.

Overwhelmingly a common social behavior was everyone there was trying to be friends with each other, and everyone wanted to make sure everyone else was having a good time. Even at LAP when the occasional person hit someone in the face, many times this person would then stop and make sure the other person was okay before they proceeded. The most notable difference was how the instructor conducted themselves. At the Green dragons, the instructor was very calm and not very forceful, more often than not when trying to get the students to do what they wanted the tone was not very forceful and was more of a suggestion than a demand. At LARP adventure program the head instructor acted more like a proper teacher asking questions of the students on proper mechanics, and suggested to many that you should look at those who are more successful than yourself in combat to see what they do better than others and how you can learn these behaviors yourself.

5b. What did the micro observations of your ethnography teach you about macro society?

A leader who is not aggressive or extremely forceful can be far more effective than someone who just screams at other people to do what they want. Both the Green dragons and LARP adventure program were perfect examples of this as the instructors rarely had to raise their voices to get people to pay attention, learn, and follow the directions without much trouble.

Jacob Schiller

5c. What is something unexpected you learned about your sites through your ethnography?

Groups that participate in martial arts with their members have far fewer behavioral problems than those who do not. I use the Scouts BSA as the prime example of a youth organization without martial arts, with a similar number of youth of the same age suffer significant cohesion, and behavior problems are far more common. The presence of martial arts seems to both weed out those without any self-control and maximizes the self-control of those already with some.