



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOWARDS WELLBEING: SYMBOLISMS THAT BIND

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**ABSTRACT** – Values of fitness and social interactions may differ from people individually or collectively as a group. The meanings one may place on a given task can be valued differently through the interpretive process by which individuals apply meaning depending on the worth the individual has placed on the task. Individuals and groups taking the aerobics program as a community engagement offer us the opportunity to study how fitness programs enhance the quality of life of the participant, how participants define “being fit”, and the values the participants place on being fit. The program that was launched back in 2009 by the Dean’s Office of the College of Arts and Sciences, has surpassed the expectation of its entity and its meanings to the public. More than five years after, participants are still coming back and continuously patronizing the Saturday engagement. There are also who left and maybe found other sources of meanings elsewhere. However, newcomers took their place. This paper intends to explore the constructs of fitness to diligent participants. Specifically, it would like to determine the different meanings of knowledge towards fitness, determine the engagement of some of the participants in relation to the weekly workout, and characterize the contribution of the university towards wellness as perceived by the participants. A qualitative paradigm is followed in the study. In-depth interviews were conducted to three males and seven females who are currently involved in the program and who have been in the program since its inception. Learning the narratives from these participants can easily predict the dynamics each of them have during the weekly workout. Using the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as the approach during the in-depth interview help eliminate the tension between the participants and the researchers. Results show the meanings participants attribute to benefits gained from the social interaction encountered at the weekly program. While most of the participants might have joined the program as way to distress themselves, they have improved their fitness level and have developed a value that being fit is necessary for higher quality of life. As a result they have put a priority on being fit. The connection between the university and the community has been greatly improved through the program. It has contributed towards increased wellbeing for the academic staff and surrounding communities as well.

*Keywords: constructs, fitness, reality, symbolic interactionism, workout*



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