*Farrell*

*✅* **UMich -  Everyone belongs to many different communities and/or groups defined by (among other things) shared geography, religion, ethnicity, income, cuisine, interest, race, ideology, or intellectual heritage. Choose one of the communities to which you belong, and describe that community and your place within it. (298/300 words)**

I was excited that middle school classes allowed electronic devices, but students sat on the floor with their phones to text each other despite being in the same room.

Itched by the situation, I brought two paddles and a pingpong ball to school and asked a classmate to play with me on a dusty, unused table at school. We first played only against each other, but our screams of victory and defeat caught the attention of others. I invited more people, and others joined on their own - the same students who had been fixated on their screens. Occasionally, I freaked out when people slammed my paddles loudly onto the tables out of frustration or joy. But it was satisfying to hear sounds of interaction, instead of just keyboard clicks.

Through shared enjoyment, the component which groups people together, I created a community of physically active people engaging in small talks and laughter.

However, one of us left for basketball, hinting he lost interest. Here, I noticed enjoyment’s fragility and the need to preserve it. After days of observations, I figured that the missing glue of this community was variety; all our games were repetitive. Gluing the community together requires variety in the games we play.

From then, I started to practice challenging techniques at home – spins, chops, ghost-serves, and flicks – all of which cause the ball to move oddly. I gradually used these techniques at school; my friends were initially bewildered but were quickly engaged as they interacted with each other to collectively come up with techniques to counter them. As a result, existing friendships strengthened through their rejuvenated enjoyment of this common interest.

Gluing a community together is indeed exhausting, but the rewarding results motivate me to continue in the communities I’ll belong to in UMich.