

Author: Kevin Chen, Shaheryar Masood, Kifleysus Gaim

Title: SPORTS

About the Author: Kevin: 18-year old male 2nd generation Asian American, plays basketball
Shayrer: 19-year old male 2nd generation Indian American, plays basketball, football
Kifley: 19-year old male 1.5 generation African American, plays basketball, football, soccer

Keywords: Asians, Sports, Church groups, Asian Organizations

Abstract: Our main questions were what sports do Asians play and why do Asians usually tend to play with other Asians? We started to research this question by looking to two athletic resources: Campus Recreational Center–East (CRCE) and Activities and Recreations Center (ARC). We looked at the behavior of Asians in the gym and how it compared to other races. We looked further into their behavior by interviewing three Asian athletes. From these interviews, we found that Asians tend to group together because of organizations such as Christian Fellowship Church (CFC). We used our information to help create further research questions.

Question: What sports do Asians play? Also, why do Asians usually tend to play with other Asians?

Plan:

- Statistics observed on what sports Asian Americans like to play
- Gym statistics
- Intramurals (what sports the Asian churches organize)

Ultimate goal:

To find out what sports Asian Americans like to play and why is that.

(We can find out the why from the interview) the why could also be church involvement in sports, what friends like to play, what they are comfortable with.

Interview Ideas:

- Are they more comfortable playing with their own race
- Do they belong to a church fellowship/group
- (If so) what events do they sponsor

- What sports are they comfortable playing and why

Data (observation): Shaheryar:

I made a visit down to CRCE and noted how many Asian Americans were there and what type of activity the majority of them were involved in. At around 4:55pm I went up to the workout area and out of 84 people 37 were Asian Americans. This was just the observation for the first day. Once we compare the difference from all different sports and locations for example ARC might have a different turnout because there are more caucasians around compared to CRCE who has PAR and FAR which has predominately more Asian Americans.

Kevin:

For my observation, I went to the CRCE gym at 3:00 on a Tuesday. I usually play basketball at this time everyday and I have noticed that at this time, many Asians play. I decided to do a fly-on-the-wall observation of the gym and take note of the different races and the activities that they were doing. First, I took a tally of the number of people for each race. There were 23 Asians (from my observation, about 15 of these were Korean; I can't be sure though), 12 African Americans, 13 whites, and 3 Latinos. What was immediately apparent was the middle court of the basketball courts. It was almost all Asian, with the exception of one white guy. It seemed like all of them were friends because of their friendly attitude towards each other. Also, many of them were wearing a shirt that says FAR PAR on it, so I am assuming that they live in FAR or PAR. Also, most people who go to the CRCE gym are from FAR, PAR, or Allen. I also noticed that the African Americans are not usually with their friends. After about fifteen minutes of fly-on-the-wall observations, I joined in on their basketball games. I observed that the Asians play like they have played together for a long time. They had a lot of team chemistry that only an experienced team could have. I asked a player about why they always come in huge groups like this. His response was that they are all friends from a church called Christian Fellowship Church. This church is mainly Korean and has about 600 members. The other area I observed was the fitness area. A large

portion of the fitness area consisted of Asians. They were usually with a workout partner, continually making conversations.

Kifley

Doing an observation wasn't a hard task for me because I frequently go to gym. I live in P.A.R which is just a couple of blocks away from Circe Gym so I decided to do my observation there. I went to Circe gym on Monday around 5 P.M to do my observation. I was surprised to see so many Asians in the gym. The most people in the gym were whites but the second most noticeable group were Asians. It was very easy to recognize them to because they were really never by themselves. They were always with there friends whether they were playing basketball, lifting weights or playing tennis. I started by doing my observation in the basketball courts. I just started taking shots in an open court by myself to get a look at number of Asians compared to other races. When I was in the gym there were two games going on the 2 of the 3 courts available at Circe Gym. In one of the games they were a total of 6 Asians, 3 white guys, and one African American. In the other game there were 5 Asians, 2 white guys, 1 Hispanic, and 2 African Americans. There were also two other Asians who were just shooting around on the open court with me. From my observation I witnessed them communicating a lot during the basketball games. They would say each other names meaning that they were probably friends already. Even as I saw more Asians come into the gym, they never came alone but with a companion.

After leaving the gym I went to continue my observation in the weight and exercise room. It was hard to get a count of the number of people because people were constantly moving from thing to the other and plus there were way more people here. I saw only a few Asians on the treadmills and bicycles or even running. But when I went to pick up some free weights, I felt as though I was in Asia. The majority of the people lifting weights were Asians and next to them were whites. That was weird because whites make up the majority of the percent at U of I. After my observation I wondered why there so many Asians at Circe Gym. The only conclusion I could come up with was that Circe Gym was very close to F.A.R and P.A.R which is home to many Asians. F.A.R is also home to another

minority: African Americans. But I was shocked to see only a small number of African Americans in the gym.

Data (interview): Kevin:

Kevin Chen

April 14, 2009

The person I interviewed allowed me to use his name, so I will refer to him as Charlie. Charlie is a 2nd generation Asian-American from Boston. He does some sort of physical activity five days a week. His physical activity usually includes ultimate frisbee, basketball, and weight training. He goes to the CRCE gym usually, but goes to the ARC for intramural sports.

Charlie plays multiple sports; his main being ultimate frisbee and basketball. He plays for a club team for ultimate frisbee and they travel all over Illinois to play other teams from other colleges. Because my research is focused on what sports Asians play, I asked him if there were many Asians in the sports he plays. He said there were only a few Asians who play ultimate frisbee but a huge amount play basketball with him. This got me interested in his observations of Asians and basketball. Charlie usually plays basketball at CRCE, but for his intramural basketball, he played at the ARC. He says that there is always one or two courts completely full of Asians. Apparently all of them belong to CFC, Christian Fellowship Church. This church is comprised of over 500 Koreans and about 100 Asians who are not Korean. They usually go to CRCE together, or they set a certain time to play. His usual time is 3:00 on weekdays. He says the reason he goes with his church is because it creates “fellowship” and is just plain fun. He explained that creating “fellowship means that building strong ties with members of [his] church will help [him] grow in his faith”. When more fellowship is built, more trust is gained, and therefore more sharing can be done. The more honest the sharings, the better one can grow in faith. He says this is especially common with Asian Christians.

Asian Christians enjoy doing group activities together.

Charlie joined an intramural team for basketball. He did not join a CFC basketball team, but he said there was one.

Other activities the church did were the Mini-Olympics, a

huge event at the beginning of the school year that brings members of the church together.

Since most of my questions were focused on Asian Christians, I decided to switch gears and ask about non-Christian Asian athletes. Charlie said, "To be honest, there really are not that many Asians who aren't Christian." The only non-Christian Asians are usually FOBs, he said while chuckling. The FOBs usually play basketball and soccer. He said soccer is a really big sport for them because in Korea, they usually play it for fun in high school. He said the Korean team for U of I's intramural "world cup" won the championship this year.

Shaheryar:

The person I interviewed was playing basketball at ARC he is also a freshman at University of Illinois. When I first walked into the gym I looked around to see if there was anyone I could interview, then I saw a group of Indian kids playing basketball, and when they were done one kid left the group to go drink some water, and I approached him and asked if I could ask him a few questions. At first he was skeptical but when I assured him it was just simple questions about what sport he plays and with whom he plays with and questions as such he said it was ok. My first question was: Who were you just playing with? "My friends" Did you meet them here at school or from back home? "Ali I know from back home, but the rest I met here. And that kid right there I have no idea who that is." Do you feel more comfortable playing with only Indians? "No its not like that, we all just chill and there is enough of us to just make teams so we just play with each other." Are you comfortable playing with other kids? "Yes of course why wouldn't I be?" What sports do you usually play? "I play a lot of tennis and basketball" Do you feel a lot of Indian kids play tennis and or basketball? "Well a lot of Indian kids try to play basketball, not all can though" "As for tennis you do notice that a lot of High School teams have more Indians on them rather than lets say Basketball would." "By the way why do you have to ask me these random questions?"

Kifley:

The person I interviewed was an Asian guy from New

Jersey. He wants his name to remain anonymous but I will refer to him as Tom. Tom is a second generation Asian. His parents are from China. I first asked him why he chose U of I and his response was like many others, “because the tuition is cheaper than many other schools”. I later asked what his major was and he told me it was business. George is a pretty big guy about 6ft and probably 200 pounds. So I asked him did he play any sports in high school. He began talking about the sports he played in high school such as football and baseball. He told me that he enjoyed playing sports.

So I asked him what he does at U of I regarding playing sports and working out. He told me that during the first semester he really didn't do any sports activities because he was busy with school and hanging out with friends on the weekend. He said he gained about 10 pounds after the first semester because he was eating so much at the cafeteria. When he went back home for winter break, he said his family and friends were calling him fat so he said he was going to dedicate this semester to get back in shape. I later asked him how often he goes to gym and what he does at the gym. He responded he tries to go to gym three times a week but he ends up going maybe twice or even once a week. He said he plays basketball most of the time and lift weights afterwards at Circe. He said he plays football occasionally but said it is hard to get all his friends to participate as well.

I asked him if he goes to the gym by himself or with others and he told me that he usually goes alone. I told him that a lot of Asians tend to play with other Asians and come with each other to the gym, and I asked him why did he think that was the case? He responded and said that a lot of Asians he know feel a better connection with each other because they may come from the same background. He said he didn't mind going to the gym by himself because he felt comfortable with all people because he went to a very diverse high school.

Analysis: For our observations, we used the same strategy as Emerson does. We used the advice on page 11 on the “Implications for Writing Fieldnotes.” The best advice was given where Emerson says, “In writing fieldnotes, the field

researcher should give special attention to the indigenous meanings and concerns of the people studied.” This makes the notes that we take more accurate and detailed. Also, without this advice, we would not be able to find out that a lot of the Asians that we took notes on were from CFC. Another portion of Emerson's article that we used was his idea of “immersion.” Like in Rebekah Nathan's My Freshman Year: What a Professor learned by Becoming a Student, we immersed ourselves into our subjects' activities. I went out of my way to play basketball with some students to take a different perspective of notes on Asians in sports. I also felt the same way as Rebekah Nathan did, too. When I first started playing with them, I felt kind of awkward and out of place. They could tell that I usually did not play with them and did not go to the same church as them. This did not really affect my research, however. I could still take notes on how they play together and find out why they play together.

We also found from our observation that Asians tend to be in groups. They never seemed to be with any other people other than other Asians. A lot of the Asians who we observed at Circe gym were probably international students because a lot of them spoke in their native language with each other. Their common language and common background and the comfort they feel being amongst each other was one of the conclusions that we came up with them hanging out together. According to the reading by Nazli Kabria he states “That is, because Asians had a shared racial identity in the U.S., they had all experienced certain things—being racially labeled and lumped as Asian”. He also says that “Related to this, there was the shared experience of feeling the sting of racial rejection from others, particularly from whites.” These are just some examples why we believe that Asians tend to hang out with each other.

Research Proposal: As a group we were intrigued by what sports Asian Americans like to play compared to other races. Our research also led us to discover why Asians tend to hang out with other Asian Americans preferably. Our plan to achieve these answers to our questions we went out about observing many people as they played sports at local gyms

such as Campus Recreation Center–East (CRCE) and Activities and Recreation Center (ARC). We also went out and interviewed young individuals to get their opinion on this topic. We found our interviews to be similar to our observations.

For our observations, we used the same strategy as Emerson does. We used the advice in the “Implications for Writing Field notes.” The best advice was given where Emerson says, “In writing field notes, the field researcher should give special attention to the indigenous meanings and concerns of the people studied” (11). This makes the notes that we take more accurate and detailed. Also, without this advice, we would not be able to find out that a lot of the Asians that we took notes on were from Christian Fellowship Church. Another portion of Emerson's article that we used was his idea of “immersion.” Like in Rebekah Nathan's *My Freshman Year: What a Professor Learned by Becoming a Student*, we immersed ourselves into our subjects' activities. We went out of our way to play basketball with some students to take a different perspective of notes on Asians in sports. We also felt the same way as Rebekah Nathan did, too: out of place. When we first started playing with them, it felt kind of awkward. They could tell that we usually did not play with them or go to the same church as them. This did not really affect our research, however. We could still take notes on how they play together and find out why they play together.

We also found from our observation that Asians tend to be in groups. They never seemed to be with any other people other than other Asians. A lot of the Asians who we observed at CRCE gym were probably international students because a lot of them spoke in their native language with each other. Their common language and common background and the comfort they feel being amongst each other was one of the conclusions that we came up with them hanging out together. When it came to the gym Asians just tend to stick together just like any other minority group. All the African Americans stuck together, the Indian kids were with the Indian kids while the Korean kids were with the Korean kids. For example when Rehan Siddiqui a freshman was interviewed after a basketball game, he was asked why he plays with all Indian kids and his response was “We all just chill and there is

enough of us to just make teams so we just play with each other”. And from that he was asked if all of his friends were Indian and he responded that majority of them were. According to the reading by Nazli Kabria, “because Asians had a shared racial identity in the U.S., they had all experienced certain things—being racially labeled and lumped as Asian”(11) . He also says that “Related to this, there was the shared experience of feeling the sting of racial rejection from others, particularly from whites.” (11). These are just some examples why we believe that Asians tend to hang out with each other. Besides our main question we learned and found out other things from our interviews and observations. We also found out how location was a factor. As in more Asians participating in sports on a given day at CIRCE gym compared to ARC. Also the Asians we talked to or observed, majority were involved in extra curricular activities that were mostly led by and sponsored by the churches. This gathering led them to meet more of their fellow Asian American peers which helped establish good friendships and bonds. These findings together led us to more of an understanding on what activities Asian Americans like to play and why their everyday interactions are mostly with other Asians.

Works Cited

- Emerson, Robert M.; Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw. "Ch. 1: Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research." *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press, 1995. 1–16.
- Emerson, Robert M.; Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw. "Excerpt." *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press, 1995. 100–107.
- Kibria, Nazli. "College and Notions of "Asian American": Second-Generation Chinese and Korean Americans Negotiate Race and Identity." *Amerasia Journal* 25.1 (1999): 29–51.
- Kim, Rebecca Y.. "Ch. 15: Made in the U.S.A.: second-generation Korean American campus evangelicals." *Asian American youth : culture, identity, and ethnicity*. Lee, Jennifer, Zhou, Min (eds.). Routledge, 2004. 235–250.
- Nathan, Rebekah. "Ch. 1: Welcome to "AnyU"." *My*

Freshman Year: What a Professor Learned by Becoming a Student. Cornell University Press, 2005. 1–18.

Recommendations: We recommend that the Asian organizations do more to get students to join. This would encourage more Asians to join the organizations and would increase the population of Asians playing sports. Also, we think that the University should give students more information on intramural sports. When we came here, we got absolutely no information on how to join intramurals. We had to ask experienced upperclassmen to see how to join them. This is even more of a problem for international students who do not have connections with older students here. Resident advisors should have information about intramurals to give to the freshman.