

The Role of Recreational Sport in the Adaptation of First Generation Immigrants in the United States

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The aim of the study was to analyze immigration-related changes in recreational sport participation of Korean and Polish immigrants and to establish the role of recreational sport in their adaptation to the new life in United States. Thirty semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with first and one and a half generation immigrants from Korea and Poland residing in metro Chicago and Urbana-Champaign areas. The findings of this study show that the majority of interviewed immigrants experienced low levels of recreational sport participation during the first post-settlement period. The social class and ethnic background of immigrants, however, heavily influenced subsequent changes in their sport participation. The study also determined that the interviewed immigrants followed three distinct paths in the adaptation process. They either (1) acculturated to the culture of the White American mainstream; (2) assimilated to the sub-culture of their own ethnic community; (3) preserved their ethnic values and promoted their ethnic group solidarity. The adaptation path chosen was dependant on immigrants' ethnic group, and their socio-economic status.

KEYWORDS: *Immigration, sport, ethnicity, segmented assimilation.*

Over the last forty years, immigration and higher fertility rates among some, mostly visible, minorities have changed the composition of the American society. Due to the rapid growth of minority groups in California, Whites now account for less than half of the state's population. New immigrants are known to predominantly settle in major urban centers and to create communities quite distinct from the mainstream population in terms of their cultural background, social norms, family structure, as well as recreation and sport participation patterns (Alba & Nee, 1997). In recent years, states such as Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Utah, where the jobs were more available, saw the number of immigrants more than double (Pollard & O'Hare, 1999).

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It is well documented that ethnic and racial background influences a variety of issues related to sport, leisure and recreation behavior (Coakley, 2001; Henderson & Ainsworth, 2001; Hutchison, 1987; Juniu, 2000; Tirone & Shaw, 1997). Significant differences have been observed in terms of recreational sport participation patterns and preferences among ethnic minority groups (Gobster, 1998; Grey, 1992; Taylor & Toohey, 1996). Moreover, it has been suggested that members of ethnic minorities are among the most disadvantaged in terms of recreational sport participation (Coakley, 2001). Although interest in leisure and sport among culturally distinct groups has been increasing, research on issues related to their recreational sport behavior¹ is still limited (Coakley, 2001; Henderson & Ainsworth, 2001). While the majority of studies that tackled the issues of ethnicity, race and sport have focused on African Americans, research on recreational sport participation of Asian Americans and White ethnics is very rare. Most work on the topic has focused on ethnic minority groups in the context of school, college and professional sports (e.g., Coakley, 2001; Fleming, 1991; Melnick & Sabo, 1994; Brown & Bear, 1999; Washington & Karen, 2001). Studies have also investigated under-representation of ethnic minorities in the sport job market (e.g., Eitzen, 1999; Washington & Karen, 2001). Moreover, some interest in the role of sport in the adaptation of ethnic minorities has been shown in the sports literature since the beginning of the 1980s. In her early works, Allison (1979b; 1982) suggested that Gordon's (1964) assimilation theory constituted an appropriate framework for studying recreational sport behavior of ethnic and racial minorities, while other, more recent studies (e.g., Eisen, 1994; Wilcox, 1994) have shown that members of minority groups use recreational sporting activities to maintain and revive their ethnic identity. Coakley (2001) suggested that further research is required in order to better understand this complex phenomenon in the context of sport and recreation behavior and to identify factors that affect the decisions minority people make regarding their participation in recreational sporting activities.

This project focuses on the experiences of first generation immigrants from two ethnic groups—Korean and Polish residing in metro Chicago and Champaign-Urbana areas. Poles and Koreans have been selected since they represent two major ethnic groups with distinct cultural backgrounds and come from two distinct geographic source areas of immigration to the U.S. (i.e., Asia and Europe). Poles are the second largest immigrant group in the metropolitan Chicago (second only to Mexicans), while Koreans are also one of the largest Asian groups in the region. Our goal was to select groups of comparable socio-economic status and history of adaptation in the United States to allow for meaningful comparisons. While Koreans and Poles have significantly distinct cultural backgrounds, the socio-economic structure of these groups is comparable as they both include many urban, highly edu-

¹In this study phrases "recreational sport behavior," "recreational sport," and "physical activity" are used interchangeably.

cated, middle class individuals who exhibit significant upward mobility after immigration (Erdmans, 1996; Jo, 1999; Mostwin, 1991). Such similarities facilitate comparisons of recreational sport behavior following immigration. While one may expect that their SES and adaptation patterns are typical to other Eastern Europeans and Asians, they are dissimilar from the predominantly rural immigrants from many Latin American, African and South East Asian countries.

The objectives of the study were twofold. First, it analyzes immigration-related changes in recreational sport participation among Korean and Polish immigrants. Second, by employing Portes and Zhou's (1993) segmented assimilation framework, the study explores the role that recreational sport participation played in their adaptation process. In both contexts, particular attention was paid to the variations between ethnic groups as well as to social-class-based differences *within* ethnic populations.

Theoretical Background

Over the last fifty years, a number of theories have been developed in the fields of sociology, social psychology, geography and ethnic studies that describe the processes of adaptation of immigrants to the new social and economic environment of the host country (Barth, 1969; Gans, 1992a, 1994; Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Gordon, 1964; Keefe & Padilla, 1987; LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Portes, 1984, 1997; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1994). A significant portion of research in the fields of sociology and ethnic studies that focused on interethnic contact had been influenced by the assimilationist approach developed by Milton Gordon in his 1964 seminal work "Assimilation in American life." Assimilation theory originated in the more general functionalist paradigm in sociology applied to the topic of foreign minorities (Portes & Borocz, 1989). The functionalist school focused on the assimilation of minorities—the process of reduction of differences in values and behavioral practices that lead to acceptance by the mainstream population and facilitated success within the mainstream economy (Gordon, 1964). The assimilation perspective, however, has endured a longstanding criticism over the last four decades. In a series of articles published in the 1980s and 1990s, Alejandro Portes and his colleagues (Portes, 1984; Portes & Zhou, 1992, 1993), Waters (1994), and Gans (1979, 1992a, 1992b, 1994) argued that traditional, straight-line theory of assimilation did not satisfactorily account for the experiences of many ethnic groups in the United States. According to Waters (1994), immigrants settling in the United States in the 1990s entered a pluralistic society in which different subcultures and ethnic identities coexisted. It was argued that assimilation theory assumed the existence of a uniform host society, that it suggested that ethnic groups were to acculturate to the "core culture" of White American Protestants, and that it was specific to a set of historical circumstances that characterized mass immigration from Europe (Alba & Nee, 1997; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). Moreover, it was claimed that the assimilation theory was obsolete as it could

not isolate the causal mechanisms giving rise to assimilation, it failed to acknowledge the existence of different forms of ethnic cultures, and it tended to exaggerate the extent of assimilation and acculturation (Alba & Nee, 1997; Gans, 1979; Nagel, 2002; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996).

Portes and others, who followed his footsteps, also questioned the underlying assumptions behind straight-line assimilation theory and pointed to the fact that despite years and even generations of residence in the U.S. many minority groups successfully resisted assimilation tendencies and retained their distinct cultural traits. As Portes and Zhou (1993) theorized, in today's America, assimilation is a *segmented process*. According to the traditional path, which continues to be embraced by some, mostly White Eurocentric newcomers, immigrants *acculturate*, adopt mainstream values and expectations and become integrated into the American middle class. This route, however, is unavailable to some immigrants due to the discrimination and other barriers imposed by the mainstream. The second possible path can lead in the opposite direction, as some immigrants may *assimilate the values and attain substandard economic levels of the American underclass*. Such a path is often taken by racially distinct first or second generation immigrant youth who are being pressured by their minority peers to assimilate into the environment, in which their upward mobility is being thwarted by the economic changes taking place in modern, industrialized societies and by discrimination and rejection by the White mainstream (Portes, 1994; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1994). According to the third model, many immigrants choose to adapt and promote their economic success by consciously *preserving their ethnic values and promoting their ethnic group solidarity* (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Through what Waters (1994) referred to as "linear ethnicity," minority members acquire social capital and successfully resist acculturation to the mainstream American society. While some of the immigrants experience downward social mobility, others maintain strong ethnic ties and by doing so, promote their economic success in the United States. Referring to the influential work by Warner and Srole (1945), Waters (1994) commented, "It is the socially mobile white ethnics whose ties to the ethnic group and the ethnic identity decline. It is the individuals who are stuck in the lower classes who turn to their ethnic identities and groups as a sort of consolation prize" (Waters, 1994, p. 817). In a similar vein, Portes and Zhou (1993) argued that many non-White immigrants might not even have an opportunity of gaining access to middle class White society. For lower-status immigrants economic opportunities may be available solely within their ethnic enclave and relying on ethnic networks may constitute their only chance of success and socio-economic advancement in the host country (Portes & Bach, 1985; Portes & Borocz, 1989; Portes & Zhou, 1992). In her 1994 study of second-generation West-Indian immigrants, Waters argued that the type of segmented assimilation adopted by immigrants varies *within* ethnic groups as well as *between* them. While some of the newly arrived participants in her study were still exhibiting a strong connection with their former countries, others had begun to identify with the American Black subculture (and not

with the wider mainstream "White" culture), or conversely, asserted strong ethnic identities that separated them from African-Americans born in this country.

Much research has argued that contemporary ethnic groups are distinctly diverse, they consist of people with various personal histories, goals and distinct social endowments and who follow different trajectories when it comes to their adaptation to the host country (Alba & Nee, 1997; Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Waters, 1994). While some of them assimilate the values of the American "White mainstream," others adopt the lifestyles and the outlook on life of the American underclass, while others yet maintain transnational ties with their home countries. In this empirical study, the role of recreational sport in the adaptation processes of recent immigrants from Korea and Poland will be analyzed using as a frame of reference Portes and Zhou's (1993) segmented assimilation theory as well as suggestions of other contemporary theories in the field of ethnic studies.

Literature Review

Research on recreational sport participation among members of minority groups remains limited (Coakley, 2001; Henderson & Ainsworth, 2001). The majority of studies on the topic that have been published in recent years have explored physical activity involvement of ethnic minority groups in relation to their health issues (e.g., Ainsworth, 2000; Crespo, 2000; Crespo, Smit, Andersen, & Carter-Pokras, 2001; Ransdell & Wells, 1998). Little attention has been paid to physical activity patterns among recent immigrants, including Asian and European groups (Stodolska, 2000). Moreover, while research on the relationship between recreational sport behavior and adaptation patterns did generate some interest in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Allison, 1979a, 1982), very few studies employed contemporary adaptation theories to tackle physical activity among immigrants. Physical activity participation of Koreans and Poles has received particularly little attention.

Recreational Sport among Koreans and Poles

It has been argued that modern Korean sport has been influenced by Confucianism of the Yi dynasty (1392-1910), by the assertion of Korean nationalism during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), and by the introduction of Occidental culture by Christian missionaries in the late 19th century (Mangan & Ha, 2001). Modern sport in Korea has been shaped by the anti-communist and defense focus of the 1950-1961 period, economic and nationalistic interests of the Park Chung-hee regime (1961-1979) that stressed the physical fitness of the nation, and by subsequent government-led promotion of sport during the post-1980 period (Ha & Mangan, 2002). Prior to 1981, when Seoul was officially named as the site of the 1988 Olympic Games, sports were generally unpopular in Korea. However, following the Olympics, television coverage of sports had increased and professional

leagues had been established, which generated more interest in recreational sports among the population (An & Sage, 1992). Moreover, the pro-sport policy of the Sixth Republic (so-called 'Hodori Plan') further contributed to the increasing popularity of sport (Ha & Mangan, 2002). Golf in particular has gained recognition among the Korean people and is considered a badge of social status as well as a means for networking and for cementing business and political deals (An & Sage, 1992). However, due to the high cost of club membership, participation in this sport is largely limited to the country's elite.

Regardless of the popularity enjoyed by status sports, such as golf, public attitudes toward sports in general remain inhibited by Korean traditions and by the Confucian philosophy. Confucianism is centered around "Three Cardinal Principles" and "Five Ethical Norms."² Confucian elements that work against the popular acceptance of sport in the Korean society include emphasis on formalism, a respect for scholarship, and the belief in the natural dominance of men over women (Mangan & Ha, 2001). Confucian elements that are still pervasive in the Korean culture include cultural preference for passivity rather than activity, and focus on collectivity rather than on the individual. Traditionally, the upper classes avoided any strenuous physical activity that was considered the proper burden of common people. Such cultural values resulted in a deeply engraved dislike for physical activity (Mangan & Ha, 2001).

The literature on recreational sport behavior of Asians and especially Koreans residing in the United States is very scarce. It has been speculated that cultural aspects (e.g., traditional Asian sports such as karate, judo, Tae Kwon Do), gender and religious issues (Wong, 1999), and the success of Asian American athletes in the U.S. (e.g., Michel Chang, Kristi Yamaguchi) are likely to have an influence on Asian groups' recreational sport behavior. In a study of Southeast Asian immigrants, Grey (1992) reported that school children belonging to this minority group failed to integrate in the school sport system, which led to their social marginalization in the school and in community settings. According to Coakley (2001), there exist significant differences between recreational sport participation of first generation Asian Americans and their third and fourth generation counterparts.

Certain dislike for physical activity is also present among Poles. During the 50 years of the communist regime, Poland's social structure comprised of a relatively homogenous working class employed in the state-run factories,

²According to Mangan and Nam-Gil (2001), Three Cardinal Principles of Confucianism include: (1) Loyalty to the rule, (2) Filial piety to parents, and the (3) Feminine virtues such as chastity, obedience, and faithfulness. The Five Ethical Norms govern the relationships between individuals and include: the principle of righteousness and justice between the ruler and his subjects, cordiality or closeness between parents and sons, distinction between husband and wife, and relationships between friends.

private farmers, the impoverished *intelligentsia*³, the political elites and some private entrepreneurs (Jung, 1994). Due to the limited opportunity for acquiring material wealth, the structures of tastes and styles, rather than occupational and material status, played an essential role in defining the social strata. Social divisions were built around the norms of "proper behavior" that included participation in high culture and simultaneous avoidance of physical activity (Jung, 1994). Recreational sport participation and active sport spectatorship were reserved for members of the working class. During the economic crisis of the 1980s, most of the leisure activities were low-cost, passive and home-centered, resembling the patterns observed among the unemployed in developed market economies. While 15% of the population engaged in walking, the most popular physical activity, less than 1% participated in *all* other forms of sport (Jung, 1994).

After the fall of communism in 1989, the rapidly developing capitalist social class (small business owners) and service classes (finance, marketing, consultancy) replaced *intelligentsia* as the role models. Their ostentatious consumption patterns had become the criteria of "success" eagerly emulated by other social strata (Jung, 1994). However, even though many patterns of Western leisure were emulated by these *novae riches*, sport participation among mainstream Poles remained very low (Gołembski, Hołderna-Mielcarek, Niezgodna, & Szmatuła, 2002). As recent research on Polish youth suggests, Poles continue to ignore recreational sport and other forms of exercise. This lack of participation have been attributed to the pressures for improving professional qualifications, to the lack of economic resources, and to the insufficient provision of leisure services infrastructure (Gołembski, et al., 2002).

Research on sport and recreation behavior among Polish immigrants to the United States is very limited. In a series of studies, Stodolska (1998; 2000) and Stodolska and Jackson (1998) analyzed changes in Polish immigrants' lifestyles, with particular emphasis on their leisure behavior, during the immediate post-arrival period. They reported that Polish immigrants increased their recreational sport participation following their settlement in Canada, but that after this initial increase in participation, their interests in sports usually subsided. The observed post-arrival changes in leisure and sport participation were attributed to past latent demand, to the decreased role of certain interpersonal constraints, and to exposure to new leisure opportunities. In 1992 Gems presented a historical overview of the Chicago Polish community. Sport clubs organized by Polish immigrants seemed to serve as important agents both for preservation of their cultural values and for the assimilation of local community members. Gems argued that local authorities promoted integration of Polish immigrants by providing them with oppor-

³In the discussion of post-settlement sport participation patterns of immigrants, this group of people will be referred to as the "middle class."

tunities for attending parks, schools and recreation facilities. Mosely (1997) who analyzed the role of recreational sport in the life of Polish communities in Australia reported that soccer seemed to be the most popular sport among Polish immigrants due to its prominent place in the tradition of their home country.

Sport and Immigrant Adaptation

While it is widely accepted that a variety of psychological and physiological benefits associated with recreational sport and physical activity (Ainsworth, 2000; Crespo, 2000) make their promotion among ethnic minorities an important issue, the social implications of recreational sport participation among these groups are not yet clear. Early studies conducted by Allison (1979a), suggested that the assimilation model (Gordon, 1964) is an appropriate framework in which to analyze ethnic minority groups' sport participation, and to interpret the role of recreational sport in the life of ethnic communities (Allison, 1979b). This paradigm suggested that through participation in mainstream sports members of ethnic minorities adopt values (e.g., competition, co-operation, achievement) and behaviors of the dominant culture (Allison, 1979a). However, the author also recognized that it would be simplistic to accept that ethnic distinctions would totally disappear as a result of interethnic contact. More recent studies challenged the role of recreational sport as an assimilation agent (e.g., Eisen, 1994; Grey, 1992), and implied that the role of sport in the adaptation of immigrant groups was quite complex (Levine, 1992).

Wilcox (1994) argued that sport provides an abundance of evidence for the existence of inter and intra-cultural conflict. In his research on Irish minority in the U.S. (1994), he found that Irish athletes' participation in the popular American sports did not indicate their complete assimilation. Pooley (1976) also demonstrated how ethnic sport clubs in Milwaukee facilitated retention of ethnic identity rather than assimilation, while Hughes (1999) discussed the important role of sport clubs in the development of Jewish identity in Australia. Similarly, Grey (1992) challenged the role of school sport system in ethnic minority students' assimilation. Although the role of schools in the adaptation of young immigrants has been well documented (Noguera, 1999), Grey (1992) reported that the school sport system did not always help ethnic minority students to assimilate, but marginalized some immigrant students due to their lack of interest in the established American sports.

The limited number of studies that have investigated recreational sport participation among ethnic minority groups suggest that further research is required in order to understand the role of sports in immigrants' adaptation. This research should take into consideration the groups' special characteristics, goals and expectations, since achieving cultural similarity with the

mainstream may not always be a desirable outcome for some minority populations.

Social Class Variations in Recreational Sport Participation

It is widely recognized that social class affects recreational preferences for sports and sport participation. Empirical evidence from North America (Crespo, et al., 1999; Eitzen & Sage, 2003) and Europe (Coalter, Dowers, & Baxter, 1995; Collins & Kay, 2003) suggests that individuals who belong to higher socio-economic groups are more likely to participate in recreational sport activities, and have higher participation rates. Eitzen and Sage (2003) reported that members of the higher socio-economic groups prefer activities such as golf and tennis, while blue-collar workers are engaged in organized team sports such as basketball, volleyball and baseball. Many explanations have been offered for such differences in recreational sport participation. Eitzen and Sage (2003) suggested time and cost related constraints as main factors. Activities such as golf, skiing and sailing are too expensive for individuals with limited resources. On the other hand, business people tend to prefer individual pastimes since their irregular schedules prevent them from taking part in organized team activities. Moreover, it has been reported that education, which is related to social class, can explain low participation among the lower socio-economic groups (Alexandris & Carroll, 1998; Coalter et al., 1995). Educated individuals are better informed about the health benefits of recreational sport participation, which induces participation.

Similarly, a significant volume of research in leisure studies focused on the effects of race and social status on leisure participation. In his seminal paper, Washburne (1978) showed that "underparticipation" of African Americans in outdoor recreation activities was primarily due to their racial background and not to their social class. Klobus-Edwards (1981) found that even after controlling for social status, African Americans had stronger preferences for fitness activities, while Whites preferred wildland recreation and skills classes. In 1985, Stamps and Stamps hypothesized that class similarities might override racial differences in leisure preferences. Their study showed, however, that race continued to be important in influencing leisure behavior—middle class Blacks were more similar to working class African Americans in terms of their leisure styles than to Whites of similar social class status. Findings of Floyd, Shinew, McGuire, and Noe (1994), who defined social class in subjective terms, indicated strong similarities between middle class African Americans and Whites, but not between the working classes from the two racial groups. Shinew, Floyd, McGuire, and Noe (1995) who examined leisure preferences of subgroups defined by gender, race and subjective social class found that leisure preferences of middle class African American and White men were similar, while Black women shown similarity across subjective social class categories. They concluded that "In the absence of more direct indicators of Black ethnicity, we are tentative in our conclusion that

race may be a more important variable than subjective class in understanding race differences in leisure preferences" (p. 86) and added that race and social class are likely to *interactively* affect leisure preferences.

Methods

The analysis presented in this paper is based on a study that employed the symbolic interaction approach to explore recreational sport participation patterns and adaptation processes of first and one and a half generation immigrants to the U.S. from Korea and Poland. Symbolic interaction focuses on understanding reality by studying "how individuals interpret objects, events, and people in their lives and how this interpretation leads to behavior in specific situations" (Henderson, 1991, p. 45). The individual being studied is at the center of attention. Symbolic interactionism assumes that people act toward things on the basis of the meanings these things have for them. People being studied define the situation; they engage in self-reflexive activity and are the experts in interpreting their worlds. Thus, an attempt is being made to describe their ways of looking at phenomena and what is and is not important for them (Henderson, 1991).

Population

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 immigrants (19 Korean and 11 Polish), between April and October 2001 in the metro Chicago and Urbana-Champaign areas. The target population included people born outside of the United States who had immigrated to the U.S. as adults (first generation) or as children (1.5 generation). To select our sample, we used a mixture of purposive and theoretical sampling. Initially, participants had to meet the criterion of being adults born either in Poland or in Korea who have permanently settled in the U.S and who represent various socio-economic backgrounds. Subsequently, theoretical sampling was used to select our subjects. As new themes emerged, interviewees who were likely to improve our grasp of such themes were selected. For instance, after several interviews it became apparent that sport participation varied greatly depending on the length of stay in the host country. Therefore, we decided to interview several recently arrived individuals who had better recollection of their establishment-related experiences as well as well settled immigrants who could reliably comment on the factors that promoted or hindered their adaptation and on the role that sport played in the process.

The interviewees selected for this research project included 16 males and 14 females between 16 and 68 years of age whose length of stay in the U.S. ranged from 1 to 27 years. The average age for Poles was 36.9 years (max. 52, min. 17), and the average length of residence in the U.S. was 9.9 years (max. 18, min. 1). The average age for Koreans was 33.9 years (max. 69, min. 16), and the average length of stay was 12.7 years (max. 27, min. 2). Since age differences between respondents were considerable, special care

was taken to separate the life-stage related changes in sport participation from those related to immigration- and adaptation-induced effects. Whenever interviewees were queried about changes in their sport behavior over the prolonged periods of time, direct questions were asked of whether the changes were related to their age and phase in the lifecycle (i.e. marriage, birth of the first child, children leaving home) or to the waning (or persistent) effects of their immigration status.

People interviewed in this study represented a spectrum of occupations—restaurant and coffee shop owners, factory workers, cashiers, businessmen, office workers, cleaning staff, nursing home workers, ESL teachers, housewives, students, ministers, a lab technician, a software programmer, upper level employees of a local chamber of commerce, and a local ethnic association. All of the interviewees have been given pseudonyms for the purpose of this study.

Interviewees came from two large ethnic groups in the Chicago area—Korean and Polish. There were approximately 45,371 Korean Americans residing in the metropolitan Chicago area at the time of the interviews (US Census, 2002). Most of them settled in the United States after the introduction of the Immigration Act of 1965. Koreans who came to the U.S. in the 1980s and 1990s belonged primarily to the working class, while those who immigrated in the 1970s to the middle and upper-middle classes. According to some authors (Jo, 1999), typical Korean immigrants are “young, married, and relatively well educated with a preference for living in urban areas” (p. 14). More than 55% of Koreans hold a Bachelor’s degree or have attended some college. Despite their educational attainment, assimilation or Koreans is hindered by strong ethnocentrism, the language barrier, self-employment in ethnic enclaves and the subtle and over racism of the host society (Jo, 1999). Many Korean immigrants, including former professionals, accepted employment as retail store operators, or became owners of dry cleaners, restaurants, gas stations, liquor stores, and real estate offices in the United States (Abelmann & Lie, 1997; Jo, 1999). Life of the first generation Korean immigrants is known to be highly home- and church-oriented. In fact, it has been suggested that a large portion of social contacts and leisure time activities among Korean immigrants revolve around the Korean Protestant church (Jo, 1999). Traditional Korean family values are maintained by immigrants for many decades. Kinship relations are of primary importance, as kinfolks are the main source of emotional, social, and economic support. Ties within the group are maintained and reinforced through Korean social organizations, Korean churches, or even leisure and sport activities (travel, golf, etc.)

The other ethnic group tackled by this study was Polish immigrants. In 2000, there were 831,774 people of Polish ancestry residing in the Chicago PMSA⁴, including an estimated 176, 272 of first generation immigrants

⁴The Chicago Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA) contains the following nine counties: Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, Will.

(Paral, 2000; US Census, 2002). The majority of Polish immigrants arrived in the late 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s. They left Poland for political and economic reasons, mainly as a result of the violent repression of the Solidarity movement, the 1981 imposition of the martial law, and severe economic crisis that followed (Erdmans, 1998). This wave of immigration has been described as mostly young (29-39 years old) people, majority of whom came to the U.S. with immediate family members (Mostwin, 1991). Erdmans (1998) described the 1970-1990 wave as "mostly educated, working or middle class people with skilled, technical and professional occupations" (p. 76). Many Polish immigrants found employment as skilled laborers, technicians, low-level management, or small business owners following immigration (Erdmans, 1998).

Polish immigrants have strong family values and tend to maintain ties with other immigrants from Poland and with their families in the home country (Mostwin, 1991). As a group, they are described as forward-looking and independent materialists (Mostwin, 1991). Similarly to that of Koreans, church is known to play an important role for the Polish immigrant community. Over 90% of Polish Americans describe themselves as Catholics, with weekly church attendance after immigration reaching 57% (Mostwin, 1991).

Interviews

The interviews were conducted in the homes of interviewees, at their places of work, in student lounges, parks, and coffee shops or in the home of one of the authors. Korean and Polish interviewers and interviewees were matched in terms of their ethnicity. Since the first author of this paper is herself a Polish immigrant, she was able to interview the Polish subjects herself. Moreover, her background allowed for obtaining close rapport with interviewees. Both the first and the second author are of middle class background, were born outside of the United States and have lived in North America for 9 years and 2 years respectively. Their interest in the topic, however, has been sparked not so much by their own immigration experience, but rather by the broader focus of the first author on issues of ethnic minority populations and the second author's interest in the topic of physical activity and sport participation.

Interviewees were offered a choice of questions being asked either in English or in their native language. The majority of the interviews were conducted in the native language of the interviewee and only five were conducted in English. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 4.5 hours. Questions were sequenced according to a predetermined, but flexible interview schedule. Interviewees were asked about their (1) Immigration experience (e.g. What was your first job after coming to the U.S.?, Where did you live right after the arrival to the U.S.?), (2) Social and economic adjustment (e.g. What were the most pressing issues after arrival? What were the things that facilitated or hindered your advancement in the U.S.?), (3) Work and leisure/rec. sport patterns and changes in leisure and sport participation after

immigration (e.g. Did you participate in any sports or recreational activities after arrival? Why and why not? Do you participate in any sports/rec. activities now? What changed after you settled in the U.S. that facilitated your participation?)

Interviewees were encouraged to elaborate on the context of their lives and immigration experience. Questions about sport participation were placed in the broader context of their leisure activity, so additional information about their less physically active pastimes could also be obtained. Since the word "leisure" does not exist in Korean and Polish languages, the interviewers had to use substitutes understandable to respondents such as "free time activities," or "things you do for pleasure/fun." However, the interviewees did not have difficulties understanding the terms "sport" or "physical activity."

Each question was followed by probes designed to provide additional insight into the experiences and characteristics of the interviewee. Issues and opinions that surfaced during the interviews were followed up in subsequent conversations with other study participants. Most interviews were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed. In the case of 5 interviews where tape recording was not possible, detailed contemporaneous notes were taken.

Analysis

Analysis of the collected data was performed by employing constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Major themes regarding changes in recreational sport participation after immigration, reasons for altering their recreation and sport behavior, as well as the role of recreational sports in their adaptation were identified as soon as the first interviews had been transcribed. Data analysis that began during the interview process allowed for the emerging themes and issues to be followed up in subsequent conversations. After all the interviews have been completed, the transcripts were re-read and common themes and categories were isolated. For instance, the themes included the decrease in sport participation in the establishment period, social-class-based variations in the subsequent adaptation periods, and the ways in which sport facilitated retention of ethnic traits or, conversely, assimilation to the mainstream culture or to the sub-culture of the ethnic community. Subsequently, each transcript was re-read several times by both researchers in order to identify sub-themes and to ascertain that they truly represented the information gathered during the course of the interviews. In this phase of the analysis, sub-themes such as the role of sports clubs in the preservation of ethnic identity or the role of sport as a status symbol among immigrant communities were isolated. As the research process progressed, the initially identified sub-themes were revised and other categories were added to the structure of the findings. Finally, after all the relevant themes had been extracted from the data, the transcripts were re-read to ensure that all the important aspects of the phenomena had been accounted for.

Care was taken to maximize trustworthiness of the study. In order to increase credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), interview transcripts were mailed back to the study participants for verification. Moreover, member checking strategy was used in which themes that emerged from the study and the interpretations of multiple interviews were presented to two informants from each of the ethnic communities who were asked to comment on the plausibility of the interpretations made by the researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Both interviewers were members of the studied population—first generation immigrants from Poland and Korea. As such, they were familiar with the culture of the relevant groups and were in a good position to detect possible misinformation/distortions introduced by the respondents. External sources pertaining to the dynamics of Korean and Polish communities were also consulted and conversations with knowledgeable members of the communities were used in analysis. In order to guard themselves against threats to dependability, researchers used low inference descriptors (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982), including detailed fieldnotes with narratives of behaviors, activities and events, and audio recordings. Fieldnotes and audio recordings were subsequently used by all members of the research team to verify to what degree their interpretations “agreed” with the data.

Findings

Findings of this study have been divided into two major sections. First, we discuss immigration-related changes in recreational sport participation among Korean and Polish interviewees of various socio-economic backgrounds in the context of their broader cultural traits and previous sport participation patterns. Subsequently, we use Portes and Zhou’s (1993) segmented assimilation theory to analyze the role of sport in their adaptation to life in the new country.

Changes in Recreational Sport Participation Patterns Following Immigration

Changes in the post-arrival period. Findings of the study suggest that immigration was associated with significant changes in recreational sport participation among the interviewed Koreans and Poles. While some of them markedly decreased their participation in exercise and sports after their arrival to the new country, others became more involved in active lifestyles. Our results indicate that the level of involvement in recreational sports was primarily mediated by their ethnicity and social class, but also by their gender and length of time spent in the host country. Regardless of the ethnic group membership and the socio-economic background, however, the initial period after settlement in the host country was usually associated with low levels of voluntary physical activity. As our interviewees observed, sport and physical recreation are typically quite low on the priority list of immigrants who struggle to adjust to the new environment, who often hold several low wage, but

physically demanding jobs and who have hardly any free time available. A 39-year old Polish female nurse assistant explained,

Anna: Because, you know, we have to start from a scratch. Americans were born here, they lived here, they have a place to live, it is a normal life for them— for them it is a continuation of their life, but we, we have left everything behind and when we come here we have to start from the very beginning. So in order to reach a certain level or to settle down, we have to work much harder than Americans, we have to work longer hours, we have to take any job available, we can't afford to be picky, we have to take whatever is available.

When asked how long this period of extreme financial and physical hardships usually lasted, she commented, "You know, the first 4-5 years are the worst. They are the craziest years." A similar finding indicating a 4-5 year period of extreme hardships accompanying immigration was obtained from interviews with Korean Americans. A 68-year old male Korean coffee shop owner commented,

Seong-Kim: Well, most of the first generation immigrants cannot have any leisure time. The most important thing is to survive here. We have to make money, we have a family to feed. I think people can have leisure when they have enough time other than the time for survival. So, during the first five years after arrival, nobody can have leisure time because their businesses are still vulnerable.

Interestingly, hardships associated with the first period after the arrival were quite pronounced among both working class and middle class immigrants. Moreover, the period of initial adaptation appeared to be particularly stressful for female immigrants. A 38-year old female Polish cashier recalled the hardships her best friend endured after her arrival in the United States:

Renata: Women, I think, are mentally stronger than men. They think about their husbands and about their children and they will 'work the mop.'⁵ I know about it because Krystyna [her best friend] 'worked the mop' for several years. One day she said to me "Renata, I hate it so much, I [expletive] hate it so much!" But, she said, "I have to do it till I get the green card." Because, you know, they won a green card later⁶. But, she said, "I have to do it because I have a child, because I want to live in a decent place, because I want to eat, I have to . . . somehow". And, you know, they are, both of them, they used to be actors back in Poland.

The literature on gender-based differences in assimilation appears to be split on whether the adjustment period is more difficult for men or for women. While some authors claim that the adaptation period is particularly strenuous on men who often are (or become after immigration) the sole bread winners, others argue that the impacts of immigration are felt particularly strongly by women who are often forced to enter the job market for the first

⁵'To work the mop' is a phrase often used by Polish immigrants. It refers to one holding a janitorial job.

⁶'Won the green card' refers to state-sponsored lottery in which immigrants from certain nationalities have a chance to be selected to receive resident alien status in the United States.

time in their lives (Heydenkorn, 1990). Moreover, it has been suggested that men and women experience the acculturation process differently. As Tang and Dion (1999) and Jo (1999) observed, gender influences not only the degree of acculturation, but the extent of the cultural conflict. For instance, they found that Chinese and Korean men acculturate more slowly and are significantly more traditional than women with respect to gender roles and family hierarchy. Similar observations were made by Jo (1999) with respect to Korean female immigrants.

It has to be noted that the 1970s wave of Korean immigrants and the post-1980 wave of Polish immigrants included a large number of highly educated immigrants. However, during the initial period after immigration, many Korean and Polish middle class immigrants were compelled to undertake low skilled, physically strenuous employment. Several interviewees commented on the effects of mental and physical stress on their lives. A 35-year old female Korean immigrant, working in the U.S. as an accountant recalled the post-arrival experiences of her father:

MinJung: When he came here, he had only \$100 and nowhere to go. So he just stayed in the airport for a day, just staying, sitting there, got a little hungry, so he took a bus and went to downtown . . . First of all, he was looking for what kind of job he could do with all his background [he was a successful businessmen in Korea]. His English was not good at all. He just looked and said that labor work, real blue-collar work, was the only one way for him to survive in this country. So he was hired as a painter, just plain painter, with no certification. He said he had to work really hard. He worked day and night. He worked at night in some apartments as a painter and just slept there too so he could save the money and also work.

Following the initial adaptation period, most Korean immigrants usually became better established. Asked about how long the period of extreme difficulties lasted, a Korean interviewee replied:

MinJung: I think it was almost a year. That is one thing. That is why my father said America is great. The good thing about America was that as you work, you get some money and you can save it. It is just straightforward. There is no way you can get cheated, just work hard, as much as you work, you get money and you can save it. . . . After a year of hard working, he was able to buy a car so he could put all the equipment in there. Then he finally worked as a contractor, not as a hired hourly worker, daily worker. Being a contractor means he owned the equipment and got all the profits. So that is the time he felt "Oh, I can do that". . . Then after that, I think almost a year, he set his own business. That was his first painting company. [Now] He feels kind of proud of maintaining his own business out of \$100. . . that is why I always remember that \$100, the number. I think that is his last dignity that he can maintain, survive, that is a big thing for him.

This quote well exemplifies the route taken by many first generation Korean immigrants—difficult beginnings, a period of extremely hard work, followed by a degree of economic success (Jo, 1999).

Similarly, following the establishment period, many Polish immigrants either updated their qualifications and continued in their former professions or established small businesses often relying on their ethnic networks. Most of the Korean and Polish immigrants had moved out of their ethnic enclaves where recent newcomers usually settle. They no longer had to share small apartments with acquaintances, but instead realized their long-held dreams of owning a house in a suburban neighborhood (Erdmans, 1998).

Social Class Variations in Recreational Sport Participation in Subsequent Adaptation Periods

While Korean and Polish immigrants from all socio-economic groups claimed that lack of time, lack of interest, and physical exhaustion were responsible for their low levels of participation in active recreation during the initial period after arrival, the circumstances usually changed when they had become better adjusted to life in the U.S. In the subsequent adaptation periods, significant variations in the recreational sport participation between different social strata of the Korean and Polish community could be clearly detected.

Middle class. Findings of our study suggest that many middle class Korean and Polish interviewees, particularly those who engaged in recreational sports in their former countries or those who desired to participate, but who were prevented from participation by certain constraining factors, increased their sport participation after they passed through the strenuous period of initial adaptation. As interviewees from both ethnic groups pointed out, after several years of hardship, sacrifices and strenuous work, they began to re-evaluate their lifestyles and often realized that the time had come to begin investing in their mental and physical health. A 68-year old male Korean coffee shop owner commented,

Seong-Kim: [After the initial adaptation period immigrants] learn how to do business in the U.S. Then, they begin to think about leisure. Also, they think they should be more careful about health, so they try to take a rest and start physical exercise. Later, when 10 years have passed since their arrival, most immigrants come to adjust to American life, and their businesses are stable, and their children enter universities. Then, they think they can have leisure time.

A theme that was very strongly pronounced among middle class Korean male immigrants, but not among Poles or among Korean females, was related to the increased availability of free time after settlement in the U.S. Having acquired their desired type of employment, they were able to enjoy 9 to 5 hour work days—a luxury that was rarely available to them in Korea. Conversely, many Korean women, who had been homemakers in their home country, entered the workforce after having settled in the U.S. While the newly found freedom and financial resources had relieved some of their previous constraints to active leisure, the lack of free time and the frequently

occurring marital conflicts related to their employment had a negative effect on their participation levels. In the words of a 45-year old female grocery store owner:

Mee-Hwa: My husband and I work together until 9 PM, but he still thinks "house work" is women's job. So, I always have to cook and clean. If I don't cook, he does not eat at all [laughter]. Well . . . of course, I would like to go to the YMCA to exercise, because I know exercise can make me feel good. But, I don't have time to do so, really.

As a sixty year old prominent member of the Korean community in Chicago remarked, the increasing divorce rate among newly-arrived Koreans was one of the most significant problems of Chicago's Korean American community. The new aspirations of Korean women involving joining the workforce and emulation of the more independent lifestyles of American women contribute to such marital problems. The finding of significant strains on family relations due to Korean immigrant females' labor force participation is consistent with the conclusions of existing research (Jo, 1999; Min, 2001).

Several of the middle class Korean and Polish interviewees attributed their increased participation in active pursuits to the opportunities for recreational sport participation in the U.S. due to the availability and quality of facilities, as well as sport programs provided by local authorities. As a 38-year old female Polish cashier described,

Renata: Marcin [her husband] has tennis. Tennis was Marcin's hobby, it was his dream. He played in Poland a bit, but he could not grow, he could not realize his talent. Here there are so many tennis courts, all over the town, all over our neighborhood and, besides, he plays in the club and for the club and now there is this "tennis pro" so he gives lessons and he does what he really likes . . .and then he goes to work . . . just to make money you know . . .

Results of our interviews also showed that the general lifestyle of many interviewed immigrants have changed after their settlement in the U.S. Sport preferences and participation patterns were a component of broader changes that took place in their lives. As a 38-year old female Polish cashier described,

Renata: [In the U.S.] I started attending sports club, that's for sure. . . you know. . . your lifestyle is changing. I've never attended any clubs in Poland . . . any sports clubs where I could exercise, do the weight lifting and so on. . . but in here, the club is so close [to the place we live]. . . if you belong to the district you pay some fees, on a yearly basis, and for \$70 a year the entire family can attend.

She commented that in Poland she used to work as a bartender for an exclusive hotel in Warsaw. She always enjoyed physical recreation and even played for her high school volleyball team. Since physical recreation was not popular, however, there were few facilities in Warsaw where she could exercise without fear of being ridiculed. The availability of recreation facilities in her middle class neighborhood in America brought physical recreation back

to her life. A 26-year old Polish male software designer, who emigrated to the U.S. six years prior to the interview, commented,

Robert: Well, I never liked sports, to tell you the truth. Maybe I was this nerdish kid, I don't know. I never liked sport and playing sport in high school was a pain for me. . . . Yes, I do play some sports here. I mean everybody does, this is normal, and this is fun. Elwira [his wife] and I do a lot of biking, in the park mostly, we play badminton. . . . It's not a sport *really*, but it's movement, right. . . .? And it makes you feel good.

Interestingly, he never exhibited a preference for sport and in the later part of the interview he even expressed certain contempt for people preoccupied with sport. Similar lifestyle changes have been observed among middle class Koreans. As a 45-year old Korean female grocery store owner commented,

Mee-Hwa: I think, in Korea, people seemed not to work out as much as American people. Maybe young Korean people do, but not middle aged people do as much as American people. But, here, Korean middle aged people came to begin to work out, or playing golf or playing tennis. Even Korean middle aged women started to work out or to swim because it can make them keep look good, [improve] body shape.

One may attribute this apparent change in lifestyles of middle class immigrants to the influence of the demonstration effect widely known from sociological, economic, geographic, and ethnic studies literature (Hagen, 1962; Kindleberger, 1977; Murphy, 1985). The demonstration effect may involve changes in sport participation patterns among ethnic groups through ceasing participation in their traditional sports and the adoption of Western ones (Douglas, 1989; Grobler, 1985), through adding new sport disciplines to the already existing repertoire (Anyanwu, 1980; Grobler, 1985), or through infusing Western elements into the traditional sporting pastimes (Douglas, 1989). In the context of the demonstration effect, an increased interest in recreational sport among middle class immigrants can be attributed to the fact that after their arrival to the United States they had discovered that sports were immensely popular in this country and were associated with a higher social status and a desirable way of life. Thus, it is quite likely that immigrants embraced new active lifestyles to do what was "trendy" and popular among social classes and groups they desired to emulate.

For instance, several of the more established middle class interviewees of Polish and Korean descent who managed to achieve a certain level of economic stability mentioned that they "wanted to live like other Americans," and wanted to "live normal lives." For them, "normal" life meant life enjoyed by middle class Americans, characterized by regular work hours, a house in a middle class neighborhood, out of town trips and a certain amount of physical recreation. In response to a question about common leisure time activities of Polish immigrants, a 39-year old Polish housewife replied,

Anna: We spend a lot of time, on weekends especially, doing out of town trips—to Michigan to spend some time on the beach, to Indiana, to Galena, or to

some lake nearby. We spend a lot of time doing sports. We do sports, we walk for pleasure, we visit friends, we go to theatre, we do what *normal* people do. [emphasis added]

Interestingly, this quote suggests that not only sport, but also other active leisure pursuits were considered symbols of a desirable lifestyle. Prior to emigration, the "American way of life" was synonymous with the lifestyles of selected members of the American *White* middle class for many Poles and Koreans. Little did they know about the diversity of the American population and about the post-arrival struggles of many immigrants. While the idealized image of America often disappeared following the arrival, the desire to achieve the "American dream" as portrayed in the media tended to persist. The pursuit of the "normal" American life often resulted in living above one's means and in overemphasizing the visible symbols of success, including participation in idealized "typical American" pastimes (Jo, 1999).

Working class. Upward mobility following immigration was not within the reach of all the interviewed immigrants. While many newcomers either began to develop professional careers in the mainstream job market or became fairly successful in the small businesses, others less successful immigrants became entrenched in the least prestigious sectors of the economy. This group of people comprised not only of immigrants who held menial jobs in their home country, but also of former members of the middle class who experienced a post-settlement decline in their socio-economic position. Such a decline is considered to be quite a common outcome of immigration and is often attributed to the differences in the job markets, discrimination, lack of understanding of the American culture, inability to transfer skills to the adopted country, lack of language skills, or over-dependence on ethnic economy in the initial periods after arrival (Erdmans, 1998; Jo, 1999). Downward mobility is a problem among many highly educated Koreans who emigrated to the U.S. in the 1970s, were compelled to forego their professional aspirations and ended up as "petty entrepreneurs" as well as among Polish *intelligentsia* of the 1970s and 1980s who was forced to work as home care workers, domestic help, taxi drivers, and construction workers (Erdmans, 1996, 1998; Jo, 1999).

While many middle class Poles and to some degree Koreans reported that they had increased their participation in active recreation after arrival, our interviews indicated that leisure of these *working class* Polish and Korean immigrants tended to be passive, home-oriented and highly ethnically enclosed. As a 40-year old Korean female office worker commented,

Yon-Mi: You could be surprised if you knew how many Korean people have never traveled to Niagara Falls, or to Hawaii in twenty years, or even to Sears Tower. They just work and work and save money. I think they don't know how to spend money on leisure.

Many interviewees attributed the absence of interest in exercise and physical activity to the lack of stamina and desire for any physical exertion. The lack of interest in embracing active lifestyles was particularly pronounced among

the “immigrant underclass”—working class immigrants residing in inner-city ethnic neighborhoods, who were trapped in the lowest paying jobs and who lacked the will or the opportunity for upward mobility. As a 38-year old, male, Polish factory worker described the life of the “immigrant underclass”:

Adam: These people usually don't have a stable job. There is this gas station on the corner of Milwaukee and Belmont, if I'm not mistaken. Each morning you will see a group of men standing there and waiting for a job, for a contractor to come and say “this young and strong man—I will take him”. Many of these men won't find a job, they don't know the language, they live with 5-10 other men in a basement, they sleep in the same bed—one goes to work the other one sleeps and so on. What do they do after work? They sleep, they can't do anything else. On weekends . . . many of them drink, they go to the bar or such, they hang out on the street.

Sporting activities and any physical recreation seemed to be outside of the realm of possibility for people whose life revolved around basic survival needs and whose leisure barely allowed them to renew their energies. The same man, when asked to describe his own leisure life after arrival to the U.S. commented,

Adam: I had no leisure life. No leisure at all. I was simply too tired to do anything. I was living in Jackowo [Polish ethnic “ghetto” in Chicago] before my wife and daughter came [to the U.S.]. We would go to work in the morning and come home at 10 PM. What can you do after working on construction for 12 hours? You are too tired to lift a finger, not to mention playing soccer or exercising. . . I had enough of exercising at work [laughter]. You want to know what I did after work? Well, mainly I watched TV, drunk on weekends, played cards with my friends. And the next morning would be the same story again. And like this for two years. . . Later after my wife came and we moved out to our own apartment and it got better. I had a stable job, I could relax more.

Our finding of the lack of physical strength as a reason for low interest in active recreation among working class immigrants is consistent with the findings of Crespo (2000), who observed that some immigrant groups (e.g. Mexicans) often engaged in more physically demanding occupations that drained them of energy that could be used in active leisure pursuits.

As results of our study showed, lack of time was another powerful reason that distinguished working class Koreans and Poles from their middle class counterparts. While many middle class immigrants could enjoy relatively stable employment, working class Polish immigrants held several jobs concurrently or worked long hours in their family businesses even years following their arrival. In the words of a 34-year old Polish man holding several jobs, including one in a furniture factory:

Krzysztof: Well. . . we can't afford to sit around and do nothing or go “play ball” like we used to do. My [factory] job is not enough, and to send Piorús to school, and buy things for him, and this house. I did different things since I arrived here—I drove taxis at night, worked in the Polish bakery and stuff. I don't have time for much else, our life here is more important. We need to get somewhere, you know.

Similarly, the majority of Korean interviewees pointed out that the necessity to keep their small businesses afloat combined with the need to fund their children's college education often compelled them to work 11 hours a day and 6 or 7 days a week.

While the lack of time and physical strength may account for lower rates of participation in active leisure pursuits among the interviewed working class Korean and Polish immigrants, one should not discount the effects of environmental factors that influence the life of ethnic minorities. Even though the availability of facilities and the availability of community recreation clubs was stressed by numerous middle class interviewees, this theme was conspicuously absent among our working class respondents, as well as some of the interviewees who resided in the inner-city ethnic enclaves. This observation echoes the findings of previous research that often challenged the equality of opportunities for recreational sport participation among ethnic minority groups (Carrington, Chievers, & Williams, 1987; Coakley, 2001).

The second goal of our study was to explore the role recreational sport played in the interviewees' adaptation to life in the new country. Our findings have been divided into three sections. Consistently with Portes and Zhou's (1993) segmented assimilation theory, first we discuss the role of recreational sport in the acculturation of Korean and Polish immigrants into the mainstream society, second, we analyze whether recreational sport had played a role in their assimilation to the American underclass and, lastly, in the preservation of their ethnic values and promotion of group solidarity.

Recreational Sport Participation as a Factor Promoting Acculturation

Consistent with the predictions of Portes and Zhou (1993) and Waters (1994), our findings suggest that the interviewed immigrants from different ethnic groups and even from certain social strata within the same ethnic group followed distinct adaptation paths. Our data indicated that middle class Korean and Polish interviewees were more likely to use sport as a way to acculturate to life of the White American middle class mainstream than their blue-collar counterparts. Recreational sport participation exposed them to the new culture and it promoted integration of immigrant parents through the sport participation of their children.

Establishing contacts through recreational sport. Active leisure pursuits appeared to play an important role in facilitating inter-group contacts and breaking barriers between the interviewed first generation immigrants, other ethnic minority members, and mainstream Americans. According to some of our middle class Korean interviewees, participation in activities such as golf gave them a unique opportunity to spend free time outdoors among lush greens, which was a highly desirable experience for Koreans accustomed to urban environments. Moreover, it helped them establish friendships with mainstream Americans, maintain business-related contacts, and solidify their position within the local community. As a 68-year old male Korean interviewee put it:

Seong-Kim: Later [after quitting golf] I began to play tennis. Actually, my wife began first. She was really good at playing tennis. She was even a champion of [name of the city removed]. Because of [our involvement in] tennis we could make American friends for the first time. Also, they are from high and middle class. Most of them are doctors, lawyers, and professors. After playing tennis, we could go to restaurants together, and we were even invited to our American friends' houses to have dinner.

Similarly, several Polish interviewees mentioned that the first time they interacted with mainstream White Americans in an informal setting was during sport and recreation activities. Moreover, sport and recreation constituted a convenient way immigrants used to establish initial contacts with other ethnic groups residing in the U.S., to learn about the ways of life in the new country and to interact with people in non-stressful and non-competitive settings. As a 45-year old female Polish lab technician, who lived in a mixed ethnic neighborhood after her arrival, recalled,

Mariola: I tried to avoid contacts with Americans for a long time. It was Robert [her husband] and Basia [her daughter] who did all the talking—picked up the phone and took care of the official things. You know, for example in the elevator, I was praying nobody would speak to me, I was afraid I wouldn't know what they wanted and it would make me embarrassed. Then I slowly began to pick up the language. It was easier for Robert—he was playing soccer with some people in our neighborhood, he made friends. Same with Basia, children make friends so easily, they don't care, they [the children] are not embarrassed as we [the adults] are.

The commentary that it is easier for children to establish contacts and to assimilate was made by several interviewees. While some of the adults remarked that they stayed home for several months after their arrival and thus limited their outside contacts, children who attended mainstream schools had little choice, but to interact with mainstream peers. A comment made by the 45-year old Polish woman that her husband had established his first contacts with non-Poles through sport surfaced in other interviews as well. Contacts with mainstream Whites and with members of other ethnic groups diminished the reclusive nature of immigrant communities and exposed immigrants to the culture and points of view of other Americans. Similar findings related to the role of sport in establishing early contacts after immigration were obtained by Mormino (1982), who studied sports among Italian immigrants and Levine (1997), who studied the role of sports in East European Jewish immigrants' assimilation.

Acculturation of parents through children's sport involvement. Results of the study suggested that the acculturation process of some of the adult interviewed immigrants was accelerated by their children's involvement in recreational sports. This phenomenon, however, was not universal and was subject to significant social class and ethnic group variations. It surfaced among middle class Polish interviewees, but was not detected among working class Poles or Korean respondents of any socio-economic background. Our interviews showed that as children of middle class Polish immigrants attended

school-sponsored sporting events, became members of sport clubs and traveled to games, many of their parents developed an interest and became involved in their sport-related activities. On several occasions our interviewees mentioned having established contacts and friendships with parents of children from other ethnic groups as a byproduct of their frequent interactions associated with children's sporting events and school-related matters. A comment made by a 44-year old cleaning lady married to a prominent businessman from the Polish community serves as a good example of this theme:

Krystyna: Beata [her younger daughter] swims . . . and you know. . . each parent has a T-shirt of his child's school team, a sweatshirt and. . . Oh! And in school, when children spend couple of years together, there is this kind of bond that gets established between parents. . . And it's the same with Beata—there are Italian parents, and Irish parents, and Polish parents and you know. . . one of us can take them [the children] to the game, another one picks them up, yet another one does something else. . . And you know, parents are so involved in the school life. . . due to those sports . . . we establish contacts. (. . .)

Working class Polish parents were less likely to be actively involved in their children's sporting careers and other after-school activities. Lack of language skills and the overall reluctance to interact with other parents, coaches and teachers whose language they could not understand constituted a psychological barrier almost impossible to overcome.

Similarly, many of our Korean respondents were highly reluctant to participate in their children's after-school activities. This pattern was common not only among highly enclosed working class immigrants who lacked English language skills, but also among middle class parents who worked for mainstream American employers. One of the interviewed parents confessed that her children often complained that they could not participate in soccer games and camping trips because of her and her husband's reluctance to accompany them to these events. Another Korean mother mentioned that it was a "considerable sacrifice" on her part to accompany her children to sporting competitions, but she did it "for the sake of her children." A 50-year old Korean housewife from a middle class family expressed it as follows:

Too-Hyun: When I am informed that I need to go to school to volunteer for children's field trips or other activities, it is always stressful for me because of [my lack of] English [skills]. I could say to the teacher once, 'Could you repeat it?', but I could not ask it several times in front of other parents. One time I felt so embarrassed. When I returned from school, I nearly cried in the car. But, I have to go to school to meet teachers and other parents for the sake of my child. I have no choice. I don't want the teacher to be disappointed with me or my child.

Our results provide evidence of a widespread lack of involvement in children's school activities among working-class immigrant parents—an important problem for school administrators in immigrant and ethnic communities that has been well documented throughout the United States. This issue,

which is often attributed to cultural differences and to the lack of language fluency of parents, appears to exacerbate the difficulties that schools experience providing education to increasing numbers of first generation young immigrants.

Assimilation of Values of Non-Mainstream Ethnic Groups

Our findings as to the adaptation patterns of this sample of Koreans and Poles could not confirm Portes and Zhou's (1993) and Waters' (1994) assertion that certain minorities assimilate values of the American underclass. However, even though the immigrants in our study did not emulate the patterns of other ethnic minorities in the U.S., some of them began to assimilate to the subculture of their own ethnic community. The role of recreational sport was quite unique in this context. The results of our study suggested that certain sports enjoyed particular popularity in specific immigrant communities. These sporting disciplines were not necessarily popular in the home countries of immigrants, but they had become a focus of interest among ethnic immigrant populations in the host country. Tennis and golf came to play a particularly important role among first generation middle class Korean immigrants residing in the United States. Our interviewees indicated that their participation in golf could be attributed not only to the latent demand they had experienced in their home country, but also to the increased interest in the sport sparked by a bright career of a young female Korean golfer Se Ri Pak. As several of our interviewees remarked, Se Ri Pak served as role model that motivated immigrants in all age groups to pick up the game of golf. A 60-year old prominent member of the Korean community in Chicago commented,

Young-Chul: When Se Ri Pak won the 2000 LPGA Championship, Korean people, here, were so proud of her, but also playing golf was booming. Most people talked about playing golf and Se Ri Pak whenever they were together. They just kept talking about her and golf.

One of our Korean interviewees described that almost all people from his church played golf, which induced him to purchase expensive equipment both for his own use and for his wife. The interviewee had not succumbed to the pressures by other co-ethnics and while he admitted to spending "thousands of dollars" on the equipment, he soon discontinued participation. This quote, however, confirms the importance of golf in his Korean community. In his own words:

Seong-Kim: I bought expensive golf equipment because a close friend from my [Korean] church convinced me to try to play. I did several times, but I didn't think it was interesting. I walked a long time and took a shot once and then walked again. It was so boring to me. I could not understand why other Korean people love playing golf.

Consistent with the findings of other research on the subject (Stodolska, 2000), our study showed that many recent immigrants showed a tendency to

acculturate to the sub-culture of their respective ethnic community. Ethnic sub-cultures exhibit themselves through immigrants' and more established ethnics' speaking a variation of their native tongue (e.g., Konglish, Spanglish), displaying certain specific values, political associations, dress styles, and leisure patterns (Erdmans, 1998; Jo, 1999; Portes, 1969, 1984). Since recreational sport participation was one of the defining traits of these specific sub-cultures, adopting new sport disciplines constituted a sign of this sub-cultural assimilation. Thus, the results of our study appear to add an additional category to the list of possible adaptation paths proposed by Portes and Zhou (1993) and by Waters (1994). This finding is also consistent with the trends observed among other immigrant communities in the United States and in Canada. As studies of Polish immigrants to Canada showed, fishing constituted one of the activities defining the sub-culture of local immigrants (Stodolska, 2000). The emergence of "subculture leisure" among minority groups has also been observed among well-established minority groups such as Mexican Americans in the American South West or among Puerto Ricans residing in large cities of America's North East (Connor, 1985; Fitzpatrick, 1971; Hutchison, 1987; Hutchison & Fidel, 1984; Portes & Bach, 1985).

Preservation of Ethnic Values and Promotion of Group Solidarity Through Sport

Results of our study suggested that while sport promoted acculturation into the White mainstream or assimilation of the values of certain sub-cultures among some of the interviewees, for others it helped to solidify their ties with their ethnic communities or served as a factor facilitating retention of ethnic identity. Our study has shown that involvement in traditional sports strengthened community bonds and allowed Korean and Polish immigrants to socialize with people with whom they shared common culture and experience. This finding applies to working class and middle class immigrants, and often to business owners, who use sport to forge ethnic bonds helpful in running their businesses. For instance, several of our Korean interviewees stressed the importance of golf that helped in re-establishing and solidifying ties among high school and university alumni clubs in Chicago. Strong ties among Korean school alumni are a known phenomenon in the ethnic studies and labor relations literature (Biggart, 1990; Kim, 1992; Lee & Brinton, 1997). They facilitate formation of networks within immigrant communities on which recently arrived immigrants rely when in need of information, help in finding housing or employment. As one 35-year old Korean female accountant described it:

MinJung: The alumni connection is really strong. When my father came to the U.S., alumni were the first people that he got in touch with. He looked at the newspaper and went to the meeting. When you are desperate, you look at all kind of resources you could think of. So he got the list of people and two of them, one was running a laundry shop and the other one was a doctor. This

doctor was wealthy. So he helped [him] a lot. You know in Korea, almost every relationship is based on family relatives or alumni, or the next is the same hometown people. . . You know the high school alumni are from the same hometown. They are really close. . . All immigrant people experience a kind of loneliness sometime. They don't have a lot of relatives [in the U.S.], so naturally they [the alumni groups] get together, help each other and they feel pity on each other too. . . My father borrowed a credit card from one of them. At first, he did not have money, but he had to spend. So, one of them rented him a credit card with a \$5,000 limit on it. Of course, my father had to pay for what he spent. . . I think it is possible for Korean people to rent a credit card to alumni friends because if the person loses the trust in that relationship, he cannot survive. Because every alumni member knows that he did that. [If] he failed to keep the trust, he cannot survive in any society, even in Korea and in the United States.

This quote supports Portes and Zhou's (1993) assertion that by building ethnic networks, preserving ethnic values and promoting ethnic group solidarity some immigrants may further their economic success in the host country. Our Korean interviewees consciously reinforced these ties through attending parties, dining together, traveling together, and playing sports in the company of their alumni friends. As the same 35-year old Korean woman described,

MinJung: Even now, they [the alumni friends] have regular meetings. They are all pretty wealthy, just kind of regular meet, travel, come back, and plan retirement together. My father is addicted to golfing. . . Now, he feels "OK, I am finally successful," because golf is a symbolic activity in Korea. Wives and kids also get together. Sometimes they invite people from Korea to play [golf] too. Once they invited like ten families from Korea. Actually the people who were invited, they were quite wealthy too. They traveled, they played golf together. Even like Christmas, believe it or not, I am the only one who stays at home. My dad and my brother, they just all went out for Christmas Eve and Fourth of July with their [alumni] friends.

While golf served the purpose of strengthening ties among Korean alumni associations, ethnic sports clubs played a similar role among some well-to-do Polish immigrants. As a 52-year old male business owner and a prominent member of the Polish community in Chicago commented,

Ryszard: Yes, I founded the [tennis] trophy last year. . . we had a lot of prominent people play in our tournament. We also invited 10 teenagers from Poland for a [hockey] camp. They were the junior players, 15-16 year olds. We took them around, showed them the city. They were supposed to stay with [Polish] families, but when the time came nobody showed up to take them. [Laughter] They all ended up staying with me, at my house. . .

This high proliferation of ethnic sports clubs was particularly pronounced among the Polish community in Chicago. Chicago's 'Polonia'⁷ sup-

⁷Polonia is a term used to describe Polish minority abroad.

ports an extensive array of clubs for sporting disciplines ranging from soccer, karate and kayaking to ballroom dancing, ultra light aviation, downhill skiing and gymnastics. The clubs had been established by Polish immigrants and were sponsored by numerous Polish businesses in the greater Chicago area. These results are consistent with the conclusions of other studies of Eastern European immigrants conducted both in the U.S. as well as abroad. As Pooley (1976) reported, ethnic soccer clubs in Milwaukee inhibited assimilation of minorities into the American culture and helped them to retain their ethnic identity. Similar findings were reported by studies conducted in Australia. Hughes (1999) reported that recreational sport clubs contributed to the development of community identity among Australian Jews. Furthermore, both Mosely (1997) and Hughson (1997) indicated that recently arrived Polish, Serbian and Croatian immigrants participated in ethno-specific sporting activities and used sports to retain their ethnic identity.

Some of the interviewed immigrants also used participation in sports to conspicuously display their newly obtained wealth and to solidify their social status within their ethnic community. Since in Korea sports such as golf and tennis were reserved for the very affluent, for many of Korean Americans engagement in sport became a sign of their economic and social success in the United States. A 68-year old male Korean coffee shop owner commented,

Seong-Kim: After people become stable, many people begin to play golf. Golf is a kind of symbol of success here among Korean immigrants. As you know, in Korea, only rich and powerful people can play golf. Many people want to play golf but they cannot. So, for immigrants, playing golf is a kind reward, [a sign] of their social and economic success in the U.S. Here, most Koreans are crazy about playing golf.

Later he added,

Young Korean women should not play golf, but rather tennis. Women should be timid and humble. They should not play golf thus displaying their wealth and status. It is understandable if older women play golf though . . . it is natural that they will be able to afford the expensive equipment.

As such, our results appear to support the assertion of Jo (1999) that conspicuous displays of wealth by Korean immigrants, including their golf club membership, spending vacations in exotic places, buying expensive cars and homes and sending their children to private schools, serve as symbols of their success in business, as means of gaining respect, and at the same time allow them to compensate for their lost social status and identity.

Similarly, some of the Polish interviewees commented on the strategic role that sport played in the life of their community. As the interview material suggested, Polish immigrants who achieved a certain level of financial security were in the position to "play" expensive and highly conspicuous sports such as car racing and sailing. In the words of a 38-year old female Polish interviewee:

Renata: They will talk about it very often, every time we meet, every time there is an occasion, especially if they start drinking, it is always "What I bought and

what you bought, I bought a new trailer for my bikes so I can take them to races". I really don't like this kind of people. One time they told my daughter "Tennis—what kind of sport it is? You could be an umbrella girl for me at the race track." She got really, really upset. She didn't want to come to our parties after that.

Polish immigrants successful in their sporting pursuits often became highly revered and influential within the confines of their ethnic communities. Similarly to ethnic politicians who achieved high social status, they became identity symbols for members of their group, providing feelings of pride over their success and strengthening bonds within the ethnic group.

Conclusions

The majority of early research that focused on the role of recreational sport in the adaptation of ethnic minorities interpreted physical recreation as either an agent of Americanization of recent immigrants or as a vehicle that allowed them to retain their ethnic traits. Harney (1985) went as far as implying that immigrants were involved in "choosing sides." For him, as for some other scholars (Day, 1981), choosing sides meant choosing between old-country games and American sports, between following the careers of sport stars from their homeland or from America, between participating in sports under the aegis of the ethnic group rather than joining or supporting clubs organized on cross-cultural basis.

The findings of our study suggest, however, that the role of recreational sport participation in the internal dynamics of some immigrant communities is quite complex. In accordance with Portes and Zhou's (1993) theory we found that the interviewed members of the Korean and Polish minority followed different routes in the process of adaptation to the host environment. First, it has been determined that recreational sport participation acted as a factor promoting their acculturation to the culture of mainstream American Whites. Those interviewees who participated in "mainstream" activities or who did so in the company of mainstream Americans or members of other ethnic groups developed interpersonal contacts outside of their ethnic group, became exposed to cultural patterns distinct from the ones of their own culture and thus embarked on a path of adoption of the values of the American society. While according to Portes and Zhou (1993) acculturation of values of the American mainstream middle class was mostly reserved to the White European immigrants, in our study similar trends have been also displayed by the upwardly mobile Asian interviewees. As the results of this study showed, the role of recreational sport in the acculturation of certain classes of interviewed immigrants did not manifest itself through the adoption of mainstream sports, but rather through more subtle and less direct means. In fact, we may argue that the *types of activities* in which immigrants participate can be interpreted to be an imperfect indicator of their acculturation level. It appears that not the activities themselves, but rather the

context of participation defines the role of leisure in the lives of immigrants and in the internal dynamics of immigrant communities.

The findings of this study also showed that for some ethnic group members recreational sport participation helped in reinforcing their ethnic identity, allowed for retention of elements of their traditional culture, and strengthened ties with other members of their ethnic community. This process, as hypothesized by Portes and Zhou (1993) and by Waters (1994), proved to provide minority members with tangible economic benefits. As proposed by Waters (1994), immigrants who chose to preserve their ethnic roots and to foster relations within their ethnic community are often able to achieve the middle class status. Results of our study provide a strong conformation of this assertion and show the prominent role that sport and recreational activities may play in this process.

Lastly, results of our study helped to expand Waters' (1994) original classification and introduced an alternative path immigrants may follow in their adaptation to the host country. Instead of adopting values of the American underclass some of the interviewees in this study tended to assimilate to the sub-culture of their own ethnic community.

Most importantly, this study found groups of interviewed immigrants to be highly heterogeneous and segmented, which is consistent with Keefe and Padilla's (1987), Juniu's (2000), Waters' (1994), Levine's (1997), and Mormino's (1982) assertions. Social class proved to play a significant role not only in the choice of sporting pastimes engaged in by the interviewees, but also in the adaptation routes that they followed. While the middle class Korean and Polish interviewees were prone to adopt values of the American mainstream, this path seemed to be rarely followed by the more socially isolated, working class immigrants. On the other hand, ethnicity retention was prevalent among both working class and middle class ethnics. Thus, our results support the findings of Juniu (2000) that experiences and level of assimilation of immigrants are affected by their social class and are consistent with the assertion of Shinew et al. (1995) who predicted that social class *in combination* with race or ethnicity influence recreational patterns of minorities. What remains to be determined, however, is the relative strength of social class versus ethnicity as determinants of adaptation patterns and recreational choices.

This study had certain limitations that could be addressed in future work on issues of sport and minority populations. First, even though we strived to obtain a good representation of people of various socio-economic backgrounds, a significant portion of our interviewees was able to obtain a middle class status in the United States. Although most of them experienced certain economic hardships, if not outright poverty, following their arrival to the United States, they were usually able to improve their economic situation with time. As such, their experiences may not be necessarily representative to many other immigrants who remain below the poverty line for prolonged periods of time. Second, we relied on people's self-reported participation in sports. It would be worthwhile in future studies to employ more objective

measures of people's physical activity participation. Lastly, our study focused only on a small sample of Korean- and Polish-Americans and thus large scale surveys of the same population could yield some interesting data that could be generalizable to larger sections of the immigrant population.

As previously noted, the body of knowledge of recreational sport behavior of ethnic minority groups is quite limited. It would be beneficial if future studies could examine issues such as recreational sport preferences, expectations, needs, motivations, and barriers faced by minority populations. Research on these issues would help us to understand how ethnic minority members make decisions regarding sport participation or non-participation and help practitioners to more effectively promote active leisure pursuits within minority communities. This could prove to be a difficult task, considering low participation rates among some of these populations and their significant cultural diversity. Research on behavioral aspects of recreational sport participation could prove to be useful from a planning perspective, since it could guide providers' decisions regarding the development and implementation of sport services according to the needs and expectations of specific minority groups.

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