

**Sport for Development Program Design for Chinese Immigrants**

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A significant element of the sport industry is the provision of sport programs for children and adults. In fact, 217 million active Americans, aged six years and older, take part in at least one sport or activity (Physical Activity Council, 2012). Further, sixteen percent of people, aged 15 years and older, participated in sports and exercise activities on an average day in the U.S. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). Although many of these programs are designed to attract young participants into sport in order to create a pool of potential elite athletes (e.g., sport development), others are designed to attract participants into sport for the benefits they can obtain (e.g., sport for development). Three types of sport for development programs have been identified: sport for social inclusion, sport as a diversion, and sport as a hook. Sport development programs start from the premise that sport participation itself provides benefits such as physical fitness and health, self-esteem, a sense of community, and improved quality of life. Therefore, the key social issue is to provide access to groups that have been underserved by sport and have not had the same access to these benefits.

Immigrant groups are often underserved by existing sport programs, which can be a useful means of social integration. Although, immigrants are low in sports participation rate (Aizlewood, Bevelander, & Pendakur, 2006), this type of program has potential to enhance immigrants' acculturation process. For Chinese immigrants, their original culture and the American culture are poles apart (Sung, 1985), and differences are obvious when it comes to values of sport and sport participation. Chinese cultural attitudes toward sports in general remain inhibited by the traditional belief that development of mental faculties is much more important than development of physical capacities (Slack et al., 2002). For sport managers to effectively serve this population, need assessments are necessary and important for program designs that are inclusive and meets the needs of this particular group (Green, 2008). The way a sport program is designed and implemented are critical to the social experiences participants gain, and therefore the benefits they obtain (McCormack & Chalip, 1988). Consequently, this study explored the sport participation and acculturation experiences of first-generation Chinese immigrants in the United States in order to provide sport managers with recommendations for effective program design for Chinese immigrants in the United States.

Cultural maintenance through sport and adaptation to a multicultural environment through sport were found to be motives of sport participation for both Korean and Polish immigrants (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004) and for international students in the U.S. (Allen et al., 2010; Li & Stodolska, 2006). In addition, research regarding physical activity participation and leisure constraints provides insights into the difficulties Chinese immigrants encounter and the way in which they operate throughout the physical activity and leisure participation process (Sit, Kerr, & Wong, 2008; Taylor et al., 2008; Tsai & Coleman, 1999). The companionship of friends and maintenance of health were identified as important factors for long-term physical activity participation. Chinese immigrants' leisure participation is hindered mainly by resource constraints and interpersonal constraints. These findings suggest the need to explore the social context of sport participation along with resource constraints facing Chinese immigrants. In order to address this need, ten first-generation Chinese immigrants, seven males and three females, were contacted through personal connections and snowball sampling for semi-structured interviews. Sampling criteria (older than 40 years old, married, and have lived in the U.S. for more than 10 years) were set to assure that interviewees have had certain life experiences and been exposed to both cultures for a period of time. The interviewees ranged in age from 42-63 years, were all middle-class, and ranged in length of stay in the U.S. from 13-31 years. Since age differences between interviewees were considerable, life-stage related changes in sport participation and their immigration experiences were specially addressed. All interviewees have at least one child and categorized themselves as the middle-class. None of them has a strong tie to religion.

The first section of the interview protocol probed their immigration experiences, with particular emphasis on life adjustment, family status, social relations and employment history. The second section probed their general activities in daily life. The third section emphasized leisure/recreational sport participation before and after

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immigrating to the U.S. The fourth section of the protocol included questions regarding the sport cultures in the U.S. and those in their home countries, and their overall views of sport and physical activity. Sport participation was self-defined by interviewees and placed in a broader context in order to obtain more information about their participation. Each question was followed by probes to access more insights of the experiences and related life events. Issues and opinions raised by interviewees were carried on to conversations with next interviewees. Interviews were audio-recorded and the researcher also took notes during the conversations. Data were analyzed by using constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Instant data analysis after interviews enabled the researcher to compare the emerging themes in next interviews. After all interviews were completed, the researcher reviewed notes and audio files to identify themes.

Three principal themes emerged, which were common to interviewees but manifested in different life stories. First, immigrants participated in more styles of recreational sport activity and participated more frequently than they had before immigrating. Second, social relations generated from sport and leisure activity participation were significant both for immigrants' ethnic networks and non-ethnic peers. Third, their concepts of sport positively changed after immigration but the priority of sport participation and value of sport remained secondary compared to traditional emphasis (e.g. education).

The importance of balancing intellectual and physical development was highly valued by interviewees. This is a major shift from their values prior to immigrating, which devalued sport and associated playing sport with poor academic performance) thereby hindering their sport participation during adolescence. However, competitive sport development for their children was not highly supported by first-generation immigrants. They perceived that sport can bring joy and health, but pursuing an athletic career was neither realistic nor favorable. Sport and physical activity participation was a useful vehicle for immigrants to facilitate their social relation with both ethnic and mainstream groups regardless of the kinds of sport and leisure activities in which they were involved. Playing pick-up basketball was an efficient way to build friendships with colleagues and neighbors. Tai chi classes offered to parents while they waited for children in the Chinese language school surprisingly reinforced the ethnic culture by learning new ethnic activities. Perhaps because the interviewees were all middle-class, most were able to participate or try new sports and physical activities after immigration. Accessibility of sport facilities, a great variety of sport activities available, the overall sporty atmosphere, and intention to maintain health were the main reasons for increased participation.

These findings demonstrate that the role of recreational sport participation for Chinese immigrants is more complex than being a mere agent of American assimilation or maintaining the ethnic culture. While immigrants acknowledge the benefits of sport participation, creating and maintaining social relationships through sport participation is the underlying motive for their participation. These findings suggest the significance of friendship building and maintenance in sport programs for Chinese immigrants. Sport managers should encourage group participation in the beginning of the recruiting process to foster a friendly environment through familiar (ethnic) companions to minimize interpersonal barriers. Program managers should aim to facilitate the social context within the sport program to enhance their participation motives and create integration through sport.