

Scott  
Ethnographic Study #3

I had the opportunity to eat in Chinatown in Flushing, Queens today at an authentic Korean restaurant. The food was great and the atmosphere presented a vast amount of differences for me to observe and ask questions about. Upon entering the restaurant I realized we were the only Anglo people. One might feel a little out of place when faced with this, but to the contrary, we were treated with an amazing amount of respect and kindness. They were pleased that we had chosen to dine there. The restaurant had about twenty-five tables and out of those there were four that were occupied.

All the patrons were male and no one was eating alone. Discussion at the tables was lively although I could not understand anything that was being said. Everyone seemed to be enjoying lunch. Due to the fact that I did not speak or understand Korean, I focused more on the service team and the presentation of the food being served. The first thing that stood out to me was the manager taking an interest in our table. He took it upon himself to serve some of the food and made sure that our every need was met. The Kim's, a Korean missionary couple from California, were at the table right next to us and did not receive half of the attention. I comment on this observation because I do not believe that Koreans want much server interaction while they eat. This manager knew that as white Americans we would be expecting this. He wanted to make the experience a pleasant one for us.

The food came and was placed onto the table. Many small dishes of ethnic food were served. I was overwhelmed by the variety and the amount. I quickly discerned that this style of eating was very different than the culture that I am familiar with. The meal was to be shared with all around the table. It was a social function. There was not a lone plate being put in front of you with your food, but instead the table was to share all the delicacies that were delivered. Chopsticks grazed in all the bowls and yes, people were double dipping. It was a nice change. It gave a new meaning to sharing a meal.

Upon finishing and leaving the restaurant I waived to one of the wait staff and said thank you. He politely bowed. How delightful to find a Korean culture existing right here in New York, and in many ways total isolated. It is amazing how people separate themselves by language and looks and culture. You have to be willing to meet them in their culture or it most likely will not happen. I know that this will be the case on the field, and I look forward to the opportunity.