UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Using the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC) To Assess Use of Local Parks in King County

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Practicum Details
- Formal traineeship funded by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO)
- Placement with Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC)
- CEPH Competencies 3, 6, 7, 14, 18

Project Goals
- Address the lack of data regarding current park use in King County
- Support development of public health strategies to encourage physical activity among residents
- Collect park utilization data and facilitate data analysis
- Generate recommendations for resource prioritization to improve public park infrastructure
- Promote equitable access to safe places for physical activity within communities of color

Project Description
- Pilot project of SOPARC, a direct observation tool validated for assessing activities, people, and environmental characteristics of parks
- 39 parks across King County; 1 park in this sub-project

Objectives
1. Conduct 3 full-day observations for Garfield Playfield using the modified SOPARC tool
2. Build an evaluation framework to support data analysis

Modification of SOPARC
- Discussed with community members and conducted internal evaluation of observational race/ethnicity data
- Decision to remove race/ethnicity variables from SOPARC
- Exploring other data collection methods/sources

Data Collection and Analysis
- 8 park observations per day
- 2 weekdays and 1 weekend
- 30 minutes per park observation
- Exported data from REDCap, then cleaned and restructured in Excel for visualization in data dashboard
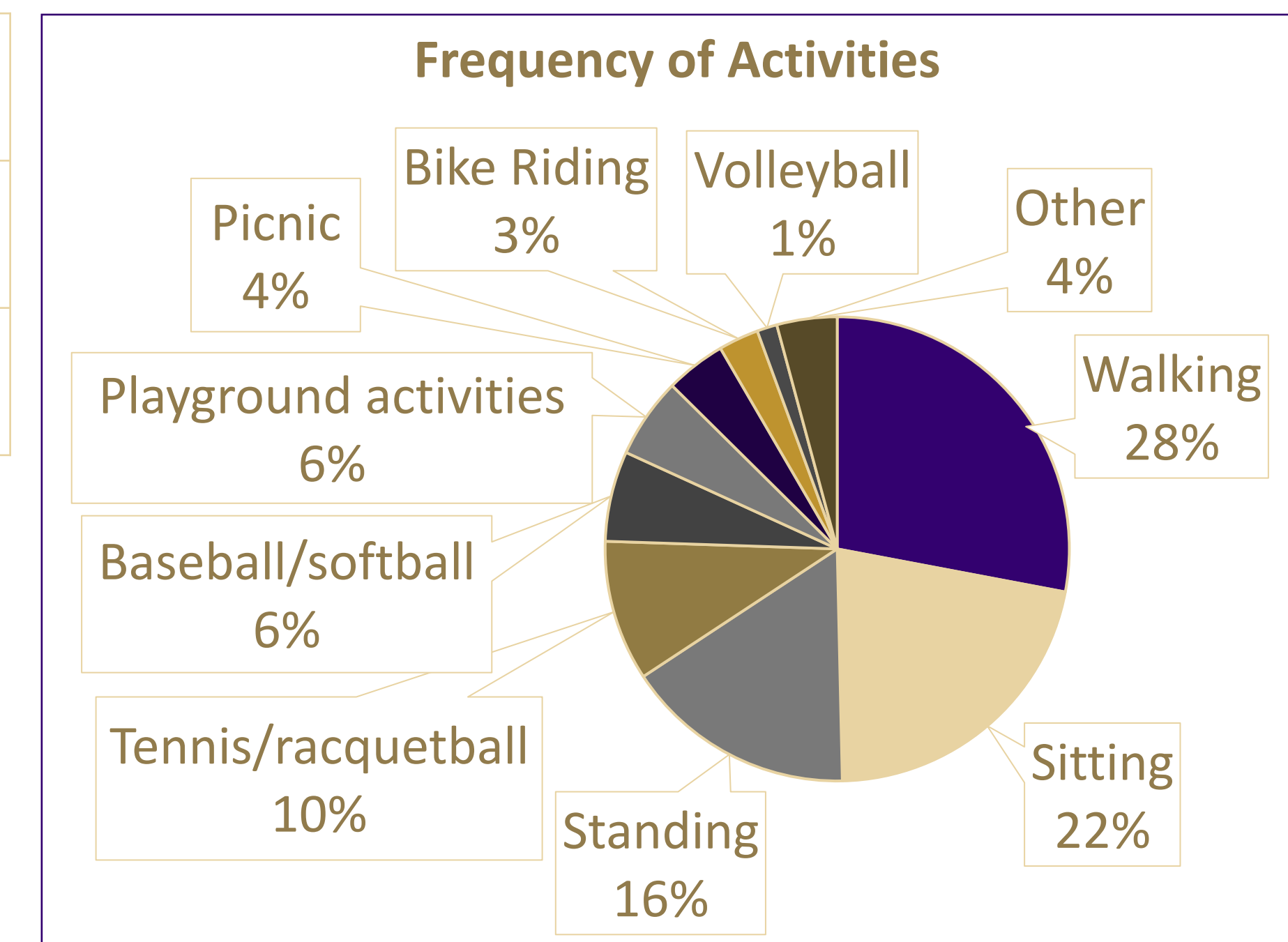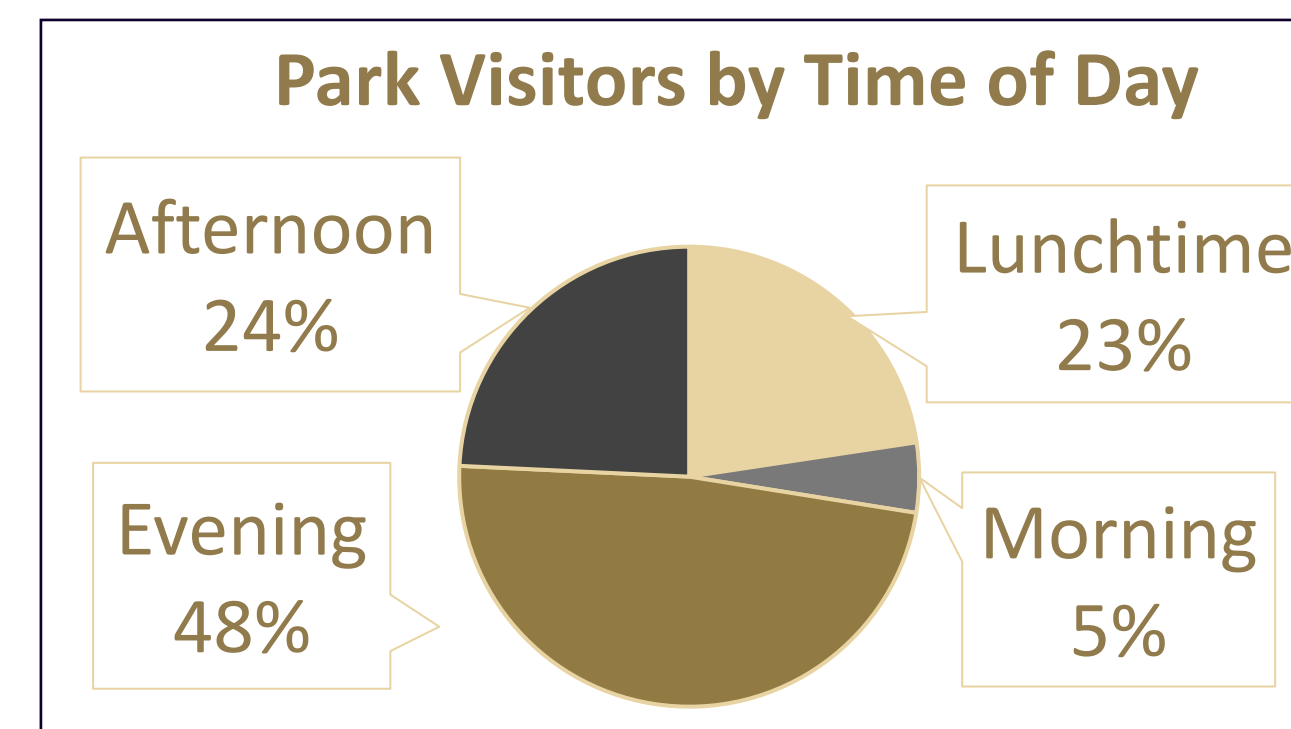
Applied Knowledge and Skills
- Public health foundations, positionality, and reflexivity
- Program implementation and monitoring & evaluation
- REDCap and Microsoft Excel

Interactive Data Dashboard
- Indicators: park occupancy rate based on target areas, target area-specific occupancy rates, conducted activities based on frequency, park visitors by age group, park visitors by time of day, and conducted activities based on popularity
- Accessible to community partners to generate insights and understand indicators of interest
- Framework for restructuring data and creating a complex data dashboard using a coding language (e.g., R) to craft visualizations and make comparisons across parks

Key Findings from Garfield Playfield Park Observation

367 visitors	Busiest Time of Day: **Evening**
33% occupancy rate	Most Frequent Activities: **Walking & Sitting**
Most Common Visitor: **Adults**	Most Popular Activities: **Baseball/softball & Sitting**

Frequency of Activities

Picnic 4%
Bike Riding 3%
Volleyball 1%
Other 4%
Walking 28%
Playground activities 6%
Baseball/softball 6%
Tennis/racquetball 10%
Standing 16%
Sitting 22%

Park Visitors by Time of Day

Afternoon 24%
Lunchtime 23%
Evening 48%
Morning 5%

Reflection
- Proactive in networking and time management
- Flexible work environment but maintained structure
- Could benefit from setting more soft deadlines, breaking up bigger tasks, and being more mindful of practicum timeline

Age of Park Visitors

Adults 51%
Children 26%
Seniors 4%
Teenagers 19%