

BOOK REVIEW

Race and Sport in Canada: Intersecting Inequalities**Janelle Joseph, Simon Darnell, Yuka Nakamura (Eds.)**

Canadian Scholars' Press, 2012

Reviewed by KangJae Jerry Lee

Texas A & M University

Race and Sport in Canada: Intersecting Inequalities offers an interesting collection of studies focused on race and sport and their intersections with age, gender, class, masculinity, and sexuality. In the introduction, the editors, Joseph, Darnell, and Nakamura, articulated that sport is a complex social phenomenon where “race, racism, and racial hierarchy are constructed and maintained, yet simultaneously obscured and normalized” (p. 2). The aim of this book is to illustrate such complex relations between race and sport and provide “an opportunity to resist, rethink, and reimagine notions of race in Canada and what it means to be Canadian” (p. 3). Thus, as Walcott mentioned in the preface, this book attempts to provide a critical analysis on Canadian multiculturalism and critique of racism studies in Canada.

As a point of departure, the editors first acknowledge that race is a socially and politically constructed illusive concept, yet it constantly shapes mainstream Canadian culture and every aspect of individuals' lives in Canada. While researchers debunked the deterministic notion of race as an essential biological feature (Omi & Winant, 2002), their explanation in the introduction is timely and prudent. They further stressed the importance of the book by pointing out the paucity of studies that have examined the relations between race and sport within the Canadian context.

The rest of the book consists of 10 chapters authored by various researchers who examined diverse topics related to race and sport. The chapters are organized into three thematic areas. The first four chapters provide historical accounts on race and sport in Canada. In Chapter 1, Field reviewed the history of immigration to Canada and the impact of sport on the life of immigrants during the first half of the 20th century. By illustrating diverse immigrant groups' sport experiences in Canada, Field pointed out a dual utility of sports and explained that sports can facilitate immigrants' contact with mainstream culture and promote their assimilation into Canadian society, yet it can also stymie their assimilation by providing a social context where immigrants can enhance ethnic solidarity. Field also went beyond the dual utility notion by documenting how immigrants established sport clubs in many cities in Canada and introduced new sports to the country. Field articulated various functions of sports on immigrants' life and emphasized that immigrants are not passive actors waiting to be assimilated into Canadian society, but active constituents of the country's sport culture.

In Chapter 2, Valentine and Darnell examined racial tolerance between Canada and America by comparing the history of Black football players in the Canadian Football League (CFL) and National Football League (NFL) during the 20th century. They noted that all Canadian professional football teams were racially integrated by 1951 so the racial integration took place

much faster in CFL compared to NFL. Moreover, while many NFL teams did not draft Black quarterbacks due to the racial prejudice, CFL teams recruited Black quarterbacks from the U.S. and allowed Black players to continue their football career. Although these records implied that Canadian society, or at least Canadian football culture, is more supportive to racial diversity compare to the U.S., Valentine and Darnell challenged this idea by documenting Black players' experience of racism and their resistance to racial hierarchy in Canada. Although racism might be less prevalent in Canada, the authors concluded that it is deeply embedded in the fabric of Canadian society.

In Chapter 3, Krebs conducted intertextual discourse analyses on Canadian mass media and examined how ice hockey is portrayed, marketed, and commercialized for the general public. Utilizing the concept of Whiteman, Krebs' critical analysis revealed that White male hegemony was legitimized in the Canadian hockey scene by constantly normalizing Anglophone and the violence of hockey players in and out of sport settings. People of color and females were excluded and devaluated in Canadian hockey. Krebs referred to hockey's symbolic meaning which pertains to Canadian national identity and claimed that Canadian hockey is a vivid reflection of White male dominance in Canadian society.

In Chapter 4, Valentine examined the stacking of Aboriginal NHL players into the role of enforcer. While stacking denotes that certain racial/ethnic groups are overrepresented in a particular position in sports, the enforcer refers to a hockey player who is designed to protect the talented players by engaging in fighting and intimidating opponents. Valentine's longitudinal analysis showed that the number of Aboriginal players in NHL closely paralleled with the rise and decline of the enforcer position in NHL from the mid 1970s through 2010. Valentine argued that racism has limited Aboriginal players' opportunities for full participation in the professional hockey and asserted that the players were exploited in this sport business. Although stacking is a popular research topic in sport sociology literature, Valentine's longitudinal approach and examination on stacking in a cultural role rather than a formalized position made this chapter a meaningful and novel addition to the extant literature.

The second section focused on the sport activities of immigrants. In Chapter 5, Huang, Frisby, and Thibault used a qualitative interview method and explored the physical activity among Chinese immigrant women in British Columbia. They found that participation in physical activity helped Chinese women to adjust to new culture and expand their social boundaries yet Chinese women also encountered several constraints to physical activity in their new country. Although the finding is not particularly new to extant studies on immigrants and their leisure participation patterns (see Stodolska, 1998; Stodolska, 2000; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004), the authors provided detailed information on the cultural and political difference between China and Canada and facilitated deeper understanding in Chinese immigrants' participation in physical activities.

In Chapter 6, Livingston and Tirone investigated the structures of federal and provincial sport delivery systems in Atlantic Canada and examined immigrant newcomers' access to sport activity. They interviewed 17 immigrants who worked or volunteered for sport related positions and asserted that Canadian sport delivery systems contain a "wicked" problem that does not effectively promote newcomers' sport participation because of elitism, funding issues, and lack of knowledge and skills (p. 171). Livingston and Tirone provided insight into the structural barriers of immigrants' sport participation.

The final section expanded the book's focus by presenting the studies that provides transnational dimensions of racialized sport practices. In Chapter 7, Darnell examined how Canadian volunteers made sense of their racial identity while they worked in Caribbean and African coun-

tries as interns of Commonwealth Games Canada's (CGC) International Development through Sport (IDS) program. Darnell identified that many volunteers experienced some forms of White privilege and superiority while they served in foreign countries. However, he also found that volunteers did not challenge the arbitrariness of White superiority that they experienced but paid more attention to maintain and manage such racial ideology. As such, Darnell observed that Whiteness and White supremacy were internationally transmitted and retained. Although Darnell's transnational approach is important, he did not provide sufficient explanation on the mechanism of Whiteness maintenance within the context of sport. Since the author failed to position sports as a central issue of his study, it is questionable whether the study results are unique to sport activity.

In Chapter 8, Nakamura analyzed the meaning of Chinatowns and North American Chinese Invitational Volleyball Tournament (NACIVT) among Chinese descendants in North America. Nakamura first pointed out that the variation among Chinatowns in North America has been largely ignored by general public and they are usually constructed as a foreign place or outside of North American countries. Similarly, Nakamura mentioned that NACIVT was historically took place on the street or parking lots in Chinatowns because the organization was not allowed to access to or hold events at mainstream physical activity facilities. Despite these discriminations, Nakamura stressed that the existence of Chinatowns helped Chinese descendants claim their citizenship and national belonging by emphasizing their heritage in Canada and the U.S. Moreover, by participating in NACIVT, Chinese descendants were able to demonstrate their volleyball skills and challenge the racial stereotype that Asians are physically weak and inept at sports. Nakamura found that Chinatowns and NACIVT were social contexts where Chinese descendants challenge ostracizing and racial stereotyping from the larger society.

In Chapter 9, Joseph presented two case studies that focus on Black masculinity in sport. The first study examined older male members of Caribbean Black cricket clubs in Canada. Joseph observed that club members utilized cricket context to demonstrate their Black masculinity by talking about cricket skills, displaying quick wit and sexual jokes, and excluding women to attend culinary duties. The second study investigated younger Black Caribbean men who play, teach, and perform capoeira. By demonstrating capoeira's acrobatic and flamboyant movements, young Black Caribbean males shaped Caribbean Black identity and resisted dominant White masculinity. They also demonstrated that sport activities allowed Black Caribbean males to highlight their racial/ethnic identity and perform a variety of resistance practices to White masculinity and supremacy. The chapter explained the way in which sport activities intersect with race, age, and gender, and nationality.

In Chapter 10, Wells used Bourdieu's (1984) theory of social distinction and examined race and class dimensions of Canadian athletes who seek athletic scholarship in the U.S. Wells compared the NCAA scholarship narratives of working-class Black basketball players studied by James (2003; 2005) and White middle-class track-and-field athletes that he interviewed. Wells pointed out divergent meanings of NCAA scholarships between the two groups and described how class status impacted scholarship obtainment. For the high school Black basketball players, NCAA scholarship was a mean to climb socio-economic ladder, obtain higher education, and make themselves valuable individuals in Canadian society. However, the scholarship opportunity is limited among these athletes since they could not afford elite basketball camps and expose themselves to the recruiters from the U.S. Conversely, for the track and field athletes, gaining NCAA scholarship is almost taken for granted during their high school years. They became a member of track clubs and attended the club meetings where many superior athletes compete

against each other and exchange information about universities in the U.S. Moreover, the track athletes were often trained and coached by individuals who have connections to American universities. Club settings exposed track-and-field athletes to more scholarship opportunities and helped them to believe they will be the scholarship recipients. Furthermore, by actually receiving the scholarship, track-and-field athletes were able to normalize their superior athletic position and privileged middle class status. By conceptualizing NCAA scholarship as a certain social benefit that is somewhat exclusive to White middle-class, Wells demonstrated the interactions among race, sport, and class and the reproduction of inequality in sport settings.

Overall, the purpose of the book to illustrate complex interplays among race, sport, age, gender, class, masculinity, and sexuality in Canadian society is well accomplished by a series of chapters. Moreover, although the title of the book suggests that its scope is limited to Canadian sport settings, I believe non-Canadian readers will also find the book intriguing because many chapters provided transnational perspectives and their topics resemble with popular inquiries of exiting sport literature.

However, a weakness of the book might be that some of findings in the book are not particularly new within the North American sport literature. Although its focus on the Canadian context might be novel, the book occasionally delivered the knowledge that North American sport and leisure literature already accumulated. Thus, experienced researchers might find some chapters are not especially interesting or intriguing. My additional concern about the book is that it provided limited explanations on the history of racial formation in Canada. Although each country possesses a unique history of racial formation (Omi & Winant 1994), this issue is not fully addressed so readers might be left wondering how the concept of race has been constructed and evolved in the Canadian history, and ultimately, how it has impacted Canadian sport landscapes. While chapter 1 described the history of immigration laws in Canada, supplementing more detailed information and analysis would promote deeper understanding of the racial relation in Canada as well as race and sport in the Canadian culture.

Despite these limitations, this book provides a nice collection of race and sport studies and acknowledges us that sports is a complex social phenomenon with which various issues in society intersect. This book deals with various topics related to race and sport and offers critical and broad analytic viewpoints on the issues related to the sports in Canada. I believe *Race and Sport in Canada: Intersecting Inequalities* is a useful undergraduate textbook filled with rich and current information.

References

- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- James, C. E. (2003). Schooling, basketball, and U.S. scholarship aspirations of Canadian student athletes. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 6, 123-144.
- James, C. E. (2005). *Race in play: Understanding the socio-cultural worlds of student athletes*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Stodolska, M. (1998). Assimilation and leisure constraints: Dynamics of constraints on leisure in immigrant populations. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 30, 39-63.
- Stodolska, M. (2000). Changes in leisure participation patterns after immigration. *Leisure Sciences*, 22, 39-63.
- Stodolska, M., & Alexandris, K. (2004). The role of recreational sport in the adaptation of first generation immigrants in the United States. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 36, 379-413.