

Book Review

KACPER MADEJ #

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland

Sport, leisure and social justice,
edited by L. Long, T. Fletcher, & B. Watson,
Abindon and New York: Routledge, 2017, ISBN:
9781138960459

Sport leisure and social justice is an important and essential book central to its theme. Editors present a collection of research analysis presented on a variety of different cases. Readers are introduced to a diversity of experiences of marginalized categories of people, theoretical approaches and contexts (e.g. physical education, musical events) that can be used in regards to inequality in this field.

At first, it is important to understand how editors describe their perspective of social studies in the field of social justice. In the first chapter, which is also an introduction to the book, they quote William Stewarts (2014) metaphor – “research to enhance social justice is like a stick that pokes and nudges for social change”. Editors directly admit that in their opinion researchers should not limit their efforts to the description of social injustice. When authors are only describing the level of power differences in society, they do not use the full potential of data that they are collecting. When social researchers identify some sort of oppression, they should recognize reasons of that situation, analyze social consequences and suggest solutions, which would start the process of social change.

Editors argue that social studies addressing social justice are most useful and mature when they can be used towards a more just society. This is a very important statement, because they recognize their book as a potential source of quality knowledge for policy makers. The main goal in the process of selecting content for this collection was to make a guide that will enable political considerations based on solid, scientific data and evidence. The book should be considered as an attempt to increase the level of cooperation between academic and policy makers.

One of the main aspects of the way that editors are using the term injustice, which is really important in context of the practical use of this book in the

Corresponding author: Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Szamarzewskiego 89 C, 60-568 Poznań, Poland.
E-mail: kacper.madej@amu.edu.pl

process of remaking policies, is that they do not focus on the economic factors. Various income or differences in wealth of social actors are often the primary way of explaining injustice in sport and leisure. Many researches concentrated on this topic are using social classes as the key term.

In this book contributors are neglecting a social class based point of view and they focus on different perspectives. Of course income is still an important aspect of that problem but authors use it as one of many variables affecting inequalities. They concentrate more on gender, race and ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation. Giving more attention to the non-economical ways of explaining inequalities in the context of sport and leisure can be recognized as one of the advantages of this collection.

Aside from the assumption that chosen contributions will focus mainly on socio-cultural aspects of social justice in sport and leisure, editors are looking for a diversity in contexts (e.g. experiences and representation of different categories in sport or physical education, lack of participation of categories in specific social roles or even in leisure in general), theoretical framework (ex. Black feminism, queer theory) or methods (ex. research based on biographies, participatory researches) used by authors. In that perspective, especially when editors highlight the practical aspect of their work, they point out that any social researcher in the field of social justice should be engaged, it is hard to assume, that they use one set of definitions or key terms and share them in every chapter of this books. Although in this collection the term of social justice is used as a main topic without dictating one way of understanding that term. That allows one to apply many points of view by the contributing authors. On one hand this is a great advantage of this book, because readers can become more familiar with more than one perspective of social justice, but on the other hand it can cause problems with connection between different chapters. In this book methodological freedom, in the way that authors are using their own terms can be considered as better because of the appearance of many contexts that authors use to write about social injustice. In that case permission to use many different perspectives is reasonable.

Because of the diversity of approaches to the subject of justice in sport and social leisure the book can be considered as the one piece or as a set of separate contributions. Editors specify that “the goal of the book is to: embrace a range of markers of disadvantage; combine theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions, draw on a diversity of approaches while being committed to the principle of social justice and devising research in support of change; examine substantive ideas that speak to audience beyond UK.” (p. 8) To achieve that assumption, emphasis has been placed on texts focused on case studies. The collection shows many different dimensions of the main term and concentrates on contexts and processes that can be unnoticed in the everyday life of social actors.

The book contains sixteen chapters. What is worth noticing is that the editors did not separate contributions from different academic disciplines, theoretical perspectives, used methods, approaches or ways how studies can be applied in the

process of political change. The first two chapters can be considered as an introduction to the terms of social justice, sport and leisure. Contributors ensure readers how these terms will be used by the other authors. Especially the second one by Wetherly, Watson and Long makes foundations for understanding and emphasizing the importance of justice and fair distribution in context of sport and leisure.

Other chapters are focused on specific dimensions of injustice that can be noticed in the field of sport and leisure. Contributors use different cases to show how social justice applies to their disciplines and researches. It is, however, possible to indicate some main themes that authors address in their works. The first of them is concentration on mechanisms that are supporting the process of making sport and leisure more inclusive. Researchers write about featured changes in reference to different excluded categories. Example of that theme can be chapter 6. Rozaitul Matzani, Katherine Dashper and Thomas Fletcher use Nancy Fraser's two-dimensional conception of social justice to address experiences of Muslim women in case of sport and physical activities. Contributors highlight that work to increase social justice in present society requires not only process of redistribution but also recognition. This shows necessity of better understanding cultural barriers, not only focusing on access to resources. Authors show that in case of Muslim women as specific category participation in sport can be more complicated because of conjunction of many factors. They are facing inequalities based on gender, cultural, religious and in some cases ethnical ground. One of the outcomes from the research is the necessity to increase number of places enabling to perform sport activities only by one sex. Carving sex-segregated spaces allows women participating without wearing hijab. Examined people indicate that wearing hijab don't causes doing sport impossible but can strongly affect the performance.

The second theme is related to identity in context of social justice. Sport and leisure is shown as a noticeable factor in the process of constructing identity, which is related to the wider problem of social inequality. Collection contains reflection on young LGBT people in reference to physical education (chapter 7). Scarlett Dury, Annette Stride, Anne Flintoff and Sarah Williams focus on negotiating feminine and masculine identities in process of physical education. Researchers used queer theory as a framework to analyze section of data collected by the Rugby Football League. Research material, based on focus group discussion was combined in three fiction stories. Narratives show that physical education construct gender binaries, reproduces gender stereotypes within heteronormativity, which can cause a feeling of being out of place.

On the other hand sport and leisure can be used as a specific space to express identity in way that can enhance fight for social justice. In chapter 9 Brett Lashua and Matthew Wood present a case study of hip-hop cypher (event that gathering people from many areas of hip-hop culture) as a way to allow Aboriginal people introduce their presence and voice to broader audience. Hip-hop activities became a context that refers to postcolonial oppression on native citizens of Canada (in this case).

Another point of interest is the representation of different excluded categories. Authors not only concentrate on problem of classification of people but also show the issue of reproducing stereotypes in debates related to sport and leisure. One of the reasons of such a situation is an insufficient level of representation of disadvantaged categories by researchers, policy makers and politicians. It is noticed that people should be encouraged to self-representation of their interests and in that way reduce stereotypes.

Example of that theme can be chapter 12 wherein Aarti Ratna questions universalization of experiences women of different ethnic origin. Contributor presents Black feminist and Spivakian thesis to highlight the specific of both approaches that can be used to address the problem of Black women representation in sport. Collecting good quality research material that captures sport experiences of that specific category is possible only when scholars use adequately theory. Deep knowledge of different approaches is crucial to improve policy addressing Black women needs.

Contributors also address the noticeable issues associated with institutions related to sport and leisure. The context of social justice is not only applied to participation of team or club members (in case of sport) but likewise to people who are employed in these organizations. Uneven access to some roles for example coaching is presented as a neglected topic. In chapter 14 Thomas Fletcher, Dave Piggott and Julian North present the results of the analysis of lack access South Asians to coaching roles in cricket. Contribution is based on 33 in-depth interviews and describes chosen mechanisms and processes of marginalization.

Researchers indicated also, that sport institutions often do not recognize their inclusive functions as important and reduce its significance, focusing on sporting excellence (see chapter 15 written by Alexandra Rankin-Wright, Kevin Hylton and Leanne Norman).

Because of the variety of cases that were used by researchers, some contributions can be linked to more than one of the main themes. Also it is worth noticing that some of them are referring to methodological approaches. For example, Annette Stride and Hayley Fitzgerald are recommending more frequent use of participatory research. Chapter 8 presents advantages and challenges of conducting studies with the participation or even by young people.

The publication can be considered as valuable and worthy of notice. Researches based on different cases and experiences of marginalized categories are fruitful and can be useful in the exploration of that field. Editors combined various perspectives of contributors associated with many academic disciplines in a way that makes the book interesting for the researchers from different scientist field. Collection contains detailed descriptions of different problems related to the inequality, theoretical approaches and research techniques. Some authors very clearly indicate their recommendation (ex. Chapter 14), other are more reticent, either way readers can find useful cases and reflections that can develop their studies or effect on their approach to policy making.

KACPER MADEJ

REFERENCES

Stuart, William. 2014. "Leisure Research to Enhance Social Justice." *Leisure Sciences* 36(4): 325-339. DOI: 10.1080/01490400.2014.916961