
INTRODUCTION

Ethnicity Gender, and Sport in Diverse Historical Contexts

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Sport engages the physical abilities of men and women, boys and girls every day, in gymnasiums and swimming pools, on sporting fields and playgrounds, on tennis courts and in other sport venues, in ethnic cultures in both minority and mainstream groups. These sporting experiences of males and females, however, generate a range of complex meanings within the contexts of gender and ethnic values and at particular times and places. In fact, the intersections of ethnicity and gender in shaping sporting activities deserve historical attention so as to more fully understand the significance of sport in societies and transformations in sport often influenced by ethnic and immigrant groups. The sporting landscape in various cultures reveals the imprints of both ethnicity and gender. This special issue of the *Journal of Sport History* examines the ways ethnicity and gender serve as important social factors in sporting experiences of men and women in different locales in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Historians investigating the place of ethnicity in culture typically have overlooked the critical importance of gender in immigration and migration, at least in North American studies. Moreover, while topics such as religion, politics, family life, education, work, and community institutions interest the scholars researching ethnic history, sport represents an area of scant historical inquiry compared to these other facets of life. This absence of solid scholarly studies of ethnicity, gender and sport in diverse historical contexts prompted us to bring together substantive research in this issue of the *Journal of Sport History*. Donna

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A. Gabaccia, a leading historian of American ethnicity, has written that “most studies of the histories of immigrants in the United States begins with the experience of migratory men disguised as genderless humans,” and that immigrant women “cannot be studied apart from men of their own backgrounds.”¹ Important studies about the many immigrants to America, such as Roger Daniels’ *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, provide outstanding valuable information about an immigrant, which he defines as “a migrant whose move has involved at least crossing one international frontier.”² Nonetheless, the emphasis remains on men in ethnic life in historical works on ethnicity until the major impact of research in women’s history. The ways gender and ethnicity interconnect in dimensions of American life appear in works like Hasia Diner’s *Erin’s Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century*, Alice Kessler-Harris’s *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States*, and Barbara Schreier’s *Becoming American Women: Clothing and the Jewish Immigrant Experience, 1880-1920*.³ Yet even these examinations of ethnicity in the analysis of women largely overlook sport. Only a few articles explore particular ethnic women’s sporting and leisure experiences in American culture, such as Linda Borish’s work on Jewish American women and sport and Donna DeBlasio’s work on immigrant women in Youngstown, Ohio.⁴



Within the borders in Europe, the acrimonious “ethnic cleansing” that ravaged the Balkans during the 1990s points to the ongoing power and relevance of ethnic identity, and the need for its study. In the United States such study has encompassed nearly a century, if one credits Israel Zangwill with the recognition of cultural differences in his 1908 play *The Melting Pot*. Sociologists, particularly those at the University of Chicago, began more scholarly analyses of ethnic groups in the 1920s and 1930s, focusing largely on immigrants from southern and Eastern Europe.⁵ Oscar Handlin’s 1951 work *The Uprooted* centered on Irish immigrants to the eastern seaboard, and his interpretations sparked a host of responses.⁶

The social movements of the 1960s spawned a multitude of scholarly developments on college campuses, culminating in ethnic, racial, and gender studies programs, a rash of academic journals, and consequent factionalization into various subdisciplines of history, sociology, anthropology, etc. Although more recent program configurations have tried to integrate such studies into a unitary core curriculum, fragmentation still reigns. A 1996 survey found nearly 100 ethnic studies programs in the United States, with almost 30 listed as full departments.⁷ By 1999 Jewish studies alone provided 150 chairs on college campuses and 500 schools offered coursework in the subject.⁸

The debate over assimilation, or the lack thereof, continues among pluralists, multiculturalists, and universalists; but all have recognized the role of sport in the process of identity and culture formation. Numerous books, both scholarly and popular, have concentrated on ethnic athletes and sporting practices among ethnic groups. Journal articles proliferate on the subject, and whole academic conferences are devoted to its study.⁹

Likewise, gender studies have enjoyed similar growth over the past four decades. Initially concerned with feminist issues and women’s studies the field has broadened to include the analyses of masculinity, the relationships between men and women, and sexual-

ity. The examination of biological and psychological differences have given way to the socially constructed aspects of identity, society, and culture.¹⁰

Over the past two decades scholars have increasingly investigated the role of sport relative to gender identity, power, opportunity, ideology, and social relationships.¹¹ Descriptive, narrative accounts of women's athletic exploits yielded to more comprehensive and complex analyses of sport and gender.¹² In 1991 the *Journal of Sport History* produced a special issue on gender, edited by Roberta Park, that emphasized the myriad factors of social class, race, ethnicity, age, and medical knowledge that intersects and impacts gender perspectives.¹³ A new subdiscipline of body culture studies has emerged from the linkages across previously restricted boundaries. Crossing such intellectual borders has fostered innovation, interdisciplinary insights, greater understanding, and new knowledge.

The *Journal of Sport History* has made a significant contribution to that new knowledge in many of its previous publications. This special issue documents the continued evolution of sports studies by highlighting not only the relationships between gender and ethnicity, but also the cooperative efforts of a team of international scholars. Several of the contributors clearly demonstrate the connections between ethnicity, gender, and sport in their research in sport history. Their expertise includes and extends beyond the English-speaking world, offering opportunities for comparison and contrast.

The contributors to this special issue address the essential ways ethnicity and gender contour the sporting experiences of immigrants, migrants, and ethnic groups in societies. In European and North American contexts, these sport historians demonstrate the use of a variety of primary sources to understand the place of sport in ethnic cultures and gendered contexts. Female immigrants coming to America from Germany often participated in Turner societies in several communities in the United States. Annette Hofmann explores the ways gender influenced the physical activities and social life of these female Turners, and discusses the importance of women's place in the Turner societies to women's experiences in American society. Kevin Wamsley and Robert Kossuth next examine how gender identities shaped the physical expressions of masculinity of Canadian young men in tavern culture in Ontario, Canada, and the concerns for gender lines and class lines remaining in force in the nineteenth century. The connections among ethnicity, gender, race, religion, physicality, alcohol, and public spectacles continue to draw the research interests of social historians, and this study of Canadian culture raises important issues about maleness and physical display in sporting endeavors.

The late nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed movements of peoples across nations and boundaries, voluntarily and at times in forced relocations, and men's and women's health and sport became intertwined with social, economic, and political developments. Several authors examine the historical and cultural patterns of sport of particular ethnic groups and assess the impact of gender on the kinds and amount of sporting activities engaged in by men and women. Samuel Regalado explores the power and restrictions imposed by the American government against Japanese Americans and the activities of Japanese American women and girls in seeking to be involved in sport, despite the harsh conditions of forced relocation camps. In other communities, the minority ethnic group often created their own sporting culture in the face of a hostile white Protestant majority. The long tradition and interest in sport of Chinese Americans in West Coast communities

forms the focus of Roberta J. Parks important research on sport and ethnicity in specific locales. Certain ethnic groups seem to have been overlooked by historians of sport, and Parks essay communicates how Chinese Americans participated in sport and often faced constraints imposed by white mainstream American society seeking to alter their traditional practices. In her study of Norway, Gerd von der Lippe examines the multiple meanings of medical texts written by doctors—typically men—and the influence of these dominant viewpoints on how women and girls used their bodies in physical exercise and sport, and on the national interests in womanhood, manhood and citizenship. The migration of newcomers continues to countries in Europe and North America, and Gertrud Pfister contributes a significant essay on the impact of Muslim immigrants in contemporary Germany. She analyzes the implications of religion within the ethnic practices of Turkish immigrants in Germany and the influence of gender in traditions for women and girls gaining exposure to new forms of sport and leisure.

The authors in this issue provide important approaches to the study of ethnicity, gender, and sport and point to new areas of research for sport historians. In doing so, they help to illuminate the themes intertwined in sport such as expressions of social mobility, community formation, individual achievement, ethnic conflict, the battle for gender equity, and nationalism. This special issue as a whole, therefore, suggests the critical lens of vision cast on ethnicity, gender, and sport in the past to more fully understand the experiences of sport for men and women in diverse contexts. We hope that these intriguing works will provide readers with great intellectual value and will prove as interesting as they have to us.

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1. Donna A. Gabaccia, *From the Other Side: Women, Gender, and Immigrant Life in the U.S., 1820-1990* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), xi-xii.
 2. Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), 3.
 3. Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Barbara A. Schreier, *Becoming American Women: Clothing and the Jewish Immigrant Experience, 1880-1920* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1994).
 4. See for example, Linda J. Borish, "An Interest in Physical Well-Being Among the Feminine Membership': Sporting Activities for Women at Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Associations," *American Jewish History* 87 (1) (March 1999): 61-93; and Donna M. DeBlasio, "The Immigrant and the Trolley Park in Youngstown, Ohio, 1899-1945," *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 5 (in press).
 5. Israel Zangwill, *The Melting Pot* (1908). Early studies included William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918; reprint, Urbana: University of Illinois, 1984); Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess, and Roderick D. McKenzie, *The City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925); Ernest W. Burgess Papers, Special Collections, University of Chicago; Ernest W. Burgess, ed., *The Urban Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926); Paul F. Cressey, "The Succession of Cultural Groups in the City of Chicago," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1930. For a history of the Chicago studies, see Stow Persons, *Ethnic Studies at Chicago, 1905-1945* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987). Ethnic group histories appeared by the 1920s including Hyman L. Meites, ed., *History of the Jews of Chicago* (Chicago: Jewish Historical Society of Illinois, 1924); and Harry Sundby-Hansen, ed., *Norwegian Immigrant Contributions to America's Making* (1921; reprint, New York: R&E Research Assoc., 1990).

6. Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1951). Concerning the historiography of migration studies, see Donna R. Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History," *Journal of American History* (Dec. 1999): 1115-34.
7. Manning Marable, "We Need New and Critical Study of Race and Ethnicity," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 25 Feb. 2000, B4-7.
8. Scott Heller, "The New Jewish Studies: Defying Tradition and Easy Categorization," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 29 Jan. 1999, A21-22.
9. For example, the recent conference, entitled "Joining the Club: Jews, Sports, and the Rites of Citizenship" held at Arizona State University, sponsored by the Jewish Studies Program, 11-12 Feb. 2001.
10. For a discussion of changes within the field, see Mark Alden Branch, "Beyond Women's Studies," *Yale* (Dec. 1998): 28-32; and Joan Wallach Scott, "Women's Studies on the Edge: Introduction," *Difference: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 9 (3) (1997): i-v.
11. Comprehensive bibliographies are provided by Mary Lou Remley, *Women in Sport: An Annotated Bibliography and Resource Guide, 1900-1990* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1991); and Patricia Vertinsky, "Sport History and Gender Relations, 1983-1993, Bibliography," *Journal of Sport History* 21 (Spring 1994): 25-58.
12. Nancy Struna called for such analysis in "Beyond Mapping Experience: The Need for Understanding the History of American Sporting Women," *Journal of Sport History* 11 (1984): 120-33. Patricia Vertinsky discusses the historiography of change over the succeeding decade in "Gender Relations, Women's History and Sport History: A Decade of Changing Enquiry, 1983-1993," *Journal of Sport History*, 21 (Spring 1994): 1-24.
13. *Journal of Sport History* 18 (Spring 1991) (ed. Roberta Park).