HOCKEY AND IMMIGRANT/ETHNIC INTEGRATION

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Over the past decade or so the literature on the integration of immigrants in secondary centres has primarily focused on the attraction and retention of newcomers, economic and labour market integration, housing, and access to health services. Thus, the research literature on the social, cultural and civic integration of newcomers is scant. We argue that it is important to examine these forms of integration and research on the game of hockey, as it is played in the hockey arenas in secondary centres, provides such an opportunity. Hockey is often considered quintessentially Canadian and part of an imagined national culture and a metaphoric representation of Canadian identity and sense of belonging. We suggest that hockey arenas can be considered as multicultural common spaces thus warranting an examination of the extent of interactive pluralism amongst diverse groups in Canada including newcomers.

Au cours des dix dernières années, la littérature sur l'intégration des immigrants dans les centres secondaires s'est principalement intéressée à l'attraction et la rétention des nouveaux arrivants, à l'intégration économique et au marché du travail, au logement et à l'accès aux services de santé. Ainsi, la littérature de recherche sur l'intégration sociale, culturelle et civique des nouveaux arrivants est rare. Nous soutenons qu'il est important d'examiner ces formes d'intégration, et les recherches sur le hockey tel qu'il se joue dans les arénas de hockey des centres secondaires offrent une telle opportunité. Le hockey est souvent considéré comme étant intrinsèquement lié à l'identité canadienne. Cela fait partie de l'imaginaire national, d'une représentation métaphorique de l'identité et du sens d'appartenance des Canadiens. Nous suggérons que les arénas de hockey puissent être considérés comme des espaces communs multiculturels, ce qui justifierait un examen de l'ampleur du pluralisme interactif parmi divers groupes au Canada, y compris les nouveaux arrivants.

In the 1990s and early 2000s academic research on immigrants in Canada focused primarily on Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver, where a significant proportion of immigrants live. Since the mid-2000s, research has shifted to Canada's secondary centres, which usually include cities like Calgary, Winnipeg, Hamilton, Ottawa-Gatineau, Quebec City or Halifax. In this piece we will focus on Calgary and Halifax and explore how hockey may act as a conduit for integration into the broader community and also explore barriers that immigrants and ethnic minorities may face in the game.

Over the past decade or so the literature on the integration of immigrants in secondary centres has primarily focused on the general topics of attraction and retention of newcomers, economic and labour market integration, housing, and access to health services. In contrast, the research on social, cultural and civic integration have not been a primary focus. It is important to examine these forms of integration as they are importantly related to the notion of welcoming communities, inclusion, and civic participation in secondary centres and the topic of hockey provides an excellent opportunity to do so. Immigrants' participation in sporting activities facilitates their process of social and cultural integration in society (Sibilio et al. 2006). In this respect the game of hockey, as played in the hockey arenas across Canada, may be regarded as potential facilitator of social, cultural and civic integration.

Many scholars argue that hockey is part of the way Canadians live and is an important part of a Canadian collective memory. It acts both as a myth and allegory in Canadian culture and an imagined national culture. It has become a metaphoric representation of Canadian identity. Hockey became an official representation of Canadian identity when, in 1994, it was legislated as the country's national winter sport. In one sense then, hockey is a fundamental part of Canadian nation building and fulfills notions of a sporting nationalism interwoven with national identity. This is so much the case, that hockey has even become a part of some recent citizenship ceremonies with Canadian NHL teams hosting citizenship ceremonies with some of their players as participants.

HOCKEY ARENAS AS MULTICULTURAL COMMON SPACES AND INTERACTIVE PLURALISM

There are two ways to conceptualize pluralism (multiculturalism) in Canadian society: fragmented pluralism and interactive pluralism. Fragmented pluralism exists when ethno-cultural and immigrant communities are insular, inward looking and segregated. They therefore could be described as "ethnic silos", parallel communities, or "ethnic enclaves". A common critique in the literature of multiculturalism is that it emphasizes differences, hence it is divisive and subverts social cohesion and the development of a national identity. In contrast, interactive pluralism exists when ethno-cultural and immigrant communities are engaged with each other and with broader mainstream and non-immigrant groups. Ongoing interaction across groups produces mutual recognition and understanding which is not only cross-cultural dialogue and exchange but also an opportunity for a new and evolving macro-culture that emerges from the interaction between groups and communities. It is in this context that the places and spaces where this interaction occurs can be referred to as multicultural common spaces. Thus, hockey rinks and hockey arenas can be thought of as a multicultural common spaces and as sites of potential social integration.

However, is this the case? Do hockey arenas contribute or facilitate the social integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities in Canada, particularly in secondary centres like Calgary and Halifax? Calgary has approximately 700 local minor hockey teams, which includes over 13,300 players between the ages of 4 and 21 years, who play in 41 arenas, some of which include multiple ice surfaces or rinks (Hockey Calgary 2016). The Halifax Regional Municipality has approximately 300 local minor hockey teams and includes approximately 5,000 players between the ages of 4 and 18 years who play in 12 arenas (Hockey Nova Scotia 2016). In Calgary, there is a partnership between the Calgary Police and Hockey Calgary to provide a program called Power Play which offers immigrants and ethno-cultural minorities the opportunity to learn how to skate and to play hockey. In the past, Hockey Nova Scotia has had hockey programs which were initiatives for Black and Indigenous communities and now they are very interested in reaching out to immigrant communities.

RESEARCH TOPICS AND QUESTIONS ON HOCKEY ARENAS IN SECONDARY CENTRES

The above discussion begs the question of whether the hockey arenas in Calgary and Halifax and arenas in other secondary centres are indeed multicultural common spaces that facilitate an interactive pluralism for the residents of each city. Thematically, the academic research has covered the topics of identity (including Canadian identity) and sense of belonging to Canada, as experienced by immigrant and ethno-cultural communities including youth. The communities covered in the literature include Chinese, Indigenous, Indo-Canadian, Muslim, Portuguese, and refugees. However, this research has not examined identity and sense of belonging in the context of participation in sport generally, nor the game of hockey specifically. Two fundamental research questions remain unanswered:

- Does the game of hockey, and its attendant social relations in hockey arenas, contribute to the social, cultural and civic integration of immigrant and

ethno-cultural communities in secondary centres?

- Are the hockey arenas in these secondary cities sites of multicultural common spaces that enable an interactive pluralism?

It is important to examine these research questions in light of the interests in the attraction, recruitment, and retention of newcomers to secondary centres. Answers to these research questions will, in part, help reveal how immigrants are integrating socially and culturally. These are important research questions to explore because the integration of immigrants is a daily lived experience. Research on the social, cultural and civic integration of immigrants needs to occur in tandem with research on economic, labour market, housing, educational and health integration. By examining immigrant participation in sport and recreation, and in this case Canada's official game of hockey, we can contribute to a more holistic understanding of the immigrant integration process in secondary centres.

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