

Leisure and diaspora
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Introduction

As a truly interdisciplinary entity, the study of leisure has historically employed and integrated a wide range of theoretical and conceptual constructs from sociology, geography and psychology, among others. Ideas related to class, race, gender, sexuality, space, place, life course, consumption, media, well-being, adaptation, acculturation and self-esteem have all been used extensively to explore, explain and critique modern leisure practices. Conversely, there are also ideas and trends that have emerged and gained popularity in other academic fields which have struggled to establish a substantial foothold within leisure studies. It is within this latter scenario that the focus of this chapter – diaspora – sits.

In an influential essay from a decade ago, Rogers Brubaker (2005) noted a significant proliferation of uses of the term “diaspora” in the Western public lexicon since the 1980s, both inside and outside the academy. Dedicated academic journals now provide outlets for diaspora scholarship (for example, *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* and *Diaspora Studies*), while articles addressing diasporic formations, identities and processes have become relatively commonplace in publications on race, migration, globalization and transnationalism. According to Joanna Story and Iain Walker (2016: 135):

over the past two decades, “diaspora” has evolved from a term with a somewhat restricted usage to something considerably more ubiquitous, simultaneously crossing over from political and academic discourse into the vernacular. In academia, the word “diaspora” has, rightly or wrongly, come to be applied to almost any population or group living outside its homeland, while in popular usage diaspora now seems to be a collective noun used to refer to anyone not at home.

The outcome is what Brubaker (2005: 1) playfully refers to as a “‘diaspora’ diaspora”, signifying ‘a dispersion of the meanings of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space’.

The processes by which the concepts, theories and nomenclature of the academic “mainstream” arrive in diverse associated sub-disciplines are rarely straightforward or immediate. Existing gatekeepers of particular fields embrace or resist change to varying degrees as they hold onto or loosen their grip on the existing scholarly *doxa* (Blackshaw 2010). Nonetheless, given its evident applicability and usefulness to the study of leisure (see below), the absence of references to diaspora within the academic literature in this area, and in the related study of sport, is perplexing (see, for example, Burdsey 2006 as a notable exception). In a review essay on sociology of sport literature on race over the last half century, Ben Carrington (2015: 394) remarks that “‘diaspora’ is one of the most important concepts in contemporary social theory and a burgeoning area of study across various disciplines, yet it is frequently and surprisingly ignored within sport studies and the sociology of sport’. This is an especially curious omission given that, as Janelle Joseph (2014: 669) points out, ‘diaspora is a crucial heuristic for thinking about cultural heritage. While diasporas are often constructed as homeless and displaced, they also draw on modes of cultural production, such as sport, to feel at home or emplaced’.

A keyword search of the websites for the principal English language journals that publish articles on aspects of, broadly speaking, leisure *identities* and *practices* (rather than, say, management, business, marketing or policy) yields very few results for diaspora. Across *Annals of Leisure Research*, *Journal of Leisure Research*, *Leisure/Loisir*, *Leisure Sciences*, *Leisure Studies* and *World Leisure Journal*, the number of articles that include “diaspora” in their title or abstract is miniscule. Likewise, “leisure” does not emerge as a significant focus whatsoever in peer-reviewed outlets such as *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* and *Diaspora Studies*. Moreover, specific texts around ethnicity and leisure – such as the recent excellent accounts by Karl Spracklen (2013) on *Whiteness and Leisure*, and Monika Stodolska and colleagues (2014) on *Race, Ethnicity and Leisure* – make no mention of diaspora. In many respects, some of the most important insights are to be found within a handful of books that consider (to varying degrees) the more *leisured* aspects of the sporting realm (see, for example, Carrington 2010, Delamont forthcoming, Joseph forthcoming, Thangaraj 2015, Thangaraj et al 2014, Thangaraj et al 2016).

The tentative academic relationship between leisure and diaspora needs to be placed in the broader context of scholarship addressing leisure and processes of transnational human movement in all forms. As Diana Mata-Codesal et al (2015: 1) state:

leisure does not feature strongly in migration studies, nor do leisure scholars pay a lot of attention to migrants. Migrants are frequently perceived through the conceptual lens of their “mobility” and work-related activities. When leisure is addressed, the focus is on its functional aspects, e.g. the role leisure can play in adaptation to and integration into a new society.

Migration research that explicitly addresses leisure is thus a relatively recently phenomenon (see, for example, the 2015 special issue of *Leisure Studies* on ‘Migration, Migrants and Leisure: Meaningful Leisure?’). Notwithstanding this, I would argue that this body of research is now sufficiently substantive for us to expect it to have engaged with, endorsed or critiqued diasporic frameworks to a greater extent than it has thus far.

Given the inchoate status of research on leisure and diaspora, this chapter is inexorably somewhat exploratory in its content and approach. Unlike other chapters in this collection that address leisure studies’ more developed analytical frames [ToC TBC], there is little in the way of extant literature on leisure and diaspora to build upon here. As such, in this chapter I consider some of the *potential* ways that these two concepts might usefully come together, helping us to theorize the leisure practices and identities of migrant communities and their subsequent generations. To achieve this, I begin the next section by outlining some of the key contributions to diaspora studies and the “phases” through which this field has travelled; and I highlight some of the main critiques as well. Following that, I explore some of the principal themes that have emerged in recent years in relation to leisure and migration processes more broadly. In the final section of the chapter, using a couple of examples from my own research in this area, I consider how the concept of diaspora might be harnessed in diverse ways to think – certainly further, perhaps *differently?* – about twenty-first century leisure.

This chapter is illustrative rather than exhaustive in its subject matter, and I concentrate on a number of important thematics rather than attempt to overview all relevant literature.

The focus is placed explicitly on *leisure*, as differentiated from related and overlapping phenomena of sport and tourism. Furthermore, while there are relatively well-developed literatures on music and cinema, for instance, which engage with ideas of diaspora, globalization and transnationalism, the space constraints of this chapter necessitate that I prioritize those contributions that foreground leisure identities and practices explicitly. Lastly, it should be noted that, due to my own limitations, the analysis in this chapter is limited to an engagement with the English-language scholarly literature.

Diaspora: key ideas, phases and critique

According to Jana Evans Braziel (2008: 24), diaspora ‘historically and typically denotes the scattering of people from their homelands into new communities across the globe’. Similarly, Floya Anthias (1998: 559-60) refers to ‘a connection between groups across different nation states whose commonality derives from an original but maybe removed homeland’. She adds that ‘a new identity becomes constructed on a world scale which crosses national borders and boundaries’. Diaspora is linked to distinct but related terms, such as globalization and transnationalism; yet differs crucially in the fact that it connotes primarily the movement of *people*, as opposed to flows of technologies, capital and media, among others (Braziel 2008).

In his historical overview of academic scholarship on diasporas, Robin Cohen (2008) argues that there have been four “phases” of diaspora studies. First, there was the classical use of the term in relation to what might be regarded as a “victim” or “catastrophic” diaspora: individuals viewing their ‘scattering as arising from a cataclysmic event that had traumatized the group as a whole, thereby creating the central historical experience of victimhood at the hands of a cruel oppressor’ (ibid: 1). In this phase, the focus was directed almost exclusively towards the Jewish experience, but was augmented later in the 1960s and 1970s by coverage of African, Armenian, Irish and Palestinian diasporas. This paradigm viewed diaspora as a matter of dispersal from the “homeland” to two or more foreign destinations; and, while it can be difficult – conceptually, practically and politically – to distinguish force from volition, it referenced a sense of compelled human movement (ibid).

The second phase occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, driven by scholars such as William Safran (1991), with the categorization of diasporic formations expanded to include a variety of diverse expatriate, refugee, migrant and “settled” minority ethnic communities. Diasporas started to be viewed as variegated and intersectional entities, rather than homogenous and bounded masses; and they included displaced ethnic, religious and national groups such as Poles, Mexicans, Kurds, Sikhs, Maghrebis, Vietnamese, Tamils and Somalis (Cohen 2008).

According to Cohen (ibid: 2), the third – and arguably most critical and paradigm-shifting – phase of diaspora studies comprised a social constructionist critique of the second phase theorists. This revolved around challenges to the primacy attached to notions of “homeland”, the ontological status of “ethnic or religious community” as the unit of analysis and received wisdom about a desire for “return” (see, for example, Brah 1996, Clifford 1994, Gilroy 1993, Tölölyan 2012). As Anthias (2001) points out, up until then diaspora had tended to be used in a manner that privileged the point(s) of “origin” in constructing identities and solidarities, and so did not sufficiently acknowledge *transethnic*, rather than transnational,

processes. These observations were part of a broader critique of academic 'methodological nationalism', that is the assumption that the nation/state is 'the natural social and political form of the modern world' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002: 301). For instance, Ien Ang (2003: 142) argues that 'the limits of diaspora lie precisely in its own assumed boundedness, its inevitable tendency to stress its internal coherence and unity, logically set apart from "others"'. Indeed, Yasemin Soysal (2000: 2) argues that global social processes since the Second World War mean that diaspora has become 'untenable as an analytical and normative category'. Instead, she argues, we must 'direct our discussion to new forms of membership, claims-making, and belonging – which either remain invisible to the conventional conceptions of diaspora, or are frequently deemed insignificant in the face of its normative weight' (ibid). A number of critical scholars subsequently began to emphasize concepts of heterogeneity, fluidity, creolization, syncretism and hybridity (see, for example, Brah 1996, Gilroy 1993, Hall 1990). Within this approach, diaspora challenges dominant discourses about authenticity, belonging and citizenship, and illustrates how the formation of 'new ethnicities' (Hall 2000) often renders national borders insignificant. In particular, it enables a disentangling of the relationship between place(s) of "origin" and place(s) of "settlement", and a nuanced consideration of the respective significance attached to them.

According to Cohen (2008: 2), we are now in a fourth phase of diaspora studies – one of consolidation, which is 'marked by a modified reaffirmation of the diasporic idea, including its core elements, common features and ideal types'.

Felix Ndhlovu (2016: 33) argues that:

while ethnicity and affiliation to specific speech communities may still remain, they are no longer the sole prime markers of group solidarity especially in predominantly immigrant societies where diasporas construct and (re)negotiate their identities on the basis of shared migration histories and other life experiences.

This has led to conceptualizations of other forms of diasporic formations that do not rely on notions of "homeland" or shared ethnicity, but underscore the significance of *routes* over roots. For example, Paul Gilroy's (1993) notion of the transnational 'Black Atlantic' considers the common experiences, identity formations and cultural constructions of black populations in the United States, the United Kingdom and mainland Europe; while the likes of Gayatri Gopinath (2005) and Martin Manalansan (2003) have made critical interventions in the study of 'queer diasporas'.

To be clear, diaspora remains a contested concept, and its interpretations and implementations continue to vary, both across academic research and in the popular imagination. Nonetheless, Rogers Brubaker (2005: 5) points out that:

one can identify three core elements that remain widely understood to be constitutive of diaspora. Some subset or combination of these, variously weighted, underlies most definitions and discussions of the phenomenon. The first is dispersion in space; the second, orientation to a 'homeland'; and the third, boundary-maintenance.

It is the fluid, processual, indefinite and non-essentialist interpretations and manifestations of diaspora that have underpinned my own work to date, and which I consider in relation to

modern leisure identities and practices in this chapter. These flows, movements and multiplicities are emphasized in Paul Tiyambe Zeleza's (2010) essay on African diasporic music forms. He states that 'diaspora is a state of being and a process of becoming, a condition and consciousness located in the shifting interstices of "here" and "there", a voyage of negotiation between multiple spatial and social identities' (ibid: 211). The currents between "homeland" and "diaspora" are, he argues, 'often simultaneously covert and overt, abstract and concrete, symbolic and real, and their effects may be sometimes disjunctive or conjunctive...[and] include people, cultural practices, productive resources, organizations and movements, ideologies and ideas, images and representations' (ibid: 212). Furthermore, Jana Evans Braziel (2008: 25) calls for acknowledgement of the simultaneous multi-laterality of diasporas, which 'challeng[e] both the strictures and structures of nationalism and the increasingly imperialist, hegemonic forces of globalization'.

Leisure identities and practices in the context of transnational human movement

Although they rarely foreground diaspora as an analytical concept, some important recent contributions have added to and extended our understanding of the role of leisure in the context of various forms of transnational human movement. A selection of these examples are addressed in this section. Rather than providing a comprehensive review of their content, my intention here is to draw out some of their key underlying themes and arguments, especially those that challenge the idea that leisure is unilaterally a positive experience or source of identity formation for migrant communities. These observations provide the basis for thinking through the utility of diaspora as a concept for understanding contemporary leisure practices and identities in the final section of this chapter.

Taking the British situation as an exemplar, Jonathan Long et al (2014: 1781) argue that, 'where there has been research on the role of sport and leisure in integration in the UK it has focused on refugees rather than migrants; and more general research on new migrants is heavily dominated by the economic'. Leisure is evidently a fundamental social activity for all forms of migrants though, not least for diasporic communities. As Diana Mata-Codesal and colleagues (2015: 1) note, 'migrants' leisure activities contribute to self-perception, daily life organisation, multiple embeddedness and sense of belonging. The precariousness of, and the new challenges in, the situation of many migrants brings out the importance of leisure for leading meaningful lives'. The authors go on to highlight how leisure plays a crucial function in creating connections and distances, both to/from groups in an ancestral "homeland" and those in the "host" society. Importantly, they stress the role of leisure as an *embodied* and *spatialized* cultural practice, whereby the relationship between migrants and the places they live and play becomes co-constitutive: these spaces and places underpin and influence their leisure activities and identities; and their leisure pursuits facilitate an ontological engagement and embeddedness with the locations in which they occur.

In an essay on the recreational mobility of Polish migrants in the UK following Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, Anna Horolets (2015: 6) characterizes leisure pursuits as 'micro practices of negotiating and re-constructing ones' identity in a new environment'. For Horolets, the mobilities facilitated by and through leisure activities and encounters assist the adaptation of migrants through increased certainty over particular situations. Critically:

the certainty that is achieved through leisure experience is self-referential: it is not necessarily connected to better understanding of an environment in some objective terms or to engaging in interactions with mainstream population. The uncertainty reduction resulting from it is due to increased embodied knowledge of new environment and improved self-image (ibid: 15).

Moreover, Horolets considers the embodied nature of leisure in facilitating connections between migrant bodies and spaces, which manifest themselves in physical, emotional and affective ways (ibid: 16).

Processes related to the spatial, embodied and emotional effects of leisure occur with a range of different migrant groups in various geographical contexts. In their account of Afghan refugees in Winnipeg, Canada, Julie Stack and Yoshitaka Iwasaki (2009: 243) note that the extant research in this field concludes 'that some forms of leisure, in particular, those forms that are in line with immigrants' cultural, social and/ or spiritual orientations to life, may positively facilitate adaptation processes as they navigate through these challenging and potentially stressful processes'. For example, Nicola De Martini Ugolotti (2015) considers the experiences of young men of migrant origin in Turin, northern Italy. Through the physical cultural activities of capoeira and parkour, as public performances and articulations of leisure in the city's built environment, these young men use their leisure time and practice to navigate processes of belonging, being "out of place" and self-worth. Similar observations as to the importance of embodied leisure forms in processes of integration and ethnic and cultural community formation – both tangible and figurative – are identified in Hannah Lewis' (2015) study of music, dancing and clothing in the lives of asylum seekers in the UK. A further notable contribution on leisure spaces – which is also a rare example of a reference to diasporic formations in this context – is Beccy Watson and Aarti Ratna's (2011) case study of a South Asian cultural festival in Leeds, northern England. Spaces of leisure, the authors conclude, are critical for the public performance of diasporic formations, shedding light on their heterogeneity and the containing power that characterize their existence.

Experiences of leisure are not nearly so benign for some migrant groups. As Miri Song (2005: 63) argues, diasporic populations may struggle to form and uphold their identities: 'not all diasporic people may be equally successful in their efforts to assert hybridized identities or occupy and enunciate a "third space"'. Len Ang (2003: 142) likewise calls for scholars 'to recognise the double-edgedness of diasporic identity: it can be the site of both support and oppression, emancipation and confinement, solidarity and division'. This situation is acknowledged in some notable recent critical reflections on the components and ramifications of migrant leisure. As Karl Spracklen and colleagues (2015: 114) remark, 'the leisure lives of new migrant communities are diminished by the ways in which the instrumental powers in their new homes operate to define, delineate and constrain their leisure'. Evidence points to the fact that leisure does not necessarily create capital and facilitate positive inter-group relations, while migrants often compare their leisure experiences in their "new" places of residence negatively with their lives before migration (Long et al 2014). Sine Agergaard et al (2015) stress the importance of recognizing the broader socio-political context, highlighting that the leisure time of certain migrant young people is increasingly politicized. Focusing on a particular intervention providing sporting activities in Denmark, the authors identify how "unregulated" leisure time is regarded in the

dominant imagination as problematic and threatening, with migrant youngsters seemingly in need of the “civilizing” effects of dominant leisure practices and values.

This discussion should not be read as signifying a binary interpretation of the effects of leisure. Research suggests that migrants’ leisure scenarios revolve around forms both of integration and exclusion, with participation enabling acculturative effects and also being inhibited by a range of cultural and structural constraints (Hasmi et al 2014). As Lauren Wagner and Karin Peters (2014) identify in their multi-sited analysis of diasporic Moroccan women negotiating leisure experiences in Morocco and the Netherlands, the participation of Muslim women is not just hampered by restrictions. Instead, these ‘women balance and negotiate multiple and competing expectations from within their families and from contextualized religio-cultural circumstances into viscous spaces of leisure’ (ibid: 426).

The leisure experiences of migrants are evidently contingent on a variety of factors. Accordingly, an intersectional analysis is critical (Watson and Ratna 2011, Watson and Scraton 2013). For instance, Jonathan Long et al (2014) highlight the importance of underscoring the processes and effects of racialization in migrants’ leisure lives, with their construction as “black” or “white” impacting on possibilities for inclusion and integration. Janelle Joseph (2012), on the other hand, addresses the gendered relations inherent to diasporic communities, as well of those around age and generation, in her ethnography of Caribbean-Canadian recreational cricketers in the Greater Toronto Area. Lastly, Zana Vathi (2015), whose work addresses leisure and tourism in the Western Balkans by London-based Kosovan migrant families, calls for a further stratification of our understanding of migrant leisure, noting that the experiences of non-elite migrants are especially under-researched.

Having outlined some of the key trends within recent literature on migration and leisure, the final section explores the potential for a conceptual and analytical frame of diaspora to shed further light on these phenomena.

Situating leisure within diasporas and diasporas within leisure

A move towards a more substantive utilization of diaspora in theorizations of leisure must be rooted in appropriate intellectual trajectories, rather than simply being a matter of incorporating another neologism. Leading diaspora scholars have warned against the conceptual inflation of the term (see, for example, Cohen 2008, Tölölyan 2012), with Rogers Brubaker (2005: 3) pointing out succinctly that ‘if everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so’. Nonetheless, as Tony Blackshaw (2010: xii; emphasis added) argues, ‘in order to develop a contemporary interpretation of leisure we must not only break with the convention of seeing it as merely a residual category of work...*but also re-think it in nearly every other aspect*’. This requires leisure scholars to undertake ‘an imaginative engagement with the different social, cultural, economic and political conditions that are the mark of “liquid” modernity’ (ibid).

Given the examples and themes outlined in the previous section, the potential for a more rigorous engagement with diaspora in leisure studies is apparent. Diasporas encompass shared migration histories and other life experiences which are often promoted by, and celebrated through, leisure. Leisure is a matter of interactions between identity and space, individual and group activities, processes of inclusion and exclusion, inter- and intra-cultural

exchange, and transnational links, all of which are germane to a diasporic framework when applying to migrant and/or minority ethnic communities. To further detail the opportunities for using diaspora in leisure studies, two examples from my own research illuminate the potential analytical and empirical connections. The first example is a more traditional application of diaspora to a leisure phenomenon; the latter is more about the use of what might be called a diasporic imagination.

In the first instance (Burdsey 2008), I examined the Amsterdam World Cup (WK Amsterdam) amateur football competition and multicultural festival in the Netherlands. Alongside the 11-a-side adult men's football tournament involving the city's diverse migrant, refugee and diasporic communities that formed the centrepiece of the event, I showed how leisure can be a site of diasporic formation in the ways that attendees perform and consume cultural identities through national dress, music, dance and food. Placing the event within the context of Dutch integration policies, the study examined the differing and contested conceptions of identity, community and multiculturalism articulated by participants and organizers and, more broadly, the role that "alternative" events play in resisting or reinforcing dominant political ideologies. The article showed how leisure is both a means of intra- and inter-cultural exchange among different diasporic communities and within the "host" society. Critically, it also highlighted the structural constraints of certain leisure forms that inhibit the development of long-lasting social networks, as well as the intersections between ethnicity and gender that can bring about various patriarchal and masculinist forms of diasporic identity and practice.

More recently (Burdsey 2016), I considered the multiple engagements between minority ethnic residential communities and the English seaside. In these settings, the numbers of migrants are comparatively small, and migration is often undertaken alone or with a very small group of significant others rather than as part of large scale ethno-national migrations. As such, while the use of diaspora *per se* does not pertain to the communities here, our understanding is boosted if we employ what we might consider to be a *diasporic imagination*. In this book, I introduced the idea of 'coastal liquidity', which challenges and writes against static portrayals of the seaside: those that containerize it in a particular time period, separate it from other geographical environments and "fix" particular types of racialized bodies within and outside it. I showed how leisure spaces, such as the seaside, are key to forging links between "homeland" and new places of residence, and in residents' capacities to develop an ontological belonging to their new homes and to share commonalities with coastal neighbours of other backgrounds. Moreover, aspects of the coastal environment were also shown to provide a means of coping with the stresses that characterize attempts to adapt to, and integrate within, new environments.

Elsewhere with colleagues I have noted that the few existing contributions in leisure (and sport) studies that employ diaspora tend to treat it 'as merely a descriptive, rather than analytical, term – literally a shorthand for *what* happens after migration, rather than *how* and *why* such processes occur' (Thangaraj et al 2014: 6). This observation reiterates other calls for diaspora to be used not as a descriptive term; but as a social condition (Anthias 1998) or as a practice, project, idiom or stance (Brubaker 2005). In this regard an intersectional framework that connects ethnicity to religion, gender, age and sexuality, among others, is critical. Diasporic theorizing in/of leisure can also benefit hugely from engaging with the epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies of the Global South, which

can help us to trouble analytical perspectives that privilege the experiences of the receiving society (Horolets 2015: 6). As Felix Ndhlovu (2016: 28) states, 'diaspora cultures and identities have been theorized from a wide range of perspectives. However, the majority of such theorization has come from the Global North, a development that has invisibilized other alternative epistemologies, particularly those from the Global South'. Proposing a 'decolonial epistemology', Ndhlovu argues for a 'push for the recognition of alternative knowledges and alternative ways of conceptualizing cultural identities in order to both counter and complement dominant Euro-American epistemologies' (ibid: 37). This insightful observation must be incorporated into future leisure theorizing, directing us towards the study of diasporas and perspectives outside, or not moving towards, the Global North.

This chapter has highlighted the under-developed relationship between studies of leisure and diaspora. It has outlined some of the underlying key concepts, ideas and critiques of how the term has been used in the scholarly literature. It has documented some important contemporary trends and analyses around leisure and migration. Lastly, using some of my own work, it has shown how diaspora can be usefully employed to help us understand a variety of leisure identities, practices and phenomena. Diaspora offers scholars a dynamic framework for understanding the ways that migrants and subsequent generations orient themselves in relation to their multiple global selves and sites/sights of past, present and future lives. The opportunity – indeed arguably the *onus* – now falls on leisure scholars to make it a more central part of the theoretical and conceptual tool kit, both as a means of understanding the transnational dis/connections between leisured bodies, identities and spaces; and in terms of decentring dominant ideas around the components and ramifications of migrants' and subsequent generations' leisure.

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