

Excerpt From Thesis: Download Full Thesis at:  
[https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/18837/5/Razack\\_Sabrina\\_200911\\_MSc\\_thesis.pdf](https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/18837/5/Razack_Sabrina_200911_MSc_thesis.pdf)

## **Women's Cricket Spaces: An Examination of Female Players' Experiences in Canada**

Presently the literature available on women's cricket is very limited. This thesis attempts to redress this gap by telling a story about the experiences of women's club cricket in Toronto and Victoria. The player's social spaces were examined, as were the intersections of gender, race and culture. Using qualitative methods, narratives were interpreted and analyzed using post-colonial, spatial and feminist theoretical frameworks. Major findings indicated that there are specific challenges to women's participation in cricket in Canada and revealed differences between players due to geography, access to resources, ethnicity and race. Women also experienced inclusions and exclusions based on gendered reproductions. The results indicate that much more support is needed for women's cricket to flourish in Canada. One strong recommendation this study makes is that we pay more attention to, and develop better strategies for, the integration of Canadian immigrant and racialized women into the Canadian sport and recreation system.

My desire to pursue a research project on women's cricket in Canada was based on wanting to explore and analyze the history, development and current status of this relatively unknown sport for women. In researching the topic I discovered that few previous studies are available regarding women's involvement in cricket within Canada. My research aimed to investigate the history of Canadian women's cricket and examine how current female players in Canada experience cricket spaces.

In researching women's cricket involvement in Canada, there is the risk of reproducing generalizations and stereotypes. Ideas about gendered cultural norms remain prevalent in sport today. Therefore, one of my goals as a researcher was to uncover some of the untold stories which challenge these supposed norms. Although women have made significant advancements in sport with increased opportunities, media coverage and access to leadership positions, many inequities persist (Dabovic, 2002; Hall, 1997a; Kidd, 1995; Lenskyj, 1991, 1994, 2003; Vertinsky, 2004). The social spaces of sport are still replete with blatant gender discrimination and homophobia. Since this thesis sits within the realm of gender and sport, I was careful to plan a project that explored women's sport spaces without reproducing some of the problematic knowledge that already exists in the research literature. This thesis examined ideologies and theories that can help answer some of the questions that often surface when investigating the intersections of gender, race and sport. Some questions were: Why does gender inequity prevail in sport? What does the future hold for women in sport?

Across Canada, female cricket players represent multiple cultures and ethnic backgrounds (Dutchin, 2007). In Victoria, British Columbia, there is a women's cricket club comprised mainly of white<sup>1</sup> Canadians and immigrants from New Zealand, England and Australia. In Ontario, women's cricket clubs generally have players with South Asian and Caribbean backgrounds with only a small portion of them coming from European nationalities and other ethnicities. Globally, the migration to and from countries continues to have an impact on the socio-cultural composition of nations and this is certainly true in Canada. Such migration between nations has resulted in people having multiple identities

and has meant that 'home' may mean more than one place (Ashcroft, 1995; Handa, 2003; Said, 1997; Shami, 1998). The cricket pitch in Canada, then, is a unique space where immigrant players and many nationalities come together to play a game that they feel is part of their culture (Dutchin, 2007; James, 1991).

My choice to study this topic was grounded in the many complexities and unanswered questions surrounding women's cricket experiences in Canada. There are several additional reasons I chose to do my project on women's cricket. First, I was interested in how Indo-Canadian<sup>2</sup> women living in Canada experience playing cricket and how their identity was influenced by their participation in the sport. My own experience with cricket has mostly involved women from the Caribbean and Canada. I was also drawn to cricket due to my familial ties to the sport. My parent's Trinidadian descent and personal sport histories were similar to many of the immigrant women who I encountered in this study. I uncovered many complex stories about sport participation among children of immigrants and I found their experiences similar, but also very different, than my own journey through sport.

The purpose of this research then was to conduct a feminist, post-colonial and spatial analysis of how the game of cricket has impacted the identities of Indo-Canadian females and other women club players living in the Greater Toronto Area<sup>3</sup> and British Columbia. More specifically, I wanted to know how women experience Canadian cricket spaces. The three main research questions I investigated were: **What is the history of women's cricket in Canada and how did the game develop? How do South Asian<sup>4</sup> women view their participation in cricket? What role do current notions of Canadian nationalisms play in shaping the game and social environments of women's cricket?**

## **Findings, Recommendations and Future Research**

Upon completion of the research and analysis of women's cricket in Canada, several questions remained. Why were Indo-Canadian women from particular countries resistant to participating in the study? What is the future for women's cricket? What kind of policies and practices can be implemented to help support, maintain and develop women's cricket? Further investigation of the history and current status of women's cricket in Canada and internationally is needed to fill gaps in the literature. Archival records on women's cricket are available in Victoria and should be researched as rich history could be illuminated.

Patterns of gender discrimination uncovered in this study calls for new sport policies and practices to directly address barriers that prevent women from participating equally in cricket. A media campaign might assist in both contesting male dominant images of cricket, and introducing women to the sport. Such a campaign could point out that cricket is not only played by men, it is not violent and it can be a lot fun. This could help with attracting more women to the sport. Cricket culture needs to be studied further to critically assess the experiences of women, especially minority women. The efforts described above could enable more women to participate in cricket and improve the experiences of those, especially minority women, who are already currently playing the game.

Cricket is an up-and-coming sport in Canada that is beginning to garner some public attention. Due to its increasing popularity new policies and practices have to be created in order to meet the demands on the sport. The section on 'access' illustrated that support and resources are not equitably distributed between men's and women's teams. This situation should be rectified. Specific funding and support resources for women's cricket

should be introduced in Canada. Looking to the model of women's hockey might be useful in considering how to support the growth and development of women's cricket. Although gendered inequities persist in hockey, tremendous gains have been made with regards to exposure, funding, leagues and support resources across the country (Theberge, 2000). The federally adopted multiculturalism policy acts as a model for provincial and municipal sports organizations yet there is quite a distance to go to achieve the goals of multiculturalism. An inclusive sport policy has not been widely adopted with the exception of one on aboriginal sport (Canadian Heritage, 2005). Sport Canada should take the leadership in adopting a diversity strategy in relation to sport participation in this country. In addition to writing policies, implementation procedures with measureable outcomes should also be adopted. Other sport governing bodies could then use the Sport Canada example as a model and tailor diversity efforts to their local realities. As a first phase, more focus groups and research should be done at the federal level regarding minority women and sport participation in Canada. This would illuminate areas of need, challenges and best practices.

This research would be helpful in making sport organizations more accountable to equity in their recruitment, marketing and governing practices.

Finally, the cricket spaces in this country are dominated by immigrants who have created a unique sport culture within Canada. Although the participants did not see the game as Canadian, the more recognition and exposure the sport receives, along with international success of the Canadian national team, the more participations rates will increase. The ongoing tensions around multiculturalism and who belongs in the nation will continue to be reflected in the Canadian population's understanding of, and attitudes towards, cricket. It is unclear if cricket will ever be fully accepted into Canadian sports culture. For now, cricket remains on the margins, similar to field hockey and other sports that are not seen as North American.

The gendered and racialized relations that exist in sport and cricket spaces need to be continually problematized, resisted and challenged. I hope this thesis will encourage more scholars to engage in research that specifically interrogates the gendered, racialized, cultural, spatial and colonialist histories and practices in sports like cricket, which have shaped the experiences and identities of women cricket players in Canada.