

Journal of Family Studies

ISSN: 1322-9400 (Print) 1839-3543 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rjfs20

Race, class, parenting and children's leisure: children's leisurescapes and parenting cultures in middle-class British Indian families

by Utsa Mukherjee, Bristol, Bristol University Press, 2023, 224 pp., €152.95 (Ebook), ISBN: 9781529219531

Esra Demirkol Colosio

To cite this article: Esra Demirkol Colosio (2024) Race, class, parenting and children's leisure: children's leisurescapes and parenting cultures in middle-class British Indian families, Journal of Family Studies, 30:3, 552-554, DOI: 10.1080/13229400.2024.2318337

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2024.2318337

Published online: 15 Feb 2024.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 115

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rjfs20

JOURNAL OF FAMILY STUDIES
2024, VOL. 30, NO. 3, 552–554

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

BOOK REVIEW

Race, class, parenting and children's leisure: children's leisurescapes and parenting cultures in middle-class British Indian families, by Utsa Mukherjee, Bristol, Bristol University Press, 2023, 224 pp., €152.95 (Ebook), ISBN: 9781529219531

Race, Class, Parenting and Children's Leisure: Children's Leisurescapes and Parenting Cultures in Middle-class British Indian Families examines the relationships between leisure, social inequality, and cultural identity among middle-class British Indians. The book provides a deeper understanding of how children's leisure activities contribute to the reproduction of social advantage and the construction of racial boundaries. Through its analysis of children's leisure activities, it makes valuable contributions regarding middle-class British Indian families who experience relative economic privilege but face racial disadvantage in a society that values whiteness.

The book is based on research conducted by Utsa Mukherjee with ten middle-class Indian professional families (18 parents and 12 children in total) in London. Data collection took place in 2017 and 2018 and involved a range of qualitative methods, including interviews, drawing activities, and observations. Such investigation of class and racial inequalities in children's everyday leisure activities requires a strong theoretical framework that combines childhood and leisure studies, and this book provides in-depth analysis from the perspectives of both parents and children.

The intersections of parenthood, childhood, leisure, race, and class are well explored in Chapter 1. Both the parents and children have complicated and uncertain social positions defined by a combination of middle-class advantages and racial inequalities. Their choices and attitudes in relation to leisure activities are influenced by this duality. Mukherjee's rich ethnographic data leads the author to find that the parents in the study 'mobilized their children's organized leisure to drive their children's ethnic and racial socialization, by transmitting "ethnic cultural capital" (Lan, 2018) through leisure and by using leisure spaces to mount anti-racist strategies' (Mukherjee, 2023, p. 51).

In this regard, this research fills an important gap among studies on Indians in the UK. There is limited knowledge about the perceptions and actions of professional middle-class British Indian parents regarding their attitudes towards their children's leisure activities. It is crucial to study these families as exploring their parenting strategies and approaches to their children's activities can reveal important insights into hidden mechanisms that lead to educational and professional achievements.

Chapter 2 introduces the main theoretical foundation of the study from a critical standpoint on sociology of childhood and leisure studies to allow an analysis of middle-class British Indian children's leisure activities. The chapter provides an overview of the main theoretical concepts related to children's agency, generational structure, and the connection between social inequality and leisure. The author provides an overview of the historical development and the main themes of childhood sociology followed by a critique of adult-centred leisure theory and the neglect of children's agency in leisure research. Due to the lack of communication between childhood studies and leisure studies, the author takes the opportunity to explain concepts from both disciplines such as structured (or organized leisure), family leisure, casual leisure, setting the stage for a discussion on the potential for integrating these two fields of research to operationalize middle-class British Indian children's leisure.

This also contributes to our understanding of the axis of migrant parenthood, childhood, and leisure, on which there is limited research in the global north, and will be a guide for such studies in the global south.

In the following chapter, Lareau's (2000) concept of 'concerted cultivation' guides Mukherjee's focus on the strategies of parents to organize their children's leisure activities for practical purposes, not only for increased academic success but also to contribute to future labour market opportunities. This focus on leisure activities from parents' perspectives highlights the politicization of skills, which are adopted via leisure activities, as Mukherjee describes. This helps readers see how parents and children give different meanings to leisure activities not only from a class perspective but also considering racial inequalities. Although middle-class British Indians possess various privileges, such as 'secure well-paid professional jobs, comfortable lifestyles and property ownership' (p. 59) associated with their middle-class status, these families experience the effects of a racial hierarchy that unfairly favors the white majority population, particularly those in the middle and upper classes. As Mukherjee argues 'structural racism inflects and shapes these racialized minority families' everyday lives, including their children's leisure lives' (p. 59).

Chapter 4 explores how children choose and categorize their leisure activities and how race and class influence these experiences. Examining children's accounts provides a richer understanding of their everyday experiences and how they navigate social boundaries. Participating parents saw leisure as a means to an end, while the children valued the pleasurable experiences and social opportunities it provided. Leisure becomes a battleground between parents and children, with neither having complete control over the choices. Additionally, while middle-class British Indian children have privileged access to a range of leisure activities, structural racism shapes their experiences of those activities. Children's leisure is influenced by both race and class, and Mukherjee's findings highlight the importance of considering white privilege and class politics while discussing the impact of leisure on children's lives.

Chapter 5 addresses how home time shapes the leisure activities of children and families together. Focusing on practices destabilizes the 'static' definition of family and its members. Family members do not simply exist as mothers, fathers, and children; 'they can also be seen as "doing"' (Morgan, 2011a, p. 6). Therefore, family 'represents a quality rather than a thing' (Morgan, 1996, p. 186) and family relationships or practices constitute 'a sense of family' (Morgan, 2011b, p. 10). The conceptualization of 'doing' family offers a path for studying the leisure activities of middle-class British Indian families, where time is seen as a valuable resource that must be carefully managed to allow for family leisure or for children to engage in various casual leisure activities.

Chapter 6 considers how leisure activities reflect cultural politics in terms of relationships and place-making. It is clear that leisure in middle-class British Indian diasporic families cannot be solely understood from an individual perspective. While leisure activities facilitate intimate connections with family members, siblings, and friends, cutting across generational structures, the collective leisure activities of British Indian diasporic groups extend beyond the domestic realm and contribute to place-making in cities shaped by colonialism and whiteness. In this study, an evaluation was made on the basis of ethnic differences among the interviewee families, and the lack of a comparison on how families and children from different religious backgrounds approach leisure activities offers a new direction for future studies.

Overall, as discussed in the final chapter, the aim of this book is to explore the intersection of class and race in relation to social inequalities and identities, specifically within the context of leisure activities. The research combines leisure studies, childhood studies, and family studies to analyze the leisure activities of middle-class British Indian families and children

and their roles in reproducing identities and experiences of inequalities. Mukherjee acknowledges the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns on children and families while emphasizing the importance of studying leisure as a means of understanding inequalities and identities. The book examines the complexities of leisure in relation to expectations, constraints, and challenges faced by individuals, particularly in the context of middle-classness and racialized minority experiences. Leisure experiences are shaped by larger interpersonal and social forces, reflecting the importance of leisure research within sociology for a comprehensive understanding of social inequalities. This book would be useful for anyone teaching courses in sociology of leisure, childhood studies, race and immigration.

References

Lan, P.-C. (2018). *Raising Global Families: Parenting, Immigration, and Class in Taiwan and the US*. Stanford University Press.

Lareau, A. (2000). *Contours of childhood: Social class differences in children's daily lives* (Working Paper No: 19), Berkeley: Center for Working Families, University of California.

Morgan, D. H. G. (1996). *Family connections: An introduction to family studies*. Polity.

Morgan, D. H. G. (2011a). *Rethinking family practices*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Morgan, D. H. G. (2011b). 'Locating 'family practices'. *Sociological Research Online*, *16*(4), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.2508

Mukherjee, U. (2023). *Race, class, parenting and children's leisure: children's leisurescapes and parenting cultures in middle-class British Indian families*. Bristol University Press.

Esra Demirkol Colosio
Department of Sociology, Çankırı Karatekin University
esrademirkolcolosio@gmail.com

© 2024 Esra Demirkol Colosio
https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2024.2318337
Check for updates