their parents’ national identity report to succumbing to fatigue from persistent rejection, thus adopting “I am African” instead of “I am French” when asked about their nationality. Bass links this reality of exclusion with the riots but cautions us that this “rage” does not represent these young people’s refusal to uphold French Republican ideals; rather, it symbolizes their demands to be included in these ideals, to say “we exist” (p. 138).

The concluding chapter juxtaposes African migrant families’ lived reality, French enlightenment ideals of secularism, and what Bourdieu called the “imperialism of the Universal” (p. 33) and its rigid demands on multiple generations of migrants to submit to ideals penned centuries earlier in a different France. Despite the bleak reality of these French-African citizens and residents, the author ends the book on a positive note, suggesting that French Republican ideals still encompass possibilities but do require reforms for the twenty-first century.

African Immigrant Families is well written and accessible to academic and non-academic audiences. Bass does an excellent job in unpacking the racialized experiences of sub-Saharan families in France. The author speaks to debates in Europe, the United States, and beyond that underscore the common experiences of various groups but also context specific divergences and the importance of immigration policies in shaping migration outcomes. While strong, African Immigrant Families would have benefited from more discussion of how the sub-Saharan African experience compares to that of French-speaking Caribbean blacks. Brief attention to “colorism” gives us an idea that their exclusion is not as extreme, but more detailed attention to this topic would have strengthened the analysis of the power but also the fluidity of race. Despite this, the book is a great addition to emerging scholarship on difference and immigrant incorporation in the European context and is especially relevant for American audiences given the paucity of attention to migration beyond U.S. borders. As such, African Immigrant Families is a timely and welcome resource for both undergraduates and graduate courses in the social sciences.


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It is better for two nations to settle their international disputes on the football pitch than the battlefield, and sporting contests have long functioned as cultural metaphors for inter-group rivalry. Perhaps this explains why the International Olympic Committee has long insisted that the Olympic Games be devoid of politics. Yet, political scientist Jules Boykoff’s opening premise in Activism and the Olympics is that “the Olympic Games are shrouded in an apoliticism that is in fact eminently political” (p. 21). In this latest contribution to an extensive literature on the politics of the Olympics, Boykoff documents the dissident movements that arose in response to the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver and the 2012 Summer Games in London. A former aspiring Olympian himself, Boykoff trades his soccer cleats for the analytical lens of a critical social scientist and describes the efforts of non-athlete protestors in two cities to “piggyjack” the Olympics and gain awareness for their chosen cause—which is only sometimes about the Olympic games themselves.

The book begins with a brief history of the politics of the Olympics and a wide-ranging literature review. Boykoff characterizes the anti-Olympic dissent that he studies as “a moment of movements” (p. 26) and emphasizes the importance of framing, media coverage, and social media to these movements’ successes and failures. In Chapters Two and Three, Boykoff describes the main grievances and tactics of the activists in each city. Some of the grievances are common to both (cost to taxpayers, gentrification, and security), while others reflect the unique political cultures of each city (First Nations in Vancouver, anti-corporate culture jamming in London). In Chapter Four, Boykoff analyzes the media coverage of the anti-Olympics protests in both cities, and
Chapter Five reflects on both the results of his research and the future of anti-Olympics protest. Although Boykoff characterizes himself as an ethnographer and the research as ethnographic, readers expecting accounts of participant observation will be disappointed. The data in the book come from seventy interviews with activists and from analysis of media coverage. These methods allow Boykoff to juxtapose the activists’ perspectives with those of news journalists; and, given his self-acknowledged sympathies with the activists, they cause the bulk of the book to come across as a tacit validation of the causes and tactics of the activists. Thus, although Boykoff pledges to “offer clear-eyed analysis rather than rote homage or knee-jerk apologies” (p. 17), there are moments when his vision seems more blurry than clear.

There is a startling inconsistency in his analysis of media coverage of the two Olympic Games. For the Vancouver Games, Boykoff’s analysis is purely qualitative, but for the London Games, he presents the results of a quantitative framing analysis. The use of two apparently unrelated methods prevents the reader from gaining a true comparative perspective on the similarities and differences of media representation between the two movements. This is especially concerning given that the quantitative framing analysis of the 2012 activists seems inconsistent with his qualitative analysis of the 2010 activists: Boykoff found evidence of frames critical of the activists in fewer than 12 percent of all the 2012 newspaper articles he analyzed, but he is sharply critical of the 2010 news coverage of the Vancouver dissidents.

There is no way to determine whether there was truly a difference in the tenor of the news coverage of the two groups or whether Boykoff’s penchant for criticism gets the better of him. At times, it seems more like the latter than the former. In one passage, Boykoff criticizes the New York Times, which “parachuted journalists into Vancouver to capture images of the intense poverty in the Downtown Eastside—Canada’s poorest postal code—without sufficiently explaining why such poverty exists” (p. 131). Maybe it would be nice if journalists incorporated Marxist class analysis into their stories more often, but this is the sort of red herring criticism that makes journalists roll their eyes.

In general, Boykoff’s critical eye is decidedly one-sided, and the theoretical payoff would be greater if his critical analysis were occasionally turned on the activists, not just the media. The activism that Boykoff documents poses a wealth of contradictions that are begging for critical inquiry. For example, Boykoff observes that the “diversity of tactics” embraced by activists allowed the event coalition at each Olympic Games to hold itself together, in spite of the differences; but this social movement strategy has at least one significant downside: it generates the sort of media coverage that leftist activists despise by presenting journalists with an amorphous, polyvocal entity to cover that, from the outside, seems leaderless and pointless.

And what is the point of anti-Olympic activism anyway? Many of the causes and tactics documented by Boykoff clearly target the Olympics themselves, while others target broader forces, like neoliberalism. This is not atypical of contemporary leftist activism, and so it provides Boykoff with an opportunity to critically evaluate contrasting approaches to activism. Sure, the culture-jamming London activists had fun, but does having fun come at the expense of any identifiable victory? Or maybe victory is impossible. When confronted with the multinational cultural and corporate juggernaut of the Olympic Games, is it even reasonable to try to stop it?

In the end, Boykoff leaves us with more theoretical questions than answers. But looking ahead to the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Boykoff helps us predict what is coming. We will see many of the same concerns, many of the same protestors, many of the same media stories. Times, places, and players change; but the apolitical politics of the Olympics keeps on going. In a way, the Olympics are just like elections. Every two years, social scientists are served up a heaping portion of the sport of politics, with its horse-race coverage and obsession with your favorite (or least favorite) player’s latest stats; Boykoff shows us that we would be rewarded by further study of the politics of sport, too.