Sport, Social Class, and Cultural Capital: Building on Bourdieu and His Critics

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Introduction

Bourdieu's theory of the dynamics of class/status power in advanced capitalist societies was a major development in sociology in the last third of the 20th century. His analyses of fields of competition over defining and possessing legitimate culture, rooted in agents' volume, structure, and trajectory of economic and cultural capital have influenced a great deal of research on sport and social inequality. Yet studies of sport and cultural capital often neglect important aspects of Bourdieu's theory and his findings on adult sport participation. In addition, too little has been done on the relationship between sport participation and consuming other forms of high culture.

This study sketches some key aspects of Bourdieu's theory of cultural power and links these to the analysis of adult sport participation. It then summarizes Bourdieu's central findings on sport and social class, using this to highlight aspects of his theory neglected by sport analysts and to focus on research that addresses these gaps. I then compare research on U.S. patterns of sport participation between 1965 and 1975 highlighting how these differ from Bourdieu's (1984) 1967-1975 analysis of France. Building on this comparison, amendments to Bourdieu's theory are explored, particularly focusing on omnivore theory and Lamont's (1992, 2000) comparative analyses of aesthetic and moral symbolic boundaries.

Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Capital and Class Reproduction

Uses of 'cultural capital' and 'capital' have proliferated in the social sciences, often decontextualized from Bourdieu's theory. Thus, it may help to sketch some key aspects of Bourdieu's theory of social domination with underlies much work on sport and cultural capital. A central aim of Bourdieu's theory is laying bare the unjust aspects of "meritocratic" social mechanisms for excluding people in dominated positions from opportunities to exercise social power, with a focus on intergenerational transfers of social power. The dominant classes use their relative monopoly over *economic capital*; mastery of knowledge, information, manners, and lifestyles which open doors to powerful positions and networks (*cultural capital*); access to valuable social networks/organizations and social support (*social capital*); and influence over the means of framing and defining the value of lifestyles, cultural practices, occupations, corporations, and educational credentials (*symbolic capital*) to maintain and improve agents and their children's positions in fields of competition over these resources.

Bourdieu (1990) focused on education systems as a paradigmatic institution for *individualizing and rationalizing exclusion* of the lower middle and working classes from valued positions and legitimizing the rule of the upper middle and upper classes. Formal education systems in advanced capitalist societies sort children and young adults of all social classes and races, *as individuals*, under the sign of meritocracy, for possession of arbitrary knowledge and dispositions which are cultivated, often insensibly and inexplicitly, in upper and upper middle class families and communities. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984) identifies the disposition to aestheticize cultural practices and goods as a central distinguishing scheme of appreciation and

evaluation transmitted within upper class families in 1960s and 1970s France. The aesthetic disposition and its products are privileged in the education system as a *hidden curriculum*, thus universalizing and naturalizing a culture which favors those raised in higher class settings. As students rise in their school system, they are increasingly evaluated for possession of the aesthetic disposition, providing a ‘home court advantage’ for children from the dominant classes. Students are evaluated *as individuals* who are either gifted or not gifted with “intelligence” or “creativity” or “brilliance” based on their familiarity with upper class culture.

The aesthetic disposition, asserting “the primacy of forms over function, of manner over matter,” (1984, p. 5) has the greatest autonomy in art, but all manner of cultural practices and objects can be aestheticized, from food to coffee, home décor, music, sports, and TV shows. The higher classes, whose possession of greater economic resources over generations fosters the primary socialization of their children under conditions freed from the pressures of necessity, allowing their children to more fully cultivate refined tastes and aesthetic schemes of appreciation and to develop more liberated lifestyles, opening them to what they perceive to be richer and fuller lives. These embodied schemes and the lifestyles created through them are then the basis for all kinds of automatic social affinities and aversions which shape access to elite networks and success in a wide range of social tests controlled by gatekeepers from the higher classes. While the education system remains central to setting the value of different cultural practices and knowledge – e.g. elite universities are the “central banks” of cultural capital – *Distinction* shifted the focus from a hidden curriculum in formal education to subconscious schemes of evaluation that are operating in numerous other social settings and institutions. Much work that applies Bourdieu to sport utilizes this framework to understand if, how, and which sports fit into exclusive lifestyles.

Bourdieu on Sport and Social Class

Bourdieu’s richest empirical findings on sport were reported in *Distinction*. Yet I could not find a study that addressed the full range of his findings and most work on sport and social class neglects his strong emphasis on divisions *within* the dominant classes. Thus, we will review Bourdieu’s findings and central interpretations, summarize his conceptualization of divisions within the dominant classes, and then contrast Bourdieu’s findings to data on the U.S.

Conceiving of sport as a field of competition to define and institute legitimate sport, Bourdieu (1988) strives to recognize the full range of social and historical influences on sport participation using historical sources, ethnographic observations, qualitative interviews, and structured surveys. For the latter, he rejects the hegemonic logic of multivariate regression analysis, which fetishizes the independence of independent variables, replacing it with ‘structural causality’ (1990) and ‘correspondence analysis’ to construct social maps of social characteristics and elective affinities with various cultural practices along the volume of the most effective forms of capital (economic, cultural) and structure or balance of capital (more cultural to more economic). The social meaning and value of a sporting practice is structured by its relational position within the field of sporting practices, and via his theory of class, habitus, and lifestyle, the field of sport is hypothesized to be structured homologously to other fields of cultural consumption.

Bourdieu cautioned against explaining class differences through the intrinsic nature of different sports, while retaining a strong emphasis on historically specific but relatively obdurate elective affinities between class habitus and different sporting practices. From this perspective, current patterns of sport and social class embody institutionalized results from historical

struggles for distinction, all sports have a range of potential uses and meanings, and many sports themselves operate as differentiated fields of competition over the legitimate uses and practices of that sport (Bourdieu 1978, 1984, 1988). A core research strategy is to link survey findings of class patterns to observational studies and qualitative interviews in order to identify central schemes of evaluation and relationships to the body guiding different class fractions' decisions to take up or avoid particular sports in France, circa 1965-1975.

Moving from the culturally richest to the economically richest parts of the dominant classes (upper middle and upper classes), Bourdieu (1984) concluded that for France in 1975 mountaineering was an "exemplary expression" of teachers' "aristocratic asceticism;" yachting, open-sea swimming, cross-country skiing, or underwater fishing fit the "health oriented hedonism" of doctors and modern executives; and golf fit the leisured exclusivity and social networking interests of employers. In addition, we can summarize Bourdieu's analyses as identifying several class resource and disposition-based forces or patterns explaining the class distribution of sports:

1. "Training for training's sake" (get fit exercises being the exemplary case) fit the elementary asceticism of culturally-weighted parts of the *middle* classes. Members of the dominant classes are repulsed by training for training's sake, preferring to take their exercise in more distinctive ways.
2. Members of the dominant classes aestheticize sports in part by limiting the levels of violence and direct physical contact in their sports. They especially avoid high contact team sports, which also demand "submission to collective discipline," which they also resist (p. 214). Instead, they choose to play individual competitive sports like golf and tennis that euphemize aggression, are more associated with health, allow individual control over level of investment in the sport, and can be played into late adulthood. This contrasts with working classes' preference for playing team sports with significant physical contact like soccer and rugby.
3. The dominant classes are impelled by the social distribution of sports to take up the rare and the new. Aversion to popularity and the masses, *alone*, are bases for social distancing by the dominant classes.
4. Attendance at sporting events is most common among the lower middle and working classes. The dominant classes distance themselves from "common amusements," many preferring activities that can be "performed in solitude, at times and in places beyond the reach of the many, off the beaten track" (pp. 215, 214).
5. There are important divisions between the economically and culturally richest classes, between the "most expensive and smartest sports (golf, sailing, riding, tennis)" and the "manly sports" on the economic side vs. the "cheapest sports (rambling hiking, jogging, cycling, mountaineering) or the cheapest ways of doing the smart sports" (e.g. tennis on public courts) and the "introverted sports, emphasizing self-exploration and self-expression" on the cultural side (p. 219).
6. The working classes, who tend to cultivate a more instrumental relationship to their bodies, seek to "produce a strong body, bearing the external signs of its strength" through sport, while the dominant classes expect "the healthy body" or a "liberated body" (exemplified by the "California" sports) as part of a "new morality of health" that is increasingly important to these classes (pp. 211, 219). The dominant classes redefine the working classes' emphasis on physical strength as "brute strength" (an "unpredictable force of nature") that compares unfavorably to the "spiritual and intellectual strength" and "self-control" they ascribe to themselves (p. 479).

Note that class patterns are represented as class groups taking up positions in relation to others in a field of competition to define legitimate sport. Many of Bourdieu's nuanced findings are still relevant for advanced capitalist today. However, I believe the new "morality of health" has grown in influence, and he underestimated the "new strenuousness" emergent in adult sports during the 1970s (Rader, 1991). Shortly, I will show, contra Bourdieu's analysis of sport in 1975 France, that U.S. sport and social class patterns in the same era (1965-1975) differ significantly and support an interpretation focusing on moral rather than aesthetic boundaries in upper middle class culture (Lamont 1992). First, we will build on Bourdieu's findings to discuss neglected aspects of his theory.

Numerous studies of sport and cultural capital test for divisions between the dominant and dominated classes in adult sport participation. However, Bourdieu also emphasized the 'structure of capital,' the division of the labor of domination and struggles *within* the dominant classes between the culturally dominant and economically dominant class fractions (hereinafter CDC and EDC respectively). For example, as noted above, the culturally dominant among the upper and upper middle classes, adopt 'aristocratic asceticism, while EDCs prefer more masculine and expensive sporting activities that allow them to display leadership and wealth a status. Bourdieu repeatedly argues that in advanced capitalist systems of cultural distinction, struggles *within* the dominant classes are often more influential on the strategies and lifestyle choices of upper and upper middle classes than high v. popular divisions.¹ Lizrado and Skiles (2015) document the widespread excision of 'structure of capital' from research utilizing Bourdieu's theory (especially by those seeking in Bourdieu a simple foil for omnivore theory), and my review of the sport and social class literature found this same pattern.

Bourdieu conceptualized tensions between the CDC and EDC (e.g. college professors, artists, intellectuals v. large employers and upper management of large corporations) in terms of a difference in core dispositions tied to divergent socially conditioned strategies of reproduction, and as a *gendered* vision of the division imposed by the dominant (economic) fraction. Elite professionals (doctors and lawyers) and elite educated managers fall in between. He identified two *elementary forms of cultural distancing*, asceticism and luxury, "two contrasting ways of defying nature, need, appetite, desire" (1984, p. 254-5). Asceticism fits the ethos and lifestyle of the CDC, which relies heavily on earning educational credentials to secure valued positions. Luxury, often incorporating a '*temperate hedonism*,' fits the strategic resources (economic wealth) of the EDC in the fields of culture. Ascetic tendencies of the CDC are, at times, expressed as a refusal of the easy and homogenized pleasures of commercialized popular culture or rejecting homogenizing appropriations of their lifestyle aimed at packaging the pure aesthetic for bourgeois audiences. This disposition is sometimes expressed as maintaining authenticity and autonomy, and resisting "selling out." Bourdieu's (1996) historical analyses of high culture emphasized the struggles of artists and authors (and critics, publishers, curators, etc.) to gain autonomy for their arts - building the resources, networks of support, and dispositions to more freely pursue the pure aesthetic in their artistic practice. Near the end of his life, Bourdieu was alarmed at ways neoliberalization had reduced the autonomy of many artistic, scientific, and cultural producers, most notably journalists and intellectuals (Bourdieu, 2003).

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¹ "But the site par excellence of symbolic struggles is the dominant class itself." (Bourdieu, 1985, 254)

Further, the scales of value of asceticism and luxury extend from ‘elementary’ to ‘aristocratic’ forms. Aristocratic forms *restrain, refine or aestheticize* asceticism or luxury over time and limit the excesses of or immature enthusiasm for either principle, thus sublimating them and integrating them more deeply into the habitus and increasing the ease, range and authoritativeness with which the principles are applied. For example, mountain climbing and many adventure sports require ascetic, rationalized physical training as conditions of participation, but they go beyond (and thus distance themselves from) mere “training for training’s sake.” Physical training and the “fitness” gained through training is thus sublimated, becoming a basis for engaging in rare practices and venues that involve aestheticized and adventurous play and flow experiences which transcend “fitness” as mere self-rationalization or narcissism. Conversely, fitness sport as self-rationalization and elementary asceticism *instrumentalizes* leisure (Maguire 2008), reducing its autonomy from economic pressures, turning it into a means of increasing energy and improving performance in one’s work and professional life. In the U.S. today, many busy professionals, guided by a large field of health experts, view their fitness regimen instrumentally, as an efficient (and healthy) coping/de-stressing tool that increases their energy and productivity.

Bourdieu’s framework is supported by Fletcher’s (2008) study of adventure sport athletes which found that most adventure athletes come from highly educated, upper middle class positions and backgrounds, and embody a professional class habitus featuring ascetic traits of self-discipline, self-actualization, and deferred gratification, but also a taste for facing risk that is central to their class conditions in neoliberal societies. Importantly, Fletcher concludes that adventure sports constitute an escape or release from the intensely self-rationalizing conditions of the professional classes. In Bourdieu’s terms, this impulse is building on and distancing from bureaucratized worlds and self-rationalization (including instrumentalized fitness sports), the elementary forms of asceticism.

In addition to their elective affinities with ascesis or luxury, Bourdieu framed the CDC-EDC division as deeply gendered, with the EDC relating to the CDC as masculine to feminine. Interestingly, he stated this general formulation most clearly when discussing the role of sports in shaping class divisions:

Glorification of sport as the training ground of character, etc. always implies a certain anti-intellectualism. When one remembers that the dominant fractions of the dominant class always tend to conceive their relationship to the dominated fraction – ‘intellectuals,’ ‘artists,’ ‘professors’ – in terms of the opposition between male and female, the virile and the effeminate....one understands one of the most important implications of the exaltation of sport... (Bourdieu 1978, 826).

In summary, the division in lifestyles between the cultural and economic fractions of the dominant classes takes the form of *ascetic/feminine v. luxury/masculine*. The taste for the masculine and luxury of the EDC, and the distancing from commercialized culture of the CDC locates the former culturally and aspirationally closer to much of the working classes, a basis for identifications the EDC may mobilize in struggles with the CDC. The CDC, as the dominated fraction of the dominant classes, can most easily mobilize affinities with working classes around resistance to domination. As noted above, Bourdieu found that attending sporting events was a working class preference, but White & Wilson (1999) found that the U.S. dominant classes

attend sporting events at higher rates and Stempel (2010) found that the EDC in the U.S. is most likely to attend sporting events. This may reflect the high cost of attending professional sports in the U.S., opportunities to attend in luxury boxes, or the celebrity status conferred by the media on courtside seats. It may also reflect the EDC's closer connection to working class cultural tastes, which the latter expresses in their high rates of watching popular televised sports. Attending elite sporting events allows the EDC to identify with teams, organizations, and athletes with strong discursive ties to the "will to win," excellence, drive, controlled aggression, and performance under pressure that are recognized as masculine "character" (Bourdieu, 1978; Knoppers and Anthonissen, 2005; Levin, 2001). Thus, the most culturally valued and rarified sporting practices include participating in strenuous adventure sports or endurance events on the CDC side and on the EDC side attending celebrated (and expensive) masculine sporting events such as the NCAA Final Four, NFL Super Bowl, U.S. Open tennis, or golf's Masters Tournament.

Research on the Volume and Structure of Capital

Research provides considerable support for the hypothesis that volume of capital is associated with some types of adult sport participation (e.g. Eitle & Eitle, 2002; Engström, 2008; Kahma 2012; Warde, 2006; White and McTeer, 1990; White and Wilson, 1999; Wilson, 2002), but less has been done on his structure of capital hypothesis and I found little research that addressed class trajectory. Regarding effects of volume of capital, all societies studied have some sports that are played most by people with higher income, education, and occupational status levels, particularly rarified fitness sports (e.g. jogging, mountain hiking, yoga, Nordic skiing, aerobics, gym training), individual competitive sports which restrain aggression (e.g. tennis, golf, squash), and rarified outdoor sports (e.g. alpine skiing, windsurfing, leisure diving). These findings roughly fit Bourdieu's findings for 1975 France, with the exception of the great deal of 'training for training's sake' (aerobics, jogging, gym training) done by the dominant classes. However, Stempel (2005) found that the U.S. dominant classes play high contact team sports and lift weights the most, suggesting divergence from France, addressed below. European countries with high levels of income inequality have lower levels of sport participation and attending sporting events (Veal, 2016). It appears that societies with high income inequality also have greater inequality in adult sport participation (Kahma, 2012; Lefevre & Ohl, 2012; Stempel, 2005), but differences in measurement and analytic approaches preclude good cross-national comparisons.

A major unresolved issue in research on volume of capital and sport is what ages to count as adults and how to accurately measure social class among young adults. The modal solution has been to ignore the issue and treat the education, income, or occupation of late adolescents/young adults (e.g. ages 16-24) as sufficient indicators of their class position. Combined with the high rates of sport participation among young adults, this distorts findings by operationalizing a substantial number of dominant class adults with high sport participation rates as working/lower middle class. A better but imperfect alternative is to include in samples only those age 25 or older. Future work should more accurately operationalize young adults' social class or leave them out of the analysis when this is not possible.

A second problem with volume of capital research is a tendency to report regression findings that include education and/or income as controls when testing the influence of occupational class on sport participation. While illuminating in some ways, this dilutes and underestimates the influence of social class on sport participation. When testing for the influence of social class in terms of volume of capital, regression analyses should present social class as an index that combines elements of class (income, wealth, education, occupational prestige), an array of dummy variables which combine different elements of class (e.g. high education-medium income, high income-medium education, etc.), or enter all class variables (and only those variables) in the same step, testing for change in R^2 .

Several studies have presented findings on sport that address Bourdieu's structure of capital hypothesis. Veenstra's (2010) mapping of class and culture in Canada (using correspondence analysis) found that the four sport practices included were all located in the high volume of capital region, and three of these (playing golf, attending amateur sporting events, and membership in a local sports club) were *much* closer to high income than to high education (but see Veenstra's comment on the mapping of income) and were quite distant on the second dimension from many high culture practices such as visiting art galleries or attending classical music performances. Importantly, he summarized the second dimension (Bourdieu's structure of capital), as a division between 'popular' and 'traditional' highbrow practices with the former *featuring* golf and attending amateur sporting events and the latter featuring attending classical music concerts and art museums. This pattern fits Bourdieu's expectation of a gendered cultural division between the CDC and EDC, with sporting practices and traditional high culture in opposition. It may indicate the important role sports play in strengthening the cultural affinity between the working classes and EDC.² Similarly, using regression methods, Stempel's (2010) study of sport and high culture in the U.S. found that sporting practices had weak or no association with attending traditional high culture performances such as classical symphonies, opera, or ballet.

Rivera (2015) reported a similar divide between masculine sporting activities and traditional high culture in her study of hiring processes for elite U.S. investment banks, law firms, and consulting firms. She found that applicants are expected to narrate their educational and extra-curricular activities, including sports, as a story of self-actualization, growth, and drive. Cultural fit, defined as similar "play styles," was a primary basis for screening applicants and participation in particular sports (she mentions rock climbing, lacrosse, crew, squash, field hockey, tennis, scuba diving, and marathoning) was an important basis for assessing cultural fit

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² Bennett et al.'s (2009) groundbreaking study of class and cultural distinction in the U.K. might have provided valuable evidence similar to Veenstra's. However, their survey construction and analytic choices around sport (deemphasizing sport participation) limit their findings on relationships between sport and high culture. Their survey question on sport participation asks only for favorite sport, and thus does not capture actual participation rates on any given sport. Results from this questions were further reduced through Principal Components Analysis prior to inclusion in the correspondence analysis. Their one question on fitness sports is not included in the correspondence analysis. They do not have questions on attending sporting events. Nevertheless, they found that fitness is a central motivation of sport participation and that both sport participation and regular exercise are strongly and monotonically associated with education and social class (occupation) in the U.K. In their correspondence analysis 'not playing a sport' is located in the region of cultural practices that includes watching a lot of TV, not reading books, and not visiting art galleries and is most strongly associated with working class occupations.

and levels of drive for men and women. Some men were excluded for having feminine self-presentation styles and being too much into “culture” and “the arts,” taken as signs of being too passive (p. 230).

In their study of women in an upper middle tier state school Armstrong and Hamilton (2014) identify two key pathways for upper and upper middle class college students, ‘inherited achievement’ and the ‘party pathway’ which reproduce an asceticism v. hedonism/luxury class division. Sport participation is constitutive of both pathways. Inherited achievement best fits the strategy of highly educated professional classes exemplified by the aspirational ideal of exceling in everything, including having physically fit bodies. In recent decades there has been an impressive expansion of fitness and intramural sports facilities and programs at many middle and upper class universities in the U.S. (Dillon 2010). The party pathway best fits “extremely affluent students with middling academic credentials” who, relying more on their parents economic and social capital, establish social closure around a lifestyle that includes physical fitness and the “beer and circuses” of big time college sports (Armstrong and Hamilton 2014, quoted on p.15; Sperber 2000).

Stempel (2010) found U.S. sport participation patterns that fit Bourdieu’s division between the CDC and EDC. Those in the CDC participated in fitness sports at higher rates, while those in the EDC attended elite sporting events more. Those in the elite professions (doctors and lawyers) had among the highest rates of participation for both. The EDC was also more likely to engage in broad sport participation, measured by attending elite sporting events, doing fitness sports, *and* playing competitive sports, while the CDC was most likely to do fitness sports *and* play competitive sports (thus avoiding “common amusements”). (This study also found that the dominant classes played all three types of sport more than the middle and working classes.) Stempel (2005) also found substantial support for Bourdieu’s volume and structure of capital theses. Among U.S. adults one or more of three dominant class fractions (high education, high income, or high in both) were more likely to play 14 of 15 sports than working class Americans and more than the middle classes in 12 of 15 sports. Those in the CDC were significantly more likely than those in the EDC to run, lift weights, do aerobics, and play basketball and soccer (the latter are strenuous competitive sports which offer a good workout).

In summary, there is considerable evidence supporting divisions within the dominant classes and future survey analyses should focus on this division. Likewise, more qualitative work, sensitized to this division, is needed that is situated in locations where key evaluations or tests occur and consequential patterns of social closure take shape (e.g. Rivera 2015; Armstrong & Hamilton, 2014).

Divisions and balances of power between the CDC and the EDC are socially and historically variable, and research on sport may be able to illuminate broader institutional changes in power balances. Above we noted Bourdieu’s deep concern about the declining power and autonomy of cultural producers and intellectuals (CDC). This decline is particularly evident in the U.S. with the spectacular growth of management and administrative schools in universities, the decline in the liberal arts, and economic elite sponsorship of “thought leaders” and heteronomous think tanks (NCES, 2011; Giriharadas, 2018; Medvetz, 2012). It appears that the growth of commercialized sport in universities plays a role in this decline (Sack, 2008). Armstrong and Hamilton’s (2014) study of student pathways discussed above illustrates one

important way the EDC use commercialized sport to remake universities to support their interests. The party pathway which favors EDC children is ruinous for working class students who get pulled into it. At a different level, Lischitz et al.'s (2012) study of the influence of the college football arms race on university prestige shows that college football conferences are built around both academic and athletic capital and that the structure of this field, and moves within it, shape both the athletic and *the academic prestige* of those universities.

Comparing Bourdieu's France to the U.S., 1965-1975

Realizing that the class patterns found in his study of U.S. adult sport participation fit Bourdieu's broad schemes, but ran counter to parts of Bourdieu's analyses of sport in France, Stempel (2005) turned to Lamont's (1992) finding of stronger moral boundaries and weaker aesthetic boundaries among the upper middle classes in the U.S. compared to France. Combining Bourdieu and Lamont, he posited that a gendered asceticism v. luxury divide operated in the U.S., but that strong class patterns of adult sport participation in the U.S., particularly fitness sports, reflected the upper middle classes' moral emphasis on 'self-actualization,' a disposition to be "fully engaged" in life, to take up "improving" activities, and to be repulsed by "passive" activities like watching television (Lamont 1992). 'Self-actualization' is similar to and illuminated by Currid-Halkett's (2017) groundbreaking study on cultural consumption of the upper middle classes, labeled the 'aspirational classes,' whose members "aspire to be their version of better humans in all aspects of their lives" (p. 20).

To explore Lamont's critique of Bourdieu and possible divergences between France and the U.S., Stempel (2018) analyzed U.S. data collected during the period (1965-1975) that Bourdieu's data for *Distinction* was collected in France. He found that in 1965 time spent on and rates of sport and exercise participation were not significantly correlated with either income or education. Ten years later, in 1975, average time spent on and rates of participation had increased and that 'sport and exercise' was positively correlated with income and education, and *much more strongly associated with education*, with a large divide between those with or without a college degree. Thus, it appears that between 1965 and 1975, among the culturally dominant classes, there was a spurt of integrating sport and exercise into their lifestyles. Contemporaneous research and analysis spoke of a "new strenuousness" and the emergence of "healthism" in the U.S. (Crawford, 1980; Rader, 1991).

Using 1975 data with more detailed measures of sport participation in the U.S., Stempel (2018) found striking evidence that volume of capital had moderate to strong positive relationships and that cultural capital (education) was more influential than income for explaining participation in a wide range of sports (jogging, softball, volleyball, American football, volleyball, handball, gymnastics, bicycling, tennis, calisthenics, swimming, and basketball.) The relative influence of education compared to income was greatest among jogging, tennis, volleyball, and participating in three or more fitness sports. Education and income were equally and positively associated with golf and weightlifting. Only bowling, a sport in steep decline, was positively associated with income, but not education, and the association with income was modest.

Thus, in 1975, the dominant classes in the U.S., especially the CDC, were more engaged than the middle and working classes in nearly all active sports measured, particularly fitness

sports. They also played team sports, including high contact team sports and lifted weights more than middle and working class Americans. The limited evidence suggests that these patterns emerged or spurted between 1965 and 1975. These U.S. patterns contrast with the French dominant classes' disdain for mere training, strength building, and high contact team sports, and the broad range of greater sport participation by the U.S. dominant classes in 1975 contrasts with Bourdieu's findings for France. Without diminishing the importance of how and where sports are played in constructing their distinctive values, this evidence suggests significant U.S.-France differences which may reflect broader differences in drawing cultural boundaries.

Synthesizing Competing Explanations

Several possible developments might explain U.S. changes in adult sport participation between 1965 and 1975, and U.S. differences with France. Perhaps the U.S., with its strong strain of anti-intellectualism and ideological rejection of social class (Mennell, 2007), was a leader in moving towards the 'omnivore' as a new dominant type of cultural elites who more freely cross class boundaries (Peterson & Kern, 1996). While somewhat nebulous, omnivore theorists argue the shift from snob to omnivore emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, which fits the observed pattern for sports. Thus, the U.S. dominant classes' embrace of popular sporting practices, perhaps reconstituting them as healthy, active, and promoting vitality and personal growth, might be part of a broader change in elite-popular cultural divisions that also occurred in food, movies, sexuality, music, etc. (e.g. Johnston & Baumann, 2014). Omnivore theory, combined with Bourdieu, might even explain their failure to take up bowling, the most popular, working class identified, and perhaps least "healthy" sport tested by NHIS (Bryson, 1996). To avoid the unfortunate tendency to pose omnivore theory against Bourdieu, we note that Bourdieu demonstrated and recent research confirmed that established cultural elites are most likely to consecrate new areas of cultural consumption (Bourdieu 1984, Lizardo & Skiles. 2012), a pattern consistent with Stempel's (2018) findings for sport.

Another possible explanation for the educated classes' spurt in sport participation is their greater receptiveness to 'healthism' (Crawford, 1980), a political-cultural ideology that radically individualizes causes of health disparities and equates physical fitness with moral qualities of self-control and personal responsibility. The growing healthism thesis, which current analysts often link to neoliberalization, is supported by research on smoking showing a similarly timed upper middle class move away from smoking, and research finding that non-smoking is positively associated with consuming high culture, evidence that "healthy" lifestyles are part of high status culture (Pampel, 2006). It is further supported by research finding a cultural trend towards more rigorous (gendered) standards of fitness and the fit body (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009). We might even posit healthism reflected in a shift in the exemplary upper class sport, from golf to cycling (with some ultimate Frisbee!) among high tech elites (cite). Thus, healthism would help explain the 1970s spurt and continued emphasis on fitness and strenuous sports as part of a larger cultural change that includes abstinence from tobacco, moderating alcohol consumption (ratcheting down alcohol content from hard liquor to wine to craft beer), and healthy eating, although we still need to explain the social and cultural roots of healthism (or omnivorism) and why the spurt was driven by the culturally dominant classes.

If the partial democratization of culture highlighted by omnivore theory and the rise of healthism help explain the growth of sport as cultural capital in the U.S., Lamont's (1992) emphasis on stronger moral boundaries around 'self-actualization' in the U.S. may help pull together these explanations. A growing emphasis on self-actualization among the upper middle classes, which combines elements of deeply rooted utilitarian and expressive individualisms (Bellah et al 1986), perhaps as part of broader neoliberalization processes, helps explain the U.S.-France differences, weaker class boundaries highlighted by omnivore theory, and the appeal of healthism. Self-actualization connects to the individualistic core of healthism through dominant cultural themes of personal growth and self-realization in the 1970s and especially personal responsibility in the 1980s and 1990s as neoliberal culture crystallized.

There is considerable evidence supporting Lamont's self-actualization thesis applied to sport. We already saw the role sports play in narrating applicants' for elite positions stories of drive and self-actualization, female college students who incorporate fitness regimens in their self-actualizing/aspirational pathway of 'inherited achievement,' and Fletcher's report of adventure athletes who understand their sports as built on self-discipline and self-actualization (Rivera, 2016; Armstrong and Hamilton, 2014; Fletcher, 2008). Waring and Waring (2009) studied "city professionals" who equate physical fitness, a healthy body, expanding one's physical limits, and playing sports with self-actualizing values of self-motivation, "structured life," competitiveness, competence, and "style." Reflecting their masculinist version of self-actualization, golf was not popular among this group, focusing instead on "'physical' activities that appeared to have a more pronounced impact on the body" (Waring and Waring, 2009:358). Maguire's analysis of fitness literature shows that its central messages reinforce an obligation to make "productive use of one's time" and "improve one's body and self," beliefs that fit squarely in a theme of self-actualization (Maguire, 2008).

The self-actualization thesis also fits Brint and Proctor's (2011) summary of survey evidence on U.S. professional-managerial class lifestyles. They conclude that one of the main recent changes is that working at physical fitness has become a "high status moral imperative" associated with self-discipline and self-actualization. They also found less evidence of aesthetic distancing than Bourdieu reported for France, supporting Lamont's finding of national differences between France and the U.S. Finally, the intensification of parental support for organized children's sports to instill self-discipline and teamwork, which also took off in the 1960s and 1970s (Messner, 2009), reflects the dominant classes' shift from 'natural growth' to 'concerted cultivation' parenting styles (Lareau, 2012; see also Friedman, 2013). Concerted cultivation is the schemes of self-actualization applied to childrearing.

The influence of healthism and its ties to self-actualization are central to official campaigns to fight obesity, which have grown substantially in the U.S. over the last 30 years. Growing income inequality has likely contributed to rising obesity levels and poorer health among the poor and working classes in the U.S. and elsewhere, suggesting the need for structural responses to the "crisis" (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). However, media and governmental authorities generally frame fatness in terms of personal responsibility and *moral* failures (especially poor diet and lack of physical activity), often linking these qualities to lower class status (Saguy, 2013). The moral revulsion towards obesity, and its association with the lower classes, reinforces punitive attitudes towards the poor, who allegedly lack self-control, justifying

tightening the penal net on the poor (Wacquant, 2009). Class boundaries and tensions around healthy, energetic, and “full” living (self-actualization) are illustrated by conflicts with family members experienced by upwardly mobile professionals in the U.S. Curl et al. (2018) found that exercise and healthier eating habits increase among the upwardly mobile professionals. As they change many feel revulsion towards their working class family members’ habits and bodies, and in some instances poor diet and exercise become serious “flashpoints” of conflict with their family members.

Conclusion

In summary, there is considerable evidence that adult sport participation is implicated in class/status cultural boundaries in advanced capitalist societies, yet there is much work to do. To advance this work, we should more fully engage Bourdieu’s theory and methods, learn from his critics, and connect more to relevant research outside our field. Bourdieu’s conceptions of field (1988) and structural causality (1977), and his focus on divisions within the dominant classes are important contributions currently underutilized by sport analysts. Lamont’s comparative work on symbolic class and race boundaries is exemplary, and her findings on moral boundaries/self-actualization is a major amendment to Bourdieu’s theory that appears to be particularly applicable to sport studies. Omnivore theory’s thesis that elite strategies of distinction transformed in the 1960s and 1970s is a valuable insight, although Bourdieu’s theory may be better positioned to explain this change than omnivore theory. Above, I have pointed to one possible synthesis of Bourdieu, Lamont, and omnivore theory focusing more on moral (self-actualization) and less on aesthetic distinctions as a guide for future research. More work is needed on the relationship between sport and other high cultural practices. Veenstra’s (2010) finding, while limited by the small number of sporting practices measured, is particularly intriguing because it indicates that sport may play a central role in cultural divisions within the dominant classes. Finally, cross-national comparisons of how sport is implicated in class/status divisions are much needed, but they are hampered by problems with operationalizing social class for young adults and errors in estimating social class effects when multiple indicators of class are entered simultaneously without measuring their collective effects.

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