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Introduction

The re-emergence of the body in the social science literature over the past two decades has contributed to the recognition of physical education and sport as practices through which a wide range of implicit yet deep and lasting learning takes place. This work has highlighted the role that the body plays in the construction of gender, the embodiment of culture and class and the reproduction of social inequality (Bordo, 1989; Delamont, 1998; Hargraves, 1986; Light & Kirk, 2001, Shilling, 1991; Theberge, 1987, 1991). It also illuminates the ways in which bodies are shaped by relations of power and how they are implicated in the legitimisation of social inequality. The importance of such hidden learning that takes place through engagement in school-based physical activity was identified over a decade ago by researchers in the physical activity field such as Kirk (1992), and Shilling (1991). More recently researchers such as Armour (1999) have called for more attention to be paid to the social dimensions of the body in the physical education field.

Despite growing interest in the body in social analyses of school-based sport and physical education (for example see, Armour, 1999; Delamont, 1998; Light & Kirk, 2000, Vertinski, 1997) there continues to be a marked absence of research that actually focuses on the corporeality of bodies through examination of physical practice. There has been relatively little specific attention paid to the relationships between institutionalised regimes of physical activity in educational settings and young people’s lived experiences of class, culture and gender. Given the explicit focus of school-based physical education and sport on the physical this constitutes a surprising omission in the literature. There is a need for more studies on physical education that recognise the corporeality of the body and, as Shilling (1991) suggests, the conceptual tools of Bourdieu offer an ideal means through which this research might be conducted. Bourdieu is rare among mainstream sociologists in that he has a central concern with the body and his conceptual tools offer a powerful means of investigating the social dimensions of sport and physical education.

This paper draws on some of my own research conducted over the past five years to illustrate how Bourdieu’s key analytic concepts might be applied to the analysis of the relationships between the body, culture, class and gender in school sport and physical education. An outline and discussion of Bourdieu’s analytic concepts is preceded by a brief description of the research.

The Research: Method, the Sites and the Researchers

The research referred to here comprised studies of high school rugby in an Australian and a Japanese school and a study on high school soccer in an Australian school. The studies on rugby were conducted at a Brisbane high school in 1997 and a Tokyo high school in 1997/1998. I conducted the research and have considerable experience as both a player and a coach. The Brisbane school is referred to here under the pseudonym of BIS (The Brisbane School). It is a prominent, elite independent high school competing in the Greater...
Public Schools rugby competition. It serves the wealthier sections of Brisbane society that Connell (1977) describes as the ruling class and has traditionally been charged with the responsibility developing leadership qualities in the sons of the privileged sections of society. It had a long history as a ‘masculinizing institution’ (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler & Dowssett, 1982) in which rugby has, for well over a century, formed a key practice for reproducing a class specific form of hegemonic masculinity (Light & Kirk, 2000) and maintaining social and economic advantage for the ruling classes (Light & Kirk, 2001).

The Japanese school is referred to here under the pseudonym of ‘Tokyo School’ and it too is an academically elite school serving the wealthier sections of Japanese society. Whereas BIS is typical of Australian schools where rugby has historically been valued as an educational practice, Tokyo School is atypical. Most of the ‘powerhouse’ rugby schools are academically low-level schools where sport often provides the only means through which their students can gain access to university education. Tokyo School, however ranked nationally in the top 5% for academic performance yet had won several national championships in rugby. Prior to conducting the research I had spent six years coaching university and high school rugby in Japan and spoke Japanese. I conducted all interviews without the services of an interpreter. I used a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) at both sites and generated data through observations, semi-structured and unstructured, conversational interviews and video-analysis of games.

Focused on the links between culture and learning through soccer the study on soccer was conducted at a government high school in the northern suburbs of Melbourne by myself and a second researcher. The school serves a socially and economically disadvantaged area in Melbourne and with over 100 languages spoken constituted a multi-cultural setting. The study was conducted over an eight-month period and focused on 4 members of the senior soccer team from different ethnic backgrounds. The school was a strong soccer-playing school in which, for many of the senior soccer team, school had little relevance. Soccer formed the central concern of their day-to-day lives and their career aspirations.

Again, a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was adopted and data was generated through observation, semi-structured interview and auto-photography (Ziller & Lewis, 1977) in which the key informants were given cameras and asked to photograph what was meaningful to them in their lives. They were then asked to explain the photographs during subsequent interviews. The second researcher conducted most interviews and observation but all taped interviews were analysed by both researchers.

**Bourdieu’s Contribution to Analyses of Sport**

The contribution that Bourdieu work has made to the social analysis of sport, the sub discipline of sport sociology, and the scope it offers to those inquiring into the social dimensions of sport and physical education have been widely recognised (Clement, 1995; Jarvie & McGuire, 1994; De France, 1995). His sociology has inspired many publications on ‘sport studies’ (Clement, 1995) and Clement (1995) argues that it is the relevance of the bodily dimensions of sport that make his approach attractive. Bourdieu does not offer social theory as much as a sociological method and a set of analytic concepts through which culture and society can be examined and understood. Growing interest in culture within studies on sport such as is evident in the research discussed in this paper make his work on the body’s role in the reproduction of culture particularly pertinent. His work is complex and his writing, translated into English, is often difficult to read, even intractable. Yet it is underpinned by a set of conceptual devices that Waquant (1998) argues gives his approach coherence and continuity. The following section briefly outlines some of the principles underpinning Bourdieu’s work before moving on to examine his key concepts of habitus,
practice, field and capital and discuss how they might be applied to analyses of school-based sport and physical education.

Bourdieu's conception of social action strives to circumvent the dualism which characterises so much of sociological debate. He attempts to dissolve the opposition between subjectivist and objectivist theorising, between micro and macro levels of analysis, the dualism of mind and body or thought and action and between the material and symbolic dimensions of social life. Calhoun (1998) argues that Bourdieu's theory of practice seeks to cross-disciplinary and methodological divides by drawing on intellectual streams that have traditionally seen by sociologists as incompatible. Indeed, he describes one of his primary motivations driving his work as a determination to challenge misleading dichotomies (Calhoun, 1998). How successful he is this endeavour has been questioned by some who see his approach as being deterministic (Lechte, 1997). Bourdieu's conceptual tools are, however, as Jarvie and Maguire (1994) suggest, 'good to think with'. The concept of habitus in particular, offers a means of understanding how corporeal engagement in day to day practice and in the practice of sport and other institutionalised physical activity operate to embody the interacting dynamics of class, gender and culture. It also offers a conceptualisation of human existence that strives to avoid the restrictive Cartesian dualism of mind and body as separate entities. This was a central concern in the research that I conducted on Japanese rugby. World views and conceptions of human existence vary significantly between Western and Asian cultural settings. Despite evidence of growing dissatisfaction with the limits of objectivism in writing within the social sciences the dominant, post Enlightenment, Western conception of human existence views mind and body as separate entities. Asian views, however are distinctly different and display a more holistic conception of existence through the notion of a ‘human spirit’. This can present a problem for research on Asian sport or physical education and Bourdieu’s concept of habitus offers a means of circumventing this problem. In my study of Japanese rugby the young men in the study often referred to a notion of seishin (human spirit), seishin ryoku (spiritual power) and a range of associated concepts such as gaman (restraint, self-control, endurance, tolerance). These are concepts that are subjectively understood and learnt through the body. They are very difficult to translate into English. Employing Bourdieu’s concept of the habitus not only allows for analysis of data generated in Asian settings but also facilitates comparative studies that involve Western and Asian sites. It also provides a means through which research on the social and educational significance of sport and physical education can challenge the dominant view of the mind as separate from, and elevated above, the body. It allows for analyses of physical activity that recognise the essential interaction of mind and body in all forms of human movement.

Bourdieu's vision of society is fundamentally agonistic. He sees the social world as a site of competition and struggle in which “contention is the ubiquitous feature of collective life”(Wacquant, 1998, p.218). He is, however, primarily concerned with people’s quest for recognition and dignity rather than for self-interest. Although often interpreted differently, his theorising is not based on social action in which individuals consciously adopt strategies to accumulate resources and power but on the individual's quest for dignity and identity, qualities that only society can provide. This is most clearly evident in one of his most significant books for sociologists, Distinction (1984). As Wacquant (1998) contends it is by having a name, a place and a position in society or in a group that the individual can escape the ‘absurdity of existence’. This implies that existence in society entails differences, hierarchy and a quest for distinction and recognition. In the study on high school soccer conducted in a Melbourne school in 2001 some key informants’ engagement in soccer emerged as the primary means through which they could find meaning in their lives. As Gardner,(1993) suggests, schools tend to value the more academic dimensions of schooling over other achievement or ability such as that in the ‘bodily-kinaesthetic’ domain (Gardner et al., 1990). Some of the young men in the study came from families with little financial
resources, brought with them little of the cultural capital valued in schools and experienced little success in the classroom. They had however developed physical capital in the form of playing ability and embodied knowledge in soccer. From a very young age these boys had embodied the game and developed a ‘practical mastery’ of their cultural and physical environment. Unlike the school in which their particular form of physical capital had little value, their ability and worth was highly valued in their world outside school. It was valued by their families, their friends, their local and ethnic communities and by all involved in their soccer clubs. Through corporeal engagement in soccer they were able to construct an identity and find a sense of dignity.

Bourdieu sees Human action as being deeply situated in social and cultural contexts yet he avoids reducing it to either one and Calhoun (1998) contends that he strives to produce theory that makes sense of the stability of social organisation without succumbing to functionalism. This allows Bourdieu to focus on both interpersonal relationships and on systemic patterns of social organisation. Through this he shows how dominant social structures are constituted through the day to day actions and practices of people as they strive to realise their personal goals such as the young men in a soccer club or the young men playing GPS rugby in an elite independent high school in Brisbane. Individual action is deeply tied into the reproduction of social structure and the maintenance and reproduction of unequal social relations and this is evident on Bourdieu’s work on the French education system (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). On the other hand, he conceives of structure as being dependent upon agency and views them as being mutually constituted through practice.

While the majority of mainstream sociologists pay little attention to the significance of sport as a social activity or as cultural practice Bourdieu shows a particular interest in it within his general theorising and has written several papers specifically dealing with sport (1978, 1980, 1988). He recognises embodiment as critical to the sociology of sport (1993) and offers an analytic approach guided by a theory of culture and social order centred on the body. For Bourdieu embodied culture, as the product of collective human action shapes and constrains social existence. In pursuit of their own goals social actors, engage in social practices which contribute to the maintenance of existing culture and reproduce it as a collective pattern of preferences and tastes. In doing so they reproduce existing relationships of power and inequality in a struggle for resources during which cultural meaning is contested and culture is constantly changing yet works to favour dominant interests.

Bourdieu conceives of the body as the point where culture and social structures are manifested and produced. Sporting practice is, at once, enabling yet constraining and constitutes a social practice through which particular culture and class is embodied. He sees sport training as a bodily practice in which the performer strives to reach a state where complex movements and responses become second nature. At this point these movements are embedded in the body beyond the reach of the conscious mind in a process through which the logic of the field in which the individual trains and plays comes to saturate the body. Bourdieu sees sport as a class specific practice, as with the practices of eating or the consumption of goods, in which choice is socially structured. This ‘taste’ is seen as both reflecting and reproducing dominant culture and it is through his key conceptual tools of habitus, field, practice and capital that he seeks to capture the dynamic processes through which culture is embodied and reproduced.

**The Key Analytic Concepts of Bourdieu**

Bourdieu's key analytical concepts of practice, habitus, field and capital allow for the simultaneous examination of both individual human conduct and the structure of society. They and are briefly discussed in the following section with reference to their application in recently conducted research on sport in schools.
Habitus

Habitus is perhaps the key concept through which Bourdieu strives to avoid the oppositional relationship between structure and agency. The term habitus is difficult to define concisely and its vagueness is intentional: "Habitus is in cahoots with the fuzzy and the vague.....it follows a practical logic, that of the fuzzy, or of the more or less, which defines the ordinary relation to the world" (Bourdieu, 1987, cited Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 22). Bourdieu strives to avoid establishing demarcations between the unconscious and the conscious, between the body and the discursive and attempts to capture the mastery that humans acquire of their social world through their immersion in it (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). He sees the relationship between the individual and his/her social world as mutual possession, "the body is in the social world but the social world is in the body" (Bourdieu, 1982, cited Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 20). Calhoun (1998) contends that habitus basically refers to the embodied sensibility that makes possible structured action and improvisation. This is what allows musicians to 'jam' together and what enables elite sportsmen and women to develop a 'feel' for the game. Successful play in sport requires more that just skills or knowledge, it requires what Bourdieu (1977) calls a practical sense of the game. It requires the experience and knowledge embedded in the "socially informed body" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 124). People perceive of their physical environment in different ways that are shaped by their habitus. The cognitive and evaluative structures that organise perception of the physical context of games, and of life, are socially produced. This has serious implications for conceptions of learning in and through sport and sport-based physical education. Physical action in games is dependent upon forms of decision-making that are based on perception yet, as the work of Bourdieu indicates, this is not just a case of 'processing information'. What is perceived is socially structured. People develop particular tastes, preferences and a practical sense of their environment. This can includes a sense of beauty, a sense of responsibility, a sense of business, and a sense of morality. It also includes a tactical sense that is central to successful performance in sport or games. The notion of perception as a being socially constructed has significant implications for research in physical education on learning in games and sport. This is particularly important in the application of constructivist learning theory to movement as in the Teaching Games for Understanding instructional model and the way that it strives to account for the complexity and the socially and culturally situated nature of learning in the physical domain.

The habitus is constituted by the dispositions, inclinations and schemes of perception and appreciation with which the individual interprets social situations. It is a global description of a person's social action and the different ways in which the individual engages in social life. It is a social vision of the world, of the relationships between individuals and of the universe of bonds and shared beliefs (Defrance, 1995). These dispositions and inclinations can be usefully perceived as 'taste' which is inculcated through participation in social practice in particular social environments over time. It can be seen as the product of the individual's life history of social experiences where each habitus is unique but those who have moved through similar social contexts develop a similar habitus. Habitus is thus the embodied social history of the individual, a durable set of socially constructed predispositions which structure social action. They shape the ways in which he or she deals with both familiar and novel or new social situations. In what appears to be a rejection of criticism by those who see habitus as being deterministic Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) respond by explaining that:

Habitus is not the fate that some people read into it. Being the product of history, it is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It's durable but not eternal (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 133).
Habitus, rather than determining social action tends to structure it through the embodied dispositions and inclinations embedded in the habitus over the individual's life. It is constructed over long periods of time and, while not 'eternal' is not easily changed. Success in schooling is largely dependent upon the habitus that children bring to school (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Success in formal schooling is highly influenced by the cultural capital that children bring to school. ‘Lurch’ was one of the strongest players in the BIS 1st XV and highly regarded for his playing ability by his peers. Unlike his peers however, the habitus that Lurch brought to BIS was not in tune with the collective habitus of the school. His father was relatively uneducated, yet was a successful entrepreneur who had sent his son to BIS to ‘straighten him out’. He had the financial capital but little of the cultural capital to pass on to his son. Despite his success on the rugby field Lurch performed poorly in year twelve and picked up little of the academic or embodied cultural capital that such schools typically develop in their students. In 1999 the others were all at university. Upon graduation they would likely move into areas where the status of membership in a GPS 1st XV and the language, manners, gestures and other embodied cultural capital developed while at the school would be valued. In such contexts it could also be converted into financial capital through the access it could provide to employment and business contacts. Lurch, however, was working in his father’s distribution company where his status as a member of the firsts and his friendships with the other boys was unlikely to be valued or convertible into financial capital.

Through the organised manipulation of the body that characterises the practice of sport such as rugby in GPS school the social world within which the sports player labours and practices comes to be embedded deep in the habitus. This is, however, dependent upon the habitus that players bring with them and for Lurch, his five years at BIS was unlikely to provide him with the social advantages that it would for the other young men in the BIS 1st XV (Light & Kirk, 2001)

**Practice**

For Bourdieu the day-to-day activities that people take part in are produced by an interaction of agency and social structure and it is through participation in these social practices that culture is embodied and reproduced. The dispositions that constitute the habitus are acquired through social practice and although they may differ from individual to individual variation is limited by the particular social positions occupied in social 'fields'. Practice mediates between habitus and social fields and it is through practice that social structures are embedded in the habitus. Those who occupy the same field share similar habituses and reproduce the culture of their shared social fields through practice. The social practices which bodily reproduce culture are not, however, objectively determined. Nor are they exclusively the product of free will. They are produced by the interaction of the social context and the social action of agency. Neither are they random nor completely organised as they tend to form patterns and sequences across time.

From the level of agency and the social actor's participation practices involve conscious, intended action and unconscious, unintended action. Within the social practice of sport or game play, the expert player develops a certain 'feel' for the game which enables him/her to respond and act unconsciously. This is what Bourdieu refers to as embodied learning through which trained actions are not the result of logical reasoning but occur through processes which take part outside conscious control. Performance in sport, games and daily social practices occurs largely at subconscious levels through which cultural dispositions are expressed and reproduced. Movements, actions and other uses of the body in day to day life and in sport are initially conscious but, as they become smoother, more natural and efficient through embodiment they become embedded in the body as 'second nature' and are not the
result of conscious understanding. Bourdieu contends that it is not only a sense of the game that is embodied through sport training regimes. He suggests that through such regulated management of the body, within particular social and cultural contexts the logic of the world within which the player labours is also embedded in the habitus. As Jarvie and MacGuire (1994) contend, this has very serious implications for the practice of physical education. It encourages critical scrutiny of the practices that constitute children's and young people's experiences of school sport and physical education. The range and depth of social and cultural learning that takes place through such physical activity is implicit yet can be profoundly significant.

Habitus develops through processes of internalisation and the embodiment of dispositions and tastes specific to particular social fields through engagement in social practice. It is also through the body’s practical engagement in practice that habitus, functioning beyond the reach of conscious control and will, materialises as particular taste and sense. Habitus embeds class specific culture into every aspect of the day to day uses of the body from ways of sitting, eating and gesturing to ways of walking, running and using the body in sport. Through this embodiment of culture social relationships are expressed, confirmed and reinforced. Habitus is both constructed through and manifested in, the shapes of bodies, gestures, deportment and everyday uses of the body, no matter how small.

Bourdieu's work suggests that through engagement in sport culture and class are embedded in the habitus. The central importance of bodily practice for the reproduction of dominant culture emerged during the study of rugby in an Australian and a Japanese high school. Rugby is played by a universal set of rules and, despite its widespread practice across divergent cultural settings, is largely guided by a common ethos. There were however, significant differences in its practice and the cultural meanings attached to it at the Brisbane and the Tokyo schools and this highlighted the central role that physical practice plays in the reproduction of culture and culture-specific forms of masculinity. In both schools winning was extremely important yet the regimes of training adopted and perceptions of the educational value of rugby differed significantly. At both schools the seasons were long and the training was demanding but the boys were also expected to succeed academically. Training at both schools was shaped by culture and acted to embody particular cultural characteristics. The training at the Tokyo school was undertaken daily for most of the year and was characterised by repetitious training exercises performed over long periods of time with little variation. It typically required perseverance, commitment, group unity, physical endurance and the ability to endure discomfort. It reflected a belief in the need to learn specific patterns and emphasised effort over intellect. These are all characteristics that are highly valued in Japanese society and are also values that underpin education in Japan (Light, 1999).

Training in the Brisbane school was performed three times a week and was also physically demanding. It was, however, more varied and more focused on preparing strategies to take advantage of the next opposition’s weakness or negate its strength. It also tended to emphasise individual responsibility and reward individual performance. At the Japanese school the training schedule was almost wholly the responsibility of the senior players who enjoyed remarkable autonomy yet felt the pressure of group expectation to conform and to avoid any chance of letting the team down. As in all areas of Japanese social life the sense of intra-group surveillance was constant and powerful.

Training regimes were shaped by culture at both schools and, in turn, acted to both express, confirm and embody that culture through practice. As Giulianotti (1999) suggests, ways of playing games, aesthetics and tactics offer a rich means of social analysis. Analysis of the different approaches to play, the processes through which they had developed over time and the ways in which particular critical incidents shaped them constituted very valuable data in the study. As Bourdieu (1977) argues, while what people say may intentionally or
unintentionally not reflect their true feelings practice is the manifestation of habitus. Analysis of training and the ways that games were played offered deep insight into the ways in which rugby operated to produce and reproduce class and culture at both sites. It also highlighted the ways in which such physical practice acted to internalise culture and class specific dispositions, inclinations and ways of viewing the world.

Field

Bourdieu defines social field as a partially autonomous social arena within which struggle and contestation over resources takes place. The relative power that determines positions of dominance and subordination and locates individuals and groups within fields is determined by the distribution and accumulation of capital in the form of cultural, social, or economic resources. This distribution of capital is not fixed and is sensitive to the effects of struggle between agents which leads to fields being constituted by structured yet fluid systems of social positions determined by the possession of resources. As an inherent feature of social fields, struggle and competition for resources are the products of agency where social actors seek to secure positions in the pursuit of their interests and act upon the nature of the field. It is important to note that the value of various forms of capital is dependent upon not only its type and volume but the field within which it is converted. The cultural capital of a PhD, while valuable in academic circles will likely be considerably less valued by rugby league players in a working class neighbourhood. While Lurch’s physical capital in the form of playing ability was valued at BIS his embodied cultural capital was less valued. Once he left school and returned to work in his father’s business in one of Brisbane’s poorer suburbs the institutional cultural capital attached to having attained a GPS school would also be of little value to him. Multiple fields overlap and are interrelated to make up the larger society or social space. Over the time span of an individual's life he/ she may pass through sequences or series of different fields which he/she has occupied and struggled in for accumulation of capital with varying degrees of success. For Martin, a member of the senior soccer team at a Melbourne high school his physical capital was not valued by the school but was highly valued in the soccer community. His ability as a player was valued by the teacher at the school who promoted soccer but not by the school in any official way. Outside the school his ability not only earned him status, identity and self-esteem but also provided him with the possibility of a financially promising career. Not surprisingly Martin rarely attended school and left in year eleven to accept an offer from a wealthy Italian soccer club.

Capital

Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1979) work on reproduction in education has made a considerable impact on educational research and particularly on the sociology of education. This has seen widespread use of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital in research on education and schooling. His conception of capital is far broader than that of Marx. Capital is something that is owned, such as real estate, a car or money in the bank yet it can also be something that is embodied. The amount of capital that can be accumulated by an individual makes a significant contribution to determining the range of available choices. Accumulated capital determines an individual’s ‘distance from necessity’, his or her distance from material want. Bourdieu uses the term capital to include that existing in both material and symbolic forms, the accumulation of which determines location in social space.

Conceptualised by Bourdieu in social, cultural or economic forms capital can be accumulated and converted from symbolic forms to more powerful, material, economic forms. The institutional cultural capital contained in a university degree can be converted into financial capital through the particular type of work to which it provides access. The social capital accumulated through the building of social connections made at an elite independent school, a rugby club or an exclusive golf club may also be converted into financial capital.
through the access that it provides to business exchanges and the possibility of more rewarding employment. Primarily concerned with the reproduction of culture, in the broad anthropological sense, Bourdieu's analytical framework is focused on cultural capital which he conceives as existing in three forms. Institutional forms exist as formal credentials such as university degrees and school diplomas. Objectified forms of capital may take the form of cultural goods such as books, instruments or art works. Embodied cultural capital exists in the form of long lasting dispositions of the mind and body and is likely of greatest interest to researchers in the physical education field.

Shilling (1993) suggests that the idea of physical capital is easily grasped by thinking of the ways in which sportsmen and women convert physical ability into income or the way that models, or even prostitutes, use their bodies for material gain. While these are explicit examples of physical capital, cultural capital is also embodied in the everyday use of the body, the messages that everyday actions communicate and the ways in which uses of the body can provide social advantage or disadvantage. The cultural capital contained in a university degree can be converted into economic capital through the particular type of work to which it provides access. The social capital accumulated through the building of social connections made at an exclusive golf club may also be converted into economic capital through the access that it provides to business exchanges and better employment opportunity.

**Physical capital**

The term, physical capital, is used to refer to cultural capital that is embodied through social practice and any form of physical attribute such as athletic skill, beauty, deportment or physical strength which can be converted into other forms of capital. The shape, size, use and adornment of the body carry particular meanings just as ways of walking, sitting, gesturing and taking part in social life are saturated with social and cultural meaning. In particular social settings, these constitute a valuable form of capital that can be converted into more powerful forms such as the economic capital of wages. Shilling (1991) suggests a broader concept of physical capital than Bourdieu does. Shilling suggests that the idea of physical capital is easily grasped by thinking of the ways in which sportsmen and women convert physical ability into income or the way that models, or even prostitutes, use their bodies for material gain (Shilling, 1993). While these are indeed explicit examples of physical capital, less explicit cultural capital is embodied in through the everyday use of the body. Everyday actions communicate important social and cultural meaning to both enable and restrain social action and access to resources. Sport training and physical education practices can play an important role in these processes but this is dependent upon the habitus that students bring to classes, the overlapping practices that they are engaged in and the social contexts within which they take part in social practice.

The sociology of education literature clearly identifies how deeply implicated schools are in the reproduction on social inequality (Bernstein, 1975; Connell, 1977, Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). It shows how the schools of the privileged operate to provide cultural and social capital that advantages the dominant classes and maintains their advantage. As a sporting practice embedded with a particular set of social meaning rugby has historically formed an important element in the education of the sons of the privileged and the reproduction of social advantage (Light & Kirk, in press). Physical capital, in the form of playing ability, can be converted to financial capital through career in professional sport but, despite the growth of professional rugby since 1995 the opportunities are limited. Even for those who are able to carve out successful careers in sport their post playing life is still problematic and this is an problem that most national sporting bodies are now attempting to address. This form of physical capital is temporary and susceptible to injury. Despite his coach’s doubts of his ability to play at the top level Lurch had aspired to a career as a professional rugby player.
At the beginning of the season in 1999 he suffered a serious knee injury that ended his season and threatened his career aspirations.

Unlike Lurch, Martin, a member of the school soccer team in a Melbourne high school, had a chance of establishing a financially rewarding professional soccer career. He spent little time at school and was unlikely to achieve good academic results at the end of year 12 but had been identified by talent scouts from a wealthy Italian soccer club. He had been flown to Italy during his holidays, played for several months at the end of year 10 and left school in September 2001 to accept an offer to play in Italy. The school was in a low socio-economic area with high unemployment levels and, unlike the young men in the 1st XV in Brisbane, Martin would accumulate little cultural capital that could be converted into financial capital. He had, however, developed a high level of playing ability outside the school and this represented a potentially valuable form of physical capital for a young man with few other chances of accessing financial resources. Martin's success in soccer, allowed him to dream. It allowed him to develop a form of physical capital that would likely be convertible to financial capital and provide him with an identity, self-esteem and financial security that school could not.

**Habitus and the Analysis of Embodied Gender**

The work of Mauss (1973), Douglas (1982) and Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990) suggests that the body exists in both nature and culture simultaneously. Bourdieu, in particular, argues that not only is culture imprinted on the body but that it is the central means through which culture is produced and reproduced. The shape, size and deportment of bodies, the ways they are positioned in relation to each other and their occupation of space all communicate powerful meaning. Bourdieu (1977, 1984) contends that such bodily discourse operates implicitly at subconscious levels to mark the bearer with cultural and social meaning that is constantly and unconsciously communicated. As Bourdieu notes, "The principles embodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness and, hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit." (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 94).

Bourdieu’s work suggests that, not only are peoples’ bodies inscribed with culture, but that the body’s engagement in social and cultural practice also profoundly shapes the individual’s entire disposition and set of tastes that structure behaviour, social action and access to resources. Although the links between habitus, practice and gender are evident in some of Bourdieu’s work (Bourdieu, 1990) he pays little specific attention to gender. I would suggest, however, that Bourdieu’s concept of habitus offers a very a powerful means of understanding how corporeality and gender are interdependent. Accepting that habitus and social structures are mutually constituted through corporeal practice allows us to envisage how important the experience of participation in sport or school-based physical education might be for the construction of gender in both young men and women. If gender is theorised as a structure, as Connell (1995) suggests that it should be, then its embodied forms can be seen to, not only communicate meaning, but also to structure the individual’s social action and access to social, cultural and economic resources. Habitus can thus be usefully seen as the embodied social history of the individual, as the cumulative somatic product of the individual’s corporeal engagement in social and cultural practice over the duration of his/her life.

Bourdieu tends to focus on cultural capital in its embodied forms such as that which is embodied as various forms of taste, deportment, ways of moving and eating and attitudes to one’s own body. Extended into the analysis of gender this implies that particular forms of gender are embedded in the habitus through specific bodily practices that are both culture and class specific. The potential for Bourdieu’s work to inform research on gender has been duly recognised by feminist researchers such as Laberge (1995) and McCall (1992) who
suggests that this potential might best be realised through the integration of gender into the concept of embodied cultural capital. Through this gender can be seen as a form of capital that is embodied over the life time of the individual. When gender is viewed in this way it highlights the pivotal role part that sport and physical education can play in the reproduction of unequal gender relations.

The concept of habitus was central to the analysis of rugby’s role in the embodiment and reproduction of hegemonic masculinity at BIS. It enabled an understanding of how the formation of the boys’ masculinity was intermeshed with the class and culture specific context within which they studied and played rugby over their five years at the school. It facilitated analysis of how the overlapping contexts of the school, the rugby community and the values embedded in the practice of rugby in Australia, their family environment and the communities that they lived in combined to shape their habitus. Examination of the discourse surrounding the practice of rugby and the specific physical practices constituting it helped construct an understanding of how their habitus was shaped by these factors. In appropriating the concept of habitus to analyse the construction gender it became central to understanding how a culture and class-specific form of masculinity was embodied over their five years of playing rugby at the school. It also highlighted how a hegemonic form of masculinity was reproduced over generations of boys at the school and the pivotal role that rugby played in this process (Light & Kirk, 2000).

Conclusion

Armour (1999) suggests that by drawing on social theory to highlight embodiment in education and in physical education researchers in the field can usefully highlight the significance of physical education in educational processes and enhance its status in schools. As Armour and others (see for example, Evans, Penney & Davies, 1996) have suggested, physical education faces an ‘intractable’ problem of status as a form of education in schools. Paul (1996) has also noted that the subject suffers due its focus on the physical within an education system that has a narrow conception of education that privileges intellectual achievement. It also fails to recognise the embodied dimensions of learning. Kirk (1997) argues that in conditions of high modernity social interaction is intimately linked to body management and suggests that physical education forms an essential element in the whole education of children and young people. Identification of sport as a site of social struggle and contestation centred on the body (Bourdieu, 1978; Hargreaves, 1986) highlights the need for further research on the body in school sport and physical education and the scope that Bourdieu’s analytic framework offers in this area has been noted by several researchers in the sport and physical education field (Armour, 1999; DeFrance, 1995; Harvey and Sparkes, 1991; Shilling, 1991).

DeFrance (1995) suggests that the relevance of Bourdieu’s sociological approach to those working in the sociology of sport and physical education lies its potential to link such research to larger, more general sociological problems. This, he argues, facilitates the theoretical construction of sport as an object yet allows the sociology of sport come closer to the sociology of culture, politics and education. This suggests that the work of Bourdieu offers researchers in the physical activity field the opportunity to place studies of physical education and sport in schools with the larger social, economic and cultural contexts that shape its practice and the bodies of those engaged in it. As Apple (1979) and Kirk (1999) argue, meaningful analyses of physical education need to account for the ways in which it is situated within larger social contexts. The practice of physical education and sport is intimately related to other social phenomena and Kirk (1999) suggests that physical culture such as physical education and sport must be recognised as social practices focused on the body shaped by institutional and social contexts. The principles underpinning Bourdieu’s sociology and his key conceptual tools provide researchers with a means through which they
can place students’ experiences of physical education within broader social, cultural and institutional contexts. In doing so it also offers researchers an opportunity to address physical education’s low status in schools and the narrow focus of schools on the intellectual dimensions of education. As Armour argues, it offers a means of organising a disparate subject around the central theme of embodiment.

References


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