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## Bourdieu's Theories And Sports Participation

There are numerous studies that support Bourdieu's structural, class-based theories as they pertain to sports participation. Many support the conclusion that sporting participation is stratified along socio-economic and demographic lines. Bourdieu (1978) asserts the importance of the upper class origins of sport that he saw manifestly present in both British and French sport during his time. Collins (2004, 2014) outlines the strong exclusionary effect that poverty and a lack of economic resources has for sports participation, highlighting the persistence of class based difference in this sports engagement. Gruneau (1975, 1999) explains how the social class histories of Canadian sports specifically entrench class-based sporting inequalities. In accordance with Bourdieu's assertions that habitus is structured by socialised capital possession, some studies find that personal exercise acts as a social marker of cultural capital possession (Shilling, 1993; Stempel, 2005; Wilson, 2002). Cultural homologues, and their underpinnings in a Bourdieusian habitus that "is the basis from which life-styles are generated" (Bourdieu, 1978: 833) is the starting point here in an analysis of Canadian sporting preferences.

In accordance with Bourdieu's assertions that habitus is structured by socialised capital possession, some studies find that personal exercise acts as a social marker of cultural capital possession (Shilling, 1993; Wilson, 2002; Stempel, 2005). Wilson (2002) performed one of the most influential studies regarding cultural capital and sports engagement, positing a 'paradox' of social class and sports involvement. This paradox was that while those with higher in both economic and cultural capital were more likely to be involved in sports generally, those with high levels of cultural capital were unlikely to participate in what he termed 'prole' sports, so called because they have become associated with the lower and working classes (Wilson, 2002: 5). Wilson argues that 'class-based differences in economic capital enable upper class involvement in expensive sports, leaving 'prole' sports largely relegated to the lower classes (Wilson, 2012: 6). This is consistent with Bourdieu's assertions of cultural capital and how it manifests through objectified cultural consumption. Wilson also asserts that because those with higher capital possession were more likely to participate in most sports, this is also not inconsistent with Peterson's omnivore thesis (see next section). This being so, the most classic omnivore, as Peterson conceived of it, would not just consume a variety of non-prole sports but would also consume these so called prole, or lowbrow sports, along with the variety of non-prole sports.

Another important work on the cultural consumption of sport is Stempel (2005). Using a Bourdieusian theoretical framework (while also testing the omnivore and 'prole' theses), Stempel used a large scale survey of US adults regarding their sports participation, a much larger and well developed sample than previously existed in academic analyses of class and sports participation. In support of Bourdieu's theories, Stempel (2005) finds that:

'The dominant classes appear to use strenuous aerobic sports, moderate levels of weight-training, and competitive sports that restrain violence and direct physical domination to draw boundaries between themselves and the middle and lower classes... Thus, dominant class adults use participation in sports to draw boundaries by strenuously working on their bodies to produce disciplined, high performing and achieving selves. Engaging in strenuous sports is a practical, embodied way to maintain distance from the classes who are lazy 'couch potatoes' that 'let

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themselves go'. (Stempel 2005: 427-428)

This then, is the primary form of distinction that Stempel identifies. Also, secondarily testing the omnivore and prole theses, Stempel finds that those in the dominant classes play a variety of sports, including many prole sports (Stempel, 2005: 428). Therefore, he asserts that this is evidence also for the omnivore thesis being a relevant theory of sports consumption amongst adults in the United States (Stempel, 2005: 429). This is a finding that more closely aligns with Peterson's original arguments of his omnivore thesis, suggesting that indeed omnivorousness is found in sports participation in the United States. This is not necessarily a repudiation of Wilson, however, as Wilson was also using attendance at sporting events as well as participation in sports to come to his conclusion.

Other studies also suggest that those of higher social classes both participate more in sport and more often attend sporting events (Coakley, 1994; Eitzen and Sage, 1991; Erickson, 1996; Gruneau, 1999; Mehus, 2005; Moens and Scheerder, 2004; Thrane, 2001; White and Wilson, 1999; Wilson, 2002; Hartmann-Tews, 2006). Direct sports participation, however, forms the majority of historical scholarly work on class and sport, which is the subject of substantially more studies than any other form of sports consumption (Thrane, 2001). This continues to be true and is so even as sporting viewership, as an activity that is more widely engaged in, is arguably a better representation of an individual's cultural profile (Kahma, 2010; Warde, 2006). This research makes a similar argument for the importance of sport. I argue that the following of professional sport, as something both widely engaged in and culturally pervasive, may be just as important as sports participation, and is of yet an under-researched mode of engagement with sport.

Since Bourdieu, there has been scholarly momentum that suggests that Bourdieu's theories wane in significance as time passes and/or are context specific. The idea of a 'cultural omnivore' arises out of the US and introduces a cultural consumption profile that bridges highbrow and lowbrow culture (Peterson, 1992; Peterson and Simkus, 1992; Peterson and Kerns, 1996; Peterson 1997). Peterson theorised that Americans of high status are more likely than ever to engage in low-status activities (Peterson and Kern 1996: 900). This type of inter-status consumption would be anathema within a Bourdieusian analysis of distinction. Bourdieusian conceptions of classed consumption posited that these high-status individuals would shun these lower forms of culture because they were beneath them. Peterson and Kern (1996: 900) assert that the empirical patterns of cross-status consumption represent a shift "from snobbish exclusion to omnivorous appropriation." Peterson highlights that this omnivorousness is not indiscriminate consumption void of discernment, but rather it is the "openness to appreciate everything" (Peterson and Kern 1996: 904). In terms of how omnivores consume, a type of "intellectualized appreciation" is identified and omnivorous consumption has as a catalyst the accumulation of the necessary tools for such consumption, regardless of genre (Peterson and Kern 1996: 904).

Peterson identifies structural changes in access to more elite forms of art and value changes as primary factors leading to the rise of the omnivore. That is to say, elite forms are more accessible to those of lower class status than they were previously and the desire to not be a "snob", as a decidedly negative moniker in that context, moved those in the upper classes to broaden their cultural diet. With respect to music, Peterson (1992) also theorises the "univore" as only liking one type of lowbrow musical form. These univores were found to be associated with the lowest occupational groups while those who engaged in omnivorous patterns of musical

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consumption were from higher occupational classifications (Peterson, 1992). While there are indeed some studies that have assessed omnivorousness with regard to sport (e.g.; Widdop et al., 2014; Widdop, and Cutts, 2013; Wilson, 2002), the existence and nature of the omnivore within the realm of sporting preferences is still very much under-researched (Widdop et al, 2014). Widdop and Cutts (2013), however, use 2005 data from England and find a sports participation omnivore that is indeed drawn from the higher strata of that society, affirming the omnivore thesis in that instance.

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