60 - SOME OF PIERRE BOURDIEU'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SPORTS RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

A theory can only be considered suitable as it provides the researcher with the necessary tools to face the issues to be investigated. However, a paradoxical situation is sometimes created, in which the researcher either for identifying with the theme or for being influenced by a certain kind of "intellectual trend", ends up by defining his theoretical framework before knowing exactly what the problem is, which in certain cases have made certain theories real 'panaceas' for determined areas of knowledge.

Such a situation has been occurring with the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who since the end of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s (a time at which scientific events in the several areas of knowledge were consolidated) became one of the most popular references in the research of sports social history.

Great part of the studies in physical education, which use "Bourdieu's reflexive theory" have been following unilateral procedures. This situation can be better seen through the division of the works into two distinct groups: 1) the ones that try to explain the theoretical model proposed by the author but do not carry out a relational analysis with their object of study; 2) the ones that describe their object of study and later on try to fit it into the categories proposed by Bourdieu.

By using these methodological procedures, the researcher runs the risk of being incoherent with the proposal elaborated by this author. One of Bourdieu's first concerns was the necessity to delimit with its objects, which were normally seen through the social context, being analyzed through economical and/or linguistic relations that structured the practices and representations. Provided that the study was not based on an objectivist approach it would be located at the other extreme, where the emphasis on society would be withdrawn and the individual would be the centre of the analysis.

In order to solve this polemic, Bourdieu does not reject the knowledge provided by the objectivism and the subjectivism, but by perceiving the theoretical limitations of such matrixes tries to overcome them and suggests a methodological proposal that he calls the "praxiological knowledge" through which he seeks dialectical articulation between the author and the social structure. As indicated by Ortíz "The theoretical problematic of Bourdieu's writings rests essentially on the mediation between the social agent and the society".

From these propositions, this article aims at pointing out the main aspects that should be observed when one opts for applying Bourdieu's theory to the studies involving sports analysis. To achieve this objective, we opted for analyzing the texts in which he deals specifically with issues related to the sports field.

PLACING THE SPORT IN THE FIELD

Pierre Bourdieu was a researcher who applied his theoretical model to very different social fields, approaching the haute couture field, the school and university field, the economic field, the political field, the linguistic field, the sports field... Having the perception of power relations that permeate these fields and the strategies used for the reproduction and/or transformation of the field structure as a motivation. When approaching the sports field, it can be said that Bourdieu's starting question is: What is understood as sport?

This apparently simple question, can be approached in several different ways, however, it is usually answered through a superficial view of this phenomenon, through which a sports spectacle performed by selected athletes, specially trained who compete in legal conditions of equality is demonstrated, dramatizing a ritual of strong representation of their teams. This would be the 'concrete' part of the modern sport, which everybody sees and knows it exists, it is not necessary to be an expert trained who compete in legal conditions of equality is demonstrated, dramatizing a ritual of strong representation of their teams.

The author highlights the fact that there is an occult side of this phenomenon which is marked by the relation of powers, which many times are determined by other social fields and that are fundamental to define the hierarchy of sports within the sports field, that is, a particular sports modality cannot be thought of as something isolated to the field it belongs to "...it is necessary to think the space of sports practice as a system in which each element has its distinctive value".

This author's contribution is the contribution of a sociologist, who is not a specialist in sports, and that is concerned with noticing how the relation between the different practices and the consumption within the sports field occurs. Probably, for this reason he had the advantage of being able to see his object of analysis from a certain distance, which enables him to see and throw some light on some aspects that the specialists of this area believed to have already solved.

Among the basic aspects to be addressed, Bourdieu indicates the necessity of using a general method before going deeper into the reality of certain sports modality, therefore a starting point would be found to explain how this modality got to this position within the field, that is, a short description of the space being taken into consideration must be built. Such a framework...
accomplishing it without taking into consideration the dispositions in relation to the sport, that, being themselves a dimension of classes… one cannot comprehend the logic through which the agents adopt one or another sports practice, one or another way of within the field in the following way:

Bordieu demonstrates the existing relation current state of offer (which contributes to produce the necessity, presenting them with the affective possibility of their as position to which they correspond, and that in a given moment are defined in the particularity of their specifications in the well as in the representation, through the modal participants, in relation to a position in the social space.

One must be careful not to interpret such collocations as the necessity of always going back to the genesis of the studied sport, once what is necessary to understand is: 1) which social conditions favored the creation of a sports field in a determined moment? 2) how did people start to like a determined sport more than the other, either as a practice or a spectacle? 3) which was the process of constitution of a board of specialists who live directly or indirectly off the sport? 4) When did a system of agents and institutions start to work as a field of competition in which agents with specific interests linked to the positions they occupy compete?

In order to answer these questions it is important to realize that the sports field is not closed in itself, once it is inserted in a universe of practices of consumption structured and constituted as a system. This makes one think about the modern sport as an element present in the field of mass communication means, which presents objective relations between the agents and the practitioners or consumers. This analysis must be done through the relation between the space and a determined sports practice and the space of the social position, which hampers the analysis of a determined sport if it is not related with the context that involves it and with the position it occupies within its field.

This is a very significant passage, which appears again and again in the works that use the Bourdieusian theory to analyze the modern sport. The majority of these works end up by indicating the relevance of the autonomy of the sports history, but they do not present the necessary concern and the analysis of factor that led to the transformation of the former structure. Based on a passage taken from the text "How is it possible to be sporty", the worries rely on showing that sports present a relative autonomy:

... the history of sports is a relatively autonomous history that even being articulated with the great events of political and economic history, has its own time, its own evolution laws, its own crisis, to sum up, its specific chronology.

The relative autonomy refers to other social fields, mainly the hegemonic fields (economy and politics), which permeate the very different fields, entering and influencing the structure of the specific field. This happens mainly if the field is not consolidated, which diminishes its power of refraction of the external events on which it is still dependent. In this sense, the author alerts to the fact that one of the prime tasks of the social history of sports would be to realize in which moment one can speak about sport, which does not mean a functionalist position of determining a date, but more than that, of comprehending the process that led to the transformation of ritual/feast games into what is known as modern sport.

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The space of offer is characterized by the sports, understood as programmes of sports practices initially characterized by their intrinsic/technical properties (that is, particularly, the possibilities and mainly the impossibilities that they offer to the expression of different body dispositions). Later on in the study this might be noticed through their relational and structural properties, exactly as they get defined in relation to the set of other programmes of sports practices simultaneously offered, but that only happens at a certain moment, receiving the properties of appropriation that its dominant condition grants it, in reality as well as in the representation, through the modal participants, in relation to a position in the social space.

In the space of search, the sports dispositions can be found (habitus), which are related and structurally characterized as position to which they correspond, and that in a given moment are defined in the particularity of their specifications in the current state of offer (which contributes to produce the necessity, presenting them with the affective possibility of their accomplishment) and also for the accomplishment of the offer in the previous state. Bordieu demonstrates the existing relation within the field in the following way:

... each newcomer must count on a determined state of sports consumption practices and their distribution among the classes… one cannot comprehend the logic through which the agents adopt one or another sports practice, one or another way of accomplishing it without taking into consideration the dispositions in relation to the sport, that, being themselves a dimension of

particular relation with the body, join the unit of disposition systems, the habitus, which is in the origin of lifestyles (it would be easy, for example, to demonstrate the homologies between the relation with the body and the relation with the language characteristics of a certain social class or a fraction of a class).

These indications expressed by the author might help the analysis of the several different practices of consumption, it is only necessary to take into consideration that one sport modality in a determined space of time can have totally diverse meanings, be rediscovered or be forgotten, as sports are marked by their generation. Each new generation has a different reading about sport (which usually tries to destroy the previous generation reading). More specifically, the dominant meaning, that is, the social meaning that is assigned by the dominant social users (numerically and socially) can change, that is why the same sport can be seen from different points of view, as indicated by Bourdieu:

The field of sports practices is a place of fights that, among other things dispute the monopoly of imposition and legitimate definition of the sports practice and the legitimate function of the sports activity, amateur against professional, sports practice against sports spectacle, elite distinctive sport and popular mass sport, etc; and this field is also inserted in the field of battles for the definition of the legitimate body and legitimate use of the body... (1983:142)

The fight for the monopoly of imposition and the legitimate definition of the use of the body by a particular class is expressed by its habitus. This creates different forms of comprehending the body relations, moment at which the views of physical education professionals X physicians X sports coaches confront, that is the use of the body can be seen in different ways and present different discourses by individual that have the same symbolic capital. The habitus is fundamental to define the way the individual treats his own body, he might be concerned with health, with shape, or many times having a body with which she/he can show off. To Bourdieu, in the current social hierarchy the hygiene functions are subordinated to the aesthetic ones.

By transporting this analysis to the sports, the author indicates that those practices that need application of physical qualities, body competences and that depend on the time and physical energy available in the practitioner, usually tend to keep the people from the dominant class apart, once those see them as “vulgar activities”, which highlight sacrifice and victory at any cost, thus becoming the antithesis of the bourgeois ideology. This permits to deduce that the probability of practicing certain sports depends initially on the economic capital, then on the cultural capital and the free time...

This author presents elements that show that the sport has gone through a process of transformation, through which it left schools, went to the clubs, popular spaces and later on became a project of the agents who started to administrate it based on the market laws, trying to maximize profits and minimize risks. In this way, saying that sport in a social activity and that the sports field is a social representation of the reality, is not news and only makes dense when the research manages to show its specificities, once the sports field is a social universe as the others, in which one can verify the presence of capital, relations of strength/power, fights to keep or transform such relations, strategies of maintenance or subversion, of interests, etc., however, it presents its own logic of working, which gives it a format which is specific and irreducible to any other.

The history of the field must be perceived through the fight between the holders and the aspirants. Those who had their time fight to persist while the newcomers want to take their place. The sports field has its own rules which must be described and analyzed, however, the categories of the analysis only emerge from the observation of normative rules which are officially adopted there. By carrying out this dialogical analysis one can avoid observing only the ideal values that the sport should reach (objectivity, functionality, originality, universalism...) and on the other hand, one cannot conform to observing the object only superficially (spectacle, pursuing victory, control...). This situation is explicit in the analysis of the Olympic Games presented by Bourdieu:

In order to comprehend this process of symbolic transmutation it would be necessary to analyze the social construction of the Olympic spectacle, the competitions, and all manifestations they are surrounded by, such as the opening and closing parades. It would be necessary to analyze the production of the television image of this spectacle, which while supporting the advertising spots, becomes a commercial product that obeys the logic of market and, therefore must be conceived in such a way to reach and catch the amplest audience for the longest possible: besides being offered at peak audience times in economically dominant countries, obeying the preference of different national audiences for this or that sport and even their national or nationalist expectations, by a thoughtful selection of sports and competitions capable of offering success to their nationals and fulfillment to their nationalism. (1997:124)

It is necessary to be careful in order not to transform in "general law" the needed conditions of a group or of any practice which are inherent to them in a given moment. These must be analyzed based on their position, in a determined social space and in a given situation of offer of goods and possible practices. This has to do, therefore, with each moment of each society, with a set of social positions, linked by a relation of homology to a set of activities that suffered external pressure to adequate to the requirements of a social field, and that even transforming their structure did not lose their purity of form, once there is the working logic of a field.

It is expected that with this kind of reflection the Bourdieusian model can be used with more rigor, at least regarding one of his major concerns that is not being referred to simply as a theorist, once his theory only makes sense when in direct relation with the practice, as it is only this way that one will be able to reveal the conditions of transformations in the sports structure.

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ALGUMAS CONTRIBUIÇÕES DE PIERRE BOURDIEU PARA O ESTUDO DO ESPORTE

RESUMO

Buscou-se neste texto, realizar uma leitura hermética da teoria reflexiva formulada por Pierre Bourdieu. Objetivando...
destacar os principais cuidados que devem ser tomados pelos pesquisadores do esporte que optam trabalhar com este autor. Inicialmente foram recuperados os seus conceitos mais utilizados nos trabalhos da área da educação física e dos esportes, com o objetivo de mostrar que a aplicação destes conceitos deve estar diretamente relacionada com uma situação prática. Conclui-se apontando a necessidade da construção de um quadro teórico-geral, que permita apontar a hierarquia dos esportes, tarefa esta que só é possível se o pesquisador compreender a lógica de funcionamento deste espaço, for capaz de pensá-lo relacionalmente com conceitos como capital, habitus e campo.

Termos chaves: Pierre Bourdieu, Campo Esportivo, Sociedade

SOME OF PIERRE BOURDIEU’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SPORTS RESEARCH

ABSTRACT

This text is an attempt to carry out a hermetic reading of the reflexive theory formulated by Pierre Bourdieu, aiming at highlighting the main aspects which should concern sports researchers who opted to work with this author. Firstly, his concepts which have been most used in works on physical education and sports were recovered, with the aim of showing that the use of such concepts must be directly related to a practical situation. The conclusion points out the necessity of constructing a general theoretical framework that points to the sports hierarchy. Such a task is only possible if the researcher understands the working logic of this space and is able to think it related to concepts such as capital, habitus and field.

Key words: Pierre Bourdieu, Sports Field, Society.

ALGUNAS CONTRIBUCIONES DE PIERRE BOURDIEU EL LA INVESTIGACIÓN DE LOS DEPORTES

RESUMEN

Este texto son una tentativa de realizar una lectura hermética de la teoría reflexiva formulada por Pierre Bourdieu, teniendo como objetivo destacando los aspectos principales que deben referirse a los investigadores de los deportes que optaron trabajar con este autor. En primer lugar, sus conceptos que se han utilizado más en trabajos sobre la educación física y los deportes fueron recuperados, con la puntería de demostrar que el uso de tales conceptos se debe relacionar directamente con una situación práctica. La conclusión precisa la necesidad de construir un marco teórico general esos puntos a la jerarquía de los deportes. Tal tarea es solamente posible si el investigador entiende la lógica de trabajo de este espacio y puede pensar que se relacionó con los conceptos tales como capital, habitus y campo.

Palabras claves: Pierre Bourdieu, Campo De los Deportes, Sociedad.

LES CONTRIBUTIONS DE PIERRE BOURDIEU POUR L’ÉTUDE DU SPORT

RÉSUMÉ

On a cherché dans ce test une lecture hermétique de la théorie réfléchissante formulée par Pierre Bourdieu. En objectivant se placer en évidence les principaux soins qui doivent être pris par les chercheurs du sport qui optent travailler avec cet auteur. D’abord ont été récupérés ses concepts plus utilisés dans l’éducation physique et des sports, sur l’objectif de montrer que l’application des ces concepts doit être directement relationès avec une situation pratique. On conclure en pointant la nécessité de la construction d’un cadre théorique-général, qui permet d’indiquer l’hierarchie des sports, cette tâche seulement est possible si le chercheur comprendre la logique du fonctionnement de cet espace, ce sera capable de le penser en relation avec les concepts comme le capital, habitus et champ.

MOTS CLÉS : Pierre Bourdieu, Champ sportif, Société.