

For a reflexive sociology of sports: theoretical and methodological considerations based on Pierre Bourdieu's work

*Juliano de Souza**

*Wanderley Marchi Júnior***

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to present and discuss relevant aspects of reflexivity in sports by Pierre Bourdieu. To this end, we focused on three points of theoretical and methodological pillars rigorously investigated by the author, namely: (1) epistemological reflexivity; (2) the role of historical knowledge in the sociological analyses of sports; (3) the direction of sports consumption in the sense of social venue consolidation associated with the logic of distinction.

Keywords: Sociology. Sports. Pierre Bourdieu.

1 INTRODUCTION

In countless opportunities in his work, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu refers to the fact that he applies sociology against his own determinations, arguments and social limits in order to provide and systemize the elements comprised in the development of the sociological analysis of his work. (BOURDIEU, 1990a; BOURDIEU, 2005).

What the author beforehand suggests is obviously not restricted to questioning his role as a social scientist or researcher. During his academic life he formulated and systemized a sophisticated sociology theory, an approach that

* Master's degree in Physical Education. Research Center for Sports, Recreation and Society (CEPELS). Physical Education Department of the Federal University of Paraná. Curitiba, PR, Brazil. Latin American Association of Sociocultural Sports Studies (ALESDE). E-mail: julianoedf@yahoo.com.br

** Doctor's degree in Physical Education. Research Center for Sports, Recreation and Society (CEPELS). Physical Education Department of the Federal University of Paraná. Curitiba, PR, Brazil. Latin American Association of Sociocultural Sports Studies (ALESDE). E-mail: marchijr@ufpr.br

cannot be perceived as concluded but that could hold a status close to such intent.

More precisely, when Bourdieu questions himself and his formulations via self-social analysis he is highlighting that it is important to head towards a hands-on sociology. Bourdieu called this endeavor reflexive sociology,¹ which more specifically is exercising personal conversions (body and soul media) into sociology.

According to Bourdieu, being a professional sociologist requires incorporating a new intellectual *habitus*, the popularity of which resides in incorporating the principles that comprise and guide his theory of sociology. To this end, a new sociological *habitus*, as conceived by Bourdieu, would enable the scientist to construct a research subject matter according to the construction principles of the subject matter itself.

This is the reason Bourdieu (1983a) does not perceive the society of knowledge as just another field of expertise, but rather as one of the first requirements to building a veritable scientific sociology. Therefore, Bourdieu's knowledge of sociology is simultaneously associated with and transcends Durkheim's sociological tradition, the objective of which is to break away from any type of spontaneity and ideology. Otherwise, Bourdieu aims at setting in place the perspective of apprehending the social venue where the sociologist does not renounce his or her epistemological privilege of explaining social facts, but neither waives the value of experiences lived by the agents in an empirically limited universe. (BOURDIEU; CHAMBOREDON; PASSERON, 1999).²

1 Further to guiding the construction of the sociological thinking and theory of Pierre Bourdieu, reflexive sociology was also the scope of analysis, notably in the following works: BOURDIEU, P. Introduction to areflexive sociology. In: O poder simbólico. Lisboa: Difel, 1989, p. 18-56; BOURDIEU, P.; WACQUANT, L. Una invitación a la sociología reflexiva. 2. ed. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores Argentina, 2008. (Published for the first time and originally under the titles: BOURDIEU, P.; WACQUANT, L. An invitation to reflexive sociology. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

2 A more accurate analysis of the Durkheimian legacy on the construction of Pierre Bourdieu's sociology was made by: WACQUANT, L. Durkheim & Bourdieu: the common base and its fissures, Novos Estudos, CEBRAP, n. 48, p. 29-38 Jul 1997.

This study addresses some of the aspects of reflexivity invested in creating a sociological analysis model of the fields addressed by Pierre Bourdieu, more specifically in the form acquired and explicated for building the theory for the field of sports. To this end, three pillars of theory and methodologies were focused on, which are extensively analyzed by Bourdieu in his articles studying the analysis of the sports phenomenon, namely: (1) epistemological reflexivity; (2) the role of historic knowledge of the analyses of the sociology of sports; and (3) the orientation of sports consumption in the sense of consolidating a social venue associated with the logic of distinction.

2 PIERRE BOURDIEU'S SOCIOLOGY OF SPORTS

The contributions made by Pierre Bourdieu to develop a scientific field, or research and studies focused on the sociology of sports are well known, fundamental and exceed merely two or three articles addressing specifically this subject, or published in his magazine *Actes de La Recherche en Sciences Sociales* discussing sports-related practices and consumption. On the contrary, the strength of his approach is not unique only along this itinerary, but because of the originality of the method provided by the author to deal with sports in the light of reflexivity.³

Vis-a-vis this inferred situation and in compliance with the assumptions advocated by French sociologist Loïc Wacquant (2008), it was possible to identify at least two perspectives for the appropriation of the social theory by

3 Other studies have also addressed the concern in recovering the theoretical-methodological contributions made by Bourdieu to strengthen the analysis of different social subject matters and fields. In the sociology of health, for example, there are the insertions made by researcher Miguel Ângelo Montagner (2006;2008), who recovers the Bourdieusian theory of sociology to health, providing some notes and guidelines on social distinction, lifestyles and the social constructs of the body. In relation to the sociology of education, it is worthy of note the work of Afrânio Mendes Catani (2002), of Cláudio Marques Martins Nogueira & Maria Alice Nogueira (2002), the doctoral thesis of Cristina Carta Cardoso de Medeiros (2007), and recently the article published in partnership with Wanderley Marchi Júnior (2009).

Pierre Bourdieu to studysports. The first timely manner involves using and expanding his concepts as tools to perceive and analyze a given empiric reality. The other is more comprehensive and observes academic loyalty preserved by the sociological method that he created.

According to Wacquant (2008), this second means of assimilation potentially enables social scientists (which includes those dedicated to analyzing this sports phenomenon) to follow the path of reflexivity as recommended by Bourdieu. Using the investigation method developed by him presupposes that the scientist already detains some knowledge of the basic apprehension tools of the social world (*habitus*, field, capital), at the same time he or she already incorporated references to deeply understand a given venue, whereby they must raise questions about the genesis of knowledge previously produced in this same venue. (BOURDIEU; CHAMBOREDON; PASSERON, 1999).

Consequently, the historic retrieval of the production of sociology knowledge associated with the sports venue preserves its specific traits, and for this reason should not be misconstrued as the stage that is part of every academic work that consists of presenting a literary review, a reference assessment, or more comprehensively, the mapping of the state of the art of the subject matter to be studied.

Ultimately, this inventory of the production of knowledge associated with a given scientific field is introduced to the Bourdieusian sociology with the purpose of backing an important exercise in reflexivity that the sociologist named “theory of the theory effect”. According to the author,

[...] social science should encompass in the theory of the social world a theory of the theory effect, which while helping to impose a somewhat authorized perception of the social world, helps to build the reality of this world. (BOURDIEU, 1998a, p. 82).

In other words, knowing the historic background, at least in general terms, of the sociological and epistemological production reserved to the field of sports is the first condition to be able to understand under different perspectives the very problems that are part of this venue. Since academic provisions legitimized by a body of experts that study sports often condition scientists to perceive the tensions ensuing from the field of sports with a somewhat “trained” outlook.

In order to break away from this persuasion imposed by the scientific production milieu, Bourdieu advocates that sociologists should create the social history of the issues, of subject matters and thinking tools to implement a movement that ruptures the preconceptions with “good scientific sense”. In sum, as advocated by Bourdieu:

In order to avoid being the subject matter of the issues that are addressed as the subject matter, it is necessary to create the social history of the ‘*emergency*’ of these issues, their progressive constitution, i.e. collective work— frequently carried out under competition and fighting — which was necessary to provide knowledge e to disclose these issues as admissible, publishable, public and official[...]. (BOURDIEU, 1989, p. 37).

Hence, before taking a sociological approach to the field of sports, it is necessary to assess the sociological production for this field⁴, or in equivalent terms, to carry out a social work on the creation of tools to build the very social reality academically legitimized as the subject matter of the study. This is what it means to face the theory of the social world and the theory of knowledge as parts of the same stage of the sociological work.

⁴ Some of the first works carried out in Brazil in order to systemize the production of knowledge in the field of sociology of sports. A study worthy of note was published by FERREIRA, A. L. P. **State of art of the sociology do sports in Brazil**: bibliographic production mapping from 1997 to 2007. Dissertation (Master's degree in Sociology Federal University of Paraná, Curitiba, 2009.

At this point of our study, it should be noted that although Bourdieu dedicated himself to study sports he was not a sports sociologists like many believe. Instead, he recovered sports (of the many subject matters considered trivial within the scope of social sciences) as a subject matter worthy of being scientifically addressed in the universe of sociological production. According to Bourdieu, sports, fashion and journalism – apparently “shallow” and “unworthy” subject matters – usually attract researchers standing on the dominated side of the field, i.e. the side that tries to bring heresy and impose a new definition of legitimate subject matters. It also happens that in terms of these subject matters, the dominant representation tends to be considered inferior, often attracting researchers that are underprepared to handle them, helping the vision and division principles of the field to remain exactly as they are. (BOURDIEU, 1998c, p. 35-38). In other words, this is the equivalent to think that science and the subject matters defined as unique and legitimate are the result of objective disputes between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, between those who wish to preserve the structure and those who want to subvert it.

Substantiated by a combative and provocative vision of relationships that are fostered in the fields of scientific production, Bourdieu’s formula to fight this social hierarchy of the good things to be said and studied in social sciences is exceedingly instigating and incisive:

The pinnacle of art in social sciences is for sure to be able to question very important “theoretical things” on the so-called very precise “empiric” subject matters, frequently smaller in appearance and even somewhat insignificant. (BOURDIEU, 1989, p. 20).

This new *modus operandi*, in turn, which brings to light the discussion of academically established subject matters of studies deemed as less important arise both as a conditions and as the probable effect of Bourdieu’s emersion in the no field of high end fashion, in the field of journalism, in the fields of

artistic production and in the de field of sports that is in this case more incisively in vogue. Bourdieu's first text on sports, which is addressed in the article "Sport and social class" of 1978,⁵ promptly followed by the publication of the chapter "*Habitus* and the venues of lifestyles" as inseparable part of the book "The distinction" in 1979. In sum, in these situations the author readdressed sports as one of the practices capable of socially identifying agents according to their participation. Years later, in 1987, Bourdieu wrote the key text "Program for a sociology of sport" published in the last part of the book "Things said".⁶

When thinking of constituting a field of sports as the *locus* for analysis in the aforementioned texts, Bourdieu uses the principle of homology of the venues for cultural, material and symbolic production, which consequently takes us to the overall economy of the fields as the logic of the work constituted according to the comparative/relational method. Bourdieu is emphatic about these methodological methods:

The analogical reasoning that is based on the rational intuition of homologies (that in itself is based on the knowledge of the invariant laws of the fields) is an amazing tool to construct the subject matter. It enables us to fully submerge in the particularity of the case under study without drowning, as in the case of idiographic empiricism and to carry out the intentions of generalization, which is the science, not via the application of large formal and empty construction, but via their particular way of thinking about the case in hand, which is to think about it truly as such. (BOURDIEU, 1989, p.32-33).

5 For a more accurate analysis see: BOURDIEU, P. Sport and social class, *Social Science Information under Social Sciences*, v. 17, n. 6, p. 819-940, 1978.

6 For clarification purposes, it is important to note that the article "Sports and social class" was published for the second time by Bourdieu in 1980 in his book called "Sociology Issues" under the title "How to be sportive?". The article "Program for the sociology of sports" was published by the sociologist in the second issue of the *Sociology of Sport Journal* of 1988.

In sum, Bourdieu argues that there are universal properties (homologues) regulating the operation of a wide range of fields and first and foremost that when the understanding of a given field is greater, for sure that a reference is constructed, which is conducive to often understanding the reserves and contingencies presented in other fields. Notwithstanding, the care with which Bourdieu polished this type of reasoning is detailed and excessive to the point that the author will not fall into the common trap that lures social scientists, e.g. universalizing a particular case. Furthermore, in order to avoid this type of mistake Bourdieu justifies the nature of the fields as relatively autonomous, which presupposes the effect of specific laws and properties that pertain to each particular universe.

The concept of field was initially created by Bourdieu to address the applicability of the structuralism to French society. However, over time this notion is improved and takes on a broader range of applications, e.g. culture and education. Bourdieu's idea in more precise terms was to grant autonomy to these areas in relation to economy-based explanations. (CHARTIER, 2002).

The field of sports is one of the venues that have their own chronology and relative autonomous structural history in terms of economy and politics. While the social *locus* is limited by the Bourdieusian analysis – the field of sports, in terms of other fields it is also a structured venue where dominant and dominated agents fight for specific capitals at stake, and try to conserve or preserve the structure. Furthermore, this field, similar to other social venues, develops its own *doxa* and *nomos*; in other words, a common sense that attributes logic to the field and a set of invariable laws that regulates the actions of the agents.

In order to develop an approach for a field, e.g. sports, Bourdieu suggests a few methodological steps that should be followed. According to the sociologist, the first step to take would be to assess where this field stands in the face of the

field of power. Then, it is necessary to charter a map of the objective structure of the relationship of the agents or institutions that compete for the legitimate form of authority in the field. Finally, the *habitus* of agents should be assessed, i.e. different systems of dispositions acquired in relation to the field. (BOURDIEU; WACQUANT, 2008).

Hence, in the wake of these considerations, it is possible to affirm that constituting a relative autonomous field of sports occurs when the incidence of sport *habitus* in this venue is taken into account, where according to Bourdieu teachings the structure field of the *habitus* is so evident that the *habitus* is the field. (BOURDIEU, 1998b). Ensuing from this interpretation, *habitus* is first and foremost a socialized and structured body that incorporated “[...] structure sensing from a world or particular sector of this world and/or field, which structures both the perception of this world and the action within this world”. (BOURDIEU, 2007b, p. 144).

To this end, *habitus* plays the role of a program that perceives, classifies and organizes action; a type of strength that maintains and supports a certain social order. For this reason *habitus* presents itself and is distinguishing while “unifying and generating principle of every practice”. As durable systems incorporated by the agents, *habitus* tend to reproduce the objective structure from which they stem. (BOURDIEU, 2003a, p.54).

Based on this relational interpretation and also on the idea of the objectivity of apprehending social factors conserved in the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, it is possible to extract the methodological justification and consideration that the notion of field is to a certain extent “the conceptual stenography of a means of constructing the subject matter it will command or guide, i.e. all the options of the study”. (BOURDIEU, 1989).

More precisely, it is the notion of field that enables the researcher to surround a certain subject matter in order to have it deciphered. To this end however, this researcher should,

“[...] verify if the subject matter at hand is not isolated from a group of relationships from where the essential is extracted from its properties”. (BOURDIEU, 1989, p. 27).

In his work “Program for sports sociology” (1990b), Bourdieu gives a detailed description of each mentioned procedure, thus presenting a very consistent theoretical-methodological scenario to study the structuring of the field of sports. The first aspect suggested by the sociologist pertains to the fact that if the researcher is unable to study the venue where sports is practiced as a whole, he or she should create a sub-venue within this venue, i.e. to limit a subfield in order to develop its pertaining analysis.

Another essential point is to relate this identified subfield to other sub-venues that make up the field of sports, and then to acknowledge where they stand within that structure. Finally, and implementing the dialectic between micro and macro sociological structures, another methodological aspect of unique significance would be to identify social position venues manifest in the subfields and in the field of sports as a whole.

In order to develop this endeavor, Bourdieu acknowledges in advance the field of sports as the conditioning and conditioned venue by the social history of sports. This argumentation is clearly developed throughout the text “How is it possible to be sportive?” (1983b), where the sociologist introduces a series of questions about the origins of the social phenomenon accepted as “modern sports”, and more specifically, about the historic moment when sports and their agents, organisms and sponsoring institutions started to operate as a specific field.

Otherwise, and according to the words of Bourdieu, one of the core subject matters of the sports sociology theory would be to know:

[...] what comprises the game venue and its own logic’ this venue with completely particular social practices that were defined

during its own history and that could be understood only by addressing this very history [...]?” (BOURDIEU, 1983b, p. 138).

Bourdieu’s concern with the history of the field of sports – a venue that is addressed by historic contingencies – should be understood in relation to the trajectory imprinted upon the sociological mindset in the late 1970s. To this end, José Sérgio Leite Lopez in his discussion with French historian Roger Chartier made it a point to emphasize that works by Bourdieu as of 1980 show his greater commitment to history. (CHARTIER, 2002).

On this same occasion, the same Chartier attributed the explicative logic for the growing historic recurrence in Bourdieusian analyses, mainly in relation to the ongoing fine-tuning of concepts such as field or *habitus* under the lens of history. According to Chartier, this fact can be explained by the life story of Pierre Bourdieu, his relationship with history as a subject and his conversations with historians. (CHARTIER, 2002).

As to the way Bourdieu addresses the historic dimension of social sciences as a whole and sociology specifically, some particular instances should be noted. Firstly, he states that historic discontinuity has a clear advantage, i.e. he is not interested in the large processes of bureaucratization, rationalization and modernization, which depending on how the sociological *metier* is perceived “[...] bring many social advantages to their authors and little scientific merit”. (BOURDIEU, 1990a, p. 57).

Secondly, he states that the dimension of the field is a venue constructed in the wake of the structural history of transformations does not represent a linear process guaranteed by rules previously defined or as a product from the agents’ rational calculations. On the contrary, the history of a field changes as agents and institutions become part of the picture; as new interests replace old ones and as other disputed subject

matters become the compass for the network of relationships that attract the attention of players.

However, often Bourdieu's readers are not aware of these assumptions and use the notion of field mechanically, forgetting that it should not be addressed historically, or closer to the Bourdieusian model, establishing a structural comparison between the different periods of its relatively autonomous and not necessarily linear history. Chartier comments on the mindless application of the concept of field as follows:

I believe that working with Bourdieu mechanically applying the category of field would be introducing the idea of a universal category without paying enough attention to discontinuities. And Bourdieu also provides a proposal for discontinuity. It does not pertain to the idea of necessity, consequence or continuity. (CHARTIER, 2002, p. 167).

This statement made by Chartier immediately reinforces that historic continuity seems not to have been the main focus under the Bourdieusian sociologic perspective, but rather, under the assumption proposed by Norbert Elias who is concerned with major European civilization processes, attributing a secondary role to the advent of "points of rupture", although inconsistently reminding that in turn the theory of the process of civilization was not addressed more comprehensively by the author.

A more specific example of the nuances suggested about the work of Elias, the genesis of modern sports, as it is located in the "[...] continuity of the study of the process of civilization, i.e. in direct line with the Elisian theme". (GARRIGOU, 2001, p. 67).

For Elias, the genesis of modern sports is one of the most important pieces of evidence that the process of civilization he described for the Middle Ages was not over. The author endeavors to show this "civilizing drive" of sports through the lens of "sportization", i.e. the growing change

from or even replacement of old and traditional games by modern sports.

Notwithstanding, the line of continuity presented by Elias to explain the genesis of modern sports in favor of the disappearance of folk games presents some fragile points, although in many cases, such as with soccer and boxing, the Eliasian thesis is extremely compatible. Bourdieu gives a better summary of these impressions:

Furthermore, Elias is more sensitive than I in terms of continuity. The historic analysis of long-term trends is always susceptible to hidden critical rupture. Taking as an example the historic investigation program of sports Elias outlines in his well-known "Essay on sports and violence". When delineating the continuous genealogy that started with the Antiquity games and reach the present days Olympic Games, this text notes the danger of masking the fundamental ruptures introduced, among which are other things, via the introduction of learning systems, English colleges and their students i.e., as well as the subsequent constitution of a relatively autonomous "sports venue. There is nothing in common between the rituals of medieval *soule* games and American football. (BOURDIEU; WACQUANT, 2008, p. 129-130).

It is important to note that nowhere in his statement does Bourdieu not consider or reject the Elisian approach to the processual history of sports, as it is academically legitimized as one of the most consistent sociology matrixes used to study the process by which the modern sports first started. However, Bourdieu makes some counterpoints that raise questions about the Eliasian perspective.

Clearly speaking, and even in consistence with the scope of the analysis developed in their research programs, it can be said that Bourdieu briefly occupies the so-called moments of rupture that nearly evade history. Hence his

sensitivity in perceiving that the change from game to sport was not carried out in major elite schools of the bourgeois society.

Furthermore, the author points out that it was from these institutions that sports were disseminated to mass and maintained a close association with the sports associations, where they were given a completely new meaning with the advent of a relatively autonomous universe of sports.

In sum, Bourdieu circumscribes the advent of the field of sports – a structured and structuring venue – as the moment of discontinuity in the history of sports. To this end, when thinking of the origins of modern sports, Bourdieu takes the opposite road compared to Norbert Elias, showing that in the wake of civilization, “sportization”, “cortenação”, there are yet other more subtle and hidden paths, even decisive to the process of development of modern sports.

The last fundamentally important aspect to be recovered from the sociological analysis model of Pierre Bourdieu’s field of sports is structuring an analytic and interpretative scenario that is conducive to duly understanding distribution and orientation of sports consumption and practices in society. To this end, the sociologist systemizes sports goods cultural economy based on the relationship of sports goods offered by agents as practices of consumption on the one hand, and on the other the demand guided by taste and lifestyle changes.

Based on Bourdieusian conceptual assumptions, one can understand the demand for sports as the action of agents when playing volleyball, boxing or playing a tennis match, to mention but a few possibilities. On the other hand, passive sports consumption is shown when agents are watching a soccer match on TV or when they bought a jersey of the team they root for, or yet when children and adolescents start behaving in the manner of stereotypes and standards disseminated by the broadcasting of sport events that incite forms of dressing, talking, eating, and more specifically, choosing social networks and friends.

When thinking of the forms in which sports are practiced and consumed, Bourdieu tries to establish an immediate relationship with social positions. According to the sociologist (1983b, p. 143), as one goes down the tiers of social hierarchy the probability of an agent practicing any sports after adolescence, i.e. as an adult or an elderly person, clearly decreases. On the other hand, in terms of possibly watching or attending events involving the most popular sports, this decreases as the agents move to better walks of life. According to Bourdieu:

Distinctive profits double in terms of distinctive and distincting practices, as “chic” sports, and practices that became “vulgar” due to the dissemination of many sports that used to be practiced by the “elite”, such as soccer [...] is added to opposition that is even stronger between practicing and merely consuming sports events. (BOURDIEU, 1983b, p. 143)

Thus, it is possible to notice the formation of a field of sports substantiated by the dichotomy between sports-practice and sports - event; between elite sports and popular sports. However, other oppositions are also associated with this field, as the following: amateur versus professional; recreations sports versus competition sports; close contact sports and distance contact sports; sports that demand higher intellectual activity and less physical energy versus sports that require greater use of strength and less thinking, and the examples are many.

It is based in these systems of classification and dichotomies that sports provide a unique lifestyle to its consumers and practitioners. In other words, modern sports in the form it is consumed and practiced is perfectly compatible and complacent with the structure logic of social venue organization, i.e. as a field where the legitimate definitions of sports are at stake and form the different uses of the body in sports.

Indeed, it is in this configured social venue where the taste of agents are defined via classifications inherent to the game and that often times show more than “[...] the driver of every human behavior would be to seek distinction” (BOURDIEU, 2007b, p. 22-23), showing that existing in a venue is to differ, to be different, to be classified and at the same time classifying. Hence, it is perfectly understandable that for there to be tastes,

[...] it is necessary for assets to be classified as of “good” or “bad” taste, “unique” or “vulgar”, classified and at the same time classifying, hierarchized and hierarchizing, and for there to be people with a classification system, with tastes that enable them to perceive the difference between that assets convenient to them and those “of their taste”. (BOURDIEU, 1983a, p. 127).

This ability to perceive, appreciate and to make practical choices is the same as having a sense of game – *habitus* – imprinted, tattooed on the body, i.e. incorporated into how the agent feels, deals and fits in the social venue. Hence, taste as a set of practices and proprieties detained by a person or group works as “[...] a practical operator of the transmutation of things into unique and distinctive signals [...]” (BOURDIEU, 2007a, p. 166), enabling the material differences to convert into symbolic differences and vice-versa.

These observations make it possible to see taste as a product of two histories – one objectivized and the other incorporated. Objectivized history because it is directly associated with the exposition of assets and practices in the field of cultural production, i.e. the exteriorization of offer according to the sanctions of an economy that is not necessarily economic, which presents subject matters and classified products and incorporated history because the classification systems are interiorized by the agents, which enables them to choose respect of the limits imposed by the structure and in a non-conscious manner (although conscious

intentions and transitions should not be neglected), among assets and practices available and that precede taste itself.

Sports are one of the classified and classifying practices. Notwithstanding, the products and cultural assets directly or indirectly associated with the sports industry also are; they classify distinctive positions to be anticipated by agents with the required sense of perception and appreciation. This occurs essentially because sports and the associated cultural assets are practices objectively classified and with the potential to become classifying practices, i.e. to become the profit and symbolic expression of status.

Hence, it would not be wrong to say that the different positions occupied by agents in the social venue correspond to lifestyles adjusted to a greater or lesser degree; additionally, “class tastes” are the consequent incorporation of the social venue via the *thedoxic* experience of these agents in a given region of the aforementioned venue⁷.

Hence, the differences that guide tastes define lifestyles, or “life stylization”. Taste, in turn, can be expressed in two complementary forms, i.e. addressing the requirements imposed by the needs of agents and groups, or as a strategy that expects to suppress a distinctive lifestyle becoming to the position they occupy. Two key-concepts successively ensue from these impressions developed by Bourdieu in his book “The distinction” (2007a): distinctive cultural consumption and vulgar cultural consumption.

In the first case, consumption is construed based on the social rarity and distinction that it creates. In the second case, banality and the easy access to the product, goods or practice represent the code of vulgarity invested in the game. Therefore, distinctive consumption presupposes a reasonable accumulation of economic and cultural capital, while vulgar consumption usually lacks the volume of these capitals.

⁷ For a deeper discussion see BOURDIEU, P. Tastes of classes and lifestyles. In: ORTIZ, R. (org.). A sociologia de Pierre Bourdieu. São Paulo: Olhod'Água, 2003b. p.73-111.

By the way, the concept of capital importance and dissemination is crucial to understanding the dynamicity whereby social venues are organized, mainly in terms of the definition of taste and lifestyle. To this end, Bourdieu tries to expand the notion of capital taking it beyond to the explanation that this concept was based on Marxist approaches, showing that in order to understand symbolic changes in different social fields one can use the analogic symbol of economy, as capital is presented as a resource that tends to yield different types of profits to the holder.

Consequently, from this text, there is a wide range of different capitals at play, such as the fields themselves. According to Bourdieu, social venues constituted as fields create specific forms of interest that in turn can be considered of no interest from the viewpoint of the other fields of material and cultural production,. (BOURDIEU, 2007b).

Hence, it would be a mistake to consider the relationship between distinctive and vulgar relationship carried out in a determining and mechanical manner, which would consequently mask the existence of an intermediary position. For Bourdieu, this is not a valid project because distinctive and vulgar consumption exist in intermediary zones where pretentious practices abound, via the disagreement of agents and disputes involving the monopoly of specific capitals. (BOURDIEU, 2007a).

Ultimately, added to this analysis is the fact that capitals with a predominance for strategies of distinction and dispute between agents and structures within the field of sports are the economic, cultural and social capital, exactly in this order (BOURDIEU,1983b). Furthermore, the greater or lesser degree of provision of volume of these capitals potentially define the involvement of agents in certain sports, as well as the access to associated sports products in a dynamics that enables both the conversion of the economic and cultural capital into symbolic capital into symbolic capital, and the

opposite situations, where in a certain manner evidences the dynamicity of the agents in face of building a “taste of class”.

In sum, backed by this theoretical architecture based on the relationship between *habitus*, field and capital, Bourdieu (1983b, 1990b) circumscribes the field of sports as a venue where disputes occur under the legitimate definition of sports *per se* and the legitimate functions of sports related activities, reminding us that such disputes have the purpose of imposing new principles of vision and division in the field. They result in distinctive lifestyles that denote the strategies endeavored by agents as the *locus* of “choices” and “investments”, which differentiate them and reflect the social and objective conditions of their production.

Indeed, it should be reiterated that disputes for classification imply in the creation of a field strength; a field strength that among other factors is transmuted due to the disputes for the legitimacy of the body and how it is used in sports; a field strength, but first and foremost, a field of disputes to transform or conserve this field strength. Hence the potential and propensity of the relationships fostered in the sports milieu to be a means of opposing coaches, players, supporters, retailers and consumers of sports related goods and services, to mention but a few of the agents that drive the social venue.

3 CLOSING CONSIDERATIONS

The intellectual effort of writing this article unfolded in the sense of recovering and additionally systemizing within the scenario of a specific and situated analysis a series of Bourdieusian theoretical-methodological assumptions inherent to the constitution of an actually reflexive sports sociology.

It should be noted hereunder that despite many scholars that study sports ponder that Bourdieu did not structure in the body of his work a homogeneous analysis unit to the point that

it could be called “sports sociology theory”, the sociologist actually founded and inaugurated one of the most consistent theoretical models to make a sociological analysis of the structuring and dissemination of the contemporary sports phenomenon.

This intention, to a certain extent, was fostered and reinforced in the editorial scope of the magazine *Actes de La Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, which under the management of Bourdieu published in some issues, the discussion of sports practices and consumption. It should be noted that already into its second year of publishing, in 1976 there was an issue dedicated to discussing the relationship between, sports, violence and state.

A decade later, sports were again covered by the magazine’s editorial in two issues published in September and November 1989, respectively. In June 1994, issue #103 addressed the theme of soccer. Recently, in September 2009, there was a new insertion of sports as the subject matter of the analysis in the *Actes de La Recherche en Sciences Sociales*. It was published in the magazine’s issue #179 under the theme “*Pratiques martiales et sports de combat*”, reiterating the its commitment to disseminate scientific assets as subject matters that perhaps could be still considered and treated as “minor” under the field of sociology.

Finally, it is mandatory to admit that objectively the sports sociology theory in Pierre Bourdieu cannot be established and much less consolidated by considering it autonomous and independent from the epistemological and methodological model (reflexive sociology) (theory of practice), improved and revisited by the author a throughout his work. Indeed, the compartmentalization would be the equivalent to providing a somewhat unfair vision of the work done by a sociologist who fiercely fought against the reductionism ensuing from a substantialist sociological perception.

Hence, the sports sociology theory can be observed in Pierre Bourdieu as an extension of his reflexive and praxiological investigation method. It also reiterates the importance of not extending or transferring mechanically the conceptual Bourdieusian tools (*habitus*, field, capital) to strengthen sports analysis, which perhaps helps to “reproduce” in the academic universe the idea that his analytical model to interpret the sport phenomenon is not about the sports sociology theory, but rather about a strict scheme of isolated investigation for a set of sociological *habitus* that guide more deeply the construction of his thinking and work.

Furthermore, once again taking on this outlook is perhaps the essence of relational thinking as advocated Bourdieu, objectively applied to the analysis of “unthinkable” categories and beacons of their own sociological thinking; an outlook that sometimes is not developed by the limits of the academic appropriation of his work, but also undeferrably by limits placed on the scientific field of a type of sociology that among other incursions proposes to understand the very plot of the game “played” in scientific fields.

Por uma sociologia reflexiva do esporte: considerações teórico-metodológicas a partir da obra de Pierre Bourdieu

Resumo: No presente artigo, procura-se apresentar e discorrer sobre alguns aspectos de reflexividade pertinentes à teoria do campo esportivo de Pierre Bourdieu. Para essa investida, sentiu-se a necessidade de se concentrar em três pontos de sustentação teórico-metodológicos trabalhados rigorosamente pelo autor, quais sejam: (1) a reflexividade epistemológica; (2) o papel do conhecimento histórico nas análises sociológicas do esporte; (3) a orientação do consumo esportivo no sentido de consolidação de um espaço social associado à lógica da distinção.

Palavras-chave: Sociologia. Esportes. Pierre Bourdieu.

Por una sociología reflexiva del deporte: consideraciones teóricas y metodológicas sobre la base del trabajo de Pierre Bourdieu

Resumen: En presente artículo demanda presentar y discutir algunos aspectos de la reflexividad constituyentes de la teoría

del campo deportivo de Pierre Bourdieu. Por esa intención, sintió la necesidad de centrarse en tres puntos de apoyo teórico y metodológico trabajado estrictamente por el autor, a saber: (1) reflexión epistemológica, (2) el papel del conocimiento histórico en el análisis sociológico del deporte; (3) la orientación del consumo de los deportes con el fin de consolidar un espacio social asociado a la lógica de la distinción.

Palabras clave: Sociología. Deportes. Pierre Bourdieu.

REFERÊNCIAS

BOURDIEU, J. Pratiques martiales et sports de combat. **Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales**, Paris, v. 179, n. 6, p. 04-179, sep. 2009.

BOURDIEU, P. Le sport, l'État et la violence. **Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales**, Paris, v. 2, n. 6, p. 02-89, déc. 1976.

_____. Sport and social class, **Social Science Information sur les Sciences**

Sociales, Paris, v. 17, n. 6, p. 819-940, 1978.

_____. **Questões de sociologia**. Rio de Janeiro: Marco Zero, 1983a.

_____. Como é possível ser esportivo? In: _____. **Questões de sociologia**. Rio de Janeiro: Marco Zero, 1983b, p.136-153.

_____. L'espace des sports-1. **Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales**, Paris, v.79, p. 02-115, sep. 1989.

_____. L'espace des sports-2. **Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales**, Paris, v.80, p. 02-102, nov. 1989.

_____. Introdução a sociologia reflexiva. In: _____. **O poder simbólico**. Lisboa: Difel, 1989. p. 18-56;

_____. **Coisas ditas**. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1990a.

_____. **Programa para uma sociologia do esporte**. In: _____. **Coisas ditas**. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1990b. p. 207-220.

_____. Les enjeux du football. **Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales**, Paris, v. 103, p. 03-11, jui. 1994.

_____. **A economia das trocas linguísticas**. São Paulo: EDUSP, 1998a.

_____. **A economia das trocas simbólicas**. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1998b.

_____. Método científico e hierarquia social dos objetos. In: NOGUEIRA, M. A.; CATANI, A. M. **Escritos da educação**. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1998c. p. 35-38.

_____. Esboço de uma teoria da prática. In: ORTIZ, R, (org.). **A sociologia de Pierre Bourdieu**. São Paulo: Olho d'Água, 2003a. p. 39-72.

_____. Gostos de classe e estilos de vida. In: ORTIZ, R, (org.). **A sociologia de Pierre Bourdieu**. São Paulo: Olho d'Água, 2003b.p. 73-111.

_____. **Esboço de auto-análise**. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2005.

_____. **A distinção: crítica social do julgamento**. São Paulo: Edusp; Porto Alegre: Zouk, 2007a.

_____. **Razões práticas: sobre a teoria da ação**. Campinas,SP: Papirus, 2007b.

BOURDIEU, P.; WACQUANT, L. **An invitation to reflexive sociology**. Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1992.

_____. **Una invitación a la sociología reflexiva**. 2. ed. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores Argentina, 2008.

BOURDIEU, P.; CHAMBOREDON, J-C.; PASSERON, J-C. **A profissão de sociólogo: preliminares epistemológicas**. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1999.

CATANI, A. M. As apropriações da obra de Pierre Bourdieu no campo educacional brasileiro. **Revista Portuguesa de Educação**, Braga, v.15, n. 1, p.5-25, 2002.

CHARTIER, R. Bourdieu e a História: Debate com José Sérgio Leite Lopez. **Topoi**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 3, p. 139-182, mar. 2002.

FERREIRA, A. L. P. **O estado da arte da sociologia do esporte no Brasil: um mapeamento da produção bibliográfica de 1997 a 2007**. Dissertação (Mestrado em Sociologia). Universidade Federal do Paraná, Curitiba, 2009.

GARRIGOU, A. O "grande jogo" da sociedade. In: GARRIGOU, A.; LACROIX, B. (orgs.). **Norbert Elias: a política e a história**. São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 2001. p. 65-88.

MEDEIROS, C. C. C. **A teoria Sociológica de Pierre Bourdieu na produção discente dos programas de Pós-Graduação em Educação no Brasil (1965-2004)**. Tese (Doutorado em Educação). Universidade Federal do Paraná, Curitiba, 2007.

MEDEIROS, C. C. C.; MARCHI JÚNIOR, W. Para uma Sociologia da Educação: considerações a partir da obra de Pierre Bourdieu. In: BRANDÃO, C. F. (Org.). **Intelectuais do Século XX e a Educação no século XXI: o que podemos aprender com eles?** Marília: Poiesis, 2009. p. 99-119.

MONTAGNER, M. A. Pierre Bourdieu, o corpo e a saúde: algumas possibilidades teóricas. **Ciência e Saúde Coletiva**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 11, n. 2, p.515-526, jun. 2006.

_____. Pierre Bourdieu e a saúde: uma sociologia em Actes de la Recherche em Sciences Sociales. **Cadernos de Saúde Pública**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 24, n. 7, p.1588-1598, jul. 2008.

NOGUEIRA, C. M. M.; NOGUEIRA, M. A. A Sociologia da Educação de Pierre Bourdieu: limites e contribuições. **Educação e Sociedade**, Campinas, v. 23, n. 78, p.15-35, abr. 2002.

WACQUANT, L. Durkheim e Bourdieu: a base comum e suas fissuras. **Novos Estudos**, CEBRAP, São Paulo, n. 48, p. 29-38, jul. 1997.

_____. Hacia una praxeología social: la estructura y la lógica de la sociología de Bourdieu. In: BOURDIEU, P.; WACQUANT, L. **Una invitación a la sociología reflexiva**. 2. ed. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores Argentina, 2008. p. 25-90.

Recebido em :03.10.2009

Aprovado em: 23.11.2009