Social Class, Habitus, and Physical Culture

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This topic focuses on the manner in which social class relations, experiences, identities, and bodies are constructed through sport and physical culture.

Put another way, the focus is on the manner in which social class is constructed/performe/d/(re)produced through sport and physical culture.

The class-based nature of sport culture leads to the establishment of very different bodily conventions/expectations for different class groupings.

Theme 1:
Social Class Matters

Whether we realize it or not, most societies are divided up (STRATIFIED) into various groups (SOCIAL CLASSES) according to their access to specific forms of wealth (FINANCE) and influence (POWER).

America would seem to be no different...
Gilbert and Kahl (1990) Model of Class Stratification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Stratum</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capitalist</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Working</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Poor Underclass</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

U.S. Social Class Structure

Source: Gilbert & Kahl Model of the U.S. Class Structure

Social class location—and associated class lifestyles—are an important influence upon, and predictor of, almost every facet of our lives...

LIFE CHANCES

and

LIFE EXPERIENCES

“For our purposes, a social class can be thought of as a group of people whose members are characterized by relative similarities” of:
- wealth
- income
- occupation
- education
- culture and lifestyle
- social network
- spatial location


“People Like Us: Social Class in America”

Which social class grouping do you come from?
Social classes and class differences tend to be reproductive:

SOCIAL CLASSES ARE REPRODUCED IN THE LIVES/LIFESTYLES OF THEIR OFFSPRING, AND THEIR OFFSPRING...

The Cycle of Class Reproduction

EDUCATION

LIFESTYLE (including sport and physical activity)

OCCUPATION

INCOME

Social class groupings are identified with specific LIFESTYLES— are an ASSEMBLAGE or “set of consumption and other living patterns” (Green & Potvin, 2004)—through which members of SOCIAL CLASS GROUPINGS PERFORM/EMBODY their social class membership, and DIFFERENTIATE themselves from other social class/lifestyle groupings.


Wealthy Older Family Mix
The residents of Money & Brains seem to have it all: high incomes, advanced degrees, and sophisticated tastes to match their credentials. Many of these city dwellers are married couples with few children who live in fashionable homes on small, manicured lots.
Social Gradient of Classed Lifestyles

The Social Hierarchy and Classed Lifestyle Cultures

- **Capitalist**
  - Upper Class
  - Middle Class
  - Working Class
- **Cultures of Privilege**
  - (effortless exhibition)
- **Cultures of Promotion**
  - (aspirant elevation)
- **Working Poor**
- **Underclass**
  - (subsistence existence)

A Tale of Two Cities: One “Fat”, One “Fit”

- **YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT**
- See Video Clip 2

Median Family Income by Town

- **Burlington, VT:** $54,000
- **Huntington, WV:** $39,000 (72% of Burlington income)

As evidenced in the Huntington/Burlington comparison:

Generally speaking, lower SES (socioeconomic status) groups display less affluent, less nutritionally rich, less active, and as a result, “less healthy LIFESTYLES” than their higher SES equivalents.

The Obesity Crisis: A Class Crisis?
Social class differences clearly impact upon levels and practices of physical activity and sporting participation...

Higher SES Grouping

Higher Involvement in Organized Sport

Lower SES Grouping

Lower Involvement in Organized Sport

Mortality by Zip Code Average Income

Of total income, poor are around 40% and rich are over 100%

Life Expectancy in Years by Community Statistical Area, Baltimore City, 2000-2009

Estimates are based on the presence of the following:
- Household income
- Estimated life expectancy

A Tale of Two Cities: Life Expectancy

Roland Park: 82.9 years
Hollins Market: 62.5 years

A Tale of Two (Baltimore) Classed Lifestyle Cultures?

1. Lower Classes: The Under-Privileged and Under-Served

In West Baltimore's impoverished Hollins Market neighborhood, where the average life expectancy is about 63 years, residents shared beer and cigarettes on their front steps at midday yesterday, while pedestrians using canes gingerly avoided two dead rats on the street.

2. Middle and Upper Classes: The Privileged and Served

Across town in wealthy Roland Park, where residents live on average to be 83, the scene predictably changed. One grey-haired woman rushed to swimming lessons, while a family rode past on bikes and a man with an iPod jogged nearby.

Sport as Embodied Social Class Hierarchy I

Social class groupings tend to participate in different sporting/physical activities, through which they derive a sense of GROUP DIFFERENTIATION and IDENTITY.

Explaining the Social Class Distribution of Sport

Pierre Bourdieu: French Cultural Sociologist

1960s-1970s France: Pierre Bourdieu’s Sporting Classification

- **Upper Class**: Sailing, ski-ing, golf, tennis, fencing, riding
- **Middle Class**: Walking, jogging, yoga, hiking, climbing
- **Working Class**: Boxing, wrestling, body building, rugby

21st century America: KNES 287’s Sporting Classification

- **Capitalist**: Upper Middle
- **Middle**: Working
- **Working Poor**: Underclass

WHY SHOULD THIS BE THE CASE?

Sport as **Embodied** Social Class Hierarchy II

When the sporting events are the same, social class groupings tend to display different motivations and forms of involvement.

Lower Class Basketball: *Culture of Poverty?*

Middle Class Basketball: *Culture of Promotion?*
Upper Class Basketball: Culture of Privilege?

Theme 3:

Capitals and Social Class Differences in Sport/Physical Activity Participation

CLASS CULTURES and CAPITAL

“material conditions of existence defined by distance from necessity, by the freedoms or facilities stemming from possession of capital”


The interrelationships between capitals are multiple and complex:

ECONOMIC CAPITAL (financial/time resources)
SOCIAL CAPITAL (social status, connections, and networks)
CULTURAL CAPITAL (learned norms and values)
PHYSICAL CAPITAL (embodied form of capitals)

While the INTERPLAY of capital is key for shaping all aspects of CLASS-BASED experience. It is particularly relevant to the CLASS DETERMINANTS of SPORT/PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.

In other words, an individual’s POSSESSION, and ability to CREATE/CONVERT the various forms of CAPITAL plays an important role in DETERMINING THEIR SOCIAL CLASS STATUS, and hence their SPORT/PHYSICAL ACTIVITY-BASED LIFESTYLE.

Economic Capital
(Financial and Time Resources)

“Economic power is first and foremost a power to keep economic necessity at arm’s length”

NECESSITY:

1. The need to engage in WAGE-LABOR RELATIONS to PRODUCE the ECONOMIC CAPITAL required to MAINTAIN the existence of the self/family unit (available time resources)

2. The need to UTILIZE the produced ECONOMIC CAPITAL for the MAINTENANCE of the self/family unit (available financial resources)

Economic capital [EC] can thus be CONVERTED into:

-TIME

-PRODUCTS and SERVICES

The more EC you possess, the more leisure-time physical activity products/services you have access to...

The Issue of NECESSITY

Experience of Necessity    Distance from Necessity

Many middle/upper class people (with more access to EC) possess more CONTROL over important facets of their lives. Many of these are health promoting facets, such as the ability:

• to craft a multi-faceted healthy lifestyle
• to live in a health promoting neighborhood
• to buy healthy and nutritious food
• to pay for medical services and insurance plans
• to purchase sporting/physical activity opportunities, services, and experiences

Economic Barriers to Activity?
(Baltimore median household income: $30,078)

Private Health/Fitness Club Annual Memberships

Bally’s: $300-$420 ($25-$35 per month)
Gold’s Gym: $420 ($35 per month)
Curves: $468 ($39 per month)
Brick Bodies: $480 ($40 per month)
Merritt Athletic Club: $540-$1020 ($45-$85 per month)

Neo-Liberal Swimming Culture I

Welcome to Meadowbrook

Annual Membership Rates: 2015
Individual: $77 per month; $924
Family: $129 per month: $1,548

PRIVATIZED AND MARKET REGULATED PHYSICAL CULTURE PROVISION AND EXPERIENCE
Many working class people (with less access to EC related resources) rely on publically funded local parks and recreation facilities for their physical activity experiences.

Neo-Liberal Swimming Culture II

THE RETRENCHMENT OF PUBLICLY FUNDED PROVISION FOR HEALTH AND RECREATION

The interrelationships between capitals are multiple and complex:

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Social Capital (Social Status, Connections, and Networks)

Social capital combines the quantity and quality of social relationships (e.g., the size, density, and influence of social networks)

Social Capital [Networks] and Physical Culture

The more economic capital you have, the greater the quantity and quality your social capital is likely to be.
Participation in sport and physical activity is greater amongst people with higher levels of SOCIAL CAPITAL.

Similarly, participation in sport and physical activity contributes to greater levels of SOCIAL CAPITAL.

The Sport-Social Capital Interrelationship

Creating Social Capital

“Golf is the perfect work/life balance sport and creates connectiveness in our lives:

- A career tool for breaking the glass ceiling AND the grass ceiling. Get noticed.
- Recreation/Fitness – promotes health and lifestyle balance.
- Family – golf is the game of a lifetime. Spend quality time with family and friends.”

Source: www.camibehrer.com/for_women_only.asp

Cultural Capital

(Learned Norms and Values)

Dominant Sport/Physical Activity Norm/Value:

The neo-liberal ideology of HEALTHISM:

1. The fit and healthy are morally, physically, and socially responsible and virtuous
2. The unfit and unhealthy are morally, physically, and socially irresponsible and degenerate

Social capital, and its associated networks and relationships, is closely tied to the learning of norms and values, hence the acquisition/expression of cultural capital.

HEALTHISM (Individualist Argument)

“a belief that health [and fitness] can be achieved unproblematically through individual effort and discipline, directed mainly at regulating the size and shape of the body”


SOCIAL DETERMINISM (Structural Argument)

“The context of people’s lives determine their health, and so blaming individuals for having poor health or crediting them for good health is inappropriate. Individuals are unlikely to be able to directly control many of the determinants of health”.


Today’s physically active and healthy individual is the embodiment of the dominant ideology: HEALTHISM.

Her/his BODY is thus a marker of individual responsibility, and moral fortitude, reinforcing the individualistic ideology of neo-liberalism.
The “Heroes and Villains” of Healthism

Morally Responsible and Socially Virtuous Bodies

Morally Irresponsible and Socially Degenerate Bodies

According to Adam Drewnowski, director of the Center for Public Health Nutrition at the University of Washington:

"Our remedies are very middle class...They tell you, Seek a healthy diet and exercise. Well, if you're working two jobs and living in a trailer, you're in no mood to get home and make a salad."


Physical Capital
(Embodied Form of Capitals)

Physical capital: “refers to the development of bodies in ways which are recognized as possessing value in social fields.” (Shilling, 2012, p. 135)


The interplay of economic social, and cultural capital, leads to the creation of bodies from which physical capital is derived, and can subsequently be used.

The Mainstream “Social Field”

“the good body is indicative of the subjection of self to regimes of discipline...to practice healthy behaviour is to improve one’s ‘physical capital’ (Bourdieu, 1984) and therefore enhance one’s social and moral worth.” (Hughes, 2000, p. 21)

An Alternative “Social Field”: Body Building

HIGH PHYSICAL CAPITAL: High Social and Moral Worth

LOW PHYSICAL CAPITAL: Low Social and Moral Worth

The interrelationships between capitals are responsible for our classed bodies:

ECONOMIC CAPITAL

SOCIAL CAPITAL

CULTURAL CAPITAL

PHYSICAL CAPITAL

Classed Bodies
or
Lifestyle Embodiments

In general terms, and certainly while not always the case, BODIES (and their expressions of physical capital) can be indicators of SOCIAL CLASS location, and associated CLASS LIFESTYLES (as created from the interplay of CAPITAL resources).

Theme 4:

Class Habitus and Embodied Lifestyle Cultures: The Lower Classes

Bourdieu’s concept of:

HABITUS

Plays an important role in the differential distribution and experience of sport forms across the social class groupings.
“a habitus is a system of lasting unconscious dispositions and acquired schemes of thought and action, perception, and appreciation, based on individuals’ integrated social experiences under specific sets of objective social conditions (e.g. socialization into a given class).”


HABITUS is the socially-learned, but largely unconscious, general formula of CLASSED lifestyle that guides and individuals tastes, preferences, values in all spheres of their existence.

In the simplest terms, HABITUS refers to our:

SEEMINGLY NATURAL (BUT ACTUALLY SOCIA LEARNED) PREFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASTE</th>
<th>CLASS HABITUS</th>
<th>PREFERENCES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VALUES</td>
</tr>
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Derives from our experience of being socialized in, and through, a particular class location.

Healthy Lifestyle Practices/Choices

- Speech/Language
- Leisure
- Food and Drink
- Sport/Physical Activity
- Dress/style/consumption
- Embodied Performance

See Video Clip 3

The (Rapidly) Learned Class Habitus
Agency and Constraint

“Habitus is, thus, a matter of socialisation and the adaptation of the individual’s ambitions and actions to the social circumstances in which they live…”

...Thus habitus expresses the idea that people make choices, but their choices are always constrained and influenced by the resources and social identity of the actor”


According to Bourdieu, HABITUS is enacted through embodied through lifestyles or HEXIS (what the CLASSED BODY does, how it acts, how it is used, how it is dressed/adorned). As such,

"the body is the most indisputable materialization of class taste”


HEXIS (embodied lifestyle) refers to the ways in which the habitus become expressed/materialized through the BODY:

“as the concept of 'bodily hexis' implies, taste is literally embodied, being inscribed onto the body and manifest in its size, volume, demeanour, ways of eating and drinking, spitting, speaking, manners, gestures and so on.”


The different CLASS CULTURES are effectively different PHYSICAL/BODY CULTURES (different habitus/hexis) also.

The members of a specific class grouping tend to be INCLINED/DISPOSED TOWARD specific physical activity practices rather than others.

And/or they display very different MOTIVATIONS for involvement in physical activity.

The Social Hierarchy and Classed PHYSICAL/BODY Cultures

- **Capitalist**
  - Upper Middle: Cultures of Privilege (effortless exhibition)
  - Middle: Cultures of Promotion (status presentation)
  - Working: Cultures of Poverty (subsistence existence)

- **Working Poor**
  - Undersclass (subsistence existence)

- **Socially Driven**
  - Capitalist/Upper Middle: Instantaneous Gratification/Economic Reward

- **Distinguishing and Conspicuous Consumption**
  - Middle/Working: Socially Driven Physical Maintenance and Presentation
1. Lower Class Habitus/Hexis

- Class culture centered on subsistence existence
- Living for the present
- Often physically demanding occupations

In Bourdieu's terms, the class habitus works in an active manner, as people develop a preferences for:

“what is available to them”...a...“taste for what they are anyway condemned to”


The Lower Class Habitus is associated with a:

“taste of necessity”

(a preference for those cultural products and practices which are readily available to those with restricted sources of capital)


Huntington, WV?: “Taste of Necessity”

The “taste of necessity” (Bourdieu, 1984): SPORT and PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Preferences driven by restricted availability of sport/physical activity resources and opportunities.
**Lower Class Habitus/Lifestyle Practices**

“rough lives mean...rough, unrefined pleasures”

“pursuit and expression of toughness”

**Instrumental relation to the body:**

Body used as instrument of pleasure or for profit


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**Lower Class Habitus: Instrumental Relationship with the Body I**

The working classes tend to use their bodies as a functioning **OBJECT**, to be fuelled as cheaply and efficiently as possible.

*Image of food packet with nutritional information: 710 Calories, 45% daily fat, 90% daily sodium, High in protein, 1lb food, Cost: $???.

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**Lower Class Habitus: Instrumental Relationship with the Body II**

The working class body is oftentimes used as a source of **DIVERSIONARY AND INSTANTANEOUS RELEASE**.

*Image of people engaging in physical activity.*


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**Lower Class Habitus: Instrumental Relationship with the Body III**

“The working classes tend to be attracted to those sporting activities which cultivate physical strength...the demand a high investment of energy or even pain...and which sometimes endanger the body itself”

*Image of athletes playing rugby.*


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**Lower Class Habitus: Instrumental Relationship with the Body IV**

Body used as an instrument for profit:

“recognised route to wealth and fame for working class”

*Image of people engaging in physical activity.*

“Don’t nobody be out there fighting with an MBA.”


Ok, some MBAs might…but why?

The CONVERSION of PHYSICAL into ECONOMIC CAPITAL

Pursuing the CONVERSION of PHYSICAL CAPITAL into ECONOMIC CAPITAL

Theme 5:

Class Habitus and Embodied Lifestyle Cultures: The Middle Classes

2. Middle Class Habitus/Hexis

- Competitive class culture centered on social presentation, advancement, and status
- Long term social advancement through investments in/for the future
- Often relatively sedentary occupations
Middle Class Habitus/Lifestyle Practices

Training the body to meet the class based “social norms of self-presentation”

“Investing in the present for future physical benefits”

Status oriented relation to the body:

Crafting the body for well-being and social acceptance


The active body as a form of conspicuous consumption through which social class status/membership is expressed and displayed to self and others.

Middle Class Habitus: Promotional Relationship with the Body I

The middle classes tend to use their bodies as a PROJECT used to EXPRESS and ADVANCE their SOCIAL STATUS.

BODILY HEALTH and the PERCEPTION of BODILY HEALTH, thus comes to play a crucial role in this process.

Middle Class Habitus: Promotional Relationship with the Body II

FOOD for HEALTH MAINTENANCE and SOCIAL DISTINCTION/PROMOTION.

Middle Class Habitus: Promotional Relationship with the Body III

Physical Activity aimed at enhancing the holistic functioning (HEALTH) of the entire individual.

Burlington, VT: “Meeting Social Norms of Self-Presentation”

**Whole Foods Market**

Selling the highest-quality natural & organic products.
HEALTH INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX (HIC)
Virtually all aspects of the health and wellness sector have been transformed into for-profit industries. Such as:

- Primary Healthcare
- Cosmetic Surgery
- Preventive Healthcare I
- Preventive Healthcare II
- Middle Class Habitus: Promotional Relationship with the Body IV
- Physical Activity aimed at enhancing the PHYSIQUE/aesthetic appeal and therefore the social acceptance of the body.

What Bourdieu (1978, p. 838) referred to as the “body for others”

"Lemon, rich 50 is middle class 38, ok?"


"The right body symbolizes a whole set of moral virtues"


"physical health maintenance for social profit"


"intrinsic long term rewards from physical and psychological self-betterment"

The middle class habitus dictates that if children are not fully involved—and successful—in multiple organized activities, then they are failing/negligent parents.

In this way, children become embodied expressions of their parent’s competitive lifestyle projects, through which their social standing is asserted and expressed.

“This parenting style can be loosely defined as one that attempts to control everything in a child’s environment with the aim of achieving a perfect outcome.”

Thus many parents are bringing the middle class competitive capitalist ethos to bear upon their children’s sporting aspirations and experiences...

...sometimes with questionable consequences.

FAMILY CHILD-REARING DIFFERENCES and CLASS HABITUS

Lower Class Child-Rearing → “NATURAL GROWTH”

Middle Class Child-Rearing → “CONCERTED CULTIVATION”
Natural Growth | Concerted Cultivation
--- | ---
Authority provides independence and maturity | Controlled results in delayed maturity and independence
Opinions not valued within the adult world, broader self-worth questioned | Valued opinions lead to sense of self-worth/entitlement
Skills/experiences valued in immediate social network, but not necessarily convertible to other settings | Development of various skills/experiences converted into social, cultural, physical, economic capital
Learning the logic of immediate social network | Learning of the cultivating and controlling logics of educational and employment institutions
Not socialized into the cultivating and controlling logics of wider society | Seamless transition, and more likelihood of success, in the adult world

Clearly, concerted cultivation practices require considerable amounts of ECONOMIC CAPITAL.

The middle classes look to invest in their children in order to realize their development as productive and achieving adults.

The costs of this investment mean many working classes are prevented from engaging in such rearing strategies, even if they wanted to.


“NATURAL GROWTH” (WORKING CLASS FAMILY HABITUS)

• Clear boundary between adults and children
• More authoritarian, less democratic, power structure
• Children have more control over the nature of their leisure time activity
• Children have more autonomy over the social relationships they develop, and the social spaces they inhabit

“CONCERTED CULTIVATION” (MIDDLE CLASS FAMILY HABITUS)

• Parents have more control and surveillance over, and involvement in, children’s lives
• Organized “adult-driven” activities dominate the leisure time of children in order to cultivate their individual advancement
• Children’s opinions and values are nurtured as part of individual development
• Family structure/routine geared to the advancement/cultivation of individual children

Child-Rearing and Physical Activity I

“Natural Growth”

“Concerted Cultivation”

Child-Rearing and Physical Activity II

“Natural Growth”

“Concerted Cultivation”
Cultivating Lifestyle Choices/Investing in Future Bodies

Margaret believed that her work to educate her daughter on a healthy lifestyle will ensure that:

“When I’m gone, she will know the difference between good food and bad food, exercise and no exercise... Those two things will be there, because I’ve planted them since they’re tiny.”


“soccer in the U.S. is essentially a white, middle-class, suburban sport, just the opposite of the game’s demographics in most of the world”


Investing in the Right Body: Suburban Soccer

“I think it provides overall higher aerobic exercise, conditioning, and coordination development than any of the other sports. I think it does more for them than any other sport.”

“I think it’s a conditioning sport and I think if you go out and do weights all day it’s not going to help you as much as going out and running all the time, and being able to run and keep moving.”

“I don’t think it’s a physical sport, but I think it’s good for their bodies other than physical contact sports.”

Good team work, and the coordination, and the aerobic workout, it’s a wonderful sport.

“It is a lot of running and endurance. I like to be outside...you do not see any fat kids here playing soccer.”


Competing Class Habitus/Lifestyle Cultures?

Middle Class Habitus v Working Class Habitus

See Video Clip?
The **CONVERSION** of PHYSICAL into SOCIAL, CULTURAL, and perhaps ECONOMIC CAPITAL


Creating and Converting Physical Capital?

“Learning” the Middle Class Habitus?

In Summary

The Sporting/Physically Active Body is a CLASSED BODY (it often speaks directly to a particular class position, status, and experience).

The Social Hierarchy and Sport Based Differentiation

- **Capitalist Upper Middle**
  - Cultures of Privilege (effortless exhibition)
  - Distinguishing and Conspicuous Consumption

- **Middle Working**
  - Cultures of Promotion (status presentation)
  - Socially Driven Physical Maintenance and Presentation

- **Working Poor Underclass**
  - Cultures of Poverty (subsistence existence)
  - Instantaneous Physical Gratification/Economic Reward

Social classes and class differences tend to be reproductive:

SOCIAL CLASSES ARE REPRODUCED IN THE LIVES/LIFESTYLES OF THEIR OFFSPRING, AND THEIR OFFSPRING...
The Cycle of Class Reproduction

EDUCATION

LIFESTYLE
(including sport and physical activity)

OCCUPATION

INCOME

Physical Culture and Class Reproduction?

U.S.A.'s Sport and Physical Activity Gradient?

See course website for related required readings, video clips, key concepts, discussion questions, and essay question.