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

MIGUEL ARCHANJO DE FREITAS JR
JOSILINE APARECIDA SOARES DE FREITAS
UEPG / PONTA GROSSA PR - BRASIL
UFPR / CURITIBA PR- BRASIL
mfreitasjr72@ibest.com.br

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 traditional way with which the sociology dealt 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not based on an objectivist approach it would be located at the other extreme, where the emphasis on society would be withdrawn and the individual would be the centre of the analysis.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 Ortiz "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 to be able to describe it.

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 has 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 questions 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

1- Professor in the Physical Education Course at the State University of Ponta Grossa and PhD of History student at the Federal University of Paraná.

2- One significant indication of such a situation is the presence of this author in works published in National Meetings of History of Sports, Leisure and Physical Education. This event became one of the most important in this area of knowledge and has Pierre Bourdieu as one of the central references of the works presented. Regarding that according to Freitas Jr, Miguel A. The profile of National Meetings of History of Sport, leisure and physical education. In: **COLETÂNEA DO IV ENCONTRO NACIONAL DE HISTÓRIA DO ESPORTE, LAZER E EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA.** Belo Horizonte. EEF/UFMG, p.622-631

3- In this kind of approach the individual is a simple performer of something that has been previously "programmed" to occur, that is, the durkheimian thought is followed, in which the subject obeys the pre-established social rules. Cf. BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Economia das trocas simbólicas**. São Paulo: Ed. Perspectiva, 1974. ORTIZ. Renato (org.). **Pierre Bourdieu.** São Paulo: Ática,1994.

4- This kind of analysis is similar to the Weberian thought, which places its starting point on the subject, that is, it is necessary to comprehend the individual (preacher, sportsperson, scientist…), in order to comprehend the theme studied. *Ibidem* . About the issue of how to work on the individuals' social trajectories is worth cf. BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Esboço de auto-análise.** São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2005.

5- Praxiological knowledge: has as its object not only the objective system of relations, but also the dialectical relations between such structures and the structured dispositions in which they update and tend to reproduce, this is the double process of internalization of the externalization and the externalization of the internal. This kind of knowledge argues the issue of the objectivity of knowledge as a finished fact, instead of building up its generating principle, placing itself in the movement of its accomplishment. The praxiological knowledge is the product of a double theoretical translation: presenting the social and theoretical conditions. Cf. ORTIZ, Renato. **Pierre Bourdieu.** São Paulo: Ática, 1994. p. 8.

6- In this study the following texts were used: How is it possible to be sporty? In: **Questões de Sociologia.** Rio de Janeiro: Marco Zero Ltda, 1983. A Programme for a sports sociology. In: **Coisas Ditas.** São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1987. The Olympic Games: a programme for an analysis. In: **Sobre a televisão.** Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 1997.

7- It is important to emphasize that as well as the concept of symbolic capital Bourdieu also employs the power field notion, in order to deal with the structural effects that could not be understood otherwise. The field of power (which should not be confused with the political field) is not a field like the others: it is the space of relation of forces between the different kinds of capital or, more precisely, between the agents that hold one of the different kinds of capital, in order to dominate the corresponding field and whose fights intensify every time the relative value of different capitals is questioned (for example: when orthodox instances are threatened inside the field). Cf. Bourdieu, Pierre. **Razões práticas...** *Op cit*

8- Regarding that cf. BOURDIEU, Pierre. How is it possible to be sporty? In: **Questões de Sociologia.** Rio de Janeiro: Marco Zero Ltda., 1983. p. 136.

would initially be something temporary, which could guide the specific research, which would retro feed the initial draft, making it increasingly consistent.

From these indications, the following questions are raised: How can such a framework be built? Which are the significant elements to be observed? Which categories might emerge from this construction? It is better to let Bourdieu provide us with the evidence to clarify these questions:

The work of a researcher consists simply of drawing this space, based, for example, on the structure of distribution of the fighters, the boxers, the rugby players, etc., by sex, age, and job. In fact, this structural framework can, for a certain period of time, continue roughly drawn, according to the global statistics which are available and mainly to the limits of such statistics and the codes on which they are built.

The researcher's priority must be the construction of the structure of the space of sports practices, because if the factors that permeate the development of a field are unknown to him, he runs the risk of carrying out a 'naïve' analysis and believe that that field holds absolute autonomy. The sociological analysis of sports consist in establishing the properties inherent that lead a certain modality to meet the interests, tastes and preferences of a determined social space. For example, while analysing the fight one can notice that the predominant element is the body involvement (the body to body contact), which is associated to a social position and an originary experience of the physical and social world.

It is important to emphasize that to Bourdieu "the most distinctive practices are also the ones that ensure a more distanced relation with the opponent, they are also the most estheticized ones, once in them the violence is more euphemized and the form and formalities prevail over the strength and the function". However, it is necessary to be careful not to establish a logic-deductive relation, which will certainly lead to superficial positioning about the sport and the social position of its 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.

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 institutions committed by the competition, production and marketing of images and discourses about the sports spectacle. The sports practices must be seen as a space of the products offered at a certain time and the space of dispositions encountered at this moment, which express other types of consumption in relation to the space of offer.

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

9- Cf. BOURDIEU, Pierre. A Programme for a sociology of the sport. In: **Coisas Ditas.** São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1987. p. 211. Again the author shows the necessity of a researcher use the ethnography as a methodological resource, as for him "...the merit of ethnographers is, in fact, that unlikely sociologists, they go to check the reality themselves, they question, they take photographs, instead of seeing things from the distance, through the questionnaire and the researcher". BOURDIEU, Pierre. The armed critics. In: LINS, Daniel (org.). **O campo econômico:** a dimensão simbólica da dominação. São Paulo: Papirus, 2000. p. 35-36.

10- BOURDIEU, Pierre. A Programme for a sociology of the sport. Op cit. p. 208

11- BOURDIEU, Pierre. Como é possível ser esportivo? Op cit. p.137.

12- BOURDIEU, Pierre. How is it possible to be sporty? *Op cit.*

13- BOURDIEU, Pierre. Os campos como microcosmos relativamente autônomos . **In: Os usos das ciências:** por uma sociologia clínica do campo científico. São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 2004. p.18.

14- BOURDIEU, Pierre. Como é possível ser esportivo? Op cit. p.142

15- Bourdieu, calls symbolic capital any kind of capital (economic, cultural, educational or social) perceived according to the categories, principles of view, classifying schemes, cognitive schemes... which are part of the structure of distribution of capital in the considered field. The symbolic capital is a capital with a cognitive basis, supported by knowledge and acknowledgment . Cf. BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Razões Práticas:** sobre a teoria da ação. São Paulo: Papirus, 2004. p.150.

16- *Ibidem.*

17- BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Sobre a televisão.** Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1997. p.124.

18- Instead of the term biography Bourdieu prefers to use the concept trajectory. When dealing with the literary field he shows that the trajectory describes a series of position occupied by the writer in successive states in the literary field, making it clear that it is only in the structure of a field, that is, relationally that the meaning of such successive positions is defined, publishing in such and such magazine, or this or that editor, participation in this or that group, etc". BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Os usos sociais da ciência:** por uma sociologia clínica do campo científico. São Paulo: UNESP, 2004.

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 social uses. 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 sense 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, discrimination, 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.

REFERENCES

BOURDIEU, Pierre. Campo do Poder, Campo Intelectual e Habitus de Classe. In: **A economia das trocas simbólicas.** São Paulo: Ed. Perspectiva, 1974.

_____ . Como é possível ser esportivo? In: **Questões de Sociologia.** Rio de Janeiro: Marco Zero Limitada, 1983.

_____. Programa para uma sociologia do esporte. In: **Coisas Ditas.** São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1987.

_____. **Sobre a televisão.** Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1997.

_____. **O poder simbólico.** Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 1998.

_____. Os Campos Como Microcosmos Relativamente Autônomos. In: **Os usos sociais da ciência**: por uma sociologia clínica do campo científico. São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 2004.

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

BOURDIEU, Pierre; CHAMBOREDOM, Jean-Claude & PASSERON, Jean-Claude. **Ofício de sociólogo:** metodologia da pesquisa na sociologia. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2004.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. O capital social: notas provisórias. In: NOGUEIRA, Maria Alice; CATANI, Afrânio Mendes. **Escritos de educação.** Petrópolis: Vozes, 1998.

FREITAS JR, Miguel A. O perfil dos encontros nacionais de história do esporte, lazer e educação física. In: **Coletânea do IV Encontro Nacional de História do Esporte, Lazer e Educação Física.** Belo Horizonte: EEF/UFMG.

LINS, Daniel. **O campo econômico:** a dimensão simbólica da dominação/ Pierre Bourdieu. São Paulo: Papirus, 2000.

ORTIZ. Renato (org.). **Pierre Bourdieu.** São Paulo: Ática,1994.

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 checheurs du sport qui optent travailler avec cet auteur. D'abord ont été recupérés 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 relacionés avec une situation pratique. On conclure en pointant la necessité 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 : Pierrre Bourdieu, Champ sportif, Societé.