

Research on the Influence of Cultural Capital on Human Sports Practice

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Abstract: The concept of cultural capital originated from Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical hypothesis that explains the different academic achievements of children from different social classes. Different from the research paradigms of Karl Marx and Maximilian Weber who conducted social stratification research by analyzing people's possession of tangible social resources, Bourdieu proposed that cultural capital is also of great significance in social stratification, and social classes use cultural capital to establish stratification and demonstrate the cultural taste and habitus of different classes. In the field of sports practice, families and schools are important fields for the generation and accumulation of cultural capital. When influencing people's sports behaviors, cultural capital has the characteristics of concealment, stratification, symbolism, and inheritance. Sports culture capital has an important influence on people's cultural taste and habitus in sports, specifically, on people's participation, selection, and consumption of sports.

1. Introduction

In the process of evolution, humans develop common behavioral habits that are beneficial to their survival and development through continuous exploration. These behavioral habits are internalized to develop an acquired disposition system – habitus.^[1] As social productivity improves and the division of labor and social classes appear, human habitus has developed from its original commonality to pluralism, and the driving force for habitus differentiation comes from the capital people own. The amount of capital one owns affects his or her stratification in society. Unlike Marx and Weber's research paradigms of social stratification based on the possession of tangible social resources, French sociologist Bourdieu emphasized that cultural capital also plays an important role in social stratification. Most cultural capital is hidden inside the human body and is demonstrated through human habitus. Habitus is socialized subjectivity. Different social classes have different cultural capital and exhibit different habitus. However, the relationship between social structure and habitus is not entirely determined by social structure, and habitus, in its dynamic evolution, also influences the re-building of social structure or social relations.^[2] As Bourdieu put it, social life is the product of the interaction among structure, disposition, and behavior, and this interaction enables the social structure to develop orientation that has a lasting impact on behavior, and the orientation, in turn, constitutes social structure.^[3]

2. Two Tools of Bourdieu's Sociological Research - Field and Capital

2.1. Field Provides Space for the Competition for Capital

The field is not a network completely determined by social structure, nor is it a relational space solely established by humans, but a network historically generated by the interaction between humans (the subject) and the social structure. According to Bourdieu, a field is a network or structure developed by objective relations among different positions determined by the situation that an occupant currently or potentially owns in the distribution structure of power (or capital). The decisive power resulting from those positions is imposed on the occupant or practitioner of the position, and the possession of power (or capital) means the control of special profits of a certain field. At the same time, the control of power (or capital) enables the practitioner to continue to occupy a dominant position, putting them in a position that can make a field develop in a direction that is beneficial to them, achieving the reproduction of power (or capital).^[4] The reason is that a field is not a static space, and it is full of competition that follows the law of capital. These competitions aim to continue or change the structure in the field. The field provides space for the competition for capital, an arena of power dynamics, and also an arena of struggles to change those forces.

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2.2. Capital Competition is the Possession of Power in Essence

Capital is labor accumulated in a materialized and embodied form, a force inscribed in the structure of objects and subjects, and a principle emphasizing the inherent law of society. In essence, capital is the embodiment of power, and the struggle for capital in the field is essentially a power struggle,^[5] a struggle for dominance and the right of speech. Power is not only the goal of the struggle but also the means. Relying on the capital obtained in the struggle, practitioners occupy a favorable position in the field, obtain ruling power, and then control the special profits in the field. Bourdieu divides capital into three categories: economic, social (or social relationship), and cultural, and different categories of capital represent power in different fields. Economic capital is symbolized by money and institutionalized in property rights. Social (social relationship capital) is symbolized by social prestige and titles and institutionalized in social protocols. Cultural capital is symbolized by works, credentials, and academic titles and institutionalized in degrees.

3. Cultural Capital is an Economic Metaphor Applied to Cultural Practice

Human activities, be they commercial or cultural, are inherently for the pursuit of interests, no matter how concealed their existence is. While studying the differences in the academic achievements of children from different social classes, Bourdieu found that the special interests that some children obtain in the academic market are proportionate to the capital distribution of their class or class groups.^[6] Bourdieu thus proposed the concept of cultural capital, which is the accumulation of cultural value embodied in the form of wealth.^[7] It generally refers to any tangible and intangible assets related to culture and cultural activities. The concept of cultural capital was originally constructed as a theoretical tool and a functional concept that Bourdieu utilized to apply economic metaphors to reveal the education inequality between different social classes and to study what role culture and cultural products play.^[8] However, the concept of cultural capital has, over time, evolved beyond theoretical research, and is playing an increasingly important role in society.

3.1. Cultural Capital is the Accumulation of Cultural Value in Different Forms

3.1.1. Embodied Cultural Capital

Embodied cultural capital is connected to the human body, manifested as one's talent and culturedness, and its accumulation requires a family environment and school education. The term "embodied" means "to become an

organic part of the mind and body", which is, in Bourdieu's own words, habitus. Embodied cultural capital is external wealth that can become a part of an individual, and it cannot be transferred instantly through gifts or sales. The embodiment process of cultural capital is inevitably accompanied by a lot of time. It is achieved by accumulating knowledge and improving one's taste through learning and is inalienable once acquired. It is deeply internalized in the individual. When knowledge and culturedness become an integral part of the mind and body of an individual, then they can be transformed into embodied cultural capital.

3.1.2. Objectified Cultural Capital

Objectified cultural capital is the materialization of people's cultural concepts and competence, which can be embodied in cultural products such as pictures, books, machines, and tools. As objectified cultural capital, cultural products have their own rules of existence: only when they are possessed and used in cultural production as an investment can they exist as an effective capital and obtain proportionate material or symbolic profit.^[9] Objectified cultural capital meets people's cultural needs in different forms. On the surface, objectified cultural capital can be bought, sold or given, but what is actually bought, sold or given is only the ownership of those cultural products, not the means of consumption or use, because both the means of consumption and the means of use are embodied in an individual and cannot be directly transferred, but only be learned and imitated.^[10]

3.1.3. Institutionalized Cultural Capital

Institutionalized cultural capital refers to the validation of a person's cultural competence through academic credentials or educational certificates. It is cultural value endowed to a person through competitions, memberships, etc., such as academic certificates or qualifications. Certificates of academic qualification and cultural competence give their owners a cultural, customary, enduring, and legally guaranteed value. The credentials or certificates bear the characteristics of "social facts" that are independent of an individual or group consciousness. It is standard and comparable and has universal value recognized at a wider social level.

3.2. Characteristics of Cultural Capital

3.2.1. Concealment of Cultural Capital

Objectified and institutionalized cultural capital is carried by physical objects such as books, certificates, but embodied cultural capital, in the form of talent and culturedness, exists and functions in a concealed and intangible form. Talent and culturedness are cultural capital concealed within an individual and can only be manifested through practical activities. Through the improvement by education, people are constantly transforming the physical world. At the same time, they

also manifest their talents and culturedness in various fields, cultivating and shaping their new natural instincts. The relationship between embodied cultural capital and habitus is not as strictly regular as that of regulative principles or judicial codes and behaviors, but the two follow a logic of practice. Concealed embodied cultural capital interprets various behaviors in people's daily life by way of habitus, a behavior disposition system.

3.2.2. Stratification of Cultural Capital

The size and structure of cultural capital and other capitals determine a person's social status and power. The influence of capital on people begins at birth. People are born into a clearly differentiated position (stratification) in the social field, and their habitus will be automatically adjusted to adapt to the inherent requirements of society. All of this is not intentional, but a "mark of natural differentiation".^[11] Humans are bound to be imperceptibly shaped by the culture of the stratification they are in. Thoughts and behaviors that conform to the pattern are validated by the customs, morals, and public opinions of that class, thereby enabling one's convergence with this pattern. If not, it is then restricted by customs, morals, and public opinions, making one deviate from this pattern. People of the same social class have the same cultural capital within the same cultural framework which has the effect of "value orientation" on one's values.

3.2.3. Symbolism of Cultural Capital

A symbol is what people in the same culture use to refer to anything with a special meaning.^[12] Symbolic thinking and behavior are some of the characteristics of human life. Humans live in a world of symbols.^[13] The sharing of symbols can lead to collective recognition, and the possession of symbols can validate one's social identity.^[14] A highly developed modern commodity economy has changed people's means of consumption, from meeting the basic needs of life to symbolic and cultural consumption. People not only consume the use value of commodities but also show their cultural taste and social status through the symbolic value of commodities. Cultural capital is as strongly symbolic as economic capital and social capital. The cultural products, membership, taste, cultural talent and cultural literacy one has all match, to some extent, the class or stratification one is in.

3.2.4. Inheritance of Cultural Capital

In one's development, his or her history cannot be separated from the previous history, but determined by it.^[15] As far as individuals are concerned, the offspring not only inherits physiologically the genes of the previous generation, but also inherits the productivity and interaction patterns accumulated by the previous generation. Cultural capital contributes to the reproduction of social structure through the inheritance from parents to their children. The acquisition of cultural

benefits through educational behaviors by the offspring not only depends on their own efforts, but also depends on the level of previous parental investment in cultural capital. People of different classes have different awareness and means of investing in the education of the next generation. Therefore, cultural capital is an intermediary variable that links social structure inequality and educational opportunity inequality. The higher the status of a family, the more cultural capital it has for the next generation. In other words, with better family cultural resources, children are more likely to obtain more cultural capital and make better educational achievements.^[16] Children of the elite class can make better educational achievements because they inherit more cultural capital from their families.^[17] In this way, the cultural capital of a family transfers its social status by influencing the education of the offspring.

3.3. Habitus is the Principle by Which Practice is Generated and Organized

Practice is the product of habitus. Habitus, as a latent behavior disposition system, plays the role of generating and organizing in practical activities, so that people's practical activities can objectively adapt to their own intentions, without setting conscious goals or mastering certain procedures to achieve the goals. Practice generated and organized under habitus is objectively adjusted and compliant, rather than the result of subjectively obeying certain rules.^[18] Practical activities organized by habitus make a person himself or herself, and in most bodily voluntary acts, the unreflected habits of a practitioner execute his or her will spontaneously.^[19] Habitus is an acquired disposition system and "a second nature" that gradually evolves. Its development is influenced by past experiences. Past experiences are stored in a person in the form of perception, thinking, and behavior schemas, ensuring the consistency of practical activities and their time-invariant properties. As the generating and organizing principle of practice and presentation, habitus provides individuals with some predetermined methods that depend on their class,^[20] It is precisely because of this that people of the same class demonstrate collective coordination in habitus.

4. Influence of Cultural Capital on Sports Behaviors

4.1. Field of Generation for Sports Culture Capital

4.1.1. Family is the First Field for the Generation of Sports Cultural Capital

Family is the main field of early socialization and plays an important role in shaping one's lifestyle and behavioral habitus. Cultural capital is formed in the family. The more cultural capital a family possesses and the closer it is to the requirements of the academic field, the fewer efforts it has made for early education (cultural capital accumulation) will be erased by institutionalized

power, thus enabling the family's cultural capital to achieve intergenerational transfer and giving the inheritors of the cultural capital a head start in future education.^[21] The reproduction of cultural capital in the family relies on intergenerational transfer, that is, the elders live by example and teach the younger generation, and the younger generation inherits and embodies the cultural capital of their parents through unconscious imitation. On the surface, children's choice of a certain sport is a personal choice. However, this choice is influenced by their family and social class. It involves not only parents' conscious transfer to their children, but also children's imitation of their parents' tastes and habitus. Children's cognitive thinking and behavior patterns are subtly shaped. A good case in point is two Chinese sports stars, Eileen Gu and Yiming Su, in the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. Eileen Gu's mother is a ski instructor and taught her skiing at a young age. Yiming Su's parents are snowboarding enthusiasts and they taught Yiming snowboarding at a young age. Influenced by their family sports, both embarked on the path of professional sports and made the great achievement of becoming the Winter Olympics champions.

4.1.2. School is an Important Field for the Generation of Sports Culture Capital

Apart from family, school is another main field of cultural capital reproduction. School or education has the function of duplicating social structure, and it legitimizes the existing social order. Education enables social reproduction through cultural reproduction. The value of school education is its possibility to optimize the existence of life and improve the quality of life.^[22] The influence of the school's cultural capital on people's sports behavior is mainly reflected in the school's sports facilities and the cultural capital of PE teachers. The impact of facilities on people is direct and superficial, whereas the cultural capital of a PE teacher is implicit and hidden. It is a role-oriented cultural capital. What constitutes the cultural capital of PE teachers is their thoughts, ideas, behaviors, and habits developed in school education, family education, and PE practice, as well as the derived cultural resources related to the teaching activities of physical education.^[23] A PE teacher's ethics, knowledge structure, teaching competence, sports training, and competition organization ability have an impact on people through PE teaching and have an important impact on shaping people's sports habitus.

4.2. Specific Manifestations of the Influence of Cultural Capital on Sports Practice

4.2.1. Cultural Capital Influences People's Sports Participation

Sports attitudes can directly reflect a participant's cognition, emotion and value orientation towards sports activities, and at the same time indirectly reflect the

participants' needs for sports development.^[24] In the field of modern mass sports, sports participation has been regarded as the most common social phenomenon and has become an important way for members to achieve socialization. Studies have shown that students' participation in high culture activities is positively correlated with their parents' education. Students whose parents have a master's degree spend twice as much time on high culture activities as those whose parents only have a high school education. It is the same with skill development. The higher the education of the parents, the more time their children invest in skill development.^[25] Sports practice is a high culture activity, so families with more cultural capital are more active in participating in physical exercise and pay more attention to the health of family members.^[26] Data show that for each additional year of education an individual receives, the probability of participating in physical exercise increases by an average of 24.9%.^[27] The reason is that rich educational capital not only has a significant impact on the improvement of an individual's occupation, income, family, and social status, but also has a positive impact on an individual's technical skills, values, and lifestyle. The constant accumulation of economic, cultural and social capital gives people in this social class or group the awareness, taste, and ability to build a healthy lifestyle that suits them. Dating back to the 19th century discussed in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* by Thorstein B. Veblen, people generally believed that no need to work and participation in leisure activities showed a noble social status, and the elites with rich cultural capital even believed that no need to work was not enough to show their status, and their high social status could only be reflected by time-consuming and costly physical activities. Although time has changed, the segmentation function of a sports lifestyle still plays a role under specific conditions in modern society. The body is the carrier of life, and health goes before one's control of his wealth. Increasing sports participation is also a strategy for people in a class or group with rich cultural capital. Physical exercise is used to ensure their physical health and the smooth reproduction of their cultural capital.

4.2.2. Cultural Capital Influences People's Choice of Sports

Personal hobbies are constructed by culture, that is, people choose and act according to cultural background, and the fundamental motivation for choosing sports is the meaning and value of the sports. Studies have shown that economic capital has no substantial influence on people's choice of sports, while social status and education are highly correlated with sports participation. Different classes, limited by their education, have different understandings and beliefs in the value of sports, which need to be compatible with the culture of the class they are in. Due to differences in habitus and cultural capital, different classes also have differences in their tastes.^[28] A sport may become a symbol of identity for a class, and exists in the field of sports as a consumer culture with

segmentation attributes. After people become aware of their cultural capital and social class, they will consciously or unconsciously choose sports or leisure activities that suit them. In *The Theory of the Leisure Class* by Veblen, the upper class in the 19th century regarded costly and technical sports, such as rowing, equestrian, tennis, and golf, as the main ways to show off their social superiority. A modern empirical study has also confirmed stratification in sports. Sports stratification refers to the phenomenon or process when vertical differences are caused by various factors among members of society when they participate in or select sports activities, thus dividing them into different classes or levels.^[29] People with rich cultural capital and in a higher social class often choose highly technical sports that require sports resources in scarcity, to achieve the effect of segmentation. People of a certain social status adopt specific physical actions and strategies to shape their bodies so that their body image conforms to their social status.^[30] Highly personalized sports like track bikes and skateboarding are loved by young people. They utilize extremely creative body movements and skills to meet their needs for individualistic identities and demonstrate their unique characters.^[31]

4.2.3. Cultural Capital Influences People's Sports Consumption

Consumption culture is a relatively stable common belief in consumption developed by people over time. Sports consumption refers to people's consumption of sports activities and in other related areas, including both direct consumption and indirect consumption resulting from participation in sports. On the surface, people's demand for sports consumption depends on personal interest and convenience, be it the sports clothing one buys, the sports one participates in, or the sports one watches. However, there are underlying reasons, and cultural capital is playing a role. Sports consumption influenced by sports habitus is not only an extended embodiment of the capital of different social classes but also a symbol of identity of a group with the same sports preference.^[32] People in a higher social class and with more cultural capital are well aware of the symbolism carried by sports consumption, and fully enjoy the psychological satisfaction brought by sports consumption, such as victory, glory, wealth and honor, etc., which is an important element in stimulating people's sports consumption. As society develops, the important role of this element in sports consumption will become increasingly evident, especially in the context of diversified and personalized consumption, where consumers' attention to the cultural aspects and added value of sports consumption are further stimulated through the application of advertising, fashion, product design, and packaging, etc.^[33]

5. Conclusion and Commend

5.1. Conclusion

- (1) Sports habitus is influenced by cultural capital and changes the cognition of practitioners in an acquired and generated way and functions through physical practice.
- (2) Families and schools are important fields for the generation and accumulation of cultural capital.
- (3) When influencing people's sports behaviors, cultural capital has the characteristics of concealment, stratification, symbolism, and inheritance.
- (4) Sports culture capital has an important influence on people's cultural taste and habitus in sports, specifically, on people's participation, selection, and consumption of sports.

5.2. Comment

- (1) Different social classes have different cultural capital and exhibit different habitus. The government and community should provide opportunities for participation and competition in multi-level and various sports events to meet the sports needs of people of different social classes.
- (2) Family is an important field for the generation and accumulation of cultural capital. Parents should strive to enrich family sports cultural capital and improve children's sports participation.
- (3) For families with inadequate cultural capital, they can make full use of the school's cultural capital to develop their sports habitus. The education authorities should actively urge schools to improve the facilities of sports venues, improve the teaching staff of sports teachers, and help students form good sports habits.

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