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Cultural Capital and the Place of Sport

Alan Warde

It is not unusual now to talk about the culture of the body, or to see routine and organized physical activity, as well as sport, as part and parcel of cultural life. In recent decades body management techniques have become a very conspicuous aspect of self-presentation and have been served by the expansion of the supply of commercial services to deal with diet and health, physical training and cosmetic improvement to appearances. The professionalization and commercialization of sport have also accelerated. Bourdieu interpreted measures for body management and maintenance in terms of the accumulation and display of cultural capital. He distinguished three types of cultural capital: institutionalized, objectified and embodied. *This article considers some of the elements of the very complex and extensive property, embodied cultural capital. The* Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion (CCSE) *survey included questions on sporting activity, sports spectatorship and physical exercise routines, important elements in the mosaic of contemporary cultural activities. This article teases out the patterns of participation and taste in this area, examining differentiation by class, gender, education, ethnic and age groups in particular. While showing that all these factors matter, gender is the most important source of differentiation, though this is more the case for sport than for exercise* per se. *In addition, it is shown that educational qualification is particularly important in predicting participation in exercise, whereas occupational class makes more difference to the choice of sport, whether playing or watching.*

Keywords: Bourdieu; Sport; Exercise; Cultural Capital

Introduction

Washington and Karen (2001), in a review of the state of the sociology of sport, argue that its full significance is rarely appreciated. It is a domain with enormous ramifications for economy, culture and society: it is a gigantic industry; it is invested in heavily

Correspondence to: Professor Alan Warde, CRIC, University of Manchester, Harold Hankins Building, Booth Street West, Manchester M13 9QH, UK. Email: alan.warde@manchester.ac.uk

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by the state; it is watched by almost everyone, and fills miles of column inches in the press; it is something that all children and most adults are encouraged to do, for its physical and social benefits. Yet it is often treated as a rather trivial topic, and thought to be far less important in understanding the relationship between economy, society and culture than many minority arts and leisure activities. Thus they say that sociologists 'have ignored this object of mass attention. While the upper classes have made attendance at other cultural events and institutions (theater, opera, museums, etc) a component of elite status and an object of sociologists' attention (!), sport seems to have escaped such appreciation' (Washington & Karen, 2001, pp. 206–207).

In the world of policy this neglect is probably less common. Sport is an acknowledged element in the cultural firmament: the watching of sport and its role as a recreational activity in competition with others are activities to be encouraged and managed. Some indication of its importance is that a Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) was set up in 1997, superseding the Department for National Heritage. A Secretary of State sits in the Cabinet and there is a Minister specifically for sport. The Department's current principal aims are 'to improve the quality of life through cultural and sporting activities, to support the pursuit of excellence and to champion the tourism, creative and leisure industries' (DCMS, 2005).

Yet still, in the context of understanding social inequalities associated with cultural capital, sport has not been paid a huge amount of attention. In the past, sports often had strong class connotations. For example, different types of rugby football and the difference between rugby and soccer were symbolically significant and, indeed, remain so to some degree. Such connotations are neatly analysed by Bourdieu (1978) in his essay on sport and social class. He shows that games underwent transformations that altered their social standing and consequently the kinds of people who would play them. Soccer, indeed, was once a game for public schoolboys, which later became a sport that was popular primarily with the working class, and then, following commercialization strategies designed to detach the sport from its working-class fan base, came to attract a middle-class audience at the end of the 20th century.

Concerned throughout his career to explain the reproduction of privilege in modern societies, Bourdieu was early to recognize the importance of sport and body management practices with respect to the accumulation and display of cultural capital (1978; 1984[1979]). His book *Distinction* (1984) pays considerable attention to sport as one of several mundane activities which reflect, in just the same way as would engagement with the arts, holdings of economic and cultural capital and thus help to constitute symbolically distinguished lifestyles. Bourdieu saw engagement in particular sports, the taste for sports, as a component part of practices for the operation and presentation of the body. In *Distinction* this was the first way in which he introduced the notion of class-based *habitus*: that is to say members of different social classes have cultural and physical dispositions which are deeply embodied, dispositions by means of which class position can be performed, recognized and represented. In many domains of the social world people, according to Bourdieu, unconsciously recognize and reveal their own social position through a complex process of classifying

themselves and others in terms of preferences for activities, possessions and performances. Preferences for sport are part of the dispositions which constitute the *habitus* and thereby become elements of 'embodied cultural capital'.[1]

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984) makes a series of passing remarks about the importance in the conduct of classifiable activities of what he called bodily *hexis*: manners and mannerisms, posture and bearing, body shape and presentation, and accent are all deeply embodied, mostly unconsciously reproduced and represented in many situations, and thoroughly revealing of social origins and position. Such propensities and dispositions are, of course, learned, and indeed cultivated. Bourdieu puts great emphasis on the importance of a class-based *habitus* which generates dispositions which individuals draw upon in their daily lives. Different groups and classes cultivate different types of body. They adopt different bodily techniques and engage in different bodily practices. Bodies bear the marks of social class. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu offers a broad-brush characterization of the embodied characteristics of members of different classes. For example, he says:

> Everything seems to indicate that the concern to cultivate the body appears, in its elementary form—that is, as the cult of health—often associated with an ascetic exaltation of sobriety and controlled diet, in the middle classes (junior executives, the medical services and especially schoolteachers, and particularly among women in these strongly feminised categories). These classes, who are especially anxious about appearance and therefore about their body-for-others, go in very intensively for gymnastics, the ascetic sport par excellence, since it amounts to a sort of training (*askesis*) for training's sake. (1984, p. 213)

He contrasts this with the bourgeoisie who ensure that their activities remain socially exclusive:

> Economic barriers—however great they may be in the case of golf, skiing, sailing or even riding and tennis—are not sufficient to explain the class distribution of these activities. There are more hidden entry requirements, such as family tradition and early training, or the obligatory manner (of dress and behaviour), and socializing techniques, which keep these sports closed to the working class and to upwardly mobile individuals from the middle or upper classes and which maintain them (along with smart parlour games like chess and especially bridge) among the surest indicators of bourgeois pedigree. (1984, p. 217)

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984) grounds these discriminating features in observations about eating, clothing and sport. These are three domains where the body is shaped and cultivated. Although Bourdieu considers these matters less as conscious strategic choices, more as the consequence of the operation in practical circumstances of the dispositions associated with class *habitus*, the outcome is yet another manifestation of taste and indicator of the possession of cultural capital. Distinctions among bodies will, he maintains, by a process of homology, parallel preferences in other domains—of music, cinema and art. A preference for golf or cross-country skiing—at least in France in the 1970s—is no less revealing of a privileged social position than would be a taste for Bach or Kandinsky.

Bourdieu locates sport theoretically as an instance or component of these wider concerns with the body. Body comes first, and sport choice is a function of body cultivation. In this paper, however, the empirical focus is primarily on sport, partly because it is less clear what its role is in social classification in Britain in the 21st century. Are there homologies of taste which construct social class hierarchies on the basis of cultural distinctions spread over from the arts to exercise? Sport has had many functions, originally encouraged as a means of training both body and mind, as a source of inculcating social and moral virtues, as a 'healthy' social environment for interaction, as well as a means of maintaining physical well-being. But it is also an issue of status and social classification in its own right. It gives access to social contacts (what Bourdieu would call social capital) and an opportunity to help fashion a desired body form (see further Shilling, 2005).

Here we look mostly at sport, with only passing reference to other practices of body management. We look at the distribution of involvement in sport and physical exercise. We look at which sports respondents prefer, looking for signs of distinction by inference from patterns of participation. We supplement this by asking why people are involved. We are also able to use information on sport spectatorship to add to an understanding of the symbolic value of different sports. Having asked these questions, we are able to see the persistence of differences by class, but note that these are less marked than differences between men and women.

Sporting Lives

According to time-use surveys in Britain, the mean amount of time spent in active participation in sport increased from 4 to 11 minutes per day between 1975 and 2000 (see Multinational Time Use Study (MTUS)).[2] This is perhaps some measure of increased concern with health, fitness and the management of the body. In that context, perhaps the most striking finding of our survey was that 44 per cent of respondents report having no involvement in sport.[3] Participation in physical exercise varies considerably between categories of person. Sex, age, education and occupational class are all of significance. Women are less likely to nominate a sport: 47 per cent never do sport, compared with 40 per cent of men. Sporting activity declines monotonically with age, though this might be expected in part in the context of reduced physical capacity. Educational experience is much more significant: 73 per cent of those with a degree do some form of sport, compared to 66 per cent of those with A-levels, 62 per cent of those with an HND or equivalent, 59 per cent of those with GCSEs, and 32 per cent of those with no qualifications. There is a monotonic relationship between class and participation in sport: the higher the class, the greater the participation.[4] Only 25 per cent of the class of higher professionals never do sport, compared with 59 per cent of routine manual workers. While partly a function of available material resources, this is more likely to be a function of means of access to participation and differential concern about body maintenance.

In order to explore the relative importance of different social characteristics in predicting the likelihood of participation in sport, we conducted a logistic regression

analysis with participation as the dependent variable. Table 1 shows that three factors, each independently of one another, are highly significant—sex, age and educational level. The bolded odds ratios in the final column identify significant variations. They show, for example, that women participate less, at a ratio of 0.7 to 1 than men. Younger people participate more than older people. Age is treated here as a continuous variable, ratios of less than 1 indicating a bias towards younger members of the sample. And the more advanced the educational qualification held by the respondent, the more likely they are to participate in a sport. Thus, someone with a degree is, all other factors taken into account, almost four times more likely than someone without any qualifications to engage in sport. As can be seen, when considered

Table 1 Participation in Sport, Logistic Regression[a]

	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B)
Sex (*men*)				
Women	−0.357	0.124	**0.004**	**0.700**
Age	−0.019	0.004	**0.000**	**0.981**
Ethnic identification (*white English*)				
White, British not English	−0.337	0.144	**0.019**	**0.714**
White, not British	0.353	0.346	0.307	1.423
Non-white	−0.134	0.231	0.307	0.875
Household form (*couple, no children*)				
Single person/unrelated adults	−0.243	0.148	0.099	0.784
Couple or lone parent, dependant children	−0.244	0.159	0.125	0.784
Couple or lone parent, non-dependent children	0.077	0.205	0.708	1.080
Multi-family	−1.398	0.379	**0.000**	**0.247**
Educational qualification (*no qualifications*)				
GCSE/O-level	0.757	0.170	**0.000**	**2.132**
A-level/Higher	0.905	0.206	**0.000**	**2.472**
Further education	0.993	0.207	**0.000**	**2.699**
Degree	1.348	0.206	**0.000**	**3.848**
Occupational class (*semi-routine workers*)				
Large employer, senior managerial	−0.132	0.424	0.755	0.876
Higher professional	0.068	0.243	0.781	1.070
Lower professional and higher technical	0.463	0.289	0.109	1.589
Lower managerial	0.179	0.210	0.394	1.196
Higher supervisory	0.435	0.284	0.126	1.545
Intermediate	0.696	0.304	**0.022**	**2.006**
Small employer and own account	0.321	0.200	0.109	1.379
Lower supervisory	0.054	0.236	0.817	1.056
Lower technical	−0.090	0.308	0.769	0.914
Routine workers	−0.129	0.199	0.518	0.879
Never worked	−0.516	0.390	0.186	0.597
Constant	0.738	0.303	0.015	2.091

$N = 1564$.
B = Beta coefficient.
S.E. = Standard Error.
Sig. = Significance.
Exp(B) = Exponential (Beta).
[a]Reference categories are in brackets and italics.

simultaneously with other independent variables, measures of occupational class position, *per se*, are not good predictors of participation.[5]

Exercise Culture?

The word 'sport' has particular connotations, and the distinction between it and more routine physical exercise is hard to draw. Sport, while a form and source of exercise, typically has some additional attributes, including formalized rules of the game and usually some potential element of competition. Not only did we ask a general question about participation in sport, we also asked some more specific questions, including the frequency of participation in 'going to a gym or doing exercises'. Forty-nine per cent of respondents claim to go to the gym or do exercises sometimes, 17 per cent said this occurs every day or almost every day, with a further 23 per cent doing something at least once a week. When we considered who did such exercise, we found that 18 per cent of those who do exercise claim not to play a sport. Thus there is much overlap, but not perfect coincidence, between claiming to do sport and taking exercise.

Nevertheless, it is more or less the same categories of people who claim to participate in a sport who also report regular exercise. Asked 'How often do you go to the gym or do exercises?', 36 per cent of large employers, managers and professionals (hereafter 'the service class'[6]) said never, compared to 68 per cent of routine workers. A declining proportion of exercise is observed monotonically as one moves down the class scale. The most regular exercisers are the members of the service class, of whom just over 50 per cent exercise weekly. Of those with degrees, 55 per cent claim to exercise at least weekly. The young are more likely to exercise. However, there is little difference between men and women, or between ethnic groups.

Our survey has clearly uncovered the considerable extent to which many people now consider exercise for its own sake a sufficiently important aspect of their lives to devote attention to regular activity for the purpose of fitness and body discipline. Bourdieu referred to this as exercise for its own sake, and suggested that it had an affinity with a particular fraction of the population. He was able to find an association with particular occupational categories. Clearly, going to the gym and exercising regularly are practices embraced by those with greater education and higher social status. But there can be no doubt that there is a class gradient to engagement in those ascetic routines of training for training's sake.

Some of the attractions of exercise culture to the educated middle class can be gleaned from interviews. Perusal of discussions about sport and the body with 16 adults living in the 11 households where the survey respondent held a degree—households possessing high institutionalized cultural capital—indicates some of the reasons why people exercised. There is a general consensus on the value of exercise, a consensus which is not restricted to the middle class, but which seems to be most seriously entertained among the most highly educated. One can find resistance to sport among those with high cultural capital—with two male interviewees protesting most vehemently their lack of interest in sport—and there is some expressed aversion to exercise. One of the two men aged mid 20s, said: 'Physical exercise?—no I don't do exercise for

exercise's sake'. But mostly there was a strong sense of prudence among these interviewees. To exercise is prudent, if not quite an obligation or duty, and is something that should be done if it can be fitted in. Fitness and health, the two being hard to distinguish in everyday conversation, are the principal considerations, but relaxation from stress is also mentioned a lot. The overall tone was probably more one of regret and mild guilt about insufficient exercise. Quite a few have domestic equipment—steps, weights, pace machine etc.—though it seems that these do not get used much. No one was prompted to say that they did too much exercise! Regulating the body is an important concern for the educated middle class.

Choice of Sport and Social Status

Those who reported doing sport engage in a very wide variety of games and exercise regimes. Activities reported included snowboarding, carriage driving, abseiling, coarse fishing, paintballing and deer stalking. The most popular, those nominated as their favourite by at least 2 per cent of our respondents, are listed in order of popularity in the first column of Table 2.

Because we have a limited number of people in our sample and there are so many different sports named, it is not possible to do complex statistical analysis on preferences. However, frequencies and cross-tabulations of the impact of class, education, age, ethnicity and sex on preferences for the more popular of the activities are instructive.

Class patterns across particular sports are not very strongly marked, but there are significant detailed patterns. A comparison between members of the service class and routine manual workers shows some distinctions. Because members of the professional and managerial classes are much more likely to participate in sport (only

Table 2 Favourite Sport in Which to Participate, by Gender

	Men		Women	
Activity	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
None	285	40.1	397	46.7
Walking (including dogs)	53	7.5	94	11.0
Keep fit/gym/aerobics	30	4.2	98	11.5
Swimming	18	2.5	79	9.3
Soccer/5-aside	79	11.1	7	0.8
Golf	63	8.9	7	0.8
Cycling	30	4.2	21	2.5
Jogging/running	18	2.5	16	1.9
Dancing	6	0.8	29	3.4
Tennis	8	1.1	16	1.9
Bowls	13	1.8	7	0.8
Yoga	1	0.1	17	2.0
Badminton	8	1.1	7	0.8
Other	98	13.8	56	6.6
Total	710	99.7	851	100.0

41 per cent of routine workers are active, compared with 68 per cent of the service class), they outnumber workers in almost every activity. More important, perhaps, they have a much wider range of experience, mentioning almost four times as many activities. However, allowing for unequal rates of participation (i.e. considering only those who are active), several activities are not strongly class biased: keep fit, walking, swimming, soccer and jogging are more or less equally popular. Bowls and dancing are relatively more popular among the working class. Cycling, squash and golf are marked as middle class, golf being especially preferred by the upper service class (though small owners and supervisory workers were also disproportionately involved).

When we compared the two component elements of the service class (see endnote 6 above), we found some significant differences between the upper service class, of large employers and higher managers and higher professionals, and the lower echelons, containing less senior professional and managerial employees. The higher service class exhibits a particularly strong preference for golf, and is more attracted than the lower strata to soccer and squash. Sailing, basketball and cricket were additional activities less frequently mentioned by the lower service class. That lower group does more walking and keeping fit. Of course, the numbers in the cells are very small, so we cannot put much store by small differences in distribution, for they may be primarily a result of interaction effects with age and gender. It is also worthy of note that the higher fraction has a much larger proportion of 'other' activities, implying that there may be some kudos attached to very rare minority sports among the dominant fraction of the service class.

Education, by contrast, makes very little difference to choice among sports. There are almost no significant differences among preferences. The effect of education, then, is to determine whether people do sport, but without prejudice to which type. Sporting activity declines monotonically with age. There is also an appreciable correlation between ethnicity and favourite sport. The white-English and the non-white group are equally involved in sport (58 per cent of each did something). The 'Celtic' white group is much less involved, while the small white non-British group are more active (71 per cent did something). The differences between the non-white group and the rest are not very great (though recall that we have only 111 in this category in the main sample), but they are less likely to nominate golf and walking as favourite activities, and more likely to choose cricket.

Looking at our boost sample[7] which surveyed non-white ethnic minorities to examine the preferences of people who identified as Afro-Caribbean, Pakistani or Indian, we can see some additional differentiation. Pakistani men are most likely to do sport; 73 per cent do something, compared to 61 per cent of Indian men and 41 per cent of Afro-Caribbean men. Playing cricket is especially popular among Pakistani men, though they and Indian men also often report playing football. Pakistani men are twice as likely as Pakistani women to engage in sport, but more Indian women play (77 per cent) than do men, their preferences being for badminton and keep fit. Indian men, however, are more likely than others to report doing exercise, and also yoga. Differences between Afro-Caribbean men and women are negligible, and considered as a group they have no strongly preferred sports.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, if we want to understand differential preferences for particular sports, gender is the most powerful discriminating variable (see Table 2). Men and women prefer different activities.[8] Of the more popular activities, women are over-represented in swimming, keep fit and walking (by four times, three times and half as much again, respectively); and among minority sports they prefer yoga and dancing. Among the activities listed, no women at all registered as a favourite cricket, rugby, fishing, basketball, table tennis, skiing or water polo. There are fewer activities where no men are recorded—horse riding, gymnastics and baseball. The principal masculine sports are football and golf, where men are over-represented by a factor of rather more than 10. Men also report a wider range of activities, almost twice as many mentioning another, less popular sport as their personal favourite.

Interestingly, there is a significant interaction effect between gender and class—one that is apparent both for participation in a sport and (even more so) for routine exercise. Women who are in paid employment are more likely to do exercise. Those in white-collar occupations are significantly more frequent in their attendance at the gym or doing daily exercises than are working-class women; and this is particularly so for women in higher professional occupations. Only 26 per cent of women in the lower service class never do exercises, compared with 69 per cent of women in routine occupations. Attending the gym is also more influenced by being younger and better educated than is doing a sport. Younger, middle-class women, then, are particularly prone to do routine, 'ascetic' forms of exercise.

This brief overview suggests that, with the exception of gender differences, the choice of sport is not highly symbolically significant. Nevertheless, there is some indication that there are fine-grained class distinctions at work, with significant differences between those at the top and the bottom of the occupational class hierarchy. There are also some differences within the service class. There are thus some elements which would support a Bourdieusian analysis of the role of cultural capital in sport. However, more striking is the extent to which some categories of person, most obviously those with more education and of higher class, and more understandably those who are younger, are more likely ever to do any sport. If sport is a means of maintaining health and body, then there are significant social inequalities being generated in this field.

Why do People Engage in Sports?

Bourdieu discusses at some length whether, when people with different *habitus* participate in a sport (sporting practice), they are necessarily engaged in the same practice. How one approaches a sport is itself a differentiating factor. He detects class styles for playing the same game, marked by club memberships, attire, manners and orientation.

> It can easily be shown that the different classes do not agree on the profits expected from sport, be they specific physical profits, such as effects on the external body, like slimness, elegance or visible muscles and on the internal body, like health or relaxation; or extrinsic profits, such as the social relationships a sport may facilitate, or possible economic and social advantages. (Bordieu, 1984, p. 211)

To explore these issues, we asked respondents what was the main reason for liking their favourite form of exercise. Of those who recorded playing a sport, fitness is considered the most important benefit by 30 per cent of respondents, relaxation by 21 per cent, sociability by 12 per cent and escape from work and obligations by 9 per cent. Eight per cent opted for competition and for 'the buzz'. Clearly, then, sporting activities are entered into for a mix of motives, though the primacy of fitness is probably noteworthy given contemporary concerns with body maintenance. Fitness is chosen more or less equally by men and women, but men are more likely to say competition, team spirit or sociability, women more likely to identify relaxation and escape from work and obligations. Also, the professional, managerial and intermediate occupations opted disproportionately for fitness, sociability and escape from work. Small employers and the self-employed are most likely to seek competition through their sporting practice. Those holding degrees are particularly likely to opt for fitness. Those women whose preferred sport was declared to be 'Keep-fit, aerobics or gym' or 'swimming' are particularly likely to identify fitness as the most valued aspect of their engagement.

The household interviews revealed meanings associated with how sport and exercise were integrated into daily life. A good many interviewees reported, rather ruefully, that they now did less exercise than they had previously. Susan 'used to walk'. James 'used to go [swimming] quite a lot before kids' and had played squash and badminton—'not that I've played those for years'. Euan had gone to the gym twice a week for four years until recently and once upon a time he 'used to run most evenings' when, he said, 'I did feel a lot healthier'. And Seren Star ended her discussion with a repeated refrain: 'used to, used to . . .'. Decline in activity was often explained in terms of emergent family commitments and was also associated with work time commitments. Pressure of work was a common excuse among those with high cultural capital (cf. Gershuny, 2005). Most interviewees exercise alone; participation in team sports is part of their past, of what they used to do. Few, men or women, engage regularly in competitive sport. Some, however, appeared very assiduous about fitting in regular exercise, and routine is considered very important. A fair amount of activity is organized in accordance with a daily rhythm (walking the dog, swimming or yoga) or a weekly rhythm, perhaps through attending some sort of class. But all narratives refer to personal routines to account for participation. Exercise is, or has had to be, planned.

Some gender differences are also apparent. Women seem most instrumental and matter-of-fact about exercise. They perceive it as a general good which ideally they want to do. Exercise rather than sport is emphasized—they are not looking for competitive activity, rather exercise which is reasonably pleasant—though at least one woman, a dedicated swimmer in her forties, felt that some enthusiasm for the intrinsic qualities of activity was necessary in order to remain motivated to undertake exercise. Interestingly, there is little explicit reference to dieting or to bodily appearance. Concerns about weight were not much cited in relation to sport. A gay man, a young mother and another woman concerned that she was putting on weight as she entered middle age were the only ones to make an explicit connection between exercise and bodily appearance. One suspects that our group of high cultural capital interviewees are concerned about both fitness and appearance, but feel constrained to

emphasize the former rather than the latter when being interviewed. For example, it was being exposed by her pre-school-aged daughter, who was present in the interview and who said that mummy kept promising to do more exercise, which led the young mother, Susan, to introduce her concern about not paying enough attention to body matters. Functional considerations about body maintenance tended to dominate discussion, without a great deal of reference to exercise being fun or giving pleasure. Women mostly exercise alone, sometimes with other women, with shared activity with partners more likely if children are also involved.

Of course, for most bodily practices it is difficult to know whether people are driven by a concern with body maintenance, *strictu sensu*, or bodily appearance. Attention to other sets of questions directed towards body modification suggests that exercise for women may be more a matter of personal appearance than was revealed by our interviews. We asked people about various activities intended to alter, and thereby to improve, the appearance of, or impression communicated by, the body. Nine activities were listed, and 72 per cent of our respondents had undertaken at least one. The percentages for men and women are presented in Table 3.

As Table 3 shows, there are significant gender differences in most of the activities we asked about. That women's practical approach to sport and exercise might be part of a broader concern about appearance is suggested by their greater involvement with piercing, tanning and cosmetic surgery. That men are now not immune to such considerations is indicated by their engagement with many of these activities, though only body building involves more men, presumably testament to a masculine muscular aesthetic. Nevertheless, almost half of the men in the sample had done none of the nine activities, perhaps the strongest evidence of the continuing possibility for men to take little care in bodily presentation.

Table 3 Gender Differences in Selected Body Modification Activities

	Women		Men		
	Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent	Significance[a]
Ears pierced	712	84	139	16	***
Followed a weight loss diet	375	44	114	16	***
Tanned on sunbed	260	31	88	12	***
Permanently tattooed	104	12	110	15	
Dentistry to improve look of teeth	127	15	63	9	***
Done body building	20	2	129	18	***
Another body part pierced	110	13	30	4	***
Taken elocution lessons	41	5	17	2	*
Plastic surgery to improve looks	8	1	2	—	
None of these	92	11	338	47	***
$N = 1564$					

[a]Significance of Cramer's *V*: ***<0.001; **<0.01; *<0.05.

We would be somewhat reluctant to do as Bourdieu did and read from this mix of data a preferred type of body, though the obsession particularly with fitness, and the preferences of those in particular social classes, might be indicative of a differential concern for a particular body shape or toning. What might be equally significant is the way in which such activities fit into the rhythms of daily life. It is often said that there is a tendency for exercise that is popular to be increasingly undertaken alone. The implication is that greater individualization, problems of time pressure and co-ordination, and perhaps the avoidance of competition, are shifting participation away from competitive and team games towards other activities. Many of the exercise activities nominated as favourites are inherently capable of being practised alone or in company. Of these activities, the three most popular, and three others, are ones which can be, and probably normally are, carried out alone (see Table 2). The other six would normally require the presence of partners or opponents (though only soccer would require more than one companion), and thus require making some arrangements with others in order to participate. This perhaps explains why people did not choose sociability, competition or team spirit as principal benefits of sport. It also suggests that body management is a first priority for most, and perhaps especially for women.

Watching Sport

Another indicator of the social meaning of sport can be obtained from considering spectatorship. People do not mostly watch the sports that they play, for overwhelmingly they watch professional sports; probably most attendance at live events and all broadcast sports coverage is of professional games. Walking, keep-fit exercises and workouts in the gym are not objects of media attention. Presumably also, therefore, the aspects of the sport which are appreciated will be different; much watching is precisely an engagement with competition, with particular interest in who wins.

There are several reasons why we might learn something about the distribution of cultural capital by considering spectator sports. The social standing of a sport might be reflected in the social composition of its audience—as suggested by Bourdieu (1978); but equally, it might be that spectator sport is a general topic of conversation across social class boundaries (as suggested by Erickson, 1996), so that knowing about a range of sports enhances cultural capital.

Soccer is the most popular of all spectator sports. When offered choices among 19 popular sports, 38 per cent of respondents nominated it as the first or second favourite. Tennis was the next most popular, nominated by 18 per cent of people; 14 per cent opted for snooker and for rugby union; and 13 per cent chose Formula 1 motor racing. There were gender differences, predictably: only 24 per cent of women chose soccer, whereas 54 per cent of men did. Rugby union and motor racing were also disproportionately preferred by men, and tennis by women. Of these popular spectator sports, the only significant class effect was for rugby union, with the service class liking to watch and the working class preferring not to.

One simple indicator of the apparent standing of sports is the 'institutionalized' cultural capital holdings of those exhibiting these preferences, which, as is the convention, we operationalize as educational qualifications. Level of education does make some difference, not to the liking for soccer, which is evenly distributed, but to tennis and rugby union (where graduates are especially interested), to snooker (those with no qualifications are *afficionados*) and to motor sport (where those with GCSE/O-Level qualifications are most engaged). Education matters, but its effects differ between sports.

Once again, however, we should note the overwhelming importance of gender. As Bennett (in this issue) notes, sport is the favourite TV genre for only 2 per cent of women but for 24 per cent of men. Conversely, 26 per cent of women said that sports programmes are the type that they like least (compared with 6 per cent of men). Sports coverage clearly divides tastes between the sexes.

Evidence about favourite spectator sports shows that preferences do cluster. When we looked for combinations of preferences, we found rather weak patterns, with people united at least as much by their dislikes as by their likes. There were tendencies for concentrations of preference around motor sports, around a taste for boxing, wrestling and darts, and around a liking for athletics, swimming, tennis and skiing while disliking soccer and rugby. It would be somewhat hazardous to interpret these rather flimsy associations, but these patterns probably do have some overtones of differential status. Regression analysis showed that older unqualified working-class men particularly like snooker, boxing and wrestling, while large employers and senior managers are five times more likely than semi-routine manual workers to like watching golf most.

Conclusion

Sport is significant symbolically. But it is not as strongly marked by class as was suggested by Bourdieu (1978; 1984)—though it may well have been in the past. There are certainly some hints that different sports carry connotations of social position, limitedly in relation to spectating, a little more in relation to participation. There is some evidence that the most privileged people choose rare sports. Also, men of higher social class put emphasis on the sociable aspects of sporting participation; it may well be that such people 'profit' from their participation in golf or squash. However, the main general effect of class appears in terms not of the symbolic identity of particular sports, but in the propensity to participate actively. The likelihood of claiming to participate in sport and the frequency with which people take exercise are strongly correlated with their occupational class position. Body maintenance regimes are differentiated by class, a feature which is in fact more pronounced among women than among men.

Education, which is, of course, correlated with class position, is generally a little more strongly predictive of attachments to participation in sport and exercise. We can confirm Bennett, Emmison, and Frow's observation on the basis of Australian data that 'the care of the body is both more intensive and extensive as one's

educational level rises' (1999, p. 116). Educational level is a primary indicator of one of the 'institutionalized' components of cultural capital and its regular statistical association with measures of the 'embodied' component enhances the theoretical coherence of the concept of cultural capital. High education and extensive physical activity for the purposes of body maintenance go together; there is a general consistency between manifestations of institutionalized and embodied cultural capital.[9]

The educated middle class adopt a distinctive attitude towards exercise, seeing it almost as duty to assume a personal responsibility for taking care of the body. This appears especially among people in professional occupations within a discourse of fitness. Of course, sport and exercise not only have a part to play in general maintenance of a healthy body; they also affect appearance and play a role in presentation of self and self-identity. We reserve for another paper consideration of other aspects of body management, but it seems likely that while some practices are mostly reserved for the middle classes, especially alternative therapies, body modification is more widely distributed across different segments of the population (see Crossley, 2005). Bodies continue to display the insignia of unequal possession of cultural capital.

Most importantly, though, sport and exercise continue to separate men and women. Bourdieu's *Distinction* became somewhat notorious for its limited interest in gender differences. Gender is more important than Bourdieu had appreciated. Body practices construct distinctions of gender, making us first and foremost into men and women even if, thereafter, they permit secondary challenges to stereotypes by way of different versions of masculinity and femininity. We find evidence of unequal opportunities and differential experience between and within gender categories (see Roberts, 1999, pp. 88–110). Women dislike the importance attributed to sport, seen especially in their aversion to sport on TV, but that is not paralleled by aversion in practice to exercise. Women now participate in sport extensively, though in a rather narrow set of categories, which might indicate some degree of exclusion, but may instead be more a function of their different views of the purposes of exercise. Women approach exercise with somewhat different attitudes, towards competition for example, though the differences revealed by the survey are again not great. Interviews also showed some difference. More women explain their own participation in terms of accompanying partners or children but, while men sometimes explained their involvement through their children, in no instance did a man cite his female partner as a reason. There are grounds, insofar as women's primary objectives in exercising are fitness and relaxation, for concluding that exercise is more a function of body maintenance than of engagement in the culture of sporting events and spectacles. Finally, we find some differences among people of the same sex. Middle-class women are more active and take more exercise; while Pakistani women (not considering their class distribution) are relatively inactive when compared to other women. Some women address sport with enthusiasm and dedication, while others find it, and especially watching it, thoroughly tedious. Among men, we find fewer lines of difference, though the two male interviewees who disliked sport were probably more vehement in their rejection of it than were any of the women to whom we talked.

Overall, we have strong evidence of the development and legitimacy of a body maintenance culture. Fitness or honing of a good appearance is, as Bourdieu would predict, a primary objective. Although there is insufficient space to develop the notion in this paper, a more general focus on the body would allow us to see that it is implicated in many and varied ways in the production and reproduction of economic and cultural capital. Not only through practices of sport and exercise, but also through diet and body management, modification and maintenance, do people introduce and represent themselves and their social strategies and values to others. All these practices reveal significant social differences which are laden with symbolic significance. Such differences have in recent accounts been interpreted primarily as matters of presentation and disciplining of the self; a Foucauldian approach has dominated which stresses aesthetic differences and self-discipline. For Bourdieu, the body was more a window onto social hierarchy, the transmission of capitals and the process of domination by groups and classes. The data reviewed above indicate that the exercised body remains a component of social classification.

Notes

[1] Martin (2003, p. 20ff) helpfully nominated the core of Bourdieu's work as a sociology of organized striving; the attempt of agents located in particular positions to obtain maximum social gain or 'profit' from their, necessarily situated, actions. Insofar as cultural capital is a battery of properties the possession of which can be 'profitable'—for it can be exchanged or 'converted' into economic reward, social connection or status recognition—it requires accumulation, cultivation and operationalization.

[2] The equivalent change for 'passive participation' in sport (spectating at live events) was a decline from two minutes to one minute per day on average.

[3] The questions we asked were 'Do you ever play any sports or do any physical exercise?' and, if yes, 'What is your favourite sport or exercise to play or take part in nowadays?'.

[4] Compare Bourdieu (1984, p. 216, Table 21) for similar results, though in response to a slightly different question.

[5] There are minor significant effects: having an intermediate occupation increases participation, while being white and British, but not English, and living in a multi-family household reduces involvement.

[6] The occupational class categories used in this paper are based on NSeC (National Statistics Socio-Economic Classifical) (see Rose & O'Reilly, 1997) as shown in Table 1. For convenience, we use the term 'the service class' to refer to groups 1–4; the 'higher service class' to refer to groups 1 (large employer, senior managerial) and 2 (higher professional); and 'the lower service class' to refer to groups 3 (lower professional and higher technical) and 4 (lower managerial).

[7] The ethnic boost sample of 227 divided roughly equally between members of the Indian, Pakistani and Afro-Caribbean communities. The analysis reported here also included members of these communities identified in the main sample.

[8] Cramer's $V = 0.447$, significance $= 0.000$.

[9] Mechanisms likely to account for the relationship between educational experience and exercise include: that some educational institutions foster a taste for games, and for particular types of game which are locally accorded prestige; that some educational institutions give additional opportunities to learn to play games, and a range of games, as a function of facilities and curriculum design; and that longer exposure to sporting activity and facilities retains interest further through the life course.

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