

Jan Haut**ARE THE SYMBOLIC FUNCTIONS OF SPORTS AND CULTURAL PRACTICES VANISHING?****ALI SIMBOLNE FUNKCIJE ŠPORTA IN KULTURNE PRAKSE IZGINJAJO?****ABSTRACT**

While Bourdieu's theory of practice has been productively adopted, e.g. for explanations of social stratification, for studies *within* sports, the possibilities it offers for the interrelations between sports and other fields have been somewhat neglected. Here it might help to clarify the meaning of sports practice as part of lifestyle connected with other cultural interests and leisure activities. The study tries to fill this gap by examining sports and cultural practice together, by asking how sports fit into lifestyle patterns, which have significant differences and similarities between the respective fields of practice, and if Bourdieu's empirical findings can be supported with recent results. The data is based on surveys conducted in Saarbrücken and south-western Germany (N=760), featuring two questionnaires: one focusing on sports activity, motivation, forms of organisation of sports activity, etc.; and the other, following Bourdieu's instrument used for "Distinction," dealing with cultural practices and preferences. Bivariate analyses are used to examine the impact of stratification variables in each of the fields; multivariate analyses shall reveal the patterns of practices across separate fields. The in-depth analysis of sports practice has yet to be done; the examination of data on cultural practices is finished for the time being. Some of its most remarkable results shall be presented and the derived theoretical assumptions for the analysis of sports practices and their relations to cultural practices shall be outlined. While the impact of stratification variables on tastes and practices in each field can be confirmed, though sometimes modified, connections between practices *across* separate fields of culture tend to be rather weak, thus pointing to a greater influence of field effects. This would imply that sports practice can be considered an indicator of social stratification, but is less likely to allow conclusions concerning a certain lifestyle understood as a distinctive pattern of practices *across* different fields.

Key words: sport, symbolic function, cultural practices, tastes, social stratification

University of Saarbrücken, Germany

Corresponding author:

Wittelsbacherallee 149, 60385

Frankfurt, Germany

Tel: +49 69 20017497

E-mail: jan.haut@freenet.de

POVZETEK

Medtem, ko je Bourdiejeva teorija prakse bila produktivno uporabljena za razlage družbene stratifikacije za študije znotraj športa, pa je bil njen potencial za razlago povezav med športom in drugimi polji nekako zapostavljen. Na tem mestu bi bilo smiselno pojasniti pomen športnih praks kot dela življenjskega sloga, ki je povezan z drugimi kulturnimi interesi in prostočasnimi dejavnostmi. Študija poskuša zapolniti to vrzel s hkratnim proučevanjem športa in kulturnih praks in spraševanjem, kako je šport umeščen v vzorce življenjskih slogov, med katerimi obstajajo pomembne razlike in podobnosti ter preverjanjem, ali zadnje raziskave potrjujejo Bourdiejeve empirične izsledke. Podatki temeljijo na raziskavah, izvedenih v Saarbrückenu in jugozahodni Nemčiji (N=760), ki so uporabljale dva vprašalnika: prvi se je osredotočal na športno dejavnost, motivacijo, oblike organizacije športnih dejavnosti, ipd., drugi pa je posnemal Bourdiejev instrumentarij, uporabljen pri "Različnosti," ki se ukvarja s kulturnimi praksami in nagnjenji. Vpliv stratifikacijskih spremenljivk v vsakem polju smo proučili s pomočjo bivariate analize, multivariate analize pa so razkrile vzorce praks v različnih poljih. Poglobljeno analizo športnih praks bo šele potrebno izvesti, trenutno pa je končano proučevanje podatkov o kulturnih praksah. Nekateri najbolj pomembni rezultati so v članku predstavljeni, orisane pa so tudi izhajajoče teoretske predpostavke za analizo športnih praks in njihovi odnosi s kulturnimi praksami. Medtem ko lahko potrdimo vpliv nekoliko modificiranih stratifikacijskih spremenljivk na okuse in prakse v vsakem polju, pa so povezave v praksah med različnimi polji kulture precej šibke, kar nakazuje na velik vpliv učinka samega polja. To namiguje, da športne prakse lahko pojmujeemo kot indikator socialne stratifikacije, vendar pa verjetno ne omogočajo sklepanj glede določenega življenjskega sloga kot posebnega vzorca praks preko različnih polj.

Ključne besede: šport, simbolna funkcija, kulturne prakse, okusi, socialna stratifikacija

BOURDIEU AND THE IMPACT OF CLASS ON SPORTS AND CULTURAL PRACTICE

Modern sports have been intertwined with the dynamics of social stratification from the very beginnings: “Social class is established as the main dynamic of social stratification and it is this, more than anything else, which influences the shaping of sport during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2004, p. 311). While this general impact of class issues on the historical shaping of sports is widely agreed upon, their current relevance is hardly disputed. It is a whole set of questions that address the relation of sports and class, posed slightly differently but all pointing to a similar direction. Do class patterns still affect participation in sports and certain forms of sports and how? Have other patterns of stratification, foremost gender, age and race, become equally or more important and why? Or is sports nowadays a practice rather freely chosen and individualised to such a degree that stratification patterns are negligible? All these questions are, of course, not only specific for sports but generally provoke a high degree of sociological interest.

A significant share of this debate has been discussed in terms of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic power and cultural distinction. One of its central assumptions is that class conflicts, struggles for power and social positions are fought in symbolic forms, but serious and with “real” consequences. In modern (Western) societies, people are not or less frequently overtly excluded from practices, institutions and positions because of their class. However, social hierarchy is reproduced as “individualized exclusion” (Stempel, 2005, p. 412). Access to social positions is gained because specific dispositions and characteristics are rewarded, which seem to be “natural” and “individual” and therefore “legitimate”, but are in fact based on class differences. A striking example is the “hidden curriculum” in schools and universities, which Bourdieu in his studies of the French educational system found to be favouring a higher class origin (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). In *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1986) then shows that *taste*, preferences for practices and goods in everyday life and all fields of cultural consumption, not at least sports, is highly associated with social class. Cultural practices and sports are considered to be a result of habitual schemes of perception and appreciation and the amount and structure of the available capital resources, realised under the specific conditions and rules of different fields. Both habitus and capital are based on class positions; the former marking shared dispositions due to relatively similar social conditionings, the latter marking a similar amount of resources (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 112). These differences in the conditions of existence are retranslated into a particular lifestyle, leading to distinctive practices that again function as capital. Thus, sports practices are part of a lifestyle, based on class-specific habitual dispositions and capital resources, able to reproduce social stratification in symbolic terms (Bourdieu, 1978).

This perspective has been productively adapted to different issues in sociology of culture (see Tampubolon 2008) and sports (see Tomlinson, 2004; Stempel, 2005), but has also been criticised in several aspects. Some critics argue that Bourdieu’s approach to cultural distinction is too focussed on class and underestimates other influences on practice, such as gender, race or age (Fiske, 1997). Others hold that Bourdieu is stuck in structural determinism, unable to explain social change, because the concept of habitus would ignore possibilities of reflexion and individual shaping of practice (Rojek, 1995; Berard, p. 2005). In German sociology, there is significant doubt regarding the relevance of class structures for cultural differentiation and greater consideration that lifestyles are chosen more freely. A general rise in income levels, the opening of higher education and equalising welfare state policies would enable better access for many to cultural

consumption. Hradil (1989) sees that the link between social structure and lifestyle tends to be dissolved. Schulze (1995) argues that it is no longer a class privilege to “aestheticise” one’s life and finds an empirical model of cultural differentiation based solely on age and educational level. Class thus would no longer be an appropriate stratification pattern, as the borders of taste for higher and popular culture have blurred. This partly resembles the “omnivore” model (Peterson & Kern, 1996). It also considers the higher class taste as having changed from “highbrow” to a variety of cultural genres including popular practices. However, here the importance of class structures is still acknowledged, as an “omnivorous” taste is considered to be a privilege of upper classes.

In the sociology of sports, recent studies on the stratification and applications of Bourdieu’s theory also refer to these aspects of the discussion. For sports spectating, Wilson (2002) found that high amounts of cultural capital are associated with the most frequent attendance of sport events, but that there is a negative relation between cultural capital and attendance of so-called “prole sports”. He follows that the cultural omnivore thesis can be confirmed partly, but there are also “strict limits to any cultural omnivorism in sports tastes among the elite” (Wilson, 2002, p. 13), a point for Bourdieu’s distinction thesis. Mehus (2005) studied sports consumption in Norway and also found the omnivore thesis confirmed, but in a slightly different sense. While spectators with lower cultural capital attended more sports events in total, those with higher cultural capital showed a broader variety of taste, in terms of different sports events attended. Stempel (2005) provides a more differentiated framework suiting Bourdieu’s theory more adequately. He takes into account not only cultural or economic capital as isolated factors, but as characterising class fractions by a combination of both. The fraction within the upper classes that has relatively higher economic and lower cultural capital is consuming high culture moderately but attending sports more frequently. While this perfectly fits Bourdieu’s assumptions, Stempel’s findings on active sports participation rather support the omnivore model. In all of the 15 sports analysed, the upper and middle classes were engaged more frequently than the lower classes. Ohl assumes “a gap between the ‘univorous’, the ‘omnivorous’ and people that are excluded from sporting culture” (Ohl, 2008, p. 33). These gaps, however, could not be explained sufficiently by class structures, as omnivorous sports activity was also found within middle and lower classes. This confirms Gugutzer (2008), who considers a general tendency to a greater variety of sports practised as a consequence of individualisation. Skille (2005) instead, is sceptical about the thesis of individuality. He does not find considerable class effects in his analysis of participants in a Norwegian youth sports program, but shows the importance of socialisation effects and argues for a more complex understanding of the “sporting habitus”. Scheerder et al. (2005) analysed stratification in sports participation in Flanders from a time-trend perspective. They found that, even more than gender and age, social-economic status still is the most important pattern, and conclude: “sport participation patterns have become more differentiated, but only along the lines of traditional structuring mechanisms” (Scheerder et al, 2005, p. 159). All in all, research in the sociology of sports currently shows a variety of results, but pointing to a similar direction. The impact of class on sports practices seems to be changing, but still effective. That also leaves the adequacy of Bourdieu’s theory uncertain, as some findings seem to support it, while others seem to contradict it. Here, I would like to add to this strand of research by clarifying some aspects of Bourdieu’s theoretical framework and their empirical application, and by outlining how seemingly contradictory results, like cultural omnivorism, can at least partially be integrated in Bourdieu’s model.

In my PhD-project, I analyse sports and cultural practices as a part of lifestyle, compare the structuring effects in the cultural and sporting fields and thereby test Bourdieu's theoretical approach by applying it to contemporary data. Data is provided by one questionnaire on sports and one on cultural practice, the latter resembling Bourdieu's instrument used in "Distinction" (1986). The survey was carried out in Saarbrücken and south-western Germany in 2004-2007 (N=760). My work was focussed on the cultural part thus far and primarily indicates the necessity of a more sophisticated interpretation of Bourdieu's theory. Here, some of the results on cultural practice shall be used to show how it can integrate at least some of the critical points mentioned. That leads to some suggestions concerning an adequate interpretation of Bourdieu's framework for the analysis of sports as a part of lifestyle and as an indicator of class structures. The assumption is that class structures are still relevant for cultural and sports practices, but have become less apparent. While some practices remain clearly exclusive, others have either lost their distinctiveness or only show it in more subtle forms. As higher class taste tends to be exclusive in some respects but is, as an "omnivorous" one, blended with popular, all-appealing practices, the symbolic function of taste is becoming more complex. If that is also the case for sports practices, they thus need to be analysed within a broader set of cultural practices, in order to identify their symbolic meaning and their contribution to reproducing patterns of stratification.

CLASS RELATIONS AND DISTINCTION

The rejection of Bourdieu's model of cultural differentiation is often based on an insufficient interpretation of his class concept. Therefore, we first have to pay attention to how Bourdieu understands classes and their effect on the stratification of practices. We have to remember that he does not view class as defined by a "substance", i.e. some single constant characteristic. Rather, class is an analytic category, marking a comparable position within the whole complex of relations defining the social space (Bourdieu, 1985). He uses occupations to identify those positions and resources, because they indicate a comparable degree of education and income. Thus, he can argue in terms of proximities and distances, foremost defined by the amounts and structure of capital resources. Those are more or less continuous dimensions of the social space; where the lines between classes or class fractions have to be drawn is a practical question.

Table 1: Share of people who bought at least 20 books in the past year

| Upper classes | Middle classes | Lower classes |
|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| 18.7% | 5.9% | 4.1% |

Classification by occupational status, income, educational level, social origin. *Upper classes*: professors, engineers, teachers, etc.; income > 3.000€/month, educational level at least "Abitur" (degree, qualifying for university). *Lower classes*: low-skilled employees, workers, unemployed, etc.; income < 1.500 €/month, educational level at best "Hauptschule" or no degree. *Middle classes*: technicians, office workers, etc.; medium educational level and income.

Table 2: Preference for Salvadore Dali*

| Upper classes | Middle classes | Lower classes |
|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| 27.7% | 26.5% | 14.8% |

*Participants were asked to pick three favourites from a list of 30 painters.

No matter how exact a statistic class model is constructed, there will often be intersections, as in the examples of Tables 1 and 2. Both buying more than 20 books in a year and liking the painter Salvador Dali could be considered indicators of a "highbrow" taste. However, they are neither

exclusive in the sense that they suit just one class, nor do they show equal, but changing distances between the classes. That does not allow the conclusion that the classes are misconstrued or do not exist at all; rather, it shows that their differences do not have the same effect on both specific practices. In several cases, practices refer only to some characteristics of a class, but not to all. Consider the example of reading in Table 3, showing clear class differences concerning “scientific works” but an equal distribution of “research reports”. What opens up the gap here are not the class differences in income but those in terms of education, as Table 4 reveals. If we take for granted that the mere access to literature is less dependent on income in German society, economic capital is apparently rather irrelevant here. Cultural capital, seemingly in the specific form of having or striving for a university degree, matters. That does not mean other class differences (as income) do not exist any longer, but that they are not revealed practically in this case. That is why models based foremost on education as structuring principle, like the one of Schulze (1995), provide sufficient explanations of cultural differentiation to some degree, i.e. as long as the realisation of a taste does not depend on income.

Table 3a: Preferred literature by class*

| | Upper classes | Middle classes | Lower classes |
|------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| Research reports | 19.1% | 17.2% | 19.3% |
| Scientific works | 37.7% | 17.5% | 8.3% |

* Participants were asked to pick three favourite genres from the list of 18.

Table 3b: Preferred literature by education level

| | Graduates | Undergraduates | Abitur* | Realschule* | Hauptschule* |
|------------------|-----------|----------------|---------|-------------|--------------|
| Research reports | 19.4% | 15.6% | 14,3% | 17,2% | 21,8% |
| Scientific works | 34,3% | 43,3% | 11,6% | 10,6% | 12,1% |

* After 4 years of comprehensive primary school, Germany has a three-tiered secondary school system. The “Hauptschule” ends after 9 (4+5), the “Realschule” after 10 years. The “Gymnasium” takes 12 or 13 years and ends with the “Abitur” – the degree qualifying for university access.

Thus, if we are dealing with stratification patterns, no matter whether defined by educational level or classes in a more complex sense, we should first of all pay attention to how they affect practices specifically. Classes should not be understood in an overly static way, in the sense that they are leading to equal distances or exactly one suitable practice for each class everywhere. We have to keep in mind that the same differences in the social structure may have varying effects on different practices. That is, in Bourdieu’s sense, the effects of the different fields. With Bourdieu’s “relational” perspective, one can take into account changing patterns of similarities and differences between classes. The reason why he uses the same class model for the analysis in “Distinction” is that in all fields he assumes the same factors (the total amount and structure of capital) to be effective practically.

FIELD CONSTELLATIONS

Which relations are formed and how exact practices fit classes always depends on field conditions. Bourdieu also describes cultural practice in terms of supply and demand. The latter is made up by the dispositions of habitus and the capital resources to realise these tastes, the former by the available goods and practices, which all have certain costs of access (Bourdieu, 1986).

Focussing on the supply side, it can be analysed and differentiated on several levels; if and how the class structure is displayed depends on this level of differentiation. A historical perspective can explain this better: Veblen's term 'leisure class' may have been sufficient in 1899, as the most striking difference was not *how* leisure time was organised, but *that* certain classes do have it at all while others did not. It loses its symbolic function and becomes an inadequate class description as more and more people have leisure-time. From then only, it is the way of filling it that matters. The development of modern sport itself holds proof for the same logic, as Bourdieu (1978) describes it quite similarly to Elias and Dunning (1986). At the beginning, the mere fact of doing *any* sports is a sign of belonging to a certain class; the sportsman is a gentleman. It is only when more people and other classes get involved in sports that the way of performing sports (which discipline, which club, etc.) becomes the more important means of distinction and the better indicator for class differences. While mere access to sports is a privilege first, it is access to *certain* sports practices later. So before a model of stratification such as Bourdieu's is rejected and class distinction is declared as irrelevant, the specific conditions and probable changes of the field must be considered carefully. It is in this sense that we have to look at questions of current "high" and "popular" culture.

Figure 1 shows the graphical output of a correspondence analysis on the described data. It provides a model of the "space of cultural practices" resembling the one of Bourdieu's in "Distinction" (1986). Note that it is not a theoretical construction, but based (as exactly as possible) solely on the results of the statistical procedure.¹ The item positions are defined by their scores on the two major dimensions explaining the highest share of variance. In terms of Bourdieu, the class fractions with highest total capital are expected on top and with lowest at the bottom, those with a higher share of cultural capital on the one vs. economic capital on the other side. At large, the model confirms that assumption. The y-axis spans from professions (lawyers, doctors), engineers and teachers, all with comparably high education and income, to working classes and students with less total capital. Their positions on the x-axis also indicate that they lack different sorts of capital. While workers, or at least skilled workers in Germany, tend to have higher incomes than students, the latter tend to have higher educational degrees, but are not earning money (yet). We also find this divide by capital structure in the higher classes, with engineers on the "economic" and teachers on the "cultural" side, though not as striking as in the lower area of the model. Furthermore, in this section the x-axis seems to be highly determined by the age of the fractions, as their average age is decreasing from pensioners on the left, via the workers' fractions and the occupations in social/medical services (on average the youngest group apart from students) in the middle to the students on the right.

Focussing on the characteristics of cultural practice, a strong link between the fractions of the upper classes and aspects of higher culture (*italic*) and "exclusive" taste is visible. Apart from few items referring to a distinct taste in other areas of lifestyle (having antique furnishing, serving "exquisite" meals for guests), most of the "exclusive" items stem from higher culture: knowledge about composers and compositions, preferences for painters like Renoir, having visited the Ger-

¹Correspondence Analysis is a multivariate method of dimension reduction, comparable to factor analysis. However, it can be used for categorial data and provides a graphical output, visualising the position of items in a space defined by the two major dimensions. Although the numeric solution is more important for the interpretation, a graphical output can be used as well (Greenacre & Blasius, 1994). The model here is based on a crosstab originally containing 15 class fractions and 210 items of cultural practice. The two dimensions cover 60% explained variance. Only items which are sufficiently defined by one of these dimensions (inertia > .250) have been used, many items were deleted for reasons of perceivability.

man Pinakothek (a famous arts museum in Munich, not comparable to the Louvre in Paris, though), etc. In contrast, in the lower areas we find characteristics of what Bourdieu describes as lower-class taste on the left side: signs of a rather “functional” taste like “nutritious meals” or an “understated” dress-style, bad knowledge of classic music and preferences for what might be the least valuable (because generally known and popular in Germany) products of high culture, like Rembrandt or the Blue Danube. On the lower right side of Figure 1 many aspects of popular culture (underlined) are situated, like good knowledge about films and their directors, preference for a “fashionable” dress-style or comics as genre. In fact, most characteristic would be the preferred pop music artists whom I do not mention here as understanding them would require much familiarity with the German situation. These popular culture items are associated strongly with the student fractions, i.e. the youngest groups.

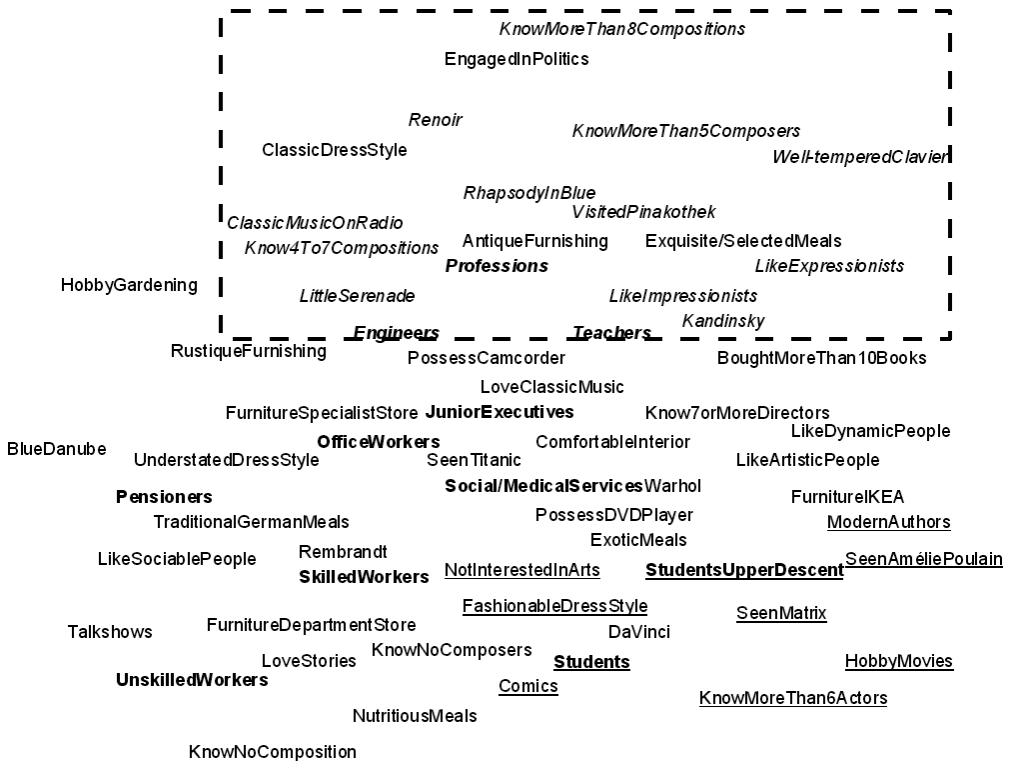


Figure 1: Space of Cultural Practices

Thus, at the first glance, there is good evidence for Bourdieu’s assumptions on the differences of class tastes. A strong association can be found between higher classes and “highbrow” culture, as well as between lower classes and “popular” culture. “Highbrow” practices seem to apply to specific resources of upper classes, especially cultural capital in terms of familiarity with pieces and actors, but partly also economic capital for expensive goods like antique furniture. Concerning more popular practices, this specific capital seems to be rather unnecessary. They can usually be accessed easier, cheaper and quicker, as they do not require greater economic efforts or the

special familiarity with legitimate culture, which Bourdieu (1986) considers necessary for judging and enjoying it. That does not mean that popular culture cannot be distinctive, but it indicates different usability of capital and different modes of distinction. Resuming the logics of form and content mentioned above, it can be assumed that while higher culture still requires higher costs of access and thus the affection to it in general is a class symbol, popular culture is available to all classes. Thus, other patterns of stratification, here age is foremost, are more evident. This is also supported by the results of Stamm and Lamprecht (1994), who found that affection to higher culture is rather determined by class, but to more popular forms of entertainment by age. Class differences might still be significant but would require a more detailed analysis of the forms of pop-cultural practices, which cannot be undertaken here. Bourdieu's model can integrate other stratification patterns, but how important they are, depends on the field and the means of distinction it provides.

UPPER CLASS TASTE BETWEEN “HIGHBROW” AND “OMNIVORE”

Thus far, only the distribution of the different cultural practices according to capital requirements has been described, as opposed to the characterisation of class taste. In fact, it was merely shown that higher culture is exclusive for the upper classes to some degree; this does not mean the upper-class taste only consists of these exclusive elements. Some methodological remarks on correspondence analysis should help to clarify that. Most important is that the assigning of items to classes is based on relative, not absolute frequencies. An item is placed closer to a class, the higher the difference of relative frequencies is compared to the other classes. For example, the Little Serenade is often preferred in higher fractions (teachers: 72%), still quite frequently though by the lower ones (skilled workers: 57%). It may be typical for the upper class, but it is not “exclusive”. Instead, Bach's less famous Well-tempered Clavier is rather seldom preferred in the higher fractions (teachers 33%), but almost never by any others (skilled workers: ~0%). It can be rightfully considered “exclusive”, but not as typical for the higher classes. Furthermore, items in the middle of the space are not necessarily typical for middle classes. Their position can also imply an equal distance to all classes, caused by a relatively equal distribution between all fractions; as in the case of Van Gogh as preferred painter, named by about a third of pensioners, workers, students, employees in the commercial sector, teachers and professions. Thus, correspondence analysis is indeed a “relational technique” (Bourdieu, 1986), suitable to inform us about the *relative* positions of practices and classes, about whether an item *rather* suits one or the other class. To characterise “the” taste of predefined classes, for instance a completely “highbrow” and exclusive one, it is less appropriate. Neither can it prove the consistency of *individual* practice across fields, i.e. a lifestyle following the class habitus in all aspects cannot be confirmed (Miller, 1989, p. 203). Consider the characteristics on top of Figure 1 (within dashed frame) strongly associated with the upper classes. As they are almost exclusively stated by persons of the higher fractions, they make up the exclusive class taste. In contrast, no case in the sample has more than half of these characteristics. That means there is no single person with that exclusive lifestyle. It is always different individuals or part-groups who shape the distinctive class practices in a field, but they 'do not follow the typical class taste in *all* fields.

Given that, it is no surprise many studies find rather heterogeneous and “omnivorous” than completely “highbrow” or “exclusive” tastes, especially, though not only, in the upper class (see Tampubolon, 2008). Accordingly, data analysed here also shows a combination of both “legiti-

mate” and “omnivorous” tastes. On the one hand the most “expensive” (in both economic and cultural senses) goods and practices, especially those considered parts of high culture, are found in the upper classes exclusively. On the other hand, these classes do not avoid popular culture, but their taste includes preferences for many of the generally most popular goods and works. Detective stories, the film “Titanic”, a cosy interior, van Gogh, considering “a sunset at sea” as a beautiful motif for a picture, etc.; many practices and goods are equally preferred in all classes, including the higher ones. They obviously do not stick to high culture here and do not draw distinctive borders. How do those findings affect Bourdieu’s theory of distinction?

First, class differences are still relevant. Knowledge of and taste for high culture remain highly exclusive, as the lower classes often have poor knowledge and no preference at all for any of the practices on offer. It follows that an “omnivorous” taste combining high and popular culture tends to be more frequent in the upper classes. Although we find a kind of “popular omnivorism” including aspects of high culture within lower classes as well, it is then characterised by less distinctive combinations. Tables 4a and b show a typical example: Mozart’s Little Serenade is quite popular in Germany, something you might hear on the radio, in TV commercials or in a shopping mall. It is the classic piece with the highest total preference among participants and is equally distributed, so despite its popularity it is not rejected by the upper classes. However, they combine it with exclusive pieces like those of Bach and reject other “low-brow” pieces like the Blue Danube, which lower classes prefer. Similar examples can be found in all fields.

Table 4a: Preference for “A Little Serenade”*

| Upper classes | Middle classes | Lower classes |
|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| 70.9% | 67.6% | 70.6% |

* Participants were asked to pick three favourites from a list of 15 pieces of classic music.

Table 4b: Those, preferring “A Little Serenade” also like...

| | Upper classes | Middle classes | Lower classes |
|----------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| Blue Danube | 10.3% | 39.1% | 70.8% |
| Well-tempered Clavier/Bach | 30.7% | 13.0% | 4.2% |

CULTURAL PRACTICES: LOSING SIGNIFICANCE?

Thus we learn that class structures stay relevant for stratification in cultural practices and that the logic of distinction is still working. Mehus argues in line with DiMaggio (1987) and Holt (1998) that goods have become less important status-definers than tastes, as we witness “an historical shift where the objectified form has been surpassed by the embodied form in advanced capitalist societies” (Mehus, 2005, p. 323). Although the argument seems a bit over-generalised, the tendency is correct and in line with the logics of accessibility and differentiation remarked earlier. As cultural products take a commodified form, they are accessible for all those with enough capital to realise it. To listen to Bach, you do not have to be part of some exclusive circle summoning such musicians, but just go and get your CD or download. When mere access to such cultural goods and practices is no longer a privilege, it is in the forms of usage where we have to study the differences. Of course, there is a distinctive difference between these two options of consuming culture, and there are uncountable ways of keeping up social closure in new forms.

In fact, this is the very core of historical changes generating new practices by distinction, just as sports history reveals. So in this sense, practices which have lost their symbolic function are modified or replaced by new ones with greater significance.

However, when this game of distinction is virtually unlimited, the question is: why do we find, instead of a newly shaped exclusive taste, an omnivorous upper class taste mixed with popular, “worthless” goods? That indeed has implications for the value of Bourdieu’s theory, as it puts in question the meaning of the class habitus as unifying principle of practice and, deriving from that, the function of cultural practices as symbolic capital. If the status of formerly exclusive practices is threatened by the increasing access of lower classes, it is becoming more difficult to secure distinctive gains everywhere. Investing in the most exclusive goods of all fields is still possible, but has increasing costs. That might be less threatening for distinction in terms of economic capital, as the usual logic remains: if the others can afford a big car, buy a bigger one. For cultural capital, though, the consequences of commodification are more severe. Easy access to high culture enables its popularisation and threatens the benefits of class-based familiarity. An example: the piece “Nessun Dorma” from Puccini’s opera “Turandot”, which might have been considered rather exclusive, was presented in a British TV show recently and is currently available as a mobile ring tone; it is quite popular among younger Germans. If formerly exclusive goods can be devalued that quickly, even investments in fields of high culture are becoming increasingly insecure. Instead of relying on the habitual taste, attention to developments in the respective field has to be paid in order to secure distinctive gains. Upholding an exclusive taste needs more effort, as well as capital resources in terms of time. More and more, people have to decide on what they should spend time and money and might abandon of a suitable practice in one field to realise a more distinct one in another. However, that already indicates a situation in which the prestabilised harmony of practice, where people “only have to follow the leanings of their habitus” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 223), does not work any longer. If the practice is rather calculated, a question of rational choice, it is a situation of crisis for the habitus, in which Bourdieu (1989, p. 397) sees potential for reflexivity and change of dispositions. Under the constant threat of popularisation, a reflexive practice is probably no longer an exception (see also Crossley, 2003; Sweetman, 2003). Thus there would be more room for a rather freely chosen taste, still being constrained but with different, more individual strategies. That also resembles the explanation provided by Lahire (2004), who also argues that patterns of taste tend to be individualised. However, this is not in the sense of growing reflexivity. He rather points to the importance of other influences than class in the structuring of dispositions due to multiple and heterogeneous socialisation. As the generation of habitus’ is becoming more individual, the schemes of perception and appreciation would be more variable and thus leading to differentiated practices transcending the class influences.

In this sense, if increasing accessibility of all cultural practices leads to greater degrees of individual choice, their practical function as a means of reproducing class structures symbolically is becoming doubtful. If it is not granted that a practice is based on a specific “relation to the world” (Bourdieu), which marks the class, if it is rather freely chosen and possibly deviating from taste in other fields, it has lost its symbolic meaning. For example: what would you think of your business partner, being a marvellous connoisseur of the visual arts, but when it comes to music sticking to cheap trash pop? What of your football club mate spending time in that weird modern art gallery when his team is away? A combined taste is a rather insecure indicator, as you never know which “end” you have.

Once again, this is not to say all borders have blurred and social stratification in cultural practice has vanished. As shown, widely shared practices exist where equality in access increases. This is not the case in all fields; especially in those of high culture it seems that patterns of exclusivity are rather stable. This situation of distinctive practices on the one, combined with all-appealing practices on the other hand puts up new questions, not at least for the impact of social stratification on sports and its symbolic function.

CONCLUSIONS: SPORTS AND CHANGING PATTERNS OF CLASS CULTURE

Before finishing with some remarks on how sports are affected by the increasingly complex constellation of class and cultural practices, I would like to summarise the arguments so far. Firstly, Bourdieu's concept of class is a relational one. That means we shall not expect a constructed class model to lead to equal class differences in all areas of practice. How accurate habitual dispositions and capital resources can be transferred into a specific practice varies across fields and the practices they offer. Thus, the exclusiveness and "degree of distinction" is changing. Secondly, it was shown that class still is the most striking pattern of stratification in some fields, especially in high culture, while it loses its significance where access to practices is easier and possible for more people. That is the case in popular culture, where other differences than those in capital resources, foremost age, are more important. Thirdly, we have seen that a constantly exclusive class taste cannot be confirmed. Instead, there is more support for the "omnivore" thesis. Upper class taste is exclusive in its knowledge of and affection to high culture, but combines it with many aspects of "lowbrow" culture, including the most popular practices. Thus, while class still leads to distinctive practices, it does not necessarily do so in all fields of practice. Fourthly, that indicates that cultural practice is, to some degree and still within boundaries, more freely chosen and individual patterns partly overlap class effects. Thus, few practices are suitable as class symbols and the decoding of single lifestyle aspects becomes more complex, practically weakening their function as symbolic capital and making it more difficult to grasp them sociologically.

Sports are, of course, highly intertwined with processes of social stratification and can be analysed in terms of Bourdieu's theory of cultural practices. The discussion of recent findings on the impact of class on sports practice has revealed that the same issues as in other fields are currently at stake. Apparently, class and capital resources still structure patterns of differentiation in sports but they seem to be changing. Class taste seems to tend to be rather "omnivorous" than completely exclusive practices in sports, too (Ohl, 2008), and there are also hints for more individualised patterns of sports practice. To learn about how and to what degree this change of stratification and thus the symbolic function of sports is taking place, the situation in the sports field first has to be analysed in detail. Sports do not simply display *the* social class structure, but translate it into practices in a field-specific way. To some degree, sports may unify class fractions which are distinguished in other fields, and vice versa, separate classes unified elsewhere. They might provide a differentiation partly shaped by other factors than class, which again might be meaningless in other fields. As Scheerder et al. (2005) indicate, participation in sports at all seems to have become less exclusive as more and other people are gaining access to sports via new forms, also in line with the premises of "sports for all". That indicates that class becomes less relevant for mere participation, but then it is likely to appear in more subtle forms. Bourdieu sees opportunities for distinction especially in the organisational form of sports practices - expensive

equipment, social closure in exclusive clubs, etc. and in the specific relation to ones own body they display (Bourdieu, 1978; Tomlinson, 2004). However, it should not be neglected that sports also provide limitations to the game of distinction. Particularly competitive sports are bound to specific rules and goal-achievement, thus constraining the display of social inequalities by their own logic (Gebauer, 1986). They leave less room than other practices to aestheticise, to stress “form over function”, which is the main source of all distinction according to Bourdieu (1986). Rather than declaring some kind of sport as class specific or all-appealing, we have to figure out both the means it provides for distinction and the limits it sets to it. Comparing sports to other fields of culture might help to clarify its own character.

Furthermore, we have seen that it is at least doubtful that sports practices are a direct expression of a homogeneous and consistent class-specific lifestyle. If, despite the existence of class structures, the consistency of individual practice across all fields cannot be taken for granted but is becoming more complex, sports practices might deviate from “regular” taste and display a rather special section of differentiated habitual schemes. They can well be differing from the individual set of cultural practices, perhaps revealing only parts of the “whole relation towards the world” the habitus marks. As well as sports might fit schemes and capital perfectly and people keep “faith to style” (Gebauer et al., 2004), they also provide a possibility to generate practices rather *uncommon* for those performing them. Thus, sports functioning as an indicator of lifestyle and class structures might be less obvious. Within the whole complex of cultural practices, sports thus might reveal other dispositions and strategies than in an isolated perspective. To learn that, we need a complex perspective to identify sports symbolic meaning (Stempel, 2005, p. 429). As Bourdieu himself said: “one would be likely to make serious mistakes if one attempted to study sporting practices... without replacing them in the universe of practices that are bound up with them” (Bourdieu 1988, p. 833).

REFERENCES

- Berard, T. J. (2005). Rethinking Practices and Structures. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 35, 196-230.
- Bourdieu, P. (1978). Sport and Social Class. *Social Science Information*, 17, 819-840.
- Bourdieu, P. (1985). The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups. *Social Science Information*, 2, 195-220.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bourdieu, P. (1987). *Sozialer Sinn. Kritik der theoretischen Vernunft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Bourdieu, P. (1988). Program for a Sociology of Sport. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 2, 153-161.
- Bourdieu, P. (1989). Antworten auf einige Einwände. In K. Eder (Ed.), *Klassenlage, Lebensstil und kulturelle Praxis* (pp. 395-410). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. (1977). *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Sage Publications.
- Crossley, N. (2003). From Reproduction to Transformation. Social Movement Fields and the Radical Habitus. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 6, 43-68.
- Elias, N., & Dunning, E. (1986). *Quest for Excitement. Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process*. Oxford, Cambridge (USA): Blackwell Publishers.
- Fiske, J. (1997). Die kulturelle Ökonomie des Fantums. In SpoKK (Ed.), *Kursbuch Jugendkultur* (pp. 54-69). Mannheim: Bollmann.

- Gebauer, G. (1986). Festordnung und Geschmacksdistinktionen. In G. Gebauer, & G. Hortleder (Eds.), *Sport – Eros – Tod* (pp. 113-143). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Gebauer, G. et al. (2004). *Treue zum Stil - die aufgeführte Gesellschaft*. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Greenacre, M. & Blasius, J. (1994). *Correspondence Analysis in the Social Sciences*. London / San Diego: Academic Press.
- Gugutzer, R. (2008). Sport im Prozess gesellschaftlicher Individualisierung. In K. Weis & R. Gugutzer (Eds.), *Handbuch Sportsoziologie* (pp. 88-99). Schorndorf: Hofmann.
- Hradil, S. (1989). System und Akteur. Eine empirische Kritik der soziologischen Kulturtheorie Pierre Bourdieus. In K. Eder (Ed.), *Klassenlage, Lebensstil und kulturelle Praxis* (pp. 111-141). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Lahire, B. (2004). *La culture des individus. Dissonances culturelles et distinction de soi*. Paris: Editions La Découverte.
- Mehus, I. (2005). Distinction through Sport Consumption. Spectators of Soccer, Basketball and Ski Jumping. *International Review for the Sociology of Sports*, 40, 321-333.
- Miller, M. (1989). Systematisch verzerrte Legitimationsdiskurse - Einige kritische Überlegungen zu Bourdieus Habitusstheorie. In K. Eder (Ed.), *Klassenlage, Lebensstil und kulturelle Praxis* (pp. 191-219). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Ohl, F. (2008). Local Sport between Identity and Economy. In D. Jütting et al. (Eds.), *Local Sport in Europe, Proceedings of the 4th EASS Conference 2007* (24-35), Münster.
- Peterson, R.A., & Kern, R.M. (1996). Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore. *American Sociological Review*, 61, 900-907.
- Rojek, C. (1995). *Decentring Leisure*. London: Sage Publications.
- Scheerder, J. et al. (2005). Stratification Patterns of Active Sport Involvement Among Adults. Social Change and Persistence. *International Review for the Sociology of Sports*, 40, 139-162.
- Schulze, G. (1995). *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft. Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart*. Frankfurt am Main & New York: Campus.
- Skille, E. (2005). Individuality or Cultural Reproduction? Adolescents' Sport Participation in Norway: Alternative vs. Conventional Sports. *International Review for the Sociology of Sports*, 40, 307-320.
- Lamprecht, M., & Stamm, H. (1994). *Die soziale Ordnung der Freizeit*. Zürich: Seismo.
- Stempel, C. (2005). Adult Participation Sports as Cultural Capital. A Test of Bourdieu's Theory of the Field of Sports. *International Review for the Sociology of Sports*, 40, 411-431.
- Sugden, J., & Tomlinson, A. (2004). Theorising Sport, Social Class and Status. In J. Coakley, & E. Dunning (Eds.), *Handbook of Sports Studies* (pp. 309-321). London: Sage Publications.
- Sweetman, P. (2003). Twenty-first Century Dis-Ease? Habitual Reflexivity or the Reflexive Habitus. *Sociological Review*, 4, 528-549.
- Tampubolon, G. (2008). Distinction in Britain, 2001-2004? Unpacking Homology and the 'Aesthetics' of the Popular Class. *European Societies*, 10, 403-428.
- Tomlinson, A. (2004). Pierre Bourdieu and the Sociological Study of Sport - Habitus, Capital and Field. In R. Giulianotti (Ed.), *Sport and Modern Social Theorists* (pp. 161-172). Houndmills / Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Veblen, T. (1897). *Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York, London: Macmillan
- Wilson, T. (2002). The Paradox of Social Class and Sports Involvement. The Roles of Cultural and Economic Capital. *International Review for the Sociology of Sports*, 37, 5-16.