

## Pierre Bourdieu's "Masculine Domination" Thesis and the Gendered Body in Sport and Physical Culture

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This paper explores the central thesis of one of Pierre Bourdieu's last texts before his death in 2001, *La Domination Masculine* (1999). This text was subsequently translated and published in English in 2001 as *Masculine Domination*. I present the view that this text is not merely his only sustained commentary on gender relations but a potentially important intellectual contribution to the way in which we might view the embodiment of gender relations in sport and physical culture. Accordingly, I examine Bourdieu's relational thesis of masculine domination as a three-part process of observation, somatization, and naturalization. I then give consideration to how sociologists of sport might use such critical analytical tools to render more transparent what Bourdieu refers to as the "illusio" of this phenomenon that is constructed by the practical everyday embodied enactments of gender relations in sport and physical culture.

Cet article explore la thèse centrale d'un des derniers textes de Pierre Bourdieu publiés avant sa mort en 2001, soit *La domination masculine* (sorti en 1999 puis traduit et publié en anglais en 2001). Je suggère que ce texte ne constitue pas simplement son commentaire sur les relations de sexe/genre mais plutôt une contribution potentiellement importante à la façon dont nous pouvons voir l'incorporation (« *embodiment* ») des relations de sexe/genre en sport et plus largement dans la culture physique. J'examine donc la thèse de Bourdieu sur la domination masculine en tant que processus comportant trois parties soit l'observation, la somatisation et la naturalisation. Je considère ensuite comment les sociologues du sport peuvent utiliser ces outils d'analyse critique pour rendre plus apparent ce que Bourdieu appelle l'« *illusio* » de ce phénomène construit par le biais des comportements quotidiens qui incorporent les relations de sexe/genre en sport et en culture physique.

In recent years, Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual work has attracted considerable interest among scholars of the sociology of sport, physical culture, and physical education (see, e.g., Brown, 2005; Clement, 1995; Gorely, Holroyd, & Kirk, 2003;

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Jarvie & Maguire, 1994; Kay & Laberge, 2002; Kew, 1986; Light & Kirk, 2000; Tomlinson, 2004; Zevenbergen, Edwards, & Skinner, 2002). Indeed, the interest shown in Bourdieu's work by sport sociologists has been both preempted and reciprocated by Bourdieu himself whose writing has periodically devoted specific attention to the "field" of sport and physical culture (Bourdieu, 1978, 1992, 1999a). Part of the reason for this has been the way in which the sporting body exemplifies many of Bourdieu's conceptual ideas around how the body acts as a mediating entity, linking individuals to the broader socio-spatial processes of power, reproduction, and change. For example, no doubt inspired by the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962) before him, Bourdieu consistently used the metaphor of "the feel for the game" in articulating how the body binds together his central theoretical constructs of habitus, capital, and field (see Bourdieu, 1984, 1990, 1993). Gruneau (1993) puts it rather succinctly:

Bourdieu continues to suggest that through a better understanding of the body in sport or dance "one could possibly contribute to a theory of belief." . . . And a theory of belief is absolutely essential in the world of politics, because of the "problem of seizing awareness." (p. 105)

Following a series of semantic connections, Bourdieu uses the metaphor of a "feel for the game" to develop a sociological sensitivity towards notions of "interest," social investment, and importantly, "illusio." He (1998) clarifies this as follows:

In his well know book *Homo Ludens*, Huizinga says that through false etymology, one can make *illusio*, a Latin word derived from the root *ludus* (game), mean the fact of being in the game, of being invested in the game, of taking the game seriously. *Illusio* is the fact of being caught up in and by the game. . . . That is what I meant in speaking of interest: games which matter to you are important and interesting because they have been imposed and introduced in your mind, in your body, in a form called the feel for the game. (pp. 76-77)

However, while Bourdieu's attention to the sporting body has made genuinely insightful contributions to the development of contemporary perspectives in the sociology of sport, it has been rather less well-received in terms of accommodating the *gendered* body. Indeed, his ideas have been quite reasonably described as androcentric in conception (Laberge, 1995; McCall, 1992). Elsewhere, Hargreaves (1994) attacks Bourdieu's early structuralist leanings, pointing out that: "Bourdieu tends to treat people as if they are properties of the system and fails to appreciate how cultural fields, such as sports, contain the capacity for people/women to resist and change social/gender relations" (p. 21).

Arguably, however, Bourdieu's own conceptual work (as well as the work of others who draw upon it) has evolved considerably in the 1990s into a more reflexive, relational, and multi-dimensional perspective. This is particularly the case with Bourdieu's internalized structures or *habitus*. *Habitus*, Bourdieu asserts, can be defined as "a system of *long-lasting* (rather than permanent) schemes or structures of perception, conception and action" (2005, p. 43; see also Burkitt, 1999; Reay, 1995; Sweetman, 2003; Wacquant, 1992). Importantly, these

dispositional schemes might be seen as *generative rather than determining*, and can be understood as an embodied “generative grammar, but is not an inborn generative grammar . . . . It is a principle of invention, a principle of improvisation. The habitus generates inventions and improvisations but within limits” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 46). A useful analogy of this is the embodied performances of boxers. Thousands of practice hours, “burning in” movement pathways, provide a psycho-physical grammar for engagement that is deployed spontaneously and creatively in each new confrontation with an opponent. There are clear limits, however, for the improvisation of these movements, as they must be recognizable within the limits of a system of movement that is recognized as legitimate boxing. Therefore, it is this creative *potential* of the habitus and its interaction with the social world that creates struggle and change or continuity. As Bourdieu describes it, “In all cases where the dispositions encounter conditions (including fields) different to those in which they were constructed and assembled, there is a dialectical confrontation, between habitus, as structured structure and objective structures” (p. 46). This can be clearly illustrated in the field of boxing, where the outcome of confrontations between boxers with opposing styles (e.g., “fighters” versus “pugilists”) can lead to changes in the structuring of the field, with coaches looking for new strategies, footwork, punching combinations, and so on that have been demonstrated to be effective against an opposing style. In terms of gender relations, this generative interpretation is evident in *Masculine Domination* when Bourdieu (2001) turns his attention to the potential of female sports practice and observes:

By contrast, intensive practice of a sport leads to a profound transformation of the subjective and objective experience of the body. It no longer exists only for others or, which amounts to the same thing, for the mirror . . . . Instead of being a body-for-others it becomes a body for oneself; the passive body becomes an active and acting body. (p. 67)

Clearly, many sociologists have already considered the objectifying and sexualizing tendencies of the male gaze over the female athlete’s body (see, e.g., Eskes, Duncan, & Miller, 1998; Henderson, 2001). However, Bourdieu regards the female sporting body as having considerable potential for generating a material *and* symbolic subversion of masculine domination that challenges the gender orthodox “gaze.” It should be stated from the outset that Bourdieu, like others, remains cautious about this potential because, as Mennesson (2000) concluded in her study of women boxers, although the female sporting body can generate material embodied change, and body-for-self experiences, its images can also be manipulated to generate the reconstruction of symbolic gender orthodoxy. In short, both possibilities are co-present in any given social setting. Nevertheless, material embodied changes rising from practice and then feeding practice in a generative sense can slowly, imperceptibly at times, challenge and transform the gendered habitus of both the viewer and the viewed. The purpose of this paper therefore is to explore Bourdieu’s tools for locating the gendered body in sport and physical culture, and how this helps us to read its relational, generative possibilities (for change and continuity). In so doing, we might begin to apply them critically to take on a slightly different view of the embodiment of gender relations in this field of human activity. In addressing these issues, the engagement with Bourdieu, as well as the language of his writings and their translations, invariably becomes an issue,

more specifically those associated with the linguistic "gaps" created by translation, cultural writing style, and philosophical presence. However, I believe Bourdieu's work is worth the extra investment of time it sometimes requires for many of us from a different scholastic tradition to come to terms with both his style of reflexivity and the depth of philosophical abstraction that he brings to his sociology. This is because the meaning lies not behind this language but *through it*.<sup>1</sup>

## Masculine Domination As a Practical and Symbolic Relation

What makes this perspective so useful is the way in which it makes connections between everyday practice, experience, and feeling of being a "gendered body" and the symbolic worlds of image and discourse that this body generates. As I shall argue, while Bourdieu is not alone in making these connections, the tools he offers us are potentially insightful.

Rather like Connell's (1995) notion of body-reflexive practice, Bourdieu (2001) contends that masculine domination remains both a symbolic feature and a practical product of everyday life. Moreover, the reflexive nature of practice looms large in both of their theories. One apparent difference, however, is worthy of further attention here, as it illustrates an important connection between the ideas that Bourdieu is seeking to develop in relation to masculine domination and the ideas of a number of other contemporary gender theorists of which Connell is one. This concerns the issue of pluralized forms of gender or, as Connell terms it, *multiple masculinities and femininities*. Connell's theoretical model substantially (and quite rightly) develops a relational view of the "gender order" that sees the potential for numerous positions to be adopted within that order. Hence, a plurality of masculinities and femininities are both possible and observable from this standpoint; however, the convergence of ideation around what Bourdieu refers to as *masculine domination / libido dominandi* and what Connell refers to as hegemonic masculinity is significant. Both, in their differently theorized ways, articulate a central masculine ideological core that is manifested through practice and ultimately enfolded in bodies, but constituted largely as a symbolic dichotomy between the masculine and the feminine in Western culture. This "internal relation" of the gender order is kept alive through the dynamic principle of alterity or otherness, always constructed in relational opposition to each other. While not reducible to each others' concepts, Bourdieu's terms that form the basis of argumentation in this paper, masculine domination and libido dominandi, are taken to refer directly to this hegemonic ideological core and its symbolic and practical manifestations. Without wishing to reify these constructs, it is perhaps possible to say that masculinity and femininity can "float free" from men and women per se and take on a quality that is simultaneously present in bodies, structures, practices, discourses, and ultimately symbolic universes that provide the material for the ontological fabric of gender relations and gender identity in everyday life. Therefore, the consideration of masculine domination in this paper should not be read as "male domination," although of course this may be an effect of gender power relations, nor should it be considered a singular type of masculinity per se but, rather, acts of gender relations that draw upon the gender binary in symbolically significant ways.

Where their observations on the topic clearly diverge is in the degree of articulation that Connell (1995) reserves for all the socio-cultural spaces that are opened up by the dynamics of the “patriarchal dividend” (the various ways of benefiting from patriarchy without fully being an active advocate of it). Clearly, some men (including gay men in particular) have reason to distance themselves from this hegemonic core, although they also often get certain dividends from drawing on it through their everyday actions as men. Connell explains this through the application of Gramscian notions of hegemony with all its fluidity in terms of power dynamics. As Whitehead and Barrett (2001) consider, “Since masculinity is something that one does rather than something that one has, it would be appropriate to say that men ‘do’ masculinity in a variety of ways and in a variety of settings, depending on the resources available to them” (p. 18). Conversely, any such rapprochement from a Bourdieusian viewpoint might quite reasonably claim that all of the positions that emerge from the patriarchal dividend, in spite of their obvious moments of resistance, substantially reinforce the symbolic violence inherent in the masculine domination / hegemonic masculine ideology in its rather more singular sense. Put rather differently, underneath the veneer of the particularism of multiple masculine or feminine identities exists a rather uncomfortable dualism that in its own pernicious manner remains unchanged, in spite of the various positions we might take up in relation to it. This symbolic universe is thus drawn on in the plethora of symbolic acts that men and women must engage in on a daily basis. While a number of relatively stable gender identities might be constructed in a certain position relative to these, such socio-spatial positionings do rather little to challenge the gender dichotomy that has given rise to these positions in the first place. Thus, while Bourdieu’s work might be fairly criticized for not accommodating multiplicity, it assumes it, and also assumes, as do a number of other gender theorists including Connell, that we must continue to entertain the uncomfortable idea that such multiplicity is still generated out of particularist variations around a binary ideological continuum that serves to perpetuate patriarchal gender relations.

With the above caveat in mind, it is perhaps important to retain the idea that such gender domination often sustains itself in very mundane and practical ways, and that the connections between these are very important. In competitive male team sport, for example, the ritualized outpourings of aggression shown through the clenching of fists, the self-magnifying chant, and the invasion of others’ personal space in the celebration that often accompanies victorious moments are typical acts of practical and symbolic masculine domination. Indeed, for Bourdieu (2001), the stability of gender relations over time is surprising, something he explains as the “paradox of doxa.” This is because, in spite of the millions of unquestioned practical actions (doxa) performed every day that would suggest an almost inevitable force for change in gender relations, these actions often seem to have the paradoxical effect of stabilizing gender relations. Here, masculine domination represents “the prime example of the submission to the social orthodoxy,” so much so that even “the most intolerable conditions of existence can so often be perceived as acceptable and even natural” (p. vii). The conditions for social agents’ submission are created by the effect of, using Bourdieu’s (2001) term, *symbolic violence*, which he defines as:

A gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition or even feeling. This extraordinary social relation thus offers an opportunity to grasp the logic of the domination exerted in the name of a symbolic principle known and recognised by the dominant and the dominated—a language (or a pronunciation), a lifestyle (or a way of thinking, speaking and acting)—and, more generally, a distinctive property, whether emblem or stigma. (pp. 1-2)

Therefore, the paradoxical doxa of masculine domination is the everyday practical orthodoxy of symbolic violence that operates to *naturalize* the social order and render it ahistorical and dehistoricized (see also Butler, 1993; Chapman & Rutherford, 1988). An example here might include the seemingly innocuous practice-turned-etiquette of males carrying luggage for their female partners, a practice that practically and symbolically draws upon notions of the physical superiority of men over women. As Bourdieu puts it, the task is to “break the relationship of deceptive familiarity that binds us to our tradition” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 3).

This critical process is particularly relevant in sport because of the way in which the performing body is both a product and symbol of the socio-culturally constructed self for present and future generations. More specifically, it involves viewing the gendered sporting body-self as a significant site of symbolic transference of seemingly natural, invariant dispositions and to “take as one’s privileged object the historical mechanisms and institutions which, in the course of history, have continuously abstracted these invariants from history” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 4). Probably the best example of dehistoricization here is that of the “desocialized” association between men, masculinity, and competition. Aggressive competitive dispositions are all too often rendered as natural traits and, as such, lead to acts of symbolic violence that are excused and rendered as a product of our evolution rather than as socially constructed, rehearsed, and ritually performed social acts.

However, the task of recognizing such social acts for what they are is difficult because it requires us to examine our own inculcated perceptions. As Bourdieu (2001) points out, “When we try to understand masculine domination we are therefore likely to resort to modes of thought that are the product of that domination” (p. 5). Bourdieu suggests that a socio-analysis of the androcentric unconscious is the only way to break out of this circle. It is beyond the scope of this paper to carry out such an analysis. Instead, and more modestly, I intend to consider some of the “tools” that Bourdieu provides us with to carry out this task and to suggest some starting points in the better-defined social space of the field of sport and physical culture. These tools, I will argue, offer scholars in this social space some possibilities for tackling the problem of naturalization and dehistoricization without uncoupling the material body and its symbolic effect. In short, Bourdieu’s approach is distinctive because he refuses to align himself with the “strident calls of ‘postmodern philosophers’ for the supersession of dualism” (p. 103). While not antagonistic towards postmodern philosophy per se, he agrees with Judith Butler (1993) that linguistic subversions of the dualistic categories of thought do little to challenge these dualisms because they are “deeply rooted in things (structure) and in bodies” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 103). As Bourdieu (2001) emphasizes, such

dualisms “do not spring from a simple effect of verbal naming and cannot be abolished by an act of performative magic, since the genders, far from being simple ‘roles’ that can be played at will (in the manner of ‘drag queens’), are inscribed in bodies and in a universe from which they derive their strength” (p. 103). He agrees with Butler (1993), who contends that:

Certain formulations of the radical constructivist position appear almost compulsively to produce a moment of recurrent exasperation, for it seems that when the constructivist is constructed as linguistic idealist, the constructivist refutes the reality of bodies, the relevance of science, the alleged facts of birth, aging, illness and death. (p. 10)

When laying out their respective agendas, Butler and Bourdieu certainly occupy a particular intellectual space with regards to the importance of the material body. This is evident, for example, when we consider Bourdieu’s comment above in relation to Butler’s (1993) articulation of materialization:

How, then can one think through the matter of bodies as a kind of materialization governed by regulatory norms in order to ascertain the workings of heterosexual hegemony in the formation of what qualifies as a viable body? How does the materialization of the norm in bodily formation produce a domain of abjected bodies, a field of deformation, which in failing to qualify as the fully human, fortifies those regulatory norms? (p. 16)

While Butler’s work offers a significant intellectual intervention on the subject of the gendered body, Bourdieu’s offers us a different set of analytical tools with which to approach its materiality. In what follows, I will consider Bourdieu’s central thesis of masculine domination that involves what he describes as the *process* of circular causality of vision, anatomical difference, and legitimation of domination. This circular cycle is presented as a three-part interrelated process of observation, somatization, and naturalization. The latter appropriation is more a distillation than a reinterpretation of his ideas, as Bourdieu uses all these terms regularly in presenting his thesis.

I conclude with a consideration of how we might use these tools in the sociological study of the gendered body in sport and physical culture to further challenge the “illusio” of the biologically “fixed” gendered body and provide articulations that help us to construct a view of the *transformative* generative potential of gendered sporting bodies in different ways.

## **Observation: The (Di) Vision of the Gendered Body**

The principle of observation concerns the symbolic opposition and the (di)vision of the gendered body. Bourdieu holds that the magnified masculine image propagates itself through the repeated, and therefore confirming, vision or *observation* of socially constructed gender imprints on the material body. Social agents assume this differentiated image to be natural, thus setting up a “circular causality” of observation, somatization, and naturalization. Bourdieu (2001) states:



Because the social principle of vision constructs anatomical difference and because this anatomical difference becomes the basis and apparently natural justification of the social vision which founds it, there is thus a relationship of circular causality which confines thought within the self-evidence of relations of domination. (p. 11)

In so doing, Bourdieu encourages us to move beyond the representationalist analyses of bodies, as these remain powerfully locked into the basic visual symbolic oppositions that stem from epistemologies and ontologies dominated by Cartesian dualisms (see Burkitt, 1999; Shilling, 2001; Thrift, 1997, 2000). While neither easy nor evident, this encourages a critical sensitivity towards the idea that on both sides of the mediated image is a thinking and feeling body that is nevertheless caught up in a web of symbolic masculine domination. We might usefully use this sensibility to help us fine tune our understanding of the "social processes through which sport constructs and naturalizes differences and inequalities between "men" and "women" (Dworkin & Messner, 2002).

A good example of this manifestation is with children whose commentaries often spontaneously reflect their increasing inculcation into, and adoption of, oppositional schemes of perception. Heywood and Dworkin's (2003) work with children reveal their developing schemes of binary perceptions, as revealed in comments made about an image of a female bodybuilder: "Here, young girls touted that they 'did not want to be all yuckery,' or did not want to look 'like a man' and thought that she was 'gross,' while boys stated that she was 'too muscular' and the image made them 'want to look away' (p. 150).

Far from being intellectual beliefs, these naturalized and oppositional visual schemes become embedded in the body-self complex. The symbolic order becomes internalized as a psycho-physical disposition that promotes thoughts, feelings, and physical reactions simultaneously in response to a symbolically transgressive gendered vision (see also Gorely, Holroyd, & Kirk, 2003). As Burkitt (1999) puts it, "Bourdieu seeks to emphasize how this type of learning, which affects men and women's perception of their bodies and selves, does not occur at the cognitive level but at the bodily level" (p. 88).

Therefore, rather like Falk's (1994) work on embodied consumption, the usefulness of this perspective is the way in which it helps us to articulate the embodiment of vision in that the vision of opposition embeds itself not only in the body of the performer and in the mediated image but also *in the bodies of the observers*. The circular causality thus begins when the learned schemes of perception conflate the vision of social difference with interpretation of biological difference. Moreover, it gives substance to Bourdieu's concerns about the linguistic supersession of gender dualisms, as these visual schemes are embodied and therefore cannot simply be re-signified through language, although the acquisition of new narrative resources will be one dimension of any transformative practice. It is to the somatization part of the naturalization process that the discussion will now turn.

## Somatization: The Embodiment of Domination

The identification of gender somatization, the process of embedding relations of domination into the body, is useful for two reasons. First, it further deconstructs



the naturalization process to consider how the material body is worked upon within relations of social domination. Second, and more importantly, it represents a refusal to dissolve the social significance of the material body into a world of increasingly unstable signs and signifiers. Rather, it allows us to articulate how gender relations operate and interrelate at different *levels* (i.e., somatic/symbolic).

Somatization concerns the articulation of social, cultural, and historical processes that, through practice, embed symbolic oppositions into and onto the body. It is also concerned with, and the concomitant construction of, differentially valued gendered schemes of perception that are normatively generated from these. According to Bourdieu (2001), masculine domination “comes from the fact that it combines and condenses two operations: it legitimates a relationship of domination by embedding it in biological nature that is itself a naturalized social construction” (p. 23). Alternatively, we might contemplate this as a process of “somatization of social relations of domination” (p. 23), as through practice, symbolic distinction becomes inscribed into and onto bodies as two opposing yet complimentary forms of habitus (schemes of dispositions). As highlighted earlier, the result of this process is seen as somatization because *both* men and women come to embody and perceive (visually) as *self-evident*, the “illusio” of a *natural* legitimacy of their dominating or dominated bodies and the concomitant social positions and practices that legitimately stem from these naturalized qualities. Therefore, women as well as men consciously and unconsciously come to embody the conditions of their own domination and dominance (see also Bordo, 1989). Many male and female sports participants thus contribute to symbolic violence by enhancing the secondary sexual characteristics of their bodies for public and self-consumption, and in order to remain in “safe” heterosexual symbolic territory. For example, the work of Klein (1993) suggests that many male bodybuilders unconsciously pursue an embodied form of *hypermasculinity* for these purposes. He defines this as “an exaggeration of male traits, be they psychological or physical . . . There is embedded in it a view of radical opposition to all things feminine. Male self-identity is the issue here” (p. 221).

Moreover, for Bourdieu (2001), symbolic domination and violence go to the core of embodiment in that “the dominated habitus” is *somaticized*: “If it is quite illusory to believe that symbolic violence can be overcome with the weapons of consciousness and will alone, this is because the effect and conditions of its efficacy are durably and deeply embedded in the body in the form of dispositions” (p. 39). Bourdieu is careful to emphasize that he is not suggesting women or dominated men choose, love, or enjoy their domination. Such a position would concede to the very prevalent conservative discourses of ahistorical individualism, victim blaming, and the circular causality he so constantly castigates. Rather, he contends:

Far from being the conscious, free, deliberate act of an isolated “subject,” this practical construction is itself the effect of power, durably embedded in bodies of the dominated in the form of schemes of perception and dispositions (to admire, respect, love, etc.) which sensitize them to certain symbolic manifestations of power. (p. 40)

The production of a dominated and dominating habitus is therefore inseparable from that which produces and reproduces them. Just as many women are “woven” into a social structure through their often-dominated habitus, so are men, as their

symbolically relational opposites. Regarding a classic example of "opposed vision," we might consider the highly accomplished juxtaposition of somatized gender relations in the bodies of the female cheerleader and the all-male teams they usually support. These images represent the material manifestation of the effect of practical and symbolic domination on the body for both viewer and viewed. The female cheerleader's body, movements, facial expressions, voice, use of space, and so on, have all been selected and refined to stand in contrast to the muscular, rapidly accelerating, highly charged masculinized habitus of the male athletes (this being particularly demarcated in aggressive contact sports such as American football in the United States and rugby league in Europe and Australia). These relations have all been constructed in complicit accord with a socio-cultural sporting "field" that uses symbolic opposition as a core interpretive framework that imposes certain differentiated regimes of practice upon the body until it adapts and conforms. If any of these gendered bodies do not conform (or, it might be said, "perform conformity" in a more symbolic interactionist sense), then they are made invisible from the mainstream eye and rendered as "unsuitable" or even as an unnatural "other" by those with the dominant schemes of perception and the social legitimacy to make that "judgment." Both Bourdieu and Butler (1993) recognize that performativity is a difficult embodied accomplishment outside of the power exercised by masculine domination for the following reasons:

The subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms. Although this constitutive constraint does not foreclose the possibility of agency, it does locate agency as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power. (p. 15)

More normally, if the practical and symbolic effects of power ensure that the performers' bodies and the embodied schemes of perception of the observers match, then the visual cycle of practical and symbolic domination is once again exercised and reinforced.

The very "real" material, ecological context plays an important role in the process of somatization (Benton, 1991, 2003; Brittan, 1989) through which gender domination takes place. Indeed, following Burkitt (1999), we can begin to account for how it is that the gendered sporting body is also to some significant extent *mediated* by the combination of practice and *artifact*. For example, the somatization of gender power relations through the practical repetition of symbolically gendered posture, gesture, physical expression, and use of social space all have generative potential that are facilitated and enhanced when combined with gendered physical *artifacts* (language systems; clothes; dedicated social spaces; equipment, such as batons and pom-pom's, rugby balls and gum shields; personal belongings, etc.) that are themselves designed for gendered bodies and have the effect of gendering bodies. While Bourdieu maintains that most of these somatized relations are generative in a socially reproductive sense, they also retain the potential for social subversion, as with the example of women's development of a boxing "habitus" through winning the struggle to move into the social space of the world of pugilism (Mennesson, 2000). Notwithstanding the social forces placed upon these women to conform in an aesthetic sense to the dominant meanings given to femininity thus sustaining symbolic domination in the visual domain, at the level of boxing practice

these women nevertheless have conditioned their bodies through a whole series of “masculine”-associated practical relations. These would include relations with objects, such as gloves, rings, punch bags; with social space, such as negotiating gym hierarchies during the use of exercise equipment; with other bodies in that space, such as closing down and dominating an opponent in the ring when sparring, receiving and administering physical pain, and so on. At the “material” level of habitus, these practices radically disrupt traditional<sup>2</sup> “feminine” ways of moving and feeling the body and engaging with other people’s bodies. An illustration of this disruption can be observed between rounds during a boxing match in the form of the traditional practice of a scantily clad female model parading around the ring with a round-number card held aloft, signifying that a female fighter momentarily shares the ring in an ironic material and symbolic juxtaposition of the embodied potentialities of the female body and its legitimate uses. Elsewhere, Bourdieu (2005) has referred to events where dispositions and the conditions and fields are misaligned as *dialectical confrontation*, the outcome of which must be a solution that will often result in the transformation both of field and disposition.

Importantly, therefore, we must consider the outcome of this practical artifactual relation that gives purpose to a whole realm of gendered practical activity or “body work” in which we engage in the use of socially constructed gendered artifacts. These might also include the objects that enable different practices and styles of manicure, and the practical relationships constructed with exercise machinery in modern gymnasias that have themselves been designed around expectations of the ideal gendered body development that might be produced from using them. All of these material relations contribute in powerful ways to somatizing, across time and social space, the broader symbolic oppositions displayed in our myriad intricate practices.

Boxing is not the only example that deserves specific commentary in relation to somatization. Dworkin (2003) notes the phenomenon of the “average” female gym-user who appears to avoid engaging with the resistance equipment that is built for the male physique and physical aspiration. Of course, in avoiding these kinds of machines, the female trainers also avoid the somatization of regimes of training the body that accompanies the intensive use of such gendered artifacts.

These tentatively ecological thoughts suggest the need for greater questioning of the socially constructed (and historically situated) nature of the legitimations made about the anatomical discrepancies between the sexes so consistently emphasized in sport and physical culture. Equally, we might take seriously Crossely’s (2004) useful interventions on the reflexive (and thus generative) potential of the practice of circuit training: “Circuit training as a social practice is ‘done’ by the self-same embodied agents to whom it is done and their doing of it is a skillful accomplishment” (p. 65). The consequence therefore is the acquisition of an embodied generative potential for change *or not*, as the case may be.

The constructions illustrated above can lead to a form of the Pygmalion phenomenon in which the circular causality of vision-division-difference actually becomes a generative force for constructing “real” physical difference. For example, how many girls partake in deliberative physique-building activities from a young age and how many continue with these through the critical age of puberty, where their pursuit of a desirable heterosexual feminine image (e.g., through dieting) leads them instead to construct a physical manifestation of the very image they

see and assign to their own somatic destiny? Were they to do so, and were boys to engage less for precisely the opposite reasons, then the notions of biological difference that emanates from what Bourdieu refers to as the magnified masculine image, might be exposed as the socially constructed exaggerations that they really are. Put differently, the latent potentialities of biological composition for boys' and girls' bodies are deliberately optimized or not optimized as a result of the social forces surrounding the gender order and gendered practice. In ironic contrast to this oppositional social construction, the biological "truth" of our bodies rests with more certainty on the principle of overlap in latent physical capacities between men and women than on categorical difference. Dworkin and Messner (2002) aptly describe this overlap, in sporting terms, as a "continuum of performance" (p. 26). If there is to be any conception of biological "reality," with qualified concessions to the body's ecological context, this would be it.

### **Naturalization: Anamnesis of the Hidden Constants**

The final part of the masculine domination process articulates what happens when we forget and conflate what is learned about gender with what is natural. In this sense, naturalization refers to the "anamnesis of the hidden constants" that is the process of learning and then forgetting the learned and thereby consigning the learned to natural attributes as opposed to its social origins. Bourdieu (2001) borrows the term *anamnesis* from Plato and Freud's usage, and extends its application into the contemporary social world. This anamnesis can be defined as "familiarity gained by the reappropriation of a knowledge (*connaissance*) that is both possessed and lost from the beginning" (p. 55). Bourdieu sociologizes this definition by considering it also to be "the phylogeny and ontogeny of an unconscious that is both collective and individual" (p. 55). Put differently, the cultural and biological intermingling and "classical ordering" of symbolic oppositions through physical (sporting) practice, language, and aesthetics, is generated and embedded in bodies. Yet, their social origins become forgotten, and the resultant embodied material manifestations of this practice visually perform powerful confirming exemplars of biology and "nature" at work. Significantly, the visual schemes referred to earlier are also a part of the process of anamnesis.

Perhaps one of the most valuable aspects of the anamnesis/naturalization thesis in the sociological study of sport is that it provides us with what Gubrium and Holstein (1998) refer to as an "analytical vocabulary" that allows us to begin to question the biological inevitability of the bodies and performances we observe in sport and physical culture by recontextualizing their socialized and somatized origins. The structural organization of the world of sport is replete with the consequences of this naturalization. For example, the comparatively limited range of athletic events available to women, the fewer sets played in women's tennis, and the different events in women's gymnastic events are often still justified on biological grounds.

More radically and perhaps anthropologically, we might begin to explore the possible imprint of this process on the biological body of generations of the social practices that have dominated and socialized minimal expectations of women's

bodies on the sporting field. Such a view is also powerfully supported by the phenomenal development in women's performances that swiftly followed their emancipation in new sporting fields (in spite of a small participation base; see Whip & Ward, 1992). Women's Olympic weightlifting in the 2004 Athens Olympics is a good case in point here. Indeed, as Brace-Govan (2004) highlights, the issue of woman's *access* to physical strength activities, particularly those of weightlifting, has been one of those most strongly "policed" until recently. For example, the lack of access for women to strength-based sporting competition has been restricted by institutional legislative practices, such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Such policing often takes place through internalized self-controlling discourses. Thus, while females are increasingly encouraged to engage in body-conditioning activities, they are actively discouraged from building muscle and strength beyond a certain practical and aesthetic point because, as Wesley (2001) puts it, "Women who build muscle de-stabilize dominant concepts of gender identity" (p. 167). As Wesley further describes, cultural norms about the muscular female body are policed through an appeal to what is *natural*. This is, in part, because of the way in which it opens up female participants to the very real experiences of physical empowerment that physical strength can provide. Until recently, the possession of physical strength was a somatized experience that men almost exclusively benefited from and used to demonstrate and justify their domination over women. As such, it is a good example of anamnesis, in embodied, naturalized terms. Moreover, women's weightlifting powerfully undermines this.

Another example might help to illustrate other possible applications. We often hear how "natural" it is that boys should (and should want to) engage regularly in muscle- and skeletal-strengthening activities. In contrast, many girls are discouraged from the very same *mode of engagement* (even if they are permitted to participate in the "same" activity). The result is often a gendered process that channels the prepubescent girl/body to a profoundly differentiated set of physical conditionings that results in greatly exaggerated anatomical and physiological differences that are then ascribed to nature rather than the socially constructed *gendered* processes that lead to the *optimization* of base physiological inheritances. At its simplest, this might again be termed anamnesis. Perhaps the real significance of this somatization of gender relations into anatomical and experiential differences is the generative way these come together to foster a greatly varied way of engaging with the world at the material, physical, and dispositional level and which also feed the circular causality of vision that helps to sustain masculine domination.

Frank (1995) contends that a somatized body has its own degree of agency. For example, how does the physicality of the boy's body—a boy who has learned to climb high trees, wrestle his peers to the ground, and out-skill them in games—encourage him to explore the world and relationships with others in powerfully different ways than his twin sister who has experienced the antithesis of these practices for the first 10 years of her life? The gendered body not only has agency but also is, as Edwards and Imrie (2003) remind us, "a bearer of value" in terms of its gendered abilities. Clearly this naturalization process extends to the differentiated athletic careers of boys and girls as they are formalized and played out in institutionalized settings of the playground (Swain, 2000), the physical education class (Penney, 2002), the sports field (Messner & Sabo, 1990; Messner, 1992; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996), and beyond.

Bourdieu identifies a central disposition of the naturalized masculine habitus as the *libido dominandi* (the desire to control). For Bourdieu, *libido dominandi* is the forgotten product of history. It is constructed through discourse and practice, and predominantly is woven into the unconscious dispositional level of the body self-complex.

If a central disposition for the classical European masculinity is or was a socialized need to control, the oppositional gender inscription on female bodies is described as a reverse Pygmalion effect that for women in particular goes unnoticed and for which the weight of negative collective expectation begins to have tangible embodied biological effects on experience and practice (referred to as *amor fati*—love of thy destiny). In this symbolic universe of somatized, naturalized oppositions, the *libido dominandi* therefore has real world manifestations. These controlling dispositions range from more subtle aspects of domination (such as types of control of social territory, eye contact, conversational interaction, control of body postures, ritual invasion of personal space as an act of domination, and so on) to dominant displays of embodied and symbolic authority that men and boys display to women and each other with painful regularity.

From the above viewpoint, symbolic domination is well-illustrated in Deem's (1986) work on the restriction of female leisure patterns by the institutionalized patriarchies of domestic family life in the United Kingdom. She articulates a powerful illustration of the dominating/dominated habitus, when she comments:

Gender constraints are such that few women, of whatever social class or employment status, would find themselves at ease on the rugby field, in a pub otherwise full of men, or jogging late at night on dark streets; nor are they likely to return from Sunday morning sport to find their lunch waiting on the table, and an offer from their partner to wash their sports gear. (p. 13)

Significantly, however, the *libido dominandi* also relates to the more generally agreed structural inequalities in the sports industry workplace as elsewhere. These have subtle yet profound consequences for the legitimation of symbolic violence and domination that is exercised through access to, and progression in, careers, vocations, pay awards and promotion, athlete and coaching opportunities, and so on. Bourdieu (2001) comments:

The definition of a post, especially one of authority, includes all kinds of sexually characterized abilities and aptitudes: If so many positions are so difficult for women to occupy it is because they are tailor-made for men whose manliness is itself constructed by opposition to women as they are today. (p. 62)

Precisely these processes have been shown to be at work, according to the conclusions of Stidder (2005), who recently gathered empirical evidence of the subtle constructions of gender that are requested through physical education recruitment advertisements in the United Kingdom. These gave particular value to various masculine-associated qualities (assertiveness, authority, leader, active, dynamic, etc.) that are assumed to correlate with the specifications for managerial posts and also the embodied qualities required for male and female PE teachers, respectively. There are also clear applications here for the study of the sports industry that might add an embodied texture to the increasingly unsteady logics of "equality" of access



and opportunity in sport and physical culture. The history of Title IX in the United States (see Boutillier & San Giovanni, 1994) is also subject to such a reading. The professional qualities required of, for example, an athletics department coach in the newly “liberated” women’s collegiate sport network were configured around a masculinized habitus. Subsequently, these new positions of authority became colonized by men, and this process helped to maintain the symbolic gender order gap (see also Nilges, 1998). In a world of symbolic opposition and violence, women are quite literally encouraged to develop a subordinated habitus by focusing on the development of skills and tastes in subordinated areas of social life. Furlong and Cartmel’s (1997) study of youth culture illustrates how young girls are encouraged to engage in feminizing practices that center on relationships, domestic work, fashion, and feminizing manicure. The emergent question is: How do women achieve parity in liberal democratic, late-capitalist economies in which the dispositions required to succeed in these meritocratic, individualized working worlds have been constructed by and for the somatized qualities attached to the *libido dominandi*?

The strength of the aesthetic and ontological “glue” of symbolic oppositions embedded in the habitus and its potential for instigating culturally legitimate symbolic violence is reinforced by Bourdieu (2001) when he points out that, in terms of the habitus, *body image* is an inadequate concept for explaining embodied masculine domination: “Such a model forgets that the whole social structure is present at the heart of the interaction, in the form of schemes of perception and appreciation inscribed in bodies of the interacting agents” (p. 63). Bourdieu develops this lived relationship through the habitus of the observer. In this way, the visual cycle of causality is at work through the embodied *gaze*, because the female habitus is traditionally of female being as being-perceived (in the Sartrean sense). The female perceived body is thereby *doubly determined* because, on the one hand, the naturalized oppositions enforce an embodied experience of subordination into and onto the body, while on the other hand, both the agent and the perceiver continually scrutinize embodied subordination (see also Whitehead, 1992). The female body becomes objectified as a consequence of a series of symbolic dispositional oppositions that are relational in character:

Thus, the gaze is not a simple universal and abstract power to objectify, as Sartre maintained: it is a symbolic power whose efficacy depends on the relative position of the perceiver and the perceived and on the degree to which the schemes of perception and appreciation that are brought into play are known and recognized by the person to whom they are applied. (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 65)

Bourdieu’s (2001) perspective adds significant embodied sociological texture to the study of the gendered body by providing some tools with which to consider the material body of the perceived and perceiver along with the symbolic body and the relationships between them, not least of which is the useful view that the sporting or physically active habitus can at least provide the means to experience empowerment of the body through human movement (see also Bolin & Granskog, 2003; Fahlberg & Fahlberg, 1997; Whitehead, 1992). To achieve this, we must begin to remember what has been forgotten. However, as Bourdieu points out, this intellectual act will not be sufficient to successfully challenge the somatic dimension of masculine domination. It is to this aspect that the discussion will now turn.



## Subversion and Invisibility: Challenging the "Illusio" of Gender Naturalization

As argued throughout this paper, sportswomen (and sportsmen) undoubtedly can come to embody the generative potential for symbolic and material challenges or *subversions* to the naturalized ascriptions and legitimations of the gender order. The body in sport and physical culture thus remains a "battleground" for the exercise of symbolic masculine legitimacy and domination, where the naturalized gendered bodies are policed in both conscious and unconscious ways, and where the legitimate types of bodies and uses of bodies are constantly at stake (Bourdieu, 1993).

The story depicted in *Pumping Iron II: The Women* (1985) of athlete and power lifter turned bodybuilder, Bev Francis, is a good illustration of how the naturalized vision of anatomical distinction is overtly policed by sporting institutions. In one pertinent scene, Bev's physique is revealed to the bodybuilding world in 1983 at the Ms. Olympia prejudging lineup. Her very physical presence causes strong reactions from competitors, fans, and judges alike. Bev presented the judges with a problem: Compared to her competitors, who presented lean, muscular, and "sexy" physiques, Bev's body more closely resembled the ideal physical aesthetics prized by men's bodybuilding—that is, lean, large, dense, and powerful muscularity. The judges had to decide which was the "ideal" body for a female Ms. Olympia in 1983. Their decision to ignore the central rationale for bodybuilding (the development of large, lean muscularity) and legitimize the "sexy" muscular physique was an act of symbolic violence that resulted from the perceptions embodied in both judges and those who wrote, and subsequently rewrote, the rules of the contest (see also Hargreaves, 1994). Another consequence of this was that mainstream women's bodybuilding was split into the pursuit of these two ideals, and subsequent developments led to separate contests for these two different body types and the further marginalization of muscular women bodybuilders. Elsewhere, Guilbeault (1999) points out that many sports institutions have, until recently, engaged in sex testing that effectively discriminated against females outside a stereotypical physical or genetic range depicted as "normal." Clearly, this process has the effect of closing down and policing the female body's agency and generative potential for physical and symbolic subversion through sport. While in 2000, the IOC abolished the "gender verification" procedure required of all female athletes, IOC officials still reserve the right to "gender verify" when there is suspicion, an option that clearly panders to normative schemes of gender perception.

Somewhat analogously, when Birrell and Cole (1994) examined the story of the transsexual tennis player Renee Richards, who shook the world of female tennis in the 1970s, they concluded:

It would seem as though the re-sexing of an individual such as Richards deconstructs notions of a natural sex identity, but in fact by remaining gendered Richards reaffirms the concept of sexual difference. By apparently changing sex, Renee Richards appears to upset our dominant ideology by merely shifting categories, by demonstrating dramatically the cultural necessity of a gendered home and that the "mistakes of nature" can be technologically regulated by humankind. (p. 393)

Here, Bourdieu's ideas are useful for helping us make sense of how Rennee Richard's habitus can be seen to have internalized the categories of perception articulated by Birrell and Cole (1994). This is not difficult to imagine, given that many of the key regulating social institutions (such as medicine, education, law, the military and, of course, sport) do not entertain the "natural" status of sex/gender anomalies—we all must be either one or the other.

Clearly much of this symbolic violence is performed on the bodies of mediated female and male athletes. As Carlisle-Duncan's (1994) work on the media representation of female athletes demonstrates, the sportswoman's body is all too often subjected to examination by the media that unconsciously applies its categories of perception deliberated upon earlier. She is often sexualized, trivialized, and feminized or subjected to a gaze that questions her being as anatomically masculine or androgynous and therefore, in some way, unnatural (see also Ian, 1991; Wesley, 2001). As a result of the reappropriation of the female habitus, the sportswoman must constantly negotiate the double-bind situation. By transgressing the symbolic order attributed to a subordinate other /femininity, she begins to challenge the naturalized legitimacy of the male habitus generally and the *libido dominandi* disposition in particular. This is especially the case in strongly male-associated sports such as American football, rugby union, professional boxing, wrestling, weightlifting, power lifting, and other strength contests such as World's Strongest Woman. In so doing, the sportswoman often receives a barrage of stigmatization for opposing what is "natural," which we might identify as the response to her challenging the forgotten, embodied schemes of opposition in the viewer. Moreover, this stigmatization is often supported by powerful institutional health and safety discourses, emanating from the medical establishment as well as political, religious, and civic institutions. While these health and safety discourses often question such practices for men, they frequently deploy a stronger disaffirmation of them for women, drawing on a plethora of naturalized "biological" differences to make the case. Examples of this for boxing include the supposed extra "fragility" of the female body, particularly the breast and abdominal areas. Those who persist in participating are often forced to occupy a relatively ghettoized position in relation to the "mainstream sporting" world. However, these women are still experiencing a profoundly reorganized body-for-self.

The significance of Bourdieu's (2001) naturalization thesis here is not so much about the mediated image per se as the embodied interpellation of that image. This embodied relationship between athletic bodies, and the vision of commentators, journalists, and spectators, are all in some way "called to order" by the alignment of their own categories of perception about the "naturalness" or otherwise of those bodies in the vision and the relative value placed upon these bodies.

If the *libido dominandi* characterizes the dominant dispositional attribute, then *amor fati* ('love of thy destiny') characterizes a most recognizable element of the dominated habitus. For example, it may help us to examine some of the deeper allegiances and attachments that many women construct, when promoting their sexuality through their sporting bodies and identities. The much-celebrated example of professional female tennis player Anna Kournikova is a case in point. Kournikova's *amor fati* demonstrates the importance of linking individual and collective dispositions and the powerful discourses of pragmatic individualism that encourages subservience to the masculine doxa in return for material and

cultural capital. Therefore, as Laberge (1995) has already noted, capital might well be considered androcentric, as it only normally has widespread exchange value within symbolic worlds dominated by masculine schemes of perception. This suggests that Kournikova's cultural capital has its highest conversion value in a symbolically androcentric scheme of perception, with her body typifying the male legitimated vision of Western female/femininity body ideals. Indeed, her reliance upon this form of capital may not determine her actions, but it is likely to strongly motivate them.

Similarly, Bourdieu's observation-somatization-naturalization thesis can be put to work to help us to make better sense of how, within this androcentric embodied cultural economy of sport, there are other smaller gendered and often overtly sexualized forms of cultural economies emerging. For example, alternative sports such as surfing have emerged in which the activities have become and remain masculinized through the depositing of "dominating" schemes of perception and meaning (see Ford & Brown, 2006; Wheaton, 2004). Elsewhere, gay sports organizations are increasingly in danger of focusing on competition, so much so as to encourage renewed forms of *libido dominandi*. Likewise, new female audiences of male sports and vice versa tend to draw upon and foster very conventional views of sexuality, bodily shape, and comportment. (Examples of this might include the rise of female soccer fans and female beach volleyball players.) These recognize different body qualities as valued capital for new sporting participants and spectators alike. These *might* be the basis for generating altered schemes of perception and habitus, from male cheerleaders to female weightlifters, gay games, and so on, each of which is indicative of an emerging embodied economy that in some way is challenging and/or resisting the symbolic order of masculine domination in new ways. In particular, Miller's (2001) work on the sexual commodification of athletes does suggest that the media portrayal of sporting men's and women's bodies and habitus as sexually captivating does have the potential to subvert and subtly transform relations within the fields of production and along with them possibly internalized schemes of dispositions as well. Whether the imprint of these and other displays of unorthodox embodiment through sport will go on to challenge dominant symbolic oppositions of the masculine and feminine or whether the increasing commodification will draw on the safe binaries of the past and shape consumption around the already known is not entirely clear.

The key issue that this potential subversive shift raises is one of *invisibility*. To get a better sense of how invisibility works in the hegemonic "illusio" of the heterosexual "masculine arena" (Pronger, 1990), we might look more generally at gay and lesbian movements and their relational position in the somatized gender order. Their symbolically subversive actions frequently represent a "revolt against a particular form of symbolic violence" (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 119). Miller's (2001) work develops the stories of a number of such cases, such as the high caliber sportsman in the masculinist sport of Australian rugby who "came out" and continued to play and the female tennis player, Mauresmo, who not only came out but publicly developed a lesbian identity. Also, their very material existence "very profoundly calls into question the prevailing symbolic order and poses in an entirely radical way the question of the foundations of that order and the conditions for a successful mobilization with a view to subverting it" (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 118). He argues that homosexuality has suffered from the same kinds of domination as some forms

of racism, such as “invisibilization” and the stigmatization and subordination by acts of symbolic violence that accompany its public appearance. An analogous process can be seen in the struggles over disability rights and, as already mentioned, in “extreme” female sports such as boxing and weightlifting. However, the gay movement remains important “because it recalls in a particularly acute way the link between sexuality and power, and therefore politics” (p. 120).

The difficulty and challenges are, however, the same for sexuality as for ethnicity, disability and, of course, gender. Although the gay and lesbian movements, through activism and scholarship, have been very good at rupturing symbolic representation and “suspending self evidences” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 121), the difficulties are far from overcome. The question remains as to the way people can “revolt against a socially imposed categorization except by organizing themselves as a category constructed according to that categorization, and so implementing the classifications and restrictions that it seeks to resist” (p. 120). Bourdieu’s question is of course rhetorical. His answer is that for real change to occur, such groups need to mobilize a more permanent challenge to the gender orthodoxy thus transforming the “internalised categories (schemes of thought), which through upbringing and education, confer the status of self-evident, necessary, undisputed natural reality . . . on the social categories that they produce” (p. 121).

The pathway towards public recognition is, therefore, through the subversion of symbolic domination. This paves the way for a gradual public visibility that is itself fraught with the danger of annulment and neutralization by the dominant norm: “For everything takes place as if the homosexuals who have had to fight to move from invisibility to visibility, to cease to be excluded and made visible, sought to become invisible again, and in a sense neutered and neutralized by submission to the dominant norm” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 121).

The tension involved in subverting masculine domination lies in the focus of the struggle for legitimacy. These groups often do not subvert masculine domination directly, as their challenge is to a *heterosexual* domination that is only one dimension of masculine domination. Whether it be challenging somatized categorizations of class, race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality, the civil right of *visible invisibility* that Bourdieu (2001) avers us to is problematic because it does not challenge the status quo of symbolic domination; it merely seeks accommodation within the prevailing symbolic order. For example, gay men’s sometimes-successful fight for participation in mainstream sport, after being “won” in certain quarters, gives way to invisibility again. As a comment in relation to gender norms, this is also useful because it reminds us how the symbolic order seems able to appropriate, accommodate, and then effectively subordinate new enactments of gender in sport and physical culture.

Therefore, “visible invisibility” lays down little challenge and leaves mainstream oppositional masculine/feminine doxas effectively mobilized and *sustained*. As a result, the right to visible invisibility can lead to another form of ghettoization through the accommodation of the right to be different. This involves the paradoxical triumph of particularism over universalism that nevertheless leaves naturalized *masculinist* universalisms unchallenged. The contrast between visibility and subversion, and invisibility and assimilation, is an important one that might help focus critiques of masculine domination and acts of resistance that underpin gendered (and sexualized) mind/body dualisms in Western culture. To avoid such

a situation, Bourdieu (2001) suggests that the gay and lesbian communities need to continue their symbolic activism:

The objective of every movement committed to symbolic subversion is to perform a labour of symbolic destruction and construction aimed at imposing new categories of perception and appreciation, so as to construct a group, or, more radically, to destroy the very principle of division through which the stigmatised group and the stigmatising group are produced. (p. 123)

Bourdieu argues that if the gay and lesbian movement remains a collective voice and resists particularism, it is well-placed to achieve such sustained subversion due to the unique symbolic positions these people often occupy in the social spaces. However, if these groups splinter and their various campaigns merely pursue the right to be different in their own particular ways, their subversive symbolic activism merely establishes another acceptable category. Thus, the prevailing symbolic order is not scrutinized or challenged.

Challenging the naturalization of masculine domination in sport will similarly involve the symbolic subversion that comes from "alternative" dispositions somatized through female *and* male participation in new and different kinds of sport and physical culture, which will in turn condition different kinds of habitus. It is precisely this juxtaposition of subversive potential and invisibilization that makes sport such an important arena for the maintenance of, or challenge to, masculine domination. A very useful example of this symbolic subversion is depicted in the film *Beautiful Boxer* (2003), the life story of Nong Thoom, who was a champion Muay Thai boxer and who was also a transsexual. As time passed, Thoom increasingly carried his transsexual identity into the ring, by wearing makeup, for instance, while beating almost all of his often-disgruntled male opponents. Thoom eventually underwent sex reassignment and began a modeling career as a woman.

As the above illustration should underline, the question of the "nature over nurture" state of gender embodiment in sport is not over, settled, won, or lost. Rather, it is a question that the sociology and social anthropology of sport must tackle continuously and vigorously because it is precisely this "self-evident" quality of the observation-somatization process that leads to naturalization. This perspective towards the gendered body then orientates responses that social agents continually draw on to justify the broadest range of social action. Such responses range from the practical pedagogies of teachers and coaches to institutional practices that privilege the androcentric habitus. Consequently, the androcentric habitus has an implicit physical capital value that often privileges certain male dispositions. An example of this can be seen in job adverts that recruit to a range of dominantly masculine occupations. These adverts often bypass legal scrutiny because the qualities and the posts that require them are all part of an androcentric workplace that is primarily still somatically constructed to reward the libido dominandi. The question is how? Bourdieu (2001) suggests the first step is to consider "the history of agents and institutions which permanently contribute to the maintenance of these permanences" (p. 83). He continues:

One must reconstruct the history of the historical labour of dehistoricization, or, to put it another way, the history of continuous (re) creation of the objective and subjective structures of masculine domination that has gone on permanently

so long as there have been men and women, and through which the masculine order has been continuously reproduced from age to age. (p. 83)

This first point becomes more pertinent if we consider the relative continuity of symbolic domination of the masculine in terms of the *maintenance of the gap* between the constructions of masculine and feminine embodiment in sport and physical culture. In sporting application, we might use this to sensitize ourselves by asking questions about the oppositional schemes of perception that might dominate institutional *practices*. These might range from questions about the legitimacies forwarded for sporting rule variations to the appropriateness of training regimes and techniques based on research done on the male body to qualities so clearly sought in job adverts.

Acts of material transformation of gender must follow historicization. These acts require an approach that addresses conscious awareness *and* the material conditions of existence:

The relation of complicity that the victims of symbolic domination grant to the dominant can only be broken through a radical transformation of the social conditions of production of the dispositions that lead to the dominated to take the point of view of the dominant. (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 41-42)

Bourdieu contributes an articulation of the somatization of relations of domination through the recognition of “interpellations” between (embodied) visual observations and states of dispositional embodiment to inform discussions about change. Dworkin and Messner (2002) suggest that those studying gender relations in sport must pay attention to such articulations because “simply deconstructing our *discourse* about binary categories does not necessarily challenge the material basis of master categories to which subordinate categories of people stand in binary opposition: the capitalist class, men, heterosexuals, whites” (p. 26).

Additionally, Bourdieu’s position vis-à-vis transforming modern institutions as a condition for transforming doxa and dispositions begins to align him a little more with other “structurationist” theorists such as Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992) in so far as the mediator of the interaction between individual and society in late modernity increasingly becomes the reflexively modernizing institution (see Parker, 2000). As Bourdieu (2005) reminds us, “Habitue must not be considered in isolation” (p. 49) from the fields that provide the practical cultural context in which people must act. Therefore, the dialectical confrontation, referred to earlier between fields (often in the form of rapidly changing institutions) and the dispositions of the actors that occupy them, becomes the central dynamic. The questions here are: How do gendered sporting institutions succeed or fail to (re) construct the gendered habitue of the individuals they embrace and how do individuals respond to such influences? Therefore, while a particular sporting institution might change its policies and procedures through the reflexive appropriation of knowledge (Giddens, 1991), individuals find changing the gendered habitue much slower and more difficult, thereby creating a considerable time lag (Lash, 1993), if indeed change takes place at all. However, gender change in the reverse direction is equally *possible* according to Bourdieu’s (2005) reflexive sociology, with actors changing fields, especially fields where there is considerable contestation and competition:



In such fields, and in struggles which take place in them, every agent acts according to his [sic] position (that is according to the capital he or she possesses, and his habitus, related to his personal history. His actions, words, feelings, deeds, works, and so on, stem from the confrontation between dispositions and positions, which are more often than not mutually adjusted, but may be at odds, discrepant, divergent, even in some sense contradictory. In such cases, as one can observe in history, innovations may appear, when people *en porte-à-faux*, misfits, who are put into question by the structures (operating through the positions) are able to challenge the structure, sometimes to the point of remaking it. (p. 49)

The potential to make the process of naturalization more transparent and, along with this, to examine what institutionally mediated gender change may mean at the level of the positioned habitus is a compelling macro-micro connection, especially when sensitized towards how this may work at an "everyday practical level" in terms of its somatization. Moreover, how these changes might become conditioned or indeed resisted and neutralized by the broader symbolic level of masculine opposition is another important question for the sociology of sport to ask of its own institutions and members. For example, should we suggest a gradual merging of symbolic oppositions that create an increasingly androgynous sporting and physical habitus? Or should we suggest some entirely new schemes of dispositions that may represent new sets of sensibilities? Or indeed both? Finally, how are our gender utopias and dystopias in sport and society bound up with our own embodied, historically and relationally positioned schemes of dispositions through which we must observe and articulate such judgments?

## Concluding Comments

I have forwarded the view that Bourdieu's thesis in *Masculine Domination* (2001) is a useful one for finding new ways to articulate gender relations in sport and physical culture. Bourdieu's ideas contained within the observation-somatization-naturalization process allow sociologists to further break down the concept of naturalization as a process and develop additional specific insights into this process. More specifically, in relation to *observation*, we might add the body of the viewer as well as the body of the viewed to our sociological sensitivities, as it is extremely important in understanding the generation of interpellation of the symbolic image. In relation to *somatization*, the materiality of the body remains in view, and it must remain in view as it has a generative potential that "exists" in spite of the symbolic images it generates. Moreover, it is constructed through practical acts that quite literally *optimize* the physical, biological body in gendered ways. Third, *naturalization* itself is the result of *forgetting* the social, a powerful yet simple lens that opens up considerable sensitivities towards the process of gendering bodies through sport and physical culture. Finally, Bourdieu's achievement has been to present some possible considerations in juxtaposing the material and symbolic domains and to make some connections between them.

The embodied dimension of Bourdieu's work remains one of the more articulate explanations of the current body-self-society complex. Yet, just like the bodies



it so often describes, it is an unfinished project, and one that is now at a perilous juncture. Does this project solidify and become reified following Bourdieu's death or does it get worked on, developed, and applied, according to his underlying principles (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) of the logic of practice and sociological reflexivity? I would concur with Wacquant (1992) that "an invitation to think with Bourdieu is of necessity an invitation to think beyond Bourdieu, and against him whenever required" (p. xiv).

As Bourdieu understood, we should not forget that the landscape of sport and physical culture is in and of itself a fertile terrain upon which we might develop increasingly more ecological, structurationist, and reflexive theoretical syntheses that accommodate the generative capacities of the somatized, socialized body. It is also a terrain requiring continuous development of the critical and analytical vocabularies that help us counter the discourses and apparent self-evidences of masculine domination as a naturalized state of human existence that is propagated relentlessly by many of the most powerful players in the sports, media, and "health" industries for the culturally conservative purposes of socio-cultural order and commercial gain. The relational, reflexive, and process-driven ideas contained within the observation-somatization-naturalization thesis presented in *Masculine Domination* presents us with one such vocabulary and set of heuristics that may be of considerable value to sociologists of sport and physical culture, both now and in the future.

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## Notes

1. First, his style of writing includes a strong reflexivity that is a linguistic expression of his conceptual focus. This is because such a writing approach is deliberately attempting to remove the focus of the attention away from "acting subject" in order to show them as objects of the action being described. This is consistent with theoretical assumptions of reflexivity that social actors both act and are acted on. Furthermore, passive and equivalent constructions are also used to show process, and reflexive sociology is centrally concerned with relational processes. However, translating French reflexive sociology into English is fraught with linguistic discrepancy. This is because the French literary traditions use passive voice more and more positively than do their

equivalent anglophile traditions. More importantly, the French traditionally have other ways of expressing the passive, such as the impersonal passive (use of the reflexive pronoun, '*se*' *un homme s'est rencontré hier*—'a man was found yesterday') and the passive infinitive (*J'ai quelque chose à faire*—'I have something to do'). The English translations, though passive, evidence a noticeable loss of style. Moreover, the English scholastic tradition often seeks to outlaw the use of passive voice, preferring instead to propagate the idea that, linguistically at least, we are all fully "acting" beings, doing rather than "being done" to by material, mental, or processual "objects," a fine example of scholastic, voluntaristic individualism. Therefore, when reading Bourdieu, it is important not to judge his use of the passive in our terms but in his—What object or action is Bourdieu drawing our attention towards?

The second claim, that his work is abstract and unnecessarily complicated with complex terms, is rather more simply countered in Bourdieu's own terms, "Hardly a day goes by when I do not read or reread philosophical works . . . I am constantly at work with philosophers and putting them to work" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 158). This philosophical connection is perhaps one of the enduring strengths of Bourdieu's insights, the considered connection between the everyday, the abstract, and the sociological, which binds them together.

Finally, it is worth considering the point Bourdieu makes when responding to criticism of his work as deliberately over-complex by Jenkins (1989), who commented, "Could somebody pass Professor Bourdieu a copy of Gower's *Plain Words*?" Bourdieu (1993) retorts, "He might have asked if the cult of "plain words," of plain style, plain English or of understatement, is not associated with another academic tradition, *his own*, thus instituted as the absolute yardstick of any possible stylistic performance" (p. 169).

2. As practiced by heterosexual middle- to upper-class women of European origin during and after the industrial revolutions in both Europe and the United States, when "modern" bodily etiquettes and dispositions were explicitly laid down and normalized by the dominant classes of that era (see Mangan & Park, 1987).