



Is Gender a Learned Act or a Act Shaped by Sporting Experiences?

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Introduction

- Within British sport, there is a historic imbalance between men and women's sports participation (Hargeaves, 1994).
- Gender regimes are embodied at a young age (Jeanes, 2011).
 - Those gender regimes are re-produced in sport across all stages of life.
- Women's participation in football increases every year (Caudwell, 2011).
- Women's participation within rugby is low in comparison to their participation in football and netball (Gill, 2007; Russell, 2004)
- Few studies attempt to explore the gendered experiences of women rugby players (Gill, 2007; Martins, 2011)

Aims of the study

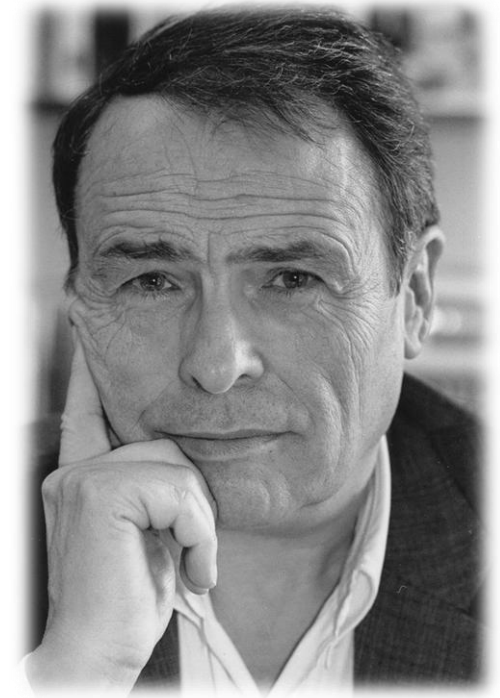
- Understand how rugby and football players in higher education construct femininity.
- Investigate their lived experiences of sport and gender.
- Deduce how their experiences have directly influenced their construction of the gendered body.

Pierre Bourdieu

“ Research without theory is blind, and theory without research is weak”

(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 162)

- Every agent, within their field, face different experiences; those experiences help the agent to understand the world around them (Bourdieu, 1989).
- Many of his concepts lend themselves well to study the embodiment of gender (Thorpe, 2009; 2010).



Methodology

- Comparative case study of the UoL Women's football and rugby teams (Purposive, theoretical example).
- Ethical approval gained from UoL Ethics committee.
- Triangulation of measures:
 - (2 X 15) Questionnaires & (2 X 5) Unstructured Group Interviews.
- Questionnaires piloted to assess reliability & validity.
 - Bivariate correlation of test/re-test & Factor analysis.
- Axial thematic data analysis.
 - Data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing

Results and Discussion

- Field of Femininities

- “We didn’t have a team [primary school], so they [school] thought they’d set one up.”
- “We had a teacher who was openly sexist . . . He said we weren’t playing and that was the end of it really.”

- Practice of Femininities

- “A lot of girls have a problem with playing football let alone rugby.”
- “It’s very stereotypical of women rugby player to be a butch lesbian.”

- Physical Capital

- “My housemate always says oh are you going to wear long dress to cover those bruises? But why would I want to I’m proud of them!”
- “I’ve never played rugby, I got told I wasn’t built for it”

Conclusion and Recommendations

- Both teams demonstrated that gender is both a learned performance and shaped by individual sporting experiences.
- Schools have a great impact upon agents construction of gender.
- Women's rugby needs more positive promotion from schools and women teachers need to help with the provision of girls rugby.



Thank you for listening
Any questions?

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