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Sports as Metaphor for Comparative Inquiry

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6. SPORTS AS A METAPHOR FOR COMPARATIVE INQUIRY

INTRODUCTION: ROLLAND G. PAULSTON'S CHALLENGE

Few scholars working in the field of comparative education have understood the importance of social theory as well as did Rolland G. Paulston. His general interest in social theory and his focus upon the importance of social mapping more specifically, addressed a number of conundrums scholars within the comparative education field commonly confront. But the contributions Paulston made in that area need to be seen within his larger body of work that included important empirical studies too. Because he was a scholar who was as eclectic in his interests as he was persuasive in his argumentation, his prescient analyses of the nuances of educational policies in areas as far-reaching as Scandinavia and Cuba (Paulston 1972, 1976, 1980) stood as models of case study inquiry for generations of comparative educators. In his later writings, Paulston (1996, xv-xxiv) returned to long-standing interests in the study of geography so as to apply the principles of social mapping to comparative education scholarship. Such a commitment could only have been successfully pursued by a scholar with an active as well as encyclopedic mind, as evidenced by the range of empirical studies he conducted earlier on.

Although comparative education can best be described as a field rather than a discipline, its evolution has mimicked the familiar intellectual and ideological conflicts representative of twentieth century social science research, including those expressed by advocates of various schools including positivism, methodological empiricism, policy analysis, structuralism, post-structuralism, neo-Marxism, feminist theory, postmodernism, and cultural studies. Proponents of broadly conceived survey research have shared space with those who construct case studies bounded by the conventions of area, culture, and religion. Practitioners of quantitative research publish their work side by side their qualitative counterparts, and the editors of the leading journals in the field have regularly published studies that have intentionally emphasized differing degrees of theoretical grounding or empirical depth.

Paulston helped us make sense this cacophony of voices in unique and creative ways. His understanding of the broad trends and specific nuances of social theory led him to conclude that the assumptions which characterized social science research from the 1950s through the late 1970s and 1980s had limited utility. His enthusiasm for postmodernist perspectives was grounded in his frustration with

those limitations. At the same time, he was conversant with the weaknesses certain postmodernist perspectives possessed: a fetishized adherence to abstraction, an uncritical embrace of situational relativism, solipsistic perspectives of meta-narration, et cetera.

His embrace of social cartography was thus meant to reconcile contradictory perspectives while acknowledging newer advances in social theory to which the mainstream comparative education audience had had little exposure. The idea of the conceptual map was an effort to illustrate how the relationship between theoretical movements and the concepts they espoused were related to one another in concrete form. It was clear that for Paulston, mapping was not the same thing as diagramming or categorizing. The subjectivity implicit in creating the conceptual map was always readily acknowledged. Indeed, the diagramming that was constructed always included symbolic arrows indicating the dynamic nature of the relationships between the ideas that were depicted. Such relationships were spatially illustrated in vertical and horizontal terms, but were never constructed so as to embrace hierarchical authority. Postmodern notions of time as flux, with an ensuing dissolution of temporal fixedness, were thus applied to conventional notions of space, in recognition of the challenges globalization theory was presenting to conventional understandings of the state, and of political, economic, social, and cultural borders. In short, Paulston's call was for all of us to become cognizant of the limitations of the conventional, understand the challenges posed by recent advances in social theory, and dare to create new ways of seeing our field that are as approachable as they are provocative. It is within this spirit that I propose that we examine the sports metaphor as a way of clarifying many of the salient issues that mark the comparative education field while raising new and important questions for further consideration.

GENERATIVE NARRATIVES

It behooves us to further address the role of metaphor and allegory in Paulston's thinking before considering the specific utility of the sports metaphor. Metaphors by their nature can be limiting or generative. They can elucidate or clarify meanings that are common-sensical or taken for granted, compelling us to re-examine unchallenged assumptions, or they can force us to extend ourselves so as to synthesize familiar elements into a new whole. For Donald Schön (1993), a key element to the comprehension of social policy formation lies in the understanding of those assumptions that frame the problem to be solved, or the act of problem setting, as opposed to problem solving. Insofar as generative metaphors encourage us to re-conceive of the ways in which we frame problems in new ways, an appreciation for their formation lies at the heart of successful policy making. At the same time, metaphors can also help us to clarify our understandings by forcing us to focus upon those concepts that are essential to the construction of new meanings. They allow us to make abstractions concrete so as to encourage us to see such meanings in familiar lights that clearly resonate with previously shared experiences. Rolland Paulston and Martin Liebman (1996, 22) recognized the dual

functions of metaphorical analysis in discussing the nature of narrative in relation to his social cartography project, viewing the process of social cartography as one involving “mininarrativization,” without excluding the “metanarrative.” In so doing, their discussion of these differing forms of narration give further support to what I contend is the more general power of metaphorical construction and analysis.

It is our thesis that when scholars address the cultural values and differences revealed by different and often competing knowledge claims, they can enhance their research by developing and including in their findings a cognitive map showing their perceptions of how these multiple knowledge claims interrelate. Social cartography rejects no narrative, whether it is a metanarrative or that of a localized culture. Although metanarratives are accepted and mapped, they are neither privileged nor accepted in their previous role of dominating other narratives. Rather than legitimizing metanarratives—and their ideologies—in their modernist form, our mapping project introduces the concept of the mininarrativization of the metanarrative. Thus the breadth of research possibilities and understandings that social cartography envisions recognizes . . . all points of view. Their general validity opens opportunities for comparison because mapping does not ‘deny integration of cultures and harmonizing values.’ (Rust 1991, 616)

Social cartography arises from what Rust notes are the possible ‘metanarratives . . . [that] open the world to individuals and societies, providing forms of analysis that express and articulate differences and that encourage critical thinking without closing off thought and avenues for constructive action’. (Rust 1991, 616)

In this chapter, through invoking the formation of metaphor as a process similar to what Paulston describes as meta and mini narrativization, we will examine ways in which employing the sports metaphor can be used to both clarify salient concepts in social theory and generate new questions and areas of exploration for comparative education scholars and practitioners.

SPORT AND SOCIAL THEORY

Three broad areas of social theory whose meanings I believe can be clarified through the use of the sports metaphor include Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the social field, notions of embodiment and embodied knowledge as generally expressed within educational practice, and the nature of causality as defined according to the interplay between social structure and agency, a continuing area of discussion for social theorists of all bents. Bourdieu’s notion of the field has important ramifications for the ways in which we understand social and more specifically educational inequality. The sociological literature on embodiment and embodied knowledge speaks to the ways in which we artificially construct certain educational practices and categories, and a discussion of the nature of causality within the context of structure and agency has important implications for the ways

in which we view globalization trends. It thus makes sense to frame examinations of specific educational policies and practices within these larger lenses.

The "Field" as a Metaphor for Sport or a Game

Few sociologists have had as significant an impact within the discipline over the past three decades as has Bourdieu, having written on fields as diverse as education, the arts, globalization, and French colonialism in Algeria. His seminal works including *The Logic of Practice* (1980), *Reproduction and Education* (1970), and *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984), are foundational writings that clearly delineate post-structuralist concepts that have been adapted in numerous disciplines. He clearly enhanced our understanding of the ways in which the mechanism through which social reproduction operates, and his use of terms such as cultural and social capital has been so influential, that these words have become common parlance within most sociological discourse. Other concepts, reflective of Bourdieu's originality, but essential to our understanding of his views include habitus and symbolic violence. But all of these concepts cannot be appreciated without considering his view of the social field, a term that that was consciously developed with the sports or game metaphor in mind.

For Bourdieu, an understanding of the exercise and negotiation of power in social settings is crucial to a larger comprehension of social reproduction processes. And in this vein, the concepts of habitus, cultural and social capital, are key. In his use of the term habitus, Bourdieu referred to the dispositions and interactions we internalize on the basis of our interactions with our environment. From the very start, then, Bourdieu viewed the distinction between the personal, individual, or private, and the social as a conceptually problematic artificial social construction. To conceive of thoughts or emotions as operating in a way that is independent of their social origins made no sense to him. At the same time, the employment of habitus to acquire cultural capital, or the formal thoughts, beliefs and values we come to possess, and social capital, or the networking and friendship ties we cultivate throughout our lives, is never a process that occurs in a standardized fashion. On the one hand, the process of acquiring cultural and social capital is strategic, insofar as it involves accumulating and exchanging ideas, beliefs, friendships, that we perceive to hold value. On the other hand, the value we associate with cultural and social capital is at least in part determined by their scarcity and the conditions of their distribution, which are neither equalized nor fair.

To be sure, Bourdieu viewed the privileging of some forms of cultural and social capital over others as evidence of the unequal power relations that mark all social interactions, and pointed to their fundamental irrationality as a demonstration of symbolic violence. He listed as concrete examples of the process, the ways in which higher education institutions or museums would reify certain forms of knowledge or selected cultural artifacts to the exclusion of others. The process of questioning the legitimacy of various knowledge forms within the academy, so as

to exclude their presence, as being unworthy of systematic study by higher education gatekeepers, while promoting inquiry as a generically inclusive series of actions in the abstract, was a specific case of symbolic violence prevalent within French higher education. And, following the earlier work of French anthropologist Marcel Mauss, Bourdieu noted how the intertwining of gift exchange among peoples of various wealth and social standing not only reiterated one's social position to the exclusion of the other (albeit in the name of philanthropy or charity), but in so doing, constituted another fundamental example of symbolic violence, expressed within social landscapes (Epstein 2007, 10–14).

However, none of these concepts can in themselves explain how class, status, and power are universally reproduced until one examines Bourdieu's unifying notion of the field. Bourdieu defines field

as a network, or a configuration of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.). (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 97)

While the positions of which he speaks are determined by the cultural, social, or economic capital one accumulates, invests in, or distributes, as well as by one's habituses or those dispositions that influence one's willingness to use these forms of capital in various ways, it is in the field where the space in which these relations are situated and are defined. And, it is the notion of the game (or for our purposes, sport), that best describes the characteristics of the field.

We can indeed, with caution, compare a field to a game (*jeu*) although, unlike the latter, a field is not the product of a deliberate act of creation, and it follows rules, or better, regularities, that are not explicit and codified. Thus we have *stakes* (*enjeux*) which are for the most part the product of the competition between players. We have an investment in the game, *illusio* (from *ludus*, the game): players are taken in by the game, they oppose one another, sometimes with ferocity, only to the extent that they concur in their belief (*doxa*) in the game and its stakes; they grant these a recognition that escapes questioning. Players agree, by the mere fact of playing, and not by way of a 'contract,' that the game is worth playing, that it is 'worth the candle,' and this collusion is the very basis of their competition . . .

at bottom, the value of a species of capital (e.g., knowledge of Greek or of Integral calculus) hinges on the existence of a game, of a field in which this competency can be employed: a species of capital is what is efficacious in a given field, both as a weapon and as a stake of struggle, that which allows its possessors to wield a power, an influence, and thus to exist, in the field under

consideration, instead of being considered a negligible quantity. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 98)

What then, is clarified through using the metaphor of “game” or “sport” to understand Bourdieu’s view of the social field? First, the sport metaphor emphasizes the fact that a field is comprised of activities that are relational and are subject to change and reinvention. While individual games or sports have common sets of rules that their participants accept as a condition of their participation, their rule governing characteristics never preclude evolution and change, both internally but also in relation to other games or sports. A social field thus, is not bounded or separated in ways that are always clear or distinct from other fields, and the internal dynamics involving participation within the field are fluid rather than static. In the same way that a sporting contest is never simply made up of discrete entities: players, managers/coaches, fans, owners, et cetera but involves the interplay amongst all of these actors, social fields are constructed in an equally elastic fashion (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 100–101). The “field of education,” for example, is comprised of more than a set of institutions (schools), actors (teachers, parents, students), and other stakeholders (community members, researchers), but involves the relationships they form with one another and with those in other fields (politics, law, medicine, the arts, etc.). Through using the metaphor of sport to clarify Bourdieu’s notion of the field as constituting a series of social relations, we are compelled to re-evaluate how we define terms such as “the school,” “the community,” or the state, for they can no longer be accurately described as fixed entities with independent meanings.

As is true of sport, competition, for power, influence, prestige, exists among participants within fields and amongst the fields themselves. And, as is true of sports contests, even though participants agree to play by a set of re-determined rules, they bring to the contexts specific assets that contribute to their chances of success. So, the universality or seeming inclusivity of the rules of the game do indeed mask the unequal opportunities for successful outcomes afforded its participants. Finally, it is important to note that the outcome of a sports contest is never predetermined as the chance of unexpected triumph or failure is always a possibility.

These factors clarify aspects of social reproduction as evidenced within the educational field in important ways. First, the social field that Bourdieu describes does not operate in overly mechanistic ways (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 102–104), and offers a compelling alternative to the functionalist and radical functionalist paradigms Paulston and Liebman (1996, 15) describe in their social cartography project. Educational institutions, to Bourdieu (1970), for example, perform social acts that are more complicated than those that simply certify class privilege. The process through which cultural capital is distributed within the educational system is intricate. A set of universal rules or principles that appear to inclusively apply equitably to all students, while simultaneously fostering a competition for the allocation of that cultural capital is created. This results in the reproduction of unequal power relationships with participants strategically positioning themselves within the field to compete according to the forms of

capital they possess or view themselves as in a position to acquire. Because not all participants are offered the same chances of success, the chances of their efforts resulting in lasting success differ according to the forms of capital they have acquired and the habituses they bring to the game (or the field). Yet the willingness to continue to play and invest in the game in part is affected by one's understanding that the outcome is to at least a limited degree uncertain and non-predetermined, even if the chances of success are slight. It is only through such analysis that one can understand how and why one's class privilege influences one's educational achievement, often but not all of the time. And it's only through such an analysis that one can appreciate the impact of individualist achievement ideology that is so characteristic of modern forms of schooling, whereby students are seductively more willing to accept the proposition that academic failure can be explained by personal rather than structural incompetence.

It should be reiterated that Bourdieu's concept of the field cannot be divorced from his other concepts that we have identified, for to do so would seriously misrepresent his view of the field as being intrinsically social. Unlike game or rational choice theory, whereby individual behavior is simplistically attributed to one's calculation of the costs and benefits of pursuing a particular course of action, and where fixed reward structures are viewed as influencing predictable individual behaviors, Bourdieu's view of the field does not invoke a similar view of instrumental rationality that is de-contextualized and separated from the contingencies that involve social relationships. The conditions under which the various forms of capital are acquired, invested, and exchanged, the habituses that influence one's outlook on the field (or the rules of the game or the sport) are of intrinsic importance in understanding his frame of reference. But as has also been noted, the meaning of these terms is closely tied to the concept of the field, which makes it easier for us to interpret their meaning according to an appropriate context.

Embodiment and Embodied Knowledge

Although the literature focusing upon the sociology of the body has a long and distinguished history (Epstein 2007, 5), its prominence coincided with the growth of cultural studies in the 1970s and 1980s, and more recently, with the awareness of consumerism as a driving characteristic of globalization. Scholars have employed this area of inquiry to study the relationship of "the body" to the social construction of identity, with "the body" viewed as a social site, subject to manipulation and reinvention, with regard to notions of gender, race, sexual orientation, et cetera. Others have examined efforts to control the body from external sources, with Michel Foucault's writings (1977; 1978; 1984) serving as a pioneering framework in this regard. Still others have examined the use of body terminology for the purposes of engaging in metaphoric construction, with regard to preservation, safety, boundedness, containment, contamination, et cetera. Finally, the examination of cognition as a holistic bodily function, rather than being reserved for the brain as a separate entity is a prominent area of study within the sociology of the body literature.

Theoretical as well as empirical discussions of sport address these themes in direct and concrete ways, and they speak in general ways to the concerns of educational scholars. In this vein, the works of two scholars that I find to be particularly compelling are Loïc Wacquant (2004) and John J. MacAloon (2008). Wacquant, who worked closely with Pierre Bourdieu on a number of projects, trained for the Golden Gloves amateur boxing tournament while a graduate student at the University of Chicago. His book, *Body and Soul* is not simply a personal memoir of that experience, but a deeper investigation of the ways in which his companion athletes living in the inner city, generate, invest in, and trade physical capital as a means of surviving in a difficult external environment. Wacquant's conclusions are therefore quite fascinating. First, he learns that the popular perception that views the sport of boxing as especially attractive to the most poor and indigent inner city youth is in fact mistaken, for the vast majority of the youth who attend training gymnasiums come from working class backgrounds, having acquired the degree of self-discipline necessary to succeed in a sport marked by its asceticism. Its popularity as an endeavor that promises upward social mobility amongst those with no reasonable alternative is thus overstated. Second, Wacquant notes that the physical aggression associated with the sport allows its practitioners to respond to the violence of street life through internalizing its effects; exerting control over one's body represents safely negotiating the unpredictability of life on the street. It is noteworthy that at its essence, boxing is a defensive sport; one trains so as to avoid being hit, a much more important goal than inflicting direct punishment upon one's opponent. At the same time, the training techniques that are employed, involving a serious disciplining of the body so as to demand control over diet, sexual activity, and alcohol and drug use prior to a match, speak eloquently to Foucault's writings regarding the interplay between education (in this case training), and discipline. Another theme that Wacquant emphasizes is the nature of the mentoring relationship between trainer and boxer. He observes that the expert trainer whom he profiles never tries to teach a novice boxer too much too soon. Mastery of the "sweet science" requires that one repeatedly learn through acting and reacting to an opponent's moves and strategy, but such learning occurs concurrent with repeated practice. Learning and practice are inter-related; one does not predetermine the other. But it is self-reflection and recognition that serve as indicators as to when new skills should be introduced. Finally, Wacquant reaffirms the views of others in asserting that notions of "pure" talent and ability really are artificial constructions that dismiss the importance of focus, repetitive training, and the resources to pursue such training at the earliest of ages in influencing in this case athletic prowess (Chambliss [1989] quoted in Wacquant 2004, 68). The differences in performance between ordinary and world-class athletes cannot be explained simply by comparative assessments of their physical differences in athletic skill levels.

To be sure, there are many studies that have focused upon the nature of the coaching and mentoring processes, experiential learning and reflective practice (Schön 1983), and the ways in which youth utilize their abilities (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1996) or world-class geniuses succeed through the efforts of outstanding

teachers (Arnove 2009). In addition, the connection between pedagogy, curriculum, student social class background, and their ultimate educational success is well-established (Bernstein 1977). But the boxing metaphor is especially powerful insofar as it brings together many of these findings and compels us to address specific imperatives that have cross-cultural and global currency. For example, being mindful of the social class influence upon those inner city youth who pursue boxing activity and comparing Wacquant's findings to the formal educational field, we can legitimately ask if there are ways in which educational practices involving student selection, assessment, and retention can be constructed so as to limit the social class bias that too often accompanies their implementation? Following this line, we can further inquire as to whether there are curricular and pedagogical assumptions that need to be rethought, as they, although universally applied, inherently affect diverse groups of students in negative ways? Are there more flexible and accurate but less arbitrary methods for determining and then cultivating student talent and ability? And, if the cultivation of individual talent is so dependent upon resource availability distributed in extremely selective ways, how can we implement more equitable forms of educational resource allocation? Furthermore, if the power of the learning process lies at least in part, in structuring situations whereby the learner perceives immediate consequence to her/his decision-making (as seems to be true of most high impact learning events [Kuh et al., 2010]), what would have to happen in order to ensure that such situations were intentionally made part of formal curricula? Finally, does what we know about high impact learning, as reiterated through the boxing metaphor, have larger implications as to how we understand the interplay between formal, informal, non-formal, and hidden curricular experiences? As has been previously argued, not only do robust metaphors clarify our understanding of existing concepts by making their premises more explicit, but they also challenge us to revisit comfortable assumptions by expanding the conditions that influence their applicability. Clearly, the boxing metaphor speaks to those of us who view the sociology of the body as a fruitful and relevant area of exploration with reference to educational issues.

A second text that I believe speaks to issues of embodiment through the metaphor of sports is MacAloon's (2008) *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origins of the Modern Olympic Games*. This work, which is part biography, part history, and part ethnography, is a classic work that details the growth of the modern Olympic movement through analyzing the life of its founder. De Coubertin was born of French aristocratic lineage in 1863, and thus experienced the influences of nineteenth century industrialization and republican liberalism that characterized much of the history of the Third Republic. Such influences had an effect upon de Coubertin insofar as they shaped his quest to find and assert a personal identity based upon *prouesses* (feats of prowess) rather than simple privilege (6–7). His thinking, informed by classicist and Christian values, was shaped by the ideology of muscular Christianity as espoused by Matthew Arnold and his disciples, Thomas Hughes in the popular novel, *Tom Brown's School Days* and A. P. Stanle. It was also influenced by his travels to England where he visited Rugby and other public schools where he solidified his faith in these principles that

he hoped could be employed to reform French state operated lycees. During his travel to the United States, he was duly impressed with the New York Athletic Club (146), whose organizational form was later parroted in the establishment of national bodies reporting to an International Olympic Committee. In a curious way, de Coubertin thus mimicked the views of early comparative educators who as a result of their travels, sought to selectively borrow elements of foreign national education systems and graft them onto one's own (52-69). In his case, his hope was that French lycees would be reformed according to what he viewed as the laudatory characteristics of the English public schools, and would thus become models of patriotism and moral training (72).

MacAloon notes that athletics, as promoted in the elite male schools to which de Coubertin was so enamored, focused less upon organized sports and more upon bodily and athletic training. The growing popularity of British sport outside of the confines of such schooling coincided with an expanding middle class; practices within the Rugbys, Harrows, and Etons of the world reflected their traditional class character. Thus, it was de Coubertin himself, who made the strong connection between sport as a vehicle for moral education, character building, et cetera for all citizens. At the same time, his embrace of sport was accompanied by a reaffirmation of his own belief in the power of a classical formal education that, if at least partially defined by athletic engagement, would further promote growth in both mind and body, entities that he viewed as inseparable.

Of course, a large component of the ideology to which de Coubertin espoused, involved an idiosyncratic merging of a worship of Ancient Greece with a faith in the type of internationalism that would promote cooperation and end conflict. In reality, the expectation that the Games could ever be separated from political considerations was grossly naïve; nationalist sentiments accompanied the construction of the movement from its inception, and overshadowed their planning and execution after the initial modern games were held in 1896, and plagued subsequent games held in Paris in 1900 and London in 1908 (302). The distinction de Coubertin made in his own mind between patriotism (a positive virtue), and nationalism (a negative one), was lost upon his external audience (299). In addition, the importance of spectacle, so prevalent in the creation of world expositions during the late nineteenth century, came to overshadow the second two Olympic Games themselves, as they were held in conjunction with such events (313).

The fact that the influences of nineteenth century nationalism hijacked de Coubertin's dream of promoting individual character building through acknowledging athletic excellence is not surprising, given our understanding of twentieth century European history. Nor is it shocking to note how a person of aristocratic privilege attempted, without success, to popularize a worldview that promoted an idealized humanism, unable to acknowledge the existence of social class or ethnic division as a natural part of social relations. But de Coubertin's views, and the growth of the Modern Olympic movement also have implications for the comparative education field too.

As was true of de Coubertin's investigations of school athletics, early comparative educators writing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lacked the tools of the modern social sciences to pursue focused research regarding educational practice and policy, resulting in writings that were overly descriptive and subject to broad generalizations regarding the ascribed characteristics of national education systems (Kelly, Altbach and Arnone 1982, 510). Certainly, they failed to construct a sophisticated analysis of the nature of the nation-state, or of the complexity involved in the educational sector's role in furthering state legitimation, through shaping the nature of one's citizenry, delivering a basic public good, et cetera. However, in pursuing analyses that were grossly holistic, they shared de Coubertin's aversion to notions of social conflict or the embrace of cultural difference. The repercussions for creating educational structures that would adequately address the differing needs of those who were socially and politically marginalized, or the difficulties of developing universal institutional structures that were *both* cross-cultural and locally relevant, were never directly nor fully addressed. But, the sentiments of muscular Christianity, which were so influential to de Coubertin's thinking, were echoed among early comparative educators as well, albeit in a more general form, whereby educational reform became viewed as a moral imperative and an inherent good, a vehicle for building personal character and cultivating intellectual talent.

Of course, the discipline associated with what many characterize as educational training bears some resemblance to the physical training that accompanies athletic preparation, and such an association is certainly not limited to late nineteenth and early twentieth century discourses. Such an association was explicitly expressed in the early 1980s as post-Cultural Revolution Chinese educators claimed that resurrected national examinations would encourage the creation of well-rounded future leaders in all domains including the physical as well as the intellectual (Pepper 1984, 45-68). The pressures for increased accountability that have more recently resulted in the barrage of testing that has accompanied neo-liberal educational reforms globally have also created test preparation and training sessions that mimic the rigorous preparation that is expected prior to major athletic contests. Indeed, the traditional role of university entrance examinations in Japan, as a spectacle designed to publicly displaying one's social worth (Rohlen 1983), is not unlike the use of international sporting competitions to engender mechanical solidarity and national cohesiveness. Not surprisingly, for almost three decades, the use of international achievement examinations to determine a country's global educational standing has been connected to the heightened global competition of the Olympics Movement (Inkeles 1982). In these instances, expressions of collective pride or shame are articulated in forceful ways, even though their duration is of a relatively short period and the means through which such expressions are voiced are artificial and external to the operations of regular institutional practices.

Although their levels of analysis differ, both Wacquant and MacAloon compel us to examine conventional assumptions regarding categorizations of the physical as opposed to the mental, the relationship between education, morality, and discipline, and the roles of competition and cooperation in defining what constitutes educational

value. The Olympic Movement became professionalized and commercialized during the latter part of the twentieth century, of course, ironically creating a more powerful global spectacle than the type that overshadowed its uniqueness when it was first created. In a similar vein, the commercialization or McDonaldization of educational practices, including the explosion of for-profit online delivery learning based upon pure business oriented cost effective efficiency models, the international ranking of higher education institutions according to the presumed scholarly productivity of faculty (Altbach 2006), admissions selectivity, et cetera, or the hoopla attached to Nobel Prize awards, demonstrates that similar processes involving the creation of spectacle, the overt commercialization of what one delivers and the means of its delivery, and the heightened importance of determining winners and losers on an international basis so as to gain global prominence, are influential trends affecting both domains.

Structure, Agency, and Causality

Questions about cause and effect, the relationship between history and culture, and the degrees of freedom that mark our decision-making capabilities in various social settings lie at the heart of our understanding of historical method and the social sciences. In *Apologies to Thucydides*, renowned anthropologist Marshall Sahlins (2004) investigates these questions by initially comparing the similarities and differences in the political and social structures of two incredibly disparate societies: the ancient Greek city states of Athens and Sparta, and the inhabitants of the islands that comprise what we today identify as Fiji. Later, he examines an assassination that influenced the course of modern Fijian history. But interspersed among these studies is a lengthy exposition regarding the nature of historical action and contingency as expressed through baseball history, for in his chapter "Culture and Agency in History," Sahlins compares the exploits of the 1939 New York Yankees with those of the 1951 New York Giants, referencing an analysis first articulated by the Yale historian, J. H. Hexter.

The 1939 New York Yankees were one of the more dominant teams in baseball history, leading their competitors from the start of the season, winning the American League Pennant by seventeen games. There was no one moment when the Yankees transformed themselves into the winners they had become, and in looking at their winning trajectory, it is difficult to distinguish any particular event that was so influential or unique so as to dictate the future course of events during that season. On the other hand, the 1951 New York Giants won the National League Pennant in the last half of the last inning of a three game playoff series, when outfielder Bobby Thompson hit a homerun off Brooklyn Dodger pitcher Ralph Branca. Hexter's point is that these cases represent different ways of examining the historical record; in the former case, as there are no specific events that can be characterized as exceptional, and as a result, one would be likely to employ a systematic if general analysis of the strengths of the team, in explaining their comparative excellence. In the latter case, we tend to focus upon the individual acting within the moment: Bobby Thompson's talent, his ability to rise to the

occasion, Ralph Branca's mistaken pitch, et cetera. In short, one can easily juxtapose a view of agency and structure that parallels traditional notions of great men independently shaping historical events with those whereby fundamental structural change occurs during specific time periods (the Industrial Revolution, the Age of Exploration, for example) independent of historical personality.

For Sahlins (2004), however, such an explanation is overly simplistic, as it fails to account for the structural factors that place a hero or celebrity in a situation whereby one is in a position to effect change. More importantly, the entire process through which the individual becomes an object of cultural focus is part of what Sahlins labels, "the structuring of agency," or the ways in which "history makes the history makers" (155). In this vein, Sahlins argues that there are two structures of agency, systemic and conjunctual. Napoleon would be an example of the former, given the fact that his power derived from the nature of the hierarchically powerful institutional position he held, which allowed him to implement his will (157). The political and military structure of the French government thus created the probability for the excessive exercise of state power that was present regardless of the peculiarities of the individual leader. Historical characters such as Bobby Thompson, or Elian Gonzales (the Cuban boat refugee who was returned to his home over the objection of distant relatives and members of the Cuban-American community in Florida), or Katherine Harris (the Florida Secretary of State involved in the 2000 Bush vs. Gore presidential election certification dispute), demonstrate conjunctual agency, insofar as their agency is derived from the "circumstances of a particular historical conjuncture" (157). In these cases, the contingent situation dictates the nature of the agency that is expressed and is non-systemic and non-institutional. But what is most important, for Sahlins, is his conclusion that the making of history as a cultural process, involves symbolic representations that fuse the "national with the personal," allowing us to create symbolic meanings that address deeply felt needs (169). Thus, the importance we attach to those who attain a manufactured celebrity status is as much derived from the social construction of their role as it is to their unique personalities.

History, unlike the other social sciences, is much more messy when efforts are made to impugn cause-effect relationships or to control for selected factors or variables. But the questions the Sahlins raises have significance for comparative educators of all types, regardless as to whether or not they employ historical narratives in their analyses, for we also struggle with issues involving the roles of systems as opposed to individuals in shaping educational outcomes, the nature of contingency and determinism in understanding knowledge flows and trends, and the role of culture in providing symbolic meanings that draw us to specific events or individuals.

For example, how do we analyze the power of Paulo Freire's legacy? Was Freire simply a "one hit wonder," who in 1971 hit the pop charts around the world with the publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1971)? One can address this question through examining in a systemic fashion, the corollary growth and popularity of liberation theology in the 1960s and 1970s in Latin America (Gutiérrez 1973), or one can focus upon Freire's own gifts of personal and political

engagement. To do the latter would raise questions regarding his less than stellar success as Minister of Education in Sao Paulo (Torres 1994); to do the former would force us to address reasons for the decline in popularity of liberation theology while Freire's writings continue to hold near universal appeal among educators. Indeed Thomas S. Popkewitz (2000) has written specifically about the tendency to promote the writings of "indigenous foreigners," (e.g., John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Lev Vygotsky, Jürgen Habermas, and Michel Foucault) without appropriately contextualizing their views. In so doing, the social construction of these educational personalities is similar to the cultural meanings attached to the personalities Sahlins discusses, only for Popkewitz, such an exercise allows policymakers to negotiate global and local tendencies so as to legitimize their own policy choices.

The systemic versus conjunctual forms of analysis Sahlins' mentions can also be loosely applied to the case study vs. cross-national survey research extremes that characterize much of the empirical work in the comparative education field. Case study analyses tend to be country, region or culturally specific; their architecture includes rather thick description of factors that make the case unique, with references to broader themes and concepts that situate the case within larger frameworks that match context with generalizable principle. Cross-national studies offer systemic overviews of trends that are viewed as widely applicable regardless of local context. The call for empirical work that would employ levels of analysis that incorporate the both of these categories has been longstanding, if often ignored (Przeworski and Teune 1970).

Of course, issues involving the nature of causality and determinism, with reference to comparative education policy-making and curricular reform have also marked empirical studies in the field for over five decades. The justification for engaging in efforts to determine co-variation among selected factors or characteristics analyzed cross-nationally formed an important part of the comparative education theoretical literature during the 1960s and early 1970s (Noah and Eckstein 1969). Later, proponents of institutional theory examined the ways in which global educational expansion with regard to enrollments, organizational components, and curricula coalesced around similar sets of cultural norms that became widely diffused (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Meyer et al., 1992; Scott 2001). More recently, globalization theorists both inside and outside of the comparative education field have offered more complicated and nuanced views as to how ideas are globally transmitted, affirmed, resisted, or reconfigured, with particular respect to the variations of neo-liberal policies that mark the interactions between the state, its elites, and its citizenry (Harvey 2005; Carney 2009). Needless to say, issues involving determinism, contingency, causality, and the appropriate level and type of empirical analysis to be conducted continue to influence inquiry involving comparative education issues even if the approaches to these issues vary and the methods employed offer answers that may be characterized as only partially satisfactory.

Of course, a fair understanding of the dynamics of neo-liberal principles as expressed in support of global capitalist initiatives necessitates an appreciation for

both the rules of engagement to which nation-states conform, and the means through which they position themselves in relation to one another. Anthropologist John Kelly (2006) makes another striking analogy to baseball in explaining what he views to be the fundamental nature of global capitalism. By examining the development of the Major League Baseball minor league system in the 1930s, Kelly explains how US baseball teams created a minor league system through which they were able to cultivate and monopolize athletic talent for their own purposes. Although often operating independent of their major league counterparts, minor league teams are contractually obligated to furnish players to their parent teams, who keep, trade, or return the players according to their needs. The creation of the World Baseball Classic (WBC) in 2006, whereby Major League Baseball manufactured a competition between professional baseball players representing their home countries can be viewed as a global extension of this process. International talent is showcased and US teams can then invest in those players whom they deem useful to their needs, all the while encouraging nation-state visibility on an international stage. In both of these instances, Kelly reminds us that there is a vertical hierarchical organizational structure that is formed between the core US major league club and its farm team(s) or between the Major League organization and the baseball associations in other countries participating in the WBC. Competition between teams is not only allowed to exist but is encouraged, so long as such competition enhances the cultivation of athletic talent that can later be monopolized. However, the expansion of vertical organizational hierarchies that serves to privilege major league clubs remains uncontested.

For Kelly, such are the rules of global capitalism. The fact that economic competition between nation-states exists belies the contention that Western core countries have simply succeed in expanding their domination of the world economy through the expansion of empire. Alternatively, the rules through which such competition exists are written by Western powers whose long-term interests are never seriously threatened. During the 1970s and 1980s, the use of world systems analysis became a compelling framework for understanding issues including Western domination of academic publishing and the brain drain (Altbach 1982; Arnove 1982) and the roles of US-dominated international organizations such as the U.S. Agency for International Development, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank (Klees 1986; Bannan 1992) in dictating the terms of bilateral educational assistance, and consequently, educational policy in receiver countries. More recently, comparativists have examined the impact of European educational reforms such as the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Accords in standardizing the European higher education system for purposes of enhancing the global competitiveness of the region (Dale 2009). At the same time, the increasing privatization of higher education on a global level, the impact of technological change upon course delivery as evidenced through the explosion of online learning, and the franchising of established higher education institutional brands (prominent Western research universities) onto foreign terrain (new branch campuses in China, Dubai, etc.), give evidence as to how basic principles of neo-liberalism are being expressed in new ways within the educational field (Croom

2008). Standardization, competition, and privatization are not new trends in and of themselves. The ways in which they have found expression in global rather than simply bilateral frameworks necessitates a re-conceptualization of their dynamics however. And, it is in this vein that Kelly's baseball metaphor is both clarifying and provocative.

CAVEATS AND CONCLUSIONS

We have employed the use of sports metaphors to both raise and clarify issues relating to the nature of education as a social field, the ways in which educational practices serve to categorize, nee discipline physical and intellectual activities, the use of schooling to promote synthetic nationalism as constructed for global audiences, the nature of causality, determinism, and contingency as related to the framing of educational personalities, issues, and systems, and the interplay between competition and power within educational contexts as characteristics of neo-liberalism and global capitalism. In so doing, we have argued that used as a generative metaphor, sports is useful because it compels us to re-evaluate and reconsider the contexts in which such issues arise. But what are the limitations of using the sports metaphor as a generative, analytic tool to be applied to comparative education inquiry?

Three potential objectives immediately come to mind. First, we make a natural association with sports activities and play/leisure. Their attraction lies in the fact that for most of us, who are neither professional athletes nor employees of sports businesses, their appeal is due to the fact that they are not work related. Although the ways in which professional sports structure themselves can be influenced by the ways in which formal work is organized, along with other factors including consumerist desire, marketing techniques, media influences, et cetera. involvement in sports as a participant or an observer tends to be less consequential than one's associations with family, occupation, governmental institutions, church, et cetera. The "playful" essence of sports distinguishes it from what we might consider to be more serious endeavors. It is for this reason that de Coubertin's effort to attach the ethical and moral imperatives he associated with muscular Christianity to the Olympic movement seem so contradictory and out of place according to twentieth and twenty-first century sensibilities. But for those of us who work in the comparative education field, the ethical consequences of the policies and practices we scrutinize are important (or at least we view them as being so), insofar as they directly affect people's lives and life chances, from childhood through adulthood and beyond. While it is a useful corrective to evaluate assumptions regarding the inherent benefit of programs and policies we promote, we view our roles as policymakers, teachers, and educational scholars as being more than simply performing a set of academic exercises. It is thus justifiable to question whether or not the use of the sports metaphor as a tool of analysis for comparative educators creates a gaze that trivializes the importance of the intellectual and policy-oriented work that we pursue. And, does the use of that gaze further legitimize the role of the comparative educator as a distant observer rather as engaged scholar? One

response to this objection though, would be to counter-argue that it is as a result of the use of the sports metaphor that we are compelled to fundamentally re-examine the relationship between leisure, play, and work, and that such a reassessment has the potential to further our contextual understanding of the issues we passionately believe are worth exploring. And, far from legitimizing a role for the comparativist that eschews emotional distance, the concrete nature of the sports metaphor actually helps to illustrate the ease with which engagement can occur and the imperative to do so.

A second objection involves the closed nature of the sports activity or the game. Sports and games are bounded by time and place; they have beginnings and outcomes that are discrete in ways that do not mirror the real life ambiguities of the educational policies and practices that we study. Can their use create artificial perceptions regarding the nature of those educational issues that are worth exploring? This argument mirrors the previous distinction that was noted regarding the use of metaphors that may not generate new inquiries but inadvertently limit them and it closely follows Bourdieu's previously noted distinction between the rules of the game and the nature of the social field. One response to this objection would simply counter-argue that it is not only useful, but imperative, that questions are raised involving the extent to which specific educational practices/policies are bounded as opposed to being open-ended or ambiguous, with regard to their finality of duration or consequence. When such questions are raised in conjunction with the use of the sports metaphor, then the use of the metaphor becomes generative in a positive manner. Metaphors should not be construed as duplicate imagery and those who offer an objection to their use on the basis of their inherent closed nature make such an error.

A final potential objection to the sports metaphor criticizes its use as being too vague, internally inconsistent, and context specific to be analytically powerful. In this essay, for example, we have touched upon a wide-ranging set of issues varied in their content, yet linked to one another indirectly. In so doing, we have used the Olympic Games, boxing, and baseball as metaphors for the issues that we have discussed. Indeed, sociology of sports scholars have certainly gone beyond these themes in their writings as studies of race, gender, and consumerist consumption have become part of the scholarly canon in this field (Carrington and McDonald 2009; Smith 2010). But if the sports metaphor can be applied to every social (or for our purposes educational) phenomenon, at what point does it lose its uniqueness and its power as an explanatory device?

In addition, one needs to be reticent in one's choices of examples that illustrate the metaphor. The "Western" influences of the sports events that have been chronicled in this essay should certainly be acknowledged. One can add parenthetically, that other popular metaphors, such as George Ritzer's coinage of "McDonaldization," as a political, social, and global process have been attacked for only selectively explaining all aspects of globalization while focusing upon decidedly Western consumption patterns (Veseth 2006; Waters 2006). Although I believe such concerns hold potential legitimacy, the field of comparative education in my opinion, does not at this time suffer from an overuse of metaphor as an analytic

tool, quite the opposite. One may with a certain degree of legitimacy criticize the specific examples used in this essay as overly narrow illustrations of the sports metaphor that do little more than replicate the author's Western bias. However, the purpose here is to make the plea for an eclectic approach to the use of generative metaphors generically, and the examples offered in this essay are meant to function only as illustrative examples of the principle being defended. Although there have been occasional direct uses of the sports metaphor within the field to examine issues of education and national identity (Epstein 2002) and citizenship education with reference to the contemporary Olympic Games (Law 2006), the contention that the invocation of metaphors has already exhausted its usefulness through over-employment is difficult to defend.

A discussion of the power of the sports metaphor inevitably leads us back to an appreciation of Paulston's efforts to extend the boundaries of comparative education inquiry through use of the social cartography metaphor. Social cartography as an analytical tool was never meant to be all encompassing but was instead meant to offer a stimulating and provocative method of viewing the comparative education field. It was further devised as a means of encouraging the construction of alternative metaphors that might also further advance the field. In this essay, I have proposed the use of the sports metaphor as one potential tool for fulfilling this aim. Others, have in equally compelling ways, examined the use of visual imagery (Fischmann 2001) and the artifacts of material culture (Lawn and Grosvenor 2005) to accomplish a similar purpose. All scholars who are concerned about questioning existing categories and extending the borders of comparative education scholarship owe a debt to Paulston, for his passionate advocacy for the furthering of intellectual inquiry within the comparative education field. It is for this reason that the legacy of his work will continue to find expression in the writings of current and future scholars in new and creative ways.

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