

Culture and Social Capital in The Sociology of Sport: An Exploration of Theoretical Frameworks and Methodologies in China and Abroad

Hong Zhang, Shiqing Wang

School of Physical Education and Health, Guangxi Normal University, Guilin, Guangxi, China

Abstract: The purpose of this thesis is to explore the theories of culture and social capital in the sociology of sport, and to analyze in depth the application and impact of these theories in the sociology of sport research by comparing different theoretical frameworks and methodologies between China and the West. This paper outlines the core concepts of culture and social capital in the sociology of sport, and by comparing the research results of Chinese and Western scholars, it reveals the importance of culture in shaping sport behaviors and sport organizations, as well as the role of social capital in facilitating sport participation and the construction of social networks. This paper compiles the research methodologies of Western sport sociology that mainly focus on quantitative research, such as social network analysis and social capital measurement and Chinese sociology of sport that emphasizes more on qualitative research. the paper also explores how to integrate Chinese and foreign sport sociology theories in the context of globalization to meet the challenges and opportunities of future research. Through this study, the paper aims to provide theoretical foundations and methodological guidance for the further development of Chinese and foreign sociology of sport, and to promote international cooperation and exchanges between academics in this field.

Keywords: Sociology of Sports; Cultural Capital; Social Capital; Theoretical Framework

1. Introductory

Speaking at the Symposium on Philosophy and Social Science Work in 2019, the General Secretary pointed out that “all ideal and aspiring philosophers and social scientists

should stand at the head of the times, be aware of the changes of the past and present, and send out the advance of ideas the sociology of sport, as a discipline studying the interactions between sport and society, has gained extensive attention from the academic community in recent years. With the intensification of globalization and social structural changes, sport exists not only as an expression of physical activity, but is also seen as an important entry point for understanding social relations, cultural norms and social capital. Physical activity plays multiple roles in contemporary society, both as a reflection of culture and as a driving force for social change. Through sport, individuals can express their social identities and reinforce or challenge established social hierarchies and power structures. In this context, cultural capital and social capital are key theoretical tools for parsing the mechanisms of sport participation and organization. the main purpose of this study is to explore the applicability and limitations of these theories in different socio-cultural contexts through a comparative analysis of theories on cultural and social capital in Chinese and foreign sociology of sport. Specifically, this paper will systematically sort out the theoretical contributions of Chinese and foreign scholars in the study of cultural capital and social capital, and analyze the application of these theories in understanding sport behavior, sport participation and sport organization. Through this cross-cultural comparison, this paper aims to reveal the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign sociological studies of sport, and to provide new perspectives and methodological references for future academic research.

2. The Concept of Culture in the Sociology of Sport

2.1 Definition and Connotation of Culture

As a composite concept, culture has multi-level structure and multi-dimensional characteristics, and its definition scope and connotation interpretation show significant differences due to different disciplinary perspectives and research fields. In essence, culture can be defined as the complex of material and spiritual civilization accumulated by human communities during historical evolution, and its connotation covers multiple dimensions such as language system, customs and traditions, artistic creations, values and educational mechanisms. Culture is not only a product of human society, but also a reflection of social behavior and social relations. Specifically in the sociology of sport, the definition of culture pays more attention to the social values, norms and symbolism embodied in sports activities and behaviors.

2.2 The Role of Culture in the Sociology of Sport

The role of culture in the sociology of sport is multifaceted; it is not only key to understanding sport behavior, but also plays an important role in shaping sport participation and sport identity. As a product of social construction, culture profoundly shapes the behavioral patterns and participation of individuals and groups in sport. There are significant differences between cultures in the way people choose sports, participate in sports and their attitudes towards sports. For example, in some cultures, teamwork is highly valued, so team sports such as soccer and basketball are widely popular, while in other cultures, individual achievement and competition are regarded as important values, so individual sports such as track and field and tennis are more popular. Culture also plays a role in the sociology of sport by shaping sport identity, which refers to the sense of identity that an individual or a group of individuals develops through participation in or support of a sport. Sport identity is not only reflected in individual preferences for a sport, but also in social collectives, such as national identity, regional identity, and school identity. Cultural background has an important influence on the formation of sports identity. For example, in some countries, specific sports are endowed with national symbolism, such as soccer in

Brazil and rugby in New Zealand, which have become important symbols of national identity. Sports activities carry the function of cultural transmission and reproduction, which not only strengthens the internal cohesion of social groups, but also plays an important role in promoting social change in the perspective of sports sociology. Sport is not only a form of entertainment and competition, but it also reflects and challenges the existing social order and cultural norms. For example, in the United States in the 1960s, through sports, the black community successfully challenged segregation and promoted social change, and similarly, the increase in women's participation in sports reflects the social call for gender equality. Thus, culture is not only a static contextualizing factor in the sociology of sport, but also a dynamic and far-reaching force that promotes a two-way interaction between sport and society.

2.3 Different Understandings of Sports Culture Between Chinese and Foreign Academics

There are significant differences between Chinese and foreign academics' understanding of sports culture, and these differences mainly stem from different historical backgrounds, social structures and cultural traditions. Western academics started their research on sports culture earlier, and usually adopt frameworks such as functionalism, structuralism and critical theory to analyze the relationship between sports and culture. Western scholars usually focus on the performance and influence of sport as a social phenomenon in different cultural contexts, emphasizing the functions of sport in the social structure, such as maintaining social order, promoting social solidarity, and expressing social values. Western academics' research methodology is based on quantitative analysis, which reveals the characteristics and development trends of sport culture through large-scale social surveys and data analysis. Through methods such as case study and historical research, the performance and influence of sports culture in a specific social context are explored in depth. In addition, Chinese and foreign academics' understanding of sports culture is also reflected in their different responses to globalization. Western academics usually regard globalization as a

driving force for the spread and integration of sports culture, believing that globalization promotes the exchange and integration between different cultures. However, Chinese academics take a more cautious attitude towards globalization, focusing on the impact and challenges of globalization on local sports cultures. Chinese scholars tend to emphasize the protection and promotion of local sports cultures to avoid the loss of cultural autonomy and uniqueness amidst the wave of globalization. Therefore, the different understandings of Chinese and foreign academics in the study of sports culture not only reflect their respective cultural backgrounds and academic traditions, but also provide us with a multi-dimensional perspective to understand sports culture. As shown in **Figure 1**.

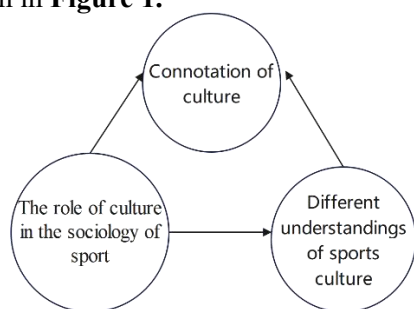


Figure 1. Conceptual Map of Culture in the Sociology of Sport

3. Application of Social Capital in the Sociology of Sport

3.1 Definition and theoretical Basis of Social Capital

Social capital theory has been established through the systematic interpretation of scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman, and its core meaning is to explain the resources and support system acquired by an individual or a collective through social relationship networks. This theoretical framework includes structural elements such as trust mechanisms, social norms, and relational networks, which serve as a bridge for individuals or groups to obtain economic, cultural, and social benefits. Bourdieu emphasized that social capital is a tool for the reproduction of social hierarchy and power, and from the perspective of social network theory, individuals or groups can enhance their competitive advantages in the economic and social fields through the construction of social

networks. Based on the theoretical framework of functionalism, Coleman defines social capital as a form of resource embedded in the social structure, which can effectively promote the coordination of actions and the establishment of cooperative relationships among individuals.

On the basis of the theory, the study of social capital usually contains three dimensions: structural dimension, cognitive dimension and relational dimension. the structural dimension focuses on the construction and form of social networks, the cognitive dimension emphasizes shared values and norms, and the relational dimension involves the formation and maintenance of trust and obligations. Together, these dimensions constitute the complexity and diversity of social capital, which plays different roles and manifests itself differently in different social contexts, e. g., in community building, strong social capital can enhance community cohesion and promote the realization of common goals; in the business field, strong social resources can effectively facilitate the establishment of coordination of actions and cooperation among individuals; and in the business field, strong social resources can effectively facilitate the establishment of coordination of actions and cooperation among individuals. For example, in community building, strong social capital can enhance community cohesion and promote the realization of common goals; in the business field, social capital can promote the construction of trust and strengthen collaboration and information sharing.

3.2 Social Capital in Sport

In the sociology of sport, the application of social capital is mainly reflected in the construction and enhancement of social networks, promotion of social cohesion and community participation through sports activities. As a highly socialized behavior, sports activities provide individuals and groups with opportunities to build and expand social relationships. Through participation in sport, individuals not only gain physical fitness and recreation, but also accumulate social capital, such as friendships through sports teams, expanded interpersonal networks through club activities, and a sense of collective identity through shared participation in sporting events. Social capital in sport can be manifested in a

variety of ways, for example, cooperation and competition in team sports can enhance trust and dependence among team members, thus forming a close social network that not only contributes to cohesion within the team, but also creates positive social impacts outside of the team, such as increased social participation in the community and a stronger sense of social connectedness. In addition, social capital in sport is also reflected in the transmission of social norms and values. Norms such as fair play, respect for opponents and adherence to rules in sport events can be consolidated through the accumulation of social capital, and thus be promoted and practiced at a broader societal level.

4 Comparison of Theoretical Frameworks in the Sociology of Sport

4.1 Theoretical Framework in Western Sociology of Sport

The research structure of Western sociology of sport is mainly based on three theories, namely structural functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism, focusing on the role and function of sport at multiple levels of society. Under the structural functionalist perspective, sport is a subsystem of the social system with the function of promoting social solidarity, social control and socialization. For example, sport can maintain social order by regulating behavior, transmitting social values and enhancing social integration. Conflict theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the role of sport in social inequality and power relations, arguing that sport is not only a site for reflecting social class differences and struggles over interests, but also a tool for maintaining and reproducing social inequality. Symbolic interaction theory focuses on individual behavioral interactions and meaning construction in sport, emphasizing how individuals form their self-identity through sport activities, and their symbolic communication and social interactions with others. These theoretical frameworks provide a multidimensional perspective for the study of Western sociology of sport, a research category that runs through the multiple dimensions of macro-social structure and micro-individual interactions.

4.2 Theoretical Framework of Chinese

Sociology of Sport

The research methodology of Chinese sport sociology usually focuses on the analysis of macro-social policies and the exploration of historical and cultural contexts, exploring the role and function of sport in social change through the interpretation of policy documents, the analysis of historical archives, and the case studies of government-led sports activities. For example, research on the National Fitness Program usually analyzes the process of the formulation and implementation of national policies, and evaluates the impact and social effects of the policies on the public's participation in sport and its social effects. In addition, Chinese sociology of sport is concerned with the inheritance and development of traditional sports culture, such as the social functions and cultural significance of traditional sports programs such as wushu and taijiquan in modern society. Through these studies, Chinese sociology of sport emphasizes the relationship between sport and social policy, state ideology and traditional culture, and highlights the uniqueness of sport as a tool for state governance and social indoctrination.

5. Exploration of Research Methodology in the Sociology of Sport

5.1 Methodology of Western Sport Sociology

The methodology of western sport sociology has formed a relatively mature and diversified research system over the years, and its research methodology covers two main types: quantitative research and qualitative research. Quantitative research methods usually include large-scale questionnaire surveys, statistical analysis, experimental design, etc. Through the collection and analysis of large amounts of data, the association between sports phenomena and social factors is revealed. For example, when studying the relationship between sports participation and social class, researchers often explore the differences in sports participation among different classes and their social significance by quantitatively analyzing variables such as the socio-economic backgrounds and frequency of sports participation of thousands of participants. Qualitative research methods, on the other hand, include in-depth interviews, participant observation, textual analysis, etc., aiming to

gain a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural meanings and individual experiences behind the sports phenomenon. For example, researchers may explore the process of constructing sports as an identity through in-depth interviews with athletes or analyze the power relations and social interactions in sports activities through participant observation of sports events.

5.2 Methodology of Chinese Sociology of Sport

The methodology of Chinese sociology of sport is largely influenced by national policies and social development goals, reflecting a strong color of pragmatism and state domination. the research methodology of Chinese sociology of sport is usually based on macro analysis and policy research, focusing on exploring the functions and roles of sport in social development through the interpretation of national policies, analysis of sports development planning and evaluation of large-scale sports projects. For example, research on national fitness policies often analyzes government documents to reveal the social goals and ideologies behind policy formulation and to assess the impact of policy implementation on national sport participation. In addition, Chinese sociology of sport pays particular attention to the role of sport in social education, national health and national image building, a concern that reflects the close connection between the research focus of Chinese sociology of sport and national development. However, relying more on qualitative analysis, through in-depth analysis of policy documents, historical archives, and cases of sports events, researchers can reveal the complex relationship between sport and social development and cultural inheritance. For example, through case studies of large-scale sports events in history (e. g., the National Games and the Olympic Games), researchers can explore the role of these events in promoting social cohesion, upgrading the image of the nation, and promoting social change At the same time, Chinese sociology of sport has gradually begun to draw on Western research methods, such as social network analysis and cultural research methods, in order to enrich research tools and expand research perspectives.

6 Prospects and Suggestions for Future Research

6.1 The Necessity of Cross-Cultural Research

With the in-depth development of globalization, sport, as a universal social phenomenon, shows unique forms and connotations in different cultural contexts. the necessity of cross-cultural research lies in the fact that it can reveal the diversity of sport in different social contexts and deepen our understanding of the interaction between sport and society, for example, Western countries may pay more attention to individualism and competitive spirit, while Eastern cultures may pay more attention to the values of collectivism and harmonious values. Through cross-cultural research, researchers can compare the ways of sports participation, the spirit of sports, and the role of sports in social construction in different cultures, thus revealing how culture influences the formation and development of sports phenomena. Cross-cultural research not only helps to understand the phenomenon of sport in different societies, but also provides a reference for the formulation and implementation of sport policies. By comparatively analyzing the sport development models of different countries and regions, researchers can identify successful sport policies and practices, which can then serve as a reference for the development of sport in other cultures, e. g., the Scandinavian strategy of public health promotion and the socialist with Chinese characteristics sport development model, both can be comparatively analyzed through cross-cultural research to identify the key factors of their success and provide insights for global sport development.

6.2 Suggestions for Chinese and foreign sport sociology research

In future research, Chinese and foreign sociology of sport studies should pay more attention to mutual learning and borrowing to promote the common development of global sociology of sport, and in the field of Chinese sociology of sport studies, it is necessary to strengthen the borrowing and application of mature Western research paradigms. Especially in quantitative analysis and interdisciplinary research, through the

introduction of western quantitative analysis methods, Chinese researchers can verify hypotheses and analyze data in a more scientific way, thus enhancing the accuracy and international recognition of the research. In addition, Chinese researchers can enrich the content and perspective of sport sociology research through interdisciplinary methods, especially when exploring the multidimensionality of sport and its socio-cultural, economic, psychological and other relationship. For western sociology of sport research, more attention can be paid to the sport development model and experience of emerging economies such as China. China's successful experience in competitive sport and national fitness, as well as the unique relationship established between sport and social development, are all worthy of in-depth exploration and reference by western researchers. As shown in **Figure 2**.

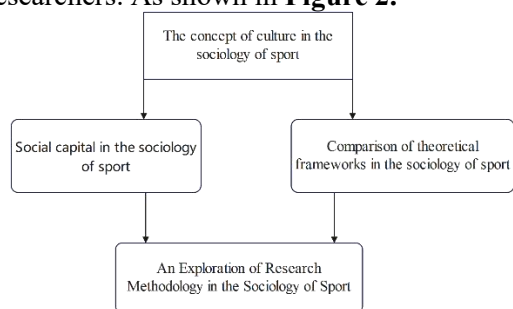


Figure 2. Exploration of Theoretical Frameworks and Methodologies in China and Abroad

Cross-cultural research is of great significance in the context of globalization, revealing the diversity of sport in different cultures and deepening the understanding of the interaction between sport and society. By comparing the ways of sports participation, sportsmanship and their social roles in different cultures, cross-cultural research reveals the influence of culture on the phenomenon of sports and provides lessons for the formulation of sports policies. In the future, Chinese and foreign sport sociology research should strengthen mutual learning and reference. Chinese researchers can learn from Western quantitative analysis and interdisciplinary research methods to enhance the scientific validity and international recognition of their research, while Western researchers should pay attention to the experience of sports development in emerging economies such as

China, and learn from their successful practices in competitive sports, national fitness and the relationship between sports and social development, so as to jointly promote the progress of global sports sociology.

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