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The Social Signification of New Sport Practice: The Case of Adventure Racing

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The Social Signification of New Sport Practice:
The Case of Adventure Racing

Summary

This project is an examination of adventure racing (AR) discourse and practice that explores the AR field, its values, tenets, stakes and struggles, its patterns of production, consumption and transformation, in light of its position and boundaries within the larger field of sport practice and in the wider context of 'postmodernity' – or Late Capitalism. Through this empirical investigation, the research objective is to understand the social signification of an emerging sport practice in the field of sport supply. Further, through an investigation of AR as a new sociocultural practice – and thus as a new symbolic system – this project seeks to highlight the power of Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical model, which has not yet been extensively exploited in sport studies, as a heuristical tool to understand the struggles and strategies that define sport practice.

The focus of this ethnography is the *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* (DCEC), which has not only grown into one of the most acclaimed adventure races in the world, but also into a yearly 'documentary' sold to TV networks worldwide with sponsorship and advertising as well as racer entry fees generating millions of dollars in revenue. The study relies on multiple modes of data generation blending qualitative analysis of on-site interviews that took place in Patagonia, Argentina in December 1999, with email communications, media analysis, participant-observation and Adventure Race Association Listserve (ARA-L) content analysis, as well as quantitative data supplied by the *Eco-Challenge* communications department and email questionnaire.

Four distinct but interconnected data analyses are presented in this project in an effort to investigate the practice of AR in all its important dimensions. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of field, the first data analysis aims to uncover the particular stakes and struggles that animate both the relationships among AR participants, and the competition among race organizers, in order to understand its historical and contemporary evolution. The next analysis explores the overrepresentation of management-level corporate participants in DCEC as a suggestion of the emergence of a new class – or social group – habitus common to both 'new' corporate culture and AR. The aim of the analysis, which examines the parallels in AR and 'new' corporate discourses is twofold: first, to uncover the practice-generating principles in the AR field; second, to explore the relationship between the AR and 'new' corporate habitus through AR's *purported* benefit of 'transferability'. A third data analysis draws on Bourdieu's notions of capital and symbolic power as a framework to examine AR discourse, which presents AR as a site of subversion and transformation of the gender regime in sport. The examination, however, reveals the dissonance between participant discourse and practice as a legitimating process of masculine domination. The final analysis explores the field of entertainment/media as it articulates with the field of AR. This analysis demonstrates that the DCEC 'practitioner', as a contemporaneous DCEC viewer, significantly molds his/her perceptions and judgments of his/her AR experience through TV discourse that simultaneously constructs and relies on viewer/practitioners' collusion.

These analyses together contribute to a larger project of exploration into the symbolic system of sport supply as well as into the stakes, struggles and strategies that define new sport culture and other lifestyle sports.

La signification sociale d'une nouvelle pratique sportive :
le cas de la compétition d'aventure

Résumé

Cette étude porte sur les pratiques et les discours distinctifs de la compétition d'aventure (CA). Il s'agit d'une exploration du champ et des sous-champs de la CA, de ses valeurs, de ses normes, de ses enjeux et luttes, de ses patterns spécifiques de production et de consommation symbolique, des luttes qui l'animent ainsi que des transformations qu'elles entraînent, et ce, compte tenu de sa position au sein du champ plus vaste du sport et dans le contexte de la postmodernité. L'objectif général de la recherche est de saisir, à travers une étude empirique, la signification sociale de la CA, une pratique émergente dans le champ du sport. L'analyse de la dimension symbolique de cette nouvelle pratique socio-culturelle s'inspire du modèle théorique de Pierre Bourdieu, lequel, à ce jour, n'a pas été utilisé de façon extensive en sociologie du sport. Les principaux concepts élaborés par Bourdieu, notamment ceux de champ, d'habitus et de capital symbolique, ainsi que sa conception du pouvoir, servent d'outils d'analyse pour mieux comprendre les luttes et les stratégies des agents sociaux dans la définition légitime de la CA.

Le devis méthodologique retenu est celui d'une éthnographie, en l'occurrence de *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* (DCEC) qui non seulement est devenu la CA la plus célèbre dans le monde, mais qui a également été le sujet d'un «documentaire» annuel vendu à plusieurs réseaux de télévision à travers le monde; ses commanditaires, sa publicité et les frais d'inscription des compétiteurs générant des revenus de plusieurs millions de dollars. L'étude s'appuie sur différents types de données et met à profit différentes méthodes d'analyse : des analyses de contenu d'entrevues effectuées sur le site

de la compétition en Patagonie (Argentine, décembre 1999) et des analyses de contenu d'échanges de participants du forum électronique de discussion de l'*Adventure Race Association Listserve* (ARA-L), de l'observation participante (Patagonie 1999), des analyses de couverture médiatique ainsi que l'analyse de données quantitatives fournies par le département des communications de *Eco-Challenge*.

Afin de rendre compte des dimensions clés de la signification sociale de la CA, notre recherche a consisté en quatre analyses distinctes mais interreliées. S'inspirant du concept de champ de P. Bourdieu, la première analyse vise à mettre en lumière les forces et ressources spécifiques qui constituent actuellement les enjeux de la CA et ce, en vue de comprendre son évolution historique et sa dynamique contemporaine. Cette étude révèle une tension croissante entre ceux qui valorisent l'«authenticité» plutôt que l'«accessibilité», la «non-médiatisation» plutôt que la «commercialisation»; ces tensions engendrant des conflits et des luttes au sein et entre des participants et des organisateurs en ce qui a trait à la définition légitime et aux frontières de cette pratique sportive. La seconde analyse s'appuie sur le concept d'habitus afin de comprendre la surreprésentation de participants appartenant au milieu de la gestion et des entreprises. L'examen du parallèle entre un nouveau discours manégérial et le discours spécifique de la CA permet de saisir et de mettre en lumière l'habitus distinctif d'un groupe social qui investit ces deux champs (social et sportif). Une troisième analyse questionne, à la lumière du concept de pouvoir symbolique, la prétention de la CA d'être un site de contestation et de transformation de l'ordre social de genre en sport. L'analyse de divers types de données révèle au contraire une dissonance entre le discours et la pratique des participants, dissonance servant à légitimer l'exercice d'une domination masculine. La dernière analyse

explore l'articulation entre le champ du divertissement médiatique et celui de la CA. L'analyse démontre que les pratiquants de CA, qui sont également des spectateurs de DCEC, modèlent significativement leurs perceptions et leurs jugements au regard de leur expérience de CA sur le discours télévisuel.

L'ensemble de ces analyses se veut une contribution au projet plus vaste d'exploration du système symbolique de l'offre dans le champ sportif ainsi que de l'étude des luttes et stratégies en vue de la définition légitime des nouvelles pratiques sportives et des sports comme mode de vie.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

AR:	Adventure Racing
ARA-L:	Adventure Racing Association Listserve
Cat.:	Category
CMC:	Computer Mediated Communication
DCEC:	Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge
HDTV:	High Definition Television
SPA:	Sport and Physical Activity

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Introduction

Research objectives

This project is an examination of adventure racing (henceforth in the text and commonly referred to as "AR") discourse and practice that explores the AR field, its values, tenets, stakes and struggles, its patterns of production, consumption and transformation, in light of its position within the larger field of sport practice and in the wider context of 'postmodernity' – or Late Capitalism. Through this empirical investigation, our aim is to highlight the social signification of an emerging sport practice in the field of sport supply. Further, through our investigation of AR as a new sociocultural practice – and thus symbolic system – this project seeks to highlight the power of Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical model, which has not yet been extensively exploited in sport studies, as a heuristical tool to understand the struggles and strategies that define sport practice. Bourdieu's model, accordingly, demonstrates the symbolic value of AR practice in contemporary society, in the construction/affirmation of individuals and in given social orders such as the sport regime. Therefore, drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and symbolic power, this study attempts to uncover the stakes in the AR field, to identify the sources of conflict and collusion between interacting social groups and institutions, and to recognize the latent patterns of interests and struggles in the definition of 'legitimate' AR practice.

The study: Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge

The sport of AR by its very character resists strict definition, but can nonetheless be loosely described – in its most undisputed formulation – as a non-stop, self-sufficient, multi-day, multi-discipline, mixed-gender team endurance competition that takes place in the wilderness over a designated but unmarked course. "Expedition Racing," as multi-day (usually 5-10 day) AR epics are often called, requires athletes to master multiple outdoor skills, endure sleep deprivation, weight loss, illness, injury, extreme weather, and harsh terrain. Athletes are required to manage and transport days' worth of food, water and equipment and to progress continuously through unfamiliar isolated areas with minimal rest and/or sleep. Its growing popularity has paralleled that of other 'new,' 'lifestyle' and 'extreme' sports, which – though in earlier manifestations fueled by larger political opposition – have most recently been described as sports that either ideologically or practically provide alternatives to mainstream sports and their values (Beal, 1995; Loret, 1995; Rinehart, 1998).

AR, which originated in New Zealand and expanded to Europe in the 1980's, was brought to North America by AR competitor and entrepreneur Mark Burnett, the creator of the *Eco-Challenge* (and later the executive producer of CBS's *Survivor*). The first *Eco-Challenge* took place in Utah in 1995 and developed into one of the most popular and most commercial expedition-length races in the world. Accordingly, since partnering with *Discovery Channel* in 1996 (and later *USA Network* in 2000), the *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* (henceforth "DCEC") has not only grown into one of the most acclaimed adventure races in the world, but also into a yearly 'documentary' sold to TV networks worldwide with sponsorship and advertising as well as racer entry fees

generating millions of dollars in revenue. DCEC can be seen to have pioneered the current trend in AR where races are owned by, or exclusively licensed to, TV production companies that create and sell 'reality' programming based on a specific race.

Research methods

The study relies on multiple modes of data generation to help assess the "validity of inferences between indicators and concepts" (Hammerseley and Atkinson, 1995: 231), a type of methodology used extensively by Bourdieu that he describes as 'discursive montage' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 66). Research was equally attached to a process of 'analytical induction', the interplay between the data collection and revision of the research project. (Bryman and Burgess, 1994: 4)

Our intention was to build an iterative and self-corrective design to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the qualitative research (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 92), and to ultimately provide a description of the norms and values that underlie cultural behaviour (Ibid, p. 229-251), interpreted in terms of the literature and theories in sport sociology. This meant that, as per Rubin and Rubin (1995, p. 226), data analysis began with data collection still underway. After finishing each interview and again after finishing a large group of interviews, we examined the data in light of Bourdieu's conceptualization of *field* and *capital*, pulled out the themes that described the world of AR participants, and decided which areas to examine in more detail. We redesigned our questions according to this preliminary analysis to focus on central themes (i.e., the values and norms at stake in AR) as we continued collecting data. After the collection was complete, we began a more fine-grained analysis of the data, paying particular attention to current debates, building toward an overall understanding of the field. In order to put into light the dynamic and

the structure of the power relations of the field of AR, we categorized all the material by key themes and compared the material within categories for variations and nuances in meanings. We then compared across categories to discover connections between themes, the goal being to provide an accurate, detailed analysis.

Our qualitative analysis of the AR field is based on 37 interviews with AR participants conducted by Joanne Kay, 30 of which took place on site in Patagonia, Argentina in December of 1999 over three weeks of an *Eco-Challenge* competition. Seven of the interviews were done off-site previous to the competition. After the initial analysis, ten of the respondents were contacted for follow-up interviews. All the interviews were semi-structured and tape-recorded, lasting an average of 90 minutes. Though respondents' spontaneous detours were encouraged with the aim of eliciting agents' particular knowledge of the field, specific themes were broached in each interview: Perceptions and judgements regarding various AR practices; Prestige as it is linked to specific events; The impact of media on personal AR experience; The impact of corporate sponsorship on personal AR experience; The impact of the 'gender' rule on personal AR experience; The importance of AR as a 'training ground for real life'.

The study also relies heavily on a series of Kay's e-mail correspondences that took place in January 2000 after a two-page feature she wrote on the *Eco-Challenge* was published in the *National Post* (Kay, 2000). *Lights, Cameras, Eco-Action* (see Appendix 1) criticized the media's (intrusive) role at the race, and the feedback Kay received from participants on this piece proved to be exceptionally useful in understanding the current dynamic taking place in AR field.

This project also draws on the Adventure Racing Association Listserve (henceforth "ARA-L") ongoing debate over the direction of AR. All comments and dialogue with "Direction of AR" in the subject line's header were collected for the duration of the debate, which took place over a 12-month period from September 1999 to August 2000. As this was the most popular on-line forum for AR participants and enthusiasts, the discussion was invaluable to determining and outlining the stakes and struggles in the field. Our online data collection was grounded in the ethnomethodological approach broadly concerned with how people construct their own definition of a social situation: "These methods focus on ordinary, mundane, naturally occurring talk to reveal the way meaning is accomplished by everyone involved" (Mann & Stewart, 2000, p. 86). As Denzin (1999) and Rodino (1997) have shown, 'lurking' unseen on-line is an effective way to watch interaction without intervening in any way, an invaluable complement, we discovered, to more traditional qualitative research methods. Further, we found that computer-mediated communication, coined "CMC" by Mann and Stewart (2000, p. 2), has proven a mode capable not only of eliminating transcription bias (Ibid, p. 22), but of generating data which are "more open, reactive and spontaneous than many traditional written accounts and more detailed, edited and reflective than many spoken conversations" (Ibid, p. 194).

While we consider this study to be predominantly of a qualitative design, the Eco-Challenge communications department supplied us with some quantitative data, statistics and competitor information that rounded out our knowledge of participants in AR. After a first analysis of the data, a questionnaire was distributed that could specifically help evaluate the relative positions of participants in the field. We also relied on a media

analysis of *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* broadcasts from 1996-1999. This proved invaluable to identifying discourse, as interview respondents often recited the script from previous years' broadcasts in their comments about AR values and anticipated rewards.

Finally, much of the research took place through participant observation. Kay trained for and competed in the 36-hour *Raid the North* adventure race in Quebec, Canada in September of 1999 – an experience that not only helped her relate better to athletes' perceptions and judgements, but permitted a privileged and welcomed entry into the AR community. Kay was able to go beyond conducting formal interviews and chat freely with racers in a more relaxed, unstructured exchange. Kay also conducted a three-week field observation in Patagonia as a journalist/feature writer for the *National Post*. In this role she was given complete access to competitors, the course and race organization, including media production facilities and crew – access that would have been denied to her had she gone in any other capacity such as racer, volunteer or spectator. Data collection consisted of diligent note taking, photos and informal discussions with organizers, producers, participants and volunteers.

Participant observation did, however, present some ethical concerns (see appendix 3). At times interviews were covert, conducted in informal non-regulated environments, as Kay was an active member in the group. As was Belinda Wheaton's participation in her analysis of windsurfers (Wheaton, 1998), Kay's participation was complicated by her additional role as sports journalist. She similarly found herself privy to invaluable information, sometimes deceptively uncovered, about media operations and influences. As an ethical minimum, Kay informed respondents of the broad area of research, interview procedures and their rights to anonymity and confidentiality, to ask questions

pertaining to the research, to stop the interview or to review/edit their response at any time prior to submission of the results (see appendix 4). If specifically 'journalistic' questions were necessary, she would turn off the tape recorder, rely on her note pad and state the change in purpose. Though we complied with prescriptions of ethical conduct, our aim was to privilege our moral obligations as the benchmark of ethical conduct. (Homan, 1992: 321-332).

The goal of the research method was to maintain an integrated approach that follows in the ethnographic tradition, which rejects positivist views of scientific research. The intention was not to mirror social reality or social facts by representing empirical research. Rather, we tried to emphasize methodological reflexivity, and, as researchers, to recognize our part in the social world being studied. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 217-253). Accordingly, while efforts were made not to overstep ethical boundaries, participant-observation data was not only justified in this research, it was central to its validity.

Chapter summaries

Bourdieu's sociocultural theory and sport practice

As Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice provides the theoretical framework for our project, providing the pivotal concepts (field, habitus and symbolic power) deployed in following chapters, this first chapter maps out Bourdieu's sociological approach. The chapter begins with a brief exposé of the main theoretical traditions that have influenced Bourdieu's conceptualisation followed by presentations of the concept of habitus and Bourdieu's analysis of the social distribution of sport and physical activity (SPA) tastes. This leads to a discussion of the concept of field and its usefulness to

understanding SPA supply. Bourdieu's particular mode of sociological inquiry is then considered in light of misreadings and major criticisms of his work, concluding with what the authors believe to be its strength for capturing the social dynamic of SPA practice and its contribution to sport sociology.

Mapping the field of AR

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of field, this second chapter explores the particular stakes and struggles that animate both the relationships among AR participants, and the competition among race organizers, in order to highlight the social dynamic and power structure of this new 'lifestyle' sport. Our analysis demonstrates that what is at stake in the AR field is both the definition of the sport practice's legitimate form as well as its orientation with respect to two dominant delineating forces: 'authenticity' and 'spectacularization' of the adventure. These two forces currently constitute the specific forms of capital (sources of prestige) that define the AR field.

The corporate habitus in AR

Chapter 3 explores the overrepresentation of management-level corporate participants in DCEC as a suggestion of the emergence of a new class – or social group – habitus common to both 'new' corporate culture and the AR field. The aim of this analysis, which examines the parallels between conceptualizations, perceptions and judgements of practice embedded in AR and 'new' corporate discourses is twofold: first, to uncover the practice-generating principles (habitus) in the AR field; second, to explore the relationship between the AR and 'new' corporate habitus through AR's purported benefit of 'transferability'.

Gender Dynamics in AR

Chapter 4 draws on Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power to examine AR discourse that presents AR as a site of subversion and transformation of the gender regime in sport. AR discourse simultaneously vaunts the physical toughness required for participation in the sport while privileging the value of (female-naturalized) *teaming* over (male-naturalized) *physical toughness* as the measure of AR achievement. A further claim of AR discourse affirms gender plurality and women's specificity as key values. Women's sought-after inclusion in what is described as a 'tough' sport serves, then, in AR discourse, to affirm women's capacity for physical toughness while simultaneously suggesting that women's specificity – or "teaming expertise" is valued over male-associated physical strength. Moreover, as risk-taking is associated with physical toughness and risk-management with teaming, discourse suggests women in AR are more highly valued through their association with managing risk. AR thus appears to subvert and transform the gender regime in sport. However, this study of participants in the 1999 *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* explores the dissonance between participant discourse and practice as the legitimating process of masculine domination in sport.

Media construction of authenticity in AR

The final analysis, supported by Bourdieu's notion that investigation into a televised sports event must "bring to light the mechanisms behind this two-step social construction: first of the sports event, then of the media event" (Bourdieu, 1998: 82), explores the field of entertainment/media as it articulates with the field of AR. Accordingly, chapter 5 draws on communication theory and conceptualizations of postmodern – or Late Capitalist – culture to explore the media construction of AR. This

analysis explores the DCEC as a simultaneous sport and media product, the success of which depends on a symbiotic relationship between the two. This symbiosis depends on the paradoxical use of *authenticity* – both as collective practitioner credo and discourse production tool – serving to forge a crucial and inextricable corollary link to the notion of *adventure*. This chapter suggests, then, that the DCEC 'practitioner', as a contemporaneous DCEC viewer, significantly molds his/her perceptions and judgments of the authenticity of his/her AR experience through TV discourse that simultaneously constructs and relies on viewer/practitioners' collusion.

Appendix summaries

Appendix 1: *Lights, Cameras, Eco-Action!*

Joanne Kay's *National Post* feature, *Lights, Cameras, Eco-Action!* (Kay, 2000) is presented as a critical demonstration of media production impact on race practice. As this feature was based on similar research data and provoked participant feedback and discussion about the AR field, we consider that it was invaluable to the project's goal.

Appendix 2: *Imperialistic Construction of Freedom in Warren Miller's 'Freeriders'*

This earlier study, *Imperialistic Construction of Freedom in Warren Miller's 'Freeriders'* (Kay and Laberge, in press) demonstrates how a tenet of the extreme subculture, in this case *freedom*, can be co-opted and commodified to suggest and/or reify a sport's 'extreme' status. As it is posited in this current project that AR, as simultaneous sport and media product, is symptomatic of a more general postmodern 'shift', this article, as another example of this process, is presented in support of current findings. In *Freeriders*, Warren Miller uses the implied promise of freedom as a marketing strategy

underlying extreme skiing's image as an avant-garde commodity in the extreme sport market. Three 'devices of connotation' (Lodge, 1992: 122) are examined through which Miller's film contributes to what is described as an imperialistic construction of freedom.

Appendices 3 and 4: Ethical considerations and information to respondents

These appendices outline research protocols in light of ethical concerns. Here we briefly discuss methodological considerations as well as fieldwork, interview and recruitment procedures.

Author's note

Each of the following articles is formatted according to the specific manuscript guidelines outlined by the journal or publication to which it was submitted.

CHAPTER 1

Theoretical Framework: Bourdieu's Sociocultural Theory and Sport Practice

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Theoretical framework:
Bourdieu's Sociocultural Theory and Sport Practice

Pierre Bourdieu is considered by many scholars to be one of the most influential French intellectuals of the twentieth century. His interdisciplinary work, linking anthropology, sociology and philosophy, has emerged as a genuinely innovative theoretical and methodological approach for understanding the pluridimensional quality of social life. Bourdieu has addressed a broad range of theoretical themes and has confronted them through an impressive diversity of empirical research, developing at once a theory of social practice, a theory of culture, a theory of power and a theory of sociological knowledge. Thus far, his major empirical works range from the study of the Kabyle berber of Algeria (Bourdieu 1962 [1958]), to the study of museum attendance (Bourdieu, Darbel, and Schnapper 1990 [1966]), the uses of photography (Bourdieu, Boltanski, Castel, and Chamboredon 1990 [1965]), the French educational system (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977 [1970]), cultural tastes (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]), uses of language (Bourdieu 1991a [1982]), French academic life (Bourdieu 1988a [1984]), writers (Bourdieu 1995 [1992]), artistic production (Bourdieu, Haacke and Johnson 1995 [1994]), scientific production (Bourdieu 1997), television (1998b [1998]), gender relations (1998c), and current economic discourse (1999 [1998]).

The complexity and scope of Bourdieu's conceptual world make synthesis difficult[1], and we therefore focus on two of his pivotal concepts, 'habitus' and 'field,' as well as on his sociocultural theory of practice as applied to sport and physical activity (henceforth "SPA")[2]. In order to map out his sociological approach, we begin with a brief exposé of the main theoretical traditions that have influenced his conceptualisation. We then explore

the manifold concept of habitus, presenting Bourdieu's analysis of the social distribution of SPA tastes, followed by a discussion of the concept of field and its utilisation in understanding SPA supply. Bourdieu's particular mode of sociological inquiry is then considered. Finally, we briefly survey misreadings and major criticisms of his conceptualisation, concluding with what we believe to be its strength for capturing the social dynamic of SPA practice and contribution to sport sociology.

Theoretical influences

Bourdieu's social theory draws from diverse intellectual sources such as Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Wittgenstein and Bachelard, and from schools of thought ranging from structuralism and phenomenology to analytic philosophy (Swartz 1997; Brubaker 1985). Rather than being characterised as merely eclectic, however, he is seen to have insightfully and creatively woven core ideas of Western thought into a selective synthesis of his own. Here, we consider the influences of three critical classical social theorists: Marx, Weber and Durkheim.

Although Bourdieu cannot be labelled a Marxist, he is in keeping with at least three of Marx's key concerns: first, Bourdieu shares Marx's contention that social theory should not consist in discourse closed on itself, but should aim to reveal processes of domination. Second, like Marx, Bourdieu recognises the primacy of class conflicts and material interests in the understanding of social inequalities. Third, Bourdieu is a materialist in the sense that he roots human consciousness in practical social life. However, Bourdieu discards the concepts of exploitation and of ideology central to Marxian theory. He sharply criticises Marx for his economism, which recognises economic capital as the only

form of power. One of Bourdieu's innovations is the recognition that many forms of power exist in social life. He terms all forms of power "capital" (for instance, "cultural capital," "social capital," "symbolic capital," and so forth) in order to suggest similar conceptual status, thus rejecting Marx's conception of culture as a 'superstructure' secondary to economy. One hallmark of Bourdieu's theory, then, is his consideration of culture and economy as equally important. Finally, Bourdieu departs from Marx's conception of social class that sees classes as real groups mobilised for social struggles. Rather, for Bourdieu, classes are defined from a cultural and relational standpoint: a social class refers to a group of social agents (defined in various ways) who share the same social conditions of existence, interests, social experience and value system, and who tend to define themselves *in relation* to other groups of agents. Social class, for Bourdieu, excludes neither the diversity of members nor the existence of internal conflicts. Moreover, social classes can be characterised by any kind of socially constructed trait, whether it be gender, age, ethnicity or something else (*readers should note that the term 'class' will be used according to this definition for the remainder of this chapter*).

Bourdieu draws from Weber in many regards as well. First, he shares with Weber his conceptualisation of social class, since Weber held that classes are aggregates of common life chances – not real social groups. Second, Bourdieu borrows much from Weber's political economy of religion that applies a materialist analysis while still recognising the symbolic dimension. One of Bourdieu's aims is to extend this model to *all* cultural and social life (Bourdieu 1990a: 36). Of particular inspiration for Bourdieu is Weber's study of 'interest' (Bourdieu 1987). However, Bourdieu's social theory expands upon Weber's notion in that it includes nonmaterial goods. For him, all practices are fundamentally

'interested,' that is, "oriented towards the maximisation of material or symbolic profit" (Bourdieu 1990b: 209). As a last point, Bourdieu draws from Weber's notions of charisma and legitimacy to construct his notion of 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu 1991b). Weber contends that the exercise of power requires legitimation. Like Weber, Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital refers to a form of power that is not perceived as power but rather as a legitimate demand for recognition, deference and obedience.

As for Durkheim's legacy, Bourdieu adopted as a fundamental principle Durkheim's stance that science must disconnect from common sense – or people's explanations for social life – and adopt an 'objective' approach. Durkheim's quantitative studies, such as that on suicide, which demonstrated it to be a social phenomenon rather than a purely individual one, are most illustrative in this regard. However, Bourdieu departs from strict Durkheimian objectivism (and any type of objectivism that followed[3]) by integrating a 'subjectivist' perspective into his social theory. Indeed, he considers people's different representations and interpretations of reality as essential components for the scientific understanding of social life. Bourdieu also builds upon Durkheim's hypothesis of the social origins of schemes of thought, perception, and action, and of the existence of a correspondence between symbolic classification and social stratification. Accordingly, Bourdieu sees symbolic systems as classification systems that fulfil a function of social integration, and he aims to explore the mechanisms that link symbolic classification and social stratification. However, while for Durkheim this integrative force operates to produce a desired consensual unity for the social order, for Bourdieu it produces differentiation and domination.

Bourdieu's intellectual project was also strongly shaped by the French sociology of the 1950s from which Lévi-Strauss (a structuralist espousing an objectivist mode of knowledge) and Merleau-Ponty (a phenomenologist espousing a subjectivist mode of knowledge[4]) emerged as towering figures (Defrance 1995). Bourdieu retains from Levi-Strauss' structuralism the 'relational' mode of knowledge, that is: "a mode of thinking that leads one to characterise every element by the relations that unite it to all the other elements in a system, and from which each element gets its meaning and its function" (Bourdieu 1990b: 10). He steadfastly implemented this relational mode of knowledge throughout his empirical and theoretical work. However, he rejects Lévi-Strauss' reification of the mental structures and its correlative exclusion of active social agents from social explanation. To overcome these shortcomings, Bourdieu draws selectively from phenomenologist thought. He was attracted by Merleau-Ponty's idea that the body is the fount of one's social experience and understanding of the social world. Indeed, Bourdieu accords a central place to the body in his social theory. He nevertheless criticises phenomenology because it considers subjects to be undetermined, and to be empowered to construct the world according to their own vision. Thus, it forgets that 'the social world is in the body,' that agents classify and construct their understanding of the world from particular positions in a *hierarchically structured social space*.

Hence, Bourdieu's ambitious program was to elaborate a social theory of practice that builds upon objectivist and subjectivist insights, and foremost, that transcends their alleged antagonism and the related 'false antinomies' (such as structure/agency, determinism/freedom, macro-analysis/micro-analysis, and internal interpretation/external explication) that have characterised sociological traditions. In order to do so, he forges a

new conceptual apparatus, the two pillars of which are the notions of *habitus* and *field.* These notions are constructed as the means for analysing and understanding the dialectical relationships between social agents and the social structure in which they evolve. More concretely, it involves, on the one hand, the investigation of how social agents incorporate, through socialisation, the system of relationships that structures society, and on the other hand, how agents participate in the social construction of these very structures. The focus is not placed on either the structures or the individuals themselves, but, rather, on the processes and mechanisms of construction. Indeed, when asked to play the 'labelling' game, Bourdieu chooses the term *constructivist structuralism* (Bourdieu 1990a: 14) to indicate his focus on the social construction of individuals and social groups and on the genesis of structures, be they cognitive or social.

SPA as differentiating cultural practices

Although Bourdieu has not devoted a complete project to SPA, *Distinction* (1984), one of his most important works, gives major attention to SPA practice. Moreover, his two articles, 'Program for a Sociology of Sport' (1988b) and 'Sport and Social Class' (1978), appear to be seminal works for sport sociologists – earlier in France[5]- and now spreading to North-America, Asia and Continental Europe as well[6]. The fact that Bourdieu was a rugby player in his youth combined with the pivotal role of the body in his understanding of social life may partly explain his interest in SPA practices.

Consistent with the central place he devotes to culture in his understanding of social life, Bourdieu considers SPA as a cultural practice much the same as listening to music, reading, home-decorating, etc. For the anthropologist he is, cultural practices manifest 'a

vision and a division of the world' [7], and bear particular symbolic value. In his highly in-depth, wide-ranging analysis of French society's cultural consumption in the early seventies, Bourdieu (1984) shows that different SPA practices are integral to more general cultural practices constituting what he calls 'life-styles.' A substantive body of interviews and a broad statistical data base collected on French society allowed him to sketch, via the application of statistical analyses of correspondence, a *spatial representation* of socially significant cultural practices (which he calls the 'space of lifestyles') and the structure of French society of that period (the 'social space'). Bourdieu privileges the term 'space' to depict society because the notion contains, in itself, the principle of a *relational* understanding of the social world:

> [...] Individuals or groups exist and subsist through *difference*; that is, they occupy *relative positions* in a space of relations which, although invisible and always difficult to show empirically, is the most 'real' reality and the real principle of the behaviour of individuals and groups. (Bourdieu 1998a: 31; emphases in the original)

What emerges (cf. Figure 1) is a depiction of the system of hierarchical relationships between the various lifestyles and between the various social positions (Bourdieu 1984: 129). It should be noted that Bourdieu's aim is not to identify patterns of consumption of social groups but rather to reveal structures of opposition by mapping of the *relative distances* between social positions and between different cultural practices. This procedure is conceived by Bourdieu as a preliminary step towards what he terms 'socio-logical' analysis that focuses on the different *meanings* that the different social groups give to practices. Social classification of the given meanings further allows him to disclose the power relationships at work in the social formation.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

With regard to Figure 1, it is important to note that Bourdieu's conception of social structure breaks with the linear conception that considers only the simple direct determination of economical asset. He accounts for two major 'principles of differentiation,' or *sources of power* (forms of capital), effective in our advanced capitalist societies: economic capital and cultural capital (academic background and all other education). His social space is constructed according to three main dimensions: (1) the volume of the two kinds of capital, represented by the vertical axis, (2) the relative composition of the capital (± economic capital and ± cultural capital), represented by the horizontal axis, and (3) the change in these two properties over time manifested by past and potential trajectories in social space (this last dimension is not represented in our simplified version.) Bourdieu employs occupational titles as the principal indicators of social groups, however they are conceptually 'deconstructed' in terms of the underlying volume and composition of capital they cover.

Taste

In order to uncover the power relationships at work in the social formation, Bourdieu's analysis focuses on the study of 'taste' and judgement of taste, that is, people's appreciation and depreciation of distinctive lifestyles (e.g., snobbish/vulgar, dull/exciting, refined/crude). The expression of taste allows the social scientist to discern the generative principle that links, or unites, the perception of or appreciation for various lifestyle practices. (Bourdieu 1984: 173). For example, taste can reveal preferences for fitness activities vs. performance sports, for hearty vs. gourmet food or for low-maintenance vs.

trendy clothing. Further, the judgement individuals apply to their own tastes and the tastes of others constitutes an act of classification: they differentiate among them and hierarchise them. People, operating according to the principles of classification at work in their society, choose from among a variety of goods and practices the ones that suite their taste. Hence, SPA, as a classified lifestyle, acts as a symbol or social group signifier.

In *Distinction* (1984), Bourdieu demonstrates that in the struggle between social groups, groups express distaste for the tastes of other groups; upper classes depreciate the goods and practices associated with 'popular taste,' and reciprocally, working classes reject the goods and practices presented to them as signs of 'good taste.' Similarly, older generations reject the goods and practices of youth culture, while adolescents might find those associated with their older counterparts to be stated or 'uncool.' Taste is seen as an expression of the symbolic dimension of class relations. According to Bourdieu's relational approach, it matters little whether professionals prefer golf, hockey, boxing or rugby. What matters is that their preferences express systematic differentiation to those of other classes. For Lash and Urry, one of Bourdieu's central claims is that "we consume not products but symbols with the intention of establishing social differentiation" (1987: 293). Bourdieu's relational approach then leads to the understanding of the space of lifestyles as an objective representation of a symbolic system, a system of socially classified and classifying practices (Bourdieu 1984:170-175). His notion of taste therefore permits a better understanding of the preferences for practices such as SPA as being fundamentally social rather than as the result of 'natural' disposition or psychological trait, and as being involved, at the symbolic level, in the power relations between social groups.

What is at stake then for the social scientist is to construct a plausible mechanism or operator that could explain the relationship between practices and the positions in the social structure. In order to do so, Bourdieu developed a concept which he terms, borrowing from classical scholarship, *habitus*, and which accounts for the dialectical relationship between social structure and individuals' practices and preferences (as objective manifestations of taste).

Habitus as the mediating construct between social position and practice

For Bourdieu, it is through the dynamic mediation of habitus, an embodied internalised system of schemes of dispositions, perceptions and appreciation, that positions in the social space are 'translated' into practices and preferences (Bourdieu 1984: 170). Adopting a dynamic perspective, Bourdieu contends that habitus, on the one hand, is shaped by living conditions characteristic of a social position and, on the other hand, operates as a 'matrix,' or generating principle, of classifiable practices and judgements of taste. The feature emphasised here is that habitus is a mediating construct, not a determined or a determining one.

Moreover, Bourdieu argues that different conditions of existence (linked to different positions in the social space) produce different habitus. In other words, life conditions and position in the social structure would fashion a certain sense of the world, and shape our perception and desires:

> Through the differentiated and differentiating conditionings associated with the different conditions of existence, through the exclusions and inclusions, unions (marriages, affairs, alliances etc.) which govern the social structure and the structuring force it exerts, through all the hierarchies and classifications

> inscribed in objects (especially cultural products), in institutions (for example, the educational system) or simply in language, and through all the judgements, verdicts, gradings and warnings imposed by the institutions specially designed for this purpose, such as the family or the educational system, or constantly arising from the meetings and interactions of everyday life, the social order is progressively inscribed in people's minds. Social divisions become principles of division, organizing the image of the social world. (Bourdieu 1984: 470-471)

The internalisation of the classifications, codes and implicit rules that structure society are the means through which the individual constructs his/her social identity, the affirmation of his/her belonging to social groups (defined by sex, age, occupation, ethnicity, or other) and difference from others.

Habitus is not only an internalisation of the social conditions into dispositions; Bourdieu conceives it also as a generating principle of practices expressed in 'taste.' Through socialisation and the learning (institutionalised or informal, discursive and bodily) it entails, social agents acquire a system of schemes of dispositions that leads them to act and react in a manner proper to his/her social group.

For Bourdieu, habitus provides the basic cognitive categories and action frames through which people think about and respond to the social world. It is a matrix, unconsciously at work and applicable to a variety of areas of life, that gives freedom within certain limits (Bourdieu 1977: 95). Via the habitus, social practices and lifestyles are understood as the outcomes of a dialectical relationship between social structure and social agency. What is at stake for Bourdieu with this concept, is to transcend the classical antinomies of structure/agency, society/individual, determinism/freedom, and objectivism/subjectivism that he so adamantly rejects. It is evident that the different

habitus cannot be pinpointed directly or with immediately accessible empirical data. Nevertheless, they are expressed through practices, and, therefore, it is possible to 'reconstruct' theoretically the practice-generating principle of different social groups through observation and relational analysis of practices, tastes and judgement of tastes.

Given that Bourdieu attributes a corporeal dimension to his notion of habitus, presented as an *incorporation* of the hierarchised social structure and as *incorporated* schemes of dispositions, perceptions and appreciation, SPA constitutes, for Bourdieu, what Merton (1987) calls a 'strategic research site' for uncovering the different habitus specific to different social groups. But what is the heuristic value of habitus for sport sociologists? It is demonstrated in the following section that the concept of habitus can be of great use in understanding how the appeal of SPA practices among social groups is linked to different bodily dispositions and to different benefits expected from the SPA practices, as well as to the role of SPA practices in the social relations of power.

The relevance of habitus to an understanding of SPA practice

It is most precisely in *Distinction* (1984; especially pp. 209-225), his wide-ranging analysis of lifestyles, and in his article 'Sport and social class' (1978) that Bourdieu attempts to show that a classes' distinctive preference for a SPA practice is best explained, within the limits of one's objective economic capital, by differences in *perception* and *appreciation* (generated by the habitus) of the 'physical,' social, educational, and economic investments required, and of the physical, social, economic and symbolic benefits expected from different SPA practices. The following passage sketches what can be considered to be a 'research programme' for sport sociologists:

> To understand the class distribution of the various sports, one would have to take account of the representations which, in terms of their specific schemes of perception and appreciation, the different classes have of the costs (economic, cultural and 'physical') and benefits attached to the different sports—immediate or deferred 'physical' benefits (health, beauty, strength, whether visible, through 'body-building' or invisible through 'keep-fit' exercises), economic and social benefits (upward mobility etc.) immediate or deferred symbolic benefits linked to the distributional or positional value of each of the sports considered (i.e., all that each of them receives from its greater or lesser rarity, and its more or less clear association with a class, with boxing, football, rugby or body-building evoking the working classes, tennis and skiing, the bourgeoisie and golf, the upper bourgeoisie), gains in distinction accruing from the different effects on the body itself (e.g. slimness, sun-tan, muscles obviously or discretely visible, etc.) or from the access to highly selective groups which some of these sports give (golf, polo etc.). (Bourdieu 1984: 20)

Differentiating bodily dispositions

Of particular interest for the sport sociologist is Bourdieu's 'phenomenological' assessment of bodily practices according to which one must delve into a person's deeper dimension, that is, the '*particular relation to the body*' or bodily disposition, to thoroughly understand an agent's logic for selecting a given SPA practice. For Bourdieu, it is assumed that the conditioning and education proper to a given position in the social structure generates a particular relation to one's own body which is, according to his conceptualisation, the fundamental dimension of habitus:

> [...] The social conditionings linked to a social condition tend to inscribe the relation to the social world in a lasting, generalized relation to one's own body, a way of bearing one's body, presenting it to others, moving it, making

space for it, which gives the body its social physiognomy. (Bourdieu 1984: 474)

Accordingly, a relational analysis of the variations and oppositions in type of corporal engagement, in degree of attention or interest that one has in one's body, in degree of risk that one is ready to assume, and in conception of the body itself and its function, led Bourdieu to identify two opposing relationships to the body among working class and professional agents: the body as means vs. the body as an end in itself:

> It is the relation to one's own body, a fundamental aspect of the habitus, which distinguishes the working classes from the privileged classes, just as, within the latter, it distinguishes fractions that are separated by the whole universe of a life-style. On one side, there is the *instrumental* relation to the body which the working classes express in all the practices centred on the body, whether in dieting or beauty care, relation to illness or medication, and which is also manifested in the choice of sports requiring a considerable investment of effort, sometimes of pain and suffering (e.g. boxing) and sometimes a *gambling with the body itself* (as in motor-cycling, parachute-jumping, all forms of acrobatics, and to some extent, all sports involving fighting, among which we may include rugby). On the other side, there is the tendency of the privileged classes to treat the body as *an end in itself*, with variants according to whether the emphasis is placed on the intrinsic functioning of the body as an organism, which leads to the macrobiotic cult of health, or on the appearance of the body as a perceptible configuration, the 'physique,' i.e. the body-for-others. (Bourdieu 1978: 838; emphases in the original).

Because SPA practices offer the possibility of shaping the body, then, they moreover express the 'body for others,' that is the bodily incorporation of social relations and meanings (i.e. those involving reference to others). In this regard, SPA practices

implement the visible manifestation of the impression one wants to give of oneself, of one's ethic or 'moral virtues' (e.g., dignity, straightforwardness, toughness) or social value (e.g., virility, femininity). The differences hence "inscribed in the physical order of bodies" are raised "to the symbolic order of significant distinctions" (Bourdieu 1984: 175). Since they are perceived in their mutual relations and in terms of social classificatory schemes, classifiable worked out body shapes become symbolic expressions of different positions in the social structure. Judgements of taste relating to body shaping are thus used as a means of legitimating and depreciating, and eventually naturalising, social differences.

Many French sport sociologists have successfully used Bourdieu's conceptualisation of habitus (and its privileged bodily dimension:) Clément (1981), for example, has shown how different types of relationships to the body can explain different social recruitment of three combat sports: wrestling, judo and aïkido: "the distance separating the combatants, the emphasis put on dodging and avoidance techniques, the value put on aesthetics, and the linking of aesthetics to the efficiency of a movement are aspects of aïkido that match the relationship to one's body prevalent in the upper middle classes," while the full body contact, falls and aggressiveness in wrestling and judo are more appealing among the middle and popular classes (Clément 1995: 150). Focussing on one sport practice, rugby, Pociello (1983) gave a comprehensive account of the bodily dispositions and appreciation underlying three styles of rugby practice, each of them attracting different social groups. On the North American scene, Wacquant's (1992b and 1995) ethnographical and participant observation study of a ghetto gym in Chicago shed light on how boxing was linked to the living conditions of the black young males and their distinctive bodily habitus.

Laberge and Sankoff (1988) studied the SPA practices of a sample of women of Montreal in light of their differentiating lifestyles and habitus. These diverse studies appear to attest to the fact that one's relationship to one's body is at the foundation of SPA selection and the manner of practice privileged by different social groups.

Differentiating profits expected from SPA

Because people apprehend reality through the schemes of perception and appreciation of their habitus, it makes 'sociological' sense that different social groups will not agree about the profits (intrinsic or extrinsic, immediate or deferred) expected from a given SPA practice (Bourdieu 1978: 834-7 and 1984: 211-5). Certain groups will seek external effects on the body such as a visible musculature. Others will seek internal profits, that is, physical and/or mental health or disease prevention. In assessing the distinctive habitus of the middle classes, Bourdieu provides us with an interesting explanation of why physical activity promotion strictly oriented toward health benefits mostly succeed among social groups with a high volume of cultural capital (e.g., professionals, teachers, junior executives). According to their position in the social structure, these social groups have internalised a distinctive ethic that leads them to find satisfaction in health-oriented activities like walking, jogging or aerobics:

> [...] Unlike ball games, [health-oriented activities] do not offer any competitive satisfaction, are highly rational and rationalized activities. This is firstly because they presuppose a resolute faith in reason and in the deferred and often intangible benefits which reason promises (such as protection against ageing, an abstract and negative advantage which only exists by reference to a thoroughly theoretical referent); secondly, because they generally only have meaning by reference to a thoroughly theoretical, abstract knowledge of the

> effects of an exercise which is itself often reduced, as in gymnastics, to a series of abstract movements, decomposed and reorganized by reference to a specific and technically-defined end (e.g. 'the abdominals'). (Bourdieu 1978: 839)

The different objectives sought from different SPA practices are reflected in judgements of sport tastes. Pociello (1999:10) illustrated this when he quoted a discuss thrower's opinion of horseback riding: "The day when the jockey carries his horse on his back, then it will be a sport." Judgements of SPA tastes therefore actively participate in the legitimation and devaluation of practices and thus in the struggles, transposed onto the cultural level, between social groups.

Finally, in addition to the intrinsic and extrinsic profits expected from SPA for the body itself, habitus allows us to take into account the 'social profits' (consciously or unconsciously) expected from SPA, that is "those accruing from any distinctive practice, which are very unequally perceived and appreciated by the different classes (for whom they are, of course very unequally accessible)." (Bourdieu 1978: 836). For instance, golf, yachting and fencing offer the possibility of gaining (and accumulating) social profits that are perceived and appreciated by the dominant social groups: practised in exclusive locations (private clubs), at a time one chooses, alone or with chosen partners and "demanding a relatively low physical exertion that is in any case freely determined but a relatively high investment of time and learning" (Bourdieu 1984: 215). SPA practices therefore participate in the process of inclusion and exclusion that contributes to the reproduction of a hierarchised social order. Further, this can be done without any explicit segregation (in the context of leisure) because tastes and distastes translate the 'sense of

one's place' into the social order. Bourdieu (1984: 56) sees lifestyle differences as "perhaps the strongest barriers between the classes."

To sum up, Bourdieu's notion of habitus can help us to understand that different tastes for SPA practices are generated by different relations to one's own body and different perceptions of and appreciation for the profits (intrinsic and extrinsic) expected from the practices; that these dispositions, perceptions and appreciation are objective manifestations of generative and classificatory schemes acquired through social learning and socialisation proper to the position occupied in the hierarchical social structure; and that because SPA practices are constitutive of lifestyles (classifiable practices) unequally distributed among the social classes, they act as social class signifiers or symbols of differentiating aesthetics and ethics, and are thus predisposed to fulfilling the social function of legitimating and naturalising social differences and maintaining a given social order. Bourdieu's analysis of SPA is in line with his broader effort to reveal the extent to which cultural practices embody power relations.

The concept of field and SPA field dynamics

Field, along with habitus, is the central organising concept in Bourdieu's theory of practice. For Bourdieu, practice emerges not simply from habitus, but from the encounter of habitus with competitive arenas called *fields* (1990b: 56). In *Distinction* (1984: 101), he proposed the following equation as a way to summarise the intersection of habitus and field in his conceptualisation of the dynamics of practice:

(habitus) (capital) + field = practice

However, this formula should be considered with an important caution[8] since it may incur a paradoxical effect: it gives the image of a 'reductionist comprehension' of social reality, while Bourdieu's aim is to uncover its complexity. With this equation in context, its formulation can be seen as Bourdieu's intention to stress the critical role of social fields and their close connection to habitus in social practice.

A 'working definition' of field

The concept of field is less delineated than that of habitus, and Bourdieu develops it more as a 'general manner of thinking' – a device for the empirical study of various social arenas – than as a conceptual entity. A field, in Bourdieu's work, refers mainly to arenas of production, circulation and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge or status centred on a particular issue (e.g., literature, art, educational system, sport), *and* the network, or configuration, of historical relations of power between positions held by individuals, social groups or institutions (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97). Like habitus, field is a *relational construct* in that rather than referring to a delimited population of producers, it points to the relationships (e.g., opposition or alliances, domination or resistance) between various social agents occupying different positions in a structured network[9]. Moreover, the field concept gives insight into Bourdieu's understanding of macro structures. A critical characteristic of field is the existence of stakes for which agents vie. For instance, in the field of art; these will be the 'legitimate' definition and function of art, in the field of sport, the 'legitimate' definition and function of sport, and so on. Each of the social agents participating in a field have specific interests but share a common belief in or 'passion' for it (Bourdieu 1990a: 87-88).

A field is also simultaneously a space of competition for resources (economic capital) and rewards (symbolic capital) and of struggle for dominant positions (high accumulation of valued forms of capital in a given state of a field). As an attempt to provide an intuitive understanding of the overall properties he attributes to the notion of field, Bourdieu often makes an analogy with a game:

> 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 *investment in 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, [...], and this collusion is the very basis of their competition. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 98; emphases in the original)

Moreover, he makes an analogy between the trump cards in a game and the particular species of capital (e.g., economic, social, cultural, symbolic) that are valued in a given state of a field. Social agents struggle to increase or conserve the defining forms of capital of the field (thus improving or keeping their position in the hierarchy of the field), but they can also work to change the relative value of the forms of capital recognised in the field. Thus agents' positions continually move in a field both as the outcome of the struggle for ascendancy and/or as a consequence of the entry of new agents who modify the structure of the field. The notion of field then allows the study of historical dynamism of a social arena, since it calls for a diachronic and a synchronic analysis.

Although a field has a relative autonomy (it has its own history and specific culture), Bourdieu stresses that the hierarchies and dynamics of fields external to it (such as the field of power and fields overlapping it) can affect its internal dynamics. Finally, Bourdieu's empirical study of various fields have lead to the recognition of the existence of 'subfields' within a field inasmuch as they have developed their own particular logic, stakes, and regulative principles.

The constitution of the sport field

In the case of sports, can we speak of a field in the sense given by Bourdieu? Accurately answering this question is tantamount, for Bourdieu, to tracing the constitution of an arena of specific practices endowed with its own logic, stakes and rules, "where a whole specific competence or culture is generated and invested" (Bourdieu 1978: 821). Contrary to Elias (Elias and Dunning 1986) who proposes a continuous genealogy of sport, running from the games of Antiquity to the Olympic Games of today, Bourdieu argues (1978: 822-833) that the importation by aristocratic and bourgeois families of popular games into the English public schools of the nineteenth century – and their correlative change in meaning and function – produced a fundamental rupture permitting the constitution of a relatively autonomous field of sports. In the context of schooling, physical activities came to be endowed with educational functions, "converted into *bodily exercises*, activities which are an end in themselves, a sort of physical art for art's sake, governed by specific rules, increasingly irreducible to any functional necessity" (Bourdieu 1978: 823). Bourdieu notes that this gradual autonomisation was accompanied by a process of '*rationalisation*' and the establishment of self-administered sport associations

vested with the right to standardise rules, to exercise disciplinary power, and to award prizes and titles (symbolic capital), etc. Moreover, he links the constitution of a sport field to the development of a '*philosophy*' of sport as a disinterested practice that promotes 'masculine' virtues and a sense of fair play (as opposed to the pursuit of victory at all costs). This initial phase is important to a sociological understanding of contemporary sport because "practice of sports (...) doubtless (*sic*) owes part of its 'interest,' just as much nowadays as at the beginning, to its distinguishing function and, more precisely, to the gains in distinction which it brings." (1978: 828).

However, the outgrowth of sport as spectacle and its correlative popularisation process lead to the unfolding of new definitions, meanings and functions of sport. The field of sport thus becomes "the site of struggles in which what is at stake, *inter alia*, is the monopolistic capacity to impose the legitimate definition of sporting practice and of the legitimate function of sporting activity – amateurism vs. professionalism, participant sport vs. spectator sport, distinctive (élite) sport vs. popular (mass) sport" (1978: 826). The entry of new social agents, namely sport event organisers, sporting goods manufacturers, the fitness industry and sport media, contributed to the transformation in the structure of the sports field, i.e., in the power relations between the various agents. Given the multiplication of new forms of physical activities and their link (even conflictual) with more traditional sports, it seems more appropriate to speak of the SPA field.

Defrance and Pociello (1993) and Pociello (1999) deployed Bourdieu's concept of field in their analysis of the French sport field between 1960-1990. Although these authors discuss a case study, the general configuration they depicted can find obvious echoes in many Western countries. Our figure (cf. Figure 2) builds upon their diagram to illustrate

the heuristic potential of the concept of field for sociological studies of SPA 'supply.' This hypothetical structure of the SPA field proposes four main traits that can inform studies in other contexts:

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

1. The SPA field appears to be currently structured along lines of tension and conflict between various 'functions' of SPA practices, namely: an 'ethical' function (to promote the ideology of asceticism, self-surpassment and the cult of performance), an 'educational' function (to participate in the educational and social vocation of school), a spectacular function (to promote performance and competition as a 'drama' and a show), a 'fitness/leisure' function (to promote health, body shape and hedonism), a commodity function (to promote SPA via consumption of related goods and services) and a socio-political function (to promote the nationalistic value of high performance and the health value of SPA).

2. The social groups and institutions associated with each of these functions "constantly interact, oppose each other, join together or adjust mutually, ensuring the dynamic of the system and regulating its evolution." (Defrance and Pociello 1993: 4). They struggle for access to resources and for maintenance and improvement of their competitive 'legitimacy' among the population. What is at stake then, for each of them, in the context of limited resources, is to get greater visibility in order to increase their economic profit or to improve the recognition of the specific social values (whether it be moral, economic, health related, nationalistic, etc.) of the sport function they support. Hence, they develop strategies of alliance ('+' in the diagram) and opposition ('–' in the diagram). The alliances are based in ideological relationships and also in common interests fueled by the given

state of the socioeconomic context. For instance, one can notice 'logical' alliances between sport event organisers and sport media, as well as between the SPA branch of the State and both National sport associations and school physical educators. However, despite some ideological conflicts, National sport associations may develop alliances with sport media due to budget cuts from the State. In contrast, the violence, drug use and unethical behaviours often displayed by sport spectacles generate opposition from school physical educators.

3. It is possible to see overlaps of the SPA field and external fields (indicating that social agents' strategies in the SPA field are affected by the stakes and dynamics of external fields), such as the International sport field, the Educational field, the State field, the Media field and the Entertainment field. We can even consider each of these overlaps as a subfield since each has its own history (e.g., the history of physical education, of state involvement in SPA), its own stakes (e.g., the legitimation of the 'educational' value of SPA vs. other school disciplines, of the mediatic value of SPA vs. that of other subjects likely to interest a large audience, and of the nationalistic and socio-political value of sport vs. that of other political issues).

4. Finally, in all these subfields as well as in the general SPA field, there is also concurrence among the various forms of SPA practices, for instance traditional sports vs. new sports, men's vs. women's sports, and so forth. Moreover, the struggle to maintain the current state of a subfield may lead to an impediment to the entry of new SPA practices. Illustrations may be found in the recent fight against the recognition of 'sporting dance' as an Olympic sport and in the exclusion of boxing in the physical education curriculum.

As we can see, Bourdieu's concept of field encourages the researcher to investigate what is at stake in a given arena, to seek out the sources of conflict and collusion between social groups and institutions that interact, and to uncover the latent patterns of interest and struggle. It helps to understand how the structure of an arena produces inclusion and exclusion, selects forms of legitimate expression, and ultimately generates change in the 'products' supplied.

Bourdieu's mode of sociological inquiry

Throughout his career, Bourdieu has developed and has continued to refine a distinctive approach to the production of sociological knowledge that unites theoretical reflection and empirical research. For Bourdieu, theory should always confront the world of observable phenomena (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 224-227). However, the thrust of his empirical investigation is less concerned with testing the 'validity' of his theory than it is with obtaining general empirical support for and/or improving his theoretical ideas. Indeed, his concepts are forged both from the process of empirical research and confrontation with opposing intellectual viewpoints. In accordance with his rejection of dogmatism, his 'open concepts'[10] remain deliberately vague, malleable, encouraging their questioning and their adaptation to the specific domain to which they are applied:

> [...] The use of *open concepts* is a way of rejecting positivism [...]. It is, to be more precise, a permanent reminder that concepts have no definition other than systemic ones, and are designed to be *put to work empirically in systematic fashion.* Hence, such notions as habitus, field and capital can be defined, but only within the theoretical system they constitute, *not in isolation.* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 95; emphases in the original).

Consistent with his project to transcend the opposition between objectivism and subjectivism, his various field analyses blend ethnographic observations, open-ended interviews and survey material together in a unique way. In *Distinction*, for example, he uses excerpts of newspaper (articles, photographs, advertisements), maps, etc. to support his analysis. In doing so, he contends that he attempted to create a 'discursive *montage*' that allows one "at once the scientific vision and the immediate intuition that this vision explains but also typically excludes." (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 66). Indeed, he considers to be valuable all types of data that could enlighten his sociological inquiry. However, this diversity of material is always subject to the epistemological principles that guide his approach and to a critical vigilance with regard to 'preconstructed' categories.

Concerning the qualitative part of his work, Bourdieu does not follow any methodological 'school' or tradition. For instance, one will never find in his account of interviews a description of his method of coding, organising, and analysing texts, as one can find in works using grounded theory or ethnomethodology. However, in *The Weight of the World* (Bourdieu et al. 1999: 607-626), Bourdieu exposes in some detail the epistemological guidelines that ground his conception of the conduct and analysis of interviews.

In the case of quantitative material, Bourdieu's use of statistical tools is quite different from (even opposed to) common practice in sociology whereby attributes of individuals and groups are transformed into variables, hypotheses are tested or the significance of factors is isolated. Bourdieu's claim to a relational approach leads him to reject linear modelling techniques (like regression analysis) or predictive ones in favour of a *descriptive* statistical procedure, namely correspondence analysis[11]. This procedure

allows him to construct a *multidimensional* space (a space built with multiple axes of differentiation) that puts into light the configurations or structures of relations that characterise the data under study. One of the principles behind this statistical tool is that the data most often associated with one another in the target population will appear closer together (cluster of points) in the space, while those least often associated with one another will be farthest away. Bourdieu asserts: "If I make extensive use of correspondence analysis, in preference to multivariate regression for instance, it is because correspondence analysis is a relational technique of data analysis whose philosophy corresponds exactly to what, in my view, the reality of the social world is. It is a technique which 'thinks' in terms of relation" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 96). Bourdieu makes use of this technique mainly in order to depict the struggles and oppositions present in the social world (as can be seen in Fig. 1). Other utilisation of quantitative data consists of selected frequency tables derived from institutional surveys. Bourdieu uses them as a way to illustrate some of his arguments (see Bourdieu 1984 and 1988a), but never discusses them as would be done in the positivist tradition.

Finally, it is important to highlight a hallmark of Bourdieu's mode of sociological inquiry: his longstanding concern for a reflexive posture, what he calls 'reflexive sociology,' 'socioanalysis,' or 'participant objectivation' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). These neologisms refer to the same concerns: on the one hand, for a critical reflection of the relationship of the researcher to the object of inquiry so that the position of the researcher is not unwittingly projected into the object of study. And on the other hand, there is a concern for the validity of the categories used by the researcher to ensure that they are not socially – but scientifically – constructed. While Bourdieu provides no single

methodological recipe for achieving a properly reflexive perspective, he offers few illustrations, notably that which appears in *Homo Academicus* (1988a), his analysis of the French academic field (see comments on this issue in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 62-74, 253-260)

Pitfalls in Bourdieu's work

Bourdieu's work is not free from contradictions, shortcomings, vagueness or unresolved questions, and has not gone without arousing controversy and critique[12]. However Bourdieu considers that many objections and criticisms that have been levelled at him attest to some degree of misapprehension or misreading[13]. Indeed, Wacquant notes that "the confounding variety of interpretations, the mutually exclusive criticisms, and the contradictory reactions it has elicited testify to this [misreading]" (1992a: 4). Misreading can be attributed partly to what Bourdieu (1990a: 106) terms the 'production side,' i.e. the author himself, and partly to the 'consumption side,' the readers.

On the author side, we can identify at least three main difficulties: First, Bourdieu's writing style is tortuous. His sentences are Parsonian in length and abstraction, and charged with polemic, paradox, multiple negation and pun. All of this makes his work sometimes impenetrable to readers not familiar with a certain French writing style, and with the French intellectual context in which he is writing. Second, Bourdieu uses a variety of expressions or metaphors to designate the same concept without specifying explicitly that he wants to signal a nuance, an analytical refinement or a change. For instance, habitus is equally termed 'habit-forming force,' 'generative principle of regulated improvisations,' 'practical sense,' and 'feel for the game.' A third and related difficulty lies

in the deliberate vagueness of his concepts. Bourdieu is forcefully against the dogmatism that eventually leads to a sclerosis of thought. Accordingly, his concepts are open, adaptable, even 'blurred,' rather than operationally defined and used rigidly, thus risking confusion and ambiguity.

Still, there are grounds for misunderstanding on the side of the reader. First, there is the fact that fragmentary and partial reading of Bourdieu's work has lead to serious misinterpretation of his concepts and mode of sociological inquiry. Indeed, it is difficult for someone to fully grasp his conceptual apparatus through the reading of a few works since Bourdieu constantly refines and develops his conceptualisation throughout his research. Second, major confusion stems from overly literal readings of his analyses. For instance, some scholars have interpreted *Distinction* as a book limited to showing that the driving force of social practice is the search for distinction, whereas Bourdieu used the term to designate the process of differentiation (deploying his relational mode of inquiry) at work in a social space (Bourdieu 1998a: 9). Similarly literal readings have been applied to such notions as class, capital, and interest, while Bourdieu uses them in a sense that can be grasped only within his own epistemological framework. A third source of reader misapprehension undoubtedly stems from prejudice towards Bourdieu's unorthodox theoretical position that attempts to integrate subjectivist and objectivist modes of knowledge and to link structure and agency. Strict proponents of one mode or the other will have a tendency to interpret as weaknesses Bourdieu's deliberate methodological and epistemological choices that integrate traditional oppositions.

Evidently, a full account of the problems of Bourdieu's work is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, we would like to point to three main enduring shortcomings: First,

the concept of habitus is so theoretically loaded and versatile that it becomes less effective for the empirical researcher who needs conceptual tools to identify specific dimensions of 'taste' and social practices as well as specific mechanisms at work in the internalisation and externalisation of the social structure. Second, while Bourdieu's work offers a powerful demonstration of the mechanisms of social reproduction, it fails to provide a way to account for social movements of resistance and transformation. Although the concept of field allows one to assess the dynamic of transformation within an arena of social life, it can hardly be used for understanding collective action in the social space. Finally, Bourdieu's treatment of gender as a 'secondary' constituent of social division (1984: 468) seems to contradict claims elsewhere in his work that gender is a major principle of social differentiation. Bourdieu's conception of social space is currently structured only by cultural and economic capital. In light of the importance that he gives to gender in the construction of social life, a more coherent approach would give gender an equivalent status in his conceptual system (McCall 1992; Laberge 1995).

Concluding thoughts

The relevance of Bourdieu's social theory to the sociology of SPA is undeniable. Despite the theory's inherent complexity and vulnerability to critique, his approach still constitutes a commanding and cogent resource for social scientists – or simply for human beings seeking to understand the 'social game' in which they take part.

The main contributions of Bourdieu's social theory to the sociology of SPA can be summed up as follows: first, it highlights SPA practices as bearers of particular symbolic value in a given society and thus, in their capacity as social group signifiers, as producers

of social differentiation. The theory, therefore, reveals the critical role played by SPA practices in the construction/affirmation of an individual's identity and difference.

Second, Bourdieu's notion of habitus debunks the idea that one's taste for a particular SPA practice is the result of a 'natural' disposition or psychological trait. Rather, taste is generated by a class-specific relation to one's body and by the different perceptions of and appreciation for the profit expected from the practice. Habitus also transcends the traditional opposition between structure and agency by suggesting that dispositions, perceptions and appreciation with regard to SPA are generated by classificatory schemes acquired through socialisation specific to a given position in the hierarchical social structure.

A third major contribution of Bourdieu's social theory to the sociology of SPA is the central role he accords to symbolic systems – or culture – in power relations. For Bourdieu, symbolic systems fulfil a political function by actively contributing to the legitimation and naturalisation of social differences, and thus to the construction and maintenance of a given social order.

Finally, the concept of field provides the SPA sociologist with a tool to recognise resources at stake in the SPA arena, to identify the sources of conflict and collusion between interacting social groups and institutions, and to uncover the latent patterns of interests and struggles in the definition of 'legitimate' SPA practices. Ultimately, however, Bourdieu himself intends the primary contribution of his social theory to be to the fight against social domination:

> The true freedom that sociology offers is to give us a small chance of knowing what game we play and of minimizing the ways in which we are manipulated

by the forces of the field in which we evolve, as well as by the embodied social forces that operate from within us." (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 198).

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[1] There is now a growing body of literature introducing Bourdieu's work. For an acurate and well designed introduction to Bourdieu's social theory, we would suggest Swartz (1997) and Harker, Mahar and Wilkes (1990). As for its use in sociology of sport, see Jarvie and Maguire (1994: 183-209), Defrance (1995), Clément (1995), and Ohl (2000), and for its use in sociology of the body, see Shilling (1993).

[2] From here on in, we will use the accronym SPA to designate sports and physical activities, and will refer mainly to their leisure modality of pratice. Institutionalized (amateur) sport will be considered in the section devoted to the concept of field.

[3] Bourdieu calls 'objectivism' either the form of knowledge that focuses uncritically on the recording and statistical analysis of empirical regularities of human behavior, or the form that tends to impute the properties of formal models to social realities such as Lévi-Strauss' structuralism.

[4] Subjectivism refers to forms of knowledge that focus on individual or intersubjective consciousness and interactions.

[5] The anthology edited by Pociello (1981) and the collection of research on sports published in two issues of *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* (1989, issues 79 and 80) are indicators of the impact of Bourdieu on sport sociologists.

[6]See Gruneau (1993), Harvey and Sparks (1991), Laberge and Sankoff (1988), Matsumura (1993), Taks, Renson and Vanreusel (1995), Von der Lippe (2000), and White and Wilson (1999).

[7]Bourdieu endorses the conception of culture that refers to beliefs, symbols, language, traditions, etc., all of these being an expression of a vision of the world, which necessarily involve a division of the world, i.e. the construction and implementation of a system of classification, which renders significant elements present in the world.

[8] Swartz (1997: 141) as well as Harker, Mahar and Wilkes (1990: 7) have underscored caution with regard to the interpretation and the use of this formula.

[9] Bourdieu often uses the term 'field' also to refer to the 'social space' because both notions share similar properties: they involve relationships between different positions in a structured and hierarchised network, and they involve struggles for conserving or transforming a current state of the structure. To avoid ambiguity with 'specialized fields', we can see social space as the 'field of social classes', comprising also multiple specialized fields.

[10]For an explanation of the distinction between "open concepts" (or "systemic concepts") and "operational concepts", see Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1973: 53-54.

[11]For more information on correspondence analysis as used by Bourdieu, see Rouanet, Ackermann, and Le Roux (2000), and Benzecri (1992).

[12] There are too many critical reviews of Bourdieu's work to account for them in this limited space. His best known critics are: in English, Calhoun, LiPuma and Postone (1993), and in French, Mary, Caillé, Terrail and Touboul (1991). The most recent collection of critical reviews is by Shusterman (1999).

[13]Bourdieu tries to resolve some misreadings, and responds to major criticisms of his theory in 1990a: 106-122, in 1993: 263-275, and in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992. Wacquant (1993) also offers an interesting analysis of the problems raised by the importation and adaptation of Bourdieu's theory by American scholars.

Figure 1. The space of social positions and lifestyles
(Simplified version of Bourdieu 1984: 128-129 and 1998a: 5)

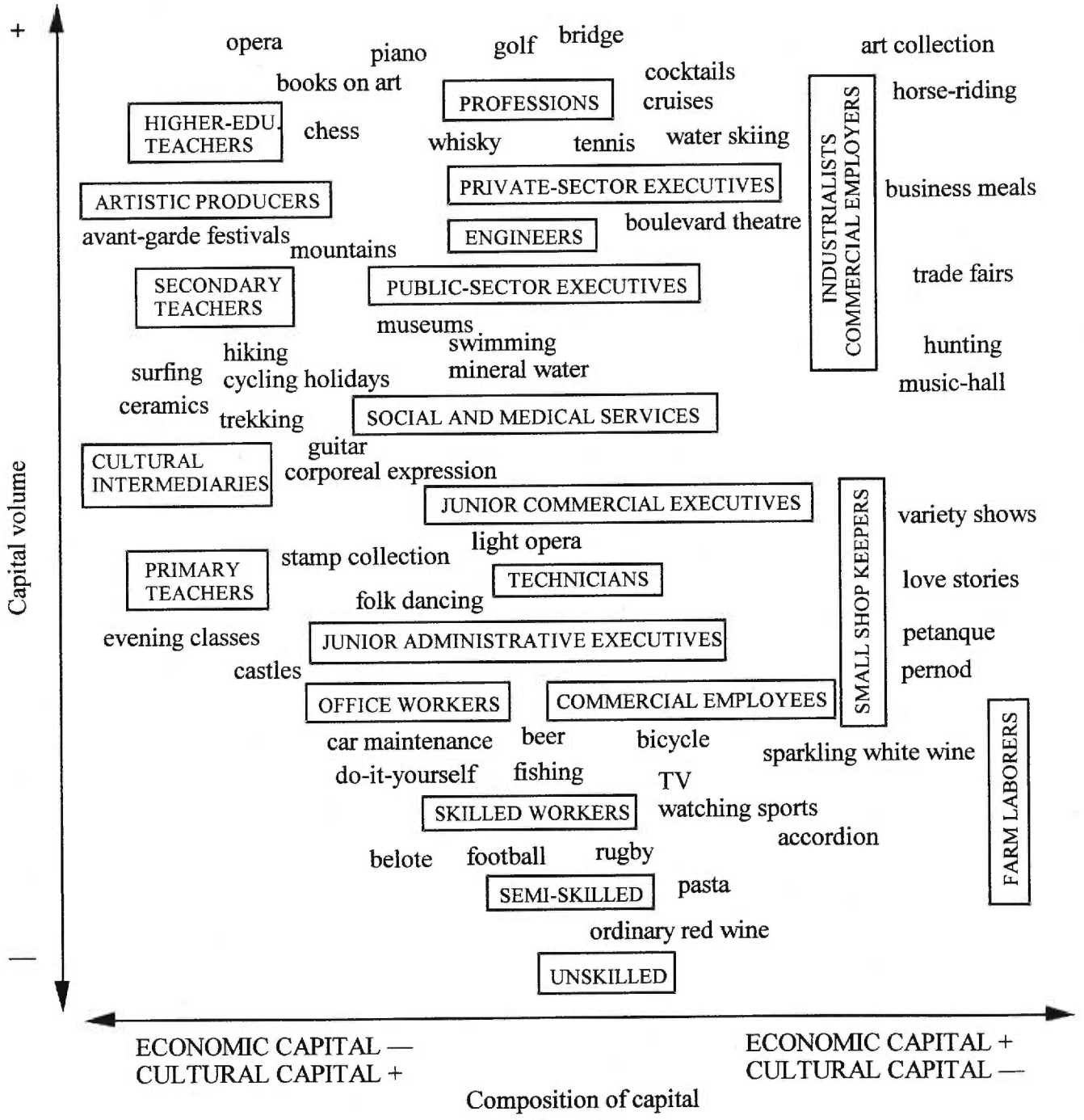
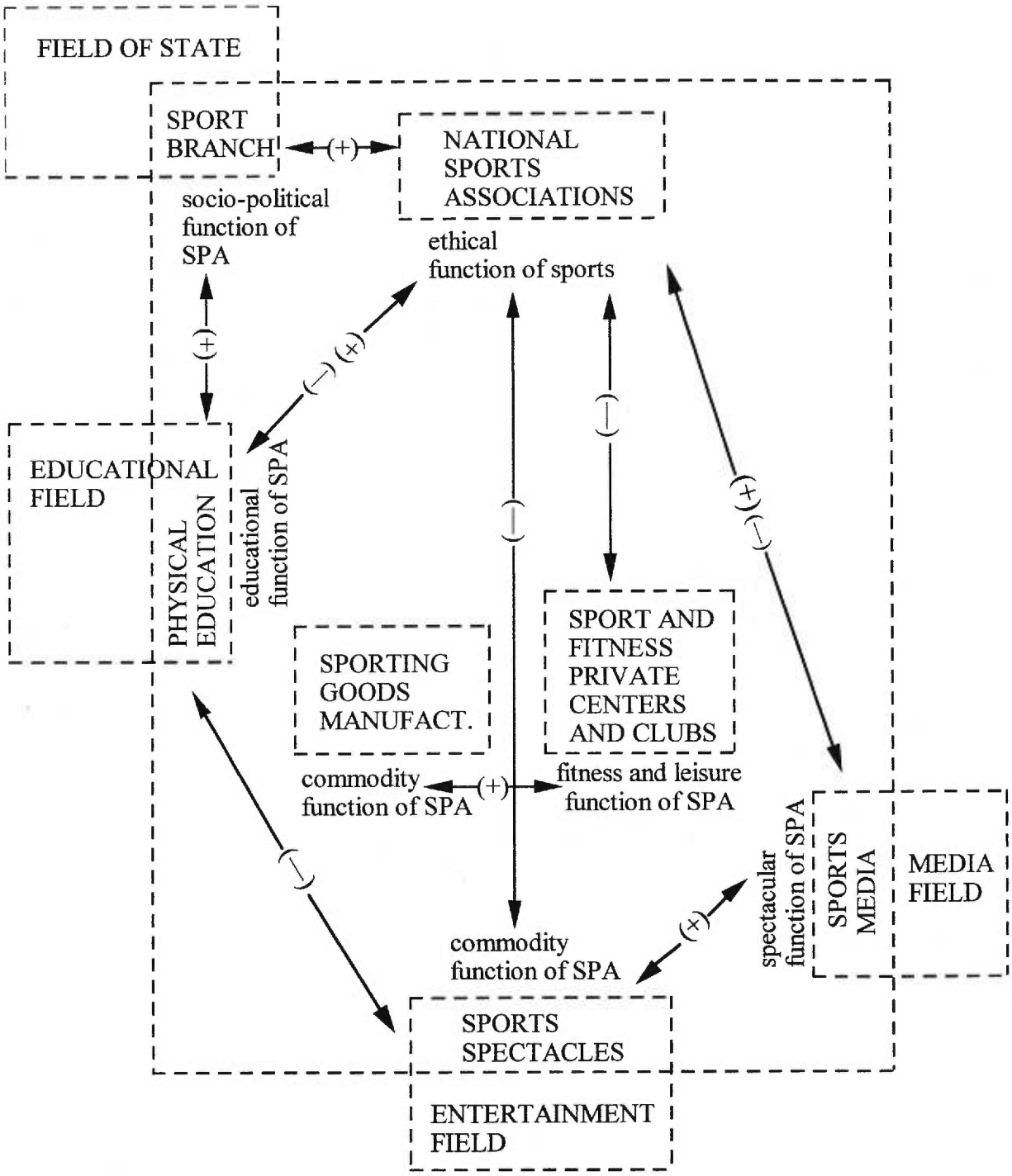


Figure 2. The SPA field and its subfields
(Adapted version of Defrance and Pociello 1993: 13)



CHAPTER 2

Mapping the Field of 'AR': Adventure Racing and Bourdieu's Concept of Field

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Mapping the Field of 'AR':
Adventure Racing and Bourdieu's Concept of Field

Abstract

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of field, this paper explores the particular stakes and struggles that animate both the relationships among AR participants, and the competition among race organizers, in order to highlight the social dynamic and power structure of this new 'lifestyle' sport. Our investigation relies on a diversity of qualitative data, namely: semi-structured interviews with 37 AR participants, Adventure Racing Association Listserve discussion, and participant observation of *Eco-Challenge Argentina 1999*. Our analysis demonstrates that what is at stake in the AR field is both the definition of the sport practice's legitimate form as well as its orientation with respect to two dominant delineating forces: 'authenticity' and 'spectacularization' of the adventure. These two forces currently constitute the specific forms of capital (sources of prestige) that define the AR field.

Mapping the Field of 'AR': Adventure Racing and Bourdieu's Concept of Field

The sport of adventure racing (henceforth in the text and commonly referred to in the sport as 'AR') by its very character resists strict definition, but can nonetheless be loosely described – in its most undisputed formulation – as a non-stop, self-sufficient, multi-day, multi-discipline, mixed-gender team endurance competition that takes place in the wilderness over a designated but unmarked course. In the larger field of sport practice, *Adventure* has now become a distinguishing brand and a marketing strategy, co-opted and commodified to suggest and/or validate producers' and products' active membership in the endurance race arena. AR, like many new sport practices, has become – for high performance athletes and weekend warriors alike – a 'lifestyle' sport, an integral and invested part of participants' lives.

The purpose of this paper is to position AR in relation to other social fields, to ultimately highlight its specific social dynamic and power structure. Our analysis, which relies on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of field, explains the constitution and direction of AR as the outcome of struggles – among social agents and institutions – over the definition of the sport practice's 'legitimate' form. By highlighting the stakes and struggles specific to the AR field, we aim at making an analytical contribution to the study of 'lifestyle' sport as well as to a larger project of exploration into the field of sport supply.

The first two sections of the paper present, respectively, Bourdieu's concepts of field and symbolic capital, and the methodological devices exploited to investigate the field of AR. The third section of the paper is devoted to our investigation of the AR field. For Bourdieu (1988), a comprehensive investigation of a field must consider four

intimately connected aspects of analysis: (1) the social history of the constitution of the field in question; (2) the relationship of the field to other fields; (3) the specific stakes and struggles that fuel the field's dynamic; and (4) the power relations that transform the structure of the field, eventually transforming the practice itself. Accordingly, our analysis of the AR field consists of four main subsections: first, we briefly trace the constitution of the AR field; second, we position the AR field within the larger universe of sport practice, considering its relationship to other social fields; third, we explore the specific stakes and struggles that fuel the field's dynamic; and finally, we present the recent transformations in the AR field.

Theoretical framework

'Field', as a key concept at the center of Pierre Bourdieu 's theory of practice, calls attention to the power relations, which are embodied in cultural practice (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, pp. 94-114). The concept of field is presented by Bourdieu more as a 'way of thinking' – a tool for the empirical study of various social arenas – than as a conceptual entity. By speaking of fields, rather than institutions, groups or organizations, Bourdieu's intention is to draw attention to the latent patterns of struggles and interests that shape the existence and dynamic of these empirical realities. (Swartz, 1997, p. 119). Our investigation attempts to exploit the heuristical power of the concept of field in the understanding of AR – a new sport in the universe of sport supply – and its particular dynamic.

Loosely defined, a field, in Bourdieu's work, is a social arena – simultaneously a space of conflict and competition – within which struggles take place for the

accumulation of the resources valued in it (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 7). Bourdieu conceptualizes resources as forms of capital when they become the object of struggle and function as a "social relation of power" (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 375). Like other Bourdieusian concepts, the notion of field is *relational* in that, rather than referring to a delimited population of producers, it points to the relationships (e.g., opposition or alliances, domination or resistance) between various social agents occupying different positions in a structured network (Laberge and Kay, in press).

A critical characteristic of field is the existence of stakes for which agents vie: "A field defines itself by (among other things) defining specific stakes and interests, which are irreducible to the stake and interests specific to other fields" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 72). One of our research tasks is indeed to identify the stakes and struggles specific to the world of AR.

Field struggles center on specific forms of symbolic capital. Symbolic capital is what is efficacious in a given field, both as a weapon and as a stake (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 98). In empirical work, it is one and the same thing to determine what the field is and to determine what are the specific forms of symbolic capital active within the limits of that field (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 73). Moreover, actors' struggles take place not only over particular forms of capital effective in the field, but also over the very definition of which capital is most valued (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 84). Therefore, one of the main objectives of our investigation is to identify the existence of symbolic capitals specific to AR.

Another property of fields is that they are structured spaces of positions based on the types and amounts of capitals. Bourdieu stresses that positions in a field are

determined by the unequal distribution of relevant capitals rather than by the personal attributes of their occupants (Bourdieu, 1993). It is important to mention that the structure of a field is a *state* of the power relations among the agents or institutions engaged in the struggle; it is the result of previous struggles and is itself always at stake and likely to be transformed. According to Bourdieu, depending on agents' trajectories and positions in the field, agents will orient themselves differently toward the distribution of the field's specific capitals. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 109). Bourdieu speaks of three different types of field strategies: conservation, succession and subversion (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 73-74). Conservation strategies tend to be pursued by those who hold dominant positions and enjoy seniority in the field. Strategies of succession are attempts to gain access to dominant positions in a field and are generally pursued by new entrants. Subversion strategies tend to be pursued by those who expect to gain little from the dominant groups. These strategies take the form of a more or less radical rupture with the dominant group by challenging its legitimacy to define the standards of the field. Hence, the structure of the field is likely to be transformed according to the relative 'success' of the different strategies at work at a given time in a given field. Our investigation of AR, then, also attempts to identify the strategies at work among the AR race organizers to maintain or transform the structure of the AR field.

Research methods

The study relies on multiple modes of qualitative data generation to help assess the "validity of inferences between indicators and concepts"(Hammerseley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 231) – a type of methodology used extensively by Bourdieu that he describes as

'discursive montage' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 66). We became equally attached to a process of 'analytical induction', the inter-play between the data collection and revision of the research project (Bryman & Burgess, 1994, p. 4).

Our intention was to build an iterative and self-corrective design to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the qualitative research (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 92), and to ultimately provide a description of the norms and values that underlie cultural behaviour (Ibid, p. 229-251), interpreted in terms of the literature and theories in sport sociology. This meant that, as per Rubin and Rubin (1995, p. 226), data analysis began with data collection still underway. After finishing each interview and again after finishing a large group of interviews, we examined the data in light of Bourdieu's conceptualization of *field* and *capital*, pulled out the themes that described the world of AR participants, and decided which areas to examine in more detail. We redesigned our questions according to this preliminary analysis to focus on central themes (i.e., the values and norms at stake in AR) as we continued collecting data. After the collection was complete, we began a more fine-grained analysis of the data, paying particular attention to current debates, building toward an overall understanding of the field. In order to put into light the dynamic and the structure of the power relations of the field of AR, we categorized all the material by key themes and compared the material within categories for variations and nuances in meanings. We then compared across categories to discover connections between themes, the goal being to provide an accurate, detailed analysis.

Our qualitative analysis of the AR field is based on 37 interviews with AR participants conducted by Joanne Kay, 30 of which took place on site in Patagonia, Argentina in December of 1999 over three weeks of an *Eco-Challenge* competition.

Seven of the interviews were done off-site previous to the competition. After the initial analysis, ten of the respondents were contacted for follow-up interviews. All the interviews were semi-structured and tape-recorded, lasting an average of 90 minutes.

Specific themes were broached in each interview: perceptions and judgements regarding various AR practices; prestige as it is linked to specific events; the impact of media on personal AR experience; the impact of corporate sponsorship on personal AR experience; the impact of the 'gender' rule on personal AR experience; the importance of AR as a 'training ground for real life'; and AR as a lifestyle activity.

Though respondents were deliberately guided toward the predetermined themes, spontaneous detours were encouraged with the aim of eliciting agents' particular knowledge of the field. As Bourdieu explains:

> The notion of field reminds us that the true object of social science is not the individual. It is the field, which is primary and must be the focus of the research operations. Individuals exist as agents who are socially constituted as active and acting in the field under consideration by the fact that they possess the necessary properties to be effective, to produce effects, in this field. And it is knowledge of the field itself in which they evolve that allows us best to grasp the roots of their singularity, their point of view or position (in a field) from which their particular vision of the world (and of the field itself) is constructed (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 107).

We also rely heavily on a series of Kay's e-mail correspondences that took place in January 2000 after a two-page feature she wrote on the *Eco-Challenge* was published in the *National Post* (Kay, 2000). The article, titled "Lights, Cameras, Eco-Action,"

criticized the media's (intrusive) role at the race, and the feedback Kay received from participants on this piece proved to be exceptionally useful in understanding the struggles taking place in the AR field.

We also draw on the Adventure Racing Association Listserve (ARA-L) ongoing debate over the direction of AR. All comments and dialogue with "Direction of AR" in the subject line's header were collected for the duration of the debate, which took place over a 12-month period from September 1999 to August 2000. As this was the most popular on-line forum for AR participants and enthusiasts, the discussion was invaluable to determining and outlining the specific stakes and struggles in the field. Our online data collection was grounded in the ethnomethodological approach broadly concerned with how people construct their own definition of a social situation: "These methods focus on ordinary, mundane, naturally occurring talk to reveal the way meaning is accomplished by everyone involved" (Mann & Stewart, 2000, p. 86). As Denzin (1999) and Rodino (1997) have shown, 'lurking' unseen on-line is an effective way to watch interaction without intervening in any way, an invaluable complement, we discovered, to more traditional qualitative research methods. Further, we found that computer-mediated communication, coined "CMC" by Mann and Stewart (2000, p. 2), has proven a mode capable not only of eliminating transcription bias (Ibid, p. 22), but of generating data which are "more open, reactive and spontaneous than many traditional written accounts and more detailed, edited and reflective than many spoken conversations" (Ibid, p. 194).

While we consider this study to be predominantly of a qualitative design, the *Eco-Challenge* communications department supplied us with some quantitative data, statistics and competitor information that rounded out our knowledge of participants in AR. After a

first analysis of the data, we also sent out a short questionnaire in order to help evaluate the relative positions of participants in the AR field. We also relied on a media analysis of *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* broadcasts from 1996-1999. This proved invaluable to identifying discourse, as interview respondents often recited the script from previous years' broadcasts in their comments about AR values and anticipated rewards.

Finally, much of the research took place through participant observation. Kay trained for and competed in the 36-hour *Raid the North* adventure race in Quebec, Canada in September of 1999 – an experience that not only helped her relate better to athletes' perceptions and judgements, but permitted a privileged and welcomed entry into the AR community. Kay was able to go beyond conducting formal interviews and chat freely with racers in a more relaxed, unstructured exchange. Kay also conducted a three-week field observation in Patagonia as a journalist/feature writer for the *National Post*. In this role she was given complete access to competitors, the course and race organization, including media production facilities and crew – access that would have been denied to her had she gone in any other capacity such as racer, volunteer or spectator. Data collection consisted of diligent note taking, photos and informal discussions with organizers, producers, participants and volunteers.

The interviews did, however, present some ethical concerns. At times interviews were covert, conducted in informal non-regulated environments, as Kay was an active member in the group. As was Belinda Wheaton's participation in her analysis of windsurfers (Wheaton, 1998), Kay's participation was complicated by her additional role as sports journalist. She similarly found herself privy to invaluable information, sometimes deceptively uncovered, about media operations and influences. As an ethical

minimum, Kay likewise informed her subjects of the broad area of research. She chose to conduct all interviews as a 'researcher', offering confidentiality unless she made a specific journalistic request, since it was felt participants were more open and comfortable with her in this role. If specifically 'journalistic' questions were necessary, she would turn off the tape recorder, rely on her note pad and state the change in purpose.

Our goal was to maintain an integrated approach that follows in the ethnographic tradition, which rejects positivist views of scientific research. Our intention was not to mirror social reality or social facts by representing empirical research. Rather, we tried to emphasize methodological reflexivity and, as researchers, to recognize our part in the social world being studied (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 217-253). Accordingly, while efforts were made not to overstep ethical boundaries, our participant-observation data was not only justified in this research; it was central to its validity.

Field Analysis

A Brief History of Adventure Racing: Genesis of the Field

Although the focus of this article is on the dynamic and the structure of the AR field, this analysis relies on the assumption that AR is, indeed, a field. It is therefore important to briefly trace AR's progressive constitution into an "area of production, endowed with its own logic and its own history,"(...) an area of production that refers to a specific reality and culture irreducible to any other, and that functions as a system endowed with its own specific rules and rewards (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 820-821).

The origins of AR lie in a multi-sport wilderness endurance race started in 1980 in New Zealand, known as the *Speight's Coast to Coast*, a 240km cycling, running and

paddling two-day stage race across the Southern Alps. The race later spilled over into *The Longest Day* that tackles the whole distance at once. Soon after its inception, in 1983, some American race organizers responded with a race across the Arctic called the *Alaska Mountain Wilderness Classic*. While *Coast to Coast* has grown into one of the most heralded and commercial multi-sport races in the world, the *Classic* remained unchanged from its original grass roots, advertised only by word of mouth and returning profits to those who compete. At this point in AR's history, with the emergence of two distinct forms of race organization, we see the first indication of the two forces that will eventually constitute the specific forms of capital (sources of prestige) that define the AR field: 'authenticity' and 'spectacularization' of adventure.

Following in the more capitalistic tradition of the *Coast to Coast*, the *Raid Gauloises* – the first mixed-gender-team, multi-sport, multi-day wilderness endurance race – was introduced to New Zealand in 1989 by Gérard Fusil. Though the event was similar to its New Zealand predecessors, Fusil points to the around-the-world sailing race known as the *Whitbread* as his inspiration in designing a "modern equivalent of colonial adventures past," designed to "stir the imagination and bring a sense of romance to competitive sports" (Dugard, 1998, p. 2). The well marketed expedition-length (i.e. five-day plus) *Raid*, seen by many as the ultimate human test, quickly popularized the sport of adventure racing in Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

After its first year, the *Raid* traveled to a different exotic location around the globe each year, leaving room in New Zealand for Geoff Hunt to establish the *Southern Traverse* in 1991. It modeled itself on the *Raid* but was raced over a shorter 3-5 day period and in the same geographic location every Fall. The *Southern Traverse,* like the

Raid, has maintained its legendary status in the AR community, despite increasing competition on the race circuit.

AR, now firmly established in Europe, Australia and New Zealand, was finally brought to North America by *Raid* competitor and entrepreneur, Mark Burnett, the creator of the *Eco-Challenge* – and later the executive producer of CBS's reality TV series phenomenon, *Survivor*. The first *Eco* took place in Utah in 1995 and, brandishing a new 'American flavor' (Dugard, 1998, p. 96), grew quickly into one of the most popular expedition-length races in the world.

During this period in AR's historical genealogy, an AR field is recognizable, with a critical number of events (products), "functioning as a field of competition, the site of confrontation between agents with specific interests linked to their positions within the field (...) endowed with its own specific rewards and its own rules, where a whole specific competence or culture is generated and invested" (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 820-821).

A recent addition to the emergent expedition length race circuit is the *Elf Authentic Adventure*, initiated in 1999 by *Raid* founder Gérard Fusil. The *Elf* hosts three classes for various skill levels, and was the first competitive adventure to require racers to compete in total autonomy. Currently, because of the media attention, sponsorship and elite competition that they attract, the *Raid*, the *Elf*, the *Eco* and the *Southern Traverse* make up what can be called the 'big four' of the sport.

In the wake of the new mainstream focus, many new, more accessible styles of AR have emerged. AR, like any rare product, has predictably been democratized and massified, and countless new races are now being staged around the world, all offering unique formats, disciplines and rules. Distances now vary – from 'expeditions' – to

several hour-long 'sprints' such as the *Subaru Hi-Tec Urban Adventure* series, the *Sea2Summit* races or the *Xterra off-road triathlons* – to stage races such as Morocco's *Marathon des Sables* or China's *Mild Seven Outdoor Quest* – to non-stop 'weekenders' such as Canada's *Raid the North* 36-hour series, the 24-hour *FogDog,* the *24-hours of Adrenaline* mountain bike series or the three-day *West Isles Challenge.* As the prohibitively expensive and time-consuming weeklong expedition-length races are accessible to only a privileged few, the shorter, cheaper, easier races offering a chance for a 'weekend warrior' clientele to compete have experienced a very profitable boom and are challenging the previously dominant format of AR.

Positioning AR in the Field of Sport Practice and in Relation to External Social Fields

Although the AR field has its own specific history and developed culture, it cannot be said to function in isolation. The AR field articulates with other sport practices as well as with external social fields. These articulations with other spheres are the result of strategies developed by social agents to accumulate symbolic capital (prestige). To highlight the significance of these articulations to the development of the AR field, the second part of our analysis positions AR both within the larger field of sport as well as in relation to specific external fields namely those of risk recreation, adventure tourism, corporate management and entertainment/media.

Positioning AR in the Field of Sport Practice

AR's relationships to other sport practices can be understood in light of general trends in sport practice. Pociello (1994, p. 167-170) has identified *deinstitutionalization, delocalization, ecologization, hybridization* and *adventurization* as particular

characteristics of new sport culture. AR emerged from these specific trends at a time when 'extreme' sports were gaining popularity. These sports – though in earlier manifestations fueled by larger political opposition[1] - have most recently been described as sports that either ideologically or practically provide alternatives to mainstream sports and their values (Beal, 1995 and Rinehart, 1998).

According to a relational approach that posits AR as taking its signification from its relational position to – and in function with – other social practices, values and discourses, we have cautiously (indeed, any schematic 'fixes' a social space that, in reality, is dynamic and in constant transformation) positioned AR within the field of sport. Diagram 1 is a graphic representation of the inclusive and exclusive relations of AR with others sports and with external social fields; this graphic representation is based on the dominant social representation of AR that emerges from participant opinion. Our content analysis leads us to consider AR as a 'field'[2] within the sphere of extreme sport, touching the overlap of institutionalized sport practice (see Diagram 1) and overlapped by significant external fields, "constituting a potentially open space of play whose boundaries are dynamic and are the stake of struggles within the field itself." (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 104).

Insert Diagram 1 about here

Though we have positioned AR predominantly in the sphere of extreme/fringe sport, it necessarily overlaps the intersection of traditional/mainstream sport, as participants and organizers struggle over the practice's apparently ambiguous position.

Most agents, for example, feel a sense of pride about the 'open' nature of the sport, and its fringe association:

> AR is unique and exciting because of the unrestricted nature that it now enjoys. (ARA-L[3])

Concern for the 'fringe' status of the sport has grown even more recently as races become bigger and more accessible, striving to achieve prestigious rank and media attention. For many, the *raison-d'être* of the sport is associated with its distance from the mainstream:

> I like the fact that no one knows what the hell AR is. If AR becomes more mainstream, the essence of the sport is subject to the influence of the masses. (ARA-L)

However, many participants see a benefit to driving the sport toward the mainstream, making it safe and accessible, hence creating tension with those who would cling to the sport's 'fringe' status:

> If we don't get this into the hands of kids, the average middle class person, it [AR] is dead. (ARA-L)
>
> We need to make it more interesting and spectator-friendly. Don't let it go into rich elitist hands who want to keep it to themselves. Let's make it mainstream! One day, doable race, go to work on Monday. (ARA-L)
>
> Let's make it mainstream. Not for more advertising but to make it more popular. We need exposure not to sell products but to feed the sport. (ARA-L)
>
> It's tough to find something tougher than this [*Eco]* that someone like me can do. Circumnavigation of the globe, Everest or becoming an astronaut are totally

unobtainable for the average person. So for a grunt like me, this is the top of the heap. (Male, 36)

Beyond the concern over AR's distance to the mainstream, the reference to AR as an 'extreme' sport is problematic as well:

> When someone says AR is extreme, I correct them and say 'ultra-endurance'. Because extreme has a connotation of young party animals, crazy stuff like double flips, backspins and stuff like that which is not us. Most competitors call it ultra-endurance or extreme endurance – not caring maybe, but sponsors don't want to associate with extreme sports so it matters. (Male, 26)

The discord reflects the constant struggle among the racing community over the sport's position within the larger field of sport. This tension reveals the boundaries of the sport – between fringe and mainstream, traditional and extreme, adult culture and youth culture – as important stakes in the struggle within the field of AR. Similarly, the boundaries between AR and external fields are equally important to the struggle.

Links to External Fields

Beyond AR's ambiguous position within the field of sport, its articulations with external social fields exemplify a growing trend in new sport culture by emphasizing the elasticity of its boundaries. However, as the AR field shares many core values with other social fields, it is also by identifying its distinct and differentiating values that the important stakes in the struggle over its legitimate form emerge. Therefore, AR's articulations with the fields of risk recreation, adventure tourism, corporate management and entertainment/media expose both AR's specific shared values as well as AR's

specific position within the field of (competitive) sport as important stakes in the struggle over its legitimate form.

For example, AR could be confused for risk recreation – outdoor pursuits most often implying personal challenge and self-development, the main objective being to acquire competence and skill:

> Rock climbing may be as necessary as ice climbing to reach a pass or a peak, abseiling is a means of retreat which often makes use of fixed ropes left by other climbers, local area knowledge helps on negotiating weather patterns, and experienced leadership unites an expedition in overcoming risks and unexpected obstacles. Individual outdoor pursuits are the means; the end is the whole journey. (Bell, In press, p. 3)

However, AR participants emphasize that competition distinguishes AR from risk recreation. Similarly, for the risk recreation participant, the competitive and commercial aspect of the sport is seen to challenge the 'purity' of self-designed outdoor pursuit. While the AR field's distinct property of competition distinguishes it from this external social field, both fields articulate with each other through shared activity and values. AR, for example, while treated as a distinct field, is often viewed as a phase or experiment in an otherwise uncompromised risk recreation lifestyle. As one top US competitor explained:

> In a couple of years, I'll be forced to acknowledge my waning capacity to compete and I'll be out to pasture. But what a pasture! I'll rejoin the backcountry tourists, moving through the wilderness on foot, mountain bike, kayak, or fixed line at a more contemplative pace. I'll be able to take naps, carry

> extra food, and not worry about the fitness of my companions. If the weather goes to hell, I'll be able to short-circuit the trip or take refuge. But I will always be able to cling tight to that singularly unique sensation that comes from going out into the wilderness with less than you are supposed to, traversing a course designed by a sadist, enduring foul weather and bad navigation decisions, shedding a little blood, and coming home a winner. For that, the sky can be filled with the roar of hovering Wescams[4]. (Male, 46)

A second important articulation is taking place between the AR and corporate human resources fields. As corporate culture is becoming, like adventure-sport, a space for 'personal realization', it is not surprising that AR has been used as both metaphor and training ground for corporate values. Whereas sport has generally been used as a symbol for corporate competition, AR is being used as a management strategy.

Corporate culture insists on the paradoxical necessity of combining commitment to the collective with autonomous distinction (Alvesson, 1993, Brown & Eisenhardt, 1998, Dahler-Larsen, 1994, Deal & Kennedy, 1992 and 1999, Peters & Waterman, 1982, Sackman, 1991, Sherriton & Stern, 1997). AR manifests this paradoxical combination. Examples of corporate appropriation of AR values can be seen in inter-business competition, in the invitation of high-level athletes to seminars and training sessions, and in the corporate retreat that relies on physical outdoor training incorporating specific AR skills. The lessons learned about teamwork and risk-taking are based on building an entrepreneurial employee mentality while fostering commitment to company values.

AR agents have likewise appropriated the values of corporate culture. Mark Burnett, founder of *Eco-Challenge*, has in fact incorporated corporate training into the

Eco-Challenge mission, based on his belief in the transferability of '*Eco*-values' and on his vision of *Eco* as an experience guided by a practical philosophy for daily life:

> I do management consulting speeches based on *Eco* lessons. Tolerance and realizing that the goal is more important than you alone is more important today in business. And we are in the process right now of going in that direction as a corporate retreat. *Eco* has my branding of what I think I am in terms of adventure and human dynamics. It follows one of my goals of *Eco* as a management training ground for team dynamics (personal communication with Mark Burnett).

Many AR participants own and operate adventure schools that, like Burnett's company *Eco-Challenge Lifestyles*, comprise a corporate training program as well as a race organization, offering corporate training based on the AR experience. Participants and organizers share a belief in the ability of AR to teach life lessons that will transfer into daily life:

> It's so hard and it's based around interpersonal team relationships. Arguments and conflicts lead to far more energy loss than just racing. And I think they all learn that. They all learn, as well, they never thought they could do something this hard and it kind of makes other problems in life seem not so bad. (personal communication with Mark Burnett).
>
> The way you deal with a situation in *Eco* – you get lost as a team, you start fighting – is the way you deal with life. (Male, 42)
>
> *Eco* is life crammed into 10 days. (Female, 35)

The articulation between the fields is further evidenced in competitor's own attitudes toward the racing experience, where the blurred distinction between work and leisure that marks new corporate culture is apparent. At the finish of *Eco-Challenge* 1999, one North American racer commented on his AR experience:

> These guys [his teammates] are the kind of people you would want working for your company. I have to force people to listen to me at work. This was worth five years of management training. The ultimate corporate retreat. It will teach me to be a better boss. Stress management, time management. Everything. I even got time off work by telling my boss I was going on a self-development program, not a sport event! (Male, 37)

The shared values between the AR and corporate fields blur the boundary between *Eco* the race and *Eco* the corporate retreat. Here it is AR's position within the larger sport field – its status as a "sport event" that distinguishes AR as a separate field.

A third significant field in articulation with AR is that of adventure tourism. Adventure tourism is part of a broad category known as 'eco-', 'green', 'alternative' or 'hard' tourism and is often defined in opposition to 'mass' tourism. Alternative tourists seek participatory experiences of local cultures and places, often involving risky outdoor activities in remote locations. Adventure tourists aim to 'get in touch' with their own selves by actively and physically enduring some element of controlled danger in order to overcome the challenge of nature. Adventure tourism, like AR, places value on the 'authentic', making the activity somewhat of a 'sacred journey' (Cloke and Perkins, 1997, p. 186) while simultaneously existing as a staged consumer product. Here we see the shared importance of 'authenticity' of the adventure in the two fields:

> I would have felt terrible going through these places like that (tourists) but because we were covered in mud and hadn't showered, we stunk, we were right with the people. It was almost like you would imagine in the old days when you were an explorer hiking and you came to a village and someone invites you to sleep in their barn. And that's because you didn't drive up in a big Mercedes with all your stuff and you're staying in a big hotel. (...) Like, I don't know why anyone would go to Club Med in Marrakech. Like, in the market, at 7 o'clock, all the people come off the tour busses – in white hats, with cameras, walking two by two so they don't get robbed, looking around suspiciously. Tourists thought they were seeing a Berber village and it wasn't. It's like if I said I was going to show you a traditional Canadian farm and I took you up to my house in North Vancouver. That was the great thing about *Eco*. The only way you could see the real thing was by hiking for days. It allowed you to get so close to the people. That to me is like being a real explorer. I'm not just hopping off a bus and seeing restaurants and clubs. It's being in the wilderness and getting a better sense of a place. (Male, 28)

This quote by an AR participant demonstrates little distinction between the adventure race and the adventure tour except the notion that AR is a sport event. Competition, then, as one of AR's constitutive properties, takes on greater significance according to a relational approach.

Lastly, the field of AR is consistently strengthening its links to the field of entertainment/media. AR, as made-for-TV sport, marries nostalgic adventure narrative – the stories of heroic pioneers and explorers who trekked over risky terrain for social

advancement – to popular 'reality TV'. The bigger AR races are choosing media partners that can capitalize on this trend, who specialize in family entertainment, attracting – not sport spectators – but adventure voyeurs, to maximize sponsorship and profit. The result is that adventure races are simultaneous sport and entertainment/media products with blurred boundaries between the two. As we will see in the next section, AR participants, though tolerant of the concurrent media production, tend to prioritize their commitment to *Eco* the race versus *Eco* the show, stressing the significance of competition as a defining AR property.

Though its distinct history and properties constitute AR as an autonomous field, its articulations with external fields create boundaries that are dynamic. Its links to external fields highlight values such as outdoor skill competence, self-development, authenticity and media partnership as significant values – and therefore stakes – in the AR field. Its simultaneous position within the larger field of sport practice, however, is highlighted as a significant differentiating and defining characteristic thus equally important stake in the struggle for the legitimate form of AR.

We have highlighted the significance of AR's position and boundaries within the field of sport as significant stakes. In the third stage of the analysis, we will demonstrate how these stakes affect struggles over the symbolic capital most valued in the AR field.

Stakes and Struggles in the Field of AR

Two major debates appear to animate the relationships among AR participants and the competition among race organizers: those over the 'authenticity' and 'spectacularization' of the adventure product. Both issues are intimately linked to two

crucial stakes in the field: the definition of the legitimate form of AR (what *is* AR?), and its legitimate direction. There is currently an abundant supply of races listed on AR calendars whose forms of practice range widely – from the 'authentic' (*Raid Gauloises*) to the 'staged' (*X-Terra Offroad)* to the 'spectacularized' (*Hi-Tec Adventure*) to the 'covert' (*Alaska Wilderness Classic*). Race organizers and participants are in constant competition, striving to make their particular form of practice valuable in the field. Here we present the relations of oppositions in the debate over the definition of the legitimate form of AR.

'Authenticity' of the Adventure

One of the significant indicators of the conflict concerning 'authenticity' of the adventure is the debate over the inclusion of (solo) 'stage' and 'sprint' races in the AR arena. Adventure 'purists' argue that these practices resemble the triathlon too closely:

> Sprints are not what the sport's really about. When you you've got 100 odd teams in a 3-4 hour race, it's essentially a team triathlon with slightly different events thrown in. (ARA-L)
>
> The *Hi-Tec* and *Mild Seven* are off-road triathlons, not an AR. They have no navigation. It's staged or only three hours long. You don't have to deal with packing your gear or setting gear strategy. You don't have to worry about managing food and water. You don't have to worry about sleep-deprivation or having to survive in the wilderness – all of the things that make AR a challenge. It has to at least go through the night and be a team race. (Male, 29)

Predictably, those who participate in races that don't meet the strict criteria hold AR to a looser or more inclusive standard:

> The very essence of the sport is getting out into the wilds – hence adventure. If it does that, it's an AR. (ARA-L)
>
> The ultimate AR could even be solo because it's a scary concept. (Male, 28)

It is important to note that, although the definition of 'off-roads' and stage races is under dispute, they are regularly listed on AR web calendars and referred to in AR literature, while sports such as orienteering and motorized expeditions are not. The fact that these formulas are self-defined in the field, and that their inclusion is a hotly debated issue, demonstrates their active membership in the field.

Another aspect relating to the issue of the authenticity of the adventure concerns the competitive character of AR. While some feel AR can provide authentic adventure, others feel that AR, by its very competitive character, cannot provide it. Those who believe that competition is not a compromise to authenticity see the criteria for authentic adventure linked to specific race characteristics:

> Authenticity of the event is important to me. I would like no trails, no roads in a course, no deliberate misinformation, no teams allowed to train on the course prior to the event and no artificial games but real problem-solving difficulties. (Female, 44)
>
> The purest version would be to tell teams: here's point A, here's point B – see you when you get there. No aid stations. A straight expedition working against the clock. (Male, 30)

Those who believe authenticity is solely attached to adventure understand AR as too competitive to provide 'true' authenticity in the adventure experience:

> What's most pure is someone who crosses Greenland and doesn't tell anyone. (Male, 27)
>
> You cannot have the purest version (of adventure) in AR because it is not commercially possible." (Male, 29)

Accordingly, the most 'authentic' and thus prestigious adventure races are deemed to be those that most closely mimic authentic adventure with minimal compromise within the scope of an organized race.

AR as Media Spectacle

The second major debate taking place in the AR field, which is inextricably linked to the struggle over the definition of the legitimate form of AR, is the role of media at races. Indeed, organizers and participants have been engaging in a heated debate over the commercialization of the sport and the growth of media-driven AR spectacles. There is a difference, for agents, between media partnering ('show') and media coverage ('news'), the latter allowing for a more authentic race experience. Most participants, for example, saw the increased presence of *Discovery Channel* film crews at the 1999 *Eco* as too conspicuous and disruptive, defeating their own personal reasons for being there:

> AR is about working through difficult problems as you move through unknown physical territory. You should have opportunities to see the country as it really is, to deal with the inhabitants (people, fauna and flora). Schlepping between film sites is NOT adventure racing. TV coverage is very important to the sport,

there's no doubt, but it is possible to have events that look and feel like serious expeditions and still produce magnificent and appealing television. (Male, 38)

It's really orchestrated according to a script, which makes better TV. The elite athletes are already turned off. So many of the teams aren't going to Borneo. (Male, 32)

Eco in 99 suffered a huge degree of lack of authenticity compared to previous *Ecos*. If the event continues as it did in 99, I would be disinclined to take part. (Female, 45)

It took away from my experience – the wild experience – because it's a show. The objective now with *Eco* is not the athletes – it's the media. (Female, 34)

To rationalize their participation in the *Eco-Challenge*, racers who chose to compete all described the *Eco* as two separate events, the race and the show:

I had the impression that certain teams had been invited to make money for *Discovery*. They had teams from foreign countries that have never kayaked but they were accepted so (Burnett) could sell the *Discovery* package to their country. When I understood that, I said: 'I'll do it for fun, for myself and enjoy it, and they can do their show.' (Male, 38)

Although there was a constant awareness of media, then, some racers were able to ignore their intrusions and focus on the race. Some even saw the media as a positive addition:

There are fun elements in the media coverage. Being on television and being part of that. We were filmed so much that we would be disappointed if we weren't in the film. (Female, 31)

> They've invited these cheap actors to come on board, thrash the shit out of their bodies for ten days and make this movie or docu-drama on it. But the commercialization doesn't bother me a bit. Having done other races that aren't commercial, it's scary sometimes how badly organized they are. (Male, 40)
>
> If there wasn't *Discovery,* we couldn't have done it – it would be too expensive. There is no way we could afford to enter the *Raid,* for example. (Male, 52)

Participants' judgements and perceptions of the media's role in AR seem to be closely linked to their own judgements and perceptions of authenticity. It appears that there is constant negotiation between commercial and authentic elements precisely because the notion of 'authenticity' is so entrenched in AR discourse. One comment demonstrates the significance of the AR discourse to the struggle:

> AR allows you to stretch your capabilities, go beyond what you thought you were able to do. It is the only sport I know of that gives you a new outlook on who you are. *I speak as someone who has yet to take part in an AR* (our emphasis) (ARA-L)

The Direction of AR

The struggle over the definition of AR is inextricably linked to the struggle over the direction of the sport. Most of the race community is concerned – even opinionated – about the direction of the sport's future growth:

> The heart of the sport will maybe become the weekend type events, which are both accessible, but still hard. The top of the sport should always be the expedition races. (ARA-L)

More organization is needed and the USARA is the best way to go right now. (ARA-L)

Those who oppose this sort of discussion take the position that even having opinions on the sport's direction is already too restricting to AR:

> Why can't we just let AR evolve without people deciding the direction it should take? (ARA-L)
>
> Directing anything kills the free spirit. Good events will thrive and poorly run events will die off. It's evolution. (ARA-L)

Participants and organizers are in constant struggle, therefore, not only over what AR *is* and where it is heading, but also over whether or not the debates are even worthwhile.

Mapping the Field of AR

In order to depict the relations of opposition among the various forms of races presented as AR and the defining forces that delineate the field, we have drafted a graphic representation of the field structure (see Diagram 2). Here we position the major races along two axes: 'authenticity' of adventure, and 'spectacularization' of adventure. According to Bourdieu, fields are viewed as structures in which each particular element (institution, organization, group, or individual) derives its distinctive properties from its relationship to all other elements (Swartz, 1997, p. 123).

Insert Diagram 2 about here

The diagram presents the various positions assumed by players[5] in the field of AR according to the two major forces, which, as objects of struggle, also represent the field's

defining capitals. It is important to note that this diagram is not the result of a quantitative analysis; we positioned the races according to their objective characteristics as well as according to participants' judgements relating to them. The two axes should also be considered as continua between the opposite poles.

The characteristics listed at the upper end of the vertical axis refer to those that were deemed most significant in creating an 'authentic' race experience. The most significant criteria included: non-stop travel (the term '24/7' implies continuous racing through the night for as long as the race takes, not necessarily seven days.); the required use of navigation skills with only a compass and rudimentary map for guidance; a course that takes five days or longer to complete; a rule that requires team endeavor; a race taking place in a foreign culture; an humanitarian, environmental or cultural sensitivity project; a course requiring high-level technical skill; several creative and/or difficult rope sections; elite-level competition; a remote geographic location; a new location each year; and a race considered to be among the 'toughest' races on the calendar.

Among the characteristics deemed to make an AR 'inauthentic' adventure experience, and which are listed at the lower end of the vertical axis are: the presence of 'dark zones' that, for safety reasons, disallow competitors from moving forward on specific sections of a course except in daylight conditions; the allowed use of a GPS – or global positioning unit – for navigation; the planned use of marked trails or automotive roads on a race course; the use of assistance crews at designated transitions; re-supply points on the course where competitors can change equipment and clothing and refill water and food stores from a prepared supply box; the too obvious and overprotective use of safety equipment on course (requiring guides to lead competitors through dangerous

sections, for example); the inclusion of contrived problem-solving 'mystery events' (requiring competitors to solve riddles, for example); a 'solo' race; a course repeated from year to year; a 'stage' race that is divided into daily sections with overnight rest, allowing competitors to 'start fresh' each day; races that are not environment-friendly; cut-offs that allow even the slowest of competitors to finish officially; and races accessible to all levels including beginners.

A race is deemed to be 'spectacularized', as the left side of the diagram shows, when it is surrounded by promotional 'hype'; when the race has a large corporate media partner creating its own product; when teams are required to meet eligibility rules based on common nationality; when teams are chosen for their telegenic strengths rather than AR ability; when organizers use the race for 'spin-off' profit, such as combining corporate retreats and tourism packages; when organizers trademark names and/or concepts associated with a race; when teams are invited instead of going through a common application process; and when there is a high entry fee.

Finally, the right side of the diagram lists the criteria for a non-spectacularized event: there is little or no promotional hype surrounding the event; there is media coverage of the event 'as-it-happens' but is non-intrusive and a non-priority; the organization appears low-key and uninterested in its promotion; the event is primarily run for local participants; teams are unsponsored; organizers appear to be concerned more with producing a great event than with taking home a profit; the event maintains 'grass-roots' values privileging the adventure over the competition; entry is based on a first-come-first-served application process; the entry fee is low; and team entry is unrestricted.

The (+) and (–) symbols refer to the accumulation of capital. Accumulation of capital along the 'authenticity' axis is uncomplicated: the more 'authentic' a race appears to be, the more prestigious it is for participants. Accumulation of capital along the 'spectacularization' axis, however, is dependent upon negotiation of the characteristics. A 'spectacularized' race is considered prestigious and thus 'rich' in symbolic capital. But race organizers must negotiate the level of spectacularization because over-spectacularization of an event, as our account of the current dynamic in the field of AR will show, can actually lead to a loss of prestige, and thus a devaluation (see arrows, Diagram 2) in the field.

The arrows in the diagram, leading away from specific players' positions, refer to the current trajectories of agents in the field. These will be explained in the following discussion.

Current Dynamic in the Field of AR

The structure of a field is never static; "it is a *state* of the distribution of the specific symbolic capitals which has been accumulated in the course of previous struggles" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 73) and likely to be transformed according to the outcome of struggles among agents/institutions. A field structure is itself always at stake and governs the strategies of the agents/institutions (differently situated in the field) aimed at transforming it. The last section of our analysis of the AR field focuses on various strategies deployed by the race organizers in order to improve their position in the AR field, and ultimately to modify the current state of the field. Here we briefly present some

examples of subversion, succession and conservation strategies (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 109).

Eco-Challenge, our first case example, was perceived to be too commercial in 1999, and its trajectory changed. *Eco* became too much of a spectacle by creating too much hype: Burnett opted for a multi-million dollar docu-drama instead of having regular event coverage; he branded and trademarked all aspects of the event – a move considered by most AR participants to be 'commercial overkill'; he invited athletically unqualified but media-friendly teams; and it was thought that he took too much profit. In the same year, *Elf Authentic Adventure* was attracting an elite group of competitors and promised far less hype. The *Beast* announced it would become the AR World Championships and had also confirmed elite participation for the following year. Both these races took advantage of *Eco*'s reversed trajectory, using strategies of subversion and succession to distinguish them from *Eco*'s overcommercialized reputation. Burnett then needed a conservation strategy to recover the capital that he lost. To do so, he would have to reacquire an 'authentic' image.

The first thing Burnett did was set the 2000 race date to conflict with the *Beast*, declaring the *Eco* as the new World Championship instead. He reacted to the criticism of overhyping the event with more authentic rule changes; The race became 'first come first served' rather than invitational, he removed dark zones and re-supply points, and he paid elite competitors registered in the *Beast* to come to his race instead. He also partnered with *USA Network* – a network that frequently provides sport coverage – rather than *Discovery*, the family channel that specializes in entertaining documentaries. *Eco*

regained its dominant status (see Diagram 2), shifting the positions of other races in the field.

The *Beast*'s succession strategy had failed, and as it was still subordinate to *Eco*, it lost most of its competitors to Burnett. Without the elite teams necessary to attract media, the capital it had accrued disappeared (see Diagram 2). The *Beast* has now returned to its more grass-roots origins ("the racer's race") and no longer competes with the *Raid*, *Eco* and *Elf* for the dominant position in the field. The *Southern Traverse*, which had always distinguished itself as "*Eco* without the hype" announced a new partnership with *Discovery Channel* for 2000, thus trading some 'authenticity' capital for that of 'spectacularity' (see Diagram 2). *Expedition Mata Atlantica* prides itself on copying the *Elf* format, which is high in 'authenticity' capital, but institutes socially responsible sponsorship rules, hoping to take it one step above (see Diagram 2). The *Raid* promotes itself as "the legend", unchanged from its original concept. Its strategy to conserve a constant position (see Diagram 2) is ironically a strategy to gain authenticity and thus accumulate symbolic capital in the field. The above examples highlight the strategies deployed by race organizers to negotiate the fragile balance between spectacularity and authenticity in an attempt to accumulate prestige and improve their positions in the AR field.

The smaller races that are in more direct competition with each other also shift positions for similar reasons. For example, *Raid the North* markets itself as the most accessible of the authentic races. Serious organizational problems resulted in a damaged reputation and a loss of credibility. However, in Canada, there are few 36-hour races and

RTN was able to maintain a relatively powerful position in the field due to its strategic location.

Racers also feel that they can influence race organizers' strategies. A series of comments appeared on the ARA-L on the subject of the battle between *Eco* and the *Beast* similar to this one:

> Race directors drop the glove. Let stand that in life's retrospect, a man and a woman will be ultimately judged not on their intentions but by their actions. Pick a race, die by the sword, and if you can't take the politics, sit one out. Boycott. Regardless, act with integrity. (ARA-L)

One racer described the AR field as she saw it. This rather exhaustive description is especially significant as, while not drawing on Bourdieu's social theory in her analysis, she demonstrates a 'feel for the game' and actively participates in the field struggle:

> While I am new as a racer, I have watched this sport grow for many years. There seems to be a rush of new adventure races sprouting up all over the country, which on the surface would indicate that the sport is growing by leaps and bounds. (...) It's like the early gold rush, every one is trying to get into the act and stake their claim. You have the old guard/racers out there that were not necessarily elite athletes but simply first in with little true U.S. competition who by their early successes in one race or another have their place in the growing but brief AR U.S. history. You have the growing web presence with new companies sprouting up trying to be the sports mouthpiece. You have the usurious races like *Cal Eco* that steals its name from a much bigger and better race. You have the USARA that is ahead of its time and is still trying to come up

with true benefits to its members. You have races like the ill fated *Desert Quest* or *Great Nor Easter* that somehow sealed their own fates. You have the self-proclaimed world championships by a company that had its last *Beast* finish in 3 days, has never put on a major race over 5 days, has only one race in one small region of the country and by its proclamations has offended every major race out there that has done it bigger, better and longer. You have the *Hi-Tec* series that, while spreading the word of AR across the country with its sponsor-driven 4+ hour format, has less to do with true adventure racing than mystery events but has probably done more to grow the sport in the U.S. outside of *Eco Challenge* than anyone. The power of sponsorship! So what is the state of adventure racing and where is it headed. It is going through all the growing pains that us diverse humans bring to the table. Yes the sport is definitely growing and with the good invariably comes the controversial. The sport will no doubt continue to grow faster than just about any sport has. We as racers will continue to have the ultimate choice of where and when we race and whether to buy into the hype or not. (ARA-L)

Concluding thoughts

The field of AR, like any other field of social practice, defines itself through its particular forms of capital. It hovers at the intersection of fringe and mainstream sport, impacting and impacted by the fields of risk recreation, corporate management, adventure tourism and entertainment media among others. It is a site of struggle over its very definition and direction – a struggle that underscores its social dynamic and power

structure. The 'players' are the driving force of the field's development, forming the corps of specialists who try to develop, transmit and control their own particular status culture, forming organizational and professional interests that constantly restructure and redefine the field. One cannot seek to understand a field by simply studying its production and consumption trends. One must understand its stakes and its struggles, its history and its players, its internal and external articulations. In so doing, one can begin to understand the dynamic that propels its evolution.

Our analysis has shown that new forms of sport practice are the result of power relations between agents vying for the domination of their definition of sport. It has highlighted the fact that the symbolic value of any sport is determined by the particular structure of the field at any given time. We have also begun to demonstrate the significance of participants' involvement in field struggle through the practice of, preferences for and rejection of various forms of sport. This analysis is a part of a larger project that aims at a more comprehensive understanding of the social signification of AR. While we have expressly used Bourdieu's theory of practice as a tool and not for the purpose of testing its validity, our study has demonstrated the usefulness of the framework to similar projects that explore the relatively untapped areas of lifestyle activities and new sport culture. A next step would be to question the existence of a specific habitus, characterizing participants in AR.

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[1] Extreme sports are said to have emerged out of the cultural revolution that took place in the 50's and 60's in the United States after the Second World War when the economy grew dependent on mass production and mass consumption. Although the 'anti-mainstream' image of extreme sports is still apparent, its interdependent relationship with media and corporate agents has de-emphasized – or even reversed – the oppositional ideology that marked its earlier motivation.

[2] In order to stress that a field does not have parts or components, Bourdieu sometimes uses the term 'subfield'. A subfield shares many properties with a larger field but "has its own logic, rules and regularities." (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 104)

[3] Adventure Racing Association listserve

[4] Wescams are giro helicopter-mounted cameras used in the filming of *Eco-Challenge* for the *Discovery Channel* miniseries produced simultaneously about the event.

[5] The events selected for the analysis were chosen according to their level of 'official recognition' in the AR community as adventure races. The above races have all appeared frequently on AR schedules and have been the subjects of discussions on the ARA LISTSERVE.

Diagram 1:

Positioning AR in the Field of Sport Practice and in Relation to External Social Fields

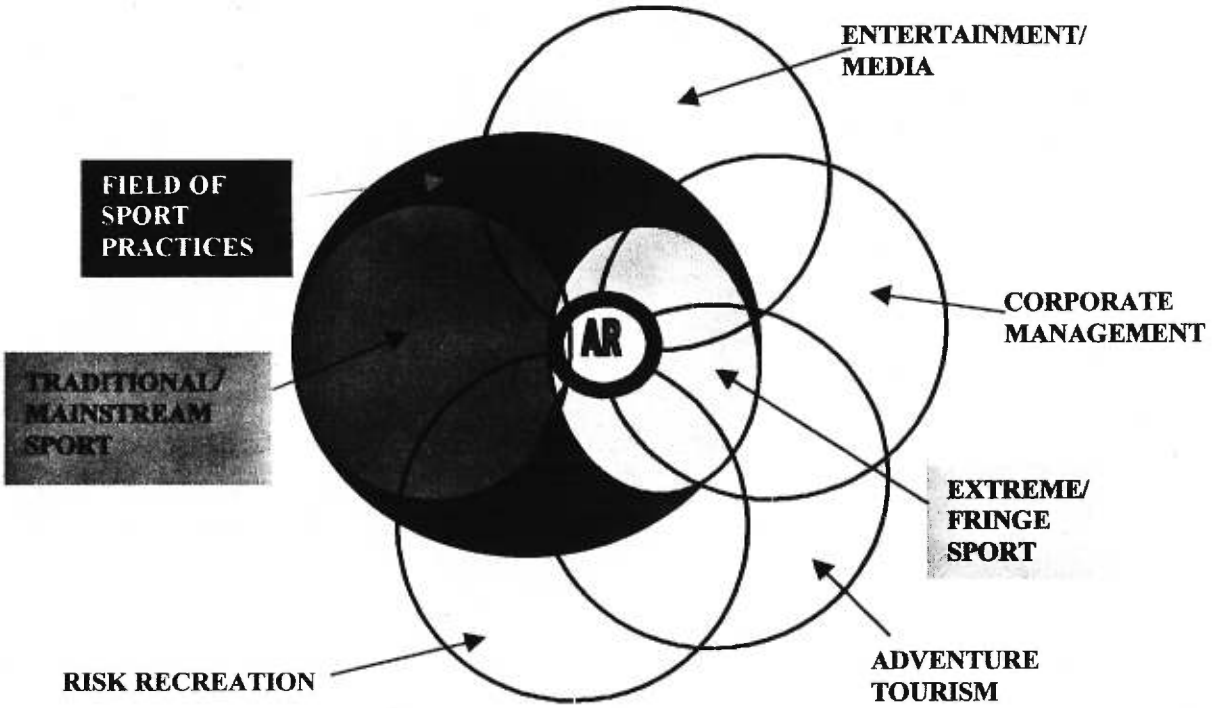
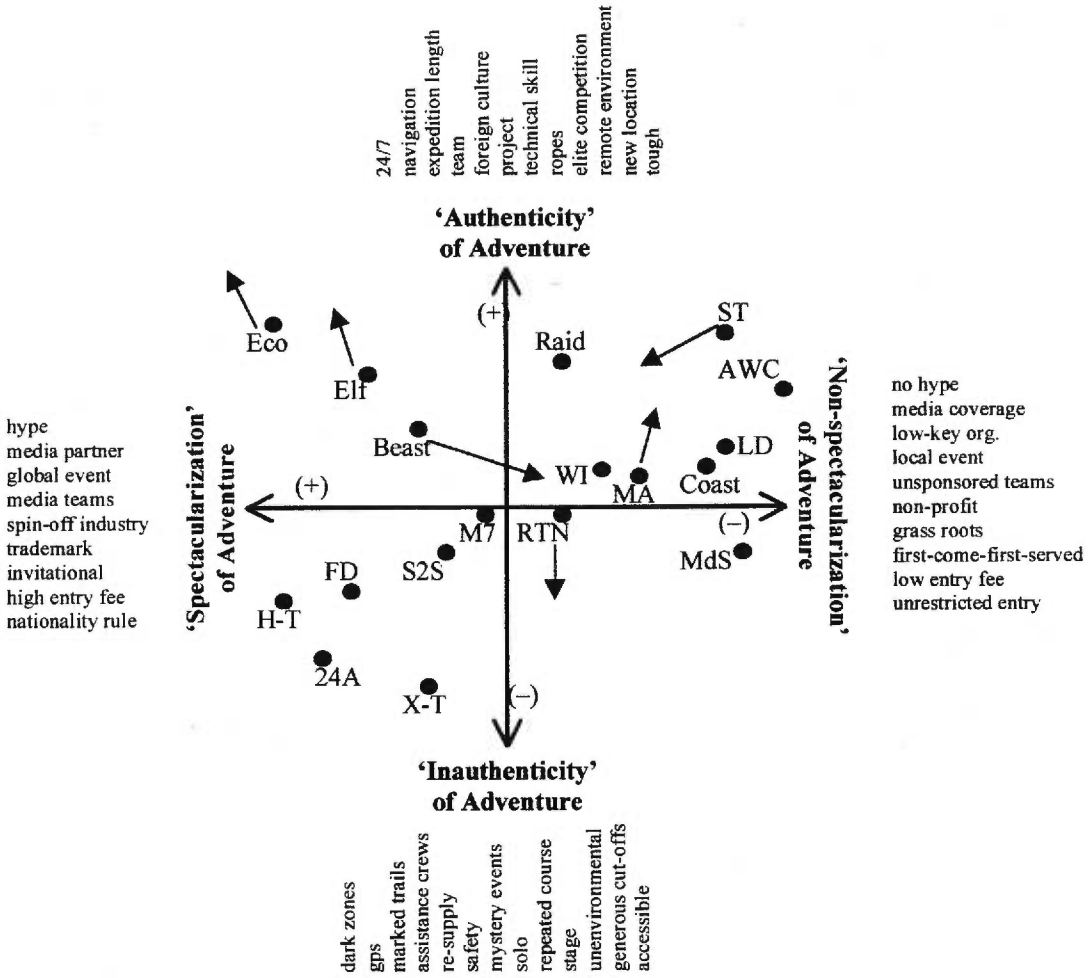


Diagram 2: The Field of AR



Legend

24A = 24 Hours of Adrenaline
AWC = Alaska Wilderness Classic
Beast = Beast of the East (Alaska)
Coast = Coast to Coast
Eco = Eco-Challenge Expedition Race
Elf = Elf Authentic Adventure
FD = FogDog 24 hours
H-T = Hi-Tec Adventure Series
LD = Longest Day
M7 = Mild Seven Outdoor Quest
MA = Expedition Mata Atlantica
MdS = Marathon des Sables
Raid = Raid Gauloises
RTN = Raid the North (Canada)
S2S = Sea 2 Summit
ST = Southern Traverse
WI = West Isles Challenge
X-T = X-Terra Offroad

CHAPTER 3

The 'New' Corporate Habitus in Adventure Racing

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The 'New' Corporate Habitus in Adventure Racing

Abstract

This article explores the overrepresentation of management-level corporate participants in DCEC as a suggestion of the emergence of a new class – or social group – habitus common to both 'new' corporate culture and the AR field. The aim of the current analysis, which examines the parallels between conceptualizations, perceptions and judgements of practice embedded in AR and 'new' corporate discourses is twofold: first, to uncover the practice-generating principles (habitus) in the AR field; second, to explore the relationship between the AR and 'new' corporate habitus through AR's *purported* benefit of 'transferability'. Our qualitative analysis is based on participant observation and on 37 semi-structured interviews with AR participants.

The 'New' Corporate Habitus in Adventure Racing

The sport of adventure racing (henceforth in the text and commonly referred to as "AR") by its very character resists strict definition, but can nonetheless be loosely described – in its most undisputed formulation – as a non-stop, self-sufficient, multi-day, multi-discipline, mixed-gender team endurance competition that takes place in the wilderness over a designated but unmarked course. "Expedition Racing," as multi-day (usually 5-10 day) AR epics are often called, requires athletes to master multiple outdoor skills, to risk illness and injury, and to endure sleep deprivation, weight loss, extreme weather and harsh terrain. Athletes are required to manage and transport days' worth of food, water and equipment and to progress continuously through unfamiliar, isolated areas with minimal rest and/or sleep. Its growing popularity has paralleled that of other 'new', 'extreme' or 'fringe' sports, which – though in earlier manifestations fueled by a larger political opposition[1] - have most recently been described as sports that either ideologically or practically provide alternatives to mainstream sports and their values (Beal, 1995; Rinehart, 1998; Loret, 1995). Through a study of *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* (henceforth "DCEC") participant discourse and practice, this article aims at exploring AR's distinctive habitus (or embodied culture) and its links with what has been labeled "new corporate culture" in the management domain.

Our analysis relies notably on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, a pivotal concept in his theory of practice. For Bourdieu, habitus is a set of *incorporated* schemes of disposition, perceptions and appreciation, that orients our practice and gives meaning to them (Bourdieu, 1984: 170-171). The various social habitus are shaped by living conditions characteristic of the various social positions existing in a

social space, and operate as "generating principles" (versus determined or determining factors) of taste with regard to practices and products offered at a given time in a given society. Distinctive 'tastes' can be explained by differences in perception and appreciation (generated by the habitus) of the benefits – whether they be social, economic, symbolic, or physical – expected from different practices. Bourdieu (1984) has specifically addressed distinctive tastes for sport and physical activities:

> To understand the class distribution of the various sports, one would have to take account of the representations which, in terms of their specific schemes of perception and appreciation, the different classes have of the costs (economic, cultural and 'physical') and benefits attached to the different sports—immediate or deferred 'physical' benefits (health, beauty, strength, whether visible, through 'body-building' or invisible through 'keep-fit' exercises), economic and social benefits (upward mobility etc.) immediate or deferred symbolic benefits linked to the distributional or positional value of each of the sports considered [...], gains in distinction accruing from the different effects on the body itself (e.g. slimness, sun-tan, muscles obviously or discretely visible, etc.) or from the access to highly selective groups which some of these sports give (golf, polo etc.). (Bourdieu, 1984: 20)

Hence, the concept of habitus can be of great use in understanding how a specific social group's preference for a specific sport practice is linked to its relative position in the social space, and to the particular benefits expected from the practice. More importantly, a sport study informed by this concept can be helpful in examining the extent to which sport fields, as symbolic systems constructed through shared tenets, values and beliefs,

constitute sites of production – of both cultural discourse and (sometimes contradictory) cultural practice – contributing to the construction of identity, difference and social order.

This article explores the overrepresentation of management-level corporate participants in DCEC as a suggestion of the emergence of a new class – or social group – habitus common to both the 'new' corporate and AR fields. The aim of the current analysis, which examines the parallels between conceptualizations, perceptions and judgements of practice embedded in AR and 'new' corporate discourse is twofold: first, to uncover the practice-generating principles (habitus) in the AR field; second, to explore the relationship between the AR and 'new' corporate habitus through AR's *purported* benefit of transferability of acquired personal development, knowledge and skills. By drawing parallels between dominant discourse models in the corporate and AR fields, then, it should be stressed, the ultimate goal is not to provide an exhaustive account of a particular social class habitus, nor is to characterize the internal dynamic (as reproductive, resistant or transformative, for example) of the AR field. Rather, it is to better understand AR as a symbolic practice – and thus social group signifier bearing particular symbolic value in the construction of an individual's identity and difference – as part of a broader understanding of the field of sport supply.

While critical analysis of the corporate/sport complex was first considered in sport sociology through a focus on sport's link to capitalism and the business sphere (Beamish, 1982; Brohm, 1976, Ehrenberg, 1991; Rigauer, 1981; Sewart, 1987), more contemporary studies have mainly focused on the corporate/sport complex through investigations of the commercialization of sport (Lobmeyer and Weidinger, 1992; Sage, 2000), usually examining specific themes such as globalization (Donnelly, 1996; Houlihan, 1994; Rowe,

1996) and mediatization (Bourgeois and Whitson, 1995; Hall et al, 1991; Rail, 1991; Real, 1998; Jhally, 1984; Kay and Laberge, in press; Sage, 1998; Wenner, 1998; Whannel, 1992) of sport[2]. As these studies demonstrate, the corporate field is evidently a field in increasingly significant articulation with sport, an integral part of sport field construction, definition and supply. However, beyond contributing to the developing understanding of the corporate/sport complex, a more important objective of this study is to explore the tenet of transferability as it is avowed in both 'new' corporate culture and AR discourses, revealing, perhaps, the emergence of a homologous class habitus[3]. As limited attention has been paid to the habitus in sport, with the exception of French sport sociology studies (Clément, 1981; Laberge and Sankoff, 1988; Pociello, 1999; Wacquant, 1992; Waser 1995), this study perhaps contributes most significantly to this body of knowledge.

We begin this article with a description of research methods, and an overview of DCEC recruitment, which demonstrates an overrepresentation of managerial level corporate participants. We then explore the correspondence between AR and 'new' corporate culture through DCEC participant discourse and practice. Our discussion explores contemporary AR and corporate field parallels in discourses regarding (1) field transformation, (2) competitive strategy and (3) social morality and 'performativity', followed by a comparison of the subjective detachment and calculative compliance manifested in practice. Lastly, we briefly consider how this new class habitus might be seen as the product of a new 'postmodern' condition.

Research methods

For our study, we chose to rely on multiple modes of data generation to help assess the "validity of inferences between indicators and concepts"(Hammerseley and Atkinson, 1995: 231), a type of methodology used extensively by Bourdieu that he describes as 'discursive montage' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 66). We became equally attached to a process of 'analytical induction', the inter-play between the data collection and revision of the research project (Bryman and Burgess, 1994: 4) with the intention of building an iterative and self-corrective design (Rubin and Rubin, 1995: 92).

Our qualitative analysis of the AR field is based on 37 interviews with AR participants, 30 of which took place on site in Patagonia, Argentina in December of 1999 over three weeks of an *Eco-Challenge* competition. Seven of the interviews were done off-site previous to the competition. After the initial analysis, ten of the respondents were contacted for follow-up interviews. All the interviews were semi-structured and tape-recorded, lasting an average of 90 minutes.

Specific themes were broached in each interview. Some of them included: perceptions and judgements regarding various AR practices; prestige as it is linked to specific events; the impact of media on personal AR experience; and AR as a lifestyle activity. Though respondents were deliberately guided toward the predetermined themes, spontaneous detours were encouraged with the aim of eliciting agents' particular perceptions of and appreciation for AR practice and particular knowledge of the field.

While we consider this study to be predominantly of a qualitative design, the *Eco-Challenge* communications department supplied some quantitative data, statistics and

competitor information that rounded out our knowledge of socio-demographic characteristics and sport experiences of AR participants. We also relied on a media analysis of *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* broadcasts from 1996-1999. This proved invaluable to identifying discourse, as interview respondents often parroted the script from previous years' broadcasts in their comments about AR values and anticipated rewards.

Finally, much of the research took place through participant observation. Kay trained for and competed in a 36-hour *Raid the North* adventure race in Quebec, Canada in September of 1999. This experience not only helped her relate better to athletes' perceptions and judgements, but also permitted her a privileged and welcomed entry into the AR community. She was able to go beyond conducting formal interviews, benefiting from a more relaxed, unstructured exchange. Kay also conducted three weeks of fieldwork in Patagonia as a journalist/feature writer for the *National Post*. In this role she was given complete access to competitors, the course and race organization, including media production facilities and crew – access that would have been denied had she gone in any other capacity such as racer, volunteer or spectator. Observation data collection consisted of diligent note-taking and informal discussions with organizers, producers, participants and volunteers.

Our goal was to maintain an integrated approach that follows in the ethnographic tradition, which rejects positivist views of scientific research. Our intention was not to mirror social reality or social facts by representing empirical research. Rather, we tried to emphasize methodological reflexivity and to recognize our part, as researchers, in the social world being studied (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 217-253).

DCEC in the AR field

AR, which originated in New Zealand and expanded to Europe in the 1980's, was brought to North America by AR competitor and entrepreneur Mark Burnett, the creator of the *Eco-Challenge* (and later the executive producer of CBS's *Survivor*.) The first *Eco* took place in Utah in 1995 and, brandishing a new 'American flavor'[4] (Dugard, 1998: 96; Carter, 2001: 25), developed into one of the most popular and most commercial expedition-length races in the world. Since partnering with *Discovery Channel* in 1996 (and later *USA Network* in 2000), the DCEC has not only grown into one of the most acclaimed adventure races in the world, but has also been the subject of a yearly 'documentary', sold to TV networks worldwide with sponsorship and advertising as well as racer entry fees generating millions of dollars in revenue. DCEC can be seen to have pioneered the current trend in AR where races are owned by, or exclusively licensed to, TV production companies that create and sell 'reality' programming – or 'dramalities'[5] based on a specific race.

Recruitment

The study showed that DCEC is marked by a significant overrepresentation of management-level corporate agents (61%) who describe their workplace environments as "new" corporate cultures. In contrast to AR professionals (11%) who are evidently motivated by symbolic and economic reward (prestige, prizes and sponsorship associated with competitive ranking) in the AR field, it appears that corporate agents select AR from among hundreds of sport and physical activities as their *preferred leisure* practice[6]. Further, corporate agents, generally, claimed their primary motivation for involvement in

the sport was to "test personal limits" (vs. risk-taking, competitive ranking, health or fitness), expecting AR to be a "transferable learning opportunity".

Bourdieu (1990) contends, in his theory of practice, that 'taste' for a given sport practice is the result of the encounter between one's particular habitus with a particular field dynamic. Therefore, if the habitus is indeed generated by one's position in social space, and if one enters into a sport field with a particular habitus – and thus particular expectation of incurred benefits – and as the majority of 'corporate' participants described their workplace environments as 'new' corporate cultures, one could expect the majority of participants in AR to come to the sport with a 'new' corporate habitus, an internalized culture acquired through the socialization process of the corporate milieu. It is, therefore, through a comparison of 'new' corporate and AR discourses and practices, that one can explore corporate agents' logic of practice and, moreover, the extent to which 'new' corporate ideology is influenced and reinforced by AR.

Discussion: 'New' corporate culture and AR parallels

> The way E-C started, it was really expensive. It didn't cater to people like me. It catered to stockbrokers and lawyers and business people who need something like that to tear them away from their jobs. Like, [B] and [R] on my team are millionaires. They've built up their own businesses. What's going to appeal to them? Weekend triathlons? I don't think so. That guy lives and breathes life full on. He needs something like the E-C to sort of tame him.
>
> (M, 28, Management consultant)

New corporate culture and new sport practice

In the 1980's, the 'culture' of corporations emerged as an important theme in organization/management studies. Managerial literature such as Peters and Waterman's (1982) *In Search of Excellence* and Deal and Kennedy's (1999) *New Corporate Cultures* offered corporate leaders a 'recipe' for success based in prescriptions for shaping the organization's value-system. This approach, later labeled by critics "value-engineering" (Martin and Frost, 1996: 602), offered managers the prescriptions to improve social integration and commitment in the organization, thereby ultimately gaining innovativeness, productivity and competitive advantage:

> Companies that have cultivated their individual identities by shaping values, making heroes, spelling out rites and rituals, and acknowledging the cultural network have an edge. These corporations have values and beliefs to pass along - not just products. They have stories to tell – not just profits to make. They have heroes whom managers and workers can emulate – not just faceless bureaucrats. In short, they are human institutions that provide practical meaning for people, both on and off the job. [...] (Deal and Kennedy, 1982: 15)

Peter Dahler-Larsen (1994) characterizes 'new' corporate culture as a *discourse* in relation to 'crises' in the organizational environment, which provided the context for its emergence. The crises – of competitiveness in the West, in organizational theory, and in late modern society – led, accordingly, to a new focus on cultural values, in discourse, if not always in practice. New corporate culture has been conceptualized as a rejection of the 'hard' values of bureaucratic organizations in favor of 'softer' values – a shift from the '*effective*' domain to the '*affective*' domain.

'New' sport culture was similarly understood to have responded to crises in sport such as the expansion of professionalization, the commercialization and the hyper-quantification of 'traditional' sport (Loret, 1995). Discourses in new sport culture have tended, at least in their early manifestations (Beal, 1995; Humphreys, 1997), to reject mainstream sport values – competition, measures and rules – in favor of 'softer' values such as personal sensation and self-actualization. Indeed, AR participants, as producers and products of new sport culture, talk about their participation in AR in terms of rejecting traditional sport values:

> The neat thing about adventure racing is that there is no time-oriented goal. It's different than triathlon. It's not so structured. You always know the triathletes because even after 4 days of racing, they hit the stop buttons on their watches at the finish line. It's such a reflex and it's so funny to watch. It's so classic. But I never wear a watch. That's more adventure racing. (M, 28, AR professional)

New corporate and sport cultures can be seen to represent new discourses, or 'ways of thinking' about their specific practice according to which each has emerged in response to crises in their respective fields, each presenting alternatives to traditional institutional structure. We believe this affinity is a significant facet of the attraction of new sport practices to corporate agents who adhere, or associate their corporate practice with, new corporate culture.

In the next section, we will outline the tenets specific to new corporate culture and AR, revealing common discourses and beliefs to ultimately sketch the dominant discourse and practice-generating principles in AR.

Competing on the edge: Strategy as structured chaos in new corporate culture

Current managerial literature dealing with "change-management" strategy treats new corporate culture in the sense of a business environment, or business 'ecology' where "American businesses are facing the greatest, most traumatic changes in their history" (Sherriton and Stern, 1997: 1). New corporate culture strategy is viewed as "dynamic," emphasizing collective goal-seeking to maintain performance 'excellence' to "make sense in high-velocity, highly competitive industries" (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1998: xi), the challenge being to coordinate "highly diversified and specialized functions within an organization being wrenched into change for the sake of survival." (Sherriton and Stern,1996: 1).

Team-oriented work approaches have allegedly supplanted traditional hierarchy and have led organizations to change what management literature terms 'core values' (Sherriton and Stern, 1996: 54). Sherriton and Stern (1996) identify five aspects of change from traditional to the newly characterized *team* cultures: Hierarchy to flat, fragmentation to cohesion, independence to interdependence, competition to cooperation, and tried-and-true to risk taking. New corporate – or *team* – cultures can be understood as organizations where managerial demarcations and hierarchical boundaries are allegedly reduced; a breaking down of silos with greater collaboration and coordination; a reliance on others; and a greater comfort with ambiguity.

New corporate culture is thus predicated on transformations[7] both in the internal structure and the external environment – as an adaptation to a changing business environment which is often viewed as hostile, mobilizing an "us against the world mentality" (Dahler-Larsen, 1994:12). Strategy literature such as *Competing on the Edge:*

Strategy as Structured Chaos (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1998:19) offers prescriptions for competing in a marketplace, which is seen as "continuously transforming landscape". A company's success is said to be based on its ability to adapt to shifting circumstances (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1998: 20). The values of improvisation, flexibility, innovation, communication, teaming, regeneration, foresight, experimentation, trust, risk-management, and pacing (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1998) are all deemed necessary for a strategy that can help a company survive – if not compete – in an environment that demands constant change.

Competing on the edge: Strategy as structured chaos in AR

While the "continuously transforming landscape" of new corporate culture is metaphorical, the harsh environmental conditions faced by AR teams are not. According to AR discourse, AR teams are constantly facing the unknown, forced to improvise, flex, innovate, communicate, team, regenerate, foresee, experiment, trust, manage risk, and pace to 'survive,' if not compete. The very same values deemed necessary to success in the new corporate climate are those espoused repeatedly in DCEC:

> So you have to have that mindset: whatever you're dealt, you just deal with it. It's not a skill necessarily. Even the camels - it's like, 'okay, we've ridden horses, we can ride camels!" (F, 33, Financial analyst)

Therefore, DCEC corporate participant discourse demonstrates parallel visions of strategy to survive in environments that demand constant change. This 'mindset,' for example, refers, for the corporate participants, to an ability to adapt, to be flexible and to confront the unknown:

In these kinds of races, you have to be very flexible. You have to adapt yourself to what's around you. (M, 44, Entrepreneur)

You have to always be prepared for the unknown - to have all your options always open for what's going to happen. If all four aren't feeling well, your options are obviously getting smaller. And a successful team has a lot of luck but essentially always has all the doors open. So their process of decision-making is always clearer if you are prepared for the unexpected. (M, 26, Entrepreneur)

As in managerial literature, teaming emerges as the central theme; skills such as goal setting, selflessness, communication and trust are highlighted:

That's how you form a team. You make sure that everyone has the same goal. (F, 33, financial analyst)

You can't think about yourself. If you're good at this, you're more concerned with your teammates and their happiness, welfare and productivity. If you think about just yourself, you'll fail. (F, 35, Financial controller)

You have to communicate and trust your teammates ultimately. (F, 33, Financial analyst)

As teams work autonomously, innovation, experimentation and improvisation are considered important to progress and success in a race:

You sometimes have to recognise when you have made a bad decision and change that. Like, we packed a lot of the wrong gear and had to improvise to get through some sections. But we are used to improvising. We have a fishing rod on the back of [M]'s bike that we use for towing, and we used a stuff sac as sail

on the kayak. Sometimes we waste a lot of time, but it's really quite fun when something like that actually works. (F, 29, Entrepreneur)

We had brought all these nuts and seeds, thinking it would give us a lot of calories, but by the second day, we couldn't eat anymore. They were too heavy and were giving us stomach-aches. We were stupid because we never experimented with eating that kind of quantity in training. I mean, the best is to experiment a lot in training. (M, 38, Technologist)

Risk management or 'calculated' risk-taking is seen as effective and necessary to success whereas risk-taking without foresight is considered irresponsible. This concept of risk debunks notions of AR as a primarily risk-involved activity, similar in ideology to other 'extreme' sports.

Everyone ahead of us was getting off and walking their bikes across. I didn't even question it. I'm not that strong on the bike anyway, and if stronger riders than me were getting off, there must be something. Anyway, it's a matter of two extra minutes in a ten-day race. If I fall and hurt myself for the sake of saving two minutes, we might not even finish. (F, 33, Financial analyst)

Those guys were fooling around in the kayaks, and I was getting really pissed off. It's fine that they wanted to have fun, but they were pretending to tip, and all our stuff was tied down so if they had really tipped, it would have been a major ordeal. I think they weren't thinking about 'what if'. (F, 33, Financial analyst)

Finally, team pace and regeneration are considered to be key factors in negotiating a multi-day race:

> If you look at the strongest teams out there, they might be twentieth on day one, tenth on day two and first on day five. It's really all in pacing it. You can go out hard and probably hold on for two, three days, but then you will make a mistake or someone will blow up. You have to keep moving, of course, but you have to be rested and aware enough to make decisions. (M, 40, Investment banker)
>
> If she says she's exhausted, there's no question that she's exhausted. And if she's at her limit, there's no sense in pushing her even further because the next day she would have to sleep a lot more. (M, 26, Entrepreneur)

Teaming, (which is evidently male-dominated[8] in AR practice) emerges as the key criterion of success in both discourses – not as a goal, but as a means to an end:

> We all had to get down beside her and warm her up. Keep in mind that we disliked her intensely and it was only because we could only finish the race if she survived. (M, 50, Graphic arts consultant)

Social morality and performativity in new corporate culture

> Corporations may be among the last institutions in America that can effectively take on the role of shaping values (Deal and Kennedy, 1982: 16).

The purported objective of new corporate culture philosophy is to mobilize combinations of language, values, rituals and myths as the key to unlocking the commitment and enthusiasm of its employees. The emphasis on the symbolic domain is presented as a way for management to counteract uncertain, chimerical, elusive values of today's society with practical organizational values. This reveals two important features of new corporate culture management: first, there is an emphasis on giving 'meaning' – or a supplanted 'morality' that is assumed to have been stripped

away in contemporary life. Second, there is an emphasis on the constructed – or the performative – for the creation of 'authenticity' and the development of 'core' values and identity. The explicit recognition of the benefits of emotional engagement – or the privileging of affectiveness over effectiveness, then, assumes the primacy of the 'symbolic frame' (Bolman and Deal, 1991) in shaping values and meaning-making in organizations.

According to Bolman and Deal (1991), the symbolic frame centers on the concepts of meaning, belief and faith. "Symbols create meaning out of chaos, clarity out of confusion, and predictability out of mystery." (Bolman and Deal, 1991: 253). Myths and stories, accordingly, give drama, cohesiveness, clarity, and direction to events that would otherwise be confusing and mysterious. The focus on the way symbols mediate the meaning of organizational events and activities emphasizes the tribal aspect of contemporary organizations (Bolman and Deal, 1991: 270). It is through this 'tribal' perspective that new cultures are said to focus on human non-rational dimensions as a key to social integration and social control, and see sacred meanings – either phrased as morality, ethics or social values' – as behavioral guidelines that help integrate individuals into social collectivities (Dahler-Larsen, 1994: 2).

The concept of "visible management" lies in the assumption that culture is learned and developed through a variety of explicit and implicit mechanisms, often based on explicit "teaching" by leaders (Schein, 1991: 25). Deal and Kennedy have dubbed the managers of strong culture companies "symbolic managers" because they see their primary job as managing values through symbolic action: "They never miss an

opportunity to reinforce, dramatize, or involve the central values and beliefs of the culture."

> Symbolic managers see themselves as players – scriptwriters, directors, actors - in the daily drama of company affairs. [...] No events are too trivial for the great actor as he strides across the stage of the corporate set; no bit player is too trivial to ignore in this great symbolic drama. (Deal and Kennedy, 1982: 142)

The goal is to manufacture 'consensus'[9] through symbols such as language, rituals, rites, myths, and heroes, instilling 'core values' paradoxically implying freedom of choice and autonomy. According to Wilmott's Orwellian analogy, autonomy is secured through "doublethink" whereby the conditions of autonomy are simultaneously affirmed and negated (Wilmott, 1993: 526). The "doublethink" is thus presumably manifested in employees' 'autonomous' acceptance of symbolically constructed values as their own.

Social morality and performativity in AR

Through constant sermonizing, DCEC 'manager' Burnett links the culture's values, such as honest communication, compassion and remaining mission-oriented to a larger societal 'morality' in his insistence that the race provides a venue for life-improvement training. Burnett's philosophy is seemingly appropriated by practitioners seeking to give meaning to their experience:

> *Eco* is a training ground for all aspects of life including business – teamwork, leadership, motivation, preparation, and planning, coping with disappointments, change, remaining flexible, communication, negotiation and facilitation skills, etc, the list could go on. (F, 44, Policy officer)

However, the tenets of new sport culture suggest that the practices occupy a cultural position removed from the realm of social morality. By rejecting institutional norms and rules, new sport culture has been said to prescribe to a 'morality of pleasure' (Loret, 1995) – a hedonistic project that sees the individual rather than society as its goal. Like the discourse embedded in corporate culture, DCEC discourse rejects the 'hard' values of traditional structure while subscribing to principles of moral conduct and virtue, ultimately challenging its own claim to counter-cultural values.

Further, like new corporate culture, the DCEC is constructed and performative, paradoxically aiming to create a sense of 'authenticity' to develop 'core' values and identity. The DCEC, accordingly, is equal parts race and TV show, with a single mythic discourse:

> *They come from every corner of the world – a gathering of bold adventurers, daring to pit themselves against the untamed backcountry of British Columbia; Its raging rivers, its jagged peaks, its deadly glaciers. (...) They know it will be difficult, but few can even imagine how this adventure will push them past the limits of human endurance. For most, it will end in heartbreak. For a courageous few, it may mean their ultimate triumph. (...) We have always journeyed into the wilderness to find wisdom and strength. A journey into nature: Push yourself until the pain comes, until you feel you cannot survive and then go on. Here the ego will let go. Here you will be purified.*

So begins the 1996 DCEC with narration that waxes formulaically poetic, strewn with allusions to the original inhabitants of the land and the noble exploration of past pioneers. The DCEC, as the discourse implies, is a "modern-day vision-quest"

attainable by the ordinary, but attained only by a select few. The few are those who have come not for fame and glory but "to learn a hidden truth about themselves, a truth that may reveal itself if they can push past the limits of what they believed possible."

By mythologizing AR participants' experience, Mark Burnett, founder of the DCEC, clearly relies on the corporate culture notion of value engineering as a tool for his company's success. Like all "symbolic managers", Burnett's emphasis is on giving 'meaning' and emphasizing the development of 'core' identity, not only by scriptwriting daily drama, but by making his leadership visible:

> Mark Burnett is full of *Eco*-Spirit – like when you see him on TV. He told us to make sure we were friends with our team and all get along – that kind of stuff. He has charisma. (M, 37, corporate valuer)
>
> He's good at what he does. I don't know what he's really like but even when you meet him, he's all PR and he's always talking about the teams and teamwork and he's really pushing it. I don't known if he really means it, but I like that he says it. (F, 33, Financial analyst)

Hence, through the use of myth, heroes and story telling, Burnett constructs a sport discourse that, like the discourse of corporate culture, purports to efficiently respond to the demands of the larger environment.

Further, though AR is no different from other sports in the sense that media narrative constructs and penetrates its discourse, AR's ethos, and thus relationship to media narrative, is unique. While the media's presence is obvious, if not intrusive[10], it is paradoxically the media-constructed drama and focus on 'real people' negotiating the

dangers of natural and remote wilderness that works to create participants' sense of authenticity. The DCEC is a simultaneous sport and media product, the success of which depends on a symbiotic relationship between the two. The inextricable link between race and media[11] therefore not only highlights the importance of performance, spectacle and the symbolic frame. DCEC discourse also illustrates the process of "doublethink" through which participants are presumed to simultaneously affirm and negate the conditions of autonomy through the acceptance of symbolically constructed values as their own.

Calculative compliance in new corporate practice

The effectiveness of new corporate culture in creating a "culture of excellence" is thus understood, according to the 'philosophy', to supplant a fading and ambiguous social 'morality' and to construct 'core' values through performative action. However, it has been noted that the absence of a 'societal project' in the discourse of morality reduces corporate culture to what Czarniawska-Joerges calls "cultural rhetoric" (1992: 168). As Wilmott (1993: 539) maintains, so long as the reflexive project of self is understood largely as a matter of extension of the control systems of modernity to the self, they lack moral meaning.

Therefore, it has been argued, new corporate culture only *appears* to possess a 'morality' because it aims to enhance social integration by substituting the company for society as the sacred realm. (Dahler-Larsen, 1994:12). For management, then, there is a "convenient confusion" between business ethics based in a code of conduct for the goal of the organization (profit) and a social 'morality' based in individual principles of conduct that treat society as its goal. This convenient confusion is exemplified by the current trend in new corporate philosophy towards 'corporate social responsibility'

(CSR). CSR is described as "a philosophy [corporations] must embrace as a core value that dictates their relations with employees, customers and communities" (*National Post*, 1999). The goal of these "principles of good corporate citizenship," however, is not to make employees feel good; the goal is to give the company a competitive edge: "as you improve a company's image, you improve its shareholder value" (*National Post*, 1999). Ultimately, CSR is a constructed *image* of social responsibility that serves company profit. The motivation and satisfaction that is likely experienced by the employee is not brought about through an autonomous sense of 'ought', but is rather 'engineered' through a code of business ethics[12] for competitive advantage.

Further, as Wilmott (1993) explains, employees' moral 'confusion' might be as 'convenient' as management's: "associated with this instrumentality is a skepticism, often expressed as cynicism, about the 'genuineness' of corporate culturist values and ideals" (Wilmott, 1993: 537). Wilmott draws on Berger and Luckmann's concept of 'cool alternation' in noting that workers – instead of being 'duped', experiencing the social world as reality – regard it as 'a reality to be used for specific purposes.' A sense of subjective detachment from their roles is achieved as the employee, like management, 'puts them on' deliberately and purposefully:

> Instead of a deep identification with corporate values, there can be selective, calculative compliance. In which case, employee behaviour is (minimally) congruent with 'realising' the values of the corporation, but only insofar as it is calculated that material and/or symbolic advantage can be gained from managing the appearance of consent (Wilmott, 1993: 537).

Respondents, when referring to the 'new' corporate cultures in which they worked, often described such processes of subjective detachment. This was illustrated by claims that employee autonomy and management trust were undermined by constant monitoring and 'micro-management' – for instance, taping and reviewing all phone conversations and installing cameras throughout the workplace. Employees, aware of the constant monitoring were thus impelled to specific behaviors because of knowledge of the 'rules of the game', not autonomous adherence to values.

Calculative compliance in AR

It would appear, however, that DCEC participation, unlike that in the corporate field, manifests little subjective detachment, subscribing to the 'cultural rhetoric' of teamwork and communication – participants often parroting Burnett's credos word-for-word:

> *Eco*'s values were originally that of the importance of teamwork, that limits are self-imposed, that gender differences do not limit performance, that the environment can be appreciated and experienced by people without being trashed, and are very important in today's society. (F, 44, Policy officer)

Most significantly, participant discourse prescribes unequivocally to the DCEC-inspired philosophy of transferability:

> On a day to day level, it can show up. What it gives you is a sense of accomplishment and an expanded comfort zone. I learned what I was capable of as an individual. (M, 29, Management consultant)
>
> The whole experience changed me. It taught me to deal with men and taught me that I wasn't going to put up with shit. (F, 33, Financial analyst)

> You learn, sometimes the hard way, about communicating, differences between men and women, about goal setting and changing goals when disappointed, about motivation, teamwork, etc. In *Eco* you learn techniques which are transferable to other areas of life. (F, 44, Policy officer)
>
> You get a little more confidence in everything you do. The teamwork thing – you do well at a race like this and I can feel comfortable dealing with my boss at work or my family or whatever. It's working together as a team. You're only as strong as your weakest link. Our goal as a team is to help the other person, to think about what I can do to help my teammate. If I see that [he] has a blister, I know that it will go a lot faster if I help him tape it instead of eating some food and resting and waiting for him to tape it and then eat and rest. So we're constantly looking at it as a team. In the past, if the car broke down on the way to the river, I was always the first one under the hood trying to fix it. Then I finally said, "is there anyone here who understands engines?" instead of trying to do it myself. (M, 41, Entrepreneur)

Moreover, participants see a strong specific correlation to corporate culture, likening DCEC to the value-shaping function of the 'corporate retreat':

> There is a very straight relationship between business people and teamwork in EC. The job has to get done. You always have to give and take so that the project goes forward, and not your personal selfish ambitions. To succeed, you have to be a really good team player. My ambitions in life are directly related to what I'm capable of doing here. In management, essentially, you have to let go

of your personal ambitions, and you have to learn to value and analyse what others are proposing. (M, 26, Entrepreneur)

The structure changed. I didn't. I was more autocratic. But this helped me integrate. You can't learn teamwork; you have to experience it. I find that whole management training system to be quite phoney and contrived. Management retreats aren't training for real life. They don't set up a series of real life situations like *Eco*. (M, 50, Graphic arts consultant)

I think adventure racing is just an awesome lesson for the corporate world. This is just project management- or consulting in a different venue. Because being a team captain in adventure racing is nothing more than being a manager. You're managing the dynamics of the team. I set the objectives for the team as a whole. I try to do it as subversively as possible- working through the team. I don't say 'this is what we're going to do'. I don't say that I'm a boss, but it's very much the same role where I am motivating, I am looking for the strengths and weaknesses in each individual, and I'm channelling them into the right places to maximise the output of the group. (M, 29, Management consultant)

I have to force people to listen to me at work. This was worth five years of management. The ultimate corporate retreat. It will teach me to be a better boss. Stress management, time management, everything. I even got time off work by telling my boss that I was going to a self-development program, not a sports event. (M, 37, Sr. Power Systems Operator)

Transferability in DCEC is argued on the basis of authenticity of the experience – an emotional engagement that privileges affectiveness over effectiveness, or the 'symbolic frame' (Bolman and Deal, 1991) in shaping values and meaning-making:

> You know what *Eco* is? It's life crammed into a week or 10 days. It's life but more intense. (F, 35, Financial controller)
>
> You access a part of yourself that you don't normally. You discover things about yourself, about how you interact with other people. You're a raw person. (M, 32, Management consultant)

Further, participant discourse is often littered with nostalgic reference and historical allusion documenting transference of authenticity from explorers and pioneers past. The practice, then, is associated with selfless exploration in the name of social advancement, to an age when the idealism of 'pure' causes, 'just wars,' public virtue, dutiful self-sacrifice, and nobility was not supplanted[13] by moral ambiguity (Lipovetsky, 1992):

> If people didn't take any kinds of risk, I think we wouldn't be so evolved. The first people that crossed the ocean with old boats took the risk to come explore. So, you call these people irresponsible? It's a way for us to do something important. (M, 44, Entrepreneur)

DCEC participants can, therefore, be seen to embrace 'as their own' the DCEC-manufactured morality that dictates their relations with (socialization into and advancement of) the social world, maintaining the myth of transferability.

However, on another level, AR participants also parallel corporate employees' subjective detachment from their roles as exemplified by competitors' attitudes toward the incorporation of local environmental action into each race:

> They have notorious people from the environment world that are there, and they talk about the project, and you have to work for the project and stuff like that. But on the other hand, you have a perspective that it is, essentially, that it's there because sponsors like to see that. (M, 26, Entrepreneur)
>
> The environment angle is important to *Eco* – it provides a major difference/selling point compared to the other major adventure races, it justifies the race in often otherwise protected wilderness areas. (F, 44, Policy officer)

Recognizing the commercial value of the social project, competitors thus sometimes maintain a calculative compliance with race management. In some cases, then, they adhere to the rules enough so as not to counter the cultural values, but often see their compliance as practical rather than ideological in terms of a larger social project. The majority of participants at DCEC 1999, who were involved in a tree-planting project, for example, planted the saplings carelessly – often with protective plastic bags still wrapped around their roots – fulfilling their 'obligation' but ultimately doing more damage than good to the environment. One participant described his participation in the ecology project according to the very same principles of 'good corporate citizenship' that profits the individual through a constructed – or performative – social morality:

> By participating in a social project, I have the ability to rationalise why I'm doing what I'm doing. You spend a lot of money and time away from your family and other life obligations to do something for yourself. When you are also seen to be providing something very positive and constructive, it's difficult for people to criticise you. (M, 40, Investment banker)

There is, perhaps, a shared understanding among organizers and participants that DCEC, without a supplanted morality produced through discourses of transferability and social advancement, is an otherwise egoistic commercial activity, similar in ideology to other 'extreme' or youth culture sports. Consent for DCEC's supplanted 'moral' purpose is thus manufactured through the complicity of both organizers and racers alike to distinguish the practice of AR – and the benefits incurred through participation – from purely hedonistic discourses. The conformity of DCEC participants, then, echoes employees' alleged conformity to the standards of conduct set by a profession in that they are responding to an ethic based on a bottom line, not a moral code.

However, in AR, the discourse of transferability is a relatively easier one to maintain, no doubt because sport has always been understood as a social phenomenon related to the intersubjective moral order (Sewart, 1987: 172). As Sewart explains, "sport is valorized as an important medium enabling social actors to 'practice' and 'learn' a sense of fair play, justice, conflict and dispute resolution, sublimating egoistic desires to group needs, as well as generating sociability, solidarity and communal effort." Accordingly, respondents privileged the transferability of acquired personal development, knowledge and skill from the AR field to the corporate field over transferability from the latter to the former.

Concluding thoughts

> It changes you as a person (...) and it makes good stories. (...) That's probably the orgasm of the whole thing - coming back. (M, 26, Entrepreneur)

On a first level, our study has uncovered the perceptions and judgements regarding practice that characterize the habitus of new corporate management participants in AR. We have shown that a majority of these participants see or present AR as primarily a self-actualization and management exercise. In contrast to elite participants who seek status and reward in the AR field itself, then, transferability is a significant sought-after or purported benefit to corporate participants' involvement in AR:

> Every time I race, I learn about myself and how I operate under stress. I learn about my strengths and flaws and I do it in the company of people I trust and love. (...) and my work and family life is better for these experiences. In managing an organisation, I know the importance of having clear goals and keeping them in sight no matter what the distractions of the day; I know the benefit of getting people to contribute and work within a structured environment; I've learned how to create an environment where people aren't afraid to take risks; I know when to press forward and keep on towards our goal and also, I know when and how to sit back and analyse with the team what worked and didn't. All of these are things I practice and refine in my racing. (M, 39, Entrepreneur)

As this quote aptly illustrates, and as we have aimed to highlight through our analysis, the distinctive appeal of AR to management-level corporate agents can best be understood by examining the perceived, expected and sometimes merely presumed benefits of transferability from the AR to the corporate field. AR participants appeared to be primarily concerned with AR practice's impact on performance, constructed self-image and prestige in their working environment rather than with their performance in

the AR field. While elites pursue physical toughness and competitive ranking as forms of capital, and thus power, in the AR field, the corporate AR participant values teaming and media recognition, seeking symbolic profit linked to his or her position – not in the AR field itself where s/he is among the 'dominated' in the field – but rather in a social field where economic and cultural capitals dominate. Symbolic profit accrued in the corporate field is thus seen as an associative value, based on social perceptions of AR as a "tough", "risky" and "fringe" sport practice, that constructs identity and difference:

> Now adventure racing is the big thing and people want to be an adventure racer. It's funny. It's more what you think you are because you do that race then it being about doing the race.... (F, 35, actuarial analyst)

Our analysis has therefore not only highlighted a connection between the culture of an occupation and the culture of a particular sport practice, but it has shown that the presumption of transferability is a pivotal argument of social logic that drives corporate agents to engage in AR. Although transferability has always been embedded in traditional sport discourses, we have rarely seen it exploited in those of 'new' sport. AR constitutes an interesting case in this regard.

AR/corporate habitus and the postmodern condition

Bourdieu (1984) argues that conditions of existence generate the habitus, providing the basic cognitive categories and action frames through which people think about, respond to and reproduce the social world. It has been noted that the corporate sector may have become the *de facto* premier institution in contemporary society in the production of meaning, personal identity, values, knowledge and reasoning (Rail, 2000: 1-11). This

"corporate colonization" (Ibid: 4) might account for the smooth articulation between the corporate field and AR.

Further, perhaps a *postmodern condition,* seen as characterized by moral ambiguity and paradox, can help explain the emergence of a new class habitus participating in symbolic systems such as new corporate culture and AR. And perhaps the DCEC can be explained by the Late Capitalist notion of 'kitsch', the values embedded in its discourse reduced to rhetoric, their dramatization more meaningful than the values they suggest:

> Without expressive events, any culture will die. Ceremonies are to the culture what the movie is to the script, the concert is to the score, or the dance is to values that are difficult to express in any other way. (Kennedy and Deal, 1982: 62)

Future research into AR, corporate culture and the field of sport supply

As the goal of this study was to broaden the understanding of the field of sport supply, our focus was limited to a study of AR corporate practitioners. However, as habitus is a mediating construct between social position and practice, a study that explores the different profits expected from different cultural practices among the agents occupying different positions in the corporate field could complement and further refine this analysis. A study could explore, for example, how an agent's position in relation to the delineating symbolic forces in the corporate field (economic and cultural capital) affect the particular benefits and social profits expected from AR practice (i.e. the transfer of team-building skills vs. prestige). Further, a study of bodily disposition would add an interesting aspect to the analysis. Most importantly, the concept of habitus could be usefully exploited in future studies of the ways in which sport practice constructs

identity, difference and given social orders. Finally, as our analysis in no way attempts to evaluate the *actual* transferability of values or the purported acquisition of mindset or skill into the corporate environment, this elusive area of analysis needs to be explored in future investigations.

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[1] Extreme sports are said to have emerged out of the cultural revolution that took place in the 50's and 60's in the United States after the Second World War when the economy grew dependent on mass production and mass consumption. Although the 'anti-mainstream' image of extreme sports is still apparent, its interdependent relationship with media and corporate agents has de-emphasized – or even reversed – the oppositional ideology that marked its earlier motivation.

[2] There is also a growing body of knowledge on personal and corporate management 'coaching', sport metaphors and sport cultures at work. Sport psychology has likewise influenced areas such as corporate team-building, motivation and productivity. And corporate challenge/fitness programs are becoming increasingly popular. However, these works tend to generate discourses of transferability vs. critical perspectives.

[3] In Bourdieu's sociological theory, classes do not refer to economic strata but rather refer to groups of social agents (defined in various ways) who share the same social conditions of existence, interests, social experience, and value system, and who tend to define themselves *in relation* to other groups of agents. We use the expression 'class habitus' accordingly.

[4] As Dugard and Carter have both noted, Burnett's quest for a production empire based on associative value sponsorship and advertising is a very 'American' approach to event planning.

[5] Mark Burnett rejects the 'reality TV' label used to describe Eco-Challenge productions in favor of the term 'dramality' that refers to non-scripted drama.

[6]While AR is not accessible to those without the financial means, participation in AR is not only a function of privilege, but of 'taste' as well. For example, corporate participants, who evidently have the personal funds to participate in AR without external funding, still pursue corporate sponsorship as it is convertible into symbolic capital (prestige).

[7] It can be argued that these transformations remain at the level of discourse as large corporations are continually linked to the exploitation of workforces as a direct product of capitalist globalizing processes.

[8] *Eco-Challenge* rules mandate that teams must be mixed gender, touting women's involvement as valuable to team – and competitive - success. However, in practice, teams are almost always made up of three men and one woman. Women are more often treated in AR practice as 'mandatory equipment' than as equally valuable teammates, thus naturalizing masculine domination in AR (Kay and Laberge, 2001).

[9] Although this is a management term, it is used similarly to the term 'hegemony' as described in cultural studies, referring to the whole range of processes through which dominant social groups extend their influence in such a way as to continually refashion their ways of life and institutionalized modes of practice and belief in order to win consent for the system and structure of social relations which sustain their dominant position (Gruneau, 1988: 29)

[10] For a critical look at media intrusion in DCEC, see Kay, 2000, B6-7.

[11] *Eco-Challenge* takes place in exotic, isolated areas and is thus prohibitive to on-sight spectatorship. The sale of all media rights to Discovery Channel to produce a yearly four-part series for cable viewers has made *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* the quintessential 'made-for-TV sport'.

[12] A business feature in *The Gazette* (Jay Bryan, 1999. "It Pays to be Ethical, Researchers Say". Montreal: May 30.) claims the shift in how organizations view business ethics is marked by a renewed effort to develop ethics codes: "Such companies are called *eudaimonistic*, following the ancient Greek philosophy that one should act virtuously not in the hope of monetary reward, but rather because virtuous behavior is its own reward." High ethical standards as a way of life, not just a marketing slogan, is understood to increase organizational cohesion, employee motivation and financial performance. The latest manifestation of this trend in business is the rising interest in "workplace spirituality" or "corporate karma" (Ron Csillag, 1999. "To All Staff: Let us now pray". *National Post*. Montreal: June 6).

[13] One could argue that a result of recent terrorist attacks on the United States, Sept. 11, 2001 might be the reduction of the moral ambiguity that has marked Late Capitalism – a reaffirmed belief in moral purpose and patriotic cause that will ultimately impact all cultural practices including sport.

CHAPTER 4

Gender Dynamics in the Field of Adventure Racing: Misrecognition and the Legitimation of Power

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Gender Dynamics in the Field of Adventure Racing:
Misrecognition and the Legitimation of Power

Abstract

Adventure racing ("AR") discourse simultaneously vaunts the physical toughness required for participation in the sport while privileging the value of (female-naturalized) *teaming* over (male-naturalized) *physical toughness* as the measure of AR achievement. A further claim of AR discourse affirms gender plurality and women's specificity as key values. Women's sought-after inclusion in what is described as a 'tough' sport serves, then, in AR discourse, to affirm women's capacity for physical toughness while simultaneously suggesting that women's specificity – or "teaming expertise" is valued over male-associated physical strength. Moreover, as risk-taking is associated with physical toughness and risk-management with teaming, discourse suggests women in AR are more highly valued through their association with managing risk. AR thus appears to subvert and transform the gender regime in sport. However, this study of participants in the 1999 *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* uses Bourdieu's notions of capital and symbolic power as a framework to explore the dissonance between participant discourse and practice as the legitimating process of masculine domination in sport.

Gender Dynamics in the Field of Adventure Racing: Misrecognition and the Legitimation of Power

The sport of adventure racing (henceforth in the text and commonly referred to as "AR") by its very character resists strict definition but can nonetheless be described, in its most undisputed formulation, as a non-stop, self-sufficient, multi-day, multi-discipline, mixed-gender team endurance competition that takes place in the wilderness over a designated but unmarked course. It is an illustration of trends in 'new' sport culture[1] described in terms of 'lifestyles', whereby the personal is valued over the institutional and the natural over the artificial. Accordingly, AR combines sports such as trekking, climbing, mountain-biking, paddling, and horseback riding, practiced in a remote natural environment, into a competitive and paradoxically collective journey of 'self-development'.

Though the term 'adventure racing' has been applied to the beginner's urban sprint-distance multi-sport race as well as the exclusive, elite and geographically remote expedition epic, the latter holds the greatest prestige. "Expedition Racing," as multi-day (usually 5-10 day) AR epics are often called, requires athletes to master multiple outdoor skills, endure sleep-deprivation, weight loss, illness, injury, extreme weather, and harsh terrain. It is necessary for athletes to manage and transport days' worth of food, water and equipment and to progress continuously through unfamiliar isolated areas with minimal rest and/or sleep.

However, despite the evident physical 'toughness' such an athletic and competitive test demands of its participants, the general discourse of AR – and specifically that of *Eco-Challenge* – touts *teaming* as one of the sport's key tenets and as

AR's measure of achievement. Mark Burnett, founder of *Eco-Challenge*, explains the race's philosophy:

> That philosophy (...) has always been the same. (...) It's so hard and it's so based around interpersonal team relationships. If they argue, (and have) conflicts, their energy loss is so much greater than just racing alone. (...) It's not like other sports where you can muscle your way through. (...) It's about working well as a team. Of course the race itself is physically grueling. I've heard it described as the most difficult physical and mental human test on the planet. But the best teams – even the ones you think are just these incredible jocks, they know that teamwork is the key. (...) It's like, you can go out and find a world champion triathlete (...) or Navy Seal, but if he can't work well in a team, you're dead before you start. (Mark Burnett)

As this quotation demonstrates, AR discourse simultaneously vaunts the physical toughness required to participate in the sport while privileging the value of teaming as the norm of AR success. Unlike other sports associated with (male-biased) physical toughness, then, AR discourse constructs a site of opportunity for egalitarian sport.

AR discourse further affirms gender plurality and women's specific teaming "expertise" as key values, the widely implemented 'gender rule,' or that which requires teams to be co-ed, purporting to demonstrate this fact:

> The co-ed idea is good. (...) I think girls in general are better at working in teams. (...) Some of the girls are really strong, but I think it is their teamwork that is their biggest strength. And, in fact, teamwork is the most

important thing in this kind of race. I think [only female team member] is the star on our team. (M, 44, Cat 2)

Therefore, AR discourse, which affirms women's capacity for physical toughness while simultaneously suggesting that women's (teaming) specificity is valued over male-associated physical strength, also appears to subvert the gender regime in sport (Connell, 1987; Messner and Sabo, 1990; Laberge and Albert, 2000).

Moreover, risk-taking is considered to be one of the key demonstrations of physical toughness in AR, a quality most often attributed to men. However, AR discourse privileges risk-management, a quality more often attributed to women as a demonstration of their teaming skill. Therefore, by privileging teaming over physical toughness, women's specificity over men's, and risk-management over risk-taking, AR appears, *at the level of discourse*, to constitute a site of egalitarian – if not female biased – sport.

Indeed, Susan Birrell and Nancy Theberge (1994: 361-376) have discussed sport as an important site for fighting gender oppression and contesting gender relations, suggesting that sport opportunities outside the mainstream of institutionalized sport "hold greater promise for the realization of alternative and resistant sport forms." AR discourse, then, suggests the sport might act as a "springboard for the transformation of gender relations by dislodging the gender hierarchy that sport helps preserve." Accordingly, by "compromising the sanctity of sport as a male preserve and a site for the celebration of male physical superiority and difference," AR appears to serve as a site for the construction of alternative visions of gender relations.

However, at the level of practice, the discourse does not ring true. Teams are made up almost entirely of three men and one woman in compliance with the mixed

gender team requirement but not in line with the discourse that would value women more. Further, though often regarded as 'mandatory equipment', their specificity, prudence and teaming skill apparently valued far less in practice than discourse would suggest, participants still uphold the contradictory discourse that would purport an egalitarian terrain. How, then, can one account for the dissonance 'gap' that exists between discourse and practice in AR? Moreover, how can one account for the 'dual' participation in a discourse and practice that contradict?

Pierre Bourdieu's conception of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991) is a useful heuristical tool to explore AR as a social process and symbolic system – constructed simultaneously by discourse and practice – that legitimates masculine domination not *despite* but *because* of the dissonance gap that is produced. Further, Bourdieu's concepts of field and its properties (Bourdieu, 1993b) can contribute to an understanding of how women's participation in the struggle for the accumulation of capital contributes to their own subordination.

In light of this chapter's purpose, we begin with a summary of Pierre Bourdieu's notions of symbolic power, field and strategy. We then examine AR discourse (the collective understanding of the sport's 'legitimate' form) and practice (personal reflections on participation based on experience) drawing on these concepts. We suggest that the naturalization of women's difference/weakness and the privileging of physical toughness as the dominant capital in the field serve to legitimate masculine domination in AR. Lastly, we examine women's struggles for the accumulation of capital – made evident through women's various self-interested strategies – demonstrating women's relative complicity in their own domination. Through an analysis of AR's

discourse/practice 'gap' and its significance to masculine domination, we aim at making an analytical contribution to a larger project of exploration into the symbolic system of sport supply as well as into the gendered strategies that impact the evolution of new sport culture and other lifestyle sports.

Theoretical framework

In line with Bourdieu's social theory of practice (1984) and his analysis of sport practice (1993a), our study considers AR as a site of *cultural* practice manifesting symbolic value determined through social relations. AR practice is thus understood to constitute a *symbolic system of social classification*, serving as an instrument of domination, legitimating social ranking by encouraging, as Bourdieu explains, the dominated to accept the existing hierarchies in the social field.

Symbolic power and masculine domination

For Bourdieu, the exercise of power always requires some form of justification or legitimation, which acts as a "*misrecognition*" of its fundamentally arbitrary character. Taken-for-granted assumptions, practices and symbolic systems, then, serving as instruments of misrecognition, play a critical role in the constitution and maintenance of power relations. According to Bourdieu, symbolic systems exercise power "only through the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it." (Bourdieu, 1991: 164) The misrecognition of arbitrariness, therefore, legitimates the dominant status of certain practices as well as the correlative dominated status of others, contributing to the reproduction of the social order in which they are embedded. Accordingly, we suggest that *the misrecognition of the arbitrariness*

of AR's 'legitimate' form – that privileges male-associated practice over female-associated practice – serves as a justification of the symbolic power that maintains and reproduces masculine domination in sport.

Moreover, Bourdieu closely links symbolic power to the notion of symbolic violence, defined as the capacity to impose the means for comprehending and adapting the social world by representing forms of power in disguised, taken-for-granted forms. Via the exercise of symbolic violence, then, the dominated are inclined to accept as legitimate their own condition of domination (Bourdieu, 1998b).

Bourdieu (1998c) specifically conceives of male domination as the prime example of paradoxical submission:

> The biological appearances and the way real effects which have been produced, in people's bodies and in their brains, by a long collective labor of socialization of the biological and biologisation of the social combine to overturn the relationship between causes and effects, and end by making them appear to be a naturalized social construction ("genders" and sexed habitus) as the grounding in nature of the arbitrary division which is the basis both of reality and of the representation of reality. (Bourdieu, 1998c)

Distinctions made between male and female, then, are more social constructions than biological facts, the qualities attributed to women's 'nature' corresponding trait for trait to the social domination of the male gender. Further, for Bourdieu, women, like men, participate in masculine domination and help to construct the divisions that dominate them. Women achieve a dominated status – not through calculated choice – but through

adoption of the categories of the dominants, reflecting on their condition with the ideas, judgements and perceptions that stem from the domination itself. Accordingly, in AR, it is the *naturalization of difference that serves to mask the arbitrariness of power by legitimating it in collective consciousness.*

Field and capital

Bourdieu's notion of field can be defined as a social arena – simultaneously a space of conflict and competition – within which struggles take place for the accumulation of different forms of symbolic capital (physical, social, cultural, economic, etc.) valued in it, i.e. as a source of prestige, distinction, power, influence, etc. (Bourdieu, 1993b: 72-77; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 7). Social agents' struggles take place not only over particular forms of capital effective in the field, but also over the very definition of which form of capital is most valued. In this sense, fields are arenas of struggle for 'legitimation' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 84), or recognition of the legitimacy of the power associated with a specific form of capital. The symbolic capital which is dominant in a given field is, accordingly, that which is most efficacious, its legitimacy and value tacitly agreed upon and reified by participants 'playing the game' (Harker et al, 1990: 7, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 98).

To explain internal field dynamics, Bourdieu identifies different strategies deployed by social agents striving to maintain or improve their current position in a field (1993b). According to Bourdieu, although these strategies are interest-driven, they are not the result of conscious choice or rational calculation. They are, rather, generated by what Bourdieu calls a "practical sense" or a "feel for the game" – the practical dimension of action whereby social agents respond to the opportunities and constraints of a given

circumstance according to their position, and thus power, in a field (Bourdieu, 1990). Bourdieu recognizes three main strategies at work in a field: Conservation strategies tend to be pursued by those who hold dominant positions and enjoy prestige in the field. Succession strategies are attempts to gain access to dominant positions in a field. And subversion strategies are pursued by those who expect to gain little in the struggle for the accumulation of the dominant symbolic capital and who are, in fact, "condemned" to challenge the legitimacy of the dominant capital in order to improve their position in the field. Accordingly, we use these conceptualizations of 'field' and 'capital' to understand the relative efficacy of *physical toughness* and *teaming* capitals in the field of AR, as well as women's position-taking strategies in relation to them.

Research methods

For the study, we chose to rely on multiple modes of data generation to help assess the "validity of inferences between indicators and concepts" (Hammerseley and Atkinson, 1995: 231) - a type of methodology used extensively by Bourdieu that he describes as 'discursive montage' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 66). We became equally attached to a process of 'analytical induction', the inter-play between the data collection and revision of the research questions (Bryman and Burgess, 1994: 4) with the intention of building an iterative and self-corrective design (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 92)

Qualitative analysis of the AR field is based on 37 interviews with AR participants – 14 women and 23 men – 30 of which took place on site in Patagonia, Argentina in December of 1999 over three weeks of an *Eco-Challenge* competition. Respondents were classified according to ability, experience and past performance: Category 1 = elite caliber; category 2 = above average caliber; and category 3 = novice or

average caliber. Seven of the interviews were done off-site previous to the competition. After the initial analysis, ten of the respondents were contacted for follow-up interviews. All the interviews were semi-structured and tape-recorded, lasting an average of 90 minutes.

Specific themes were broached in each interview: perceptions and judgements regarding various AR practices; prestige as it is linked to specific events; the impact of media on personal AR experience; the impact of corporate sponsorship on personal AR experience; the impact of the 'gender' rule on personal AR experience; the importance of AR as a 'training ground for real life'; and AR as a lifestyle activity.

Though respondents were deliberately guided toward the predetermined themes, spontaneous detours were encouraged with the aim of eliciting agents' particular knowledge of the field. As Bourdieu explains:

> The notion of field reminds us that the true object of social science is not the individual. It is the field, which is primary and must be the focus of the research operations. Individuals exist as agents who are socially constituted as active and acting in the field under consideration by the fact that they possess the necessary properties to be effective, to produce effects, in this field. And it is knowledge of the field itself in which they evolve that allows us best to grasp the roots of their singularity, their point of view or position (in a field) from which their particular vision of the world (and of the field itself) is constructed (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 107).

Though we consider this study to be predominantly of a qualitative design, the

Eco-Challenge communications department supplied some quantitative data, statistics and competitor information that rounded out our knowledge of participants in AR. We also relied on a media analysis of *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* broadcasts from 1996-1999. This proved invaluable to identifying discourse, as interview respondents often recited the script from previous years' broadcasts in their comments about AR values and anticipated rewards.

Finally, much of the research took place through participant observation. Kay trained for and competed – as the only female member of a four-person team – in a 36-hour *Raid the North* adventure race in Quebec, Canada in September of 1999. This experience not only helped her relate better to athletes' perceptions and judgements, but also permitted a privileged and welcomed entry into the AR community. She was able to go beyond conducting formal interviews, benefiting from a more relaxed, unstructured exchange. Kay also conducted a three-week field observation in Patagonia as a journalist/feature writer for the *National Post*. In this role she was given complete access to competitors, the course and race organization, including media production facilities and crew – access that would have been denied to her had she gone in any other capacity such as racer, volunteer or spectator. Data collection consisted of diligent note taking, photos and informal discussions with organizers, producers, participants and volunteers.

Our goal was to maintain an integrated approach that follows in the ethnographic tradition, which rejects positivist views of scientific research. We tried to emphasize methodological reflexivity and to recognize, as researchers, our part in the social world being studied (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 217-253). Accordingly, while efforts were made not to overstep ethical boundaries, participant observation data was not only

justified in this research, it was central to its validity.

Results

> ***– A forest trail made slick from rain. Elina Maki-Rautila falls hard off her mountain bike. Petri Forseman, Jukka Pinola and Mika Hirvinen, her three teammates on Team Nokia, stop and briefly check her condition. Winded by the shock, the young Finnish woman wipes away a tear and quickly moves on. In this brief expression of distress just as quickly overcome, the future adventure racing world champion, after 460km of trekking, canyoneering, mountain biking, rafting and glacial traverse, from September 3 – 7 in the Suiss Alps between Saint-Moritz and Zermatt, perhaps embodies the singular conduct of women in the sport (our translation. Le Monde, 2001).***

In this section, we present the assumptions most frequently embedded in the *Eco-Challenge* discourse, weighing them against descriptions, perceptions and judgements of participants' practice, highlighting the existent discourse/practice gap. We suggest that, in the case of AR and its discourse, contradictory practices serve to reproduce the categories of the dominant.

Naturalizing women's weakness through the 'recognition'[2] of men's strength

The participation of women is treated in AR discourse as a demonstration of a capacity for physical toughness equal to that of men:

> You have to be strong. (…) A 6'4 guy has no more chance than I do to finish. (F, 29, Cat 2)
>
> A female has to be strong to be on that team. If you're going to be a female competing at this level, you have to be as strong as the guys are. (F, 40, Cat 3)

However, in practice, women are clearly perceived as the physically weaker sex. They are considered to be less willing to take risks (or, according to the more common

politically correct euphemism, to be more "prudent"), less competitive ("less egotistical") and more prone to breakdown or injury ("more fragile"). Though the gender rule implies men's inclusion is mandated along with women's, for example, only women are referred to as "mandatory equipment:"

> Women are sometimes considered as mandatory equipment. It is true. It's not a big spread joke but it's known. I didn't say it. I heard it. I found it funny. (M, 26, Cat 2)
>
> We all had to get down beside her and warm her up. Keep in mind that we disliked her intensely and it was only because we could only finish the race if she survived. (M, 49, Cat 2)

When a woman performs well physically, it is often attributed to good team management of her weakness, rather than as woman's relative strength. While maintaining the discourse of women's capacity for physical toughness, one team referred to their female member, in practice, as the team 'barometer', and thus the weak link:

> In our case, [she] was the barometer. If she was sleepy, there was no question about it – we would sleep. And if she was not sleepy, well the guys would keep going until she wanted to stop.
>
> *Why was there no question?*
>
> Well, because she's the girl. It's just logical that the girl has to have some privileges.
>
> *Why?*
>
> It is a good question. There was just no discussion about it. (...) If she says she's exhausted, there's no question that she's exhausted. And if

she's at her limit, there's no sense in pushing her even further because the next day she would have to sleep a lot more. But actually, [she] was the one who had the best race, if you look at it. Probably because she was essentially – we agreed – the barometer. (M, 26, Cat 2)

Treated as the 'barometer', the woman is assumed to represent the team's baseline strength. Therefore, despite the claims in discourse that describe women's equal capacity for physical toughness, they are, in practice, often treated as the weak link.

Similarly, whereas men who get injured are perceived to be risk-takers or 'tough', a double standard dictates that a woman's injury is due to overcompensating for her 'natural weakness' rather than an inclination to take greater risks:

Women get injured more than guys, probably, because they push harder. Teammates push them because they may at times be the weakest link, and the women have to try to keep up. (M, 32, Cat 1)

The inclination towards management of assumed women's weakness is clearly evident in a practice of helping the female team member before she demonstrates any evidence of weakness – even if she appears to be physically stronger than a male team member does:

They tow me all the time whether I feel good or bad. It evens us out. It's like a lifeline. (F, 35, Cat 2)

We tried not to give her as much of a load in her pack. But [she] was in better shape and could carry as much load as I could. (M, 38, Cat 3)

We had to carry a lot of her gear, of course, but except for that, (...) they're just as strong. They're just as dogged. (M, 32, Cat 1)

Therefore, as it is acknowledged that carrying heavy packs is a demonstration of physical toughness, this trivializing, in discourse, of women's inability to carry as much weight as men – and men's simultaneous inclination, in practice, to take on women's loads – serves, in effect, to naturalize women's relative weakness.

Further, while exceptionally physically strong women – who, for example, carry heavy packs equal in weight to those carried by men – appear to be admired in the AR discourse, they are often criticized, suspected of cheating, their strength downplayed or attributed to men if they appear 'too strong.' While Team Rubicon was made up of three women and only one man, for instance, still their high competitive ranking was frequently attributed to the single male member:

> Rubicon's success may be attributed to a number of factors: The main one is Ian Adamson (the only male member). He is an excellent athlete, one of the best navigators racing and an excellent communicator. If he had been unable to navigate for any reason and if the navigation had been harder, then they would not have been successful. (...) Next, I have concerns regarding the use of illegal substances with the women. (...) Nevertheless, the three women are very good athletes, not the best, but good. They also had a point to prove. The whole reason the team was put together was for sponsorship and exposure. (F, 44, Cat 1)
>
> I would like to race with other women that are strong. Rubicon women intimidate me though. They look and race like men. They could beat me to a pulp! (F, 25, Cat 2)

Moreover, while Team Rubicon's strength was extolled in discourse, Rubicon

women were concurrently dubbed "Ian's Angels" – an obvious allusion to the 1970's TV drama, *Charlie's Angels*. In contrast to the label of 'mandatory equipment' the mandated woman on an otherwise male team would assume, the recurring reference depicts Adamson as the team's invaluable leader and mastermind. The women are accordingly compared to the "angels", the obeisant 'field agents' exploiting femininity – not physical toughness – to achieve team success. Women's physical ability, then, can be simultaneously lauded and disputed, naturalizing difference and masking the arbitrariness of power. This process helps explain the apparent paradox embedded in judgements and perceptions about practice:

> With a woman on the team, you might have to slow your pace or even carry more equipment so she can race lighter. It's not because she is not physically capable. Women are stronger in the long run but cannot afford to carry much equipment. (...) The gender rule is good. She can massage my feet (laugh). I think it's more challenging – women and men together. If we were only men, the teams would be stronger, that's for sure. (M, 44, Cat 3)

Therefore, though AR discourse implies women's capacity for physical toughness to be equal to that of men, the practice contradicts this claim through consistent treatment of the woman as the weak link. This simultaneous affirmation of women's strength and inescapable difference serves to naturalize women's weakness through the categories of perception and symbolic classification.

Naturalizing women's weakness through recognition of the dominant capital

As we have seen, teaming is presented in AR discourse to be the norm of competitive success and thus the dominant symbolic capital, or 'power resource' over which agents struggle to maintain or improve their position in the AR field. However, in practice, it is physical toughness that, evidently, is most valued, creating a dissonance gap that naturalizes women's difference/weakness through a collective recognition and legitimation of the 'active' dominant capital in the field.

Each year, for example, a military team has been invited to compete in the DCEC and has featured heavily in its discourse to support the tenet of teaming as the norm of success. The 1999 DCEC documentary featured the Navy Seals, focusing on the team's mounting problems, finally culminating in a disqualification and an ironic open-water rescue. The narration confirms the surprise an uninitiated viewer might experience at their failure: "Based on all our preconceptions, the Navy Seals should win this race every year." Their bad performance, however, is explained: "(...) they lack flexibility and communication skills. They don't talk when they get in trouble. They shut down." In *Eco-Challenge* discourse, military teams are held up as examples of the ultimate in physical toughness, and their failure as proof that teamwork is key: "without teamwork, even the 'world's toughest' can't muscle their way through."

Objective descriptions and competitive classifications of the teams, however, contradict claims in discourse about the primacy of teaming as the criterion for achievement. The top teams at *Eco-Challenge*, for example, are strictly made up of elite-caliber and professional athletes who expressly exploit physical toughness to achieve high ranking. Top teams are consistently those who aim to sleep the least and progress

the fastest, demonstrating the highest capacity for endurance, risk-taking, stamina and skill. Top teams are perceived by participants to "push their bodies the hardest" and to take more physical risks in the pursuit of a high competitive ranking – symbolic capital that can be later converted into economic capital in the form of sponsorship, prize money and entry fees.

Those who conform to the discourse with their practice, pursuing teaming – not physical toughness – claim to value personal and lifestyle satisfaction over victory. However, as the notion of competition is crucial to AR's social signification and as the symbolic capital of teaming is not convertible into high objective ranking and therefore economic form *in the AR field*, it is inevitably treated, in practice, as a dominated capital in AR. It is therefore not only the dissonance gap between discourse and practice that maintains the dominance of physical toughness capital in the field. It is demonstrated in the field's objective rankings as well.

Women's recognition of physical toughness as the dominant capital in the field is achieved through the 'alternate' recognition of teaming as the more important criterion of success. For example, the majority of women indicate that although the teams, which achieve high competitive ranking, occupy more powerful positions in the field, a "successful" race – *for them* – is one in which their team worked well together. Women, accordingly, demonstrate a relative privileging of teaming over physical toughness by valuing participation over competition (the 'complete, then compete' philosophy):

> At one point I said, "we have to trust each other and it would be nice if we could be friends and like each other," and he said, "we don't even know each other. We just have to be tolerant of each other." That was his vision

> of teamwork. (...) I was so disappointed by it all. I had watched the Australia coverage and Mark (Burnett, *Eco-Challenge* founder) talking incessantly about teamwork, and I was so into that. I wanted that so badly. Our team captain doesn't know what that means. And the other two guys – (...) they had never seen the (*Discovery Channel* broadcast) tapes. They never realized. (F, 33, Cat 3)

Teaming, then, is simultaneously vaunted in discourse and acknowledged in practice as a dominated capital – the accumulation of which not conveyable to the improvement of one's position in the power structure. As physical toughness has been determined through practice to be associated with both men and the dominant capital in the field, women's perception of teaming as purported means and end in AR serves to legitimate masculine domination in the field.

Naturalizing women's weakness through the recognition of specificity value

In AR discourse that touts commitment to the collective through autonomous distinction, specificity is valued among both men and women. Women are accordingly attributed specific qualities that are allegedly invaluable to team success. Accordingly, teaming – already touted as the measure of AR achievement – is associated with women's 'nature' and specific skill:

> Physically, is the woman typically as strong as the men are? Maybe not. But that's not what makes a successful adventure racer. Teamwork ability is as – if not more important than physical ability (...) and that, in a sense, is what women have always been really good at. (M, 29, Cat 1)
>
> Good teamwork is trying to make your team laugh and be happy. Cutting

a piece of salami and giving it. Little things that probably the guys don't think about because they act so tough. But I find those things very important. (...) I'm emotional. It's not like guys who are tough. (...) It's kind of a good balance. (F, 29, Cat 2)

Without women, males are really macho, and if you would have four males, you would have so many teams that would just burst because they would never sleep. There would be too much testosterone (...) and the teamwork wouldn't be there. (...) We're too macho. We push ourselves and we don't want to say to the others that we need a break. So I think it's actually a plus that there are girls. (M, 26, Cat 2)

It would seem logical, then, that as 'teaming experts', women recruited onto AR teams would be chosen not simply in compliance with the gender rule, but would be chosen as frequently as – if not more often than – men. However, in practice, teams maintain compliance with the gender rule but not the discourse, rarely having more than one woman on a team.

What becomes clear through the analysis of the discourse/practice gap regarding women's specificity, then, is that recognition of women's value as *teaming* 'experts' masks the arbitrariness of power in the field. However, what is also revealed through the analysis is that the teaming skill attributed to women takes on a specific (inferior) 'women's form.' 'Women's teaming' is considered more important as a serviceable factor in the management of her 'natural weakness' than it is as implied in the discourse – as a successful criterion in itself:

If the woman is ever the weak link on the team, it's not because of the

> physical. It's the attitude that she is unwilling to admit that she needs help. She should say, "I am unable to maintain this pace." Do your best, is all we ask. It's how you deal with things that matters. (...) Just being honest about if she's having trouble or whatever can be a really big contribution to the team. (M, 29, Cat 2)

Other traits that appear to be specific to women's teaming ability, are 'emotion', 'prudence' – or risk management – and 'maternal instinct' – traits that expose by corollary a lack of (male) reason, boldness or ego. Although their 'natural' women's qualities are often described as a 'necessary' and 'supportive' counterbalance to typical 'aggressive' male behavior, it is treated in practice, simply, as more weak.

For example, as risk management or 'calculated' risk-taking are seen as effective and necessary to success whereas risk-taking without foresight is considered irresponsible, women who take fewer risks are described positively in discourse as "more responsible", "prudent" or "more safe."

> Women are definitely more responsible (...) Those guys were fooling around in the kayaks, and I was getting really pissed off. It's fine that they wanted to have fun, but they were pretending to tip, and all our stuff was tied down so if they had really tipped, it would have been a major ordeal. I think they weren't thinking about 'what if'. (F, 33, Cat 2)

It is clear, however, that this behavior translates more often to scenarios where 'prudence' is both associated primarily with women and understood as a detriment to success:

> [She] just wouldn't follow us on the bike because she was scared. We

would have made that section in an hour if she wasn't so scared of falling. But then all the teams had at least one woman and were probably in the same situation. (M, 37, Cat 2)

Further, the discourse of woman's specificity implies that motherhood builds physical and mental strength in women and is therefore an asset to the team. One of the main 'stories' featured in the 1999 *Eco-Challenge* broadcast, for example, concerned the return of a new mother to the sport of AR:

> I am back doing AR after giving birth eight and a half months ago. Motherhood has definitely prepared me for this race. Sorry men can't do it. In terms of endurance, sleep-deprivation, balancing time, having a sense of humor, and letting things go.

However, in practice, motherhood was not considered to be an asset. Rather, it was assumed to deter women from taking requisite physical risks:

> Some athletes take bigger risks than others. (...) I don't think a mother of four would take a huge risk or anything (...) but sometimes you need to push really hard (...) to stay up at the front. (F, 29, Cat 2)

It was also assumed that, in practice, mothers might be distracted with concerns of children left at home. While 'fatherhood' is relatively non-existent in AR discourse, the responsibility of 'motherhood' appears as an ongoing theme:

> We're married and we have kids. I don't know. (...) I'm always asked things like 'as a mother, how do you feel about leaving your kids and going into this sort of race?' Or, 'if a serious accident happened to you, how do you handle that? (...)When there was that big storm, and we were

> all safe in the media tents, (...) I really wanted to call my kids to let them know we were safe and warm and not out in danger. He just couldn't wait until the storm ended so we could continue. Our minds were on different things. (F, 40, Cat 3)

Women's 'natural' weakness, then, is legitimated in practice through associations with motherhood and maternity while their specificity as 'naturally' emotional, prudent and maternal is simultaneously touted in discourse both as teaming skill and as a criterion for team success.

Lastly, the gender rule itself is described in the discourse to be a positive demonstration of women's specific value to AR practice:

> *Eco*'s values were originally that gender differences do not limit performance. (F, 44, Cat 1)

However, in practice, participants understand the rule to act less as a demonstration of collective "*Eco*" values than as a necessity to ensure female participation, which would otherwise not be the norm:

> The gender rule is great because otherwise it's sexist not to have women there. You can't just exclude women. (F, 29, Cat 2)
>
> Without the gender rule, I think we would have made the mistake of choosing an all-male team. (M, 26, Cat 2)
>
> The mixed gender rule is good for AR. It *forces* men and women to work together. Also the rule is necessary to maintain strong female involvement, otherwise, I feel that most teams would comprise only men. This would restrict the opportunity of women to race and to be seen

> racing which not only encourages other women to race (and/or extend themselves in other areas) but also provides important role models for women and girls around the world. (F, 33, Cat 1) (italics ours)

Therefore, while the gender rule is described in discourse as an *attestation* to women's value, it is treated, in practice, as an equity mandate, naturalizing women's weakness and legitimating masculine domination in the field of AR.

Naturalizing women's weakness through recognition of 'dramatic appeal'

The media, like participants, can be seen to engage in a contradictory practical relationship to AR discourse. While the 1999 *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* clearly highlights women's weakness in the practice of production, recognizing their relatively high dramatic appeal, media discourse advances the claim of reality TV, purporting to document real life. Participant discourse, however, appears, in this instance, to contrast from that of the media, recognizing the manufactured character of 'the show', distinguishing it from the 'reality' of 'the race'. However, while participants' non-complicity in the media-bias is argued on the basis of this detachment, participants share with the media the recognition of women's dramatic appeal to production based on their relative weakness. The recognition of women's 'dramatic' value to media strategy, therefore, serves to naturalize women's weakness and legitimate masculine domination in the field.

A content analysis of the 1999 *Discovery Channel* broadcast, accordingly, reveals that *all* stories center on women and, with the exception of Team Rubicon racers, all women are treated as the weak link. As well, *all* the injuries that are highlighted are those

of women and are treated as either threatening or destroying team achievement. Early on in the broadcast, for example, the viewer is introduced to Team Vail:

> We have an extremely strong team. Mike is the strongest person on the team. We try to be like Mike. André is a freak of nature. He is 48 years old and he is faster than most twenty-year-olds. Ellen just has this sparkling attitude. Never hear a bad word out of her mouth. Everything is positive that comes from her.

The visual accompanying these remarks is of Billy Mattison who, the viewer is told, is the strongest paddler on the team, propelling a two person kayak from the rear while Ellen sits motionless in the front, holding a makeshift kite. Mattison smiles for the camera and says, "just giving Ellen a rest." Ellen is portrayed as the physically weaker member of the team whose contribution is emotional support.

Next, the viewer meets Team Aussie, another elite team, and sees that Jane Hall is carrying paddles while the men team up to portage both kayaks one at a time. The voice over explains that "carrying fully loaded kayaks tests teamwork as well as strength." Hall, shivering as she watches her male teammates struggle with the kayaks, exclaims, "I'm starting to wonder what I'm doing here. Gosh, I hate the cold." Hall, like Ellen, is portrayed as the weakest of the four. Teamwork, in this case, is evidently managing Hall's weakness for team success.

After podium contender Team Rubicon's feat is introduced: "bucking *Eco-Challenge* tradition", their main rival, Team Greenpeace appears on screen. John Howard, team captain, describes the team dynamic: "As a team, we're fairly spread out in

how we think. Andrea is good at feeding me when I'm hungry. Keith is good at carrying heavy loads. Neil is a good navigator. We're trying to bring out the best in everyone."

Team MapInfo is also considered a favorite, the viewer learns, as female team member Kristina Strode-Penny is shown helplessly getting thrown from her bucking horse. Her injury takes the team out of second place, and later out of the race: "PC4 (passport control 4) to HQ (headquarters): Team 33 looks like their female can't continue (...) This is Trish confirming a DQ (disqualified) status for team 33." Strode-Penny is captured by cameras crouched near a medical tent, crying, and looking at her swollen ankle while her teammates, still fully dressed and carrying packs, look on.

Tier One is made up of three males from an all-male Airforce pararescue unit and Carry Lewis, a female airforce survival and escape instructor. Lewis is shown in an unlikely role for a woman as the team navigator. However, within seconds of taking out her map, Lewis exclaims to her male teammate: "you can navigate if you want to. I'm pretty sick of it."

Lewis's difficulties navigating are contrasted with Team Halti's effortlessness at the task. Dominic Arduin, the female member on the team boasts, "we don't have any problems in navigation. The guys are world champions. It's not a problem." Although the team makes a navigational error that costs them several hours, the media focus is on Arduin's battle with bone cancer and chronic pain. The team is interviewed about their strategies to manage: "if the pain is too much, we carry her. If we collapse, it's part of the game." Subsequent clips of Team Halti show Arduin in tears, struggling. It is made clear that Arduin is the weak link and 'managing' her weakness is the team's strategy for success.

A male member of Team Subaru Outback is then shown resting after being hit by stomach flu. The cameras follow him as he moves slowly, obviously ill. His teammate, however, is not concerned: "He'll recover on the way. Once he gets his energy back then he'll probably be towing us!" Soon after, Subaru Outback is shown resting in a field. The camera's focus this time is on Laura Walsh. Mark Burnett, arriving by helicopter, greets the team and assesses the severity of illness on the team. Burnett shows little concern over Lawrence Foster's virus-induced dehydration and weakness, but attends to Laura who is crying and holding her stomach:

> *Burnett*: I need to know what's going on. Is it a stomachache? (...)
>
> *Walsh* (crying): It's a cyst. (...) It's on my ovary and it's the size of a four-month pregnancy.
>
> *Burnett*: Well then, you're out. (Walsh bursts into more tears). Are you crazy? Why would you do that? What were you thinking? (...) I cannot possibly in good conscience allow you to go on.

As Walsh climbs into the helicopter, the voiceover reminds viewers that "Laura Walsh's cyst has wrecked her team's hopes." This segment demonstrates not only that the female member proved the weakest, but also highlights her role as a potential mother and the irresponsibility her risk-taking thus implies.

Tier One is shown again, lost, being led by rescuers out of the bush. "Carrie Lewis," the voiceover remarks, "is the team navigator." Lewis continues: "Yeah, it's a confusing area. It's a confusing map..." The only highlighted female navigator in the 1999 *Eco-Challenge* costs the team a disqualification.

Finally, after South Africa's Lindy Bradshaw almost quits the race and disqualifies her team due to her fear of heights and her unwillingness to embark on an uncomplicated rappel, there is another injury that costs a team their race; The female member of Team Holland has been sent tumbling down 600 feet of rock and ice by a gust of wind. After the medic is seen fixing her dislocated elbow, he remarks, "her injuries will heal in a few months. The pain of disqualification will last longer."

The *Discovery Channel* producers, therefore, clearly maintain a male-dominated bias that naturalizes men's strength and women's weakness. However, participants clearly recognize the manufactured character of the TV product, arguing detachment from the process of production and thus from the male-bias:

> I had the impression that certain teams had been invited to make money for *Discovery* (...) so he (Burnett) could sell the *Discovery* package to their country. When I understood that, I said: 'I'll do it for fun, for myself and enjoy it, and they can do their show.' (Male, 38, Cat 1)
>
> For sponsorship, it's appealing to have both women and men in the same team because it attracts TV (...) but the TV people have their own *Eco-Challenge* going on. (...) We do the race while they worry about making a big show. (...) It doesn't help us in the race when the girl starts to cry, even if the *Discovery* people get off on it. (M, 26, Cat 2)
>
> The cameras always focus on women getting injured. It's expected, but we ignore it. (F, 29, Cat 2)

Even while participants claim detachment from the production process, however, they actively recognize women's dramatic appeal to the media based on 'natural'

weakness:

> It's Mark Burnett's strategy. Women and men don't react the same way. Men get frustrated and they hit each other. Women tend to cry. It sells more. (M, 38, Cat 3)
>
> Of course it's more interesting for TV to see people having a hard time and crying and falling down. If a man is saying 'this is easy' and a woman is saying 'this is the hardest thing I've ever done', of course they (the media) will focus on the woman. It's sometimes men who cry or can't finish – that I've seen a lot. But I think it's always easier to find that the woman doing that, and it's good on TV. (M, 33, Cat 3)

While participants' 'media savvy' and self-reflexive discourse is posited as a challenge to suggestions of their complicity, then, validation of media's male-biased strategy serves to naturalize women's weakness. Moreover, it serves to highlight media attention as a sought-after form of symbolic capital for which participants vie to improve their position in the field:

> We'd tease [her] and try to make her cry because we noticed that all the girls... (...) would cry and they'd get all the attention. So we wanted to get [her] to cry a bit (laughs.) (M, 26, Cat 2)

Therefore, while participants' apperception of media exploitation and marketing strategy is recognized as non-complicity in the masculine domination process, it is, in effect, the recognition of women's value to media drama – and thus recognition of their 'natural' weakness – that acts along with the DCEC documentary to naturalize women's difference/weakness and to legitimate masculine domination in the field of AR.

'Playing the Field': Women's strategies and struggles in the field of AR

The discourse/practice 'gap' highlights competing symbolic capitals in the field of AR that are assigned a specific less valuable women's form, thus defining the field's specific 'gendered' capitals. Physical toughness emerges as the form of capital that produces the most relevant differences among female athletes but which is valued most highly in men. Teaming capital, though touted among both genders as AR's norm of success, similarly takes on a less valuable form when accumulated by women (associated with emotional support, good following skills and the ability to arbitrate dissention rather than with leadership, navigation and strength). Accordingly, AR practice privileges (male-naturalized) risk-taking is over (female-naturalized) risk-management. Media attention also emerges as an important gendered capital, associating women with drama – in contrast to men's more customary link to performance – and thus with a less valuable form. And lastly, competitive ranking appears to take on a less powerful form when accumulated by women, associated with 'natural' weakness and the lack of competitive instinct when ranking is low, and explained by the leadership, navigation and physical toughness of male team members when it is high.

Women participating in AR, however, do not constitute a homogeneous group in the field, either with regard to ways of "playing the game" or to position taking in relation to gendered forms of capital. Drawing from Bourdieu's conceptualization of strategies that underpin dynamics in a field, our current discussion explores the different 'practical logics' fueling women's practice. We thereby demonstrate how women's strategies are linked to their positions in the hierarchy of AR attested ranking – classified, for the purpose of our analysis, into 3 categories that represent caliber of ability and

experience: elite (Cat 1), above average (Cat 2) and average/novice (Cat 3). As described earlier, these strategies are not the result of rational calculation. They are, rather, generated by what Bourdieu calls a "practical sense" – the practical dimension of action whereby social agents respond to the opportunities and constraints of a given circumstance according to their position, and thus power, in a field.

Despite the evidence that the majority of women in AR recognize teaming as the most frequently pursued 'women's' capital in the field, a very small minority of Cat 1 women (5% of women participants), in contrast, does not share in this recognition. It is, rather, in the interest of Cat 1 women to pursue, like men, physical toughness capital in order to maintain and/or improve their position in the field. Accordingly, Cat 1 women censor emotion, carry heavy loads, take risks and push their bodies to capacity. Cat 1 women's strategy, aiming to minimize any appearance of weakness, can be considered as a *conservation* strategy of their dominant position among women. Accordingly, as an extraordinarily 'tough' minority, they hold a value of 'rarity' (Bourdieu, 1984: 226-250) in the field, a value preserved by demonstrating high levels of physical toughness and by encouraging the existent minority female ratio in the sport.

As women generally do not assemble their own teams and depend on a previously formed team of men to select them as '*the* woman', the more physical toughness capital a Cat 1 woman has, the more likely it is that she will be recruited onto a top-performing team. She can then earn sought-after profit in the form of sponsorship, prestige and 'star' status in the AR community as well as gaining more racing opportunities. Physical toughness capital – and thus rarity value – also gives Cat 1 women leverage, allowing them to act as 'free agents' and even to command payment or, at minimum, expenses for

their team membership. Most Cat 1 women are able to sustain AR as an all-consuming lifestyle, racing with several different high-caliber teams throughout the year, earning prize money, sponsorship and 'signing bonuses'. The accumulation of physical toughness capital then leads to profit in the forms of symbolic and economic capital.

However, as Cat 1 women acknowledge that without the gender rule, Cat 1 men would most often select an all-male team, they accept characterization as 'mandatory equipment'. Accordingly, they acknowledge that Cat 1 men most often seek only to fulfill the mandated minimum on a team, thus securing Cat 1 women's position as a (dominated) minority in the field. The accumulation of rarity value, however, ensures a better position in relation to the field's dominant capital. Therefore, though appearing subversive in the AR field through the pursuit and accumulation of male-dominated capital, Cat 1 women legitimate 'men's capital' as that which is dominant, thus naturalizing women's weakness in the field.

In contrast to Cat 1 women's *conservation* strategy, it is in the interest of Cat 3 (81% of women participants) women to pursue a *subversion* strategy, suggesting an intentional rupture with the "traditional physicality of sport." The strategy to pursue teaming capital appears as a subversive challenge to the legitimacy of physical toughness as the defining standard of AR. However, it is according to their 'feel for the game' that cat 3 women recognize – but do not challenge – the dominant capital in the field, expecting to gain little in the struggle for the accumulation of physical toughness, and pursuing the dominated capital instead.

Cat 3 women, accordingly, tend to accept and reinforce their weakness relative to men, downplaying their competitiveness and 'toughness', setting low expectations and

emphasizing their emotionally supportive role on the team. Although Cat 3 women emphasize inequality and physical weakness through their practice they, in complete contrast to Cat 1 women, by pursuing an 'alternate' capital, reject the label of 'mandatory equipment.' In fact, for cat 3 women, dysfunctional team dynamics will often make the race experience personally unsuccessful, regardless of competitive ranking:

> I kept my mouth shut most of the time because I just wanted to finish. I didn't care about the team because they didn't care about me. I personally wanted to finish so that I would never have to see these people again, and I was sad the whole time that it was like that because I had seen what some of the other teams were like. (...) Everyone kept congratulating me because we actually did pretty well, but that just made it worse for me (...) because I knew how it was. (F, 33, Cat 3)

The interests sought by Cat 3 women differ greatly from those sought by women in Cat 1. Unlike the 'free agent' status pursued by elite women, cat 3 women race infrequently (their lifestyles usually reflect more general outdoor pursuits and risk recreation than they do AR specifically), but usually with the same teammates, who are often husbands and/or friends. They consider emotional investment as important as their financial investment, and generally look for long term loyalty to a team. Cat 3 women who acquire teaming capital, then, achieve a protected position on their team and do not have to continually vie, like their elite counterparts, for selection onto different teams throughout the year.

> When we were looking for a replacement last year, she was the one who insisted we look for a guy. She likes the dynamics the way they are -

being the only girl. We have to respect that because dynamics are so important. (M, 32, Cat 3)

Importantly, in contrast to Cat 1 women who pursue symbolic and economic capital within the AR field, Cat 3 women seek to accumulate social profit in external fields (in the form of friendships, alliances and physical capital):

Everyone here is so amazing, and I never really feel that great about my performance in comparison to everyone else. But when I go home, everyone treats me like I did something incredible. Then I feel strong. (F, 34, Cat 3)

We were all pretty close anyway because we work together and we're friends. But after this, I know I can count on them for anything. (F, 31, Cat 3)

Cat 3 women, aiming to accumulate symbolic profit – not economic capital also take advantage of reduced pressure, recognizing a certain freedom – even power – in assumptions about their weakness:

I cry a lot and they just let me get over it. And then I'm fine. It's liberating. After I cry, everything is relative again. The guys don't let themselves. I'd hate to be a guy doing this. I'm allowed to be the weakest. They're not. (F, 35, Cat 3)

Finally, Cat 2 women (14% of women participants) often aim to acquire both forms of capital, but privilege physical toughness over teaming capital as their position in the field – based in increasing ability and experience – improves. A Cat 2 woman, for example, may value her emotional or maternal contributions to the team dynamics while simultaneously recognizing her competitive and athletic strengths. One woman with top-ten ambitions going into the 1999 *Eco-Challenge* competition illustrates Cat 2 women's

characteristic strategy of *succession* – to value both women's specificity along with their strength:

> I am different being a woman because, like, when [he] was sick, my maternal side came out. He was like a little child. He would just snuggle and I would put his hat on or rub his back. (...) But I think I was the one who had the least problems. (...) I passed over the stage of proving myself. I don't have anything more to prove. I know I can do this or that. I'm not struggling against something I can't do. (...) People don't realize the reason why they do it. We go and we have a good time. We're competitive, but we go for a good time. If we start fighting with each other, it's not worth doing it. That's our philosophy. (F, 29, Cat 2)

Therefore, Cat 2 women, in an attempt to improve their position in the field hierarchy, pursue *succession* strategies to either accumulate *physical toughness* capital or to exploit teaming capital – as the moment dictates. Further, Cat 2 women accumulate both physical toughness and teaming capital, and they, accordingly, accrue both of the resulting forms of profit. Cat 2 women most often maintain loyalty to and priority with a specific team, but accept opportunities to race with other (usually Cat 2) men looking for a "good woman" to complete their team for a specific race.

I have explained how AR's internal field dynamics are underpinned by the interest-driven strategies deployed by participants struggling to maintain or improve their current position in the field. Women from all categories, accordingly, demonstrate a "practical sense" for the field's dynamics, responding strategically, according to their position in the field hierarchy, to the opportunities and constraints of given

circumstances. However, despite the heterogeneity of the participants and strategies deployed, none of the women's position-taking or practices with regard to the competing forms of capital in the AR field can be considered as subversive or transformative to the gender regime in sport. Strategies – whether based in the pursuit of teaming or physical toughness capital – all act to legitimate masculine domination in AR.

Concluding thoughts

As I have discussed, AR discourse's emphasis on the value of gender plurality, women's specificity, risk-management and teaming as the measure of AR achievement suggests that AR might constitute a site of subversion and thus transformation of the gender regime in sport. However, through a study of participants in the 1999 *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge*, AR is presented, rather, as a symbolic system that naturalizes women's weakness and thus legitimates masculine domination. Further, it demonstrates how women's participation in the struggle for the accumulation of capital contributes to their own domination. Therefore, although the analysis suggests that women (and men), by pursuing an 'alternate' capital to that which is perceived as dominant, are subverting the arbitrariness of the field's power structure, their active meaning-making does not translate into power in the AR field.

However, while women have not yet subverted male domination in the sport of AR, our data suggests that women do accumulate – by virtue of participation in a 'tough' sport – a form of physical capital only recognizable as such in external fields, including those of other sport practices. Therefore, this accumulation of capital – and thus power – in the social structure may have an indirect impact on transformations in other fields, ultimately, perhaps, influencing gendered dynamics in AR. In other words, though our

analysis challenges the 'postmodern' inclination to emphasize and celebrate resistance, "the creative agency of individuals and the instabilities of power relations rather than their recuperative qualities" (Bordo, 1993: 294), sport remains "a political terrain characterized by internal contradiction and paradox that leave room for the play of oppositional meanings, and potentially for the organization of collective resistance and institutional change" (Messner, 1996: 229).

Further, whereas we have determined that the field of AR does not constitute a site of subversion of the male-dominated gender order, we have uncovered the struggles and strategies that underpin gender dynamics in a specific (sport) field. We have highlighted the shortcomings of research that emphasizes discourse as the basis of social reality, ignoring the material, structured relations of power that shape language and ideology (Messner, 1996:227). And we have demonstrated the impact that gender dynamics have on the definition and constitution of a field – its hierarchy of power and its struggles for valued capital. Therefore, perhaps this study's most important contribution to social science is threefold: First, it is a demonstration of the significance of gender dynamics to the evolution of new sport culture. Second, it is caution to researchers aiming to understand a social process through its discourse. Third, it is an illustration of the indispensability of a gender-focus in function with a comprehensive analysis of any other social field.

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[1] The definition of 'new' sport culture is historically relative and the object of debate. We use the term only to designate those sports which ideologically or practically provide alternatives to mainstream sports and their values (Beal, 1995 and Rinehart, 1998).

[2] "Recognition," refers to the set of fundamental, prereflexive assumptions that social agents engage by the mere fact of taking the world for granted, of accepting the world as it is, and of finding it natural because *their mind is constructed according to cognitive structures that are issued out of the very structures of the world* (Bourdieu et Wacquant, 1992, p. 167-168). 'Recognitions,' accordingly, imply the simultaneous misrecognition of the arbitrariness of classifications.

CHAPTER 5

Reality Sport:
Media Construction of Authenticity in Adventure Racing

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Reality Sport:
Media Construction of Authenticity in Adventure Racing

Abstract

This study explores the *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* (DCEC) as a simultaneous sport and media product, the success of which depends on a symbiotic relationship between the two. This study further suggests that this symbiosis is nurtured through the paradoxical use of *authenticity* – both as collective practitioner credo and discourse production tool – serving to forge a crucial and inextricable corollary link to the notion of *adventure*. Accordingly, the DCEC practitioner, as a contemporaneous DCEC viewer, significantly molds his/her perceptions and judgments of the authenticity of his/her adventure racing experience through TV discourse that constructs and is constructed by viewer/practitioners' collusion.

Reality Sport:
Media Construction of Authenticity in Adventure Racing

The sport of adventure racing (henceforth in the text and commonly referred to as "AR") by its very nature resists definition, but can nonetheless be loosely described – in its most undisputed formulation – as a non-stop, self-sufficient, multi-day, multi-discipline, mixed-gender team endurance competition that takes place in the wilderness over a designated but unmarked course. Its growing popularity has paralleled that of other 'new', 'fringe' or 'extreme' sports, which – though in earlier manifestations fueled by larger political opposition[1] - have most recently been described as sports that either ideologically or practically provide alternatives to mainstream sports and their values (Beal, 1995, Rinehart, 1998 and Loret, 1995). Practitioners of AR, like those of other 'new' sports, commonly justify their participation by touting the authenticity of experience that the sport provides. Through a study of *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* (henceforth "DCEC") discourse and practice, this article explores authenticity as a valued tenet in the field of AR

Our analysis explores the DCEC as a simultaneous sport and media product, the success of which depends on a symbiotic relationship between the two. We suggest that this symbiosis is nurtured through the paradoxical use of authenticity – both as collective practitioner credo and media discourse production tool – serving to forge a crucial and inextricable corollary link to the notion of adventure. Accordingly, the DCEC practitioner, as a contemporaneous DCEC viewer, significantly molds his/her perceptions and judgments of the authenticity of his/her AR experience through TV discourse that simultaneously constructs and relies on viewer/practitioners collusion. This study, then,

treats AR as a social process, both producer and product of culture, and thus aims to contribute to a larger project of exploration into the field of sport supply and the struggles that define new sport culture.

We begin the current study with a description of methodology followed by a brief history of AR and the context within which the DCEC evolved. We then consider the particular case of DCEC as a media/sport product constructed through the discourse of 'authenticity', highlighting the tenet as a symptomatic postmodern stake. Lastly, our analysis of DCEC examines four specific 'devices of connotation' (Lodge, 1992: 122) embedded in its discourse to expose the paradoxical use-value of authenticity in the field of AR.

Research methods

For the study, we chose to rely on multiple modes of data generation to help assess the "validity of inferences between indicators and concepts"(Hammerseley and Atkinson, 1995: 231), a type of methodology used extensively Bourdieu that he describes as 'discursive montage' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 66). We became equally attached to a process of 'analytical induction', the interplay between the data collection and revision of the research project (Bryman and Burgess, 1994: 4) with the intention of building an iterative and self-corrective design (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 92).

Our qualitative analysis of the AR field is based on 37 interviews with AR participants, 30 of which took place on site in Patagonia, Argentina in December of 1999 over three weeks of an *Eco-Challenge* competition. Seven of the interviews were done off-site previous to the competition. After the initial analysis, ten of the respondents were contacted for follow-up interviews. All the interviews were semi-structured and tape-

recorded, lasting an average of 90 minutes. Specific themes were broached in each interview. Some of them included: perceptions and judgements regarding various AR practices; prestige as it is linked to specific events; the impact of media on personal AR experience; and AR as a lifestyle activity. Though respondents were deliberately guided toward the predetermined themes, spontaneous detours were encouraged with the aim of eliciting agents' particular knowledge of the field.

While we consider this study to be predominantly of a qualitative design, the *Eco-Challenge* communications department supplied the quantitative data, statistics and competitor information that rounded out our knowledge of participants in AR. We also relied on a media analysis of *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* broadcasts from 1996-1999. This proved invaluable to identifying discourse, as interview respondents often recited the script from previous years' broadcasts in their comments about AR values and anticipated rewards.

Finally, much of the research took place through participant observation. Kay trained for and competed in a 36-hour *Raid the North* adventure race in Quebec, Canada in September of 1999. This experience not only helped her relate better to athletes' perceptions and judgements, but also permitted a privileged and welcomed entry into the AR community. She was able to go beyond conducting formal interviews, benefiting from a more relaxed unstructured exchange. Kay also conducted a three-week field observation in Patagonia as a journalist/feature writer for the *National Post*. In this role she was given complete access to competitors, the course and race organization, including media production facilities and crew – access that would have been denied had she gone in any other capacity such as racer, volunteer or spectator. Data collection

consisted of diligent note-taking, photos and informal discussions with organizers, producers, participants and volunteers.

Our goal was to maintain an integrated approach that follows in the ethnographic tradition, which rejects positivist views of scientific research. We tried to emphasize methodological reflexivity and to recognize our part, as researchers, in the social world being studied (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 217-253). Accordingly, while efforts were made not to overstep ethical boundaries, participant observation data was not only justified in this research, it was central to its validity.

AR history

The origins of AR lie in a multi-sport wilderness endurance race started in 1980 in New Zealand, known as the *Speight's Coast to Coast*. This race, still one of the most heralded races in the world, has since spawned countless other events of its type, some of which have remained committed to original non-commercial grass roots values, while many others have grown into profit-generating corporate enterprises.

Following in the latter tradition, the *Raid Gauloises* – the first mixed-gender-team, multi-sport, multi-day wilderness endurance race – was introduced in 1989, designed as a "modern equivalent of colonial adventures past" (Dugard, 1998: 2). The well-marketed expedition-length (i.e. five-day plus) *Raid*, seen by many as the ultimate human test, traveled to – and popularized AR in – Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

AR was brought to North America by *Raid* competitor and entrepreneur Mark Burnett, the creator of the *Eco-Challenge* (and later the executive producer of CBS's *Survivor*.) The first *Eco* took place in Utah in 1995 and, brandishing a new 'American flavor' (Dugard, 1998: 96), developed into one of the most popular and commercial

expedition-length races in the world. Since partnering with *Discovery Channel* in 1996 (and later *USA Network* in 2000), the DCEC has not only grown into one of the most acclaimed adventure races in the world, but also into a yearly 'documentary', sold to TV networks worldwide with sponsorship and advertising as well as racer entry fees generating millions of dollars in revenue. DCEC can be seen to have pioneered the current trend in AR where races are owned by, or exclusively licensed to, TV production companies that create and sell 'reality' programming based on a specific race.

The DCEC 'documentary' is, accordingly, heavily scripted and edited, woven through with melodramatic narration and footage of the production process itself. The formula features the 'stories' of a select group of teams, which are revisited throughout each episode to build continuity, suspense and narrative. Traditionally, the adventure narrative has focused on severe weather and landscape, injured competitors, women, team implosion and individual eccentricity, prioritizing the construction of drama over the 'play by play.' However, while the construction of narrative is made obvious, authorial direction is hidden for the sake of the action's "the way it is" feel (Cantelon and Gruneau, 1998).

Theoretical framework

DCEC in the field of sport supply

This study is connected to a broader investigation into AR supply and demand (Kay and Laberge, forthcoming) that relies notably on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'field' and 'capital' to suggest that two forms of symbolic capital – 'authenticity' and 'spectacularization' of the adventure – constitute the dominant delineating forces in the AR field. The current study is further supported by Bourdieu's notion that investigation

into a televised sports event must "bring to light the mechanisms behind this two-step social construction: first of the sports event, then of the media event" (Bourdieu, 1998: 82). Accordingly, this analysis draws on communication theory and conceptualizations of postmodern – or Late Capitalist – culture to explore the media construction of AR.

Moreover, this study explores authenticity as a power-generating resource – not only in the field of AR, but in the field of media entertainment as well – currently propelling the explosion of new-wave 'reality' shows that purport to document 'real life.' It would appear, therefore, that DCEC is a practice at the intersection of at least two convergent field struggles – in the fields of sport and TV entertainment – over a same form of symbolic capital.

DCEC in postmodernity

We also suggest that the parallel quests for authenticity in the two distinct fields of supply – each the evolutionary result of distinct histories and struggles – highlight authenticity as a symptomatic postmodern stake. Here, 'postmodern' refers to a *discourse*, an *epoch* and a *style*,[2] constituting a new world vision that embraces paradox, reconciliation and self-reflexive consumption. It is a useful reference for understanding new sport culture into which AR has emerged:

> In the past three decades, [new] sport has been infused with a marketing strategy, an ethic, a vocabulary, an attitude, and a style. It inspires personal introspection and public allure. It has been associated with co-optation by the commercial, the marginal, the counter-cultural and the postmodern. Performance is paradoxical -- imbued with individualism and collectivism, the ludic and the prosaic, aesthetics and kitsch. What emerge

> are tenets that contradict and co-exist: participation and competition, amateurism and professionalism, urban play and wilderness adventure, the 'authentic' and the constructed, the youthful and the nostalgic, the self-determined and the regulated, the resistant and the complicit. (Kay and Laberge, in press).

The paradox of authenticity

Accordingly, we discuss DCEC in light of its inherent contradictions as an emergent sport form, examining four 'devices of connotation' embedded in DCEC discourse that significantly contribute to the construction of viewer/practitioners' authentic adventure. The first, *mythification* of DCEC narrative serves to facilitate the script's appropriation into viewer/practitioner discourse. The second, *nostalgic interpretation* of adventure treats the modern-day adventure as a romanticized "faux-archaic" (Brooks, 2000) (re)constructed commodity bequeathed by the pioneers of the past to the adventurers of the present. The third, *commodification* of the personal journey permits the voyage of self-discovery to be collectively constructed and mass consumed. And finally, *naturalization* of the media-sport union reconciles, through production and consumption processes, the authentic 'race' with the authentic 'show'.

Results

> *They come from every corner of the world – a gathering of bold adventurers, daring to pit themselves against the untamed backcountry of British Columbia; Its raging rivers, its jagged peaks, its deadly glaciers. (...) They know it will be difficult, but few can even imagine how this*

adventure will push them past the limits of human endurance. For most, it will end in heartbreak. For a courageous few, it may mean their ultimate triumph. (...) We have always journeyed into the wilderness to find wisdom and strength. A journey into nature: Push yourself until the pain comes, until you feel you cannot survive and then go on. Here the ego will let go. Here you will be purified.

So begins the 1996 DCEC with narration that waxes formulaically poetic, strewn with allusions to the original inhabitants of the land and the noble exploration of past pioneers. The DCEC, as the discourse implies, is a "modern-day vision-quest" attainable by the ordinary ("policemen, doctors, even housewives and Navy Seals"), but attained only by a select few. The few are those who have come not for fame and glory but "to learn a hidden truth about themselves, a truth that may reveal itself if they can push past the limits of what they believed possible."

The DCEC is constructed through an unapologetically manufactured script, fabricating media and participant discourses alike. But, as the following quote begins to demonstrate, though DCEC practitioners, as contemporaneous viewers, fully recognize the fictional quality of the narrative, they simultaneously invoke it in the construction and reconstruction of their *Eco-Challenge* experience.

> I first heard about AR when I saw the coverage of the first *Eco* race in Utah in 1995. The one in Australia, I saw. The one in British Columbia I saw too. I always wanted to do it. (...) The show was so much soap opera but I remember being really excited by the idea of pushing limits and all that stuff. (...) After the race, I was very excited to watch my *Eco-*

Challenge experience. It inspires me to go back and do it again. Watching the camera shots, especially the ones taken from the helicopter, I understood how difficult the race was and was even more proud. (YL)

This appetite for manufactured narrative, therefore, appears incongruous with their simultaneous claims to non-complicity in its construction, and to "keeping it real":

> To have a camera aimed right at me- okay, the camera can be there but don't talk to me. I'll do my own thing and you can film it. (NP)
>
> If there's a camera there, or a helicopter, we just let it go over our heads and film us. You always know they're there, but we don't do anything different. (YL)

Indeed, the cognitive separation between "race" and "show" is frequently posited as a strategy to experience practice in a much more 'authentic' way:

> As long as you think of it as two separate things, it's really okay. The TV show is for the commercial side. But our experience is still what it is. If you let the cameras ruin it for you, you probably shouldn't be doing the bigger races. (MN)

Therefore, in the quest for authenticity, participants are paradoxically attached to discourses claiming non-complicity in – and discourses modeled on – the DCEC script. This reconciliation of apparently opposing discourses, however, is achieved through several devices of connotation, the first turning 'narrative' into 'myth.'

<u>Mythification of narrative</u>

> *(Voice-over:) Forcing their way past the barriers of human endurance. Not just to win, not merely to finish, but to uncover something deep and*

profound within themselves (...) all to discover the hidden regions of their souls that may reveal themselves once their previous physical and mental limitations have been stripped away.

(Racer testimony:) You really don't know who you are, what you're all about, what you can do, until you do something like this. (...) When you finish one of these races, it seems like nothing in the world can ever worry you again. (...) Eco-Challenge is an accelerated crash-course in all the hardest lessons in life (...) You compress a year's worth of living into eight or ten days.

This formulaic introduction to DCEC Australia is an example of 'narrative' constructed as myth. This *process* is manifested not only in the media narrative, but in respondents' incorporation of strikingly similar dialogue into descriptions and judgements about their practice that are clearly appropriated as – and/or blended with – their own:

It is important to me to find my limits of endurance, to push myself through the many barriers one experiences during the race. (JH)

Yes, this is a race. But we're not only here for the race. Just doing something like this – it's so hard. You have to push past all your mental and physical limits, and it's like you discover yourself – who you really are and what you can really do – not just what you think you can do. (KG)

By doing this, you access a part of yourself that you don't normally. You discover who you are and what you can do. You're a raw person. (IE)

> Life's very easy after AR. Nothing's too hard after this. You know what *Eco-Challenge* is? It's life crammed into 10 days. (LW)
>
> AR allows you to stretch your capabilities, go beyond what you thought you were able to do. It is the only sport I know of that gives you a new outlook on who you are. *I speak as someone who has yet to take part in an AR* (our emphasis). (LS)

A similar example of this process is the appropriation of media narrative referring to a team made up of Navy Seals, also featured in the DCEC Australia show. The team's mounting problems are 'documented' throughout the program, finally culminating in a disqualification and an ironic open-water rescue. The narration confirms the surprise an uninitiated viewer might feel at their failure: "Based on all our preconceptions, the Navy Seals should win this race every year." Possible reasons for their bad performance are suggested: "(...) they lack flexibility and communication skills. They don't talk when they get in trouble. They shut down."

In discussions about teaming, respondents accordingly held the Navy Seals up as examples of bad teamwork, drawing on DCEC narrative to argue their point:

> In these kinds of races, you have to be flexible. That's why the Navy Seals never finished. (...) They don't communicate together. They argue together, but they don't communicate. (PR)
>
> Like the Navy Seals – they were too military, too inflexible. If you don't adapt and communicate, your team will just shut down. (KB)

On a first level, then, participants' paradoxical relationship to media is illustrated by the appropriation of a collective and manufactured 'script' into descriptions of and

reflections on personal experience. Although AR is no different from other sports in the sense that media narrative constructs and penetrates its discourse, AR participants' paradoxical relationship to media narrative is made more significant in light of the sport's 'natural' adventure ethos:

> AR takes away the phoniness of sport – it's more natural. You are doing a sport which is just you working with the environment and that sort of stuff. (...) You are stripped of all your coping mechanisms. You're climbing mountains and swimming in rivers. You're cold and hungry and exhausted. It's all about being comfortable with nature. It's really a different kind of thing. (LS)

The media's presence is thus reconcilable not only with discourses of detachment from the media project but with those that privilege the natural over the manufactured. This appears to be accomplished through a process that (re)creates for the participant an authentic adventure based on myth. As does a myth, the DCEC discourse serves as a traditional story explaining human experiences with nature. In the case of DCEC, the discourse originates in a script; the 'tradition' is manifested in formula, and the phenomenon – the *Eco-Challenge* adventure – though constructed, is constructed as 'real'. *Mythification* of the DCEC narrative, which grants even the most melodramatic script unaffected appropriation into viewer/practitioners' own discourse, then serves to explain DCEC's fabrication of practice as *natural*. For the viewer/practitioner, the *myth* of adventure is *authentic*.

Nostalgic interpretation of adventure

The second device of connotation used by DCEC to suggest the *authenticity* of AR practice is the nostalgic interpretation of adventure, or the romanticized construction of adventure as a "faux-archaic" (Brooks, 2000: 94) commodity bequeathed by the pioneers of the past to the adventurers of the present. Description of DCEC Patagonia, for example, is littered with references and historical allusions documenting this transference of authenticity: an "authentic" journey that follows the paths of gauchos, Magellan, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. DCEC British Columbia likens the competitors' journey to the local First Nation people's 'vision quest'. Similarly, the Aborigines who lived in harmony on their sacred ground since the dawn of creation supposedly inspired participants in DCEC Australia, while racers' spiritual and physical quest for self-discovery in DCEC Morocco was allegedly motivated by the "mysterious Berber people" who traveled through the devout Islamic country on their pilgrimage to Mecca. The Moroccan race itself begins with competitors on camels – treated as symbols that "echo times long past" – which at one time linked North Africa to the rest of the world and a gathering of which, it is narrated, constitutes the largest since Lawrence of Arabia.

Practitioners' discourse reveals the recuperation of nostalgic reference through the use of metaphors and justification regarding their practice:

> If people didn't take any kinds of risk, I think we wouldn't be so evolved. The first people that crossed the ocean with old boats took the risk to come explore. So, you call these people irresponsible? It's a way for us to do something important. (PR)

> I would have felt terrible going through these places, but because we were covered in mud and hadn't showered, we stunk... we were right with the people. It was almost like you would imagine in the old-days when you were an explorer hiking and you come to a village and someone invites you to sleep in their barn. And that's because you don't drive up in a big Mercedes with all your stuff and you're staying in a big hotel. You're going to stay in their barn because you probably don't have any money. (DN)
>
> It's like the early days when explorers were trying to pass through these areas and you didn't know what was in front of you and you had to deal with the circumstances. (AB)
>
> Participation in adventure races may be a response to civilization, our way of experiencing the exploration era of years gone by in a test against the environment/wilderness. Perhaps this is why so many urbanites seek to participate; it is their chance at exploration. (JH)

DCEC practice is associated with First Nation peoples and with those who are closest to the earth. The practice is associated with selfless exploration in the name of social advancement. It is linked to cultural immersion eco-travel and disassociated from the (superficial) tourist gaze (Cloke and Perkins, 1998: 186). It is linked to history and to the past, to an age when the idealism of 'pure' causes, 'just wars,' public virtue, dutiful self-sacrifice and nobility was not supplanted by moral ambiguity (Lipovetsky, 1992). Here, for the viewer/practitioner, the *nostalgic* adventure is an *authentic* one.

Commodification of the personal journey

A third device of connotation evident in DCEC coverage is the implication that the voyage of self-discovery can be collectively constructed and mass consumed. DCEC narrative is filled with 'personal' testimonial to the impact of *Eco-Challenge* practice on knowledge and identity of the 'self.' The DCEC is often touted as a "training ground for real life" that makes the tasks of everyday life appear easy and that teaches the value of teamwork to the achievement of individual goals. It is referred to as the ultimate test of the limits of body and mind, a test required in today's information-based world. As Mark Burnett explains,

> Technology is growing so fast that we're looking for the meaning of our lives. And we won't find it inside our laptop. Therefore, outdoor stuff that concerns nature – marooned on a desert island, going into the Patagonian Andes – is where you might find the meaning of who you are on the planet.

This quest for personal discovery was argued by respondents to be one of the most important motivations for participation. Significantly, descriptions of 'personal' rewards and self-discovery shared a single discourse that mirrored the DCEC script:

> In *Eco* you learn techniques which are transferable to other areas of life. (JH)
>
> I keep thinking that this race will clear everything for me. Like, I'll be in the middle of the mountains and I'll say 'I know what I want to do…' I'll have an epiphany. (LW)
>
> *Eco* is a training ground for all aspects of life including business – teamwork, leadership, motivation, preparation and planning, coping with

disappointments, change, remaining flexible, communication, negotiation and facilitation skills etc, the list could go on. (JH)

I wanted to explore the unknown and the limits of my body and my mind (CL)

The way you deal with a situation at *E-C*- you get lost as a team, you start fighting, the way you deal with that is the way you deal with life, so it is important that you deal with it in a positive way. And you learn about yourself. (RH)

DCEC touts a paradoxical authenticity of collective self-discovery. Though the personal voyage appears in discourse to be no more than a recipe for practice, here, for the viewer/practitioner, the *personal* adventure is linked to the *authentic* one.

Naturalization of media sport

This fourth device of connotation refers to postmodern filmmaking as a technique to *naturalize* the inextricable bond between AR and TV in adventure sport. This filmmaking technique involves two paradoxical strategies: first, a self-reflexive production in which the filmmaking process is self-consciously documented and, second, a 'fly-on-the-wall' perspective that implies the filmmaker does not exist. The first strategy serves to naturalize the presence of media in AR, while the second serves to naturalize the presence of AR on TV.

Literary critic Robert Alter (1975: x, xi) has described the self-conscious genre as one that systematically flaunts its own condition of artifice, privileging equally the ostentatious nature of the artifice and the systematic operation of the flaunting. This postmodern style, culturally pervasive in aesthetic fields, is what Erving Goffman designated 'breaking the frame' and the Russian formalists called 'exposing the device'-

playfully inverting convention. With a production focus that is equal parts 'documentary' and 'the making of', DCEC echoes this style that can be described as 'metafiction'[3] (Lodge, 1992: 43). DCEC's focus on executive producer Mark Burnett and the *Discovery Channel* staff is symptomatic of the new trend in filmmaking and sport-media productions, which incorporates the self-reflexive, self-promoting omnipresent filmmaker. Its heavy editing and scripting exemplify the interpolation of 'real' action and fiction writing so that neither is autonomous or closed to the other. DCEC is both a fictional documentary and truth-inspired fiction. It blurs distinctions between media and sport, creator and creation, production and product. As such it constitutes a fictional (re)construction of adventure where media's presence is naturalized in AR.

The second strategy used by DCEC to naturalize the media/sport marriage in adventure sport is 'fly-on-the-wall' filmmaking – the hallmark of 'reality TV.' Through this strategy, the filmmaker's (omni)presence, though not denied, is presented as unobtrusive and non-manipulative. The cameras are understood to document and follow the 'action', but not to provoke it, influence it or get involved. Media's presence thus remains naturalized while authorship is erased.

The focus of the 'reality' camera's gaze is not on the Hollywood celebrities, but, rather, it is on the ordinary person – whose life appears to take on greater meaning simply because it is broadcast on TV. Some have theorized the new celebrity-dom bestowed on ordinary people as an extension of the Internet: "The World Wide Web is the invention that puts 'me' in medium – its essential text being the personal home page; a document dedicated to the fact that the author exists." As Arthur Kroker (in Sheppard 2000: 61) has suggested:

> Marshal McLuhan was absolutely right: This is what happens when an old medium is forced to confront a new one. It reverses itself and goes back to something old. In this case, the something old is the fly-on-the-wall documentary of the 60's and the game show of the 50's. This is TV's attempt to save itself by marrying with the internet.

Although discussions of reality TV necessarily evoke references to Orwell's *1984* and *The Truman Show* to suggest paranoiac fantasy of voyeurism out of control, linking the ubiquitous surveillance implied by reality TV programs to the Internet suggests a new conceptualization: The "panoptic" or "internal" "theatre" leads, rather than to paranoia, to the belief that one's most minor business is interesting to others. In this sense, the totalitarian metaphor of 'Big Brother' for viewers of Reality TV is no longer useful. "How can you be a voyeur when you are watching an exhibitionist? It's like being a peeping tom at a strip show." (Goodman, 2000)

The paradox of postmodern filmmaking – seen both in strategies of self-reflexivity as well as those of 'reality TV' – is mirrored in viewer/practitioners' discourse that recognizes their often discordant role as 'featured character' and 'televised athlete,' while accepting the DCEC media/sport marriage as natural. For example, respondents were highly attuned to media presence, often describing a notable level of intrusion:

> On the top of Tronodor, they had a camera crew come up with us. They said they were going to do a heli-shot. So all the camera crew went and hid and the camera came flying around. And then they said they wanted to go round again so we had to do it all over again. We had to do a group hug twice for the camera. They were like 'hang on' we want to film it again.

> The first time we hugged, the film crew was right there with us. But then they wanted the helicopter to get it so the camera crew hid behind the rocks. So in comes the helicopter, cruises around and the crew comes out and says "that was great" but they're going to come around again for a second shot. So they came around again, and we did the hug again. So when you see the TV coverage, the big show that they put together – like last year, the Malaysian team going up to the top. It's staged. They were wired – they put a microphone on her. They put a microphone on me on the rappel. He asked me to slow down on the rappel so he could stay with me. (PI)

However, while participants sometimes criticize media presence on course, they do so without challenging the use-value of the media's construction.

> Media affects my race experience by having to communicate and therefore understand myself many of my values and principles for racing, my techniques for coping during racing (physical mental and emotional). Also by providing the vehicle to the rest of the world of our message, of what we do, what we experience, what we learn and how they can do it to. We do that by being shown to them as ordinary people doing extraordinary things. (JH)

> Basically we worked since Utah to get that attention. You have to prove yourself and wait your turn. (BF)

What becomes evident is that the interpolation of fiction with real action is manifested in, not only the production process, but in the consumption process as well. It

is this 'postmodern' blurring of boundaries between the constructed and the real (Ang, 1996, Balsamo 1996, Baudrillard, 1987, Haraway, 1991, Lipovetsky, 1992, Obel, 1996, Real, 1998, Watzlawick, 1977) that naturalizes the presence of AR on TV. The most prolific and descriptive respondent's fiction-inspired account illustrated this blurring of boundaries with an ironic description of his DCEC experience:

> I hate to tell war stories, but in this case, we were coming up onto the glacier on day six of BC, and were trapped by the cold and blustery storm. Some of the teams had already made the snow-peaked glacier, and we were following right behind them, exhausted, about to crest the top (...) (BF)

By referring to his upcoming account as a 'war story', the respondent acknowledges the tendency to fabricate, narrate and romanticize adventurous journeys and anecdotes from the past. Further, his use of adjectives and suspense references less 'reality' than it does fiction. Viewer/practitioners, as reality-TV consumers, then, not only recognize the viewer appeal of the DCEC narrative, but seek out the fictional construction as well:

> The culture – the people who do it are there because they watch it and love it. They see people who are themselves. The everyday worker, the woman who shops for groceries and takes kids to daycare, the guy who is a stockbroker, the woman who is an elite runner. Somewhere on the screen, you will find yourself. (DN)
>
> Dependent upon the skill of the director and editors, the TV version of the race often captures some of the unique moments of the race quite perfectly. They are sometimes able to heighten the emotion of that

> moment so that it becomes meaningful not only to those who were there at that moment. But to other racers (who have often undergone similar moments) and, more importantly, to the general viewing public so that they can feel part of that moment and empathize with the racers. (JH)

Through this fourth device of connotation – the naturalization of the media/sport relationship in DCEC – media's presence in AR appears natural, and the DCEC narrative is seductive to the viewer while, to the racer, appearing benign. Viewer/practitioners' perception of this naturalized relationship is crucial to the credence in the authenticity of adventure. Here, for the viewer/practitioner, an *authentic* adventure is the naturalized *media*-adventure, *where media – but not authorship – exist.*

Discussion

As we have seen, DCEC marries the metaphors of exploration and self-discovery with postmodern filmmaking strategy to construct AR's mythified discourse. The media narrative is recuperated into the discourse of viewer/practitioners, through which practice is argued on the basis of authenticity. But through mythification of the adventure narrative, nostalgic interpretation of the practice's intent, commodification of the idealized personal voyage of self-discovery and naturalization of media-sport, this argument is based on 'authentic' *simulation* – or on authenticity *implied.* This paradox is one that can be said to be borne out of postmodernity – a (life)*style* that affects the production and consumption of media and sport alike.

While the hallmarks of postmodernity have been said to be consumer capitalism, multinational capitalism, media capitalism, and a spectacle or image society (Wenner, 1998: 20), it has also been used to describe a style that collapses hierarchical distinctions,

mixing codes; parody, playfulness, paradox and irony (Rail, 1998: xi). And while Baudrillard (1987) has theorized that new forms of technology and information are central to a shift from a productive to a reproductive social order in which distinction between simulations and the real disappears, postmodernity has also been characterized by an acknowledgement that communication creates 'reality' (Watzlawick, 1977: xi).

Each of these disparate conceptualizations is useful to understanding the emergence and popularity of the DCEC. Ultimately, perhaps, DCEC's constructed and self-conscious style is best described by the postmodern concept 'capitalist kitsch' offering the viewer/practitioner only a commodified tracery of spontaneity, a derivative excitement that comes only 'second hand' through reflection. Kitsch implies that values embedded in discourse are reduced to rhetoric, their dramatization more meaningful than the values they suggest. DCEC manifests a 'reality' inextricably linked to television, its content, its audience and Late Capitalist culture, according to which there is no 'original' sport practice that either pre-exists – or exists without reference to - media. Kitsch in its purest form refers to the symbolic frame losing its reference to value, and this perhaps is the 'postmodern condition', which produces DCEC as its symptom and *authenticity* as its coveted stake. Accordingly, the narrative of DCEC is valued for its *suggestion* of authenticity – for the values to which it merely implies. The mythified narrative of DCEC blends the simulated and the real in an ambiguous and paradoxical style that flaunts the artifice of its own simulation but constructs adventure that is made to feel "real."

Further, a study of mediasport process must consider practitioners, too, as symptoms of a new ethos, the cultural consequence of the postmodern age. David Brooks

(2000: 10) has described a "new information elite" formed by a hybrid culture he terms "bourgeois bohemian:"

> The intangible world of information merges with the material world of money, and new phrases that combine the two, such as "intellectual capital" and "the culture industry", come into vogue. So the people who thrive in this period are the ones who can turn ideas and emotions into products.

The new elite is described as "the reconcilers", embracing paradox and reconciling opposites, thus merging bourgeois productivity with the romantic spirit, achievement with counterculture, materialism with the expansion of self. What has emerged among postmodernity's privileged elite is the quest for the simple and a taste for the "faux-archaic" – objects and experiences coated by a patina of simplicity and whose virtues have been rendered timeless by their obsolescence. In this realm, remarks Brooks, one becomes the curator of one's possessions, able to discourse upon them, turning everything one touches into "soul": "Marx once wrote that the bourgeois take all that is sacred and make it profane. The bourgeois bohemians take all that is profane and make it sacred" (Brooks, 2000: 102).

DCEC practitioners are participants in bourgeois bohemian culture: They reconcile opposites into functional paradox and they discourse their practice into soul. Through new postmodern 'devices of denotation', they mythify DCEC's constructed narrative, reconciling authenticity with simulation and they recuperate nostalgically interpreted, commodified and naturalized discourses as their tools.

The construction of viewer/practitioners' social practice in Late Capitalism has therefore 'adjusted' to a new postmodern ethos based in discourse, reconciliation and self-reflexive consumption. These postmodern concepts applied to DCEC reveal the viewer/practitioner as both DCEC producer of meaning and product of consumption, neither passive nor monolithic, implicated in a dynamic process, constructing discourse, social knowledge and practice. As Ien Ang (1996:13) explains, it is in the context of viewer 'choice' that the practices of active meaning making need to be understood; in the process of media consumption, one creates a 'lifestyle'[4] for oneself. Accordingly, DCEC viewer/practitioners should not be treated as a 'passive audience' – a rhetorical figure of a modernist paradigm – but as agents living within an increasingly media-saturated culture, forced to be active: "as choosers and readers, pleasure seekers and interpreters" in order to produce any meaning at all."

Concluding thoughts

Our goal in this project was to uncover the constructed nature of AR and its tenets to illustrate *authentic adventure* as a value shared among sport producers and consumers alike – a 'postmodern' paradox and (life)style, manufactured and reconciled by the very same discourse produced. Accordingly, DCEC fictional discourse can (re)construct the personal and the authentic, and DCEC practice can authentically (re)construct myth. For the AR viewer/practitioner, adventure is authentic, not *despite,* but *because* it is on TV.

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[1] Extreme sports are said to have emerged out of the cultural revolution that took place in the 50's and 60's in the United States after the Second World War when the economy grew dependent on mass production and mass consumption. Although the 'anti-mainstream' image of extreme sports is still apparent, its interdependent relationship with media and corporate agents has de-emphasized – or even reversed – the oppositional ideology that marked its earlier motivation.

[2] Genevieve Rail (1998: xi) has made distinctions among the various forms and meanings of the term 'postmodernity.' While I maintain its distinction from 'postmodernism' as a theoretical approach, I use the term to describe a convergence of Late Capitalist discourse, style and conditions of existence.

[3] David Lodge (1992: 43) refers to 'metafiction' as a new phenomenon in the history of fiction whereby the exposure foregrounds the existence of the author, the source of the novel's *diegisis*, in a way which runs counter to the modernist pursuit of impersonality and mimesis of consciousness.

[4] Ien Ang (1996: 13) suggests that the concept of life-style articulates a particularly postmodern predicament where the discourse of choice – in which the rhetoric of the liberatory benefits of personal autonomy and individual self-determination - has become hegemonic. Subjects in the postmodern world are now impelled to constantly reconstruct and reinvent themselves; in pursuit of happiness, life is defined as the ability to make an ever-increasing number of choices.

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APPENDIX 1

NATIONAL POST, MONDAY, JANUARY 3, 2000
MEDIA CHALLENGE: For competitors at the Eco-Challenge, the toughest obstacles are the cameras. Page B4-5 (Sports)

It may be billed as rugged and uncompromising, but the Discovery Channel's Eco-Challenge has just as much to do with media manipulation. To start with, it helps if the participants have a good background story and the patience to repeat a tough climb if the TV cameras missed it the first time

LIGHTS, CAMERAS, ECO-ACTION!

By Joanne Kay

The Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge is acclaimed among adventure zealots as a grueling and hallowed test of personal limits in remote lying wilderness. It is also a race that for several years has constituted the fodder for a spectacular television production that draws voyeuristic armchair adventurers into the close familiarity of competitors' lives.

Last month in Patagonia, at the southern-most tip of Argentina, 51 teams of four, including three from Canada, struggled against time and harsh Patagonian landscape, driven by a quest to endure the extreme. Competitors kayaked, rode horseback, mountaineered and navigated their way across 318 kilometres of terrain the race president and founder, Mark Burnett, calls "one of the last truly wild places on earth."

Cyber-spectators around the world eagerly surfed 'adventure dot-coms' for up-to-the-minute reports. They devoured the hyperbole of racers imbued with Burnett's noble idealism: "We are here to complete- not just to compete", "modern-day explorers escaping cell phones and fax-machines", "pushing personal limits" and "getting in touch with nature."

But all are still awaiting the Eco pièce-de-résistance – Discovery's four-hour mini-series that airs in the spring. Without the benefit of media boxes, bleachers, timers or scoreboards, 19 international film crews shadowed competitors through mud, bamboo and snow – hovering in helicopters and submerged in rapids, to produce the largest documentary field production ever shot in HDTV.

As one of the show's most faithful viewers, I have drunk in Discovery's dramatic tales of anguish, and complacently ignored – along with the cameras – the tedious trudgery that much of the race entails. After all, I have grown accustomed to the sensationalism typical of Wimbledon or Ironman, and here, once again, I assumed the melodrama was commercial and seductive, yet benign.

But this year, in live attendance, I was reminded more of the World Wrestling Federation than of the National Football League. This was no longer sport on display, I realized – it was an *avant-garde* performance based loosely on adventure sport. While competitors slogged through the course, editors, field producers, directors, writers, composers and celebrity narrators wove exhilarative and epic tales into a docu-fable involving an international cast of 200.

On the surface, it appeared that cameras and competitors were symbiotically hitched as media-savvy athletes spouted sound bites to clustered paparazzi at passport control. In exchange, challengers got an expedition of magnitude – if not experience of the wild and remote.

It is hard to ignore cameras, and it is becoming even harder to ignore their impact. New Zealand's Team MapInfo became a striking example when a scoop-hungry reporter thrust a boom mike into the path of their horses. Team member Kristina Strode-Penny was launched from her spooked mount, suffering a broken ankle and early retirement from the race. Events such as this are, if not common, apparently expected, as competitors sign a mandatory waiver that "some of the coverage may interfere with or cause risks to participants."

Media logistics dictate course design as well. According to Burnett, Eco-Challenge is an authentic journey that "follows the paths of gauchos, Magellan, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid." Can it be mere coincidence that the road-accessible course circumnavigated the Telefonica media center like its node? The "theatre" was scouted, equipped and manned by enormous crews, visited by media, locals and curious tour groups who invariably compromised the boundlessness of an adventure through "unexplored" and "wild" terrain.

The event's selection process has also no doubt been affected by the media's involvement, as chronicles of human interest privilege 'media teams' for race entry. One competitor that didn't make the Eco cut despite excellent adventure race credentials said, "It is all about the show... If you have cancer or grandchildren, you are more likely to make it in than if you are really talented but unexciting for TV."

The influence of the camera on the participants can also provoke Kodak-courage, thanks to the promise of cinematic immortality. Teams have admitted to picking up the pace or suppressing team conflict while the gaze of the camera holds their focus.

But the cameras were often blatantly invasive as well.

'SCHLEPPING BETWEEN FILM SITESIS NOT ADVENTURE RACING'
Adventure racer Robert Nagel

On Mount Tronador, the highest peak of a glacier traverse, a film crew followed the Scottish team on foot, orchestrating pace and a group-hug for the cameras. After the land footage was caught, the team was asked to replay the scene twice more for the heli-

mounted Wescam. Land crews crouched behind rocks, hidden for the sake of a clean shot, while the chopper buzzed the crest. Though producers claim to use unobtrusive techniques, this is perhaps only the sense for the viewer – not for the actors working through scene two, take one.

Researchers do exhaustive pre-race interviews and prepare storyboards before the cameras even roll.

"The footage on the cutting room floor" says one Discovery editor "is made up of the stories that don't unfold." A field producer excitedly offered that "generally, we know about team conflict before they do."

This year, for example, it was rumoured that a conflict had arisen among members of female-dominated Team Rubicon. A "news flash" alerted media to the dissension, and the executive producer open-radioed congratulations to his staff for "capturing the breakdown on tape."

When a *Dateline* producer culled the tape for evidence, she heard only casual bickering tinged with sarcasm but not drama. It will now be the task of Discovery to manufacture the conflict through editing and narration if they want to stick to the plot.

Last year, this very same team sat in a tent in Morocco fighting over the imminant withdrawal of a team member while in-your-face cameras honed in. The team was obviously stiff and aware of their unwelcome role as performers, but their request to continue off-camera was denied.

In defense of the intrusive filming techniques, the producer in charge explained that "when conflict occurs, it is our responsibility to tell the story for everybody's sake. If they don't comply, we remind them that they signed a waiver."

To the racers' credit, despite –or perhaps because of – the race's commercial appeal, adventure is not completely lost. Racers pushed personal limits even through the Disneyfied unknown. They assume a new kind of a pioneering spirit and credence in a collective myth – where real action and fiction writing are interpolated.

In reality, the romantic notion of self-responsibility and discovery for the advancement of the common good has become less important than adventure for the sake of personal experience. But Eco-Challenge erases suggestions of egoistic gratification by supplanting a morality found in the souls of famous writers, explorers and outlaws – wringing dramas of noble conquest out of voyages of non-discovery.

Racers and producers, stoked by retrograde nationalistic pride, tell each other parables of heroic quests through a hostile landscape, asserting participation as the paradigm of public virtue, dutiful self-sacrifice and the cautious courage of selfless exploration. At least one Eco-Challenger has even infused her participation with a Darwinian purpose: "It's like the nature of our species... only the fittest survive."

But while tales of nobility and survival inspire and entertain, here it is dumbed-down in the face of, not death, but disqualification and a hot shower. Those who push through pain and deprivation will finish among the top. But the Eco-tourist who sleeps and cooks porridge will survive too – and might even have a little fun.

Some competitors chose not to compete in last month's race because it has become more TV spectacle than race. Robert Nagel, one of the world's premier adventure racers, feels racers should have opportunities to see the country as it really is, to deal with its people, flora and fauna: "Schlepping between film sites is *not* adventure racing."

But Eco-Challenge is not struggling to find either participants or viewers. It appears to have forged a niche in a market fueled by the cannons of entertainment – a supra-ideology that dominates both sport and TV. Eco-Challenge's production is symptomatic of a new trend that uses an MTV 'fly-on-the-wall' strategy where viewers – or rather, voyeurs – become privy to personal foibles and triumphs that presumably take on greater importance precisely because they are broadcast to the world. It is a technique, however, that requires a tremendous suspension of disbelief – like viewing an Everest first ascent, captured by IMAX, from above.

It is a technique also undermined by our fascination with "the making of". More journalists than any other year covered behind-the-scenes stories, turning the cameras back on themselves in self-reflexive, self-congratulatory fashion. Producers constantly screamed for clean production shots where spectators and media didn't exist, while Discovery logos, plastered on equipment and clothing – even a hot-air balloon – littered the Eco landscape.

At last month's closing ceremonies, Burnett told racers they were "the most important people here", a remark expanded upon by Peter Henning, film director, with the words: "Thank you competitors. You are the ones who make the show..."

The Eco-Challenge TV show should have the disclaimer that while names and places have not been changed, stories are only loosely based in truth. But the fact of the matter is that there would be little viewer interest if the race were shown the way it really is. That can be known only to the competitors. To the real-time spectator, the race appears tedious, pointless and primarily for the self-involved.

We want it to make sense and we want it to entertain. We rely on Discovery to do this for us. Perhaps, then, the most provocative aspect of the Eco-Challenge paradox is the way we as viewers watch the morality tales unfold, benumbed to our own collusion.

The event is a high-budget soap opera, quintessential capitalist kitsch par excellence, and, next April, I will no doubt be blithely peering into the lives of competitors along with everyone else. I will watch with the understanding, however, that this race and the documentary are inextricably linked.

I will waive my right to knowledge of competitors' private rewards and I will appreciate the multi-million-dollar fictional production that offers me travel and adventure from the comfort of my sofa.

Even in my first-hand experience, it seemed natural and comforting that life should imitate art: As the first racers approached the finish line, the clouds lifted and the dramatic storm from the previous days died down. I focused my lens and watched the set come to life, contendedly imagining Burnett somewhere off-stage uttering the magic words: "Cue the sun!..."

[Sidebar:] ECO PRODUCERS PROVIDE ONE VIEW

I was actually excited about signing a waiver of liability acknowledging the potential for "death, serious physical injury, illness and property."

I assumed that the release along with my swag – official Eco-Challenge icefield parka and expedition pack – meant I would be getting my hands, and the rest of me, dirty, following racers and the course up close.

Instead, international media were forced to take literally the invitation to "document the drama of this spectacular event as it unfolds."

Discovery limited media access to the point where scoop-and-file journalism prevailed. In order to feed daily reports to outlets, journalists took to regurgitating Discovery-constructed reports as fast as they surfaced, often meaning that friends at home were better informed than we were.

One production assistant described the problem of access as a double-edged sword: "You want to get the Eco-Challenge brand name out there and to get viewers for Discovery but [the media] also ruin the shots."

Over the weeks, I grew more frustrated and cynical about my role at the DISCOVERY CHANNEL ® ECO-CHALLENGE® EXPEDITION RACE™ , culminating in the moment when I knew I didn't fit in. While snapping pictures of camera crews shooting teams kayak the rapids in a post-race staged photo-op, a Discovery producer shouted: "hey, you're pointing your camera the wrong way!" I think next time, I will just do the race.

Photographs: Joanne Kay / National Post

National Post

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APPENDIX 2

Oh Say, Can You Ski?
Imperialistic Construction of Freedom in Warren Miller's *Freeriders*

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(Forthcoming) S. Sydnor and R. Rinehart (Eds.)
To the Extreme: Alternative Sports Inside and Out. **New York: SUNY.**

In the past three decades, extreme sport has been infused with a marketing strategy, an ethic, a vocabulary, an attitude, and a style. It inspires personal introspection and public allure. It has been associated with co-optation by the commercial, the marginal, the counter-cultural and the postmodern. Performance is paradoxical -- imbued with individualism and collectivism, the ludic and the prosaic, aesthetics and kitsch. What emerge are tenets that contradict and co-exist: participation and competition, amateurism and professionalism, urban play and wilderness adventure, the 'authentic' and the constructed, the youthful and the nostalgic, the self-determined and the regulated, the resistant and the complicit. But with all its inherent ambiguity, one staked value of extreme sport perdures -- in combination with or despite any others -- and that value is freedom.

As a concept, 'extreme' flexes and expands to accommodate a plethora of sport practices, allowing for the seemingly incongruous to flourish under one ensign. Accordingly, chapters on activities as disparate as adventure racing and skateboarding can be linked in a book's common thematic, and a multitude of sport forms can fall under one appellation. Extreme skiing, then, like its other extreme counterparts, is not limited to a single practice or a single context, neither to the competitive circuit, nor the trail-less and the steep beyond the spectator's gaze.

In this chapter, we will analyze Warren Miller Entertainment's 1998 film *Freeriders* to demonstrate how a tenet of the extreme subculture, in this case *freedom*, can be co-opted and commodified to suggest and/or reify a sport's 'extreme' status. In *Freeriders*, Warren Miller uses the implied promise of freedom as a marketing strategy underlying extreme skiing's image as an avant-garde commodity in the extreme sport market. We will examine three 'devices of connotation' (Lodge 1992: 122) through which Miller's film contributes to what we describe as an imperialistic construction of freedom. The first, *commoditization*[1] of freedom, refers to Miller's positioning of extreme skiing within freeriding[2] culture, constructing an inextricable relationship between skiing and (American) freedom. Through the second device, *exportation* of freedom, Miller ships abroad self-branded freedom -- with a freeriding 'world tour' -- constituting a form of symbolic violence towards anyone not American. Finally, a third device, *(post)modernization* of freedom, combines postmodern filmmaking techniques with modernist (American revisionist) historical (re)construction to naturalize the existence of extreme skiing in contemporary extreme sport culture.

'Total Freedom' and the Tourist Infomercial: Commoditization of Freedom

As the word 'extreme' takes up permanent residence in mainstream (categorical) conceptions of sport, it has become a neologism for those comprehended in its meaning. 'Free skiers' want to distance themselves both from the European extreme ski movement -- which incorporates freeclimbing and higher levels of risk-taking -- and from the "crazy XGame participants"[3] who they feel diminish social recognition of their status as professional athletes.[4] 'Free-skiers' have aligned themselves with the standards and structure of institutionalized practice, rejecting the mainstream conception of marginal sport. Yet they maintain their alternative status through the sport's social correlation to freedom. The term 'freeriding' betrays

neither the mainstream classification that determines it to be 'extreme' nor the participant opposition to its reductionist connotation. To the mainstream, 'freeriders' are extreme, to the freeriders, 'extreme' is mainstream, but to all, freeriding is the paragon of freedom.

Warren Miller, capitalizing on the 'extreme' controversy, insists on the specificity of 'freeriding' and the freedom that this name implies. Miller sells skiing -- and freedom through analogous association -- as one would sell a product in a TV infomercial. Miller has mastered the hard-sell consumer hook: freedom is playfulness, mobility, American (and can be seen at a theatre near you...). Our host tells us that we are embarking on a "search for total freedom" which can be found at a Miller-endorsed mountain resort (probably not so very near you.... Order now!) and if the images of thrills and spills in the opening montage haven't hooked you, perhaps the pressure of a limited offer will: "because if you don't do it this year, you'll be one year older when you do..." (But wait there's more...)

Playfulness & the culture of innocence

Presently in his seventies, and after a fifty year filmmaking career that has produced almost the same number of films all bearing his signature, the now-retired movie mogul -- the "originator of extreme sports filmmaking"[5] -- has shifted control of Miller Entertainment to his son Kurt (Finkel 1995: 36). True to the Warren Miller ski film-formula, however, Miller still narrates, waxing poetic about the innocence and purity of skiing. His tongue-in-cheek statement that "after a lifetime of following my heart on a pair of skis, I still don't know what I'm going to be when I grow up" denotes the unconstrained freedom of childhood with all of youth's boundless possibilities. Set to the adolescent tunes of *Toad the Wet Sprocket, Cake, Counting Crows, Dave Matthews Band, Presidents of the United States and Semisonic*[6], montaged footage features crews of (predominantly young white male[7]) skiers and snowboarders launching

themselves off cliffs and out of helicopters into the sea of powder below. Landings range from the ridiculous to the sublime, blended so that the consummate and the calamitous appear equally worthwhile to their performers. The apparent pleasure that the plummeting freerider takes in the explosion of powder that awaits him or (rarely) her on landing is a nostalgic reminder of the childish insouciance one once found puddle-hopping or jumping into a pile of leaves. Miller's high-intensity sequences present freedom in the fearless, adrenaline-seeking 'play' of the freeriders, where skiing is spontaneously pre-lapsarian, childlike and thrilling. When Miller introduces a 13-year old nordic jumper in Park City, Utah, he praises those abilities in her that are the result of youthful freedom and ignorance: "that's when they don't know enough to be afraid" (Miller 1998). The implied corollary is that maturity is bound up with the anticipation of consequence, and thus with fear: "to know -- that is to have knowledge -- is to instinctively understand the relationship between what you know and what you do" (Raulston Saul 1995: 5). Miller presents the adult consumer with a paradoxical invitation: to seek the bliss of youthful ignorance, denying the normative (adult) accommodation to the threat of mortality[8].

The myth of mobility

One of Miller's recurring themes is that freedom can be found in mobility -- upward and westward. His vision of mobility implies an accessibility and freedom of choice that lies, in truth, in stark contrast to the limited access available only to the privileged and wealthy. As such, Miller's connection of freedom to mobility constitutes a form of what Pierre Bourdieu (1990, 1996) calls symbolic violence towards anyone without financial means.

> *Don't forget that it's always snowing somewhere in the world, and all you need is a good snow report of where it is falling to pack your stuff.[...] So quit your job and rent a U-Haul trailer now so next winter this can be you, not just you sitting*

there watching this wishing this was you. [...] If you try another poor excuse to take the day off and you come back to work with a sunburned face, and you get fired, it'll be worth it because for the day, you'll be a freerider. (Warren Miller 1998)

Traveling to resort towns, however, is not your only option, according to Miller. He suggests that one can choose to move to a resort town as well:

[In Salt Lake City, Utah] many of the people who live around this modern city live here because they can get up early and drive just a few miles East to the nearby mountains and find their own freedom by getting first tracks. (Warren Miller 1998)

As the median household income in Park City, Utah is $58,000 and the average home price is $457,000 (Clifford 1999: 63), residence in this town is prohibitively expensive to most American and non-American citizens alike.

Heli-skiing in Chile, Norway, Switzerland, France, Greece, and especially America, according to Miller, is not a matter of means but rather of choice. If leaving your job, your family and all your responsibilities is not something you are willing to do, then freedom cannot be yours, no fault but your own.

The assault of elite access is further manifested in the valorization of 'freeloading'. One of Miller's young stars, Jason Patnode, describes his appreciation for his job:

This gig totally rules. The cars, free food, hot tubs, free condos and the women- oh! Free pathfinders! We got it all man! (Warren Miller 1998)

As a Warren Miller rider, Patnode has everything money can buy, but apparently doesn't need any actual money. The assumption once again is that if you do not have the means to procure

freedom (often camouflaged as a Nissan Pathfinder or a bikini-clad woman), and you are not one of "the smart ones [who] live in a ski resort," you have made the decision to opt out of the freedom package made available to you.

One scene in the film blatantly exemplifies the symbolic violence which usually only flows as an undercurrent. When a French Canadian skier is asked to show his knowledge of 'American English,' he first explains that he has learned his American accent from television. He then jettisons all traces of his Quebec heritage in the phrase, "my trailer has a propane heater." One needn't know that this is a direct quotation from the animated series *King of the Hill*[9] -- a parody of 'white trash' America that takes place in Arlen, Texas ('Small Town, USA') -- to read the mockery in the text. References to 'trailer-trash' appear regularly in American parody and social classifications, referring to a largely uneducated, low-income segment of the American population. Although the gap between the haves and have-nots is widening, the hoax of equal opportunity and equitable prosperity still condones ridicule of low economic classes. Miller's inclusion of such a seemingly innocuous but ultimately derisive comment reinforces the lie of accessibility. Miller constructs his audience through association with negative identity. From the mouth of a Canadian (whose national identity is most often associated with being 'not American'[10]) the viewer understands that those who achieve freedom are 'not poor'.

Land of opportunity

For Miller, extreme skiing constitutes an objective correlative to American hedonism. Although this theme will come up in the descriptions of American exportation and American revisionism, here we are exploring its position in the construction of freedom as a commodity. Skiing in this sense is linked to all that is quintessentially America -- 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' For Miller, extreme skiing appears not to be a constitutional right to individual

freedom, but an individual freedom from collective responsibility as well.[11] As freeriders surf the powder snow of a distant mountain accessible only by helicopter, we learn that it is the 4th of July. Miller asks "What are you doing on the fourth of July?" The anniversary of the American Declaration of Independence is thus marked by what Miller deems to be the ultimate homage to freedom -- freeriding.

As Miller travels from one North American ski refuge to another (in between stints at international vacation resorts) we learn that American snow delivers supreme freedom:

> *When the snow is like* this *in the Canyons of Utah, your most basic instinct, your instinctive search for freedom, is finally being satisfied.* (Warren Miller 1998)

As such, Miller reveals, the history of skiing *is* the history of America.

> *Almost 200 years ago, the real pioneers, the trappers and fur traders, exploring this part of* America *found it so abundant in everything they wanted out of life. The two of them got together and started a trading post. It later became Jackson Hole, Wyoming-- and today, they're trading information on ski conditions.* (Warren Miller 1998)

Miller's revisionist approach to the American pioneering spirit is again presented through what *Skiing* magazine has dubbed "patented Miller silliness."(Green 1994: 28) We watch beginners tumbling, chair lift screw-ups, shovel races and a Dummy Big Air contest in which unmanned, hand-crafted contraptions of all shapes and sizes launch off a jump-site. He also includes the latest updates to freeriding, such as powder kayaks and double tip skis. On the American slopes, Miller presents a sporting arena marked by an anything-goes attitude -- an attitude that is becoming increasingly linked to America's pioneering and innovative spirit in mainstream consciousness.

> *The proliferation of new sports stems not so much from a lunatic fringe but from the center of a soul that cherishes the pursuit of happiness. The sports inventor's mantra, 'been there done that', is an update of 'Go West, Young Man'."*(Thurlow 1996: A1)

Pioneering, which once implied hard work and exploration of unknown terrain, is here linked to hedonistic pursuits and exploration of the 'disneyfied' unknown. Individual indulgence and immediacy of gratification rather than collective responsibility and prospects for the future inspire Miller's pioneering spirit. The 'unknown' no longer enkindles the cautious courage of selfless exploration, but rather the casual thrill of capturing one's 'big air' on film.

Soldiers of fortune: American Exportation of Freedom

Warren Miller invites us to join him on his "search for total freedom which can only be found on the side of snow-covered mountains..." We learn that he is going to take us "all over the world to the meet the people [he] calls freeriders." However, as we move from continent to continent, traveling thousands of miles to foreign lands, we meet the people who probably live within a day's drive of our homes. When we leave North American soil, most often the 'locals' are seen not riding down their steep slopes over jagged mountain edges, bursting through light, fluffy powder under crystal blue skies. It is primarily the American skiers that Miller has flown in (of the 74 ski talents represented, more come from Colorado alone than all the international skiers combined), along with *his* cameras, *his* crews, *his* drivers, *his* pilots, *his* gofers, and *his* continuity experts that we see. The locals bustle around in their markets and gape idiotically at the cameras while the fearless and free Americans claim 'first tracks' on *their* mountains.

This is the second instance of symbolic violence: Through cultural appropriation and the exportation of the American brand of freedom, the mockery previously aimed at the poor, in this case, turns itself on any culture or lifestyle which is 'not American.'

Following the Miller formula, a foreign resort town is introduced with panoramic grandeur. Through sweeping helicopter-mounted camera shots, we see their landscapes, their temples, their schools and their farms. We see their (mostly American) tourists purchasing postcards, eating in their restaurants and buying their produce. We then witness the arrival of our 'freedom fighters' -- the Warren Miller skiers, who stride confidently through exotic cultures, unaffected by what after several stops on the world tour become nebulous surroundings. It is clear that for Miller -- who once chose to film a snowboarder grinding down the sacred steps of a Japanese temple (Warren Miller 1994) -- imperialistic cultural mockery is funny. His ethnocentric narrative bent can be witnessed in his send-up of local customs and industry. For example, he finds the road linking Chile to Argentina so steep that "unless they are going downhill, the 18-wheeler drivers can't go faster than their IQ" (Warren Miller 1998). Assuming that an 18-wheeler rarely travels faster than 70 miles an hour on the flat and slows to speeds of 30 miles an hour or less on long, steep climbs, logic would dictate that these local drivers range from mentally retarded to brain-dead.

Miller's flippant commentary is too often tinged with facile racism, indicating his apparent freedom from the evolving cultural and political superego of the last fifty years. Miller's juvenile world vision is again present in his need to preserve organic uniformity: foreign countries become de-naturalized theme parks where pain, poverty and prejudice do not exist. As a filmmaker both fixated on childish fantasy and fixed in adolescent narcissism in search of

egocentric gratification, Miller's freedom from responsibility and political consciousness constitutes freedom to deride and insult.

> In Norway, for example, Miller flouts local ecological and liability protection:
>
> *With* unbelievable *bureaucratic foresight, the Norwegians wrote a law against helicopter skiing just two years after the helicopter was invented.* (Warren Miller 1998)

Listening to Miller's self-congratulatory narration, we see imported American skiers climbing into a Warren Miller logo-plastered helicopter (this another trademark of Miller-films where Nissan Pathfinders and American Airlines jets cruise through the film "with the subtlety of a buffalo stampede" [Green 1994: 28]) to ride the Norwegian slopes above the Arctic Circle. This segment implies that Americans are freer than their local counterparts-- they can rise above the regional constitution and still be true to their own. Throughout their stay in Norway, Miller's skiers nurture a growing disgust for the country's industrial lifeblood. After an apparently invariable diet of fish (and assuming they would otherwise have 'freedom of choice' it is clear that there is nothing else to eat in Norway) the American skiers condescendingly quip at its ubiquity: "It's not Norwegian toothpaste -- it's caviar in a tube."

In London, we learn, there are no ski mountains. Miller's primary intent in including London in his tour is obvious: "it only snows here once every 7 1/2 years. But there are a lot of ski shops [...] and a lot of Brits who just wander around in their ski gear looking for birds" (Warren Miller 1998). After filming a local man-made hill: "Plastic on the Palisades" and filming his skiers in the requisite 'Beatles in London pose,' we are whisked off to Zermatt, the town that time apparently forgot. It is significant, then, that in this town that bans combustion engines and that is described by Miller as a place that "even change can't change," the camera

fixes (seemingly) interminably on one of Miller's export talents skateboarding through its streets. Locals react with Milleresque predictability, with confusion or indifference, with blank stares or bemusement. We follow their gaze to witness urban youth sport and all that it suggests clashing violently with rural 'old world charm,' but as in all the overseas sequences, it is the locals who appear as foreigners in their own land.

American Revisionism and Self-reflexive Cinema: (Post)modernization of freedom

By linking freedom to nostalgia but not to the past, to the American dream but not to American life, to youth but not to the margins, Miller normalizes the existence of extreme skiing in avant-garde culture while targeting an expansive mainstream audience. For fifty years Miller's films have defied the laws of marketing. An aging sport presented to a youthful audience should logically have slid into the category of 'so ten minutes ago.' Yet in *Freeriders*, this formula contributes to an association with contemporary extreme sport culture. With the consumption of his films the ultimate objective, the sale of freedom is a loss leader[12] in Miller's marketing strategy.

That Miller began his filmmaking career in the 50's is significant. Postwar America was marked by rampant consumerism -- what was to become the longest cycle of capitalist expansion in history, spreading to Europe in the 1950's and later to Japan and the Pacific (Johnson 1991: 147). Simplistic 'apple pie' concepts were etched into the American psyche, inspiring citizens' faith in the country's formula for prosperity and the American Dream. Individually and collectively, Americans began to expect and demand world recognition as the flagship of prosperity and democratic freedom, and national pride became the country's chief export.

In *Freeriders*, Miller nostalgically clings to concepts of wealth distribution, democracy and freedom that echo the ideals of the 50's, even though the American Dream can no longer be

substantiated by present-day social realities. While the optimism of the 50's has been replaced by widespread uncertainty, Miller's modernist messianic faith, that technical innovation and purity of form can assure social progress, is left undisturbed in his films.

Nostalgia and the American Dream

Miller's narration is strewn with nostalgic references and historical allusions documenting the freedom bequeathed by the pioneers of the past to the present. We learn how a hill and a T-bar grew into the mountain enterprises we visit today -- how gondolas, high speed quad-chair lifts, helicopters (Pathfinders and American Airlines) have increased access to many more acres of freeriding terrain. And we appreciate how "expensive, exotic, space-age fabrics [..] and high-tech aerodynamic devices" have helped in "the search for ultimate freedom."

Miller traces the history of freedom / skiing through a nostalgic historical revision in which he poses as a key actor in the transhistorical development of the (American) sport. After viewing some vintage Warren Miller film footage, we learn through his narration that Miller was instrumental in the development of Alpental resort in Washington State:

> *[Bob Nicholson] asked me to make a movie of Blue Whitaker Alpental to publicize the resort [..] With that movie, he built a ski resort he named Alpental.* (Warren Miller 1998)

Through his narration, Miller reestablishes an historical and nostalgic tie to his origination myth of skiing/freedom as presented by his skiers:

> *When I was in Alaska I was dropping in on this first descent... Powder so deep, it was blowing my mind. I couldn't believe it. I was ripping down a huge face! This filming dude was hanging out of a helicopter, watching me rip down the mountain*

and boom. Avalanche. The filming was epic and that was the start of my career. (Warren Miller 1998)

Miller then claims responsibility for introducing skiers to the industry and products too: In the sequence demonstrating the powder kayak, Miller explains:

And if a kayak looks strange to you, think back to when I first started filming snowboards 20 years ago and what you thought of them then. (Warren Miller 1998)

As Miller writes himself into the history of snowboarding's rising popularity, he claims a particular brand of skiing immortality, suggesting that he is indispensable to innovation in contemporary extreme sport culture.

What's old is new again

In Steamboat, Colorado, at the Nissan Freeriders Exhibition, we are witness to big air competition and a lesson in 'new school technique.' Jon Mosely, an Olympic gold medallist in moguls (and later, in 1999, an XGame medallist in 'big air') explains:

Old school is more of the straight jumps. In new school, we're starting to do more awkward take-offs, more snowboard style. (Warren Miller 1998)

Moseley, who represents the sport's avant-garde, exclaims that his next feat will be to "ski for Warren Miller." Miller's film, then, most possibly represents the cutting edge of the avant-garde. Moseley's youth is juxtaposed with Klaus Obermeyer, who at the age of 78, skis with young freeriding companions in another protracted sequence. We learn (but realistically doubt) that Obermeyer, the inventor of quilted ski parkas, inflatable ski boots and the snow kayak, is still so competent on skis that "he can stay ahead of most of the young freeriders who live in Aspen" (Warren Miller 1998).

For Miller, extreme skiing is no longer 'skiing'; rather, it is 'freeriding'. The term 'freeriding' links skiing, a sport that has been traced back in (American) history to the 1850's (John and Allen 1993), to the relatively new sport practices of snowboarding, powder kayaking and big air contests[13]. With his continual blending of old and new sport practice, Miller ensures that what was old is new again.

Closing in on the final montage and leading into *Semisonic*'s rendition of "Closing Time", we witness a Freerider tribute to honor fallen skiers who "will always be remembered by the members of the 'freerider's club':"

> *We miss all of those fallen freeriders and what they stood for and what they accomplished. Their adventures have inspired a lot of other skiers to try and go for even more freedom with even steeper descents.*[14]

There is mordant humor in the notion that increased risk will avenge the death of those who died at the hands of risk. In this rendition, dead skiers are 'fallen heroes' -- martyrs of the sport. Death, as in war, pioneering or religion, is seen here -- not as tragic -- but as the paradigm of public virtue, as dutiful self-sacrifice for country, mankind and comrades[15]. *(Dulce et Decorum est pro Patria Mori*[16]*...)* In an age when the idealism of 'pure' causes, 'just wars' and nobility is challenged and supplanted by moral ambiguity, Miller offers steeper descents -- the promise of gratification and an homage to fallen companions. (*Greater Love Hath No Man Than This, That He Lay Down His Life For His Friends*[17]*...)*

This homage takes place in Whistler Blackcomb, a place where a locally sold bumper sticker honors Trevor Peterson, "professional ski hero," extreme ski movie star (indeed a stone engraved with his name is the subject of a momentary pause by one of Miller's cameras in the 'fallen Freerider' sequence) and father of two, who died ('in action') on the slopes of Chamonix.

The sticker which reads "Trevor would do it" (an update, perhaps, of '*they died that we might live*[18]'?) can be seen plastered on signs warning of a dangerous slope (Ulmer 1996: 42). Miller captures the Blackcomb spirit, according to which fallen skiers, who push the limits of danger, leaving children fatherless and spouses widowed, are hailed as freedom fighters who died for a worthy cause. It apparently gives solace to those left alive that death is noble in the name of freedom... or a steeper descent.

The nature of Miller's trivialization of the sacrificial theology of war memorials – to suggest that fallen freeriders, like fallen soldiers, have not died in vain -- is captured in President Lincoln's famous words at Gettysburg:

> *From those* honored *dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion, that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom.* (Davies 1992: 80)

Media blur and the dissolution of polarities

The final mode adopted by Miller to commodify freedom is evident in the filmmaking process itself. Miller's film, in one respect, is symptomatic of a new trend in filmmaking and sport-media productions which incorporates the self-reflexive, self-promoting omnipresent filmmaker. In another respect, although Miller is still a modernist in vision, his film exemplifies the interpolation of 'real' history and fiction writing so that neither is autonomous or closed to the other. *Freeriders* is both a fictional history and an historical fiction. It is a docufable, infomercial and a personal history of the social. It blurs distinctions between media and sport, creator and creation, production and product. As such it constitutes a fictional (re)construction of freedom.

Robert Rinehart distinguishes contemporary sport by performers' new awareness of their performance (Rinehart 1998: 8). In Warren Miller's films, this no doubt can be seen in skiers' sudden abundance of 'Kodak Courage' (Gasperini 1999: 43) whereby the promise of cinematic immortalization inspires the hubris to perform otherwise impossible feats. This distinction of contemporary sport is analogous to a distinction in contemporary filmmaking where the producer, too, has a new awareness of performance. Warren Miller's presence is manifested in narration, on Pathfinders, cameras and helicopters bearing his name -- and most importantly, through his tendency to turn the cameras on themselves -- to document the filming process with self-conscious irony. The self-conscious performances in Miller's film also exemplifies quintessential capitalist kitsch offering the viewer only a commodified tracery of the spontaneous gesture -- a derivative excitement that comes from reflection -- or what Milan Kundera, in *The unbearable Lightness of Being,* called the "meta-tear."[19]

Robert Alter has described the self-conscious genre as one that systematically flaunts its own condition of artifice, privileging equally the ostentatious nature of the artifice and the systematic operation of the flaunting (Alter 1975: x, xi). This postmodern style, culturally pervasive in literature, arts, music, and theatre, is further tinged by American nostalgia, finding eloquent expression, for example, in the great American novel *Huckleberry Finn,* which begins famously with the words:

> *You don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer; but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Twain and he told the truth, mainly.*

This century-old self-reflexive novel marked a critical shift in the narrative tradition. The narrator, the protagonist speaks directly, in his own voice -- what Erving Goffman designated

'breaking the frame' and the Russian formalists called 'exposing the device' -- playfully inverting convention. Warren Miller echoes this style that can be described as 'metafiction'20 (Lodge 1990: 43) thus naturalizing his own presence in extreme ski/freedom culture.

The closing credits of Warren Miller's Freeriders are set against "never-before-seen vintage shots of Warren Miller [..] and a rare glimpse of the Warren Miller cameramen, hard at work on location across the globe."21 Miller's inclusion of the production process in the final product illuminates a trend that places equal importance on the 'final edit' and the accompanying 'making of' sequel22. Again, Miller blurs the conventional distinctions between claimed function and fiction23, and (re)constructs his own (rhetorical) historical presence in our postmodern imagination.

Conclusion (Slippery Slopes?)

The purpose of this paper has not been to raise a discussion of American cultural imperialism24, though it must, nor to disillusion those for whom extreme sport proclaims freedom, though it might. By examining one film from the Warren Miller series on winter sports, our goal was to highlight the constructed character of 'extreme' sport and its tenets, through semiotic theorizing as constructed and arbitrary as the terms themselves. Freedom, as we have tried to illustrate, can be marketed and sold. It is analogous to extreme sport in our collective imagination, a false consciousness perhaps, shared among practitioners, producers, consumers and scholars alike; what is private for the practitioner can be profit to the producer. What denotes the mainstream to the scholar denotes the margins to the consumer. But for all, freedom is a loaded abstraction that touches the individual and the collective; it is authentic to the person and authenticated by the social; it is a personal right and a cultural privilege; it is the progress of

modernity and a paean to nostalgia. Freedom is American, it is 'extreme' and it sells.

> *The last four hundred years of philosophy, politics and art [has been spent] praising autonomy -- the free are those who can spontaneously direct their desire, follow their heart, and not be swayed by public opinion, by fear of the crowd or by what the wheel of fashion decides is in or out. The denunciation follows that of the world as a theatre, the* teatrum mundi *with 'all the men and women merely players.' The desires of the world's players are socially based and hence somehow fraudulent. An actor whispering fine words will only be echoing sentiments originating in a figure off-stage* (de Botton 1995: 69)

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[1] We use this term in the sense used by Robert Rinehart (1998:2) referring to a 'been there, done that' mentality that values the *collection* of experience (in this case the experience of freedom) as an individual commodity.

[2] The term 'freeriding' is displacing 'extreme skiing' in participant discourse. While in its designation by the mainstream the phrase 'extreme skiing' poses no conflict, alternative sport participants often resist the 'extreme' label, suggesting that its mainstream connotations contradict a desired image. This opposition has been reflected in the extreme ski world by the title given to one of the sport's governing bodies: *The International Free-Skiers Association*, a member-run organization started in 1996 by skier Shane McConkey to standardize events. The association is seen as a more democratic and less bureaucratic alternative to other regulating bodies such as *FIS* (Federation Internationale de Ski), and it currently sanctions free-skiing competition, slope-style, ½ pipe and big-air events.

[3] Extreme skiing is linked to youth and subcultural participation in magazines such as *Freeze*, touting "new ski culture" and modeling layout and content design on skateboard and snowboard revues with similar male adolescent markets.

[4] Phone interview with IFSA vice president Feb. 18, 1999.

[5] Warren Miller Entertainment. www.mountainzone.com

[6] Warren Miller Entertainment. www. Mountainzone.com. *Warren Miller's Freeriders Production Notes.*

[7] See Kutz , this volume.

[8] Patrick Baudry explores extreme sport as a paradoxical practice through which practitioners attempt to deny their mortality in what ironically becomes a planned suicide. In this sense, the more one attempts to deny mortality, the more its certainty is highlighted.

[9] Fox debuted this series on Jan 12, 1997. Title character, Hank Hill sells propane and propane accessories for a living.

[10] By identifying oneself as 'not American', it is the American identity which is reified and privileged by establishing oneself as the 'Other'.

[11] This is perhaps more obvious to the Canadian authors for whom contrasting doctrines of accountability and conformity, 'peace, order and good government', are linked to national identity.
[12] The loss leader in a marketing strategy is a product that does not accrue individual profit but contributes to profit on other products by its association.
[13] Big Air contests are an updated version of aerial competition including 'new school' tricks co-opted from snowboarding.
[14] *Warren Miller's Freeriders Production Notes*
[15] Jon Davies, "Duty and Self-Sacrifice for Country: The New Disparagement of Public Ideals" in Digby Anderson, ed. *The Loss of Virtue: Moral Confusion and Social Disorder in Britain and America.* National Review: 1992: 69-82
[16] Epitaph of Horace
[17] Ubiquitous
[18] The memorial at Kilmartin, Argyllshire (Davies 79)
[19]According to Kundera's distinction between the first and second tear (Margalit: 1988:20), the second tear is the "meta-tear", the tear we shed from solidarity with the collective feelings of the group we belong to at the sight of the first tear. It is a manifestation of a vicarious sentiment: it does not come out of the person's direct involvement with the object of feeling but rather out of a derivative excitement that comes from reflection. Margalit (1988: 20) extends Kundera's distinction to define kitsch in its purest form: when the second tear comes without the first one's ever occurring.
[20] David Lodge (1992: 43) refers to 'metafiction' as a new phenomenon in the history of fiction whereby the exposure foregrounds the existence of the author, the source of the novel's *diegisis*, in a way which runs counter to the modernist pursuit of impersonality and mimesis of consciousness.
[21] *Freeriders Production Notes*
[22] Imax film crews, for example, simultaneously shot footage for the 1999 release of *Extreme*, and *The Making of Extreme*, a made-for-TV documentary.
[23] The more nakedly the author appears to reveal himself, the more inescapable it becomes, paradoxically, that the author as a voice is only a function of his own fiction, not a privileged authority but an object of interpretation (Lodge 1992: 43)
[24] Discussion of Americanization and cultural imperialism in sport has increased recently. For an exploration of these concepts, see: Houlihan 1994 and Donnelly 1996.

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APPENDIX 3

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Title of study: The Social Signification of New Sport Practice: The Case of Adventure Racing

Principle researcher: Joanne Kay, département de kinésiologie, Université de Montréal
Project supervisor: Suzanne Laberge, département de kinésiologie, Université de Montréal

1. Research responsibility

Both Kay, as principle researcher, and Laberge, as project supervisor, assumed responsibility for proper ethical procedure throughout the duration of the study.

2. Methodological aspects

The study is of a predominantly ethnographic qualitative design as the goal was to explore the particular relationships and strategies among participants and organizers that underscored the social dynamics and power relations in adventure racing. With this objective in mind, Kay employed site-based fieldwork to systematically observe, interview and record cultural processes as they occured.

2.1 Fieldwork 'sample'

As the *Discovery Channel Eco-Challenge* was the largest and most culturally diverse adventure race in the world at the time of the study, and as Kay was given relatively unrestricted access to DCEC participants and facilities for the duration of the event, DCEC participants were selected for interview and observation. Interviews took place primarily on-site in the village of Bariloche in Argentina before the 1999 DCEC competition. Some respondents were interviewed at locations of their own choice before arriving on-site and/or after leaving the competition site.

2.2 Recruitment procedure

The DCEC communications department provided Kay with a list of competitors at the 1999 DCEC with contact information. Kay telephoned or emailed potential respondents requesting a 1-2 hour interview. At this time, they were informed of the general objectives of the research project and assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Their interest in participation in the study and their availability was noted, and they were told they would be recontacted to set up an appointment at the time and location of their choice.

2.3 Interview procedure

At the beginning of each interview, before turning the tape recorder on, respondents were asked for consent to record the discussion. Once the tape recorder, in plain sight of the respondent, was on, Kay outlined the objectives of the project and the interview procedure to be used and asked the respondent for a statement of consent. Kay asked the

respondents if they had any questions or concerns, reminding them that he or she could stop the interview at any time or review/change their response at any point in the future before submission of the results. The interviews took the form of semi-structured discussions; though respondents' spontaneous detours were encouraged with the aim of eliciting agents' particular knowledge of the field, specific themes were broached in each interview. The major themes that guided the interviews were: perceptions and judgements regarding various AR practices; prestige as it is linked to specific events; the impact of media on personal AR experience; the impact of corporate sponsorship on personal AR experience; the impact of the 'gender' rule on personal AR experience and the importance of AR as a 'training ground for real life'. Verbatim transcripts were made and annotated with detailed descriptions of context and important incidences of non-verbal communication.

2.4 Anonymity and confidentiality

Respondents were not identified by name except in circumstances where public information (web-published or televised) was used. Audiocassettes were kept in a secure location throughout analysis and were destroyed upon acceptance of the submitted results.

2.5 Participant risks and benefits

The method employed in the study posed neither risk nor discomfort – either psychological or physical – to study participants. They were, however, given the opportunity to explore and reflect on their sport practice. This knowledge offers, perhaps, "a small chance of knowing what game we play and of minimizing the ways in which we are manipulated by the forces of the field in which we evolve, as well as by the embodied social forces that operate from within us" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:198).

3. Quality of research

This study was designed in accordance with SSHRC research guidelines and the results presented in accordance with Université de Montréal doctoral thesis submission procedures. Both the principle researcher and project supervisor have formations in social science and have experience with qualitative investigation and analysis as well as with the application of social theory.

APPENDIX 4

INFORMATION TO RESPONDENTS

Title of study: The Social Signification of New Sport Practice: The Case of Adventure Racing

Principle researcher: Joanne Kay, département de kinésiologie, Université de Montréal
Project supervisor: Suzanne Laberge, département de kinésiologie, Université de Montréal

Objective of study :
To explore the values, tenets, patterns of production and consumption as well as the particular relationships and strategies among participants and race organizers that underscore social dynamics and transformations in AR. The results will constitute the content of my doctoral thesis and will be submitted for publication by academic press.

Study 'sample' :
Respondents have appeared on a published list of DCEC participants and participate in this study on a voluntary basis.

Interview procedure :
The interview will take the form of a tape-recorded semi-structured discussion, an 'open' and 'spontaneous'dialogue guided by myself according to specific pre-determined themes. You will be asked about your perceptions and interpretations of your own AR experience. You are encouraged to present your questions and concerns about the study as they arise. You may stop the recording of the interview at any time by either turning the recorder off or by asking me to do so. You may stop the interview at any time. You may review or change your response at any point in the future before submission of the results. If required, I will provide you with contact information for an ombudsperson at the University of Montreal.

Anonymity and confidentiality :
Respondents will not be identified by name except in circumstances where public information appears on the DCEC web-site or television broadcast. Audiocassettes will be kept in a secure location throughout analysis and will be destroyed upon acceptance of the submitted results.

Author bio

Joanne Kay received her Ph.D. in sport sociology from Université de Montréal. She holds an MA from McGill University and a BA from Concordia University, both in communication studies.

Her areas of research include new sport culture, media, gender and the corporate/sport complex. Her research has earned her a Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Council Fellowship as well as 'médaille d'or' (top 5 percentile) distinction for her doctoral thesis and the Barbara Brown Student Paper Award at the 2001 North American Society for the Sociology of Sport conference.

Kay has also been a member of Canada's elite national triathlon team. As a professional athlete, she has ranked top ten in international long-distance competition.