

## *Slowing* the Social Sciences of Sport: On the Possibilities of Physical Culture

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Paper submitted to the special issue of *Sport in Society* (16/04/13)

Revised & Resubmitted 15/08/13

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## ***Slowing* the Social Sciences of Sport: On the Possibilities of Physical Culture**

### **Abstract**

Within this paper, we address how the ‘knowledge market’ positions certain ways of knowing over others. We suggest that this questions the very worth and perceived value of the social sciences of sport, let alone allowing for discussion of the contemporary relevance, quality, position and potential impact of the field. To counter what we perceive as a regressive orthodoxy, we explore the dangers that can arise from narrowly conceived (yet often hegemonic) globally accepted structures, discourses and epistemes and suggest a *slow* counter: an approach couched in *slow pedagogy* and that can offer often competing approaches within the context of neoliberal educational rationalities. Through discussing how we have *negotiated* these conditions within our own institution, we propose what we imagine is a provocative vision of the potentialities of the field. In so doing, and while we are not suggesting this is the way ‘sport studies’ should or ought to be, we suggest that a *slow sports studies* can *open up* the critical potential of *the* field, promote democratic (body) knowledge, and ensure the University as a space for vibrancy, innovation, critique, debate and equality.

## *Slowing* the Social Sciences of Sport: On the Possibilities of Physical Culture

### I. Introduction

Within this paper, we address how the academic study of sport—in a similar fashion to other disciplinary enterprises—has become enmeshed within the dictates of neoliberalism; namely ‘logics’ of the market, privatization, efficiency, flexibility and the accelerated rationalization of society. Hence, we outline how these market considerations implicitly and explicitly privilege centrally controlled, efficiency oriented, rationally predictable, empirically calculable modes of knowledge generation and, ultimately, epistemologically restricted ways of knowing<sup>i</sup>. We propose that these processes not only further wed the ‘science of sport’, the University, and implicated subjects (students as well as Professors) to the logics of the capital, but give precedence to such concerns over, for instance, human needs, civic and moral responsibilities, public values and critique<sup>ii</sup>. This knowledge market, thereby, questions the very worth and perceived value of the social sciences of sport, let alone allowing for discussion of the contemporary relevance, quality, position and potential impact of the field. This is clearly alarming given that such non-rational and incalculable pedagogical outcomes are crucial foundations for democracy, political freedom and equality<sup>iii</sup>; yet they appear as apparently devalued in the ‘sciences of sport’ as in other formations of (higher) education. With Ritzer<sup>iv</sup>, we thus expose the *epistemological McDonaldization* evident with the sports sciences, which we argue has resulted in a field stymied by what elsewhere has been described as its “inconvenient truth”<sup>v</sup>; namely, the intellectually and humanity limiting scientific doxa apparent, and embodied within, the constitution of ‘sport’ departments, curricular, journals, and indeed, the academy itself<sup>vi</sup>. To be clear from the outset, this is not an attack on science *qua* science, rather an argument that attempts to break down real or perceived hierarchies and boundaries within the critical, academic study of sport and thereby open the field to a broader constitution of interests and possibilities. Indeed, our approach is not one that disavows the historically stated missions of particular institutions of higher education; but it is one that addresses the need to maintain (or resuscitate in places) the place of higher education in the production of democratic, civic, moral and critical knowledge<sup>vii</sup>. Within this paper, we thus unpack the sense of ‘privilege’ or ‘legitimacy’ afforded to certain types of sporting knowledge, and the dangers that can arise from narrowly conceived (yet often hegemonic) globally accepted structures, discourses and epistemes. To counter such blinkered orthodoxies, we propose that we ‘hold together’ the hard (fast) and soft (slow) sciences of sport; offering an approach that, we believe *opens up* the critical potentialities of *the* field, promotes democratic knowledge, and ensures the University as a space for vibrancy, innovation, critique, debate and equality.

In the balance of this paper, we argue that failure to fully acknowledge and support the contribution of socially, culturally, philosophically, and historically focused research and understanding, precludes the actualization of the expansive intellectual promise, impact, relevance and potentialities of the academic study of sport. Sport, as a field of academic study—and when we refer to ‘sport’ we are not just referring to an over-determined focus on elite professional sport, but including all manner of being ‘physical’ ranging from exercise, to movement, dance, physical activity and sport—can never be substantial (possessing some fixed, immutable essence), rather, it is unavoidably relational, and always in process. Its contemporaneous iteration provides a persuasive—if illusionary—semblance of fixity within what is, in actuality, an ever-changing world. As such, our argument in this paper is predicated on this very point: when we research, teach, read about, play, learn, engage with being physical we are not doing so in a manner isolated from a broad range of important social issues. Rather, in the broadest sense, the omnifarious planes of physicality represent a “pressure point of complex modern societies.<sup>viii</sup>” These planes are “sites” or “point(s) of intersection, and of negotiation of radically different kinds of determination and semiosis<sup>ix</sup>”; a place where social forces, discourses, institutions, and processes congregate, congeal, and are contested in a manner which contributes to the shaping of human relations, subjectivities, and experiences in particular, contextually contingent ways. In a more specific sense, contemporary representations of, for example, Paralympians are more than just an (advertising) image or snap shot. They are a carefully crafted assemblage of subjectivities and physicalities that articulate with a range of wider social phenomena and concerns ranging from access, privilege, spectacularisation, consumption, difference, diversity, hierarchies of disability, militarisation, terrorism and neoliberalism, governmental benefits, and social acceptance and understandings of disability/impairment. Such a representation then comprises a litany of “events”, moments that crystalize “diverse temporal and social trajectories<sup>x</sup>” through with individuals negotiate their own identities. Following Frow and Morris<sup>xi</sup>, the physical is thus a complex multi-layered site replete with numerous types of events that can and do ‘happen’—the product and producer of numerous overlapping systems and discourses (economic, political, aesthetic, demographic, regulatory, spatial) that creates a bewilderingly complex, and dynamic, coherent, social totality. As such, our critical investigations and our pedagogic practices cannot be limited to an understanding of sport or problems specific to sport (if there are any)—this would not do justice to the potentialities of the field. A critical ‘sports studies’ then is not just about the physically active/sporting body; it is, as Denzin<sup>xii</sup> argues, about the articulations between (in)active bodies and spaces of violence, global terror, neoliberal regimes, identity, self, gender, queer bodies of colour, bilingual belongings, and public education in globalizing times—it is about postcolonial intellectuals decolonizing the academy, freedom, social justice, border crossings, the voices of oppression, and democracy<sup>xiii</sup>. Further, we suggest that a *lean* and *mean* ‘sport science’, in which it is explicitly clear to see *whose knowledge counts*<sup>xiv</sup>

within the *prestige hierarchies* of the contemporary university, precludes the development of the field. This ultimately destabilizes the possibilities for higher education as a site of intellectual advancement, social justice and critical and autonomous thinking. That is, we propose that the epistemological hierarchy associated with a *McDonaldized* sports sciences is something that we all need to forsake, in favour of more epistemologically balanced, empirically wholesome, and intellectually stimulating fare: one which can do more than just reproduce the “contemporary landscape of political intelligibility and possibility”<sup>xv</sup>.

We thus tentatively sketch our thoughts on what a reinvigorated—or resuscitated—sports sciences might (not ought) to look like; an interdisciplinary field as both constitutor and constituent of a *critical curriculum of the corporeal*<sup>xvi</sup> that draws on a range of exciting and innovative methodologies, that provides the languages of, and possibilities for, a politically progressive, socially just and democratic citizenry. To do so, and following the emergence of the slow movement—initially conceived to counter the fast food movement and subsequently manifest in a number of social and cultural forms including slow tourism, gardening, fashion, art, and parenting—we suggest an alternative to what we describe as a dominant and fast ‘sports science.’ We argue that by not embracing slow science and slow pedagogy our field will not be able to realise its potential or indeed its impact. We suggest that we need time to read and to think, that our students need time to read and think and that collectively we need time to step back and reflect on ‘sport’ and unpack our physical worlds/being: and we frame this alternative in a discussion of what a slow sport curriculum and research agenda *might* (not ought) look like. We do not intend to present the *right way* or the *only way* of being/thinking in sports, but rather we offer a provocative and hopefully intellectually stimulating vision (fully ground in our own experiences). This paper thus aims to serve as stimulus for debate, critique and consideration within, and for, our field. This is a field of contestation, yet perpetual self-reflexive contemplation means it is a healthy, flourishing field in which the quality, position and relevance of the social sciences of sport can be ‘legitimately’ discussed and contemplated.

## II. Higher Education, Bare Pedagogy & McDonaldization

Ritzer’s<sup>xvii</sup> McDonaldization—ground in Weber’s<sup>xviii</sup> conceptualising of the iron cage of capitalism—captures the increased organizational bureaucratization and productive rationalization of human existence within modernizing capitalist societies. This iron cage traps, and represses, individuals in highly complex and rule-based organizational structures (they are bureaucratized), in which evermore aspects of their existence become productivity and goal-oriented (they are rationalized). Ritzer’s paradigmatic “iron cage” is, of course, the ubiquitous “Golden Arches” and as a processual metaphor, McDonaldization speaks to the organizing and rationalizing of the institutionalized production and delivery of products and services according to a set of profit-driven principles. These principles are based on: efficiency (the streamlining of production processes and the simplification of products and services); calculability (the belief that

things should be assessed by quantitative [objective] as opposed to qualitative [subjective] measures); control (increased influence of rules and regulations and non-human technologies over workers/consumers); and, predictability (the creation of institutionally standardized products and services).

As Ritzer, and numerous others have identified, the “Golden Arches” of bureaucratic and commercially rationalized efficiencies has crept out of the fast-food franchise and into all aspects of life, including the public university. Fully entrenched within academe are a series of discourses, power relations and ways of knowing framed around the rationalization of rationality<sup>xix</sup> which are manifest in the all too familiar ‘metrics’ that dominate the discourses and lived experiences of our everyday lives within our McDonaldized institutions<sup>xx</sup>. Our institutions of higher education, then, are invariably increasingly predicated on the McDonaldizing mantras of *efficiency* (e.g. doing more with less, leaner and meaner, replacement of tenured or permanent positions), *calculability* (measurement of ‘valued outcomes), *control* (over the curriculum and regulations) and *predictability* (standardized ‘products and services’).

Rather than underscored by democratic principles and practices that provide the conditions for future generations to confront the challenges of a global democracy<sup>xxi</sup>, a McDonaldized higher education is thus increasingly narrated in market terms: corporate culture subsumes democratic culture and critical learning is replaced by an instrumental logic that celebrates the imperatives of the bottom line, downsizing, and outsourcing<sup>xxii</sup>. Following Giroux’s<sup>xxiii</sup> formulation, and drawing on Agamben’s<sup>xxiv</sup> ‘bare pedagogy,’ academics become obsessed with grant writing, fund raising, and capital improvements, and higher education devalues “its role as a democratic public sphere committed to the broader values of an engaged and critical citizenry”<sup>xxv</sup> in place of performance managed and objective driven/oriented research trajectories.

As such, and as handmaiden to the ‘logics of the market’, higher education mimics the inequalities and hierarchies of power and ties public life and civic education to market-driven policies, social relations, values and modes of understanding<sup>xxvi</sup>. Within this rationalized McUniversity, research is guided only by the “controlling yardstick of profit [that] undermines the role of the university as a public sphere dedicated to addressing the most serious social problems a society faces”<sup>xxvii</sup>. Such commercially instrumentalized knowledge is declared *a priori* superior and undermines forms of theorizing, pedagogy, and meaning that define higher and public education as a public good<sup>xxviii</sup>. Dominant pedagogic practices within the corporate university thus become depoliticized and reduced to the status of training future students for the workplace—with ‘good value’ courses being those deemed ‘relevant’ in market terms<sup>xxix</sup>—and any knowledge that might challenge anti-democratic forms of power or that questions dominant social practices, values, power relations, and morals, is dismissed by administrators, students and their parents, seen as ornamental and *irrelevant* to gaining a foothold in the job market<sup>xxx</sup>. Indeed,

for Giroux<sup>xxxii</sup>, 'bare pedagogy' is one which deems compassion a weakness, scorns moral responsibility given it places human needs over market considerations, and "strips education of its public values, critical contents and civic responsibilities as part of its broader goal of creating new subjects wedded to the logic of privatization, efficiency, flexibility, the accumulation of capital and the destruction of the social state." As distinct as possible then from the historically stated mission of 'higher' education, and completely at odds with providing students with the skills and information necessary to think critically about the knowledge they gain, colleges and universities have become, or are increasingly perceived—and perceive themselves—as training grounds for corporate (and military<sup>xxxii</sup>) existence: a mere medium for sorting students and placing them into a pre-existing iniquitous social order<sup>xxxiii</sup>.

Ritzer proposes that irrationalities embedded in the quest for rationality lie at the heart of the McUniversity<sup>xxxiv</sup>. These 'damaging limitations' include: the treatment and positioning of students as consumers which has bought with it the spectre of grade inflation, student (and newspaper) 'ratings' of the faculty/department/university, administrative obsession with student retention rates, the removal of all but the most remedial barriers to student's securing the product which they consider themselves to have secured prior to the point of *purchase* (their degree), the neoliberal, managerial, and technocratic means for regulating and normalizing behaviour and inducing conformity within the profession, satisfying *necessary* requests for accountability, the demise of the tenure track professoriate, and its replacement by a corps of temporary-contracted, outsourced, low waged McProfessors with few benefits, intellectual closure in terms of both work practices of Faculty and the possibilities of agency,<sup>xxxv</sup> the standardization of curricula and course content in order that it can be more easily replicated globally, and the perversity of 'public access' (read open access) within the commercial logics of privatized university education<sup>xxxvi</sup>. The drawback of what Payne and Wattlow<sup>xxxvii</sup> term the "fast, take-away" world of higher education—characterized by the intensification of work and the increased time pressures—is the profound individual and collective cost to working conditions that have broader implications for the development of democratic and socially just knowledge and understanding within society as a whole. This 'speedy scholarship'<sup>xxxviii</sup> may well benefit university administrations who welcome the savings from not having to pay the *inflated* wages, pension contributions, and various other benefits, yet, it entails exploitative working conditions, unrewarding work, a high turnover of instructors, and an understandable decline in the number of people wishing to pursue careers in higher education. It produces a bare higher education that has led to educators making themselves *more calculable than memorable*<sup>xxxix</sup>. With Ball, the embodiment of this new academic ethos is the 'enterprising academic', who, drawing on Weber is a 'specialist without spirit'; a soulless cog sucked into the calculable vortex of contemporary knowledge generation and denied the possibilities to enable *people to think*. The very performance then of 'academia' has become subjectified—the very structures of domination have been

sedimented on the bodies of the McProfessoriate—with the realities of pedagogy practiced within the “constraining normativities of an increasingly corporatized academy”<sup>xli</sup>.

### III. The Pornographic Scientism of Sport

The McDonaldizing rational productivity ethos of liberal capitalist society has seemingly found its epistemic corroboration in the positivist objectivism that underpins the *scientific method*, as conventionally understood. Both are constituents and simultaneously constitutors of a particular understanding of modernity, centred around linear evolutionary assumptions pertaining to the (assumed) inexorable progress of human civilization through the advancement of empirically grounded—often a euphemism for quantitatively driven and objectively reasoned—science. Hence, the scientific hegemony presently in place within the contemporary university speaks less about the veracity of the scientific method *per se*, as it does about the political economy of the McDonaldized university, and the broader political, economic, cultural, and technological context in which the process of McDonaldization exists and operates<sup>xli</sup>. Science then, as a ‘reason of state’<sup>xlii</sup>, is not an epistemological accident: it is quintessentially reductionist and related to the needs of a particular form of economic organization based on exploitation, profit maximization and capital accumulation<sup>xliii</sup>. This is clearly a dangerous turn—not least given science can inflict violence in the name national security and development<sup>xliv</sup>—one that all but removes the *ethical referent* from the meaning, practice, and purpose of higher education and in which educating students to resist injustice, anti-democratic pressures or to learn how to make authority and power accountable, appears a receding horizon<sup>xlv</sup>.

Given that the McUniversity is, if nothing else, a pragmatic environment, it has responded to the corporate and “governmental manipulation of science” by reinforcing the primacy of “high-quality science”<sup>xlvi</sup>. In short, the meaning and purpose of higher education has become besieged by a phalanx of narrow economic and political interests<sup>xlvii</sup> that are often in the guise of funding bodies rewarding ‘gold standard high-science’ and in which the corporate brand is more important than any mission to educate free moral agents<sup>xlviii</sup>. Manifest in a pervasive grant culture, research areas are valued more for their funding potential and records than their intellectual impact and relevance. In short, primacy is afforded to rationally conceived, empirically grounded and objective research, while critical, interpretive, and reflexive forms of intellectualizing are devalued<sup>xlix</sup>. The ‘scientific knowledge’ that comes to dominate our institutions, then, is political through and through; a knowledge ground within our contemporary social and political conditions that authorize particular regimes of truth<sup>l</sup>. It is, as Dallas Rogers<sup>li</sup> suggests, about the politics of (and technocratic right to) placing boundaries about what can be counted as ‘truth’. In this climate, it is of little surprise that we come face to face with the aggressive push of evidence based “scientific” progress, policies and programs; a “dangerously naïve common-sense view on truth”<sup>lii</sup> that fails to recognize the political workings of power



which silently operate behind the mask of objectivity, inscribe rigid norms and standards that ensure political dominance, and set the agenda with regard to what questions about ‘truth’ can be asked and by whom. It is, quite simply, a mechanism of power that has co-opted and corporatized all aspects of learning (both the construction and understanding of learning) and re-interprets them as competition, privatization and profiteering<sup>liii</sup>.

The critical social science of sport thus sits in a precarious institutional position. The social sciences are under threat as an amalgam of neoliberal, neo-scientist and neo-conservative forces frame higher education, ‘safeguarding science’ and medicine at the expense of arts, humanities and the social sciences<sup>liv</sup>. Further, academics that research on ‘trivial’ or ‘pointless’ subjects, such as sport, are under increasing pressure to prove their work has ‘demonstrable economic impacts’<sup>lv</sup>. As such, the critical social study of sport sits, rather uncomfortably, at the confluence of two rather arid streams; our work has perhaps never been more vulnerable given its position at the nexus of two ghettoized (one empirical, one disciplinary) domains<sup>lvi</sup>. Within this scientific episteme, the very existence and continuance of our work is imperilled perhaps more than ever, particularly given the pervasive epistemological and methodological fundamentalism which fosters an aggressive push towards science defined by evidence based programmes, policies and practices<sup>lvii</sup> and which become seen as the sole avenue for ‘legitimate’ academic survival. The ‘pornography’<sup>lviii</sup> of the McUniversity has clearly materialized in sports studies, it is cheaply produced in a standardized and highly predictable form, it is outwardly seductive and appealing, it is popular and (ful-)filling. However, closer inspection reveals a bland and insubstantial structure—it offers anything but a balanced and healthy composite of the various food groups; it serves its immediate purpose, but offers nothing in terms of long-term benefits to the individual; it is far from the multi-ontologic (multiple ways of being physically) and multi-epistemic (there being numerous different forms of knowledge of physical activity/sport) field that it believes itself to be. The academic study of sport has been infused with one of the most significant *irrationalities* of higher education *rationality*: namely, an epistemological empirical calculability that, for the most part, has uncritically embraced the doctrines and standards of logical positivism<sup>lix</sup> and its correlative, constrictive curricular efficiency<sup>lx</sup>. Any ontological or epistemological position that may run counter to such a position and might enable students to develop critical and analytical skills that might hold power accountable (‘speak the truth to power’ in Edward Said’s parlance), or develop a sense of prophetic justice<sup>lxi</sup>, is usually viewed with suspicion at best, and outright hostility at worst. Those marginalized, stand-alone and ‘avant-garde scholars’ who exist on the periphery of the field are deemed to counter the ‘legitimate’ or normative forms of science against which their work is judged. In short, the science of sport is dominated by self-destructive reductionist science that (subconsciously) acts as an insidious corroborator of social and economic conditions that

privilege ‘state’ science<sup>lxii</sup>—science that is embedded within, and looks to expand, neoliberal, militarized, economic modes of governance and efficiency.

We perhaps should not be surprised by the pornographic (in the sense of its graphic and celebratory exposure) scientism of sport. Over 20 years ago, Alan Ingham and Peter Donnelly<sup>lxiii</sup> warned of “technocratic” scientific knowledge being privileged over humanistic knowledge. They suggested that while department’s may well tolerate or pay “lip service to the liberal education curriculum”, within the “contested terrain” of our field, the “humanistic intellectual” is habitually forced to view the (scientific) “technical intelligentsia” as an overbearing and resource-hogging adversary, as opposed to an ally. The “technological intelligentsia” however oftentimes consider “humanistic intellectualizing” to be a superfluous, and thereby expendable, trifle. The self-evident epistemological hierarchy—what we can term the epistemological violence<sup>lxiv</sup> that privileges specific “scientific” ways of knowing—has structurally and intellectually constrained the potential and relevance of the social science of sport in terms of realizing its aims of developing a truly integrative and interdisciplinary approach to the study of physical activity and thereby of society.

Alan Ingham, however, did not just empirically identify and cogently dissect this unfolding crisis of the bio-scientific and politically regressive turn in sports studies and its acquiescence to power, he also provided a compelling solution to it. He sought to counter the fragmentation of knowledge through the advancement of cross- and inter-disciplinary studies of practices in physical culture. Unfortunately, the rest of us, perhaps social scientists most pointedly, have not had the courage of Ingham’s convictions; rather, we find ourselves responsible and indeed culpable as we develop—or perhaps better put, manage the survival of—our own corners and programs within the context of our Departments. The academic study of sport and active physicality lends itself to inter-disciplinarity (in that it synthesizes and integrates elements of sociological, historical, anthropological, and philosophical analysis), yet the often unambitious nature of this inter-disciplinarity means that these carefully manicured corners do not challenge the epistemological violence of sport sciences. Rather, their form and existence effectively confirms the boundaries between the technological intelligentsia (the Cognitive Motor Neuroscience and Exercise Physiology research groups/clusters/silos) and humanistic intellectuals<sup>lxv</sup>.

The spectres of Ingham compel us to stress that neither bio-science nor humanities and social sciences, positivism nor post-positivism, quantitative nor qualitative approaches, should be fetishized over the other. We are not calling for any one ideology on the political spectrum to take over the University, however, following Giroux<sup>lxvi</sup> we are suggesting the need for our disciplines (and our institutions) to *take a stand* about the meaning and purpose of higher education; ensuring that the critical academic study of sport does not become another site in which teaching becomes “confused with training, militarism or propaganda”<sup>lxvii</sup>. With Garbutt and Offord<sup>lxviii</sup>, we point to the compelling and urgent need for scholarship/pedagogy that is

activated by ethical imperatives and concerns; a form of pedagogy that can consider relations of freedom, authority, democratic knowledge and responsibility<sup>lxix</sup> and which can do justice to the diverse narratives, issues, histories, experiences and contexts we are likely to encounter as part of the pedagogical process<sup>lxx</sup>. The section below is one such—admittedly idealistic, embryonic and incomplete—attempt to demonstrate the quality, position and relevance of the critical academic study of sport as a space in which to conduct research and educate students in the

spirit of a critical democracy by providing [students and academics] ... with the knowledge, passion, civic capacity, public value, and social responsibility necessary to address the problems facing the nation and the globe ... [an approach that challenges] the existence of rigid disciplinary boundaries, the cult of expertise or highly specialized scholarship unrelated to public life, and anti-democratic ideologies that scoff at the exercise of academic freedom<sup>lxxi</sup>.

It is an approach that counters the legitimacy of *just* evidence-based scientism; we are at pains to point out that this is not a defensive attack on science *qua* science rather, it is an expression of concern for our field / society if we allow prestige hierarchies to mature in the academic study of sport. To condone—or better put, to pander to—the pornography of evidence-based scientism in sports studies, compromises, if not neuters, everything that we, as critical intellectuals strive for and believe in; it is a powerful virus of sorts that speaks against our ontological, axiological, epistemological, methodological and political approaches. It is, in the words of Zygmunt Bauman<sup>lxxii</sup>, the latest rendition of a society that has stopped questioning itself, a force that legitimates and essentially concretizes a form of ‘science’ that serves industry, the economy and existing power blocs, yet ignores, for the most part, the most pressing social problems of our time. This is clearly a dangerous turn and one that all but removes the *ethical referent* from the meaning and purpose of higher education,<sup>lxxiii</sup> and we are, following Said, not willing to allow the university to become just another space in which citizens “have been left to the hands of ‘free’ market forces and multinational corporations”.<sup>lxxiv</sup> Too often, however, as academics (perhaps especially those in the social sciences), we have been silent or have articulated our grievances and problematized the conditions of researching, publishing and teaching with ‘familiar others.’ Continuing to remain silent, as Denzin<sup>lxxv</sup> suggests, is simply to be in collusion with immoral and unjust conditions that frame higher education. Whilst we claim to be incited by a richer understanding of sport and the physical we often refrain from expanding and elaborating on the need to locate our work within the nexus of dialogues—originating as they do from the field of sports studies itself and the higher education sector more broadly—that expressly seek to reengage with an invigorated focus on sport, physical culture, health and the body (the field), at precisely the time when our outputs and the expectations upon our teaching are sites of continuous scientific scrutiny. As such, within what follows, we unpack the potentialities of politically motivated research and critical pedagogies of physicality/embodied experiences in a

way that pushes for, and advances, a productive project for sports studies. Building on our critique of prestige hierarchies in McEducation, we want to interrogate further the notion that there exists any form of “evidence that matters” by calling for a (re)turn to—or indeed democratizing of—the “body that matters.” With others who have recognized and embraced the (physical) cultural turn<sup>lxxvi</sup> within our critical inquiries into gender, race, class, (dis)ability, queer studies (to name but a few) we argue that the body should be the focal point for the entire spectrum of our academic endeavours. This not only includes critical scholarship of the cultural politics of the body, but is germane to the kaleidoscopic possibilities of sporting research, teaching, knowledge and methodological trajectories that seek to understand the (in)active and (un)healthy body as fully bound with relations of power.

#### **IV. Towards a New Language of Physical Cultural Possibilities**

Pace Bairner,<sup>lxxvii</sup> who calls for a strengthening of the sociology of sport, we foster an interdisciplinary approach—one centred on the physical (in)active body—that aims to understand sport and physical activity as important ‘sites’ through which social forces, discourses, institutions and processes congregate, congeal and are contested in a manner that contributes to the shaping of human relations, subjectivities, and experiences in particular, contextually contingent ways. Following Denzin,<sup>lxxviii</sup> a “critical sports cultural studies” needs a new language and curriculum of possibility; a morally centred and critically informed dialogue focused on human rights, history and politics. He continues, “an embodied sports studies project *that matters* must locate the body with a radically contextual politics. It must focus on the active, agentic flesh-and-blood human body”<sup>lxxix</sup>, it must re-establish a relationship to the body that imagines embodiment as a site of pedagogic possibility—one that questions normalized cultural narrations of embodied existence<sup>lxxx</sup>. Furthermore, we need, following Denzin,<sup>lxxxi</sup> to construct within our discussions, our research and our pedagogies a utopian imaginary, a radical democratic present, a safe and sheltered place where the shackles of neoliberalism are cast aside and where consumer culture / (discursive) militarization is held in abeyance. To do so, we need to read outwards from sporting bodies and we need to situate these stories within the historical present, and open up a space for utopian imaginaries; a place where the inconvenient truths of a global sporting culture are exposed and then reconfigured within a radical democratic present.<sup>lxxxii</sup> Again, following Denzin whose recent musings on sporting culture perhaps more evocatively and succinctly offers a directional purview for our efforts as scholars, we need to ensure that these voices/stories are critical, humane discourses, spaces in which people can express and give meaning to the tragedies in their lives<sup>lxxxiii</sup>. This is a space which works back and forth, connecting the personal, the political, and the cultural and that will help people think critically, historically, and sociologically and expose the pedagogies of oppression that produce and reproduce injustice. It will critique the ideological discourses of the media—embedded as they are with neoliberalism, war, patriotism,

‘democracy’ and so on—and foster conversations with practitioners and others ‘beyond academe’ to create a new discourse from a coalition of voices that reimagine citizenship, human rights, democracy, and well-being. This is work that will require a suite of critical, interpretive methodologies that can help us make sense of bodies/lives; critical methodologies that “exhibit interpretive sufficiency; ... [are] free of racial, class, gender, or sexual stereotyping; rely on multiple voices; enhance moral discernment; and promote social transformation.”<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

This is, if you like, the point of departure for an interdisciplinary and productive project of the physically active body that enacts an interventionist, reflexive, dialogic and *slow* pedagogic agenda; one that is both engaging and invigorating for researchers and students alike as it centralizes the performance of the physical and destabilizes taken for granted forms of knowledge/‘data’. Building on the work of Brophy and Hladki<sup>lxxxv</sup> and Titchkosky<sup>lxxxvi</sup>, such a corporeal curriculum can help in reshaping understandings of (ab)normalcy, wellness, inclusion/exclusion, the presence/absence of the body and its representations. With Rose<sup>lxxxvii</sup>, this is a curriculum that recognizes the realities of our fleshly nature and examines the possibilities and constraints that flow from it. To be clear at this juncture however, this is a position that is predicated on an understanding that to truly grasp, and ultimately intervene into, physical sporting cultures we must recognise that we are involved in a series of connections between the banal (an instance of sport, physical culture) and wider social forces. In this way, sport becomes an “event,” almost in an abstract sense that represents a potential important focus of critical inquiry (in as much as it is implicated in hierarchical, iniquitous, unjust power relations and effects). Thus follows a process of connecting/articulating this “event” to the multiple material and ideological determinations which suture the event—in a dialectic sense—into the conjuncture of which it is a constituent element. This commitment to, and practice of, articulation thus involves “starting with the particular, the detail, the scrap of ordinary or banal existence, and then working to unpack the density of relations and of intersecting social domains that inform it” (Frow & Morris, 2000, p. 354). This is a practice that involves what Fine (1994) has termed ‘working the hyphen’; thinking reflexively about the various points of critical consciousness that can attach the lives of the private individuals, the texts, the institutions who form the essence of our scrap of ordinary to structures (e.g., racial, gendered, economic, national, global) in our efforts to understand the physical, transform public consciousness, and, common sense. In this regard, it becomes absolutely non-sensical to think of concerns that are endemic just to sporting worlds (or likewise, concerns that are not manifest in various sporting / physical worlds). For example, and to refer back to our discussion in the introduction regarding Paralympic representations, it would be remiss to focus purely on the achievements of those overcoming impairments and supposed legacies of increased access and disability sport participation without extending consideration to how the disabled body is a ‘site’ for the celebratory discourses of consumption / empowerment and how such narratives are

interconnected with wider, historically located, structures, relations and experiences. In this regard, and rather than insular or somehow separate from wider social concerns, our approach needs to ensure that such discourses / experiences are held to academic scrutiny that involves connecting, or articulating with, for example, wider social phenomena and concerns ranging from neoliberal commodification, mediation, bodily differences, diversity and hierarchies, the contested re-deployment of the wounded soldier as epitome of nation, the governance and regulation of disability, and how such concerns intersect with the cultural politics of the body (such as gendered, raced, sexual and classed body politics) to name but a few.

As this one brief example suggests, we are proposing a curriculum that takes us beyond 'bare pedagogy' as an instrument of neoliberal legitimization; it requires slowing down and reflection. It is one, following Giroux<sup>lxxxviii</sup>, that provides students with pedagogical practices that create a formative culture and safe space for development of humanistic bodily knowledges, technical knowledge, scientific skill and a mode of literacy that enables them to engage and transform (when necessary) the promise of a global democracy<sup>lxxxix</sup>. Necessarily interdisciplinary in nature, the field needs to embrace a fluid methodological toolbox (placing the gold-standard of scientism on an equal footing with a suite of interpretive methodologies that can make the physical 'visible' and 'palpable'<sup>xc</sup>) and degree design needs to reflect the evolution of critical thought; develop a repertoire of approaches and perspectives and be underpinned by interventionist and change agendas that produce practical and applicable knowledge. Our project—that unavoidably and purposefully combines research and teaching—centres the tacit, sensuous body (including our own), its fleshy sinews, its movement and its (in)activity in our research, teaching, knowledge and methodological trajectories. It is one that resounds with the messiness of reflexivity and empirical vulnerability as we place, or articulate, the body purposefully within our scholarly practices and forward inquiries that look to redefine the boundaries of knowledge production<sup>xcii</sup>. In this sense, and conducive with Giardina and Newman<sup>xcii</sup>, through the study of body cultures and body politics (as opposed to one obsessed with, well the fastest, highest, strongest) it becomes a project that takes seriously a wider cultural politics and contextualizes the physical within power relations of the past, the present, and the potentialities of the future. In this regard, our suggestive approach explicates the noticeable impact of corporeal movement, contact, proprioceptive politics that problematize the mythologies of scientific research paradigms and bring to the fore more creative and innovative approaches that seemingly elicit or allow for a *fuller exposition of the cultures of the body* that are being experienced<sup>xciii</sup>. Centralising the body, in the sense that it is allowed to move, gesture, exercise, dance, present, perform, work and so on, inevitably means an entanglement of the embodied, emplaced<sup>xciv</sup>, cognitive and epistemological.

To destabilise the centre and thus challenge (or at least slow down) such a regressive orthodoxy, we need pedagogies, curricula and projects that counter, and co-exist alongside

(however uncomfortably) positivistic scientific—read McEducation—doxa and we propose instead a more democratic, anti-reductionist approach that centres on an active, pedagogical, ethical and moral axiology—a *slow sports studies* if you like. It is a project that may well require rethinking our roles and responsibilities as ‘professionals’, having conversations with yet to be imagined parties, stepping outside the halls of academe and working with and for communities, artists, activists. It might just require leaving behind all that is academically agreeable, and, informed by Said, rediscovering *amateurism in intellectual life*<sup>xcv</sup>. Above all, the centralizing of the body (that matters and moves) enables interdisciplinary, methodological and theoretical fluidity and creates the conditions and possibilities for more equitable understandings of social/sporting life. The academic study of sport can, and should, be contributing to a range of conversations about gender-based violence and sexual health for disadvantaged women in the global south, healthcare provision among ‘excluded’ or ‘marginalized’ populations, the neoliberal governance of the body, the pathologized or abject body, immigration, racisms, personal identity, citizenship, freedom, patriotism, justice, democracy, perpetual war, violence, terror, global social relations, political struggle, sporting bodies, class relations, bodies in (urban) spaces, (trans)gender bodily politics, and so on<sup>xcvi</sup>. A *slow sports studies* centred on democratic values, identities and practices, Miller and Ahluwalia<sup>xcvii</sup> suggest, requires recognizing that the social sciences and the humanities are vital, for they provide the space for us to be absolutely clear about the critical importance, distinctiveness and impact that education can have upon our societies. In this formulation, and in direct contrast to the dictates of McDonalidized institutions of higher education, *slow sport* becomes a space for students to “embrace pedagogical encounters as spaces of dialogue and unmitigated questioning, to imagine different futures, to become border crossers establishing a range of new connections and global relations, and to embrace a language of critique and possibility that responds to the urgent need to reclaim democratic values, identities and practices”<sup>xcviii</sup>.

At this juncture, we turn briefly to how we are embracing this project at the University of Bath; about how we have worked with colleagues in the hard sciences and University administrators and have fought—sometimes with, and sometimes without, success—for the legitimacy and value of critical, interpretive, and reflexive forms of intellectualizing in sport<sup>xcix</sup>. We need to be clear that we do not hold up our own scholarship and approach to the curriculum at the university as the only way *to be* in academe (a potentially dangerous proposition lest we be accused of declaring a state of affairs that is not in the spirit of a democratic turn). Rather, following Sparkes<sup>c</sup>, ours is an effort to initiate dialogue that responds to the perils of our field in a climate of neoliberal audit culture and public management (which we unpacked earlier as a McDonalidized higher education). The other option is to succumb, sink into despair or oblivion or become a docile McProfessoriate worshipping a rationalized—and thereby reductive—sport agenda as the triumphal paean of neoliberalism. Our work has been, and continues to be

motivated by a commitment to a progressive and democratic social science of sport; one underscored by an unequivocal “commitment to progressive social change”<sup>ci</sup>, and which struggles to produce the type of knowledge through which we are in a position to intervene into the broader social world, and *make a difference*. This emerges from both the research projects we undertake and in the redesign of our curricula: two areas of an academics work which are often discussed separately, but which we do not see, in any way, as mutual opposites. Rather, our curriculum and pedagogic practices are research informed, and increasingly, our research is informed by the voices and concerns of our students. Grounded within a physical cultural studies sensibility<sup>cii</sup> that conceptualizes sport broadly, decoupling the noun from narrow over-determined ‘elite’ meanings the curriculum calls for critical engagement with all forms of physical activity, movement, exercise, sport and dance; if you like, all forms of ‘physical culture.’ It centralizes social justice and looks to undertake the hard work involved in forging relationships with policy-makers and (less traditional) funding bodies. The development of the curricular and research group has involved having very difficult conversations among ourselves, with senior administrators and with other academics related to the production of work *for* policy, about where we should focus our efforts (and what that may mean for our ‘careers’), and, our ability to *speak truth to power*. It has been about delving deeply into our souls, our consciousness as researchers and pedagogues, debating whether we should follow the next pot of money, or if we should attempt to remain true to the ontological and epistemological core of the approach we have sketched above (which then opens us to even more soul searching with regard to who we think we are in *setting* an agenda and delineating which projects are in any sense worthy, and to whom!). It has been a time dominated by us, as self-reflexive academics, engaging in a form of embodied academic performativity that, at one and the same time, is grounded within the context of our institution and of higher education, yet which enables us to hold on to the principles of democratic knowledge production. It has been, and continues to be, a space in which we need to *negotiate* principles *and* pragmatism, an institutionalised market ethos *and* our anti-/post-capitalist sensibilities, one of anomie *and* compromise, politics *and* Politics, tolerance *and* alienation, conformity *and* creativity, deference *and* the strategic decentering of academic prestige hierarchies. Born out of these complex negotiations, our project needs to be about ‘crossing borders’<sup>ciii</sup>, having conversations with—and often holding together the very different demands of—charity workers, artists, activists, peace workers, social workers, development workers, policy-makers, educators, University managers, students, grant funding bodies; it often requires rethinking the very roles of academe<sup>civ</sup>. None of these conversations, moralising or self-reflexive ruminations have been easy; all take place within the confines of an institution that is grounded within a STEM<sup>cv</sup> agenda, takes great pride in its associations with elite sporting performance and which makes no pretence about the import it places on metrics, technocratic performance indicators, accountability and league table positioning. Yet, within that climate, and in part because of this



climate, the institution has afforded us both the space, and the resource, to develop our curriculum and research trajectory and has enabled us—and at times actively encouraged us—to begin to demonstrate the importance, relevance, position and *impact* of an interdisciplinary approach to the academic/social study of sport—a position that, importantly, has encouraged a fascinating self-reflexive turn among our colleagues in sport and exercise science whose work has moved closer to ours in an attempt to demonstrate social and economic impact and develop an inter-disciplinary agenda focussed on well-being across the lifespan.

Within that context, we have found a small space in which to *mobilize the body* and begin what we hope is a just, moral, democratic and pedagogic project that encourages the production of critical, reflexive, creative and innovative sporting knowledges. We are engaged in research that, for example: addresses the design of gender based violence and sexual health interventions for disadvantaged women in the global south; involves working with public agencies and policy makers (such as the Baltimore Dept. for Health and healthcare providers in Bristol) to address (often perceived) spatial barriers to physical activity among ‘excluded’ African-American populations and older adults respectively; that exposes the disposability of bodies not deemed relevant to urban regeneration projects integral to mega-event planning and delivery; projects that intervene into the lived experiences of bodily disfigurement and aid in our understandings of disability, well-being and mental health; that addresses the role of social media technologies as they pertain to knowledge on health, well-being and medicalization across the lifespan; that speak out to the marketing practices of the food industry as they pertain to the constitution of normalized and abject (fat) bodies; that embark on the production of artistic representations of research on pathologised obese bodies; that develop critical corporeal curriculums that privilege the voice of young people alongside the researcher; that engage with National Governing Bodies when examining the exploitation of young elite athletes in sporting academies; that speak to the well-being of athletes related to drug-testing; that influence policy with respect to social interventions and physical activity in schools; the preservation of heritage environments in ‘smart growth’ urban spaces in Asia; and work that explores the sexualisation of young (pre-school and tweenage) bodies through media and consumption discourses and material expressions of neoliberal play. In essence, this is ‘research’ that addresses sport and physical activity as diverse experiential forms through which physically active human bodies are organized, regulated, trained and consumed, and therefore critically appreciates the significance and relevance of sport as an effective vehicle for critically examining issues in the context of the wider social, economic, and political environments. It is thus research that can speak to a range of pressing social concerns and which has social justice at its very heart—research that we feel should be judged in terms of its quality according to its commitment to non-foundational judgment criteria<sup>evi</sup> and which positions the critical academic study of sport as not just relevant, but as a space for active intervention given the pre-eminence of sport as a cultural form, crucial to addressing social

problems and troubles.

Notably, and not unrelatedly, these concerns have been central to the design of our curriculum at Bath. We have built a team of scholars (over the last 5 years) whose work addresses these very concerns, takes them out of the halls of academia, championing public engagement and impacting upon the discussions that can be enabled in the classroom. Still, there remain multiple tensions that frame the curriculum and our pedagogical practice on the revised undergraduate BA (Hons) Sport & Social Sciences programme at Bath (see figure one for programme specifications). Commencing in 2012, the revised programme<sup>cvii</sup> draws upon a variety of theoretical knowledges—sociology, health, psychology, cultural studies, media studies, urban studies, history, gender studies, critical race theory, pedagogy, international development, social policy, political science, cultural geography, management—and has been specifically designed to address a number of perhaps competing demands, including the production of democratic, socially just citizens and employees that can operate within the ‘sports industry.’

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

We take teaching seriously and deem it to be crucial to the future shape and direction of the relevance of both the academic study of sport and of the fields into which our graduates populate. Nevertheless, this in and of itself can serve to further reinforce the epistemological violence and pornography of McDonaldised education in two interrelated ways: first, it characterizes the bio-scientific *grantsman* as possessing an inherent disdain or disregard for teaching (which may or may not be the case), and, second, it positions humanities and social science scholars as a reverse category—as individuals who need (for their very institutional existence) to recognize their role as teachers first, and researchers second, if at all. The danger here of course is of a demeaning and ultimately deleterious form of academic patronage; rather than the generation of significant grant funding, the only valued contribution comes through teaching and serves to legitimate the treatment of the social sciences as an area that needs to be taught (although not necessarily ‘valued’ by our ‘customers’) but not invested in as productive and valued research.<sup>cviii</sup>

Second, and predicated upon consumerist expectation, exists the troublesome notion among our student body that effort and energy are all that is required to buy a ‘first-class degree’, a *product*. Such sentiments clearly rub against (although do not necessarily have to) forms of sporting knowledge that could promote democracy or foster socially just knowledge and understanding within society as a whole. We have found it very hard, within a highly competitive marketplace for students, to remain true to such values while at the same time serving a student body who, at university open days where they make choices about which universities to attend, ask questions about employability, about potential income post-graduation and about how we

will aid them plug into an existing political and economic order (or more accurately, their parents ask these questions). We also find it increasingly difficult to ensure diversity within the classroom when the possibilities of a higher education (at least in the UK) are increasingly foreclosed for anyone other than the middle/upper-classes<sup>ix</sup>.

In our efforts to overcome—or *negotiate*—these tensions we have engaged in, perhaps somewhat counter-intuitively, active relationships with employers. This has been through the establishment of an industry panel with whom we discuss issues related to assessment, course content and whom provide placement (and often graduate employment) opportunities for our students. To enhance employability of our students we position ourselves as a programme that will not produce clones or a production line of potential employees (e.g. an ‘off the shelf’ PE teacher, sports development worker, sports marketer, policy-maker or coach) that will be productive and functional and enter into an existing corporate order. Rather, we argue, that the Bath social science sports graduate will be one who will not only be relevantly skilled in the employment pathway that they choose (through defining optional choices within the curriculum that lead to certain career trajectories) but will be students who have engaged in transformative (as opposed to processual) knowledge and thinking, who have undertaken critical learning (as opposed to followed an instrumental logic that celebrates the bottom line), who have at the heart of the subject matter broad values of democracy and who have engaged with critical sporting pedagogies that draw attention to the production of knowledge and subjectivities and that link learning with social justice and social change<sup>ix</sup>. We aim for the curriculum to be one that provides the educational conditions that allow for behaviour to unfold and which offers skills for thinking critically about knowledge production (and we have been overwhelmed with the support we have received from employers who have heralded the approach and the transferable and creative skills which our students bring to the workplace) and resources for creatively realising and disseminating this knowledge (we have, for instance, been resourced to procure digital technologies to develop a Connected Learning Lab that will provide skills for twenty-first century employability). This, we hope, is far from just ‘job training’ and about producing productive and functional employees; it is about producing skilled critical employees (and citizens) who have at their core concerns of equity, equality and democracy and who we hope will make their chosen professions (and society) ‘better’ (to deliberately rework an overused Lawrence Grossberg phrase). Yet even so, we are bemoaned within the institution for a focus on employability and for an ethic of care for our students (when it is our research that should *really matter*).

Further, within a climate in which the entry profile of students (the higher the grades, the better) matters for University metrics (e.g. league tables), we have had to make difficult decisions about who is admitted to our undergraduate programme. Unsurprisingly, good post-16 entry grades map onto good post-16 schools and this in turn maps onto social and economic privilege. As a result, University students (in the UK) who attend ‘top’ ranked universities come

from an ever-diminishing number of ‘good’ schools with an ever-decreasing diversity. We have actively resisted this pattern—even though it positions us within our own institution as somewhat inferior to those programmes that will only take the very best students—given the benefits of a socially diverse classroom. In one sense, we actually tick a box for the university, in terms of reaching its ‘widening participation’ (WP) targets (these are set by the central government to enhance access among disadvantaged populations). Yet, at the same time, and with little resource following these WP students, the well-meaning and intentioned Sport & Social Sciences (Mc)professoriate become overwhelmed by the support required by such ‘non-traditional students’—support that is not only time-consuming (albeit exceptionally worthwhile) but further positions such staff as *teachers first*.

Finally, and most importantly, the curriculum we have established on the BA Sport & Social Sciences programme aims to provide a space and opportunity to de- and re-construct taken for granted bodily forms of knowledge. As the body becomes centralized so we are required to move between and decentre discourses of privilege and the margins. This movement is predicated on a simultaneous shifting between research pedagogies, teaching pedagogies and the physical that makes salient the discursive currents of age, gender, society, education, race, class, ethnicity, religion, (dis)ability that converge and permeate upon cultural spaces/‘sites.’ In so doing we thrust body pedagogies<sup>cxii</sup> and body texts (in Fusco’s parlance) into the core of our studies, our curriculum and into the life-worlds of those our research and teaching impacts—including, but not restricted to, our colleagues, peers, participants, the public and our students. We do so through holding together some quite divergent aims: the delivery of a research-informed curriculum which both takes into account the future employability of our students (as discussed above) and a commitment to democracy and social justice and a deep belief in interdisciplinarity given *any* single perspective is laden with assumptions, blindness, and limitations, produces a naïve overspecialization, and is often imbued with elitist dimensions of dominant cultural knowledge techniques<sup>cxiii</sup>. As such, we attempt to deliver units on the programme that provide space for elastic conversations about the ways in which knowledge can be developed, about individuals contributing to a more democratic whole and about how as a field we can contribute to wider societal debates. This requires thematic units which do not rely on a single discipline or theoretical assumption and in which views from history, sociology, cultural studies, psychology, gender studies, urban studies, media studies, critical race theory, politics, geography and so on can come to bear on our *understandings of physical culture as it articulates with policy, management, pedagogies, the cultural economy, youth cultures, corporeal physicality, power, and discourses of health and well-being*. More specifically, this involves a curriculum that reflects on sport and physical culture relational to a gamut of issues, not exclusively limited to: globalisation and (international) development; (un)healthy and physically (in)active bodies; mental health; abuses of power; the discursive constitution of the body; bio-pedagogies; an understanding of the ways in which the

sporting body is imbued with power relations; issues of surveillance, security, and governance within our city spaces and popular sporting texts; militarisation and terrorism; the specificities of clinical populations; cultural technologies (such as the internet, social media, popular and promotional cultures); social inequalities and social justice; ethics; the economic and political rationalities of neoliberalism and neoconservatism; and, the discursive constitution of bodies, health and well-being. It involves, within these units, the very careful use of theory as a resource to think and act, that allows us to situate sporting texts within historical and institutional contexts, and that can aid in allowing students to create the conditions for collective struggles over resources and power and where needed mobilize instances of collective outrage against material inequalities as they are manifest in our sporting worlds.<sup>cxiii</sup> Furthermore, it requires a range of innovative and pedagogical and methodological practices and approaches that can aid in breaking down taken for granted assumptions, reifying power structures and entrenched inequalities, unpacking deeply embedded sporting experiences, and bringing alive the reflective, questioning and imaginations of our student to enable a language of critique and possibility that speaks to democratic values and morally just identities and practices. Within (and across) these units, we provide multiple opportunities, spaces and possibilities where the body, materially and discursively, is ‘put to work’ within what we hope is an innovative, creative, and often individually designed *corporeal curriculum*. These spaces include, for example, presentations, performance art, narrative writing, integration of innovative digital creativity, exhibitions, developing online personas and platforms that consider alternative realities and more equitable public/bodily pedagogies.

Our approach *necessitates* working with our colleagues in sport and exercise science (rather than cowering in the comfort of our silos), to ensure that we are part of a coterie of sport degree options at Bath; one which gives the student choice and flexibility and can allow them to garner insights and input from as many different theoretical perspectives as possible, all the while allowing for a developing focus that will position the student as a critical and ‘better’ graduate/employee/citizen. We can, for sure, do far better than we have done as we grapple with these tensions; yet, at this juncture, in just the second year of the revised programme there are clear areas in which we are achieving some success (such as in employability and student ‘rankings’ of satisfaction) yet others where there is clear work to be done (such as in furthering interdisciplinary links across the social/hard sciences, or in ‘marketing’ a cohesive ‘sport’ offering at the institution). We would do well here to follow Rose<sup>cxiv</sup> with respect to his call for us to “accept that the social and human sciences are also sciences of the living, of living bodies, of living matter, of matter that has been made to live;” a recognition that may aid our disciplines to help remake our human world for the better.

## V. Coda: ‘Slowing Down’ the Social Sciences of Sport

Although only briefly delineated, what we hope to have shown is a requisite to snatch back the body and situate it as an integral part of the contextual and democratic social sciences of sport that are theoretically rigorous, dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and implicitly ground in an incentive to intervene, exchange and transfer knowledge in dynamic, illuminating and meaningful ways. Again, we feel it important to reiterate the point that we are, in no way promoting our project or approach as a panacea for the social sciences of sport. Rather, it has emerged from unique, historical and contextual conditions; and we have been extremely fortunate to have been given both the latitude, encouragement and space to consciously develop our trajectory. Other institutions will likely have different concerns, tensions and approaches. For us at Bath, what we do hold central are concerns about harnessing and being accountable to a moral, democratic and ethical agenda and bringing it to bear on the research/pedagogic process<sup>cxv</sup>. We are thus about the body, the moving body and mobilizing the body within research, teaching practice and curriculum design. Ours is thus a research/teaching project ground in an “ethos of experimentation”<sup>cxvi</sup>, which, in name and intent, requires a complimentary synthesis of epistemologies if it is to realize its diverse and multi-faceted empiricism: a project which can contribute towards reason, understanding, dialogue, and critical engagement for both faculty and students<sup>cxvii</sup> and is informed by democratic imperatives of equality, liberty and justice.

A critical self-reflexive sports studies is one that can free itself from the shackles of academic Darwinism, and challenge hegemonic orthodoxies in facilitating an expansion of knowledge and the democratic sphere. Of course, we have only suggested tentatively what such an alternative might look like—and we are sure that we have not got this right as yet. But, in providing a space for critical reflection—rather than the production of more of the same sporting knowledge—we are edging towards what crafting

a morally centered, critically informed dialogue focused on human rights, history, and politics ... [which can] help us imagine a sports cultural studies that will interrupt history. A sports studies that will not stand silent when a nation rushes to war. A sports studies that creates a moral discourse that challenges official versions of political reality. A sports studies that challenges the ways political administrations manipulate information and produce regimes of fear and terror. This is a sports studies that argues for a politics of truth that answers to enduring issues concerning what is just<sup>cxviii</sup>.

Our intent is to offer ways of seeing and interpreting through engagement with alternative ontological, epistemological, ideological, political, and methodological approaches to

the study of the active human body—in all its multiple and iterative forms. In direct contrast to the culture of speed that provides the contemporary context for the McUniversity—drawing on the Slow Food Manifesto that proposes we are enslaved by speed, a fast-life of fast food that is stripped of its nutritional values and cultural connections—we embrace what Hartman and Darab<sup>cxix</sup> term a slow pedagogy that can offer often competing approaches within the context of neoliberal educational rationalities<sup>cxix</sup>. Slowing down, they argue, is a form of critical praxis that challenges the orthodoxies of speedy pedagogy and thereby provides the space and time for engaging with ideas, deep reflection, experiential learning, reflexivity, critical insight, creativity and innovation. It is perhaps in *slowing down*—and by offering a *slow sports studies*—that we can best address the challenges required to ensure the quality, position and relevance of the critical academic study of sport.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*.

<sup>ii</sup> Giroux, *Bare Pedagogy*

<sup>iii</sup> Brown, *Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-democratisation*.

<sup>iv</sup> Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*.

<sup>v</sup> Andrews, *Kinesiology's Inconvenient Truth* and Silk et al, *McKinesiology*.

<sup>vi</sup> There are various monikers applied to the loose conglomeration of disciplines that make up the field of the 'sports sciences'. In the UK it is more common to use the term Sports Studies or somewhat more tellingly, Sport & Exercise Sciences, while in Australia, Human Movement Studies is the preferred terminology, in the US Kinesiology has been instantiated as the name for this discipline. While there are variations in aim and scope—the field is realized in different places and locations as a multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and very rarely, transdisciplinary project—it is an academic discipline, with varying intensities and emphases, that draws from biology, psychology, sociology, philosophy and includes multiple sub-disciplinary areas (e.g., biomechanics, sport history, exercise physiology, sport pedagogy) (see Gill, *Integration*). However, this is a far from integrated field. Indeed, in its current iteration, it is a field fraught with hyperfragmentation and hyperspecialization in which there is instantiated an epistemological hierarchy that privileges positivist over postpositivist, quantitative over qualitative, and predictive over interpretive ways of knowing (see Andrews, *Kinesiology's Inconvenient Truth*)

<sup>vii</sup> see also Sparkes, *Qualitative research*

<sup>viii</sup> Frow & Morris, *Cultural Studies*, 352.

<sup>ix</sup> *ibid*

<sup>x</sup> *ibid*

<sup>xi</sup> *ibid*

<sup>xii</sup> Denzin, *Afterword*.

<sup>xiii</sup> see e.g. Newman, *Full throttle Jesus* and Silk and Andrews, *Sport and Neoliberalism*.

<sup>xiv</sup> Ingham and Donnelly, *Whose Knowledge Counts*.

<sup>xv</sup> Brown, *Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and de-democratization*, 693.

<sup>xvi</sup> This curriculum is not conceived in relation to nor restricted to (higher) education but in fact is somewhat more of an incitement to centre the body within teaching *and* researching practices—a necessary blending of the two. For further discussion of the corporeal curriculum and research methodology see Francombe (forthcoming) *Methods that Move*, *Sociology of Sport Journal*.

<sup>xvii</sup> Ritzer, *The McDonaldization Thesis* and Idem, *McDonaldization of Society*.

<sup>xviii</sup> Weber, *Protestant Ethic*.

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- xix Clegg, *Lives in the Balance*.
- xx see also Rogers, *Research, Practice and the Space Between* and Subramaniam et al, *Intellectual Closure*. Perhaps there is no more pertinent and grounded apparition of this haunting prophecy than the BA (Hons) in Business Management offered at De Montfort University in Leicester sponsored by Kentucky Fried Chicken.
- xxi Giroux, *Bare Pedagogy* and Giroux, *Dumbing Down Teachers*
- xxii Giroux, *The Abandoned Generation*; Giroux, *Rise of the Corporate University* and Giroux, *Bare Pedagogy*
- xxiii Giroux, *Bare Pedagogy*
- xxiv Agamben, *Sovereign Power and Bare Life*.
- xxv Giroux, *The Abandoned Generation*, 22
- xxvi Giroux, *Bare Pedagogy*.
- xxvii Giroux, *Corporate Culture and the Attack on Higher Education*, 20.
- xxviii Idem, *The Abandoned Generation*
- xxix Idem, *Corporate Culture and the Attack on Higher Education*.
- xxx Idem, *The Abandoned Generation* and Idem, *Dumbing Down Teachers*
- xxxi Idem, *Bare Pedagogy*, 185.
- xxxii The processes of militarization—especially in Kinesiology—have a longer history (see Giroux, *Militarisation*) and have intensified post 9/11 such that within a wider *biopolitics of militarization* the university has become a militarized knowledge factory. Giroux argues that there has been an increasing reliance on the Pentagon and corporate interests, and that resultantly the academy has opened its doors to serving private and governmental interests, further compromising higher education's role as a democratic public sphere.
- xxxiii Giroux, *The Abandoned Generation*
- xxxiv While Ritzer is at pains—certainly more than we—to stress that the rational efficiencies associated with McDonaldization do result in some very real benefits and advantages, they are, by the same token, equally fraught with damaging limitations.
- xxxv See Subramaniam et al, *Intellectual Closure*.
- xxxvi See Giroux, *The Abandoned Generation*; Idem, *Corporate Culture and the Attack on Higher Education*; Holmwood, *Higher Education must be Contextualised*; Lincoln, *A Well regulated Faculty* and Silk et al, *McKinesiology* for a detailed discussion of the impact on higher education institutions.
- xxxvii In Hartman and Darab, *Call for Slow Scholarship*.
- xxxviii Ibid.
- xxxix Ball, *Performativity, Commodification and Commitment* (our emphasis).
- xl Brenner, *Performative Pedagogy*, 3; cf. Subramaniam et al, *Intellectual Closure* and Sonu, *Illusions of Compliance*.
- xli e.g. Nandy, *Science as a Reason of State* and Rutherford, *Cultural Studies in the Corporate University*.
- xlii Nandy, *Science as a Reason of State*.
- xliii Shiva, *Reductionist Science as Epistemological Violence*.
- xliv Nandy, *Science as a Reason of State*.
- lv Giroux, *The Abandoned Generation* and Giroux and Searls-Giroux, *Universities Gone Wild*.
- lvi Lather, *Government Intrusion and the case of Qualitative Research*, 35-34.
- lvii Giroux, *Bare Pedagogy*, 188.
- lviii Giroux and Searls-Giroux, *Universities Gone Wild*; see also Barnett and Griffin, *End of Knowledge in Higher Education*; Evans, *Death of the University*; Lather, *Government Intrusion and the case of Qualitative Research* and Readings, *University in Ruins*; Sparkes, *Qualitative Research*
- lix Denzin and Giardina, *Qualitative Inquiry and the Conservative Challenge*.
- l Murray et al, *Intellectual Integrity*.
- li Rogers, *Research, Practice and the Space Between*.
- lii Murray et al, *Constitution and Status of 'Evidence'*, 273.
- liii Canella, *Political Possibility, Hypercapitalism*.
- liv Lipsett, *Cash for University Arts*.
- lv Curtis, *Pointless University Studies*.
- lvi The curtailing—or perhaps better put, governance—of funding for the social sciences been demonstrated most recently in the U.S. by the National Science Foundation who recently



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introduced measures to prohibit funding of research on political science unless that research is in the interest of national security.

lvii see e.g. House, *Qualitative Evaluation and Changing Social Policy*; Murray et al, *Constitution and Status of 'Evidence'*; Sparkes, *Qualitative Research*.

lviii Giroux and Searls-Giroux, *Universities Gone Wild*.

lix We do not suggest discarding such advances, yet we do oppose parochialism and domination and the ways in which the conventions of this particular approach become accepted as *the* natural way of producing knowledge and viewing a particular aspect of the world. As such, our intent is to raise questions, provide an opportunity for thoughtful reflexivity, and aid the power of those in the academy to apply research so that it impacts, and is meaningful to, the various communities that *sport studies* has the potential to touch. These are debates that are likely to continue; we imagine we will be challenged, and opposed, for what may seem to be appropriate to some may well be ludicrous to others—such debates, are, in our opinion a vital sign of a self-reflexive, healthy, field of study.

lx cf. Bairner, *For a Sociology of Sport*; Dart, *Sports Review* and Silk and Andrews, *Towards a Physical Cultural Studies*.

lxi Giroux, *Bare Pedagogy*.

lxii Murray et al, *Intellectual Integrity*.

lxiii Ingham and Donnelly, *Whose Knowledge Counts*, 59.

lxiv Shiva, *Reductionist Science as Epistemological Violence*; see also Kincheloe and McLaren, *Rethinking Critical Theory*.

lxv see Silk et al, *McKinesiology*.

lxvi Giroux, *Bare Pedagogy* and Giroux, *Dumbing Down Teachers*

lxvii Idem, *Bare Pedagogy*, 190.

lxviii Garbutt and Offord, *Activating Cultural Studies*.

lxix Stevenson, *Critical Pedagogy, Democracy and Capitalism*.

lxx Giroux, *Rethinking the Crisis of Public Education*.

lxxi Idem, *Bare Pedagogy*, 187.

lxxii Bauman, *In Search of Politics*.

lxxiii Giroux, *The Abandoned Generation*.

lxxiv Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, 4.

lxxv Denzin, *War on Culture*.

lxxvi see e.g. Andrews, *Kinesiology's Inconvenient Truth*; Giardina and Newman, *Physical and the Possible* and Silk and Andrews, *Towards a Physical Cultural Studies*.

lxxvii Brainer, *For a Sociology of Sport*.

lxxviii Denzin, *Afterword*, 296.

lxxix Ibid, 298 our emphasis.

lxxx Titchkosky, *Body as Pedagogic*.

lxxxi Denzin, *Afterword*.

lxxxii Ibid.

lxxxiii ibid.

lxxxiv ibid.

lxxxv Brophy and Hladki, *Pedagogy, Image Practices, and Contested Corporealities*.

lxxxvi Titchkosky, *Body and Pedagogic*.

lxxxvii Rose, *Human Sciences in a Biological Age*.

lxxxviii Giroux, *Bare Pedagogy*

lxxxix Ibid

xc Denzin, *Afterword*.

xci Giardina and Newman, *Physical and the Possible*.

xcii Ibid.

xciii Ibid; see also Bairner, *For a Sociology of Sport*.

xciv Pink, *From Embodiment to Emplacement*.

xcv see Silk et al, *Contingent Intellectual Amateurism*.

xcvi This list is, of course, necessarily abbreviated.

xcvii Miller and Ahluwalia, *Why the Humanities and Social Sciences are Vital*.

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- xcviii Giroux, *Rise of the Corporate University*, 691.
- xcix Silk & Francombe are full-time at Bath; Andrews is a Visiting Professor
- c Sparks, *Qualitative Research*
- ci Miller, *Introducing . . . Cultural Studies*, 1; Evans, *Ideational border crossings*
- cii see Andrews, *Kinesiology's Inconvenient Truth*; Atkinson, *Physical Cultural Studies (Redux)*; Giardina and Newman, *Physical and the Possible*; Silk and Andrews, *Towards a Physical Cultural Studies* and Rich, *Relationship between Pedagogy and Physical Cultural Studies*.
- ciii Giroux, *Cultural Studies, Neoliberalism and the Politics of Hope*.
- civ see Silk et al, *Contingent Intellectual Amateurism* for a more detailed account of what we termed, following Said, a contingent intellectual amateurism.
- cv A Higher Education agenda focused on science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects.
- cvi see Amis and Silk, *Politics of Quality in Qualitative Organizational Research*.
- cvi In its previous incarnation the programme was called Coach Education & Sports development. In the period since 2008, we have worked with alumni, current students, employers, external examiners, Visiting Professors, and colleagues in other Departments within our Faculty (including Politics, Social Policy Sciences, Health) to re-write and re-structure the entire programme.
- cvi This can position philosophers, historians, pedagogues, sociologists, social-psychologists, geographers, cultural theorists within 'sport' departments as either ploughing a solitary scholarly furrow or as lacking membership of the type of critical mass of likeminded intellectuals that could generate a truly vibrant and productive research culture.
- cix see e.g. Reay, Crozier and Clayton, *Working-class Students in Elite Universities*.
- cx see Giroux, *The Abandoned Generation*.
- cxii Rich, *Body Pedagogies, Education and Health* and Idem, *Relationship between Pedagogy and Physical Cultural Studies*.
- cxiii Kincheloe, *Describing the Bricolage*.
- cxiiii Giroux, *Some Things Missing*.
- cxv Rose, *Human Sciences in a Biological Age*, 24.
- cxvi Giroux, *Cultural Studies, Neoliberalism and the Politics of Hope*.
- cxvii Cote et al, *Utopian Pedagogy*, 317.
- cxviii Giroux, *Bare Pedagogy and the Scourge of Neoliberalism*.
- cxviiii Denzin, *Afterword*, 294.
- cxix Hartman and Darab, *Call for Slow Scholarship*.
- cxix We read, with excitement, Simone Fullagers' recent (August 6<sup>th</sup> 2013) article in the Australian version of *The Conversation* that calls on us to embrace slow, social and sensuous sporting experiences (in cycling); a counter movement that compliments our call for a slow sports studies.

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