

Barbero-González, J.I. y Bores-Calle, N. (2014). Windsurf: manteniéndome a flote en el agua y en la vida / Windsurf: trying to stay afloat in water and in life. Revista Internacional de Medicina y Ciencias de la Actividad Física y el Deporte vol. 14 (54) pp. 339-362. [Http://cdeporte.rediris.es/revista/revista54/artdequehablo467.htm](http://cdeporte.rediris.es/revista/revista54/artdequehablo467.htm)

ORIGINAL

WINDSURF: TRYING TO STAY AFLOAT IN WATER AND IN LIFE

WINDSURF: MANTENIÉNDOME A FLOTE EN EL AGUA Y EN LA VIDA

Barbero-González, J.I. & Bores-Calle, N.

Profesores Titulares de Universidad. Universidad de Valladolid. España. jigna@mpc.uva.es | nbores@mpc.uva.es

Spanish-English translator: M^a Luisa Fernández jesusymarisa@hotmail.com

Código UNESCO / UNESCO code: 6306.99 Sociología de la Educación Física y del Deporte / Sport Sociology; 5899 Educación Física y Deportes / Physical Education and Sport

Clasificación Consejo de Europa / Council of Europe classification: 16 Sociología del deporte / Sport Sociology

Recibido 1 de diciembre de 2011 **Received** December 1, 2011

Aceptado 24 de enero de 2013 **Accepted** January 24, 2013

ABSTRACT

From a biographical narrative perspective, this article focuses on Moses, a professional in the field of Physical Activity in Education, Leisure and Sports (AFERD) who, despite his very limited swimming skills, has devoted much of his life to windsurfing. The two main aims we tackle in this paper are: firstly, the reconstruction of Moses' biography in relation to swimming and windsurfing and, secondly, the interpretation of such biography taking into account its context and conditions of existence. Methods used, among others, are: narrative interviews, semi-structured interviews and commissioned autobiographical essays. Having analysed Moses' biography, it's argued that it is better understood by using some concepts (*habitus*, athletic identity and distinctive space-culture-and-life-style) that let us relate the 'personal' to the 'social'. Moses assumed everything that is stated and suggested the title of this article.

KEY WORDS: Life stories, *habitus*, athletic identity, distinction, swimming, clumsiness, windsurf.

RESUMEN

Desde una óptica biográfico-narrativa, este artículo gira en torno a Moses, un profesional del campo de la Actividad Física Educativa, Recreativa y Deportiva (AFERD) que, a pesar de sus limitadas habilidades natatorias, ha dedicado buena parte de su vida al windsurf. Los objetivos se ciñen, primero, a reconstruir su trayectoria vital en relación con la natación y el windsurf y, segundo, a interpretar su biografía a partir del contexto y condicionantes sociales en que se desarrolla. Metodológicamente hemos utilizado, entre otros, la entrevistas narrativa, la semi-estructurada y el relato autobiográfico por encargo. Tras desglosar la biografía de Moisés se argumenta y concluye una mejor comprensión a partir de ciertos conceptos (*habitus*, identidad deportiva y espacio-cultura-estilo-de-vida distintivo) que permiten relacionar lo 'personal' con lo 'social'. Moisés asume todo lo que aquí se dice y, además, nos ha sugerido el título del artículo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Relatos de vida, *habitus*, identidad deportiva, distinción, natación, torpeza, windsurf.

1.- INTRODUCTION

Statistically everything is *accountable*, personally everything gets *complicated*. (Pennac, 2007: 11)

To situate the reader, this paper is an exercise of *biographical-narrative research in education* (Bolívar et al., 2001) and all its main characters are Physical Education (PE) teachers.

Although this kind of studies are not the most common within the Spanish AFERD field, they are not at all unknown (see, for example, Sillvennoinen, 1994; Devís & Sparkes, 2001; Sparkes & Smith, 2001; Brown, 2003; Pascual, 2003; Sparkes, 2003; Barbero, 2006; Sparkes & Devís, 2007; Martínez, 2005; Pulido, Bores & Moreno, 2009). Literature and cinema have also produced interesting (auto)biographical stories (i.e., Delibes, 1992, Murakami, 2010).

For our part, in the context of a research about (auto)biographical narratives, we found some peculiar and infrequent stories that we registered under the category of *sublimation-&-compensation*.

Although within the psychoanalytic tradition such terms refer to dense concepts, for us it's a mere heading for the gathering of the stories whose authors said they had dedicated many efforts and energy to tasks they were not at all good. Also, despite the psychological ascendancy of the caption, we tend to frame our

work within the terrain of the *sociological imagination* (Wright Mills, 2000) that strives to interrelate biography, history and social context.

From this point of view, this paper focuses on Moses (pseudonym chosen by himself), PhD on Physical Activities and Sport Sciences, a person gifted with the rare quality of drowning himself in a bathtub who has devoted much of his time and energies to windsurfing and other activities related to swimming.

2.- FROM THE QUESTIONS-PROBLEM TO THE OBJETIVES

However much of a cliché it may sound, we began this research (almost) totally *'blank'*, with very little preconceived ideas, even hesitating if there was any matter that deserved to be studied.

In retrospect, this inquiry is the result of, first, our sheer curiosity when confronted by a 'rare' narrative and, second, the collaborative disposition of our main character, with whom we enjoy long lasting ties.

In this situation, our initial questions were broad and vague: is it true he doesn't know how to swim?; is he afraid of water?; his devotion to windsurfing, has it been a passing or a lasting fever?; what has pushed him to engage in something he's so unskilled?; is all nothing but outward appearance?; what about his lifespan experiences en el aquatic environment?

This kind of questions constituted our basic equipment for the first formal interview. Soon we were convinced that there was a matter to be studied and we shaped more precise objectives. From them, taking into account the limits of this paper, we have chosen the following:

- a. To break down, rephrasing Becker (1953), Moses' life and experiences around windsurf (see section 4).
- b. To consider Moses' biography in the light of his material and cultural conditions of existence in order to detect the social origin of the motives that led our unskilled swimmer to risk his life in deep waters (see section 5).

3.- METHODOLOGY

In a qualitative research, the need to pay attention to ethical matters is very important in order to avoid serious problems both to the researchers and to participants (Eisner, 1998: 256). That's why although our interlocutor didn't pose any objection if finally this or other texts make him recognizable, and to avoid the possibility that, when making public certain elements of his private life, he will be somehow harm, we have used different concealing techniques that we don't reveal because they will cease to fulfill their functions.

In the same way, Moses gave us his *relative* informed consent. It's *relative*, (i.e., Eisner, 1988: 249), because researchers can't inform a great deal in the early stages of the inquiry: apart from the general themes, they do not know beforehand neither what is going to emerge nor the possible effects of their publications

During some 18 months, leaving aside informal conversations, the research techniques used have been:

a) Regarding our main character.

- Our first formal meeting consisted of a two hours *narrative interview* where, after a brief introduction (recalling of research global theme and the planning of the meeting), we formulated the *generative question*: *Can you tell us your life experiences in relation to 'water' (swimming, sailing, windsurf, rivers, swimming pools, reservoirs, sea...)?* The meeting took place according to the basic patterns of this method (see, for example, Apple, 2005; Flick, 2007: 111-118): our interlocutor *developed his tale* with great autonomy following a chronological order and relying from time to time on funny anecdotes. During this *narrative interview*, which is neither an informal dialogue nor an open questionnaire, researchers only took scarcely part at the end to clarify some open points.

- In our second meeting we carried out a semi-structured interview, again two hours long. By contrast with the previous, we tried to develop, as Valles says (2002: 54), a *qualified questioning* although, as it's obvious, not at all coercive. The items came from the content analysis of the *narrative interview*.

- Five autobiographical essays commissioned by the researchers on topics selected to fill lacunae detected in collected data. Moses titled them in this way: *«I have a strong athletic identity»*, *«I've always hated getting into the swimming pool»*, *«I don't try (I never tried) to make up for my limitations. Everything has occurred by accident (by a series of accidents)»*, *«From a village, from a dry land and windsurfer»*. Their length varied from 1000, the shortest, to 3000 words, the longest. As it's well known, the use of commissioned (by competition and, even, paid for) autobiographical essays has a long history. By way of illustration, for *«The London survey of the poor»*, 1936, housewives were asked to write their experiences (Plummer, 1989: 107); also, since the appearance on the scene of the biographical method (see, for example, Pujadas, 1992), with Thomas and Znanieki's *Polish Peasant* study, many members of the Chicago School used it.

- The sending of three drafts of our reconstruction of his life and experiences that Moses always read and commented.

- Finally, an open interview based on the next to last draft of this paper.

b) Regarding other informants.

- A semi-structured interview with Martín, Moses's companion of adventures in and out windsurfing. Its script was designed for triangulation (Denzin, 1970: 297-313) of nodal points by collecting data from *different voices* (Pérez, 1994: 81).

- The e-mailing of the draft of this paper to four of Moses' close friends, whom they know very well. Their comments were discussed by phone.

The process concluded as soon as we considered we had reached a threshold of *theoretical saturation* indicating that *we have been told all that could be said*.

Finally, the writing of this text which was not conceived as 'the final task' but it has gone parallel to the very research process, as a way of knowing and a *method of discovery and analysis* (Richardson, 2000: 923).

4.- HALF A LIFE WINDSURFING

In this section, we are going to analyse Moses's life experience around windsurfing, swimming and the swimming-pool.

4.1.- INTRODUCING OUR CHARACTER

Yesterday evening, my wife was trying to convince my younger son to spend the evening in the swimming-pool. We were all at home peace and quiet and he didn't want to go. They phoned a friend from school..... and all of them went, including my elder daughter.... While they were getting ready, they were saying: "We are going to the swimming-pool, does anybody else want to come?" They know I am not going with them, but they pull my leg all the same (14/XI/2010)

We have known Moses for a long time. In different occasions, taking advantage of the night talks during the congresses about our field of knowledge we had already teased about the contrast between some of his occupations and his skills to develop them.

Moses was born in the sixties (20th century) in a small village in the centre of Spain, in a large family whose short income came from farming.

When he was 11, his parents sent him to a religious boarding school in the capital city of their province. He stayed in this small city until he finished COU (A-levels), studying throughout this period in different schools, all of them run by religious orders.

In the village where he was born, there was no river and the first indoor swimming-pool in the city where he lived, was opened when he was studying COU

When he was 17, he decided to study PE at university but he had a big problem: he couldn't swim and the first test to access University studies on PE consisted of showing certain skills in swimming.

4.2.- A SPORTIVE IDENTITY

Moses states today (1/11/2010) that, despite his efforts on the opposite direction during these last years- as an *adult who, repented*, tries to erase the tattoos of his youth- he carries a very *strong sportive identity* in himself. Going back to the time when he was 17, the fact that he decided to opt out for studying PE at university suggests that he was already a sportsman

The academic explanation of the concept of sportive identity (Sparkes, Brown y Partington, 2010; Devís y Sparkes, 2001) is colloquially expressed by Moses: *I have been nothing and nobody at sport. My success in sport hasn't gone beyond the limits of my province..... but I liked doing sport and I lived surrounded by a halo of sportive prestige.... The others (family, friends, acquaintances, teachers...) saw me like a sportsman (1/11/2010).*

Between the ages of 11 and 17, he lived, as stated before, in different religious boarding schools where, as it happened traditionally, you could (or should) do some sport. As he was a bad football player, he ended up as a goalkeeper and. Moses (15/10/2010) says that, *by chance, one day he stopped two possible goals and, from there on, the captains began to choose me for their teams and you accepted because you wanted to play and be someone.*

That is how he started a career as a goalkeeper in which, despite being a bad one, he went up from one team to another (his school changes have to do with the options they gave him to play in external federated clubs). He reached the top when he became goalkeeper with a local team in the third league.

During this time, he also played handball, did karate, judo.... In judo, he enjoyed a lot and he became regional champion because he was a good competitor, although he wasn't technically good.

These continuous comments on his scarce qualities make us wonder: *Have you ever been good at something?*

Never... I have always been a fighter because technically.. nobody has ever taught me properly..... At judo I was really bad technically, a tough fighter. In karate... the same. I think the opponents were frightened.. Same as it happens to me in life... (15/10/2010)

Anyway, at the age of 17. Moses showed a clear tendency towards sport, and the sportive background that enlightened his personality, brought him to make

the logical decision of studying a PE degree at university. This decision, he comments when he reads the draft of this text, fed back his sport identity:

In fact, this halo of sportsman encouraged me to get this degree at university, but saying that I was going to study this degree gave me a new reputation as a sportsman. What people had in mind (including myself) was that to study PE at university, you had to be a bit like Rambo and every time I commented it, they said that some guy who was really good hadn't been able to get through or that another guy who was a champion of who knows what sport hadn't succeeded either. So trying and saying that you were going to try already gave you a name as sportsman. To pass the entrance test had to be really something, I thought.

4.3.- THE MUST OF LEARNING TO SWIM

When they finished their A-levels, the boarding students at the religious school had to choose between becoming a priest or leaving. Moses had no religious vocation and he left. He started living in a flat with other five friends. When he was studying the last year of A-levels, he was a reserve goalkeeper (he didn't play a single match) in a football team in the third League. He received a small salary for that job.

COU (last year of A-levels) is going to be a year of vital decisions in his life and, step by step, he made the decision of studying a degree in PE at university. To access, he had to pass an exam on his sportive control in the water.

As he couldn't swim, he, together with two of his flatmates enrolled a swimming-course in the first indoor swimming-pool in the city. Everybody made progress except him, who is precisely the one who really needed it and the one who encouraged the others to join in.

After finishing his first course, he took up the second one and he continued *swallowing water uselessly while he realised that even the old women and the girls, not the sportive type at all, learned so quickly.* His progress was really limited and the experience wasn't a pleasant one.

To tell the truth, I have really bitter memories of my start in the swimming-pool trying to learn how to swim. I can say, without any doubt, that I would have never made such a big effort if it hadn't been compulsory to learn to swim in order to pass the physical test to enter university to study PE. I would have given up the first day of the first course and, of course, I would have never joined in the second one.

My clumsiness to float came together with the difficulty to move and breathe, the cold I felt, the feeling of a useless tiredness, the dizziness and displacement in which I remained during the rest of the day after being in the swimming-pool, the jokes of the instructors.... And other disgusting sensations that haven't made water activities attractive for me at all (14/11/2010).

To access University to study PE, candidates had to show that they possessed determined “capitals”. At this time, from all the cultural background that Moses had, the most decisive one came out to be his clumsiness to swim.

4.4.- THE ENTRANCE TESTS TO ACCESS PE UNIVERSITY STUDIES

Moses needed seven years to get a place to study a PE degree. During this time, quite a few universities established a degree in PE and Moses travelled all around Spain until, at last, he saw his name on a list of admitted students in one of them, situated in a city on the coast.

I think this is a vital moment in my life. Seven years living as if I was a high performance sportsman to prepare the physical test. I knew that swimming was the key, but I only went to the swimming pool during the summer and only for a few days. It was a nightmare... even the summer... after training for three or four hours in the morning with a temperature of more than 30°C, it took me a big effort to get into the water (8/4/2011).

The entrance tests to PE degree have, at least, two possible interpretations. The aseptic-descriptive would say that they consist of “n” tests that measure determined physical abilities and some specific skills of sportive nature. If they are passed, each one is valued according to a pre-established punctuation that is converted into a scale from 1 to 10. The average of all of them is combined or not, depending on the cases, with the mark obtained in the tests to access university to establish the final list of applicants.

Another more symbolic interpretation would say that the tests to access are there to make the following public warning “Exclusive for sportsmen”. In other words, its selective power is not only in the order that it establishes among the persons with sportive identity that carry them out but also in its capability to previously reduce the number of applicants.

The entrance tests were for a long time the main obstacle to study this degree and it was often considered that “once in, the most difficult part was already achieved”

Moses uses both hands to count the number of times he tried to get in. Except for swimming, he was very well prepared, except for the last time that was precisely when he got to pass them. The first time when he, together with other mates contracted a teacher to design a training plan, he vomited in the swimming-pool and they had to get him out of the water. And thus, one year after another, he tried but always getting 0 in swimming, although he had improved (15/107/2010).

Finally, the goddess Fortuna gave him a hand. He had almost decided that a friend of him was going to swim in his place, but it wasn't necessary to get that far. With experimental character, the university he was applying for, introduced

a modification in the punctuation for swimming, reducing it to just a “Pass” or a “Failure”. Given this new situation, Moses didn’t have to compete against anybody or worry about the time; the only thing he had to do was not to drown and get to the end within a preset time which was quite easy to beat.

Not without an effort, he achieved a “Pass” and, after passing the rest of the tests easily, he thought, as we stated before, that *everything was already done*.

4.5.- WINDSURFING IN THE RESERVOIR. THE BEGINNING

His first intensive contact with windsurfing took place during a summer in the mid 80s (when he was trying to get into University but failed to do so for 7 years) when he earned his living working as an instructor in the only private gym of an important town in the province, situated quite close to the reservoir.

At that time, says Moses (20/04/2011), being a windsurfer in a place inland, was an adventure that only a few rich and snob people, including landowners and some representatives of companies in the area, adult males though young, with the economical resources to buy the big boards and sails of those times,(their price could be around half a million pesetas) and the car to carry them from the cities nearby could afford. These people, no more than a dozen, had taken courses in Tarifa and came to the reservoir to take advantage of the wind that generated from a different temperature between the coast and inland.

One of these single-adult and rich persons was a pupil at the gym where Moses worked as an instructor and, as he had just broken up with his girlfriend, decided to occupy his free time teaching Moses how to windsurf and lending him all the necessary material to do it.

Moses remembers today (20/04/2011) this introduction to windsurfing as a perfect activity for him. First of all, practising a new and different aquatic activity (which was, therefore, logical he couldn’t dominate) that was carried out with a life jacket and where it wasn’t necessary to demonstrate that you could swim let him reaffirm his sportive identity within the people in town. Secondly, Moses was then physically strong, being able to be up and down the board as many times as necessary and to stand the strongest wind. Finally, he learnt much quicker than the others that were neither sportsmen nor instructors or PE applicants.

As a precaution, Moses tended to sail with the breeze of midday and avoiding the strong wind in the evening. One day that he was on his own, Moses took the material, went into the water and, little by little, falling and coming up again to the board, he became far from the edge until he arrived at the opposite side of the reservoir. It was dark night and he was shivering because of the cold. When he got there, the police and an ambulance arrived. Apparently, they had been looking for him.

Thank God that I had the caution of putting the life jacket on! If not, that day I would have drowned at least 16 times! Although I think you can only drown once (20/04/2011)

When that summer got to its end, Moses forgot about the boards and sails. He doesn't even remember commenting anybody that he could do windsurfing. During the winter, he continued reaffirming his sportive identity with the PE degree always in mind. His single-adult and-rich friend taught him how to ski in the mountains whose water ends up in the reservoir that can be seen from the distance.

4.6.- HE BECOMES WINDSURFING INSTRUCTOR AND COMES BACK TO THE RESERVOIR

Some years later, when he was about to finish his second year at university and just before the summer holiday, two classmates decided not to do a windsurfing course that they had already paid for. For half the price, Moses and other friend offered to take their place.

The course was directed by a PE graduate gone away from INEF and civil servant in our region. The first day, trainees had to tackle a swimming test that consisted of going and coming to a buoy situated 200 metres away from the beach. As he knew he wasn't going to pass that test, Moses sharpened his wits and he spoke to the director this way:

- *Fuck! You aren't going to make us (from PE studies) do that!*
- *Come on! Of course not..*

That is how he started a course in which he never got into the water without his life jacket; in which he had the luck of a champion (*once the board got too far, a zodiac with the director in it passed by and, as if nothing happened, I said: "come on, take me to the shore"*); in which his physical condition and his sportive halo, his age (older than the other instructors and pupils) and his background (PE university) let him enjoy a certain status; in which, once the fortnight finished, his boss (who had become his partner at playing cards) offered him a post for the next fortnight. That is how Moses remembers it:

I was in heaven. I had learnt to handle those enormous boards that, once you got the hang of it, made it impossible to fall down. What else could a guy like me ask for: an aquatic activity in which you didn't have to get in touch with water! (20/04/2011)

When the second shift started, he met Oscar, a student from PE that was a year ahead of him, and they soon got on well. Contrary to Moses, Oscar wasn't clumsy at all and he specialised in light sail. The following summer, they both worked as instructors again together with the friend who went with him for the first time: one of them was in charge of windsurfing, the other of sailing boats and the third one as a canoeing instructor. And Moses was still in seventh

heaven: physical activity, nature, improving (relatively) his skill on boards and earning a bit of money quite useful to tackle his last year at university.

It seems that most of his illusions and projects at the end of his graduation had to do with windsurfing: first thing we did, he speaks in plural, was to buy a modern board... and come back to the reservoir.

A PE university teacher happened to be carrying out a research project and the fieldwork was carried out by students in their last year at university or just graduated. Moses was one of them and he managed to get the area close to the reservoir where he spent the summer sleeping in a tent and windsurfing. The weekends, Sara (his wife nowadays), Oscar and some friends and classmates as well as the “radicals” from the province (we will talk about them later on) came to the reservoir.

It was like winning the lottery. The truth is that they were moments full of illusion. I spent most part of the day sitting on a rock in the reservoir waiting for the north wind (which is cold) to come and get into the water with my board, but I wasn't able to get into the water during the rest of the day, not even to refresh (20/04/2011).

4.7.- EVERYTHING CENTRES AROUND WINDSURFING

When the summer finishes, with his PE degree in his hands, he gets a job as temporary teacher at a Secondary School in a town on the coast where he enlarges his life as a student, now with money in his pocket and a board on his car:

First thing I did was to look for a windsurfing shop, make friends with the owner and some windsurfers. I spent the day in the shop talking with people and telling stories. When the weather conditions were good, I went sailing with them. I usually carried the board on the car and, on the way back from school; I always had a look to all the beaches on the way looking for the wind (20/04/2011).

The economic welfare lets sophistication become part of Moses life and his taste begins to realise that, the same as when you eat, there are certain types of waves that taste better with a determined type of boards and sails. He takes advantage of weekends, bank holidays and holidays to travel around the Iberian Peninsula to the places where all windsurfer must go and he states that he discovers incredibly beautiful places.

The academic year is coming to its end, Moses's time as temporary teacher finishes and, as summer is near, Moses and Oscar take supplies of sails and boards with the aim of starting a windsurfing school in the place where it was at the beginning: the reservoir. To transport all the material, they need a bigger vehicle and Moses changes his new car for an old van. During the summer, Moses passed the state exam to become a secondary teacher and earned

some money with the windsurfing school. He invested that money on a route that he carried out before starting the new school year and that was going to end in Tarifa, the Mecca for windsurfers. According to them, if you haven't been there at least once, you can't consider yourself a windsurfer. Here, in the middle of real waves, Moses broke his shin bone and fibula in his right ankle and grabbed to the table, he was rescued. "I went through a really scary rescue"

The main lesson I learnt from the accident and the rescue is that the board is your life insurance. While it is by your side, there is no problem. It always floats and you can hold to it (30/04/2011).

During all his convalescence, all were plans to windsurf. Sara, his wife today, also PE teacher in secondary education, kindled the flame from his post in a coastal city and, the following spring, seven months after the accident and wearing a special ankle support, Moses came back to the sea starting a period of fervent dedication in which, avoiding swimming or getting into the water when waiting for the wind to come, he sailed in conditions which were extreme for him, in places more and more dangerous, always trying to make sure that the windsurfing board stayed close to him.

And at that time I spent really bad moments....so many times I have dreamt that the board slips and I can't catch it I am unable to swim quickly, to resist... (20/04/2011).

During these years, Moses gets a post as university teacher and he marks many of his students' projects sitting at the table in his van while he is waiting for the wind to come. Immerse in the windsurfing whirl, one day of snowstorm at the end of the nineties, Moses and Martin head towards the reservoir with the idea of going for a sail and getting out before dying. In the van they were telling each other:

Sailing with snow, we are radicals! (5/5/2011).

4.8.- GRADUAL DISTANCE

One decade later, Moses has left the club they started in the reservoir where they even organised national competitions. It has been years since the last time he got up his windsurf board and he doesn't even know where his pole is.

His two sons that were first fed in the van while their parents were waiting for the wind to arrive, are now pre-teenagers and practise other sports- which his father has also started to dedicate to (as a trainer or manager)

He says that Sara gave up windsurfing before he did, that the children... that she doesn't feel comfortable in that type of atmosphere, except with a very reduced group of friends, that she has lost all the illusion. Now they plan their

holiday avoiding places for windsurfing and that distance has been a liberation for them

The truth is that I don't consider myself a windsurfer anymore and, although they constantly call me up, I feel comfortable without depending on that activity to organise the evenings, weekends and holidays. It's as if a sort of liberation has given way to other activities, also related to sport, that we couldn't carry out before (5/5/2011).

4.9.- HIS FAR AWAY PROXIMITY TO THE SWIMMING POOL

When Moses enrolled his first swimming course, he started a very complicated relationship with the swimming-pool that has lasted ever since.

His limited progress in swimming, together with his physical discomfort (earache, cold) and the repeated failures in the entrance tests made of the swimming-pool a space of torture and shame to avoid. That's how a rejection towards the swimming pool started and it still persists after the years.

The *creative concept* that the swimming teacher at PE at university had, let him pass the subject quite easily, without unpleasant memories or the need to use complicated strategies to avoid it.

His intuition and his complain to the director of the windsurfing summer camp (are you going to make us, PE students swim...?) saved him from public exposure. The windsurfing camps were very useful for him to avoid a good part of the contents of other subjects at university also related to water.

When Moses became a teacher-expert-father, he didn't get far from the swimming-pool, but just the opposite, he got much closer although we could say that without touching it. He, that doesn't even get into the jacuzzi, has been instructor of aquatic activities for elderly people, has developed summer courses during the summer and has accompanied his sons, both swimmers, to the swimming –pool even paying for the entrance as if he was going to swim to stay there observing them. He is married to Sara, who got the master in swimming during her degree. Finally, he has been recording videos of handicapped children to study how they learn.

During all these activities close to the swimming-.pool, he usually comes across friends and acquaintances from his first swimming courses, among them his instructors who, teasing him (don't empty the swimming-pool!) strengthen the link between the present and the past

4.10.- SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO MOSES, EVERYTHING HAS BEEN AN ACCUMULATION OF COINCIDENCE

Chance says our main figure is responsible for the scarce number of goalkeepers in his youth. Bordered at different religious schools and a very bad football player, he started to defend the goal and, after stopping a couple of them by chance, he started a career where he was always a reserve -because he was really bad at it- he came to play against a German national team and he signed up for a team that intended to play in the Second League.

Inside this football atmosphere, chance made him hear someone talking about a PE degree and meet some footballer who was preparing the entrance test to access to that degree. It was also a coincidence that, during those seven years when he was trying and failing to get into that university degree, he met his single-mature and rich pupil-friend who introduced him to windsurfing. *And, don't tell me it isn't by chance*, he writes (23/X/2010)

... That someone had the brilliant idea of eliminating the punctuation from the swimming test to enter a PE degree... That is fortune. Someone had it all prepared for me.

A strike of luck was that, once studying his university degree, two classmates decided not to attend the windsurfing course that they had previously paid for and they resold it half price and that, once there, he got on so well with the director of the course who, later, proposed him to continue as an instructor.

It was also fortunate that he finished his degree in June and that thanks to an informal conversation, he applied to become a temporary teacher for secondary education for the next school year and that he ended up in a school situated on the coast where, as they were starting the new educational system, LOGSE, he could attend a lot of training courses in which he learnt all the new terminology of the new law, which would let him pass the state exam to become secondary teacher the following summer. That is how Moses summarises what happened during this exam:

I also think that it was all in my side to pass. I wasn't lucky with the subjects I had to talk about..... Neither did I have the set of topics nor had I studied them. I went to the exam with a borrowed set of topics. It was the famous "trap" (two hours preparing a topic in a room all on your own. You had to choose three balls from the set of topics and choose one to talk about it). I didn't know anything about none of the topics and I chose a vague one. It was something like "Physical activity, leisure and free time and I said to myself: "I am sure I will be able to say something about this topic after having studied two subjects about it at university". I went to the room where you had to prepare the topic for two hours and when I opened the set I realised that it was all definitions and classifications. I had spent twenty minutes desperate without knowing what to do. Should I abandon, try or commit suicide? When, suddenly, the president of the examiners

came in and asked me how I was doing... he commented that the previous applicant had left after 15 minutes and asked me to please tell them when I was ready, as I was the last one that morning. A flash came to my mind: I am ready. I can do it now if you like... They let you have some written notes with you. I tore the paper I had been waiting on and, on a different one I wrote:

1- Introduction 2- Development 3- Conclusions

This paper was revised by the examiners. They looked at it, looked at one another and I started to talk. I don't know exactly what I talked about, but I spoke a lot, very confidently but with humbleness.

What did I speak about? thanks to the courses I did that year, I came to have an acceptable knowledge of the new law (LOGSE), mainly its vocabulary....

A month after passing my state exam, I was giving a course for teachers in the city where I was working and a guy... asked me if I remembered him.- I had no idea.... He told me that he was the president of the examiners for the state exam... Privately, he commented my exam as a curiosity he couldn't help discovering. He said that the other examiners were writing notes while I was talking during the exam...He showed them to me in the evening and they were something like.. What the fuck is he talking about? He told me that they were discussing my case almost every day.. At the end of each day, they wondered what to do with that guy they didn't understand a single word. They said to themselves that if what I had told them was truth, it was awesome and if it was a lie, it was amazing anyway.. Therefore, it was worth having him as a teacher (23/XI/2010).

As a coincidence Moses considers the fact that, after passing his state exam, his first post as a secondary teacher was the school in the town next to his daring reservoir. It was also the place where the person who is his wife now was working in as a temporary teacher for several years.

Fortune had also much to do with his access to university as a teacher, for both, the time when the opportunity appeared and the fact that nobody else opted out to it.

Anyway, if there is something that Moses doesn't consider a chance, that is his survival in the sea each time that the waves sent him to the water. Here, he insists on his idea of holding to the board and resist, on getting to the shore little by little although it is a considerable distance from the starting point.

5.- BIOGRAPHY AND SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In this section, to discover (objective b) if the "personal" and somehow magical explanation of the reasons that moved our useless swimmer to dedicate to

windsurfing and risk his life inside the water have a social causality, we are going to consider his material and cultural conditions of life.

5.1.- FAMILY CONTEXT

Turning to Boltansky (1975) and Bourdieu (1988: 170) we believe that Moses character, as well as his tendencies, likes and investments are a consequence of his habitus, that is to say, an internal structure acquired along the process of socialisation/perception inside his family and social vital framework, that orientates or delimits the conditions of possibility of action of people.

Or in which Moses lived his first years: a big family with scarce income, settled in a small village inland. His parents, who had suffered scarceness during the hardest times of the Franco period, had as his main objective in life to leave their sons a better future than theirs as a legacy.

To move forward, their parents taught their sons an ethics based on work and effort. This meant, for example, that their sons had to work during the summer holidays, unless they had a strong alternative (as it could be a course that could be important for their training, and if they were paid for it, much better)

An option at that time was to send sons and daughters to religious schools (we are talking about a time when the poor provinces in the centre of Spain competed in terms of religious vocations), in which, apart from securing a cheap and trustable education, there was the possibility to continue until they became members of the religious order. This was the option of some of his brothers, even in churches considered stricter than the catholic church.

Therefore, the effort and steadiness in his behaviour that Moses's life reflects has its roots in his family. The same happens with his taste for nature (his first ten years in a village down the mountains where all free time activities as well as productive ones have to do with great contact with nature) and his inexperience in swimming (the absence of a river makes it something extraordinary).

5.2.- SPORTIVE IDENTITY

On evaluating his successive attempts to access PE at university, Moses states:

It was really hard but I didn't think of any other option. I didn't see any other possible alternative.

This comment reflects the previously ethos of fight against adversity and adds another new ingredient, his sportive identity that didn't let him see other options

Obviously, we don't understand this identity (sportive) as a transcendental and stable I far from the social reality of this person, but, on the contrary, as a display set in a context of an I built up along the time. Regarding this, although the habitus constitutes a good theoretical support to understand the process of training and the sense of sportive identity, many of Moses' explanations lead to a symbolic interaction in which, as Goffman would say (1959) the relationship with the group conditions the way in which a character tends to see himself, to behave and appreciate himself.

Let's go back to the beginning and imagine the boy that arrived at a religious school where he didn't know anybody and where it was compulsory to fill his free time with sport and where, after earning a post as goalkeeper,

... after 15 days have passed, I was integrated in the class and I had my friends like everybody else (23/11/2010).

For six years, his transit for three religious boarding schools was related to the facilities the schools offered to train and play with "external" football teams" that needed goalkeepers, were they federated clubs, amateurs or semi professional led by people whose moral credibility was enough for the religious school to authorise the boarders to go out.

Football was, without a shadow of a doubt, the voluntary "occupation" to which he dedicated more time and energy. But football, as any other sport, isn't only a physical practice but it is also a social specific frame that characterises for a certain discursive homogeneity that crystallises in specific ways of being and seeing present and future. And Moses, paraphrasing Goffman (1959) regarded himself as conferred with a sportsman fame

... Among family, friends, classmates, teachers.... One of the things that makes of me a person with sportive identity is that the rest sees me like it. (1/11/2010)

On talking about his future, our character aged 17, couldn't reach to see another option but to study a PE degree and he started a period of seven years struggling, seven years in which the training for the entrance test to access university, the practice of different sports (swimming, judo, karate, windsurfing and skiing) and his work as instructor in the first gym in the province, restated his sportive identity, showing a way that he couldn't abandon: during those years, he studied to become a university graduate and he didn't finish the third and last year just in case he was tempted to dedicate his life to something different.

Some windsurfing mates describe Moses as a very competitive person (Martin 15/4/2011). This characteristic is just the ethos of effort and steadiness against adversity that has been rebuilt by the sportive mechanism where, as it is already known, nobody likes losing even in trivial games

To a certain extent, the windsurfer Moses that we have described seems to act as a competitive superman that doesn't give up in front of the risk that implies the specific control (sportive) of nature that windsurfing requires. Around the fight with waves, synthesis of water and wind, the subcultures of surfing-windsurfing and kitesurfing created an imaginary of personal development, freedom and rebellion:

But what I liked most, what really got me into windsurfing was the sensation that the combination of different elements, water, wind and speed provides. It was freedom in itself, as if you were part of the mechanism that makes the machine work, the total communion with nature (Auger 2003).

This isn't the place to analyse the economical function that, in the production of assets and services of this defined social space, this philosophy plays. However, it is useful to understand the distinctive character that windsurfing had in Spain, moreover inland, at the beginning of the 1980s.

5.3.- THE CONDITIONS TO DEVELOP A DISTINCTIVE LIFESTYLE

According To Moses, when he started to practise windsurfing, it was a minority who could afford it, mainly sons of wealthy families or other young single-rich adults. Among the latter is his pupil from the gym, who also taught him how to ski. Among the former are the radicals who came to the reservoir for the weekend

The radicals where the advance militants of a new sport-lifestyle-identity and subculture. The name isn't neutral: many are the connotations of the word "radical" when we refer to windsurfing: risky techniques, advanced material, exclusive dedication, way of being and lifestyle. The three radical friends of Moses came from wealthy families from the capital. Two of them, when they finished their degree in Computers engineering, decided to take the state exam to become secondary school teachers in Andalusia in order to have the waves from Tarifa close by. They passed the exam and they continue living there. The third one, an economist, inherited the family business, abandoned windsurfing and became what the others consider a fool.

We are talking about a time when windsurfing, that was accepted as an Olympic sport in 1984, hadn't democratised yet. Twenty years later, Parals (2003) explains the two keys for a democratisation that approaches: the design of shorter and with more sleeve boards that, allowing a more relaxed sail, make it easier for ordinary people to practise and the price, more reasonable, around 1000 Euros. Taking into account that some people are validating questionnaires to know the interest that Primary and Secondary students show towards windsurfing (Blasco, Lopez and Mengual, 2010) we could think that, effectively, this sportive practice has democratised during the last two decades...

The increase in the number of windsurfers implies disparity of links and degrees of compromise. Thus, for several years, Moses was part of the hard core of propagandists who, through their equipment, consumption and customs, spread the (sub)cultural identity that they personified (Wheaton 2000). As soon as he earned some money, Moses bought and prepared a van and, as the radicals that went to live near Tarifa, he travelled with his friends and their vans to the beaches of the Iberian Peninsula and north of Morocco looking for the wind that moved the waves, spending hours sitting on the rocks and frowning because of the quietness of the clouds, always looking at the weather forecast, moving the same day from one place to another.... As the mentioned autor explains.

... in my research on windsurfing.... the participants described the activity as "a lifestyle" more than a sport. It was obvious that this particular "life style" played a main role in the meaning and experience of windsurfing. The participants looked for a distinctive lifestyle, often alternative, that provided a particular and exclusive "social identity" (Wheaton, 2004.4).

Windsurfing is the personification of a distinctive life style that requires, at least, two capitals, the economical that, Dan and Wheaton (2007 state, still excludes those without a reasonable salary and ; more important is perhaps the physical-corporal, that on dissolving the division between sailor and vessel must keep a certain proportion with the risk that he is taken.

Moses, a person from a humble background, a fighter, with a strong sportive identity and a nature lover, found in windsurfing a distinctive lifestyle in which the control of the elements (waves and wind) and the physical capitals of youth, strength and risk are dignified, As he explains,

... I liked the life around it.....there may have been moments when I have even liked getting into the water.... But there were external motivations of prestige and distinction... We could say that I have windsurfed despite the water (8/4/2011).

Inside the mentioned motivations of prestige and distinction there is to count the added value that the windsurfing club created around the reservoir, in which some of the wealthy persons in the area were involved and where Moses played a main role, provided.

5.4.- THE REASONS FOR A GRADUAL ABANDONMENT

Moses says "gradual abandonment" to indicate that he doesn't know (doesn't want to know) how it started and what was the reason for it. The result is that now he feels "free". It is quite a paradoxical way to describe his state of mind, as its attachment to windsurfing was absolutely voluntary and he didn't mention any kind of coercion or obligation before.

To try to understand this distance and the individual feeling of liberation we must also look into his social conditioning.

The turning point, according to different sources, was a conflict with the club. In this process, Moses started to keep distant with some people and he continued keeping a close relationship with others. It could be thought that these movements were related to the specific reason of the conflict. However, we think this is not so: whereas the link with some people was just windsurfing, it was different with others (previous common development, classmates, teachers, understanding of the sportive phenomenon..) In other words, Moses has grown apart from those who he related to because he was together with them in a desert island and he had no other option.

The appeal of the desert island was its distinctive character of its practice-identity-subculture. However, at this point in his life, Moses has no need of it, as he has other sources of status and other priorities.

Besides, windsurfing is a very demanding sport both physically and technically. On leaving the club and the reservoir, Moses stopped training and his physical and technical capitals diminished, making it difficult to come back more sporadically each time.

Finally, in the family context, his sons do sports that have nothing to do with windsurfing and they participate in competitions at a high level in their category. This wouldn't be possible without his parents effort, and Moses continues strengthening and rebuilding his sportive identity getting deeply involved in their sons' sportive occupations and career.

From this point of view, the abandonment of windsurfing, if circumstances don't change, has no way back.

6.- CONCLUSIONS

While we were writing the section about his vital development around windsurfing, we sent Moses three different drafts that he always gave back with some sort of clarifications.

However, we didn't show him the section dedicated to the socio-historical contextualization of his biography together with the final draft of this paper till the very end. We weren't sure if he would assume the social causalities shown and if he would agree with our argument from the concepts of habitus, sportive identity and distinctive space-culture-lifestyle.

Respect this, in the final interview, he insisted on two different aspects:

Firstly, he seemed to like the paper in general as well as in detail, as shown, assuming that his "individual and casual" development is guided by a logic built up on the economic-social-cultural context he has lived in.

Secondly, he put up for discussion a matter that was of special interest for him and that we haven't tackled (this, we can say, illustrates the opening and absence of previous ideas with which this work was started as well as the opposing interests of the participants in a study with these characteristics). Moses thought that the research would focus on how his clumsiness and suffering, his condition of fragile character (Varela y Alvarez.Uria, 1989) in water, his lack of a vital capital on the field of AFERD had influenced his way of understanding PE, his teaching techniques, his understanding of the difficulties of those who don't fit in the stereotype of ideal pupil of a compulsory subject in PE.

This worry- that we agreed to develop in a future paper- refers to one of the core points in the field of AFERD and we formulate it this way: professionals on PE should be the best qualified people to understand the social and at the same time contingent and random character of determined corporal capitals. However, they are the ones who often tend to naturalize them more strongly (Tinning, 1990; Barbero, 1996)

Thirdly, Moses considers that his relationship with windsurfing is an allegory of his own life, in which he sees himself as playing with the idea of being different and innovative without forgetting to have his cake and eat it, that is, he tackles the difficult wave but always with a life vest and leaving the biggest waves pass by in order not to risk his neck more than necessary. And he adds, Sara and I were a radical family (we got married without any ceremony or celebration, we brought up our children in quite a different way, in the van, far from all the clichés...) but we were also the first ones to build up a family. Besides, during this time, he never forgot his other reality, where he got a post as professor at university and developed his doctoral thesis. In a certain way, he concludes, we were traditional among radicals and radicals among traditional.

Finally, when we were talking about a possible title, we proposed: *"What I am talking about when I talk about swimming"* –inspired in Murakami (2010)–. He answered *" keeping afloat in life and in water"*.

7.- REFERENCES

- Apple, M. (2005). La entrevista autobiográfica narrativa: fundamentos teóricos y la praxis del análisis mostrada a partir del estudio de caso sobre el cambio cultural de los Otomíes en Méjico. *Forum Qualitative Social Research*, 6 (2), artículo 16, Mayo 2005. (<http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/465/995>)
- Auger, C. (2003). El ABC del Windsurf. *Surf a vela*, 194. (<http://www.windsurfesp.com/artsurf.asp?section=001&codi=5394&col=226>)
- Barbero, J.I. (1996). Cultura profesional y currículum oculto en Educación Física. Reflexiones sobre las (im)posibilidades del cambio. *Revista de Educación*, 311, 13-50.
- Barbero, J.I. (2006). Ficción autobiográfica en torno a la cultura corporal y la vida cotidiana. *Educación Física y Deporte*, 25 (2), 46-63.
- Becker, H.S. (1953). Becoming a marihuana user. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 59 (3), 235-242.
- Blasco, J., López, A. y Mengual, S. (2010). Validación mediante método Delphi de un cuestionario para conocer las experiencias e interés hacia las actividades acuáticas con especial atención al windsurf. *Ágora para la Educación Física y el deporte*, 12 (1), 75-96. (http://www5.uva.es/agora/revista/12_1/agora_12_1d_blasco_et_al.pdf)
- Bolívar, A., Domingo, J. y Fernández, M. (2001). *La investigación biográfico-narrativa en educación. Enfoque y metodología*. Madrid: La Muralla.
- Boltanski, L. (1975). *Los usos sociales del cuerpo*. Buenos Aires: Periferia.
- Bourdieu, P. (1988). *La distinción. Criterio y bases sociales del gusto*. Madrid: Taurus.
- Brown, D. (2003). El proyecto corporal culturista: construyendo nuevas identidades a través de la supermuscularidad. *Ágora para la Educación Física y el deporte*, nº 2-3, 61-74. (http://www5.uva.es/agora/revista/2/agora2_4_brown.pdf)
- Dant, T. y Wheaton, B. (2007). Windsurfing: an extreme form of material and embodied interaction? *Anthropology Today*, 23 (6), 8-12.
- Delibes, M. (1992). *Mi vida al aire libre*. Barcelona: Destino.
- Denzin, N.K. (Ed) (1970). *The research act in sociology: a theoretical introduction to sociological method*, Nueva York: McGraw-Hill.
- Devís, J. y Sparkes, A. (2001). La crisis de identidad de un estudiante universitario de educación física: un estudio biográfico. En Devís (Coord): *La Educación Física, el deporte y la salud en el siglo XXI*. Alcoy: Marfil, 87-99.
- Eisner, E. (1998). *El ojo ilustrado. Indagación cualitativa y mejora de la práctica educativa*, Barcelona: Paidós.
- Flick, U. (2007). *Introducción a la investigación cualitativa*. Madrid: Morata
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

- Martínez, L. (2005). Escenarios y biografía en la configuración de la mirada pedagógica. En Sicilia, A. & Fernández, M. (Coord) *La otra cara de la enseñanza. La EF desde una perspectiva crítica*. Barcelona: Inde, 93-114.
- Murakami, H. (2010). *De qué hablo cuando hablo de correr*. Barcelona: Tusquets.
- Parals, J. (2003). 1.000 euros y al agua. *Surf a vela*, nº 195 (<http://www.windsurfesp.com/artsurf.asp?section=001&codi=5420&col=228>)
- Pascual, C. (2003). La historia de vida de una educadora de profesores de educación física: su desarrollo personal y profesional. *Ágora para la Educación Física y el deporte*, nº 2-3, 23-38. (http://www5.uva.es/agora/revista/2/agora2_2_carminabanos.pdf)
- Pennac, D. (2007). *Chagrin d'école*. París: Nrf-Gallimard.
- Pérez, G. (1994) *Investigación cualitativa. Retos e interrogantes. II Técnicas y análisis de datos*, Madrid: La Muralla.
- Plummer, K. (1989). *Los documentos personales*. Madrid: Siglo XXI.
- Pujadas, J.J. (1992). *El método biográfico: El uso de las historias de vida en las ciencias sociales*. Madrid: CIS.
- Pulido, S., Bores, N. y Moreno, A. (2009). Investigando la identidad deportiva de los estudiantes de EF, el proceso de construcción y la influencia en los programas de formación inicial. En Moreno, W. & Pulido, S. (Ed.) *Universidad, currículo y EF*, Medellín: Funámbulos, 2009, 97-108.
- Richardson, L. (2000). Writing. A method of inquiry. En Denzin, N.K. y Lincoln, Y.S. (eds) (2000) *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 923-948.
- Silvennoinen, M. (1994). ¡Todos en fila! La experiencia de la EF escolar y la imagen del papel del profesor. En Barbero, J.I. (Coord.) (1994) *Investigación alternativa en EF*, Unisport, Málaga, 271-284.
- Sparkes, A. y Smith, B. (2001). Hombres, deporte, lesión en la médula espinal y problemas en la restauración del yo. *Ágora para la Educación Física y el deporte*, 1, 37-48. (<http://www5.uva.es/agora/revista/1/agora1sparkessmith.pdf>)
- Sparkes, A. (2003). Investigación narrativa en la EF y el deporte. *Ágora para la Educación Física y el deporte*, nº 2-3, 51-60. (http://www5.uva.es/agora/revista/2/agora2_14_sparkes.pdf)
- Sparkes, A. y Devis, J. (2007). Investigación narrativa y sus formas de análisis: una visión desde la EF y el deporte. En Moreno, W. y Pulido, S. M. (Ed.) *Educación, cuerpo y sociedad. El cuerpo en las interacciones e instituciones sociales*, Medellín: Funámbulos, 2007, 43-68.
- Sparkes, A., Brown, D. y Partington, E. (2010). The 'jock body' and the social construction of space: The performance and positioning of cultural identity. *Space and culture*, XX(X), 1-15.
- Tinning, R. (1990). *Ideology and Physical Education. Opening Pandora's box*. Geelong: Deakin University.
- Valles, M.S. (2002). *Entrevistas cualitativas*, Madrid: CIS.

- Varela, J. y Álvarez-Uría, F. (1989). *Sujetos frágiles. Ensayos de sociología de la desviación*. Madrid: FCE.
- Wheaton, B. (2000). Just do it: consumption, commitment, and identity in the windsurfing subculture. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 17 (3), 254-274
- Wheaton, B. (2004). Introduction. Mapping the lifestyle sport-scape. En Wheaton, B. (Ed.) *Understanding lifestyle sports. Consumption, identity and difference*. Nueva York: Routledge, 1-28.
- Wright Mills, C. (2000; e.o. 1959). *La imaginación sociológica*. Madrid: FCE.

Referencias totales / Total references: 38 (100%)

Referencias propias de la revista / Journal's own references: 0 (0%)