Towards a feminist playology: social sport studies and the limits of critique

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Chapter 4

A synthesized understanding of post-Marxism and the theory of play

4.1 Introduction

The advances made by Marxist, cultural studies and Foucauldian poststructuralist social theory have enabled social sport studies to further think the relation between language, the body and the subject. These insights have provided us with the necessary tools to account for the elite women's football players references to 'high performance' and 'gender policing' in the data. However, we argued that the existing accounts of players' experiences are not sufficient to theorizing the experience of being an elite women's football player, as they forget play. The references to 'sacrifice' in the data cannot be reduced to the instrumental level of explanation, but must be understood as a reference to play. Along with the categories of 'gender policing' and 'high performance', 'play' must be understood as an irreducible structure of the experiences of the football players.

In chapter 3 we outlined the appropriate theory of play, by weaving together insights from the pre-rational playologists, most notably Huizinga, but also Fink and Gadamer. Following their insights we argued that play refers to an ontologically distinct category and draws the (football) players into a sphere that is not of their own making and importantly escapes both the workings of power and the logics of scarcity. The play holds players under its spell and allows them to experience something that transcends their 'real' life behaviours, thoughts and motives. Perceived in this way, play points at an irreducible structure of experience that should be understood as a proper object of philosophical inquiry.

Accordingly we argued that the women's football players' 'willingness' to sacrifice indicates that play is taking place. Put differently, we argued that the players' willingness to sacrifice must be understood in terms of their irreducible commitment to play. Thus, in contrast to the view upheld by the Marxist, cultural studies and Foucauldian poststructuralist informed theoretical frameworks, according to which sacrifices should be understood as sacrifices to the real world, that is a sacrifice of the real world to the real world, we argued that sacrifices must be understood as placing the real world and the play world in competition.

This means first of all that the women's football players experience not so much being torn between the diverse imperatives of real life, but between those of the dominant reality and play. They are operating according to at least two systems of meaning, that is that of the dominant reality and play. However and importantly, we argued with Huizinga that in reality properly conceived, both are united. The distinction between the two is by contrast always and already contingent and historical. What this allowed us to bring into view is first of all that the players' sense of living a contradictory life does not come from any supposed fact that life is bifurcated, but from the historical and artificial separation of playfulness and seriousness. Secondly it allowed us to bring into view that the players precisely suffer from this historical separation between playfulness and seriousness. To be more precise, the theory of play allowed us to bring into view that the players become unable to make sense of their real life and life choices because they use ideological tools

informed by the disjunction between playfulness and seriousness. Accordingly, it is for this reason that they see, and supposedly only can see their real-life choices as contradictory, and perhaps therefore, as reprehensible.

When we take seriously these insights provided by the theory of play, we must first of all conclude that eventually play makes visible that the existing approaches to the social study of athletes' lives are not sufficient and fail to account for a richer understanding of subjectivity and agency. Play makes visible that the Foucauldian poststructuralist, cultural studies and Marxist informed accounts in social sport studies miss important insights into theorizing the athletic subject. One of the important consequences is that the element of resistance and emancipation involved in play is overlooked. To be more precise, as these frameworks are monistic about value systems they reduce or minimize the notion of agency: either we act in order to meet our physical needs, or because of some internalised law. Put bluntly, in these frameworks the subject is simply trapped, an object amongst many other objects that serve very precise and univocal goals, alongside chairs and footballs. Moving beyond the reductionisms that we find in the Marxist, cultural studies and Foucauldian poststructuralist paradigms, what the theory of play tells us is that we can do things that exceed immediate purposes, as we always have access to living our life according to at least two systems of meaning, that is that of the dominant reality and that of play. What this, in very concrete terms, means is that the theory of play tells us there is always room for manoeuvre. We can always play, we can always challenge the normative scales imposed on us structurally by placing them in competition with the scales of play. More philosophically, the theory of play upholds the position that there is always the possibility of moving from subjection, the disciplinary definition of a subject by discourse, to subjectification: the self-creation of a new subject-position. In other words, play is what resists alienation/oppression.

Secondly we must conclude that the theory of play already provides us with the minimum conditions necessary to determine what the introduction of play into the existing frameworks in social sport studies demands from us. Recall that we are in need of a theoretical framework that can do justice not only to the references to 'sacrifice' in the data, but does so in conjunction with those of 'high performance' and 'gender policing'. Yet, in so far as the experience of play must be understood as ontologically primary, yet distinct from the experience of 'high performance' and 'gender policing', we cannot simply complement the existing frameworks with the concept of play, but we must *rethink* these through the theory of play. Accordingly we must establish a method or framework that integrates those theses of the existing frameworks that are indispensable for making sense of the themes of 'high performance' and 'gender policing' and those relevant theses of the theory of play. By contrast, if we simply complemented the existing frameworks with the theory of play, we would run the risk of method incompatibility or incongruence.

What the establishment of the required framework demands from us is first of all a rejection of the totalizing views of the existing theoretical accounts in social sport studies. Second, we must determine which elements of these frameworks are indispensable for theorizing the themes of 'high performance' and 'gender policing'. Third, we must determine how these theses can be made congruent with the account of play that we established in chapter 3. When these qualifications have been met, we will be in a good position to establish the required integrative theoretical framework, or model.

In order to fulfil this task, I shall first of all in 4.2 recall which theoretical insights of the existing frameworks in social sport studies are indispensable in reference to the themes of 'gender policing and 'high performance'. Already in chapter 2 of this thesis a number of insights were introduced. The object of 4.2 is however to systematically review those insights and determine which are indispensable for theorizing the themes of 'high performance' and 'gender policing'. I shall, however, argue that these are best understood by returning to Marx himself in the context of Marxist-informed sport studies and to Foucault himself in the context of Foucauldian poststructuralist-informed sport studies. Subsequently, we must critically assess the possibility of overcoming the alleged insurmountable differences between the materialist and the poststructuralist premises such as we find in the field of social sport studies. To this end I shall in 4.3 first assess the cultural studies paradigm in social sport studies. Second, based on our turn to both Marx and Foucault in 4.2, I shall provide a post-Marxist reading of both materialism and Foucauldian poststructuralism that is both respectful of differences, yet overcomes dogmatic claims. Following his interpretation of Marx, I shall argue that notably Foucault himself could be read as a post-Marxist, which subsequently allows for a more nuanced reading of both frameworks.[29] Then, in 4.4, I shall determine how the theory of play forces us to rethink the established post-Marxist framework anew.

4.2 Sociological theses on sport and the athletic subject

4.2.1 A brief summary of the main theoretical claims of Marxist social sport studies

In chapter 2, we noted that social sports studies found in Marxist social theory both tools for analysing the facts about exploitation in sports and to write about athletes' subjectivity - their state of consciousness, their subjective frameworks for understanding the world they inhabit, and the ways in which their identities are formed. While chapter 2 introduced a number of theoretical insights, the object of this section is to systematically review those theses of Marxist-informed social sport studies indispensable to our aim of establishing a theoretical framework that can account for the experiences of the elite women's football

29 As this thesis is neither concerned with exegetical projects nor aims to contribute to either the Marx or the Foucault reception, but aims to make sense of the women's football situation, my arguments are suggestive in character and more importantly limited in scope.

players. Two comments must here be made. First, as it would be foolhardy to attempt to review Marxist-inspired social sport studies as a whole, in this section I shall limit the discussion to the most prominent contributions within the field.[30] Second, as there are many post-Marxist articulations, we should not overlook the articulations by Marx himself.

Following the insights of Marxist social sport studies, five theoretical claims can be identified that inform the field of study: (i) labour makes humans what they are and defines the parameters of human society; (ii) the study of class explains the concrete realities of social life; (iii) under the capitalist mode of production labour becomes alienated and alienating; (iv) the relationship between owner and producer is immediately influenced by cultural forms; (v) ideology explains enduring forms of social and economic inequalities.

An opportune expression of the first two Marxist insights applied to sports can be found in Jarvie and Maguire's *Sport and Leisure in Social Thought*: 'Within the capitalist labour process the means of production, teams, cartels, leisure organisations, are purchased in the market by the capitalist. So too is labour power. The athletes, the teams, the music star, and the box-office film hero/heroine perform the work under the supervision of the capitalist with the product of that labour remaining the property of the owner of the means of production. The purpose of the capitalist labour process is to produce profit, or at least produce commodities whose value exceeds the sum of the values of labour power and the means of production consumed in the process of production' (Jarvie & Maguire, 1994, p. 92). Central to this expression is first of all the analysis of sport in terms of the process of labour and secondly Marx's core critique that this process is structured by class contradiction. In this view, athletes or sport workers with their labour power to sell, and be sold, are no different from other agents in the labour market. However, the most prominent adaptations of Marx's critique of labour in capitalist society to the context of professional sports are Rigaur's *Sport and Work* (1969), Hoch's *Rip Off the Big Game* (1972) and Brohm's influential *Sport: A Prison of Measured Time* (1978), which we already mentioned in chapter 2 of this thesis. For these theorists, modern sport presents a microcosm of modern capitalist society and an integral aspect of its culture of domination and exploitation. To be more precise, locating sport within a discussion of the ideological and repressive state apparatus, they view sporting practices as part of the process through which a structure in dominance is being secured or reproduced. Perceived in this way, sport provides: 'a stabilising factor for the existing social order', 'a basis for reinforcing the commodity spectacle', 'a basis for reproducing patriarchy', 'a basis for regimenting and militarising youth' and 'a set of hierarchical, elitist, authoritarian values' (Jarvie & Maguire, 1994, p. 96). Sport, states Brohm, 'as an activity characteristic of bourgeois industrial society, is an exact reflection of capitalist categories. And as Marx explained, economic categories reflect the structures and principles of organisation of the capitalist mode of production. The verti-

30 Hence I leave aside here the various post-Marxist sport studies, amongst which are black Marxist and feminist Marxist articulations.

cal, hierarchical structure of sport models the social structure of bureaucratic capitalism, with its system of competitive selection, promotion, hierarchy, and social advancement. The driving forces in sport—performance, competitiveness, records—are directly carried over from the driving forces of capitalism: productivity, the search for profit, rivalry and competitiveness' (Brohm, 1978, p. 49, 50). According to Brohm, modern sport should be understood as an expression of the interests of imperialist capital, governed by the principles of competition and by the exact measurement of space, time and output. 'For Brohm sport is the rational organisation of human output, and in a most useful formulation he calls sport the Taylorisation of the body; in other words the scientific means for producing maximum output from the human body. This gives him a means of applying the principle of labour power and surplus value to athletic performance' (Horne, Tomlinson, & Whannel, 1999, p. 220).[31] In a similar vein, Rigauer allies sport and work in his *Sport and Work*. In a later article Rigauer summarizes his own position as follows: 'According to his [Rigauer's] central sociological thesis, under conditions of industrial capitalism sport as an integral part of the superstructure (culture, ideology) reproduces features of social behaviour that are functionally and normatively ingrained in capitalistically-organized processes of working, marketing, rationalization, scientification, communication and socialization. All these social processes are reduced in sport to the quantitative principle of "ideal" and "material surplus value" (reification, alienation). On the one hand, the central ideological function of sport consists in transposing its base-related (economic) superstructural relation and interdependence into societal practice. On the other hand, it also has to blur this very structural correspondence ideologically in a way that allows the idea of sport as a socially autonomous area to be maintained. The main purpose of a Marxist sociological theory of sport should be to explain the real societal functions of sport with the help of informed analyses focused on culture and ideology. In addition, a Marxist sociology has to generate concepts that relate sport to the aim of political emancipation, thus contributing to the defeat of capitalism' (Rigauer, 2000, p. 40, 41). In the footsteps of both Brohm and Rigauer, social sport studies have incorporated the notions of the division of labour in several ways (see: Jarvie & Maguire, 1994, p. 93).

Important to keep in mind here is the insight that the position of the owners of teams or athletes enables them not only the power to hire, but also to establish such factors as the length of the season, the number of exhibition games, the timing and length of training camps and the structure of post-season play (Beamish, 1988, Jarvie & Maguire, 1994, p. 91). This can loosely be understood in reference to what Marx called the passage from the formal subsumption to the real subsumption of labour under capital (see: Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 25; Negri, 1991). What Marx means by this is that the production process produces the worker herself and not only commodities.

31 Particularly worth mentioning here is Guttmann's *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sport* (1978) in which he analyses modern sport as being dominated instrumental rationality. In modern sport, he argues, *Homo mensor* reigns , as it is characterized by 'the almost inevitable tendency to transform *every* athletic feat into one that can be quantified and measured'(Guttmann, 1987, p. 47)

Here we arrive at the third thesis of Marxist theory, namely that under the capitalist mode of production labour becomes alienated and alienating. Recall that according to Marx, it is by means of labour that people are to achieve their potential. To be more precise, according to Marx it is through labour that humans exteriorise their consciousness in the objective world, and it precisely this act that distinguishes human from mere animal life. However under the capitalist mode of production (wo)men become removed from their 'species-essence', that is the possibility of expressing their individuality. Philosophically, Marx's notion of alienation can be traced back to Feuerbach, who sought to explain 'religious alienation', that is 'the fact that real, sensuous men represent salvation and perfection to themselves in another supra-sensuous world (as a projection of their own 'essential qualities' into imaginary beings and situations - in particular, the bond of community or love which unites 'humankind')' (Balibar, 2007, p. 15). Subsequently by way of consciousness raising, human beings can become capable of reappropriating their essence which has been alienated in God and live out fraternity on earth (Balibar, 2007, p. 15). What Marx takes from Feuerbach's model is the realisation that alienating forces induce experiences of dispossession common to the human condition. Marx then extends this insight to the sphere of politics, but unlike Feuerbach without grounding alienation in an idealist conceptualisation of the political sphere. Rather he focuses on the diverse ways alienation arises from real-life social conflicts: 'in present economic conditions, labour's actualisation carries with it the worker's loss of actualisation, labour's objectification is the worker's loss of the object and servitude to it, and instead of appropriation, there is for the worker estrangement [Entfremdung], alienation [Entausserung]' (Marx, 2007, p. 71). Thus for Marx the social relations of production produce the worker's alienation. What Marx concretely finds in his analyses of capitalist societies are four aspects of alienation: (1) alienation of the worker from the product; (2) alienation from the labour process; (3) alienation from one's social nature; (4) most importantly, alienation from species essence, that is the worker's essence as a free, social, self-directed creator (Marx, 2007, pp. 73-76). Alienation is a form of domination and exploitation that shapes the capitalist mode of production, in which labour creates commodities without owning the means of production and without controlling the conditions and the results of production. Following these insights, the argument in the field of social sport studies has been that when a sports player sells her labour to an employer the opportunity for creative self-actualisation becomes restricted (Jarvie & Maguire, 1994, p. 94). Another dimension of alienation engages the question of how players help to create the structure which actually works against them or their interests, as 'players rarely own the stadia, the teams, or the leagues in which they play and therefore rarely promote their own labour, unless they are up for sale.' The players 'produce a product which they do not own, a product which has the potential for returning high profits for the owners while at the same time involving minimal risk to the owners, which "leads to alienation"' (Jarvie & Maguire, 1994, p. 94).

Important to note here and as already suggested in chapter two of this thesis, Marxist-informed sport studies not only condemn elite competitive sports, but eventually all forms of leisure, viewing these as false techniques of escapism from reality (Gruneau, 1983, pp.

34-39). Recall that we argued in chapter 2 that for Marx eventually the labourer's leisure or free time served servitude, allowing labourers to satisfy their physical needs, instead of contributing to self-realization. Particularly worth mentioning here is Lefebvre's critique of leisure and the leisure industry: 'The case against leisure is quite simply closed - and the verdict is irreversible: leisure is as alienated and alienating as labour; as much an agent of co-optation as it is in-itself co-opted; and both as assimilative and assimilated part of the system (mode of production). Once a conquest of the working class, in the shape of paid days off, holidays, weekends, and so on, leisure has been transformed into an industry, into a victory of neo-capitalism, and an extension of bourgeois hegemony to the whole of space' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 383, 384). For Lefebvre leisure is an illusion, 'sold by a capitalist industry, which profits from selling this myth of the possibility of an escape from the control and alienation of the everyday' (Crawford, 2015, p. 577).[32] Thus, for Marxist-informed social sport studies, sport must be considered alienating when dominated by the values of capitalist society (private property, exchange value, etc.), or as an illusory domain that falsely promotes freedom, at the expense of overcoming the alienation found in labour.

Secondly, it is important to note here that Marxist-informed social sport theorists do not in general perceive the unmasking of different forms of self-alienation as an end in itself but rather as a step towards radical revolution, a realisation of communism and de-alienation. Noteworthy here is the task that Morgan sets for himself in his overview of Marxist sport studies '*Leftist Theories of Sport: A Critique and Reconstruction*': 'The signs of the degradation of sport are all around us. The mania for winning, the widespread cheating, the economic and political trivialization of sport, the thirst for crude sensationalism and eccentric spectacle, the manipulation of the mass media, the cult of athletic stars and celebrity, and the mindless bureaucratization are just some of the more ominous signs. These signs are too pervasive to deny, too steeped in our milieu to pass off as anything other than social pathology, and too entrenched in our present social configurations to require anything short of a wholesale revamping of our major social institutions. This picture of sport can hardly be ignored - not, that is if a more humane and civil form of sport is to be salvaged. Indeed, I am convinced that the social rehabilitation of sport is critical to the rehabilitation of society itself' (Morgan, 1994,p. 1). What a more human and civil sport would look like is hardly ever envisioned by these authors. Marx himself is however clear on this point. For him, as we noted in chapter 2, in the envisioned classless society sport would have no objective beyond itself and would thus belong to the sphere of freedom.

Before turning to the fourth thesis of Marxist theory, we must however emphasize here, as we did in chapter 2, that Marx does not speak only negatively about alienation. Rather for Marx individual and collective alienations are sometimes necessary for the achievement

32 Lefebvre position here is immediately linked to that of Althusser, according to whom, any escape from capitalist ideology is impossible, while being in ideology gives the impression that one is or can be outside of it (Crawford, 2015, p. 577, 578).

of a better society in which improved material conditions can realize the promise of an unalienated life for all. Put differently, for Marx sacrifices and losses, in short alienations, may be necessary to achieve a greater good. This is paradoxically precisely the grand theme of liberalism; sacrifices of individual freedoms are essential for the realisation of collective freedoms, which are thought to be of benefit to all.[33] While we acknowledge that making sacrifices is part and parcel of the lives of athletes, we refuse to understand sacrifices by way of an instrumental level of explanation. To be more precise, to say that we make sacrifices is something radically different from giving it explanatory value in pursuit of a man-made defined goal. Thus, paradoxically, when speaking positively about alienation, Marx, like his much detested capitalists, makes smart use of our capacity to play.

However, let us now turn to the fourth thesis of Marxist theory, that is, that the relationship between owner and producer is immediately influenced by cultural forms. As noted already above, for Marx the starting point of historical materialism is social life, that is real living individuals as they live in concrete social formations. More precisely, according to Marx the 'innermost secret of capitalism' is neither abstract nor mono-causal but rather a structure that is both necessary to capitalism and always historically inflected: 'It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers . . . which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political form of the relations of sovereignty and dependence, the corresponding specific form of the state. This does not prevent the same economic base—the same from the standpoint of its main conditions—due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural, environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc.— from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances (Marx cited in: Hennessy, 2018, p. 17).

The challenge Marx, however, set for himself is 'how precisely to encompass historical specificity, as well as human agency, while recognizing within it the logic of modes of production' (Wood, 1995, p. 59). In the wake of this challenge we must situate the various post-Marxist sport studies, amongst which are black Marxist and feminist Marxist articulations, which I shall address in the next sections. Convenient expressions faithful to the centrals claims of Marxist thought can however be found in the work of Wood and Hennessy (Hennessy, 1993a, 2018; Wood, 1995). Hennessy describes her position as follows:

33 The irony behind Marx's praise of revolutionary capitalism, Shaviro contends in a Deleuzian-inspired Battaillan mode is the irony of the capitalist system itself: 'For capitalism's dirty little secret is that it cannot endure its own abundance. This is the key to Marx's theory of crisis. Again and again, Marx and Engels say, "there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity – the epidemic of over-production." The wealth that capitalism actually produces undermines the scarcity that remains its raison d'etre. For once scarcity has been overcome, there's nothing left to drive competition. The imperative to expand and intensify production simply becomes absurd. In the face of abundance, therefore, capitalism needs to generate an imposed scarcity, in order to keep the system going' (Shaviro, 2005, The Pinocchio Theory, accessed 24 September, 2020, <http://www.shaviro.com/Blog>).

'In historical materialism we have a way of knowing that recognizes that the accumulation of surplus value or profit on which capitalism depends is fundamentally based on human relations of exploitation, and that also recognizes that these relations are never lived in economic terms alone, leaving aside as less real the norms, the concepts, the cultures around which this mode of production is organized' (Hennessy, 2018, p. 15).[34] Similarly, Wood argues that the challenge of a middle ground requires first of all an understanding of the 'economic', not as a 'regionally' separate sphere which is somehow 'material' as opposed to 'social', but rather as itself irreducibly social - indeed, a conception of the 'material' as constituted by social relations and practices. Secondly it requires that we consider the process and relations of production, not as simply economic, but also as embodied in juridical-political and ideological forms and relations (Wood, 1995, p. 61).

Social sports studies found in Marxist theory not only apt tools for analysing the facts relative to exploitation in sports, but also tools to write about athletes' subjectivity—their state of consciousness, their subjective frameworks for understanding the world they inhabit, and the ways in which their identities are formed. Here we arrive at the fifth and final thesis of Marxist theory that has proved indispensable in the field of social sport studies, namely the thesis that ideology explains enduring forms of social and economic inequalities. While the concept of ideology is often used loosely to refer simply to any set of beliefs, in its strict classical Marxist usage it involves two definite assertions: (1) that beliefs and ideas, or more generally the ways people perceive the world, are socially determined and (2) that beliefs and ideas are informed by class interests (see also: Jarvie & Maguire, 1994, p. 97). The first of these claims can be found in a plurality of sociological and philosophical traditions, while the latter is more specifically rooted in the work of Marx, although having parallels in other traditions of thought (Jarvie & Maguire, 1994, p. 97).

Let us start with the first claim. Predominantly in his early political writings, Marx himself articulated how ideas and thoughts structure one's experience of the world and the ways in which these mental structures are influenced by social relations. These insights are well captured in the famous quote that 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their existence that determines their social consciousness' (Marx, 1970, p. 21). What Marx himself in this context particularly aims for is the formulation of a sociology of consciousness, that is an understanding of the way historical circumstances, economic structures, and social relations of production influence or determine the features of consciousness. This in turn would allow him to give a materialist account of the various ways

34 Hennessy herself aims then also to articulate a middle ground between what could be called a totalizing Marxist perspective and a focus on the local. According to her, a feminism that aims to understand the discursive construction of women along different axes of difference requires an analytical framework that can explain the connection between discursive constructions of difference and the exploitive social arrangements that shape them (Hennessy, 1993, p. 65, 66). It is her contention that feminism cannot ignore a totality such as patriarchy which continues to organize people's lives in systematic and oppressive ways (Hennessy, 1993).

the interests of those that are in power, shape the consciousness of those who are not.[35] In this context the question however arises what makes social and economic inequalities so persistent, or how should we understand enduring forms of social and economic inequalities from a materialist perspective? Here we arrive at the second meaning of the term ideology, namely as distorted false consciousness. According to Marx, under the capitalist mode of production the class that controls material production subsequently controls mental production and in any area the prevailing ideas and values are likely to be those of the dominant class. In this way social differences become naturalised, legitimating human relations of exploitation and domination, thereby offering humans an imaginary relationship to the material inequities they live. The idea that forms of sport and leisure have contributed to a state of false consciousness is an assertion that has been made by several Marxist scholars. Noteworthy here is Miliband's *Marxism and Politics*, in which he not only argues for the need for a Marxist sociology of sport, but also that working-class involvement in sport impaired the development of class-consciousness (Miliband, 1977, p. 51, 52). Jarvie and Maguire list five ways the notion of ideology has been used in the context of sport: '(i) the idea that sport and leisure interests help to mask a number of competing social, economic and political ideologies is a common critique of statements which tend to suggest that people's experiences of sport and leisure are universal, natural, and harmonious; (ii) the idea that sport and forms of leisure are themselves sites of ideological struggle not just about sport and leisure but about the type of world we should live in; (iii) the idea that the ability of consumer driven capitalism to produce a range of leisure goods and experiences carries a range of ideological implications when compared with the poorer sections of the world; (iv) the idea that sport and leisure can help to distort and constrain social reality and progress; (v) the idea that sport and leisure practices contribute to a process through

35 Unsurprisingly, Marxist theory played an important role in feminist epistemologies (e.g. Harding, 1986; Hartsock, 1981, 1983a, 1983b, Hennessy, 1993a, 2018; Mohanty, 2015). Hartsock's formulation of a feminist standpoint is particularly worth mentioning, as it consists of detailed analyses of the alleged importance of Marxian theory to further feminist aims. More precisely Hartsock works out the theoretical forms appropriate to each of the two levels of reality when viewed not from the standpoint of the proletariat but from a specifically feminist standpoint. To this end, she explores and expands the Marxian argument that socially mediated interaction with nature in the process of production shapes both human beings and theories of knowledge. Of key importance here is that the Marxian conception of labour would allow to cut through the dichotomy between nature and culture and thus help feminists avoid 'the false choice of characterising the situation of women as either purely natural or purely social'(Hartsock, 1983b). Within feminist theory there is however little agreement about whether the standpoint should be considered a structural position or rather a structured process. Secondly, and this obtains specifically for feminist materialists, a much debated question is how precisely to accommodate difference without losing the claim of uncovering a truer reality (Hekman, 2014, p. 110). As Hekman points out, the difficulty for feminist materialists is as follows. Insofar as it is true that the material reality of women's lives structures their concept of self, it is argued that the focus should no longer be on the experience of women in general, but on the differences between women. Insofar as one accepts this position - women inhabit many different realties - this has enormous implications for feminist truth claims. If realties are multiple, one cannot appeal to one reality to ground a claim about social reality. But insofar as there are multiple realities, there must be multiple truths that correspond to them (Hekman, 2014, p. 105, 106).

which particular interests are represented as universal interests that should be adopted by society or humanity as a whole'(Jarvie & Maguire, 1994, p. 98)

Having presented the key theoretical claims that are to be found in Marxist-informed social sport studies, we must now identify which of these are indispensable for giving a comprehensive account of the experiences of the elite women's football players. In short, what the Marxist perspective offers to our analyses of the experiences of elite women's football players is a theory of alienation. To be more precise, what Marx offers us is a critique and understanding of the historical separation between work and leisure, which is in terms of the language of play, playfulness and seriousness in the context of elite women's football. This needs further elaboration. In chapter 3 we argued, with Huizinga, that play, understood as the originary ground of human experience consists of a unity of playfulness and seriousness. The seriousness that we find in play is that which keeps the game alive, for as soon as one fails to take the game seriously, one ruins the game. It follows that play without seriousness is impossible. Hence, play must consist of both playfulness and seriousness and the separation of playfulness and seriousness must be understood as contingent and historical. What this concretely means in the context of elite women's football is that what we perceive as objective reality and meaning is not given, but made. What the Marxist framework allows us to recognize is the concrete historical circumstances in which the separation of playfulness and seriousness took place in the context of elite women's football. Thus, it is with the institutionalisation and the move towards commercialisation, instrumentalisation and rationalisation that women's football ceased to be simply played for the experience it produces but became played for the sake of externally defined values such as national heroism, prestige, (symbolic) capital etc. It is easy to imagine a world in which winning a football match is solely meaningful as such. Today however, winning a football match is first and foremost meaningful in relation to externally defined values.

Similar sentiments can be find in Huizinga's discussion of modern sport, in which he argues that it is with the increasing systematization and regimentation of sport that 'something of the pure play-quality is lost' and 'the spirit of the professional is no longer the true play-spirit; it is lacking in spontaneity and carelessness' (Huizinga, 1980, p. 197). In sport we could find an activity 'nominally known as play, but raised to such a pitch of technical organization and scientific thoroughness that the real play-spirit is threatened with extinction' and however 'important it may be for the players or spectators, it remains sterile', the 'old play factor' having 'undergone almost complete atrophy' (Huizinga, 1980, p. 198). In this context, the players are means to certain ends and treated as such. Their activities matter not in or by themselves, but solely in terms of their usefulness, or in relation to other useful activities. This is exactly what Marx means with the notion of alienation: to be robbed of the playing part of the self, the meaning-making part of the self, or as he puts it one's true self that can do 'one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic' (Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 53).

Accordingly, the women's football players seem only capable of making sense of their life choices in terms of football's language of use and usefulness, that is, its instrumental scale of values. To be more precise, insofar as play, according to our understanding, consists in the unity of playfulness and seriousness, the women's football players seem only capable of making sense of their life choices in terms of the ideological tools inherited from the belief in the opposition between playfulness and seriousness, or irrationality and rationality.

There are, however, at least two distinct reasons we must depart from the unilateral application of the Marxist understanding of alienation to sport. First, while we observe numerous cases of profit-maximizing in sports, at least at the present time, elite women's football clubs in the Low Countries cannot produce any profit. This does not mean that there is no relation between elite women's football and capital, but that it takes a different form. Important to mention here is Hargreaves's quintuple analysis of the forms that the relation between sport and capital can assume within commercialisation. The first he lists is profit maximising, with examples being professional boxing and horse-racing. However, as Hargreaves points out, many sports have no real aspirations to make profits and simply hope to break even. Thus, the second form of relationship is the attempt to remain financially viable through various survival strategies such as fund raising. The third form of relationship sees sport stimulating the accumulation of capital indirectly, providing a market for goods and services: sport helps to produce the sports equipment, clothing and gambling industries. In the fourth relationship, sport aids capital accumulation indirectly, by offering opportunities for advertising and sponsorship. Finally, sport attracts a degree of investment for non-economic reasons. Directors of football clubs are often motivated by prestige, the desire to have local influence or to use the club for corporate entertaining (Hargreaves, 1995 and see: Scambler, 2005, p. 148). Second, if we take seriously the experiences of the players as reflected on by themselves, we have no reason to believe that, even in a different form, the economic factor is determining in the last instance, and that in the context of elite women's football gender oppression is derivative of class oppression. Rather, next to the theme of 'high performance' the theme of 'gender policing' must be understood as a key structure of the experience of elite women's football that is not reducible to purely economic factors and therefore evades the Marxist framework. This irreducibility of identity exclusion to class oppression, amongst other things, is a core theme of the Foucauldian poststructuralist literature.

4.2.2 A brief summary of the main theoretical claims of Foucauldian poststructuralist sport studies

As in the case of the Marxist perspective, the Foucauldian poststructuralist framework is particularly useful for the analyses of the working lives of athletes and how they cope with authoritarianism, the culture of obedience in their sporting practices. Following up, the perspective subsequently is extremely useful in the attempt to understand the social construction of gendered and sexualised bodies in sport. In the previous section we concluded that the Marxist framework provides us with a theory of alienation. However, we

also concluded that for our purposes, Marxist theory places too much emphasis on economic forces and assumes too hastily that elite women's football is informed by capitalist interests. Secondly, we concluded that Marxist theory cannot sufficiently account for the women's football players references in the data to the theme of 'gender policing'. However, this does not mean that we have to do away with the Marxist critique of the subject under alienation, but that we should complete it with different theoretical resources to accommodate for difference and cultural specificity. It is here that we should turn to the theoretical theses of Foucauldian poststructuralist-informed sports studies.

While chapter 2 already introduced a number of theoretical standpoints, the object of this section is to systematically review those theses of Foucauldian poststructuralist theory that are indispensable to the aim of this thesis, that is, for making sense of the experiences of the elite women's football players.

What must however be noted is that an extensive part of poststructuralist informed social sport studies is guided from the outset by normative questions concerning the challenges and opportunities of sport for social justice. However, I argue that it is imperative to take into account the fact that Foucault refrained from any explicit normative claims if we are to arrive at a proper understanding of those of his insights that inform the field of study (see for a similar agument: Pringle, 2014, p. 398). In addition, it must be emphasised that this thesis differs from explicit normative projects.

At least four theoretical positions can be distinguished that inform the Foucauldian poststructuralist research programme and that are relevant for the data that emerges from the interviews. They all refer to the issue which I grouped under the heading of "gender policing": (i): power works at the level of the local; (ii) within discourses objects obtain meaning and become objects of knowledge; (iii) discourses discipline and produce the subject; (iv) resistance is a matter of resignification. Characteristic of Foucauldian poststructuralist sport theory is first of all the move away from the totalising narratives of Marxist theory by shifting the attention from global to local issues of power. Whereas Marxist informed sport studies predominantly understand disciplinary practices in terms of relatively static class antagonisms between capital and the proletariat, poststructuralist informed sport studies, shifted the attention to the theorisation of forms of oppression and exclusion in sport related to gender, sexuality, ethnicity and race and, increasingly, also ability (for helpful articulations of the diverse forms of dominance and subordination in sport, see Hargreaves, 1982, 1994). Accordingly what the Marxist framework confines to the private sphere is understood by poststructuralist sport studies as profoundly political, traversed by power relations that not only oppress or restrain athletes, but rather produce them as political subjects. This then allows us to theorize the references made to gender in relation to the social significance of being and becoming an elite women's football player as a key structure of the experiences of the players.

Second, at the heart of discussions amongst poststructuralist informed sport studies is the Foucauldian insight that it is within discourses that objects obtain meaning and become objects of knowledge. Foucault's first account of discourse or discursive formation is to be found in his *Archeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 1972). In this work, Foucault describes the archeological method he used in his first three books of history (*Madness and Civilization*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, and *The Order of Things*) (Smart, 2002, p. 29). In a nutshell, the archeological method aims to reveal the structures that underlie thought and make possible particular kinds of knowledges at specific historical moments. These structures that underlie thought are what Foucault calls discursive formations, agglomerates of different representations (from statements to images) that circulate and create meaning about specific topics and govern what can be said. Discourses, in Foucault's words, are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). A discourse gives meaning to experiences, and likewise organizes and structures these meanings. Thus roughly conceived, the concept of discourse provides us with an understanding of the production of recognizable and meaningful acts and knowledges. Subsequently, coining the phrase power-knowledge, Foucault argues in direct reference to Nietzsche that knowledge is both the creator and the creation of power (Smart, 2002, p. 69): 'power produces knowledge . . . power and knowledge directly imply one another . . . there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations' (Foucault, 1995, p. 27). Accordingly, discourses both structure and constrain how people perceive reality. Thus, as we saw in the data emerging from the interviews conducted in this study, the various discourses surrounding elite football work to 'objectify' football as a masculine activity.

Here we arrive at the third thesis, namely that discourses discipline and produce the subject. In order to examine social struggles, Foucault does not ask 'What is power?', or 'Where does power come from?'; rather he argues in the 'Subject and Power' that his primary concern is to analyze how power is exercised and what happens when power is exercised in this or that way (Foucault, 1983, p. 217). To be more precise he is interested in the analysis of diverse relationships of power in order to understand the 'ways in which certain actions modify others' (Foucault, 1983, p. 219). These actions do not always act directly and immediately on others but could also relate to the circulation of ideas (for example, workings of discourse) and systems of communication (Pringle, 2014, p. 400). Importantly, Foucault further states that discourse is a medium through which power relations not only regulate, but also produce the subject. The individual, according to Foucault, is always and already the *effect* of the workings of a form of power. Hence Foucault's famous assertion that power not only acts as law (through prohibition and exclusion) but is first and foremost productive: '*We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production*' (Foucault, 1995, p. 194). The subject, as Foucault suggests is both the effect of discourse or the bearer of

power-knowledge and subjected to discourse. To put it differently, the subject is made, constructed and not given and can accordingly neither ground meaning, knowledge or morality, nor be considered the agent of social or epistemic changes. In this respect, Foucault examines how certain forms of power are exercised to understand how 'certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals' (Foucault, 1980, p. 98).

As will be argued in 4.4 of this chapter, Foucault acknowledges multiple forms of power. However, much social sport scholarship, in line with Foucault himself, extensively focuses on what he calls *disciplinary power*: a form of power that controls and normalises individuals so that they are 'destined to a certain mode of living' (Foucault, 1980, p. 94). Important to stress here again is that for Foucault disciplinary technologies are not inherently good or bad. His concern is not the disciplinary techniques *per se*, but their creative effect. Drawing on Foucault's insight about disciplinary power, various sport scholars analyse how disciplinary techniques are employed in sport and produce normalised bodies (e.g. Helstein, 2003; Howe, 2007; Kreft, 2009; McLeod et al, 2014; Roderick, 2006; Shogan, 1999). Particularly worth mentioning here is Shogan's prominent work *The Making of High Performance Athletes: Discipline, Diversity, and Ethics* (Shogan, 1999), to which we referred in chapter 2. In this work, she draws on Foucault's work to unravel the technologies of disciplinary power in the context of sport. These technologies include the 'individuation of private space; codification of "correct" actions in relation to a strict timetable; routinization of activities according to a training schedule of increasing difficulty, followed by an examination to test abilities; and synchronization of individuals into a collective' (Shogan, 1999, p. 19). These technologies are commonly employed in sport training contexts, for example: fitness work is often based on the overload principle, coaches plan periodised timetables, athletic ability is measured via the stopwatch, and coaches video athletes to access and develop correct technique. These various training technologies help produce, what Shogan called, the *docile athletic body*, that is, a body that is a highly efficient sport performer but also one that conforms to athletic conventions, ignores degrees of pain, provides automatic responses in sporting situations, and is subject to repetitive and often tedious training sessions.

Important for our concerns is that Shogan extends her analyses of the making of high performance athletes to an understanding of what she calls 'hybrid athletes', who are simultaneously subject to multiple and competing identity discourses, such as those related to gender, sexuality and ethnicity. According to Shogan, the process of becoming identified as 'female' or 'male' could similarly be thought of as a disciplinary process that requires an extended period of training, conforming and (self-) examining in relation to a specialized form of embodied knowledges. Shogan adds, however, that competitive institutionalized sport is a discursive context within which masculine values, gestures, actions and interactions 'are practised and normalized' (Shogan, 1999, p. 54). Yet, in contrast to explicit feminist sport studies, she doesn't conclude that sporting context is inherently problematic for women athletes.

As already suggested in chapter 2, it is precisely this question that guides feminist theorists working in the poststructuralist paradigm, indicating subsequently the turn to Butler's account of the sexed subject (see also Bartky, 1988; Bordo, 1988, 1993). At least three Butlerian insights have proved to be relevant for theorizing sport situations; gender is (i) performative; (ii) normalising; (iii) open for resignification. First, Butler understands gender as a performative (see for an encompassing understanding of gender performativity: Butler, 1993, p. 1-23, 1999). In short as a performative, gender must be understood as 'the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being' (Butler, 1999, p. 43). These more or less forced and repetitive doings of gender produce the fiction that an individual has a stable gender, which they are in fact performing in their actions. For example, feminine identity, manifest in dress, ways of walking and behaving, does not exist outside of these modes of action but is the product of them. It is acquired by performing discourses of femininity that constitute the individual as a feminine subject.

Second, lived as ontological truth, according to Butler gender forces one to conform to hegemonic, heterosexual standards for identity. 'Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions — and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them; the construction "compels" our belief in its necessity and naturalness. The historical possibilities materialized through various corporeal styles are nothing other than those punitively regulated cultural fictions alternately embodied and deflected under duress' (Butler, 1999, p. 178). Particularly worth mentioning is the study of Cox and Thomson (Pringle, 2014, p. 399) that explores via in-depth interviews, how members of a premier women's football team 'experienced their bodies within the discourses of sport, gender and heterosexuality' (Cox & Thompson, 2000, p. 5). They conclude that their results supported Butler's notion of the heterosexual matrix in that the 'homophobic climate of sport puts pressure on all female athletes to present a heterosexual image of femininity' (Cox & Thompson, 2000, p. 16). In addition they argue that this conclusion could be liberating as individuals might recognise that they do not have to perform a 'restrictive set of "natural" traits' (Cox & Thompson, 2000, p. 18). This brings us to third Butlerian insight, namely that gender is open to intervention and resignification. Insofar as gender does not mimic sexual difference, according to Butler, one can play with the symbolic attribution of allegedly feminine and masculine characteristics (Butler, 1999, 175, 176). Informed by this insight, a significant amount of gender and sport scholarship focuses on the way that performativity serves as a possible site of subverting and displacing naturalised and reified notions of gender in the context of sport (see for instance: Azzarito, L., & Katzew, 2010; Pringle, 2008; Cox & Thompson, 2000). Accordingly we arrive at the fourth thesis that informs Foucauldian poststructuralist sport studies, namely that insofar as they speak or speculate about resistance, they understand it as a matter of resignification.

What we should take from the poststructuralist framework is first of all the Foucauldian insight that the analyses of power relations must recognize how these are constitutive of the subjects involved in them. While the Marxist theory effectively allows us to expose forms of alienation, it fails to account for the precise ways in which the elite women's football players are constituted. The Foucauldian insight, by contrast, allows us to theorize and understand what in reference to Shogan could be called the making of an elite women's football player, through their everyday footballing practices, from daily training regimes, dietary restrictions etc. Yet, while Shogan extends her analyses of disciplinary techniques to the operations of gender, it must not be overlooked that Foucault himself argues that the processes that constitute normalized subjects cannot be reduced to the disciplinary practices aiming to produce docile workers, or in our context docile athletes. For this reason he draws the distinction between 'normation' and 'normalisation'(Lazar, 2007)(Lazar, 2007) (Lazar, 2007) (Oksala, 2015 and see: Foucault, 2009, pp. 83-91). 'Normation' refers to the disciplinary techniques used for the training of students, workers, soldiers etc. It 'consists first of all in positing a model, an optimal model that is constructed in terms of a certain result' (Foucault, 2009, p. 85). It 'analyzes and breaks down; it breaks down individuals, places, time, movements, actions, and operations', 'such that they can be seen, on the one hand, and modified on the other' (Foucault, 2009, p. 84). Where normation is the technology deployed to make individuals behave, to be efficient and productive workers, normalisation is deployed to manage populations, for instance with regard to reproduction or the health of a workforce. Normalisation works, however, exactly in the opposite fashion to 'normation'. It requires knowledge of the normal understood as a scientific average: 'The normal comes first and the norm is deduced from it' (Foucault, 2009, p. 91). Normalisation is thus the process that produces other forms of the subject aside from workers, in relation to gender, ethnicity, ability etc. It is here that the importance of Butler for our purposes makes itself visible, as she precisely allows us to theorize the experiences of the elite women's football players in reference to the normalising discourses concerning gender.

4.3. A synthetic account of Marxist and Foucauldian post-structuralist insights

4.3.1 The limits of the cultural studies paradigm in social sport studies

In the previous sections we assessed those theses of both Marxist and Foucauldian post-structuralist informed sports studies that are indispensable for giving an account of the experiences of the elite women players, as reflected on by themselves. To sum up, the Marxist theory addresses the "high performance" aspect of the athlete's experience. It provides an account of alienation by way of a critique and understanding of the historically contingent separation of work and leisure. The poststructuralist paradigm addresses the "gender policing" aspect of their lives. It allows us to theorize the precise ways that the elite women's football players are constituted as subjects in terms of both 'normation' and 'normalisation'. We must now, however, test the compatibility between these two views: can we keep the necessary insights of each paradigm without conflict? In particular, we

must ask to what extent the Foucauldian poststructuralist critique of the subject may be a problem for our adherence to the Marxist notion of alienation. First, the orthodox reading of the subject under alienation is based on the premises that class has an objective status, while for Foucauldians it must be conceived of as a construct, to be more precise a construct constituted by the same political practices that it was supposed to found. Second, it is based on the premises that there exists something that we could call 'human nature' or a 'true self', while for Foucauldians the subject is always already historical and contingent.

With regard to the first question, we must first of all situate the cultural studies paradigm in social sport studies that largely draws upon the post-Marxist insights of Gramsci (Hargreaves & McDonald, 2000, p. 50). As the various attempts to re-interpret the ideas of Marx in the context of sport have been many, a comprehensive study falls beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead we follow here the leading voices in the field, starting with Horne et al.'s evaluation of Hargreaves's *Sport, Power and Culture* (1986) and Gruneau's *Class, Sport and the Modern State* and his *Class, Sports, and Social Development* (1983). These are readings that are 'marked by a greater degree of sophistication and sensitivity to the complexities and contradictions immanent in the complex economic processes underlying lived cultural practices' (Horne et al., 1999, p. 251).

What makes these studies especially sophisticated is their Gramscian turn. Key for them is Gramsci's conceptualisation of hegemony as 'a process of experience, negotiation and struggle by individuals in real-life situations', 'never complete and fixed, but always "diverse and changing", rather than one in which subordinate groups are simply duped by dominant ideologies' (Hargreaves & McDonald, 2000, p. 50). Following Gramsci's insights, both Gruneau and Hargreaves view hegemony as a process and sport 'as a part of the contestation of meanings that arise in class society.' However, eventually most sport studies that follow the path of Gramsci, including those of Hargreaves himself, ended up prioritizing class relations at the expense of other social categories (Hargreaves & McDonald, 2000, p. 54, 55). Yet as, we argued in the previous sections, the data of this research does not allow for this prioritisation.

In the context of the cultural studies paradigm we must also situate the various post-Marxist sport studies, amongst which are black Marxist[36] and feminist Marxist articulations that question the eurocentrism and sexism of classical Marxism. Given the central role of gender

36 Following the insights of theorists such as William Dubois, C. L. R. James, Richard Wright and Angela Davis, at least three concerns are central in the work of Black-Marxist inspired sport studies: (1) that the whole basis of Marxism as a Western construction is a conceptualisation of human affairs and human development which has been drawn from the experiences of European peoples; (2) that Marxism fails to consider or question the existence of modern slavery or specific forms of exploitation born out of, for example, black poverty in America; (3) that Marxism has paid little attention to the way in which racism mediates the organisation of labour, or racism itself as an expression of alienation, or the specific contribution to revolutionary or reformist change born out of the struggle of African peoples (Jarvie & Maguire, 1994, p. 101).

in this study, we will limit ourselves here to a discussion of feminist Marxist critiques. As outlined in chapter 2, in the wake of Marxist critiques some feminist sport studies aimed to develop analyses of the complex ways class relations are cross-cut by gender difference (see for instance: Theberge, 1981). As women do not fit into Marxist theory it followed that the theory needed to be changed in such a way that the situation of women would become a core theoretical element (for a similar argument see for instance: Young, 1981). However and as suggested in chapter 2 of this thesis, socialist sport and gender studies often ended up centring on the ideological significance of sport as a gendered institution and thus paradoxically moved away from the central premises of historical materialism that the profit making relationship on which capitalism depends should be considered the determining force in theorizing the social (Knoppers & McDonald, 2010, p. 37).

The challenge thus remains: how we can still effectively speak about class, while questioning its objective status? While this thesis is neither concerned with exegetical projects, nor aims to contribute to the Foucault, Marx - or any other author - reception, there are good reasons to believe that, paradoxically, Foucault himself allows for a more 'sophisticated' reading of Marx (see: Hardt & Negri, 2000, 2004, 2011; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, Oksala, 2016). To be more precise, in the next section I will suggest that Foucault could be read as an early post-Marxist[37]. In short the difference between 'neo- Marxists' and 'post Marxists' lies in the fact that neo-Marxists claim that class is only one of many factors (along with gender, race, sexuality, nationality, etc.) that shape social life, whereas post-Marxists take this step further and claim that class and relations of labour have no objective existence outside the discourses that constitute them (Hennessy, 2018, p. 11). Of course, these arguments are merely suggestive in character and limited in scope, and a detailed analysis of them falls far outside the scope of this thesis.

4.3.2 Real subsumption, normation and normalisation

In an interview published under the title of '*Considerations on Marxism, Phenomenology and Power',* Foucault explicitly situates his work in the lineage of Marx's genealogy of capitalism (Oksala, 2016)*:* 'As for myself, what interests me about Marx, at least what I can say has inspired me, is Book 2 of *Capital*; that is to say everything that concerns the analyses of the genesis of capitalism, and not of capital, that are first of all historically concrete, and secondly the analyses of the historical conditions of the development of capitalism particularly on the side of the establishment, of the development of structures of power and of the institutions of power. So if one recalls, once more very schematically, the first book

37 In the context of our Marxist reading of Foucault, particularly worth mentioning is also the work of Marcelo Hoffman. In his analysis of the Marxist underpinnings of Foucault's political practice, most notably the work done by the The Prisons Information Group (GIP), he shows that Marxism was not 'an exogenous moment in Foucault's political practices, one opposed to something preordained as authentically and essentially "Foucauldian"', but 'inhabited Foucault's political practices and propelled them in unique directions, thereby producing whole new configurations' (Hofmann, 2016, p. 182).

[on] the genesis of capital, the second book [on] the history, the genealogy of capitalism, I would say that it is through Book 2, and for instance in what I wrote on discipline, that my work is all the same intrinsically linked to what Marx writes' (Foucault, 2012, p. 100, 101). Furthermore in a 1976 lecture, published under the title '*The Mesh of Power*', Foucault even argues that he developed his notion of productive power out of insights he gained from Marx (Oksala, 2016). 'How', asks Foucault, 'may we attempt to analyse power in its positive mechanisms'. To which he responds that we can find these elements in Marx, essentially in the second volume of Capital: 'It's here, I think, that we may find some elements that I will use for the analysis of power in its positive mechanisms' (Foucault, 2016, p. 4).

According to Foucault, four crucial insights concerning productive power can be found in *Capital*. First, a society is not a unitary body, in which one and only one power is exercised, but is rather the juxtaposition, the link, the coordination and also the hierarchy of different powers that nevertheless remain in their specificity. Society is an archipelago of different powers. 'Marx places great emphasis, for example, on the simultaneously specific and relatively autonomous – in some sense impervious – character of the de facto power the boss exercises in a workshop, compared to the juridical kind of power that exists in the rest of society' (Foucault, 2016, p. 4). Second, these different webs of power cannot, and must not, simply be understood as the derivation, the consequence of some kind of overriding power that would be primary. Marx does not recognise 'the schema of the jurists', that is the model of the social contract. On the contrary he shows 'how, starting from the initial and primitive existence of these small regions of power – like property, slavery, workshop, and also the army – little by little, the great State apparatuses were able to form. State unity is basically secondary in relation to these regional and specific powers; these latter come first' (Foucault, 2016, p. 4, 5). Third, these specific regional powers have absolutely no primordial function of prohibiting, preventing, saying 'you must not.' Rather the original essential and permanent function of these local and regional powers is, in reality, being producers of the efficiency and skill of the producers of a product. Marx has 'superb analyses of the problem of discipline in the army and workshops' (Foucault, 2016, p. 5). With the division of labour, it became obligatory to invent a new discipline of the workshop, yet inversely the discipline of the workshop was the condition of possibility for achieving a division of labour. 'Without this discipline of the workshop, which is to say, without hierarchy, without surveillance, without the appearance of foremen, without the timed control of movements, it would not have been possible to achieve a division of labor' (Foucault, 2016, p. 6). Fourth, these procedures of power must be regarded as techniques, that is procedures that were invented, perfected and unceasingly developed. 'Here, once again, we can easily find between the lines of the second volume of Capital an analysis, or at least the outline of an analysis, which would be the history of the technology of power, such as it was exercised in the workhouses and factories' (Foucault, 2016, p. 6).

What these insights make clear, is that post-Marxism, if understood properly, already provides us with the required synthesis of Marxism and Foucauldian poststructuralism.

Recall that we need to find congruence between Marxism and Foucauldian poststructuralism, in order to establish a methodologically sound framework that can account for the experiences of the elite women's football players. In effect, Foucault reads Marx as a kind of post-Marxist, who recognises first of all the heterogeneous nature of power relations, and secondly that power has profound subject effects (Oksala, 2016). Importantly, Foucault even strongly positions himself against those readings that inscribe Marx in the juridical theory of power: 'It appears to me, in fact, that if we analyzed power by privileging the State apparatus, if we analyze power by regarding it as a mechanism of preservation, if we regard power as a juridical superstructure, we will basically do no more than take up the classical theme of bourgeois thought, for it essentially conceives of power as a juridical fact. To privilege the State apparatus, the function of preservation, the juridical superstructure, is, basically, to "Rousseauify" Marx' (Foucault, 2016, p. 6).[38] Thus according to Foucault, Marx is not so much concerned with theorizing institutions, but with concrete practices. Foucault's own response to those critics who demanded him to 'Rousseauify' his own work is well known by now: 'Well, I would reply, yes, I do, I want to, I must do without a theory of the state, as one can and must forgo an indigestible meal' (Foucault, 2008, p. 76, 77).[39] Foucault, however, takes the insights that he finds in Marx concerning the idea of productive power much further than Marx (Oksala, 2016). As already suggested in the previous section, throughout his work Foucault repeatedly stresses the difference between those processes that constitute docile workers and those that constitute normalized subjects, that is normation and normalisation. Without too much ill-will 'normation' can be understood

38 In addition, Foucault allows us to understand the difference between the micro and the macro level of power as, not a difference in kind, but as a technical difference (Rose, 1999) To govern, Foucault argues, 'is to structure the possible field of actions upon others. The relationship proper to power would not therefore be sought on the side of violence or of struggle, nor on that of voluntary linking (all of which can, at best, only be the instruments of power), but rather in the area of the singular mode of action, neither warlike nor juridical, which is government'(Foucault, 1983, p. 221). What follows is that a 'macro-actor' is not different in kind from the 'micro-actor', but is merely one who has a longer and more reliable 'chain of command' – that is to say, assembled into longer and more dispersed networks of persons, things and techniques (Rose, 1999, p. 5). This in turn means that the same style of analyses as deployed in, for instance, *Discipline and Punish* – the micro-physics of power – could also be used to analyse the techniques and practices for governing populations of subjects at the level of political sovereignty over an entire population (Rose, 1999, p. 5).

39 For Foucault, the state is neither an existing thing, nor an illusion, an error or an ideology (Foucault, 2008, p. 19). By contrast the state, 'is nothing else but the effect, the profile, the mobile shape of a perpetual stratification [étatisation] or stratifications, in the sense of incessant transactions which modify, or move, or drastically change, or insidiously shift sources of finance, modes of investment, decision-making centers, forms and types of control, relationships between local powers, the central authority, and so on '(Foucault, 2008, p. 77). Lemke directs attention to an insightful passage in the *Birth of Biopolitics*, where Foucault uses the concept of 'transactional reality' (Foucault, 2008, p. 297; Lemke, 2007, p. 48). Understood as a transactional reality, an entity like the state is born precisely from the interplay of relations of power and everything which constantly eludes them, at the interface, so to speak, of governors and governed (Foucault, 2008, p. 297). For Foucault the state is a dynamic set of relations that produces both the institutional structure of the state and the knowledge of the state. Such an analysis allows, then, for an understanding of how the borders between the state and civil society, the public and the private come into being and what marks these borders - as these are not given but made.

to correspond to Marx's notion of 'real subsumption' (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 25; Oksala, 2016). Recall that with the term 'real subsumption' Marx refers to the ways that capital not only takes over an already existing labour process (formal subsumption), but completely transforms its nature and, by extension the labourers themselves. Normalisation on the other hand introduces an aspect of subjectification that is given less attention in Marxist theories and to a certain extent can be said to correspond to false-consciousness and ideology (Oksala, 2016). Normalisation refers to those processes that produce other forms of the subject beside labourers, which can but do not necessarily intersect with normation.

Hence, what we should take from post-Marxism is the concern with two forms of struggle. First, the struggle against the diverse forms of domination (ethnic, social, and religious). Second, the struggle against forms of exploitation which separate individuals from what they produce. These are the struggles against subjection and against forms of subjectivity. While the Marxist informed sport theoretical framework focuses predominantly on the second struggle, insightfully coined 'extractive power' (Patton, 1998, p. 64), post-Marxism takes both forms of struggle seriously.

4.3.3 The key lessons of post-Marxism

As I argued in section 1 of this chapter, the Marxist framework provides us with an account of alienation, that is an understanding of the historical separation of work and leisure, in the context of women's football. Yet, whereas Marx's critique of alienation is often understood in normative terms, the post-Marxist view that we established allows us to theorize it in practical terms. To be more precise we argued there are good reasons to believe that eventually both Marx's and Foucault's perspectives on the subject are much closer than is commonly suggested. For Marx species essence is the product of social relations, which parallels Foucault's account of the historically constituted subject. The Foucauldian poststructuralist view allows for a theorisation of the precise ways that the elite women's football players are constituted as subjects in terms of both 'normation' and 'normalisation', in the context of their experiences, that is the training field, the stadium etc. Yet, while the poststructuralist focus on the local is in general perceived to be antithetic to the Marxist position, we suggested, by contrast, to read Foucault as a post-Marxist in the sense that his analysis of the disciplines would be an elaboration of Marx's idea of real subsumption. In addition, the suggestion has been made that Marx himself already recognises the diffuse and heterogeneous nature of power and the constitutive nature is has with the subject. It has however also been argued that eventually Foucault develops the idea of productive power much further than Marx, as he repeatedly emphases the difference between normation and normalisation.

Thus, by moving towards a synthesis of the key theses of Marxist and Foucauldian poststructuralist informed sport studies, first of all the attempt has been made at effectively speaking about alienation under poststructuralist theoretical conditions. Secondly, the

attempt has been made at speaking effectively about both normation and normalisation without losing sight of the Marxist critique.

4.4 The synthesis of social sport studies and the theory of play

4.4.1 Play and the limits of post-Marxism

Given our task of the establishment of a framework that can give a comprehensive account of the experiences of the elite women's football players, we must now integrate those insights that we reviewed as indispensable for making sense of the data that emerged from the interviews. More particularly, we must now integrate the core insights that we delineated in the previous sections of this chapter and those of the theory of play. As argued, it is only by adding the theory of play that the establishment of the required theoretical framework can be accomplished, for without it, the third axis of the experience of the elite women's football players, namely the experience of sacrifice would be overlooked. For this purpose we must first of all determine what the theory of play demands from us with regard to existing methods.

Prior to this, it is useful to recall the key lessons that we should draw from the theory of play, such as established in chapter 3 of this thesis. In short, what the theory of play offers is a concept of an experience, that is the experience of play, that which must be distinguished from existing systems of value or meaning and their corollary dichotomies between playfulness/seriousness, irrational/rational, the subject's inside/the subject's outside. By contrast these oppositions are only secondary or historically contingent phenomenon, while in play these poles are united. This however does not mean that play is engaged with any sense of objectivity. It is not play that should be understood in reference to reality, but rather calculative reason, reality or objectivity that should be understood as derived from play. The creative characteristic of play further elucidates this point. Play produces novelty, or put more precisely, it is the condition under which new meaning appears. The novel must however not be understood as something radically new, neither can it be confined to the subject's inner world. Rather the novel should be understood in terms of the subject's reciprocal relation with her environment.

Thus, I argued in chapter 3 that play should be understood as a key structure of the experiences of the elite women's football players that can account for the references to sacrifice in the data. Recall that we argued that we are in need of a theoretical framework that (i) allows for a theorisation of sacrifice as evading moral, material, physical and social pressures and obligations yet motivating the players in such a way that it can compete with such demands; (ii) posits the experience of sacrifice as distinct from, yet ontologically prior to, these modes of subjection, as the players attribute meaning to something that escapes immediate recognition. The theory of play allows us to meet these requirements, as it precisely points to an experience that is both distinct from, yet ontologically prior to the diverse modes of subjection.

What the theory of play demands from us is a rejection of the normative monism that we find in the existing social sport studies paradigms. The theory of play shows us that we have the ability to engage with at least two incommensurable scales of values. First, with regard to the Marxist-informed paradigm, what the theory of play makes visible is that the monistic paradigm problematically takes the separation of work and leisure as a given, or more precisely de jure, when it becomes the object of critique. We know that Marx dreams of a situation in which the separation between the sphere of work and leisure is overcome, when we can fish without becoming a fisherman or hunt without becoming a huntsman and, where we can play for the sake of play, without becoming a professional player. The theory of play makes us realize that in his capitalist critique he takes *de facto* separation to be *de jure*. Subsequently, when Marxist-informed sport studies talk about the alienating effects of the commercialisation and instrumentalisation of modern sport they fail to see, or rather, forget that even a fisherman always and already fishes without being a fisherman. Presumably Marx himself knows that. If not, he wouldn't be capable of making the separation of work and leisure the linchpin of his critique of capitalism nor its undoing the key to a new way of the world. Yet, when the *de facto* separation becomes the object of critique, social sport studies, taking their cue from Marx, take it to be *de jure*. Accordingly, Marxist-informed sport studies fail to see that a reference to the culture of obedience in elite sports does not exhaust the experiences of the elite women's football players. Indeed, they fail to see that the quote 'football is not important, yet it is the most important thing of the world' and others to the same effect, do not refer to any internal contradiction within the dominant reality between values that can be measured in terms of costs and benefits. Rather, they refer to the women's football players' innermost experience of living a dual existence, that is of being both player and plaything. More particularly, they fail to see that the women's football players' sense of living a contradictory life results from the forgetting of play.

Accordingly, what this makes visible is that the theory of alienation in terms of exploitation itself generates oppression. For, eventually the elite women's football players feel they are being regarded as irrational when they are in play. The following quotes that we presented in chapter 1 are exemplary: '*If I really think about it, I would quit playing football.* ***It's madness****. But then I do*n't'; '*But asking your brother-in-law to change his wedding date is for me actually* ***too bizarre*** *to believe; I fully devote myself to football. What you see is that I adjust my work to football and not the other way around. A lot of people call me* ***mad'.*** Being made to feel irrational when one is not, or more precisely is in play, is precisely a mode of oppression. More particularly, it is a form of subjective or spiritual alienation. What I precisely mean with this is that the produced incapacity to make sense of themselves, results in self-doubt and feelings of powerlessness and impotence. The players literally feel incapable of taking possession of a power they believe they do not have.

Thus, for the elite women's football players, eventually the forgetting of play results in subjective or spiritual alienation. Importantly, this doesn't mean that the objectivist theory

of alienation doesn't have something to tell us. Nor does it mean that alienation should then be perceived as an ontological condition of the subject as such. Concerning the latter, the theory of play upholds, by contrast, the position that the separation between playfulness and seriousness is historical and contingent. However, in contrast to the Marxist critique, it also upholds the position that (i) in reality they are united, and (ii) that this unity is not endowed with any sense of objectivity, and therefore (iii) freedom and the possibility of resistance and emancipation remains.

What eventually follows from these considerations against the monistic view implicit in Marxist-informed social sport studies is that alienation cannot be understood in terms of exploitation alone, but first and foremost refers to the women's football players *produced* incapacity to make sense of their life and life choices. In effect, the theorisation of alienation in terms of exploitation rests on a prior objectification of the subject that reduces the subject to the level of objective, or instrumental reason. Accordingly, insofar as we take seriously the experiences of the elite football players as reflected on by themselves, we must conclude that the forgetting of play not only causes modes of oppression, but itself *is* a mode of oppression. More particularly the forgetting of play is a conceptual mode of oppression that causes ethical forms of oppression.

Second, while the Foucauldian poststructuralist perspective is particularly helpful in theorizing the specificities of the diverse modes of subjection, in terms of not only normation, but also normalisation, what the theory of play makes visible is that the problem with this perspective is that it never even entertained the thought that humans do also play. Of the Marxist-informed account it could be said that it forgot the play element, when making the separation between work and leisure the object of critique. The poststructuralist-informed paradigm, informed by Foucault's work on disciplinary power, seems to completely overlook it. Presumably this is for the very reason that the poststructuralist-informed paradigm tries to stay away from any reference to real or authentic selves. Recall that in this view any reference to a real self or authentic interests is considered a fallacious conflation of cause and effect. However, it does overlook that we always retain the ability to operate according to at least two systems of meaning, that is that of the dominant reality and that of play, and that we can achieve freedom by playing them against each other. Thus, likewise this view on subjectivity eventually rests on a prior objectification of the subject. Accordingly, the question of the subject's self-constitution remains tied to the options or alternatives imposed by objectivist or instrumental reason, which in turn can only limit the subject.

To conclude, the problem with the existing frameworks in social sport studies, including our attempt at a synthesis, is that they are eventually all monistic about systems of values, reducing all experience to the regime of objectivist reason. In these frameworks the subject is simply trapped, an object amongst many other objects that serve very precise and univocal goals. There is nothing in or about the subject that is immune to subjection, in terms of both normation and normalisation. As a result, any experience that cannot be

explained in objectivist terms bears the mark of irrationality. It is for this reason that we argued that the forgetting or overlooking of play must be understood as a conceptual wrong that causes forms of oppression.

Accordingly, what this makes visible is that in the existing theoretical frameworks the notions of freedom and resistance are problematically based on the same objectivist reasoning as the calculative and instrumentalist reasoning that is held responsible for alienation. In these frameworks, resistance equals the introduction of new modes of subjection that in turn can only limit the subject. Moving beyond the reductionism that we find in the existing paradigms, the theory of play tells us that insofar as our experiences cannot be reduced to the instrumental level of reasoning, we should think of resistance in different terms. More particularly, what the theory of play minimally tells us is that even though systems of good reason may tell us otherwise, we can always play.

In short, play is precisely that which resists alienation.

4.4.2 The playing subject, freedom and indetermination

The question that must now be addressed is how play subtends a theory of resistance, and prior to this, how should we precisely understand that part of the subject that is immune to oppression?

Starting with the latter, we must first of all recall that the irreducible commitment to play cannot be considered in a dichotomous fashion along with the diverse modes of subjection - normation and normalisation. This, we argued, follows from Bataille's notion of sacrifice. By contrast, following Huizinga, I argued that in the context of the experiences of the elite women's football players the experience of play cannot be posited alongside the experience of 'high performance' and 'gender policing', but should be understood as distinct from, yet ontologically prior to this distinction. According to Huizinga the experience of play precedes these distinctions, as in reality play contains both playfulness and seriousness. Insofar as play points to an experience of which the meaning is intrinsic to itself, the dichotomies between playfulness/seriousness, irrational/rational, the subject's inside/the subject's outside should be understood as secondary and historical phenomenon. More particularly, it is only under the condition of the inseparability of the players and their contexts that play can be meaningful in terms of itself. For as soon as they become separated, the meaning of play can be attributed to something outside it.

What importantly follows from these considerations is that the theory of play implies a radically different understanding of subjectivity than those we find in the existing theoretical frameworks in social sport studies. More particularly, in so far as the meaning of play must be understood as intrinsic to itself, the theory of play rests on a pre-objective notion of experience that understands the subject to be reciprocally related to its environment or context. What this means concretely is that players are both makers and receivers of

meaning. Thus, in the context of our study, participating in football exposes the elite women's football players to a set of meanings that constitute the world of football. However, this meaning can only occur through the players' active participation in the world of football, that is through their capacity to give meaning. What this means is that the subject cannot be perceived as an object that is pushed around and shaped by its surroundings without contributing to its meaning. This would amount to the account of subjectivity that we find in the existing frameworks in social sport studies. Neither can the subject be perceived as the single and unique cause of meaning-making. This would return us to the notion of the sovereign subject resting on pure consciousness that we find in the idealist tradition.

Against these views, the theory of play tells us that it is only from an outside position, that is an out of the game perspective, that it is even possible to speak about a first person perspective, as it is only from an outside position that demarcations between the subjective and the objective are possible. Accordingly, it is only from an outside position that an individual can be said to be the cause of meaning making, or said to be determined by her environment. These demarcations are, however, always misleading attributions of the constitutive capacities to either one of the two poles.

Hence, for the theory of play, it is not determination, but indetermination that characterizes the subject. Indetermination is what exceeds the terms and functions outside the constraints of the oppositional understanding of the subject, as either resting on pure consciousness or being fully constituted by the outside world. Thus, the playing subject is a subject of indetermination.

What follows from these considerations is that the playing subject cannot be oppressed, that is the playing subject is immune to oppression. Put differently, insofar as she is playing, oppressive structures have no hold on the subject. This does not mean that oppression does not exist, far from it. What we are saying is that oppressive structures have no hold on the playing subject, insofar as it is playing, precisely because the playing subject is not an object. In fact only objects can be oppressed, that is entities whose values are determined by something outside them. Accordingly the playing subject must be a free subject, yet in a very peculiar way.

What we know already is that the freedom of the playing subject cannot be understood in a historical sense. Second, we know that it should be distinguished from Bataille's understanding of the term as self-loss through excess and fusion with a more real oneness. For Bataille's free subject, free as in being free from all constrains, has arguably lost its capacity to respond to the dominant reality. Yet, to be capable of responding to the dominant reality demands rations of subjectivity. To be more precise, without such rations one is fully taken over by a state of excess - drunkenness, illusion, madness etc. and incapable of differentiating the realm of excess and that of real-life.

Contrary to Bataille's subject of sacrifice, the playing subject, as we argued in chapter 3, can call herself back out of her role, as in the 'enactment of play, there remains a knowledge, albeit strongly reduced, about his double existence' (Fink, 2016, p. 24, 25). Hence, it is this capacity to call oneself back out of one's role that keeps a sufficient quantity of rations of subjectivity for the playing subject to respond to real life. Correspondingly the player who doesn't play can call herself into play. What this, in very concrete terms, means, is that the freedom of the playing subject consists in the fact that she is capable of choosing worlds, that is between that of the dominant reality and that of play.

Thus, contrary to the existing frameworks in social sport studies that tie the question of freedom to the functioning of the oppressive and dominant other and correspondingly link the question of freedom to a concept of emancipation understood as the liberation from or of an oppressive or unfair form of constraint, the theory of play advances a positive notion of freedom where freedom is understood as the capacity to choose between multiple available worlds. The word choice must here, however, be treated with caution, as it is does not refer to the notion of choice understood as a selection of options outside the subject that are independently available to it. This would lead us back to the domain of instrumental reason. The freedom of the playing subject is not the freedom of selection, but a freedom of choice that is connected to inalienable part of the self.

More particularly, it is the inalienable capacity to call oneself back from and into play, without being subjected to power and discourse or material necessities. As we argued, the arbitration between the two scales of value belongs under no scale of value (there is no third, overarching scale of value). As a result, the player falls into a normative vacuum, and therefore a zone that is not subjected to power or discourse, or to material necessities: a zone of freedom. Hence, the playing subject is a free subject because she has a choice between worlds, free from the demands made upon her.

However, in contrast to the oppositional pairing of freedom and oppression, this capacity has no given content and cannot be defined. Put differently, there is nothing inherently good or bad about the playing subject's capacity to choose between worlds. This is because it is not a quality or attribute, of which the meaning is determined by something outside it. By contrast, the freedom brought to us by playing must be understood as a consequence of indetermination, the very indetermination that characterises the subject. By contrast, every negative definition of freedom gives determinism the last say.

4.4.3 Foucault's subject of freedom

Before continuing our discussion, we must not overlook that it was paradoxically Foucault himself, one of social sport's studies key authors of inspiration, who, predominantly in his later work, advances a positive notion of freedom and questions the possibility of the move from subjection to subjectification, that is the creation of a new subject position. This is in contrast to the unilateral focus on Foucault's work on disciplinary power that we find in the

field of social sport studies. In fact, based on his earlier distinction between a repressive hypothesis of power and a positive understanding of power as that which enables or produces, in his later work, Foucault argues that his starting point of analysis is not oppression, but freedom, understood as the concrete capacity of humans to act. Freedom, he argues, should be understood as the precondition of both politics and ethics (Foucault, 1983).

What this first of all means is that it is only under the condition that people are free that domination can occur. In short, what Foucault means by freedom is the ability of people to act in a variety of ways, that is of having the power to act in several ways or of not being constrained in such a fashion that all possibilities for action are eliminated. This is well captured by Patton: 'the subject of freedom is in effect a subject of power in the primary etymological sense of that term' (Patton, 1998, p. 62). Accordingly, what Foucault understands by power in the primary sense of that term is a capacity to do things (Foucault, 1983, p. 216; Patton, 1998, pp. 61-63). Every human subject, regardless of what else she, they, or he may be, has a capacity to do certain things. The capacity to do things, or put differently agency, should not be understood in terms of a voluntarist, Hobbesian or Nietzschean notion of the will (Patton, 1998, p. 63). Instead, power conceived of as a capacity to do things involves not so much involuntary, but rather voluntary bodily movement that is intended to serve some purpose. Actions of which human agents are capable are 'intentional, goal oriented movements of dispositions of forces' (Patton, 1998, p. 63). What follows from this understanding of freedom, is that domination eventually only makes sense insofar as people have a certain capacity to act.[40] Put bluntly, one can only be silenced when one is capable of speech.[41] Thus, even when his work on disciplinary power may have suggested otherwise, eventually for Foucault, as for us, freedom should not be understood in opposition to oppression. More particularly, for Foucault, freedom should not be understood as being tied

40 Patton's remarks concerning *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality,* volume 1, are here particularly insightful, as he suggests that it is precisely in order to dress bodily forces that the techniques of discipline are deployed: 'It is precisely because there is nothing natural about such constructions and because they are fabricated upon an active body, a body understood in terms of primary capacities and power, that is accompanied by resistance (Patton, 1998, p. 62).

41 What secondly follows from this understanding of freedom is that subjects can also limit power. Insofar as freedom consists of one's capacity to do and to make, the subject is accordingly provided with the capacity to act on certain limits. To further elucidate this point, we need to consider the diverse forms of power that Foucault distinguishes: Power over, or strategic games between, liberties and domination (Foucault, 1997, p. 299). What Foucault means by "power over" is precisely the concrete capacities of individuals to do and to make. Accordingly they are inescapable features of social relations (Patton, 1998, p. 63). Domination by contrast is a particular type of power relationship that stabilizes and fixes power relations. In cases of domination, power relations are asymmetrical leaving subordinated persons little room for manoeuvre because their capacity to act is limited (Foucault, 1997, p. 283). Domination, however cannot but be realised in a field of power relations and should therefore always be conceived of as a secondary result. What this, in very concrete terms, means is that domination can never be complete or exhaustive, for as soon as this becomes the case there would no longer be a power relation. As Foucault put it, 'at the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom' (Foucault, 1983, p. 221).

to a negative concept of liberty. Freedom does not mean to be liberated from an unfair form of constraint or limitation. Rather for Foucault freedom should be understood as 'freedom to', that is the concrete capacity to act. Perceived in this way, freedom enables and limits oppression.[42] However, what precisely does it mean for a subject to act on certain limits? To enact one's freedom should for Foucault always be understood in a historical sense.[43]In fact, it is precisely by studying concrete practices that Foucault allows himself to say that freedom also limits power. The women's movement, the anti-apartheid movement and the Seattle protests, all show in a very concrete way that domination can never be exhaustive.

4.4.4 Play, therapy and resistance

While it is important not to overlook that it was paradoxically Foucault himself, who is his later period advances a positive notion of freedom, understood as acts without particular qualities, we must remain faithful to the insights provided by the theory of play. For it is not the later Foucault, but the theory of play that allows us to make sense of the references to sacrifice that we find in the data of this study. To recall, what the playing subject has revealed over and above the existing frameworks in social sport studies is that their adherence to an oppositional understanding of freedom and oppression is far from innocent,

42 Foucault, however, argues that his analysis of power should not be mistaken for a theory of power, as power for him should always be understood in a historical sense. 'I never spoke of Power, I never did an analysis of Power, I never said what Power is, which was interpreted by certain active minds to mean that I was making a kind of absolute of it, of transcendental power, of hidden divinity, etc. Okay, when we look at things, if I never define power, and so if I don't speak about Power, what do I do instead? I study things like a psychiatric asylum, the forms of constraint, exclusion, elimination, disqualification, let us say, the reason that is always precisely embodied, embodied in the form of a doctor, a medical knowledge, a medical institution, etc., exercised on madness, illness, un-reason, etc., what I study is an architecture, a spatial disposition, what I study are the disciplinary techniques, the modalities of training, the forms of surveillance, still in much too broad terms, but… what are the practices that one puts in play in order to govern men, that is, to obtain from them a certain way of conducting themselves? That is to say that each time it is something precise, concrete, that is of the order of domination, constraint, coercion, etc. all things that one could put, if one likes, under the category of power, but this notion of power repels me much more than those who reproach me for using it, and it is precisely as a way of undertaking a real, concrete, precise critique of this shadowy notion of power that I speak of these different things, and that I study them' (Foucault, 2012, p. 105). Accordingly for Foucault, all there is are relations of power and practices.

43 Even in his work on the ethical self-relation, *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* and the interviews "On the Genealogy of Ethics" and "The Ethics for the Concern of Self as a Practice of Freedom", Foucault argues that the ethical practice of 'care of the self' always takes place in a relational and historical context (Foucault, 1986, 1990, 1997 and see Oksala, 2005 pp. 157- 169). Recall that in these works, Foucault, shifts his focus from the analyses of normation and normalisation to a third axis of subjectification, i.e. the self-constituted subject and the relation between the subject as both constituted and self-constituting. Based on the Greek ethical experience, the central thought that Foucault puts forward is that the practice of freedom requires the adoption of a 'creative' stance or attitude toward self-understanding. It is an ethics of acts and deed, however neither in the face of a pre-set goal, nor based on pre-established knowledges that one has about oneself, but must be understood as an ongoing process of experimentation (Oksala, 2005, p. 168). Such practices of freedom, as Foucault suggests, allow one to overcome or unleash what has become stratified or frozen in the ethical self-relation. It allows for the experience of some sort of novelty perceived from the established forms of self-understanding and as such a different relation of the self to the self.

both ethically and politically. By contrast, the analysis of the playing subject brought into focus that the conceptual distinction between freedom and oppression is itself imposing modes of oppression. As long as elite women's football players make use of tools informed by the belief in the opposition between playfulness and seriousness, they can only see themselves or their life and life choices as irrational. Secondly, the playing subject has revealed that as long as freedom remains tied to a negative concept of liberty, it remains tied to the options or alternatives provided by objectivist or instrumental reason, which in turn can only limit the subject.

If we take these insights seriously, we must conclude that the theory of play brings us not only conceptual discoveries that function outside the constrains of the existing framework in social sport studies, but importantly also brings about a form of relief. It could even be more ambitiously said that play is curative and brings about health. On the face of it, appealing to theory to alleviate suffering might appear as a category mistake, yet insofar as it is precisely the forgetting of play that results in subjective modes of oppression, we can likewise assume that a self-understanding through play is potentially an emancipatory experience. Arguably, a self-understanding through play would allow the elite women's football players to overcome the feeling of being irrational, when they are in fact free.

Accordingly, we are drawn into the conclusion that such a curative self-understanding through play is a concrete model of resistance in the context of the experiences of the elite women's football players. To be more precise, what the self-understanding through play makes visible is that we should understand resistance not in terms of the duality of oppression/alienation, but rather as resistance to this very opposition. For, recall, this is the duality that is oppressive. Put differently, the concept of resistance shouldn't be understood in opposition to domination—resistance as directed against domination—but as directed to the false choice we are presented with: to perceive ourselves as either subjects or objects. To posit the subject as a ground for change is a misleading attribution of a constitutive capacity to the subject. Similarly, to posit the subject as an object amongst other objects, incapable of meaning-making, is a misleading attribution of a constitutive capacity to the environment.

Thus, what the theory of play makes visible is that resistance is resistance against normative monism, or reductionism. Concretely, it is resistance to the idea that the elite women's football players cannot both want to win and stay healthy. Should we still want to speak of a revolutionary subject in the context of women's football, we would then be referring to a player who refuses to make a choice between infernal alternatives: to suffer or to quit (see also: Heuvel, van den, 2017, p. 134).

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the introduction of the theory of play forces a reconsideration of the existing frameworks in social sport studies. It has been made apparent that each of the paradigmatic models has something to offer to our analysis of the data that emerged from the surveys undertaken for this study. Yet, taking seriously our discovery in chapter 3 that the theory of play accounts for the references to sacrifice in the data and that play must be understood as an irreducible structure of the experiences of the elite women's football players, we can only maintain them in the mode of synthesis. This should not be mistaken to be a mere eclectic approach that mixes and matches at the risk of method incongruence. Thus, in this chapter we have sought to fashion an internally consistent theoretical framework that is cognizant of the varied and even contradictory theses of the diverse insights it appeals to and a novel contribution in its own right.

To this purpose we have first of all determined which of the theoretical insights of the Marxist and Foucauldian poststructuralist frameworks in social sport studies are indispensable for the theorisation of the two themes that we distinguished in chapter 1: 'High performance' and 'gender normalisation'. Second, we have tested the compatibility between these two frameworks. To be more specific, we have asked to what extent the poststructuralist critique of the subject is a problem for our adherence to the Marxist notion of alienation. This required an assessment of the move towards a synthesis provided by the cultural studies paradigm in social sport studies. We argued that for our purposes the cultural studies paradigm eventually places too much emphasis on economic forces in their account of the subject under alienation. However, we also argued that by turning to both Marx and Foucault himself, a more nuanced reading of both Marxism and Foucauldian poststructuralism becomes possible that is best describes as 'post-Marxist'. To be more precise we have argued that there are good reasons to believe that Marx's and Foucault's perspectives on the subject are much closer than is commonly assumed. While the poststructuralist focus on the local is in general perceived to be antithetic to the Marxist position, we proposed to read Foucault's analysis of the disciplines as an elaboration of Marx's idea of real subsumption. Conversely, I suggested that Marx himself already recognised the diffuse and heterogeneous nature of power and the constitutive nature it has with the subject. Both of which are mainstays of Foucault's work. It has however also been argued that eventually Foucault develops the idea of productive power much further than Marx, thanks to his repeated emphasis on the difference between normation and normalisation.

Once this post-Marxist framework has been established, we arrived at the following conclusion: (i) the Marxist side of the framework allows us to adequately make sense of the theme of 'high performance', by way of a theory of alienation; (ii) the Foucauldian poststructuralist side of the framework allows us to make sense of the theme of 'gender normalisation' by providing the necessary tools to theorize the diverse modes of subjection in the context of the experiences of the elite women's football players; (iii) the theory of play

allows us to adequately make sense of the theme of sacrifice. Concerning the latter, recall that we observed in chapter 2 that the theme of sacrifice involves an experience of a conflict between discrete value systems. Accordingly, we argued that the experience of sacrifice points to an experience of the co-existence of value systems. Insofar as the theory of play precisely posits experience in terms of a dual consciousness, we argued that the theory of play allows us to account for the theme of sacrifice. However, we also argued that insofar as the women's football players use ideological tools informed by the belief in the opposition between playfulness and seriousness, they can only sense their life and life choices as being contradictory. These are, as stated before, the two meanings of the quote 'Football is actually not important, but then it is' (as well as several others, reviewed in chapter 1).

Third, insofar as the theory of play challenges the monistic view that we find on both sides of the post-Marxist framework, we have analysed in this chapter how the theory of play forces us to think this framework anew. We have argued that by overlooking or forgetting the play element, both the Marxist and the Foucauldian poststructuralist sides are limited to a monistic understanding of the subject. Both sides overlook the fact that there is something in or about experience that is neither ideological nor discursively constructed, that is the experience of play. Accordingly, both sides overlook that eventually the subject retains the constant possibility of engaging with at least two systems of values, that is that of the dominant reality and of play.

What this brought into view is that the framework cannot provide a notion of resistance outside the objectivist logics that it holds responsible for oppression. To be alienated, we argued, means to be robbed of the playing part of the self. Which accordingly means to be objectified by instrumental reason. Yet, instead of returning to play, resistance is sought within the domain of objectivist reason itself. Accordingly, both sides eventually only risk triggering further modes of oppression, as it is far from clear how such new modes of subjection may be emancipating.

The theory of play brought us the anthropological discovery of a new type of subject: the playing subject. And with this, eventually a new way of thinking about freedom and resistance that is lacking within the existing frameworks in social sport studies. As the theory of play places subjectivity in the pre-objective realm, the playing subject should be understood as a free subject, yet in very particular way. To be free, as we learned from the later Foucault, means not to be free from constrains, but to be capable of enacting a certain room for manoeuvre. Yet, we also learned that eventually for Foucault the capacity of an individual to do and to make should always be understood in a historical sense. The freedom of the playing subject should by contrast be understood in an ahistorical sense, albeit one radically different from the ahistorical notion of freedom as sovereignty that we find in the idealist account of subjectivity resting on pure consciousness. Neither should it be mistaken for Bataille's glorification of excess, as the subject of excess has lost the necessary rations of subjectivity to be capable of differentiating the realm of excess and that

of real life. By contrast, as the world of play and that of the dominant reality are exposed to each other, the playing subject can always choose between the two worlds. Accordingly, it is this availability of choice that marks the inalienable freedom of the playing subject. In short, we argued that the playing subject is a free subject insofar as she has a choice within the two worlds.

Insofar as the freedom of the playing subject resides in her capacity to choose within the two worlds, this makes visible that we can no longer posit resistance against domination. Worse still, it makes visible that this opposition is itself oppressive, as made apparent in the context of the experiences of the women's football players. As long as the players can only make sense of their life and life choices in terms of opposing systems of values they'll understand their existence as being pathological. Accordingly, they can only understand themselves as irrational or mad. Recall again the following quotes: 'If I really think about it, I would quit playing football. It's madness. But then I don't'; 'But asking your brother-in-law to change his wedding date is for me actually too bizarre to believe; I fully devote myself to football. What you see is that I adjust my work to football and not the other way around. A lot of people call me mad'.

Presumably if they had been provided with the tools to understand that they are not mad—but playing—subjects, they'd no longer be submitted to the false choice: to either find an answer (the truth) inside themselves, or in the dominant reality. What they would discover, rather, is a higher type of resistance, which is resistance to the false choice: to perceive oneself as committed to one system of values or to another. They'd discover our discovery that resistance is resistance against monism.

Let me conclude on my move towards an internally consistent account of the experiences of the elite women's football players such as described by themselves that synthesises the insights provided by the theory of play and the post-Marxist framework. First, what the Marxist side of the post-Marxist framework provides are the necessary tools to situate the separation of leisure and work in the context of developments of elite women's football. Second, what the Foucauldian poststructuralist side of the framework provides are the necessary tools to theorize the various modes of subjection in the concrete context of the players' experiences. Third, what the theory of play provides are first of all the necessary tools to understand that insofar as the sphere of leisure and work are in reality united, it is wrong, theoretically, ethically and politically, to reduce the experiences of the elite women's football players to the sphere of work, or of instrumental reason. To be more precise, it allows us to understand that regarding the *de facto* separation as *de jure* is not simply a conceptual fallacy but one that has grave ethical and political consequences. Second, the theory of play allows us to theorize the athletic subject in a radically new way, which opens the doors to a theory of freedom and resistance that is lacking in the field of social sport studies. Importantly, although it competes with it, the scale of value of play is not disconnected from the scale of instrumental reason. Accordingly, it is affected by it.

However, the playing subject cannot be determined by it, as she can always choose to play. Indeed, the elite women's football players are subjected to football's culture of obedience, yet at the same time their irreducible commitment to the game and the concomitant sacrifices, reveal that the themes of 'high performance' and 'gender policing' do not exhaust their experiences. They sacrifice not a certain part (say, their health) of the real world to another (say, money), but to play. The results are playing subjects occupying what Fink calls a particular schizophrenic position, one side engaged with the dominant reality and the other with the world of play.

A self-understanding through play is potentially a liberating experience, as it would allow the women's football players to understand that their commitment to the game is anything but irrational. This is in concrete terms what resistance would look like in the context of the experiences of the elite women's football players. Importantly it must however be noted there is nothing inherently good or bad about the playing subject's capacity to choose between worlds. In short, there is nothing inherently good or bad about the inalienable freedom of the playing subject. In fact only objects can be called good or bad, as the value of objects is precisely determined by something outside them. By contrast, the value of being in play is intrinsic to itself.

Let me here emphasize once more that I am not arguing that oppression does not exist. Neither am I arguing on the practical level that players should embrace their own oppression. What I am saying, is that the kinds of pressure that the club owners and coaches put on players, are unable to force them effectively because the players always have an unassailable access to choice. Put differently, they play on their own terms. Club owners and coaches may benefit from it, but this is epiphenomenal.