

# Following and Forgetting Foucault- An Anti-Disciplinary Strategy for Understanding Sport

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Michel Foucault's critical analysis of the complex human condition revolved around an interpretive method which refuted conventional structures of knowledge. Moreover, Foucault's unorthodoxy focused upon themes which have largely avoided the gaze of mainstream social commentators. In order to explore issues such as punishment, madness, and sexuality, Foucault turned his back on traditional epistemological conventions; preferring to borrow from history, sociology, and philosophy et al. only what was required of his anti-disciplinary agenda.

*Following Foucault* we worked outside the rigid boundaries of traditional disciplines. Our aim in this paper was to construct an incisive and illuminating approach to the critical comprehension of another relatively overlooked and largely misunderstood aspect of modern existence—sport. Breaking down the analysis of sport by asserting the arbitrary boundaries imposed by the historical, sociological, psychological, and philosophical disciplines, is completely futile and totally artificial. Conversely, this paper outlined a thematic strategy which focuses upon sport as a form of culture and an expression of power relations within a socio-national context.

*Forgetting Foucault* the interpretive strategy discussed within this paper derives from a very individual reading of the Gramscian oriented positioning of contemporary British cultural inquiry. This is the latest theoretical hybrid to have emerged from the "eclectic mix of research" (Heller, 1990) widely referred to as British cultural studies. Whilst undeniably an aspect of the movement toward holistic understanding, the approach explicated within this paper is inherently unique. Cultural studies is a purposely blurred—some would say ambiguous—approach and method of cultural investigation. There is no one correct cultural studies doctrine or method inscribed in stone. Rather, the interpretation and usage of cultural studies is wholly individual, relying upon the questions posed by the critical analyst.

The approach outlined within this paper demonstrates a sociohistoric reading of cultural studies. Unashamed borrowing from the work of Stuart Hall, Lawrence Grossberg, Antonio Gramsci, Dick Hebdige, Walter Benjamin, and Eric Hobsbawm, fashions a critical understanding of sport as a cultural practice centrally located within the maelstrom of social existence, rather than being divorced and somehow isolated from it. This theoretical/political positioning enables us to use sport as a gateway into the understanding of society as a whole.