

**DE-GENDERED LEISURE: REFLECTIONS ON BODY PRACTICES OF SUBJECTS DISSIDENT FROM CIS-HETERONORMATIVITY****Received on:** April 10, 2024**Passed on:** October 19, 2024License: *Izabelle Cesco de Carvalho<sup>1</sup>*

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper discusses corporal practices of leisure and sports of subjects who move away from cisgender normativity. The proposal was to articulate a new category, namely 'ungendered leisure', encompassing diverse bodily expressions and lifestyles concerning leisure activities, distancing itself from hegemonic and generalized concepts. Bibliographical research was used to discuss the concepts of leisure and gender, as well as employing exploratory research on social media videos from sports teams. It was concluded that 'ungendered leisure' can be a valuable category for leisure studies as it introduces new perspectives rooted in non-normative bodies.

**KEYWORDS:** Leisure activities. Gender. Cis-heteronormativity. De-gendered leisure.

**LAZER DESGENERIFICADO: REFLEXÕES SOBRE PRÁTICAS CORPORais  
DE SUJEITOS DISSIDENTES DA CISHETERONORMATIVIDADE**

**RESUMO:** Este artigo discute práticas corporais de lazer e esportivas de sujeitos dissidentes da cisgender normatividade. Propõe-se analisar uma nova categoria, a de lazer desgenerificado, que envolve diversas corporalidades e estilos de vida acerca das práticas de lazer e se distancia de conceitos hegemônicos e generalistas. Utilizou-se de

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pesquisa bibliográfica para discutir os conceitos de lazer e de gênero, além de empregar pesquisa exploratória em vídeos nas redes sociais de equipes esportivas. Concluiu-se que o lazer desgenerificado pode ser uma categoria útil para os estudos de lazer por propor novos referenciais a partir de corpos não normativos.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Atividades de lazer. Gênero. Cisheteronormatividade. Lazer desgenerificado.

## Introduction

Andreas showed me what he called queer skateboarding, that is, a way of skateboarding dissociated from the virile, aggressive, brutal (and, ultimately, masculinized) style of its practitioners. Or rather, a sportive practice that dehierarchized bodies and established, wherever it went, a democracy in the way of expressing oneself (personally and sexually). Andreas' group brought together young and old people, lesbian women, gay and straight men, transgender women and men, in a crowd that mixed foreigners, Germans, beggars, Jews and atheists. Wherever they went, they de-gendered skateboarding, eroticized performances, and subverted the expectations of those who saw them (Camargo, 2018, n/p).

The fragment by the aforementioned author rescues a bodily practice of a queer skateboarding group he observed in Berlin in the 2010s. Challenging common body and aesthetic standards for skateboarders, with daring and even deferential maneuvers in terms of skateboarding, these people not only occupied the available spaces in Mauerpark (an urban park in the eastern part of the German capital) with their carts, but also purposefully did not present themselves to the community as "men" and "women": they were androgynous, non-binary bodies, which mixed characteristics of several genders in a single body.

This leisure practice told external spectators much more than this brief description could explain. It presents subjects who challenged gender norms, questioning and exploding normative representations of femininity and masculinity (both through the use of accessories and gendered bodily signs), in a conventional leisure space in the city.

What interests us here is that the analytical categories “leisure” and “gender” take on different developments, not only from this example, but also in other contexts in which we identify subjects who express their subjectivities via signs and non-normative bodily practices. These are categories and concepts widely theorized by authors from different fields of knowledge (such as Physical Education, Sociology, Anthropology, Economics, Tourism, etc.), especially in an interdisciplinary way. In this paper, therefore, an exercise will be carried out to rethink some approaches to leisure and gender, applying them to the bodily practices of subjects who dissent from cisgender normativity, notably the subjects of LGBTQIAPN+.<sup>4</sup>

Before we continue, a consideration about the term “body practices”. There is no room here for speculation about its uses in the area of Physical Education, even because this has already been done at another time (Lazzarotti Filho et al., 2010); nor is it a matter of questioning its status within scientific structures as a potential concept (Manske, 2022). We prefer to take “body practices” as elements

[...] constituents of human corporeality and [which] can be understood as a form of language with deep bodily roots that, at times, escape the domain of consciousness and rationalization, which allows them a quality of experience very different from other daily activities (Silva, 2014, p. 18).

This article seeks, in a deeper sense, to reflect on the lack of democratic access to the bodily practices of subjects who deviate from the cisgender normative expectations of common sense<sup>5</sup>. To this purpose, it will seek in gender and leisure studies a

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<sup>4</sup> According to Martins (2022), LGBTQIA+ subjects are people who deviate from binary and heterosexual norms, who may present different sexual orientations and gender identities, represented by the aforementioned acronym: Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transvestites, Transsexuals, Transgenders, Queer, Intersex, Asexuals and others.

<sup>5</sup> According to Rosa (2020), cisgender normativity is understood as a set of norms, reinforcements and punishments, widely reproduced in society, which format subjectivities so that individuals are always cisgender and heterosexual.

theoretical interrelation that reveals explanations about the sportivized bodily practices (Elias; Dunning, 1992) of LGBTQIAPN+ subjects in urban environments.

In this context, and in an attempt to relate the two categories addressed (gender and leisure), it can be understood that, as in other areas of human life, leisure is also a gendered and genderifying field: that is, it produces/reproduces practices that gender bodies, delimiting what is proper to the masculine and feminine, as stated by Goellner *et al.* (2009). In this regard, this phenomenon also follows the imperatives and norms of a cisheterosexist culture. This fact makes leisure a less democratic environment and this shows the need to take such attitudes as discriminatory. From this, this article raises the following question: would it be possible to think about the existence of a “de-gendered leisure”, considered from the subjective perspective of the subject who practices it, which evokes individualities and singularities, different cultures, beliefs and socioeconomic contexts, through performances not guided by cisheteronormative expectations?

Thus, to reflect on the previous question, a qualitative and interpretative bibliographical research was carried out on the categories of leisure and gender, in order to identify and deepen the theme, verifying the debates that have already been produced in the scientific field of leisure and gender studies. This type of research, according to Sousa, Oliveira and Alves (2021), begins with a literature review of references that already exist to delimit the theme and contextualize the research object. In this sense, a survey of reliable bibliographic sources is necessary, through a selective and critical reading of the chosen materials, to test and prove the hypotheses or classify and solve the research problem.

Our context starts from the simple observation that, given the galloping rates of femicide around the world, it is clear that women are still greatly affected by a cisgender and heterosexist society, which empowers the phallus on the pedestal of normality. In addition to them, it is worth considering that even within the social hierarchy there are other subjects who, by distancing themselves even further from the norm (androcentric, phallocentric and sexist), are violated and excluded even from their basic rights, such as the practice of sports and leisure. Here we consider it valid to bring to the field of leisure and bodily practices the presence of different sexualized bodies, which transit through other logics of the sexual imperative, and which propose a deterritorialization capable of provoking deviations in binary gender norms.

In view of this, initially, in the search for theoretical conceptualizations of leisure, we find clearly cisheteronormative definitions – despite the reservation of Gomes (2004), who points out leisure as a “human need” and considers the right to its practice capable of questioning and resisting the exclusionary order of social injustices. We agree on this point, however, with Galak (2023), who understands the defense of leisure (and sport) as a “human need” as a maneuver to universalize the diversity of bodily practices and, at the same time, homogenizing the plurality of bodies.

In a second moment, we bring authors who analyze the trajectory of the category “gender” within the scope of feminist productions that discussed the inferiorization of women in patriarchal social structures and the epistemological option of speaking of “gender” instead of the unifying term “woman/women”.

Given this, we start from the concept of “gendered” leisure, which is understood as a space in which practices and discourses of what each culture has defined about what is feminine and what is masculine are (re)produced (Goellner et al., 2009;

Goellner, 2010), to consider the possibility of materializing “de-gendered leisure” – which does not appear anywhere in the literature, which provokes us to imagine its potential for bodily practices little analyzed in the field of Physical Education and Sport studies.

Finally, an incursion was made into audiovisual productions of sports teams and LGBTQIAPN+ groups on YouTube, in order to exemplify some bodily practices in the leisure time of these subjects considered “minorities”. The proposed exercise can be both useful for deepening the understanding of such bodily practices (as it indicates the need to consider non-normative gender bodies and expressions), and will serve to present the materiality of the concept of “de-gendered leisure”.

### **About Leisure as a Phenomenon**

Since the first half of the 20th century, it has been possible to find Brazilian studies on the concepts of leisure. According to Gomes (2004), at that time, these views approached leisure as a phenomenon that occurred in free time, that is, it was closely linked to labor achievements, the reduction of working hours and paid vacations. Thus, those who held the means of production during the current context determined both working time and free time, in addition to regulating the activities that should occupy the institutionalized time for rest and leisure.

Such activities were considered “healthy” and were used as an element of coercion. Since, according to Gomes (2003), when leisure became institutionalized, it was placed in conflict with idleness, and thus began to be repudiated, as it represented a threat to the current mode of socio-economic organization. Idleness, in turn, was

considered something negative, as it did not aim at productivity. In short, he violated the moral conventions of the capitalist society of the time.

In addition, the issue of space for the institutionalization of leisure became an important factor, since until the 19th century, rural areas were still considered the great producers of wealth, but with industrial advancement, urban societies began to receive this role as economic centers, which provided new forms of social life. This fact reveals that mechanization led to the search for the city and made social control difficult, threatening the existing order. Therefore, the need to structure spaces in urban centers for leisure was perceived, as the unemployed and salaried workers were often subject to the vices of alcoholism, prostitution and other attitudes that were morally reprimanded by the hegemonic class, which preached moral hygiene. Thus, the construction of parks, squares, gardens, recreation centers, and other open wooded spaces gradually took place (Veal, 2019).

That said, leisure is a “modern phenomenon”, which emerged linked to the process of urbanization and the Industrial Revolution (Gomes, 2004). However, this concept of leisure linked to free time and work began to be rethought, mainly in the second half of the 20th century.

It is currently difficult to define an absolute boundary between work and leisure – these concepts are not polar opposites – and, despite having different characteristics, they are part of the same social dynamic. As Marcellino (2013) demonstrates, alienation in one of these two elements can lead to evasion or compensation behavior in the other, as work and leisure are not separate dimensions. In this way, both dimensions, or even other family, social, and religious obligations, are dynamic situations that maintain relationships and contradictions between them. Work and leisure can be considered

parts of a system, in which the movement of one continually interferes with and influences the other.

Assuming that it was with the development of capitalist industrial work that the separation of time and space between leisure and work occurred, Marcellino (2013) postulates that even leisure can be marked by productivity and performance, in which only the final product is sought and not the process of experiencing the practice, which can lead to compulsory action just for status or fashion, without critical thinking.

It is also worth noting that Marcellino (2013) makes an observation regarding the term “free time”, an important component in this discussion: no time is completely free from rules, norms, and behaviors expected by society. In his view, the ideal would be to adopt the term “available time”, which would encompass the experiences and influences that the individual goes through.

Gomes (2004, p. 125) also highlights that leisure is not an isolated phenomenon, as it establishes connections with different dimensions of culture: on the one hand, “it can contribute to masking social contradictions, but, on the other, it can represent a possibility of questioning and resistance to the unjust and exclusionary social order that predominates in our environment”. His concept of leisure is thus postulated:

a dimension of culture constituted through the playful experience of cultural manifestations in a time/space conquered by the subject or social group, establishing dialectical relationships with needs, duties and obligations, especially with productive work (Gomes, 2004, p. 125).

In turn, Mascarenhas (2000) considers leisure as a force capable of questioning the current order, modifying society, reorganizing social values, creating new norms and behaviors. Therefore, it is necessary to propose practices that correspond to the real needs and experiences of the group that will be participating. Therefore, from his Marxist perspective, leisure would be a force resulting from the tensions between

capital and labor, materializing, ultimately, as a “time and space for the exercise of citizenship and the practice of freedom” (Mascarenhas, 2000, p. 17).

For this author, only in a different form of society, in which an autonomous association occurs between workers, is it possible for individuals to experience truly free time, destined for physical and intellectual development, as an end in itself. Furthermore, in this situation, work will have meaning for the subjects and will not be seen as a burden, since, with the end of private property over the means of production, a fair and equal distribution of their social product would be ensured.

However, as Padilha (2008) states, with the expansion of capitalism, human existence began to follow an economic-financial logic, which aims at private profit and the accumulation of capital, and the worker no longer knows himself in the product of his work, since he no longer produces out of necessity or pleasure. And, therefore, it is difficult to have an autonomous and creative activity, mainly because there was a loss of control over time.

In this sense, Silvestre and Amaral (2016) state that with non-work time becoming alienated, leisure is also transformed into a commodity. And this is only available to a portion of the population, who assume a buying and selling relationship with it (not always occurring directly in the market), but the individual becomes a consumer or owner and acquires the right to consume and enjoy the practices and experiences. In other words, leisure activities are subject to the logic of capital, which increasingly makes working conditions precarious and annihilates rights, establishing policies that regress achievements already acquired in work and even in leisure (Silvestre, Miguel, Assis, 2020).

It is worth noting that, according to Marcellino (2012), the importance of leisure in contemporary society is the fact that this phenomenon is considered a privileged time to exercise practices that have the capacity to reorganize the moral and cultural order. In this way, leisure and the search for pleasure do not have a purely functionalist focus, but can bring about radical changes on a social level.

Therefore, it is possible to consider that leisure has the potential to instigate moments of reflection in individuals regarding the behaviors and standards propagated in society, as well as the possibility of acting in the transformation of culture and breaking with power relations. In theory, this would happen equally to all people and could promote well-being, pleasure, and quality of life, also for marginalized minorities.

However, it is important to highlight that in the society in which we live, with the increased application of neoliberal economic policies, particularly, work has assumed degrading conditions and there is a dismantling of the labor rights that have been achieved (Beck, 2007), affecting those who are less favored. As a result, in addition to the excessive demand for delivering tasks in the short term, society is buried by its obligations to capital, so that it can be considered that the enjoyment of leisure is compromised because free time itself becomes difficult to access. It is worth highlighting that, even in this widespread process, and thinking from an intersectional perspective of class, “race”/ethnicity, gender and the like (Collins; Bilge, 2020), white and black women, poor people, people with disabilities or LGBTQIA+ are more affected than heterosexual and white men.

As Barros and Mourão (2018) have already shown, men work in positions of power with higher salaries compared to women. And, as we know, in addition to paid work, women are still expected to fulfill the obligation of domestic and family chores

(the so-called double shift), which has been little or not at all minimized even in recent times of the pandemic (Pessoa, Moura, Farias, 2021)<sup>6</sup>.

Another aggravating factor in our discussion is that this modern phenomenon, because it directly interacts with work and free time, is affected by the political setbacks arising from the “shift to the right” on a global level. However, when it comes to rights, it is worth highlighting that leisure is a social right guaranteed here by the Federal Constitution of 1988, but that it has not been enjoyed equally by men and women – and much less by people who deviate from this binary spectrum.

Thus, in this context, part of the population is affected by the lack of democratic access to leisure, especially groups of subjects exploited and expropriated from their minimum conditions of quality of life and work, exhausted by the structures of capital, in a society considered androcentric and cisheteronormative. Santos (2001, p. 95), states that “the white man earns more than the white woman, who earns more than the black man, who, in turn, earns more than the black woman”. And, bringing it to the subjects considered in this research, possibly white cis(gender) men overlap both white cis(gender) women, as well as trans(gender) men and women of other skin tones – and detail: not only in terms of income measurement, but also regarding access and leisure time.

What this brief survey of references attempted to do was to highlight the debate on leisure and, above all, show how either the productions do not bother to name genders beyond the binaries (man/woman), or they weave universalist speculations: “leisure as a right for all”, “individual becomes a consumer or owner”, “leisure has the potential to instigate moments of reflection in individuals” (our emphasis), among

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<sup>6</sup>Furthermore, the insertion of women into the job market without being detached from domestic and family tasks generates an accumulation of responsibilities, an overload, which can lead to emotional stress (Spindola, 2000).

others. It can also be said that ideas and concepts about leisure were built from an androcentric point of view and that it has historically been denied to women and, nowadays, to other sexual subjects – that is, those excluded within the universal. The Government must guarantee more than just the law; it must seek gender equality in reality through the public policies it creates.

It would still be possible to encompass many definitions of leisure, showing how generalist and little gendered they are, but this sample makes it clear that there is no consensus on the concept of leisure and its conceptions, much less a specificity of this phenomenon that involves other groups and perspectives. In view of this and thinking about the subjects who dissent from the “gender order” (Connell, 2016), we will demonstrate below how gender becomes a fundamental category for thinking about power relations in society, and particularly, in relation to the scope of these individuals’ bodily leisure practices.

### **Gender as an Essential Category of Analysis**

In her classic essay, Scott (1995) addresses the notion of gender and its relevance in historical analysis, arguing that gender is not simply a biological characteristic or a “natural” manifestation of sexual differences, but rather a social and cultural construction that shapes power relations and people’s identities over time. The author proposed, back in the 1980s, that gender was a crucial category of analysis for understanding how societies structure social, political and economic relations based on conceptions of masculinity and femininity. She further postulated that these gender constructions are dynamic and historically contingent, that is, they would change over

time and vary according to specific cultural and social contexts. In this text, this concept is also essential for us to understand the implications of the proposal.

The concept of gender came in the wake of a multiplicity of reflections on the feminine, the place of women (and, later, of women) and of various struggles waged particularly during the period known as the Second Wave of Feminism (Ergas, 1991; Piscitelli, 2002). Over time, the term gender, which had been developed in the scientific laboratories of the Cold War (Preciado, 2008), gained greater relevance in debates on the oppression of women. First, a digression in defense of the argument, in a theoretical retrospective.

Rubin (1993) realized that in every society there would be a “sex/gender system”, in which the biological raw material of sex and human reproduction would be satisfied and shaped by the social environment, even if some of these conventions might seem “bizarre”. Therefore, it could be said that the prevailing culture would determine and conceptualize what sex was. In other words, the domain of sex, gender and human procreation (as we know them today) would be a social product, which would have been continually transformed.

Rubin (1993) would also state that any mode of production is related to the reproduction of instruments, labor forces and social relations and the sex/gender system cannot be limited to reproduction alone, neither in a social sense nor in a biological sense. The author would postulate that kinship systems are constructed and reproduce the concrete reflection of socially organized sexuality. Therefore, they are ways of observing sex/gender systems. Given this, it is symptomatic to think that kinship systems vary from one culture to another and are a social organization that would establish rules with whom people should marry and reproduce. It is also well known

that men have rights over their wives, but they do not have the same rights over themselves or over their husbands. In this way, we perceive the subordination of women as a product of the relationships in which gender/sex are reproduced and organized.

Based on the above, Rubin (1993) states that every society has a type of division of tasks by sex. But these specific task assignments for one sex and the other vary enormously, that is, they do not necessarily need to be due to biological factors. For example, there are societies in which women are responsible for agricultural work and in others where it is left to men. Thus, the sexual division of labor may be linked to the maintenance of the relationship between men and women, in which the smallest economically viable units contain at least one pair of these individuals. This leads to the notion of a kinship system, which changes with culture and history; furthermore, it depends on the social invention of “two opposite genders”, based on biological sex and the sexual division of labor.

All of this reveals a division of sex into two mutually exclusive categories, something that ends up exacerbating biological differences, and thus, “creating” gender. But it is worth noting that this concept also applies to sexual arrangements that differ from the heterosexual norm, which is what interests us here. That is: for Rubin (1993) all forms of sex and gender are built by the obligations of social systems; these systems, in turn, do not only oppress women, but are something that affects, represses and controls all subjects through the vehemence in framing them into their specific molds of personality and binary behaviors, masculine and feminine. As explained by the author:

Gender is a socially imposed division of the sexes. It is a product of social relations of sexuality. Kinship systems rest on marriage. Therefore, they transform males and females into “men” and “women”, each an incomplete half that can only find itself when united with the other. Men and women are certainly different. But they are not as different as day and night, earth and sky, yin and yang, life and death. In fact, from the point of view of nature, men and women are closer to each other than either is to anything else - for example, mountains, kangaroos, or coconut trees. The idea that men and

women are more different from each other than they are from anything else must come from somewhere other than nature [...] (Rubin, 1993, p. 11).

In the wake of these problematizations, Piscitelli (2002) considers that Rubin's contributions were an advance for feminist studies, with two significant shifts: one is to think about the construction of women through the totality of cultural systems and understand the historical systems of sexual differentiation – one of the assumptions of the creation of the concept of gender; the other shift is the explanation of sex/gender systems linked to understanding the diverse realities experienced in their specific contexts, in which power relations develop and this is another possibility of analyzing patriarchy. Thus, it is noted that the concept of gender is initially linked to the feminist movement with studies on the situation of oppression against women, but that it ends up spreading to think about other sexualized bodies.

This idea of gender quickly spread, and other feminist authors began to stand out, such as Donna Haraway, who criticized the knowledge of Western feminist theories and analyzed the importance of historicizing and relativizing the concepts of sex and gender. For her, there is a problem in conceptualizing gender and sex as a global identity, as it creates an imposing “essence” in the identity of men and women. However, it is important that there be a specific discussion about other bodies, sexualized and racialized, in opposition to the ethnocentric and colonialist tendencies of Euro-American feminisms, since the category of gender would obscure all other categories, such as “race”/ethnicity, class, nationality.

In one of her most influential works, she presents the idea of the cyborg, a hybrid being that transcends the traditional boundaries of gender, race and social class (Haraway, 2009). It thus argues that human bodies and identities are shaped by technologies and that the strict separation between the human and the non-human is

increasingly difficult to maintain. Such a cyberfeminist vision challenges rigid binary conceptions of gender and suggests the possibility of multiple identities and ways of being. However, to problematize the plurality of genders and bodies that differ from cisgenderism/heteronormativity, the philosopher Judith Butler will be a fundamental author.

Through a deconstructive and problematizing logic, Butler (2001; 2003) considers “sex” as a regulatory norm that reproduces markers of power and controls bodies, which are unable to fully conform to all these impositions, since:

the regulatory norms of 'sex' work in a performative way to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the sex of the body, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative (Butler, 2001, p. 152).

And here comes a powerful element to this analysis: gender performativity. Butler (2001) says that the regime of heterosexuality determines the “materiality” of sex, which is formed and sustained by a materialization of regulatory norms that are consistent with sexual hegemony. Such materialization depends on the identification processes in which social norms are appropriated and, in turn, this identification is prior to and enables the formation of the subject – but is not, strictly speaking, executed by him. Thus, gender performativity cannot be thought of separately from regulatory sexual regimes.

Butler (2003) questions the immutable and biological nature of sex, which is also culturally constructed like gender. So, in this way, there would be no differentiation between sex and gender. The author points out that it is necessary to analyze the entire apparatus of reproduction and social construction in which the sexes are established, as establishing them as a duality or binary is a way of maintaining the internal structure of oppression and power relations.

Another point of note is that which concerns compulsory and institutionalized heterosexuality, which Butler borrows from Adrienne Rich. This author examines how heterosexuality is imposed and institutionalized in society, becoming a “mandatory” social norm to which everyone is presumed to belong, regardless of their personal inclinations or desires (Rich, 2010).

The author argues that compulsory heterosexuality is a system that guarantees women's submission to patriarchal structures, as they are socialized to conform to “female roles”, focus on men's needs, and seek male approval. Heterosexuality, in this context, is seen as an institution that sustains and reinforces gender inequality. Rich (2010) also explores how society marginalizes, denies, and makes lesbian existence invisible, repressing and discouraging any deviation from the heterosexual norm. She argues that women are taught to see heterosexuality as the only viable option and that attraction between women is often trivialized or ignored. This process of denial and repression leaves many women feeling alienated from their own lesbian desires and identities.

By highlighting this concept of compulsory heterosexuality, Rich helped open up a space for discussion about sexual diversity and freedom of choice in terms of sexual orientation. She drew attention to the ways in which society controls and limits female sexuality, as well as the political and social implications of this control.

This last aspect is quite important for the reflection developed here. Binary regulation tends to hide the multiplicities that encompass the spectrum of sexualities, since such plurality is often reflected in the rupture of hegemonic heterosexual, reproductive and medical-legal practices. However, these heterosexual conventions are also sometimes present in homosexual contexts, which can be understood as a reflection

of the insistence of heterosexual constructs in gay and other sexual cultures. Therefore, it is important to reflect on these ambiguities, as such gender configurations, which distance themselves from the binary structure based on masculine/feminine, are in a subversive place, of resignifications, with the potential to interrupt regulatory repetitions. After all, for Butler (2003), rules not only reinforce binaries, but also subvert them.

That said, she also proposes a genealogical investigation of gender ontology to understand how this sexual binary arose and the scientific discourses that helped consolidate the regulatory norms of sex, through effective naturalization. This same political genealogy, if successful, would have the capacity to disrupt gender expression, in addition to explaining these acts directly from within compulsory structures, created by forces that control gendered social appearance:

Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory structure, which crystallizes over time to produce the appearance of a substance, of a natural kind of being (Butler, 2003, p. 59).

Therefore, it is clear that, for Butler (2003), sex, desire and gender do not have a causal relationship, just as desire does not express gender, nor does gender express desire. These discontinuities are hidden by binary and oppositional gender constructions. In addition, the author seeks to articulate the gender category with other identities, such as racial, economic class, ethnic, sexual, among others. Therefore, it is understood that gender cannot be separated from the political and cultural contexts in which it is produced.

Thus, it can be said that, if there is a body standard that is considered “right”, there are also bodies that do not materialize these standards. Such bodies are excluded and delegitimized, that is, they cease to be considered bodies, their existence is

delegitimized and they are treated with violence. This behavior ends up becoming a cycle in which what influences is also influenced. If cis(gender) men, the valued and desired body standard in contemporary society, delegitimize cis women, other subjects and their bodies are also subjugated by them. Gender performativity that materializes other bodies equally leads to delegitimized existences not only in the social world, but also in the specific universes of leisure.

In this regard, all this problematization affects the subjects and their lives in society, including at work and also in their leisure time. If leisure is gendered and gendering at the same time, as we have already stated, it is necessary to complicate our understanding of these processes in order to try to determine the possibility of escape points. This leads to the concern sought here about whether it would be possible to think about “de-gendered leisure”, based on non-normative bodies, and their condition of existence/occurrence.

### **De-gendered Leisure: New Category?**

In this topic, we propose thinking about gender issues linked to a disruptive and plural conception of leisure. By linking the categories of leisure and gender, we intend to develop a reflection on some observed practices, notably those involving the bodies of dissident subjects, who escape the prerogatives of a cisgender and heteronormative (cisheteronormative) society. Such bodies are gendered in society and guided by a series of control institutions (Foucault, 1985), but there are lines of flight that interest us here.

From a critical transfeminist perspective, we live in a society where people can identify as cisgender or trans(gender). Trans people interest us insofar as, based on the broader proposal of “gender transgression” (because they do not identify with the

gender socially assigned at birth and seek the desired gender), they postulate a denaturalized performance, which would question the very “natural” gender status of a normative body.

Here we want to activate what we call “de-gendered leisure”, a category still under development and which will be expanded upon throughout the examples. To this purpose, we developed some hypotheses by viewing audiovisual materials found on the internet, particularly on YouTube, a well-known video sharing platform. The network has been a contemporary receptacle for the expressions of individuals and groups, from more recent generations. We selected a sample of them, which will be explained and commented on below.

The first is related to transmasculine futsal or indoor soccer teams. Teams such as Meninos Bons de Bola (MBB), T-Mosqueteiros, Trans United FC, Pogonas, MandaBuscá and BigTBoys FC were investigated in their football practice exercises. It is worth noting that justifies this choice: little audiovisual material was found and leisure activities related to football were chosen because, according to current researchers, they are the “hot topic” for groups demanding visibility and representation in conventional sports and leisure spaces. Let us comment on two documentaries on the subject.

The first documentary was produced by TV Trip, in 2019.<sup>7</sup> It shows part of a meeting of the MBB team of trans men, who are there to play football, but also to socialize. Most of the players are wearing team uniforms (including logos) and some appear shirtless; some boys wear accessories such as necklaces, bracelets and binders<sup>8</sup>, and others wear fluorescent-colored vests; in addition to the narration of the athletes'

<sup>7</sup> “The first trans team in Brazilian football” (2019). Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Api1tqzVIOY>. 19 thousand views.

<sup>8</sup> A breast binder is a type of breast protection often used by trans men.

individual stories, there is a story about the founding of the soccer team and the social issues they defend as trans men.<sup>9</sup> This video also shows a conversation circle, where reflections appear on the social place they occupy as trans bodies in a cisheteronormative society.

The production of this documentary shows the preparation for the game, but above all for a moment of possible fraternization among people historically excluded from football. Of an amateur nature, it can be concluded that the recreational practice developed there, despite using football as a theme, functions more as a moment of leisure from social ills for those subjects. Does this practice go beyond the sport itself? What does peer socialization mean in trans football leisure? Can such sports practice provide acceptance and belonging to these individuals? Furthermore, do acceptance and identification have similar meanings than for heterosexual, cisgender men? Does gender transition impact their sports and leisure activities? How does trans soccer differ from conventional leisure sports related to soccer, such as amateur soccer, for example?

The second documentary is about the T-Musketeiros [*T-Musketeers*] team and was produced in 2022 by the news team at *Mobilidade Estadão*, a project that showcases diverse urban social scenes within one of the country's largest-circulation newspapers.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, this trans men's soccer team is a spinoff from the previous one (MBB), and its motto is welcoming, transmasculinity, and playful soccer practices. There are reports of how players feel about participating in the “inclusive” football practice and how they have come to form the “collective”. In addition to all the socialization noticeable in the group, the testimonies emphasized how welcoming that

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<sup>9</sup> We know the difference between trans-men, trans men, Female-to-Male (FTM), among other nominations, but we will not go into the merits of explaining each of them because that is not our purpose here – and the distinction between terms, in the context of our example, is meaningless.

<sup>10</sup> “Indoor soccer in the suburbs: T-Musketeiros is made up of trans men” (2022). Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G\\_m3Xustqyw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_m3Xustqyw). 2 thousand views.

space is towards non-normative subjects: “here I even take off my shirt, because I feel good”, said one player.

Based on this video, it would be worth asking: does continuous leisure aim at “inclusion and acceptance”, as mentioned, but in what senses? Does the occupation of such places in leisure time function as a form of resistance or assimilation to cis-heteronormative values? What kind of inclusion is practiced among trans people in cis-dominated settings? It is known that T-Musketeiros is a dissident group from the MBB team and, in this sense, what is the difference postulated by the “more welcoming practice” of one in relation to the other?

Following our concern and researching more audiovisual productions, we found a documentary about amateur trans people in the world of fighting, also posted on YouTube and produced by TV Trip, in 2020.<sup>11</sup> Anne Viriato, an amateur trans fighter from Amazonas, uses the world of Jiu Jitsu to integrate herself into the sportive practices of MMA and combat gender bias. With long, blond hair and tight clothing, he makes a point of fighting with other cisgender men.

The documentary shows some of the trans athlete's training sessions and testimonies about what she thinks about MMA, the fights she takes part in, how she faces the prejudices of male fighters when she shows up for fights and her day-to-day life. More than competition itself, Anne inhabits a place of sporting and playful practice, which does her good. It's clear she enjoys saying she needs to fight to feel alive, and that she will continue “fighting men”, despite undergoing gender reassignment.

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<sup>11</sup>“Anne only fights men” (2020). Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RkyhP3YKDI>. 30 thousand views.

Occupying the notorious and media-heavy Octagon, colonized by sweaty, testosterone-fueled males, with a short, feminized, average-sized body, and above all, to fight other cisgender men, is noteworthy. It's an amateur fighting practice, more associated with leisure than with high-performance sport. What clues does this woman's body give to the cisgender women who inhabit the Octagon? What does it tell us about gender, leisure and sport? And how can we think about gender inequalities in amateur or professional Jiu Jitsu or MMA practices?

The fourth and final production we found is a documentary about queer skateboarding practices in the city of Oakland, in 2019, California, United States.<sup>12</sup> Oakland is known for having a thriving queer skate scene, with a diverse and vibrant community. There, this practice is an expression of the subculture within the world of skateboarding, in which LGBTQIAPN+ skaters find a space for leisure activities and the joy of their identities. Something very similar to what Camargo (2018) found in the Berlin urban scene.

In the documentary, there is a main voice that narrates the themes that motivate the group, but there are other voices talking about prejudice, hate speech and the erasure of existences. They compose scenes of people skateboarding, falling, doing unusual tricks and talking to each other, spontaneously. The focus of the occupation of these urban spaces is to claim the possibility of belonging to a place they were never allowed to be. A person attracts attention because he has a body considered to be that of a man, but is dressed in tights and clothes considered to be feminine. What kind of skateboarding is this? How does Oakland view these bodies and their leisure practices in city spaces?

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<sup>12</sup> “Grinding out discrimination with Oakland’s queer skate collective” (2019). Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKM4gzR5vSM>. 6 thousand views.

Given what was brought by these audiovisual productions, we ask ourselves: can the playful and sport-related practices carried out by these individuals minimize the physical and social barriers of conventional leisure? How would these trans bodies behave in conventional “gendered” leisure spaces, restricted to cisgender men and women? Would recreational football practices favor trans bodies with greater passability?<sup>13</sup> To what extent would the mere presence of funding (public or private) be sufficient to expand the practice and promote acceptance in a sports leisure activity for trans or queer women/men?

Of course, we do not have answers to the questions raised above and many others could be asked; nor was it the purpose to try to answer the questions here. What seems symptomatic of something different in the making is the postulation of demands from trans/queer people in the cisnormative leisure spaces available.

There are many differences between the cultural settings of the productions we chose. Not only because they occur in different regions and countries, with different people, physical practices that use knowledge or sports, but all these scenarios have elements in common. Such bodies, whether in football, skateboarding or fighting, end up gendering the place they occupy in a way that is distinct from binary cisnormative bodies (of cisgender men and women). And they degender it at the same time: because they are trans men and women, binary or not, bi or homosexual, queer women and men, agender or pansexual or asexual, who bring their existences and struggles to the spaces in which they practice leisure or sport. We would venture to say that the occupation of space based on the peculiarities determined by their explicit genders and dissident sexualities causes their bodily or sportive practices to be de-gendered.

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<sup>13</sup>Passability is the degree of collective recognition of a body that is in transition. And, for the subjects, it can mean an idea of protection against transphobia and a supposed conformity with the new gender (Chinazzo *et al.*, 2021).

The idea of presenting this "flyover" on amateur documentary productions on social media is to highlight that leisure practices are becoming more differentiated within collectives, and they have not received attention from the public authorities, much less from other social instances. Furthermore, and more specifically, such playful practices that involve sports and recreation end up offering the chance to reflect on a "de-gendered leisure" in formation, that is, a category that, regardless of the population that materializes it in practice, engenders in itself a de-gendering/de-gendering proposal based on the way it occurs in reality.

Considering the theoretical categories currently available to us, as demonstrated by our brief bibliographical survey, none of them are capable of answering the problematizing questions of this experimental observation of the activities posted on social media by such subjects and groups.

### **Final Considerations on a “Gender Revolution” in Leisure Studies**

After these preliminary considerations, we can state, with some certainty, that the leisure practices (and even sports) available cannot account for the multiplicity of bodies when we consider the different expressions/manifestations of gender and sexual orientations in sports and recreational spaces. Gender performativities themselves do not presuppose materializing in a disruptive way in unauthorized spaces.

There is no consensus on the concept of leisure and its different conceptions for such audiences, not only because theoretically it is quite complex to discuss this (considering the authors who dealt with leisure and who we presented previously), but it is possible to affirm that the mentioned populations and their gender performativities have the potential to provoke reflections of subjects regarding the norms and rules

propagated in society, in the same way that they can act in the transformation of their behaviors, breaking hegemonic relations of power.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, when considering the field of leisure within the current political-economic scenario, based on the notable increase in neoliberal economic policies, assuming degrading work conditions, there is an accumulation of duties and obligations to capital, so that free time becomes scarce, as well as the enjoyment of leisure activities themselves. And this directly affects subjects who are already marginalized in society for not following the cisgender normative imperative.

In terms of Brazil, it is important to emphasize that leisure is a right guaranteed by the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988. However, it has not been promoted to all people equally for some time, as it is a phenomenon affected by political setbacks of all kinds – including the alternation of governments with different political affiliations. Would “de-gendered leisure” be a political practice that challenges the conventional leisure right “of every human being”, highlighting the specificity and heterogeneity of the plurality of bodies that have fun in their moments of pleasure? Going further: should the State be concerned about such a demonstration to the point of legislating on it?

Therefore, when we identify these practices posted on YouTube, but invisible to the vast majority of people, it is possible to assume that a portion of the population is not reached by democratic access to leisure, like these subjects expropriated from their own conditions of existence, exhausted by the structures of capital, in a sexist, misogynistic, transphobic and cisgender normative society.

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<sup>14</sup> Here, transfeminist critics could take a hard line against this statement, saying that the “salvationist” view of cis people considers trans people as “disruptive heroes” who would transform society. However, the issue is precisely this: the mere presence of a trans person proposing to do something differently from the cisgender normative mold is already a condition for the emergence of the established power regime – it is enough that this is clear.

Furthermore, it is also possible to state that, conventionally, the leisure category as we know it was conceived from a male (androcentric) point of view, being denied to women and other sexual subjects, which today is still reflected in the inequalities of their access to recreational practices and spaces. In this essay we find leisure categories with a heteronormative and binary bias, and although some authors consider this phenomenon as a “human need”, intended for all subjects, we agree with Galak (2023) on the non-universalization of rights that erases the specificities of practices of diverse bodies. What we wanted to discuss here advocates a revisit of what has been written about leisure, as well as an appreciation of contemporary bodily practices that occur around us in cities.

Finally, it can be understood that this topic is of great relevance to the scientific field, since there is a gap in scientific production about such identified bodies and that they need other perspectives, particularly regarding their leisure and free time practices. And we realized the need to develop studies and research to observe, listen to and monitor these people (through interviews, sports training, discussion groups, etc.), in addition to personally monitoring their physical and sports practices in their leisure time.

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