

The democracy-competitiveness dilemma in team sport.

A panel study of Swedish soccer girls and boys.

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Since long, participation in voluntary associations has been seen as an important measure in fostering democratic citizens in Sweden. Thus, state support for youth leisure activities have been directed to different youth organisations, particularly sport clubs. They are organised at lower levels, on an every day basis, as a peoples movement (*folkrörelse*), that is, in voluntary organisations. For sport clubs, however, fostering top athletes is a basic part of their pursuit. Consequently, in youth sport activities, at least in Sweden, a characteristic contradiction is found as these somehow have to balance between democratic values, particularly equality in participation, and elitism in the form of competitiveness.

The state support to youth sport in Sweden is both a huge economic investment and an important ideological commitment, stating that the citizens safely can and should activate their children in sport clubs.¹ Most Swedish children does engage in sport clubs for a longer or shorter period. At the age of 12 two thirds of the boys and half the girls are members of sport clubs. Through this engagement the children are supposed to learn *both* democratic ways of thinking and acting, based on respect, cooperation and equality, *and* at the same time the principles of competing and winning, who on the other hand strives towards

¹ This is articulated each year in the government proposal on the budget to the Riksdag, cf. Budgetpropositionen 2005, or in the instructions to public inquiries on Sport and the Sport Movement, cf. SOU 1998:76, sid 11-22.

selection, ranking and elitism. These different values does not resonate easily with each other, but rather constitute a dilemma. This dilemma, we call *the democracy-competitiveness dilemma*.

But our focus here is mainly on *youth football practice*, on football *from within*. We have thus chosen to engage theoretically with the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. We are faced with a democracy-competitiveness dilemma *also within the field*, one that is generated by the field and has to be handled in the field: how to follow the rules and how to win simultaneously. We assume that learning to handle this dilemma is a process over time, by way of gradually incorporating an understanding for the rules of the game and the handling of them. This process involves learning the doxa of the field. In the beginning it is all very simple: the children will learn that they have to follow the rules *and* that sport is about winning. Along the way they have however to learn that there is a complicated relation between rules, goals and means, and that this relation must be handled, negotiated. In this article we will examine this process of handling the democracy-competitiveness dilemma.

We begin with a presentation of the longitudinal research project on youth football from which we get our results. Then we present a series of analysis of data based on a set of questions designed to measure the dilemma discussing different interpretations of the results. Finally we contrast changes in handling the dilemma within the football field with changes in democratic values more generally among our young football players.

The material

This article comes out of, and is based on data from, our research project *The critical years*. In a panel study, beginning in 1997 we followed football youth in Sweden, from their 13th to their 15th year, that is, during three consecutive seasons. In all, the study comprises 1133 girls and boys playing in 47 teams in 31 clubs, from different parts of the country, from the top clubs but also from clubs lower down in the series system. However, this is no conventional panel study. Since there is a player turnover between the seasons, there is not only a natural panel mortality in our study, made up of those who end playing football (or go to another club), there is also a corresponding natural panel fertility of those who begin to play in any of our teams during the study, coming from other clubs. (To start playing football in an organised way is most uncommon at his age.) In short, it is the members of 47 teams that are studied through a survey for three consecutive seasons, or rather 46 since one team was dissolved before the coming of the second season. Nevertheless, there is a

drop in the number of players over the seasons. In all, 46% of those who entered the study at the age of 13 were still members of their clubs at the age of 16. Besides this ‘natural’ drop, the response rate was quite good over the years and the different questions.

We call these years critical for double reasons. First of all, since they mark the beginning of secondary socialisation, of building a (gendered) self. But they are also critical from the football point of view since precisely at this time any serious future engagement in the game is determined.

Overview of the results

One set of questions in our panel study is specifically devoted to the democracy-competitiveness dilemma. In all, the set consists of ten questions. Technically, it is constructed as an attitude measurement battery. Theoretically, however, this does not mean that we are proposing any kind of attitude research. As already outlined, our main theoretical anchorage is found in applying Bourdieu’s concepts of field, habitus and capital to sport, observing particularly the working of time, that is the effects of continuing investments in the football field among our young players from 13 to 15 years of age. Yet, we want to argue for the possibility of transposing attitude measurement out of its classical theoretical social psychological context into the research program developed by Bourdieu. In other words, we propose a kind of *secularisation of attitude measurement*. Thus we have, first to decontextualise it theoretically, and then recontextualise it the proposed way, though, in principle, other recontextualisations too, of course, are possible, since the crucial step is freeing the measurement instrument from its ‘natural’ – that is, conventional – theory.

Thus, we have asked the respondents for each question to state ‘how this statement fit with your experiences of your team’.² Consequently, we do not ask for the personal attitude or anything like that but for how the respondent experiences the team’s orientation to each topic. The answer, nevertheless, is *a personal one*, though about the *orientation of a collective* one belongs to, and often identifies with.

We used a five grade ordinal scale to measure how well each statement fitted the respondent’s experience. The strongest agreement equals that it fitted ‘very well’, the second strongest that it fitted ‘well’; the strongest disagreement equals that it fitted ‘bad’, the second

² Of course, all survey questions originally were stated in Swedish.

strongest disagreement that it fitted ‘rather bad’. In between agreement and disagreement, the answer is that it fitted ‘neither well, nor bad’.

Of the ten questions, or items, three were explicitly reserved to catch the democratic orientation. Most poignantly, this holds for agreement in ‘In my team, to follow and respect the rules of the game is most important’, but also in agreements in ‘Our team would rather lose than win the game in an unjust way’ and ‘In my team we don’t play more unjust than normally if the ref[eree] should allow it (or seem to be uncertain)’. Thus, the democratic orientation is about respecting the rules and its arbiter. This orientation is not to be misunderstood as authoritarian, but rather its opposite, since respecting the rules of the game is to engage in the competition in a fair way – which is absolutely fundamental to the field of sports.

Now, this orientation *must be combined* with a competitive orientation, with the will to win – which is fundamental to sports too. Thus, the dilemma. We have measured this orientation with seven different items. Paradigmatically by agreements to ‘In my team, winning is what’s it all about’, but also by more concrete questions about different tricks to win as ‘it’s OK to “fake” to receive a free-kick or a penalty kick’, or that ‘it’s OK to brake the rules to sto a skilful opponent’, and in between these items as ‘Our team would rather win the game than play strictly to the rules’, and ‘It would be more difficult for for our team to win if we kept strictly to the rules’. More specific here are the remaining two items, one about that any player in my team ‘have the right to criticise the ref’s decision if s/he feels that the decision is wrong’ and another one stating ‘In our team, players that are slightly injured are allowed to play if it is an important game’. In other words, the willingness to win could imply not only a moment of disrespect for the rules, the referee and the oppoonents of the game, but also costs for the own team as severed injuries.

Of course, it is possible to see disagreements in one orientation as an agreement in the other one, and vice versa. In this first overview of our results, we will, however, just look at the level of explicit agreements over time. The results are presented in Table 1. In the table, the level of agreement is presented for the first and for the third year. We have chosen not to give the numbers for the second year – at the age of 14 – here, though it should perhaps be noted that the change is greater, or faster, between the age of 14 and 15, than for the year before. Moreover, the level of agreement is given for both the strongest agreement (very well) and the not so strong one (well). The items are presented in the same order as in the survey.

The critical subject is how the democracy-competitiveness dilemma is handled in practice. Given the nature of our data, we also are able to see how the dilemma is, if not

solved, so resolved, over time. Given what is at play in the field of sports, and how, the dilemma could even be said to be a constitutive part of the field. Thus it cannot be solved in principle, though in practice it has to be compromised somehow. The question now is how – and if the compromise may change by time, by getting more attuned to the game.

Table 1. The democracy-competitiveness dilemma: overview

	Year 1		Year 3	
	Very well	Well	Very well	Well
<i>How do these statements fit with your experiences of your own team? (%)</i>				
Our team would rather win the game than play strictly to the rules	9	25	13	31
In my team a player have the right to criticise the refs decision if she/he feels that the decision is wrong	10	22	15	24
Our team would rather loose than win the game in a unjust way	21	43	13	27
In my team it's OK to "fake" to receive a free-kick or a penalty kick.	12	30	19	39
It would be more difficult for our team to win if we kept strictly to the rules	7	18	3	11
In our team players that are slightly injured are allowed to play if it is an important game	5	17	11	29
In my team, to follow and respect the rules of the game is most important	50	83	30	71
In my team winning is what it's all about	13	46	14	41
In my team it's OK to break the rules to stop a skilful opponent	7	21	9	32
In my team we don't play more unjust then normally if the ref should allow it (or seem to be uncertain)	26	52	21	52

Much can be said about what is found in Table 1. But perhaps the single most important finding is the strong agreement when it comes to the democratic orientation, and particularly so for its most straight item: ‘In my team, to follow and respect the rules of the game is most important.’ While 83 percent agree in this, and 50 percent strongly agree, agreements for the other two questions of this orientation are definitely lower (43/21 respectively 52/26 %). Why the results come out this way may seem difficult to understand, though we think there is one simple explanation of it: the formulation of this item squares directly how the young players are taught the rules. The other two questions may seem a little more ambiguous for our young players, compromising in a way with the other orientation, the will to win. So, if they definitely agree on one thing, it is to follow and respect the rules.

At least for the first year this result is more than evident, though agreements on the straight question about the will to win – ‘In my team winning is what it’s all about’ – are as strong as on the other two about democratic orientation – 46 percent agree well. Yet, not more than 13 percent are able to agree strongly upon this, thus testifying to *the presence of*

the dilemma, or the difficulty in strongly agreeing in both orientations – a compromise that would resonate with the demands of the field, but seems difficult to make at this age. In other words, the democratic orientation still gets the priority. In deed, most other willingness-to-win-agreements are found at the 20 percent-level, with one exception. 30 percent agree upon that it is ‘OK to “fake” to receive a free kick or a penalty kick.’ This is quite a high figure compared to what one would expect given the high agreement in respecting the rules. On the other hand, it testifies to the presence of the dilemma.

Yet, the balancing of the dilemma, the compromise made, change in a significant direction as the young players invest in the field. With the experience of two more years of playing and exercising the game, the competitiveness seems to have become more important than before, and at the cost of the democratic orientation. To respect and follow the rules are still what most players agree upon, but there is a definite drop here, particularly when it comes to the strong agreement (20%). Nevertheless, more than two third of the players still agree on this. Looking at the other two items supposed to measure the democratic orientation, it is possible to recognise a similar drop in just one of them: at the age of 15, a third of the agreements, strong or not, in rather losing the game than winning in an unjust manner are lost.

Turning to the other side of the dilemma, agreements in ‘In my team winning is what it is all about’ does not show any increase, and this irrespective of how we measure it. Yet, on three items about the willingness to win, agreements now have become more common. If we look at the level of agreement measured by the statement fitting well, the increase is about ten percent in that it would be OK to fake to gain a free kick or a penalty kick, as it is for playing with slightly injured in important games and breaking the rules to stop a more skilful opponent – but note that strong agreements do not increase on the latter item, just for the other two.

Now, the direction of change in the balancing of the dilemma, though uneven, is unambiguous. Over time, the willingness to win is becoming more important. In a sense, this is what one could expect as the game for each consecutive season is becoming more serious, as the players are approaching the senior level. That is, as they invest more and more of their lives in the field, they get a stronger ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu 1993b: 122), and the game of football, as every sport, is about winning. Sport does not make sense if you do not want to win. However, this does not make respecting and following the rules into something ridiculous. Without rules, no sport either makes sense. However, a reasonable conclusion on balance seems to be that increasing investments in the game do not strengthen the willingness to respect and follow the rules. Or to put it another way,

there is something static about the rules, they are just there – also for the player investing more and more in the field.

The repatterning of the dilemma

Though the direction of change of the balancing of the dilemma is unambiguous, it definitely is not even. In a second step of our analysis, we want to explore this further. One way of doing this is by factor analysis.

The result of the factor analysis for year 1, when the players were 13 years old, is given in Table 2. The results correspond to the analysis above, and to the intention with the construction of the set, in identifying two factors, one about the willingness to win, here called the *winning factor*, and one about following the rules, here called the *rule, or democratic, factor*. In deed, from the point of view of the construction of the set, the result is almost perfect in that seven items load the winning factor, and three the rule factor (though the factor loading of one of the former items is a little below the .50-level).

Now, if the democratic orientation in the former analysis turned out as stronger than the winning-to-will orientation, the results of the factor analysis are the reverse, with the winning factor as the strongest (eigenvalue 3.06). There is, however, nothing contradictory in this: this just means that the variation is stronger when it comes to the winning factor than to the rule factor. And as we saw, agreement was stronger for the democratic orientation. Thus, a reasonable conclusion here is that the democracy-competitiveness dilemma very much is a dilemma about *when and how to compromise* the rules of the game and. Or to be more precise, the three items loading factor one the strongest are the most dilemmatic ones.

Table 2. Factor analysis of the dilemma set at the age of 13

<i>In my team...</i>	Winning factor	Rule factor
OK to break the rules to stop a skilful opponent	.77	-.05
would [we] rather win the game than play strictly to the rules	.75	-.12
OK to "fake" to receive a free kick or a penalty kick	.69	.03
players that are slightly injured are allowed to play if it is an important game	.57	-.07
winning is what it's all about	.56	.33
it would be more difficult ... to win if we kept strictly to the rules	.53	-.12
a player have the right to criticise the ref's decision if S/he feels that the decision is wrong	.49	-.13
to follow and respect the rules of the game is most important	-.32	.66

We don't play more unjust than normally if the ref should allow it (or seem to be uncertain)	.35	.60
[we] rather lose the game than win the game in an unjust way	-.15	.54
<i>Eigenvalue</i>	3.06	1.22

Looking at the rule factor, we see that the item formulating the democratic orientation most succinctly – that respecting and following the rules of the game is what is most important in our team – also loads the factor most strongly. Yet differences of the factor loadings are smaller for this factor, as well as the magnitude of the loadings.

Perhaps more interesting is that the two items that most succinctly, as we put it in the first analysis, formulated the two respective orientations making up the dilemma, both load the opposite factor somewhat (-.32 respectively .33). This could be interpreted as testifying to the presence, or reality, of the dilemma for the young players. These two factors, or orientations, are *difficult to separate*. This becomes easier, the more concrete the winning orientation is formulated.

With two more years of football experience in their body, the value pattern had changed fundamentally, however. As is to be seen in Table 3, at the age of 15, we have to do with three different factors. The question is how this is to be interpreted.

However difficult this may be, what seems clear though is that the dilemma is not as clear cut as at the age of 13. Searching for the democratic orientation, we cannot find any such factor purely. ‘To follow and respect the rules of the game’ does not load any factor here positively in a strong way. This leaves us at best with what we suggest is a factor of *rule ambivalence* (the third factor, with the smallest eigenvalue) combining ‘winning is what it’s all about’ with ‘we don’t play more unjust than normally if the ref. should allow it’. In a sense, this factor fuses the opposites of the dilemma. Besides this, we have to do with two factors, both of which articulate the willingness to win.

Table 3. Factor analysis of the dilemma set at the age of 15

<i>In my team...</i>	Instrumental winning	Principal winning	Rule am- bivalence
it would be more difficult ... to win if we kept strictly to the rules	.77	.06	-.03
a player have the right to criticise the ref's decision if S/he feels that the decision is wrong	.67	-.06	.20
players that are slightly injured are allowed to play if it is an important game	.59	.17	-.08
OK to break the rules to stop a skilful opponent	.51	.47	.42
OK to "fake" to receive a free kick or a penalty kick	.50	.33	.32
[we] rather lose the game than win the game in an unjust way	.08	-.86	-.09
to follow and respect the rules of the game is most important	-.26	-.59	.25
would [we] rather win the game than play strictly to the rules	.54	.54	.24
We don't play more unjust than normally if the ref should allow it (or seem to be uncertain)	-.04	-.23	.73
winning is what it's all about	.18	.27	.66
	<i>Eigenvalue</i>		
	3.30	1.26	1.06

Yet, given the logic of factor analysis, there must be a difference here. How to interpret it? The first factor seems quite understandable as it discursively have to do with difficulties to win that *could be overcome by not following the rules strictly*, particularly when facing a stronger opponent, letting slightly injured players play if that is necessary to win, faking to get a free kick or a penalty, and letting players criticise the referees arbitrations if s/he finds that right.

The second, much weaker winning factor (eigenvalue 1.26 compared to 3.30) is yet much more tricky. First of all, it is loaded by we 'would rather win the game than play strictly to the rules' as strong as the first factor is. Precisely here, the two winning factors fuse. Now, the other two items loading factor 2 do this negatively. Thus we have to interpret the second winning factor *by negating* these two items. The question is what sense the negation of '[we] rather lose the game than win the game in an unjust way' does make. Moreover, this loading is the strongest of all. And it loads negatively, as does 'to follow and respect the rules is the most important'. As this item, loading the factor negatively, is just the opposite of the winning orientation, we want to stick to an interpretation along the lines of the former item. If the first winning factor is about overcoming obstacles to win by not strictly following the rules, the orientation it demonstrates is instrumental. Thus we call it the *instrumental winning* factor. An opposite orientation, but of a winning kind, cannot be

instrumental, that is adapted to the circumstances, as the first factor is. Thus, we propose that this winning factor is of *a principal kind*.³

If the instrumental winning orientation is opportunistic, adapting to the circumstances, it is at the same time more sensible to the requirements of the rules. In other words, it makes the compromises with the rules that still make it possible to win. The principal winning orientation, on the other, in its dedication to win, rather dismisses the rules. Thus, they resolve the dilemma in different ways, one in a more practical, one in a more principal, way.

This dilemma is about finding a reasonable value-orientation in handling the requirements of the field. For our young players, however we interpret it, this dilemma, or rather its resolution, is fundamentally repatterned in three seasons. Yet, as our first analysis reminds us, the democratic orientation, in terms of the agreements it meets among the players, still matches the willingness to win, in both its forms, at the age of 15.

Variations to the dilemma resolution

So far we have seen, first, that the resolution of the dilemma by growing experience of the field implies a growing relative importance of the competitiveness orientation, and second, an increasing complexity of the dilemma. In this section, we take the analysis one step further by looking at resolutions to the dilemma on a more disaggregate level.

At the age of 13, and then at the age of 15, we will see what difference gender, ethnicity and the clubs position in the series system make to the dilemma resolution. *Gender* and ethnicity are both used here as binaries. For the *ethnicity* variable this means that we have distinguished player's with a Swedish background from those without such a background. Of course, this is a very crude measure, but our intention is not to interpret any differences here as grounded in this difference per se, but as an effect of power relations in the football field and in social space more generally. If we may expect the girls to show a less competitive resolution of the dilemma than the boys, an ethnicity hypothesis is more difficult to formulate. On the one hand, given the discriminatory tendency of the power relations at hand, players of a Swedish background perhaps do not have to prove their ability all the time, the consequence of which would be a less strong winner orientation. On the other hand, and given the same reasons, players of a non-Swedish background, could be

³ This differentiation into two winning factors/orientations parallels Weber's distinction between instrumental rationality and value rationality, or, more interesting here, between an ethic of responsibility and an ethic of conviction. Further see, Schluchter (1991: Part II).

expected to adapt more strongly to the democratic orientation *not* to be criticised for being brutal, sticking to a Jesuit moral, and similar accusations, be they outspoken or not. However, if this is a reasonable argument, what seems true is that the dilemma is *more of a dilemma* to the non-Swedish players. The *club's position* hypothesis is easier to formulate. Thus, we may expect boys and girls, playing for any of the elite clubs – that is clubs with male, respectively female, senior teams in the two top divisions – to show a stronger elitism, and thus also a stronger will to win.

At least for our first year of observation, these hypotheses seem relevant. Given the more complex results of the factor analysis at the age of 15, we do not propose any specific hypotheses here, as the theoretical purpose with the battery used was just to measure a simple dilemma. Nevertheless, we have for both observation years constructed *an index variable based upon each identified factor* – named consequently. The index variable is constructed as an additive index.⁴ It is what difference gender, ethnicity and the clubs position in the series system make to this variable we are now turning to.

At the age of 13 – and this is a most interesting finding – no differences are observable when it comes to *the rule factor*. This testifies to the importance of the democratic orientation, to *a significant consensus* in this orientation. In other words, at this age, the dilemma is primarily resolved by *differently emphasising the winner factor*.⁵

In deed, we can observe a significant effect for each of our three variables.⁶ First of all, there is a *gender effect* here ($p \leq .000$). Unsurprisingly, it goes in the expected direction: among the boys, it is more important to win. Turning now to the *ethnic effect* ($p \leq .001$), the winner factor, or orientation, is stronger among the non-Swedes than among the Swedes. Yet, the interpretation here is difficult to make without lapsing into ideology. For example, if we recognise the gender difference as a lack of sporting spirit among the girls, why not say the same for the Swedes more generally. To move beyond the stereotypes and their inversions, we think it is crucial to understand these different outcomes as different resolutions to the dilemma in question. Thus, the basic question is the gender and ethnic implications of this dilemma.

Finally, the effect of the *club's position* upon the winner orientation among the young players is the expected ($p \leq .05$). And this shall come as no surprise, since there are many

⁴ Items loading the factor negatively has been inverted.

⁵ Given that the factor analysis identifies a specific rule factor, of course there is a certain variance here that is possible to explain, though not with the variables used in this analysis.

⁶ Measured by a simple chi-square test. (But it remains to control for the effect of the other two variables for each analysis. We know, for example, that non-Swedes are overrepresented in the elite teams, as well as among the boys.)

clues that tell about elitism being quite common at this level though also smaller clubs may be ‘ambitious’ in this sense. But, if these clues together make up a false picture, the stronger winner factor among the elite clubs’ young players could equally well depend upon a selection effect.

At the age of fifteen, things become more intriguing as we now have to do with three different factors, or orientations, that together resolve the democracy-competitiveness dilemma for different players in specific ways. Suffice it here, however, to look at them one by one.

Moving first to the *instrumental winner factor*, once again, *gender* makes a difference ($p \leq .000$) and in the expected direction. Thus, an instrumental winner orientation is more common among the boys than among the girls. More interesting perhaps is that neither ethnicity, nor the club’s position, do make any difference here ($p = .700$ respectively $p = .806$).

Looking then at the *principal winner factor*, *gender* once again make a difference (though at a lower significance level, $p \leq .050$). The question then becomes which difference among the boys that for make this outcome – a question we do not have the space to delve into here. However, also *ethnicity* makes a difference here ($p \leq .050$): the principal winner orientation is more common among the Swedish, than among the non-Swedish, players at this age. Most probably, this is an ethnic difference between boys. Finally, the club’s position does almost make a difference here ($p = .053$). The direction of the connection is interesting: the principal winning orientation is less common among the elite clubs’ players; the winning orientation in the elite clubs thus seems to be of a more pragmatic – tactical – kind.

In terms of our hypotheses above, most difficult to interpret is of course the *ambivalent rule factor* – perhaps it represents the dilemma as such. However, one result here seems interpretable and that pertains to *gender* ($p \leq .000$). That is, the girls seem to be less ambivalent than the boys, which seem plausible given their less pronounced willingness to win however we chose to measure this willingness. In other words, for them the dilemma is *not so acute* as for the boys. Ethnicity does not have any effect here ($p = .174$), while the *club’s position* in the series system does. Given the tendency for a principal winning orientation in the lower regions of the series system, we should perhaps not be surprised by finding this rule ambivalence a more salient feature in the elite clubs ($p \leq .050$).

Undemocratic sporting spill over?

All of these observations pertain to the trajectory of the young players *within the field* as they grow older, that is, are growing in experience, or in the words of Bourdieu, as they are incorporating more and more of the doxa of the field into their sport habitus, enhancing their feel for the game, and thus expanding their sport capital. Time now has come to widen the horizon, looking at the world outside sport. Particularly the strong critique of sport argues that sport is morally bad because of its competitiveness, resulting in selfishness and disrespect for other people – in contradiction to the ideals of democracy. Much is to be said about this (cf. Arnold 1997, 34ff for a practice oriented defense). But let us here concentrate on just one but crucial question here. The question we will try to answer is if there are any *negative spill-over effects*. In other words, does the observed resolution of the dilemma result in the weakening of democratic values more generally among young football players?

Without being able to isolate such spill-over effects, our longitudinal data nevertheless makes possible some kind of relevant answer. That is, it is possible for us to show that such spill-over effects, if they exist, are not strong enough to contain the development of democratic values among young football players in their critical years.

We will do this by analyzing answers to two more general questions about democracy. One is about respect for *equality*, about the right for all to participate; the other is about *involvement* in democratic values. Both questions were put to the respondents by this introductory question: ‘How well does the following statement fit your own opinion?’ The first question – measuring what may be called the *ethnic discriminatory disposition* – then states: ‘Persons belonging to specific immigrant groups or religions are not to have weighty jobs in Sweden,’ while the second – about the *democratic involvement disposition* – questions states: ‘So many people vote in the parliamentary elections so that my choice doesn’t matter.’ Both were measured by a five-graded scale varying between ‘fitting very well’ and ‘fitting bad’. In Table 4 we see how the answer on these question change from the age of thirteen to the age of fifteen. The badder the fit, the more democratic the disposition, or to put it in other words, a positive democratic development is observable when the bad fits increase their share, and/or the well fits diminish their share. On both items, both types of indications of a positive democratic development among the football youth is observable. Thus, this holds for both the ethnic discriminatory disposition and for the democratic involvement disposition. Consequently, we *cannot prove any undemocratic spill-over effects*.

Table 4. Democratic values by age at thirteen respectively fifteen (%)

Statement below fits	Age	'very well'	'relatively well'	'neither well nor bad'	'relatively bad'	'bad'	
Persons belonging to specific immigrant groups or religions are not to have weighty jobs in Sweden	13	3	7	18	13	60	100 % (n = 787)
	15	3	3	11	12	71	100 % (n = 516)
So many people vote in the parliamentary elections so that my choice doesn't matter	13	7	12	39	16	26	100% (n = 773)
	15	8	9	31	18	35	100% (n = 512)

To be more precise, parallel to the young players being more competitiveness oriented, they are also gaining in democratic dispositions. Most probably too, however, is that the latter effect cannot be traced to the football practice; on the other hand, the habitus developed by this very practice *cannot be said to inhibit any democratic virtues*. Moreover, the dispositions developed by the football practice are relevant primarily in the football field; being contained there, they, thus, do not imply any general democracy-competitiveness dilemma for the young players. The dilemma belongs to football-field practice. To sum up, the double development observed is literally a parallel one.

Finally, let us delve into any differences here in terms of gender, ethnicity and position in the series system, working with simple means for each category.⁷ Looking first at the *ethnic discriminatory disposition*, a widening gender difference is discernible (from 0,29 to 0,44).⁸ But remember the positive over all development – also for the boys. Given what we already know about the gender differences in the material it shall come as no surprise that more girls than boys hold a democratic disposition here. More interesting is that we are unable to disclose any ethnic difference on this issue. Also when it comes to position in the series system, no difference is observable, corroborating that these values do not emanate from within the field, even though the presence of many ‘non-Swedes’ there perhaps may make discriminatory dispositions more difficult.

⁷ In principle, this is to suppose our ordinal scale having interval scale properties. Even if this supposition is untenable, we nevertheless hold our results to be approximately safe.

⁸ All differences discussed here, and further on in this section, are significant – measured by an independent samples t-test.

Turning then to the democratic involvement disposition, given the overall positive development, once again we have to do with a gender difference. But on this issue, it is not widening, but slightly diminishing (from 0,36 to 0,31). In terms of ethnicity, no differences at all are observable, but rather a perfect zero-connection. Nor when it comes to position in the series system are there any pertinent differences. In short, if there are any differences in democratic dispositions, they have to do with gender.

Conclusions

We have assumed that learning to handle the democracy-competitiveness dilemma is *a process* over time, by way of gradually incorporating an understanding for the rules of the game and a practical way of them. Our results seem to corroborate this assumption. Consequently, learning the doxa of the field implies a double learning process of *simultaneously* following the rules and trying to win to tackle the demands of the field. Thus the dilemma is increasingly solved in and through practice; yet practice takes time. In short, the doxa provides if not a principal so a practical solution of the dilemma. Sport is a practical, not a philosophical matter.

Although our data only covers three (consecutive) seasons, the empirical material supports this interpretation, with some important variations. We have seen how the balancing of the democracy-competitiveness dilemma change significantly with growing experience of the football practice; in short, competitiveness seems becoming more important at the cost of the democratic orientation, though the democratic orientation still is stronger than the willingness to win. Then, we were able to see that this changing resolution of the dilemma very much goes in the direction of when and how to compromise the rules, but also, and perhaps more interesting, that the will to win is about opportunities, a practical matter, in the sense of still being within the rules but ready to compromise them, and not against the rules, though it was possible to disclose a principal winning orientation too. Thereafter we looked for variations among the young players relating to gender, ethnicity and the club's position in the series system. Most obviously, there is a stable gender difference over time in the material, the girls showing a less pronounced willingness to win than the boys do. Moreover, at the age of thirteen, players in the elite clubs did show a more common willingness to win, as did players with a non-Swedish background. At the age of fifteen, besides the relatively stable gender difference, we can recognize a change in the relation between ethnicity and the will to win: the principal winning orientation being more

common among the Swedes. So it is also for players not belonging to the elite clubs. If the instrumental winning orientation is in line with the field's doxa – which is our suspicion⁹ – these observations are definitely interesting. If it is so, and given the result of the second factor analysis, we can also bracket the ambivalent rule factor with the doxa: rule ambivalence is more common among player's from the elite clubs as it is among the boys.

Finally we posed the question if the observed resolution of the dilemma results in the weakening of democratic values more generally among young football players. Our results says that it is not so. Parallel to the young players being more oriented towards competitiveness, they are also gaining in democratic dispositions.

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⁹ Several arguments for this can be made though this time is not the right time for us do demonstrate this since it presupposes a reconstruction of the Swedish football field.