



INTERNSHIP REPORT

'Holland no abi tifi maar ai beti':

(Holland does not have teeth, but she does bite)

Sport heroes and the sense of
belonging of young adult
Surinamese and Dutch Caribbean
athletes in the Netherlands

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Summary

Sport is often used in policy as a connector between diverse groups and a promotor of mental and physical health. The Dutch sports sector, especially soccer, is seen as a microcosm that reflects a healthy multi-cultural society. However, many people with ethnically diverse backgrounds are daily confronted with racism, discrimination, and exclusion. This daily racism is evident in all parts of society also in the sports sector. This study will examine how the sense of (non)belonging in sports and sports heroes affects the well-being of young adult, post-colonial athletes. In this study, sports heroes will be used as a narrative construct as they are a source of national belonging that shape perceptions of worth and define inclusion and exclusion criteria. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted with professional young adult athletes of Surinamese and Dutch Caribbean decent. The critical narrative approach was used which empowers participants to articulate their experiences from their unique perspectives. Out of these ten interviews, two fictional first-person constructed stories were written to articulate the narratives of these post-colonial athletes. Furthermore, theories such as Critical Race Theory, Eurocentrism, and transculturalism, are approached as theories that shape social dynamics and discourse. These four theories are connected to a framework of community belonging and well-being consisting of four dimensions: being seen, read, close and heard.

This study's findings show that respondents are confronted with excessive pressure and stress, due to their hypervisibility and feelings of otherness. Professional athletes are always confronted with extensive pressure to perform and high stress levels. However, this specific group is dealing with an extra layer of minority stress, as their efforts to perform up to standard are often diminished. Respondents mentioned that these high stress levels have affected both their mental and physical health, with negative emotions and poor athletic performances as most prevalent outcomes. Additionally, athletes of color are confronted with stereotypes related to sports and their social identities are mainly based on their marginalized groups. Whether respondents feel like they belong or not is met with ambiguity and ambivalence, as it is a constant negotiation influenced by personal experiences and structural factors. Findings show that despite one's formal belonging, most respondents feel like they are guests in the Netherlands due to the daily racism, discrimination, and exclusion. Findings show two groups of sports heroes, the first being the publicly known hero whose narrative is mainly constructed by the media. Respondents mentioned that these heroes were mainly of importance at the beginning of their careers and their admiration was related to their great athleticism. The second group of heroes entails acquaintances who become a hero. These are people that respondents have a personal connection with, such as older teammates, friends, family members or coaches with similar ethnic backgrounds. These heroes play an important role in respondents' professional career and offer a notion of pride, representation and togetherness. In closing, this study's findings conflict with the ideology of Dutch sports being color-blind and meritocratic. Surinamese and Dutch Caribbean, young adult athletes are constantly navigating for places where they belong and feel like they only belong to the Netherlands under specific circumstances. Their formal belonging is not complimentary to their experienced belonging as their experienced belonging mainly depends on the dominant ethnocultural group.

1. Introduction

'Dirty, nasty black guy go back to your own country!', were the words howled at Humprey Mijns in 1960. Born in Surinam, Mijns was the first black soccer player to wear the Dutch jersey. Twenty years later, soccer players such as Ruid Guilit and Frank Rijkaard, who are born and raised in the Netherlands, were confronted with similar racial slurs and jungle noises. At the 1996 European Championship, black soccer players such as Patrick Kluivert, Edgar Davids and Clarence Seedorf were paid less than their Euro-Dutch teammates such as Danny Blind and Frank de Boer. Fast forward to 2019, a professional soccer game was halted as Ahmad Mendes Moreira got racial slurs thrown at him during a game in Den Bosch. Sport, especially soccer is often seen as a reflection of society, and a place where people with ethnically diverser backgrounds come together in harmony. However, the above-mentioned examples raise the question how these instances relate to the sense of belonging and well-being of those involved. Therefore, this research will delve into the intersection of identity, culture, belonging, and well-being by analysing the narratives of ten young adult professional athletes of Surinamese and Dutch Caribbean decent.

1.1 Re/Presenting Europe

This research is part of Work Package 3 (WP3) of the NWO project Re/Presenting Europe: Popular Representations of Diversity and Belonging. WP3-Arenas of Belonging: Sports heroes as models of aspiration, inspiration, and participation, focuses on how sports heroes play a role in the building and strengthening of identities. This work package studies how dominant and popular representations of sports heroes, function as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the Netherlands. The Dutch colonial era is often described as the golden age, a time characterized by wealth, art and academics and the VOC (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie) (Nijhof, 2013). However, a much darker side to colonialism often remains undiscussed such as the fundamental role of the Dutch in the transatlantic slave trade and the traces this has left in today's society. Enslaved men, women, and children were forcibly transported to Dutch colonies such as Suriname and the Dutch Caribbean islands (Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, Sint Maarten, and Sint Eustatius), where they were subjected to forced labor (Van Welie, 2008). For the scope of this research, we will refer to post-colonial descendants as people with roots in Suriname and the ABC-SSS islands, excluding descendants from other Dutch colonies such as Indonesia and South- Africa.

1.2 After-effects of colonialism

The murder of George Floyd in the United States in 2020, sparked a racial justice protest that sparked a global reckoning of racism. In the Netherlands, this tragic event catalyzed a long-overdue conversation about white prejudice, segregation, and ethnic inequality. It underscored the reality that racism, sexism, exclusion, and discrimination persist as urgent societal issues that demand immediate attention. Philomena Essed's book "Alledaags Racisme," published in 1984, talks about the discrimination and racism that people of color (POC) in the Netherlands must endure (Essed, 1984). Despite the passage of time, these struggles remain ingrained in today's society. Organizations such as Kick Out Zwarte Piet (KOZP), The Black Archives, and Nederland wordt Beter exemplify the ongoing efforts to combat racism in the Netherlands. Effects of European colonialism still linger in several systems such as the economy, healthcare, education, and sports systems (MacQueen, 2007). These aftereffects are also present on an individual level which are seen in the forms of (interpersonal) discrimination and feelings of inferiority (Anjay, 2023). In addition, research by Van Sterkenburg and Knoppers (2012) shows how racialized ethnic disparities in society are visible in Dutch sports culture. Although the Dutch sports community is often seen as a great example of diversity and inclusion, research by the Mulier Instituut has shown that 25% of paid soccer players with a migration background, were confronted with racism (Cremers & Elling 2021). It is of great importance to address the complex

societal disparities that post-colonial descendants endure, therefore this research will mainly focus on the impact of these disparities in sports culture. Understanding ethnic differences within the Dutch sports community entails not only quantifying the presence of ethnic minorities but also exploring how colonial legacies have influenced their identities and sense of belonging within Dutch sports culture.

1.3 Problem statement

This research will investigate the sense of belonging among post-colonial descendants in the Netherlands. Sense of belonging, as demonstrated by various studies, plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's social well-being (MacDonald & Leary, 2005; Karaman & Tarim, 2018). The connection between sports, sense of belonging, and well-being underscores the need to investigate how these factors intersect, particularly among young adult sports participants of post-colonial descent in the Netherlands. Post-colonial descendants hold a unique position in Dutch society as the colonial past has structured the societal and cultural discourse. By examining how young adults' participation in sports affects their social well-being and self-perception, we can better understand the impact of colonial legacies on their well-being. While previous research has highlighted the importance of social interactions over athletic achievements in fostering a sense of belonging (Burrmann et al., 2017), there is a gap in understanding how sports heroes, as influential narrative structures, shape the self-perception and well-being of young athletes in this demographic. This research will focus on young adults, aged 18 to 25, as this is a crucial age for finding one's identity and position within society (Pfeifer & Berkman, 2018).

1.3.1 Research Objective:

This research will analyze the sense of belonging and well-being of young adult sports participants of Surinamese and Dutch Caribbean descent in the Netherlands. By analyzing their experiences with belonging and the role of sports heroes in the building and strengthening of their identities. The focus will be on understanding the narratives of post-colonial descendants and analyzing the role of sports heroes in their experiences of belonging in the Netherlands. This research seeks to address the following research question:

How do sports heroes contribute to the sense of belonging among post-colonial athletes between the ages of 18 and 25 in the Netherlands?

2. Background

2.1 Contextual background

This chapter will explain this study's concepts, theories, and conceptual framework. First, relevant concepts such as migration, well-being, the Dutch sports community, and sports heroes will be described to provide the context of this research.

2.1.1 Migration

To grasp the complexity of post-colonial descendants in the Netherlands, it is important to dive deeper into their background and societal position. In 2023 it was estimated that 20% of the Dutch population had a migrant background (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2023). The five main migration groups are people who migrated from Morocco, Turkey, Suriname, Indonesia, and the Dutch Caribbean, also referred to as the 'classical' migrant groups (Van Der Star et al., 2021). This research will mainly focus on the descendants from Suriname and the Dutch Caribbean kingdom, also referred to as Antilleans. The current Dutch Caribbean islands are Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba, and are considered public bodies of the Netherlands. Curaçao, Aruba, and Sint Maarten are considered part of the Caribbean Dutch kingdom (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2024). The historical ties between the Netherlands and these regions have led to significant migration waves, notably sparked by economic shifts such as the closure of Shell refineries in the Dutch Caribbean in 1985, resulting in heightened poverty and unemployment (Oostindie, 2008). The biggest group of Surinamese people migrated during the 1970s shortly before Suriname reached its independence from the Netherlands in 1975 (Vezzoli, 2014). Most of the Surinamese and Dutch Caribbean people in the Netherlands today are considered second-generation migrants, as seen in Figure 1. One is considered a first-generation migrant when they are born abroad, and a second-generation migrant when one or both parents were born abroad.

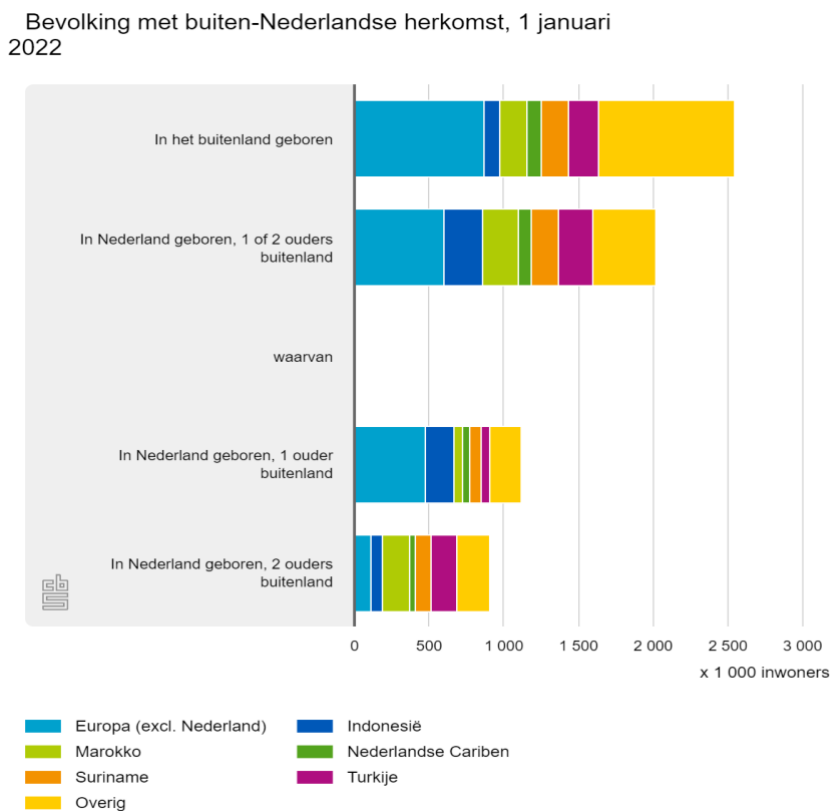


Figure 1: Provides an overview of migrants living in the Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2023)

Migration is marked by multiple hardships, such as socioeconomic challenges and stressors during and after migration. Examples of these stressors include educational mismatches and unemployment, often due to racism and discrimination (Falcke et al., 2020). These stressors can be on a macro level, as is the case with inequitable hiring or housing policy, and a micro level which has to do with personal adjustments such as language barriers or adjusting to a new culture (Shea & Wong, 2022). Both first and second-generation migrants tend to struggle with belonging as they are both constantly confronted with the fact that they are ethnic minorities in Western society (Kate et al., 2020). Studies on migrant populations often underscore the heightened levels of psychosocial stress experienced due to their minority status and socio-economic disadvantages. The intersectionality of these factors creates complex challenges that migrants navigate daily. Research by Veling et al. (2007) highlights the pervasive nature of these stressors, emphasizing their impact on mental health and overall quality of life. Furthermore, generational trauma has left many traces throughout migrant populations and stem from the historical injustices, violence, exploitation, and cultural suppression inflicted upon their ancestors during the colonial past (Lloyd, 2000). These stressors and hardships can not only influence how a person feels internally but also how accepted they feel in a new community, which ultimately influences their well-being.

2.1.2 Well-being

In this study, belonging will be approached as 'feeling at home' within Dutch society. Sense of belonging is a vital mental health concept and refers to the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that an individual feels like an integral part of that system or environment (Hagerty et al., 1992). Sport is often used as a policy tool to increase a sense of belonging as it builds social support and identity building (Aggerholm & Breivik, 2020). Participating in a sport can not only increase face-to-face contact but also the sense of belonging to a local community, and is therefore often seen as a connector within society (Walseth, 2006). The concept of (Dutch) identity and belonging is influenced by racialization and discrimination, resulting in the exclusion of individuals based on visible differences such as skin color, language or ethnic background (Landvreugd, 2016; M'charek et al., 2013). Due to this racism, discrimination, and sense of non-belonging, POC, particularly black people, face ongoing questioning of their Dutchness (De Witte, 2019). Social well-being encompasses the maintenance of healthy relationships and engaging in meaningful, genuine interactions with others and is a key component of mental health (Boston University Student Wellbeing, 2024; Keyes, 1998). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and can contribute to their community (WHO, 2024.) Therefore, to understand an individual's optimal functioning and mental well-being, it is important to understand one's social well-being (Larson, 1993). This study will not only investigate the sense of belonging of post-colonial descendants but also look at how the sense of (non)belonging influences their (social) well-being.

This study relates to the social determinants of health (SDH), which are the non-medical variables affecting health outcomes. These are the environments in which people are born, develop, work, live, and age as well as the larger group of systems and factors that shape day-to-day living circumstances. These determinants can influence health equity in both positive and negative ways. Examples of the SDH are education, income, social protection, food insecurity, working life conditions, and social inclusion and discrimination (Social Determinants of Health (WHO), 2010). Being a member of a marginalized ethnic group has an impact on an individual's position, opportunities, and trajectory throughout their life due to racism, discrimination, and exclusion. When compared to members of more privileged groups or the general population, the health status and results of oppressed ethnic groups are generally drastically lower (Williams et al., 2019). The issue between racism and health has multiple components such as: the benefits

of the superior groups at the expense of the inferior group, racializing biology to produce and justify the demarcation of ethnic groups, social trauma, inadequate medical care, and health-harming responses to discrimination (Krieger, 2012). There is a growing acceptance by researchers and practitioners that they must include the social determinants of health in their daily practices as they are highly consequential for well-being.

2.1.3 Belonging to the Dutch sports community

Sports have played a pivotal role in improving social belonging and integration in multicultural societies (Breedveld, 2003; Elling, 2001). Particularly in team sports, such as soccer, we see that multiple ethnicities come together in the Netherlands. This creates a social discourse where social connection and distinction come into play. Distinctly in male soccer, it is evident that people not only identify themselves with specific players based on their ethnicity and nationality but also with their playing styles and clubs (Cronin & Mayall, 1999; Janssens & Elling, 2005). Research showed that 40% of Dutch first-division (male) soccer players come from an ethnically diverse background (Peeters & Van Sterkenburg, 2017). An article by the KNVB (Koninklijke Nederlandse Voetbalbond), states that the Dutch national team is a great example of the way that ethnically diverse players successfully work together. However, the complexity of belonging is prominent in choosing who people identify with or look up to, and when we look at professional athletes' decision-making regarding which team or club they belong to. In general, higher-level athletes identify with each other solely based on their sport despite their social differences ('we are all soccer players'). Additionally, not because 40% of male soccer players have an ethnically diverse background, this means that these players are all socially included.

Instances of racism in professional and amateur levels of sports have frequently garnered national media attention, often stemming from incidents where supporters direct racial slurs toward players, as previously introduced (Hart van Nederland, 2022; NPO, 2019). Such incidents serve as a reminder of racism and discrimination in all levels and fields of sports, and the importance of actions and measures against discrimination. An incident in 2019, where racial slurs were used against soccer player Ahmad Mendes Moreira during a professional soccer game, reached national media attention (Van Der Horst, 2020). This incident can be seen as a 'wake-up call' for the Ministries of Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport (VWS), Justitie en Veiligheid (JenV) en Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid (SZW), together with the KNVB to initiate an action plan against racism and discrimination in soccer, called *Ons Voetbal is voor iedereen* (OVIVI, our soccer is for everyone) (Elling et al., 2021). Considering that the National Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination, launched in 2016, did not explicitly mention the sports culture (Plasterk, 2016). The core of the OVIVI action plan is to implement measures for prevention, identification, and sanctions against racism and discrimination to enhance social inclusion and diversity. The title of the action plan, *Our Soccer is for Everyone*, shows that it is imperative to state the universality of sports participation.



Figure 2: Georginio Wijnaldum and Frenkie de Jong make a statement against racism at the European Championships in 2019 (NOS, 2019)

It is important to emphasize the intersectionality of women of color in the Netherlands. In sports, they frequently experience social isolation and stress as they are often the only woman of color or one of few in their sports (Hall, 2001). The intersectionality of being an ethnically diverse woman in sports comes with many challenges such as cultural biases, lack of understanding, a lack of resources, unequal pay, racial injustice, and in some cases even gender-based violence (Carter-Francique & Flowers, 2013; Arnaut et al., 2016). Women are often offered a second place on the agenda when it comes to participation, inclusion, and belonging (Elling, 2015). Hall (2001) illustrates that sport is, like every aspect of culture, impacted by societal norms. In this microcosm, women of color are faced with racism and sexism based on their ethnicity and gender. At any level of the community, all people should be afforded equal treatment, and there should be space for individuals to express themselves on both mundane and controversial issues. However, there is an unwritten rule in sports that players, especially those of color, should leave their political and social opinions off the field (Peterson, 2009). When athletes do choose to voice controversial viewpoints, they often face repercussions and backlash (Kaufman & Wolff, 2010). In 2022, four Dutch hockey players shared their experience with racism due to an incident during play-offs where a white player made racial slurs toward another player of color. All players mentioned that they experienced racism in different ways, differing from racist jokes to name-calling. They all mentioned that they would rather not speak up about racism, especially not to their Euro-Dutch teammates as they often feel vulnerable or unheard (NOS,2022).

2.1.4 Sports Heroes

A sports hero can be any person who inspires someone to engage in a sport and can be a valuable source of national belonging and community building. They represent social ideologies and create specific perceptions of value (Crepeau, 1981). Sports heroes have constructed characters that go beyond the individual athlete's character, embodying social ideologies and fundamental (national) values (Parry, 2020; Crepeau,1981). Therefore, sports heroes shape perceptions of worth and define inclusion and exclusion theories within communities. Sports heroes can also be used as a token for common values and the construction of a common identity as an important part of community building (Crang et al., 1996). These narratives around heroes play an important part in creating the feeling of belonging within a community as they often embody the values and ideals the nation aspires to uphold (Dumitriu, 2018). The distinction between winners and

losers, from hero to zero, struggle, resilience, and victory are all attributes that form a basis for constructing the boundaries of community belonging. Dumitriu (2018) argues that sports heroes are a mirror of national identity that fuels the sense of national pride and togetherness. They are a tool to construct and reinforce the myths a nation has of itself. It is mainly through the media that the narrative of publicly known sports heroes is spread and that athletes become larger than their physical abilities. Their heroism is not only based on athletic skills and performance but often on their appearance, vocal advocacy, alignment with shared values, etc. (Lundby, 2009; Hepp & Hasebrink, 2017; Baoill, 2007). Sports heroes become a global example or ideal character for people to identify with and are often a benchmark for new generations (Bifulco & Tirino, 2018).

Hall (2020) states that sports heroes should not be seen as inherent saviors or beacons of social justice but defined as narratives that play a role in processes of belonging and exclusion. In 1999, research was conducted on sports heroes among Dutch youth, which stated that the African American basketball player Michael Jordan was generally most prominent, and Afro-Surinamese soccer player Edgar Davids was specifically most prominent among white youth (Elling, 2002). This example illustrates how public sports heroes are bigger than their own personality and constructed by the media; basketball is a relatively small sport in the Netherlands, and white youth found their hero in a black, Surinamese soccer player with dreadlocks. Sports have become a popular culture due to the increase in the social value of sports as they carry very strong images, have a mass international audience, and appeal to all classes (Dumitriu, 2018). Throughout history, the concept of 'heroes', has been shaped to be white men who have performed great deeds for their countries. Henceforward, sports heroes have developed to be examples for the younger generation and can even be seen as celebrities (Lines, 2001). However, female heroes are still less prevalent due to the stereotype of women being less eligible for sports and the masculine connotation of athleticism. Women of color often go unnoticed as Dutch sports heroes, despite their performances as exceptional athletes. An example is Enith Brigita, the first black swimmer to win an Olympic medal in that sport. After moving from Curaçao to the Netherlands in the 1970s, Brigita became one of the most prominent swimmers at the time. She was the top swimmer in the Netherlands for 7 years in a row and she won 21 Dutch swimming titles. Brigita was recognized as a Dutch sports hero in 2022 after local crowdfunding initiated the inauguration of a monument of her (Sexton, 2017).

2.2 Theoretical background

After contextualising this study, this section delves into the theories supporting this research. In this study theories such as Critical Race Theory, Eurocentrism, and transculturalism, will be approached as theories that shape social dynamics and discourse. The first section will focus on the Critical Race Theory and Eurocentrism, which are some of the theories in which today's social and racial discourses are imbedded. The second theory that will be discussed is transculturalism which emphasizes the interconnections between cultures. Finally, the media discourse, in which the narratives around sports heroes are shaped, will be explained.

2.2.1 Critical Race Theory & Eurocentrism

One of the theories to consider when researching the belonging of post-colonial descendants is the Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT is a theoretical framework that aims to understand how racial, and historical context influences our modern society (Bush, 2021; Fernander, 2022). CRT explains the concept of race not based on biological differences, but rather as an enforced racial hierarchy (Fernander, 2022). This theory aims to highlight how racial ideologies are still present in supposed race-neutral policies and how these policies are influenced by structural racism (Parker, 2015; Borrell, 2018). Rather than stating just the disparities between groups, attention is drawn to interpersonal and structural racism which explains disparities between post-

colonial descendants and the Euro-Dutch (Borrell, 2018). This racial hierarchy can still be seen in modern society, for example, post-colonial descendants have lower chances of being admitted to high-quality schools and receive lower school recommendations compared to their Euro-Dutch peers (Badou & Day, 2021). Badou and Day (2021) explain that due to inequality in opportunity in higher education, ethnic minorities are estimated at a lower educational level compared to their white peers. These inequalities stem from the assumption and bias that POC lack academic proficiency (Defence for Children, 2020). This hierarchical thinking of ethnic minorities being less than their white peers is made visible through CRT, which allows us to see that POC are less eligible for high-level functions, and are instead downgraded towards more stereotypical roles, such as careers in entertainment and sports (Sailes, 2017). The Governance Index Report explains the sexist and racist stereotyping that accounts for these disparities, based on feminist theories and CRT (Van Sterkenburg et al., 2023). People of color are often associated with natural physicality and strength or speed, while Euro-Dutch people are associated with notions of leadership, organizational skills, and 'thinking' positions on the field. 40% of professional, male soccer players come from an ethnically diverse background. However, when we look at the trainers and assistant trainers this is only 5%, and only 2% of management positions are POC (Peeters & Van Sterkenburg, 2017). This is an example of the hierarchy that is still prevalent in society in that there are fewer POC in higher-level positions. The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in the field is often associated with the stereotype of women having a lack of independence, ambition, and/or leadership skills compared to men.

Hylton (2010) highlights how black athletes often do not get the same opportunities compared to white athletes in terms of unequal access to opportunities. As well as the assumption that some sports such as boxing, and soccer are more eligible for POC compared to golf or tennis. This underlying racial hierarchy can be linked with another theory called Eurocentrism. Eurocentrism can be explained as how white European norms are seen as superior and normal, while other communities are considered inferior and peculiar (Wintle, 2020). Eurocentrism puts Western Europe as the center of historical, cultural, and intellectual narratives. Eurocentrism leads to the overshadowing and marginalization of the achievements of non-Western contributions. Desmond Watchman, a POC professional hockey player mentioned in an interview with NOS that he often feels 'othered', and that 'You adapt in all kinds of ways to fit the image of a white hockey player' (NOS, 2022). This is a clear example of European norms being seen as the epitome of a civilized society. Eurocentrism has a dual nature: it not only bestows privilege upon Euro-Dutch athletes but also perpetuates the marginalization or undervaluation of ethnically diverse athletes, regardless of their skills and athleticism.

2.2.2 Transculturalism

In the context of migration, finding a sense of belonging is often approached as a linear process. This traditional view often suggests breaking bonds and giving up on ethnic identification in favor of embracing the national identity and values of the host country (Waldinger, 2016). This (historical) linear understanding of migration, identity, and belonging fails to take into consideration the fact that the world is more interconnected and interdependent than this linear thinking allows for and requires active engagement among multiple communities (Kantek et al., 2019; Levitt, 2009). Contrary to these traditional views, studying the sense of belonging should acknowledge the complexity of human connections and the multiple perspectives that come with them (Waldinger, 2016). Therefore, this study will not approach migration and belonging as a linear process, but rather as a concept where the richness that arises from diversity is embraced and used as a powerful tool for identity and community building.

This multidimensional approach is also referred to as transculturalism, which can be understood as combining elements of more than one culture to create a new cultural belonging (Mansouri & Al-Deen, 2023).

Central to transculturalism is the idea that human identity is co-constructed through interactions with diverse cultural perspectives (Welsch, 1999). Every interaction with someone from a different background influences an individual's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that add to the composition of one's identity. Transculturalism is also described as a way of belonging, referring to the practices that express or embody an identity that shows a deliberate bond with a specific group (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Sense of belonging is often based on those aspects of culture with which a person most identifies. This allows people to create a connection between their transcultural space of belonging, which crosses both their countries and their respective cultures (Richter & Nollert, 2014). In this light, Surinamese immigrants living in the Netherlands are not limited to a choice between their Surinamese heritage and the Dutch culture. Instead, they navigate a dynamic cultural environment, drawing from their Surinamese traditions, values, and beliefs while seamlessly integrating aspects of Dutch society. This fusion of cultures is not a one-way street; it enriches both migrant populations and Euro-Dutch individuals, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation. By fostering a space where individuals can decide which aspects of their heritage to carry with them in their host country, we enhance the sense of belonging for migrant populations.

2.2.3 Narratives

This study will embody two types of narratives; the first is the narrative of the respondents and the second is the narrative around publicly known athletes who become heroes. A narrative can be used as a way to communicate morals, and cultural and political perspectives (Elliott, 2005). They are often used as a form of adding meaning to a human experience and can be explained as how we tell a story (Richards, 1989). In our daily lives, we are constantly confronted with narratives of personal and social myths, stories, and fairy tales that explain our actions (Barthes & Duisit, 1975). Crepau (1981) and Parry (2021) highlight that the narrative around a sports hero cannot be separated from the community in which they exist, meaning that they are shaped by their context. This study will investigate narratives of sports heroes, to analyze the sense of belonging of post-colonial descendants in the Dutch context.

The narrative around publicly known sports heroes is often shaped by the media as they play a pivotal role in reproducing ethnic and gender stereotypes. Racialized sports media discourses often associate ethnically diverse athletes with natural athleticism and white athletes with leadership capacity (Bradbury et al., 2020). These media discourses do not only keep these stereotypes alive but also determine the conditions of becoming a national sports hero. Sports heroes are often portrayed through a nationalist lens, suggesting that athletes are only considered Dutch when they meet specific standards. Ethnically diverse athletes are marginalized when they fail to meet these standards. An article by the *Volkskrant* criticized the media for building the narrative around athletes of post-colonial descent as being 'occasionally Dutch' (Mac Donald, 2015). Being occasionally Dutch is described as being a Dutch sports hero on one occasion and a migrant on another occasion, based on athletic performance. An example of an occasional Dutch sports hero is Churandy Martina. A Curaçao-born Dutch sprinter who won 13 Dutch national titles. When it went public that he would represent the Netherlands at the 2015 World Championships, he was referred to as a happy Dutch sprinter. However, when he lost at the finale of that same championship the media described him as the cranky Antillean sprinter (Mac Donald, 2015).

2.3 Conceptual Framework

This study will utilize a framework adapted from the research by Hudson (2015) who presented a conceptual framework for understanding community belonging and well-being based on the experiences of queer individuals and POC. The study presented a framework based on four dimensions: being close, being read,

being seen, and being heard (Hudson, 2015). As this study does not concern queer individuals, table 1 presents an adapted version of the four dimensions and themes to fit this specific study.

Table 1: Dimensions of community belonging and related themes, adapted from Hudson (2003)

Dimension	Themes
Being close	Physical and geographical proximity, migration, sharing resources
Being read	Creating intentional spaces, challenges to authenticity, othering/distancing processes
Being seen	Intersecting identities, shared experiences, self-definition, self-awareness
Being heard	Setting community priorities, developing awareness of privilege and oppression, inaccessible language/discourse

The four dimensions of community belonging- being close, read, seen and heard- are complexly connected to and influenced by the four previously mentioned theories of CRT, Eurocentrism, Transculturalism, and Narratives. As previously mentioned, these four theories shape social dynamics and discourse, therefore impacting how individuals experience and perceive the four dimensions of community belonging, as illustrated in Figure 3.

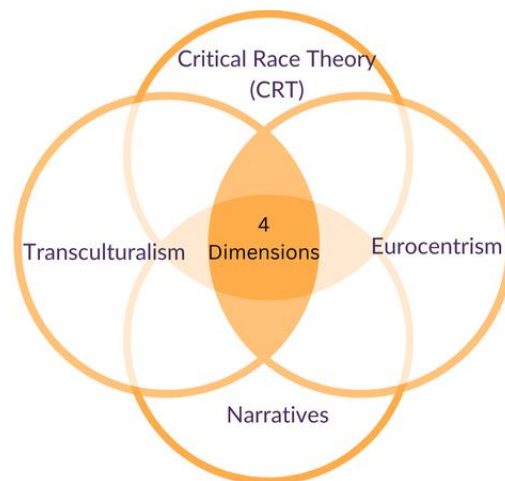


Figure 3: The conceptual model used in this study. In the middle of the Venn-diagram the 4 dimensions are depicted, which are all intertwined with the four theories that dominate our social dynamics and discourse.

Being close speaks to the importance of the feeling of connectedness and the feeling of disconnection from a community. This dimension underscores the significance of connectedness and detachment within communities, elucidating the interplay between physical and geographical proximity, alongside intentional spaces, in shaping communal significance (Hudson, 2015). Physical proximity delineates the actual spatial distance between entities, while geographical proximity underscores their relative positions within a geographical framework, both of which significantly influence individual well-being through the strength and density of social connections (Karaman & Tarim, 2018; Greenfield & Marks, 2010). This dimension emphasizes the diverse factors which contribute to a feeling of (dis)connection and is closely related to the theory of transculturalism which states that one can combine elements of multiple cultures to create a new cultural belonging (Mansouri & Al-Deen, 2023). One can feel close to multiple cultures and communities and, therefore feel like they belong to multiple communities. Transculturalism enables individuals to feel close to the Dutch sports community while still honoring their heritage and following certain cultural values and beliefs. Exploring the dimension of being close allows for an investigation into the extent to which post-colonial sports participants feel connected to Dutch sports communities and the factors influencing this closeness.

Closely related to the dimension of being close is the dimension of being read, which pertains to how others perceive an individual. Being read relates to the experience of being 'othered', based on factors such as ethnicity, gender, or nationality. This dimension relates to the 'What are you?' question which is characterized by personal interactions in and outside the community. Awareness about being read (and reading others) builds a sense of community for individuals in which spaces become intentional and a sense of safety and accountability can be nurtured, therefore increasing opportunities for well-being. As the previously mentioned example about Churandy Martina illustrated individuals may be labeled based on the situation's outcome, as he was 'being read' as the Antillean when he lost and Dutch when he won a game. This dimension will not only analyze how post-colonial descendants are being read but also in what circumstances they are assigned a specific label. Being read is influenced by concepts coming from theoretical frameworks such as Eurocentrism and the CRT, which have historically perpetuated a standard or norm based on a hierarchy among different ethnicities and backgrounds (Ong et al., 1996; Dobbins & Skillings, 1991). Therefore, this dimension will also explore how the labeling of public sports heroes, impacts the identity-building of post-colonial sports participants. To whom does 'our hero' relate and how does this impact one's sense of belonging? How does the way that others read me relate to my sense of belonging?

The dimension of 'being seen' revolves around individuals presenting their complete selves within a community, nurturing a sense of safety and trust in the acknowledgment and acceptance of their entire identities. Being seen does not only relate to recognition and shared identities within groups but also relates to the dimensions of self-determination and self-definition. Self-determination and self-definition emphasize the freedom to self-identify and name one's reality, and to have others honor and respect those identities (Harding & Collins, 2000). This relates to the question of 'Who am I', as the questions people have about their identity are consistently reinforced and negotiated by the representations of sports heroes. Being seen and self-expression also highlights the perceived threats to physical and psychological safety. For example, high levels of discrimination have been associated with poor self-reported mental health (Lindström, 2008). This dimension invites exploration into whether there is space for transculturalism in the Dutch sports community. This dimension also relates to what makes a hero 'my hero' and if someone feels seen and/or represented by that character. It allows space for examination of how Dutch sports culture is not only diverse but also embraces inclusivity. Inclusivity refers to treating everyone fairly and equally and giving all groups equal access to resources (Spaaij et al., 2020).

The final dimension, being heard, delves into how individuals experience acceptance and validation through dialogue. This dimension highlights the power of dialogue and the fulfillment of having a conversation with like-minded individuals (DeTurk, 2006). Being heard can emerge in multiple ways, including the courage to voice opinions, and the simple fulfillment of having meaningful conversations. Nevertheless, this can also relate to language barriers and not having access to resources, which can both be barriers to reaching a sense of belonging within a community. This dimension will further explore the relationship between effective communication, equitable representation of voices, and its impact on social well-being. Colonialism has not only led to POC being viewed and categorized as inferior to their white counterparts but has also instilled a sense of internalized inferiority within marginalized communities (Solorzano et al., 2000). The dimension of 'being heard' will analyze how publicly known sports heroes affect post-colonial athletes (representation) and whether they feel empowered to express themselves.

The study will delve into the existence and prevalence of sports heroes in the post-colonial sports context. Exploring the common values shared between these perceived heroes and the athletes elucidates how these shared values contribute to a sense of belonging within Dutch society. Since these common values can vary greatly and may be influenced by personal perspectives, athletes will be granted the autonomy to define

their sports heroes from their perspective. The aspect of sports heroes is embedded in all four dimensions as the role they play in the narratives of sports participants can be diverse. The diversity of values that may resonate with different individuals, allows for a nuanced understanding of the role of sports heroes in shaping belonging narratives within the post-colonial sports landscape.

2.3.1 Sub-questions

Three sub-questions were formulated based on the conceptual framework and the presented theories. The first sub-question is formulated to study how sports participants give meaning to and experience belonging as this term can be interpreted differently. The second sub-question emphasizes the relationship between belonging and well-being. Finally, the last sub-question will discuss the role of sports heroes in shaping the narratives of post-colonial sports participants. The central research question will be answered based on answering the following sub-questions:

Central research question: *How do sports heroes contribute to the sense of belonging among post-colonial sports participants between the ages of 18 and 25 in the Netherlands?*

Sub-question 1: *How do post-colonial sports participants experience belonging within the Netherlands?*

Sub question 2: *How does the sense of (non)belonging impact the well-being of sports participants between the ages of 18 and 25?*

Sub question 3: *How do young adult sports participants give meaning to sports heroes and how has this developed throughout their lives?*

4. Methodology

4.1 Study design

This study will analyze the role of sports heroes and the sense of belonging of sports participants of post-colonial descent in the Netherlands. The aim is to understand their experiences with belonging which relates to their well-being. As well as investigating the role that sports heroes play in their narrative of being a post-colonial descendant in the Netherlands. For the scope of this research, the focus will be on those descending from Suriname and the Dutch Caribbean. This research will focus on young adults, those between the ages of 18 and 25 years old as this is marked as a transitional life period. While the biological and psychological development of young adults is characterized by this stage, the specific social roles and tasks that are required of young people are dictated by the historical features of the society in question (Bonnie et al., 2015). Therefore, this age group is particularly relevant for understanding the sense of belonging due to the unique developmental, social, and cultural factors that characterize young adulthood.

Inclusion criteria:

- Between the ages of 18 and 25 years old
- Descending from Suriname or the Dutch Caribbean (Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, St Maarten, St Eustatius & Saba)
- Sports participants (participate in sports at least weekly)

4.2 Data collection

Belonging, and assessing whether someone belongs or not, is complex and person dependent. Therefore, this research will use the critical narrative approach to empower participants to articulate their experiences with belonging from their unique perspectives. This approach considers that when a story is told, the storyteller is in charge of how the reality, their experience, and their self-perspective are shaped and constructed (Chase, 2003). This approach relates to the previously described definition of narratives to communicate morals, and cultural and political perspectives as well as a form of adding meaning to a human experience (Elliot, 2005; Barthes & Duisit, 1975). In narrative studies it is important to consider that, what is tellable and concerns the audience is shaped by ethnicity, gender, class, power relations, and sexuality (Pavlenko, 2002). I, the researcher behind this report, am aware of my position as an Afro-Surinamese student born in the Netherlands, and the impact that the social interactions between me and the interviewee can have on the outcome of this study. Therefore, I focused on establishing rapport with the interviewee to foster trust and comfort, facilitating an open and candid exchange of ideas.

For this study, ten in-depth interviews were conducted, and participants were approached through a snowball method. Respondents were approached in writing through an information letter, which stated the aim of the study, what is expected of participants, and the inclusion criteria for participating in the research. An example of the information letter and informed consent can be found in Appendix 9.1 and 9.2. The participants were given the opportunity to contact the main researcher in case of questions and/or doubts and they could refrain from participating in the research at any given time. After agreeing to participate, no one refrained from participation. Two out of ten interviews were conducted online via Teams, the rest were conducted in person. After each interview, the participants were asked if they wanted to receive copy of the transcripts, stories and final report as part of the membercheck. Five out of ten participants requested a copy of their story and had no additional remarks after receiving them.

The ten respondents participated in five different sports and comprised of six female and four male athletes. All participants were professional athletes or played at the highest level at one moment in their careers. Two

of the participants turned 26 during the data collection period yet were still allowed to participate in the research. Five athletes were of Surinamese decent and five of Dutch Caribbean decent, specifically from Curaçao and Aruba. To protect the identity of the participants the names mentioned in this research are fictitious, and a full overview of their characteristics is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Characteristics of the participants

Athlete	Gender	Ethnicity	Sport	Age
1. Sanne	Female	Dutch Caribbean	Track and Field	24
2. Sara	Female	Dutch Caribbean	Soccer	26
3. Kate	Female	Dutch Caribbean	Basketball	24
4. John	Male	Dutch Caribbean	Baseball	26
5. Charles	Male	Dutch Caribbean	Baseball	20
6. Cheryll	Female	Surinamese	Track and Field	22
7. Esther	Female	Surinamese	Track and Field	25
8. Lotte	Female	Surinamese	Volleyball	25
9. Oscar	Male	Surinamese	Soccer	24
10. Thomas	Male	Surinamese	Basketball	23

4.3 Data analysis

The interviews were recorded with an audio recorder provided by the host organization and transcribed by the main researcher using F4Transkript. This research utilized both deductive and inductive coding methodologies, where themes, codes, and categories are respectively pre-selected before the analysis and emerge from the data during analysis (Daniels, 2018). Deductive coding was used to analyze the four dimensions discussed in Chapter 2.3. Inductive coding was used to analyze the perspectives of sports heroes in this process of belonging. Additionally, this research used narrative analysis which is a method for revealing the broader culture that shapes narratives and the underlying beliefs ingrained in the story (Rodriguez, 2016). After analyzing each transcript, a story was written of each participant, in the first-person point of view, as a tool to fully grasp the participants' narrative. This critical narrative approach, also used by Stuij (2021), focusses on social, personal, cultural, and ideological events or phenomena and helps with understanding this on an individual level. Based on the ten individual stories, two constructed stories were written to emphasize the similarities within the stories and share a common narrative.

4.4 Ethical considerations

The main researcher was responsible for obtaining informed consent before initiating the interview. After each interview, the recording was transferred to a secured file on a laptop provided by the host organization and deleted from all other devices. The data was saved to a secured folder with a password and an anonymized name. All data was secured under a code name which did not trace back to the respondent. After completion of the research, the data was archived in a protected folder from the host organization. Participants are anonymous and only the information relevant to the research was used. For this research,

the most important aspects of the participants are their age, gender, ethnicity and sport. A member check was done to ensure that the interviewees agreed with and felt recognition of their quotations and stories, by reflecting on the interview before ending the recording and asking if the participants request a copy of the stories written about them. These stories were a reflection tool and were not used in the final report. These stories were shared with the participants and there were no additional remarks. It was of utmost importance that the respondent and interviewer felt safe during and after the interview. Topics such as sexism, racism, exclusion, and the sense of (non)-belonging could be difficult to talk about and even spark negative feelings and emotions. Attention was paid to this, and empathy and recognition were of great importance while in contact with participants. Aftercare or alteration of the interviews was in no case necessary.

5. Results

5.1 Portraits

Based on the ten individual stories of Surinamese and Dutch Caribbean athletes about their experiences of belonging and sports heroes in the Netherlands, two fictional stories were constructed. These two stories were constructed to compose a general, suitable story, which encompasses many experiences of post-colonial athletes in the Netherlands. The first composed story entails the story of Sandrina, a young Surinamese woman of 23 years, born and raised in the Netherlands, and who is in Track and Field. The second story is the story of Kenley, a baseball player from Curaçao, born in the Netherlands and who has lived in Curaçao from the age of six until nineteen.

Sandrina

19 year old, Surinamese, female

I am a typical Surinamese moksie patoe (mixture), as we call it, because I am Hindustani, Indigenous, Creole, and also Dutch. That's something Dutch people don't understand because here I'm just seen as Surinamese or a foreigner. I was born and raised in the Netherlands and my parents are from Suriname. My parents always thought it was very important that I play a sport so when I finished swimming lessons, I started looking for another sport. Some friends from school were in athletics and asked if I wanted to join. From the very first moment, I loved the sport and I never stopped, although at the moment it is on a lower level. When I started I just liked to do something with my friends but when I started to focus on the short distances and competed in them, I liked it more and more. At one point I became one of the best in the Netherlands and also made the national selection. Although I enjoyed stop sports, I also found it to be very tough mentally.

Belonging

As a second-generation immigrant, I have always felt that I had to prove myself more compared to others. I am often one of the few people of color on the athletic track but I still feel at home. Maybe because, on the one hand, I am used to being the only one. Both inside and outside the sport I notice that there is always more attention being paid to me which makes me feel that I am not allowed to make as many mistakes. I don't feel 100% at home anywhere. Of course, I have friends I feel comfortable with and my family I can always go to, but I also notice that as an athlete it can sometimes be quite lonely. As I got older I also started to realize that there is a stereotype about black people that they are better at sports. I think this also caused me to mentally struggle and suffer from a kind of need to prove myself. I put a lot of pressure on myself so badly that I would sometimes completely shut down and block during competitions. At some point, I went to a sports psychologist and luckily things improved a bit. I believe in equality and respect for everyone and therefore do not think you should treat someone differently or have different expectations of them based on ethnicity or skin color.

Sport heroes:

I would define sports heroes as people who are inspiring because of their athletic accomplishments. I think when I first got into athletics, I always kind of looked up to the older athletes in my group. But then as I got to know them a little better, that also disappeared again. It wasn't until I started competing myself that I started watching athletics and then, of course, Usain Bolt immediately stood out, maybe also because he is so charismatic. I think it's very important as an athlete to do what's right for you but at the same time not forget where you came from. Ronaldinho, Alyson Felix, Simone Biles are all such athletes who have meant something to the sport, and their community but also stayed close to themselves. Around the age of 14, I had a Surinamese coach who taught me a lot and also made sure I got into the national selection. He was the first and also the last coach of color I ever had. It feels like he is the only coach who saw me and did his best for me. Besides that, my family is also very important because they have always supported me by always bringing me to training and matches despite their busy jobs. I don't follow a lot of Dutch sports because I think Dutch athletes of color are often discussed negatively in the media. If they do well for the Netherlands and are beneficial to the image of the Netherlands, then they are Dutch. If this is not the case, then people make monkey noises. This also gives me the feeling that I have to make an extra effort to be accepted, to be considered a real Dutch athlete. As a Surinamese athlete, and of course also as a woman, I always have to do more than others. That constant being on my toes, constantly having to prove myself, and that constant tension, is exhausting and unfair. Why can't I just be good enough?

Kenley

23 year old, Curaçaoan, male

I am Kenley, 23 years old, born in the Netherlands and I am half Dutch and half Curaçaoan. At age 6 I moved to Curaçao, but at 19 I came back to the Netherlands to study. My whole family plays baseball and I wanted to play along with my uncles and cousins from a young age. I started playing in Curacao and the sport was my whole life. Without baseball I was nobody and it was my whole identity, everyone on the island knew me as 'the baseball player'. On Curaçao, there is a great baseball culture and it was my dream to play abroad at a professional level like other boys from the island. In Curaçao, I played at the highest level but unfortunately, I was not scouted to go abroad. When I was 19, I came to the Netherlands to start training. If it had been up to me, I would have just focused entirely on the sport but now I am aware that not every boy gets the opportunity to study abroad. I quickly noticed that in the Netherlands it is very different to play at the highest level and that I constantly had to prove how good I was and belonged to play at that level. That's why I chose to play at a slightly lower level, where my qualities are not constantly put to the test. Now I play for fun and I have been fortunate to find a group with guys who understand me and where I can completely be myself.

Belonging

Whether or not I feel at home somewhere, depends on the people around me. I feel most at home around my family and friends, and on Curaçao of course because that is where I made most of my memories. I also go to places where there are mostly like-minded people, which makes me feel comfortable. In the Netherlands baseball is like coming home because the guys I play with are more passionate, I can speak Papiamentu and there is just a good vibe. Without Antilleans, there is no baseball in the Netherlands. It is often said that black boys are better at playing sports and to be very honest, that is also true. I also played basketball and if you look at the best players, they are mostly black too, right? I've also played in teams where I was one of the few immigrants, and where I felt less at home but I just make sure I go to another team then. You're not going to make me feel like I'm not wanted somewhere. I always do my best but it's different because I'm always more likely to be rejected because of my origin and/or skin color. Do you know what it is, the Netherlands is my home because I was born here but I will always be a visitor here. We are in the Netherlands after all, and it will stay the Netherlands, you can't change it. We cannot change how we are treated here but we can change which groups we are in.

Sport heroes

I don't have sports heroes but there are athletes that I think are remarkable. I have always looked up to other Antillean boys who have achieved a lot in sports. There was a guy who used to come to Curaçao and train us there. He also made sure I knew where to go when I came to the Netherlands. It is players like that who really left an impression on me and with whom I still have contact. I think it's important that they do something back for the Antillean community and are also just friendly and approachable. I don't have any female heroes or women that I see as idols. Yes, Serena Williams is of course super good at what she does but I don't necessarily look up to her. It's mostly men who are like me, who have been through the same thing that I look up to. My brother and father are very important to me because it is through them that I have seen up close what it is to be a man. I also have many cousins in Curaçao whose games I always went to watch and they also gave me my first baseball lessons. In the Dutch media, there is always something negative to say about athletes of color. That's not something I focus on but I do think it makes me pay more attention to what I do and where I go. When I walk into the canteen on Sunday at the club I have to take my hoodie off but white players don't. I do so because I also just want a "good morning" instead of a whole speech about that hoodie but it shouldn't be like that. I think it's unfair that people of color always have to fight for their spots and I've experienced that myself. You can continue to worry about it but it's not going to change anything anyway. When I walk down the street here, people will always see an Antillean, and maybe that's a good thing, the Antillean community has always shown me more love.

5.2 The constant navigation to belonging

All respondents identified as elite athletes, who have played at the highest level at some point in their careers. The analysis showed that there is no uniformity in how the respondents define and interpret the concept of belonging in the Netherlands. For many respondents, the notion of belonging is closely tied to their athletic performance, leading to an inherent ambiguity. Respondents often feel a sense of belonging when they perform well on the field. Conversely, when their performance declines, they may feel less accepted as part of the team. As a high-level athlete, maintaining peak performance is of utmost importance. Within their respective sports, a sense of belonging is linked to performance, and evaluating belongingness is not a primary concern. Most respondents focus primarily on being the best athlete that they can be.

'I don't really think 'feeling at home' is that important, at least I'm not concerned with it because the moment I play well, everyone is my friend but if I play badly, I'm alone in my room again. I just rely on myself and on my family, the rest is less important to me.' -Thomas

When the sense of belonging is discussed outside the context of their sports careers, many respondents find this a challenging subject to articulate. The perception of whether they belong is closely tied to their ethnicity. Respondents frequently mention that they are perceived as 'other' based on their ethnicity and/or skin color. This perception of being 'othered' contributes to their feeling of not fully belonging to Dutch society and not being recognized as Dutch. Such experiences of othering are often manifested through microaggressions, implicit and explicit exclusion, and hypervisibility. This hypervisibility arises from being perceived as different despite their Dutch nationality or being born and raised in that same neighborhood or community.

"In (neighborhood respondent grew up in) you notice that everyone is white. In the neighborhood and at school you would always see people looking a little bit like: "Hey who's that? What are you doing here?". Despite being born and raised here, I don't feel at home because I'm always seen as different."
- Sanne

However, there are specific groups and places where respondents feel like they belong, and these are environments characterized by more ethnic diversity. For some respondents, these places are related to sports, as they choose to join teams or clubs that offer more representation of their cultural background. Nevertheless, other respondents experience this sense of belonging primarily with close friends and relatives. The ambiguity of belonging is often related to their performance in the field and the social context they are surrounded with. For instance, respondents who grew up in Randstad (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht along with areas surrounding them) cities and neighborhoods with more ethnic diversity, reported a stronger sense of belonging. The proximity to diverse cultures influences this feeling. When there is a mutual understanding of different cultures, backgrounds, and languages, and when there is a 'safe space' for self-expression, respondents are more likely to feel that they belong. Particular respondents mentioned finding it difficult to connect with Euro-Dutch people, as they felt a certain disconnect because of cultural misunderstandings.

"In general, I do think I feel at home in the Netherlands because I just don't know any other way. But I don't feel at home among Dutch people." - Kate

The different narratives indicate that respondents feel that they belong to the Netherlands only under specific conditions, and their negotiation of this sense of belonging is often met with ambivalence. Their sense of belonging is perceived as something conditional. While respondents express that they do not feel a

genuine sense of belonging to the broader Dutch community, they actively create or find spaces where they do feel a sense of belonging.

“Doesn't matter if you have a Dutch passport or play for the national team, you are not considered Dutch the moment you lose. I think I was already aware of that as a child, which is why I always wear a flag of Curaçao on my jersey.” - Charles

Respondents struggle with the experience that they are often judged solely based on their ethnicity or skin color, which gives a feeling of never being good enough to uphold Dutch standards. These stereotypes are beyond athletic performance and extend to broader character judgments. Respondents struggle with the perception that people of color are more aggressive, lazy, rebellious, or inattentive, just to name a few. This constant judgment based on ethnicity or skin color reinforces the notion that one will never measure up to Dutch expectations.

“Others are often intimidated by our team, and at the club they sometimes call us rough and rebellious. I think it's a culture thingy.” - Kate

Most respondents have become accustomed to the sense of nonbelonging, and they adapt by seeking out or establishing environments where they are accepted. The experience of being othered and not fully belonging has become a familiar aspect of their lives, and most respondents have learned to navigate and cope with this reality. Nevertheless, not all respondents have learned to cope with this reality and feel like it is unfair, biased and depleting that they are constantly looking for a place where they feel accepted and not othered.

5.3 The vicious cycle of never being good enough

The respondents are in a constant negotiation of their belongingness as everyone seeks a place to call home. They are frequently confronted with the feeling of nonbelonging. This constant negotiation and the quest to find a place of acceptance have both physical and emotional impacts including stress, pressure to perform, insecurities, and loneliness. There is a prevalent perception among respondents that their efforts to meet performance standards and gain acceptance in society are never deemed satisfactory. Respondents are under the impression that they must always work harder compared to their Euro-Dutch counterparts due to their ethnicity. This perception indicates a sense of inequality and an additional burden placed on respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds to prove themselves within the societal and athletic realms.

“The pressure to perform at school and in sports brought a lot of stress. I felt constantly rushed, which eventually manifested itself in mental and physical complaints such as eczema.” - Esther

Respondents often describe a vicious cycle related to being 'othered', both within and outside their sport. This cycle begins with pressure to perform at their highest level, which leads to stress and insecurities. Their efforts to perform are often challenged and not satisfactory. Which leads to negative emotions that diminish their enjoyment of sports and other daily activities. Ultimately resulting in poorer performance and preventing them from being the best version of themselves. This poorer performance brings them back to the initial point of pressure to perform better, as seen in *Figure 4*.

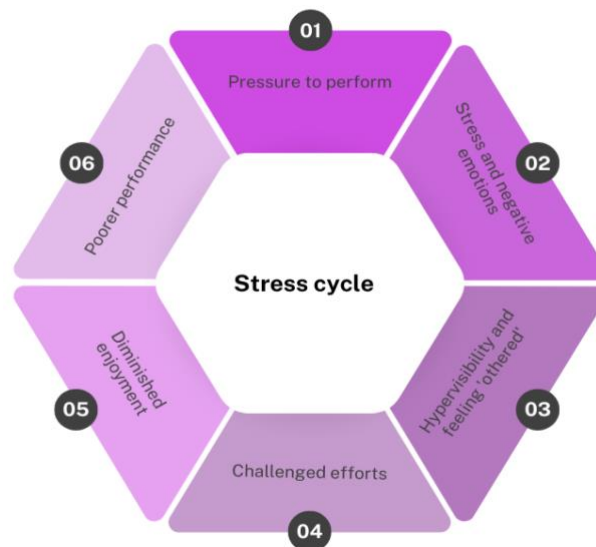


Figure 4: This figure shows the stress cycle that respondents endure.

It's important to note that while hypervisibility and feelings of being 'othered' can be present in various phases of the cycle, they are most prominent in the third phase as it distinctly impacts how respondents perceive themselves compared to other athletes. It is often due to their hypervisibility and different treatment that their efforts are challenged (phase four). Respondents mentioned that it was often due to this stress cycle that they ended up in a negative cycle, sometimes causing them to stop playing in certain teams, competitions or cities.

“When you stand there then it's really like okay, I must prove that I'm good enough, 'I must do this' instead of just being able to play your game and I think that makes a big difference for me. Sports means everything to me, and I also think the most important thing is to have fun while playing sports. If I'm not having fun, I automatically start playing badly too “- Charles

Respondents acknowledged the racism and discrimination that POC endure in the Netherlands. Despite not all respondents having experienced any forms of explicit racism and discrimination, they all assumed that there is a great possibility that this can and probably will accrue at one point in life. This awareness drives respondents to continuously assess their surrounding and evaluate their place in society, which promotes a sense of vigilance.

“Once when I was 12, I was standing in line at an amusement park and someone told me to 'go back to my own country,' I got angry and sad, but I was also horrified. I didn't quite get it and thought, 'huh, but this is my own country, isn't it?’” -Sara

These experiences leave such a mark on people as this explicitly highlights how they are perceived as others and that they do not fit the Dutch societal image. The notion of nonbelonging brings even more mental hardship and pressure to perform on top of the stress and pressure that is already related professional athleticism. This is often at the expense of the joy, happiness, fulfilment, and physical benefits of being an athlete.

Respondents mentioned that they are often confronted with stereotypes in the Dutch sports community. For example, in track and field, there is a common perception that people of color are the best sprinters. These stereotypes create pressure to meet certain expectations, adding to the stress of performing. As a result, respondents feel immediately labeled based on these stereotypes. They are often very conscious of being

among the few athletes of color, which imposes an additional burden as they feel they must represent all athletes of color. When they fail as individuals, it impacts how their entire community is perceived.

“As an athlete, I often feel the pressure that I must work harder than the rest, especially since there is this stereotype about Caribbean sprinters that they always perform the best. The idea that my performance depends on my ethnicity adds even more pressure.” - Cheryl

Some respondents have reclaimed this narrative and see the stereotypes as a source of pride. Sport is often a place where they can connect with their culture and for some even a space where they feel the freedom to embrace their roots. The perception that they are better than or in some cases ‘one of the best’ or those that ‘carry the sport’, instills a sense of pride and fulfilment.

“We must show that we run the game because that's how it's seen, it's our game!” - Charles

As previously mentioned, most respondents experienced the vicious circle and felt that they would never be able to meet the (societal) expectations of being a Dutch athlete. This sentiment is particularly pronounced among respondents like Kenley, who have lived and played abroad. For them, sports serve as a means to reconnect with their community. These so-called “friendly teams,” provide a space where respondents can embrace their cultural identity without fear of being perceived as outsiders. However, for some professional athletes, this entails playing at a lower competitive level than their skill level. Despite this, the decision to participate at a lower level is often a conscious one, driven by the prioritization of enjoyment and companionship in sports over competitive success.

“Now that I think about it, this (a team with a lot of ethnic diversity) did really have a positive impact on my mental health. I always put so much pressure on myself to perform well and fully focus on basketball and now I finally feel like I can relax and be myself.” - Thomas

This specific group of respondents is under a lot of pressure, impacting their physical and mental well-being. Some examples of physical complaints are tension in the neck and shoulders, back pain, eczema, and the consequences of less exercise. Most mental complaints had to do with (minority) stress, loneliness, and insecurities. Multiple important factors impact this group's well-being. The first is the age group, as these are young adults already navigating through their place in society as this is a transitional life period. Second, these are all elite athletes under a lot of pressure to perform regardless of their background. And lastly, Surinamese and Dutch Caribbean people are minoritized groups in Dutch society, indicating that they are exposed to minority stress.

5.4 From idol to mentor

The way that respondents give meaning to sports heroes is not univocal and typically falls under two categories. The first is the publicly known athlete that they follow through the media, and a second is a person, often a coach or relative, that they are personally connected to. The significance given to these heroes, changes throughout their lives. At a young age, the respondents had more admiration for their sports heroes and looked up to them as if they were their idols. Whereas, as they have gotten older, they would refer to these heroes as examples, inspiration, and motivation to become a better person. Publicly known heroes usually come to their attention at a young age, either when the respondents begin their careers or through exposure to (social) media. The admiration for these heroes is often linked to their athleticism, charisma, community contributions, and their ability to overcome criticism and challenges in their careers.

"I didn't start watching sports until I started athletics myself, and Usain Bolt was the first to stand out. A sports hero for me is someone who has achieved a lot in sports and is charismatic." - Cheryll

Important to note that when discussing publicly known athletes, the respondents expressed frustrations with the media portrayal of athletes of color, who are often negatively depicted in the Netherlands. There is a notion that the accomplishments of athletes of color are often overshadowed by negative comments based on their ethnicity and/or background. The narratives surrounding these athletes, harm the mental state of some respondents as they often feel more stress and pressure to perform.

"If you look at the French soccer team, you see that there are many players with a black skin color. Sometimes they say: 'our boys' when they perform well and otherwise it's 'the boys from Africa. What is that supposed to mean?' - Sara

The second category of sports heroes comprises individuals with whom respondents feel a close, personal connection, such as relatives, coaches, or older team members. For these people to be regarded as heroes, they must make the respondents feel acknowledged and encouraged to succeed in their athletic careers despite the hardships related to their ethnicity. These heroes often share the same ethnic background and have participated in sports themselves, fostering a sense of mutual understanding and support.

"My uncle from my black side, is also a sports hero to me. He taught me that I am allowed to be there, to be proud of my heritage and my identity. He taught me that I should let my voice be heard, even when others try to silence me. Because of him, I always feel seen for who I am." - Oscar

Respondents stated that the relationships they have built with these heroes are important to them and that they continue to think highly of them. They would typically stay in touch with them as they continue to serve as an inspiration to them.

"He saw that I have talent or that maybe there was something in me, although at the competition where he first saw me, I didn't perform that well at all." - Sanne

Nevertheless, the respondents did not typically use the terms 'hero' or 'idol' to describe these individuals. Instead, they referred to them as someone to look up to or as role models. Male respondents did not cite any female role models, and some noted that their sports heroes influenced their sense of masculinity. For female respondents, gender was less significant in choosing role models. However, some female respondents emphasized the importance of mentioning female athletes, particularly black female athletes, as influential figures.

Representation matters and affects the respondents' sense of belonging. This representation can be seen in multiple aspects of the ten different narratives. Firstly, it is reflected in their choice of sports heroes. All respondents, who were people of color, mentioned that they look up to other people of color. They do not necessarily have to be of the same ethnicity, nevertheless, they had to be of color to relate to them. Some even mentioned that they do not look up to white athletes as they could not relate to them, as they do not go through the same struggles or life experiences as them. The same goes for the personally known heroes. Additionally, the topic of discrimination and racism was challenging to discuss for most respondents, and this topic evoked feelings of frustration, sadness, anger, lack of understanding, and disappointment.

"It feels weird to say but I would like it if there was more diversity sometimes." - Cheryll

Respondents mentioned rarely speaking about these issues as this is often seen as something inevitable for a person of color in the Netherlands. The feeling of always being different, that you will never be Dutch enough, is for most respondents inevitable. While some struggle with this reality, others suggest it is something one must accept, as it is unlikely to change. Consequently, some respondents prefer to play in teams with more ethnic diversity, attend schools, live in neighborhoods, and apply to jobs where there is representation of ethnic diversity. This indicates a continuous search for environments where they feel they belong.

6. Discussion

6.1 Belonging

The purpose of this study was to research in what way young adult, postcolonial sports participants give meaning to and experience 'sense of belonging' in the Netherlands. Through analysis of the narratives from ten postcolonial young adult athletes, their perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of belonging were investigated. Using Hudson's (2015) framework, which operationalizes the four dimensions of being close, read, seen, and heard, this study examines the relationship between community belonging and well-being. The results reveal that these four dimensions co-exist and are intertwined. Hypervisibility and the feeling of being othered are particularly interwoven with the dimensions of being heard, read, and seen. These respondents are perceived and interpreted differently compared to their Euro-Dutch counterparts, which leads to their hypervisibility. This heightened visibility fosters a feeling of disconnection from the community, impacting the dimension of being close. The results showed that athletes are framed as belonging to the Netherlands only under specific circumstances. These specific groups and places are environments characterized by more ethnic diversity as these are the places where they feel most comfortable and feel like they can connect with others. Respondents mentioned the importance of feeling safe and free to be their authentic selves without feeling judged. As previously mentioned in the contextual background, section 2.1.3., the Dutch sports community is often perceived and described as ethnically diverse. However, results show that the respondents are being seen, heard, and read differently based on racialized ethnic bias and stereotypes which creates a disconnect. Additionally, the respondents are all participants in sports which are known for their ethnic diversity. The ideology of sports being color-blind and meritocratic (based on ability and talent rather than wealth, class, or privilege) is here shown to be irrational in a society where gender bias and ethnic disparities are embedded in our (social) systems. These ethnic disparities are products of ideologies based on theories such as the CRT and Eurocentrism.

Hypervisibility is in its most benign definition, the state of being extremely visible (Reddy, 1998). This can be positive for dominant groups, for example being visible as a valued employee or teammate. However, for marginalized groups like the respondents, negative stereotypes and being considered as different often result in them being deviant (Buchanan & Settles, 2019). This hypervisibility causes for individuals to become a main focus with higher scrutiny from others, which can be seen in the story of Sandrina where she mentioned that she is often the only person of color. As the findings show, respondents' social identities are invisible, and they are seen solely as their marginalized group. They are not seen as a basketball player but as a Surinamese man who also plays basketball. Paradoxically, this hypervisibility leads to invisibility, as one's positive aspects are ignored while all mistakes are magnified. The way that the respondents experience the assumption that their identity derives from being a member of a group, has to do with the fact that groups are often perceived as something homogeneous (Brubaker, 2002). Minoritized groups are seen as homogenous in for example gender, socio-economic status, and ethnicity instead of as processes or social relations (Martin et al., 2023). Respondents are perceived as belonging to ethnic groups that bring a given predisposition, for example, that they are the best sprinters or aggressive athletes. This perspective minimizes the individuality of ethnic minoritized people by confining them within a limited paradigm where their ethnicity is seen as their entire identity. Additionally, it suggests that belonging to this ethnic group means that one will be associated with a set of homogenous attitudes and behaviors, perpetuating stereotypes and ignoring the diversity within the group.

All respondents had a migration background, some first and others second-generation, indicating they have different cultural roots. Some mentioned that they feel like they belong in the Netherlands, as they are used to living here but find it difficult to relate to Dutch culture. The results have shown that whether someone

belongs or does not belong is met with ambiguity. A sense of belonging to the Netherlands or a common identity is neither adjacent nor mutually exclusive (Anthias, 2011). As the results show, one can identify but not feel like they 'belong' in the sense of being accepted or a full member. Many respondents expressed that they feel like they identify with the Netherlands, more specifically the cities and neighborhoods they grew up in, rather than that they identify with being Dutch or with other Euro-Dutch cultures. As an example, one of the respondents mentioned being a real 'Hagenees' (person from The Hague) while always feeling like a visitor in the Netherlands. Whether or not someone belongs does not mean that they are socially included. As the results show, one does feel like they belong to the Netherlands under specific circumstances. However, this is also the place where they have experienced the most instances of implicit and explicit exclusion through racism and discrimination. Hence, respondents exhibit ambivalence about belonging, as it is a constant negotiation influenced by personal experiences and structural factors (Quassoli & Dimitriadis, 2019). Furthermore, the participants disclosed that they often experience a sense of disconnect, even in the absence of explicit exclusion in social settings, even in sports where they feel most at home. They do not feel fully socially included and perceive that they must apply more effort compared to their Euro-Dutch counterparts to achieve a sense of inclusion. Belonging does not follow from social inclusion, though there is a strong correlation between the two. Nevertheless, a sense of belonging and acceptance in society is established and sustained via social inclusion activities and experiences (Alcoff, 2007). In this context, feeling safe, accepted as a member of a community, and having a say in how that group develops are all necessary components of belonging, which relates to the four dimensions of feeling heard, read, seen and close.

6.2 Heroes & the context they live in

As previously mentioned, a sports hero can be anyone who inspires someone to engage in a sport. They represent social ideologies and create specific perceptions of value. The results show that there were two main categories regarding sports heroes. The first category of sports heroes are the athletes who are publicly known and often get media attention. The second, being a coach, friend, or relative that they have a personal connection with. The first hero, the publicly known one, was often discussed as one of those talented athletes who is just inevitably good in what they do. Someone whose athleticism they admire and who is respected for overcoming trials and tribulations. Most respondents mentioned that when they were younger, they would often see this famous athlete as a real idol whom they worshiped. However, as they got older, they felt a distance between them and these heroes as they realized that these heroes are often heavily constructed by the media, and they would rather look up to a 'real person'. This shift in interpretation of what it means to be a hero, came when respondents got older and has to do with the mythologization of heroes. As Browne and Fishwick (1983) state, the hero is a primary social model used by society to help maintain the social structure. To maintain this structure, the hero must be a mythical or legendary person who is strong, noble, and brave. People naturally gravitate towards the best in any given endeavor, so they can easily relate to the sports hero. Because sports are major cultural values, athletic hero worship has also been accepted and even encouraged (Douglas & Carless, 2014). Individuals have the freedom to choose their heroes, but it is the context that shapes the hero. A complex, intertwined network of social, cultural, historical, and political factors, along with media influence, defines the context in which heroes are created (Reed & Forbes, 2023). This heroic context, which gives rise to publicly known athletes, creates a disconnect for respondents as they recognize the mythification involved. Respondents were critical of how Dutch media often constructs negative or discouraging narratives around athletes of color. They frequently cited examples such as Churandy Martina being selectively referred to as Dutch and the treatment of the French soccer team. These examples foster a sense among respondents that their efforts are never sufficient to be fully recognized as Dutch athletes, even in ethnically diverse sports. This differential treatment compared to their Euro-Dutch counterparts not only frustrates athletes of color but also reinforces feelings of inequity and exclusion. This is in line with the article by Hall (2020) that explains how sports heroes play a role in processes

of belonging and exclusion. These constructed media narratives of athletes of color, create a notion of being excluded from the Dutch sports community.

National sports heroes are a mirror of national identity that fuels the sense of national pride and togetherness (Dumitriu, 2018). The results show that all respondents mentioned that their sports heroes are POC. In some cases, their sports heroes had to be of the same ethnicity to feel connected to them. Despite all respondents holding Dutch nationality, there was little to no expression of national pride in the Dutch context. This indicates that the respondents' sense of belonging and national identity is influenced more by ethnic and cultural connections than by their formal nationality. This resonates with the second category of sports heroes, which entails elder players, family members, or coaches who the respondents personally know. Here respondents mentioned the importance of having the same background and experiences as an immigrant in the Netherlands. The sports heroes are often applauded for their comradery and athleticism, and for helping the respondents navigate through not only their athletic careers but often also outside of sports. Additionally, these heroes offer a sense of pride and togetherness as there is a connection based on ethnicity and experiences as athletes of color in the Dutch context. The similarity of context fosters a deeper connection between respondents and the second category of heroes. These similarities enable respondents to reclaim their national pride and identity, providing a sense of recognition and representation.

6.3 Cultural dynamics

In this study, migration and belonging are not approached as a linear process but as a dynamic process in which diversity is embraced and used as a powerful tool for identity and community belonging. Transculturalism, as previously mentioned in section 2.2.2., can be understood as combining elements of more than one culture to create a new cultural belonging. However, results imply that transculturalism faces substantial challenges in practical implementation. The experiences of the respondents reflect that despite transculturalism advocating for cultural integration and unity, this ideal is not achievable. Based on their different cultural roots, respondents frequently felt disconnected from Dutch society and hyper visible. This indicates that rather than cultures mixing, people of color are still seen through a monocultural lens. Proponents of transculturalism, state that this theory recognizes the 'other' by interacting between cultural encounters (Canagarajah, 2012; Khorakiwala, 2022). Despite transcultural being perceived as a quest to define shared interests and common values, the 'other' in question is one that European, more specifically Dutch imperialism once dominated, and perhaps still dominates (Slimbach, 2005). We use the term post-colonial, while Eurocentrism is still part of Dutch society. Qu (2014) states that transculturalism can only be meaningful if it is liberated from identity politics and the colonized mind. Transculturalism is shaped by the postcolonial dualism that splits the world into the West and the non-west, ignoring the complexities of power dynamics in cross-cultural and intracultural interactions, and ignoring the differences within each culture.

Dutch sports are often perceived as diverse and inclusive, particularly in media portrayals. However, this perception does not necessarily equate to 'true' inclusivity, as evidenced by the study's findings. Young athletes, particularly those at the elite level, experience significant stress and pressure regardless of their background. However, athletes of color (POCs) in the Netherlands bear an additional burden due to structural racism pervasive in all systems, including sports. This minority stress compounds the general pressure experienced by all elite athletes, adding an extra layer of difficulty for these individuals. The discourse of inclusion in sports tends to overshadow necessary conversations about anti-racism and discrimination. Respondents frequently noted that they were often among the few individuals of color or with diverse cultural backgrounds on their teams. Moreover, as the level of competition increased, the environments became predominantly white, and coaches and trainers were often white. The archetype of the white male as a leader persists, while athletes of color are typically seen as prototypes of athleticism and entertainment

(Van Sterkenburg & Knoppers, 2012). This dynamic often leads to a personal disconnect between athletes of color and their predominantly white coaches or managers. There is a need for a critical examination of sports to acknowledge and address the role of racial power relations. Without such an examination, these issues will persist and potentially intensify (Bradbury et al., 2016). Racial processes in sports often seem harmless, nevertheless, their effects can differ from employment to unemployment, getting scouted or cut from a team, choosing whether to play a certain sport or not, or becoming a head coach or not (Hylton, 2018). CRT's focus on transformation and awareness could be a starting point for diminishing racial bias in sports. Although controversial, CRT has also been used as an approach that gives voice to the historically overpowered narratives of marginalized populations (Hylton, 2010). A suggestion based on this report is that the Dutch sports sector puts in efforts to identify, understand, and challenge ongoing racialized inequalities embedded in everyday processes and practices.

6.4 After effects of the colonial past

Professional athletes often struggle with high stress levels due to multiple factors such as high expectations, external distractions, negative thoughts, injuries, and competition itself (Pensgaard & Ursin, 1998; Oudejans et al., 2011; Blijlevens et al., 2018). Additionally, respondents were all young adults between the ages of 18 and 26. In 2023, a significant number of young adults in the Netherlands experienced mental health problems related to stress, insecurities, and emotional and social loneliness, also related to the recent COVID-19 pandemic (RIVM, 2023). These two elements (professional athletes and age) already make the respondents a vulnerable group for mental health issues. In addition, there is also the burden of minority stress. The minority stress theory states that members of multiple stigmatized minoritized groups (e.g. ethnic and sexual minorities), are often exposed to a wide variety of stressors that impact their mental health, well-being, and social functioning (Meyer, 2003). Therefore, it is crucial to keep in mind that the experiences of these respondents are complex and multifaceted. Their personal experiences, socio-economic status, and the larger cultural setting all have an impact on their experiences of stress and marginalization, which are not just related to their ethnicity or skin color. This ambiguity highlights the intersectional nature of their challenges, where multiple identities and stressors affect their general (mental) health and well-being.

How is it that specifically, this group feels so out of place in the Netherlands? The subjects of this research were born, raised and educated in the Netherlands and became the young adults they are today. Subsequently, they became athletes who represent the Netherlands in international competitions but still feel no national pride. How is it possible that these young adults are constantly looking for places where they feel safe, where they can be themselves and feel a sense of belonging? Remarkably, most respondents referred to themselves as 'Allochtoon' (immigrant), to indicate the opposite of 'Autochtoon' or indigenous, native, or authentic Dutch people. When asked about belonging to the Netherlands, most respondents reacted by explaining that because they are immigrants, they would never fully belong to the Netherlands because they are not native Dutch. Despite their citizenship and connection to the Netherlands, respondents mentioned that they were constantly reminded of their immigrant status. In 2016, the Dutch government replaced the word 'Allochtoon' with 'iemand met een migratieachtergrond' (someone with a migration background). However, the definition remained the same and refers to someone of whom at least one parent is born abroad (CBS, 2024). The underlying assumption that 'autochtoon' represents a higher valued group to which one can only belong when their heritage is rooted in Dutch ancestry, as indicated by CRT, is obstructed by the overemphasis on whether someone has a migration background. Being Dutch by birth is known as 'autochtoon', and their Dutch ancestry is what makes them (real) Dutch. Following the logic of these concepts, someone with a migration background can never meet the criteria of being Dutch (Essed & Trienekens, 2008). Additionally, though not entirely, the lighter-skinned respondents felt less alienated and

more at home. This raises the question of whether being white is correlated with one's perception of Dutchness and sense of belonging.

7. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the sense of belonging and well-being of young adult sports participants of Surinamese and Dutch Caribbean descent in the Netherlands. Additionally, this study also focused on sports heroes who are an important part of the sports community as a microcosm, as well as in the lives of young adult athletes. In this research, the main focus was to understand the narratives of these young athletes to encompass the role of sports heroes in their experiences of belonging. The results show that finding a sense of belonging is not something that this target group is consciously concerned with in their day-to-day lives. These are all professional athletes; whose focus is on their athletic performances. However, when discussing the reasons behind poorer performances, the reason behind this is that they felt like they did not belong in various ways. All respondents were aware of their hypervisibility due to their ethnicity, background, or skin color and they emphasized that they would often feel 'othered', also in sports which are often considered an inclusive space for ethnically marginalized groups. Results show that even in sports, athletes of color often feel (socially) excluded. In some cases, this exclusion could be due to explicit forms of racism and discrimination which is, according to the respondents, inevitable as a POC in the Netherlands.

Results show that these young adults always feel as if they must work harder, in and outside of sports, due to for example ethnic inequality and minority stress. Respondents mentioned a vicious cycle of stress that starts with the pressure to perform, which gets worse due to challenged efforts, negative thoughts, and poorer performances. Results showed that hypervisibility and otherness impact the physical, mental, and social health of respondents, with stress and negative emotions as the most prevalent outcomes. Non-belonging, hypervisibility, feeling othered, and minority stress have a tremendous impact on one's mental, social, and physical well-being, as evidenced by this study's findings. Therefore, migration and ethnic marginalization should not only be acknowledged as a (social) determinant of health but also included in public health policies. Sports heroes play an important part in the development and sense of belonging of the respondents.

First, the publicly known athletes that they look up to be a driving force at the kick-start of most careers as these heroes played an important role when respondents were younger. Secondly, there are also those personally known heroes whom respondents have a closer bond with and know on a personal level. Respondents find it important that these heroes also have a migration background to truly feel a connection with them. The results also show that the way (Dutch) media discusses athletes of color, also has an impact on the sense of belonging of post-colonial athletes. The media is a constant reminder of how POC will never be considered truly Dutch and how their hypervisibility will always cause them to be treated differently. Despite all respondents being born in the Netherlands and carrying Dutch citizenship not one of them felt like they truly belonged in the Netherlands. Some respondents have reclaimed the 'allochtoon' narrative by surrounding themselves in safe spaces where they feel a certain intimacy and connection. In this context, being labeled 'Allochtoon' is seen as something positive and a label in which they belong. As Kenley mentions in one of the constructed stories; 'I was born and raised here, but I will always be a guest and there is nothing to change about that'. These ten young adult post-colonial athletes of Surinamese and Dutch Caribbean descent are aware of their different treatment, hypervisibility, and otherness in the Netherlands. Due to the daily racism, discrimination, and exclusion, they are constantly debating their belonging, despite their efforts to find a place to belong in a place they consider home. The reality is that the criteria for belonging in the Netherlands is not whether you feel like you belong there or not, but whether the dominant ethnocultural group thinks that you belong.

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9. Appendix

9.1 Information Letter

Informatiebrief: Thuis voelen & Sporthelden



Beste sporter,

Ik wil graag met jou in gesprek gaan voor een onderzoek. Jij beslist zelf of je dat wilt. Ik ben Maryse Vorm, stagiaire van het [Mulier Instituut](#), en samen met mijn begeleider Agnes Elling organiseren wij dit onderzoek. In deze brief geven wij uitleg over het onderzoek.

Waarom is dit onderzoek belangrijk?

Dit onderzoek gaat over thuis voelen in Nederland door Nederlands-Surinaamse en Nederlands-Caribische (Antilliaanse) sporters en de rol van 'sporthelden' in hun leven. Het is belangrijk om persoonlijke verhalen van deze sporters in kaart te brengen om hun ervaringen van er (niet) bij horen beter te begrijpen.

Wie zoeken wij voor dit onderzoek?

Voor dit onderzoek zoeken wij sporters die:

- tussen de 18 en 25 jaar zijn
- afkomstig uit Suriname, Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, Sint Maarten of Sint Eustatius
- minimaal 1 keer per week sporten

Wat vragen wij van jou?

Als jij meedoet, ga ik met je in gesprek. Dit gesprek zal in de vorm zijn van een (verhalend) interview waarbij jouw eigen verhaal centraal staat.

Het gesprek duurt ongeveer 90 (en maximaal 120) minuten. Het gesprek zal het liefst fysiek plaatsvinden op een plek die jou goed uitkomt. Indien dit niet mogelijk is, kan het gesprek online gevoerd worden, bijvoorbeeld via Teams. Je hoeft het gesprek niet voor te bereiden.

Wil je niet meedoen of stoppen?

Jij beslist of je meedoet of niet. Zo niet, dan verandert er niks voor jou. Je kunt ook altijd stoppen als je niet meer mee wilt doen. Dat kan voor of tijdens het gesprek, of na het gesprek door mij te mailen. Dan verwijderen wij jouw informatie. Je mag tijdens het gesprek vragen overslaan die je niet wilt beantwoorden.

Hoe gaan we met jouw informatie om?

Jouw privacy is voor ons belangrijk. Jouw gegevens slaan wij op een veilige plaats op. We noemen nooit jouw naam in een rapport. Vóór het gesprek vragen wij jou om toestemming voor jouw deelname. Meer informatie over privacy vindt je op [de website van het Mulier Instituut](#).

En nu?

Lijkt het jou leuk om mee te doen? Neem dan contact met mij op. Je kan mij ook altijd vragen stellen.

Ik hoop dat je met mij in gesprek wilt gaan!

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9.2 Informed Consent



Toestemmingsformulier: Thuis voelen & Sporthelden

Waarom willen we met jou in gesprek?

Veel mensen hebben een sporter naar wie ze opkijken, dit kan om verschillen redenen zijn. Vaak heeft het te maken met de sportprestaties, maar soms gaat het ook om wat de sporters te zeggen hebben of hoe ze eruitzien. Wij willen weten wie jouw sporthelden zijn, hoe jij tegen sporthelden aankijkt en wat dat met jouw achtergrond te maken heeft. Ik wil graag jouw verhaal horen over jouw ervaringen met thuis voelen in Nederland en de rol van sporthelden hierin. We voeren het gesprek op een fysieke locatie die jou goed schikt en het duurt ongeveer 60-90 minuten. Je mag zelf kiezen of je meedoet met dit onderzoek.

Toestemming

- Ik doe vrijwillig mee.
- Ik mag vragen overslaan en stoppen wanneer ik wil.
- Ik vind het goed dat het gesprek wordt opgenomen met een geluidsrecorder. De opname wordt alleen voor dit onderzoek gebruikt en nooit openbaar gemaakt.
- Ik weet dat het Mulier Instituut heel zorgvuldig met mijn informatie omgaat. Hierover staat meer op [de website van het Mulier Instituut](#).
- Ik weet dat mijn naam nooit in rapporten over dit onderzoek staat.
- Ik weet dat tijdens het gesprek naar mijn bijzondere persoonsgegevens wordt gevraagd, namelijk: leeftijd, etniciteit, woonplaats en de sport die ik beoefen.
- Ik heb genoeg tijd gehad om te bedenken of ik mee wil doen met dit onderzoek.
- Ik heb dit formulier gelezen en ik doe mee aan dit onderzoek.

Door hieronder uw naam in te vullen geeft u toestemming om mee te doen aan het onderzoek.

Naam (voor- en achternaam):

Handtekening:

.....

Datum:

Contactgegevens onderzoeker: Maryse Vorm, m.vorm@mulierinstituut.nl, 06-29531915

Eventuele opmerkingen:

Indien deelnemer minderjarig is, is ook toestemming van ouder/verzorger vereist:

Ik ben voldoende ingelicht over de rechten van mijn kind voor dit onderzoek en stem in met de deelname

Naam (voor- en achternaam): _____

Handtekening: _____

Datum: _____

Dit vult de onderzoeker in:

- Ik heb het onderzoek zo goed mogelijk toegelicht.
- Ik zal vragen zo goed mogelijk beantwoorden.
- Ik zal zorgvuldig omgaan met de verzamelde gegevens ([Nederlandse gedragscode wetenschappelijke integriteit](#)).

Naam onderzoeker: _____

Datum: _____

9.3 Interview Guide

Voorafgaand aan ons gesprek wil ik je nogmaals een aantal vragen stellen die te maken hebben met jouw instemming voor dit interview

1. Ben jij je ervan bewust dat dit interview wordt opgenomen voor onderzoeksdoeleinden?
2. Ben jij je ervan bewust dat je elk moment kan stoppen met het interview?
3. Heb jij nog vragen voordat we met de rest van het interview beginnen?

Intro

Hoe zou jij jezelf omschrijven?

- leeftijd
- opleidingsniveau
- sport
- woonplaats

Sport

Hoofdvraag: Kan jij vertellen wat sport voor jou betekent?

- Welke sport(en) beoefend?
- Verandering betekenissen?

Belonging

Hoofdvraag: Kun je iets vertellen over waar en waarom je je ergens thuis voelt?

- Thuis voelen in/verbondenheid met Nederland
- Ervaringen met niet thuis voelen in Nederland/sport
- Relatie (niet) thuis voelen en gezondheid/welbevinden

Sporthelden

Hoofdvraag: Waar denk je aan bij de term 'sporthelden'? En aan wie?

- Identificatie
- helden in en buiten de sport? (O.a. muziek, ??)
- verandering voorbeelden of 'helden'

Druk/verantwoordelijkheidsgevoel

In eerdere interviews merkte ik dat veel sporters een bepaalde druk voelen en een verantwoordelijkheidsgevoel als gevolg van hen etniciteit en/of afkomst

- Hoe kijk jij daarnaar?
- Stress
- Gevolgen voor thuis voelen
- Casus sporter in de media die gelabeld wordt aan de hand van zijn/haar afkomst (Seedorf, Martina, Tjon a Joe, etc.)

Outro

Korte reflectie op het gesprek door belangrijke punten te herhalen of bepaalde sport helden te bespreken. Heb jij zelf nog vragen of aanvullingen?

Respondent bedanken en uitleg geven over de membercheck en dat zij altijd contact met mij kunnen opnemen.