

**Race/ethnicity, gender and audience receptions of football on television in the  
Netherlands and England**

A research project financially supported by the UEFA Grant Scheme

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## **Chapter 1 Introduction and research question**

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century professional football has become one of the most important sources of international entertainment worldwide. Because of its popularity on television and vast international audiences it is no longer feasible to discuss the significance of professional football without attending to television's role in it. Previous research has shown that televised football has the potential to develop mutual respect and tolerance among racial/ethnic communities and a sense of national belonging (Verweel, 2007). This is visible, for instance, when TV viewers of the national team during a major football event such as the European Championship or the World Cup demonstrate that collective identities still exist.

However, other studies have *also* shown that sport commentators use racial/ethnic gender stereotypes that socially disadvantage and exclude ethnic minorities and women (Hylton, 2009). Such practices challenge the principles of football shared by UEFA as promoting principles of unity, solidarity and tolerance. Most notably, previous studies have shown that within the seemingly trivial commentator statements, hegemonic stereotypes are incorporated that associate Black male athletes with natural physical qualities and White male athletes with intellectual qualities and hard work (Carrington, 2001; Hylton, 2009). Sabo & Jansen (1998) have argued in this regard that Black success is framed as achievable and acceptable in sport but not in other social domains such as academics, business or politics. I have studied this in a detailed, contextualized manner for Dutch club football. Results showed that commentators drew on centuries-old Dutch colonial discourses to emphasize Surinamese-Dutch male physicality in particular (Van Sterkenburg et al., forthcoming).

But although these findings have yielded important insights, they do *not* reveal the understandings of race/ethnicity that concrete viewers take on from these representations. This is extremely problematic as conclusions are often drawn about sport media impacts on the basis of textual analyses alone. Research is, therefore, urgently needed that investigate more than content alone and that starts doing audience research. Such research should also focus on audience understandings of *gender*; How do male and female viewers, for instance, give meaning to women's football as compared to men's football? The involvement of women in professional football is increasingly appreciated and supported by national football federations across Europe and the UEFA. The planned research reflects UEFA's concern by providing new knowledge about the discourses that male *and* female viewers draw on when they watch football on television.

This is especially interesting to explore in an international perspective. I therefore explore audience receptions in the British and Dutch context. This allows me to search for overlapping and common dynamics in audience receptions of televised football content across national contexts. The English and Dutch contexts are relevant to take as case studies as they are both ethnically diverse countries harbouring a mixture of postcolonial migrants and labor migrants. In addition, football consumption constitutes a significant part of both English and Dutch cultural identity (Alabarces et al., 2001; Lechner, 2007).

The question that guides the research project can now be formulated as follows: *How do Dutch and English viewers of various racial/ethnic and gender groupings receive and interpret representations of race/ethnicity and gender based on televised men's football?*

### **Set-up of the report**

The structure of the report is as follows; After this chapter comes chapter 2 which presents the state of knowledge on the issues that are central in this report as well as the innovativeness of the present study. In chapter 3 I will then present my theoretical framework of cultural studies. Since the Dutch and English contexts serve as reference points in this research project, I will then discuss in more detail the historical and cultural specificities of racial/ethnic meanings and categorizations in Dutch and English popular discourse in chapters 4 and 5. This contextualization will be followed by a methodological chapter (chapter 6) where I present my method of focus group interviews and two results chapters where I present the empirical findings based on the focus group interviews<sup>1</sup> (chapter 7 and 8). The empirical findings constitute the building blocks for chapter 9 where I discuss the main findings and come to a conclusion. I will round off the research report with discussing the wider contribution of the study to football and society, and giving some recommendations for follow up implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> I want to thank those who have given support in helping to conduct, transcribe or recruit participants for the group interviews, in particular Dr. Laura Hills, Dr. Eileen Kennedy and Dr. Alison Maitland of Brunel University London, and my MA students within the course *Publiek en receptie 2012/2013* (Utrecht University). In addition, I want to thank the students at Brunel University for their willingness to take part in the interviews and the lively discussions we had.

## **Chapter 2: State of knowledge and innovativeness**

Because sport media representations and audience receptions of race/ethnicity and gender are central in this research project, I will use this second chapter to give a summarized overview of the state of knowledge on these themes. First, I will focus on representations and audience receptions of *race/ethnicity* in the sports media followed by a summarized account of representations and audience receptions of *gender*. This overview serves to indicate how the present research is embedded within existing research. Wherever possible, I will zoom in on televised *football* as that is the key focus of this research project. Please note that the main purpose of this chapter is to give the overall conclusion of findings in this area rather than to describe everything that has been published<sup>2</sup>. This overview provides me with the opportunity to then outline the added value and innovativeness of the present study in the second part of this chapter.

### **Representations of race/ethnicity**

While some authors have suggested that the ethnic diversity and popularity that characterizes televised football has the potential to engender mutual respect between different communities and foster a sense of national belonging (e.g. Verweel, 2007), most scholars have concluded that televised football is rife with stereotypes and racialized discourse (e.g. Carrington 2001; Elling, 2002; Hylton, 2009). Previous studies have shown how hegemonic stereotypes are incorporated within commentator statements that associate black male athletes with natural physical qualities and white male athletes with intellectual qualities and hard work (Carrington, 2001; Hylton, 2009).

However, previous UK and US based results don't necessarily apply to all other contexts. Although globalization of the sport media influences local and national discourses about race/ethnicity, this influence is never total and is accommodated to the local and national situation (Van Sterkenburg & Knoppers, 2004). Moreover, several Anglosaxon studies contradict the aforementioned findings (Denham, Billings & Halone, 2002; McCarthy et al. 2003; Sabo, Jansen, Tate, Duncan & Legget, 1996 ). Analyses of television commentary of sport events in Britain and the US show that black athletes are not always described less

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<sup>2</sup> Like in the rest of the report, some of the discussions or overviews are informed by my previous work on race/ethnicity and gender in the sport media.

frequently in mental terms than their white counterparts are. In other words, media discourses are contradictory and fluid in which slippages of meaning are always possible (McDonald and Birrell, 1999). To better understand the ways race/ethnicity in sport is represented in the media I have conducted an exploratory study that examined Dutch televised football (Van Sterkenburg, Knoppers and De Leeuw, 2012). The study demonstrated that Dutch football commentary contains some features that are similar to those found in the Anglo-Saxon studies, particularly when commentators drew on standard Dutch colonial tropes to emphasize the physical strength and speed of Black Surinamese-Dutch players<sup>3</sup>. This seems to point to the existence of a globalized discourse surrounding race/ethnicity where certain hegemonic, historically informed colonial stereotypes are reconstructed, confirmed and 'naturalized'. These findings tie in with more general assessments of the representation of race and ethnicity in the media that show how black success is framed as normal in sports and entertainment, but not in, for instance, business, academics or politics (Sabo and Jansen, 1998). According to Carrington (2001), such representations suggest a mind-body split that associates black athletes explicitly with superb bodies but implicitly with poor cognitive skills (also Van Sterkenburg, 2011).

### **Audience receptions of race/ethnicity**

In contrast to the substantial data available about sport media representations of race/ethnicity there is a scarcity of data on how audiences receive and negotiate these representations. Previous audience reception studies have mainly focused on news programs, soaps and police series (e.g. de Bruin 2005; Gillespie, 1995; Liebes & Katz, 1993), but have generally ignored sport on television. There are some notable exceptions, however. Morning (2009) has shown that colonial stereotypes inform individuals when they talk about sport. Her study revealed that the tendency of individuals to claim biological, essentialist differences between various 'races' rises significantly when they are asked to talk about sport. Hermes (2005) found similar results for the Dutch context. She concluded that young males in particular drew on racialized types of talk and colonially informed stereotypes when discussing the non-White players who played for the Dutch national (men's) football team.

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<sup>3</sup> Results also showed that some other commonly used (non-colonial) racial/ethnic stereotypes in everyday Dutch discourse were not used by the commentators. As such, the football commentary may not only be a place where stereotypes are reinforced but also a place where commonly held hegemonic discourses are being challenged.

Findings from the few other sport media studies that focused on ethnic audience readings have also suggested that viewers use colonially informed stereotypes to give meaning to Black male athletes. Buffington & Fraley (2008) generally found that North American Black and White media users accepted the hegemonic White Brain vs. Black Brawn distinction while British scholars McCarthy, Jones & Potrac (2003) concluded that Black viewers frequently rejected hegemonic football media discourses surrounding race as they perceived these as stereotypical and derogative. For the Dutch context, Knoppers & Elling (2001) concluded that immigrant participants tended to challenge hegemonic sport media discourses surrounding race and ethnicity more frequently than their non-immigrant counterparts. But although these studies have given important insights, they were limited in scope and did not study extensively differences and overlaps in receptions of televised soccer by differently ethnically located male and female viewers in distinct nations.

### **Representations of gender**

Gender relations also play a role in sport media discourses and this role is often more explicit than with racial/ethnic relations as sport is formally structured along the lines of gender. Pfister (2010) considers sport as a system based on ‘a universally valid gender segregation that is scarcely to be found any longer in other areas of western societies’ (p. 234). It is therefore not so surprising that there is a substantial body of knowledge about sport media representations of gender focusing on a diversity of sport events such as the Winter and Summer Olympics, Commonwealth Games and Athletic Championships (Crossman, Vincent & Speed, 2007). The general conclusion of these studies is that 1) women athletes are underrepresented in the media in quantitative terms and 2) women athletes are often represented in stereotypical ways through which they are marginalized and trivialized. As Crossman, Vincent & Speed (2007, p28) concluded:

The overwhelming conclusion from these studies conducted over the past 30 years was that the articles and photographs of women’s sport constituted a minority of the coverage and that women tended to be not only underrepresented, but trivialized, devalued and marginalized”

As a variety of studies have shown, female athletes are depicted as strong but also as dependent (on their male coach or family), mentally vulnerable or as sexual objects whereas men are associated with strength and independence (Pfister, 2010; Van Sterkenburg &

Knoppers, 2004). These media constructions of gender also intersect with those about race/ethnicity; whereas White women are depicted as 'real women' in the media and associated with dependence, elegance, and weakness, African-American women are more often associated with characteristics usually associated with males such as aggressiveness, dominance and independence (Azzarito & Solomon, 2005).

In addition to this, Vincent et al. (2003) concluded that during the Olympics 1996 women received more newspaper coverage in sports generally seen as appropriate for women such as gymnastics, tennis, swimming, than in sports traditionally seen as 'women-inappropriate' such as football, field hockey or volleyball (Vincent in: Crossman, Vincent & Speed, 2007). In a similar vein, Caudwell (2003) showed that the media trivialized the performances of female athletes when they perform in sports traditionally associated with men such as football. The media do so by focusing on the athletes' appearances and personal relationships instead of their performance (also Crossman, Vincent & Speed, 2007). In contrast to this, women participating in traditional feminine sports such as gymnastics were described on the basis of their performance but also in terms of feminine stereotypes (Crossman, Vincent & Speed, 2007). For men, on the other hand, playing football appears a signifier of true manliness (Caudwell, 2003, p. 378). The emphasis in men's televised football on force and physical strength invite readings that perpetuate hegemonic masculinity and gender hierarchies (Elling & Luijt, 2009; Hardin, Kuehn, Jones, Genovese & Balaji et al., 2009; Van Zoonen 1998).

### **Audience receptions of gender**

Discourses surrounding race/ethnicity and gender are, however, not fixed and not passively accepted by media audiences. Hermes (2005) showed, for instance, that while men tend to talk about football in a serious way discussing players' past achievements and technical abilities, women viewers experience televised football more frequently as a sociable way to spend time and legitimately watch male bodies. Knoppers & Elling (2001) and Lines (2000) have shown, however, that both male and female viewers of televised sport support the hegemonic gender discourse assuming that men are naturally stronger than women. This 'natural physicality discourse' was used, amongst others, to legitimate the existing gender separation in sports (Van Sterkenburg & Knoppers, 2004). Knoppers & Elling (2001) showed that young Dutch people across the gender divide believed that sports that are generally perceived as traditionally masculine are too tough for women. Lines (2000) additionally concluded that male youth favored men's football over women's football, as the following

quote from one of the interviewees from her research indicates:

‘When you put it up against men’s football...it’s not as exciting. Men’s football has been going on for 150 years and women’s football for about 5 years’  
(Lines, 1999 in: Lines 2000, p. 677).

### **Innovation of the present study**

The planned research further explores discourses surrounding race/ethnicity and gender by sport media audiences, and the role televised football may play in this. Football programs provide topics for gossip, and provide starting points for shared discussions of and reflections on viewers’ own and others’ lives. As such, they offer points of reference for viewers which may contribute to ideas about their own and others’ racial/ethnic and gendered identities (Gillespie, 1995, Hermes 2005). This applies particularly to boys for whom football programs are among the main things they can fall back on as a shared topical resource. As a social tool, this football related ‘TV talk’ is an important form of social interaction for them where meanings about race/ethnicity as well as gender are negotiated, reinforced and/or challenged. There is, however, not much adequate theorizing about how such media effects would come about and under which circumstances. The two academic traditions that cover the workings of the media, media psychology/social psychology on the one hand (e.g. Busselle & Bilanzic, 2009; Green, Brock & Kaufmann, 2004) and cultural studies on the other (e.g. Hall, 1997; Macdonald, 2003), have only limitedly addressed the issue.

This lack is surprising considering the widespread agreement among cultural studies scholars that sport media reception is a process of negotiation by active media users. As Rowe (2004) argued, media texts acquire meaning in the interaction between texts and reader/viewer. For that reason, audience research always needs to address the interaction or ‘dialogue’ between the television image and the viewer and explore how that interaction filters through into everyday conversations (Wilson & Sparkes, 1999). This is exactly what the present study aimed to do. By using focus group as reflections of everyday football conversations the project brings to the surface how ethnically diverse youth audiences interpret and receive the racialized and gendered representations of football stars. Such research findings enable more effective policy decisions about the use of sport and football as a tool for social inclusion. The research also provides, more generally, some insights into audience experiences of televised football. Media and/or football organizations usually do not have in depth

qualitative knowledge about viewers' pleasures or frustrations in relation to the programs they watch.

*Critical media literacy*

During the project time already, results of the project have been transferred into a number of educational settings (June 2012-April 2013) in order to increase critical media literacy among young people. Critical media literacy enables people to challenge the power of media to create and naturalize racial/ethnic and gender stereotypes that have exclusionary effects. Empowering the audience through critical inquiry is essential as it enables youth to see how the same message can be read in different ways and not only in a way preferred by the media. Critical reading skills are especially important in relation to televised football given the potential televised football has to reach many people and its tendency to create routine, everyday forms of racialization and gender stereotypes (Knoppers & Elling, 1999; Van Sterkenburg et al., 2012).

### **Chapter 3: Theoretical lens of cultural studies**

A cultural studies perspective constitutes my primary theoretical lens to explore audience receptions of race/ethnicity and gender in televised football. A cultural studies perspective understands the terms ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ as dynamic, moveable concepts that are often conflated and essentialized in everyday language and gain meaning in and through *discourse* (Hall, 2000). Stuart Hall (1997) has defined discourse as dominant ways of constructing knowledge about a particular theme or concept, such as race/ethnicity or gender. The conflated character of race and ethnicity is evident when ethnic groups are described in racial terms or vice versa. This happens, for instance when all people from the African diasporas, although different in ethnic terms, are taken together in the racial category of ‘Blacks’ (Omi & Winant, 1986), or when all (West)Europeans are labelled ‘White’ despite ethnic variegations among them (also Van Sterkenburg & Knoppers, 2012).

When conceptualizing race and ethnicity from a cultural studies perspective, it is imperative to acknowledge that identities are constructed out of intersecting discourses. Ethnic identities interact with gender identities, and vice versa, but also with religion, sexuality, class, age, or (physical) ability. A cultural studies perspective understands gender also as a social construction that gains meaning in and through discourse. From a social constructionist perspective, gender “is not something we have or are, but something we perform, we do” (Pfister, 2010, p. 235). We thereby draw on the discourses surrounding gender that are available to us. Televised football has proven to be a central site for the (re)production of discourses surrounding race/ethnicity and gender. As the vast majority of people working in the football media are White males, football on TV predominantly (re)produces discourses from a White-situated, male perspective. Their hegemonic meanings may therefore reflect those of most White male viewers who find themselves in the ‘ideal subject position’ (Duncan & Brummett, 1993). Viewers of other ethnic backgrounds may tend to use negotiated or oppositional readings instead of preferred ones. Preferred readings accept the hegemonic discourses encoded in the media content while oppositional readings reject the hegemonic discourse. Negotiated readings blend preferred and oppositional elements (Fiske, 1987).

In sum, despite the principal openness of the television ‘text’, televised football is a site where young people in particular are confronted with possible ways of seeing themselves and

others. They are active 'bricoleurs' of the various ingredients that television offers them for the formation of discourses around difference, with some of these ingredients more easily available and more appealingly framed than others. And although televised football is not alone in offering sources for identity construction, 'its stories and narratives are particularly potent' given its popularity and the meanings it (re)produces about ethnicity and gender (Bruce, 2004, p. 863). The social power of televised football is illustrated, for instance, by the popularity of football heroes of various ethnic origins that serve as role models for ethnically diverse youth audiences (Elling, 2002).

Simultaneously, however, television can also be a source of contestation and oppositional identity formation for minority ethnic audiences. Dutch media scholar De Bruin (2005), for instance, has shown how young black and Muslim audiences oppose and criticize the representation of their peers in television drama like soap operas and crime series.

Psychological and cultural research about audiences has shown that television effects are strongest when audiences have no direct personal experience with what they see (e.g. Gamson, 1992). This is usually not the case with football; it is therefore unlikely that there will be unique and direct effects of racialized televised football on audiences, but – as the more general audience research suggests - it will function as a pivotal and inescapable (given its immense popularity) frame of reference and comparison for audiences. Audience research furthermore suggests that how such a frame operates and becomes relevant to individual identities, football experiences and participation, depends on individual and social backgrounds.

## **Chapter 4: The Dutch ethnic relations and football context<sup>4</sup>**

As one of the definitional cores of a cultural studies perspective is a focus on the context of the study, I will devote the following two chapters to a description of the Dutch and English contexts where the empirical fieldwork has been conducted. I will, in particular, discuss the Dutch and English political and football contexts in relation to race/ethnicity in some more detail.

### **Dutch political context**

Philemona Essed (2004) and Jan Rath (1991), scholars in the area of Dutch ethnic and racial relations, have marked the specificity of the Dutch discourse about race/ethnicity by stating that it is framed in terms of a variety of ethnic minorities while the majority ethnic group remains invisible. The largest ethnic minorities in Dutch society are defined as Surinam, Turkish, Moroccan and Antillean. According to governmental statistics, these ethnic groups comprise around seven percent of the total Dutch population (CBS, 2010). The social group that originates from the former Dutch East Indian colony forms another large ethnic group in The Netherlands with a colonial background (Janssens, 2005; van Sterkenburg, 2011). However, this social group generally escaped the label of ‘non-western-immigrant’ in policy discourse (see also Captain & Ghorashi, 2001). As a result, they are generally not mentioned as one of the largest minority ethnic groups in Dutch populist discourse or governmental statistics.

In addition to this categorization based on the largest ethnic groups, The Netherlands also uses a *binary* racial/ethnic categorization based on the categories of ‘allochtonen’ (foreigners/immigrants) and ‘autochtonen’ (indigenous/non-immigrants). These are unique Dutch concepts that were first used in Dutch governmental policy documents at the end of the 1980s (Captain & Ghorashi, 2001). In official governmental discourse, someone is labeled ‘allochtoon’ when one or both parents were born in another country than The Netherlands (CBS, 2010). People whose parents were both born in The Netherlands are coined ‘autochtoon’. In everyday Dutch discourse however, the terms ‘allochtonen’ and ‘autochtonen’ are conflated with

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<sup>4</sup> The description for the Netherlands is based on previous work I have produced, amongst others for UEFA and FARE (within the project *Cracking the glass ceiling*, 2012, with Steve Bradbury and Patrick Mignon).

notions of race (in terms of meanings given to skin color) and class (Captain & Ghorashi, 2001). It means that it is particularly non-White inhabitants of lower social-economic class who are labeled as ‘allochtoon’ in everyday Dutch discourse (see also Van Sterkenburg, 2011). As such, skin color and especially a Black-White divide are relevant in Dutch society to distinguish among people although this occurs in an implicit and covert way.

Since the turn of the millennium, the Dutch policy approach towards minority ethnic groups can be characterized as assimilationist, with a strong call on non-White minority ethnic groups to culturally assimilate to mainstream (White, autochthonous) norms and values. Governmental Dutch policies have become stricter and the main aim is to equip migrants with language skills and other skills to enhance their independence and self-sufficiency (d’Haenens & Bink, 2007). This assimilationist tendency does not only apply to The Netherlands but seems to be part of a wider European trend (e.g. Gilroy, 2006). Within this discourse, minority ethnic groups are relatively frequently represented as unwilling or unable to integrate fully in society. Paradoxically enough, this assimilationist discourse also dictates that the policy focus should be on general policy goals directed at social inclusion instead of on race/ethnicity specifically. This discourse is evident in sport governance where the recent trend is that anti-racism initiatives should not exist in itself but take place within broader sport policy goals, such as promotion of sport participation of *all* youth, promotion of tolerance and fair play<sup>5</sup>.

### **Dutch football context**

Dutch professional men’s football is also characterized by racial/ethnic diversity. The first minority ethnic football players came to the Netherlands during the 1950s and were from Surinam and South-African descent (Janssens, 2005). However, this multi-ethnicity was only

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<sup>5</sup> And although proponents of such an assimilationist discourse may argue that race/ethnicity is included and addressed within such broader policy goals, it can be argued just as well that ethnicity as a relevant social category is made irrelevant and erased from (sport) policy discourse as if ‘racism’ is no longer an issue in Dutch society. I would argue, therefore, that the claim made by some social critics that these broader Dutch policy goals do not actually ‘accept’ race/ethnicity or racial/ethnic minorities as a relevant category may be justified (this interesting observation comes from Patrick Gasser, in an informal reaction to a draft of this report).

temporarily and by the mid-1970s minority ethnic football players became exceptional (Janssens, 2005, p. 122). This lasted until the 1980s when the numbers of players of Surinamese origin once again increased. This was mainly due to the decolonization of the Dutch colony of Surinam in 1975 which resulted in an exodus of Surinamese people to the Netherlands. In addition, the number of players of other ethnic backgrounds also increased during the 1980s and 1990s which reflects the ethnic composition of Dutch society in general (Janssens, 2005). By the mid 1990s, the number of players with a minority ethnic background who had Dutch citizenship accounted for about 15% of the total amount of professional football players in the Netherlands (Janssens, 2005). Until today, it is especially the social group of Surinamese-Dutch players who have shaped Dutch football history being important in both Dutch club football and the Dutch national team. Also the number of professional players of Moroccan origin increased from 0% in 1990 to 5% in 2003/2004 (Van Bottenburg, 2004). The number of foreign players in Dutch professional football that do *not* have Dutch citizenship has also increased considerably during the last fifteen years, from around 13% in the 1995/1996 season to around 36% in the 2008/2009 season (Hack, 2008). This increase was mainly due to the Bosman legislation that scrapped the 'nationality clause' in professional football (Janssens, 2005; Van Sterkenburg, 2011).

So let me now take a closer look at racism in football in the Netherlands. I will make a distinction between overt, outright forms of racism on the one hand and more institutionalized forms on the other which includes racial/ethnic stereotypes expressed by the sport/football media.

### *Outright racism*

On the amateur level, racism and interethnic tensions take place during competitive matches, especially when minority football clubs are involved. Examples include racist remarks and racialized language expressed especially towards minority ethnic players. Minority ethnic football clubs sometimes complain about racist treatment, not only from their opponents but also from the part of the referee who is accused of applying double standards at the disadvantage of minority players (Janssens, 2005).

At the professional level that is always in the limelight of media attention, problems are probably less severe than in amateur football where incidents can remain anonymous (Van Sterkenburg, Janssens & Rijnen, 2005). Some incidents have been reported however. The clearest evidence can be found in the football stadiums. Things are relatively peaceful in this respect compared to the 1980s when overt racism took place by supporters throwing bananas on the pitch and making jungle noises towards Black players (Janssens, 2005). Very recently, however, overt racism has

raised its head once again when FC Den Bosch supporters made jungle noises directed at the Black North American player Altidore from football club AZ (January 2013). The main problem nowadays are probably the anti-semitic chants sung by rival supporters of the Amsterdam team of Ajax that is of alleged Jewish background. For example, the after-match celebration of the team of The Hague over Ajax Amsterdam in 2010 received much media attention. After their victory over Ajax, several The Hague players as well as their coach were involved in anti-semitic chants. This was videotaped and the people involved were suspended for one or more matches.

### *Institutional racism*

Generally speaking, however, openly racist chants are clearly less evident in the Netherlands compared to some decades ago (Van Sterkenburg, Janssens & Rijnen, 2005). More institutionalised forms of racism are however still a large problem and generally remain unaddressed (Van Sterkenburg, Janssens & Rijnen, 2005; Van Sterkenburg, 2012). Ethnic minorities are still significantly underrepresented in boardrooms and in other managerial positions within football clubs, both on the professional as on the amateur level. Minority ethnic *coaches* are underrepresented in professional as well as amateur football (Bradbury, Amara, Garcia & Bairner, 2011).

An often underestimated problem in relation to institutional forms of racism relates to media treatment of ethnicity and ethnic composition of the football media corps. The multi-ethnic character of Dutch professional football combined with its continued popularity among many Dutch people confirms the role of Dutch televised football as a platform that helps to construct everyday meanings given to race/ethnicity in the Netherlands. The overrepresentation of Whites in football organizational structures also applies to the Dutch football media. This is not unique for the Dutch context but applies to many countries worldwide. Most studies, usually conducted in the US and UK, have shown that these commentators use cultural stereotypes to describe football players (see also chapter 2). Results additionally indicate that White *audiences* often draw on a similar discourse (Van Sterkenburg & Knoppers, 2004). Previous literature suggests that White commentators and audience members themselves generally do not see or simply deny their use of racial/ethnic stereotypes (Spencer, 2004).

## **Chapter 5: The UK ethnic relations and football context<sup>6</sup>**

### **The broader context**

Taken together, 'settled' minorities, asylum and refugee communities, and economic migrants, account for around 15% of the total UK population. Overall, more than 90% of all minorities in the UK are resident in England, in contrast to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland where populations tend to be more ethnically homogenous.

Over the last 20 years, UK governments have pursued a mix of multicultural, integrationist, and assimilationist approaches to 'race relations'. The election of a centre-right coalition government has seen a significant de-prioritisation of efforts to utilise sports as a means of engaging socially and economically marginalised groups, and a general rise in the rhetoric of assimilation and the cultural 'protectionism' of majority (White) populations in the UK.

Despite the implementation of measures to promote racial equality over the last 20 years, there is a strong body of evidence to suggest that 'settled' minority and new migrant populations experience disproportionate levels of racism and discrimination. This is evidenced in the continued incidence of overt verbal and physical abuse and in the continuance of cultural stereotyping which prioritises perceived differences between dominant and minority groups. Taken together, overt, cultural and institutional forms of discrimination has limited the potential for equality of opportunities and equality of outcomes for minority populations and contributed to their general under-representation in key decision making positions in social, cultural, economic and political institutions in the UK.

Studies undertaken in the UK indicate the general under-representation of minorities as players, coaches and in leadership positions in recreational and professional sports. Minority sports coaches are under-represented within regional and national sports organisations, have fewer coaching qualifications and are less likely to be employed as full time coaches. Similarly, minorities are notable by their relative absence in senior administration or governance positions within sports organisations. Thus far, there have been only a handful of minority coaches and managers at professional clubs in the UK. There is a strong consensus

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<sup>6</sup> This part on the UK context (chapter 5) is based literally on a more extensive description by Bradbury, Hylton & Jones (2012) constructed for the FARE academic working group that the principal researcher is also part of.

amongst Black players, NGO's, and sports academics that there exists a 'glass ceiling' effect which has limited the occupational advancement across the transition from playing to coaching in the UK amongst minorities. Research suggests strong levels of under-representation of minorities in senior administrative and executive committee positions in football in the UK

### **Racism and discrimination in football**

The issue of racism in professional football in the UK first became the subject of public and academic concern in the 1970s and 1980s as a response to individual and orchestrated racist abuse emanating from fans. Racism of this kind utilised a series of racial epithets to describe and demean the growing number of Black players in the domestic game, and was also strongly associated with support for the national team where right wing ideologies chimed most obviously with historically embedded ideas around 'race', nation, and cultural exclusivity. From the late 1990s onwards, research has alluded to the multiplicity of ways in which racisms are manifest in football spectator culture. These include patterns of cultural interchange and coded discourse that takes place across white spectator formations, premised on shared racially structured antipathies and the celebration of homogenously white and racially closed birthplace localisms. More recently, these coded discourses have incorporated Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, xenophobic and sectarian sentiment targeting opposition players, fans, and minority 'stadium communities'.

During the 2011/2012 season, high profile on-field clashes between Luis Suarez and Patrice Evra and between Anton Ferdinand and John Terry has also drawn attention to the issue of player to player racism in the game. Research studies and former player narratives have suggested that overt and coded expressions of racism have been a relatively common place (but, little discussed) feature of player interaction on the field of play and within the occupational culture of the game in the UK.

Processes of cultural stereotyping have also been evident in the racialised assessments of potential minority coaches enacted by key decision makers within professional clubs. These assessments have pre-supposed the limited analytical, motivational and organisational capacities of black applicants and positioned them outside of the cultural marketplace of coaching and managerial recruitment. There is a strong sense amongst sports academics and anti-racist activists that the processes, practices, and outcomes of institutional discrimination

are especially marked with reference to the senior administrative and governance tiers of the game in the UK.

## Chapter 6: Methodology

The empirical part of my study focuses on the interpretation and reception of televised football by White and non-White British and Dutch TV-audiences. Although I realize that the labels White and non-White are gross generalizations lumping together various ethnicities within two racial categories, this was done for reasons of comparability between the Dutch and English contexts that each have their own racial/ethnic categories in everyday discourse. In addition, this dichotomy does reflect the distinction between the hegemonic racial/ethnic group (the White majority) and the various non-hegemonic racial/ethnic groups (often non-White minorities) in both countries where skin color still plays a crucial role to classify people. Moreover, many of the questions around race/ethnicity (though not all) in the interviews were about Black and White athletes since this Black-White dichotomy has proven to be very powerful in shaping racialized/ethnicized discourses in both countries, in a direct or more indirect, implicit manner (Knoppers & Elling, 1999; McCarthy et al., 2003).

My research method involves techniques aimed at uncovering audience discourses surrounding race/ethnicity and gender based on televised football. This means that I used a grounded theory design in which I built my understanding of the research topic in an iterative, bottom up cycle of data. I collected data through ethnographically inspired methods, in particular focus groups. Fitzgerald (2012) found that focus groups “open up the possibilities for participants to listen to the views of others, consider their position, share with the group and debate the perspectives articulated (p. 247). Such interviews are considered an adequate way to learn about differentiated subtleties of people’s engagement with television (Ang & Hermes, 1996; Müller, 2011). The choice for a collective interview is also based on the assumption that such group discussions reflect as closely as possible the everyday *TV talk* about football as a site of social interaction (Ang & Hermes, 1996; Müller, 2011). *TV talk* refers to the fact that televised football programs have become social events that are talked about before, during and after the viewing. Respondents are asked to reflect on the football stars, on the qualities/characteristics that typify these players, and to value those qualities in relation to the athletes’ careers. This elicited *TV talk* which gives insight into televised football as a socio-cultural site through which male and female youth of various ethnic origins give meaning to hegemonic discourses surrounding race/ethnicity and gender.

In total twenty focus group interviews with male and female viewers form the empirical basis

for this report (15-31 years) spread across White and non-White audience groups in England and the Netherlands (see table 1). The White audience groups consist of respondents who see themselves as belonging to the White majority ethnic group in their country. The non-White audience groups consist of a variety of minority ethnic groups and includes respondents who label themselves Black-Caribbean or Black British (in England) or Indonesian-Dutch, Turkish-Dutch, Jamaican-Dutch, Egypt-Dutch or Thai-Dutch (in the Dutch sample). Of the twenty focus group interviews, eleven have been conducted in England and nine in the Netherlands. Each focus group consisted of three to five persons, most of these groups were mixed in terms of race/ethnicity and gender but some were not (see tables 2a and 2b). The Dutch interviews have been conducted by MA-students in a course titled *Audience and reception* which was coordinated and guided by the principal researcher of this project (Nov 2012-Feb 2013). The English interviews were all conducted by the principal researcher himself during scholarly visits (October 2012). While the Dutch interviews took place across the Netherlands in different places, the English interviews took place in Croydon and Uxbridge, two areas just outside London which are quite distinct from each other in terms of social class and ethnic composition. English respondents came *originally* from all over England or from other countries, and this also applied to the Dutch respondents. This guaranteed regional spread of the respondent samples. Dutch interviewees were generally recruited through students' personal contacts, the English respondents were recruited at Brunel University and Croydon College.

**Table 1. Total number of interviewees**

Race/Ethnicity	White-Dutch	Non-White Dutch	White-British	Non-White British	Total
Interviewees	24	12	21	23	80

**Table 2a. British focus groups along the lines of gender and ethnicity**

Focus group	Gender	Ethnicity
1	M	Non-White British
1	F	Non-White British
1	F	White British

2	M	White British
3	F	White British
3	F	Non-White British
3	F	White British
3	F	White British
3	F	Non-White British
4	M	Non-White British
4	M	White-British
4	M	Non-White British
5	F	White British
5	F	White British
5	F	Non-White British
5	F	Non-White British
5	M	White British
6	M	Non-White British
6	F	Non-White British
6	M	Non-White British
6	M	White British
7	M	Non-White British
7	M	Non-White British
7	M	Non-White British
7	M	Non-White British
8	M	Non-White British

8	M	White British
8	M	Non-White British
9	M	Non-White British
9	M	White British
9	F	White British
9	F	Non-White British
9	M	White British
10	M	Non-White British
10	M	Non-White British
10	M	White British
10	F	Non-White British
11	M	White-British
11	M	White British
11	M	Non-White British
<b>M = 29 / F = 15</b>		<b>WB = 21 / NWB = 23</b>

**Table 2b. Dutch focus groups along the lines of gender and ethnicity**

Focus group	Gender	Ethnicity
1	M	Non-White Dutch
1	M	Non-White Dutch
1	F	Non-White Dutch
1	F	Non-White Dutch
2	M	White Dutch
2	M	Non-White Dutch
2	F	White Dutch
2	F	White Dutch

3	F	Non-White Dutch
3	M	White Dutch
3	M	Non-White Dutch
4	F	White Dutch
4	M	White Dutch
4	F	White Dutch
4	M	White Dutch
4	M	White Dutch
5	M	White Dutch
5	M	White Dutch
5	M	Non-White Dutch
6	M	White Dutch
6	M	Non-White Dutch
6	M	White Dutch
7	F	Non-White Dutch
7	F	White Dutch
8	F	Non-White Dutch
8	M	White-Dutch
8	F	White-Dutch
8	F	White Dutch
9	M	Non-White Dutch
9	F	White Dutch
9	M	White Dutch
9	F	White Dutch

9	M	White Dutch
	M = 19/ F = 17	WD = 24 / NWD= 12

### Data analysis

The semi-structured interviews (see Appendix for the topic list) were literally transcribed and analyzed by the principal researcher<sup>7</sup>. The analysis of these qualitative, textual data (transcriptions) followed a bottom-up procedure, working from broad coding categories to more refined ones (Boeije, 2010). First, the data were analyzed by a search for emerging themes and patterns. The end result of this open coding process are numerous labels that represent the interview data. In this study, the various labels were additionally specified 'White' or 'non-White' to indicate whether they originated with respondents who could be labeled White or non-White. After the open coding phase, the various labels were compared in order to reduce their number. Labels that were similar in content were brought together under more encompassing themes that were compared with each other to explore their variation. This expanded the density of the analysis and finally resulted in an overview of the data with only a limited number of abstract themes/discourses that covered the data (selective coding) (see also Van Sterkenburg, 2012, unpublished FIFA report). These themes or dominant discourses within the data will be presented in the following chapter.

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<sup>7</sup> The English interviews were analyzed by Rens Peeters (MA student at Utrecht University) under the supervision of the principal researcher.

## **Chapter 7: Results Dutch interviews**

The following two chapters present the main findings from the interviews with the Dutch (chapter 7) and English interviewees. Both chapters are structured around the same themes: ‘discourses around race/ethnicity and nation’, ‘gender’ and ‘football commentary’.

### **Discourses surrounding race/ethnicity and nation**

Respondents associated different countries with different playing styles which seemed often based on widely held national stereotypes. The German footballers were seen as being gründlich, Latin Americans passionate and ‘dancing on the field’, and the English being physically strong, robust defenders. Some more negative traits were mentioned as well; Brazilians were mentioned as very good football players but lacking in team cooperation. This squares with previously documented globalized (media) stereotypes regarding Latin American players as passionate but also egocentric although some studies have found that Brazilians sometimes manage to escape those specific stereotypes (Van Sterkenburg, Knoppers & De Leeuw, 2012). The Spanish were seen, on the other hand, as technically skilled *and* as good team players. In other words, they were seen as good in both aspects of the game, something that may be based on their hegemony in international football at the time of the research.

Just like national playing styles, meanings given to race/ethnicity in the interviews were also often based on widely circulating hegemonic discourses surrounding race/ethnicity. A common statement made by interviewees was that Black players are naturally stronger and faster than White players. Not surprisingly given the dominance of Black people in sprint, respondents often made the association between Black people and sprint as well. The perception of Black athletes as good sprinters may also have had an impact on the perception towards Black footballers as fast players. Some respondents explained the perceived natural physical power of Black players by a reference to slavery and/or a history of physical labor; as Black people have done manual labor for centuries, it is not surprising (in the respondents’ view) that traces of that are still visible in their physique.

[...] In Africa, if you have been born there, previous generations have done physical labor. So you are born with different body sizes over there. And if you start to practice

and train, you progress rapidly. As you say, it is just genetic, it is the built.

Their perceived superior *natural* physique leads some respondents to associate Black footballers with animalistic characteristics. One respondent talked, for instance, about the Black Ivory Coast player Bony as a 'Beast'.

Connected to this physicality discourse is the *mentality discourse* that some respondents drew on and that stated that Black players are lacking in tactical qualities, football insights and rationality. Black players were described, for instance, as not so smart in the field, and as 'making dumb fouls'. Some additionally described Black people as less in control of themselves and aggressive. As Hall (1995) has argued, these ascribed characteristics fit within the 'grammar of race' through which many people in the West think and speak about Black people and in which Black people are often seen as primitive and violent (Hall, 1995). This grammar of race is also visible when Black players are associated with being 'pure' and as representing a specific kind of masculinity:

That man [Ivory Coast footballer Wilfried Bony] is just pure...he is just pure! If you see that man he is just one piece of muscles; that man expresses a certain kind of masculinity.

Even though this discourse around Black people/athletes as physically strong and mentally unstable was quite dominant in the interviews, a few respondents also challenged this discourse. They did so by associating White instead of Black players with physicality (like Zlatan Ibrahimovic), by arguing that Black players are not better 'natural' athletes than Whites, or by discrediting the idea that White players are stronger than Black players in terms of their mentality. Overall, it is also worth noting that respondents talked more about Black players than White players; Whites remained relatively invisible in the interviews. And *if* respondents talked about Whites in football it was mostly in a positive way; White players were seen to play at central positions in the field due to their good tactical insights; Whites were also seen as having more endurance than Black people.

#### *Other discourses*

Apart from these discourses around physicality and mentality, respondents sometimes also drew on other discourses to give meaning to race/ethnicity in professional football. Most

notably, an economic discourse was used to explain the many Black people in professional football. Respondents argued that football may be the only way out for many Black young people who live in a marginalized position. Therefore, it may not be so surprising that relatively many of the Black players invest much energy in playing sport and/or football and that relatively many of them become top players. An economic discourse also included comments about Black people working/training harder than Whites as they have to bring in money for their family back home. Here we see that an economic discourse is combined with a hard work theme. A cultural discourse was also used occasionally, for example to explain the overrepresentation of Black people in sprint by pointing to the national culture where Black top athletes come from and where sprinting is a major sport.

Some other racial/ethnic groups than the Black and White categories have been discussed as well in the interviews although most talk has been about Blacks and Whites. Players of Moroccan origin were mentioned as being ego-centric while Asian football players were discussed as too frail to be good football players. Despite being technically skilled, disciplined and eager to learn, their lack of physical strength could not make them good football players according to most of the respondents.

Those Asian [football] teams are not very good. But the national team, they are surprisingly good. There are only small players in the team, so they loose everything because they lack physical strength. But they are actually super fast, they are small and everything they do is based on their technique. They have those quick feet so they are technically very skilled [...] But they will always loose because they lack physical power.

### *Identifications*

In the interviews, respondents were also asked about their favorite players. In general, respondents favored in particular those players that are acknowledged as global superstars in football. Race/ethnicity of the players was usually irrelevant for respondents' identification with players. Messi was mentioned regularly in this respect as well as the entire team of Barcelona. Some non-White respondents, however, did mention ethnicity of players as an important criterium for their support, and were particularly interested in global stars who shared their ethnic background. Some Turkish Dutch respondents, for instance, favored the Turkish-German player Özil (Real Madrid); this example also indicates that more than the

country where these respondents lived it was the shared ethnic roots that provided them with a resource to feel connected with a player. Contrary to these Turkish-Dutch respondents, White respondents did not mention such connectedness based on ethnicity or race. Many of them reported to feel connected to the Dutch national football team, but this was for many of them mainly because of the ‘party atmosphere’ that usually surround the matches of the Dutch national team; ‘you should make a party out of it’ . Minority non-White respondents did not emphasize the importance of a party atmosphere to that extent; while some felt connected to the Dutch team, others did not.

Respondents were also asked about their opinions on racial/ethnic diversity in the national team. It appeared that for the majority of the respondents (both White and non-White,) racial/ethnic composition of the team was irrelevant for their support and/or feelings of connectedness with the team. Some White and non-White interviewees argued, however, they would identify less with a team which would only consist of Dutch non-White players, in particular if they do not speak the Dutch language very well.

## **Gender**

In general, the respondents reported to watch women’s football only rarely or not at all. They generally spoke about women’s football in derogatory terms; Repeatedly, the respondents argued that women’s football is of lesser quality than the men’s, it is not entertaining and is slower, some even stated that women’s football ‘does not make sense’ as football is a men’s sport. The assumption that football is inherently and traditionally a men’s sport was widespread among all respondents. Football was seen as a men’s game, this applied to players, coaches and commentators. Some argued that football requires power and power, they said, is something which belongs to men rather than women. An underlying assumption in respondents’ statements about women’s football was often that football requires qualities that are typical for males such as toughness and not caring about appearance. Some stated that men also like to show off more and, as a result of that, men’s football is more entertaining than women’s football.

Football is also a bit about doing some tricks. I have the impression that men really show off a bit and women do not do that. They just want to score that goal and that’s it.

Some respondents additionally stated that women do not have enough courage during the game and consequently do not learn to play as well as the men. At the same time, women

who *do* play football were not seldom qualified as homosexual/lesbian or too manly. In line with this were remarks that football is not feminine, which was then often contrasted with a sport like hockey which was seen as suited for women.

Occasionally, the hegemonic discourse around women as poor football players was challenged. One respondent stated, for instance, that women ‘see’ the game better and can thus be stronger than men when it comes to tactics; theoretically, this respondent argued, women footballers may therefore become better football players in the future. Furthermore, one respondent appreciated women’s football because the women footballers just stand up when being tackled contrary to the men who start complaining and will keep rolling over the ground. Such remarks, which speak relatively positively about women’s football, were extremely rare in the Dutch interviews, however. This may explain why respondents generally did not find it problematic that women’s football is only rarely shown on TV. Some acknowledged that women’s football gets only marginal attention but they expressed a certain understanding for this given the poor quality of women’s football (in their perception). In line with this is their argument they would not start watching women’s football more if the media would pay more attention to it.

Not surprisingly given these qualifications, respondents generally rejected the possibility of mixed gender football. The main objection they expressed towards mixed gender football was the perceived physical difference between male and female footballers which was seen as just too wide. Therefore, they argued, the level of play in the men’s game remains too distant (superior) from that of the women’s game. Interestingly enough, one of the respondents argued that his opinion towards mixed gender football might have been different if football would have always been a mixed sport. This reflects statements by some other respondents who mention sports like hockey and korfbal as sports that could actually be played within mixed teams. In The Netherlands, these are sports that are usually seen as gender-neutral in the popular imagination; Korfbal is one of the very few sports that are practiced in mixed teams while both men’s and women’s hockey is often screened on Dutch TV. It seems to indicate that the traditional gendered structure and image of sport also influences individual discourses.

### **Media commentary**

As said before, a general trend in the interviewees’ opinions about televised football is that women’s football gets very little media attention. In addition, some respondents argued that

women's football is described and represented as inferior to the men's game. Respondents acknowledge that this may be dissatisfying for women footballers themselves or for fans of women's football. In that sense, the coverage of women's football needs improvement according to some of the interviewees. At the same time, however, the respondents stated they do not care too much as they do not watch women's football anyway. In addition, some respondents argued they can understand and accept that women's football is marginalized by the media; after all they themselves (the respondents) see women's football as less entertaining than the men's game as well. Some of the respondents do think, however, that this may change in the future when performances and results from the women's teams will improve; Women's football will then become more popular and commentators will start treating women's football more seriously.

When it comes to media coverage of race/ethnicity, meanings of respondents were quite mixed. About half of the respondents argued that the football media were not racially/ethnically biased at all, and that they have never noticed any bias. The other half argued that commentators represent Black players differently than White players using hegemonic stereotypes which link Black players/athletes to physicality and White player/athletes to mental skills and rationality. A similar statement was made about players of Moroccan origin; the football media describe them as aggressive which squares with the hegemonic discourse regarding Moroccan-Dutch people in the mainstream media. However, most of the respondents *also* believed at the same time that these racialized/ethnicized discourses may reflect reality; in other words, these respondents were aware of the fact that the media may use stereotypes around Black players as naturally fast or Moroccan-Dutch players as aggressive, but they also argued these stereotypes may just be true, just like the discourse that states that Whites may be more rational and mentally stable than Blacks. Other respondents challenged this view and argued that the football media apply stereotypes too easily and construct a false reality based on hegemonic racialized assumptions. Some respondents also realized that most people working in the (Dutch) football media are White males and that that might have an impact on the use of White-situated stereotypes on the non-White Other that are consequently internalized by viewers.

## **Chapter 8: Results English interviews<sup>8</sup>**

### **Discourses surrounding race/ethnicity and nation**

Practically all students argued, in more or less explicit terms, that countries display different playing styles. There seemed to be a consensus on the English style of play which is characterized as being very physical (rough, hard), static and rigid in its formations, but quick, and the emphasis is less on skills and technique and more on getting the job done for the team. The typical English players that are often named by the respondents are illustrative of this style. John Terry is one of those players, aptly described by a black male student as being “mister England”. Terry was characterized as not being afraid to go into a challenge, someone that doesn’t shy out of tackles and will put “himself in line” for the team and the win. Wayne Rooney and Steven Gerrard are two other players that were perceived as being typical English by playing a fast and physical form of football and excelling in teamwork.

The English playing style was also being characterized in opposition to the Spanish style of football. As one female respondent remarked on the difference between the English and Spanish style of play: “Compared to them, they're more skillful.” Spain was often connected with terms like agility, fluency, technique and especially the quick passing game of Barcelona that some English clubs, like Arsenal, try to imitate. Some respondents believed that the English football culture isn’t appreciative of skills and technique, because “it’s seen as showboating” and that’s also the reason for a few respondents to call English football single-minded and boring. Latin American players and teams also play with more freedom and generally like to show off their skills, according to some of the respondents.

#### *Natural physicality*

Irrespective of their ethnicity or gender, a majority of the respondents used a natural physicality discourse to evaluate Black football players and differentiate them from other ethnicities. Some of the respondents also used this discourse to explain the apparent over-representation of Black players in attacking and winger positions. Black players were often

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<sup>8</sup> Chapter 8 is written by Rens Peeters (MA student at Utrecht University) within the framework of his MA thesis, under supervision of Jacco van Sterkenburg who is the principal researcher within the present study. Van Sterkenburg has conducted the interviews himself (October 2012).

seen as possessing a strong physique and being naturally fast. Most of time, a general statement was made to explain this difference, as the following reasoning by a black female student makes clear:

[...] but the Black people are more often the ones with the power and the speed in order to like progress up the pitch. [...]. They've got the quick feet, they've got like the speed to get in behind the back four and I think you do see that an awful lot.

Sometimes, an explicit connection was made with a genetic advantage among Black players. One Black female student stated: “They are sprinters. They have like the fastest muscle fibers and can run.” One ethnically diverse group of male students explained the physical difference by pointing out that Black and White players have different eating patterns:

If you see in England, they like based in chips, and everything. Yes, so that's why you see most English players, like they're still strong, but they look slim. They can still play good football, but when you see lots of black guys, they're big and everything, because obviously when they go home, they eat properly. They eat proper food.

The natural physicality discourse was refuted by some of the respondents. A group consisting of male students and a mixed gender group with different ethnic backgrounds did so explicitly. One male participant remarked: “I think it has been a big thing for a long time, like about Black players have supposedly a genetic advantage of being quick. I think that stereotype just carries.” This stereotype is so ingrained in modern football that it has a big influence on where players are positioned on the pitch, one group of students argued. Besides, this stereotype wouldn't hold up on closer inspection as most Black players wouldn't conform to this stereotype of being big and physical. A similar reasoning was found in other groups whereby stereotypes instilled in coaches or scouts about Black players was seen as part of the reason for the over-representation of Black players in attacking and winger positions. A smaller portion of the respondents believed that positions would ultimately come down to the fact of which player has the best attributes for that specific position. Another portion of the respondents believed that this correlation between positions and ethnicity was no longer valid or would over time disappear.

White or Asian players were almost never described in terms of a natural physique. The exception here being the typical English players such as Terry and Rooney mentioned earlier, but in these instances the White players were spoken about in a manner that directly associated them with the typical style of play of the English national team.

### *Mental discourses*

A second, less dominant, discourse that was used in some groups involved the evaluation of players on the basis of mental capacities. In a few instances, this discourse was linked to the positions taken up in the field by players of different ethnic backgrounds. Several respondents used a mental discourse to evaluate White players. First of all, White players were described in terms of having a good “perception” or overall view of the pitch. As one White male explains: “Paul Scholes he is always vision and what he can do with the ball, like the way he spreads the ball across 60 yard passes. Those are the same with Rooney as well.” A few Black male students that adopted this discourse thought that this could be the reason for the apparent over-representation of White players in the controlling positions of the game, such as central midfield or central backs. These same students also gave a different explanation for the fact that Black players are almost never seen in defending positions or as a goalkeeper. The reason behind this, the students remarked, was that Black players want to be “the star of the show”, and the people who get in the “limelight” are usually the one’s that make the goals. Furthermore, White players were more often related with characteristics such as teamwork and were frequently mentioned as being good role models with examples such as David Beckham and Paul Scholes being named. Nonetheless, there were also some students that used a mental discourse to describe Black players in a different way. A quote from a White female student provides a case in point:

The people that are not English put a hell of a lot more effort into the game, because they actually want to be there. [...]. So if you like think Drogba, he sends pretty much half of his wages back to his country, to help them out. So he appreciates the fact that he is playing at a high level of football.

Another student stated that Drogba possessed leadership qualities and is someone other players would look up to. In a different group interview, the black player Yaya Touré was described as a hard worker that earned his central midfield position because of this commitment to his job.

### *Under-representation of Asians*

Students agreed that the group of Asian footballers active in English football is substantially smaller when compared with other ethnic groups. Although different explanations were given to account for this hiatus, the dominant argument was of a cultural order. Asians, by which was usually meant people of Indian and Pakistani background, were seen as not being interested that much in football and instead more readily take up a sport like cricket. A statement made by a Black male student on this topic was exemplary for this discourse:

Because, like say, in their own country, they...in India they play cricket. So, when Indian families come over to England...even if the child grows up in England, they're going to play cricket. Because that's what their parents or the whole family has been into.

Some argued that this tendency had the result of there not being as many Asian role models in footballs which kids could look up to. Religion (Hindu and Islam) was named by some respondents as being another factor, because children would have to attend a religious gathering after school rather than play football with their friends. A third explanation that was provided, focused on the fact that English scouts don't really scout for Asians. Asians would play in their own leagues according to some students, and these leagues were generally unknown to the larger public. Some students argued that Asians were stereotyped as not being able to play proper football or that they were seen as physically weak. A variation on this third argument was found in a male focus group, where the students argued that Asians simply didn't like the English style of football and thus stayed in their own countries.

### *Identification: Quality overrides ethnicity*

A large majority of Black and White students mentioned that a player's ethnic background is irrelevant for the degree of support or identification. Respondents contended that the best players should always play, regardless of their skin color or their ethnic background. Identification with a player would probably rest on their respective ability or style of playing. Students who adopted this discourse would either state that an all-Black or all-White team wouldn't affect their identification or support, while other stated that a mixed team was preferable, because there would be different playing styles and traits present. A diverse team would be able to gather more support as one white male explains: "A lot of football fans have

a favorite player and it's usually someone they can identify with.” This diversity would also improve the overall quality of a team.

An interesting argument that often accompanied this dominant discourse was one where students stated that either the media and/or the general public would strongly react to a team consisting only of Black or White players, while they themselves wouldn't have a problem with it. A female student used the example of her home-town to sketch out such a scenario: “I just couldn't imagine Norwich having all Black, like all Black players in the football team. Not that I have a problem with it, but I know that it would be really strange. I think it would be shocking.”

#### *National team represents a country*

This discourse was much less used by students. One ethnically diverse group said that “because if the nation is mixed I would expect to see a mixture” and that because England has many different ethnicities, the national team will always consist of a set of players with different backgrounds. A group with Black students would feel a bit “uncomfortable” seeing an English team with only White players, as they would view it as being done on purpose. These respondents also perceived England as being a country that predominantly consists of White people. An all-Black national team would in their view thus be much more of an issue in society. This thought was echoed in another male group, who explicitly made clear that a national team made up of only Black or White players would bring back “segregation” and would lead to an uprising in racial abuse.

#### **Gender**

Although it's difficult to single out a dominant discourse regarding gender amongst the English respondents, a slight majority of them tend to view football as a masculine activity. Irrespective on their outlook on football, most students agreed on the fact that men are inherently stronger than women. For most respondents, this is also the main reason that mixed gender teams will probably never happen as the physical difference between men and women is just too big to justify such an undertaking. An argument put forward by a Black male student further illustrates this point:

You know, the males, the males bodies are stronger. Their bodies are stronger. The female's legs will get broken, if men never held back when they're playing each other.

Some of the respondents said that mixed teams would “ruin football”, thereby identifying football as a physical contact sport. There was however also a different discourse that was, with a few exceptions, primarily used by female students to argue that mixed teams would be interesting in that it would improve the quality of the female players by increasing the competitiveness of the game. Besides the physical difference, some of the respondents also pointed to mental differences between men and women as a reason why football is masculine. As one white male respondent observed: “Whereas females still have that, kind of... In a way when you are older you have that maternal instinct, so you don't want to hurt anyone.” One male student stated that “you don't expect a woman to be aggressive” as it's not a trait that he would normally associate with femininity.

A slight majority, a group comprised mostly by male students, found men's football to be more entertaining than women's football, because the game is played on a superior level. Men's football was viewed as always being better and “more exciting” compared to women's football where “the quality of the football is not as good as in the man's game.” The concept of quality was in most cases being constructed along the same lines. Respondents argued that women's football has a slower pace and the female footballers are frequently described as being less technical and skillful than their male counterparts. Some respondents just stated that they find it boring, while others go further as the following comment from a Black male student illustrates: “[...] they're [women] not really meant to play. They're not skilled enough.” The students that used this discourse would only watch women's football if it was entertaining enough, meaning that the female players should to some extent possess the same qualities as displayed in the men's game.

By contrast, a slightly smaller group that largely consisted of female students also explicitly connected men's football to entertainment, but insisted that this wasn't necessarily a positive thing. The reasoning behind this is explained by one female student that points to the fact that men's football is “all about the media” and that women's football is actually “all about the football.” Male footballers were deemed to “play up to the cameras” and when they get fouled, they would also make a fuss about it. A female student discussing this topic said that: “If they get fouled, they roll around on the floor, wasting time. But everyone, likes it, enjoys that part of it.” While on the other hand, women's football was seen as containing a lot less

“drama”. When a female player gets fouled, she would be “up and ready to go again” making the game “flow more”.

In a female group a discourse was found where ethnicity and gender intersected. The female students remarked that there was far less racism in women’s football. This was explained in a twofold manner. The first explanation was that in general the crowd attending a women’s football match are very small. The second argument was that women are more emotional and “feel for the play more” and racist abuse resides at the opposite end of the emotional spectrum.

In some cases an economic or cultural discourse was used to explain why women’s football has a hard time gaining ground. The economic discourse, used by males and females, focused on the fact that there’re almost no sponsors and thus the game is barely funded.

Consequently, women don’t have the best facilities to train or play. An example of this was given by a female student that discussed the fact that the Arsenal ladies team can’t play in the Arsenal stadium. Another aspect that was mentioned is that most of the female players have normal jobs as they don’t get paid enough to rely solely on their income from football activities.

The cultural discourse focused on the way males got more opportunities to play football from a young age onward as structured in society’s institutions and societal norms and values. A female student remarked: “Boys do their sports, girl do their sports. So, it is kind of how you are brought up in education. That also impacts on what happens.” This was also put forward as the reason why there resides more quality in men’s football, as there is far more competition between players. The students of one all-male group argued that they don’t know many girls who like football and that women who play football were most likely heavily influenced by the males in their family. As one student remarked: “Because you have to be very butch. Not even butch, but you just have to be very male oriented to like football as a girl.”

## **Media commentary**

### *Men’s football is the norm in coverage*

All respondents, irrespective of their gender or race, acknowledged that women’s football gets less coverage than men’s football and that only big international and cup final games are

shown on television. When women's football is on television, there's hardly any advertising to promote the game and it's shown on what some of the respondents named as obscure channels. The dominant discourse here is that men's football is the norm in the media. In a female focus group, a Black-British respondent claimed that in general "women aren't portrayed in the media as doing sport." Male and female respondents also stated that the commentary in a female match was often less exciting and that commentators were less critical on mistakes made by female players and thus don't take women's football as serious. One Black-British male described it in the following manner:

It seems that sometimes commentators they don't take the women's game as serious when they're commentating. So it's kind of 'aaah she made a mistake,' like I don't know... It's not the same commentating, it's completely different.

A Black-British male blamed the media for being "sexist in a way" by heavily favoring male football. Some female respondents argued that the reinforcement of typical gender stereotypes by the media would also be a reason that mixed teams wouldn't work. This prioritization of the male by the media was also witnessed by male and female students in the case of the commentator Andy Gray who made a negative remark about a female linesman. A few students also noticed that female commentators in men's football are scarce.

A contradictory discourse that was used in two focus groups that largely consisted of male respondents contended that there wasn't any difference in the commentary on women and men's football. Both groups still conformed to the view that men's football receives more coverage and gets talked about more. Nearly all groups agreed on the fact that women's football could and should get a lot more coverage and that this would probably increase its popularity. A few male respondents digressed from this by stating that female football just isn't a viable commodity and that more coverage would probably not change its popularity.

#### *Commentators are neutral regarding ethnicity*

The large majority of respondents claimed that commentators don't make any difference between ethnicities or races during a match. In most groups the argument was posited that commentators actively reflect what happens on the pitch and that ethnicity isn't a focal point. As a White British women noted: "I think mainly during commentating it all focuses on individual players' performance, rather than where that player comes from." In two groups

this seeming neutrality of commentators was explained by pointing to the fact that commentators would be prone to a backlash in the media if they made remarks about someone's race or ethnic background.

Opposite this dominant discourse, a discourse was found in which respondents pointed out that the media do indeed stereotype players based on their ethnic or racial background. This discourse was mostly used by male, Black and White, participants and highlighted the fact the media would associate Black players with physical qualities and White players with technical abilities. This claim was on some occasions followed by the argument that these kinds of observations do have some basis in reality, but are usually put forward as "massive blanket statements," as one Black participant notes. Another prevalent discourse was that the (White) English players got more support in the English media. This is among other things evident in the fact that most participants, mostly Black students, believed that the Uruguayan Luis Suarez got more slack in the British press than the England defender John Terry, whereby both have been involved in two separate cases of racial abuse. Another claim made by some Black and White students was that the English media tends to focus on a lack of English players in club team. One White male student describes it in the case of Arsenal: "[...] but there was a lot of bad press about actually. It's an English team that's not fielding English players." A few male students claimed that the media would also emphasize attempts at diving and faking by non-British players, while ignoring those same actions when done by British players.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

*“If you close your eyes and listen, you can tell whether a commentator is discussing a White or Black athlete. When he [sic] says somebody is a ‘natural’, so fluid and graceful, you know he’s talking about a black performer. When you hear this other guy’s a hard worker, or that he comes to play every day in the strength of guts and intelligence, you know that the player in question is White. Just open your eyes.”*

*“In sports journalism, performances of Black athletes are often described in terms of natural ability or genetic athletic capabilities. If a White athlete performs well, journalists often explain this by a reference to hard work, intellect or perseverance.”*

The quotations above come from an academic (Campbell, 1995 in: Hylton, 2009, p.83, 84) and an experienced Dutch sport/football commentator (Mart Smeets, 1990 in: Koster, 1990, p. 2,3). Although both statements have been expressed some time ago already, we can see that their observations are still highly relevant today. This is evident, first of all, from the numerous content analyses on the sport media that have confirmed the construction of a naturalized difference between Black and White athletes (Hylton, 2009; Rada & Wulfemeyer, 2005). Second, it is also evident from the relatively small body of research that has focused on sport media audiences (e.g. Buffington & Fraley, 2008; McCarthy et al, 2003; Van Sterkenburg & Knoppers, 2004). The present study falls within this last category and addresses the urgent call for more research on audience consumptions and interpretations of racialized/ethnicized sport media content.

One of the main findings of the present study is that racialized mindsets are still dominant even in an era which generally discredits talk about racial difference and instead talks about cultural difference, ‘multiculturalism’ and Islam (Essed & Trienekens, 2008; Piller, 2011). A *natural physicality discourse* which associates Black athletes with natural physical strength and power was dominant among both British and Dutch, White and non-White audience members. It reveals once again the persistent and deep rooted character of an association of Black people with physicality and athleticism (also Coakley & Pike, 2009; Hermes, 2005). Respondents in the present research sometimes combined this natural physicality discourse with a *mentality discourse* which has as an underlying assumption that Black athletes are mentally more unstable and less intelligent than White players. White players were, for example, seen as having the tactical and leadership capacities to be positioned at central

positions in the field (the 'nr 10' position) contrary to Black players who were associated more often with other traits such as their quickness. There were also contradictions to this pattern, and there were some differences between the English and the Dutch interviewees; whereas the Dutch spoke quite explicitly about mentality of Black players in derogatory terms, the English players usually made a Black-White difference by evaluating the mentality of White players positively. In both cases, however, respondents seemed to draw on a Brain-Brawn discourse that frames Blacks as physically superior and Whites as tactically and mentally superior. Several scholars have shown that this Brain-Brawn divide can be traced back to the time of colonialism and slavery when Black people were associated with physicality, savagery, animality while White people were seen as civilized and intellectually superior and destined to educate and civilize Black people (Piller, 2011). Even though this centuries old discourse is generally discredited in modern day societies, it still seems to linger on in postcolonial societies like England and the Netherlands, in particular in and through the domain of sport with its emphasis on physical excellence. The present study confirms this and thereby strengthens Carrington's (2002) statement that an emphasis on Black physicality remains deeply inscribed in contemporary Western culture, thereby forwarding 'colonial discourses about the colonial Other in the post/colonial present' (p. 3). As argued already earlier in this report, such one sided representations of race and ethnicity in the sporting context can have meaning and consequences far beyond the boundaries of the sporting world itself, for instance in framing unconscious thinking about racial/ethnic groups in nonathletic situations such as hiring individuals in the governmental, business or academic worlds (Rada & Wulfemeyer, 2005). Especially in contemporary Western postcolonial contexts like the Dutch or English where mental capacities are generally seen as more important to achieve a social career than athletic and physical qualities, this racialized Brain-Brawn distinction mainly works to reinforce the status quo in which Black people may be the stars on the sport field but where the real power in terms of the decision making positions both within and outside the field of sport remains with White people belonging to the majority ethnic group. This applies to the football *media* as well where commentators, editors, analysts are still predominantly White males (Coakley & Pike, 2009). Given the massive popularity of televised football, these editors and commentators have much power to shape and reinforce hegemonic discourses surrounding race/ethnicity. This is not to say that racial emancipatory progress cannot come from White dominated football institutions such as the football media, after all "it would be too simplistic to think of all people who are usually labeled White as belonging to a 'unified and racist ruling class' (Hall, 1995, p. 20). Having said this, however,

White dominated institutions – and White people in general – have been reported to find it difficult to see their own whiteness and to be aware of how their ideas around racial difference incorporate hegemonic stereotypes that socially disadvantage and exclude ethnic minorities (Essed & Trienekens, 2008; Hylton, 2009). One of my suggestions would therefore be to help increase self-awareness among White people, including White football media workers, about the racialized discourses they may use (often unconsciously) and increase their self reflexivity on the wider societal consequences of those discourses. This suggestion would not only apply to football media workers but also to football media *audiences*. After all, the present research shows that only a thin line seems to exist for White media-users between acknowledging that the sport media may use stereotypes around Black players on the one hand and accepting these stereotypes on the other. In general, respondents were not aware of the wider consequences such racial stereotyping may have for unequal relations of power in society at large.

### **Gender**

Besides a focus on race/ethnicity, there was another social dimension that received much attention in the interviews; gender. From the interviews, it appears that the vast majority of respondents viewed football primarily as a masculine activity. This may not be surprising as football on TV is a highly gendered cultural practice that is based on gender-coded premises; The emphasis on stereotypical male characteristics such as force, physical strength, aggressive behaviour, mental ‘toughness’ and the giving and taking of pain makes football coverage a powerful site for (re)constructions of hegemonic masculinity inviting readings that perpetuate a gender hierarchy (Duncan & Brummett, 1993; Lines, 2000). Both English and Dutch respondents perceived women’s football generally as less entertaining and of less quality than the men’s game. A *physicality discourse* and a *mentality discourse* could be identified here as well; on the one hand, the (perceived) poor quality of women’s football was explained by a reference to women’s physical weakness compared to men’s physical strength. At the same time women footballers were seen as less courageous and less aggressive in the field than males. Respondents drew on these discourses to justify their claim that football is a men’s sport. This view towards football was pronounced even more explicitly in the Dutch than in the English interviews. Some Dutch respondents stated, for instance, that women’s football is un-feminine, and associated Dutch footballers with being half-manly and lesbian. A few interviewees used counterarguments favouring (aspects of) women’s football over that of men’s (see the Results section). These types of comments were

very scarce, however.

The role the media play in these gendered understandings of football can probably not be underestimated. The male dominated football media have historically been using gender stereotypes that trivialised women's footballing performances (Bradbury, Hylton & Jones, 2011). Usually, the women's game is positioned as novel, recreational, and less worthy than the men's game, this applies both to the UK and the Netherlands (Bradbury, Hylton & Jones, 2011). Respondents in the interviews generally acknowledged that the football media trivialise women's football in both quantitative (very little coverage) as qualitative (derogatory stereotypes) terms. As a result, British and Dutch interviewees were quite critical of the football media's role in this regard. Dutch respondents in particular, however, *also* expressed an understanding for the media's marginalization of women's football since they also thought of women's football as less attractive, less entertaining and of less quality compared to the men's game.

## **Chapter 10: Recommendations and contribution to football and UEFA**

The present study has societal and cultural significance for policy makers and stakeholders in the field of football, for football media and for Dutch citizens.

As discussed earlier, football on television has the capacity to unite and divide, to provide good examples and evoke contestations. This gives television professionals a profound social responsibility. Many studies, however, have demonstrated that football commentators often unwittingly use race/ethnicity and gender-based stereotypes to frame sport events for enormous audiences, thereby (re)producing everyday racial/ethnic and gendered stereotypes and hierarchies (e.g. McCarthy, Jones & Potrac, 2003; Van Sterkenburg, Knoppers & De Leeuw, 2012). Such practices will need to change if professional football is to play a role in contemporary globalized societies as an integrative social force. Before this can be done however, the ways in which this content is received and negotiated by television audiences need to be investigated. Such research subsequently should result in a critical discussion as a first step towards more diverse, less stereotypical representations regarding race/ethnicity and gender in televised sport.

Stimulating such a discussion is a role that European football institutions and governmental bodies who are dedicated to fight against racism and sexism may want to play. Organizations such as UEFA stimulate the use of football to foster interethnic tolerance and increase women's participation in and identification with football. The role that television plays in this process has, however, received relatively little attention until now, neither from governmental bodies or football associations themselves.

The present study enables the main stakeholders in the field to use its results for future policies and initiatives such as educational resources that aim to contribute to a more open and tolerant football culture. I will return to that in more detail later. The research will also provide more general audience data about televised football. Media organizations as well as football bodies usually do not have in depth qualitative knowledge about pleasures or frustrations of viewers of diverse backgrounds in relation to the programs they watch. Knowledge gained through the project can be useful for TV channels and football associations to improve the appeal and quality of their programming and of football more generally. It will provide the main TV-stakeholders and football associations with empirical first hand findings on the experiences of TV viewers with men's and women's football on television.

Finally, the results of the project should be transferred into educational settings in order to increase critical media literacy among young people. After all, the challenge in this type of

research is to transfer knowledge not only to academic colleagues but to public opinion and youth viewers of football especially. As argued earlier in the report, critical media literacy enables people to challenge the power of the football media to create and naturalize racial/ethnic and gender stereotypes that have exclusionary effects. This is important in media saturated societies like the Dutch and/or English as it provides young people with some tools to see how the same message can be read in different ways and not only in a way preferred by the media. I have already made a start with the knowledge transfer into the educational system by giving several guest presentations and organizing group discussions on the topic of the present study in the Netherlands and England (October-December 2012). Furthermore, I have initiated collaborations on the theme with football commentators in the Netherlands and England and informed them about my research. I have also coordinated student groups who had to look critically at football commentary in relation to race/ethnicity and gender; The various student groups presented their findings during a closing conference where results were compared and debated (February 2013; Social Organization of Sport, Utrecht).

For UEFA, as one of the main stakeholders in the field, I suggest the development of the following tools for implementation, together with partners in the field such as FARE. These tools will help re-inject research findings into the wider professional field.

- A code of ethics for football media professionals to enhance the awareness of their commentary practices. This will promote the inclusive character of professional football and decrease (unconscious) use of exclusionary stereotypes.
- Training seminars for football media professionals in cooperation with broadcasters which will learn the professionals being self-reflexive of their commentary practices and more sensitive to the pleasure and frustrations of diverse ethnic and gendered audiences of professional football.
- Tailor made toolkits for education and professional organizations, including a critical football media literacy guide for youth viewers and an education toolkit to increase critical sport media literacy skills among youth.
- Regular national and European wide expert meetings with the main stakeholders in the field.

- A two-day international conference at the time of the men's football European Championships (2016). This conference brings together the efforts of European stakeholders and academics working on the theme of televised football and in- and exclusion. The first day of the conference reaches out to a broader audience and engages the major stakeholders in the field. On the second day, the character of the debates will be of an academic nature. Conference proceedings will be submitted in the form of a special issue to an international journal in the field of sport/media. A conference report will be distributed among relevant stakeholders.

The implementation of findings through these activities will provide a unique opportunity to raise citizen's, young people's and media professional's self awareness of widely shared commonsensical ideas and practices of everyday racisms and sexism that take place in and through (televised) football. In addition, these measures will enhance cultural sensitivity from the part of football commentators and program makers who will be better equipped to address the pleasures and frustrations of multi-ethnic football audiences in an increasingly globalized Europe. As a result they may even manage to pull in more viewers, especially those that have remained at the sidelines until now or have quit watching football altogether due to biased commentary practices.

## **Appendix: Questionnaire interviews**

*(The questions below apply to the English interviews. I have used the same questionnaire for the Dutch interviews but then in Dutch and specified for the Dutch context discussing Dutch football, Dutch players etc.)*

### **1. General**

Ask participants one by one;

\*\*What is your name?

\*\*Educational background?

\*\*Age?

\*\*National and ethnic background?

\*\*Born where? \*\*Grew up where?

(This is important to check regional spread and nationality of participants)

\*\*Do you practice sport, or football, yourself?

### **2. Football on TV and context of watching**

\*\*Do you watch sports on TV? Which sports?

\*\*Do you watch football on TV? How often do you watch?

\*\* Club football? National team? European leagues (CL and EL)?

\*\* What channels?

\*\*Context: Do you watch alone, with others? Where?

### **3. Meanings given to football players on TV (focus on race/ethnicity)**

\*\* Do you have a preference or do you identify with certain players more than with others?

\*\* Does race/ethnicity matter in this respect; e.g. is it easier to identify with players of the same ethnic background or doesn't this make any difference? Why? Why not?

\*\* And in terms of nationality; Do you identify easier with English players than players with other nationalities or not? Who do you consider typical English players?

(For myself; are those White players or mixed?)

\*\* Is bonding with your club or the national team irrespective of ethnic composition of the team? E.g. would your support be influenced if the team you support would only consist of White players / Black players?

Does this differ between the national team and the club team you support?

\*\*Does race/ethnicity of players influence the qualities players possess, e.g. do Black players have other skills than White players and vice versa? What would be the reason for that?

\*\*Other ethnicities, such as Asian players? Why do you think they are under-represented in football?

\*\*In professional English club football, teams have relatively many Black football players compared to the overall share of Black people in the population as a whole. What would be plausible explanations for why the racial composition of club football teams is different from the racial make up of the country as a whole?

\*\*Previous studies have shown that Black players are often positioned as wingers in the field as coaches see them as fast, while White players hold central positions as they are seen as leaders in the field with tactical capacities. Do you think that this positioning still applies? Does the media play a role in this? How?

#### **4. Meanings given to football players on TV (focus on gender)**

\*\*You have just mentioned skills that a typical (male) football player possesses;

Do the same qualities/skills apply to a good woman's footballer?

\*\*Can you mention examples?

\*\*Do you watch women's football?

Why/Why not?

\*\*Do female footballers play differently or similar to men in your opinion?

In what respect are there similarities and /or differences?

\*\*If they do play differently, what's the reason for that?

\*\*Football is structured along the lines of gender; there is men's and women's football. What do you think is the reason for that?

\*\*Should football be a mixed practice so that males and females play in the same team?

\*\*And if there are separated teams, do you think male and female teams should/could compete against each other?

\*\*Is the women's game as ethnically diverse as the men's game? Does ethnicity of players influence playing style?

#### **5. Evaluation of the football coverage**

\*\*How do you evaluate the football commentary generally?

\*\* Are all players considered 'real English', regardless of ethnic backgrounds as they all play for the nation, or do commentators makes differences between players in this respect?

\*\*More generally; do you feel commentators treat all players the same irrespective of their racial/ethnic background?

\*\* Have you ever noticed that commentators use ethnic stereotypes?

\*\*Gender: What traits do commentators use to describe male and female footballers? Are there any differences in traits ascribed to male and female players? What is your opinion on that?

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