

Thinking ‘race’ and ethnicity in (Dutch) sports policy and - research (final draft)
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The chapter will be about how race and ethnicity are considered social constructs in scholarly discourses about sport, but are often treated as essentialist categories in popular and governmental discourses about sport with consequences for racial and ethnic inequalities in society at large. A cultural studies perspective, along with social cognition theory, provides the theoretical framework within which to highlight the centrality of classification and categorization in the popular use of the concepts of race and ethnicity and emphasize the constructive character of race and ethnicity in scholarly discourse. I will review dominant racial and ethnic categories which work in sport research as well as popular and governmental discourses about sport to construct and normalize racial/ethnic hierarchies. New ways of using race and ethnicity in sports policy and –research will be suggested that are more open to the temporal and situational character of race and ethnicity.

Introduction

As authors like Brubaker et al. (1994) argued, the social constructions of race and ethnicity are significant structuring dimensions in contemporary western societies and important ways of categorizing the self and others. Ideas about racial and ethnic groups and the multicultural society are not just influenced by institutions such as education, family and paid labor but also by sport. Due to its popularity and the visibility it gives to various ethnicities, (televised) sport -and soccer in particular as one of the most popular sports worldwide - has become an important factor in the expression of racial and ethnic meanings and categorizations. This is evident in a recent article in the national Dutch quality newspaper *De Volkskrant* that states that ‘the line-up of the Dutch [soccer] team under 17 at Euro 2008 reads like an exotic menu.’ According to the writers of the piece Dibi and Jungmann (2008), the Dutch national soccer team will increasingly become multi-ethnic and multi-racial. Another article in the same newspaper adds ‘that a new phenomenon presents itself already; the former asylum seeker as professional soccer player, [...] [like] Youssouf Hersi from Ethiopia, Collins John from Liberia and Haris Medunjanin from Bosnia’ (Vissers, 2005, pp. 40). These quotations illustrate the multiplicity and range of ethnic groups that are represented in Dutch professional soccer. And this multi-ethnicity is not restricted to soccer or the Dutch context, it is illustrative of professional as well as amateur sports worldwide (Poli & Ravenel, 2008; Coakley, 2007).

Two schools of thought can be roughly distinguished in the (Dutch) debate about the social functions of sport for the multicultural society, one the more popular and commonsensical, the other the more scholarly and critical (Hartmann, 2000). The popular and commonsensical discourse about sport generally emphasizes and takes for granted the beneficial function of sport for racial and ethnic relations. Politicians and the mainstream media in The Netherlands generally seem to support this positive perspective towards the social function of sport (Van Sterkenburg, forthcoming; Verweel, 2010).

They argue that sport, with its appeal to a variety of ethnic and cultural groups, can make a fundamental contribution to interethnic interaction and dialogue and to processes of social bonding and integration in multicultural societies (see also Verweel, 2007). This sport-as-a-progressive-racial/ethnic-force discourse (Hartmann, 2000) is evident in Dutch national governmental programmes that often use sport as a social panacea, for instance to solve problems related to obesity among young people or to face the challenges related to the integration of ethnic minorities (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, 2005). And this emphasis on sport as a social leveler does not restrict itself to the domains of politics or everyday discourse, but is also evident in some of the Dutch scholarly writings about race/ethnicity and sport (e.g. RAPPORT MEEDOEN??Verweel, 2007 WEG).

In contrast to this perspective stands the recognition by many Dutch as well as international critical sport scholars that sport also harbours racialized (as well as homophobic, sexist or sectarian) ideologies. They emphasize that racism, homophobia and sectarianism are persistent aspects of sport and that (mediated) sport confirms and reinforces, and at times challenges, racial or ethnic stereotypes as well as more institutionalized forms of racism (e.g. Boyle & Haynes, 2000; Müller et al., 2008; Van Sterkenburg & Knoppers, 2004). These scholars see the sports arena primarily as ‘a site of struggle’ in which different dimensions of ethnic bonding and ethnic exclusion are performed, experienced and demonstrated (Elling & Van Sterkenburg, 2008).

In this chapter, the purpose is not so much to elaborate in detail on both perspectives towards sport and race/ethnicity. Previous studies already extensively discussed the role of sport as a potential catalyzer for racial and ethnic relations and generally concluded that sport should be considered a ‘contested racial terrain’ (Hartmann, 2000, pp. 245) and that ‘it is too simplistic to say that sport improves ‘race relations’, just as it is to say that sport can only reproduce racist ideologies’ (Carrington & McDonald, 2001, pp. 2). However, the specific racial/ethnic *categorizations* that these two views towards sport generate and (re)produce, have received relatively little scholarly attention until now. As several authors have discussed, racial and ethnic categorizations are essential in structuring the very ways in which people think about and give meaning to race and ethnicity (Brubaker et al., 1994; Hall, 1995). Racial and ethnic categorizations permit individuals to go beyond immediately given information, to make inferences and interpret the world according to these established categories (Brubaker et al (1994). They give people a definition of what race or ethnicity *is* (Hall, 1995). This chapter critically interrogates the common sense and often taken for granted use of racial/ethnic categorizations in Dutch sports policy and everyday discourse about race and ethnicity. I will juxtapose these categorization practices with the racial/ethnic categorizations used in (Dutch as well as international) critical scholarly studies on race and ethnicity in sport and the sport media. These studies are usually informed by a constructionist approach towards race and ethnicity. I will argue that both categorization practices pose their own problems. Suggestions will be made about how to synthesize the two perspectives. Such an effort seems relevant to sensitize researchers as well as (Dutch) policy makers in the field of race and ethnicity and sports to conceptualize race and ethnicity in more self-reflexive and contextual ways.

My theoretical lens

A cultural studies approach provides the theoretical lens through which I approach sports, the sports media and race and ethnicity. A cultural studies perspective sees sport and the media as aspects of popular culture through which people formulate and put into action ideas about race and ethnicity. In other words, sport, sport governing bodies as well as the sport media can be considered as sites that provide people with *discourses* about race and ethnicity. Stuart Hall, a leading proponent of cultural studies, defines discourse as ‘ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic’ (1997, pp. 6). While discourse ‘rules in’ and prefers certain ways of talking about a topic, it also by definition rules out, limits and restricts other ways of talking about that topic. In that sense discourse constructs the topic, defines and produces it (Hall, 1997). Both race and ethnicity can be considered social phenomena that are constructed and reconstructed in and through discourses. Central in the understanding of race and ethnicity from a cultural studies perspective is their reflection of existing power relations. Discourses about race and ethnicity in sport and sport media, as in other domains, reflect inequalities of power in which powerful groups in society have more power to label, categorize and define the less powerful ones (Feagin & Vera, 1995).

Although some critical examinations of race and ethnicity have revealed their distinctive conceptual character by associating race with social meanings given to biology and inherited differences and ethnicity with cultural differences (e.g. Jackson & Garner, 1998), others argue that these constructs also overlap and are often conflated in western societies (e.g. Brubaker et al., 1994; Eriksen, 2002; Rath, 1991). The conflated character is evident when ethnic groups are described in racial terms, for instance when all ‘black’ people from the African diasporas, variegated in ethnic terms, are aggregated and lumped together into the racial category of ‘blacks’ (Omi & Winant, 1986), or when all (West-)Europeans are labelled ‘white’ despite ethnic differences among them. In this chapter, I will also refer to the constructs of race and ethnicity as conflated constructs.

The Dutch context

Apart from being theoretically informed by a cultural studies perspective, my view upon race and ethnicity in sport is also influenced by being a (white, male) Dutch sport scholar. The Dutch situation with regard to (discourses about) race and ethnicity is unique in several aspects and therefore deserves some explanation. Philemona Essed (2004), a scholar in the area of Dutch ethnic and racial relations, have marked the specificity of the Dutch context by stating that the discourse about race and ethnicity in The Netherlands is framed in terms of ethnic or cultural minorities and their lack of integration (also Rath, 1991). Similar to other European countries like France or Finland (Silverman & Yuval-Davis, 1999; Rastas 2005) the race category ‘black’ and the ‘black-white’ dichotomy to define race, commonly used in US and UK discourses about race, is generally rejected in popular Dutch discourse. According to the Dutch Central Office for Statistics, the four largest ethnic minorities in The Netherlands are defined as ‘Turkish’, ‘Moroccan’, ‘Surinam’ and ‘Dutch-Antillean and Aruban’ (CBS, 2009). These ethnic groups comprise around seven per cent of the total Dutch population (CBS, 2009). The Surinamese and Antillean ethnic minorities are linked to the Dutch colonial past while the Turkish and Moroccan immigrants are linked to economic labor migration during the 1950s and 1960s. In addition to this discourse about *ethnic minority groups*, the Dutch everyday and

governmental discourse about race/ethnicity focuses on the binary categorization of ‘*allochtonen*’ and ‘*autochtonen*’. The term ‘*autochtoon*’ could be loosely translated as indigenous and ‘*allochtoon*’ as foreigner. But since these terms are contextualized in the Dutch discourse about race and ethnicity, a precise translation into English is not possible (Van Sterkenburg et al., forthcoming). The official Dutch governmental policies classify an individual as ‘*allochtoon*’ if one parent was born outside of the Netherlands and as ‘*autochthon*’ if both parents were born in the Netherlands. In everyday discourse, however, these ethnic categories are also highly racialized because skin color has become an important marker to define both categories. All non-western ethnic minorities of colour are usually classified ‘*allochtoon*’ while ‘white’ Native-Dutch people are coined ‘*autochtoon*’. I shall reflect on this categorization further on in the chapter.

In the following, I will discuss the sport-as-a-progressive-racial/ethnic-force discourse and the more critical, scholarly discourse with regard to how they both perceive the social function of (Dutch) sports for racial and ethnic relations. In particular, I will focus on the racial/ethnic *categorizations* these two discourses (re)produce (or challenge). After having discussed these categorization practices, I will try to bring the two perspectives together. Some guidelines will be suggested for the use of race and ethnicity in future sports policy and - research that is more sensitive and open to the contextual character of race and ethnicity and to the power relations involved in the constructions and definitions of race and ethnicity.

The Dutch sports policy discourse and racial/ethnic categorizations

The dominant political discourse about race/ethnicity and sport in The Netherlands has been largely concerned with how sports can be beneficial for interethnic relations through interethnic contact and can contribute to the integration of ethnic minorities. This discourse was demonstrated, for instance, when the former Dutch Minister of Integration Rita Verdonk argued that participating in sport brings people closer to one another and that ethnic mingling in sport contributes to integration (in: Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, 2006a). Included in this political discourse about sport is the use of specific racial and ethnic categorizations that define the target groups of sport policies or locate problematic groups that these policies address. The racial/ethnic categorizations (often implicitly) represent certain discourses about race and ethnicity and specific hierarchies that reach many people simultaneously, often through the media. The question of relevance then becomes which racial and ethnic categories and discourses about race and ethnicity are dominant and preferred in this sport-as-a-positive-racial/ethnic-force ideology and which are marginalized and how this connects with relations of power in society at large.

As said earlier, the discourses about race/ethnicity in the Netherlands mainly centre around two categorizations; one that distinguishes between the largest ethnic minorities in The Netherlands and one that distinguishes between the categories of ‘*autochtonen*’ (indigenous) and ‘*allochtonen*’ (foreigner). In the next sections, I will discuss how the widespread and often unreflexive use of the *allochtoon/autochtoon* categorization in particular, in a recent influential Dutch sport policy document/programmeme, can result

in one-sided governmental sports policies that are very much situated in an assimilationist framework towards racial/ethnic relations and the multi-ethnic society.

The governmental programme 'Meedoen allochtone jeugd door sport'

The Dutch governmental sport programme *'Meedoen allochtone jeugd door sport'* [*'Participation of allochthonous youth through sport'*] in which at least 500 Dutch sport clubs participate, was initiated by the Dutch government in 2006. The programme is financially funded by the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports for the period 2006-2010 and aims to increase the numbers of ethnic minority youth (4-23 years) who are members of a sport club (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, 2005; 2006b; c). The programme explicitly uses sport as a tool to achieve social goals, in particular to improve integration of racial/ethnic minorities in Dutch society. The following quote referring to the programme is a concrete manifestation of this:

'[...] In the programme ['Meedoen allochtone jeugd door sport'] the characteristic aspects of sports will be used for pedagogical and integration purposes towards the allochthonous youth. This will take place through creating fields of encounters between autochthonous and allochthonous youth in sport [...]

(Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, 2006b, pp3, own contribution between brackets)

As this quote demonstrates, the Dutch programme reproduces the dominant allochtoon/autochtoon binary. Although it briefly addresses sport participation of 'autochthonous' youth and the role that white 'autochthonous' sport clubs have to play in the integration of ethnic minority youth (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, 2006c), the programme is especially directed towards the 'allochthonous' youth (2006b; 2006c). This dominant focus on 'allochthonous' youth is evident when the document continues by saying that the programme aims to 'convey norms and values' to 'allochthonous' youth and 'teach [them] how to deal with rules' (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, 2006b, pp4). These quotes are situated in a sport-as-a-positive-racial/ethnic-force-discourse that is characterized by the idea that the assimilation of 'allochthonous youth' into the mainstream of Dutch values is a positive contribution of sport. The focus on the category of '*allochthonous youth*' in the policy programme and the perceived need to teach them Dutch norms and values through sport reflects the wider Dutch discourse about race and ethnicity that emphasizes the need for the social group of 'allochtonen' to assimilate to dominant Dutch norms and values. In other words, sport is used here to bring the cultural norms and values of 'allochtonen' closer to those of 'autochtonen' while rendering the social group of ('white') 'autochtonen' normative. Such an instrumentalist discourse, thus, reduces the Dutch population to discrete racial/ethnic groups – 'allochtonen' and 'autochtonen' - that implicitly continue to be hierarchically positioned according to 'the ascribed proximity to the normative structure of white ['autochthonous'] collective identity' (Carrington & McDonald, 2001, pp. 59, own contribution between brackets). In doing so, the discourse implicitly denies the 'allochtone'/non-white individual the right to be different and assesses him/her exclusively with regard to his/her degree of assimilation to the dominant (Dutch) cultural norms and values. In other words, the allochtoon/autochtoon categorization in sport

policy documents like *'Meedoen allochtone jeugd door sport'* is situated in a discourse that privileges one racial/ethnic group ('autochtonen') above the other ('allochtonen').

This mainstream Dutch sports policy discourse surrounding race and ethnicity is consistent with Hall's (1991) statement that the ethnic majority finds itself in an ideal subject position with respect to ethnicity in many social practices, including sport. Although ethnic majority and minority Dutch citizens increasingly interact in their neighborhood, at work or in leisure time, ethnic majority people in general have more discursive power to stipulate the dominant discourses and categorizations about ethnicity (Elling & Van Sterkenburg, 2008). This also applies to the area of Dutch sports policy; the vast majority of sports policy makers belong to the ethnic majority group that can be defined as white and 'autochtoon' in everyday discourse. Their discursive power (re)produces the 'allochtoon-autochtoon' dichotomy in Dutch sports policies and society at large. This dichotomy causes those labeled as 'autochtonen' (and 'white') generally to be 'inside, included and powerful', as the 'we', the 'answer' and, most notably, to be unspoken (Dyer, 2001; Wekker, 1998). The categories of 'allochtonen' or ethnic minorities (generally non-white) on the other hand are often stereotyped as the 'other' and are often (unconsciously) represented as less intelligent, deviant, uncivilized, and the source of the problem (Van Dijk, 1993; Wekker, 1998). This discourse, thus, constructs a racial/ethnic hierarchy that represents the socially constructed group of 'allochtonen' as culturally less developed vis-à-vis the socially constructed group of 'autochtonen'. This may not be a conscious process, 'white'/'autochthonous' people may reproduce and strengthen the status quo without knowing it (Hall, 1995).

Cultural racism

The dominance of a (white) 'autochtoon' (sports policy) discourse that strengthens and revolves around this hierarchical relationship between 'autochtonen' and 'allochtonen' determines the kind of integration that it will finally produce. Such a discourse reveals what several authors have labeled the operation of 'cultural racism' (Carrington & McDonald, 2001). Cultural racism constructs insider and outsider groups on the basis of cultural assimilation to Dutch mainstream norms and cultural values. It is signified by and conflated with biological and religious markers of difference, evident from the fact that it is in particular non-western ethnic minorities *of color* or 'muslims' who are labeled 'allochtoon' in contemporary everyday Dutch discourse. This dominant way of 'thinking' race and ethnicity in terms of homogeneous and fixed entities, marginalizes alternative engagements with race and ethnicity in sports policy or society at large. It does not address cultural *differences within* or *similarities between* the broadly defined categories of 'allochtonen' and 'autochtonen' (Gunaratnam, 2003; Wekker, 1998). It also runs the risk of ignoring the fact that race and ethnicity are always co-constituted by other axes of power like gender, age or social class (Wekker, 1998). In addition, it does not generate a critical reflection on the imagined homogeneous group of ('white') 'autochthonous people' and its privileged position in the Dutch mainstream discourse about race/ethnicity.

To summarize, the (re)production of the 'autochtoon-allochtoon' categorization scheme in the Dutch sport-as-a-positive-racial/ethnic-force ideology is not ideologically neutral,

but socially produced and situated in a certain hegemonic (white) autochthonous ideology that privileges white ‘autochtonen’ above non-white ‘allochtonen’. The autochthonous (white) perspective that historically produced this dichotomy in the first place remains invisible and, as a result, it becomes difficult to reveal the normativeness of ‘autochthoeness’/‘whiteness’ in Dutch policies and society. What is at stake here from a cultural studies perspective, is the disappearance of the *constructedness* of the ethnic categorizations of ‘allochtonen’ and ‘autochtonen’ into the taken-for-granted world of common sense (Hall, 1995; 1997). If existing discourses about ethnicity and ethnic categorizations – or other social group relations – are increasingly being ‘naturalized’ through their repeated and seemingly self evident use in (sport) policies, they are likewise increasingly placed outside of change and political intervention. Such an unreflexive (sports) policy can then only direct itself towards that what it *does* know, that what *is* visible and what ‘*should be civilized*’: the ‘allochtone’ Other.

The scholarly, constructionist discourse

Constructionist scholarly writings on race and ethnicity have extensively criticized such ‘normalized’ hierarchical accounts of racial/ethnic categories as pure and fixed entities (e.g. Hall, 1997) and have emphasized that race and ethnicity are social constructs that are context specific and dependent on power relations. It is not surprising that Dutch scholars using a constructionist approach are critical of the Dutch governmental use of race/ethnicity as a ‘given’ and seemingly fixed characteristic that can be pinned down along the lines of the (hierarchical) dichotomy between allochtonen and autochtonen (e.g. Wekker, 1998). Dutch as well as international critical scholars emphasize the temporal and situational character of race and ethnicity, amongst others by pointing to the historically shifting boundaries that determine who is included in a certain racial category and who is not. Race scholars Omi & Winant (1986) and Nederveen Pieterse (1995), for instance, demonstrated that populations nowadays defined as ‘white’ in the US and UK like South-European and Irish immigrants, have been defined as distinct ‘races’ in the past¹. Captain & Ghorashi (2001) illustrated the historical flexibility of who is labeled as ‘allochtoon’ and ‘autochtoon’ in the Dutch context by describing the shifting position of Dutch immigrants originating from the former colony of the Dutch East Indies (‘Indische Nederlanders’). These immigrants of Dutch and Indonesian origins came to the Netherlands in the 1950s. In order to limit their immigration into The Netherlands, the government divided this variegated group into two subgroups; those who were perceived as oriented towards The Netherlands (‘Western-oriented Indische Nederlanders’) and those with Indonesian roots (‘Eastern-oriented Indische Nederlanders’) (Schuster, 1999, pp. 311). The first group mainly included white Dutch individuals who had lived in The Dutch East Indies only temporarily while the second group consisted of people of mixed Indonesian and Dutch origin who generally had never seen The Netherlands (Schuster, 1999). The group constructed as Eastern-oriented Indische Nederlanders were then discouraged to immigrate to the Netherlands because of their perceived genetic inability to assimilate (Captain & Ghorashi, 2001). One decade later however, the same government radically changed its view and considered the whole group of ‘Indische Nederlanders’ as successfully assimilated to Dutch society. While they were, thus, (in part) defined as ‘the Other’ upon their arrival in The Netherlands, they became socially

invisible one decade later and are even praised for their successful assimilation into Dutch society nowadays (Captain & Ghorashi, 2001)ⁱⁱ. When the label ‘allochtoon’ became dominant in Dutch policy discourse in the 1990s (Captain & Ghorashi, 2001), this ethnic minority group managed to escape the label (non-western) ‘allochtoon’ altogether.

The emphasis in contemporary sociological work on the temporality and situatedness of (meanings given to) race and ethnicity has also resulted in a growing body of literature that examines and reflects on the construction of whiteness as a privileged and normative category (e.g. Dyer, 1997; Garner, 2006). Sport has proved to be a useful sociological site for examining whiteness, white privilege and racial/ethnic hierarchies (e.g. Long & Hylton, 2002). In the Dutch context, authors like Elling (2007) have reflected on the problems that ‘white’, ‘autochthonous’ athletes have to see their own (‘white’) ‘autochtonness’. The shift in attention towards the dominant ethnic/racial ‘Self’ instead of the marginalized ethnic/racial ‘Other’ can be considered an important contribution to the sometimes pathologizing almost exclusive attention for the [black or ‘allochtone’] Other in sport sociological research and governmental programmes like ‘*Meedoen allochtone jeugd door sport*’.

But despite the significant contributions that constructionist scholarly writings have made to examining white privilege and to the deconstruction of common sense discourses about race and ethnicity, their use of racial/ethnic categorizations also poses some theoretical and methodological problems. In the remainder of this section I will make this problematic more explicit by discussing the kinds of racial/ethnic categorizations that some constructionist scholarly writings on sport have produced in and through their studies.

Social constructionism and racial/ethnic categorizations

The major problem that social constructionist writers face when it comes to the use and definitions of race and ethnicity is how to reckon with everyday essentialism and popular racial/ethnic categorizations (Brubaker et al., 1994; Nayak, 2006). Social constructionist writers generally reject the use of stabilized and essentialist categories but they also tend to reify them in their studies. Nayak (2006) illustrated this ambiguity by stating that social constructionist writers on the one hand emphasize that there are no ‘distinct races with biologically inherent characteristics or culturally immutable ethnicities’(pp411), but at the same time ‘freeze, tame and objectify race and ethnicity into unitary categories that can be easily understood and managed’ (Gunaratnam, 2003, pp 33). Brubaker et al (1994, pp. 45) agreed and argued that

‘despite the constructivist stance that has come to prevail in sophisticated studies of ethnicity, [...] much ostensibly constructivist academic writing about ethnicity remains informed by ‘groupism’: by the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous, and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts and fundamental units of social analysis. Ethnic groups, races and nations continue to be treated as things-in-the-world, as real, substantial entities [...]’

The tendency to use stabilized, essentialist categories to define race or ethnicity seems particularly evident in some of the more quantitatively oriented studies that subscribe to a social constructionist approach. In a meta-analysis on quantitatively oriented media studies that examined racial and ethnic representations in the sport media, we found that many North-American and British researchers subscribed to a social constructionist approach on the one hand but used a definition of race or ethnicity in terms of black and white *a-priori* on the other (Van Sterkenburg et al., forthcoming). These studies generally froze and classified race and ethnicity into the seemingly fixed and stable categories of 'black' and 'white' (Van Sterkenburg et al., forthcoming). Even in West-European contexts like the Dutch, social constructionist researchers have used such a predefined black-white conceptualization of race (e.g. Knoppers & Elling, 1999). This is remarkable since the Dutch popular discourse, as explained earlier in this chapter, rather focuses on the broad allochtoon/autochtoon dichotomy or a diversity of ethnic or cultural minorities. The use of a black-white dichotomy to define race or ethnicity in Dutch scholarly studies may obscure relevant ethnic distinctions that go beyond what can be captured by the black-white mapping. The end result of such scholarly routines is that they might reproduce universalist forms of essentialism, stereotyping and racialized power relations instead of unraveling and deconstructing mechanisms of racial or ethnic inequality in sport or the sport media in the specific context under study.

The need for researchers that subscribe to a social constructionist approach towards race and ethnicity is, thus, to move away from *predefining* racial/ethnic categorizations as if they are universally applicable and a-historical. Such predefining categorization practices still guide the questions some social constructionist scholars pose and the knowledge they produce. Especially studies that work with large volumes of data and are characterized by the process of classifying and categorizing these data along racial/ethnic lines, are urged to remain open for the temporality and situatedness of racial and ethnic categorizations and use categories that are relevant in the context under study (Van Sterkenburg et al., forthcoming). In the next section, I will attempt to provide some theoretical and methodological guidelines for 'thinking' race/ethnicity and using racial/ethnic categories in scholarly research that does justice to the tension that exists between aiming to approach race and ethnicity as socially constituted and contextual constructs on the one hand while also acknowledging the need to examine large volumes of data and the logic to use everyday, essentialist categories on the other. Apart from suggesting guidelines for future (sports) research, I also aim to demonstrate how these insights can result in a more sophisticated usage of the concepts of race and ethnicity in (Dutch) sports policy and help policy makers escape blinkered thinking.

Bringing the perspectives together

As I have argued in the previous section, an essentialist (common sense) approach towards race/ethnicity that defines the concept in seemingly stable and 'naturalized' hierarchical categories like 'black' and 'white' or 'allochtoon' and 'autochtoon' has generally been rejected within the scholarly (social constructionist) paradigm. It gives the impression of biological or cultural determination, while in actuality racial or ethnic groups do not have any biological or cultural essence but are socially constructed and

change over time and place (Miles, 1989). However, social constructionist writers regularly do use a notion of race/ethnicity that ‘freezes’ the concept into seemingly stable and ‘naturalized’ categories (Nayak, 2006), in particular when they have to manage and classify large volumes of data. In contrast to scholarly discourses, an essentialist approach towards race and ethnicity is much more commonplace and accepted in everyday and governmental discourses about race and ethnicity. Brubaker et al (1994) and Baumann (1999) argued that an approach towards race/ethnicity that emphasizes its essentialist and categorical character is very popular in everyday conversations, political rhetoric and the (sport) media, for the racial/ethnic majority as well as minorities. Because so many laypeople embrace a view of race/ethnicity that more or less *essentializes* others and the self into seemingly fixed racial/ethnic categories, Baumann (1999) argued that it cannot be simply discarded (Baumann, 1999); After all, ‘it shapes the realities that we [as sociologists] need to understand’ (Baumann (1999 pp90 -91, own contribution between brackets).

For this reason, I would argue that scholars should not treat both approaches –the essentialist, categorical approach and the scholarly, constructionist approach - as opposites and mutually exclusive, with the one as false and the other as true. Instead, I would suggest to consider them as complementary rather than oppositional (Baumann, 1999). We can do this by acknowledging that both approaches are largely directed towards different questions. The categorical approach works with discrete categories that are actually used to define race/ethnicity in daily practice. The constructionist approach, which is supported by most scholars within the social and human sciences, emphasizes how these categories are at the same time contextual, fluid and constructed. Connecting the two perspectives requires attending to everyday essentialist, popular, categorical definitions of race and ethnicity as well as to structures of power and structural inequalities that are related to how these racial and ethnic categories *have come into being*, are continuously (re)constructed, played out and change over time and place (Malik, 1996). It also requires attending to how these popular and essentialist categorizations are themselves the structuring principles of social life in contemporary multi-ethnic societies and, consequently, the vectors of existing relations of power. As argued earlier in the paper, the naturalization of racial/ethnic categories (implicitly) relates to very specific racial/ethnic hierarchies.

To make my argument more precise I will refer here to the writings of theorists Baumann (1999) and Brubaker et al (1994)ⁱⁱⁱ who mainly approach race and ethnicity as social cognitive categories^{iv}. Social cognition theory attributes popular societal categorizations of race and ethnicity to mental classification practices that are used by many to understand the world (Van Sterkenburg et al., forthcoming). Although these authors argue that we should avoid ‘analytical groupism’, i.e. the tendency to treat racial and ethnic groups as *predefined* entities, they argue that we should take into account the importance of ‘groupism’ and categories in the practice of everyday thought, talk, policy analysis, media broadcasting, and even in some of the constructivist academic writing about race and ethnicity (Baumann, 1999; Brubaker et al 1994). They highlight the centrality of categorization in the popular use of the concepts of race and ethnicity, while emphasizing at the same time its constructive character. Without ignoring the shared content of a racial or ethnic group, their perspective claims that this shared content has no

a priori existence or stability (also Eriksen, 2002). It is the product of people's ways of categorizing themselves and others, in order to create boundaries between them and construct racial/ethnic hierarchies. In other words, it is the people's *beliefs* about racial or ethnic differences that create the categories. It is not important whether race and ethnicity 'in reality' are relevant categorizing variables here, if they are believed to be relevant, this belief is real in its consequences (Woodward, 2004).

Race and ethnicity should, therefore on the one hand be understood in terms of categories, but these categories should *not* be considered and used as pre-defined and already fixed entities that can be a-priori operationalized - like many Dutch politicians as well as some social constructionist researchers studying race and ethnicity still do. In other words, although the binary racial and ethnic classification *allochtonen/autochtonen* is commonplace and dominant in Dutch society, is rooted in cognitive processes, and even institutions like the state routinely categorize people as members of the 'allochtone' or 'autochtone' group, the very process of this categorizing is a *practice* from a specific ('white, autochthonous') racial/ethnic standpoint; an inventive/constructive act which is shaped by human minds (Baumann, 1999).

Precisely for the notion that racial and ethnic categories are socially constructed and can change across cultural and historical boundaries, I argue that researchers as well as politicians should be more self-reflexive of their use of racial and ethnic categorizations. This implies, amongst others, an emphasis on and reflection of *power relations* and *racial/ethnic perspectives* from which these categorizations emerge. Categorizing practices always relate to wider power structures and racialized/ethnicized histories in society at large (Leonard, 2004). In addition, they are always expressed through voices that are racially/ethnically positioned (Wekker, 1998). Therefore, the point is not so much, as Fernandes (1997) argued, to 'deny the importance –both material and discursive – of [racial/ethnic] categories, but to focus on the process by which they are produced, experienced, reproduced and resisted in everyday life' (quoted in McCall, 2005, p.1783).

In Dutch sport policy, this means that policy makers should avoid attempting to almost exclusively represent the 'allochtone' Other in their governmental programmes. Instead they should also reflect on their own ethnic positioning and acknowledge the 'autochtone' Self as the subject for policy analysis and governmental address. This means, for instance, that policy makers should critically expand on the role that 'autochtone' (white) sport clubs play in the participation and integration of ethnic minority youth. Although this notion is briefly touched upon in Dutch sport policy programmes like 'Meedoen allochtone jeugd door sport', such programmes generally address the social group of 'allochtonen'.

Addressing the 'autochtone' Self in governmental programmes also means a shift in focus on to more institutionalised forms of racism in sport organizations^v. Ethnic minorities are still significantly underrepresented in boardrooms and other managerial positions within many sport clubs and organizations as well as sport governing bodies. This situation is not unique for The Netherlands, but applies to other European countries as well (Van Sterkenburg & Rijnen, 2005). As a consequence, the (unwritten, informal) rules and norms in most sport organisations continuously best fit the preferences, norms

and interpretation frames of the (white) racial/ethnic majority (Elling & Van Sterkenburg, 2008). The rules of the ethnic majority, thus, have become, and continue to be, the 'norm' for the organisation of sport. Governmental programmes can address this phenomenon more explicitly and stimulate a critical (self) reflection on the unequal racialized/ethnicized distribution of power in sport clubs and sporting bodies. As Gloria Wekker (1998), a scholar in the area of Dutch racial and ethnic relations, already argued, the presence and mere existence of the 'allochtone' Other is always relational and refers to the presence of the (normative and normalized) 'autochtone' Self. Such a more balanced policy discourse would overcome the invisibility of the (white) 'autochtone' Self that implicitly functions as the norm. It might open up the possibility to discuss white, autochthonous privilege and normativity in many sports policy programmes. It would also render more explicit the constructed hierarchical racialized/ethnicized character of contemporary, apparently value-free and objective governmental sport policy discourses.

With regard to critical scholarly research, I would urge Dutch as well as international sport scholars to problematize in every new study the categorizations that they use and to 'ground' these categorizations in empirical research that is contextualized in time and place instead of predefining them on the basis of past research that is often located in the US or (to a less extent) the UK. Studies that tend to use predefined racial/ethnic categories in their research design could benefit from methods used in ethnographic case-study oriented approaches that examined sport. Those studies tend to locate the analysis of race and ethnicity at the micro level of sport into the larger framework of racialized/ethnicized power relations and discourses in the society at large that is being studied (Van Sterkenburg et al., forthcoming). Authors like Jackson (1998), Spencer (2001) and Jamieson (1998), for instance, deconstructed media representations surrounding sport celebrities and demonstrated that racial and ethnic meanings and categorizations are dependent on the convergence of temporal and situational factors as well as on the varied 'ethnic standpoints' from which they are constructed^{vi}. Quantitatively oriented studies that are characterized by the use of categories should also continuously reflect on such convergence of temporal and situational factors and ethnic standpoints that help to shape (or challenge) racial/ethnic categorizations. This implies that researchers explore the various racial/ethnic categorizations that might be relevant for the specific society under study throughout their analysis, instead of predefining *one* racial/ethnic categorization based on previous studies and routinely apply that categorization without reflection throughout the analytical process. In The Netherlands, for instance, several dominant racial/ethnic categorizations exist parallel to each other. These various categorizations should be explored throughout the analysis, along with possible alternative categorizations that appear to be relevant for the specific context or situation under study. This exploration and analytical use of a variety of categories throughout the analysis gives the researcher the opportunity to gain better insight into the diversity and different levels of racial/ethnic categories that are used to give meaning to and construct difference in the context under study. In addition, it urges the researcher to reflect on the question which categories are actually preferred and dominant in that context and which are marginalized and how that might relate to power relations in society at large^{vii}. For a further elaboration on the possible use of such a contextual

analysis in sport media research that uses racial/ethnic categories, see Van Sterkenburg et al. (forthcoming in 2010).

Conclusion

In summary then, I have drawn from a cultural studies perspective as well as insights from social cognition theory to critique the use of racial and ethnic categorizations in Dutch sports policy and everyday discourse as well as in some (quantitatively oriented) constructionist scholarly writing. I urge those using the racial/ethnic categorizations in sports research or –policy to reflect on their use of categorizations and be open to the power relations and racialized/ethnicized standpoints from which these categorizations emerge. Situating racial/ethnic categorizations in the power dynamics of the time will result in more balanced (Dutch) sport policies. Such policies will not almost exclusively focus on the non-white ‘allochtone’ Other, but also reflect on the dominance and normativeness of the white ‘autochtone’ Self in sports policy and on the differences within and similarities between the categories of ‘allochtonen’ and ‘autochtonen’ (see also Verweel, 2007). Although critical scholarly research in the area of sport and race/ethnicity have increasingly paid attention to white normativeness and the privilege of being ‘white’ in a white culture, some of this research can at the same time be criticized for ‘naturalizing’ the status quo and confirming existing (US-oriented) racial/ethnic hierarchies through their tendency to *predefine* race or ethnicity and seemingly routinely follow categorizations used in previous studies. It is vital that race and ethnicity are problematized in every new study and that the use of categorizations is ‘grounded’ in the context under study, in order to avoid routinely reifying racial and ethnic categories.

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ⁱ At the same time there are variations between cultures over whiteness; In the US context, for instance, the socially constructed Hispanic population is often considered a 'non-white ethnic minority group' (Yancey, 2003) whereas it is considered a 'white' ethnic group in some British usages (e.g. O'Donnell, 2006).

ⁱⁱ Even though the Dutch government has praised 'Indische Nederlanders' for their "silent assimilation" into Dutch society (Captain & Ghorashi, 2001, pp. 162), it remains very questionable whether 'Indische Nederlanders' themselves have benefited economically or socially from this 'successful assimilation' into Dutch society (Captain & Ghorashi, 2001; Schuster, 1999).

ⁱⁱⁱ See also Van Sterkenburg et al. (forthcoming) for the use of the writings of Brubaker et al. (1994) and Baumann (1999) to critically reflect on the use of fixed black-white categorizations in sports media (content) analyses

^{iv} See Brubaker et al. (1994) for a more elaborated discussion on the cognitive approach towards race/ethnicity, e.g. his preference of the concept of 'schema' above that of 'category'.

^v This shift in focus is most notable in countries like the UK where anti-racism initiatives in sport got off much earlier than on the European continent.

^{vi} Jackson (1998) critically studied the Canadian media representations of Ben Johnson recognizing the importance of contextual factors in the shifting racial and national signifiers of Johnson's identity. Spencer (2004) identified the convergence of various cultural factors in 1990s North-America to better understand the media representations of the Williams sisters in tennis. Jamieson (1998) demonstrated how US media texts from varied standpoints constructed the female Latina golf celebrity Nancy Lopez as a cultural marker of racialized, classed and sexualized statuses in US society and sport.

^{vii} Although previous researchers have legitimized their use of already established categories by arguing that they seek consistency with previous studies and that it is necessary for ideas of comparison or measuring progress (e.g. Denham et al., 2002), I would argue that the use of contextualized categorizations still provides scholars with this opportunity. Even though the specific racial/ethnic categorizations and labels can change across time and place, these categorizations generally have in common that they originate

from a process of ‘othering’ that constructs the dominant racial/ethnic group as ‘the Self’ (that is often made normative) and the non-dominant ethnic groups as ‘the Other’. It becomes possible to compare the racial/ethnic categories defined as the Self with those defined as the Other across contexts, even though the specific markers or categories of difference might differ. In discussing empirical results of such a comparison, the researcher should point out which categories actually constitute the Self and the Other in the various contexts and which markers of difference (ethnic, racial, religious) are played out and get emphasized in the respective dominant discourses.