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While it is well documented that sports events can reinforce nationalism, less attention has been given to how borders are drawn to mark off groups whose national identity is questioned in connection with their everyday sports and leisure practices. This article aims to develop a conceptual framework for studying such collective identification processes that not only include some but also exclude ‘others’ from the nation. To do so, we draw on postcolonial and transnational feminist scholars’ descriptions of politics of belonging and everyday bordering that place non-western women in a position as ‘others’. The utility of such a conceptual framework is illustrated in analysing current political and public discourses about Muslim women’s sports and leisure practices that demarcate this group from belonging to the nation. Further, we discuss the contributions and limitations of this conceptual framework and point towards related perspectives that can further develop research with national ‘others’ in sport.

Keywords: belonging; identity; ethnicity; inclusion; exclusion

Subject classification: Research paper

**Introduction**

In contemporary societies, sports competitions between nations have been described as the essence of international sports events (Bairner 2015). Indeed, sport has become one of the most powerful ways to reinforce nationalism (Edensor 2002). Yet, not only as mega events but also as everyday leisure practices, sport produce and activate stories about who we are as a nation (Seippel 2017). For instance, specific narratives about how ‘Danes’ organise sport in local clubs or how handball was invented in Denmark do not only contribute to the national identity, but also often involve a comparison with ‘others’ who are not seen to organise sport or not know of/play handball in the same way as ‘we’ (‘Danes’). In other words, sports-related nationalism is defined both with

reference to internal traits as well as in comparison with “strangers” (Armstrong 1982).

In this article, we argue that sport does not only contribute to the national identification but is also involved in drawing borders to detach some groups and individuals from the nation. We find it highly relevant to conduct research of such boundary-making processes since nationalism flourishes in many Western societies in combination with populist movements that draw distinctions; both vertically between a political elite and the people as well as horizontally between insiders and outsiders within national communities (Brubaker 2008). While belonging to modern nations often has been linked with civic traits such as citizenship and shared institutions, Europe is currently witnessing a resurgence of ethno-nationalism according to which members of a nation must have shared ethnic and cultural heritage (Elgenius and Rydgren 2019). As a result, migrants and descendants who may have been attributed asylum or citizenship in a nation are often perceived as ‘internal outsiders’ threatening the unity of a nation (Thangaraj et al 2018).

Thus, at heart of the nationalism that seeks to preserve ideas about the sovereignty of the nation and a uniform national identity is the ‘problem of the other’ (Spencer and Wollman 2002). In other words, for nations to appear integrated as a unity some must be included and others excluded (Simonsen 2018). In line with Alan Bairner’s call for the use of a wider range of theoretical (and methodological) perspectives in studies of sport and nationalism (Bairner 2015), this article aims to develop a conceptual framework that will help draw our attention to such boundary-making processes in connection with sports and leisure time physical activity. Thus, the research question that drives this article is, “How may sports and leisure time physical activity contribute to not only including but also excluding groups and individuals from belonging to the nation state?”

In answering this question, we will move away from primordial theories that describe nationalism as a naturally occurring phenomenon and supplement ethno-symbolist descriptions of nationalism as a historically evolving phenomenon with attention to modernist and constructionist perspectives. Thus in our understanding, nations are not merely historical but also socially constructed communities as identified in Benedict Anderson's seminal work on imagined communities (Anderson 1991). As a further evolvement of Anderson's work, postcolonial feminist scholars, specifically Nira Yuval-Davis' work on current politics of belonging and bordering, will serve as our conceptual framework to expand the theoretical approaches used in studies of sport and nationalism. As such, this article will remind us about some of the dark sides of nationalism and the ways in which sports and leisure time physical activity contribute to not only marking who belongs but also who does not belong to the nation.

**Postcolonial and transnational feminist perspectives on boundary-making**

Together with the postcolonial theory, a so-called third-wave feminism emerged in the North American scholarship in the 1980s (Diaz 2003). In comparison with the first and second waves of feminism, the third wave involved a critique of Western feminist studies for their claim to universalism and for misrepresenting non-western women as a homogenously oppressed group (Brown 2018). Influential studies like Chandra Mohanty's *Under western eyes* point out how western feminist scholars represented third-world women as poor and uneducated as well as victimised through domestic obligations such as caring for family and traditions (Mohanty 1988). Such descriptions reproduce colonial representations and also contribute to the self-representations of western women as educated, liberated and modern. Moreover, Mohanty points out a tendency in feminist studies to focus on gender and presuppose a shared sisterhood, while making differences in race, class, ethnicity, etc. invisible (Mohanty 1988).

Closely related to postcolonial feminism is the work of transnational feminist scholars who also seek to destabilise the global feminist ideas that women around the world share the same experiences while pointing to differences and inequalities which arise from power differences influencing life across nation state borders (Nagar and Swarr 2010). The transnational feminists attempt to support transnational solidarity and collaboration in recognizing power differences and listening to the voices of women who tend to be silenced (Enns, Díaz and Bryant-Davis 2020). Due to the transnational perspective, particular attention is paid to interaction across borders and to the lives of people who are particularly affected by shifting borders. 'Borderland thinking' is suggested as a useful way of turning attention to hybrid identities, challenges and resistance among such groups (Enns, Díaz and Bryant-Davis 2020, 7).

A scholar occupied with describing such processes is Nira Yuval-Davis. Supplementing the modernist and constructionist understanding of nations as 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1991), Yuval-Davis points out how such identification processes draw boundaries between the ones that stand inside and the ones that stand outside 'the imaginary boundary line of the nation and/or other communities of belonging' (Yuval-Davis 2006, 204).

The ways in which groups and individuals are able to develop belonging to different communities are related to the processes that Yuval-Davis (2006, 197) has termed the 'politics of belonging':

"The politics of belonging comprises specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities that are, at the same time, themselves being constructed by these projects in very particular ways."

Thus, Yuval-Davis alerts attention to the political interests involved in collective identification processes. Accordingly, the politics of belonging is also described as 'the

dirty work of boundary maintenance’ (Crowley 1999 cited in Yuval-Davis 2006, 204). The boundaries worked on are those of specific political communities such as nation states, which through regulation of their territorial borders, immigration laws, etc. – but also through symbolic boundary making – include some and exclude ‘others’ (Yuval-Davis 2006, 204). As such, political communities have the hegemonic power to identify who belongs and who does not belong to a nation, even if these boundaries are also contested by other political agents and the excluded groups themselves.

In her most recent work Yuval-Davis has supplemented her studies of politics of belonging with the concept of *bordering* which is used to stress the interplay between the concept of ordering and the active processes of creating and recreating socio-cultural borders (Yuval-Davis 2011; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy 2018). In a historical period in which nation states conduct increasing control of their external territorial boundaries Yuval-Davis points to the subtle ways in which borders are also constructed in everyday life by way of ideology and attitudes as well as political regulations that expand into healthcare institutions, schools, workplaces, etc. (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy 2019). As such, *bordering* is defined as practices that are intimately linked to political projects of belonging and performed in everyday life in ways that shape subjectivities of individuals and groups, who also contest such processes (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy 2019).

Even if *bordering* shapes the lives of all people, particular attention has been paid to how processes of everyday *bordering* reach into the daily lives of both irregular and regular migrants and shape their subjectivities (Tervonen, Pellander and Yuval-Davis 2018). Further, such *bordering* practices are described as ‘differentiating machines’ (Rigo 2009, 51 cited in Tervonen, Pellander and Yuval-Davis 2018) that distinguish between ‘us and them’ and produce complex hierarchies, for instance



between migrants and the population as such. Yuval-Davis (2006) points out that such collective identification processes are often made with reference to one identity marker such as national identity or ethnicity, but it is critical to consider belonging in relation to the intersecting social locations such as gender, race, religion, class, etc. This perspective is taken up in the work on 'everyday intersectional bordering' (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy 2019, 24) that points out that the current political regulation of national belonging shapes everyday practices of migrant groups in particular.

While the nation is a central community of belonging accompanied by political regulations of citizenship and the rights and obligations that ensue, it is not the only identity marker at play. Thus, Yuval-Davis also builds on Black feminists' work on intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991, Collins and Bilge 2016). Originally, Crenshaw used the concept to describe how gender as well as race and social class make up multiple sources of identity but also social structures that oppress Afro-American working class women. Later, the concept of intersectionality has been used widely in the social sciences not only to describe intersecting structures that oppress certain groups and individuals but also to point to the intersecting layers of identities such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, etc. that relate with each other in diverse ways. In fact, intersectionality has been described as the most important contribution from the feminist theory to the broader social sciences (McCall 2005).

In the wake of this theoretical development, it has been discussed whether wider studies of intersecting layers of identity encompassing age, class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, race, etc. have become detached from attention to the oppressive structures of power (Tomlison 2013). Scholars using the intersectionality perspective argue for the non-additive principle according to which multiple identities and structures may at

times enforce each other but also sometimes reduce the oppression arising from each other (Christensen and Jensen 2012). Yet, the intersectionality perspective does not simply encourage researchers to describe the complexity of intersecting identities but also to point out how such identities combine with social structures in ways that shape the subjectivities of the groups and individuals involved (Davis 2008).

Below we will focus on how the position of ethnic ‘other’ women in sports and leisure time physical activity is shaped by the political and public debate about national belonging. Before doing so, we will outline former studies that have more or less explicitly applied postcolonial and transnational feminist perspectives.

**Postcolonial and transnational feminist studies of ethnic ‘other’ women in sport**

While a couple of studies of sport have directly referred to Yuval-Davis’ concept of belonging (Spaaij 2015, Stone 2018), to our knowledge no studies (besides our own) have yet used these perspectives to study sport and nationalism. Notwithstanding, the postcolonial and transnational feminist perspectives are not new to studies of sports and leisure time physical activity. A number of studies have more or less explicitly applied such perspectives to study ethnic ‘other’ and particularly Muslim women’s relationship to sports and leisure time physical activity. Below, we outline such studies to build on their insights and to point out how Yuval-Davis’ concepts may add attention to the ways in which Muslim women are turned into national ‘others’ in connection with their sports and leisure time physical activity.

In her study from 2000, Jennifer Hargreaves did not explicitly term her approach postcolonial feminist but delivered a sharp critique of the ways in which western feminists have contributed to homogeneous representations of ethnic ‘other’ women, without describing the mechanisms that shape the identification of specific sporting

females (Hargreaves 2000). Another classic text within this field is the book *Muslim women and sport* (Benn, Pfister, Jawad 2011), which is breaking away from the western perspective on 'others' by including chapters not only about but also by Muslim women.

Notwithstanding, several studies have demonstrated that orientalist thinking is highly prevalent in political and public discourses that among others describe Muslim women as uniformly constrained from sports participation due to their religion and culture (Ahmad 2011, Ratna 2011, Walseth and Strandbu 2014). Studies have also demonstrated that Muslim women are often invisible or depicted as 'strange, incompetent, and out of place' in sporting institutions and media (Samie 2013, Samie and Sehlikoglu 2015). Furthermore, as identified in their edited collection on the politics of ethnic 'other' girls and women (Ratna and Samie 2018), some of the critical literature may also unwittingly contribute to reproducing stereotypes about ethnic 'other' women as a group in particular need of scrutiny or interventions.

As pointed out by sport for development scholars, western images of 'others in need of saving' often form the basis for the current sports policies and programmes (Darnell 2010, Spaaij and Jeanes 2013). Among others, such an approach is prevalent in the policies and programmes in which sport is considered a means to integrate ethnic 'other' groups into their new nation states (Author 2018). Notwithstanding, studies have demonstrated that while sport is assumed to lead to belonging to the nation state, belonging is multi-faceted and evolve at different levels ranging from the team and the sports discipline to free and individualised sporting spaces (Walseth 2006).

In order to move beyond the one-sided attention to Muslim women in sport as shaped by the receiving nations' political focus on, among others, integration, Kim Toffoletti and Cathrine Palmer argue for the usefulness of a transnational feminist

approach (Toffoletti and Palmer 2017). The authors criticize the sports development approach in which ethnic ‘other’ groups and individuals are described as in deficit (e.g. in need of integration and/or health promotion). Further, they argue that sports narratives largely fail to take into account the varied ways in which Muslim women engage in and take pleasure from participating in and consuming sport with diverse approaches (Hamzeh and Oliver 2013, Toffoletti and Palmer 2015).

We agree with the long-standing call for studies of the diverse lives of women of colour and their experiences of sport (Birrell 1990, Scraton 2001, Scraton and Flintoff 2013). However, at present we find it particularly relevant to display the shortcomings in the political and public representation of ethnic ‘other’ women in a time where rising nationalism and populism influence sports policies and programmes (Author 2018, Spaaij et al 2019, Thangaraj et al 2018). Already in 2014, Aarti Ratna described how the national identity of British Asian groups intersects with their gender, race, ethnicity and religion in contradictory inclusion and exclusion processes related to sport. Thus, some British Asians manage to be included by displaying the ‘right’ attitudes to football while particularly young Muslim British Asian men remain ‘outsiders’ (Ratna 2014). Below we will make explicit use of a postcolonial and transnational feminist framework to analyse how current political and public discourses only conditionally include and rather exclude Muslim women from belonging to the national community in connection with their sports and leisure practices.

**Applying Yuval-Davis to studies of sport and nationalism**

In our own studies, we have been making use of the conceptual framework of Yuval-Davis to analyse the politicisation of sports and leisure practices of various groups of Muslim women in Denmark (Authors 2018, Author 2019, Authors 2020, Author et al

forthcoming). As other European countries, the Danish state has enacted increasingly restrictive immigration and asylum policies (Bergmann 2017, Stainforth 2009), while a growing political and public attention is also paid to immigrants' and descendants' civic integration into their new nation states (Mouritsen and Olsen 2013, Mouritsen, Jensen & Larin 2019). Thus, we assume that the tendencies identified in our studies towards nationalism as a political ideology and as public attitudes interfering with the sports and leisure practices of ethnic 'other' groups and individuals are not unique to Denmark, but may also deserve attention elsewhere.

Firstly, we will describe how Yuval-Davis' concept politics of belonging may be used in analysing the current nationalism as evident in the lengthy political debate about the 'Danishness' (or rather non-Danishness) of women-only swimming (Authors 2018, Authors 2020). Secondly, we will demonstrate how the concept of everyday bordering contributes to analyse the ways in which novel political regulations and public attitudes shape Muslim women's options for engaging themselves in leisure time physical activity (Author et al forthcoming). Thirdly, in order to further demonstrate the utility of postcolonial and transnational feminist theory we will also pay attention to the agency of ethnic 'other' women to negotiate current politics of national belonging (Author 2019). Across the three case studies, the framework of Yuval-Davis will contribute to point out how national identity is key in current collective identification processes, while more complex intersecting structures and identities are also at play.

### ***Politicizing Danish Muslim women's leisure time physical activity***

Despite the often problematised low degree of physical activity among minority ethnic women in western societies (Author 2016, Author and colleague 2016), women-only swimming sessions, which are popular among Muslim women, have caused great debate in several European countries (Almila 2019, Shavit and Wiesenbach 2012). In

the spring of 2016, the debate also arose in nationwide newspapers and among national and local politicians in Denmark. Before then women-only swimming programmes had received governmental and private funding, among others, from the Fund of the Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Denmark and had been praised by the participating women, the organisations involved and by politicians for promoting well-being and civic participation of Muslim women (Author 2018).

However, women-only swimming attracted political and public attention in Denmark at a time when the ‘threat’ of refugees and immigrants had become important in the current formulations of Danish identity and values (Bergmann 2017, Stainforth 2009). Politicians ranging from the right wing to the central left wing were now keen to utter their critique of Muslim girls and women’s participation in such activities (Author 2018). For instance, the political spokesperson and current political leader of the liberal party ‘Venstre’ was quoted for saying, ‘It is not Danish to gender-segregate in swimming pools, and if you do not want to accept the Danish culture, you should find another country to live in’ (author’s translation, Jakob Ellemann-Jensen, *Berlingske*, 27 April 2016).

In the city council of Aarhus (Denmark’s second biggest city) a variety of arguments were expressed during a one-year-long political debate that was initiated by a proposal ‘to end women-only swimming’ tabled by city councillors of the Liberal Party (Authors 2018). Thus, women-only swimming was presented as a non-Danish leisure time physical activity, making it relevant to use Yuval-Davis’ understanding of politics of belonging to analyse the line of argumentation about what (and who) belongs to a Danish way of practising sports and leisure time physical activity. This argumentation evolved around four major city councils.

The first city council discussion described women-only swimming as an activity making the participants part of a segregated community. This was reflected in the fact that the concept 'parallel society' was used 29 times (Authors 2018). As such, women-only swimming was linked to an ongoing political debate about ethnic 'other' norms and values in politically designated ghetto areas which uniformly makes living there incompatible with the Danish society (von Freiesleben 2016). Moreover, politicians made links between women-only swimming and coercive control in Muslim families portraying the participating all of the women as mothers who hand over norms to their children that are 'non-desirable' in Denmark (Authors 2018). In other words, Muslim women's leisure practices had become part of a wider political debate that draws boundaries between who belongs and who does not belong to the nation.

In the second discussion, a city councillor from the Danish People's Party, described gender segregation as a non-Danish practice; thus adding to the general line of argumentation in which nationalism is reinforced through negations of what (and who) is excluded therefrom (Simonsen 2018). Furthermore, the politicians presented gender equality as a core value in the Danish society with the assumption that white Danes have achieved gender equality while ethnic 'others' lack behind. Through such 'nationalizing of gender equality' (Andreassen and Lettinga 2012 cited in Authors 2018: 712) the politicians were creating a binary division between the progressive West and the backward Islam. As described by postcolonial feminist scholars (Mohanty 1988), the political debate contributed to represent ethnic 'other' women as a homogeneous group without agency. Notwithstanding, a survey reported the variety in age, ethnicity, religion, citizenship and language proficiency of attendees in women-only swimming sessions and a protest group was formed to claim agency and the right to participate in leisure practices of your own choice (Authors 2018).



In the third city council discussion, the Social Democratic Party started supporting the proposal against women-only swimming while also expressing their concern about abolishing club-organised women-only swimming, which they portrayed as a leisure activity that was not religiously motivated (Authors 2018). Thus, these politicians reinforced a widespread political belief that ethnic ‘others’ will obtain civic integration into Denmark through sports clubs (Author 2011), while the participants’ religious identity was detached from the debate. As pointed out by Yuval-Davis (2006), national or ethnic identity is often the single predominant characteristic in collective identification processes, which leaves out the intersecting social locations such as gender, race, religion, class, etc. that shape Muslim women’s sports and leisure practices.

In the last political discussion, the Social Democrats did criticise the Liberal Party for categorically describing women-only swimming as a uniform practice that leads to women’s oppression (Authors 2018). Yet, councillors from the two political parties agreed that women-only swimming violated the options for men and women to have equal access to sports facilities in Denmark. Thus, in February 2017 a large majority of the city councillors voted for a ban that closed the single weekly session designated to women-only swimming in one municipal swimming pool located in a socially deprived neighbourhood.

Throughout the debate, ‘Danishness’ appeared as an overarching theme that intersected with changing arguments linking women-only swimming to, among others, segregation, gender, religion, equality (or not) in ways that drew attention to single dimensions of the participating women’s multiple identities. Below, we will point further to the intersecting structures that shape specific groups of Muslim women’s leisure practices.



### *Everyday bordering shaping newcomer women's leisure time physical activity*

As a further development of politics of belonging, Yuval-Davis points to everyday bordering in the shape of political regulations, ideologies and public attitudes that extend into various societal institutions and shape the daily practices of particularly migrant groups (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy 2019). Such political regulations may act as 'differentiating machines' (Rigo 2009, 51 cited in Tervonen, Pellander and Yuval-Davis 2018) that distinguish between the ones who belong to the nation and the ones who do not.

In 2019, a so-called paradigm shift took place in the Danish immigration policy that had consequences for newcomers in particular. Accordingly, the introduction programme for refugees and family reunified persons was renamed "the self-support and repatriation programme".<sup>1</sup> Besides the current emphasis that persons with refugee and family reunified background should become self-supporting within the first years during which they are also learning the Danish language, it has been explicated that the residence permit is temporary and has to be re-evaluated every year or every second year.<sup>2</sup>

The first author and colleagues have conducted a qualitative study with Syrian newcomer women who were part of such an introduction programme in a Danish municipality (Author et al 2020). Asking these women about their relationship to physical activity, we found that most of the women had been physically active as children and had been engaged in everyday physical activity in their country of origin. Yet, the transition to Denmark had changed their everyday lives, among others, by political regulations for job training and language education. All of the women expressed their desire to be more physically active, while also expressing that they did

not have the time and resources needed to participate in sports and leisure time physical activity.

Moreover, the women expressed their feelings of otherness in relation to what they described as active (white) Danish women. For instance, one of the Syrian women newcomers described that it looks right when ‘white’ Danish women are running, while it would look completely wrong and strange to Danish women if Muslim women were running (Authors et al 2020). As described by Yuval-Davis, everyday bordering includes ideology and attitudes, such as the public attention to veiled Muslim women in public spaces. Such attention has been sharpened with the passing of a law in Denmark against masking directed towards preventing Muslim women from wearing a burka and niqab.<sup>3</sup> As Yuval-Davis and colleagues point out, such political and public debates are moving into the everyday lives of the migrant population. The othering of women that wear Muslim attire also appears to regulate Muslim women’s sports and leisure practices. Besides the Syrian women newcomers’ utterances, the participants in women-only swimming also described that they refrained from going to the beach or went to beaches in remote places to avoid the public gaze on them as ‘others’ (Authors 2020). Thus, even if some of the Muslim women negotiate their options for going to the beach, political regulation and public attitudes appear to increasingly shape the options for Muslim women to participate in leisure time physical activity in Denmark.

Such processes of everyday bordering also evolve around intersecting structures and identities (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy 2019). In our study with the Syrian women newcomers to Denmark, we identified an entanglement of intersecting structures that shapes these Muslim women’s access to leisure time physical activity. Such structures included limited financial resources, obligations following the introduction programme together with household and family obligations. Moreover,

Muslim women's engagement in sports and leisure practices did also appear to be limited by pain and worries about the political situation both in their country of origin and in Denmark. This appeared as an interrelated pressure structured both by an increasingly restrictive asylum policy on the one hand and by political conflicts and regimes in their country of origin on the other hand (Authors et al 2020).

Thus, it is relevant to develop a transnational feminist perspective on the power differences that influence life across nation state borders (Nagar and Swarr 2010) and to listen to the voices of newcomer women to shed light on their hybrid identities, challenges and resistance (Enns, Díaz and Bryant-Davis 2020, 7). Some of the Syrian women attempted to resist challenges arising from processes of everyday bordering, e.g. through jogging in the public domain or through attending leisure time physical activity in closed-off spaces, such as women-only swimming. Below we will elaborate further on the ways in which Muslim women may also negotiate nationalistic politics of belonging and everyday bordering.

### **Resisting the position as national 'others'**

As pointed out by postcolonial and transnational feminist scholars, the lives of national 'other' women are not merely shaped by political discourses but also negotiated and resisted in various ways by the women themselves. This has already been described in studies of how Muslim women use social media to challenge stereotypical and dominant portrayals of ethnic 'other' women as in need of saving, among others, through displaying their participation in sport (Ahmad and Thorpe 2020, Hamzeh 2011).

Muslim women who are successful professional athletes appear to be positioned so that they are better capable of negotiating current politics of belonging. The first

author's study of Danish newspapers' representation of Nadia Nadim around the Euro 2017 shed light on such processes using Yuval-Davis conceptual framework and in particular her inspiration from the intersectionality theory to analyse how some groups and individuals are included while others are excluded from belonging to the nation state (Author 2019).

Up through the years when Nadim became one of the most popular players of the Danish national team in women's football, Nadim was described several times in the media as the exemplary ethnic 'other'; a 'poor' girl with refugee background who through sport had become integrated into the Danish society. However, in the wake of an evolving political and public debate about 'Danishness' in 2016-2017, Nadim used the position she had obtained to utter that she had followed the debate on Danishness and had a feeling that it was moving away from the humanity, solidarity and tolerance she and her family had experienced when first coming to live in Denmark. In the run-up to Euro 2017, she participated in a TV documentary in which she raised her concern about the tone and rhetoric of the immigration debate that she described as xenophobic and as detrimental for the part of the Danish population that has a different ethnic background than Danish. Directly questioned by journalists she admitted that she might not have chosen the Danish national team if she still had the choice to play for the Afghan national team. Particularly, the last utterance was discussed fiercely among politicians and media reporters who, among others, argued that as a national team player Nadim could not hesitate in 'fully calling herself Danish' (cited in Author 2019).

Despite Nadim's resistance to such political debate and public attitudes, Nadim's performance and self-presentation at the Euro 2017 contributed to re-awarding her Danishness. As Nadim contributed to the success of the Danish national team in women's football, she was again made Danish to the public. She figured in nation-wide

1  
2  
3 newspapers after the Euro games in embracement with the Crown Prince of Denmark,  
4  
5 and she contributed to a joking relationship between nations in stating to the media that  
6  
7 her favourite song is 'Deutschland, Deutschland, alles ist vorbei' (Germany, Germany,  
8  
9 Germany, it's all over). Thus, a shared national 'other' (Germany) contributed to  
10  
11 including Nadim into the nationalism uttered around the women's football team.  
12  
13

14  
15 Later the same year, Nadim was voted 'Dane of the Year' by the conservative  
16  
17 national newspaper, Berlingske. The media reported that Nadim was very happy and  
18  
19 honoured to win this price, while Nadim's concern about the minority ethnic population  
20  
21 affected by the same political and public attention to Danishness seemed to be silenced  
22  
23 (Author 2019). Rather, Nadim was praised for not only being a very skilled female  
24  
25 football player, but also for her concurrent training as a medical doctor. Thus, while  
26  
27 Nadim's intersecting national, gendered and educational identities were pointed out, the  
28  
29 intersecting structures facilitating her trajectories such as the fact that she had grown up  
30  
31 in an Afghan upper class family were not pointed out, and neither was her identity as a  
32  
33 Muslim.  
34  
35

36  
37 Thus, popular athletes like Nadim may be included into the national community  
38  
39 but on the condition that they embrace ideas about 'Danishness'. Nevertheless, in the  
40  
41 run-up to Euro 2017 Nadim did use her position to express her hybrid identity (as  
42  
43 Danish and Afghan) and to connect with the minority ethnic population that is excluded  
44  
45 from the national community by the debate about Danishness. Despite politician and  
46  
47 media reporters' critique of her resistance, Nadim was reintegrated into a Danishness  
48  
49 that pointed out that she is successful, well-educated, sports-active, etc. In other words,  
50  
51 Nadim is everything that the group of homogenously represented Muslim women is not  
52  
53 in Western eyes (Mohanty 1988).  
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Muslim women who are professional athletes appear to have a platform from which they can utter their resistance towards nationalist discourses. A postcolonial and transnational feminist framework helps to point out that media representations of Nadim are shaped by political and public attitudes that ascribe belonging on the condition of certain intersecting identities while leaving out other aspects of Nadim's hybrid identity. In addition, the political and public debate did not pay attention to the structures that contribute to keeping the large majority of Muslim women in positions as national 'others'.

### Discussion

After demonstrating how the postcolonial and transnational feminist perspectives can be applied in studies of sport and nationalism, it is relevant to discuss the contributions and limitations of this theoretical framework. Below we will also point to a possible further development of related theoretical and methodological perspectives that will help researchers to pay more attention to how sport not only includes but also excludes groups and individuals from belonging to the crucial political community of the nation.

While it is well-described that sports events may contribute to reinforce the national identity of the members of the competing nations, Yuval-Davis' conceptual framework contributes to analysing how groups and individuals that are marked as 'others' may be excluded from belonging to the nation in connection with their sports and leisure practices. While postcolonial and transnational feminism critique the othering of particular groups and individuals as well as western ethnocentric perspectives on national 'others', the question remains whether this conceptual framework allows us to break away from such categories. Paying attention to politics of belonging and everyday bordering, this article describes political regulations and public attitudes that reproduce stereotypical categories of Muslim women as a homogeneous

and oppressed group. While we do critique such nationalist policies and public attitudes and also point out how the participating women negotiate and resist such discourses, we may not give sufficient attention to the diverse experiences of sports and leisure practices of Muslim women in their own right.

Postcolonial and transnational feminist theories may be used to analyse how political and public debates about sports and leisure time physical activity are not innocent pastime activities but rather form a part of everyday bordering activities that shape the daily lives of migrant groups in particular. Moreover, the conceptual framework points out that sports and leisure practices of some groups and individuals may be politicized in ways in which nationality (in the shape of ethnic belonging rather than citizenship) become the dominant marker for intersecting identities and structures, while other aspects of migrants' hybrid identities are silenced.

In future research, postcolonial and transnational feminist perspectives could be linked more closely to a social justice perspective so that more attention can be paid to identifying and transforming the inequalities at play. In a position statement, Darnell and Millington (2019) argue that sport may contribute to social justice, but only when efforts are made to distinguish between justice and charity. While many sports and leisure programs are directed towards providing the popular activity of sport to marginalised groups, often no efforts are made to influence the power dynamics and change the existing inequalities. To work towards such a change, the stakeholders must move away from the dominant model of sports development and instead towards a transformative model (Darnell and Millington 2019). Within the dominant model, the focus is on providing sport as charity to people 'in need', while the structures that reproduce social inequality are often seen as secondary. In contrast, the transformative model for sports and leisure programs is directed towards pursuing social change and

1  
2  
3 initiatives are shaped to support people in their struggle for justice, for instance through  
4  
5 linking their sports and leisure practices with social movements (Darnell and Millington  
6  
7 2019).  
8  
9

10 This also points to the relevance of further developing the postcolonial and  
11  
12 transnational feminist approaches and matching them with appropriate methodological  
13  
14 perspectives. Pursuing the transformative model for sports and leisure programs  
15  
16 involves a shift from simply describing and analysing sports and leisure activities  
17  
18 towards contributing to designing, implementing and evaluating sports and leisure  
19  
20 activities that are directed towards social change (Long, Fletcher and Watson 2017).  
21  
22 Thus, it appears relevant to develop further attention to participatory approaches and  
23  
24 action research in which researchers are involved together with relevant stakeholders  
25  
26 and, not least, the marginalized groups and individuals themselves (Hayhurst et al  
27  
28 2015). More attention should be paid to how such methodological approaches could be  
29  
30 applied in order to give voice, among others, to Danish Muslim women's concerns and  
31  
32 resistance against the collective identification processes that demarcate them as national  
33  
34 'others'.  
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### 43 **Conclusion**

44  
45 In this article, we set out to develop a conceptual framework for analysing sport and  
46  
47 nationalism that is not limited to sports events but move into the processes evolving  
48  
49 around everyday sports and leisure activities. Based on a postcolonial and transnational  
50  
51 feminist approach – and more particularly Nira Yuval-Davis' concepts of politics of  
52  
53 belonging and everyday bordering – we enquired into the processes through which  
54  
55 sports and leisure practices do not only include but also exclude groups and individuals  
56  
57 from belonging to the nation state.  
58  
59  
60



While postcolonial and transnational feminist perspectives have been applied (implicitly or explicitly) in previous studies of ethnic ‘other’ women, we have identified a continuous need for critical studies of the ways in which the current nationalist political and public debate shape Muslim women’s sports and leisure practices. To be more specific, we found that such political regulations and public attitudes are part of everyday bordering processes that interfere with Muslim women’s leisure practices but also their clothing and their movements in public space. Furthermore, we found that Muslim women do also negotiate and resist such political and public regulations and that some individuals and groups are better positioned to do so than others.

Finally, we suggest that related theoretical perspectives such as the social justice perspective and methodological approaches such as participatory and action research can further support research not only on but also with national ‘others’ in sport. Thus, we point out the relevance of working with groups like Danish Muslim women in claiming to belong to and have equal access to sports and leisure time physical activity.

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<sup>1</sup> Information retrieved 01.06.2019 from:

<https://uim.dk/arbejdsomrader/Integration/Selvforsorgelses-og-hjemrejseprogrammet-og-introduktionsprogrammet>

<sup>2</sup> Information retrieved 01.07.2020 from:

<https://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-GB/Applying/Asylum/Adult%20asylum%20applicant>

<sup>3</sup> Information retrieved 01.10.2020 from:

<https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/ft/201712L00219>

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