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## **Experiencing Resilience through Sport: A Visual Ethnography on LGBTQ+ Athletes in the Netherlands**

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# Experiencing Resilience through Sport – A Visual Ethnography on LGBTQ+ Athletes in the Netherlands

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# Abstract

This article addresses the way LGBTQ+ athletes use sport as a tool for resilience. Preliminary research on resilience through sport focuses on sport as a pre-facilitated space, intentionally created for resilience building, rather than sport as a regular space but used by the athlete as an independent tool for resilience without interference by external organizations. This research explores the experiences of LGBTQ+ athletes in sport by conducting visual ethnographic research, keeping the social ecology theory in mind. This article reflects on how the process of fieldwork has changed the course of this research, and how audio-visual methods and making a film have led to these changes, thereby providing new insights regarding sport as a tool for resilience.

# Introduction

Listening to the Podcast 'de Schaduwspsits', I noticed how being an LGBTQ+ athlete is still a large issue in the sports world. A Dutch professional soccer player anonymously revealed to the NOS-podcast 'De Schaduwspsits' that his main reasons for not coming out as gay in public is that he does not see any added value. Coming out can damage his soccer career and he doesn't want to risk that. His view on the acceptance of gay soccer players seems quite negative. He experienced that homophobic comments are still being made, and that people can be very close-minded regarding gay parenting for example. He mentions that there will probably be a large part of the people who don't care if he's gay or not, but that this small other part will cause him problems (NPO Radio 1 / NOS, 2021). According to the reasons above, coming out in public may have negative consequences for a professional sports career, and it might have negative consequences on a social level as well. What about transgender, intersex, and non-binary athletes? A soccer player from the Canadian women's soccer team was the first openly non-binary transgender athlete to participate in the Olympics, and they came out in 2020 (*First openly transgender Olympians are competing in Tokyo*, 2021). The year 2020 is not that long ago. They are one of the three openly trans athletes who are participating in the Olympics (nbc sports, 2021). What does that say about trans and non-binary visibility in sport?

Feeling a bit astonished on this conservative environment regarding LGBTQ+ acceptance in sport, I decided to dig a bit deeper on the current position of LGBTQ+ people in society. Recent research statistics show that opinions on the LGBTQ+ community seem to be quite positive and even move towards a more positive direction. But attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community still show homo- or transnegative traces. Quantitative research among ca. 2000 18+ year old inhabitants of the Netherlands shows that 92% percent claims that gays and lesbians should be able to live their lives in the way they want to, a percentage that has been increasing since 2006 (Kuyper, 2018 : 14). However, when looking at specific cases, like showing homosexual behaviour in public and opinions on equal rights regarding child adoption, the percentages of Dutch adults who have a positive or neutral attitude is much lower (Kuyper, 2018 : 10). The attitudes towards gender diversity are even more diverse. About one out of ten Dutch adults have a negative attitude towards gender diversity, and one in five Dutch adults consider that something is wrong with people who neither identify as male or female (Kuyper, 2018, 33- 34). This shows that stating to have a positive attitude

towards the LGBTQ+ community, does not always mean that LGBTQ+ people receive the same amount of acceptance compared to heterosexual cisgender people. LGBTQ+ people still experience higher levels of discrimination, being victims of violence or bullying, and are showing higher levels of mental health problems (Kuyper, 2018 : 47). Overall, the Netherlands only has a score of 61% regarding ‘achieved LGBTI human rights’, receiving 13th place among 49 European countries, which is largely due to the lack of hate crime and hate speech policies (ILGA-Europe, 2021). There have been some improvements in terms of positive attitudes towards sexual and gender diversity in the Netherlands, but there is still room for improvement.

Kaelberer (2019) has found that although homosexuality has become more acceptant in society, there continue to be structural forms of homonegativity in sport. He explains this with the absence of enough powerful anti-homophobic discourse fighters. While media and sponsors fought for anti-racism discourse in professional soccer, anti-homophobic discourse does not seem to get much attention (Kaelberer, 2019 : 806). But there have been some developments in the acceptance of homosexuality. The number of gay athletes that are out, has been increasing in these last decades (Anderson 2011a, 571 - 572, Anderson 2011b, 264-265). It appears that sports clubs today are more accepting of homosexual athletes. But the heteronormative culture in the sport world is still very dominant. Homosexuality is not a taboo anymore, but neither is it something that is favourably looked at (Vilanova, and Soler, 2020: 34). This can make it hard for LGBTQ+ athletes to come out and may be one of the reasons that the presence of gay athletes still seems quite invisible in the professional sport world. Kulick, Wernick, Espinoza, Newman and Dessel (2019, 948), found out that LGBTQ high school students are less active in playing sports compared to straight students. Given reasons for this are that they feel less safe, and that they reported hearing anti-LGBTQ language. That does not necessarily mean that the students in these high schools are not accepting homosexuality, but it seems that there is still anti-LGBTQ+ behaviour structured in the sport world. Deciding to be open about one’s homosexuality depends on many different variables like team climate, social networks, the attitude of the coach, etc. (Anderson 2011b, 265). The amount of homo- and transnegative language seems to vary per sport context, with higher rates in team sports and more competitive or higher level sports (Hartmann-Tews, Menzen & Braumüller, 2021 : 1010). If a sport environment shows traces of an anti-LGBTQ+ culture, even if they claim to be acceptant, an LGBTQ+ athlete can still feel unsafe to come out.

Athletes within the non-cisgender spectrum experience hostility in sport as well, as sport often assumes a clear, binary distinction between the two dominant sex categories (Hartmann-Tews, Menzen & Braumüller, 2021 : 1010). Because this binary sex distinction within sport is challenged by athletes who do not fit these categories, sports themselves are challenged to rethink their policy on sex segregation (Hartmann-Tews, Menzen & Braumüller, 2021 : 1010). What can authorities and sport organizations do to create more space for gender diversity in a sport, especially the sports that are structured with distinct male/female categories? For trans, intersex<sup>1</sup> and non-binary athletes, the amount of support regarding inclusion seems to be increasing, but their place in sport largely depends on how well they align with dominant ideas about the construct of their affirmed gender and that they do not excel too much in their sport (Riseman, 2021 : 21). Not much research has been done on the experiences of non-elite intersex athletes, but in the professional sport, intersex athletes tend to struggle with regulations that suggest an unequal position for intersex athletes compared to cisgender athletes, due to biological advantages (Piggott, 2020 : 26). Non-binary athletes have received even less attention from scientists and sport organizations, but it seems that they experience similar difficulties as trans athletes, regarding the binary distinction in organized sport, that has little or no room for athletes who do not fit in these binary categories (Piggott, 2020 : 30). These struggles may have a negative impact on the way athletes with non-cisgender identities experience their sport environment. Cunningham and Pickett (2017 : 223, 224) found a higher expression of trans prejudice compared to LGB prejudice in sport. These results suggest different power dynamics within the LGBTQ+ community itself, which I will elaborate on later in this article.

### **Sexual diversity in Dutch sport**

Within the Netherlands, the number of homosexual athletes who participate in sport seems to be in line with the heterosexual community. Statistics have shown that sport participation in the Netherlands does not differ much between LGB groups and heterosexual groups (sport en bewegen in cijfers, 2014-2020). But differences have been found regarding sport club memberships, for which homosexual men score lower on the amount of sport club memberships compared to heterosexual men (Elling, Smits, Hover, van Kalmthout, 2011 : 24, 73). What is it that creates this sudden gap when it comes to an actual sport club membership?

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<sup>1</sup> Intersex is “a term used to describe a person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female” (Stonewall, 2020).

According to a study on acceptance of sexual diversity in sport in the Netherlands, there have been some positive developments on the acceptance of homosexuality in sport in the last decade (Hoeijmakers & Elling, 2018/9 : 3). But as stated before, acceptance of homosexuality is not in line with non-homophobic behaviour. For example, using ‘homo’ (homosexual) or ‘mietje<sup>2</sup>’ (homosexual/sissy/wimp) as a swear word (Hoeijmakers & Elling, 2018/9 : 2-3). There are LGB athletes who have mentioned that they do not always feel safe in their sports environment (Elling, Smits, Hover, van Kalmthout, 2011 : 73, 75). A cis-heteronormative culture with traces of anti-LGBTQ+ behaviour still appears to be embedded in the Dutch sport culture. Transgender athletes tend to choose an individual sport, rather than a team sport, or actively avoid sports with gendered dress codes or dress codes that reveal certain body aspects (Cremers & Elling, 2021 : 11). Two out of five transgender respondents in a study on transgender experiences in sport say that they feel unsafe during sport practices, and one out of four mention feeling unsafe within their own sport community (Cremers & Elling, 2021 : 16). Although homosexuality and transgenderism have become more accepted in the last decades, it seems to be conditional and vulnerable. It is accepted, as long as it is not explicitly expressed. This may have led to the lower numbers of LGB sport memberships compared to the heterosexual community, and the tendency of trans athletes to practice individual sports.

### **Research motivation**

To get more insight in the experiences of LGBTQ+ athletes in the Dutch sports world, I conducted visual ethnographic research by observing, interviewing, and filming individual LGBTQ+ athletes and a diverse sports team for a period of 2,5 months. I conducted the ethnographic research in three different field sites. In each of these sites, I focused on one or more key informants. The first one is Ed, a homosexual man who is an amateur tennis player. The second one is Laura, a transgender woman who is a semi-professional windsurfer. And the third ones are members of a roller derby team, who are 18+ years old amateur athletes including some who identify within the LGBTQ+ spectrum. I will elaborate on the participants later in this article. The initial research objective was focused on exploring the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ athletes who are currently active in either an LGBTQ+ specified sport club, a sport club with an open positive attitude towards sexual and gender diversity and inclusion, or a sport club without a significant focus on sexual and gender

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<sup>2</sup> According to ensie.nl, the digital dutch dictionary, the word ‘mietje’ can be defined as 1) a homosexual man, a sissy/wimp, someone who does not shows weakness, does not stand up for him-/herself and does not show courage. Both definitions are also used as swear words (ensie.nl, 2017)



diversity and inclusion. By conducting ethnographic research and looking into the lived experiences, I hoped to understand what role these sport clubs take in contemporary society, address the social position of LGBTQ+ athletes in the sport world and get more insight in how far we are on the road of acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community in sport. But after spending some time in the field, having built rapport with my participants, and editing the filmed material into a documentary, the focus of this research shifted.

### **Research shift**

The main thing that changed during fieldwork is that I shifted away from my focus on LGBTQ+ focused sport clubs. It is included for a bit, but not enough for the emphasis I gave it in my initial research question. During fieldwork and during the editing phase of the ethnographic film that is part of the methodology and research output, I noticed that the main experiences of my participants do not lie within being part of an LGBTQ+ focused sport club or not, it is rather the love for their sport, the impact of the world around them on their identity and their will for fighting for their visibility and acceptance that shaped their experiences regarding sport and their LGBTQ+ identity. Ed and Laura both used their love for their sport as a tool to deal with the struggles they had to endure related to their homosexual and transgender identity. The main newfound concepts that relate to the insights I gained from conducting this visual ethnographic fieldwork are adversity and resilience through sport. Therefore, the renewed argument I will make in this article is how sport can serve as a tool for resilience, to overcome adversity based on LGBTQ+ identification. I will do this by answering the following research question:

*RQ: What are the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ athletes regarding LGBTQ+ adversity, and how do they use their sport as a tool and empowerment for building resilience?*

Knowledge of the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ athletes regarding LGBTQ+ adversity, will provide insights in the forms of adversity they experience and in what context. Understanding the adversity they are coping with, will help to understand the way they are coping with it and how sport plays a role in their resilience building process.

But before I dive into the lived experiences of Ed, Laura and members of the roller derby team, I will first construct a theoretical framework to elaborate on adversity and resilience and how these concepts can be related to sport.

# Theoretical Framework

In this section I will give an overview of preliminary research on adversity and resilience, on the social ecology theory of resilience, the relation to the LGBTQ+ community and how sport can both be a source of adversity as well as a source of resilience. Finally, I will state my argument how sport can not only be used as a source of resilience building, but as a tool for resilience building as well for LGBTQ+ athletes.

## **Adversity and resilience**

Adversity can be seen as challenges, change and disruption, which occur prior to resilience (Higgins, Sharek, & Glacken, 2016 : 3653). Adversities like stressful events or traumatic experiences can become risk factors for negative mental and physical health, which is why providing an individual with strength and skills to cope with this adversity is needed to overcome these negative outcomes (Norris & Norris, 2021 : 2-3, 6; Higgins, Sharek, & Glacken, 2016 : 3653). This capacity to cope with adversities is also known as resilience (Higgins, Sharek, & Glacken, 2016 : 3653). Resilience is a broad term that in existing research on resilience is defined in different ways. In the past decades, research on resilience is adapted by different disciplines and applied to new groups of people who experience different forms of adversity (Holton, Brass, & Kirmayer, 2009 : 195), and with it, the concept of resilience changed in definition as well. Resilience is adapted from ecological and physical sciences, who understand resilience as a way to return to the state before adversity occurred (Barrios, R.E., 2016 : 29). But other scholars argue that this definition is inadequate as humans and communities are not static and unchanging. In disaster research, resilience was understood as the capacity for adaptation (Barrios, R.E., 2016 : 30).

Because this research focuses on LGBTQ+ individuals who experience adversity grounded in marginalization, a definition based on the cultural and contextual influences of resilience building would be more adequate (Higgins, Sharek & Glacken, 2016 : 3653). A frequently used definition is the one by Ungar (2008 : 225), who defines the concept resilience as follows:

*“In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual’s family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways.” (Ungar, 2008 : 225)*

This definition keeps the social ecology of the individual in mind (Ungar, 2008 : 224), which in this research includes, but is not limited to, the marginalized position of part of the LGBTQ+ community. Resilience can arise from different sources, which can either be assets or resources. Assets are internal factors that reside within individual themselves, while resources are external factors from their environment that help them overcome the adversities they face (Fergus, & Zimmerman, 2005 : 399).

### **Social ecology theory**

It is important to note that each form of adversity and the journey to resilience is unique and is often not a linear process (Higgins, Sharek, & Glacken, 2016 : 3659, 3661). Adversity and resilience are very broad conceptions and can be experienced by people in different ways and in different forms, and must therefore be understood within their specific context, keeping someone's marginalized experiences in mind (Asakura, 2019 : 271, 279). A positive outcome for one person is not necessarily a positive outcome for another person. As are the interactions between individuals and their social ecologies, which will influence the way and degree they experience positive outcomes as well (Ungar, 2008 : 220). It is therefore important to keep someone's perspective in mind.

### **Adversity and resilience for the LGBTQ+ community**

Sexual and gender diversity itself can be seen as a source of adversity, and can occur when people experience stress or victimization because of their LGBTQ+ identity (Asakura, 2019 : 269-270). Research shows that LGBTQ+ people can experience family rejection, bullying and violence based on their identity (Asakura, 2019 : 270-271). It is important to understand the adversities LGBTQ+ individuals face due to their sexual or gender identity, but at the same time it is important to understand what strengthens these individuals as well. Knowing what factors lead to strength and empowerment and understanding the unique sources of resilience among LGBTQ+ individuals can be used to improve coping skills rather than just state their problematic experiences (Schmitz, & Tyler, 2019 : 711; Kwon, 2013 : 379). Resilience can help LGBTQ+ individuals to cope with prejudice and discrimination they face based on their gender or sexual identity (Schmitz, & Tyler, 2019 : 726)

As stated earlier, adversity and resilience are experienced in unique ways by individuals. But to sketch a picture of how resilience can be experienced by different LGBTQ+ individuals, and check if some experiences can be seen as common patterns, some

results of preliminary research on the topic will be discussed here. Asakura and Craig (2014 : 257) found 4 major themes that emerged as a form of resilience among LGBTQ+ individuals, which are *“leaving hostile social environments, experiencing ‘coming out’ in meaningful ways, remembering the social environments, and turning challenges into opportunities and strengths.”* Another pattern that was found in preliminary research are the following three important resilience factors; social support, emotional openness and hope and optimism, which help an LGB individual cope with prejudice, and consequentially leads to an improvement in psychological health (Kwon, 2013 : 371-372). Resilience can also lie in the challenges LGBTQ+ individuals face. According to participants from a study on resilience among LGBTQ+ young adults, the prejudice and discrimination they faced became a source of resilience and led to more personal strength (Schmitz, & Tyler, 2019 : 723-724). This is an example of a resilience asset, as the source lies within the individuals themselves. Examples of resources of resilience can be caring people in your environment like family members or a teacher, friendship with other people from the LGBTQ+ community or the offering of support groups (Asakura, 2019 : 269-270). Higgins, Sharek, & Glacken (2016 : 3659) documented the process of finding resilience as a result of facing adversity among older LGBT people and categorized several processes and strategies named by their participants. All participants had different, unique journeys, but all lead to overcoming adversity. Finding these many different processes, is in line with the theory that each experience of adversity and resilience is unique and does not necessary apply to individuals who share similar aspects like gender or sexual identity or forms of adversity. Lee et al. (2013) found in their meta-analytic research on the relevant variables for psychological resilience, that protective factors such as self-efficacy, increased the capacity of resilience for an individual, with self-efficacy defined as the individual’s belief that they are capable of controlling their own functioning, for example in coping with change or using problem-solving skills (Lee, Nam, Kim, Kim, Lee, Lee, 2013 : 274). This research will investigate sport as a resource that is used by individuals for building resilience.

### **Resilience through sport**

In preliminary research, sport is mentioned as a source of resilience as well. Kaya, Faulkner, Baber and Rotich (2022 : 43) found that immigrant and refugee youth overcame their adversities that came with moving to the United States by finding resilience through sport participation. Sport and physical activities tend to have a positive influence on mental and

physical health, and can play an important role in building resilience (Norris & Norris, 2021 : 5-6). Nevertheless, It should be noted that finding resilience through sport, could only take place once a safe and supportive sport environment was facilitated (Kaya, et al., 2022 : 43). Once a sport environment is not safe and supportive, it can generate the opposite effect. It can be a space of exclusion for LGBTQ+ individuals, based on their gender or sexual identity, making sport a place of adversity (Zeeman, Aranda, Sherriff, & Crocking, 2016 : 392).

The participants in this research found forms of resilience in their sport, but not in the way that is described by preliminary research. Ed and Laura both experienced hostile social and sport environments, at least from a degree to which they did not feel comfortable to be open about their LGBTQ+ identity. Yet, it was through sport that they found strength and the capacity to not only cope with adversity regarding their identity, but to use the sport to fight against it by means of further developing emancipation through organizing sport events and by becoming an activist in a broader movement and informing and advising sport clubs about gender diversity. Before I dive into this argument, I will first lay out some criticism on the concept of resilience.

### **A critical point of view towards resilience**

Research on resilience focuses on agency, and the resourcefulness of individuals to overcome their experienced adversity, for example the clever use of resources, networks and other structures (Dagdeviren & Donoghue, 2019 : 548). This research looks at the strengths of individuals to build resilience through sport, as a consequence of facing adversity. But before I start the analysis of their resilience building process, I want to acknowledge some of the critiques on resilience theory in resilience studies. One being the individualistic approach of studying resilience building. The state would not be responsible to tackle adversity, if individuals are responsible for their own resilience process (Van Breda, 2018 : 7). Even though this research investigates how individuals take the agency of resilience building through sport, it should not be generalized that all individuals have the capacity and tools to take matter into their own hands. Institutionalized resilience building environments, and governmental action to tackle adversity as a consequence of belonging to a marginalized groups should still be acknowledged as valuable and necessary for creating safe environments for people. While agency is an important factor for building resilience, it goes hand in hand with structure, the macro systems that influence the choices and opportunities of individuals (Van Breda, 2018 : 10). This is also related to the social ecology theory, which states that context, including provided structure, influences the experienced adversities and resilience

experiences by individuals (Ungar, 2008 : 220; Van Breda, 2018 : 13). The focus of this research lies on the choices of the participants, but it is important to acknowledge that structures provided the opportunities to make these choices.

# Operationalization of Concepts

## **Identity**

It is important to clarify the understanding of the term LGBTQ+. Officially, the term stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning, and an added + for all the other known and still unknown labels people identify with, other than heterosexual and cisgender (Merriam Webster, n.d.; *What does LGBTQ+ mean?*, n.d.). Queer is defined as an inclusive term for non-heterosexual identities (Asakura, 2019 : 269). When I refer to LGBTQ+ athletes in this research, I refer to athletes who identify with one or more of these included labels, including the non-labels, as long as the identification does not correspond with being heterosexual cisgender. Cisgender refers to the identity if which the sex assigned at birth (male/female) corresponds with the gender they identify with (man/woman) (Merriam Webster, n.d.). Sexual and gender diversity are placed within the same community under the umbrella term LGBTQ+, as they share a marginalized identity. Regardless, it is important to note that these are separate concepts that likely come with separate issues as well (Asakura, 2019 : 269). Sexual diversity refers to non-heterosexual forms of sexual orientation, including but not limited to lesbian, bisexual and homosexual, and gender diversity refers to non-cisgender forms of gender identity, including but not limited to transgender, intersex and non-binary (Hartmann-Tews, Menzen & Braumüller, 2021 : 999). For some people, the two focuses may intersect (Hartmann-Tews, Menzen & Braumüller, 2021 : 999). This research will focus on people who identify within the spectrum of LGBTQ+, taking into account that there is both distinction as intersectionality between diversity in sexual orientation and diversity in gender identification. Until now, I have used the umbrella term LGBTQ+, to include the whole LGBTQ+ community in this research. But it is important to acknowledge the internal power dynamics in this community. There are differences between how the different groups within this community are marginalized in society. Attitudes towards gays and lesbians tend to be more positive compared to attitudes towards transgender people, and often get more social support in the fight for their rights (Lewis, Flores, Haider-Markel, Miller, Tadlock & Taylor, 2017 : 862, 871). In this research, I will still refer to the LGBTQ+ community as a group, but it remains important to keep the internal differences in mind while talking about the whole LGBTQ+ community in sport. The participants of this research fall into different categories of the LGBTQ+ community, to provide insights from multiple

perspectives and from different marginalized positions. Their experiences will be presented as individual experiences without claiming that they apply to the whole LGBTQ+ community.



# Methodology

This research was conducted with a qualitative research strategy with multi-sited ethnography combined with ethnographic biography as my main research design, by studying the experiences, norms, values and actions of my interlocutors to generate a deeper understanding of their social world (Bryman, 2012 : 380). Several research methods were implemented during this research: participant observation, semi-structured interviewing and using visual methods for data collection and generating knowledge on a multimodal level. Finally, I used montage as method for data-analysis.

## **Multi-sited ethnography**

Doing research in not only one specific location, but multiple field sites, is described by Marcus (1995 : 96-98) as a methodology of multi-sited ethnographic research. Marcus explains multi-sited ethnography by explaining the different approaches towards a world system, compared to single-site ethnography. For multi-sited ethnography, the world system does not form a theoretical, holistic framework that forms the basis for doing ethnographic research on a location. Rather, the world system becomes embedded in studying the lifeworld's of subjects (Marcus, 1995 : 97-98). Marcus (1995 : 98) suggests that multi-sited research will give the ethnographer a better understanding of local changes in culture and society and how this is positioned in a world system perspective. In this research, multi-sited ethnography was implemented by doing research in three different field sites. Each field site had one main key informant: an elderly homosexual man who plays tennis, a middle-aged transgender woman who is a semi-professional windsurfer, and a roller derby team with mostly members in their 20s, and several members who identify within the LGBTQ+ spectrum. By performing multi-sited research, the research topic could be investigated from multiple perspectives, proving insights in multiple dimensions like generation, type of sport, individual vs team sports, geographical location, and LGBTQ+ identification. Not only did this method generate insights from different perspectives, it also provided the possibility to analyse structures between these dimensions. This was particularly useful as different sports and different LGBTQ+ identities appear to have complicated internal structures as well. The collected information in this research might not give much information of the world system on a global scale, but it does provide more insights in national patterns on gender and sexuality dynamics within the Dutch sport world.

### **Ethnographic biography**

Exploring the lived experiences of my participants, may cause issues when it comes to experiences from the past, specific encounters of adversity or experiencing certain emotions that are not directly visible. To understand these lived experiences and overcome the gap of traditional ethnographic limitations, I applied the research strategy 'ethnographic biography'. Ethnographic biography is based on open-ended interviews, meant to expand on the traditional ethnographic context and get insights in the inner world of the participants (Tabib-Calif & Lomsky-Feder, 2021 : 2). This also filled the gap that multi-sited research did not allow me to be in the same field site for a long period of time, and thereby I was not able to follow every action and every encounter of my participants. I conducted both ethnographic interviews, which were open-interviews taking place in the life worlds of my participants, for example in the car, while walking or during an activity, as biographical interviews, which took place in reflexive settings outside their daily life flow, like online or purposely situated in their living room (Tabib-Calif & Lomsky-Feder, 2021 : 3). This allowed the participants to look back at their own lived experiences retrospectively and reflexively (Tabib-Calif & Lomsky-Feder, 2021 : 9). The first biographic interview I had with my two main participants was online via video call. I talked to both participants for 2 hours and had an easy opportunity to type along with what they were telling me. This gave me detailed and more accurate descriptions of their life stories compared to my written fieldnotes later. From the second meeting on, I have been visiting my participants in person. I visited them approximately once a week and without a camera in the first month of fieldwork. This gave me the chance to build rapport and establish a relationship of trust, and to fully focus on our open-interview conversations. I used my notebook to make notes of what they were telling me, what was happening and how the fieldwork day was going. Afterwards, I would translate these notes to an online format in more detailed descriptions.

### **Participant observation**

As a complementing ethnographic method, I conducted participant observation by observing my participants during sport activities, and occasionally, participating in their activities. For example, I played tennis with one of my participants which was a good way to strengthen the relationship and to observe his passion for tennis from a new perspective. With the roller

derby team, I observed their training session every week, to understand how their sport was played and how team members behaved during training sessions. Besides the sport activities, I joined my main participants in other relevant activities as well. For example, I visited one of my participants at work, to learn more about their personal environment as well. These activities often lead to spontaneous ethnographic interviews as well.

### **Semi-structured interviews**

After the first month, I did a rough analysis of my fieldnotes to construct a renewed structure of my film plan. I analysed the conversations I had with them so far, and structured them into chronological storyline, in order to make sense of their experiences. This was also translated into a constructed interview guide with specific topics that I wanted to cover during the on-camera interview (Bryman 2012 : 471). These guides helped both me and my participants to keep to the essence of their experiences without wandering off to unrelated topics, and made sure that all the topics were covered. Most of the time, I would just let them talk about their experiences and only interrupt when they were wandering off, when I wanted to start a new topic or dive a bit deeper in the things they were telling me. The interview material for each of my main participants gave me a lot of verified, but also new information about their experiences. My participants mentioned to me that this guide helped them to tell their stories as well, especially because it could be quite exhausting for them to keep on talking. The interviews helped me to better understand the stories they had already told me during the first month of fieldwork. It helped me to understand what values they attach to their sport and identity and what the relationship between these parts of their lives are to them.

### **Visual ethnography**

From the second month on, I have incorporated producing audio-visual records as a method. As sport is a large part of my research theme, visuals are very important. Sports are very sensorial, embodied practices. Audio-visual recordings can contribute to the written descriptions about the performed sports, that exceed my personal interpretation on how the sport movements are executed. Sound can play an important role in the experience of a sport as well. Take for example the sound of water and wind during windsurfing, the sound of tennis balls echoing through the tennis hall, and team members screaming instructions to their fellow team members while you can hear the sound of roller skates moving over the floor. Besides the sport topic, there are also the topics of identity, acceptance and personal

experiences embedded in this research. While these topics may not be as embodied as the performance of a sport, audio-visual representation is still essential to gather new information. I have covered topics with my participants that touch the emotional spectrum. Not all information can be gathered from what is verbally being said. When filming my interlocutors, I also filmed their expressed emotions in body language, facial expressions, and the way they speak. Filming this and looking back at the filmed material for deeper analysis, provided deeper insights in the emotions and values that are attached to the different topics we covered. Both during the semi-structured interviews but also during the observation moments. While one participant could get very emotional while we covered certain struggles, my other participant expressed a more serious look while talking about struggles from the past.

### **Montage as a method for analysis**

After conducting fieldwork, the editing phase began. To translate their experiences into a film, it was important to construct a clear narrative for my participants. This challenged me to start puzzling and creating a story arc for Ed and Laura, which is in line with their experiences. The fieldwork conducted with the roller derby team did not go through the same process as Ed and Laura, and therefore got a more supplementary role in this research, rather than becoming main characters. The method I used for constructing the narrative storylines of Ed and Laura was based on the narrative model of the 3-act structure of storytelling (Studiobinder [by Maio, A.], 2019). This structure consists out of 3 different acts: a beginning, middle and end. Between the acts, there are so called plot points, which are moments that create the beginning of a new act. The construction of the two main storylines in this research are as follows:

- Act 1 (beginning):** Discovering LGBTQ+ identity together with first experiences, ending with hitting rock bottom due to the adversities they encountered.
- Plot point 1:** Sport as a solution for their negative encounters
- Act 2 (middle):** Using sport as a tool for empowerment, to cope with the negative experiences they had
- Plot point 2:** Bringing this empowerment to a new level
- Act 3 (end):** Using this empowerment for further emancipation or activism and discussing the topic of LGBTQ+ and sport on a macro level.

This simplified version of the 3-act structure of the documentary film, gave me new insights in the role of sports in the experiences of my participants. As act 1 indicates, my participants had to deal, and are still dealing with, adversities based on their sexual or gender diversity. Defining plot point 2, was an important moment of clarification for their lived experiences, and relating it to the theoretical concept of resilience, put the role of sport in a new perspective. In the next section, I will clarify these insights further by quoting interview fragments with my participants and using data analysis to make sense of their lived experiences. Important to note, is that the quotes I used from my participants to support my statements, are translated from Dutch to English, which takes away some of the reliability. The quotes in the original language can be found in Appendix A.

# Data analysis

Ed and Laura both experienced different forms and different degrees of adversity related to their LGBTQ+ identity. Both are passionate about their sport and have used it in their own unique way to build resilience. But not only did they use sport as a way of coping, they used their sport as a tool for emancipation and activism on a larger scale. I will unfold their resilience building process in the same rhythm as the story arc of the documentary based on this research. Starting with their LGBTQ+ identification and experienced adversities, the turning point from which they started to build their resilience, how sport is independently used as a tool for resilience building and how my participants translated this into the larger picture. I will use examples of the roller derby team in a similar way as in the documentary, namely to give additional insights in how this sports team deals with diversity and how team members found strength through their sport and the team inclusivity.

## **LGBTQ+ identity and adversity**

As mentioned before, each individual experiences adversity and resilience in a unique way, and must therefore be understood in their specific context (Higgins, Sharek, & Glacken, 2016 : 3659, 3661; Asakura, 2019 : 271, 279). Ed and Laura both experienced unique forms of adversity regarding their LGBTQ+ identity. For Ed, who identifies as homosexual and grew up in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, adversity was mostly based in the general attitude of society towards homosexuality. When he learned about the discrimination that was attached to a homosexual identity, the pressure of the general attitude towards homosexuality started to impact his own attitude towards his own identity.

*Ed: So homosexuality, at least behaving like this, or... just coming out for this. Like, I am homosexual. You just didn't do that. There was this sort of fear, because I thought, you don't get accepted.*

This fear that Ed had was not unjustified. He explained how at some point, the pressure became so intense that he attempted suicide. Later in life, even when he was more comfortable with his homosexuality, his homosexuality had led to a traumatic experience. Ed was beaten up by a guy because of his homosexuality.

*Ed: What I remember, that was pretty traumatic, because he beat me up, in the kitchen. We had a communal kitchen. [...]. But the homosexuality eh... came back into my life very clearly, but in a very negative way.*

For Laura, the experiences of adversity started once she discovered that her biological identity as a male, did not fit with the gender she identifies herself with. The moment she started exploring the other gender, she soon started to experience a lot of resistance from her environment. At work, the adversity became so bad that it caused traumatic experiences.

*Laura: From management that was yelling at me, that someone like me did not have a right of existence and eh.. Actually eh... that someone like me would never get better at the moment I reported to feel better again, being surrounded by coworkers, with what nonsense it was that I.. [getting emotional] had reshaped my body, that I should act normal and accept the fact that I was treated this way. [...]. I snapped off so far, that I was put into a psychiatric hospital.*

As was stated earlier by Norris & Norris (2021 : 2-3, 6) and Higgins, Sharek, & Glacken, (2016 : 3653), stressful or traumatic experiences of adversity can impact an individual's mental and physical health condition. Ed and Laura both reached a very low point in their lives due to the adversities they encountered based on their sexual and gender identity. But both found unique ways of dealing with these adversities as well, namely in their sport.

### **Plot point 1: finding a source for resilience**

There are similarities, as unique differences in the ways that Ed and Laura found resilience in sport. Both used their sport as a tool to cope with adversity, rather than participating in a sport that was facilitated by organizations with the goal of building resilience. There is some form of agency at play, where Ed and Laura both took initiatives themselves to use sport as a tool for resilience. For Ed, tennis was a way to enhance homo-emancipation.

*Ed: We were just very passionate about tennis, so we connected this to each other. Being active eh... in tennis, in tennis, but especially for homosexual men and lesbian women. So we got the idea, in 1992 '93, to organize a tennis tournament for especially homosexual men and lesbian women.*

Instead of being fearful to show or mention homosexuality, Ed deliberately brought attention to homosexuality. Important to note here is that he had already started to build his resilience when he moved to a new city where homosexuality was more visible, and emancipation was

already more active compared to the place he grew up in. For Laura, windsurfing was a direct solution for coping with the trauma she had as a result of experiencing adversity, after she couldn't find the help she needed at official institutions.

*Laura: There I was, sitting at home. Searching for, for how or what. Eventually eh..., halfway January, I put myself together a little. I noticed that sport had some effect. Well, the middle of January, the wind blows. Why not, I gathered all the surfing gear that I had. I put everything on a motorbike and in the middle of January, with too thin clothes, I just went windsurfing. I just... didn't know anymore. And suddenly I had found so much freedom. I thought by myself, this works.*

Windsurfing was a way to cope with all the adversity related to her gender identity. It was a tool for her to get back on her feet. Organizing tennis events for homosexual men and lesbian women and using windsurfing as a way to cope with traumatic experiences were both turning points for Ed and Laura. To turn their negative experiences of adversity, into empowerment and building resilience.

### **Sport as a tool for resilience**

From this point on, they both started to strengthen their resilience through their sport. Together with a friend, Ed decided to create more attention for homosexuality. They did this by organizing pink tennis tournaments, open for everyone but especially homosexual and lesbian people. Later, these tournaments would become the basis for a new tennis association with a focus on homosexual and lesbian members. Plus, they brought an important international sport event to the Netherlands. An important statement that he wanted to make, was to normalize being gay and being an athlete.

*Ed: Making a statement that you can be homosexual and practice sports as well. That it's normal to, just, come out for your sexuality, that you don't need to hide that. And against discrimination of course, because that is implicit right. If you are open as an athlete, and you give your boyfriend a kiss, and other people see this, that this is considered as something normal.*

This shows that Ed has already overcome his prior fear of coming out for his homosexuality. As he stated earlier, coming out for his homosexuality was not done, and he experienced a great fear of doing so. But now, he even encouraged visibility of homosexuals, with an emphasis of visibility in sport.



Where Ed found resilience in bringing LGB individuals together through sport, Laura found her strength in practicing windsurfing itself.

*Laura: And now that I sport this often, and can focus on that. I notice that things are going well. I finished a transition. I am like I was meant to be, how I can eh... happily.... How I can look in the mirror as a happy person. Despite all the misery and stress that I still experience. I can look in the mirror and think, this is right and I am happy with the woman I see in there. Because I am.*

Windsurfing helped her to overcome adversity, and accept herself for who she really is, and be happy with it. She is still experiencing resistance from her environment due to her gender diverse background, but at the same time, she can find her safe space on the water. Because not only the sport itself is used as a tool, also the environment of windsurfing helped her to build resilience.

*Laura: And for that, I need windsurfing. Because, the water doesn't discriminate. Human kind does, but for the lake I surf on, everyone is equal. And that creates so much freedom.*

The water itself becomes a safe space for Laura. In a study of Zeeman, Aranda, Sherriff, & Crocking (2016 : 389), transgender youth explained that they wished for such an escape space in their school, to take some time off when they are struggling, in order to deal with their struggles in a more empowered way. They also mention sport as a way to take some time out, but mention the problematics of a gender divide as well (Zeeman, Aranda, Sherriff, & Crocking, 2016 : 389). This is a similar situation Laura describes.

*Laura: Sometimes I do really need it. And... to just be able to say sometimes, guys I can't function right now, eh... bye. Just, I will let everything go. I already had some employers who noticed like, hey, Laura sometimes gets stuck. We just need to send her away to go surfing.*

Laura needs windsurfing to clear her mind because she gets stuck sometimes. This way, she is able to function properly again after a windsurf session, and therefore able to make steps to cope with life again. Sometimes resilience needs a little help from another setting and practicing sport can help with that. For Ed as well, creating this safe space for homosexual and lesbian people was important for him.

*Ed: I got this question more often. Is it really necessary to... to organize a homosexual sport club? And I always respond with yes, this is necessary. We want this. Apparently, there is still demand for a safe environment. There is still a hostile atmosphere sometimes.*

Ed created a safe space for him, but also for other people. Combining a safe environment with a safe and understanding social community.

Important to note here, that sport was not the only way of coping with resilience for both participants. They drew their resilience from resources like supportive people, organizations, and communities around them as well. As stated earlier in this research, agency and structure go hand in hand (Van Breda, 2018 : 10). Their social ecologies impacted their resilience journey, as they influenced the choices that were available to them for resilience building. Ed for example, had the opportunity to go to a city where homo-emancipation was already a starting movement, creating opportunities for him to become active in this movement and make choices for contributing to homo-emancipation. Laura for example, has the ability to go windsurfing because of social structures that allow her the time and space to recover from her trauma's.

### **Plot point 2: bringing resilience to the larger picture**

Building resilience to cope with adversity was not enough. Both participants took this empowerment that they found and brought it to the bigger picture. Ed already did a lot of this in the first stage, as organizing sports events and setting up a sports association was a large part of his use of the sport as a tool for resilience. But after this, he pushed it further by bringing this build up emancipation back to the place where he grew up.

*Ed: I want to organize a eh... rainbow tennis tournament, to become more visible. Eh... to put the accent on homosexual men and lesbian women, but actually for everyone.*

This rainbow tournament shows his personal growth, as the growth of society. In his youth, naming homosexuality was something that was not done, and he decided not to come out at his tennis club. But now, he is not only open about his homosexuality, he actively wants to raise more attention to the topic in an environment that used to hold him back. Laura decided that her build up resilience could take a step further in both her passion and goals for windsurfing, as for becoming an activist by creating visibility for other LGBTQ+ sporters.

*Laura: I have been thinking about it for a while, I have talked about it with Pride & Sport [organization that supports LGBTQ+ athletes in sport] like, yeah what, what are we going to... yes or no. And actually, because of their empowerment eh... I felt supported to say you know what, I am going to do this. I am just going to go with sail number, I am going to stand up and openly fight to become the fastest women of the world. And, but not eh... hiding my gender diversity. Especially not.*

This is a new step in her journey for resilience building. She is not only using the sport to cope with adversity, she is openly participating in the sport, meaning that she feels strong enough to encounter potentially more adversity. A clear example of a resilience resource here is Pride&Sport, an external organization that aided Laura in her resilience building process.

### **Emancipation/activism as a form of resilience**

Singh, Hays, & Watson (2011 : 23-24) found social activism as a resilience strategy and being a positive role model for others as resilience experience to be factors as well. Both participants used social activism as a resilience strategy and took the role of becoming a positive role model for others as resilience experience. But for Laura, being active and open about her gender diversity in sport, has been provoking more adversity as well.

*Laura: Sometimes, I find it hard with eh... that I stand up for gender diversity and sexual diversity in sport. Because this way, I make myself a target.*

But this time, her build up resilience has created a difference in her attitude. She mentions that even though it is hard to encounter these adversities, it becomes worth it once her visibility strengthens other people with a gender diverse background to build resilience.

*Laura: Someone who feels supported to go in transition themselves because of my visibility. Yeah, you know, I feel that all this transphobic eh..., transphobic mess that I receive, all that aggression, it becomes worth it.*

This statement shows how much resilience she has built. The resilience to overcome the adversities she still faces because of her gender diverse background, because she knows what her visibility can do for others. Others who experience similar forms of adversity and need resources to build resilience themselves. Laura feels empowered to become one of those resources herself. Ed did not mention further personal experiences of adversity. He does

mention the emancipation we went through as a society regarding positive attitudes towards homosexuality in general and in sport. He experiences this emancipation throughout the course of his life and played an active role in this himself. Today, he uses his resilience to continue this emancipation in places where change is still needed. These places include his home town, and certain places abroad.

*Ed: I want to be more visible. Also for people who, because I know for sure that there are elderly, who still have a problem. I don't know anyone, except women, because there is the point again of women being more open and out about it. I don't know any man, nobody has come to me and said, oh Ed, I am homosexual too or anything, hearing them say that. On a distance, sometimes. So I thought hmm.... That is why I want to organize this rainbow tournament, I am curious who will participate from the association. I find that thrilling, I am curious about this. For me, this is for emancipation. And openness, a thing, I want to see that.*

Ed mentions that there are still people who are hesitant to talk about homosexuality. By organizing a rainbow tournament, he wants to contribute to the development of openness towards homosexuality in his hometown. To change the environment that once caused him to experience forms of adversity.

Again, social ecologies should be acknowledged as a large influential factor that provided Ed and Laura to make the choices to further enhance their resilience building process.

### **Roller derby**

In this research, I did not focus much on the individuals of the roller derby team, but rather on their experiences of the team and the sport as a whole. I did speak to individual team members, both with and without an LGBTQ+ identity. Many members mentioned that they are part of a very open and supportive team, which helps to create a safe environment for people.

*Team Member A: Because it is such a tight group and often because everyone is there for each other. You can see that you often feel safe as a queer person because eh..., to be in a Derby environment compared to for example a hockey team or soccer team.*

Apparently, roller derby stands out because of its safe environment. This also implies that there are still other sport environments that need improvement to become a safer environment

as well. But besides the safe environment, team players note that roller derby is a sport that gives them self-confidence. That it makes you physically, but also mentally stronger.

*Team Member B: I notice that physically, and also the contact part of the eh... of the sport, results in making me feel stronger. And yeah, a stronger body is a stronger mind for me. So that works out very well.*

The sport itself can therefore also be seen as a source for building resilience. Both because it is an open and safe environment, as well as the full-contact sport itself builds empowerment which players transfer to everyday life. Roller derby is not deliberately a place to build resilience, just as Ed's tennis environment and Laura's windsurf environment were not. The roller derby environment can be an example for other sport clubs, where LGBTQ+ athletes still feel not safe to come out or where being queer is still seen as problematic. It is not up to LGBTQ+ athletes to build resilience, it is up to the sport environment to provide an adversity free space so LGBTQ+ athletes can feel empowered to overcome any other forms of adversities they might encounter in life due to their marginalized positions (Asakura, 2019 : 279).

# Conclusion

This research has given more insights in lived experiences of LGBTQ+ athletes regarding LGBTQ+ adversity, and how they use their sport as a tool and empowerment for building resilience. Although this research started with a focus on differences between sport clubs and their focus on LGBTQ+ diversity and inclusion, the findings in the field caused the focus of this research to change course. The experiences of Ed and Laura did not lie within the facilitated focus of a sport club, their experiences lie within their own initiatives to use their sport as a tool for building resilience for the adversity that they encounter regarding their LGBTQ+ identity. As the social ecology theory states, experiences of adversity and resilience depend on the specific context of an individual, which makes each journey to find resilience and the degree of experiencing positive outcomes unique (Higgins, Sharek, & Glacken, 2016 : 3659, 3661; Asakura, 2019 : 271, 279; Ungar, 2008 : 220). According to the insights this research offers, sport was used for empowerment to overcome traumatic experiences, for building a community that strengthens cohesion and support within the LGBTQ+ community. Finally, their empowerment made them resources of resilience themselves. Both actively participated in creating more visibility, are part of an emancipation process for more inclusion and acceptance of LGBTQ+ athletes in sport and are still fighting to create safer and more open spaces for the LGBTQ+ community. Even if it provokes more adversity for themselves. This shows how they have grown through their journey of finding resilience, and how sport was used as a tool to find strength and empowerment. Today, sport teams like roller derby have created these safe spaces for LGBTQ+ athletes. But not only for them to feel included, but for all team members regardless of their background to find support and strength which they can take with them into everyday life.

This research also has its limitations. Doing research in multiple field sites might have provided me with multiple perspectives, but comparing the perspectives should be treated with caution. These are personal experiences which are influenced by multiple factors. Even though all my field sites fall under the umbrella concepts of sports and LGBTQ+ identity, the concepts itself are very broad and have a lot of internal differences. According to Marcus (1995 : 105-113), multi-sited research is based on a certain mode of construction from which the ethnographers defines their objects of study. This research is not based on one of these modes, but rather implements multiple, independent field sites. The global structure that lies

within the multi-sited field sites, should perhaps be approached differently while drawing conclusions.

Participant observation has helped me to understand the life worlds of my participants a bit better. I have visited them in their homes, but also joined them on certain relevant activities. The events, including the ones unrelated to sport, helped me to further understand how their lives are structured and how this relates to their positionality in life. But I have encountered some epistemological issues while conducting participant observation, which I will discuss below. An important limitation in this research is time and planning. I have conducted fieldwork over a period of 2,5 month in multiple field sites. This has limited me to observe spontaneous events. For example, one of my participants mentioned that she experiences transnegative behaviour from her environment sometimes. During fieldwork, I barely encountered transnegative behaviour from others. For this to be observed more clearly, I would have needed to follow her for more hours during the week and for a longer period of time. This was not possible in this research because I had multiple sites that I was visiting. It also meant that I had to travel to each location every time, which took me a few hours which I could not spend in the field. The partial solution to fill these gaps was implementing the ethnographic biography strategy, but that too has its limitations for knowledge gathering compared to the way participant observation would have done. This is also one of the reasons why I had to plan some things with my participants in advance, instead of just showing up every day to see what happens. For example, my participant planned a meeting with an old friend for the purpose of this research and the film output, and we scheduled a day to film this meeting. This meeting would perhaps not have taken place without my research intentions. My influence as a researcher in the field has become quite large in this case, but that does not necessarily make this event useless. On the contrary, the interaction between the two friends happened spontaneously and gave me more insight in the social aspects of my participants' life. The ethnographic method of using audio-visual material helped me to gain new insights, but it also has its epistemological issues. The main issue that came across during research is the influence of the camera on the field. Sometimes, my participants would stay quiet while the camera is on, perhaps because they did not want to interrupt me while filming something. But in moments when the camera was off or tucked away, I had a lot of interesting and natural conversations with my participants, which were very valuable for understanding their life. Many of these conversations happened with one of my participants in the car, as we were driving to different locations. Asking to turn on the camera or taking the time to set it up, would have interfered with the spontaneous, and often vulnerable, conversations we had. I

would later write these conversations down in my fieldnotes, but it could not become part of the visual output anymore. Another limitation is the time it takes to set up the camera. An example from the field was a day on which I would film my participant playing tennis with a friend. We went to the court, and I had to set up my camera equipment. In the meantime, they had already started playing and quickly concluded to move on to the children's court, because due to weather factors it was not possible to play on the normal court. I missed this whole event due to the technical preparations of the camera. I had to solve this by asking them to redo this moment in order for it to make sense on camera that they had decided to play on the children's court. This made the scene less spontaneous compared to the original moment.

This research gave me insights in the lived experiences of my participants, gathered with a visual ethnographic research method, and by taking a new approach in analysing the way sport can be used as a tool, rather than a pre-existing source of resilience. Psychological research regarding the process of resilience has been done by other researchers, but not with the factors founded in this research. Resilience through sport can be further researched on a psychological level to better understand the processes LGBTQ+ athletes go through when using sport as a tool to overcome adversity.



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# Appendix A

*Ed: So homosexuality, at least behaving like this, or... just coming out for this. Like, I am homosexual. You just didn't do that. There was this sort of fear, because I thought, you don't get accepted.*

Ed: Dus homoseksualiteit, je zo althans gedragen, of... gewoon zelf daar mee voor de dag komen. Zo van ik ben homoseksueel. Ja, dat deed je gewoon niet. Dat was een soort angst die er was, omdat ik dacht van, je wordt niet geaccepteerd.

*Ed: What I remember, that was pretty traumatic, because he beat me up, in the kitchen. We had a communal kitchen. [...]. But the homosexuality eh... came back into my life very clearly, but in a very negative way.*

Ed: Wat me nog bijstaat, dat was voor mij redelijk traumatisch toch, want die sloeg mij in elkaar, in de keuken. We hadden een gemeenschappelijke keuken. [...]. Maar de homoseksualiteit kwam toen heel duidelijk eh... weer in mijn leven, maar op een hele negatieve manier.

*Laura: From management that was yelling at me, that someone like me did not have a right of existence and eh.. Actually eh... that someone like me would never get better at the moment I reported to feel better again, being surrounded by coworkers, with what nonsense it was that I.. [getting emotional] had reshaped my body, that I should act normal and accept the fact that I was treated this way. [...]. I snapped off so far, that I was put into a psychiatric hospital.*

Laura: Dat ging van management dat tegen mij stond te schreeuwen dat iemand zoals ik geen bestaansrecht had en eh... Eigenlijk eh... dat iemand zoals ik nooit beter zou zijn op het moment dat ik me beter had gemeld, omsingeld worden door collega's, met wat een onzin het was dat ik me zo... [wordt emotioneel] had laten verbouwen, en dat ik maar normaal moest doen. En moest accepteren dat ik gewoon zo zou worden behandeld. [...]. Toen ben ik dusdanig afgeknapt dat ik ben opgenomen in een psychiatrische inrichting.

*Ed: We were just very passionate about tennis, so we connected this to each other. Being active eh... in tennis, in tennis, but especially for homosexual men and lesbian women. So we got the idea, in 1992 '93, to organize a tennis tournament for especially homosexual men and lesbian women.*

Ed: En we waren gewoon gepassioneerd wat tennis betreft, dus we hebben dat aan elkaar gekoppeld. Actief worden eh... in de tennis, in tennisverband, maar ook met name voor homoseksuele mannen en lesbische vrouwen. Dus wij krijgen het idee, in 1992 '93, om een tennistoernooi te organiseren voor met name homoseksuele mannen en lesbische vrouwen.

*Laura: There I was, sitting at home. Searching for, for how or what. Eventually eh..., halfway January, I put myself together a little. I noticed that sport had some effect. Well, the middle of January, the wind blows. Why not, I gathered all the surfing gear that I had. I put everything on a motorbike and in the middle of January, with too thin clothes, I just went windsurfing. I just... didn't know anymore. And suddenly I had found so much freedom. I thought by myself, this works.*

Laura: Zit ik dan, thuis. Gewoon zoeken naar, naar hoe of wat. Uiteindelijk eh..., mezelf he midden in januari beetje opgepakt. Ik had zoiets van, weet je, ik merkte wel dat sport wat deed. Ja goed midden in januari, hey het

waait. Ach wat zou het ook. Al mijn surfspullen die ik nog had bij mekaar gezocht. Op motortje geladen en gewoon midden in januari, gewoon met veel te dun, dunne kleding ben ik gewoon gaan windsurfen. Ik had zoiets van, zoiets van ja ik... ik weet het niet meer. En daar op een gegeven moment heb ik zoveel vrijheid gevonden. Dat ik zoiets had van hey, dit is wat werkt.

*Ed: Making a statement that you can be homosexual and practice sports as well. That it's normal to, just, come out for your sexuality, that you don't need to hide that. And against discrimination of course, because that is implicit right. If you are open as an athlete, and you give your boyfriend a kiss, and other people see this, that this is considered as something normal.*

Ed: Een statement maken dat je homoseksueel kan zijn en dat je ook sport. Dat het normaal is om, gewoon, uit te komen voor ook je seksualiteit, dat je daar niet verborgen over hoeft te doen. En tegen discriminatie natuurlijk ook. Want dat is impliciet he. Als je uitkomt als sporter en je geeft je vriend die je hebt een zoen, en dat de andere mensen dat zien, dat dat als normaal wordt ervaren.

*Laura: And now that I sport this often, and can focus on that. I notice that things are going well. I finished a transition. I am like I was meant to be, how I can eh... happily.... How I can look in the mirror as a happy person. Despite all the misery and stress that I still experience. I can look in the mirror and think, this is right and I am happy with the woman I see in there. Because I am.*

Laura: Eigenlijk nu ik zoveel sport, en zo lekker daarmee bezig kan zijn. Merk ik ook gewoon dat het goed gaat. Ik heb een transitie afgesloten. Ik ben zoals ik hoor te zijn, zoals ik eh.. gelukkig... als een gelukkig persoon in de spiegel kan kijken. Dus ondanks alle ellende en stress waar ik nu nog steeds wel in zit. Eh... kan ik wel in de spiegel kijken van het klopt, en ik ben gelukkig met de vrouw die ik daar zie. Want dat ben ik.

*Laura: And for that, I need windsurfing. Because, the water doesn't discriminate. Human kind does, but for the lake I surf on, everyone is equal. And that creates so much freedom.*

Laura: En daar heb ik het windsurfen ook bij nodig. Omdat, laat ik wel zeggen, het water discrimineert niet. Mensheid doet dat wel maar voor het meer waarop ik vaar is iedereen gelijk. En dat zorgt wel voor heel veel vrijheid.

*Laura: Sometimes I do really need it. And... to just be able to say sometimes, guys I can't function right now, eh... bye. Just, I will let everything go. I already had some employers who noticed like, hey, Laura sometimes gets stuck. We just need to send her away to go surfing.*

Laura: Dat ik het ook echt wel nodig heb. En... om af en toe gewoon ook te kunnen zeggen, jongens het wil even niet, eh... doe. Gewoon, dan laat ik ook echt alles los. Ik heb al opdrachtgevers gehad die het ook gewoon in de gaten hadden van, hey Laura loopt af en toe gewoon vast. Die moeten we gewoon wegsturen om te laten surfen.

*Ed: I got this question more often. Is it really necessary to... to organize a homosexual sport club? And I always respond with yes, this is necessary. We want this. Apparently, there is still demand for a safe environment. There is still a hostile atmosphere sometimes.*

Ed: Die vraag heb ik ook vaker gekregen. Is dat nou wel nodig om... om een eigen homoseksuele sport club te organiseren. En dan zei ik altijd, ja dat is nodig. Wij willen dat. Want er is blijkbaar een veilige omgeving nog nodig. Er is toch een vijandige sfeer af en toe.

*Ed: I want to organize a eh... rainbow tennis tournament, to become more visible. Eh... to put the accent on homosexual men and lesbian women, but actually for everyone.*

Ed: Ik wil een regenboog eh... tennistoernooi organiseren, om ook toch nog iets meer zichtbaar te zijn. Eh... om het accent te leggen op homoseksuele mannen en lesbische vrouwen, maar eigenlijk voor iedereen.

*Laura: I have been thinking about it for a while, I have talked about it with Pride & Sport [organization that supports LGBTQ+ athletes in sport] like, yeah what, what are we going to... yes or no. And actually, because of their empowerment eh... I felt supported to say you know what, I am going to do this. I am just going to go with sail number, I am going to stand up and openly fight to become the fastest women of the world. And, but not eh... hiding my gender diversity. Especially not.*

Laura: Ik heb er heel lang over nagedacht, ik heb daar ook wel heel vaak met Pride & Sport [organisatie die zich inzet voor lhbtq+ sporters] over gehad van ja wat, ja wat gaan we er nou... wel of niet. En eigenlijk door hun empowerment eh... voelde ik mij gewoon gesteund om te zeggen van weet je wat, ik dat gewoon doen. Ik ga gewoon met zeilnummer, ik ga gewoon opstaan en openlijk strijden om de snelste vrouw van de wereld te worden. En, maar dan ook niet eh... mijn gender diversiteit verbergen. Juist niet.

*Laura: Sometimes, I find it hard with eh... that I stand up for gender diversity and sexual diversity in sport. Because this way, I make myself a target.*

Laura: Daarom vind ik het af en toe lastig met eh... dat ik toch wel opsta voor gender diversiteit en seksuele diversiteit in sport. Want daardoor zet ik wel weer een schietschijf op me.

*Laura: Someone who feels supported to go in transition themselves because of my visibility. Yeah, you know, I feel that all this transphobic eh..., transphobic mess that I receive, all that aggression, it becomes worth it.*

Laura: Iemand die zich gesteund voelt om zelf in transitie te gaan door mijn zichtbaarheid. Ja weet je, dan heb ik zoiets van dan is al dat transphobisch, eh... transphobische drek dat ik dan over me heen krijg, die agressie, dat is het allemaal waard.

*Ed: I want to be more visible. Also for people who, because I know for sure that there are elderly, who still have a problem. I don't know anyone, except women, because there is the point again of women being more open and out about it. I don't know any man, nobody has come to me and said, oh Ed, I am homosexual too or anything, hearing them say that. On a distance, sometimes. So I thought hmm.... That is why I want to organize this rainbow tournament, I am curious who will participate from the association. I find that thrilling, I am curious about this. For me, this is for emancipation. And openness, a thing, I want to see that.*

Ed: Ik wil wat meer zichtbaar zijn. Ook voor mensen die, want ik weet zeker dat er ouderen zijn, die nog steeds een probleem hebben. Ik ken niemand, ja behalve vrouwen, daar heb je weer het punt dat vrouwen daar eerder voor uit durven komen. Ik ken geen man, nog niemand is naar mij toe gekomen, en gezegd goh Ed, ik ben ook



homoseksueel of ik noem maar wat, van horen zeggen. Op een afstand, af en toe. Dus ik denk hmm... Daarom wil ik dat regenboog toernooi organiseren, dan ben ik benieuwd wie hier van de vereniging meedoet. Dat vind ik spannend, ben ik nieuwsgierig naar. Ja, dat is voor mij in het kader van emancipatie. En openheid, een dingetje, wil ik zien.

*Team Member A: Because it is such a tight group and often because everyone is there for each other. You can see that you often feel safe as a queer person because eh..., to be in a Derby environment compared to for example a hockey team or soccer team.*

Team Lid A: Omdat het dus zo'n hechte groep is vaak en omdat iedereen heel erg voor elkaar klaar staat. Kun je wel heel erg zien dat je je vaak veilig voelt als queer persoon om eh... om je te begeven in een Derby Omgeving tegenover bijvoorbeeld een hockey team of een voetbal team.

*Team Member B: I notice that physically, and also the contact part of the eh... of the sport, results in making me feel stronger. And yeah, a stronger body is a stronger mind for me. So that works out very well.*

Team Lid B: Ik merk ook dat lekker fysiek, en ook het contact sport deel van de eh... van de sport, zorgt er ook voor dat ik me sterker voel. En ja, sterker lijf is ook een sterker hoofd voor mij. Dus dat werkt echt super goed.