

Tel Aviv University  
The Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities  
The Shirley and Leslie Porter School of Cultural Studies  
Unit of Culture Research

# **Female Endurance Athletes in Today's Israeli and Dutch Societies**

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by

**Tally Zevulun**

Prepared under the supervision of  
Professor Itamar Even-Zohar

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אוניברסיטת תל אביב  
הפקולטה למדעי הרוח ע"ש לסטר וסאלי אנטין  
בית הספר למדעי התרבות ע"ש שירלי ולסלי אנטין  
היחידה למחקר התרבות

## **נשים העוסקות בספורט סיבולת בחברה הישראלית והחברה ההולנדית היום**

חיבור זה הוגש כעבודת גמר לקראת התואר  
"מוסמך אוניברסיטה" M.A.- באוניברסיטת תל אביב

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De Lester and Sally Entin Faculteit der Geesteswetenschap  
De Shirley and Leslie Porter School van culturele studies  
Unit van Cultuuronderzoek

**Israëlische en Nederlandse duursportbeoefening door  
vrouwen in de hedendaagse Israëlische en de  
Nederlandse samenleving**

Masterscriptie  
aan de Universiteit van Tel Aviv  
Geschreven door:  
**Tally Zevulun**

Afstudeerbegeleider:  
Professor Itamar Even-Zohar

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## Preface

As a gymnast and a gymnastics teacher, sports have always been part of my life and my education. The topic of participation in sports was thus a natural choice for the theme of my thesis. I wanted to study sports participation from a cultural perspective, and examine the way people organize the sport in their life.

After my supervisor, Professor Itamar Even-Zohar, suggested the phenomenon of recreational running, I began developing my own thoughts on the subject. During my bike-ride from the university to my home through Park HaYarkon and the boulevards of Tel Aviv, I suddenly noticed how many runners there are – not only those who train individually, but also those who train in a group. I saw a female runner. She looked tired, but forced herself to keep going. She wore a perfect outfit and sports shoes. It reminded me of when I used to run in the streets in the Netherlands and people jokingly shouted: “Hardlopers zijn doodlopers” (which means “fast runners are dead runners”), “where are you running?” or just a supportive, “You go girl!”. This commentary caused in me the feeling of being misunderstood by society. I started reading about the trend of joining marathons, and noticed that the athletes who do often participate in triathlons read as well. The mass events especially interested me because of participation of people from all over the world.

Finding the athletes to participate in the study was a pleasant experience. I only accepted interviewees who interested me and even drove to the north of Israel in the summer heat with no air-conditioner in order to meet with one. This situation made me laughingly ask myself how people motivate themselves to run on such hot days. In the Netherlands I drove to the interviewees in the dark, cold rainy winter and asked myself the same question, but about training in the bitter chill. Why do people choose to participate in endurance sports? How do they organize their lives in order to accommodate it? How do they have the energy to train before or after a full day of work?

This thesis is the last exercise in the completion of my master program in culture research at Tel Aviv University. I grew up in the Netherlands speaking both Dutch and Hebrew. For this reason

I decided to compare these two societies. Female participation in this field interested me, because while it is growing, women are still a minority.

I want to thank Itai Marko for having the patience to check the spelling of all my Hebrew transcripts, Sara Genessa Levavi for checking my English and Debby Garvelink, Charlotte Gremmen, Aynur Dirlik, Tanya Aharonov and Danielle Zevulun for reading my thesis and adding comments. Most especially, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Itamar Even-Zohar, who advised and helped me throughout my research.

I have finished my thesis, but it feels like just the beginning.

Tally Zevulun

7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2014

## Contents

Preface .....	4
Abstract - English .....	8
Abstract – Hebrew .....	9
Abstract – Dutch .....	10
Long abstract.....	11
1. Introduction.....	32
1.1 Methodology.....	34
2. Theoretical Framework.....	36
2.1 Narrative .....	36
2.1.1 Linguistic strategies in narrative.....	36
2.1.2 Narrative and interaction.....	36
2.1.3 Rejection and adoption of an identity .....	37
2.1.4 Self-presentation .....	37
2.1.5 Habitus .....	37
2.1.6 Development of the habitus between generations.....	38
2.1.7 Cultural interference (global and local culture) .....	38
2.1.8 Professional versus recreational sports .....	39
2.2.1 Running waves.....	40
2.2.2 Marathon.....	40
2.2.3 Triathlon.....	40
3. Agents .....	41
3.1 Media .....	41
3.2 Articles shared in media.....	41
3.3 Blogs .....	44
3.3 Coach .....	47
4. Self-distinction versus connection .....	53
5. Masculinity versus Femininity.....	58
5.1 Masculine features of female athletes.....	58
5.2 Feminine features of female athletes .....	62
5.3 Positive gender inequalities .....	63

Tally Zevulun, A study about Female Endurance Athletes in Today's Israeli and Dutch Society

5.4 Negative gender inequalities .....	64
5.5 The female endurance athlete's ideal body .....	64
5.6 Women, roles and family .....	66
5.7 Controlling the body .....	67
5.8 Older versus newer femininity.....	70
5.9 Influence of media on aspects of gender.....	72
5.10 Alcohol consumption .....	74
5.11 Suffering .....	75
6. Romanticizing .....	79
6.1 “Amazing public support in Europe” .....	79
6.2 “Roadblocks without conflicts” .....	80
6.3 “No competitiveness in Europe” .....	81
6.4 “Desire to be part of the European attitude” .....	81
7. Individualism versus collectivism.....	83
8. Embodiment .....	88
8.1: Geographical location .....	88
8.1.1 Biking as vehicle of travel .....	89
8.2 Climate.....	92
8.3 Narration .....	95
8.4 Social Class.....	101
9. Conclusion .....	104
Bibliography .....	107

## Abstract - English

In western capitalist society people experience a great deal of stress due to their overloaded and busy lives. Participating in endurance sports requires a lot of time and a change in lifestyle. The time devoted to training, as well as the decrease in time available for rest contradicts the needs of western capitalist society. Few studies on participation in marathons or triathlons address a cross-cultural perspective. In this study, the intense lifestyles of female endurance athletes in Israeli and Dutch society are studied by analyzing nine semi-structural depth interviews with female athletes. Five Israeli and four Dutch athletes between the ages twenty-four and fifty-two are included. The central question addressed is: *How is today's endurance sports trend practiced by female athletes integrated into Israeli and Dutch society?*

The cultural transference of endurance sports has shown different cases of rejection and adoption of cultural elements by different groups. Taste is integrated into the culture of endurance sports. Geographical location also influences athletes' choices. Storytelling and the use of terms and metaphors provide information about the individual trying to achieve her ideal athlete model. Injuries and suffering are seen as part of the athlete's identity. In this way collective identities are revealed.

The motivation of most of the athletes is to have a thin and toned body – an ideal extolled by the media, which is used by the athletes to stay up to date. The acceptance of the media allows for a decrease in gender inequality in masculine-dominated international endurance sport events. This study shows that instead of avoiding the visualization of the perfect, unrealistic feminine body accepted by society, the media increasingly exhibits feminine representations in sports, and in this way supports gender inequality. The influence of media on these cultural patterns can be treated in a follow-up study.



## Abstract – Hebrew

בחברה המערבית הקפיטליסטית חווים האנשים לחץ רב עקב עומס היתר של חייהם רבי הפעולה. העיסוק בספורט סיבולת דורש זמן רב ושינוי באורח החיים. הזמן המוקדש לאימון, בנוסף להפחתה בזמן הפנוי למנוחה, סותרים את הצרכים של החברה המערבית הקפיטליסטית. מחקרים מעטים על ההשתתפות במרתון או בטריאתלון מתייחסים אל נקודת המבט המשלבת תרבויות שלה. במחקר זה, דרכי החיים העמוסות של אתלטיות סיבולת בחברה הישראלית וההולנדית נלמדות על ידי ניתוח תשעה ראיונות עומק סמי-סטרוקטורליים עם אתלטיות. חמש אתלטיות ישראליות וארבע אתלטיות הולנדיות בין הגילאים עשרים וחמש עד חמישים ושתיים משמשות כמקרה מבחן. השאלה המרכזית אליה מתייחס מחקר זה היא: כיצד טרנד ספורט הסיבולת של היום, בו עוסקות האתלטיות, נשזר אל תוך החברה הישראלית וההולנדית?

ההעברה התרבותית של ספורט הסיבולת הראתה מקרים שונים של דחייה ואימוץ של אלמנטים תרבותיים על ידי קבוצות שונות. חוש הטעם משולב אל תוך תרבות ספורט הסיבולת. המיקום הגיאוגרפי משפיע גם הוא על בחירת האתלטיות. סיפור סיפורים והשימוש במונחים ומטפורות מעניקים מידע אודות האינדיבידואלית המנסה להגיע אל המודל האתלטי הרצוי ביותר שלה. פציעות וכאבים נתפסים כחלק מזהות האתלטית. בדרך זו מתגלות זהויות משותפות.

משאת ליבן של רוב האתלטיות היא להיות בעלת גוף רזה ומצודד אופנתית – אידיאל המהולל על ידי התקשורת, בה האתלטיות משתמשות כדי להישאר מעודכנות. קבלת התקשורת מאפשרת ירידה בחוסר השוויון המגדרי שבאירועי ספורט הסיבולת הבין לאומיים, בהם הטון הדומיננטי הוא גברי. מחקר זה מראה כיצד, במקום להימנע מדימוי הגוף הנשי המושלם והלא מציאותי שהחברה אימצה לתוכה, מציגה התקשורת יותר ויותר ייצוגים נשיים בספורט, וכך תומכת בחוסר שוויון מגדרי. השפעת התקשורת על דפוסים תרבותיים אלה יכולה לעמוד למבחן במחקר המשך.

## Abstract – Dutch

In de westerse kapitalistische samenleving ervaart men veel stress als gevolg van een overvol en druk bestaan. Deelnemen aan duursporten vergt veel tijd en een verandering in leefwijze. Zowel de aan training gewijde tijd, als de verminderde hoeveelheid tijd die overblijft voor rust, zijn in tegenspraak met de behoeften in de westerse kapitalistische samenleving. In weinig studies op het gebied van participatie aan marathons of triathlons is sprake van een cross-cultureel perspectief. In dit onderzoek wordt de intense leefwijze van vrouwelijke duursporters in de Israëlische en Nederlandse samenleving bestudeerd aan de hand van een analyse van negen semi-structurele diepte-interviews met vrouwelijke atleten. Vijf Israëlische en vier Nederlandse sportsters tussen de vierentwintig en vijfentwintig jaar oud werden hiervoor geïnterviewd. De hoofdvraag in dit onderzoek is: Hoe wordt de huidige duursport trend beoefend door vrouwelijke atleten en geïntegreerd in de Israëlische en Nederlandse samenleving?

De culturele overdracht van duursporten heeft verschillende gevallen van afwijzing en adoptie van culturele elementen door verschillende groeperingen aangetoond. Smaak alsook geografische ligging heeft invloed op de keuzes van atleten. Storytelling en het gebruik van terminologie en metaforen geven informatie over de individuele sportster, dat haar ideaalbeeld van de atlete probeert te bereiken. Blessures en pijn lijden worden beschouwd als onderdeel van de identiteit van de sporter. Op deze manier worden collectieve identiteiten onthuld.

De motivatie van de meeste atletes is het hebben van een slank en gespierd lichaam; een ideaal dat opgehemeld wordt door de veelgebruikte media. De acceptatie van de media zorgt voor een afname van genderongelijkheid in door mannen gedomineerde internationale duursportevenementen. Deze studie toont aan dat in plaats van te pogen de door de samenleving geaccepteerde beeldvorming van het perfecte, onrealistische vrouwelijke lichaam te vermijden, de media in toenemende mate vrouwelijke vertegenwoordiging in sporten belicht. Op deze wijze ondersteunt de media genderongelijkheid. De invloed van de media op deze culturele patronen kan behandeld worden in een vervolgonderzoek.

## Long abstract

In western capitalistic society people experience a great deal of stress due to their overloaded and busy lives. Participating in endurance sport means spending a lot of time and changing a lifestyle. The time consuming training and the changing of patterns such as food, sleep and having less time for social relationships contradicts the needs of western capitalist society.

Few studies on participation in marathons or triathlons address a cross-cultural perspective. In this study, the intense lifestyles of female endurance athletes in Israeli and Dutch society are studied by analyzing nine semi-structural depth interviews with female athletes. Five Israeli and four Dutch athletes between the ages twenty-four and fifty-two are included. The central question addressed is: *How is today's endurance sports trend practiced by female athletes integrated into Israeli and Dutch society?*

### Methodology:

Five Israeli female endurance sport athletes from middle and upper-middle class backgrounds and four Dutch female endurance sport athletes were interviewed. The youngest of the Israeli athletes is thirty-eight years old and the oldest is fifty-one. All of the Israeli athletes have at least two children. Two of the interviewed women have adult children; three have young children. Three have their own businesses, one is a nurse and one works at a bank. Of the Dutch athletes, the youngest interviewee is twenty-four years old and the oldest is thirty. None of the women have children. Two are students and two are teachers at a high school. During my search for female athletes it was unable to engage Dutch interviewees who were the same age and status as their Israeli counterparts. Interestingly, during the search no Dutch athlete over the age of forty responded to the interview requests, thus resulting in the differing ages of the two groups.

### Theoretical Framework:

This study focuses on female participation in two disciplines: marathon competitions and triathlon competitions. The reason for this is that most interviewees started participating in triathlons only after a period of participating in marathons. The two branches of running are discussed in this study together under the umbrella term “endurance sports”.

### Linguistic strategies in narrative

Narratives provide linguistic strategies with information about how one is influenced by one's surroundings and how this relates to the formation of one's repertoire. Labov argues that cultural patterns can be recognized in spontaneous narratives and the individual unconsciously employs strategies intended to impress the listener. Labov primarily focuses on the moment in the interaction in which a speaker shares his experience, and the importance of conveying an idea in a specific manner. There exist many strategies of expression in a narrative that reflect the individual's cultural values (Labov 1972).

### Interactions in narrative

Gumperz, on the other hand, focuses on problems during interactions in a narrative that occur in the transmitting and receiving of signals. In order to correctly interpret speech-participants, it is necessary to understand the participants' social worlds and personal histories (Gumperz, 1979).

### Rejection and adoption of identity

Bucholtz and Gumperz exhibit more flexibility than does Labov in that they not only examine linguistic strategies within a narrative, but also consider the situation as a whole. "Negative identity practices are those that individuals employ to distance themselves from a rejected identity, while positive identity practices are those in which individuals engage in order to actively construct a chosen identity" (Bucholtz, 1999 p. 211). The individual attempts to achieve the positive identity that he himself constructs, though this does not occur without continuous friction. In this manner social identities are created within a repertoire (Bucholtz, 1999). Quinn argues that metaphors contain semantic constructions that provide information concerning the individual's identity (Quinn in: Holland *et al.*, 1987).

### Presentation of the self

Goffman's theory explores interaction between individuals. This face-to-face interaction builds relations within a society by examining the "self" and how people present themselves in different situations. He claims that the cultural patterns reflected in the individual can be observed through interactions and self-presentation. Individuals choose the most ideal method with which to

represent themselves in interactions with others and may make different choices in different situations (Goffman, 1959). The interviewees exhibit a model of how they want to present themselves. Thus, by applying these two theories to the interviews, we can infer cultural patterns and habitus of the female endurance sport athletes.

### Habitus

Bourdieu argues that each person wants to be stand out from his or her group. Through distinction, he or she constantly attempts to enter into a higher-class group in order to obtain power. When such attempts are successful, the now higher-class individual will look for something else with which to distinguish himself from the lower class. This "competitive struggle" is "unbroken and unending" among different groups (Bourdieu, 1993).

Gilbert's research also discusses the habitus of women in sports. In his research, women from the first generation of tennis participation would not have been accepted in that societal group if they had worn short, comfortable clothes and made free, unrestrained movements during competitions. These rules were relaxed for the second generation of women, who had grown up in a society in which female participation in tennis was already institutionalized. As their participation in sports was more accepted, they were able to go a step further in wearing short comfortable clothes and moving freely and quickly while playing (Gilbert, 2011). This means that the taste of an individual can be changed providing it is done within a socially accepted framework. Gilbert's study also shows that habitus can be changed through generations, which may imply that each development exhibits different dynamics. The trendsetters adopt new cultural patterns for a short while, until they are adopted by others. The trendsetter will find patterns that have diffused to the periphery of society and bring them back to the center in a different style (Gladwell, 1997). An example of this can be seen in the return of the trend of endurance running to the center of society as a leisure activity (e.g. participating in competition) rather than as a survival skill.

Even-Zohar discusses the "producers" and "consumers" in a society. His scheme of factors operating in culture shows that without a market there is no "cultural repertoire". A cultural repertoire consists of rules and instruments in a society that governs the production and

consumption of a product. The market in a society of endurance athletes consists of elite athletes (producers) and amateur athletes (consumers) (Even-Zohar, 2005).

Gratton's pyramid distinguishes between professional (elite) sports and recreational sports, which appear at the top of the pyramid and the rest of the pyramid respectively. The interviewees in this study belong to the latter group. Governments of different countries are increasingly supportive of professional sports and even earn money from recreational sports. The dominant supporter of recreational sports is the commercial sector (Gratton, 2007). People participating in recreational sports act as "consumers", as they pay to participate, which means they can be considered passive. In contrast, participants in elite sports are "producers", as they receive funding and can be considered active. The goal of the commercial sector is to attract consumers (i.e. recreational sport participants) who consume via different media, such as internet forums, social networking sites such as Facebook, and blogs, television and magazines focused on endurance sports. These official and non-official agencies serve as the important trendsetters in this field.

Van Bottenburg claims that the running trend has occurred in two waves (i.e., expansion of participants in the sport). The first wave occurred in the seventies. Characteristics of this wave include less participation by female athletes and the infrequency of running in public. Endurance sport events such as those seen today did not exist. The second wave of running started in the nineties and has continued until today. This wave is characterized by participation in huge events such as marathons or triathlons, which have developed "carnival-like" atmospheres. While men are still more prevalent in this wave, participation among females is growing much more rapidly than among males (Van Bottenburg, 2006).

## Marathon

A marathon is a long distance run of 42,195 km. Amateurs as well as professional athletes participate in international competitions. During the race both genders run the marathon at the same time, but the results of the competition are separated. Typically, a marathon competition also includes shorter distance races such as 21.1 km (half-marathon), 10 km and 4.2 km.

## Triathlon

A triathlon is a combination of three different endurance sports: running, biking and swimming. Triathlon races vary in distance. The most common versions are (according to the website [totaltriathlon.com](http://totaltriathlon.com)):

- 1 "Sprint Distance": 750 m swim, 20 km bike, 5 km run.
- 2 "Olympic Distance": 1.5 km swim, 40 km bike, 10 km run.
- 3 "ITU (International Triathlon Union) Long": 3 km swim, 80 km bike, 20 km run.
- 4 "Half- Ironman": 1.9 km swim, 90 km bike, 21.1 km run.
- 5 "Ironman": 3.8 km swim, 180 km bike, 42,195 km run.

## Findings

### Agents

Important agents for the female athletes are the media and coaches.

### Articles shared in media

The interviewees all recount how they stay up to date through media such as internet forums, magazines and Facebook. This is a positive way to reach the greater audience interested in endurance sports. None of the Dutch interviewees have written articles related to endurance sports. When asked why, they all react the same way: They do not feel that they have important experiences to share. The act of writing articles about their participation in endurance sports is particularly prominent among the Israeli athletes. A noteworthy example of this can be seen in athletes who use the internet to participate in forums on endurance sports and who discuss this subject on Facebook. They read articles about their participation in endurance sports and also write articles that they publish on sites or forums. This shows a difference between the athletes who want to share their experiences with the world and those who do not. In this case the Israeli interviewees want much more to share their experiences. The Dutch athletes are more introverted and hesitant to show their achievements.

### Forums

Common issues relevant to athletes from both Israeli and Dutch culture are food consumption, injury and the ability to register for different events online. There exists a category for general

questions regarding different events and questions about issues that may influence their lifestyles such as pregnancy, how to subscribe to an event and information about training programs or injury prevention.

## Blogs

The female athletes collect a great deal of information about their sport via blogs. Blog posts about the experience of female athletes are mostly written after achievements and are presented in a reflective way. The authors write about obstacles they faced and how they overcame them. The responses that they receive support their achievements. The athletes reflect on specific themes and use the discussions to reject negative identity. The publication of an article depicting a negative identity is rejected and causes disagreement.

One example can be seen in the case of an athlete who combines travel and training in Greece. She writes an account of achievements in life so as to downplay the failure she briefly mentions at the end – her volunteer work at a project that guides people in being vegan for at least twenty-two days. However, she mitigates her feeling of failure with the fact she convinced somebody that veganism is healthy for endurance athletes. She handles failure by adopting a “positive identity” and rejecting a “negative” one. Some write in a poetic way about their injuries and have a positive attitude. Another athlete describes how easy it is to sink into a depression because of injury, but writes in a positive way. Another example is about the way the athletes combine their sport with other activities, which causes the sport to move to the periphery in their life. Typically they explain how they move it back to the center.

Some female athletes add female sensibility to their writing about their sport by including that they love activities like dancing and cooking. In some articles the triathlon moves to periphery, but they ultimately bring it back to the center (<http://www.shvoong.co.il/he-IL/355/14878/>).

Athletes use metaphors and compare their sport activity with other doings in their daily life such as having a child (<http://www.shvoong.co.il/he-IL/301/17179/>).

In one blog athletes re-published Scheerder's claim that running is simply a means of gaining status and allowing one to boast the next day at the office



([http://www.telegraaf.nl/vrouw/inbeweging/22649551/Waarom\\_is\\_hardlopen\\_zo\\_hip\\_.html](http://www.telegraaf.nl/vrouw/inbeweging/22649551/Waarom_is_hardlopen_zo_hip_.html)). This identity described is “negative” and so rejected by the athletes. The reactions of female athletes reveal their disagreement with the claim and feelings that they are not being understood. Prominent is that in the original newspaper publication of this article, it was printed under the category “female”.

### Coach

In general, one of the most important responsibilities of a coach is to create a safe environment and to prevent injuries during training and competitions. This is not as apparent in endurance sports, however. During the event athletes want better results than they achieve during training. Injuries occur during moments in which it is most difficult to think rationally – when the athlete is tired and in pain, but does not want to fail. Nevertheless, in the interviews, no mention is made of coaches aiding in the prevention of damage by helping athletes think rationally and by advising them to slow down. The task of prevention is instead allocated to friends and medics. For example, MU explains that medics scan the athletes for symptoms of fatigue (Transcript 8, #402-#405).

It is noteworthy that none thinks that this is significant, and that all think it is obvious that they make decisions without support of the coach during an event. J. tells about her new coach, who is not present during the competitions, but plans to be present in the future. She explains that even then he will not support the athlete when quitting the event is the rational choice (Transcript 9, #764-#775). This example shows that the athletes are consumers and the coach is the producer. By acting as a friend, rather than a coach, the coach masks his goal of earning money. To control your own body is a part of the athlete's model, which is threatened when the coach becomes too involved. By remaining independent in this respect, a flexible situation is created for the individual, which correlates with the individualistic society.

### Self-distinction versus connection

Acknowledgement is an important issue for the athletes from both cultures. A difference is that while all the athletes enjoy recognition via a trophy or another object that can be placed in the home (for instance MU. keeps her trophies in her living room) the Israeli athletes, like N., also

seek acknowledgement that they can show in public, such as the sticker that can be placed on her car. N. explains that she likes to do things that others do not. The distinction of having a "42.2" sticker is already common and now she wants a "61" sticker (Transcript 1, #867-#869). The sticker is not mentioned at all by the Dutch athletes, though they do mention the trophy that is used to distinguish them, as well as the award ceremony in the beer tent.

The Israeli athlete A. also distinguishes herself by joining a small elite group. She registered for a "boutique" marathon in France – a marathon that only a few thousand attend, unlike the popular marathons of the masses. She uses somewhat aristocratic imagery to describe it. A "boutique" marathon suggests high quality, high costs and low quantity. Saying it has an atmosphere of a wine tasting also suggests that this is a marathon of the type of upper class individuals who attend Beaujolais wine tasting events. Emphasis should be placed on the fact that it is not drinking wine, but tasting it; this means slowly sipping different kind of wines, symbolizing the aristocratic class of society that is part of her ideal model. Wine is a refined alcoholic drink compared to beer, which is coarse. In this way she uses taste (e.g. wine tasting) in order to distinguish herself. A says:

א: "Beaujolais".

ט: כן

א: זה מרתון בוטיק. זה לא מרתון ב... כמו יש אה... יש בכל הערים הגדולות שיש בהם ארבעים אלף, המישים אלף משתתפים. זה מרתון בוטיק כי יש בו, לדעתי שמונת אלפים משתתפים, הוא הרבה יותר קטן, יש בו... אווירה אה: של שתיית יין".  
(Transcript 2, #423-#427)

Like the event in Beaujolais (France), Dutch events also exhibit a combination of alcohol culture and sports culture. Though in Israel this combination is not apparent, participating in these kinds of endurance sports events is a way for Israeli athletes to distinguish themselves from their society. In contrast, the Dutch athletes combine the endurance sport with beer. Alcohol consumption during events does not distinguish them from the group. The Dutch athlete A. explains that the event's award ceremony, which for her was the most impressive moment of her participation in the sport, was held in an immense beer tent (Transcript 6, #994-#997). Drinking beer shows that the Dutch female athletes adopt the practice in order to feel connected to Dutch

society, while the ideal model of the Israeli athletes contains features that distinguish them from ordinary society by reaching the upper classes.

### Masculinity versus Femininity

Krane *et al.* explain that there is a clash between the feminine ideal and athletic activity due to the latter being associated with masculinity (Krane *et al.*, 2004). Women express masculine characteristics during sports such as strength, assertiveness, independence and competitiveness, which contradict the hegemonic femininity (Krane, 2001 in: Krane *et al.*, 2004). Assertiveness is seen in the interview of V., who discussed a competition in which she did not finish in time, which was supposed to result in her dropping out. However, she succeeded in convincing the competition manager to allow her to continue:

ו: "ואז באתי לצאת לאופניים... ואומרים לי תשמעי, את לא יכולה לצאת, אה: עוד מעט פותחים כבישים. אמרתי להם תקשיבו, דיברתי עם מייקי, הוא היה המנהל התחרות, לקחתי אותו ו:אמרתי תגיד, נראה לך הגיוני, על טריאתלון ספרינט נשים אתה עושה cut of time, תשים על ה.. צעירים, בני השלושים וחמש, למה.. אה: למה עד 35, למה עלינו? בקיצור, ישבתי עשר דקות, שכנעתי אותו בסוף הוא אמר טוב, תוציאו אותה, הוא שם עלי אופנוע, רכבתי בכבישים פתוחים. לא וויתרתי <מחייכת>"  
(Transcript 4, #731-#736)

MU addresses the trophies in the bookcase:

MU: "Nou ik heb een paar keer op dat soort loopjes gestaan en eh ook dingen kunnen winnen. Dat zijn

T: [Ja [ja

MU: die paar bekens eh <wijst naar de bekens op de kast> die zijn allemaal van mij natuurlijk <grinnikt>."

MU: "Well I've been on a few of those little runs and er, have also been able to win. That's those couple of trophies

T: [Yes [yes

MU: er <points at trophies on the shelf> those are all mine of course. <chuckles>." (Transcript 8, #707-#710).

The female athletes need to exhibit mental strength. It is common among the interviewees to speak of physical weaknesses such as pain or fatigue, but they all manage it. It is not common, however, to speak of the need for support during a mental breakdown. This is seen as a weakness. For example, A. hides the term mental breakdown. Rather than name the term explicitly, she recounts that last winter the combination of work and exercise did not go well,

leading to her quit her job as well as the training (Transcript 6, #331- #332). Later she describes the incident as simply being too busy, and notes that people pushed her to start running again (Transcript 6, #418-#421). That she could no longer function in her daily life is a serious problem that she chose to ignore. A. explains that sports make her look younger and pretty (i.e., thin and toned):

א: "אני נהנית מזה שאני... יפה וחטובה ואף אחד לא מאמין שאני בגיל שלי. אה: הכל מונח עלי כמו דוגמנית..."  
ט: ]<צוחקת>  
(Transcript 2, #376-#378).

Another example of the typical endurance athlete is discussed by M. who says that the ideal body is thin and toned:

מ: "אני לא אתלטית, אתלט, זה מישוהו שרואים שהוא מאוד מאוד רזה, והוא בנוי ל: אנשים אה: ספורטאי סיבולת הם צריכים להיות אנשים מאוד מאוד רזים, אחוזי שומן מאוד נמוכים בגוף. מאוד מאוד נמוכים כי... זה ברור אתה לא יכול להיות כבד יותר ממה ש.. מההכרחי ל:שרירים לשאת אותך." (Transcript 3, #360-#363).

Feminine features concern the exterior, a person's appearance, whereas masculine features concern the interior, mental behavior. This is apparent in the interviews. Prominent during the interviews was the idea that the athletes exhibit masculine behavior while striving for a feminine athlete model similar to the more general ideal feminine model. Today men and women in competitive events have the same rights, though in reality many inequalities still exist. These can be either positive in supporting female athletes or negative in undermining them.

#### Positive gender inequalities

Unconscious elements of inequality remain, though they are less prominent today than in the past. During biking and swimming the gender inequalities negatively affected men who did not help the female athletes. MU. describes positive gender inequality at a competition during which there was a lot of wind in the face. In this case she appeared physically weak and was therefore not perceived as a rival. Male athletes who saw that she had a chance of winning the competition ran in a circle around her in order to block the wind (Transcript 8, #739-#744).

#### Negative gender inequalities

V. explains that in the field of sports, men act opposite to how they act in the workplace. She provides an example from her job in marketing; the women are assertive and cold, whereas the men are kind. On the track she sees the opposite. Women are kind, and while men can also be kind, when you are better than they are they feel threatened:

ו: "לא גם בספורט, נשים.. בניגוד לעולם העסקי שאני חווה את זה, בספורט.. זה מדהים. זה כאילו: ההפך מוחלט. ההפך המוחלט.. לגברים הם יותר עם אגו והם פחות מפרגנים.

ט: פחות מפרגנים?

ו: כמה שזה נראה כאילו... הם כאילו יפרגנו אם רק תהיי... פחות טובה מהם. אבל אם טיפה תהיי יותר טובה מהם, הרסת לגמרי..". (Transcript 4, #497-#501).

Another example is provided by MU. who tells of men who do not want her to pass them by bike (Transcript 8, #747-#749).

The female endurance athlete's ideal body

According to Krane *et al.* women with athletic bodies have different proportions than the ideal female body dictated by society. The interviewees agree that being athletic is equated with being masculine and is not as socially acceptable for females. Young women engage in typical feminine behavior in order to enhance their femininity. Athletes may do their hair, put on make-up and wear feminine clothes to compensate for the distancing from femininity caused by their participation in sports (Krane *et al.*, 2004), because femininity dictates a woman's appearance in society (Bordo, 1993 in: Krane *et al.*, 2004). A. explains that sports make her look younger and pretty (i.e. thin and toned) (see paragraph "Masculinity versus Femininity", Transcript 2, #376-#378).

The ideal endurance athlete's body resembles the ideal feminine body, thin and toned. Therefore striving for the ideal endurance athlete's body is a way for the women to strive for an ideal female body (as constructed by society). In the case of A. it is particularly important that she realizes the ideal female body, because she needs to present a youthful image at her anti-aging clinic (Questionnaire 2). This is another important motivation: to strive for a socially accepted body.

### Women, roles and family

In general, having children leads to the traditional division of gender roles, with women investing more time in managing the household and caring for the children (Minnen *et al.*, 2004). Most modern women also need to work, so their time management must be strict, especially when younger children are a factor. All the women who participate in the sport have or had a husband or boyfriend who participates with them. Women with younger children spend far more time taking care of them than do women with adult children. It is harder for the first category of women to include the athlete model in their repertoire. In order to achieve this, the whole family is involved in the sport of the mother's choice: All the Israeli interviewees train with their husbands. Small children are involved as supporters or as endurance sport participants.

### Controlling the body

Cooper claims that marathons and triathlons give women the chance to learn about and control their own bodies, and reject the patriarchal "science" of the seventies that told them that women could not run. Marathon participation has encouraged women to explore their physical limits (Cooper, 1995). Although today physical activity is still, according to society, perceived as masculine, it is evident that female athletes are becoming accepted more and more. Although there are now fewer gender inequalities, anecdotes from the interviews demonstrate the interviewees' attempts to fight gender inequality and explore their physical limitations.

The athletes from both cultures present themselves as exploring their physical limits, but stay "in control" of their body and training. This is part of the masculine model of the endurance athlete who is "in control" (Vaccaro *et al.*, 2011). One of the ways to be "in control" is deciding independently whether or not to take recommended precautions, train with a professional trainer or stop training in order to prevent injury. They base their ability to make such decisions without consulting a professional (or reject such recommendations when they are made) on their claim of "knowing" and "feeling" their bodies.

### Older versus newer femininity

Vaccaro *et al.* (2011) argue that women are culturally identified with weakness. Gilbert describes a historical development according to which this identity, which is seen as negative, can change. This is important, as it indicates the evolution of cultural identities. In contrast with the Israeli athletes, the Dutch athletes are all (with the exception of one) supported by their parents. The interviews show that Dutch society, in which there has already been a generation of endurance athletes, more easily adopts endurance sports in general and female participation in particular. The Israeli athletes, however, also represent the clear development of the acceptance of female endurance athletes. This case is important, as it indicates feminist development in different societies over the course of two generations.

### Influence of media on aspects of gender

Gratton argues that the commercial sector is a dominant supporter of mass participation in sports (Gratton, 2007). The commercial sector is indeed a dominant element influencing the interviewees. This makes the interviewees consumers who are attracted through media. Fredrickson *et al.* argue that in American culture visual media turns the female body into an object. In advertisements, the female body is a visual object that is constantly being evaluated, while the masculine body is rarely portrayed; rather, men's heads and faces are more often on display. Fredrickson *et al.* argue that confrontation is unavoidable. Women are influenced by these visualized and objectified bodies, which idealize the female form and create a standard that is almost impossible for the average woman to reach. (An extremely thin body is the norm in advertisements.) This results in women's desire to change their bodies, which can lead to exercising, dieting, using beauty-products, becoming more interested in fashion, developing eating-disorders and getting (elective) surgery (Fredrickson *et al.*, 1997).

The media uses the ideal body as a tool for advertisements, making the body a visual object. It accentuates the physical look (thin and toned), which also fits with the interviewees' idea of the ideal athlete model. It also attracts consumers by encouraging them to buy in order to reach the ideal model. As the interviewees state, endurance sports enable you to eat what you want and to lose weight (and not develop a muscular, masculine body). Endurance sports conform to the idealized physical feminine model as presented by the media. This makes the transfer of new

cultural patterns in female participation in endurance sports easier, because the visual feminine model (thin and toned) physically fits with the female endurance athletes' body (thin and toned) and is accepted by society.

On the other hand, the fact that this involves the objectification of women fits into the more conservative repertoire of older cultural patterns. This stimulation of gender inequality arose from older cultural patterns that were pushed to the periphery of society, only to return in a slightly altered form in order to suit the times. Independent acts such as subscribing to events via the internet and using media actually have paradoxical results: While exposure to the media allows for independent action, it also causes the female athlete to strive to achieve an unrealistic body – and thus to submit to older cultural patterns – which in turn makes her dependent on the media.

#### Alcohol consumption

Drinking wine is more refined than drinking beer, which makes wine more feminine than beer. A. will not just drink wine, but she will taste it, meaning she will sip it slowly and consume only a little bit of each kind. In doing this, she expresses her femininity. In contrast, the Dutch athletes' ideal model corresponds with heavy beer consumption, which is masculine:

M: "dan nog even wat.. drinken en dan weer naar huis, dat je even bijpraat, maar.. in het weekend eh gaan we ook nog wel regelmatig eh op stap en eh de kroeg in lekker biertjes drinken en zo dus dat eh dat

T: [ja [ <lacht> okay

M: doe ik gelukkig ook nog wel <lacht>."

M: "and then go to a pub and enjoy drinking small beers and then go home again, just to catch up, but. . . in the weekend er, we do go out regularly er, to the pub to have a couple of cold ones and all that so that er that

T: [yes [ <laughs> okay.

M: is something that I do still do and enjoy <laughs>." (Transcript 7, #595-#598).

M.'s use of the sentence "lekker biertjes drinken" which means "Enjoying drinking small beers" makes it seem as though she only drinks a little bit. However, this can be explained by the use of the plural diminutive word and by her statement that she often goes to the pub. Drinking wine is more refined than drinking beer, which makes wine more feminine than beer. A. expresses her



femininity by drinking wine (see the aforementioned citation in paragraph distinction versus connection).

### Suffering

Though it is possible that the athletes have not suffered from major injuries, examples show that the Dutch athletes originally claimed not to have been injured. Later they admit to having had injuries that were minor, but were still significant enough to have caused them to rest more and train less. Considering cultural differences, this can be seen as making obstacles smaller in order to make them easier to handle. An injury means “losing control of the body” which threatens the female's ideal model. The satisfaction of finishing the competition seems to actually be enhanced by overcoming physical hardship. In other words, pain is necessary in order for it to be overcome. Pain is something they want to feel, because overcoming pain is part of the athletes' identity.

### Romanticizing

All the female athletes agree that in foreign countries the support for athletes is better. Israeli athletes tell about situations that would not have happened in Europe, while the Dutch athletes tell about situations that would have been much better in a foreign country. The athletes talk about the public support during events in foreign countries. An Israeli athlete complains about how “terrible” the awareness of sports in Israeli society is, remarking that people get annoyed when roads are blocked because of endurance sport events (Transcript 2, #626-#632). That the Dutch athlete A. was involved in disputes between drivers reveals that in Dutch society people are also sometimes disgruntled by the blocking the roads (Transcript 6, #1038-#1048).

N. explains that in Israel events are more competitive than those in Europe (Transcript 1, #1021-#1027). The Israeli athletes as well as the Dutch athletes exhibit competitiveness, but in the case of the former this is expressed in an extroverted manner (by putting marathon stickers on their cars in order to publicize their achievements to the public) and in the latter in an introverted (by keeping trophies in their home).

### Individualism versus collectivism

Despite participating in an international competition the athletes maintain segregated groups. In contrast to Israeli athletes, the Dutch athletes travel to foreign countries to support members of their group. Both the Dutch and Israeli athletes exhibit a culture of collectivism. The difference is that for the Israelis it is expressed as a nationalistic feeling during international events. This means that during international events they feel connected with other Israelis even if they do not know them. One athlete even called strangers “friends”, but then corrected herself to say Israelis (Transcript 5, #697-#714). In contrast, the Dutch athletes do not feel connected with Dutch strangers. Instead, they feel connected with the athletes on their team. This difference shows that the culture within which the athlete lives influences how they practice sports.

#### Embodiment

The Dutch athletes have the advantage of already knowing how to ride, as bicycles are common vehicles of travel in the Netherlands. They already experience an element of endurance sports during their commutes to work. It is common for Dutch athletes to integrate their sports activities into their daily commute. An example MU. travels thirty kilometers by bicycle to and from work (Transcript 8, #117-#120).

For Israeli athletes the heat during the summer causes difficulties in training and for the Dutch athletes the cold and darkness of winter creates obstacles. Because of the summer heat, Israeli athletes get up early in the morning or even at night in order to train. They get up at 4:00 or even 2:00. In contrast, the Dutch athletes are not used to getting up at this time, and feel that 6:30 is early. The Dutch athletes do not train in the dark.

#### Narration

The Dutch athletes use many more diminutives for the words that present obstacles. In this manner they make such obstacles appear easy to overcome. In other words, they assert that everything is in control. Thus, when the Dutch athletes use diminutives, it does not necessarily mean that they are referring to something small or easy. They can use diminutive words to refer to something huge. For example, the Dutch athlete M. says that she regularly goes to a bar with her fellow athletes and enjoys drinking “small beers”. Terms such as “Gelletjes” (Transcript 8,

#262) and “Crossloopjes” (Transcript 7, #184) are used by the Dutch athletes. In this case the training is presented as small, easy and fast. In reality, however, it means intensive training. In this way they make their obstacles seem insignificant. In contrast to this, the Israeli athletes do not use diminutives at all. This shows how linguistic patterns and cultural habits are intertwined.

The use of drug addiction as a metaphor was repeated by most of the Israeli interviewees. In Israeli society drugs are associated with being “laid back”, a characterization quite opposite to the image of someone who does endurance sports. They are associated with non-western customs and people who have no stress, who do not have busy lives and who have flexible schedules. The association with drugs corresponds with the flexible, “living in the present” style that fits the needs of members of today's western capitalist society. For instance, the Israeli athlete N. uses the term “high” (transcript 1, #749-#752). Another example is A. who explains her feelings of nervousness as the result of not getting her daily “dose” of practice (Transcript 2, #771-#774).

Although drug use is legal in the Netherlands, it has fewer positive associations and is less accepted by Dutch society than by Israeli society. This could be a reason that the Dutch athletes do not compare their participation in sports with drug-related terminology. Interestingly, however, alcohol consumption is quite common and even integrated into the sport.

None of the Dutch athletes mentioned the term “bonk”, used by Israeli athletes. They did discuss the “pacer”, but referred to it by several different names, including “stayeren” (Transcript 9, #556) and “tempogroepjes” (Transcript 8, #314), which mean small tempo-groups. “Hazen”, which is the word for hare converted into the form of a verb, is also used (Transcript 8, #786). As can be seen from this example, the Dutch athletes either translate English words into Dutch or use English words with Dutch grammar. This style of speech in the endurance sport world indicates the internalization of endurance sport schemes into the habitus of the interviewees.

The Israeli interviewees view their bodies as a tool used to achieve their goals. Explanations of the body were mostly carried out through comparisons with objects or animals. Most prominent was the comparison of the body with a car. For instance N says:

ג: "כאילו אני יכולה להשקיע עד מחרתיים את יודעת... אהיה לי מרצדס אם אני אשים דלק לא טוב.. זה לא יעזור.

ג: כאילו זה הדלק, התזונה. " (Transcript 1, #359-#362).

Other comparisons are the use of the words “automatic” (Transcript 2, #538) and “cruise control” (Transcript 2, #532) to explain the state of the body. In society, cars are considered to be masculine and so these comparisons can be seen as the latent adoption of masculine traits. A. also equates herself with a doe, a female animal that runs quickly and gracefully, and which is lightweight (Transcript 2, #15-#17). The Dutch athletes do not compare their bodies to objects or animals. They did not use comparisons or metaphors to explain the workings of their bodies. The linguistic strategies employed during narration indicate differences in styles of storytelling. Israeli athletes tell their story in a heroic and dramatic way in order to emphasize having persevered through a difficult situation. In contrast, the Dutch athletes tell their stories in a much lighter manner. Their struggles are described as small.

The Israeli athletes compare the process of running with mental consciousness. An Israeli female athlete explained that her sport activity helps her to organize her thoughts, and she compares it with a dream (Transcript 1, #998-#1002). Another athlete describes it as a meditation, as though she were flying (Transcript 2, #531). This exhibits the need of members of western society who look for rest in their busy lives. However, the Dutch athletes do not use such words. While the Dutch athlete A. did, she immediately retracted it, saying that it does not actually fit the context. Such descriptions simply do not correspond with their ideal model (Transcript 6, #635-#637).

### Social Class

All the Israeli athletes interviewed belong to the middle or upper class of their societies. Subscribing to magazines and websites, traveling, transporting goods and obtaining equipment requires a great deal of financial investment that they manage to afford. They have more power to realize the external models than do members of society's lower classes. Their participation in international events further distinguishes them from the lower class. To belong to a running team in Israeli society is more expensive than going to a gym.

The Dutch athletes, on the other hand, are not from the upper class. J. believes that the reason people choose to engage in endurance sports is because gyms are too expensive in a period of economic crisis (Transcript 9, #216-#217). For the Dutch athletes, it is less expensive to participate in international endurance sports events than it is for Israelis. The professions of the athletes represent those of different social classes and the possibility for Dutch athletes from various classes to join endurance sport events in foreign countries. The interviews reveal Israeli society to be more consumer-oriented than is the Dutch.

#### Conclusion:

The intense lifestyle of female endurance athletes requires an addiction to the sport. This study shows the adoption and rejection of different aspects of Israeli and Dutch identity in female athletes. For those who are members of the third generation participating in endurance sports, such activities have been normalized and integrated into their daily life and patterns.

The Dutch attach diminutive suffixes to nouns colloquially, not to suggest that something is small or insignificant, but to express the opposite, or to indicate that their obstacles are small. Metaphors of drugs consumption are not present in the Dutch interviews, but are in the Israeli. Alcohol consumption among the Dutch athletes is more common than in the Israeli athletes.

Dutch female athletes are more introverted in exhibiting their individual achievements than are Israeli female athletes. They do not show off in public, preferring to keep their trophies at home. In public they only show their collective achievement (through a ceremony in a beer tent), unlike the Israeli athletes who also show their individual achievement (through the placement of marathon stickers on their cars).

Modern marathon culture, founded in the US, was expected to promote gender equality, but actually indirectly stimulates inequality. Initially, the participation of women in endurance sports was not accepted, but now, after the passage of time and the acceptance of new patterns, it is becoming more widespread. Nevertheless, the influence of other agents, such as the media, which depicts the visualized female body and which promotes the condition of gender asymmetry, tips the balance back in favor of men.

The interviewees adopt mental masculine traits but reject the physical ones. They adopt appearances that are accepted by western society but reject the mental qualities that society purports to be feminine. The adoption of masculine mental traits combined with feminine physical traits causes them to feel self-confident in other environments, such as at the workplace. The way endurance sports are practiced, in accordance with western society and male-dominance, stimulates implicit gender inequalities and encourages male dominated aspects of society.

#### Follow up study

The motivation for putting Scheerders' claim – which is related to both genders – in the newspaper under the section “woman” would make an interesting subject of a follow up study about the way the media influences the collective opinion of the endurance sport community.

It would also explore whether gender inequality in this field is an intrinsic cultural pattern or whether this is only the result of portrayals the media. It would also address whether the media's portrayal of men and women is instrumental in pushing older cultural patterns back into the center of a repertoire.

A study on endurance sports and its acceptance into Israeli and the Dutch society between generations would be necessary in order to explain the different ways these societies adopt or reject different aspects of this field.

Another study could examine how in both Israeli and Dutch society today, the need for more rest does not exclusively result in the popularity of Pilates or yoga. Endurance sports, which require discipline, suffering and a strict schedule, would appear to counteract this collective need. Though the sports do not correspond with “laid-back” characteristics, the female athletes who engage in them describe them using words associated with relaxed traits. Examples of these are the interviewees' references to meditation and comparisons to drug use. It is particularly interesting that such metaphors are not common among the Dutch athletes, despite the fact that soft drugs are legal in the Netherlands. Instead, it is common to consume alcohol – especially beer – after an event. The Israeli athletes use the metaphor of drug use, comparing the sports with something illegal. They hardly combine alcohol consumption with their sport, and if they

do, it is wine, which is more delicate than beer. The observation of the combination of these consumption habits and sports could provide interesting conclusions concerning the adoption and rejection of social trends in marathon and triathlon.

## 1. Introduction

Although humans may not be particularly fast runners, they can run continuously for hundreds of miles. Long distance running is an everyday activity for the Tarahumara tribe in Northern Mexico, who are known as excellent endurance runners. While hunting, which they do for subsistence, they can run for up to two days in order to exhaust their prey (Bennett & Zing, 1935 in: Balke *et al.*, 1965). Today western society encourages endurance sports as a defense against increasing obesity, resulting in a decrease in healthcare costs. Because of this, the promotion of running corresponds well with campaigns aimed at preventing obesity (van Bottenburg *et al.*, 2006), enabling the transfer of the trend to other countries. Thus, while on the one hand we see new behavioural patterns being adopted, on the other, older traditional culture patterns are being defended. This phenomenon obviously creates friction and opposing forces (Sela-Sheffy, 2003).

The Israeli female athletes who have been interviewed about their participation in marathons and triathlons are from middle and upper-middle class backgrounds. None are religious and all live in a world influenced by western capitalistic patterns. Typically, a female amateur athlete's schedule starts at 4:00 am to allow a two to three hour workout before taking the children to school and then going to work. Their days end quite early in order to allow for sufficient sleep, as the next day they will wake up early again. The long hours of training and the unusual schedule comes at the expense of social relationships with friends and family. Female endurance athletes devote themselves to endurance sports and much of their social lives revolve around marathons or triathlons. They form social relationships with other athletes, write articles about endurance sports and get their families involved in endurance sports.

In western capitalistic society people experience a great deal of stress due to their overloaded and busy lives. A need for mindfulness and rest, as well as the ability to avoid strict time schedules and increase flexibility is one of the consequences of the stressful and busy life. Pilates and yoga are examples of solutions for this need and have therefore become trends today. In fact, it has been shown that most Israeli athletes have a background in pilates or yoga.



In contradiction with these needs, endurance sports require a strict schedule and disciplined attitude. With this intensive sport these female athletes create much more busy lives than they had previously. Despite the multitude of obstacles they enthusiastically continue to choose to practice these sports. While the decrease in obesity is a likely motivation for the participation in endurance sports, one must also consider the consequences of the overloaded lifestyle they create. Given the increased stress and strict schedules of the women practicing these sports, we may question whether they actually decrease healthcare costs.

Endurance sports have become popular and current research has shown the growth of participation. Many people are active in endurance sports. People run and bike outdoors and swim in the sea, rather than relegating their exercise routines to fitness centers. Everywhere there are people who run. Though there have been cultural studies on leisure activities such as music, theater and art, the subject of sports has been neglected. Although a wide range of articles concerning this subject can be found, they are all related to kinesiology, physiology or training- and dietary programs. Despite the wide range of different people who are active in this field, it has not gained prominence in the research of cultural perspectives. It has the potential to provide information about the way people organize their lives and can lead to strategies for decreasing healthcare costs. A cross-cultural study such as this one sheds light on how the culture of endurance sports is transferred and adopted by different societies. This in turn provides fruitful information about people and thus reveals the collective identity of a society. Another important aspect of this study is that it contains semi-structural depth-interviews that reveal implicit information about a field in which women are a minority.

It is also noteworthy that females have changed their athletic activities from practicing pilates and yoga (activities in which most participants are female) to practicing endurance sports (activities in which most participants are male). What causes the female athletes to adopt parts of this rigorous model when it requires such a radical transformation of their already busy lives and is there a difference between Dutch and Israeli females?

The drastic change female athletes have made from activities like yoga and pilates to endurance sports in which they are a minority makes them an interesting group to study. Also interesting is

that the female athletes choose an activity that requires a great deal of time and thus a strict schedule. They profoundly reorganize their lives and overcome a variety of problems in order to practice these sports and adopt or reject identities in order to reach their ideal model. This study thus examines prominent social and cultural aspects of amateur female marathon and triathlon athletes in order to answer the following question: *How is today's endurance sports trend practiced by female athletes integrated into Israeli and Dutch society?*

The following chapter consists of an outline of the theoretical framework employed in this study. Chapter 3 is a discussion of prominent agents that cause the transfer of cultural aspects of endurance sports and their influence on female athletes. Chapter 4 deals with self-distinction versus connection, and treats aspects of the individual athlete who adopts or rejects identities in order to gain symbolic value. In Chapter 5 the masculine and feminine aspects of the interviewees is discussed. Also addressed is their experience of participating in a field in which masculinity is hegemonic and which requires them to find a balance between this and their feminine traits. In Chapter 6 the interviews of the Israeli and Dutch athletes are analyzed and compared. Chapter Seven is a discussion of how interviewees from both societies experience feelings of belonging to a specific group and how they distinguish themselves from others. In Chapter 8 the embedded aspects of one's society and the way one is influenced by one's environment will be discussed. Chapter 9 is the conclusion of the study. Following the conclusion the references are noted. Transcripts, summaries and questionnaires can be found in the appendix.

## 1.1 Methodology

### Sources

Five Israeli female endurance sport athletes from middle and upper-middle class backgrounds and four Dutch female endurance sport athletes were interviewed. The interviews were semi-structural depth interviews. The youngest of the Israeli athletes is thirty-eight years old and the oldest is fifty-one. All of the Israeli athletes have at least two children. Two of the interviewed women have adult children; three have young children. Three have their own businesses, one is a nurse and one works at a bank. Of the Dutch athletes, the youngest interviewee is twenty-four years old and the oldest is thirty. None of the women have children. Two are students and two are teachers at a high school.

During my search for female athletes it was unable to engage Dutch interviewees who were the same age and status as their Israeli counterparts. Interestingly, during the search no Dutch athlete over the age of forty responded to the interview requests, thus resulting in the differing ages of the two groups.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This study focuses on female participation in two disciplines: marathon competitions and triathlon competitions. The reason for this is that most interviewees started participating in triathlons only after a period of participating in marathons. The two branches of running are discussed in this study together under the umbrella term “endurance sports”.

### 2.1 Narrative

#### 2.1.1 Linguistic strategies in narrative

Narratives provide information about how one is influenced by and how one forms one’s own repertoire. Labov argues that cultural patterns can be recognized in spontaneous narratives and the individual unconsciously employs strategies intended to impress the listener. The construction of a narrative consists of an “abstract” (what will be told), an “orientation” (who, when, what and where), a “complication action” (what happened next), a “resolution” (what happened at the end), an “evaluation” (the significance of the narrative) and a “coda” (relevance of the narrative to everyday life). Labov primarily focuses on the moment in the interaction in which a speaker shares his experience, and the importance of conveying an idea in a specific manner. There exist many strategies of expression in a narrative that reflect the individual’s cultural values. For example, Labov’s research illustrates how black Americans in New York have created their own linguistic repertoire (Labov 1972).

#### 2.1.2 Narrative and interaction

Gumperz, on the other hand, focuses on problems that occur in the transmitting and receiving of signals during an interaction. In order to correctly interpret speech-participants, it is necessary to understand the participants' social worlds and personal histories. He argues that there may exist a dissimilar cultural knowledge between participants that underlies their linguistic knowledge. This causes the participants to either understand each other fully (resulting in a “synchronic” rhythm) or not (resulting in an “asynchronic rhythm”) (Gumperz, 1979).

### 2.1.3 Rejection and adoption of an identity

Bucholtz and Gumperz exhibit more flexibility than does Labov in that they not only examine linguistic strategies within a narrative, but also consider the situation as a whole. "Negative identity practices are those that individuals employ to distance themselves from a rejected identity, while positive identity practices are those in which individuals engage in order to actively construct a chosen identity." (Bucholtz, 1999 p. 211). The individual attempts to achieve the positive identity that he himself constructs, though this does not occur without continuous friction. In this manner social identities are created within a repertoire (Bucholtz, 1999). Quinn argues that metaphors contain semantic constructions that provide information concerning the individual's identity (Quinn in: Holland *et al.*, 1987).

### 2.1.4 Self-presentation

Goffman's theory explores interaction between individuals. This face-to-face interaction builds relations within a society by examining the "self" and how people present themselves in different situations. He claims that the cultural patterns reflected in the individual can be observed through interactions and self-presentation. Individuals choose the most ideal method with which to represent themselves in interactions with others and may make different choices in different situations (Goffman, 1959). The interviewees exhibit a model of how they want to present themselves. By applying these theories to the interviews, we can infer cultural patterns and habitus of the endurance sport female athletes.

### 2.1.5 Habitus

The "habitus" of an individual is presented by the individual's "taste." The individual internalizes rules through schemes and accordingly decides how to act in a way that is suitable to their environment. Bourdieu's habitus integrates the individual with the environment and the habitus is displayed in the person's "taste" (Bourdieu, 1990).

Bourdieu argues that each person wants to be stand out from his or her group. Through distinction, he or she constantly attempts to enter into a higher-class group in order to obtain power. When such attempts are successful, the now higher-class individual will look for

something else with which to distinguish himself from the lower class. This "competitive struggle" is "unbroken and unending" among different groups.

Bourdieu explains society by identifying different "fields" each of which has its own rules. In these "fields" there are continuous conflicts over the acquisition of power. This study addresses the field of sports. Bourdieu discusses how economic and symbolic capital is used to obtain power in a specific environment, which shows that symbolic capital is related to valued entities other than money. For example, an athlete who wants a marathon sticker has reason to spend money on a trip to New York because the sticker provides him with value (Bourdieu 1993).

#### 2.1.6 Development of the habitus between generations

The habitus is like a "toolkit" (Swidler, 1986), providing the individual with a means of understanding his world and the knowledge of how to act. An individual who has grown up in an environment where they have a high exposure to sports has more tools in that field than someone who starts at a later age. Gilbert's research also discusses the habitus of women in sports. In his research, women from the first generation of tennis participation would not be accepted in that societal group if they wore short, comfortable clothes and made free, unrestrained movements during tennis competitions. These rules were relaxed for the second generation of women, who had grown up in a society in which female participation in tennis was already institutionalized. As their participation in sports was more accepted, they were able to go a step further in wearing short comfortable clothes and moving freely and quickly while playing (Gilbert, 2011). This means that the taste of an individual can be changed providing it is done within a socially accepted framework. Gilbert's study also shows that habitus can be changed through generations, which may imply that each development exhibits different dynamics.

#### 2.1.7 Cultural interference (global and local culture)

Sela-Sheffy argues that changes in culture exist through interference. This means that during cultural exchange goods and practices are imported from one culture to another, becoming part of the second culture and thereby creating new forms of consumption and production. In culture, repertoires change through two different forces interfering with each other: the innovative forces

(trendsetters) and the conservative, traditional forces (canonizers). This means that proponents of traditional culture attempt to maintain old cultural patterns and defend against import, while innovators try to import new cultural patterns. There are differences in tempo; while some external repertoires are absorbed easily and quickly, others are absorbed over a long time and with more effort (Sela-Sheffy, 2003).

The trendsetters adopt new cultural patterns for a short while, until they are adopted by others. The trendsetter will find patterns that have diffused to the periphery of society and bring them back to the center in a different style (Gladwell, 1997). An example of this can be seen in the returning of the trend of endurance running to the center of society as a leisure activity (e.g. participating in competition) rather than as a survival skill (as it is for the Tarahumara tribe mentioned above). Even-Zohar discusses the “producers” and “consumers” in a society. His scheme of factors operating in culture shows that without a market there is no “cultural repertoire”. A cultural repertoire consists of rules and instruments in a society that governs the production and consumption of a product. The market in a society of endurance athletes consists of elite athletes (producers) and amateur athletes (consumers) (Even-Zohar, 2005).

#### 2.1.8 Professional versus recreational sports

Gratton's pyramid distinguishes between professional (elite) sports and recreational sports, which appear at the top of the pyramid and the rest of the pyramid respectively. The interviewees in this study belong to the latter group. Governments of different countries are increasingly supportive of professional sports and even earn money from recreational sports. The dominant supporter of recreational sports is the commercial sector (Gratton, 2007). People participating in recreational sports act as “consumers”, as they pay to participate, which means they can be considered passive. In contrast, participants in elite sports are “producers”, as they receive funding and can be considered active. The goal of the commercial sector is to attract consumers (i.e. recreational sport participants) who consume via different media, such as internet forums, social networking sites such as Facebook, forums, blogs television and magazines focused on endurance sports. These official and non-official agencies serve as the important trendsetters in this field.

### 2.2.1 Running waves

Van Bottenburg claims that the running trend has occurred in two waves (i.e., expansion of participants in the sport). The first wave occurred in the seventies. Characteristics of this wave include less participation by female athletes and the infrequency of running in public. Endurance sport events such as those seen today did not exist. The second wave of running started in the nineties and has continued until today. This wave is characterized by participation in huge events such as marathons or triathlons, which have developed “carnival-like” atmospheres. While men are still more prevalent in this wave, participation among females is growing much more rapidly than among males (Van Bottenburg, 2006).

### 2.2.2 Marathon

A marathon is a long distance run of 42,195 km. Amateurs as well as professional athletes participate in international competitions. During the race both genders run the marathon at the same time, but the results of the competition are separated. Typically, a marathon competition (such as the Tel Aviv marathon) also includes shorter distance races such as 21.1 km (half-marathon), 10 km and 4.2 km.

### 2.2.3 Triathlon

A triathlon is a combination of three different endurance sports: running, biking and swimming. Triathlon races vary in distance. The most common versions are (according to the website [totaltriathlon.com](http://totaltriathlon.com)):

- 1 “Sprint Distance”: 750 m swim, 20 km bike, 5 km run.
- 2 “Olympic Distance”: 1.5 km swim, 40 km bike, 10 km run.
- 3 “ITU (International Triathlon Union) Long”: 3 km swim, 80 km bike, 20 km run.
- 4 “Half- Ironman”: 1.9 km swim, 90 km bike, 21.1 km run.
- 5 “Ironman”: 3.8 km swim, 180 km bike, 42,195 km run.

Many endurance sport athletes participate in a group dedicated to a certain type of endurance sport (e.g. Ironman or marathon). Usually the group practices with a goal of participating in a specific event (e.g. the Paris marathon). They train with a group but compete individually.



### 3. Agents

#### 3.1 Media

An important trendsetter in endurance sports is the media. People can subscribe to websites and can receive a wide range of information and tools that may not otherwise be readily available to them. Some examples include obtaining workout equipment, subscribing to an event and booking hotels and flights. Being able to do this provides a feeling of independence: the individual makes choices for himself. The media reaches a multitude of people from all over the world. The media is an important agent that transfers massive amounts of information to and from different cultures and can quickly reach an extensive range of people. Repertoires can therefore be transferred from one culture to another in different tempos and in different amounts (Sela-Sheffy, 2003).

By now the domestic repertoire has been changed by new, external patterns (in this case endurance sports) and the way these were adopted into society. An external repertoire is not always adopted, however; the domestic repertoire defends older cultural patterns. For example, Israeli interviewees state that they look for fellow Israelis during international competitions, which may indicate that they stay in touch with their original domestic repertoire. Nevertheless, they also stay up to date on trends in clothes and shoes (from American culture) through media, indicating that it is possible to simultaneously adopt new patterns. This is what makes the media such an important factor for spreading new cultural patterns.

#### 3.2 Articles shared in media

Pain, struggle, fatigue and weather are all obstacles that each interviewee discusses, and in the case of the Israeli women, inspires them to write articles about their experiences. The articles they write are about how they suffered during training as well as during the event itself, and how they combine their sport with the other duties in their lives. Their experiences, overcoming obstacles and the insights they have gained as endurance athletes are themes which they often describe. Writing articles makes them (to at least some extent) producers, rather than mere consumers, bringing them closer to the model of an elite endurance athlete. Moreover, writing

articles places them closer to the center of the world of endurance sports. At the end they all conclude that they are victorious.

The act of writing articles about their participation in endurance sports is particularly prominent among the Israeli athletes. A prominent example of this can be seen in athletes who use the internet to participate in forums on endurance sports and who discuss this subject on Facebook. They read articles about their participation in endurance sports and also write articles that they publish on sites or forums. Two interviewees write articles in such media as internet forums, Facebook and magazines. A third started to write following a recommendation by her coach, but stopped because she did not want to publish her personal story. The interviewees all recount how they stay up to date through media such as internet forums, magazines and Facebook. This is a positive way to reach the greater audience interested in endurance sports. None of the Dutch interviewees have written articles related to endurance sports. When asked why, they all react the same way: They do not feel that they have important experiences to share. For example, M. and J. claim that their experiences are no more special than those of others, and there is always someone better than they. M. reads the stories that people write assuming they are professionals. However, their results in the competition are among the worst (a fact that M. finds quite annoying). In other words, in their view, writing articles is for elite athletes and not for amateurs.

M: “want ik ik vind het altijd een beetje, als je die blogs leest dat.. dat zijn vaak.. mensen die wel goed kunnen sporten, maar ze kunnen ook... ik bedoel het zijn geen olympische sporters of zo ik denk ja als je een olympisch: sporter bent, dan vind ik het wel leuk als je een blog schrijft, dan kunnen wij lezen over

T: [amateur

M: hoe je eet hoe je slaapt, eh hoe je hoe je traint dan vind ik het leuk maar.. als je gewoon op nationaal

T: [ja

M: niveau meedoet dan.. vind ik het altijd een beetje zo van.. kijk mij eh.. dus ik wil niet dat mensen dan eh.. nee dat.. nee. Ik word er een beetje kriebel van <glimlacht>.

T: <lacht> Okay. Oh dus je leest het eigenlijk ook nooit?

M: ja ik lees het wel, <lacht> ik lees het wel, ik vind het ook wel leuk en dat soms moet ik er ook wat

T: [<lacht> [ja

M: lachen en.. ik vind het meer dat zijn mensen die: waarvan ik dan bijvoorbeeld vind dat ze niet eens zo

T: [ja

M: heel goed zijn en dan schrijven ze wel een blog van oh en ik heb vandaag heel hard getraind en ik ben zo goed bezig. En ik heb een nieuw PR en dan hebben ze op de tien kilometer vijftig minuten gelopen dus dan denk ik van o:ch... doe niet zo.. doe niet zo want het is echt niet goed.

T: Nee?

M: Nee dus dan eh.. nee..

T: [ja okay en dan heb je ook wel zoiets in je hoofd van eh o:h weer eentje die eh <lacht>

M: ja: en dan wil ik ook niet dat als ik dan zoiets zou schrijven dan moet ik zeggen dat... wat mijn tijd was op een bepaalde afstand en er zijn natuurlijk in Nederland zijn tal van mensen veel beter en dan denk ik van.. en dan zullen anderen wel denken van moet je haar interessant zien doen met de tijd en dat ik denk nee, dat moet helemaal niet. <Lacht> “.

M: Because I do think that it's a bit. . . when you read those blogs. . . those are often. . . people who are good at sports, but they. . . I mean they're not Olympic athletes or anything. I just think that, yeah sure, if you're an Olympic

T: [amateur athlete, I can enjoy your writing a blog – it will let us read about

M: your eating patterns, your sleeping patterns, er your training patterns. I can enjoy that but. . . if you're just competing at national

T: [yes

M: level the. . . I always think it's a bit like. . . 'hey look at me' er. . . so I don't want people to er. . . no that. . . no. It just gets on my nerves <smiles>.

M: "Yes, I do read them. <laughs> I do read them, I kind of enjoy them and sometimes they do

T: [<laughs> [yes.

M: make me laugh and. . . I think it's more that it's people who think that they're doing

T: [Yes.

M: so great and they'll be writing on their blog like, 'oh and I trained so hard today and I'm doing so well. And I have a new PR' and it turns out they'll have done ten kilometers in fifty minutes, which just makes me think come on. . . don't be so. . . don't be like that because it's really not all that.

T: No?

M: No so then er. . . no.

T: [Yeah okay and then you might be thinking, like 'oh there's another one of those er <laughs>

M: Yes and I wouldn't want it to be me to be writing something like that, I'd have to say that. . . what my time was over a certain distance, there are in the Netherlands a bunch of people who are doing a lot better so I'd think. . . and others must be thinking, ooh well look at her making a big deal of that time, and I just think no, no that shouldn't be happening at all <laughs>.” (transcript 7, #558-#581).

A: "Ja nee, zoveel mensen die een blog bijhouden, op zich is dat wel leuk om te lezen hoor, maar ik heb zelf nooit de behoefte gehad om dat met de wereld te delen. Nee."

M: "Nah, there are so many people running a blog. In itself it's fun reading them you know, but I've never felt the need to share that with the world. No." (Transcript 6, #667- #668).

MU: "Nee eigenlijk niet <lacht> nee ik weet ook niet wat ik nog heel veel meer te melden zou hebben. Aan anderen". "No, not really <laughs>. No, I don't even know what I would say to other people on the subject." (Transcript 8, #477-#478).

J: "Nee: ik ben niet zo'n goede schrijver <lacht> dus dat doe ik eigenlijk niet. Nee.. Nee." "No, I'm not really a good writer <laughs> so I don't really do that. No . . No." (Transcript 9, #482).

This shows a difference between the athletes who want to share their experiences with the world and those who do not. In this case the Israeli interviewees want much more to share their experiences. The Dutch athletes are more introverted and hesitant to show their achievements. This can also be seen in the marathon sticker some place on their car versus the trophies kept in the home, practices that will be discussed in chapter four "Self-distinction versus connection".

### 3.3 Blogs

#### Forums:

On the internet there is a wealth of information for female athletes. Common issues relevant to athletes from both Israeli and Dutch culture are food consumption, injury and the ability to register for different events online. There exists a category for general questions regarding different events and questions about issues that may influence their lives such as pregnancy, how to subscribe to an event and information about training programs or injury prevention.

#### Blogs:

At the site [www.shvoong.co.il](http://www.shvoong.co.il) there is a category about "women and sports." An interesting development is the participation in sports of different generations within the same family. Female athletes join marathons with their daughters and on this site a female athlete and her daughter are interviewed about the event. This illustrates the development of several generations within the sport. Additionally, there is an interview with a mother and daughter that tell that they

will join the family marathon with two generations. An older women reacts to this and says she will join this event with three generations: her granddaughter, her daughter and herself (<http://www.shvoong.co.il/he-IL/107/19040/>).

An examination of blogs on the internet reveals that there are interesting developments and trends within the world of marathons and triathlons. One of these is veganism. A number of female athletes write blogs about their experiences in how they integrate their sport into daily life. One linked the sport with veganism and provides examples of other athletes who are vegans. Before she describes her experience of adding her vegan food habits, she describes her spontaneous decision to travel to Greece for training during a long weekend. She explains that before the trip she had many obligations that prevented her from getting enough sleep. One of the responses she received allowed her to realize that she needed to take responsibility for the situation and request an extension on a deadline. In general, responses on the blog show that vegan athletes feel supported when they hear someone who shares their views. They hope to meet these other athletes at events. The aforementioned athlete who traveled to Greece claims that everything in her life is balanced: As a professor, all her students admire her quick reading of their seminars, her relationship with her husband is perfect, she convinced a travel guide to take them to places even locals do not know about, and she explained what she is working on. In this manner she demonstrates her success in life. In order to downplay obstacles she masks them with jokes. For instance, when she gets a splinter in her foot she says it traveled with her back to Israel to make an “aliyah” (<http://www.shvoong.co.il/he-IL/350/19187/>) . She starts her article with an account of her achievements in life so as to downplay the failure she briefly mentions at the end – her volunteer work at a project that guides people in being vegan for at least twenty-two days. However, she mitigates her feeling of failure with the fact she convinced somebody that veganism is healthy for endurance athletes. The style of the article is that of a holiday diary. She combines travel and training, and shares pictures of her family during the trip. In this way we see how she (as an individual) handles failure and how she adopts a “positive identity” and rejects the “negative” one.

Some female athletes add female sensibility to their writing about their sport by including that they love activities like dancing and cooking. In some articles the triathlon moves to periphery, but they ultimately bring it back to the center:

"כשאני יורדת מהבמה בסיומו של הריקוד, התרגשות אופפת אותי. זהו. גם זה נגמר. עכשיו ממוקדת יותר לטריאתלון הבא אלינו לטובה. בדרך למטרה הבאה." (<http://www.shvoong.co.il/he-IL/355/14878/>).

#### Injuries:

One athlete describes an injury that she suffered and its consequences in a poetic way. She describes how easy it is to sink into a depression because of injury. This is similar to the interviewees who discuss how difficult the period of recovering from injury can be (<http://www.shvoong.co.il/he-IL/355/17256/>).

#### Metaphors in blogs:

Athletes use many metaphors in the discussion of their sport. One compares it with having a child:

"לסיכום, גידול ילדים, כמו כל ספורט, הוא קשה בהתחלה. אבל אחר כך, ככל שמתקדמים – משתפרים. רק שעם הזמן האתגרים גדלים, כך שזה בעצם קשה כל הזמן." (<http://www.shvoong.co.il/he-IL/301/17179/>).

Another compares the pain of giving birth with that of participating in a marathon (<http://www.sportweb.co.il>). What is noteworthy about these metaphors is that they specifically integrate femininity into the identity of the athlete. Another athlete writes about the "magic" she feels at the marathon in Jerusalem. As is the case with interviewee O., Jerusalem is particularly special to her. She explains:

"תחושה הזו שכולנו כאן חולקים את אותה האהבה: האהבה לריצה והאהבה לארץ ישראל, לנופים, לאנשים משכרת לא פחות מהריצה עצמה. וגם זה חלק מהקסם הירושלמי." (<http://www.shvoong.co.il/he-IL/283/14310/>).

In contrast to the interviewees who hardly communicate with foreigners, she explains in her blog that she supports foreigners who join the Jerusalem marathon.

The blogs are written following athletic achievements and therefore serve as an instrument of reflection about their lives as athletes.

In his article Scheerder claims that running is simply a means of gaining status and allowing one to boast the next day at the office

([http://www.telegraaf.nl/vrouw/inbeweging/22649551/Waarom\\_is\\_hardlopen\\_zo\\_hip.html](http://www.telegraaf.nl/vrouw/inbeweging/22649551/Waarom_is_hardlopen_zo_hip.html)

). Scheerder's claim was published in the newspaper "De Telegraaf." According to him, the intrinsic motivation of finishing a marathon becomes an extrinsic motivation. This is because the question of whether someone finished the marathon becomes the question of how much time it took. This identity described is "negative" and the reactions of female athletes reveal their disagreement with the claim and feelings that they are not being understood. One female athlete addresses the article in her blog (<http://runandrearun.nl/nieuws/hardlopen-is-hip/>). She gets reactions from people that say they never respond to blogs, but that this issue is too important to ignore. Readers agree with her argument that the article is not true. One female athlete says that such articles almost make her feel bad about running marathons. Also noteworthy is that the newspaper placed the article in the "Female" ("Vrouw") section. The motivation for putting this article – which is related to both genders – in this section would make an interesting subject of a follow up study about the way the media influences the collective opinion of the endurance sport community.

The above shows that female athletes collect a great deal of information about their sport via blogs. Blog posts about the experience of female athletes are mostly written after achievements and are presented in a reflective way. The authors write about obstacles they faced and how they overcame them. The responses that they receive support their achievements. The athletes reflect on specific themes and use the discussions to reject negative identity. The publication of an article depicting a negative identity is rejected and causes disagreement.

### 3.3 Coach

According to the Israeli athletes, the coach, who serves as an agent between the sport and the athlete, can influence the actor (the athlete) to a great extent. He guides the athlete through the training course and provides mental support and advice. He gives discounted sessions to the family members of the athletes he trains. All the athletes have shown that making rational decisions during an event is practically impossible, and all admit to at least once having made irrational decisions in order to achieve their goals. This shows that in the most critical moments,

when decisions must be made, the athletes do not get the support of their coach. It is noteworthy that none thinks that this is significant, and that all think it is obvious that they make decisions without support.

The coach plans the training schedule and decides which event the group will train for. If he tells the athlete to start training for a triathlon instead of a marathon, she follows his advice without any hesitation. Should the athlete encounter obstacles, the coach assists in overcoming them. If the athlete is not satisfied with her results, a talk with her coach will reassure her. M. describes the mental support she has received not only from her coach, but from other athletes as well.

מ: "...ציפיתי לזמנים אחרים, לא, לא ציפיתי להישבר ככה בתחרות.. אה: איך התמודדתי? הייתי מאוד מתוסכלת תקופה מאוד ארוכה. התמודדתי: אני חושבת הרבה שיחות עם המאמן שלי, הרבה מאוד שיחות ש:ו לא רק איתו עם ש:אנשים ש: סו..סו.. בספורט הזה הסתובבו סביבי וחלקם ידעו את ה:הכירו את הסיפור שלי, שמאוד מאוד תמכו בי ו:זה ממש כמו רשת תמיכה: חברתית." (Transcript 3, #471-#475).

The coach is perceived as an expert in the field. He builds an ideal model of the endurance athlete and assists the athlete in realizing this model by encouraging the athlete to train more. NK. describes one of the ways she provides mental support as a coach:

נק: "ולאחת הבנות היה קשה מאוד ב:באימון. היא ככה השתרכה מאחור. בשלב מסוים כולם חזרו אליה. ביקשתי מכולם לחזור אליה ונתתי אה: פקודה <צוחקת> שמרגע זה היא מובילה. זאת אומרת היא רצה, אנחנו חיכינו והיא רצה וזה נותן המ... לפנים לפני כולם זה נותן המון כוח גם מניסיון אישי." (Transcript 5, #83-#85)

MU recounts how her coach mails all the results to each athlete after each competition. She explains that this forces her to compare her results with those of others and encourages her to train more.

MU: "mailt de trainer elke week alle uitslagen door. Zwaar he? <lacht> Dan zie je iedereen staan."

MU: "Each week the trainer emails everyone their results. Though, huh? <laughs> You see everyone's results right there". (Transcript 8, #175).



In all the interviews the athletes averred that the main role of the coach is to encourage the runners to train and to provide mental support. The Israeli athlete M. expresses a commercial attitude wherein she explains that she gave training sessions to her brother as a birthday gift.

מ: "אה: אני עודדתי את אח שלי עכשיו חגגו לאח הגדול שלי חמישים, ו:עשיתי לו סדרה של ארבעה אימונים אישיים אצל המאמן שלי.." (Transcript 3, #315-#316)

On the other hand, NK. (who is herself a coach) emphasizes the importance of friendship in the group by noting the benefits of social gatherings after training sessions:

ט: "אתם נפגשים גם אחרי האימונים בערבים? ו...  
נק: [כן, מעט אה: לא מספיק לטעמי,  
ט: <צוחקת>  
נק: אבל אה: כן. אני חושבת שזה כן נכון לעשות את זה שהקבוצה צריכה להיות קבוצה גם חברתית..."  
(Transcript 5, #448-#451)

J. tells about her new coach, who is not present during the competitions, but plans to be present in the future. She explains that even then he will not support the athlete when quitting the event is the rational choice:

T: "Ja. En is er ook iemand die: die jou in de gaten houdt tijdens de wedstrijd dat hij zegt 'hey dat gaat helemaal niet goed eh.. eh die moet eventjes stoppen', want ik kan me voorstellen dat tijdens een wedstrijd dat het juist heel moeilijk is om rationeel te denken, want je wilt het afmaken.

J: Ja. Nee is eigenlijk niet.

T: Dat moet je gewoon echt zelf aanvoelen.

J: Ja.

T: Okay. Okay

J: [Okay ja onze trainer wil wel komend seizoen, want wij nu hebben we dus een trainer en wil die wel bij de wedstrijden zijn.

T: Ja

J: Maar ik denk niet dat hij dan gaat zeggen 'stap maar uit, tijdens die wedstrijden'. Tijdens andere wedstrijden misschien wel.."

## Tally Zevulun, A study about Female Endurance Athletes in Today's Israeli and Dutch Society

T: "Yes. And there is someone keeping an eye on you during the match, telling you 'hey watch out, er. . . er you need to take a little break' – you know, 'cause I imagine especially during a match it can be very difficult to think rationally – you want to finish the run.

J: Yes. No it's actually not.

T: You need to rely on your own senses for that.

J: Yes.

T: Okay. Okay.

J: [Okay, our trainer is willing to do that next season. We have a trainer now so he wants to be at the competitions.

T: Yes

J: But I don't think he'll say 'just quit during those competitions.' Maybe during other competitions he would." (Transcript 9, #764-#775).

The example above shows that the athletes are consumers and the coach is the producer. By acting as a friend, rather than a coach, the coach masks his goal of earning money. He is motivated to achieve his client's goals and to gain value via the successful results of his athletes. The coach presents himself as the "answer" for the athletes: If they choose him as a coach, they will definitely succeed in the event. This shows that there is a market. Although the coach fulfills a psychological and mental role, and supports social activities before and after the event, he does not take the same sort of responsibility that coaches of other sports do. He is even not present during the event. This lack of responsibility enables incompetent people to become coaches:

T: "enneh en de coaches zijn dat ook studenten? Of zijn dat eh bevoegde docenten? Die de alo hebben

A: [eeh nou er is een eh

T: afgerond of...

A: eh ja nou er is een iemand eh.. die is ook eh.. werkt ook voor het sportcentrum deels.. dat is onze hardlooptrainer eh.. dus die eh dat is.. nou volgens mij is het niet een officieel bevoegde docent maar eh.. wel heel veel ervaring ermee. En we hebben een, ja dat was ooit een studentlid maar... hij

T:[ja

A: werkt op dit moment in een sportschool en dat is onze fietstrainer, die begeleidt ons daarin maar die heeft er ook heel veel ervaring in ook wel cursussen gevolgd volgens mij. En we hebben een officiele zwemtrainer en dat is een eh... ja.. daar zijn we via via aan gekomen dat is een schoonmoeder van een van de leden en zij geeft ook zwemtrainingen voor eh andere verenigingen en eh ja dus zij is wel echt

T: [oh

Tally Zevulun, A study about Female Endurance Athletes in Today's Israeli and Dutch Society

A: een professionele: ze heeft ook zelf veel zwemles gegeven voor kleine kinderen dus eh van alles een

T: [ja [oh okay okay

A: beetje: wat.”

T: So, er ,the coaches, are they students too? Or are they licensed teachers who completed studies at Alo <Dutch sports academy>?

A: Er well there is a er. Well there is someone who er. . .who is er. . . they work part time for the sports center. . . that's our running trainer er. . . so they er they are. . . well I don't think they are an officially licensed teacher but er. . . they have a lot of experience in that area. And we have an, er. . . well he used to be a student member but. . . he

T: [Yeah.

A: is currently employed at a gym – he is our biking instructor. He guides us in that area. He really has lots and lots of experience and has also taken courses I think. And we have an official swimming trainer and she is an er. . . well. . . we got her through various channels. She's the mother-in-law of one of our members and she also teaches swimming for er, other groups and er, yeah so she's really

T: [Oh.

A: professional. She's taught a lot of swimming classes for little kids so er, a little bit of everything

T: [Yes, [oh okay okay.

A: really.” (Transcript 6, #63-#77).

According to MU, you think you can run faster than you actually can. This provides another reason why the coach is so important.

MU:”als je een wedstrijd doet en je weet dat je eigenlijk harder kan dat voelt gewoon raar. Waarom doe

T: [ja.

MU: je het dan niet? Dat je toch een wedstrijd net wat verder gaat dan je normaal zou doen.”

MU: “When you are in the middle of an event and you know you can go faster, it just feels funny. Why

T: [Yes.

MU: wouldn't you then? That thing where you push yourself that little bit more than you would normally.” (Transcript 8, #1015-#1017).

N. explains how easy it is to continue and end up doing damage to the body:

ט: "כן כי זה מההתחלה אומרים שזה מזיק אבל איכשהו מחפשים את ה..

נ: אומרים אוקי, לי זה לא יזיק, את יודעת. אני יודעת איפה הגבול אבל אתה עובר את זה.

ט: [כן זהו כזה..

.(Transcript 1, #1089-#1091)

In general, one of the most important responsibilities of a coach is to create a safe environment and to prevent injuries during training and competitions. This is not as apparent in endurance sports, however. During the event athletes want better results than they achieve during training. Injuries occur during moments in which it is most difficult to think rationally – when the athlete is tired and in pain, but does not want to fail. Nevertheless, no mention is made of coaches aiding in the prevention of damage by helping athletes think rationally and by advising them to slow down. The task of prevention is instead allocated to friends and medics. For example MU. explains that medics scan the athletes for symptoms of fatigue:

MU: “..ik zie juist dat ehbo-ers.. tijdens zo'n race.. je ontzettend goed in de gaten houden. Dus dat'ie

T: [Ja?

MU: echt.. zeker als je meer achterin het veld loopt dat'ie echt.. scannen of het nog goed met je gaat..”

MU:” I notice that medics especially. . . during a race like that. . . watch you like a hawk. So they

T: [Yes?

MU: really. . . and even more so when you're running in the back of the field. . . they really. . . scan to check if you're okay.” (Transcript 8, #402-#405).

She also says that her boyfriend warns her when she may be at risk of damaging her body:

MU: “ik denk dat.. dat in dat geval dat mijn vriend ook.. daar wel een beetje een rol in zou spelen en ook

T: [Ja

MU: zou zeggen nou ja.. trainen prima maar ga die wedstrijd nou maar niet doen..”

MU: “I think that. . .that in that case my boyfriend would also. . . play a bit of a role in that, and also

T: [Yeah.

MU: would say well. . . training is all well and good but it would be best not do that competition..” (Transcript 8, #1007-#1009).

The reason the coach would decline to interfere in these choices of the athlete may be related to body control. To control your own body is a part of the athlete's model (see paragraph 5.7 “Controlling the body”), which is threatened when the coach becomes too involved. By remaining independent in this respect, a flexible situation is created for the individual, which correlates with the individualistic society.

The Israeli athletes M. and NK. also discuss the significance of athletic social groups, which support the athlete. This aspect is treated in the next section.

#### 4. Self-distinction versus connection

A prominent theme that arose from the interviews is the athlete's attempt to adopt elements of her ideal model of an endurance sport athlete and to reject the elements that do not fit the model; each interviewee tries to integrate this model into her life as much as possible. Each interviewee has different strengths and thus, each has a different model. The personal goals of the interviewee bring her closer to the model she has of herself as an athlete. The closer she comes to achieving her goal, the less time she devotes to family, friends and work. The women who are interviewed are working women with children, some of young and some adult. They all divide their time and energy to the best of their ability in order to accommodate these elements in their repertoire and find solutions that also correspond with their model of an ideal athlete. In this chapter the prominent features of the female endurance athlete, her environment and the interaction between her and her environment will be discussed.

There are several examples of the interviewees striving for self-distinction. In order to achieve it they use two different methods in their repertoire: One is by joining a small elite group. Another is by having someone else, preferably an objective expert, testify to their uniqueness.

נ: "עכשיו אני גם אוהבת להיות אה...מיוחדת למשל אני לא אוהבת את אני לא אוהבת וג. תמיד צוחק עלי. אני לא אוהבת שעושים מה שאני עושה. אז אני שהתחלתי לרוץ פה בשכונה כולם היו אומרים לי שאני משוגעת משוגעת משוגעת. לאט לאט אנשים התחילו לרוץ כי זה התחיל להיות טרנדי. גם בשכונה עכשיו כולם רצים פה פתאום." (Transcript 1, #843-#846)

נ: "כאילו שכל אחד ימצא משהו לעצמו. אמרתי לג. אם זה יהיה יותר מדי טרנדי אני אעבור למשהו אחר. אני אתפס על הקלמנג'רו אני לא יודעת מה אני אעשה. אבל אני אעשה משהו שלא כולם עושים. אני אוהבת לעשות משהו שלא כולם עושים." (Transcript 1, #853-#855)

N. distinguishes herself by joining a small upper-middle class group. First, she joined a group of marathon runners. However, now that marathons have become trendy and everyone has a "42.2" sticker, indicating that they have run one, she has started training for the ultra-marathon competition of sixty-one kilometers, for which she will receive a "61" sticker. The sticker adds value to her "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu, 1990) by signifying her distinction. N. says:

נ: "ארבעים ושתיים שתיים הפך להיות מדבקה שיש לכולם

ט: כן

נ: אז זה שישים ואחד. את ראית מדבקה של שישים ואחד <מחייכת>? (Transcript 1, #867-#869).

During the interviews the Dutch women made no mention of the symbolic value of the sticker. However, all mentioned that winning a trophy gave them symbolic distinction. Of the Dutch athletes, A. and J. said that their experiences winning were the most impressive moments of their participation in the sport. According to the Dutch athlete A., her most impressive moment was to stand in a beer tent in Groningen as the winner of the Batavierenrace (a relay race in which teams of twenty-five students participate):

A: "daar een paar keer voor meegelopen en dat is.. zo.. spannend het is zo'n race tegen de klok enneh of je dan.. op het moment dat je dan wint is dat zo: fantastisch en dan sta je in zo'n Groningen toch..

T: [ja [hebben jullie gewonnen toen?

A: Ja, ja en dan sta je in zo'n grote biertent enneh je hebt er hee:l lang voor getraind en je hebt echt.. je

T: [oh <glimlacht>

A: uit de naad gelopen en dan is het wel echt, dan is het wel echt dan eh dat vind ik wel het mooiste moment. Dat vind ik de mooiste overwinning ja."

A: "ran a few times for that and that's.. so.. exciting; it's one of those races against the clock and er whether you.. When you do win that's just so: fantastic and you'll be standing right there in Groningen..

T: [yes [did you guys win that time?

A: Yeah, yeah and you'll be standing there in this big beer tent and you have trained for it for such a

T: [Oh <smiles>.

A: long time and you've really. . . run your ass off and at that point it is just so real, it's really real and er, that to me is the most beautiful moment. That's the most wonderful victory." (Transcript 6, #991-#997).

J: "kijk toen ik de eerste triathlon deed, mijn allereerste, toen was ik direct eh derde dus dat was wel heel gaaf. Dus dat was wel indrukwekkend, maar dit seizoen ben ik.. in een best wel goed startveld een keer derde geweest dat vond ik ook wel heel gaaf. En we hebben met het team zeg maar een wedstrijd was echt een teamwedstrijd dat je het echt helemaal samendoet met je team. En die hadden we gewonnen

T: [ja

J: en dat hadden we echt niet verwacht dus dat was ook echt heel gaaf."

J: "you see, when I did my first triathlon, my very first, I immediately finished er third so that was really awesome. It was very impressive but this season I'm.. in a pretty good starting field I managed to finish third once so that was

really awesome. And we won, with the team you know, it was really a team competition – so really a team effort. And yes we won it. And we really hadn't expected that so that was very cool.”

T: [yes

(Transcript 9, #918-#923).

Acknowledgement is an important issue for the athletes from both cultures. A difference is that while all the athletes enjoy recognition via a trophy or another object that can be placed in the home (for instance MU. keeps her trophies in her living room) the Israeli athletes, like N., also seek acknowledgement that they can show in public, such as the sticker that can be placed on her car.

When the New York marathon got cancelled, all the people who had registered for it spontaneously ran in Central Park. N. joined them, but quit after twenty kilometers. The next day those who accompanied her decided to go out and enjoy their extra time in New York. She, however, chose to go back to the park and run a full marathon on her own. She could have done this the day before, but then she would have belonged to the "masses." Instead, she preferred to act on her own, thus distinguishing herself from the "masses" as well as those who did not regret the cancellation of the marathon:

נ: "לא לא יכולתי לעבד את זה. את יודעת ב"ע" לא יכולתי to process it. ובלי לה החלטתי... שאני עושה למחרת, מרתון עם עצמי. לבד. לא אומרת לאף אחד." (Transcript 1, #801-#803).

V. distinguishes herself via the testimonial of someone else, who says that her success in achieving her extreme goal is due to her uniqueness; she never listened to other people's discouragements:

ו: "... אפילו מישהו כתב לי ש:אני לא יודעת אם את מכירה את המשל של צפרדעים... של הצפרדעים שניסו לטפס על ההר. אז מישהו פשוט שם לי את זה וכתב לי את הצ... אח... את... יש איזה משל שאומר שהצפרדעים באו לטפס על בניין גבוה, באו אנשים לראות, וכולם אמרו הם לא יצליחו, וצפרדעים... נפלו נפלו ו:אמרו לא יצליחו וזה, ואז בסוף אחת הגיעה למעלה. כשבאו חברות שלה לשאול איך עשו גילו שהיא חרשת. ואז הוא אמר, צפרדע חרשת." (Transcript 4, #431-#436).

The Israeli athlete M. also distinguishes herself via the testimonial of an important person – a doctor who says that her progress in long distance running after recovering from cancer treatment is remarkable:

מ: "וכעבור שלושה חודשים עמדתי על קו הזינוק לרוץ מרתון שזה באמת מבחינת הרופאות, זה סוג של אה: פנומן שאין דברים כאלה." (Transcript 3, #226-#227).

The Israeli athlete A. also distinguishes herself by joining a small elite group. She registered for a “boutique” marathon in France – a marathon that only a few thousand attend, unlike the popular marathons of the masses. She uses somewhat aristocratic imagery to describe it. A “boutique” marathon suggests high quality, high costs and low quantity. Saying it has an atmosphere of a wine tasting also suggests that this is a marathon of the type of upper class individuals who attend Beaujolais wine tasting events. Emphasis should be placed on the fact that it is not drinking wine, but tasting it; this means slowly sipping different kind of wines, symbolizing the aristocratic class of society that is part of her ideal model. Wine is a refined alcoholic drink compared to beer, which is coarse. In this way she uses taste (e.g. wine tasting) in order to distinguish herself. A says:

א: "Beaujolais".

ט: כן

א: זה מרתון בוטיק. זה לא מרתון ב... כמו יש אה:... יש בכל הערים הגדולות שיש בהם ארבעים אלף, המישים אלף משתתפים. זה מרתון בוטיק כי יש בו, לדעתי שמונת אלפים משתתפים, הוא הרבה יותר קטן, יש בו... אווירה אה: של שתיית יין." (Transcript 2, #423-#427).

Like the event in Beaujolais (France), Dutch events also exhibit a combination of alcohol culture and sports culture. Though in Israel this combination is not apparent, participating in these kinds of endurance sports events is a way for Israeli athletes to distinguish themselves from their society. In contrast, the Dutch athletes combine the endurance sport with beer. Alcohol consumption during events does not distinguish them from the group. The Dutch athlete A. explains that the event's award ceremony, which for her was the most impressive moment of her participation in the sport, was held in an immense beer tent:

A: "Ja, ja en dan sta je in zo'n grote biertent en je hebt er hee:l lang voor getraind en je hebt echt.. je

T: [oh <glimlacht>

A: uit de naad gelopen en dan is het wel echt, dan is het wel echt dan eh dat vind ik wel het mooiste moment. Dat vind ik de mooiste overwinning ja."

A: "Yeah, yeah and you'll be standing there in this big beer tent and you have trained for it for such a

T: Oh <smiles>.



Tally Zevulun, A study about Female Endurance Athletes in Today's Israeli and Dutch Society

A: long time and you've really. . . run your ass off and at that point it is just so real, it's really real and er, that to me is the most beautiful moment. That's the most wonderful victory." (Transcript 6, #994-#997).

The Dutch athlete M. says that she is often in the pub drinking beer till early in the morning and still trains the same day. She won the Dutch championship in an Olympic distance triathlon without altering her beer-drinking habits. This is an example of alcohol culture being adopted into sports culture as part of the Dutch athlete's ideal model.

M: "Het is niet dat ik erin doorsla, want ik sta ook nog regelmatig in de kroeg tot de volgende ochtend laat en dan.. dan kom ik om zes uur 's ochtends thuis en dan ga ik de volgende dag gewoon wel weer

T: [<lacht>

trainen, het is niet dat ik echt alleen maar.. alleen maar sport."

M: "It's not that I go overboard on it, 'cause I do still regularly go to the pub until late the next morning and then. . . I come home at six am and then the next day I just go. . . and train. I really don't just. . . just work out."

T: <laughs>

(Transcript 7, #429-#432).

These examples of drinking beer show that the Dutch female athletes adopt the practice in order to feel connected to Dutch society, while the ideal model of the Israeli athletes contains features that distinguish them from ordinary society by reaching the upper classes.

## 5. Masculinity versus Femininity

### 5.1 Masculine features of female athletes

Vaccaro *et al.* argue that men who need to control their emotions, see their competitors as weak and fearful, traits that are culturally associated with women. Sports on the other hand, are associated with men (Vaccaro *et al.*, 2011). Krane *et al.* explain that there is a clash between the feminine ideal and athletic activity due to the latter being associated with masculinity (Krane *et al.*, 2004). Women express masculine characteristics during sports such as strength, assertiveness, independence and competitiveness, which contradict the hegemonic femininity (Krane, 2001 in: Krane *et al.*, 2004).

Assertiveness is seen in the interview of V., who discussed a competition in which she did not finish in time, which was supposed to result in her dropping out. However, she succeeded in convincing the competition manager to allow her to continue:

ו: "ואז באתי לצאת לאופניים... ואומרים לי תשמעי, את לא יכולה לצאת, אה: עוד מעט פותחים כבישים. אמרתי להם תקשיבו, דיברתי עם מייקי, הוא היה המנהל התחרות, לקחתי אותו ו:אמרתי תגיד, נראה לך הגיוני, על טריאתלון ספרינט נשים אתה עושה cut of time, תשים על ה... צעירים, בני השלושים וחמש, למה... אה: למה עד 35, למה עלינו? בקיצור, ישבתי עשר דקות, שכנעתי אותו בסוף הוא אמר טוב, תוציאו אותה, הוא שם עלי אופנוע, רכבתי בכבישים פתוחים. לא וויתרתי <מחייכת>"  
(Transcript 4, #731-#736)

The Dutch athletes do not exhibit such confrontations, though they do reflect on the situation, albeit without communicating. For example, according to M.:

“als ik.. we: tegelijk starten bijvoorbeeld... ehm.. en je ligt in het water klaar dat mannen dan weleens tegen je zeggen van ‘nou ga jij maar even een rij naar achter’. Omdat ze dan denken dat ze sneller zwemmen dan ik omdat ze man zijn. Tenminste dat denk ik dan vaak dat dat het argument is. Of ik.. denk dat mannen wel denken dat ze.. dat ze wel sneller zijn dan jij dat ze dan zeggen ehm nou ga jij maar een rij naar achter liggen en je moet niet voorop liggen want straks kunnen we wel...”

T: [en dat bepa.. en dat bepaalt diegene dan even voor jou dat je dan?

M: ja dat wordt dan weleens tegen je gezegd dan zeg ik altijd nou.. ik ik eh...we zien straks wel wie er als eerste uit het water komt en negen van de tien keer eh ben ik dat dan toch wel!”

“When I . . . we start at the same time for example. . . er. . . and you are lying in the water, ready to go – men will tell you things like, ‘hey you, just go back a row.’ Because they think they will swim quicker because they’re men.

At least I often assume that must be their reasoning. Or I . . . think that men must think that they're . . . that they're quicker than you, that in that case they will say er, well you just go back a row alright, and don't go to the front 'cause later we can just. . .

T: [and the person in front of you just deci.. decides that for you?

M: Yeah well, that's the kind of thing you get told and I always say well. . . I I er. . . let's just see who comes out of the water first and nine times out of ten er, it's me!" (Transcript 7, #1046-#1054).

During the interviews the Israeli athletes all said that the finish time is not important, while to all the Dutch athletes it is incredibly important. More than anything else the Israeli athletes emphasize the importance of finishing in good health and with a smile. Nevertheless, there is still competition. Unlike strength (another masculine characteristic), which they discuss in their interviews, competitiveness is not mentioned as an ideal characteristic. The athletes do not openly talk about their competitiveness. MU. says that perhaps this is the reason there are fewer female athletes in local competitions.

MU: "die kleine dorpsloopjes zijn vaak echt minder vrouwen. Misschien zijn vrouwen ook meestal minder competitief." MU: "The small town runs see a lot fewer women. Maybe women are less competitive most of the time too." (Transcript 8, #726-#727).

However, competition is still present to some extent. The Israeli athlete M. says that she is not satisfied with her finish time, despite the fact that her coach was pleased with her results.

מ: "ומבחינת המאמן שלי, הוא היה מאוד מבסוט ממני, מאוד מאוד מבסוט, שסיימתי אני, הרגשתי תחושת אכזבה כי אני רצייתי לעשות את זה בקצבים וזמנים אחרים." (Transcript 3, #237-#238)

And as NK. Explained, you do not want people to pass you.

נק: "אין מה לעשות זה גם ספורט תחרותי אתה לא תיתן לו להיות לפניך אתה תרוץ יותר מהר זה." (Transcript 5, #194)

Competitiveness is also prominent in the interviews with the Dutch athletes. The athletes compare their results with others:

M: "als ik dan aan een.. losse hardloophwedstrijd heb meegedaan en zij ook, dan eindigt ze wel

T: [ja

M: altijd.. voor mij natuurlijk, want ze loopt iets harder en dan.. baal ik daar soms wel van.. heb ik wel

T: <lacht> Ja

M: <glimlacht>.. dus dat is.. het steekt dan wel een beetje dat ja.."

M: "When I enter a single running competition and she enters it as well, then she will always finish

Tally Zevulun, A study about Female Endurance Athletes in Today's Israeli and Dutch Society

T: [Yes.

M: before I do of course, because she runs a bit faster. So. . . that sometimes bothers me a bit.. It does.

T: [<laughs> Yes.

M: <smiles>.. So that's. . . it does sting a bit.” (Transcript 7, #543-#547).

J: “dus dan is het van we willen gewoon winnen dus dat betekent dat je zo hoog mogelijk moet eindigen.

T: Ja

J: Maar ja ja het is moeilijk ik: weet wel bijvoorbeeld bepaalde persoon ken dus ik denk nou daar wil ik voor blijven.”

J: “So then it's a case of us just wanting to win, which means you have to finish in as high a position as possible.

T: Yes

J: But of course, it's hard: I do try to, for example this person, I know them, and I'll think to myself - I definitely I want to stay ahead of them.” (Transcript 9, #681-#685).

The athletes also compare their results with others on the internet:

MU: “..mailt de trainer elke week alle uitslagen door. Zwaar he? <lacht> Dan zie je iedereen staan.”

MU: ”..and then the trainer e-mails everyone the weekly results. Tough, huh? <laughs> You just see everyone's results.” (Transcript 8, #175).

MU. shows competition with her boyfriend:

MU: “Dus en omdat ik sterker ben dan hij had.. ik ben ik hem gaan hazen.” MU: “So because I'm stronger than he is. . . I became his pacemaker.” (Transcript 8, #786).

MU: “Mijn marathontempo is dan op dat moment zijn wedstrijdtempo op vijftien kilometer.” MU: “My marathon speed at that time is his competition speed over fifteen kilometers.” (Transcript 8, #818).

MU. addresses the trophies in the bookcase:

MU: “Nou ik heb een paar keer op dat soort loopjes gestaan en eh ook dingen kunnen winnen. Dat zijn

T: [Ja [ja

MU: die paar bekens eh <wijst naar de bekens op de kast> die zijn allemaal van mij natuurlijk <grinnikt>.”

MU: “Well I've been on a few of those little runs and er, have also been able to win. That's those couple of trophies

T: [Yes [yes

MU: er <points at trophies on the shelf> those are all mine of course. <chuckles>.” (Transcript 8, #707-#710).

V. discusses her competitiveness during a race when she wanted to win and to be on stage:

ו: "בתחרות בשישים ושתיים קיבלתי ממש כאבים חזקים בריאה השמאלית שלא יכולתי לנשום, באמצע הדרך. אמרתי, את זה אני מסיימת. לקחתי שני אדווילים, ביחד.. ועוד כאב לי תופת, אחרי חצי שעה עוד שני אדווילים." (Transcript 4, #540-#542).

The interviewees see strength as a positive feature. A. explains that practicing endurance sports gives her positive feelings, self-confidence and an appearance of beauty, health and youth. It brings her happiness and she is still getting stronger:

א: "אלף אה: הערכה ובטחון עצמי. בת, אה: מראה יפה יותר... ובריא יותר.  
גימל אה: מביא לי, שמחה, כי: זה מביא מצב רוח טוב, מי שעוסק בספורט, יש לו  
מצב רוח טוב. גימל, אה: אני... חזקה יותר, אני הולכת ומתחזקת כל הזמן." (Transcript 2, #458-#460).

The female athletes need to exhibit mental strength. It is common among the interviewees to speak of physical weaknesses such as pain or fatigue, but they all manage it. It is not common, however, to speak of the need for support during a mental breakdown. This is seen as a weakness. For example, A. hides the term mental breakdown. Rather than name the term explicitly, she recounts that last winter the combination of work and exercise did not go well, leading to her quit her job as well as the training:

A: "...ook wel heel veel werkte en vorig jaar in de winter.. ging het daardoor ook even helemaal niet goed, dus dan ben ik ook even tijdelijk gestopt met eh alles. Maar uiteindelijk.. eh ja helpt dat toch niet."  
A: "...was working quite a lot, and last winter... things went a bit upside-down because of that, so I temporarily stopped doing er, the whole thing. But eventually... er yeah that won't help." (Transcript 6, #331- #332).

Later she describes the incident as simply being too busy, and notes that people pushed her to start running again:

A: "Want ik heb vorig jaar een tijdje.. niks gedaan voordat ik deze baan had, omdat ik het.. ja omdat het  
T: [mm  
A: te druk werd enneh.. ja dan merk ik ook wel dat mensen je weer gaan pushen om toch te gaan hardlopen."  
A: "Because last year. . . for a while I did nothing before I got this job because I... yeah because it  
T: [mmm...  
A: got too busy and er. . . yeah I noticed that people do start to push you to pick up running again."

(Transcript 6, #418-#421).

That she could no longer function in her daily life is a serious problem that she chose to ignore.

Rather than become a member of a training group, some women train for a marathon or triathlon independently. Krane *et al.* have shown that some women felt that society perceived them as different from the socially acceptable female image, though they were also proud to be physically and mentally strong, to have muscular bodies and to express feelings of empowerment (Krane *et al.*, 2004). These examples of masculine features in women are described as positive. N. even compared herself with a car (see paragraph "Narration", Transcript 1, #359-#362).

## 5.2 Feminine features of female athletes

The qualities of assertiveness, competitiveness and independence, described above, are all masculine features. Krane *et al.* claim that to be accepted in society the athletes painted their nails in order to look more feminine and get closer to the feminine model society has created. One of the aspects of femininity is a thin and toned body (Krane *et al.* 2004). Below is an example of A. explaining that sports make her look younger and pretty (i.e., thin and toned):

א: "אני נהנית מזה שאני... יפה וחיטובה ואף אחד לא מאמין שאני בגיל שלי. אה: הכל מונח עלי כמו דוגמנית...".  
ט: <צוחקת>  
(Transcript 2, #376-#378).

Another example of A. explaining why thinness is important for endurance athletes:

א: "כדי שאתה תסיג תוצאות טובות יותר, אתה צריך להיות קל יותר, רזה יותר. אם אתה שמן בעודף משקל, אז קשה לך לפדל באופניים, אתה איטי יותר על האופניים, כי אתה סוחב את כל המשקל שלך. כנ"ל לגבי ריצות. אם אתה כבד יותר, אתה תרוץ לאט יותר. תוריד במשקל, אתה תרוץ מהר יותר, אתה גם תרכב מהר יותר." (Transcript 2, #165-#169).

A third example of the typical endurance athlete is discussed by M. who says that the ideal body is thin and toned:

מ: "אני לא אתלטית, אתלט, זה משהו שרואים שהוא מאוד מאוד רזה, והוא בנוי ל: אנשים אה: ספורטאי סיבולת הם צריכים להיות אנשים מאוד מאוד רזים, אחוזי שומן מאוד נמוכים בגוף. מאוד מאוד נמוכים כן:... זה ברור אתה לא יכול להיות כבד יותר ממה ש.. מההכרחי ל:שרירים לשאת אותך." (Transcript 3, #360-#363).

Feminine features concern the exterior, a person's appearance, whereas masculine features concern the interior, mental behavior. This is apparent in the interviews.

Prominent during the interviews was the idea that the athletes exhibit masculine behavior while striving for a feminine athlete model similar to the more general ideal feminine model. Today men and women in competitive events have the same rights, though in reality many inequalities still exist. These can be either positive in supporting female athletes or negative in undermining them.

### 5.3 Positive gender inequalities

Unconscious elements of inequality remain, though they are less prominent today than in the past. During biking and swimming the gender inequalities negatively affected men who did not help the female athletes. MU describes positive gender inequality at a competition during which there was a lot of wind in the face. Male athletes who saw that she had a chance of winning the competition ran in a circle around her in order to block the wind:

MU: "...van eh.. Burg-Haamstede naar Zoutelande dus je gaat.. eh langs de kust langs de Oosterschelde en dan naar het zuiden. Nou daar stond toen heel veel wind en precies zo dat je.. op de Oosterschelde echt vol wind tegen had. En ehm.. ik had toen een groepje mannen om me heen die.. die wilden niet dat ik ook maar even.. in de wind zou lopen dus die gingen allemaal zo om mij heen lopen om mij uit de wind

T: [Nee

MU: te houden.”

MU: “. . .from er. . .Burg-Haamstede to Zoutelande so you'll be following. . . er the coast alongside the Oosterschelde River and south after that. Well, it was very windy there and exactly. . . at the Oosterschelde you'd get the full blast head on. And er. . . I was surrounded by a group of men who. . . who did not want me to, even for a moment. . . be exposed to the wind, so they basically walled me in while running to keep me out

T: [No

MU: of the wind.” (Transcript 8, #739-#744).

In this case the female athlete appeared physically weak and was therefore not perceived as a rival. As the male athletes did not view her as a threat, they ended up supporting her. This example shows that physical weakness in female athletes is more accepted than mental weakness.

#### 5.4 Negative gender inequalities

V. explains that in the field of sports, men act opposite to how they act in the workplace. She provides an example from her job in marketing; the women are assertive and cold, whereas the men are kind. On the track she sees the opposite. Women are kind, and while men can also be kind, when you are better than they are they feel threatened. This shows implicit gender inequality. V. says:

ו: "לא גם בספורט, נשים.. בניגוד לעולם העסקי שאני חווה את זה, בספורט.. זה מדהים. זה כאילו: ההפך מוחלט. ההפך המוחלט.. לגברים הם יותר עם אגו והם פחות מפרגנים.  
ט: פחות מפרגנים?  
ו: כמה שזה נראה כאילו... הם כאילו יפרגנו אם רק תהיי... פחות טובה מהם. אבל אם טיפה תהיי יותר טובה מהם, הרסת לגמרי.." (Transcript 4, #497-#501).

The Dutch athlete M. says that during the competition there are men who tell her to start behind them because they think she is not as fast as they are. She does not listen to them and stands in front of them (see paragraph 5.1 "Masculine features of female athletes", Transcript 7, #1046-#1054). Another example is provided by MU. who tells of men who do not want her to pass them by bike:

MU: "Ja. En dat is op de fiets ook heel erg. Op de fiets is het zelfs als ik eh mannen inhaal.. dat willen ze  
T: [Ja  
MU: ook niet laten gebeuren. Dus dan gaan ze dan even snel weer voorbij."  
MU: "Yes. And it's the same thing on the bike. When I'm biking, even when I er, overtake men. . . they don't want  
T: [Yes  
MU: to let it happen. So they'll overtake me again right after." (Transcript 8, #747-#749).

#### 5.5 The female endurance athlete's ideal body

א: "אני נהנית מזה שאני... יפה וחטובה ואף אחד לא מאמין שאני בגיל שלי. אה: הכל מונח עלי כמו דוגמנית.."



This statement by A. contradicts Krane *et al.* who claim that there is a split between the ideal female body and the ideal athletic body. According to Krane *et al.* there is a contradiction between the social expectations and the bodies of female athletes. This means that women with athletic bodies have different proportions than the ideal female body dictated by society. The interviewees agree that being athletic is equated with being masculine and is not as socially acceptable for females (Krane *et al.*, 2004). Femininity dictates a woman's appearance in society (Bordo, 1993 in: Krane *et al.*, 2004).

During the interviews all of the Israeli athletes and one of the Dutch athletes cited a well-built body and increased strength as motivations for engaging in sports. Interestingly, both these features comply with society's ideal of the masculine body. A possible reason for the contradiction between these statements and the findings of Krane *et al.* could be that the average age of their interviewees was around twenty, twenty-six years younger than the average age of this study's interviewees. The contradiction may also be explained by the claim that participation in sports distances young women from perceived femininity (as Krane has shown), while older women realize the feminine body by being athletic; in fact this could be their motivation for engaging in endurance sports. Comparing this claim with the Dutch interviewees, one cited weight loss as her motivation to participate in this sport She is thirty years old. Although this appears to contradict Krane *et al.*'s findings, as stated, this could be because at thirty, she is some ten years older than the participants in their study.

According to Krane *et al.*, young women engage in typical feminine behavior in order to enhance their femininity; athletes may do their hair, put on make-up and wear feminine clothes to compensate for the distancing from femininity caused by their participation in sports (Krane *et al.*, 2004). The interviewees in this study say that older women increase their femininity through sports. An ideal feminine body is thin and toned (Krane *et al.* 2004) and the interviewees in this study agree that the typical body of an endurance athlete is thin and toned. Therefore, by realizing the endurance athlete model they also realize the feminine model. As A. states:

א: "כדי שאתה תסיג תוצאות טובות יותר, אתה צריך להיות קל יותר, רזה יותר." (Transcript 2, #165-#166).

M. describes the ideal endurance athlete's body, but adds that she has not fulfilled this ideal:

מ: "פיזית צריך להיות אה: אתלט. בואי אני מדברת על האידיאל, צריך להיות אתלט... אני לא אתלטית. אני גם נראית לך אה:... אני לא, אני לא נראית אתלטית." (Transcript 3, #359-#360).

M. says that she works with a dietitian in order to reach this ideal:

M: "אה: מישהו שהוא דיאטן ספורט, אבל זה: שווה פעם זה נורא אישי, כי לא כולם צריכים אה: לא כולם צריכים לרדת ו... למרות ששוב פעם האנשים הרגילים, אפילו בעלי שיחסיית אדם רזה, אפילו הוא היה צריך לעבוד עם אה:..." (Transcript 3, #391-#393).

The ideal endurance athlete's body resembles the ideal feminine body, thin and toned. Therefore striving for the ideal endurance athlete's body is a way for the women to strive for an ideal female body (as constructed by society). In the case of A. it is particularly important that she realizes the ideal female body, because she needs to present a youthful image at her anti-aging clinic. This is another important motivation: to strive for a socially accepted body. Realizing such a model is important for success in other fields, such as in the workplace.

## 5.6 Women, roles and family

Minnen *et al.* claim that children make a big difference in the lives of women as well as men. For women, children have a radical impact on their priorities. While men also need to reorganize their priorities, these changes are usually less drastic than those of women. In general, having children leads to the traditional division of gender roles, with women investing more time in managing the household and caring for the children (Minnen *et al.*, 2004). Most modern women also need to work, so their time management must be strict, especially when younger children are a factor. Two women with adult children explain that they have more time to practice their sport. According to A.:

א: "אני בת חמישים ואחת, מגיעים לגילי, יותר קל לעסוק בספורט כי אתה לא צריך אה: לרוץ עם ילדים לגן, לקופת חולים, לחוגים, להסיע להחזיר." (Transcript 2, #50-#52).

NK. says that she has more time and that she and her husband train together:

נק: "אמרתי המזל שלנו ששנינו, גם אני וגם הבן זוג שלי, בתוך זה. הילדים שלנו גדולים, התחלתי את זה יחסית שהילדים היו גדולים. אה:.... ו... זה עוזר מאוד.. " (Transcript 5, #431-#433).

All the women who participate in the sport have or had a husband who participates with them. Women with younger children spend far more time taking care of them than do women with adult children. It is harder for the first category of women to include the athlete model in their repertoire.

In order to achieve this, the whole family is involved in the sport of the mother's choice: All the Israeli interviewees train with their husbands. Small children are involved as supporters or as endurance sport participants. For instance, a son of an interviewee wore a shirt with the text: "My dad runs faster than your dad." She also had a picture displayed showing the last few meters of an Ironman race; the photo showed her husband, their children running proudly beside him holding his hand, crossing the finish together (Summary interview 3). N. says that her children are proud of her and interested in the sport. They pushed her to join Ironman:

נ: "הם התרגלו לזה נורא מהר והם אפילו גאים בי.

ט: אה כן?

נ: הם באו לטריאתלון נשים ועודדו אותי ואת כל המדליות... אה: את יודעת כזה תמיד שאני חוזרת אז א. שואל אותי... 'איזה

ט: [אה:]

נ: מקום הגעת? את יודעת, ו...הם נורא רוצים שאני יעשה איירון מן מלא 'אנחנו נבוא לעודד אותך.. " "

ט: [אה:]

(Transcript 1, #250-#256).

The participation of the whole family in endurance sports helps the female athlete adopt the athlete model.

### 5.7 Controlling the body

Cooper claims that marathons and triathlons give women the chance to learn about and control their own bodies, and reject the patriarchal "science" of the seventies that told them that women could not run. Marathon participation has encouraged women to explore their physical limits (Cooper, 1995). Although today physical activity is still, according to society, perceived as

masculine, it is evident that female athletes are becoming accepted more and more. Although there are now fewer gender inequalities, anecdotes from the interviews demonstrate the interviewees' attempts to fight gender inequality and explore their physical limitations. For instance A.:

א: "אמרתי, אם הם עושים, אז גם אני יכולה לעשות." (Transcript 2, #9).

A. speaks of exploring her physical limits:

א: "... חזקה יותר, אני הולכת ומתחזקת כל הזמן." (Transcript 2, #460).

N. talks about exploring both her physical and social limits. She did not think she could achieve her goal, and her eventual success gave her strength:

נ: "המאמן כתב לי אימון נורא קשה שלא חשבתי שאני אצליח לעשות אותו הצלחתי לעשות אותו, זה לוקח אותי באותו שבוע או באותו יום לאיזשהי תעוזה לדברים אחרים זה נותן לך... אומץ." (Transcript 1, #32-#34).

V. describes how she did not know how her body would react to running a distance of a hundred sixty-six kilometers. She uses someone else's testimony to express her unbelievable success. No one thought she would succeed in achieving her goal, but she did. This shows she explores limits and still controls her body:

ו: "תשמעי יכול לקרות עכשיו במאה שישים ושישה. <צוחקת> זה תמיד ניסוי. באמת אני אומרת לך. כשהלכתי לרוץ מאה קילומטר, בחיים לא רצתי מאה קילומטר. אני... הכי הרבה רצתי שישים. היו לי ארבעים קילומטרים כבר וזה הררי. זה תחרות שלא ידעתי איך הגוף יגיב, זה הכל היה חידה. אה... באופ... באיש ברזל... אף פעם לא עשיתי את זה, כאילו: התחלתי בטווח קצר שאני אראה לך שאנשים לא האמינו שאני אעשה את זה. כי אמרו: זה לא הגיוני." (Transcript 4, #427-#431).

The athletes from both cultures present themselves as exploring their physical limits, but stay “in control” of their body and training. This is part of the masculine model of the endurance athlete who is “in control” (Vaccaro *et al.*, 2011). One of the ways to be “in control” is deciding independently whether or not to take recommended precautions, train with a professional trainer or stop training in order to prevent injury. They base their ability to make such decisions without consulting a professional, (or reject such recommendations when they are made) on their claim of “knowing” and “feeling” their bodies.

א: "אנחנו בדרך כלל עושים אה: בדיקות, ארגומטריה אני, עושים בדיקות אה: סח"ח זה... סף חומצת חלב, אז אנחנו יודעים פחות או יותר, איך אה: לעלות את הרמה של ה... של ה... אה: של המאמץ שלנו.. אבל אני, לא מאלה. אני עשיתי סח"ח ועשיתי בדיקות כאלה בווינגייט, אה: אבל אני יכולה להגיד לך, אני מאלה שמקשיבה לגוף, אני לעולם לא תראי אותי עם מד דופק." (Transcript 2, #501 - #505)

A. says she does not need a pulse meter because she "listens" to her body. Her personal knowledge surpasses scientific knowledge.

ו: "אני בניתי תוכנית לעצמי. אה: כי אני מכירה את הגוף שלי... אה: אני יודעת מתי אני עומדת להיפצע מתי לא, מתי... אה: תוכנית בשבילי זה לא רלוונטי, אנשים שונים זה... אני מאמינה שהדבר שהכי אני צריכה להיזהר ממנו זה overtraining. תמיד אני אומרת לבעלי, מה שחשוב זה שאני אגיע לתחרות לא פצועה. כל השאר זה: ראש, ולתת הכל וזה אני יודעת לעשות. ככה אני..." (Transcript 4, #261-#265)

V. built her own training program and is the only one monitoring when she may be heading towards injury. She does not need a trainer or a running group because she "knows" her body. MU. provides anecdotes that portray the control she has over her own body. She is sure that her body is healthy and she says she does not have an increased risk in getting injured.

MU: "ik vind ook dat ik me goed voorbereid aan.. aan evenementen begin. En ehm.. dus ik denk

T: [<grinnikt> [Ja?

MU: niet dat ik zo'n daar echt een risico in zou lopen."

MU: "I do like to think I prepare properly before starting any... any events. And er... so I don't think

T: [<laughs> [Yes?

MU: that that would really be a risk for me." (Transcript 8, #397-#399).

Later she describes an injury that she ignored because she wanted to finish the event rather than admit failure. She explains that to think rationally during a competition is not possible. She does not know why she continued running:

MU: "op dat moment voelt stoppen als iets heel.. ergs enneh.. vooral als falen dan. En toen heb ik

T: [Ja okay

MU: wel doorgerend, maar ehm.. daardoor heeft het ook zo lang geduurd daarna. Dus dat heeft.. dat

T: [Ja [Okay

MU: deed.. erg veel pijn. Dat was ook wel pijn dat ik niet eh.. niet meer goed ja. Ik weet eigenlijk niet

T: [ja

MU: waarom ik toen wel door ben gerend.”

MU: “at that point quitting feels like something very.. bad and er.. it feels like failure, really. So then I

T: [Yeah okay

MU: did continue to run but er.. that's why it took so long afterwards. So that has.. that was.. it hurt so badly.

T: [Yes [Okay

MU: It really was the kind of pain that I couldn't er.. not very well. I don't really know why I kept on running

T: [yes

MU: then.” ( Transcript 8, #532-#538).

### 5.8 Older versus newer femininity

In the past, women's participation in endurance sports was not socially acceptable. Women were simply not allowed to participate. For example, in 1967 Katherin Switzer was the first female runner who attempted to participate in an official marathon the Boston marathon. During the race one of the event officials even tried to forcibly stop her because she was a women (Van der Werff & Hover, 2011). It was only in 1984 that the first women's Olympic marathon took place.

Gilbert theorizes that older women who play tennis do not perform as well because – given their age – they are bound by more constraining cultural patterns (Gilbert, 2011). This development can also be observed in the interviews by comparing different generations. The woman with young children, M. is a particularly good example:

מ: "... ו ואמא שלי חושבת שירדתי מהפסים באופן סופי." (Transcript 3, #387).

M. explains that her mother (the canonizer, first generation, who defends the old traditional cultural patterns) thinks she (the second generation trendsetter) is crazy, while her children (third generation) are not only proud of their parents for running triathlons and marathons, but accept it as a matter of course (see terms “trendsetter” and “canonizer” at paragraph 2.1.7) In addition to supporting them they even participate in endurance sports for children.

Similarly V.'s mother also does not approve of her participation in endurance sports:

ו: "אני עכשיו הולכת לעשות את המאה שישים ושישה קילומטרים, בלי שהיא תדע.

ט: את לא אומרת לה?

ו: לא: כי היא... זה ישגע אותה. היא תהיה מוטרדת והיא תשגע אותי

ט: מ.מ..

ו: היא תדע אחרי. איש ברזל שיגע אותה היא פשוט הייתה לוקחת את זה כל כך ללב ודואגת ואין..

ט: היא דואגת?

ו: מאוד. "(Transcript 4, #895-#901).

However, her children, a girl and a boy, also participate in endurance sports (for children). These examples show the changing habitus over generations and the way the social environment has changed with increased participation of females in endurance sports. Women no longer need to defend their choice to engage in endurance sports. Another example of this can be seen in how the Dutch athlete A. is influenced by her father. He was also an endurance sport athlete and her athleticism was not only accepted, but viewed as having symbolic value:

A: "Ja mijn ouders zijn hele: fanatieke supporters. <lacht>en die vinden het ook heel leuk om te zien.

T: [ja [ja

A: Mijn vader eh.. ja die kwam eh regelmatig even kijken. Lag er wel ligt er tenminste wel aan waar je

T: [ja [ja

A: een wedstrijd doet, maar als ik bij hun in de buurt wedstrijden deed dan eh.. waren ze altijd wel van de

T: [ja [ja

A: partij. Ja zeker. Ja."

A: "Yes, both my parents are very committed supporters <laughs>, and they really enjoy watching. My father

T: [Yes, [yes [yes

A: er. . . yeah he would er, come by to watch regularly. Although it does depend on where the match is. But when

T: [Yes. [yes

A: I competed in their neck of the woods, they er. . . they would always be there. Definitely. Yeah."

T: [yes

(Transcript 6, #910-#916).

Vaccaro *et al.* (2011) argue that women are culturally identified with weakness. Gilbert describes a historical development according to which this identity, which is seen as negative, can change. This is important, as it indicates the evolution of cultural identities. In contrast with the Israeli athletes, the Dutch athletes are all (with the exception of one) supported by their parents. The

interviews show that Dutch society, in which there has already been a generation of endurance athletes, more easily adopts endurance sports in general and female participation in particular. The Israeli athletes, however, also represent the clear development of the acceptance of female endurance athletes. This case is important, as it indicates feminist development in different societies over the course of two generations. Further research would be necessary to verify if Israeli society is as open to female sport participation as the Dutch society.

The clothing used in endurance sports is imported into Israeli as well as Dutch society. An examination of these clothes makes it apparent that there are differences in the model of shoes and clothes that are made for women and men. This development represents the increased acceptance of female participation in endurance sports. Most of the brands are American big names such as Asics, Adidas, Nike and Reebok. Another change is in the industry of materials used for endurance sports. Today materials in female colors can be observed, as can be shoes designed especially for females and bikes that allow one to train at home.

#### 5.9 Influence of media on aspects of gender

It was not until 1999 that Nike and Reebok used a female in one of their advertising campaigns, indicating that it was only then that the athletic body became an ideal for both sexes (Heywood and Dworkin, 2003 in: Birk, 2010). Van Bottenburg argues that during the second wave of endurance sport popularity, female participation increased as well (Van Bottenburg, 2006). This is an important influence on the development of the participation of women in sports and on women's habitus. An example of this can be found in the interview with A., who has an anti-aging clinic. In the advertisement for her business she is the model, a fifty-one-year-old woman with an athletic body, wearing a delicate dress. This shows a more refined repertoire of female endurance athletes than existed in the past. Nevertheless, there continue to be negative perceptions concerning endurance sports.

Gratton argues that the commercial sector is a dominant supporter of mass participation in sports (Gratton, 2007). The commercial sector is indeed a dominant element influencing the interviewees. This makes the interviewees consumers who are attracted through media.



Fredrickson *et al.* argue that in American culture visual media turns the female body into an object. In advertisements, the female body is a visual object that is constantly being evaluated, while the masculine body is rarely portrayed; rather, men's heads and faces are more often on display. Fredrickson *et al.* argue that confrontation is unavoidable. Women are influenced by these visualized and objectified bodies, which idealize the female form and create a standard that is almost impossible for the average woman to reach (an extremely thin body is the norm in advertisements). This results in women's desire to change their bodies, which can lead to exercising, dieting, using beauty-products, becoming more interested in fashion, developing eating-disorders and getting (elective) surgery (Fredrickson *et al.*, 1997).

The media uses the ideal body as a tool for advertisements, making the body a visual object. It accentuates the physical look (thin and toned), which also fits with the interviewees' idea of the ideal athlete model. It also attracts consumers by encouraging them to buy certain products in order to reach the ideal model. As the interviewees state, endurance sports enable you to eat what you want and to lose weight (and not develop a muscular, masculine body). Endurance sports conform to the idealized physical feminine model as presented by the media. This makes the transfer of new cultural patterns in female participation in endurance sports easier, because the visual feminine model (thin and toned) physically fits with the female endurance athletes' body (thin and toned) and is accepted by society.

On the other hand, the fact that this involves the objectification of women fits into the more conservative repertoire of older cultural patterns. This stimulation of gender inequality arose from older cultural patterns that were pushed to the periphery of society, only to return in a slightly altered form in order to suit the times. Independent acts such as subscribing to events via the internet and using media actually have paradoxical results: While exposure to the media allows for independent action, it also causes the female athlete to strive to achieve an unrealistic body – and thus to submit to older cultural patterns – which in turn makes her dependent on the media .

### 5.10 Alcohol consumption

Drinking alcohol is part of the Dutch female athlete's ideal model and not that of the Israeli athletes. While the Dutch athletes drink beer, the Israeli athletes do not. The Israeli athlete A. says that she will taste wine during an event in France:

A: "זה מרתון בוטיק כי יש בו, לדעתי שמונת אלפים משתתפים, הוא הרבה יותר קטן, יש בו... אווירה אה: של שתיית יין"  
(Transcript 2, #426-#427).

Drinking wine is more refined than drinking beer, which makes wine more feminine than beer. A. will not just drink wine, but she will taste it, meaning she will sip it slowly and consume only a little bit of each kind. In doing this, she expresses her femininity. In contrast, the Dutch athletes' ideal model corresponds with heavy beer consumption, which is masculine:

M: "dan nog even wat.. drinken en dan weer naar huis, dat je even bijpraat, maar.. in het weekend eh gaan we ook nog wel regelmatig eh op stap en eh de kroeg in lekker biertjes drinken en zo dus dat eh dat

T: [ja [<lacht> okay

M: doe ik gelukkig ook nog wel <lacht>."

M: "and then go to a pub and enjoy drinking small beers and then go home again, just to catch up, but. . . in the weekend er, we do go out regularly er, to the pub to have a couple of cold ones and all that so that er that

T: [yes [<laughs> okay.

M: is something that I do still do and enjoy <laughs>." (Transcript 7, #595-#598).

M. uses the sentence "lekker biertjes drinken" which means "Enjoying drinking small beers" makes it seem as though she only drinks a little bit. However, this can be explained by the use of the plural diminutive word and by her statement that she often goes to the pub (see paragraph 8.3 "Narration" for an explanation of the athletes' use of Dutch diminutives).

The Israeli athletes take their training much more seriously:

נק: "ו...אז אתה כל הזמן סביב זה יש אירוע משפחתי, אה: צריכים לחשוב על האימונים שלי אז, בשבת הזאת זה לא מתאים בשבת ההיא זה כן מתאים ו.. אה:.. ואם נניח אני... נוסעת לחו"ל, אז אני צריכה לשלב בזה את האימונים. היינו בארצות הברית בטיוול עם המשפחה, והם ידעו, שאנחנו קמים מוקדם בבוקר, אז התאמנו, התחלנו להתאמן לברלין, אנחנו קמים מוקדם בבוקר ועושים את האימונים, והטיוול מתחיל בתשע בבוקר. כי אנחנו באים, צריכים אה: עד שנתקלח, עד שנאכל, אז אה:..."

ט: ממ יפה

נק: ובערב לא יוצאים לבלות, כי צריך לקום מוקדם בבוקר אז זה... דורש שייכות וזה דורש התמסרות..."  
(Transcript 5, #423- #429).

NK. explains she never skips a training session during holidays and the sport requires devotion and seriousness.

### 5.11 Suffering

All of the Israeli athletes have suffered injury at least once. The interviewees indicate that stopping their training in order to recover is difficult for them. Each of the Israeli interviewees has dealt with or is currently dealing with injury, and some have viewed it in a positive light:

נ: "הלכתי את כל הדרך ובכיתי ובכיתי בכיתי כי ידעתי שזאת חתיכת פציעה. את יודעת זה היה רגע קשה אבל, זה הביא אותי  
ט: [כן]

נ: לאיש ברזל. כי בזכות זה שלא יכולתי לרוץ שלושה חודשים אה: נורא השתפרתי באופניים.. כי מותר לך באופניים..

ט: [כן] אה:

ט: ושחייה.

נ: ושחייה. ואז פתאום... נהיה חצי איש ברזל שאף פעם לא היה אופציה." (Transcript 1, #928 - #935).

MU. says that she began biking when she got injured while running.

MU: "met lopen raak je snel geblesseerd. Dus eh op een gegeven moment dus ook een mountainbike dus

T: [ja [ja

MU: bij gekocht. Hij doet het nog steeds.

T: [Ja

T: Ja hij doet het nog.. <controleert of de recorder het nog doet>

MU: Wat meer gaan fietsen."

MU: "in running it's easy to sustain an injury. So at some point I ended up buying a mountain bike. It is still on

T: [yes [yes [yes

T: Yes, it's still working. <checks if the recorder is still working>

MU: And I started to bike more often." (Transcript 8, #10-#15).

The injury is perceived as an obstacle to reaching their goal. But N. and MU. overcome this obstacle by beginning to train for a triathlon, which includes swimming and cycling – activities that they still can do. This is another part of the masculine model of the endurance runner – an

endurance runner finds a way to overcome obstacles. Some of the athletes say they never suffer injury, but later it is revealed that this is not the case:

T: "heb je weleens een blessure opgelopen?"

A: eh nee..

T: nog nooit een blessure?

A: [nee ik ben helemaal niet eh..

T: [in al die jaren nog nooit een blessure opgelopen?

T: <verbaasd>

A: <lacht>."

T: "Have you ever sustained an injury?"

A: Er no. . .

T: You've never had an injury?

A: No, not at all, er. . .

T: In all those years you've never once gotten injured? <surprised>

A: <laughs>." (Transcript 6, #267-#274).

Later A. explained that she did in fact sustain a minor injury:

A: ".heb af en toe weleens kleine pijntjes.. wel dingetjes waar.. dat ik het even rustig aan moet doen.

A: Maar ik heb..ehm.. nou ik heb een tijdje ook.. geprobeerd te schaatsen in combinatie met het..

T: [zoals wat bijvoorbeeld?

A: hardlopen en fietsen maar.. met schaatsen is de belasting zeg maar wat meer achterop je hak. En: met

T: [ja

A: lopen is het voorop en ik merkte dat ik dan heel erg last kreeg van mijn scheenbeen..."

A: "Every now and again some little pains. . . just small things where. . . I would just have to take it easy for a while. But I've. . .

T: [Such as?

A Er. . . well I've also tried to. . . do ice skating together with the. . . running and biking but. . . in ice skating there's more pressure on the back of your heel. While in running it's in the front and I noticed that that caused my shins to

T: [Yes.

A: hurt quite badly..." (Transcript 6, #276-#282).

J.'s first reaction at having an injury started with "no", but became "almost never":

J: "Nee eigenlijk.. bijna nooit ik denk dat ik geluk heb dat ik niet zo snel een blessure heb. J:" No, as a matter of fact. . . almost never. I think I've been lucky to I do not get injured easily." (Transcript 9, #800).

Though it is possible that the athletes have not suffered from major injuries, these examples show that the Dutch athletes originally claimed not to have been injured but later admit that they have in ways that are minor, but still significant enough to have caused them to rest more and train less. Considering cultural differences, this can be seen as making obstacles smaller in order to make them easier to handle (see paragraph "Narration" about the characteristics of using diminutives by Dutch athletes). An injury means "losing control of the body" which threatens the female's ideal model.

In her role as a coach, NK. motivates people by telling them that the pleasure is in the shower after the marathon; after finishing an event one experiences a feeling that they can conquer the world:

נק: "אם אתה לא תגיד לעצמך אני יכול ואני אגיע, שום דבר לא יעזור אתה צריך, אתה צריך אה: מצד אחד נותן המון עוצמה ותמיד אני אומרת להם, הכיף הוא ... במקלחת של אהרי! <צוחקת>". (Transcript 5, #95-#97).

Overcoming pain and finishing the competition gives them a strong feeling:

א: "אני הולכת ומתחזקת כל הזמן." (Transcript 2, #460).

A. says:

A: "Ja het mooiste is als je: he gewoon een seizoen heel hard kan trainen en dat je echt weet dat je in vorm bent. Dat je weet dat je de afstand aankan. Dat geeft sowieso al een heel zelfverzekerd gevoel."

T: [ja

A: "Yes, that's the best thing, isn't it? Just training really hard for a season and knowing for sure that you're in shape; knowing you can handle the distance. That in itself provides a great sense of self-confidence."

T: [ja

(Transcript 6, #703-#704).

Each woman claims that the effort is worth it. The satisfaction of finishing the competition seems to actually be enhanced by overcoming physical hardship. In other words, pain is necessary in order for it to be overcome. Pain is something they want to feel, because overcoming pain is part of the athletes' identity.

Thus, an experienced athlete needs to “control her body” by recognizing the pain signals that she can ignore and the signals that need to be taken seriously. A focus on finishing an event when the athlete is tired and does not want to fail creates a situation in which it is almost impossible to think rationally. This shows that the runner has great potential to cause damage to her body, and therefore, especially at these moments, she needs a coach to observe her (see paragraph 3.3 “Coach”).

## 6. Romanticizing

### 6.1 “Amazing public support in Europe”

A. describes the experience of participating in an international marathon:

א: "בגלל ההערכות של אותה אהה רשות מקומית כל העיר נערכת, היא אהה כולה מקושטת, כל האנשים יוצאים לרחובות ומעודדים למשך כל הדרך... יש תחנות הזנה זה שולחנות עם אהה בנות ו..משקאות, והכל, יש להקות לאורך כל הדרך כל מאה מטר יש להקה, כל מאה מטר יש דיג'יי כל מאה מטר להטוטנים. אהה הליקופטר בשמיים מפזרים אלפי בלונים, קרנבל אחד גדול. אין את זה בארץ". (Transcript 2, #694-699#).

N. tells also about her experience:

נ: "והם עומדים שמה כל הילדים זה לא כמו בארץ העידוד שם באירופה הוא מדהים." (Transcript 1, #583)

MU relates her experience of participating in an event in a foreign country in Europe where the support is better than in the Netherlands:

MU: “Ja Nederlandse wedstrijden staat het publiek eigenlijk.. ja is meer met elkaar bezig. En die

T: [oh <lacht>

MU: wachten tot hun eh.. tot hun kind.. oom voorbij komt, maar die moedigen niet echt aan. Dat doen ze in het buitenland meer.”

MU: “Yeah, in the Dutch race the audience is really. . . yeah it’s really more a bit self-involved. And they wait

T: [oh <laughs>

MU: until their er. . . child. . . uncle comes by but they don’t really provide a lot of support. People abroad do a lot more cheering.” (Transcript 8, #300-#303).

A: : “Dat is in Nederland ook wel zo. Je hebt.. hele gezellige wedstrijden waarbij.. eh he de organisatie heel veel heeft gedaan voor de aankleding van de wedstrijd en echt ook een leuke sfeer probeert te

A: brengen en andere wedstrijden zijn wat kleiner en soms ook wat killer en koeler.”

T: [ja

A: “It’s pretty much the same in the Netherlands. You’ve got. . . really nice competitions where. . . the whole organization has really put a lot of effort into everything surrounding the race, and they really try to create a great atmosphere, while other competitions may be a bit smaller, but then also sometimes a bit cooler and chillier.”

T: [ja

(Transcript 6, #1027-#1031).

This shows that the Israeli athletes romanticize the level of support athletes receive in Europe. The Dutch athletes have a more positive view of support in a foreign country.

## 6.2. "Roadblocks without conflicts"

N. complains about how "terrible" the awareness of sports in Israeli society is, remarking that people get annoyed when roads are blocked because of endurance sport events:

נ: "יש אווירה אחרת לגמרי יש.. את יודעת נותנים לזה את הכבוד של זה לא כמו במרתון תל אביב... בקושי היה עידוד. מרתון ירושלים.. היה יחסית אבל זה בקטנה. המודעות לספורט בארץ, היא איומה אתה בעיקר שוב במרוץ איל שברמת השרון אתה בעיקר שומע את הצפוצים של המכוניות  
ט: <צוחקת>

נ: יאללה!!! תפסיקו כבר!! חוסמים לנו את הכביש בשבת!! את יודעת היה לי מרוץ אופניים בצפון, כל הכבישים היו סגורים בגלל האופניים. צפירות וקללות וילדים עומדים ואומרים <עם קול של ילד בוכה> 'די תפסיקו לרכב אנהנו רוצים להגיע הביתה'. את יודעת כאילו אין את הלעמוד עם הדגלים ולעודד." (Transcript 2, #626-#632).

The Dutch athlete A.'s involvement in disputes between drivers reveals that in Dutch society people are also sometimes disgruntled by the blocking of the roads:

A: "Ik heb zelf ook wel als vrijwilliger aan de kant gestaan. Om eh.. he..als verkeersregelaar om mensen  
T: [oh echt?  
A: dan tegen te houden. En je hebt een heleboel mensen die zijn heel begrijpend van 'oh joh wat leuk dat  
T: [oh  
A: jullie een wedstrijd hebben' en er zijn ook mensen die.. ja zijn dat helemaal niet.  
T: [En die je echt tegen moet houden en  
A: [ja, ja  
T: waar je ook wel ruzie mee hebt gehad dan?  
A: Nou ja ruzie is een groot woord, maar wel eh.. woordenwisselingen dat eh... ja dat.."  
A: "I've worked as a volunteer on the side of the road myself. To er. . . you know. . . work as a traffic control person  
T: [Oh really?  
A: to stop people. And there are many people who are very understanding, like 'oh wow so nice that you guys  
T: Oh.  
A: are having a competition' and there are also people who. . . yeah they're just not like that at all.  
T: [And who you really have stop and you  
A: [yes, yes



T: have gotten into fights with?

A: Well, fights is an extreme word, but there have been er. . . arguments that er. . . yeah that.”

(Transcript 6, #1038-#1048).

### 6.3 “No competitiveness in Europe”

N. explains that in Israel events are more competitive than in Europe:

נ: "זה מתחיל בקטע אצל ישראלים לדעתי זה קטע מאוד מאוד חזק כי ישראלים הם מאוד תחרותיים. לא יכול להיות שהוא עשה ב4 שעות ואני יעשה ב4,5 שעות. אין מצב. את יודעת  
ט: כן  
נ: נורא עסוקים ותחרותיים ו באירופה אתה רואה שאנשים עושים גם את המרתון ב5 שעות, וב6 שעות אין להם את זה  
ט: ובארץ לא רואים את זה?  
נ: בארץ? אין מצב." (Transcript 1, #1021-#1027).

Another example of competitiveness can be seen in how MU's coach sends the results to everyone, which causes the athletes to compare themselves with one another. MU describes receiving results of others as “burdensome” (See paragraph 3.3 “Coach”, Transcript 8, #175). The trophies displayed in the bookcases indicates that the Dutch female athletes are also competitive (see paragraph 5.1 “Masculine features”, Transcript 8, #707-#710). The Dutch athletes do not put marathon stickers on their cars in order to publicize their achievements to the public, but rather, keep trophies in their home. They read the results mailed by their coach, but do not discuss them with others. The negative feelings experienced by M. when her competitors have better results than her cause her to reflect, but she does not discuss it with others. Thus, the Israeli athletes, as well as the Dutch athletes, exhibit competitiveness, but in the case of the former this is expressed in an extroverted manner and in the latter in an introverted.

### 6.4 “Desire to be part of the European attitude”

A difference between the Israeli athletes and the Dutch athletes is that the Israeli athletes compare events and attitudes with foreign countries in Europe and in United States. Their ideal model of an athlete features European patterns that they strive to adopt. An example of this can

be seen in A. joining a “boutique” marathon in France that included wine tasting (see paragraph 5.10 “Alcohol consumption”, Transcript 2, #423-#427).

N. discusses her experience of the Paris marathon, for which she expresses great appreciation:

נ: "אני עוברת מעל, מתחת למגדל איפל ואני אומרת לעצמי יאאו את יודעת את מתמלאת בדמעות

ט: כן

נ: אני רצה בפריז! לא יכול להיות זה משהו ש... <נשימה עמוקה> אני נפעמת מעצמי.

ט: כן

נ: כאילו אני חלק ממרתון פריז? וא:ו. " (Transcript 1, #583-#588).

## 7. Individualism versus collectivism

All the interviewees began their training in social groups. They all made new friends who practiced the sport with them and built an entire new network of people who participate in endurance sports. NK. discusses how the group dynamic benefits the individual athlete:

ט: "אוקי ואם נגיד אה: יש מישוהו ש.. שמרגיש אה: שקשה לו באימון או במרתון עצמו, אה: איך את מצליחה לעודד בתור מאמנת?  
נק: <צוחקת> קודם כל זה לא רק אני כמאמנת, כי הקבוצה בקבוצה יש הרבה כוח באמת אני חושבת ש... מאוד קשה להתאמן במיוחד עם מרחקים כאלה כשאתה לבד. שאתה יודע ש... למשל לקום בבוקר מוקדם. אם אתה יודע שמישהו מחכה לך אז יותר קל לך לקום. אם לא מחכים לך אז אתה אומר טו:ב אני ארוץ בערב, אולי הבוקר אני לא אקום <צוחקת>".  
(Transcript 5, #73-#78)

N. also discusses how the group pushes her into the sport:

נ: "כאילו זה לא נעים אם אתה לא עושה ספורט פתאום. זה מרגיש נורא לא נעים. מה, כולם עושים ספורט מה אני לא יעשה ספורט? טוב נו נתחיל ואז אתה נדבק. כאילו וזהו." (Transcript 1, #1040-#1042).

All the interviewees train or have trained with a group, but they refer to endurance sports as an individual activity. NK. says:

נק: "ריצה זה ספורט יחיד. אין מה לעשות אתה עם עצמך, אתה מתמודד עם הכאבים שלך, אתה מתמודד עם הסבל שלך, אתה.. מדבר עם עצמך תוך כדי: אם אתה לא תגיד לעצמך אני יכול ואני אגיע, שום דבר לא יעזור..." (Transcript 5, #94-#96).

During international events NK. says:

נק: "זה סוג של הפנינג. שפוגשים אנשים שרצים... ו... מינגלינג כזה." (Transcript 5, #873-874#).

However, when she is at competitions in foreign countries, all her interactions are with other Israeli athletes:

נק: "... ניגשת לקו ואת... זהו. נגשתי ל... נכנסתי לזה של הזינוק זה מין אה:... שמים גדרות מאוד גבוהים כדי שאנשים שלא אמורים להכנס לא יכנסו. כך שרק רצים עומדים באזור. ו... נכנסתי, ונעמדתי... ואז... ניסיתי... אה:.... לברר, אולי יש ישראלים, שעומדים לידי." (Transcript 5, #354-#356).

Another example is described by V.:

ו: "בחור"ל לא. אין לנו בחור"ל קשרים.

ט: אין לכם קשר.

ו: כל ה... קליק הזה... בארץ. יש המון אבל... כולם מחוברים מהארץ. (Transcript 4, #650-#652).

NK. also describes typical characteristics she recognizes Israelis – specifically in a woman following her army service. She also describes meeting another Israeli who was struggling and how she supported him all the way to the finish line. She continues her story by telling about other “friends” she met, but then corrects the word “friends” with Israelis. This example show the collective thought exhibited by Israeli athletes during events:

נק: "ותוך כדי גם פגשתי עוד בחורה, שראיתי שיש לה תמונה... של חייל על הגב, זאת אומרת, זיהיתי שזה חייל ישראלי, כי... את יודעת הם באים מהצבא מורידים את המדים נשארים עם ה...גופיה הלבנה, עם ה... עם הדיסקית ככה... רואים שהיא תחובה מתחת לה... ככה התאמצתי, התקרבותי אליה התאמצתי, ראיתי שזה באמת שם ישראלי ואז... פניתי אליה, מסתבר שהיא, זה... אנחנו ככה רצות קצת ומקשקות, כמה עוד...שאפשר בקילומטרים ה... ואז הסתבר, כשהוא קרא לי, הוא קרא לי

ט: [ומה, כן מה היא..]

נק: <בקול שקט, אבל כאילו צועק> 'נ!!' הוא קרא לי מהקהל והיא הסתובבה מאושרת שמישהו קורא לה והיא

ט: <צוחקת>

נק: מסתכלת, ואז היא קלטה, כי היא הרי הבינה שאני מכירה אותו אז היא אומרת לי, 'קוראים לך נ.?' אז אמרתי 'כן', ואז

נק: היא אומרת לי, 'גם לי קוראים נ.!' <צוחקת> במרתון פריז בקילומטר השלושים

ט: [במהלך הריצה? <צוחקת>]

נק: ושש תפגשי מישהי מישראל שקוראים לה נ.?' <צוחקת> זה היה: מדהים וזהו ואז פגשנו עוד חברים, עוד ישראליים, לא

ט: [ולמה היא...]

נק: חברים. במהלך הריצה ו:בחור שהתקשה מאוד. ו:פתאום אתה מקבל כוחות, את יודעת את עוזרת למישהו את

ט: [במהלך הריצה?]

נק: מעודדת אותו את סוחפת אותו היינו, <בכל חלש אבל כאילו צועק> 'עוד קצת אנחנו מסיימים! איזה זה' ו... והגענו יחד אה:

לקן הסיום פחות או יותר.. (Transcript 5, #697-#714).

This relates to Baumeister's (Baumeister *et al.*, 1995) claim that belonging is a fundamental need. When Israeli athletes meet each other, they form an ad hoc group to provide each other with support and encouragement. According to N.:

נ: "ואז פגשתי מישהי מהארץ שאמרה לי אני תורמת לפרויקט שלך עשרה קילומטר אני רצה איתך עשרה קילומטרים. ואני אמרתי 'יש!' אז אמרתי אחרי עשרה קילומטרים אני אחשוב מה יהיה. רצה איתי עשרה קילומטר אחר כך היא הלכה. פגשתי ט: ]<צוחקת>  
נ: מישהי אחרת היא רצה איתי עשרים קילומטרים." (Transcript 1, #813-#817).

Later N. explains that she does not communicate with foreigners:

ט: "את גם בקשר עם אנשים ממרתון נגיד מפריז או..  
נ: לא לא זרים לא  
ט: אה: רק אה: רק..  
נ: רק מי ש:כן." (Transcript 1, #591-#594).

Additionally, V. says she does not stay in touch with foreigners:

"את ובעלך מכירים גם אנשים מחו"ל שגם רצים? כאילו..  
ו: בחו"ל לא. אין לנו בחו"ל קשרים.  
ט: אין לכם קשר.  
ו: כל ה:קליק הזה.. בארץ. יש המון אבל, כולם מחוברים מהארץ." (Transcript 4, #649-#652).

Other interviewees also say that they do not have contact with foreigners. Despite participating in an international competition they maintain segregated groups.

The Dutch female athletes do not exhibit a need to meet other Dutch athletes or foreigners during events. The Dutch athlete M. admits that it is easier for her to speak with Dutch strangers during a Dutch event than during an event in a foreign country:

M: "ik eerder geneigd ben om.. een ander atleet die.. ook zijn fiets staat klaar te maken om daar een praatje mee aan te knopen, ik ben altijd wel van.. met iedereen even praten en

T: [met de Nederlandse

T: wedstrijden eerder.

M: [ja, precies dat eh dan.. dan eh is de wedstrijd ook wat kleiner en dan.. ben ik eerder geneigd

T: [ja

M: om.. met mensen in contact te gaan dan bij die hele grote: wedstrijd."

M: "I will tend to... talk to another athlete who... is also preparing his bike; I do enjoy chatting with everybody and

Tally Zevulun, A study about Female Endurance Athletes in Today's Israeli and Dutch Society

T: [More

T: so in the Dutch races.

M: [yeah, exactly that er, then. . . then er, the race is a bit smaller which. . . makes me more inclined

T: [yes

M: to. . . interact with people than I would at those massive events.”

(Transcript 7, #750-#756).

MU. says she sometimes talks to foreign athletes during the event but does not stay in touch:

MU: “Ja je komt.. je loopt toch altijd wel een beetje in hetzelfde tempo als met andere mensen.. dus je komt toch wel aan de praat ook. Gewoon alleen al ‘hoeveelste marathon is dit?’ ‘heb je hier eerder

T: [Ja

MU: gelopen?’. Ja

T: [Ja. Okay en is dat zijn dat ook eh.. buitenlandse: lopers of vooral Nederlanders

T: eh welke..

MU: [ook..ook buitenlanders. Ja. Ja.”

MU: ”Yeah you go. . . you always run at a similar speed as other people. . . so you get to talking. Just things like

T: [yes.

MU: ‘how many marathons have you done?’ ‘Have you

MU: run here before?’ Yeah.

T: [Yeah. Okay and would they also be er. . . foreign runners or more Dutch er, which. . .

MU: [also.. foreigners too. Yes. Yes.”] (Transcript 8, #346-#352).

They discuss their experience in the group. In contrast to Israeli athletes, they travel to foreign countries to support members of their group. Thus, though they are not collectivistic with other Dutch athletes, they are with their specific team. They also act in roles other than that of an athlete. For example, A. travels to the Alpes d’Huez to support her group:

A: “dan vind ik het leuk om iemand aan te moedigen. Ja. Maar ja nee ik vind het helemaal niet erg om te

T: [ja [okay oh

A: doen eh.. dat is eh..nee

T:. [Nee? En neem je hoe hoe moet ik me dat voorstellen ga je mensen echt eh aanmoedigen of

T: neem je ook dingen mee: of...

A: Ja we nemen, want meestal zijn er wel een paar mensen die aanmoedigen dus dan rijd je met de auto want.. eh.. op een paar.. Ja en dan eh.. sta je een paar keer stil en dan gooi je water over ze heen en eh..”

A: “I enjoy supporting someone. Yes. But yeah no I don’t mind at all doing that er... that’s er... no

## Tally Zevulun, A study about Female Endurance Athletes in Today's Israeli and Dutch Society

T: [yes [okay [No? And what is the picture

T: you're painting here? Do you cheer for people or do you bring supplies or...

A: Yeah we take – 'cause usually there'll be a few people cheering for the athletes, so you go and drive the car 'cause... er... in a few... yeah and then er... you'll stop a few times and throw some water over them and er..." (Transcript 6, #948-#954).

Another example of J.:

J: "Niet zo.. wel een heel enkele keer maar niet zo heel veel want meestal dan eh ben je de.. al zelf heel druk en in de weekenden dat ik dan niet hoeft te sporten dan vind ik het ook eh.. dan hoeft het niet maar een enkele keer en dan.. maar dan meestal als het gewoon in de buurt is als het in Amersfoort is en er

T: [Ja.

J: doen.. bekenden mee dan zou ik wat eerder gaan dan als het verder weg is."

J: "Not that. . . very rarely, really not that often, because most of the time you'll be er. . . you'll just be really busy yourself and on the weekends, I don't have to workout. I just think er... it's not necessary; just occasionally sometimes and then. . . but then usually if it's in the neighborhood; if it's in Amersfoort and people you know are in

T: [Yes.

J: it, then I might go if it's a bit farther away." (Transcript 9, #165-#169).

Another example of acting in a role other than that of an athlete is A. volunteering as a traffic controller during events:

A: "ook wel als vrijwilliger aan de kant gestaan." A.: "have been a volunteer too, on the side of the road." (Transcript 6, #1040).

MU. says that in a foreign country everybody supports everybody, as opposed to the Netherlands, where everyone is only concerned with his or herself. MU. tells how people support in the Netherlands (see paragraph 6.1 "Amazing public support", Transcript 8, #300-#303).

V. says that the Jerusalem marathon is special to her, because as a Zionist she feels that it has a connection with her soul:

ו: "משהו בירושלים בעיניי, עם כל מה שאמרתי לך, זה מרתון יותר כיפי מכל המרתונים בעולם אני.. גם אני ציונית... ציונית <צוחקת>

ט: <צוהקת>

ו: מהוברת למרתון עם הנשמה. כאילו לירושלים בנשמה. אז אה... המרתון בעיניי הכי כיפי בירושלים."  
(Transcript 4, #680-#683)

Both the Dutch and Israeli athletes exhibit a culture of collectivism. The difference is that for the Israelis it is expressed as a nationalistic feeling during international events. This means that during international events they feel connected with other Israelis even if they do not know them (NK. even called strangers “friends” but then corrected herself to say Israelis). In contrast, the Dutch athletes do not feel connected with Dutch strangers. Instead, they feel connected with the athletes on their team. This difference shows that the culture within which the athlete lives influences how they practice sports.

## 8. Embodiment

Bourdieu's term “bodily hexis” refers to the internalization of schemes. He claims that culture can be seen in the human body and in human behavior; in this way, the habitus of the athletes is displayed (Bourdieu, 1993). Most of the women have athletic bodies that show the internalized schemes, in this case the physical training of an endurance athlete.

### 8.1: Geographical location

Natural environment does not influence one's choice of whether to participate in endurance sports (Kaufman and Patterson, 2005). Though it may be easier for the Israeli athletes to choose a sport that does not require outdoor training during the summer, they nevertheless participate in marathons and triathlons.

One difference between Israel and the Netherlands' landscapes is that the Netherlands has no mountains, which has led to the popularity of using bicycles for transportation. As a result, people learn to ride at a very young age. This practice is so embedded in the culture that Dutch athletes do not need to learn how to ride before participating in an event. In contrast, Israeli athletes do occasionally need to learn how to bike. However, this obstacle does not stop them from engaging in endurance sports.



### 8.1.1 Biking as a vehicle of travel

All of the Israeli athletes have children, and they all began participating in endurance sports after giving birth. Before they had children some could not run, swim or bike. V. says that she could not bike and swim. She was even afraid of water:

ו: "עשיתי את הטריאתלון הראשון שלי, שלא ידעתי לשחות, פחדתי ממים ולא ידעתי לרכוב. וזה היה גם טריאתלון ספרינט, ו... הסיבה זה, כי: הייתי... פחדתי ממים. פחדתי להיכנס לים..." (Transcript 4, #704-#706).

According to A.:

א: "ואז התחלתי להתאמן בקבוצה, של טריאתלון. בהתחלה לא ידעתי לרוץ. באמת שלא ידעתי לרוץ..." (Transcript 2, #11-#12).

The Dutch athletes have the advantage of already knowing how to ride, as bicycles are common vehicles of travel in the Netherlands. They already experience an element of endurance sports during their commutes to work.

It is common for Dutch athletes to integrate their sports activities into their daily commute. An example is MU. traveling thirty kilometers by bicycle to and from work. The interview was held during the winter, when the sun sets early, so during this period she rarely commuted by bike:

MU: "Nou ik fiets weleens naar werk. De laatste tijd niet zo heel vaak gedaan.

T: Hoeveel kilometer is dat?

MU: Dertig.

T: Dertig. Heen.. dertig heen dertig terug."

MU: "Sometimes I ride my bike to work. Haven't done that a lot lately.

T: How many kilometers is that?

MU: Thirty.

T: Thirty. Thirty there thirty back again." (Transcript 8, #117-#120).

The Dutch athlete M. also describes combining travel time with her training. She runs to and from her swimming sessions:

M: "...of ik combineer het dan ga ik.. als ik..bijvoorbeeld euh zwemtraining heb dan ga ik er hardlopend

T: [okay [ja

M: heen. En dan ga ik zwemmen en ga ik hardlopend terug."

M: ... or I'll combine the two. I might go... when I... for example when I have er, training for swimming

T: [okay [yes

M: I'll run there. And go for a swim and run back again." (Transcript 7, #114-#116).

Though this would save time, Israeli interviewees, who have much busier and less flexible lives due to having children and full time jobs (see paragraph "Women, roles and family"), do not combine these practices. They prefer to travel to the gym by car.

נ: "וואמרת איז קבוצה זאת אז הוא אמר לי עולם המים. אז אמרתי לו 'יאללה! אתה יכול להביא אותי

ט: <צוחקת>

נ: וזה?" (Transcript 1, #212-214)

Not only is biking more common in the Netherlands, but the sports the Dutch athletes practiced as children are similar to certain elements of endurance sports. According to J.:

J: "Toen dacht ik nou ja: ik kan nu lopen, ik kan fiets... ik kan sowieso al fietsen en zwemmen kan ik

T: [Okay.

J: ook dus ik ga een triathlon doen."

J: "Then I thought well: I can run now, I can bike... well I could already ride a bike and I can swim, so I'm going to

T: [okay

J: do a triathlon." (Transcript 9, #33-#35).

M. describes her athletic activities before becoming involved in endurance sports:

M: "Daarvoor deed ik altijd aan eh wedstrijdzwemmen. Ook gewoon echt.. kleins af aan heel

T: [ja [okay

M: fanatiek."

M: "Before that I participated in er, competitive swimming. For real. . . I started at a young age

T: [yes.

M: very enthusiastically." (Transcript 7, #7-#9).

J. explains that she started playing water-polo after she received her swimming certification. This example shows that not only did she have experience swimming – an element of endurance sports – but also that in the Netherlands children are prohibited from swimming without a certificate:

J: "gewaterplood dus daar ben ik eh.. mee begonnen direct na mijn diploma's ben ik gaan waterpoloën."

J: "Played waterpolo so started with that right after having gotten my swimming certificate I started playing waterpolo." (Transcript 9, #5-#6).

When she was a student she was active in a student association for rowing:

J: "En toen ging ik studeren of toen ik aan het studeren was was het niet

T: [ja [okay

J: meer zo handig. En toen heb ik eh... nog een of twee jaartjes geroeid. In Enschede. "

J: "And then I went to university. And while I was a student it wasn't

T: [yes [okay

J: very convenient anymore. And after that I er.. rowed for a year or two. In Enschede." (Transcript 9, #22-#24).

Her social environment resulted in her learning how to swim and ride a bicycle (which she used as a vehicle) at a young age, two skills that are more difficult for the Israeli athletes.

N. discusses the cancelled marathon at which thousands of people ran without the sanction of any formal institution. This collective act reveals the internalized patterns of the athletes. The sudden cancellation caused N. to feel confused and depressed. Rather than continuing her food and exercise programs, she went shopping:

נ: "עשיתי שופינג, בג'רסי. לא אכלתי כל היום מהדיכאון את יודעת לא הייתי רעבה מהדיכאון."  
(Transcript 1, #796).

The participants constructed an event without professional organization, illustrating their active attitude towards the situation. Though there was a bit confusion, the runners completed their planned distances and the supporters cheered them on:

נ: "מה שקרה זה שביום הראשון שהיה אמור להתקיים המרתון, אה: יצאנו באופן ספונטאני אם כל מי שנסענו, אה: לסנטרל פארק. ולא רק יצאנו אנהנו מסתבר שכ:ל הרצים. ארבעים אלף רצים הלכו לפארק ועשו סיבובים בפארק. כולם רצו ט: [ואו]

נ: להוציא את הארבעים ושתיים שתיים. כולם. התחילו לרוץ. כו:לם את לא מבינה כולם זה היה הומה אדם. ואנשים עמדו ועודדו וחילקו ג'לים ומים עכשיו יש.. כאילו עשו מרתון! ספונטני כאילו אף אחד לא תכנן עם דגלים של ט: [כאילו הריצה הייתה מרתון]

נ: המדינות וצרחות את לא מבינה.. " (Transcript 1, #772-779#).

## 8.2 Climate

For Israeli athletes the heat during the summer causes difficulties in training and for the Dutch athletes the cold and darkness of winter creates obstacles. Because of the summer heat, Israeli athletes get up early in the morning or even at night in order to train. The Israeli women noted this issue as one of the hardest to overcome in endurance sports. They get up at 4:00 or even 2:00. In contrast, the Dutch athletes are not used to getting up at this time, and feel that 6:30 is early. According to A.:

A: "Ja ja dus dat zou betekenen dat ik om.. vijf eh zes uur op moet staan om eh.. om dan te gaan trainen en dat ah dat.. dat lukt me niet nee."

A: "Yes, yes so that would mean I'd have to get up at. . . five er, six o'clock to er. . . train and that er, that. . . that's not something I can manage to do." (Transcript 6, #434-#435).

According to J.:

J: "Nee.. nee: dan word ik gewoon moe als ik voor half zeven mijn bed uitga dan ben ik gewoon te moe dus dat eh..

T: [Te moe okay om dan daarna ook te werken eventueel of eh..

J: Ja nou dan heb ik gewoon te weinig slaap dus dat eh.. dus dat.. ik heb het wel een tijdje gedaan maar

T: [ja [ja okay

J: dat vond ik echt dit vind ik niet eh.. dat vind ik niet prettig dus daar ben ik mee gestopt."

J: "No. . . No: I just get tired if I get out of bed before half past six. I'll just be too tired so that err. . .

T: [Too tired, okay, to then

T: go to work after that maybe or er...

J: Yeah, well I would just need more sleep so that er. . . so that. . . I did that for a while but

T: [yes [yes okay

J: I really didn't, I don't er. . . I don't enjoy that at all so I stopped." (Transcript 9, #110-#115).

The Dutch athletes mention that they do not train outside in the dark or when it is cold. On such days J. says that she uses a tax bike, which allows her to cycle at home.

T: "Fiets je ook weleens 's avonds?"

J: "Ehm nou niet in de winter, want dan is het gewoon donker. Ja nou gister heb ik dus voor het eerst op die tacx getraind dus binnen. Ja dat is dat ding dat je binnen kan fietsen maar dat vind ik eigenlijk verschrikkelijk dus ik had het eigenlijk nog nooit gedaan. Maar ja het is zo.. Het is niet zo lang: licht overdag, dus dan soms moet het, maar toen dacht ik nou dan ga ik gewoon televisie kijken en dan ga ik gewoon doen."

T: "Do you ever ride your bike in the evening?"

J: Er, well not in the winter because it'll just be dark. Well yesterday I trained on the tacx for the first time, so inside. Yeah, that's that thing that allows you to bike inside the house, but I thought it was awful, so I had never actually done it before. But yeah, that's how it is.. There's only light for a short period of time during the day, so sometimes you have to, but then I figured I'll just watch television and that's just what I'm going to do." (Transcript 9, #713-#718).

MU. says that she does not want to train in the dark:

T: "Ja want dat moet altijd in het licht?"

MU: Ja.

T: Ja.

MU: Ja ja ik vind naar school doe ik ook wel met een lamp voorop. Maar ik ga eigenlijk niet voor mijn lol

T: [ja

MU: fietsen als het donker is."

T: "Yeah so it always has to be during daylight?"

MU: Yes.

T: Yes.

MU: Yeah I think that, when I go to school, I'll put a little light on the front (of the bike). But I really don't just go

T: [yes

MU: out biking for the hell of it when it's dark out." (Transcript 8, #626-631).

J. goes mountain biking to keep her body warm in the winter, and does regular bicycling in the summer, when it is less cold and slippery:

J: "en... zaterdagochtend ga ik mountainbiken nu in de winter" J: "and.. Saturday mornings I go mountain biking, as it's winter now." (Transcript 9, #89).

Another example can be seen in A.'s account:

A: "mountainbiken blijf je bijvoorbeeld ook.. warmer bij dan op de racefiets dus dat is ook een overstap die veel mensen maken om dan: te gaan mountainbiken. In de winter. Ja."

T: [okay [ja

A: "Mountain biking for example, you stay warmer than on the (racing) bicycle, so that's a switch that a lot of people make: to go mountain biking in the winter. Yeah."

T: [okay. [yes

(Transcript 6, #591-#595).

A.: "En voor de fietstrainingen nou in de winter is het gewoon lastig om buiten te fietsen. He omdat

T: [mm

A: het glad is: of sneeuwt of het is nat en hartstikke koud dus dat doen we dan op de aclo. En in de zomer fietsen we buiten."

A: "And for the bike trainings in the winter right now, it's just tricky to bike outside isn't it. Because it's slippery;

T: [mm.

A: it'll either be snowing or it's wet and freezing cold, so we'll just take the aclo in that case. And in the summer we ride outside." (Transcript 6, #446-#449).

As seen in the examples above, the Dutch athletes vary their training programs (even using different bicycles in the winter and summer) while the Israelis do not make any changes to their training. The Israeli athletes continue to run early in the morning even in the winter, while the Dutch athletes do not get up early in the summer when there is lighter and the weather is warmer. The Israeli athlete M. says:

מ: "כאבים ועייפות ולקום בינואר או בפברואר בארבע וחצי בבוקר לריצת שבע עשרה קילומטר באמצע השבוע כשחושך וגשם, אהה ממש חושך וגשם וקר בחוץ ורוח ורעמים וברקים, זה מעיד על איזשהו אי שפיות..." (Transcript 3, #186-#188).

The Dutch athletes do not participate in Israeli events, but the Israeli athletes participate in European events. As such, they must participate when the European climate is most suitable for running, which is September. This means that the Israeli athletes must train during the warmest period of the year in order to participate at the marathons in Berlin or Paris. Nevertheless, they choose to join these events, instead of participating in Israeli events that better accommodate local weather conditions. This behavior indicates that geographical location and climate are not factors in the decision of whether to join a marathon or triathlon in a foreign country. Rather, the

athletes choose these events to distinguish themselves from others in their society and to identify themselves as belonging to a specific group.

Issues concerning climate are also relevant to the organization of marathons. The Israeli organizations are more cautious with warm weather than are European countries, because they are more aware of the consequences. This can be seen in the Israeli cancellation of an event when it was hotter than twenty-eight degrees (<http://www.tbk.co.il/article/2801662>), while in Alpes d'Huez the event continued when it was 30 degrees.

A: "Ja dus dan is het al eh.. best wel warm daar en dit jaar was het dertig graden."

A: "Yeah, so by that time it'll be er. . . pretty warm there; this year it was thirty degrees." (transcript 6, #963).

There are other internalized schemes that are mental, rather than physical. An example is narration.

### 8.3 Narration

Another interesting element is the interviewees' use of terminology and phrases that are common in their endurance sport circles. While both the Israelis and the Dutch use English terms, they are more common among the Israelis. Most of the English terms used by the Israeli athletes are not used by the Dutch, who instead either adopt an alternate English term, or use a Dutch term. The Dutch athletes use English terms that can be transferred into their language, such as "gel" and then add the Dutch diminutive letters "letjes" in order to create a new word – in this case, "gelletjes" (Transcript 8, #262). The Dutch athletes use many more diminutives for the words that present obstacles. In this manner they make such obstacles appear easy to overcome. In other words, they assert that everything is in control. Thus, when the Dutch athletes use diminutives, it does not necessarily mean that they are referring to something small or easy. They can use diminutive words to refer to something huge. For example, the Dutch athlete M. says that she regularly goes to a bar with her fellow athletes and enjoys drinking "small beers". (see M.'s citation in paragraph 5.10 "Alcohol consumption"). Another example is calling a type of training "crossloopjes" (Transcript 7, #184). In this case the training is presented as small, easy and fast. In reality, however, it means intensive training. In this way they make their obstacles

seem insignificant. In contrast to this, the Israeli athletes do not use diminutives at all. This shows how linguistic patterns and cultural habits are intertwined.

The Israeli athletes use metaphors in their anecdotes. Most of the Israeli athletes mention the endorphins that the brain secretes during prolonged physical activity that make the athletes become addicted to the sport. The use of drug addiction as a metaphor was repeated by most of the Israeli interviewees. In Israeli society drugs are associated with being "laid back", a characterization quite opposite to the image of someone who does endurance sports. They are associated with non-western customs and people who have no stress, who do not have busy lives and who have flexible schedules. The association with drugs corresponds with the flexible, "living in the present" style that fits the needs of members of today's western capitalist society. For instance, the Israeli athlete N. uses the term "high":

ט: "...שאת חוצה את ה: שאת מגיעה לקו הסיום זה:

נ: זה היי

ט: זה היי

נ: ואז זה היי!" (Transcript 1, #749-#752).

A. explains her feelings of nervousness as the result of not getting her daily "dose" of practice:

א: "...אה: התאמנתי איתם אתמול בלילה, ואז אמרתי אוקי, אז בבוקר אני לא חייבת לקום לאימון, אבל, מכיוון שזה, עכשיו אני מרגישה את זה בעצבים שלי.. באמת, כי לא קיבלתי את המנה היומית."

ט: [אה:..]

(Transcript 2, #771-#774).

V. explicitly discusses addiction:

ו: "ו:אפילו.. ההתמכרות בעיניי, אני לא רופאה, אבל, איך שאני מרגישה ברמת החומרים, כזאת גדולה, שאם אתה, יותר מדי ימים לא עושה ספורט, אתה נכנס לדיכאון. כאילו יש לך צניחה ו:אומרים, יש איזה משפט שאומר, הס.. היום רצתי הכל בסדר כאילו לא משנה מה יהיה. רצתי, הכל בסדר." (Transcript 4, #931-#933).

The Dutch interviewees did not associate drug addiction with sports and did not use the term. A. says it provides a kick, but she does not go as far as using the term "addiction":



A: "Het geeft een kick." A: "It gives you a rush." (Transcript 6, #723).

Although drug use is legal in the Netherlands, it has fewer positive associations and is less accepted by Dutch society than by Israeli society. This could be a reason that the Dutch athletes do not compare their participation in sports with drug-related terminology. Interestingly, however, alcohol consumption is quite common and even integrated into the sport. In response to the question of whether their activity is comparable to addiction, MU. described it as a challenge: MU: "...dat dan wil je een.. nieuw doel en eh.. ja dat gaat zo steeds verder en dat.. was denk ik bij mij ook."

MU: "...so then you want a... new goal and er... yeah, you keep going forward which... was also the case for me." (Transcript 8, #162).

M. remarked that the word was too heavy for this context, instead describing it more as a pressure to continue:

M: "je... nou ja.. verslaafd maar dat het wel.. je hebt wel echt een drang van.. ik wil trainen." M: "You... well... addicted, but it is... you really do feel an urge like... I want to train." (Transcript 7, #847).

There are also many terms used by the interviewees that are borrowed from the jargon of their endurance sport. V. mentions the term "drafting" which means to ride closely behind another cyclist so that the one in front breaks the wind for the one behind, allowing the latter to exert less energy while achieving the same speed:

ו: "...אסור לך להיות גלגל על גלגל אפילו במרחק דראפטינג..." (Transcript 4, #195).

N. mentions the "bonk", a certain point of crisis that marathon runners often reach after about thirty-two kilometers:

נ: "במרתון שיש את הקיר הזה? יש את הקיר אזה את יודעת מה זה הקיר?"

ט: לא, מה זה הקיר?"

נ: קיר זה ה:בונק

ט: אוקי

נ: זה נקרא.. בונק. בקילומטר ה: בקילומטר השלושים ושתיים שלוש, ארבע

ט: כן

נ: יש איזשהו אה:.... מפחדים תמיד מה קיר, או מהבונק" (Transcript 1, #363 - #369).

N. discusses a fellow runner who assumed the role of “pacer”:

נ: "אז הוא אמר לי אוקיי..... כיוון את השעון 'יאללה, אני הפייסר שלך' פייסר את יודעת מה זה?

ט: מה זה?

נ: פייסר זה מישוהו שהוא נותן לך את הקצב. הוא יותר חזק ממך." (Transcript 1, #38 - #41).

None of the Dutch athletes mentioned the “bonk”. They did, however, discuss the “pacer”, but referred to it by several different terms, including “stayeren” (Transcript 9, #556) and “tempogroepjes” (Transcript 8, #314), which mean small tempo-groups. “Hazen” which is the word for hare converted into the form of a verb, is also used (Transcript 8, #786). As can be seen from this example, the Dutch athletes either translate English words into Dutch or use English words with Dutch grammar. This style of speech in the endurance sport world indicates the internalization of endurance sport schemes into the habitus of the interviewees.

The Israeli interviewees view their bodies as a tool used to achieve their goals. Explanations of the body were mostly carried out through comparisons with objects or animals. Most prominent was the comparison of the body with a car. For instance N. says:

נ: "כאילו אני יכולה להשקיע עד מחרתיים את יודעת... אהיה לי מרצדס אם אני אשים דלק לא טוב.. זה לא יעזור.

ט: כן

נ: כאילו זה הדלק, התזונה." (Transcript 1, #359-#362).

Another examples appears in the interview with A.:

א: "אתה.. כאילו רץ בcruise control. רק רצים יבינו על מה אני מדברת." (Transcript 2, #531-#532).

א: "באוטומט ואתה בכלל לא קשה לך. אתה לא מרגיש כלום." (Transcript 2, #538).

In society, cars are considered to be masculine and so these comparisons can be seen as the latent adoption of masculine traits. A. also equates herself with a doe, a female animal that runs quickly and gracefully, and which is lightweight:

"אה: ו... צחקו עלי כל הזמן אמרו, מי זאת העגלה הזאת <צוחקת>

ט: <צוחקת>

א: אבל אה: מהר מאוד אה: כבר אה: שינו את דעתם ואמרו היא רצה כמו אילה <מחייכת>."  
(Transcript 2, #15-#17)

The Dutch athletes do not compare their bodies to objects or animals. They did not use comparisons or metaphors to explain the workings of their bodies. It is noteworthy that the older women were the ones who described their bodies using material terms or comparing them in order to express their youthfulness. The Israeli athlete A. observed that someone said she runs like a doe. Using somebody else's description causes the listener to believe that she really does run quickly, gracefully and lightly.

The Dutch athlete M. describes the moment the swimming portion of a triathlon begins. According to her, the narrow space filled with a mass of people starting to swim while pushing and kicking to be first is reminiscent of a washing machine:

M: "... ja dan zeggen we altijd dat je 'in de wasmachine' zit" M: "Yeah we call that 'being in the washing machine'." (Transcript 7, #707-#709).

The linguistic strategies employed during narration indicate differences in styles of storytelling. Israeli athletes tell their story in a heroic and dramatic way in order to emphasize having persevered through a difficult situation. In contrast, the Dutch athletes tell their stories in a much lighter manner. Their struggles are described as small. They use diminutive words and do not express their struggles as much as the Israeli females do. The Dutch athlete A. describes her ideal marathon in a light way:

A: "okay eh.. een voet voor de andere en gewoon gaan enneh.. ja verstand op nul blik op oneindig."  
A: "okay er... one foot before the other and just go and... yes, brain on zero and keep going." (Transcript 6, #714).

This can be compared with the testimony of the Israeli athlete NK:

נק: " במהלך הריצה ו:בחור שהתקשה מאוד. ו:פתאום אתה מקבל כוחות, את יודעת את עוזרת למישהו את  
ט: [במהלך הריצה?]

נק: מעודדת אותו את סוחפת אותו היינו, <בכל חלש אבל כאילו צועק> 'עוד קצת אנחנו מסיימים! איזה זה' ו... והגענו יחד אה:  
לקו הסיום פחות או יותר.. " (Transcript 5, #711-#714).

The Israeli athlete N. describes how she cried the whole way because of the cancellation of the marathon in New York:

נ: "כאילו עשו מרתון! ספונטני כאילו אף אחד לא תכנן עם דגלים של המדינות וצרחות את  
לא מבינה, הפנינג שלם... ולי זה היה קשה... אחרי עשרים קילומטרים. אני כל הדרך בכיתי.  
ט: אה:

נ: כל הדרך בכיתי... <אחד הילדים נכנס ומדבר איתה>  
אה: ואני.. יצאתי אחרי קילומטרים ואמרת לעופר זה שרצתי איתו אני אומרת,  
<בקול עייף יותר חלש> תקשיב אני לא מסוגלת. לא מפסיקה לבכות ואני הייתי עם  
משקפיים נגד השמש הוא אומר לי תגידי, את לא בוכה. ואני אומרת אתה לא רואה אני מייבבת. " (Transcript #777-#785).

The Israeli athletes compare the process of running with mental consciousness.

N. explains that during exercise she organizes her thoughts, and compares it with a dream:

"את מסדרת לעצמך את הראש זה פשוט מדהים זה כאילו כמו חלום זה שברי מחשבות. את אומרת אהה ואי אני צריכה את זה אני  
יעשה את זה, את מסדרת לעצמך את היום. היום אני יעשה ככה ואני יעשה כך ואז את פשוט חולמת ועולים לך מחשבות ועולות  
לך זה ו... כאילו כמו חלום. זה שברי מחשבות את מתחילה מחשבה, את לא בהכרח מסיימת אותה. אבל היא מתחילה. המון דברים  
יצירתיים עולים. " (Transcript 1, #998-#1002).

The Israeli athlete A. describes it as a meditation, as though she were flying:

"אתה עושה סוג של מדיטציה ואתה פשוט בריחוף, אתה... כאילו רץ בcruise control. " (Transcript 2, #531-#532).

V. says that it is good for the soul:

ו: "זה לא... לא בריא. אבל מה זה משנה? זה טוב לנפש. זה הפסיכולוג הכי טוב. " (Transcript 4, #404).

This exhibits the need of members of western society who look for rest in their busy lives.

However, the Dutch athletes do not use such words. When the Dutch athlete A. did, she immediately retracted it, saying that it does not actually fit the context. Such descriptions simply do not correspond with their ideal model:

A: “nou ja fysiek ook moe van wordt maar dan... dat het... wel geestverruimend ja het klinkt een

T: [Okay.. Nee

A: beetje ver gezocht maar dat je er wel weer eh fitter van.. van gaat voelen.”

A: “well physically tiring too, but then. . . it. . . it makes your mind open up. Yeah, it sounds a bit far-fetched, but

T: [okay. No.

A: it does make you feel fitter again.” (Transcript 6, #635-#637).

She also describes her ideal marathon without linking it to mindfulness, as that concept does not belong to her ideal model. On the other hand, she refers to living in the present, which is characteristic for mindfulness:

A: “een voet voor de andere en gewoon gaan enneh.. ja verstand op nul blik op oneindig

T: [ja [ja.. okay

A: enneh.. ja dat zou een ideale marathon zijn.”

A: “Put one foot in front of the other and just go and er. . . yeah. Don't think, look ahead and keep

T: [Yes [Yes. . . okay

A: going. And. . . yeah, that would be the ideal marathon.” (Transcript 6, #714-#716).

#### 8.4 Social Class

Paragraph 5.8 “Older versus newer femininity” shows a development that took three generations to play out. There are, however, developments that do not take as long. The time it takes to adopt cultural aspects of a society varies. This variety depends on status and specific practices (Sela-Sheffy, 2003). All the Israeli athletes interviewed belong to the middle or upper class of the society. Subscribing to magazines and websites, traveling, transporting goods and obtaining equipment require a great deal of financial investment that they manage to afford. They have more power to realize the external models than do members of society's lower classes. Their participation in international events further distinguishes them from the lower class. To belong to a running team in Israeli society is more expensive than going to a gym.

The Dutch athletes, on the other hand, are not from the upper class. J. believes that the reason people choose to engage in endurance sports is because gyms are too expensive:

J.: “misschien dat het nu ook wel met de crisis te maken heeft dat de sportschool te duur is en dat mensen dan eh makkelijker gaan lopen.” J.: “Maybe it has to do with the crisis at the moment; the gym is too expensive so more people take up running.” (Transcript 9, #216-#217).

The Dutch athlete M. agrees:

M.: “.. lopen is een hele populaire sport en ik en.. bij lopen kan ik het me nog.. nog.. eerder voorstellen omdat je volgens mij wel merkt omdat.. het crisis is en het is een stuk goedkoper dan een fitnessabonnement in de sportschool..”

M.: “Running is a very popular sport and.. with running I can.. I can imagine you would more easily notice it because... there is a crisis and it's a lot cheaper than a gym membership.” (Transcript 7, #602-#604).

J. thinks the materials are too expensive and has decided to buy as little as possible:

J.: “ik vind eigenlijk altijd allemaal erg duur, dus toen ik begon ook dan schafte ik gewoon zo min mogelijk aan. Dus ik had toen ik begon nou ja.. ben ik naar de hardloopwinkel wel: geweest voor

T: [ja

J: schoenen. Toen ik wat: meer ging hardlopen, maar ik begon gewoon op mijn gympen.”

J.: “I just think it's all really expensive, so when I started I just bought as little stuff as possible. So I had when I started, well... I did go to the running store for shoes. Then I started running a bit more, but I started out with just

T: [Yes.

J: my sneakers”. (Transcript 9, #491-#495).

J. borrowed a bicycle from someone:

J.: “een fiets heb ik gewoon eerste: half jaar geleend van iemand en toen dacht ik nou.. nu fiets ik wel

T: [ja

J: veel ja en toen heb ik die gekocht, dat was gewoon een degelijke fiets en niet eh duur.”

T: [en toen heb je deze.. <wijst naar fiets in de woonkamer>.. ja

J.: “The first six months I just borrowed a bike from someone and then I figured I, well. . . I'm biking quite a

T: [yes

lot now, and so I bought one. It was just a good solid bike and not er too expensive.”

T: [and than you bought these <points to bike in livingroom>.. yes

(Transcript 9, #502-#505).

J. does not use professional clothing while working out:

J.:“En qua kleding heb ik eigenlijk heel lang gewoon

J: eh.. in een badpak gedaan met zo'n hardloopbroekje eroverheen die ik dan ook gekregen had. <lacht>”.

J: “Outfit-wise, actually for a long time I just er. . . put on a bathing suit, and over it a pair of running shorts that someone had given me <laughs>.” (Transcript 9, #510-#512).

MU. says that in the beginning she used an ordinary swimming suit, but now she has professional clothes that she received from her athletic club:

“We hebben nu ook kleding van de club. Dat scheelt ook dan weet je ook een beetje wat handig is. En

T: [Ja

dat hoor je ook een beetje met de eerste wedstrijden. Dus ik heb mijn eerste wedstrijd gezwommen in een

T: [ja [ja

badpak en daarna kleren er overheen aangetrokken en toen gaan fietsen en dan..

T: Oh met de badpak aan?

MU: Ja <lacht>”

MU.: “We now have clothing here at the club. That does make a difference, because you find out what sort of thing is comfortable. And you also hear a bit about that at the first competitions. So I swam my first race in a bathing suit, and then put some clothes on top, and then went for a bike ride and then...

T: Oh in the bathing suit?

MU: Yes <laughs>. ” (Transcript 8, #957-#963).

A. says that she drove to the Alpes d'Huez with several other people, which is less expensive than flying:

A:“Ja we nemen, want meestal zijn er wel een paar mensen die aanmoedigen dus dan rijd je met de auto...” A:“Yeah we take, because usually there will be a couple of people cheering, so you'll go by car...” (Transcript 6, #953).

Unlike the Dutch women, the Israeli women buy everything they need, without first borrowing it. They have all the necessary equipment, which is very expensive. As V. says:

"טריאתלון זה... איש ברזל בכלל זה ענף שאני תמיד אומרת שאם אין לך זמן וכסף, אל תיכנס אליו..." (Transcript 4, #176)

For the Dutch athletes, it is less expensive to participate in international endurance sports events than it is for Israelis. Three of the Dutch athletes are teachers, one is a Master's student and another is a Ph.D. candidate. Three of the Israeli athletes own their own businesses, one works at a bank and another is a nurse. The professions of the athletes represent those of different social classes and the possibility for Dutch athletes from various classes to join endurance sport events in foreign countries. The interviews reveal Israeli society to be more consumer-oriented than is the Dutch.

## 9. Conclusion

The intense lifestyle of female endurance athletes require an addiction to the sport. This study shows the adoption and rejection of different aspects of Israeli and Dutch identity in female athletes. For those who are members of the third generation participating in endurance sports, such activities have been normalized and integrated into their daily life and patterns.

Participation in international competitions, where individuals can have direct contact with one another, has less impact on the transference from a cultural repertoire. A dominant agent that succeeds in quick transference, and which is also high-volume, is the media, which mediates between the individual and the field.

Specific elements of endurance sports are already embedded into Dutch culture and it is common for Dutch athletes to develop skills such as biking and swimming at a young age, while Israeli athletes have difficulty with activities. The Dutch athletes are passively involved in the sport, as their society pushes them to engage in it. Though the Israeli athletes need to invest more time in learning skills, are less accepted by their society and live in a climate that makes it difficult for them to train (because of the heat), they continue to participate in the sport. For them it requires a more active attitude. Adoption occurs in two directions: Israeli and Dutch cultures adopt endurance sports, but the endurance sports also adopt cultural aspects of the places in which it is practiced.



Training methods are more developed in Dutch culture. For example, athletes use tax bikes, cycling bikes and mountain bikes, while Israeli athletes focus on only one type of bicycle.

The Dutch attach diminutive suffixes to nouns colloquially, not to suggest that something is small or insignificant, but to express the opposite, or to indicate that their obstacles are small. Metaphors of drug consumption are not present in the Dutch interviews, but are in the Israeli. Alcohol consumption among the Dutch athletes is more common than among the Israeli athletes. Dutch female athletes are more introverted in exhibiting their individual achievements than are Israeli female athletes. They do not show off in public, preferring to keep their trophies at home. In public they only show their collective achievement, unlike the Israeli athletes who also show their individual achievement (through the placement of marathon stickers on their cars).

Modern marathon culture, founded in the US, was expected to promote gender equality, but actually indirectly stimulates inequality. Initially, the participation of women in endurance sports was not accepted, but now, after the passage of time and the acceptance of new patterns, it is becoming more widespread. Nevertheless, the influence of other agents, such as the media, which depicts the visualized female body and which promotes the condition of gender asymmetry, tips the balance back in favor of men.

The interviewees adopt mental masculine traits but reject the physical ones. They adopt appearances that are accepted by western society but reject the mental qualities that society purports to be feminine. The adoption of masculine mental traits combined with feminine physical traits cause them to feel self-confident in other environments, such as the workplace. The way endurance sports are practiced, in accordance with western society and male-dominance, stimulates implicit gender inequalities and encourages male dominated aspects of society.

Follow up study:

A potential follow-up study would explore whether gender inequality in this field is an intrinsic cultural pattern, only reflected by the media or whether the media's portrayal of men and women is instrumental in pushing older cultural patterns back into the center of a repertoire.

A study on endurance sports and its acceptance into Israeli and the Dutch society between generations would be necessary in order to explain the different ways these societies adopt or reject different aspects of this field.

Another study could examine how in both Israeli and Dutch society today, the need for more rest does not exclusively result in the popularity of Pilates or yoga. Endurance sports, which require discipline, suffering and a strict schedule, would appear to counteract this collective need. Though the sports do not correspond with "laid-back" characteristics, the female athletes who engage in them describe them using words associated with relaxed traits. Examples of this are the interviewees references to meditation and comparisons to drug use. It is particularly interesting that such metaphors are not common among the Dutch athletes, despite the fact that soft drugs are legal in the Netherlands. Instead, it is common to consume alcohol – especially beer – after an event. The Israeli athletes use the metaphor of drug use, comparing the sports with something illegal. They hardly combine alcohol consumption with their sport, and if they do, it is wine, which is more delicate than beer. The observation of the combination of these consumption habits and sports could provide interesting conclusions concerning the adoption and rejection of social trends.

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