Playing for More Than Victory:

Non-White Footballers and The Making of Belonging Through Football in Contemporary Hungary

By

Zsofia Leleszi

Submitted to Central European University
Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology and Social Anthropology

Supervisors:
Prem Kumar Rajaram
Kris Orszaghova

Vienna, Austria
2025

Author's Declaration

I, the undersigned, Zsofia Leleszi, candidate for the MA degree in Sociology and Social Anthropology declare herewith that the present thesis, titled "Playing for More Than Victory: Non-White Footballers and The Making of Belonging Through Football in Contemporary Hungary" is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography.

I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright.

I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, 10 June 2025

Zsofia Leleszi

Copyright Notice

 [1]

[1] Icon by Font Awesome.

Abstract

Football in Hungary is often framed as a symbol of national pride, community cohesion, and ethnic homogeneity. While racialized players are occasionally celebrated for their performance, their presence is typically understood as temporary, tolerated only under the condition of athletic success. Existing research has examined how sport can serve as a site for identity formation and community building, particularly among racialized groups. However, little attention has been paid to how these dynamics unfold in Hungary, where racial diversity is politically contested, and football remains a largely exclusionary space. The aim of this research is to explore what a local Hungarian football community comes to mean for non-white players who participate in it, and how they are perceived, spoken to, and spoken about in ways that reflect broader national discourses around race and belonging. Fieldwork was carried out in Budapest, Hungary, during football trainings and matches. The data was collected through participant observation and semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings suggest that while players routinely encounter racial abuse from fans, these experiences are often normalized and rarely viewed as exceptional by the players themselves. Instead, the football club emerges as a space of emotional support, friendship, and everyday solidarity. For many players, it offers more than a team – it becomes a community and a site of subtle resistance against their racialized exclusion. The study highlights the importance of informal, grassroots collectives in fostering belonging within exclusionary environments, and contributes to broader conversations on race, nationalism, and everyday resilience through sport in contemporary Hungary.

Acknowledgments

Undertaking this thesis has been a journey filled with enthusiasm, challenges, doubts, support and inspiration. I am thankful for the help and encouragement from all the people who have accompanied me and my work along the way.

This thesis could not have been written without my interlocutors, the people I was lucky enough to meet and spend time with. I am thankful for the time they took to speak with me, and for welcoming me into their circles. I am grateful to them for entrusting me with their personal experiences and feelings, which have enriched this research immeasurably. I also appreciate the feedback they shared during my time in the field and the writing process, as this helped me avoid representing them in ways they would not feel comfortable with.

I am also incredibly grateful to my supervisors Prem Kumar Rajaram and Kris Orszaghova, as I could not have accomplished this journey without them. Thank you, Prem for guiding my thinking so gently and patiently, and thank you, Kris for the care with which you engaged and guided my ideas and worries. I am fortunate and grateful to have learned from the mentorship you both have provided throughout this time, and it has been invaluable in navigating the complexities of this research.

My special appreciation goes to my family, friends and classmates for the emotional support, practical guidance, and feedback along the way.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Background – Gaps in Literature

Football's deep integration into daily life, its central position in media coverage and its emotional impact on the public make it a central topic for discussions about the shifting meanings of race and belonging not only, but also in Hungarian society. Sporting events function as culturally significant sites which serve both as competitions and entertainment while accomodating discourses about race, community and inclusion (Carrington, 2002). Football in Hungary serves as a distinctive national symbol that represents ethnic unity while maintaining deep historical and political significance (Molnár, 2023). Expressions of national pride through sport victories create spaces where whiteness becomes dominant but accepts non-white individuals under specific conditions. Athletes from non-white backgrounds receive recognition only when their achievements boost national success while matching the standards of mainstream culture. This inclusion process remains short-term and subject to conditions because it operates within systems that maintain racial hierarchies outside of Sport, while excluding access to 'unsuccessful' athletes (Carrington, 2013; Bozóki and Cueva, 2021). In response, marginalized groups establish independent supportive environments that function as opposing spaces against the discriminatory patterns found in both football and broader social structures. These football networks operate as essential sources of belonging and emotional care despite their lack of recognition in wider society. These networks enable groups to express cultural pride and mutual support within environments that frequently attempt to isolate and marginalize them (Joseph, 2017).

Although this topic is deeply intertwined not only with race but also masculinity, this thesis will focus primarily on race for a deeper exploration of how racialization shapes non-

white footballers' lived experiences and perceptions within Hungary's unique socio-political context. Despite Hungary's claim to a race-neutral identity (De Genova, 2018), this denial obscures its role in a global racial order that privileges whiteness (Böröcz, 2021; Balogun, 2023), subtly shaping inclusion and exclusion in social and institutional spaces (Goldberg, 2006). Racism in Hungarian football transcends individual prejudice and becomes manifested as a structural and systemic aspect inherent in the institutions of the sport (Feagin, 2006, as cited in Burdsey, 2011). Research with non-white footballers is essential because their lives illustrate how these systemic forces play out, shaped by historically based and context-specific racisms (Feagin, 2006, as cited in Burdsey, 2011). In the socio-political context of current Hungary defined by nationalist prioritization of ethnic white homogeneity, the presence of non-white football players in lower divisions runs counter to dominant discourses and offers valuable observations regarding the ways in which race articulates with power and identity in society and sport. The majority of race, belonging, and political identity literature exists at the macro level, which leaves a gap in understanding how the above concepts are lived in local spaces (Rosino, 2016). This thesis is aimed at bridging this gap by examining the process of racialization and belonging in football among the players of the AFC Stallions[2] in Budapest, Hungary. Examining players' everyday interactions on and off the pitch reveals how these dynamics are embodied, resisted, or contested locally, offering insights into how micro-level experiences challenge or reinforce broader societal structures.

Research Questions and Aims

Grounded in existing research gaps and in the consciousness around the (a)politicization of football in Hungary under the Fidesz government, the use of sport as a tool for national identity construction, and racialized discourses of non-white bodies – all of which will be further

[2] The name "AFC Stallions" is a pseudonym. The team's name and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy and security of its members.

elaborated later in the thesis –, this research explores the meanings of a grassroots football club in Budapest, Hungary. It considers how football becomes a site where broader societal tensions around race, nationalism and belonging are negotiated on and off the pitch. By focusing both on public responses – particularly from white Hungarian fans – and the lived experiences of non-white players, the thesis aims to trace how everyday encounters in football may reflect, reproduce or subtly resist dominant narratives about who can belong to the 'nation.' To explore these dynamics, the following research questions guide this thesis:

1. What does participation in AFC Stallions, a grassroots football club in Budapest, come to mean for non-white players?
2. How is the racialized presence of players interpreted, contested, or normalized by opposing fans?
    2.1. How does this interpretation relate to broader Hungarian socio-political imaginaries?

Introduction to the Field

Officially registered three years ago, AFC Stallions evolved from informal games among players into a competitive team, starting in county leagues and advancing to the Budapest League. As winners of the 2024/2025 season, they have earned a promotion to a higher group in the Budapest League and will compete there in the next season. The team's influence is not limited to Budapest, as demonstrated by their goalkeeper[3], who travels from a distant town for matches, thus emphasizing the team's symbolic significance in players' lives. AFC Stallions is the only officially registered football team in Hungary without active white Hungarian players. Despite having three white Hungarian footballers listed on paper, they did not attend any

[3] The goalkeeper was the only one I personally met who commutes from outside of Budapest, players told me that there are some other players traveling from different cities.

trainings or matches during my time in the field, and their long-term absence was confirmed by others. The team, primarily composed of players from African background who came to Hungary for study or work, uses English – often pidgin English – as its main language. This creates a familiar space for active members but can hinder integration with players whose mother tongue is Hungarian (Danson[4]). Approximately four African players hold Hungarian citizenship.

Trainings take place once a week, late in the evening, on one half of a 92m x 55m pitch. The other half is allocated to another team. While training facilities are in good condition, many pitches used for the matches, are substandard in surface – including the home pitch of AFC Stallions which is different to where they train. Despite these physical infrastructural challenges, players turn up for the trainings in large numbers, driven by passion and not by money. The team operates without salaries or charges, aided by the individual dedication and sponsorship of the founder, who also plays actively. The social life of the team is active and at times tense. Trainings and games are full of laughter, jokes, and support, but also heated disagreements – especially during high-stakes games. These moments of tension are solved shortly, most often on the same day, a reflection of a strong sense of mutual respect and familiarity that is also underlined by frequent get-togethers outside of the football pitch. The informal hierarchy of the team favors the older, more experienced players with the louder voices, and the coach regularly shouts during practice sessions, voicing concerns regarding discipline and being on time. Many players who are not officially registered to play competitive matches still attend trainings or show up to cheer from the sidelines on matchdays. These acts of showing up – despite no guarantee of playing time – further imply the affective ties that bind the group. For matches, typically only a small group of supporters – averaging five or six people

[4] To ensure the confidentiality of participants, all names have been anonymized, and pseudonyms will be used throughout the research to protect their identities.

– shows up to cheer. However, during my time, one match stood out with a large celebration, featuring drums and chants, creating an electric atmosphere.

Methodology

Ethical Considerations

Due to the potential vulnerability of participants and my own positionality as a white female researcher, ethical considerations were a key part in the research design and implementation. Voluntary participation was ensured and any chance of coercion eliminated. To facilitate a non-intrusive and respectful recruitment, the first contact was made with the team manager, providing time to the team to talk through their emotions and thoughts about being part of the study. Before the research was actually conducted, the players were provided with an in-depth Participant Information Sheet where the purposes, procedures and activities of the study were explained. They were encouraged to ask questions, seek clarification, or raise concerns prior to providing informed consent. Whilst written consent was obtained in all but a few cases with a signed Consent Form – signed jointly by me, the researcher, to confirm mutual understanding – verbal consent was used occasionally. In some informal or ad hoc research situations where interactions were interrupted, it was considered ethically acceptable to obtain permission verbally because going for written consent would have changed the dynamics in the field. Participants were told that their decision to participate in interviews was completely voluntary and that if they chose not to be interviewed, their relationship with the researcher or the team would remain unchanged.

In order to encourage open and honest participation, confidentiality and anonymity were emphasized throughout the research process. In accordance with participant protection ethical standards (Sieber, 1992), all identifiers were substituted with personal codes to ensure anonymity. While participants had complete discretion over what personal experiences they

wished to share in more detail through interviews, no sensitive information that could compromise their privacy is revealed in this thesis, and therefore personal narratives are treated discreetly and sensitively.

All research data were securely stored on the university's OneDrive platform, with restricted access limited only to the researcher, in compliance with institutional data protection policies.

Data Collection

Given the exploratory nature of this research, qualitative methodology was chosen to capture the nuanced and lived encounters of the AFC Stallions' players. Qualitative methods allow for the exploration of people's experiences, thoughts, and emotions (Silverman, 2021), providing a detailed understanding of the phenomena under study (Denzin et al., 2024). In order to create space for participants to express their own perspectives, minimize potential vulnerability after our interactions, and foster trust and comfort during observations and interviews, I employed the following ethnographic methods:

Stage 1: Participant observation

Participant observation was the main method of data collection which provided a naturalistic environment for observing interactions among players, coaches, and fans at trainings and games. As Wolcott (2005) suggests, ethnography offers a chance for researchers to explore a group's behavior and culture in closer proximity, allowing them to gain better insight into daily experience and social dynamics. Participant observation gives the sense of presence in the football environment, seeing firsthand the interaction among players as well as their social setting (Carrington, 2008). This method allows for the researcher to be directly involved in the group's activities and to uncover nuanced layers of personal motive and cultural meaning (Müller & Mutz, 2019). By being immersed in the football landscapes, I could observe how

AFC Stallions' footballers are positioned by others within the broader football culture and what does this team mean to them in relation to the wider exclusionary socio-cultural setting in Hungary. For a month, I attended the trainings and matches of AFC Stallions and took detailed fieldnotes on the language, sounds, behaviors, and social relations, paying particular attention to moments of inclusion and exclusion, and when national identity and race were being discussed. Participant observation is especially useful in conducting research with non-white individuals' experiences because it highlights the heterogeneity and complexity of their experiences, revealing how migration and belonging are negotiated subtly (Budel, 2013). However, as critical anthropologists like Anderson (2002, p. 1548, as cited in Carrington, 2008, p. 442) have emphasized, ethnography can only result in partial knowledge, and the interpretation by the researcher of these observations may not always be able to capture the players' rich lives and thoughts, hence the second phase attempted to overcome this limitation.

Stage 2: Semi-structured Interviews

During this voluntary phase, I conducted semi-structured interviews with some of my interlocutors to discover more detailed information regarding their experiences of football in Hungary. Semi-structured interviews are most appropriate for this research because they allow respondents to guide the conversation while still addressing key research issues (Roulston & Choi, 2018). This method supports the deeper exploration of observations, as personal perspectives may guide us to the broader social framework in which public stories are told. "In this sense narrative can be used to explore the interrelationship between the personal and the social" (Woodward, 2004, p. 10), making it well-suited for examining intersections of football, race, and belonging. The fact that these interviews were voluntary and semi-structured also meant that participants had the option to take part by providing information in any quantity that they felt comfortable with, thus protecting them from any kind of discomfort or unwanted sharing of sensitive information. Therefore, three formal interviews were conducted in English:

two with players, and one with an AFC Stallions supporter. In one of these interviews, two additional players briefly joined and contributed to the conversations and data collection. In order to build trust and confidentiality and to prevent any discomfort, all interviews were conducted at locations with which my interlocutors were familiar (Campbell et al., 2021). Where consent was provided, interviews were recorded and later transcribed to ensure completeness and accuracy of data. Where participants did not provide consent for recording, only written notes were taken.

In addition to these formal and scheduled interviews, several informal conversations with players occurred during fieldwork. Though less structured and not recorded in any way, these interactions provided valuable context and insight into the everyday experiences and working of the team.

Data Analysis

To bring together and make sense of participant observation and the interviews, the data was first reduced to enable better focus on answering the research questions (Mezmir, 2020). After filtering out extra information, fieldnotes of observations and interview transcripts with its notes were coded to explore and parse meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Codes aimed to capture the relevant parts of the data that could potentially answer the research questions. After the codes were examined, a summarized set of themes emerged through the codes. To organize and present research findings, a framework was established based on the identified themes (Clarke & Braun, 2017). As themes were identified, the research questions were constantly revisited to ensure a rigorous analysis. The final themes were then reviewed against the coded data and the condensed dataset to maintain coherence and accuracy (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

Research Limitations

Although the research design was carefully thought out, this thesis is by no means limitable and should be read in these terms. Firstly, gender relations structured the research, especially in what was shared, or not shared with me as a white heterosexual female researcher. My positionality inevitably structured how trust played out, what kinds of talk I was engaged in with my interlocutors, and which areas of experience remained unattainable or unsaid. Variations in levels of trust between participants and researcher have impacted on the levels of trust during interviews, thereby limiting the depth of some accounts (Ayrton, 2020). Secondly, the voluntary nature of the interviews affected the sample size. With few formal interviews conducted, the study cannot capture the full range of opinion in the team. Therefore, there was increased reliance on my subjective fieldnotes and informal conversations to contextualize and complement the few 'official' interviews. While these engagements have value, they cannot substitute for a more solid or systematically varied data set. Even though AFC Stallions is an interesting and valuable case study as the only Hungarian team that has primarily foreign and non-white players, its uniqueness also limits the generalizability of the findings. The players are situated in a particular social and cultural context that might not be the case for non-white players in other teams or regions. Hence, the findings cannot effectively represent the broader population of non-white football players among Hungarian footballers. Additionally, the research is geographically limited to Budapest – Hungary's most ethnically diverse city. This urban setting likely shaped both the experiences of the players and the reactions of fans. Football encounters in more rural or less diverse areas of the country might produce different dynamics, particularly in terms of racial perception and exclusion. Therefore, the findings may not reflect the experiences of non-white footballers outside of the capital and hence the research tries to be mindful and cautious of any generalization of the collected data while

acknowledging that "just because a study does not find results that are capable of generalization does not mean they have no relevance" (Gray, 2004, p. 89).

Structure of the Thesis

The organization of this thesis is as follows:

Chapter 1: The chapter begins at the grassroots level to explore ways in which football spaces may be places of care, solidarity, and belonging for marginalized or discriminated groups. From here, the chapter goes upwards in scale to discuss the broader socio-political context that shapes the necessity of such spaces. It considers how football has been used in Viktor Orbán's politics, especially around ideas of race, nationhood, and belonging in Hungary. Particular focus is given to the so-called 2015 migrant crisis to illustrate how contemporary responses to migration are entangled with longer histories of racialization of Roma people, and how football can become a medium through which these anxieties and national narratives are played out.

Chapter 2: The second chapter is concerned with the core empirical finding of the research. Drawing on interviews and participant observation, the chapter analyzes how opposing supporters and players of AFC Stallions create narratives about the club that reflect, reinforce, or subvert wider national discourses. The chapter pays close attention to the affective and symbolic work of football, showing how AFC Stallions' players carve out a space for expression, solidarity, and belonging, in lack of opportunities in the Hungarian (football) sphere.

Chapter 3: The final chapter is a reflexive discussion on the ethnographic process. It considers the challenges and fieldwork dynamics in a masculine environment as a heterosexual female ethnographer. The chapter deals with how gender, positionality, and power shape not only access and relations in the field, but also what is created in terms of knowledge through

ethnographic engagement. It accounts for the bodily and affective quality of research and how the researcher's presence comes to influence the field and is, in turn, formed by it. By doing this, the chapter concludes the thesis by critically engaging with the knowledge-producing practices on which ethnographic research depends.

Chapter 1: Football, Race and Nation-Building in Hungary

1.1 Football and the Conditional Belonging in White Spaces: The Forming of Alternative Communities

According to Carrington (2002), sporting events are not just games, but spaces filled with cultural discourses where race, community, and national identity can be continuously contested and reaffirmed. Due to football's deep embeddedness in everyday life, its media amplification, and its ability to evoke strong emotional and national attachments, it has become a powerful stage for negotiating race and belonging. In Hungary, these football games often privilege whiteness, granting conditional inclusion to non-white athletes only when their success aligns with dominant cultural narratives. This temporary inclusion reinforces hierarchies of belonging, embedding structural marginalization within celebrations of national pride (Carrington, 2013; Bozóki & Cueva, 2021). The significance of these racialized dynamics in football can be further illustrated by Hungary's football culture, where racist incidents are commonplace. In 2007, Kálmán Mészöly, then an advisor to the president of the Hungarian Football Federation (MLSZ), infamously remarked that African players had "just come down from the trees in Africa, and they're already being brought here" (as cited in Haszán, 2017, para. 1) – a statement that led to his resignation. A decade later, his son, Géza Mészöly, commented after a league match that he had fielded few foreign players and would therefore receive a 600,000-forint bonus from the MLSZ, adding: "but if I had a striker, a good Black one, I'd play him in a heartbeat" (as cited in Haszán, 2017, para. 3). Since then, Viktor Orbán continuously emphasizes the importance of a football system built around Hungarian talent and tradition (Rényi, 2012). In line with this nationalist vision, Orbán described the moment when Hungarian children booed the English players kneeling in support of the Black Lives Matter

movement during a 2022 Nations League match in Budapest as more significant than Hungary's 4–0 victory over England in London ten days later. He framed the incident as a symbol of national promise, after which great things would come in Hungary (TrollFoci, 2025).

The presence of non-white players in the national team or leading clubs can give rise to pride and insecurity, a reflection of the nation's ambivalent embrace of diversity. Orbán's Fidesz governments since 2010 have nurtured an ideal of white ethnic solidarity and Christian values, regularly portraying racial minorities as existential threats to survival and national culture (Bozóki & Cueva, 2021). Despite all this, the government has embraced successful non-Hungarian and non-white sportspeople for their international sporting achievement for Hungary. For example, Loïc Négo – of Guadeloupean descent –, who gained Hungarian citizenship in 2019 despite not speaking the language, became a national hero after scoring a crucial goal in a 2020 Euro qualifier against Iceland (Végh, 2020). Therefore, sporting achievements by non-white athletes are often framed as exceptional narratives within a predominantly white society, offering a form of symbolic reconciliation without dismantling existing hierarchies (Carrington, 2002). Instead, their success temporarily integrates them into the national imaginary, providing a layer of inclusivity while maintaining underlying racial boundaries (Carrington, 2002). Hence, the non-white body is framed through stereotypical and limited narratives that reduce them to their physical capabilities but deny full personhood, autonomy or political agency (Fanon, 1952; Mercer, 1994, as cited in Carrington, 1998; Carrington, 2002). Against this backdrop, alternative football communities can serve as protective spaces, offering emotional support and a platform to resist such hostility.

Brubaker (2004) reminds us that what seems to be a coherent sense of community is actually contingent and emergent. Group boundaries are not fixed but emerge and change in specific historical and political moments. This can be seen in Hungary, where racial hierarchies

are pushed under the façade of celebration or solidarity with successful athletes. These fluid boundaries do, nevertheless, cover up the lived diversity and plural identifications of racialized subjects, who remain relegated to the margins of national narratives – never fully insiders, always marked by difference (Carrington, 2002). This conditional belonging is evident in the experiences of non-white football players, who navigate a predominantly white space where they are expected to remain unnoticeable, becoming hyper visible and often unwelcome the moment they draw attention or deviate from white norms. Puwar's (2004, p. 33, as cited in Hylton, 2018, p. 110) concept of 'space invaders' captures this dynamic: racialized athletes unsettle the historically white institution of Hungarian football and are therefore constantly marked as 'out of place.' These dynamics are reinforced by what Pronger (2000, as cited in Carrington, 2002) terms the temporal and spatial organization of desire within sport. This suggests that sport disciplines not only the body but also desire, therefore creating bounded spaces where the racialized male body can be gazed upon safely and legitimately. Hence, whiteness is not a substance but a spatial and social configuration that determines whose presence feels natural and whose existence raises questions. As Ahmed (2007) argues, racialized bodies in white-coded spaces are never neutral; they cause social and symbolic disorientation, eliciting both fascination and unease.

Böröcz (2021) notes that whiteness continues to be a global benchmark for humanity. On this basis, non-white Hungarians are not fully recognized as members of the Hungarian nation, even when they participate in its most visible institutions, like football. It is through such exclusionary, white-coded institutions that other kinds of communities begin to emerge. These collectives do not simply hope for entry into hegemonic orders; instead, they build their own spaces of belonging, reconfiguring identity and solidarity on terms that transgress the conditionality of national belonging. Through this, they surpass strategic diversity and open up new areas for cultural and political agency from the periphery (Joseph, 2017). As Carrington

(1998) has discussed in the context of Caribbean communities in England, sporting organizations within groups that are excluded from wider societies based on race, provide more than a sense of belonging – they are protective spaces against a wider, often hostile environment. Therefore, football clubs and communities of non-white and/or non-Hungarian groups in Hungary can exist not just as recreational spaces and competition sites but also as forms of cultural survival, care and solidarity that are needed to navigate the everyday life. These spaces offer a sense of home for those who tend to be positioned as outsiders, thus having these spaces is a form of racialized community-making that is resilient in a society that otherwise excludes them. To non-Hungarian and non-white footballers, the football pitch can perhaps offer a space for transnational solidarities to feel a sense of belonging through reframing sport as a cultural validation site and political site of resistance. Accordingly, grassroots football clubs can be understood as embodied performances that challenge marginalization, provide opportunities for connection, and form networks which allow players to navigate through and disrupt exclusion practices (Joseph, 2017).

1.2 Race-making and Nation Building Through Viktor Orbán's Love and Use of Football

In recent years, Hungarian football has become a key symbol of the nationalistic and (un)racialized narratives promoted by the Orbán regimes. This fusion of sport and politics is far from a modern phenomenon in Hungary; since the late 19th and early 20th centuries, governmental influence has intricately shaped the development of sports, particularly football, intertwining it with political agendas (Handler, 1985; Hoffer & Thaly, 2000, all cited in Molnár, 2023). Although Hungarian political actors continuously try to present football as a neutral field (Aradi, 2022), it reflects wider societal discourses around race, belonging, national identity, and worthiness. Hungarian governments have been using sports in general – and

football in particular – to strengthen the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006), of ethnic Hungarians (Venuti, 2024). The Fidesz government claims that "one of the most important innovations in [their] governance has been the rise of communitarian thinking […] which has been achieved by reunifying the nation and asserting national sovereignty (Kovács, Molnár & Szánthó, 2022, p. 467). They further claim that in the making of the nation and communities, sport plays an "indispensable" role, "without which Hungary cannot succeed in the long term" (Kovács, Molnár & Szánthó, 2022, p. 470). Therefore, when the government promotes an ethnically homogeneous identity and implements anti-immigration policies to secure that (Juhász, Molnár & Zgut, 2017), the treatment of non-white football players can reveal underlying cultural attitudes and tensions toward 'foreign' bodies in public spaces.

Viktor Orbán may isolate politics in the stadiums, yet his views on football and politics are almost identical. He perceives football as closer to culture than to business or social phenomena, arguing that it thrives only through intensive governmental intervention (Rényi, 2021). Orbán has gone so far as to frame football as an art form, likening clubs to opera houses and players to artists (PFLA.hu, 2013, para. 36; Botos, 2020, para. 6). For him, both football and politics are battlegrounds where only the most determined prevail – a perspective that underscores his relentless drive for victory and control across these domains. Since returning to power in 2010, he has proudly credited his political success to lessons he learned from the football pitch and the dressing room from his competitive days (Rényi, 2021). For Orbán, life itself is a series of trials, and football serves as a preparation for this unending struggle (Orbán, 2015, as cited in Rényi, 2021). This belief fuels his emphasis on sports development as a tool for building national resilience. Elevating football to a central pillar of his nationalist agenda, Orbán sees its development as a personal priority. The Fidesz government has designated sport as a strategic sector, with a particular focus on revitalizing Hungarian football to create a robust national identity (Havran & Jandó, 2024), and in recent years, Orbán has channeled vast public

funds into the sport. Between 2010 and 2018, the government spent roughly 791 billion forints (around €2.5 billion) on football (Székely, 2019, para. 10). With only about 20 billion of this amount being allocated to youth player development, the remaining 80 billion forints were spent on infrastructure establishing around 1,300 new pitches, the construction or renovation of around 27 stadiums, operational support, and the establishment of state-sponsored football academies beyond Hungary's physical borders (Székely, 2019, para. 11; Rényi, 2021).

Molnár and Whigham (2021) argue that such 'sporting investments' are not merely for entertainment or health but are instead attempts to reconstruct the Hungarian nation in an ethnically purified sense. In their analysis, Orbán envisions a Greater Hungary that reconnects Hungarians within and beyond current geographical borders, evoking the nostalgic glory of pre-1920 Trianon treaty days. He frequently invokes symbolic ties to Hungary's golden era of football – the 1950s "Magical Magyars" – and has publicly declared his ambition to "make Hungarian football great again" (Goldblatt & Nolan, 2018, para. 24 & 27). This vision is echoed by György Szöllősi, a close ally often called 'Orbán's football megaphone,' who highlights the sport's historical significance between the two world wars and Orbán's determination to revive its past prominence (Goldblatt & Nolan, 2018, para. 27). Football matches, then, serve not just as entertainment but as platforms to reinforce Orbán's image of a strong, triumphant Hungary. Victories by the national team or promising performances by domestic clubs are showcased in state media as proof of national renewal, linking sporting success to Hungarian pride and nationalism (Molnár & Whigham, 2021).

Orbán's approach reflects a broader trend in right-wing politics, where a nation's sporting achievements are exploited to suggest the superiority of its people or political ideology (Hoberman, 1984, as cited in Molnár & Whigham, 2021). Historically, sports have often served political purposes (Hoberman, 1984, as cited in Molnár & Whigham, 2021), and football is a

key vehicle in Orbán's politics. He and Fidesz have deepened their influence in the sport by placing government members in club leadership positions[5], effectively monopolizing Hungarian football to align its popularity with political objectives (Ligeti & Mucsi, 2016). As Molnár and Whigham (2021) observe, European football offers unique opportunities for political movements to mobilize influential fan bases and write ideological stories into popular culture. This sports nationalism is supplemented by Orbán's explicit ethnonationalism: repeatedly, he has declared Hungary should remain the homeland of white Christians, denounced multiculturalism, and denied racial diversity (Molnár & Whigham, 2021). Yet this xenophobic political approach is filled with paradoxes. Although mainly opposed to immigration, Orbán's administration selectively allows for exceptions when it is in national interest, notably in sport. This pragmatism applies to football, where some of the players in the Hungarian national team are foreign-born – most have been trained abroad and some do not speak Hungarian. In spite of the regime's ideology of ethnic purity, the public celebrates such athletes as national heroes when they perform well. A good example is the Hungarian team that defeated England on June 4, 2022, led by an Italian coach and featuring players unfamiliar with the Hungarian language. Orbán lauded their triumph on social media, stating: "Perhaps it can be seen even from the Moon! Boys, it was beautiful!" (as cited in Sarkadi, 2022, para. 2). Individuals typically marginalized as outsiders are welcomed as great Hungarian athletes when their victories bolster political narratives, highlighting how Orbán adapts his ethnonationalist framework to maintain dominance (Molnár, 2023). This process aligns with Stuart Hall's concept of the "racialized regime of representation" (1997, p. 249), where the Black male body

[5] By the 2024/2025 season – and at the time of the writing of this thesis –, the entire top division of Hungarian football had come under the influence of the System of National Cooperation (Nemzeti Együttműködés Rendszere, NER), the political, cultural, and economic network closely aligned with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the ruling Fidesz party (sportal.hu, 2021; Brückner 2022; Kiss, 2022, Korom, 2024). Some of the most notable NER-affiliated teams include MTK Budapest, led by Tamás Deutsch, a founding member of Fidesz and representative in the European Parliament; Puskás Akadémia, founded by Viktor Orbán next to his childhood home and officially owned by a foundation chaired by Lőrinc Mészáros, Hungary's richest businessman; and Ferencvárosi TC (Fradi), whose president is Gábor Kubatov, Fidesz vice-president and member of the Hungarian Parliament.

becomes hyper-visible in popular culture, yet only through narratives that serve hegemonic interests.

1.3 Constructing the Nation Through the 2015 Migration Discourse

The so-called migration crisis in 2015 marked an important moment in Viktor Orbán's nation-building project, reshaping the country's racial, cultural, and ideological boundaries through a blend of nationalist rhetoric, strict policies, and securitization. Orbán framed the arrival of asylum-seekers in the summer of 2015 as an existential threat to Hungary's Christian heritage and Europe's cultural identity. Using apocalyptic rhetoric, he warned of "Muslim invaders" and demanded exclusion of the refugees as essential 'to make Europe safe' (Mortimer, 2024, para. 7). Orbán's reaction to the migrant crisis was not merely a reaction to external events but connected to a broader aim to reframe the Hungarian identity as a resistance to perceived liberal and immigration threat from Europe. By framing the crisis as an existential threat to Hungarian Christianity and to European cultural identity, Orbán tapped into longstanding "Europeanity" discourses appealing to common historical and cultural attributes to unite Europeans against foreigners (Delanty, 1995, as cited in Cantat, 2016). This rhetoric, repeated by state media, rejected the term "refugee" in favor of labels like "economic immigrants" or "illegal migrants," portraying arriving people as criminals and terrorists rather than individuals fleeing conflict (Klaus, 2017). As Cantat and Rajaram (2019) argue, this framing turned the crisis into a political project of 'bordering and ordering the nation,' ethnically and culturally defining who belongs to Hungary.

Hungary's response to the coming of migrants was immediate and violent. The government built barbed-wire fences along its southern borders with Serbia and Croatia and introduced legal changes allowing police to use rubber bullets and tear gas against migrants (Klaus, 2017). These actions were justified as a defense against an 'invasion' (Klaus, 2017),

with state media fueling moral panic through images of border chaos, portraying refugees as a security threat rather than a humanitarian issue (Gerő & Sik, 2020). Orbán's rhetoric tied nationhood to a 'white European' identity, racializing migrants as incompatible with Hungary's cultural and racial space. In 2015, he declared that Hungary must defend its borders to preserve its Christian character, a theme that evolved into overtly racial terms by 2022. At the Tusványos Festival[6], he warned that by 2050, over half of Western European city populations would be of "non-European" origin, advocating measures to prevent racial mixing in Hungary. He further claimed that without decisive action, such as increasing birth rates, Hungary and the Carpathian Basin risk being "taken over" by outsiders, however "we are not a mixed-race people," he declared, "and we do not want to become one" (Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda, 2022, para. 14 & 15). In another interview, Orbán reaffirmed that "We don't want to be an immigrant-country. I rather cut my hand off than to include such a sentence in any government programme" (Orbán, 2022, as cited in Molnár, 2023, p. 313). This rhetoric evolved over time, with Orbán declaring at the 2025 'CPAC Hungary' conference that "migrants are taking over our cities," framing it as "organized population replacement" rather than integration, and outlining a patriotic vision of "Christian culture, national schools, streets and neighborhoods without fear," where nations could take pride in their identities (Orbán, 2025). This discourse, which Cantat (2016) labels Europe's "new racism" based on "civilizational difference," positioned migrants as threats to a homogenous, white Hungary. Though most 2015 asylum-seekers were not Black Africans, the anti-migrant campaign fostered suspicion toward all people of color, intensifying racialized assumptions within Hungary's political culture (Vincze, 2014).

[6] The Tusványos Festival (officially: Bálványosi Summer Free University and Student Camp) is an annual political and cultural event organized by Fidesz and its broader network, held in Băile Tuşnad (Tusnádfürdő), Romania. It features lectures, panels, concerts, and folk cultural programs. While originally conceived as a space for dialogue between Hungarians and Romanians, it has increasingly become a platform where Hungarian government figures, particularly Viktor Orbán, deliver key political speeches (Balázsi-Pál, 2017).

1.4 Historical Continuity: From Roma to Migrants

Hungary's response to the so-called 2015 migrant crisis was not new but built upon an extensive history of racializing and excluding Roma, the nation's largest ethnic minority (Növekedés.hu, 2025). The Fidesz government has repurposed exclusionary tactics previously targeting Roma to deploy against migrants, exploiting the alleged migration crisis to redefine national belonging and legitimate authoritarianism. This continuity illustrates a persistent pattern of othering whereby tropes of threat, dependency, and incompatibility have been extended onto migrants and, other non-white minorities such as Black (Hungarian) people. The result is an extension of a racialized nationalist rhetoric that constructs both groups as equal threats to a white, Christian Hungarian nation.

The racialization of Roma in Hungary intensified during the post-socialist transition of the 1990s, a period marked by economic upheaval and the shift to capitalism. As the socialist economy collapsed, poverty was reframed as a cultural failing rather than a structural issue. Cantat and Rajaram (2019) describe the emergence of a 'new moral economy,' where social value became tied to economic productivity, justifying the neglect of groups like the Roma, who were deemed culturally deficient. This "culturalization of economic systems" (as cited in Cantat and Rajaram, 2019, p. 189) racialized poverty, attributing Roma disadvantage to alleged inherent traits rather than systemic inequalities (Emigh et al., 2001, as cited in Cantat & Rajaram, 2019). Consequently, Roma people were increasingly portrayed as threats to public security and the Hungarian nation, thus their exclusion from political, social, and economic spheres was legitimized by this narrative. Vincze (2014) situates this within neoliberal Europe's broader dynamics, where promises of cultural recognition and inclusion for Roma instead entrenched socio-economic disparities, casting them as an 'inferior ethnic group' associated with social ills and a pre-modern 'otherness.' This racialization laid the groundwork for their enduring marginalization within Hungary's national imaginary. Within Böröcz's

(2021) framework of "Eurowhite," where East Europeans assert a European (white) identity while claiming the right to discriminate against perceived 'others,' Roma served as the primary targets of racism for decades, where their depiction as a dangerous underclass reinforced notions of a pure Hungarian nation they supposedly threatened.

This assertion of a "Eurowhite" identity is part of a broader 'race' regime that rests on several assumptions: the division of humanity into separate groups, the arrangement of these groups into a moral hierarchy, and the mapping of this hierarchy onto physical traits, with "Whiteness" always at the top and "Blackness" at the bottom (Böröcz, 2021). In this context, "Whiteness" functions as a moral-geopolitical superiority claim, demanding unconditional global privilege. Hungary's self-racialization as "Eurowhite" distinguishes it from both non-White identities and less 'immaculate' forms of "Whiteness," such as those perceived in Eastern or diasporic contexts. This tension what Böröcz (2021) calls "dirty whiteness," is a reactionary identity that still craves acceptance as "Eurowhite" but is treated by Western Europeans with disdain, is evident here. This phenomenon is essential for interpreting the position of Hungary within Europe's racial hierarchy, as it is a case of a country that, on one hand, is still proudly European but, on the other hand, is still engaging in the practice of negative stereotyping by alienating those it perceives as threats for 'dirtying' the white Hungarian identity. A process that directly shapes its treatment of marginalized groups like the Roma, who are cast as "dirty white" to reinforce Hungary's pristine "Eurowhite" status. By labeling the Roma population as those whose degree of whiteness is lowest on the scale of purity, the nationalist rhetoric of Hungary provides a moral basis for their exclusion and at the same time it logically extends this reasoning to 'othered' groups, such as refugees and those who are of a different race than white Hungarians. In this way, the internal racialization of the Roma becomes a model for the way in which those external others are treated thus, it links the

two dynamics in a continuous racial hierarchy, where "Eurowhiteness" stands as the dominant ideal.

Since 2015, Hungarian political discourse has framed migrants as threats to the Hungarian and European culture, 'way of life,' and security, reinforced by mechanisms such as anti-migrant billboards, and 'national consultations' tying migration to terrorism and disorder (Cantat & Rajaram, 2019; Gerő & Sik, 2020). Orbán explicitly bridged this narrative to the Roma in 2014, rhetorically asking, "if we can't offer work [for the Roma], how do we believe [migrants] will be able to integrate?" (as cited in Jósa, 2015). The shift from racializing Roma to targeting migrants in Hungary represents not a rupture but an evolution of established practices. Vincze (2014) highlights how neoliberal Europe racialized Roma poverty as a cultural deficiency, setting the stage for their exclusion, while Cantat and Rajaram (2019) show how the 2015 'crisis' was instrumentalized to 'produce others,' solidifying a biopolitical order that delineates belonging. In an attempt to gain power by dividing the society, the Orbán government has reinforced social divides by demonizing people of the same groups through discourses and practices that marginalize people living in Hungary. Through such methods, the government has re-established Hungarian identity in opposition to racialized 'others,' and this has led to the deepening of social divides. The lack of change in this behavior in present time underscores a wider pattern where the political elite of Hungary are continuously employing racist discourses, around the Roma community and immigrants, to keep running a nationalist agenda that still relies on exclusion and divide as the main instruments of governance.

Following Anderson's (2006) concept of imagined communities, nations are socially constructed entities, where boundaries of belonging are shaped by shared cultural and political imaginaries. A key element of this is the role of race in elevating whiteness as a dominant identity within the context of the migration 'crisis,' designating the boundaries of Europeanness

and whiteness (Balogun, 2023). Racialization happens through a system that creates boundaries between various populations, classifies them into homogeneous groups, and solidifies hierarchies of subordination. This system usually depends on biological traits, especially skin color, with whiteness gaining privilege (Böröcz, 2021). The spectacularizing of both Roma and migrants in Hungary – through media portrayals, political rhetoric, and public policies – creates a hypervisibility that frames them as potential public dangers. This enables a specific ordering of a desirable public, where privileged belongingness is authorized in relation to the perceived threat of these 'others.' Such dynamic constitutes a citizenship regime that centers on producing a consumer citizen, where economic participation is conjoined with cultural privilege (Cantat & Rajaram, 2019). This regime not only marginalizes Roma and migrants but also reinforces the centrality of whiteness and Christianity in defining Hungarian identity.

Chapter 2: AFC Stallions and Football Beyond the Game

> When the teams stand together in a circle before the match, one of the spectators shouts, *"Let's go Hungarians."* As the match begins, tension rises in the background, visible in the looks exchanged between fans and players and the language used from the sidelines. Almost every time an AFC Stallions player touches the ball; a few spectators exchange racist side comments which soon escalate into audible chants. The occasional racist shouts of the first half continue in the second as well. The predominantly male fans of the opposing team imitate and mock the AFC Stallions coach's passionate gestures, and laugh at the players' accents, sarcastically yelling, *"Speak English?"* as they communicate with each other in pidgin (broken English). After one hard tackle, as an AFC Stallions player argues with the referee, a voice from the sideline shouts: *"There, the gypsy is mouthing off again immediately."* A Stallions player glances toward the net where the spectators stand to which an opposing fan replies: *"What the f** are you looking at, kid? Come out here then, come on!"* The tension off the pitch mirrors the tension on it; the Stallions' coach yells in frustration at the referees in Hungarian, while a few opposing fans aggressively tease him about his emotional involvement in the game. Physical confrontations and heated words are exchanged among the players, and the referee struggles to keep control as players on the pitch clash and a fight breaks out. Everyone is visibly angry, frustrated but hyped up. Some opposing substitutes and even their coach rush onto the pitch as they get their support from the sidelines. When the referee blows the final whistle, someone shouts: *"your home is calling, go home!"* (fieldnotes).

2.1 The Football Pitch as a Battleground for Belonging

The above vignette illustrates how the participation of a mainly Black and brown team in a Hungarian football league can become a flashpoint for contesting racial belonging. By emphasizing the foreign origins of the players, it becomes a successful strategy to 'other' them. The opposing fans' shouts of "Let's go Hungarians" immediately frame the game as more than a neutral sporting contest. With this chant, opposing fans effectively assert the football pitch as an extension of the nation, drawing a boundary between the national 'us' and the foreign 'them.' As Hadas notes (2000), fans align themselves with teams not only for the players but also for the broader social meanings these teams represent. Hence, the exclusion and inclusion of athletes becomes a sociologically significant distinction that gets confronted on the pitch

during matches that carry these social values and identities. As a result, besides entertainment, support and leisure, the football pitch becomes a dynamic space of social interaction, where identities are continuously redefined and reinforced (Hadas, 2000). While supporters of AFC Stallions generally remain within the bounds of conventional football rivalry and support, the AFC Stallions players' presence on the pitch is perceived by some opponent spectators as a disruption of the normative order, marking them as what Puwar (2004, as cited in Hylton, 2018) would term 'bodies out of place.' These athletes are effectively perceived as 'space invaders' (Puwar, 2004, p. 33, as cited in Hylton, 2018, p. 110), whose presence in a white, Hungarian space disrupts the expected social order and provokes resistance from those who see themselves as the space's rightful or 'natural' occupants. Yet this perception is shaped almost entirely by skin color, not nationality or legal status. As the founder of the team but also a player, Danson, noted,

> The coach is a Hungarian. He's Black, but he's a Hungarian [laughing], he grew up here. He's a Hungarian. There are two Hungarians. There's also another Black guy who is a Hungarian but he's Black.

Although some of the Black players were born in Hungary or have Hungarian citizenship, they are still characterized as foreigners because of their skin of color only. This highlights the fact that the concept of belonging is still enforced through visual means, whereby the idea of 'whiteness' operates as the silent norm for those who are recognized as 'non-Hungarians.' Therefore, to certain local fans, the racialized bodies of the AFC Stallions' players appear out of place not only within the imagined space of Hungarian football, but also within broader notions of national identity and 'the nation.' The presence of non-white footballers provokes defensive, exclusionary reactions designed to maintain the status quo, reflecting the deep-seated anxieties of a "dirty white" identity (Böröcz, 2021), where whiteness is not taken for granted but must be protected. While territorial chants and rivalry are common in many football matches, in this context, they take on an explicitly racialized and nationalistic character.

Opponent fans do not simply oppose the Stallions players as sporting rivals but frame their presence as a threat to the nation itself. This is evident in chants like "your home is calling, go home!" (fieldnotes) – a statement that goes beyond usual fan rivalry to directly challenge the players' belonging to the national community. Such expressions reveal how the football pitch becomes a symbolic site where boundaries of national identity are contested and enforced through exclusionary and racialized discourse (Carrington, 2002). The hostile reception thus reflects a struggle over who can occupy and belong in this sporting landscape, setting the stage for racialized boundary-making on the pitch (James, 2013).

Such acts of othering reflect broader socio-political imaginaries in contemporary Hungary. During Orbán's long-standing government, a nation-building project has explicitly tied football to Hungarian identity and pride. As Prime Minister Viktor Orbán himself declared in 2023, "Hungarian football is not part of the entertainment industry; it is more important than that. It is part of the Hungarian people's lives and their national identity" (Orbán, 2023, 9:08). The Fidesz government's heavy investment in stadiums, youth academies, and its emphasis on giving playing time for Hungarian players at the expense of foreigners – who at the club level are a huge part of the small successes of Hungarian football – echoed in some of the AFC Stallion players' words as they describe an implicit monopoly on opportunity that the Hungarian government maintains in football: "Hungarian football, the government has monopolized [it]. They mostly want to support just Hungarians. That's the big problem here, you know" (Danson). No matter how talented a foreign player is, Danson, breaking into higher leagues or visibility is extraordinarily difficult:

> Even if you are so good, but you are a foreigner, they can't push you ahead. Like if there's a game that they have to show on national television, and you are in a Hungarian team as an African, they're not going to put you to play because they want to promote just Hungarian players. They want to promote Hungarian football. Everything Hungarian, Hungarian, Hungarian.

Another teammate, Abraham, contrasts it with experiences in Western Europe: "Especially we Blacks, in the West they see your quality, they like to nurture you. But here, they don't care." This sense of exclusion was reinforced during matches and trainings through various forms of racial profiling. At games, the AFC Stallions players were repeatedly marked as outsiders, both through overt abuse and more subtle racialized commentary. One particularly racist remark came when a spectator, noticing a light-skinned player on the team, loudly asked, "There's a white player among them – how did he get there and what does he do there?" The comment revealed how the team was racialized as uniformly non-Hungarian, so much so that the presence of a white player appeared puzzling, as if whiteness itself was out of place in a group already marked as foreign. On several occasions, opponent teams' supporters shouted, "Go home!" to the laugh of the surrounding small crowd. Through such chants, fans explicitly cast non-white players as intruders on what they considered 'their' field. The hostility extended even beyond direct abuse. During trainings, other teams' players would often mock the AFC Stallions for "taking football too seriously," for being "strong but brainless," and "undisciplined African players who instead of playing football for two hours are just shouting at each other as if this was normal" (fieldnotes). The implication is that non-white players are not only physically 'out of space,' but also culturally out of sync with Hungarian norms of how to engage in football. Yet, ironically, many of these same critics themselves took their training very seriously and often engaged in heated debates or loud arguments on the pitch when things did not go their way. This makes it more revealing that the issue lies not in the conduct itself, but in who is seen as entitled to express it within Hungarian football, as heated behaviors were only condemned when displayed by non-white players.

These racist ideals are however situated within a broader scope of exclusion in Hungary. It is not just individual racist fans; it is an institutional favoritism that is embedded in broader racialized politics that prioritizes ethnic, white Hungarians at every level. In Orbán's

vision, the football arena is a sacred national space – a space for Hungarians. In an interview conducted just before the 2023/2024 season with the then communications and marketing director of the Puskás Academy, Orbán responded to concerns about the low number of Hungarian players in top teams by insisting that since Hungarian football is more than entertainment, fans do not want to "cheer for foreign players brought in from distant lands but to see their own, Hungarian children play" (Orbán, 2023, 9:18). This narrative frames Hungarian football as the domain of ethnic, white Hungarians, casting Black and brown athletes – regardless of their nationality – as outsiders. Fan abuse inscribes these athletes as canvases for exclusionary nationalism, demarcating an in-group ('white Hungarians') and an out-group (the multicultural AFC Stallions), thus reinforcing imagined national boundaries (Hall, 1997; Anderson, 1983, as cited in Armstrong & Giulianotti, 2002).

Orbán's sporting ideals, however, draw on an even broader historical narratives of race and belonging in Hungary and Europe. Böröcz (2021) argues that Central and East Europeans have long occupied an anxious position in the racial hierarchy – what he terms a "dirty white" (p. 1129) identity, forever striving to be accepted as fully "European" (i.e. white). Historically deemed not quite "West European" and thus denied the full prestige of "Eurowhiteness" (Böröcz, 2021, p. 1129), many in the region assert a purist, exclusionary whiteness as a way to claim their status. In this framework, Hungarian nationalists treat non-white others as a threat to an already insecure identity, guarding the boundaries of whiteness even more strongly. In a 2024 speech, Viktor Orbán remarked, "there are not enough white Christians in Europe," (as cited in Koller, 2024, para. 6) and attributed this demographic shift to the losses incurred during the two world wars and the subsequent decline in birth rates among native populations. This statement underscores a fear of demographic and cultural mixture that aligns closely with Böröcz's (2021) concept of "dirty whiteness." For those who occupy this precarious racial

status, the exclusion of non-white athletes is not merely about preserving sporting tradition but about defending an anxious, fragile identity.

Within this project, Hungarianness is actively promoted and reinforced through multiple structural and symbolic strategies using football as a key medium. Football has become central to the Orbán governments' efforts to extend the symbolic reach of the Hungarian nation beyond its current geographic borders. Public funding has supported the construction of sports infrastructure, including football stadiums, in neighboring countries, particularly in regions that were once part of historical Hungary and still host sizable ethnic Hungarian populations (Molnár & Dóczi, 2020). This nationalist project is further reinforced through the mythologizing of iconic figures such as Ferenc Puskás, portrayed by Viktor Orbán not merely as a sporting legend but as the perfect embodiment of the Hungarian national character – "the most Hungarian" life story (Rényi, 2021, p. 374). This symbolic centrality is reflected in the naming of key institutions like the Puskás Academy and Pancho Arena[7] in Orbán's hometown. More recently, institutional policies have embedded this ethno-national focus even more deeply: beginning with the 2026/2027 season, the Hungarian Football Federation will condition a significant portion of financial support on a new requirement: clubs must field an average of five Hungarian players per match over the course of the season (Benics & Székely, 2025, para. 2). Together, these projects are a mere reflection of a much broader vision of football no longer being seen only as entertainment, but as a medium for the country's re-creation. In this context, the presence of non-white players seems not only as a change of the custom, but also as a threat that blurs the symbolic purity of the imagined nation. For some fans, the visibility of non-white players risks 'contaminating' or 'dirtying' an already precarious claim to whiteness and European belonging. This concern leads to the defensive act

[7] "Pancho" was the nickname given to Ferenc Puskás during his time playing for Real Madrid in Spain.

of symbolic racial purification both on and off the pitch as it becomes necessary to keep a white image for not losing the white 'European' status. Thus, the intolerance that goes to AFC Stallions is not merely isolated from prejudice but is also coming from the deeper insecurities about the racial and cultural boundaries in this case. Therefore, football fields become contested places where notions of national identity have to be defended.

In performing this exclusion, some fans engage in a symbolic act of racial purification, affirming that true Hungarian identity is defined by being white and Christian. The use of "gypsy"[8] as an insult (like the slur shouted at a Stallions player in the vignette at the beginning) reveals how these racist attacks are drawn from a longstanding racializing repertoire – a shared ideological toolkit used to mark certain bodies as fundamentally incompatible with Hungarian national identity. The slur "gypsy" hurled at a Black player illustrates how racial outsiders – whether Black African or Roma – are grouped together in a stigmatized category of those who are seen as not fully Hungarian. Despite their different historical contexts, both groups are subjected to a similar symbolic logic rooted in a fear of 'getting dirty' (Böröcz, 2021). The hostility toward the Stallions players extends these longstanding mechanisms of exclusion that have operated in Hungarian society, now applied to a new visible presence in football. Thus, the fans' behavior can be understood as an expression of dirty white ressentiment: a defensive reaction to maintain a racial and cultural boundary by pushing back against those seen as threatening the purity of a white, ethnically homogeneous national identity.

Of course, this marginalization through othering does not leave the AFC Stallions players unaffected. Abraham, one of the players noted that, "when you're trying to stand and someone is not encouraging you […], it weighs you down. This is how this country is." And

[8] The Hungarian Football Federation categorizes the regular instances of Roma-related slurs observed at domestic league matches not as racism, but as obscene expressions (Pelek, 2024; Kálnoki, Kele & Marosi, 2025).

as a matter of fact, players have to deal with this often. Bryce, a supporter of the team, declares that hearing abuse from rival fans "happens often. They always say shit… the Hungarian player will be calling the other black players monkeys," he says, or fans would refer to them as the "fekete team" (Joao), literally "black team" in Hungarian. Danson, provides a broader perspective on racist slurs:

> Yeah, it's normal. Every time. This in Budapest is better, you know. Two years ago, when we were in the county league playing those villages, it was terrible […]. They are there, they are insulting monkey, everything, they're saying all sort of things. So that's why it was better for us to leave that league, 'cause it was really toxic. It was too much.

He recounts how in rural matches, entire villages would turn up, some people spitting on players or screaming "monkey" at them. "They don't see Black people often, so when they see Black people, the whole village is coming out," Danson recalls. Initially, these encounters often led to fights: "Before, we didn't know how to manage these types of things. There was always a fight" (Danson). However, the team has learned to cope with the abuse more efficiently with time, and their coach is definitely a major part of this process as he provides not only tactical help but also emotional support for the hostility that they experience on a regular basis. During a practice before an important match, he warned:

> On Saturday, we are playing Hungarian Talents. By the name you can see they are very boastful […] they have people around them. So don't be afraid on Saturday if you see a lot of white people on the pitch. Don't be afraid […] they are there to come and bully us. You have to show it on the pitch that you are better.

The directive is simple: let our football do the talking. In this way, the AFC Stallions embody what Gilroy (1987) describes as the politics of performance and presence – using skills and determination on the pitch to claim a space of belonging which challenges exclusionary narratives. In a setting that is characterized with "dirty white" anxieties (Böröcz, 2021), and exclusion based on race, the players aim to break through the limitations that such a society,

which is usually trying to push them into the margins, has set for them by proving themselves in the game.

2.2 The Football Club as a Counter-Narrative

In a climate of lack of opportunities, and exclusion on and off the pitch, the AFC Stallions players have created an alternative space for their belonging. Initially, many of the African players would organize informal matches amongst themselves, just to enjoy the game and come together. They wanted to play football, but when it came to joining local Hungarian teams or playing in mixed amateur leagues, many of them "[didn't] feel comfortable playing with Europeans because there's a lot of discrimination" as Danson recalled. As a response, he decided to register and start building AFC Stallions as the only team composed predominantly of non-white players in Hungary. As Danson put it, "Football is about the whole world, so you cannot tell me in Hungary there is no team of foreigners. Then there's something wrong. There's no football there." This conviction encapsulates the spirit in which AFC Stallions entered competition – as a challenge to the unspoken rule that Hungarian football is space only for white Hungarians. On the surface, AFC Stallions can be viewed as just a football club in the lower divisions. But for its players, coaches, and supporters, it has become much more – a family, a community of care, and a place without exclusion. Many of the team members left family behind in their countries of origin and found themselves isolated in Hungary's predominantly white society. Within AFC Stallions, however, they discovered a network of friendships. As one player, Joao, described it, "Where we come from, football brings people together. It's not just a game, it's love, it's coming together." The club actively cultivates this sense of togetherness. They train hard on the pitch, but off the field they celebrate birthdays and holidays with each other, share meals, and support one another through hardships. "It's a whole community… it's a whole family team," Abraham emphasized in an interview, confirming what another member called the "connectivity" that unites them beyond the sport.

They talk about life challenges, whether "maritally, physically, familywise," and, as Bryce noted, "if there's any way we can help, assist each other, we do that." Hence the Stallions provide not only an emotional support system but a practical one:

> Some people don't know what's happening in the country, and the culture as a whole [so] we get them through […], share information like how to go about their papers, working stuff […]. We're here, directing, making it easier for them (Abraham).

More settled players mentor newer arrivals on navigating the bureaucracy of visas, jobs, and life in Hungary. This kind of peer assistance can be critical for migrants who lack family locally or who face language and cultural barriers in dealing with Hungarian institutions. In the context of their lives as foreigners, often struggling with Hungary's "closed, tight immigration and integration policies" (Joao), the team helps to fill a void of absent connection networks. The notion of community established by the Stallions players resonates strongly with theoretical insights from Black diaspora scholarship. A community in this sense refers to more than just a group in a geographic area – it implies a moral and political solidarity born of shared experiences and mutual aid (Gilroy, 1987). This sense of community operates within what Farrar (1997, as cited in Carrington, 1998) calls a "constructed Black social space," whereby Black communities actively carve out physical and symbolic zones that are to some degree "free" from the coercive practices and discourses of white-dominated power structures (p. 108, as cited in Carrington, 1998, p. 283). These efforts are not merely coincidental; they are deliberate responses to the structural and everyday struggles that accompany being non-white in a predominantly white society. Such autonomous or semi-autonomous spaces can be understood as efforts to resist a "collective gaze that is wedded to an aesthetic of white supremacy" (hooks, 1995, p. 40), under which Black bodies are persistently subjected to surveillance, judgment, and exclusion. Regarding Hungarian football, this gaze is set by institutions, but also by some racist supporters, who, in a similar way to social control, through their chants, insults, and mockeries are aiming at limiting the presence of the Black community

by using hostility, laughter and the symbolic removal of their place in the public. In this regard, AFC Stallions symbolizes an everyday practice of mutuality, cooperation, help, and solidarity. These, in turn, are the things that they can hardly find for themselves anywhere else in Hungary.

Even though AFC Stallions fulfills a community role besides football, "the most important [thing] is for [them] to win" (Danson). "Just to win and [try] to move the team to a greater height" (Bryce). There is a determination to be taken seriously and not "just as low-level, Africans coming together to play football" (Danson). Instead, both the players and the coach regularly emphasize that the dream is to climb the divisions and to produce players who can move to professional clubs:

> We have a really big dream of going higher, we have a dream from God. It's football, you never can say what can happen, but the ultimate dream is to have that promotion, to go bigger. That's just the dream, to go bigger […], go to the next level. Last year we sold one player to a higher-level club, so […] that's what we are dreaming about. We can bring up players, sell them, make money. So, the dream is to go bigger and higher and higher (Danson).

This dream, however, is not only about sporting ambition; it is filled with a desire to transform perceptions. Many players believe that by playing well and winning, they can challenge Hungarian fans' prejudices. Each victory on the pitch is, symbolically, a disruption of the stereotype that non-white players do not belong to football. When the AFC Stallions defeat a white Hungarian team, it carries extra meaning for them, "proving wrong all those who doubt us" (Joao). The stakes of each match thus become higher than just league points; they are about "challenging the logic and efficacy of the racism" the players face day-to-day (Back, 1996, p. 113, as cited in Carrington, 1998, p. 286). This is in line with Messner's (1992, as cited in Carrington, 1998) argument that sport can provide a platform for subordinated groups to contest domination. Messner notes that marginalized athletes often "use sport as a means to resist (at least symbolically) the domination imposed upon them" (Messner, 1992, p. 13, as cited in Carrington, 1998, p. 279).

As several players explained, playing "good football" is not just about winning, it is their way of challenging the hostility they face. Demonstrating skill, discipline, and composure on the pitch becomes a strategy to move higher in the leagues to prove their worth and actively counter the narrative that they do not belong. For the players, success is about sporting achievement, but they also hope to alter perceptions: showing that they can play well can compel even hostile fans to acknowledge their ability and perhaps soften the rejection they encounter (Joao; Bryce). And according to them, this shift has already begun. Danson shared that some white Hungarians, who had initially kept their distance, have become friends with him "because they watch our games, they have heard about us, [and] they are happy that there's a community of foreigners playing football. And it's not just football; it's good football as you can see." In other cases, people who had previously made racist comments apologized after watching the Stallions play, acknowledging their talent and commitment (Joao). Although challenging deep-rooted perceptions is more complicated than that, this insight reveals that the story of AFC Stallions is also one of hope. Hope that the game can still create openings for recognition and respect in spaces where politics have failed to do so.

Chapter 3: Gendered Fieldwork and Reflexivity[9]

3.1 Ethnography in a Masculine Field

Football has long been established as a deeply gendered and heterosexual space, structured by patriarchal norms and often dominated by men (Pfister, 2010). This masculine and heteronormative framing not only shapes participation in sport but also the way it is observed, analyzed, and researched. Doing ethnographic research in such a setting – particularly as a heterosexual woman – means entering a space already loaded with assumptions about gender, power, and belonging. Therefore, the embodiment cannot be removed from the ethnographic text, otherwise the story of the field can look like one in which gender, sexuality, and other intersecting identities do not exist (Palęcka, 2025).

The aim of ethnographic fieldwork, as foundationally described by Malinowski (1922/2002, p. 19), is to "grasp the native's point of view," to understand how people experience and make meaning in their everyday lives. Ethnographers are encouraged to immerse themselves in the field, to establish trust and proximity with participants, and to become part of the social worlds they study (Tedlock, 1991; Hastrup, 1992, all cited in Palladino, 2025). Although now widely critiqued and long challenged by feminist scholars, the idea of fieldwork as a neutral or apolitical process persists in subtle ways. Feminist scholars have long challenged the power relations that organize and construct researcher's subjectivity, arguing that fieldwork is never outside the power relations and the various intersecting

[9] This final chapter adopts a reflective, rather than empirical, approach. It draws together the theoretical, methodological, and emotional threads that have run through the thesis, focusing on the research process as a situated experience. Rather than offering new field data, it engages with how knowledge was co-constructed and how my own positionality shaped – and was shaped by – the field. In this sense, the chapter is about thinking through what it means to research, write, and represent within particular contexts. Some aspects of the field remain unwritten, not due to a lack of importance, but because writing itself is a gendered, racialised, and political act. What can be written, and what should be left unwritten, is often shaped by the positionality of the researcher and the social context of the research, particularly when working with marginalized or precarious communities (Parson, 2019).

identities of the researcher such as gender, race, class, and sexuality that shape and organize the world (Stacey, 1988; Haraway, 1988; Rose, 1997; Sultana, 2007, as cited in Kaspar and Landolt, 2016). As Kaspar and Landolt (2016) summarize, the field is not a neutral space; it is structured by asymmetrical relations that can shift, overlap, and contradict depending on the context. Hence, engaging in fieldwork becomes a "contextual, relational, embodied, and politicalized" process (Sultana, 2007, p. 383, as cited in Pante, 2014, p. 85).

As a first-time, white, female ethnographer conducting research in a masculine, sport-based environment, I was positioned as a clear outsider, hence these issues became more than theoretical for my research. Although I did not initially foreground gender in my research design, it was consistently foregrounded by others. Oudenhuijsen (2022) discusses how researchers, regardless of intent, are ascribed gendered and sexual meanings by the field itself. My body thus became not just a research tool, but it was also part of the field, generated and influenced by the nature of the research environment and its dynamics and relationships. The field interactions were impacted by the manner in which people saw me based on gender, age, race, and sexuality, and these perceptions – whether they were explicit or implicit – led to changes in access, relationships, and the type of data that I was able to collect. Gender, as performed and interpreted through daily interaction (West & Zimmerman, 1987), actively shaped how my interlocutors reacted to me and what they required of and revealed to me. As Kloß (2017) formulates it, in spite of preparation in advance and warning of potential risks, the female researcher's body is exposed to unexpected challenges and vulnerabilities. Attempts to remain 'neutral' or strictly professional in the field were often frustrated by the fact that my interlocutors perceived and responded to me through multiple overlapping identities. Playing along to a certain extent – performing friendliness, engaging in light teasing, or managing discomfort – was sometimes necessary to build rapport, but not without consequence (Oudenhuijsen, 2022). This constant negotiation was also made more complicated by the fact

of ethnographic fieldwork itself, where the researcher is constantly "on": always observing, interpreting, storing away facts, and adjusting to inquiries in the moment (Evans, 2017). Being in a constant state of alertness like this, I noticed that I felt pressure to be polite, friendly, and approachable without paying much attention to my own comfort in the given situations. These multiple layers of expectations were often the cause of an internal struggle that I was having over the way I wanted to present myself and how I wanted to understand the interactions which felt ambiguous, inappropriate, or just uncomfortable. This aligns with what Hochschild (1979) conceptualizes as "emotion management" – the internal regulation of feelings and expressions to meet perceived expectations – which, in the field, became part of the invisible labor required to maintain access and relationships.

The relational nature of fieldwork also complicates traditional notions of power. While researchers are often presumed to hold more power in the research relationship – especially when working with marginalized communities (Pante, 2014) – this assumption can overlook the many ways in which researchers are dependent on participants for access, trust, and narrative (Cerwonka & Malkki, 2007, as cited in Kaspar & Landolt, 2016; Billo & Hiemstra, 2013). As Pante (2014) puts it, the researcher's social identity – particularly for women – can shift the power balance in unexpected ways. I encountered these dynamics during my own experience: in many moments, I did not feel in control of the encounters. Rather, I was negotiating, adjusting, and responding to dynamics I could not fully direct. Zurné and Oudenhuijsen (2024) argue that researchers are not immune to the (hetero)patriarchal hierarchies they study. We are not merely observers of these structures – we are subjects within them. This is why feminist ethnographers call for transparency and emotional honesty, recognizing that unpredictability, discomfort, and affect are not research obstacles but vital elements of knowledge production (Jaggar, 1989, as cited in Zurné & Oudenhuijsen, 2024; Palladino, 2025).

3.2 Managing Discomfort and Boundary Negotiation

Although having moments of connection, insights and joy, navigating fieldwork as a heterosexual woman in a masculine-dominated space also involved a constant negotiation of boundaries, and expectations – both mine and my interlocutors.' These negotiations were rarely straightforward, and a significant amount of interpretive labor went into it (Lombard, 2022). I was aware that in these moments, it was not just my own boundaries I was negotiating – I was also intruding into others' lives, and this double-edged awareness often left me uncertain: how much is too much? When does my presence become unwelcome, disruptive, or extractive? This uncertainty extended to moments of disclosure. Telling the football players that I was conducting research often brought a wave of discomfort because it felt like I was contaminating a space with something alien, something that did not belong there and I felt that being a 'researcher' whose very presence alters the social atmosphere of the football community.

Rather than aiming to dissolve boundaries in pursuit of some imagined ethnographic closeness, Lombard (2022) suggests that boundaries are not only inevitable but also necessary for respectful relationships. Drawing on Bashkow's (2004) neo-Boasian framework, boundaries are tools that help us understand, protect, and relate across differences, including those created by gender, race, and power. They help to facilitate interpersonal interpretations by acting as fluid thresholds that enable us to navigate and make sense of both similarity and difference, as we continuously work out our evolving relationships with others. Oudenhuijsen (2022) writes that relationships in the field rarely rest solely on academic interest; it is naïve to assume that all interlocutors are engaged purely for research purposes and thus, some of my interactions required managing not just academic expectations, but emotional and social labor too – sometimes even physical proximity. My positionality, along with the roles and identities of both myself as the researcher and the participants, was continuously shaped and reshaped

through each interaction during the research process, evolving dynamically rather than fitting into fixed social categories (Kaspar & Landolt, 2016).

These interactions carried the weight of boundary-setting (Lombard, 2022) during small gestures like how warmly I smiled, where I placed my bag, where I sat down, how I worded text messages and emails, or where I stood during matches. But there were times when the boundaries I had tried to set seemed to be unclear or hard to keep. Lombard (2022) argues that fieldwork usually requires delicate negotiation with other people and that researchers may find themselves in more dependent positions than they expect without realizing it. This was evident in research situations where the tone of the dialogue was less clear, or the closeness was more than I had expected. Such situations have challenged my role as a researcher and left me feeling uncertain, not knowing how to interpret or respond in ways that would both care for the relationship and maintain my professional integrity. Additionally, the urgency to gather data added another layer to this dynamic. The pressure to produce empirical material can shift power dynamics in subtle but significant ways, sometimes pushing researchers – often unintentionally – into situations where personal boundaries are tested or compromised (Kaspar & Landolt, 2016). My experiences in these kinds of situations made me realize that the expectation to keep the access to the field, build a good rapport, or not break a potential relation sometimes affected my sense of comfort and professional limits. At these times, I was most sensitive to my vulnerability in the field and how researchers can still be influenced by the social hierarchies or power imbalances.

3.3 How the Field Shapes the Researcher and the Research

Being perceived as a (heterosexual) woman in the field with intersecting imaginations and social realities does not necessarily mean that one is in a perpetual vulnerability or boundary-negotiation. Privilege, context, and the evolving nature of relationships all shape what gender

– and other identity markers – mean in a given encounter. Through this ethnographic research, I discovered that instead of being identified with my gender alone, I was getting more sensitive to the gentle work of boundary negotiation required by respectful relations. This awareness – constructed by the very practice of negotiating discomfort – led me to investigate the emotional and professional investments of these dynamics, not only for myself, but also for the character and quality of ethnographic knowledge I was producing. Lombard (2022) notes that such experiences, are not failures but a natural part of the fieldwork's richness, in which relations evolve in a midst of ongoing negotiation, mutual influence, and shifting understanding. Boundaries in my own filed did not turn out to be barriers to ethnographic relation but integral tools that governed it. Dealing with these dynamics helped further to define my own position and to remind me that fieldwork is less a matter of collecting data than of negotiating who we are to each other.

As Yassour-Borochowitz (2012) indicates, the encounters between a female researcher and male interlocutors are situations that are in themselves unclear and undefined. They are not governed by a specific set of norms but are framed by the researcher's and the participants' personalities, intentions, and worldview. Such interactions are further complicated by a complex array of intersecting elements: the researcher's personality, social and ethnic background, professional style, theoretical orientation, and choice of method. Equally important is how researchers perceive the participants and their role within the research process. At the same time, participants bring their own subjectivities like their socioeconomic status, motivations for taking part, and perceptions of the researcher's position in relation to their own – which all deeply affect how the research relationship unfolds (Yassour-Borochowitz, 2004; Karnielli-Miller et al., 2009, as cited in Yassour-Borochowitz, 2012).

However, as Ross (2015) and Berry et al. (2017, as cited in Lombard, 2022) argue, knowledge produced through ethnography is inevitably linked to the positionality and embodiment of the researcher. My gendered body influenced the depth of the stories I was told, the kind of access I had, and the interpretations I drew. To pretend otherwise would be to erase the very conditions under which this research was conducted. As Yassour-Borochowitz (2012) notes, the research is not only a product of the questions asked or the topics chosen, but of the interpersonal relationships that underpin the entire process. Participants shape what is shared, how it is shared, and under what conditions it is shared. In life-story research especially, what is revealed depends on mutual trust and the specific context of our relationship. Ultimately, my time in the field required not only methodological attentiveness but deep, ongoing reflexivity. The data I gathered cannot be separated from these dynamics. As Berry et al. (2017, as cited in Lombard, 2022) argue, embodied ethnography demands that we acknowledge how our gendered bodies shaped what we could see, feel, learn and understand. Only by doing so can we produce knowledge that is both honest and ethically grounded.

Conclusions

Summary of Key Findings

This thesis has attempted to talk about non-white athletes and their belonging in wider Hungarian society through football, as the sport's popularity, social embeddedness and political use provide a unique analytical perspective to do so. Football is not only a form of entertainment; it reflects – and often recreates – broader societal dynamics. The football pitch, as this research has illustrated, becomes a space where national identity, cultural inclusion and exclusion, and racial politics can be constantly negotiated and contested. Hungarian football is often publicly framed as politically neutral (Aradi, 2022), with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán stating that "football is not politics" (Orbán, 2022). Yet this research revealed how deeply entangled the sport is with race, nationalism, and the advertised social identity of Hungarian people. Under Viktor Orbán's leadership, football has become a powerful instrument for advancing a nationalist agenda, using the sport to promote an ethnic nationalist identity (Molnár, 2023). The government has invested heavily in football infrastructure to build stadiums and support clubs aligned with Orbán's Fidesz party (Székely, 2019). This financial commitment is not merely about improving the sport but about reinforcing an ethnic nationalist identity centered on whiteness and Christian values (Molnár & Whigham, 2021). In this ideological project, successful non-white players are conditionally celebrated as national heroes, when their performance boosts Hungary's international image and reputation (Végh, 2020). Their inclusion is strategic, temporary, and rarely accompanied by structural inclusion or belonging. Therefore, the experiences of non-white footballers in lower Hungarian leagues are far from the successful images of black or brown athletes that are used to 'appropriate' Hungary's success.

Through ethnographic research with AFC Stallions, this thesis has demonstrated that the everyday experiences of 'less successful' non-white footballers in Budapest, Hungary reflect broader national tensions around race, belonging, and the boundaries of the imagined community (Anderson, 2006). Non-white players regularly encounter overt racism during matches and trainings, with fans deploying chants like "go back to where you came from" or calling the players "gypsies" (fieldnotes). These moments are more than just heated exchanges of a football match; they are indicative of the larger socio-political discourse that frames Black and brown bodies as 'out of place' (Puwar, 2004, as cited in Hylton, 2018) in the Hungarian national space. Thus, the football pitch becomes a paradoxical arena of belonging, where the non-white is given the spotlight only to be hidden. The results imply that the hostility that the players receive from the fans of the other teams is similar to the Hungarian state's hateful rhetoric of migrants, refugees and non-white people like the Roma, that was especially clear during and after the so-called 2015 migration crisis, when the media portrayed migrants and refugees as the main danger to the very existence of the Hungarian national identity (Cantat & Rajaram, 2019; Gerő & Sik, 2020).

At the same time, these public reactions are not new – they draw on a long history of racialization and marginalization of Roma communities in Hungary (Vincze, 2014; Cantat & Rajaram, 2019). This logic reflects Hungary's unstable racial positioning in Europe, what Böröcz (2021) describes as a "dirty white" identity, in which whiteness is both aspired to and jealously guarded. The marginalization of non-white athletes is deeply connected to Hungary's historical racialization of Roma, framed as threats to the nation's "Eurowhite" identity, as described by Böröcz (2021). Böröcz's idea helps us to see how Hungary is in a border place in the European racial hierarchy, having never been quite at the center of "Eurowhiteness" but still being very much involved in protecting its closeness to it. This unstable position of Hungary is the root of these anxieties, which are quite frequently expressed in the form of the

exclusion of the people who are perceived as the ones that will lead to the further dissolution of this weak claim to whiteness. As a result, this form of racialization not only serves as a model for the exclusion of Black athletes, but it also allows the depiction of them in the same way as the ones who are going to cause the disappearance of Hungary's ethnic purity because they are the ones who come from outside.

In light of this, the thesis has also shown how, in this hostile environment, new communities emerge – not in alignment with state narratives, but in resistance to exclusion. Black social spaces, such as AFC Stallions, form not just to play football but to counteract marginalization and affirm collective identity (Carrington, 1998; Joseph, 2017). AFC Stallions emerged as a community forged in response to exclusion and lack of opportunity in the Hungarian football sphere (Danson). In the forming of this team, a community of care emerged which extends far beyond the football pitch. Players support each other in navigating Hungary's restrictive immigration and integration policies (Joao) offering mentorship, and emotional support for players (Abraham; Bryce). In this way, the team has grown into more than a sporting initiative; it functions as a mutual aid network and as a site of everyday cultural resistance. At the same time, the players are determined to be taken seriously on the field. They do not wish to be dismissed as "just a group of foreigners playing for fun" (Danson). Their collective goal is to win, gain promotion to higher divisions, and prove their worth. They hope that every good match played becomes a symbolic rejection of exclusion and a declaration of presence that can alter the wider thinking about them (Bryce; Danson). For AFC Stallions, being part of Hungarian football is not something unusual or out of place, but rather natural. They want to make it clear that they are not 'space invaders' (Puwar, 2004, p. 33, as cited in Hylton, 2018, p. 110), and just like more successful players, they do belong to the Hungarian football scene (Danson).

Contributions of the Research

This research makes an important contribution to the studies of sport, race and nationalism within the under-examined context of post-2010 Hungary. While much of the existing scholarship on race and football has taken a global perspective, this study shifts the attention to the national and grassroots context. By closely examining AFC Stallions with non-white players, the research challenges dominant narratives that portray under-represented communities as the cause of their own marginalization. Instead, it shows how these communities are often the targets of deeply embedded, exclusionary structures and practices (Burdsey, 2011). In doing so, this thesis demonstrates how this grassroots football initiative provides forms of social support, inclusion, and recognition that the state itself has failed to do so.

For methodological insights, the thesis offers a detailed account of conducting ethnography as a white heterosexual woman in a masculinized, racialized space. It highlights how researcher positionality impacts access, trust, and knowledge production – and the importance of reflexivity in navigating these dynamics. In doing so, it contributes to accounts around gendered fieldwork and the embodied relations of research.

Suggestions for Future Research

Building upon this research, a number of avenues for further research emerge. First, incorporating the voices of white Hungarian players, coaches and fans of other teams, would offer understanding of how and why racial and ethnic exclusion is justified, tolerated or contested by different actors in football. The incorporation of these additional perspectives would not only make our understanding of the logics reproducing or challenging exclusion in dominant football culture more comprehensive but make the analysis less incomplete. Second, although this thesis has focused on race, follow-up research can be conducted on the formation

of masculinity and its influence on the characteristics of the team, the behavior of the fans, and the nature of the public discourse. The issue of masculinity is connected to race, migration status, and class in ways that deserve more in-depth study, especially in the extremely gendered heteronormative environment of football. Lastly, longitudinal research with AFC Stallions could also research whether visibility and success on the field result in more meaningful, more lasting forms of social inclusion that the players aspire to. While some players reported a shift in fan attitudes after witnessing the team's strong performance, it remains an open question whether such symbolic and sporting victories lead to broader acceptance or whether political and racial anxieties adapt to preserve exclusionary norms in contemporary Hungary.

References

Ahmed, S. (2007). A phenomenology of whiteness. *Feminist Theory, 8*(2), 149–168. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700107078139

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Rev. ed.). Verso.

Ayrton, R. (2020). The case for creative, visual and multimodal methods in operationalising concepts in research design: An examination of storyboarding trust stories. *The Sociological Review*, *68*(6), 1229-1249. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026120903918

Aradi, H. Zs. (2022, November 22). Orbán Viktor a nagy-magyarországos szurkolói sáljáról: A foci nem politika [Viktor Orbán on his Austro-Hungarian Empire fan scarf: Football is not politics]. *Telex*. https://telex.hu/belfold/2022/11/22/orban-viktor-a-nagy-magyarorszagos-szurkoloi-saljarol-a-foci-nem-politika

Armstrong, G., & Giulianotti, R. (2002). Avenues of contestation. Football hooligans running and ruling urban spaces. *Social Anthropology*, 10(2), 211–238. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8676.2002.tb00055.x

Balázsi-Pál, E. (2017, July 22). Tusványos nem az, aminek Magyarországról látszik [Tusványos is not what it appears to be from Hungary]. *HVG*. https://hvg.hu/velemeny/20170722_Tusvanyos_erdelyi_szemmel

Balogun, B. (2023). Refugees separated by the global color line: The power of Europeanness, whiteness, and sameness. *International Migration Review*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/01979183231218981

Bashkow, I. (2004). A neo-Boasian conception of cultural boundaries. *American Anthropologist, 106*(3), 443–458. https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2004.106.3.443

Benics, M., & Székely, S. (2025, May 9). Akár 500 milliót is bukhat az a magyar fociklub, ahol nem játszik elég magyar játékos [A Hungarian football club could lose up to 500 million

if not enough Hungarian players are fielded]. *444*. https://444.hu/2025/05/09/akar-500-milliot-is-bukhat-az-a-magyar-fociklub-ahol-nem-jatszik-eleg-magyar-jatekos

Billo, E., & Hiemstra, N. (2013). Mediating messiness: Expanding Ideas of Flexibility, Reflexivity, and Embodiment in Fieldwork. Gender, Place and Culture. *A Journal of Feminist Geography, 20*(3), 313–328. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2012.674929

Botos, T. (2020, July 1). Orbán: Mi a futballt a művészet kategóriájába soroljuk [Orbán: We classify football as a form of art]. *444.*. https://444.hu/2020/07/01/orban-mi-a-futballt-a-muveszet-kategoriajaba-soroljuk

Bozóki, A., & Cueva, S. (2021). Xenophobia and power politics: The Hungarian far right. In S. A. Strube et al. (Eds.), *Anti-Genderismus in Europa* (pp. 109–120). transcript Verlag.

Böröcz, J. (2021). Eurowhite conceit, dirty white resentment: "Race" in Europe. *Sociological Forum, 36*(4), 1116–1134. https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12752

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One big happy family? Understanding similarities and differences between reflexive thematic analysis and its methodological siblings and cousins. In V. Braun & V. Clarke (Eds.), *Thematic analysis: A practical guide* (pp. 223–258). SAGE Publications.

Brückner, G. (2022, July 29). Egy csapat kivételével nagyon NER-es az idei NB I. [With the exception of one team, this season's top-tier football (NB I) is heavily dominated by the NER]. *Telex*. https://telex.hu/sport/2022/07/29/nb1-ner-futball-elvonal-magyar-foci

Burdsey, D. (2011). Introduction. In D. Burdsey (Ed.), *Race, ethnicity and football: Persisting debates and emergent issues* (pp. 3–20). Routledge.

Brubaker, R. (2004). *Ethnicity without groups*. Harvard University Press.

Budel, M. (2013). An ethnographic view on African football migrants in Istanbul. *Ankara University SBF Journal, 68*(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1501/SBFder_0000002270

Campbell, R. D., Dennis, M. K., Lopez, K., Matthew, R., & Choi, Y. J. (2021). Qualitative research in communities of color: Challenges, strategies, and lessons. *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research, 12*(1), 177–200. https://doi.org/10.1086/713408

Cantat, C. (2016). The ideology of Europeanism and Europe's migrant other. *International Socialism, 152*. http://isj.org.uk/the-ideology-of-europeanism-and-europes-migrant-other/

Cantat, C., & Rajaram, P. K. (2019). The politics of the refugee crisis in Hungary: Bordering and ordering the nation and its others. In C. Menjívar, M. Ruiz, & I. Ness (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of migration crises* (pp. 181–196). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190856908.013.69

Carrington, B. (1998). Sport, masculinity, and Black cultural resistance. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 22*(3), 275–298. https://doi.org/10.1177/019372398022003004

Carrington, B. (2002). *Race, representation and the sporting body* (CUCR Occasional Paper Series). Goldsmiths, University of London. https://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/33829/7/15.%20Ben%20Carrington.pdf

Carrington, B. (2008). "What's the footballer doing here?" Racialized performativity, reflexivity, and identity. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies, 8*(4), 423–452. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708608321574

Carrington, B. (2013). The critical sociology of race and sport: The first fifty years. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 39*(1), 379–398. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-071811-145528

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 12*(3), 297–298. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613

De Genova, N. (2018). The "migrant crisis" as racial crisis: Do Black Lives Matter in Europe? *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 41*(10), 1765–1782. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1361543

Denzin, N. K., et al. (2024). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin et al. (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (6th ed., pp. 1–28). SAGE Publications.

Evans, A. (2017, February 14). *The ethnographer's body is gendered*. The New Ethnographer. https://thenewethnographer.com/the-new-ethnographer/2017/02/14/gendered-bodies-2

Fanon, F. (1952). *Black skin, white masks*. Grove Press.

Gerő, M., & Sik, E. (2020). The Moral Panic Button: Construction and Consequences. In *Europe and the refugee response* (pp. 39-58). Routledge.

Gilroy, P. (1987). *There* Ain't *no Black in the Union Jack: The cultural politics of race and nation*. Hutchinson.

Goldberg, D. T. (2006). Racial Europeanization. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 29*(2), 331–364. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870500465611

Goldblatt, D., & Nolan, D. (2018, January 11). Viktor Orbán's reckless football obsession. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/jan/11/viktor-orban-hungary-prime-minister-reckless-football-obsession

Gray, D. E. (2004). *Doing research in the real world*. SAGE Publications.

Hadas, M. (2000). Football and social identity: The case of Hungary in the twentieth century. *The Sports Historian, 20*(2), 43–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/17460260009443368

Hall, S. (1997). Staging Racial 'Difference': 'and the Melody Lingered On…'. In S. Hall (Ed.), *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices* (pp. 249–256). SAGE Publications.

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies, 14*(3), 575–599. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066

Haszán, Z. (2017, July 25). Kálmán szerint épphogy lejöttek a fáról, de ha Gézának lenne egy jó fekete csatára, úgy betenné a csapatba, mint a huzat [Kálmán says they barely came down from the tree, but if Géza had a good black striker, he'd put him in the team like a shot]. *444.* https://444.hu/2017/07/25/kalman-szerint-epphogy-lejottek-a-farol-de-ha-gezanak-lenne-egy-jo-fekete-csatara-ugy-betenne-a-csapatba-mint-a-huzat

Havran, Z., & Jandó, Z. (2024). Orbán's big football reform: Wings or shackles? In D. Wojtaszyn, D. Fitzpatrick, & R. Benedikter (Eds.), *The political economy of European Football* (pp. 180–204). Routledge.

Hochschild, A. R. (1979). Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *American Journal of Sociology, 85*(3), 551–575. https://doi.org/10.1086/227049

hooks, b. (1995). *Art on my mind: Visual politics*. The New Press.

Hylton, K. (2018). *Contesting 'race' and sport: Shaming the colour line*. Routledge.

James, C. L. R. (2013). *Beyond a boundary*. Duke University Press.

Joseph, J. (2017). *Sport in the Black Atlantic: Cricket, Canada and the Caribbean diaspora*. Manchester University Press.

Jósa, B. (2015, October 5). Anti-refugee discourse in Hungarian mainstream politics. *Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.* https://www.boell.de/en/2015/10/05/anti-refugee-discourse-hungarian-mainstream-politics

Juhász, A., Molnár, Cs., & Zgut, E. (2017). *Menekültügy és migráció Magyarországon [Asylum and migration in Hungary]*. Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung & Political Capital. https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/HUNGARY_BOOK_HU_BOOK_ONLINE.pdf

Kaspar, H., & Landolt, S. (2016). Flirting in the field: Shifting positionalities and power relations in innocuous sexualisations of research encounters. *Gender, Place & Culture, 23*(1), 107–119. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2014.991704

Kálnoki, K. A., Kele, J. & Marosi, G. (2025, May 19). Csak akkor rasszizmus a cigányozás, ha az UEFA is hallja. [Anti-Roma slurs are only treated as racism when UEFA hears it]. *24.hu.* https://24.hu/sport/2025/05/19/podcast-ziccer-mlsz-uefa-buntetes-ciganyozas-wrexham-magyar-kupa-kubatov-gabor/

Kiss, I. (2022, February 3). Világi Oszkáré lett a Győri ETO FC-t működtető cég. [Oszkár Világi became the owner of the company managing Győri ETO FC]. *444.* https://444.hu/2022/02/03/vilagi-oszkare-lett-a-gyori-eto-fc-t-mukodteto-ceg

Klaus, W. (2017). Closing gates to refugees: The causes and effects of the 'asylum crisis' in Hungary. *Central and Eastern European Migration Review, 6*(1), 5–22.

Kloß, S. T. (2017). Sexual(ized) harassment and ethnographic fieldwork: A silenced aspect of social research. *Ethnography*, 18(3), 396–414. https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138116641958

Koller, H. (2024, May 25). Orbán Viktor Vásárhelyen: Nincs elég fehér keresztény ember Európában [Viktor Orbán in Vásárhely: There are not enough white Christian people in Europe]. *Telex*. https://telex.hu/belfold/2024/05/25/orban-viktor-hodmezovasarhely-lazar-janos-grezsa-istvan-marki-zay-peter-valasztas-2024

Korom, M. (2024, March 14). Az Újpest FC felvásárlásával teljessé válik a NER térhódítása a honi labdarúgó-élvonalban. [With the takeover of Újpest FC, the expansion of the NER is complete in Hungary's top football division]. *Népszava.* https://nepszava.hu/3228605_labdarugas-ner-ujpest-fidesz-holdudvar-mol

Kovács, I., Molnár, B., & Szánthó, M. (2022). *Making Hungary great again 2010–2022*. Center for Fundamental Rights.

Ligeti, M., & Mucsi, G. (2016). Opening the door to corruption in Hungary's sport financing. In *Global corruption report: Sport* (pp. 79-87). Routledge.

Lombard, L. (2022). The interpretation of relationships: Fieldwork as boundary-negotiation. *Ethnography*, *0*(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/14661381211069670

Malinowski, B. (2002). *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An account of native enterprise and adventure in the archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. Routledge. (Original work published 1922)

Mezmir, E. A. (2020). Qualitative data analysis: An overview of data reduction, data display and interpretation. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, *10*(21), 15-27. https://core.ac.uk/reader/356684456

Miniszterelnöki Kabinetiroda. (2022, July 23). *Orbán Viktor előadása a XXXI. Bálványosi Nyári Szabadegyetem és Diáktáborban* [Orbán Viktor's lecture at the 31st Bálványos Summer Free University and Student Camp]. https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-eloadasa-a-xxxi-balvanyosi-nyari-szabadegyetem-es-diaktaborban/

Molnár, G. (2023). Nationalism and sport intersection in Hungary: Building fences, expanding nationhood. *National Identities, 25*(4), 305–322. https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2023.2188584

Molnár, G., & Dóczi, T. (2020). The transformation of sport in post-communist Hungary: A transitology-informed approach. In R. Naul & K. Hardman (Eds.), *Sport, statehood and transition in Europe* (1st ed, pp. 11-26). Routledge.

Molnár, G., & Whigham, S. (2021). Radical right populist politics in Hungary: Reinventing the Magyars through sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 56*(1), 133–148. https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690219891656

Mortimer, T. (2024, June 14). Political football: How multicultural Hungary contrasts Orbán's dogma. *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/football/article/2024/jun/14/political-football-how-multicultural-hungary-contrast-orbans-dogma

Müller, J., & Mutz, M. (2019). On the Search for Social Esteem: An Ethnography on the Meanings of Football for Marginalized Male Migrants. *YOUNG*, *27*(4), 336-354. https://doi.org/10.1177/1103308818805595

Növekedés.hu. (2025, March 2). *Térképen mutatjuk a hazai kisebbségek nagyságát a magyar településeken* [We show the size of domestic minorities in Hungarian settlements on a map]. *Növekedés*. https://novekedes.hu/elemzesek/terkepen-mutatjuk-a-hazai-kisebbsegek-nagysagat-a-magyar-telepuleseken

Orbán Viktor. (2022, November 22). A foci nem politika [Football is not politics] [Image attached] [Status update]. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/orbanviktor/posts/pfbid02AFiD93Cah72cMqi7UvjYBJ2xJQ4dwiGA2upBcrfRhG7vGLkD8vu3Y7LiRP6zL1DYl

Orbán Viktor. (2023, July, 27). *Interjú a puskasakademia.hu honlapnak*. [Interview for the puskasakademia.hu website]. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rw3_r0gBCcI

Orbán Viktor. (2025, May 29). *CPAC 2025.05.29*. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVVTKTm2G6E&t=381s

Oudenhuijsen, L. W. (2022). Desiring researchers: Reflecting on sexuality and fieldwork in Senegal. *LOVA Journal of Feminist Anthropology and Gender Studies*, *42*, 21–38. https://lovanetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/LOVA-Journal-42-LR-Desiring-researchers.pdf

Palęcka, A. (2025). "Why Won't You Let Me Hit On You?": Sexual Harassment in Fieldwork as Data. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *54*(1), 60-84. https://doi.org/10.1177/08912416241284974

Palladino, S. (2025). The unspoken experiences of ethnography: Overcoming boundaries of (un)accepted behaviours. *Ethnography*, *0*(0), 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1177/14661381251334035

Pante, MA. B. L. P. (2014). Female Researchers in a Masculine Space: Managing Discomforts and Negotiating Positionalities. *Philippine Sociological Review*, *62*, 65–88. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43486388

Parson, L. (2019). Considering Positionality: The Ethics of Conducting Research with Marginalized Groups. In K. K. Strunk & L. A. Locke (Eds.), *Research Methods for Social Justice and Equity in Education* (pp. 15-32). Palgrave Macmillan.

Pelek, D. (2024, March 1). Hiába az MLSZ kampánya, a magyar stadionokban a gyűlölet a pálya. [Despite the MLSZ campaign, hatred rules the pitch in Hungarian stadiums]. *24.hu.* https://rangado.24.hu/magyar_foci/2024/03/01/mlsz-kampany-kirekesztes-rasszizmus-ciganyozas-magyar-foci-nb-i/?_gl=1*16deo66*_gcl_au*MTk1OTc5NTgyNC4xNzUwMjQwNzA1*_ga*MjA5NDA0NDQzNC4xNzM0MzYyNDYx*_ga_WQCPVWN1XZ*czE3NTA3MDUzNzckbzkxJGcwJHQxNzUwNzA1Mzc3JGo2MCRsMCRoMA

Puskás Ferenc Labdarúgó Akadémia. (2013, August 8). *Futball, mint gulyásleves* [Football, like goulash soup]. *PFLA.hu.* https://puskasakademia.hu/?q=news/4151#

Pfister, G. (2010). Women in sport – gender relations and future perspectives. *Sport in Society, 13*(2), 234–248. https://doi.org/10.1080/17430430903522954

Rényi, P. D. (2021). *Győzelmi kényszer: Futball és hatalom Orbán világában* [The compulsion to win: Football and power in Orbán's world]. Magyar Jeti Zrt.

Rose, G. (1997). Situating knowledges: Positionality, reflexivities and other tactics. *Progress in Human Geography, 21*(3), 305–320. https://doi.org/10.1191/030913297673302122

Rosino, M. L. (2016). Boundaries and barriers: Racialized dynamics of political power. *Sociology Compass, 10*(10), 939–951. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12412

Ross, K. (2015). "No Sir, She Was Not a Fool in the Field": Gendered Risks and Sexual Violence in Immersed Cross-Cultural Fieldwork. *The Professional Geographer*, *67*(2), 180–186. https://doi.org/10.1080/00330124.2014.907705

Roulston, K., & Choi, M. (2018). Qualitative interviews. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection*, (pp. 233-249). SAGE Publucations.

Sarkadi, Z. (2022, April 3). Orbán: Akkora győzelmet arattunk, hogy még a Holdról is látszik [Orbán: We achieved such a big victory that it can be seen even from the Moon]. *444*. https://444.hu/2022/04/03/orban-akkora-gyozelmet-arattunk-hogy-meg-a-holdrol-is-latszik

Sieber, J. E. (1992). Strategies for assuring confidentiality. In J. E. Sieber (Ed.), *Planning ethically responsible research: A guide for students and internal review boards* (pp. 52–63). SAGE Publications.

Silverman, D. (2021). Introducing qualitative research. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research* (5th ed., pp. 3–16). SAGE Publications.

Sportal.hu (2021, February 26). Már csak Fidesz-kapcsolattal működnek a klubok: mutatjuk, kik irányítják a magyar futballt. [Only clubs with Fidesz ties remain: here's who controls Hungarian football]. *Sportal.* https://www.sportal.hu/cikk/mar-csak-fidesz-kapcsolattal-mukodnek-a-klubok-mutatjuk-kik-iranyitjak-a-magyar-futballt-20220928044719088 62#

Stacey, J. (1988). Can there be a feminist ethnography? *Women's Studies International Forum, 11*(1), 21–27. https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(88)90004-0

Székely, S. (2019, November 27). Már 791 000 000 000 forintot tolhatott a fociba az Orbán-kormány [The Orbán government may have poured 791 billion forints into football]. *mfor*. https://mfor.hu/cikkek/makro/utanpotlas-koltesek.html?fbclid=IwAR1soQTHvRDqBDhib2rgyTRzL-UNr0szcfu_o5EJPoU0TGaseBSXkccZHmc

TrollFoci (2025, March 23). *"A futball nem szép dolog, hanem szenvedélyes." - vendég: Orbán Viktor miniszterelnök* ["Football is not a beautiful thing, it is passionate." - guest: Prime Minister Viktor Orbán]. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hqigj9bDaf8

Venuti, L. (2024). General introduction. In L. Venuti (Ed.), *Hungary as a sport superpower: Football from Horthy to Kádár (1924–1960)* (pp. 1–13). De Gruyter Oldenbourg.

Végh, J. (2020, November 13). Válogatott: Így lett Loicból Lajos – egy váratlan hős útja Magyarországra [National squad: This is how Loic became Lajos – an unexpected hero's journey to Hungary]. *Nemzeti Sport*. https://www.nemzetisport.hu/magyar-valogatott/2020/11/valogatott-igy-lett-loicbol-lajos-egy-varatlan-hos-utja-magyarorszagra

Vincze, E. (2014). The racialization of Roma in the 'new' Europe and the political potential of Romani women. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, *21*(4), 435-442. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506814548963

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society, 1*(2), 125–151. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243287001002002

Wolcott, H. F. (2005). The art of fieldwork (2nd ed.). AltaMira Press.

Woodward, K. (2004). Rumbles in the jungle: Boxing, racialization and the performance of masculinity. *Leisure Studies, 23*(1), 5–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/0261436042000182281

Yassour-Borochowitz, D. (2004). Reflections on the Researcher-Participant Relationship and the Ethics of Dialogue. *Ethics & Behavior*, *14*(2), 175–186. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327019eb1402_5

Yassour-Borochowitz, D. (2012). "Only if she is sexy": An autoethnography of female researcher–male participants relations. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, *31*(5/6), 402–417. https://doi.org/10.1108/02610151211235433

Zurné, L., & Oudenhuijsen, L. W. (2024). Sexualised researchers in ethnographic encounters: towards feminist approaches of fieldwork training and representation. *Tijdschrift Voor Genderstudies*, *27*(2/3), 171-189. https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/4178469