Preface

Education to prevent racism –
Interview with Lilian Thuram

An interview with Lilian Thuram (37), a former professional footballer who played for France, including the World Cup-winning team of 1998, and is now a member of that country's High Council for Integration and President of the Lilian Thuram Foundation – Education against Racism.

William Gasparini: People from a variety of cultures play football in France. Is it not paradoxical that, although football is a "mixed-race sport", racism also occurs in the context of football?

Lilian Thuram: It is vital to realise that racism and discrimination in sport reflect the racism that exists in society. The more racism there is in society, the more will occur at football grounds. The racism that occurs is not therefore specific either to sport or to football, and it is not sport which gives rise to racism. On the contrary, it is through sport that people come into contact with one another and get to know each other, with the result that prejudice becomes less marked. Thus, football is a fantastic means of integration. Clearly the situation is not the same in society, where people do not always meet others, and therefore retain their prejudices. Football does not solve all of society's problems, but does bring people together and get positive messages across to combat racism and encourage people to accept others. In fact, I am surprised that people feel that sport contributes to racism. While sport does involve rivalry, that rivalry is friendly. I think that there is less discrimination in sport than in society as a whole. Performance is what counts most, not skin colour.

You played in several European countries (in Parma and Turin in Italy, and Barcelona in Spain, as well as in France). How did racism seem to you to affect sport (especially football) in these three countries? Are there differences, and, if so, what causes these?

Lilian Thuram: It is no easier for a foreigner in one country than in the others, for racism exists in all three. There are some differences, however, for societies have developed differently in each. The approach to others, such as the approach to black-skinned people in France, Italy and Spain, is different. Not all of these societies recognise others in the same way, because each has its own history. France, unlike Italy and Spain, came into contact with foreigners and black populations on its own soil at an early stage, as a

result of colonialism. In spite of such differences, however, racism exists in all three countries, for the history of Europe is based on a hierarchy of "races". Thus history helped to shape Europe's collective unconscious. A European mindset emerged according to which whites were superior and blacks inferior, a matter on which European scientists agreed in the 19th century and for part of the 20th.

We live in a society where people believe that some qualities are intrinsically linked to skin colour. In every European country, for instance, if you ask whether blacks are physically stronger, the reply is usually that they are. The implication of physical strength, however, is intellectual weakness. Such prejudice is even stronger in certain countries where there has been no mixing of races, such as those of eastern Europe. This is evident from the reception given in some European stadia to black footballers, with some supporters throwing bananas at them and making monkey noises.

Did you ever suffer discrimination during your footballing career? Can you recall any instances of racism whilst playing, after your arrival in metropolitan France at the age of nine?

Lilian Thuram: I was nine when I first arrived in Avon, near Fontainebleau, and I gradually came to realise that my skin colour counted against me, with people making comments and behaving differently. Within football, however, everything went fairly well. I played in the local Portuguese club in Fontainebleau first, then moved on to Racing club de Fontainebleau, and subsequently Melun.

Later on, I was indeed subjected to racial abuse and to monkey noises while playing, but, as I have already said, this is understandable when you look at the history of peoples and the education received by the spectators and fans concerned.

Did your perception of racism change in the course of your playing career? Did your own social success and fame alter your perception of racism in sport (and in general)?

Lilian Thuram: My view of racism has not changed. I always try to understand the society in which I am living in order to get a clearer idea of how racism works.

Racism stems from the fact that the great majority of people still believe today that there are several different human races. How many people are aware that we all share the same origin? As Professor Yves Coppens has pointed out, we are all of African origin dating back 3 million years, a fact which should foster a feeling of kinship. People view me differently today, but this is not because of my football career, but because I am known and recognised. There is less racism for anyone well known and recognised.

Anyone who does not know any blacks thinks that they are all identical. People who live in a neighbourhood where there is a foreign family may feel prejudiced if they do not know that family. But prejudice vanishes once they have talked to and recognised each other. If someone is recognised, prejudice changes, whereas it will endure in the absence of any approach to the other person.

Do you make any distinction between discrimination and racism in sport?

Lilian Thuram: Racism reflects a belief in "races" and a prejudice based on skin colour. Thus people are defined according to their race on the basis of a hierarchy of races. A similar hierarchical system is also applied to women, and some people also regard women as inferior. All such views come under the heading of discrimination.

People may suffer discrimination for being short, tall, Italian, black, female, etc., and not just for their skin colour. Discrimination is more general, but, like racism, it applies a hierarchy and separates out certain population groups regarded as inferior.

There is fairly widespread agreement that racism and discrimination in sport should be condemned. On the other hand, there are disagreements, both in France and in Europe as a whole, about solutions. The response in certain European states of "multiculturalist" tradition has been to develop positive discrimination machinery or to encourage community-based sport. France, in contrast, shows a greater inclination towards mixed sport, acting as a vehicle for integration. What is your position on this?

Lilian Thuram: The differences noted stem from cultural differences. France has been built up denying differences and recognising only French citizens (whether they are from the Basque country, Alsace, or elsewhere), rather than communities. In Great Britain a different view is taken, with the community to the fore. There is no problem about coming together. Provided that nobody is excluded, activities based on the community are not in themselves problematic. I myself played in a Portuguese club, without any problems arising. I keep a completely open mind. Everything depends on the club's own message. There is no problem if people want to come together, enjoy themselves and experience some part of their own culture. The real question is whether the community concerned is open or closed. Sharing without excluding others does not pose a problem.

Competitive sport traditionally keeps women and men apart. There are some countries, however, where gender-based discrimination goes much further, for the sake of cultural and religious "traditions". In Norway, for instance, women's basketball competitions are held specifically for young Muslims, and no males may be present during matches, where only female officials and spectators are allowed. And in Germany some swimming

pools open at certain times just for Muslim women. What do you think about such single-sex sport?

Lilian Thuram: This separation has nothing to do with sport, as it is done for religious reasons. Not all sports can be mixed, for there is a biological difference between women and men. The sexes are kept apart for reasons of physical capacity.

Separation for religious reasons is unconnected with sport. It is a complex issue. It is an odd idea to exclude men from women's matches, and for one sex not to accept the other. Competitive sport should be open, whatever participants' religious beliefs may be.

Whether we are talking about cultural identities or religions, it is important to know other people and other religions, thus avoiding negative judgements and prejudice. Hence the importance of education. I personally respect every religion, provided that it is open and accepts other people both in sport and in society. But this acceptance must go both ways, between different religions and between civil society and religions.

In 2008, you set up the Lilian Thuram Foundation – Education against Racism. Tell us how it enables discrimination in sport to be effectively combated.

Lilian Thuram: My foundation will not be active specifically in the world of sport, but in society as a whole, for racism is an ill which afflicts our society. No one is born a racist. It is society which produces racism. I am therefore trying to work out why a society becomes racist. It is necessary to understand before the fight against prejudice can begin. It is also my firm belief that it is through education that racism can be effectively combated. Thus my foundation is intended to combat racism in all its forms, relying on education as the main means of dealing with the problem. The foundation is based on the axiom that there is only one race, the human race. It works in three fields: educational activities with children, awareness-raising in society as a whole, and research into racism. I believe that this programme will enable us to campaign effectively against the idea that some "races" are better than others. Racism has been part of some European peoples' education, and it is in the same way – through education – that this conception, this collective unconscious must be corrected.

Until such time as we change our conception, racism will continue. What is your conception of other people? Are you prejudiced?

General introduction

What do we mean when we speak of discrimination in sport?

William Gasparini,[1] University of Strasbourg (France)

Etymologically, discrimination means making a distinction. But it is not just any form of differentiation between one individual and another, or between one group and another, which constitutes discrimination. Differentiation becomes "discriminatory" where it is based on illegitimate or illegal criteria. In practice, discrimination involves different treatment of persons who are in comparable situations, on the basis of at least one criterion which is against the law. Sociologists also show us that discrimination may be subjective and felt internally. Eurostat surveys reveal that the feeling of discrimination is more widespread than actual discrimination. Whether it occurs at work or during leisure activities, discrimination needs to be studied from both the objectivist and subjectivist angle, with the vigilance of the research scientist.

The world of sport: between inclusion and exclusion

Sport involves a paradox. Popular, and practised on a voluntary basis, it accepts anyone, irrespective of cultural origin or gender. It can therefore be regarded as an area free from discrimination. Conversely, competitive sport can also be viewed as a form of differentiation, dividing and ranking practitioners according to level of ability. Yet this exclusion of those who are "less good" at their sport, which may look like discrimination, is not in fact based on social criteria, birth, religion or "race". It is even clearer that discrimination is not involved when you consider that the rules require equal treatment: age groups, weight categories and rankings are created precisely so that "the best person wins", skin colour not being a factor. Differences are recognised and differentiation allowed only between the sexes, since it is "natural" for separate competitions to be held for women and men.

In accordance with sporting ideology, performance is a fair yardstick to apply in democratic societies which posit fundamental equality between individuals. Thus sport provides a playing field which is "in essence" level (fair), and the best possible opportunity for integration for participants, whatever their culture or national origin. The humanist sporting tradition adopted by the founder of the modern Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin, involves the bringing together of athletes from different (geographical, cultural, religious

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1. University professor, and head of the sports sciences research team (EA 1342), University of Strasbourg (France).

and social) backgrounds, who compete against one another, obeying the same rules, and in the same institutional and ethical framework, all coming together in a single "sporting community". Thus all participants leave their affiliations and individuality in the dressing room, appearing on the sports field or in the gymnasium in a neutral capacity.

A reality check, however, shows that these ethical principles are flouted. In practice, some groups of participants and supporters, either because they do belong to a particular group or because they are assumed to, suffer injustice, racism and discrimination which highlight the paradox of sport. What is more, being based on physical performance, competitive sport not only keeps women apart from men, but also separates athletes with disabilities from the others. At the very highest level, for instance, the Paralympics are organised by the International Paralympic Committee (and not the International Olympic Committee), bringing together athletes with disabilities from all countries to participate in special events. The athletes concerned have physical disabilities, visual impairments, and so forth (amputees, people without sight, cerebral palsy sufferers, wheelchair athletes and athletes with other disabilities).

This shows that society does not always keep up with its principles and intentions. In the face of a certain political concept of the universality of sport, day-to-day practice and the conduct of sports institutions surely indicate that sport continues to be affected by a number of identity-related affirmations and specific instances of discrimination (sexual, ethnic and/or based on physical appearance or sexual orientation).

Discrimination: a legal concept, a growing European awareness

Anti-discrimination policies were first adopted in relation to access to employment. In accordance with the French Labour Code, discrimination is a difference in treatment on grounds or origin, gender, morals, sexual orientation, age, family situation, actual or supposed affiliation to an ethnic group, nation or race, political opinion, involvement in trade union or mutual benefit society activities, religious beliefs, physical appearance, name, state of health or disability.[2] Discrimination is thus against the law in France, as it is in most European countries.

The building of Europe played a decisive part in the inclusion in public policies of all kinds of discrimination, in combination or individually, and particularly discrimination on ethnic grounds. By introducing a European responsibility for discrimination, Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam, of

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2. Law against Discrimination of 16 November 2001.

20 November 1997, was the first step in a broadening of the concept of discrimination on grounds of gender to include all kinds of discrimination, particularly those based on actual or supposed ethnic origin. Hence equality, non-discrimination and diversity are principles which are often laid down in law in EU countries. Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) states that: "Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, […] membership of a national minority, […] shall be prohibited". Similarly, Article 22 states that "The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity".

On the basis of this definition, does discrimination exist in sport? National communities being scattered in many European countries, sport is often said to be a way of integrating a number of population groups which suffer from negative discrimination. This widely held idea of sport as a unifying and integrating factor was recently confirmed by the findings of a European survey conducted at the request of the European Commission in 2004. Sixty-four per cent of European Union citizens said that they regarded sport as a way of combating discrimination.[3] The Council of the European Union similarly described sport (in December 2000) as "a factor making for integration, involvement in social life, tolerance, [and] acceptance of differences", echoing some of the articles of the European Sports Charter (1992), which not only gives a reminder of the right of access to sport for all (included in 1975 in the first European Charter of Sport for All), but also emphasises the need to keep sport free of any kind of discrimination based on religion, race, sex or political opinion. In 2007, the main intentions of this universalism in European sport were again endorsed by the European Commission in its "White Paper on Sport", which proposes the development of activities with a view to achieving social inclusion by and through sport.

Sport, discrimination and racism

Evidently, the reality of sport is contradictory, with various legal texts on sport officially affirming the need for equality, while in practice equality is far from having been achieved, precisely because of discrimination.

If discrimination is considered to be the separation of one group of human beings from another (or from others), and the denial to that group of the same rights, it is clear that there are various forms of discrimination which affect physical and sports activities, based on physical appearance, sex, age, race or national origin, social background, religion and geographical location. Although there are variations, discrimination in sport very frequently

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3. Special Eurobarometer 213 (2004), "Citizens of the European Union and sport", opinion poll conducted at the request of the Directorate-General of Education and Culture and co-ordinated by the Directorate-General of Press and Communication, European Commission, November 2004.

involves stigmatisation[4] (Erving Goffman referred, in 1975, to "stigmata") on the basis of external signs or characteristics of foreignness or difference (skin colour, language, body shape, gender, etc.). As already stated, it also seems important to distinguish between deliberate discrimination (in sports clubs, at venues, etc.), which is not very widespread in sport, and the feeling of being discriminated against, which some individuals and communities may experience more strongly than others (foreigners, homosexuals, etc.). Furthermore, discrimination is very often cumulative, particularly for economic migrants, despite the commonly shared view about immigrants succeeding through sport.

Confusion between racism and discrimination often arises during discussions of discrimination issues. Discrimination is not necessarily the act of a racist. Racism is based on two dimensions: the inferiority of persons belonging to what are claimed to be different races, and the specific intellectual, physical and emotional characteristics of persons of different "races". People often say that "blacks are good at sport", which is a racist opinion, but does not prevent "blacks" from being invited to join sports clubs.

In France (unlike English-speaking countries, and particularly the United States), racial or ethnic discrimination in sport has been very little studied. In English-speaking countries, the situation of black minorities and the sociological tradition of "racial studies" have led to greater attention being given to these issues for a long time now. As long ago as the late 1960s, early American studies clearly described black people's exclusion from, and exploitation by, sport and challenged the view that sport was free from racism, made social mobility possible and, in more general terms, promoted black people's social integration. At the same time, belief in their athletic superiority developed in both the black and the white communities.[5] All these studies ultimately gave social issues a racial dimension, but also tended to influence European researchers.

In France, unlike the US, we have little information about discrimination in sport according to ethnic origin and skin colour, because of our republican tradition of integration, and because "ethnic" statistics are not allowed to be included in censuses. Not until the second half of the 1990s did the ethnicity

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4. As described by Goffman E., *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Englewoods Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1963. According to Goffman's definition, individuals are "stigmatised" if they display some attribute that disqualifies them in their interactions with others. This attribute differs from what others would expect of them in terms of their identity.
5. See Coakley, J., "Sport, questions raciales et ethnicité", in Ohl F. (ed.), *Sociologie du sport. Perspectives internationales et mondialisation, Pratiques physiques et société*, Paris, PUF, 2006, pp. 89-103.

paradigm begin to feature in empirical studies in France,[6] at first in relation to schools, and subsequently in public action, following official recognition of discrimination by the government in October 1998. Yet if we take a close look at not just elite sport, but also ordinary and amateur sport in France, we find people originally from sub-Saharan Africa or the Maghreb participating in certain areas of sport (sports requiring stamina, speed and strength, as well as football), but not in others (technical sports requiring equipment, such as skiing, sailing, motor sport, and those sports historically considered "middle class", such as tennis, dancing, climbing and equestrianism). Their visible successes often trap people with black skin or from the Maghreb in jobs requiring natural gifts and talents (sport and music), and not intellectual qualities. The view that black people's athletic abilities are "innate" is also tinged with racism, for black athletes do not have specific physiological features or greater intrinsic qualities.

The fight against ethnic discrimination in the context of European pluralism

Policies to combat discrimination were gradually introduced from the 1990s onwards, mainly at the instigation of the European authorities which wished to regard certain groups of immigrant origin as "visible minorities". The concept of "visible minority" as used in France, however, is a euphemism which refers to the highly institutionalised English-language concept of "race relations". Not because races in the biological sense exist, but because the attachment of a "race" label to certain individuals and minority groups gives rise to, and sometimes shapes, interaction between persons and organised practice. It is with a view to designating this social relationship and measuring its expressions that the concept of "race", in English-speaking countries, is one aspect of a set of representation policies, both in the social sphere (and especially for the purposes of censuses) and in the sphere of media portrayals, thus fuelling public discussion of discrimination and its measurement.

The question then arises, in these countries as in France, of the relations between those "racial" categories, as shaped and established in the social sphere, and as made visible by media portrayals, especially on television. What link is there between efforts to achieve recognition and the struggle to achieve visibility? Where "racial" discrimination is concerned, what is to be measured and which indicators are to be used? Are the various policies to prevent discrimination in social practice and in television portrayals effective? Does higher visibility necessarily lead to better recognition?

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6. Lorcerie F., *L'école et le défi ethnique. Education et intégration* (School and the ethnic challenge. Education and integration), Paris, INRP-ESF, 2003.

By gradually legitimising a "differentiated citizenship" and "group demands", are European policies not contributing to the fragmentation of states by assigning a specific place in the social sphere to certain groups regarded as "minorities"? In the world of sport, it is often anti-racism associations and movements representing people who identify with each other (gays and lesbians, for instance) which persuade European states to take action against discrimination and homophobia. The anti-racist measures adopted at UK football grounds, however, can be understood only in the context of a society divided into ethnic groups, within which inter-ethnic relations have as much substance as (or more than) relations between social classes. This view also leads governments to pursue community management policies involving, for example, multicultural education through sport or intercultural competitions.

In the context of the fight against discrimination, immigrant population groups are gradually coming to be regarded as ethnic minorities. Is there not a risk, if identities are based on cultural and ethnic origin (particularly for second and third generation immigrants), of ultimately, unwittingly, giving social relationships an ethnic dimension? France, on the other hand, has a tradition of sociological analysis of social exclusion, and of dealing with discrimination through urban policy and through action against exclusion, without specifically targeting ethnic groups. These public policies, to which various labels are applied (priority education zone, work integration system, plan for integration through sport, and so on), are implicitly designed to combat the effects of ethnic discrimination, but without making this an object in itself, as is done in the United Kingdom and in Germany. But the fact that they target areas, rather than population groups, brings a risk that policies for preventing and combating discrimination might fail to deal directly with ethnic discrimination. As is clear from these examples, the fight against discrimination in sport is a subject of debate in Europe, for it refers to integration models which differ from one country to another. Far removed from any ideological prejudice, this book is intended to tackle a question of fundamental importance to anyone wishing to understand what is at stake in European sport, as viewed from the various perspectives of young research scientists and of European sports journalists.

The structure of this book

Chapter 1 looks at the way in which the media and those who work for them cover anti-discrimination initiatives in their sports reports. How can sports reporters contribute to more balanced and fairer coverage of the international rivalry very frequently involved in sports events? How can sports journalism play a part in intercultural dialogue? These questions were put by the Council of Europe to those who spoke in the seminar on "Sport and discrimination: the media perspective", which took place on 20 November 2008

at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg. Following an introduction by Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni,[7] Chapter 1 looks at the discussions which took place at the seminar and the ideas put forward.

The chapters which follow contain the thoughts of some young Europeans who are conducting research into sports sciences and have studied three kinds of discrimination (sexual, ethnic and physical). These young scientists (most of them studying for doctorates at European universities), who all got together on 20 November 2008 to discuss "Sport and Diversity",[8] are thus, through their research, contributing new ideas to the European "sport for all" debate. With an introduction by European research scientists with an established reputation in these fields, discrimination in sport is considered from three different angles.

– ***Women's and girls' access to sport:*** While there do seem to be some sports which are more "masculine", and others which are more "feminine", what relationship between the sexes should be the aim in the world of sport? Are variations determined by social affiliation, cultural influences or geographical distribution? How can women gain access to a male-dominated sports world?

– ***Access to sport for persons in situations of difficulty:*** Under this theme texts will appear relating to the implications – ideological (inclusion, participation, discrimination, stigmatisation, etc.) and educational (adaptation, accessibility, educational relationship, etc.) – of physical activities intended for persons with disabilities and those excluded from society. Should specific treatment be suggested for physical activities for persons with disabilities, or should such persons be integrated into the ordinary world of sport? Can sport help to restore to their place in society those excluded from it?

– ***The access to sport and conditions of participation of "ethnic minorities":*** While the "French-style integration model" is often contrasted with the multiculturalism of the English-speaking world, both these major models of management in a multinational context rely on sport as a vector of cohesion. That said, what about the actual situations experienced across Europe's many and varied sports facilities?

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7. Director General of Education, Culture and Cultural Heritage, Youth and Sport, and Council of Europe Co-ordinator for Intercultural Dialogue.
8. European Encounters, organised jointly by the Education through Sport Agency (APELS), the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (APES) and the Sports Sciences Research Team of the University of Strasbourg.