

Sociology essays - racism football sport



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Racism Football Sport

Real Literature Review

The phenomenon of racism in football is not as old as the conflict of racism in society in general, but neither is it as recent as the current worrying situation in which some to believe (Back et al. 1998). Back et al. (1998) identified that football grounds have provided one of the largest public arenas in which racism can be openly expressed. It is against this background that the phenomenon of racism in football has led to wide spread discussion during the past couple of decades within the media, amongst policy makers and in the wider football community. Recently, there has been a increase in the study of sport, racism and ethnicity (Jarvie 1991). Numerous factors which will be explained have undoubtedly contributed to fuel this interest.

However, a couple of considerations appear to have been of great importance. Firstly, black sportsmen and sportswomen throughout the world have experienced remarkable 'successes' in international sport (Jarvie 1991). According to Mercer, (1994) and Shohat and Stam , 1994) this may be due to the fact that apparently each positive stereotype has a negative result.

Therefore , as black men and women have come to excel in various sports , people of a non ethnic background have needed an explanation for why what seemed to be an inferior race can outperform a superior one . This may be one of many factors which may have encouraged resentment for their success which in turn could have lead to abuse in a racist nature. Secondly, a disproportionately high level of athletic participation by diverse ethnic minority cultures has often been used by 'liberal minded' sports enthusiasts as an excuse to indicate that there is no racism in these arenas. These authors use these examples to try and illustrate that there is no form or

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racism in certain sports, however authors such as (Williams 1992, 1994; Turner 1990; Holland 1992a, 1992b, 1995) have proven otherwise. Bairner (1996) and Guha (1997) who are thought to be sporting enthusiasts argue the assumption that sport itself is relatively free from racism and that sport, more than any other sphere of society, enjoys a certain degree of democratization and equality according to Jarvie (1991). However, “ such accounts of sport which make general inferences about the changing nature of racial relations in society based on a consideration of athletic participation rates” (Jarvie, 1991, p. 3) are misleading due to their ignorance of the broader issues of power and domination within society. Although there has been a sizable interest of studies in the area of race and sport in the UK (Chappell et al. 1996; Norris & Jones, 1998) focusing primarily on the issues of “ stacking” and “ centrality” is useful evidence in a descriptive term. However, in terms of quantifiable data indicating that there is a decrease racism in sport, it would be very naive to gain assumptions that there was a decrease in racism in sport from these sources. Maguire (1991) has therefore recognised that there is a need for greater qualitative as well as quantitative research into the area in the “ hope that a more rounded picture may be produced” (p. 100). Although some qualitative research involving racism in English football has been carried out (Cashmore, 1982; Howe, 1976; Maguire, 1991), these studies only concentrated on the experiences of top level Black players. This has been highlights to identify there is very little data on the experiences of racism on lower league footballers. Therefore, this is a worthy study because not only will it explore the different avenues of racism, but will also give a broader picture as to the experiences of racism in lower league footballers. It is believed that non-league football, which

consists of the middle section of the football hierarchy in the United Kingdom, would prove to be a grounded place for such a study for a variety of reasons. First, the realities of race relations could well be more real at lower levels of the game than in the polished environment of professional sport (Hoberman, 1997) due to its less cosmopolitan nature (Maguire, 1991). The need to investigate below the top level of sport has been echoed by Horne (1996), who stated that focusing on the lower level of soccer culture may be beneficial in understanding the differing forms of attachment to, and identification with, the game for Black players, as these everyday levels could well be “ important sites for consolidating and possibly transforming racist attitudes” (p. 61). He further stated that investigations at different levels of soccer are needed if involvement of ethnic minorities in sport and in the wider community are to be better understood and appreciated Racism is undoubtedly a sensitive issue and it is important to be clear on what racism is when conducting the research.

What is Racism?

As quoted from the McPherson report from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: ‘ Racism in general terms consists of conduct or words or practices which advantage or disadvantage people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. In its more subtle form it is as damaging as in its overt form.’

(Macpherson, 1999: 6. 4)According to Long et al (2000) racism arises from the belief that people can be divided into physical genetic categories that make some superior to others, a belief which is then used to justify inequality. He also goes on to explain that ‘ recently racism has been recognised to extent beyond supposed biological superiority to others to

encompass notions of cultural differences' (Long et al, 2000 p. 15). Further to this point Solomos and Back (1996) who conducted a study on racism in society states that racism can be seen as a mutable and changing phenomenon in which notions of biological or pseudo-biological cultural difference are utilised to explain and legitimate hierarchies of racial dominance and exclusion. Therefore there are cases where people do not realise they are disadvantaging people because of their ethnicity. This is can be referred to as everyday, subconscious or indirect racism (Long et al. 2000). It is helpful to look at racism on a broad scale to identify the common trends which may occur and compare them with the experiences of individuals in the UK. Therefore, different types of research such as carried out within various countries in Europe was a practical place to begin with. Racism in football is still a major problem in Poland, Spain and Italy for instance. In the Netherlands: " Ajax fans have the tradition of using Jewish and Israeli symbols to express their allegiance"(Wikipedia). This shows how the picture can often be complex, as these Ajax fans are for the most part not Jewish, but use Jewish symbols because of the historical connections of the club and the area it was founded in to Jews before WW1. Within Holland fans of teams playing Ajax sometimes exhibit racist behaviour in terms of anti-semitic remarks, even though there are no actual Jewish players at Ajax another example from the literature is those Italian fans from Napoli who supported Argentinians in the world cup 1990, rather than the national team, because their local team hero Maradona was in the Argentine side. This lack of national loyalty meant that the Northern Italian fans disliked the southern region fans and so supported anyone who played against Argentina. Examples like these two above highlight that it is not always a

straight forward picture that we are dealing with in considering racism within football. Local and divided loyalties arise and sometimes exchanged, patterns of illogical racist behaviour can develop according to varying circumstances. Therefore: "... the racism on display in European football matches is more often than not dependent on the traditions and historic rivalries within white fans' cultures' (UNESCO 2000). However, there also may be common practices of racism that can be seen through out Europe and even the world. Therefore common ways to deal with it are applicable: ' While one must recognize that the problem of racism is different in each country, a Europe-wide initiative to combat the problem must surely be welcomed' (UNESCO 2000). Even within the UK there are different patterns and history of racism, and different things being done to combat it. The situation in Scotland or Northern Ireland is different from that in England and Wales. For instance the investigation in 2007, against West Ham fans before the match with Spurs was over anti-Semitic chants. An example of the kind of chants that are sometimes used against Spurs fans are:" Those yids from Tottenham
The gas man's got them
Oh those yids from White Hart Lane"
(UNESCO 2000)

Localised Racism

Authors such as Holland et al. (1995) who considered the impact of racism by far right groups at Leeds United football club and the strategies used to oppose these by the club identified ' that it is impossible to identify uniform patterns of racism or prejudice or race relations', rationalize their own choice of focus on the basis that ' terms such as race, ethnicity and sport have to be specifically " unpacked" in terms of content, time and place'. There is a

general consensus that white players do not experience racism in football in the UK, however there is evidence to contradict this belief. There are in fact identity codes within football culture which reveal quite complicated racial meanings. A prime example is the song 'I'd rather be a Paki than a Scouse' which is regularly sung to Liverpool supporters by supporters from Arsenal and Chelsea and Manchester United fans. This song which is sung to the tune of 'She'll be coming round the mountain' is directed at Merseyside fans. The intention is to demote the status people who come from Merseyside from being a normal English society, to one which is frowned upon. Therefore ridiculing the 'neighbourhood nationalism' of Scouseness. This is achieved by fans of different ethnicities from London and Manchester to altering the meaning of being a loathed minority which is the stigmatized category of a 'Paki', rather than retain their race and be a Scouser. This example emphasises the complexities of local racialization and racial exclusion. Likewise it also highlights the fact that different minority communities may have a different hierarchal status within local society. . For example, young black men may win inclusion and even command positions of prestige within particular fan cultures while other minorities – in this case SouthAsians – are relegated to the status of vilified outsiders.(Williams 1992: 24)Williams has also developed a more nuanced notion of the politics of racism within English football. Interestingly he used Phil Cohen's (1988) notion of 'nationalism of the neighbourhood' to discuss the ways in which minorities can win contingent inclusion within local working-class collectivities

Reverse Racism

The terms of racism, moreover, may in some situations also be reversed and lead to phenomena that are difficult to grasp without a sense of the inherent contradictions of contingent Racialization. For example, it has been noted that a racialized black identity can have a number of advantageous connotations within a masculine culture like soccer. In some circles, the mythical dimensions of the black body (of physical, sexual and athletic prowess) may even make a black identity preferable over a white one in terms of its ability to signify a powerful masculinity (Carrington, 2002). As a result, such racialized identities may sometimes be sought out for short term gains as kind of strategic essentialism' (Mercer, 1994). Without doubt, the contingent admiration of racialized black bodies and men is not only a source of possibility within soccer culture, but also one of restraint. Racialized expectations of 'black performance', for example, position black players mostly in attacking roles, and much more rarely as key defenders or goalkeepers (Maguire, 1991). Moreover, this particular black identity is not available to all black players. In contrast to players of British-Caribbean descent, those of British Asian descent are rarely perceived as potentially talented professional players in any position at all. The latter ethnicity, as Burdsey has shown, is stereotypically taken as effeminate and too frail for soccer (Burdsey, 2004). Long , Tongue , Sprackle . and Carrington(1995) affirm this assumption that racial stereotyping provides a freefall for commonsense racism' (Long *et al.*, 1995) . These assumptions transcend a belief that it true that Asians cannot play football . This in tern leads individuals who do not research the subject to believe that these myths are true. These views are the same for black players. Examples include ' not

being good trainers, not being any good once the pitches get muddy and not having the bottle to be defenders' (Long 2000). A further hopeful note there is that in recent years a Japanese player, Shunsuke Nakamura has been making a considerable contribution towards decreasing racist habits amongst Scottish football fans, merely by his popularity as a player. The friendly chant there of " Oh, it's so Japaneasy," when Nakamura gets the ball makes a welcome change from the racist chants that are otherwise heard in football. His football shirt had become the favourite new buy amongst Children in Glasgow, and they have welcomed him as one of their own, so that: " The Japanese midfielder revealed in the pages of the official club magazine, *The Celtic View*, that he would even contemplate extending his contract with the Hoops, such is the manner in which he has acclimatized to life in the West of Scotland." (Soccerphile Ltd, 2000) In a 1995 England vs. Republic of Ireland friendly match in Dublin saw considerable trouble from hard core group of right wingers, including the BNP and Combat 18 groups. They chanted anti-republican songs that led to such bad fights that the game was actually called off, only half an hour later. Research into such things brings to light the cultural nature of racism in football. It comes out in ways that depend on the wider culture that it is within. Clearly the long history of trouble between Eire and England is the background to the 1995 scenes. In a habit that is similar that outlined in Italy where the northerners call the southerners 'blacks' there is also a tendency towards antagonism between the North and South of England. The chant: " I'd rather be a Paki than a scouse (Liverpudlian)" is sometimes used by the fans of some southern teams playing against Liverpool. Tim Crabbe, principle lecturer in sport sociology at Britain's Sheffield Hallam University notes the significance of <https://assignbuster.com/sociology-essays-racism-football-sport/>

using such race related words: " These insults only work because of the stigma that these racial groups still suffer in the minds of large swathes of white European society. As such, race often stands on the sidelines, ready to be mobilized in circumstances where it is deemed appropriate within the ritualized abuse of a football game... " (UNESCO, 2000) Dramatic incidents like these focused the public's attention, and attracted widespread debate in the media about the role of racism among certain groups of supporters and about violence and hooliganism. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that most studies of racism in football tend to concentrate either on the nature and extent of racist abuse in and around football stadiums (Holland 1992a, 1992b, 1995), or are preoccupied with the recruitment activities of extreme right-wing movements (CCS 1981; Leeds Trades Council 1988; Waters 1988). In addition a number of writers have analysed the phenomenon of the growing presence of black players in football, notably Cashmore (1983, 1990), Woolnough (1983), Hill (1989) and Vasili (1994). While most studies have focused on the issue of fan behaviour, racism is apparent at other levels.

Football racism Theories

In terms of scholastic writing and in the minds of the general public, racism in football is often associated with the hostile behaviour of groups of hooligans in and around the stadium (Holland 1992a, 1992b, 1995, Garland and Rowe, 2001; Back et al 1999; Jones, 2002). Nevertheless, it has been acknowledged by Brown (1998) that racism exists amongst ordinary soccer fans, players and even amongst referees and coaches (King, 2004). Racism has also been identified amongst referees and coaches and in the

institutional regions of football associations such as executive committees of football clubs (Back et al., 1999). Further to this point, a number of writers have analysed the phenomenon of the growing presence of black players in football, in particular Cashmore (1983, 1990), Woolnough (1983), Hill (1989) and Vasili (1994). Although, most studies have concentrated on the issue of fan behaviour, racism is evident at other levels. Authors such as Back, Crabbe and Solomus, (1999) have indicated that the majority of the literature on racism in football overlooks the issue by reducing the problem to a clearly identifiable, overt form in which everyone can recognise as racist behaviour. A prime example would be racist hooligan groups (Back et al., 1999). They suggest instead that racism in football should be considered as a part of global football culture. Interestingly, Back et al. (2001) recognised that identifying racism is a more complex task than originally perceived. They identified that there lies four domains in which racism can be measured in football culture. These can be identified as the 'the vernacular', 'the occupational', 'the institutional' and 'the culture industry'. The 'vernacular' domain relates to those forms of racist behaviour which can be identified by society as a negative form of abuse within football. These problems include explicit racist chanting amongst fans. This also includes local rivalries which can be identified as a form of 'neighbourhood nationalism' (Long, 2000) which can lead to racist behaviours within and outside the stadiums (Crabbe, 2004). An example of this is the 1995 England vs. Republic of Ireland friendly match in Dublin which saw considerable trouble from hard core group of right wingers. The second domain which has been identified is the 'occupational domain' which concentrates on the forms of racism players experience at their football clubs. These can include

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experiences on the training ground and in the changing rooms. Racist actions which can also be identified in this domain include the process of 'stacking' players in certain positions which comply with historic racial folk law views of successful positions for some for ethnic minorities (Maguire, 1991)

EXAMPLE?? The 'institutional' arena involves the administration and management of the football. Racial issues which arise from the institutional domain include a lack of access for ethnic minorities towards decision making and policies and at the club. racialized patterns of club ownership, and a lack of representation of different ethnic groups on management and club boards. It also involves the shapes of social networks that can constitute racialized networks of patronage, which hinder access of certain minorities in football (Solomos and Back 1995 and Burdsey, 2004). This is reflected due to the growing number of black and ethnic players, emerging from professional football. It would be natural to think that this development would naturally transcend to the institutional forums of football. However, this has not had a significant impact on management, coaching or in the board rooms (Solomos and Back 1995). The fourth domain, 'culture industry', looks at racism involved in biased representations of football players from different ethnic backgrounds in the popular media and patterns of advertising and sponsorship that support them (Hernes, 2005). The four arenas of racialization in football mentioned above bring to light the different ways in which racial exclusion can occur within football. This shows that there has been a development on the notions of racism which illustrate that there is in fact more depth to the origins of racism compared to previous authors such as Williams (2001) who relate racism in football with hooliganism and violence. Therefore, this research has focussed on all the aspects of racism

which have been identified in the literature. However, in particular finding out if the more covert forms of racism are existent at lower league football.

Initiatives

In addition, the Football Offences Act was passed in 1991 which criminalized racial chanting or abuse (Armstrong, 1998). Nevertheless, according to Welsh (1998), the undoubted racialized nature of the fan environment has resulted in “ a generation of black people [having] been hounded out of football by overt racism” (p. xii). Emphasizing this point of a continuing racialized environment, he went on to ask, The 'Football unites, racism divides' initiative (FURD), started in 1995 by some Sheffield United fans focuses on the issue of increasing the participation of people from ethnic minorities in football in a variety of ways. They note:" It has long been the case that a number of fans have used Saturday afternoons at football matches to air their racial prejudices but it is now recognised that this minority of racist fans is only part of the problem." (FURD, 1997)They help make it clear that in order to decrease racism in football it is also necessary to get people from ethnic minorities involved, not just as fans, but also as players, managers, etc. FURD indicates that the UK was the first country to try to tackle racism in football in an organised way. The ' Let's Kick Racism out of Football' campaign was started in 1993, also the ' Show Racism the Red Card' came soon after. Now there is a Europe wide effort, the 'Football Against Racism in Europe' (FARE) network. The Let's Kick Racism Out of Football is now well established within the UK and aims to prevent racism through a variety of aspects. " Kick It Out works throughout the football, educational and community sectors to challenge racism and work for positive

change." (Kick it out, 2007) They target Professional football players and clubs with advice, and try to get to Young people in schools and youth clubs. However, more specific to this research project, they also attempt to prevent racism within Amateur football, and so stop it growing into the professional side. They also, in conjunction with the most recent developments in combating racism in football try to help various Ethnic Minorities, especially Asians become involved with football. The (SIRC) notes two important points, that racism: "... an important factor in the problem of football hooliganism itself (SIRC, (2007). The actual extent of racism is virtually impossible to measure as detailed statistics in this context are almost non-existent." The issue of football hooliganism was better known, at least until recently in the UK. Of course it is a less contentious issue, as the vast majority of people can easily condemn it. When it comes to racist hooligan behaviour then the issue become that divisive. Since, it appears many in the UK still harbour racist attitudes in various ways. Another aspect of the literature that has informed the present study is the issue of right wing groups and racism. Groups like the BNP are often associated with racism in football. It is an issue to consider as to why the groups are attracted to each other: " Some debate also exists as to whether right-wing groups deliberately target soccer fans as recruits or whether soccer fans are drawn into the groups because of the opportunities they offer for violence." (SIRC, 2007) It appears that some researchers think right wing groups do deliberately target football fans. Others think that they are opportunist and use violence as a way to direct aggression against those they see as their enemies, i. e. ethnic minorities

Types of Racism

A study in 1999 by Jon Garland and Michael Rowe attempted to consider three aspects of racism in football and efforts made to combat it: " the conflation of racism with 'hooliganism'; the role of antiracist campaigns within the game; and the denial of the problem of racism within football." (Garland and Rowe, 1999: 335). They suggest that although the various efforts by fans and clubs are good, they lack an academic rigor in the way that defines racism and other important concepts. This is not just academic nit picking, but something that actually affects real efforts. For instance there is often too much attention paid to large scale, obvious examples of racism, such as a group of fans self consciously giving the Nazi salute. This at the expense of more subtle examples of racism at the everyday level. They suggest that these everyday forms of racism are actually more harmful to individuals because of the impact on their ordinary lives which can cause psychological upset in a way that is, though hard to quantify, deeply felt. Garland and Rowe note that initiatives would benefit from having more sociological thinking behind them: " Adopting these perspectives at the local level would help both clubs and fans to develop and sustain more meaningful programmes that suit the prevailing conditions." (Garland and Rowe, 1999: 335). Overt racism among supporters and abuse directed at black players, both of which flourished in the 1970s and 1980s, have declined steeply in recent years in the face of vociferous public campaigning such as the kick it out campaign. " EXAMPLE – JOHN BARNES However, Crabbe, (2004) goes on to note that the underlying negative feelings against black players appears to still be there. Also, that, unfortunately in other European countries it is not even implicit EXAMPLE LEWIS HAMILTON 2008. The racism is still very much

explicit and in your face. He notes the singing of chants like 'Get out, get out, queers, niggers, Basques and Catalans' in Spain and anti-Semitic slogans written on club walls in Italy. In addition, some researchers think that there has been something of a return to racist behaviour in football in the last few years. (Cowley 2003) comments on the possible cause of this: "... the present rise stems partly from the growth of racism within society generally... The present 'war on terror' has brought about increased suspicion, hatred and outright hostility to Muslim communities in Britain." (Cowley, 2003: 55) Statistics in 2000 from the Football League national fan survey suggest that three out of ten of fans had heard racist remarks aimed at players in the 1999/2000 season. 7% had seen racism towards other fans. These figures are very similar for the FA Premier League. only 4% of all FA Premier League fans surveyed thought racism was getting worse at football matches at that level in 2001. Although, half way through 2001 apparently racially motivated organised groups of fans and others were involved in serious disturbances in Oldham before the Oldham Athletic v Stoke City match. This appeared to be the catalyst which caused disturbances later in northern cities to ethnic minorities who retaliated to these supporters and racist organisations (Williams, 2001).

Inconspicuous forms of Racism

The focus on different cultural domains and interactions outlined above has particular consequences for the way racist behaviour is understood, and its reproduction theorized. Overt and instantly recognisable 'racist' acts can no longer be taken as shorthand to classify a person as belonging to a deviant group of soccer fans that is characterized by moral degeneration (that is,

'racist/hooligans'). As (Garland and Row, 1999) state, they should rather be seen as expressions of a larger 'racialized' culture of Football. Therefore, the solution to understanding racism does not lie solely in the study of the content, consequences and intentions behind the overt racist act itself. Interestingly it also requires taking into account the cultural context in which such acts become meaningful expressions (Miles, 1997). Further to this point Miles (1997) declared that the cultural context of racism is repeated through continued development of 'Racialization', which are contained in the unobtrusive, sub-conscious ins and outs of everyday life. These everyday endeavours can range from a simple joke about black players in the changing room to differential racist expectations on the training grounds and the development of mono-ethnic sub-groups of players within mixed soccer clubs and teams (King, 2004). These practices do not necessarily produce overtracism, nor may people identify these expressions with that of a racialized nature. However, by reproducing a racialized situation they are in fact, fuelling the *catalyst* for overt racist abuse to occur in meaningful ways. Since the potential for meaningful expressions of racism lies in sets of racialized practices and interactions of wider soccer culture, the usual focus on the perpetrator and 'victim' of the racist act needs to be complemented with a similar rigorous attention for the culture in which the act was expressed. Racialization implies a set of differentially racialized cultural contexts it also constitutes a move away from the common assumption that such a context is formed by a single, coherent racist ideology. Instead, it allows for an understanding of the contradictions and incoherencies within and between the expressions of racism in different domains of soccer culture. For example, white soccer fans can racially abuse black players of

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the opposite team Whilst supporting those on their own team, (Garland and Rowe, 1999) and racist abuse is also common between different non-white ethnic groups and in situations where the white majority is underrepresented (King, 2004).

Institutional Racism in football?

Back et al (2001) interestingly made some intriguing observations when invited to a Carling No. 1 Panel of Chair of the Football Supporters' Association. The first was that not only did this setting reflect traces of middle or upper class and status but 'white centredness within the institutions of football more generally' (Back et al. 2001, p. 162). It is in these exact places, where political decisions, footballing rumours, policies and job opportunities are instigated. During the visit to this setting, Back et al. noted that there was not one ethnic minority descendent sited at the location. Therefore if the most influential people in British football do not have a true representation of society (in this case people of ethnic minority who work in the footballing industry). These boards claim that their decisions are based on holistic approaches which benefit everyone at their establishment. However, if there is no diversity in at the top level of decision making, how can there be a fair conclusion in policies which embodies everyone involved in the game? This proves that the old-boy network is still active and is continuing to work along racial lines (Rimer, 1996). Back et al (1996) go on to state that it is: "easy for everyone to support a campaign against racism in football when it is targeted against pathologically aggressive, neo-Nazi thugs. It might prove a little more tricky to generate

football-wide support if we were to start asking questions about the attitudes in the boardroom, on the pitch, and in the training gro