Chapter 2

Conceptual and theoretical considerations

Racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and Islamophobia

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The chapters of this volume provide a series of case studies that analyse racism and other forms of discrimination in various European countries. Each has a theoretical perspective – some more explicit than others. The purpose of this chapter is to offer a conceptual framework to contextualise them collectively. It draws quite deliberately upon discourses about racisms from different disciplinary traditions (e.g. anthropology, geography, history, philosophy, psychology, sociology), a variety of subject fields (e.g. education, health, media, medicine, politics, sport), and scholars and practitioners from several countries (e.g. Austria, Cyprus, France, Hungary, Spain, Switzerland). Despite this wide range of sources, empirical examples to illustrate conceptual and theoretical points are drawn primarily from men's football, reflecting the main focus of researchers' attention and the relative scarcity of women's (and non-binary) voices in the public domain on themes associated with racisms. Material is also drawn from sources available in the English language which may also indicate an implicit Anglocentrism.

It is almost 30 years since *Racism and Xenophobia in European Football* was published. In it, drawing especially on the work of Robert Miles (1982), Mike Cole (1996) offered a clear and uncomplicated conceptual account of the fundamentally problematic concept of 'race' and how it was the basis for racism. Those themes remain in this chapter, followed by a brief account of 'racial science' and 'scientific racism'. A conceptual framework for understanding racisms signalled in the previous chapter is then linked to a lexicon of related terms, followed by an overview of some of the key perspectives that inform other chapters and the particular prominence of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Finally, there is a short summary section.

'Race'

The concept of 'race' does not provide a meaningful depiction of human biological variation, and as Fuentes, Ackermann, Athreya et al. (2019, p. 400) make unambiguously clear in the American Association of Physical Anthropology's statement on 'race' and racism, "it was never accurate in the past,

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and it remains inaccurate when referencing contemporary human populations". Yet 'race' became and continues to be a profoundly important building block for the flawed logic of racisms.

As a form of classification grounded in European colonialism (and hence domination, exploitation and discrimination), 'race' has been used to differentiate humankind into groups based on inherited biological characteristics manifest in physical appearance (phenotype) and linked genealogically to geographical origin (James and Burgos, 2024). Throughout the history of its use, 'race' has had various meanings – as a 'group' of shared common descent, as a 'type' for the purposes of classification, as a 'sub-species' and within political rhetoric and other contemporary debates (Banton, 2004a). It has also become a signifier of cultural difference and 'otherness' in discourse analysis (van den Berghe, 2004).

There are, at least, five fundamental problems with the concept of 'race'. First, as UNESCO (1965, p. 8) made plain, "pure races – in the sense of genetically homogeneous populations – do not exist in the human species". Hence, the description of 'races' is inevitably blurred, and it would be impossible to categorise every individual according to 'race' (Howells, 1974). Second, all humans have 99.9% of their DNA in common, yet there is significant variability in the observable characteristics of people that result from the interaction between their genetic composition and environmental factors. Natural selection and adaptation to local environments have shaped the physical characteristics of populations (Fuentes, Ackermann, Athreya et al., 2019). Third, the movement of people – first through colonisation, commerce, slavery, and later through globalisation, industrialisation and migration – has made discrete 'racial' categories unsustainable and hence meaningless (Spracklen, 2008). Geographic distance, topography and socio-political influences have also affected patterns of population dispersal and distribution (Fuentes, Ackermann, Athreya et al., 2019). Fourth, as Farb (1978, p. 276) concedes, "the genetic difference *between* two different (geographical) populations is very much the same as the difference *within* a single population" [original emphasis], and the phenotypic differences within a 'race' are at least as great as the differences between 'races' (Fleming, 2007). Fifth, variation within a population has given rise to claims for 'sub-races' with descriptions to match (e.g. Tobias, 1972 [1961]), but these have been discredited as lacking a strong evidential basis. There remains, therefore, a simple and irresolvable problem about an operational definition of 'races' which has a confounding effect on claims for empirical precision about them (Hirschman, 2004).

As John Rex (1994, p. 537) concluded, "there is no justification in biological science for the popular use of the term race", and biological accounts of 'race' as sub-species have been rejected by most biologists and anthropologists (Williams, 2001). However, the social construct of 'race' remains important for the understanding of 'race' and ethnic relations amongst sociologists, psychologists, geographers, economists, epidemiologists and others.

Racisms

Like the concept of 'race', the term 'racism' has also been used at different times and in several contexts for various purposes, for example, as an ideology, a discourse, an analytical tool and a political label (Farrington, Kilvington, Price et al., 2012). Racism is multi-faceted and complex (Solomos and Back, 1994); it has occurred and continues to occur in different socio-economic structures and cultural contexts (Jarvie, 1991); it has many historical manifestations (Banton, 2004b) and may have a changing prime target (Long and Spracklen, 2011). New forms of racism have emerged over time (Small, 1994), and there is a growing interest in the intersectionality with gender and class (Lewis, Hagerman and Forman, 2019) as well as sexual orientation. There are also different modes of opposition and resistance to it (Ellefsen, Banafsheh and Sandberg, 2022). As a result, the term 'racism*s*' is often preferred.

Broadly, racisms are the consequence of ideas and policies that produce and normalise inequalities based on 'races' (Kendi, 2019), and often emphasise how (false) theories of 'race' are used to deny or unjustly distribute social and economic opportunities and political rights (e.g. Lemert, 2006), as well as creating unfair privilege and oppression (Sumerau and Denise, 2018). Accounts of racisms often refer to prejudice and discrimination on the basis of their membership or assumed membership of a particular ethnic group – usually one that is marginalised through an imbalance in power relations (e.g. Australian Human Rights Commission, n.d.).

In a systematic review of the meanings attached to racisms in over 1,000 articles in sociology journals between 1995 and 2015, Shiao and Woody (2021) emphasised the deep, wide-ranging and nuanced complexity of a sociological understanding of racisms by identifying four sets of constructs: individual attitudes, cultural schema, pre-existing consequential inequalities (e.g. 'racial' dominance) and processes that create or maintain 'racial' dominance. Attempts to interrogate, understand and tackle racisms are complex owing, in part, to the use of vocabulary and the professional practice community and academic discipline from which they are made. Distinctive forms of racism first delineated between individual or personally mediated racism and institutionalised racism (Bowser, 2017). Later, when cultural markers, context and embedded stereotypes and prejudices were acknowledged as key determinants of racist dispositions, cultural racism was adopted (Jones, 2000). Most recently, recognising the difference between *intra*-institution racism and wider societal and political racism (Lander, 2021), as well as the *inter*-connectedness of institutions (Dean and Thorpe, 2022), a fourth conceptualisation was added – structural or systemic racism (e.g. Lewis, Hagerman and Forman, 2019). This overview provides an inclusive platform for interpreting and analysing racisms.

There are, however, some important caveats about adopting and applying this framework. First, it should not be inferred that the disambiguation above

means that forms of racism are mutually exclusive – there is overlap (Small, 1994). Second, forms of racism are not fixed, and new meanings are created (Farrington, Kilvington, Price et al., 2012). Third, the terms used are fluid and flexible (Banton, 2004b). Fourth, forms of racism do not operate in isolation from each other, and they are often encountered in combination (Cole, 2019). Fifth, some typologies of racisms focus on a particular field of professional practice – for example, in health studies (Jones, 2000) or psychology (Brogaard and Gatzia, 2020). Nevertheless, this framework provides a conceptual point of departure for understanding racisms in their various instantiations and enables linkages with other descriptors linked to racisms to be explored (see Table 2.1).

In the context of sports performance (see Wiggins and Nauright, 2017; Adair, 2023), stereotypes about athletes from marginalised groups have been explored through the lens of 'racial' science or 'scientific racism'. An early example was Martin Kane's (1971) article *An assessment of black is best*, in which he argued that anatomical and physiological differences between 'races' bestowed performance advantages on Black athletes. Inevitably, the article attracted compelling critique – notably by Edwards (1972) and Cashmore (1982) – but also resonated with some latent racist perceptions and

Table 2.1 A lexicon of 'racisms'

Concept	*Characteristics*	*Linked to other . . . 'racisms'*
Individual	• Perceptions, attitudes, behaviours • Overt or covert • Explicit or inadvertent (conscious or unconscious) • Through action and inaction	• *Discursive* – how people are spoken to or talked about ('racial' jokes, hate speech) • *Explicit* – behaviour that is consistent with personal racist values of superiority/inferiority • *Habitual* – unquestioning, unreflective and unconscious ingrained behaviour • *Interactional* – how people interact with each other (e.g. non-verbal communication) • *Internalised* – acceptance of racialised perceptions (negative or positive) • *Interpersonal* – beliefs/biases influencing interaction (e.g. tokenism) • *Linguistic* – written or spoken, individual or collective discrimination based language • *Personally mediated* – behaviour based on prejudicial/discriminatory assumptions • *Relational* – the context of everyday human relationships

(*Continued*)

Table 2.1 (Continued)

Concept	*Characteristics*	*Linked to other . . . 'racisms'*
Institutional	• Policies, procedures, practices and administrative structures • Within an institution or organisation • Often anonymous discrimination with undetectable causes • Focus on outcomes/ consequences (e.g. under-representation)	• *AI* – existing biases perpetuated through generative artificial intelligence • *Colour-blind* – discriminatory outcomes in spite of attempts to disregard 'race' or ethnicity • *Techno* – fallibilities in facial recognition software disadvantage some marginalised groups • *Unconscious* – where individual racism affects institutional policies, procedures and practices
Cultural	• Normalised views and beliefs embedded as 'common sense' • Negative stereotypes and symbolic portrayal • Biological determinism • Extended to aspects of culture (e.g. nationality, religion)	• *Accidental* – racist behaviour/actions not intended to be racist • *Epistemic* – domination of knowledge (e.g. Eurocentrism) • *Epistemological* – Eurocentric bias in qualitative research • *Ideological* – everyday 'common sense' ways of thinking • *Inferential* – forms of media from which racism can be deduced or presumed • *Laissez-faire* – blaming marginalised groups for their disadvantage • *New* – a departure from biological (old) racism • *Representational* – depictions of 'racial' stereotypes (e.g. in popular culture) • *Reverse/White* – prejudice/ discrimination by people of colour to Whites • *Scientific* – conceptual commitment biological 'races' and to 'race science' • *Sexual* – discrimination or bigotry in the selection of sexual partners • *Symbolic* – support for principles of equality but no commitment to implementation of change • *Unwitting* – a lack of understanding, ignorance or mistaken beliefs

(*Continued*)

Table 2.1 (Continued)

Concept	*Characteristics*	*Linked to other . . . 'racisms'*
Structural/ systemic	• Embedded societal reproduction of stratification and discrimination • Rationalisation of inequalities in prejudices, stereotypes and ideologies • Reflected in power imbalances with spatial and temporal dimensions • Leads to patterns of resistance	• *Colonial* – domination and exploitation of people and resources through subjugation • *Environmental* – disadvantage/ discrimination in relation to the built environment • *Overt* – favourable coverage in support of an openly racist view or policy • *Xeno* – xenophobic discrimination (e.g. concerns about community conflict and national security)

Sources: adapted from Anderson (2020); Ashwini (2024); Back, Crabbe and Solomos (2001); Bowser (2017); Brogaard and Gatzia (2020); Carrington (2008); Cashmore (2004); Cole (2019); Farrington, Kilvington, Price et al. (2012); Jones (2000); Kendi (2019); Long and McNamee (2004); Long and Spracklen (2011); Loppie, Reading and de Leeuw (2014); Malcolm (2008), Müller, van Zoonen and de Roode (2007); Patel (2023); Ramadan (2024).

affirmed some views that had begun to surface about Black footballers in the UK and elsewhere.

In *Taboo: Why Black athletes dominate sports and why we're afraid to talk about it,* Jon Entine (2000) was forthright and unconvincing in an argument about the links between 'races' and sports performance. The work was controversial (e.g. St Louis, 2003, 2004; Darda, 2024) and addressed football in particular with some "crude and inaccurate caricatures" (Back, Crabbe and Solomos, 2001, p. 282). Individual racism has also been prevalent in the words and actions of fellow players, coaches, managers and supporters (Fleming and Tomlinson, 1996) as well as media pundits (Boyle and Haynes, 2000). Players' experiences of racisms were documented in biographies (e.g. Hill, 1989; Longmore, 1988), in autobiographies (e.g. Ferdinand, 1998; Wright and McCarthy, 1996) and through the institutional impact of stereotyped perceptions that became established and most visible through the disproportionate over-representation of Black players in specific playing positions (e.g. Maguire, 1991; Nobis and Lazaridou, 2023). Dominant discourses became embedded as cultural racism and resulted in negative consequences for Black players in captaincy roles within teams and in career opportunities, progression and retention in coaching, management and administration leadership roles (Holding with Hawkins, 2021; Howell, 2022) – even for highly successful international players (Thuram, 2020).

There may be several reasons to explain why the victims of racisms did not pursue redress through whatever channels were available to them, not least the power relations and hierarchies within professional sport. However, since retiring from playing, some Black players have been very candid about perceptions of structural racism encountered (Barnes, 2021). The exposure of high-profile cases of discursive racism has also shone a light on behaviour and opinions that may be habitual and/or internalised and/or representational and/or unwitting – see, for example, the widespread condemnation of former player, manager and popular pundit, Ron Atkinson, following unmistakably racist remarks about Marcel Desailly in what he thought was a private conversation that was actually being broadcast (Carrington, 2011).

Related conceptual considerations

Driven by expressions of difference (Bhugra, Smith, Liebrenz et al., 2023), a common feature of racisms is the racialised *Other* along with the related construct of *Otherness* and the process of *Othering*. These are based on binaries and stem from philosophical explorations of identity, in particular the differences between the same and the Other (Nederveen Pieterse, 2004), or 'us' and 'them' (Udah, 2023). To paraphrase Goldberg (2000), differences linked to 'race' are identified by the dominant group, and knowledge is constructed based on their evaluation, invariably negative. Even ostensibly positive stereotypes about the athletic prowess of Black footballers are offset by the pernicious corollary about assumed laziness and decision-making capability (see Harris, 2017; Barnes, 2021). Voices of the Other are neglected or ignored, and power differential is perpetuated within the dominant group which then confirms policies, practices and behaviours that reinforce and maintain the subjugation of the Other. This 'otherism' is a versatile and adaptable conceptual tool for investigating and understanding the social and political inequalities of marginalised or oppressed groups (Bhugra, Smith, Liebrenz et al., 2023).

As an ideology, the fundamental premise of **nationalism** is that nation-states are the basis of social life (Kumar, 2006) and that national identity should align with political recognition (Walz, 1995). This means that the world is divided into nations, each with unique characteristics and cultural markers, and with the right to self-determination (Miles, 2004). As a concept, nationalism embraces several forms of national attachment (Mylonas and Tudor, 2021) – including, in particular, 'ethnic nationalism' and 'civic nationalism'. The former is characterised by a shared sense of heritage, culture and language; the latter is based on democratic legitimacy, voluntary engagement and citizenship (Roshwald, 2015).

Sport is closely linked to displays of nationalism through economic and diplomatic propaganda (Bairner, 2008b); the history of the modern Olympic Games is a narrative of global politics (Cottrell and Nelson, 2010; Grix, 2013). Through international competition especially, sport provides a platform for

celebrations of national identity and ethnic pride, and also for discourses about the Other.

Manifestations of racisms are historically grounded and situationally sensitive. They are also experienced differently by marginalised groups depending on their circumstances. For instance, **anti-Black racism** exists in different parts of the world, but unique iterations can be found in national and regional contexts (Showers, 2015). These are influenced by specific institutionally racist immigration policies and practices leading to structural racism of exclusion, oppression and disadvantage. To illustrate, with origins in slavery and colonialism, discriminatory racist legislation in South Africa (i.e. Apartheid) and the USA (i.e. the Jim Crow laws in the southern states) enforced segregation and subordination of Black people in different ways. Both of these were also different from the anti-Black racisms experienced by the diverse groups of migrant and refugee Africans in Australia (Udah, 2023). It is anti-Black racism that is seen most frequently in football, especially in Europe.

In the context of European football fandom, anti-Other racism has been well documented. For example, in relation to verbal abuse directed at Romani Hungarians (Földesi, 1996), the perceptions in Austria of 'foreign' players, especially Turks and Yugoslavs (Horak and Marschik, 1996), the racism-hooligan couplet and the rise of the far right in Germany, especially in the east (Kassimeris, 2010), and extremist views and Fascist salutes amongst Lazio's supporters in Italy (Kassimeris, 2011).

In its broadest sense, **sectarianism** refers to the relationship between two groups through which harm is caused, or perceived to be caused, by one to the other. It is applied most often to religious groups and their political differences (Bairner, 2008a). As a specific form of racism (McVeigh, 2019), sectarianism exists in various ways and in different contexts (e.g. India, Lebanon). It, too, creates and reinforces social inequality and can be understood as a labelling process and an ideological justification (Sugden and Bairner, 1993). Unlike some other forms of racism, however, as Brewer (1992, p. 352) notes, sectarianism's "social markers are more opaque, less deterministic . . . more context bound". In Scotland, one such marker is football allegiance (Rosie, Clegg, Morrow et al., 2015), and although the recent history of conflict is different (Hassan, McCullough and Moreland, 2010), football fandom also symbolises religion, culture and politics in Northern Ireland (Boyle and Haynes, 2000; Cronin, 2002).

Xenophobia is predicated on Otherism in relation to people or things that are foreign or unfamiliar. Etymologically, the term reflects fear, dislike or aversion, and involves stigmatisation and rejection of those who are, or are perceived to be migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, displaced persons and non-nationals (International Labour Office et al., 2001). A distinction between racisms and xenophobia is made explicit by Banton (2004c, p. 455): "racism can be seen as relying on ideas of inferiority, whereas xenophobia relies on ideas of fundamental differences between cultures". For analytical

purposes, however, xenophobia is often treated as a form of racism and finds expression in many of the same ways (Llopis-Goig, 2009).

A specific form of xenophobic prejudice and hostility directed at Muslims as a religious-cultural group is **Islamophobia**. The concept is contested, and a precise definition has proved elusive (López, 2011). The associated bigotry includes negative anti-Muslim attitudes and emotions (Bleich, 2011), but Islamophobia is more than a particular religious intolerance and may be better considered as a form of cultural racism. More widely, Islamophobia is often the basis for perceptions of geopolitical threats and terrorism from Islamic states (Hedges, 2021).

Sport is often seen as a site for displays of cultural conflict, especially amongst football spectators in Europe (see Doidge, 2017). Interestingly, however, Alrababa'h, Marble, Mousa et al. (2021) have reported research findings that support the parasocial contact hypothesis in relation to Islamophobia. Described as 'visibly Muslim', Mohammed Salah has been a key player in the successes of Liverpool F.C. men's team since he joined the club in 2017. His popularity is thought to have reduced Islamophobia amongst fans and is supported by hate crime data, analysis of social media and a fan survey.

The alignment of Islamophobia with cultural racism has prompted some commentators to draw a comparison with **antisemitism**, but that, too, is contested (López, 2011). The term Jew is a signifier of religion but as Dart (2021, p. 678) makes clear, Jewish identity is "intersectional and a dynamic set of social relations" and includes ethnicity, community and the secular. As a form of Othering, antisemitism has a 2,000-year history and recognised as institutional and/or structural since 1870 (Bonnett, 2004). It has also been connected to ideas of 'race' and therefore, as a concept, is more than being 'anti-Jewish'.

There is a crude stereotype that 'Jews don't play sport' (Dart, 2021) and examples of antisemitism from supporters include songs and chants on the terraces (Tamsut, 2021). There is also the profoundly offensive hissing to mimic the sound of gas entering the chambers at Nazi concentration camps at games involving Tottenham Hotspur FC (Back, Crabbe and Solomos, 2001), especially against neighbouring London clubs (Poulton, 2013). In addition, antisemitic language was reported in text messages between club officials at Cardiff City FC (Doidge, 2017); and on the field, in 2013, Nicolas Anelka celebrated a goal with the *quenelle* gesture, thought by many to be antisemitic (BBC Sport, 2014).

Racisms and xenophobia do not exist in isolation from other forms of prejudice and discrimination. Pioneering work by bell hooks (2014), first published in 1981, explored the interfaces of ethnicity, gender and class, and the term **intersectionality** was adopted in the late 1980s as an analytical construct to recognise combinations of power imbalances and socio-political disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1991). However, multiple social and political identities also include, for example, age, disability and sexuality. Together, in different ways and to varying extents depending on the circumstances, these shape

day-to-day experiences and influence the life chances of individuals and groups sharing common characteristics. Furthermore, the failure to accommodate intersectionality risks simplistic reductionism and assumes mistaken homogeneity of monolithic groups.

In sport, racisms are often co-articulated with sexism and homophobia (Carrington, 2011), and intersectionality is still emerging as an explicit research domain (Sherry, Bowell, Symons et al., 2024), for example, in sport psychology (Bennett, Owens and Prewitt-White, 2022). Although there have been important contributions to debates about sport, ethnicity and gender (e.g. Corbett and Johnson, 1993; Lovell, 1991; Scraton, 2001; Borish, 2002; Kay, 2006; Sutherland, 2017), relatively little attention has been paid directly to the gender-ethnicity dynamic in European football – Scraton, Caudwell and Holland (2005), Caudwell (2022) and Leslie-Walker, Taylor and Jones Russell (2023) are notable exceptions.

A prevailing theoretical account

Although theoretical insights inform many of the concepts in the earlier sections of this chapter, in relation to the dynamics and social relations between different ethnic groups in and through sport and leisure, a dominant theoretical account has surfaced. In a systematic review of research outputs addressing the themes of 'race', Whiteness and sport in academic journals between 2009 and 2015, Fletcher and Hylton (2017) report that Critical Race Theory (CRT) was the primary theoretical theme.

Developed as a theoretical approach to examining systemic and institutional racism with analytical and practical applications (e.g. Hylton, 2011; Lawrence and Hylton, 2022), CRT has become a controversial focus in educational policy discourses in Australia and the USA (López, Molnar, Johnson et al., 2021). Different interpretations of CRT have emerged since its development in the 1970s, but crucially, as Hylton (2005, p. 81) makes plain, its use is

> likely to lead towards a resistance to a passive reproduction of the established practices, knowledge and resources, that make up the social conditions that marginalize 'race' as a core factor in the way we manage and experience our sport and leisure.

There are five precepts, CRT

(i) "[centralises] 'race' and racism at the same time as recognising their connection with other forms of subordination and oppression";
(ii) "challenges traditional dominant ideologies around objectivity, meritocracy, colour-blindness, 'race'-neutrality and equal opportunity";
(iii) "has a clear commitment to social justice that incorporates elements of liberation and transformation";

(iv) makes a significant contribution by centralising marginalised voices; and
(v) is transdisciplinary.

(distilled from Hylton, 2005, pp. 84–85)

In addition to the work on theorising the nexus between sport and CRT already cited earlier (e.g. Hylton, 2005, 2011; Fletcher and Hylton, 2017), there is a body of research explicitly linking CRT to football in the UK. Led in particular by scholars associated with Leeds Beckett University and the University of Brighton, studies have addressed, amongst other things, British Asians in football cultures (Burdsey, 2007), the failure of liberal approaches to 'race' equality and anti-discriminatory policies (Lawrence, 2017), the fandom experiences of marginalised groups (Lawrence and Davis, 2019), the criminalisation of football spectator behaviour (Gardiner and Welch, 2011), professional football (Burdsey, 2011) and the men's English Premier League (Lawrence, 2017).

Summary

There are key messages from this chapter that apply to later chapters:

- Although the biological concept of 'race' has been discredited and almost completely discarded, the social construct of 'race' remains an influential element in the enduring perceptions of (false) 'racial' distinctions.
- Racisms exist in different but overlapping and linked forms. The 'individual – institutional – cultural – structural' typology provides a very useful framework for interpretation and analysis.
- There is some inconsistency in the use of vocabulary associated with racisms that does not always add clarity to discussion and debate.
- Concepts linked to the Other underpin forms of discrimination, oppression and subordination experienced by various groups for different reasons.
- Intersectionality is an important construct for understanding the multiple, and frequently overlapping, power imbalances and socio-political disadvantages experienced by members of marginalised groups.
- CRT has emerged as an influential theoretical lens for understanding the dynamics and social relations of minoritised groups in sport and is applicable to European football.

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