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INTRODUCTION

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Racism, antiracism, football and migration: introduction

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ABSTRACT
In this Introduction we outline key facets of the themes covered by the papers in this themed issue. We begin by exploring the intersections between race, racism, antiracism and migration in football and the need for a better understanding of the processes that have shaped the contemporary situation. We then discuss the ways in which issues of migration and mobility play an important role in structuring the experiences of race, racism and antiracism within football. We conclude the Introduction by providing an overview of the papers that comprise this themed issue and the core themes of each paper.

The papers in this *Themed Issue* are the product of a call for papers that sought to bring together contributions that addressed key facets of the interplay between racism, antiracism, football and migration in the contemporary environment. This call for papers grew out of conversations between us about the need to bring the study of sports such as football more squarely into the study of racial and ethnic relations. We have worked on various facets of the interplay between race and football cultures and have sought to bring our wider scholarly interests in race and ethnicity into the analysis of the changing expressions of racism and antiracism in football cultures in Europe and beyond. It is from this ongoing interest that we thought there was a need for a themed issue of the journal that explored the changing dynamics of race, racism and antiracism in football. Over the years *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, along with other journals in the field, has published relatively little research in this particular area, and we felt that a dedicated call for papers was an opportunity to bring together high-quality research papers that are framed around the role of race, racism and antiracism in the context of contemporary football culture and its institutions. By publishing this themed issue we hope that it will encourage more researchers working on race and sport to publish their research with the journal and to continue the conversations that are reflected in the papers that follow.

Processes of racialisation and football

Football is sometimes seen as a fundamentally aggressive human activity which, by its very nature, encourages tribalism, nationalism, and racism. But it is also seen as an activity

that brings communities and peoples of all ethnicities, races, nationalities and social classes closer together. From this perspective football is thus seen by some as a school of respect, inclusion, and antiracism. The reality is less clear-cut and more complex. From a sociological point of view, the world's most popular sport can be seen as a mirror, albeit an often distorting one of human societies. We can observe some of the social, economic, political, and cultural dynamics that characterise society through the spectacle of football. If racism is present in the world of football, it is because it's present in society at large, and not the other way round. If antiracist practices do exist in football, it's because they exist in society, and not vice versa.

Existing scholarship and research have highlighted four dimensions of racism in football. First, when we talk about racism in football, we generally focus on the verbal and sometimes physical assaults suffered by players of African heritage, either by fans or by other players. We could list a whole host of racist and antisemitic insults and chants that can be heard in stadiums week after week. We could mention the bananas thrown at certain African players and the monkey chants addressed to them. But these proven facts, some of which are still too often considered to be the expression of football folklore, and therefore tolerated, only cover one – the most visible – part of the everyday realities of racism in football.

It is also important to consider three other dimensions of racism that are present both in the world of professional football and in society in general: *racial prejudice*, *racial ideologies* and, finally, *more structural, institutional and systemic forms of racism*. Racial prejudice is rife not only among certain fans, but also among players, coaches, referees, club managers and federations. For example, African players and players of African descent are sometimes perceived as less disciplined, unable to keep to schedules, less intellectually capable of understanding and absorbing complex tactical principles. Arab players, meanwhile, are sometimes perceived as being particularly aggressive on the pitch and susceptible. Italian players are said to be comedians, and so on. Prejudices of this kind are far from having disappeared.

Such prejudices may be linked to a racist ideology that has been internalised for centuries and reinforced by colonialism and imperialism. All racist ideologies are based on the idea that humanity is divided into biological and/or cultural groups which reproduce their specific characteristics from generation to generation, and which are called races. What's more this ideology has often placed the so-called white race at the top of a racial hierarchy and asserted its superiority over other races. It has thus served to justify and legitimize slavery, apartheid, colonialism and its alleged civilising mission. It is still present in society in general, as well as in football, although it is often also vigorously rejected there.

Finally, as in society at large, racism in football also has a structural, institutional and systemic dimension. For example, it is still too often taken for granted that the place of racialized people in football is almost exclusively on the pitch as players or in the stands as supporters. In many countries, there are few owners who come from racialised communities. There are also few managers and referees from minority backgrounds. As for the URBSFA, the FIFA and the national football leagues, they are still largely dominated by men form dominant racial and ethnic groups.

The way young players are recruited in Africa and other parts of the globe could also be the subject of more study under the prism of racism. Until recently, the organisation of transfers of very young African players to Europe had much in common with human

trafficking. Finally, on an international level, the construction of stadiums for the World Cup in Qatar in 2022, which led to the deaths of over 6,500 migrant workers, shows another facet of racism in professional football. The lives of thousands of Asian and African immigrant workers were sacrificed, reduced to a modern form of slavery, in preparation for an event that is more geopolitical and commercial than simply sporting.

Racism and football cultures

As a number of scholars have argued race making in football cultures is not a new phenomenon, and we can trace a longer historical background to concerns about the role of racism among sections of football cultures (Solomos 2023a).[1] Researchers have shown that as early as the late 1970s and 1980s the emergence of black players as a recognisable group in professional football in the United Kingdom led to widespread debate, particularly in the mass media and in policy circles, about expressions of racism among sections of football fan culture (Back, Crabbe, and Solomos 2001; Crabbe 2006; Holland 1997). Indeed, through much of this period it was almost impossible to attend football games without hearing sections of crowds chanting abuse at black players, throwing bananas at them or using the "n" word and imitating monkey noises. Such abuse became almost routine in this period and was often linked to the hard-core fan groups attached to teams such as Chelsea, West Ham, Millwall and Leeds among others. It was also something that had a deep impact on the players who were the direct target of abuse as well as on the fan bases of a number of clubs that gained a reputation for their involvement in forms of racist and xenophobic abuse. Indeed, many of this early generation of black players have written movingly about their experiences of racist chanting and abuse through much of their careers, and the ways in which such abuse became almost routine at many football grounds (Barnes 1999; 2021; Rees 2015; Regis 2010).

In this wider environment it is perhaps not surprising that in the discussions about the role of racist sub-cultures in football during the 1980s and 1990s much of the research focused on questions about hooliganism and the influence of racist ideas and values among some sections of football supporters. This was a time when much of the discussion about racism in football in the United Kingdom was still linked to the role of political groupings such as the National Front and the British National Party, which had sought to attract support among some sections of football supporters through the late 1970s and 1980s. This was a time when the issue of racism among football supporters had come to the fore in both media and policy debates, but it remained narrowly focused on the activities of supports who were linked to hooligan groups or sympathetic to the political values of extreme right-wing organisations.

By the early 2000s it was evident that such a narrow focus only captured some facets of the complex ways in which questions about race and racism were shaping popular football cultures. It was at this time that we began to see new research agendas emerge that sought to locate questions about race and racism in football within a broader analytical frame. An example of these emerging bodies of research can be found in the project developed by Les Back, Tim Crabbe and John Solomos in the late 1990s and early 2000s, that sought to locate the discussion of racism in football cultures within a broader analytical frame. Drawing on research among football supporters, players and administrators they found that although there was a tendency to collapse the issue of

racism in football into broader discourses about the *football hooligan* this in practice served to limit our understanding of the variety of ways in which ideas about race helped to shape processes of racialisation among football fans, managers and coaches and administrators (Back, Crabbe, and Solomos 1999; 2001). Rather than focus their research on the figure of the *football hooligan* they argued that it was important to understand how questions about race were constructed within football supporter fan cultures more generally, thus allowing for an exploration of the often messy and complex ways in which race was experienced in football cultures more generally. In developing this analytical frame, they were influenced by the broader theoretical conversations about the changing dynamics of race and racism in the wider society, as evidenced for example in the influential work of scholars such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy (Gilroy 1993; 2001; Hall 2017). Rather than limiting their focus to the figure of the racist football hooligan they argued that what was needed was a broader and contextual analytical frame that explored how questions about race and nation had become part of both popular football cultures as well as the institutions that governed the game as a whole or in the context of specific clubs.

At the same time other researchers also broadened their analytical approach to allow them to make sense of how race was seen within the key institutions of football, among football players and within fan groups that sought to oppose racism both within the game and in society more generally. During the 2000s and 2010s there was an expansion of research that focused on football supporters and players, and their experiences of issues linked to race. Such research explored in more detail such issues as club identity, national culture, and efforts to develop antiracist initiatives in football. As a result it became evident that much of the dominant theoretical discussion on race and racism in football did little to develop our understanding of the cultures of racism football, or indeed other important facets of the changing dynamics of racialisation and processes of identity formation in contemporary society. This was partly because much of the conceptual and theoretical analysis remained somewhat separate from the realities of carrying out more empirically focused research, whether in the context of key institutions at the local or national level or in the context of sport and popular culture. But it was also because empirical research agendas tended to develop along narrow frames and did not engage with the efforts to construct more open and critical analytical frameworks for the situated analysis of race, racism and ethnicity in specific social and political spheres (Brown 1998; Carrington and McDonald 2001). Indeed, much of the scholarship on football cultures remained somewhat separate from the wider debates about race and racialisation that were emerging at this same time.

Over the past few decades, however, we have seen the growth of new scholarly and research agendas that have sought to provide us with a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the workings of racism in football at all levels. A wide-ranging body of scholarship and research has emerged that has begun to address the evolving role of questions about race and national identity both within popular football cultures and in the institutions of football as an industry. What has become more evident in the evolving research agendas that came to the fore during the 2000s and 2010s is that we now have a much richer and in-depth body of scholarship that seeks to provide an understanding of both the everyday cultural as well as the institutional processes that help to shape questions about race and racism in football. As a result, the study of questions about race, belonging

and football cultures has moved forward in the period from the end of the twentieth century and the first three decades of the twenty first century (Burdsey 2011a; 2021; 2011b; Carrington 2013).

Much of this discussion has been framed around the ongoing debates about the impact of race, immigration and racial formation on questions about national identity. In this sense it links up to wider trends in scholarship and research on race and ethnicity, which has seen more discussion of the intersections between processes of racialisation and popular culture, particularly in the broader context of the impact of the end of empire and decolonisation on the ways in which both Britishness and Englishness are imagined and understood, whether it be in relation to sport or other social and political institutions (Gilroy 2004; Samuel 1989; Schwarz 2011). It is perhaps not surprising that popular culture has become such an important site for the discussion of questions about national identity, belonging and difference, given the important role of cultural symbols in the construction of the overarching meanings attached to modern under-standings of what it means to be British or English. As the work of both historians and sociologists have highlighted the everyday meanings attached to ideas about the nation, race or culture are in many ways shaped by popular culture, both in its elite and vernacular forms. From this angle football has been and remains one of the important sites for the construction of ideas about both race and the nation.

The new bodies of scholarship and research on race and sport have been influenced and shaped in various ways by contemporary scholarship on race and ethnicity that has tended to argue that one of the key features of racism is that it is constantly evolving and changing, depending on national contexts and political and cultural environments. Thus, a number of scholars have talked about the multiplicity of *racisms* or the articulation of *new racisms* as they seek to make sense of a social phenomenon that is increasingly different from earlier forms of racist thinking and racialised ideologies (Lentin 2020; Solomos 2023b). What these conceptual arguments have highlighted, albeit from different intellectual starting points, is that ideas about race are not fixed and unchanging. Rather, racial ideologies and practices are constantly made and re-made through specific social and political environments. Given the role that sports such as football, cricket and rugby play in constructions of both national and localised identities it is important for us to explore their changing role in shaping social meanings attached to both racialised and national identities. Writing about the changing meanings of race and nation in the context of football Daniel Burdsey has argued that:

> The race/nation/sport relationship is evidently fluid, messy and sometimes contradictory. Determining the sociological meanings and gauging the social implications of nascent sport-ing multiculturalisms is consequently complex (Burdsey 2021, 68).

The key point that Burdsey is making here is that we need to explore the messy and contradictory ways in which race and nation are made and re-made through sport needs to be explored in detail in the context of a broader sociological imaginary that allows both for the specifics of sport and of wider social relations.

An example of the processes that Burdsey and other scholars have sought to bring into perspective can be found in the analysis of the experiences of black and minority players over the past few decades as they began to establish themselves both within individual clubs and within the national team. Much of the early scholarship and research in this field

did not explore the experiences of black players and supporters in any depth, although in practice there was a constant reminder in the form of songs and chanting that both remained targets of abuse. However, as research and scholarship in this field evolved from the 2000s to the present there was an increasing awareness that there was a need to develop an understanding of the experiences of black players and black and ethnic minority supporters in the context of changing football cultures.

Scholarship in recent years has also sought to give more attention to the changing experiences of black and ethnic minority players and their responses to expressions of racism from supporters as well as occasionally from other players. Though the intervention of initiatives such as *Kick it Out* racist language and abuse was increasingly driven out of the game as a consequence of players' responses, the multi-racial diversity of the contemporary game and concerted campaigning around the issue. When racialised incidents occur, such as the ones between John Terry and Anton Ferdinand or Louis Suarez and Patrice Evra, they are readily dismissed as "heat of the moment" responses, individual mental aberrations which do not conflict with the multiculturalism which prevails in the majority of English professional clubs (Football Association 2012a; 2012b). What such incidents, and the debates they have led to, have highlighted, however, is that the experiences of black players are still shaped in one way or another by race. This is true in the United Kingdom but also in continental European countries such as Italy for example. The various racist episodes concerning the first Black player for the Italian national team, Mario Balotelli, illustrate this point. In this context there is an even greater imperative to move beyond the focus on the overt expression of racism as the only issue with regard to issues of exclusion than there is in relation to fan culture. Rather it is the implicit normative racism located in the everyday embodied practices of football's white core which polices the integration of black and foreign players. The possession of the appropriate "cultural passport" is not merely reliant upon wearing a particular football shirt but on a conformity with the team's cultural identity and the white working-class masculinities.

There has been somewhat less attention given to the changing experiences of black and ethnic minority supporters within the game. This has begun to change to some extent in recent years as a number of clubs have become more involved with initiatives to respond more to the needs of diverse groups of supporters, alongside efforts to attract more supporters from the diverse communities that surround many football grounds up and down the country.

Football cultures and social change

As we argued above much of the scholarship and research in this field has remained relatively silent on the question of antiracism. This neglect of forms of resistance to racism has been remedied to some extent by emerging research agendas that have placed much more emphasis on analysing the formation of antiracist initiatives, the role of resistance by racialised minorities and the creation of an antiracist imaginary. But it remains important to develop fuller research agendas in this area that can help to give voice to hidden histories of resistance in different historical conjunctures as well as uncovering the role of agency in resisting racialised exclusion and domination within the context of football and other sports. Given the challenges we face in

developing both theoretical and empirical research on antiracism it is important that we develop a conversation about what theoretical and empirical tools we need to help us to make sense of both current trends and developments and begin to contribute to discussions about what policy and political interventions can help to tackle the root causes of racism and forms of racial exclusion. It is also important for scholars and researchers working on questions about race, racism, and ethnicity to look beyond their own dominant frames and engage more directly with arenas such as sport as sites for antiracist initiatives. It is also important to make the question about possible routes to change part of the conversation in critical scholarship about the dilemmas we face in dealing with racial and ethnic difference in the world around us. Although it is important to focus on the structural processes that have helped to entrench racialised inequalities it is also necessary to keep a focus on avenues for change that are either possible in the present environment or likely in the future.

It is also important to note, however, that through the period from the 1990s onwards there have been sustained efforts to give voice to antiracist initiatives within football, both in relation to fan cultures and within the institutions that governed both professional and amateur football. John Solomos, Les Back and Tim Crabbe noted this developing trend during the course of a research project in the later 1990s and early 2000s that focused on the analysis of the changing cultures of racism in football. Against the dominant approaches that were current at the time they argued that there was a need not to construct a narrative of racism in football as fixed and unchanging, since in practice it was also important to take account of the countertrends that seek to oppose and resist racialised imaginaries about race, identity and belonging. In the book that they produced from this research they talked of the need to analyse both the cultures of racism that were emerging and evolving at the time as well as the role that ideas about multiculturalism and antiracism were increasingly playing in football (Back, Crabbe, and Solomos 1996; 2001). In particular they highlighted the role that initiatives such as *Kick Racism Out of Football*, which came to the fore in the 1990s and 2000s and continue into the present, as well as more localised antiracist initiatives that sought to challenge racist stereotypes and ideas in both local and national football contexts. Such initiatives were premised on broader antiracist political agendas and values and signalled both a concern to develop ideas about a common identity as well as to challenge the influence of racialised ideologies and practices. But they also reflected a conscious effort to counter the influence of extreme right-wing movements among sections of the fanbases of some clubs by developing initiatives within the context of football rather than from the outside.

One of the lessons that we can draw from the experience of the past few decades is that discussions of the politics of racism in football, and in society more generally, cannot be simply read off from the accounts that focus on developing an analysis at the national level. In the context of sports like football it is also important to pay close attention to what is happening at the level of the local, whether it be through an analysis focused on specific clubs or on cities and localities more generally. While there are real and important shifts going on within the context of society as a whole, it is equally true that there are huge variations across different cities and regions in the role that questions about race and ethnicity play in shaping popular expressions of racism. There is a need to locate antiracist initiatives within both national processes as well as more localised environments and contexts. Though much of the period at the beginning of the

twenty first century we have seen important initiatives by professional football clubs and in local amateur football to develop strategies that seek to challenge racism and xenophobia among their fanbases.

For this reason, we need to include in the development of new research agendas on racism and football a deeper understanding of antiracism. This requires a radically contextualised understanding of the place of popular racism within football that calls for an antiracist strategy that is localised and sensitive to the variegated, contradictory and ambivalent presence of racism in football. In refocusing research to address the possibilities for developing antiracist imaginaries in football culture it is important to frame research that is focused as much on the local social and cultural environments in which football fanbases live as on broader historical and national understandings of the making of race and nation in British society. In many localities up and down the country there are complex histories of migration, settlement and dwelling that have helped to produce specific social relations around race and ethnicity. It is these everyday social relations that need to be included in the analytical frame of research on contemporary football cultures if we are to better understand the possibilities for antiracism.

In addition, discussions of the politics of racism and antiracism in football, should also be examined at the international and global levels. On the one hand, the international connections between far-right activists and far-right hooligans and football supporters deserve more scholarly attention. On the other hand, the same goes for international antiracist movements of supporters and ultras. This is also an issue that is touched upon in some of the papers that follow.

Overview of papers in this issue

Given the origin of this themed issue in a call for papers there is inevitably a wide range of methodological and conceptual approaches to be found in the papers that we have been able to include. They do, however, address key aspects of the areas that we sought to cover in issuing the call for papers. Here we would like to provide an overview of each paper and also outline the links between them.

We begin the issue with three papers that analyse the ways in which African players, or players from an African heritage, are seen through the lens of football cultures. The first paper is by Ihechukwu Ejekwumadu and it focuses on analysing the role of racialised stereotypes of the African sporting body, particularly in the context of European football (Ejekwumadu 2025). The paper argues that African players are framed through their physical rather than cognitive abilities, and it draws on qualitative interviews in a number of football academies in Nigeria to investigate how racialised stereotypes are interpreted and utilised in talent selection. It also argues that these racialised stereotypes become internalised and can lead to a preference for players that conform to these physical stereotypes.

This is followed by the paper from Jakub Vávrovský and Stephanie Rudwick. This is focused on the evolution and impact of racist stereotypes of African players in the context of Czech football (Vávrovský and Rudwick 2025). Given the importance of racist stereotypes in the construction of racist abuse the paper situates the role that they play in the evolution of racisms in Czech football. It uses the concept of aversive racism

as a tool to explore the ways in which African players are seen in the context of Czech football culture.

The next article by article by Emy Lindberg explores how race and processes of racialisation manifest within the global football industry. The paper is focused on research about Ghanaian migrant players in Sweden (Lindberg 2025). Based on ethnographic fieldwork, it examines how racialisation is practiced, negotiated and reproduced through the experiences of Ghanaian footballers, the discourses of those working with them and portrayals in the media. In contrast to official narratives of diversity and equality, the article shows how everyday racism, racialised athletic notions, commodification, and racist abuse persist on and off the pitch. These narratives are circulated by Swedish actors, Ghanaian representatives and sometimes the players themselves, who view racism as normal. They respond by ignoring it, laughing it off or focusing on the game while acknowledging its harm. Protest is rarely an option when careers and livelihoods are at stake. Indeed, subordination is both a precondition and a shaping force of their international careers.

The paper by Marjorie Berns and colleagues (Berns et al. 2025) investigates *racist stacking* in football. This describes the phenomenon that black players are overrepresented in positions with physical attributes (e.g. strikers, wingers) and underrepresented in positions with strategic roles (e.g. goalkeepers, captains). While observational studies document racist stacking, causal effects remain understudied. In two experimental designs, they examined how racialised group membership influences perceptions of player appropriateness for several positions. The first study design (Studies 1a – 1c) found no significant differences in ratings between Black and *white* players when explicit performance indicators were provided. However, Study 2 revealed that without explicit indicators, participants rated Black players as more talented and suited for physical positions (i.e. striker, winger) and *white* players as more suited for the goalkeeper position. This final study indicates that racialised stereotypes and images in sports persist in ambiguous contexts.

This is followed by a paper by Gloriana Rodriguez Alvarez that focuses on football in Costa Rica. It suggests that for a fuller understanding of the interplay between race and national identity we have to look beyond the field of play, and explore the colonial legacies embedded in racialised social hierarchies (Rodriguez Alvarez 2025). By employing decolonial critiques and social identity theory, the research interrogates the sport's role as a site of exclusion and resistance. The paper explores how Costa Rica's national identity excludes Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities, while selectively embracing them through football when it serves national pride. Subsequently, football, while often celebrated as a unifying national symbol, simultaneously perpetuates the divisions it purports to transcend. Through case studies, the article explores the intersections of racism, national identity, and power within football. Drawing on historical analysis and documented instances of racism, the study shows how football operates as a site where colonial hierarchies are both reproduced and resisted. Ultimately, the paper concludes that football holds the potential to reimagine national belonging, but only if the deeper colonial legacies underpinning racial exclusion are meaningfully addressed.

The next paper in this themed issue presents findings from an ethnographic study that looked at how football media professionals working at major English football TV stations give meaning to race and ethnicity in their everyday working practices (Van Sterkenburg et al. 2025). The paper draws on in-depth interviews and participant observations in order

to examine the daily practices, routines and meaning making of football media pro-fessionals in these organisations. In developing their analysis they explore how some foot-ball journalists tend to dismiss any discussion on race in media coverage as irrelevant, while other journalists embrace diversity, at least in general terms. In developing their analysis they highlight the need for more critical reflection on these issues.

The final two papers in the issue focus on the contradictory role of antiracist initiatives in football. The paper by Max Mauro focuses on the relative failures in official efforts to tackle expressions of racism within football cultures. It utilises the events involving French goalkeeper Mike Maignan in January 2024, when he was subjected to continuous abuse in a game involving his club, AC Milan, and Udinese (Mauro 2025). Mauro draws on the events in this game and the responses to them to discuss the impact of measures to tackle racism. When AC Milan asked the referee to suspend the game there was wide-spread discussion and it seemed to be a transformative case in the long history of examples of racist abuse of players in Italian football. The participants in the racist abuse were rapidly identified and banned and Udinese were forced to play two games in an empty stadium. In the weeks that followed, however, both the club and fan groups, along with local and national politicians sought to argue that the events could not be looked at through the lens of racism. Mauro argues that this campaign had the perverse effect of transforming both the club and the fans involved into the victims and invisibilising the role of both structural and institutionalising racism.

The final paper by Alessandro Mazzola examines how antiracism in grassroots football arises from local club engagement with the attitudes and needs of their communities, rather than from the implementation of the general anti-discrimination policy framework (Mazzola 2025). Using the case studies of 2 amateur football clubs in Belgium, Kraainem FC and City Pirates, the study highlights how grassroots clubs situated in different socio-economic contexts shape their anti-racism practices based on local dynamics. The findings demonstrate that, while national policies exist, grassroots clubs' anti-racism strat-egies are more influenced by their direct relationships with the local communities they serve. In showing the distance between policies and practices, this paper also highlights how the shaping of policies can paradoxically create obstacles for clubs in implementing anti-racism in grassroots football.

Conclusion

The contributions to this themed issue helpfully highlight the diverse range of issues that are being explored by scholars working on issues about football race, ethnicity, migration and related questions. But they are also suggestive of the need for more detailed research on this important phenomenon that has remained somewhat at the margins of scholarly research agendas on racial and ethnic relations. They also highlight the need for the field of racial and ethnic studies to open up more to research that addresses phenomena such as sport, popular culture, and the arts in order to address the complex ways in which racism and antiracism help to structure contemporary social and cultural relations.

It is also important for researchers in this field to dig more deeply into the histories of resistance to racism within football cultures. We have touched on some key facets of this issue in this themed issue, particularly in the papers by Mauro and Mazzola (Mauro 2025; Mazzola 2025). But it remains clear that there is a need for more research on the ways that

racialised ideas and practices have been resisted within football, whether it be in relation to fan cultures on the experiences of black and minority players and staff. This has been highlighted in the research of scholars such as Ben Carrington and Daniel Burdsey in the context of football in England (Burdsey 2019; 2021; Carrington 2013; 2015).

At a more general level we hope that the range of conceptual and empirical issues that are addressed in this issue will help to encourage more discussion in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* of the complex forms of racism and antiracism in contemporary sporting and football cultures across the globe. Given the important role of sport in popular culture it is an issue that we cannot leave outside of our evolving research agendas.

Note

1. Some of the themes explored in this Introduction were also presented in Solomos, John (2023a) 'Englishness and Football Cultures: Belonging, Race and the Nation' in Awan, I. and Zempi, I. (eds) *Hate Crime in Football*, 5-18, Bristol: Bristol University Press.

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