

****Understanding and addressing racism in sport****

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Aims. Racism is a persistent problem in sport, and traditional approaches to tackling it haven't always been successful. This research explores how a powerful framework called Critical Race Theory (CRT) can help us understand the deep roots of racism in sport and identify more effective ways to fight it. The goal is to move beyond simply condemning individual acts of racism to addressing the systemic issues that allow it to thrive.

Methods. This work isn't based on new experiments or surveys. Instead, it draws on existing research about race, racism, and anti-racism, particularly the ideas developed within CRT. CRT originated in legal and educational studies and helps us understand how racism is embedded in institutions and structures. Researchers applied these ideas to examples of racism in sport, particularly in football, to see how they play out in practice.

Key findings. The research reveals that racism in sport isn't just about overt acts of discrimination. It exists in subtle biases and is built into the very systems of sport, often benefiting dominant groups. CRT helps us see how racism has a historical and ongoing impact, and why it's important to center the experiences of those who are marginalized. Importantly, the research suggests that many anti-racism efforts by sports organizations are driven by self-interest – protecting their reputation, finances, or ability to host events – rather than a genuine commitment to equality. These efforts often amount to empty promises or 'speech acts' without real change. True progress requires concrete actions and investment, not just statements of support. Simply claiming to be 'not racist' isn't enough; we need to actively dismantle racist systems.

Limitations. CRT is a complex theory and can be misapplied if not used carefully. Applying it to sport requires considering the specific context and avoiding generalizations. Additionally, it can be difficult to definitively measure the impact of anti-racism initiatives, especially over the long term, and it can sometimes be hard to determine whether a lack of action represents a failure or slow progress.