

****Spanish football fans' interpretations of race in football****

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Link. [Talking football: Discourses about race/ethnicity among Spanish youth - Carmen Longas Luque, Méloine Sommer, Jacco van Sterkenburg, 2024](#)

Aim. This research explored how young people in Spain talk about race and ethnicity, using their passion for football as a starting point for conversations. Football is hugely popular in Spain, and the study aimed to understand if people simply accept the ideas about race they see in the media, or if they question them.

Method. The researchers held group discussions with people from diverse backgrounds, primarily in and around Barcelona, to explore their views on players from different racial and ethnic backgrounds – including Black, South American, Asian, and Spanish players – and the role of the media in shaping those views.

Key findings. The study found that talking about race was often difficult and uncomfortable for participants, reflecting a broader tendency to avoid the topic in Spanish society. While people sometimes challenged racial stereotypes, they often relied on them, such as assuming Black players are naturally athletic or questioning the suitability of Asian players for the sport. Interestingly, South American players were generally viewed more positively than in some previous research, likely due to their success in Spanish leagues. A common theme was the idea that players representing the Spanish national team should not only be born in Spain, but also fully embrace and 'feel' Spanish. Participants were also critical of the Spanish sports media, describing it as sensationalist, focused on entertainment over in-depth analysis, and lacking diversity both on and off screen. Some felt the media unfairly focused on the backgrounds of players of color. The research suggests that while Spain often presents itself as multicultural, underlying biases and assumptions about race and ethnicity persist, influencing how players and events are portrayed. The study also shows that football audiences and fans aren't passive recipients of media messages, but actively process and sometimes challenge them.

Limitations. The study focused on a specific region of Spain (Catalonia) and primarily on young adults, so the findings may not represent the views of the entire Spanish population. Further research is needed to explore these issues more broadly and promote more open and inclusive conversations about race and diversity.