

****Understanding prejudice in Football fan culture****

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Aim. This research investigates the problem of prejudice and discrimination within European, and particularly English, football fan culture. It seeks to understand how different forms of discrimination – including antisemitism, racism, Islamophobia, and homophobia – are expressed, the motivations behind them, and how they relate to fans’ sense of identity.

Methods. The study combines analysis of existing research, media coverage, and examples of fan behavior. This includes examining chants, songs, banners, and online activity, with a particular focus on the language used and its historical context. One study focused specifically on Tottenham Hotspur fans and their use of the term “Yid.”

Key findings. The research reveals that discriminatory behavior in football is widespread, but often takes subtle forms beyond overt hate speech. It frequently manifests as ‘banter’ and rivalry, and is often linked to fans’ collective identity and attempts to provoke opponents. Antisemitism persists, with some clubs being disproportionately targeted due to perceived associations with Jewish communities. The use of the term “Yid” by Tottenham Hotspur fans is a particularly complex case, where the word has been reclaimed by some as a badge of honor and a way to deflect antisemitic abuse, despite its deeply offensive history. Interestingly, some research suggests that the presence of players from diverse backgrounds can positively impact local community attitudes. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing prejudice and promoting inclusivity in football and beyond.

Limitations. The research primarily focuses on European, and especially English, football, meaning the findings may not be universally applicable. Interpreting the intent behind fan behavior is also challenging, as what one person considers harmless banter, another may find deeply offensive. Finally, the study relies on analyzing observed behaviours and language, which may not fully capture the complex underlying attitudes and beliefs of individuals.