

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: University of Leicester</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: UoA 23 Sociology</p>
<p>Title of case study: Underpinning work to combat racism and other inequalities in sport</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact Over the past 20 years, racism in sport, particularly football, has been recognised as a significant problem, on the pitch, in the stands and within clubs. The issue is being proactively addressed at multiple levels, from national initiatives by sports governing bodies to policies implemented by individual clubs and fans, all designed to challenge discrimination, encourage inclusive practices, and work for positive change. The University of Leicester pioneered research into sports spectator statistics and analysis and later specialised in assessing the effectiveness of anti-racism and social inclusion strategies. Its research has been used by sports organisations to identify the scale of the problem and to guide and inform work to combat it.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p><u>Game and Spectator Analysis</u> Between 1987 and 1997, Leicester sociologists produced the <i>Digest of Football Statistics</i> (funded by the Football Trust), the first ever published annual statistical commentary and analysis of the game and its spectators. It covered economics, attendances, crowd behaviour, player discipline and stadium redevelopment. (1) Between 1994 and 2001, in detailed annual national fan surveys funded by the English Premier League (2) and the Football League (3), Leicester published the first large-scale analyses of the changing national demographics and patterns of consumption and behaviour of sports crowds conducted anywhere in the world.</p> <p><u>Racism and inequalities in sport</u> Building on the influential work by Prof Eric Dunning and Leicester colleagues on racism in sport (4), the research centre collaborated with the FA Premier League, the Football League, the PFA and the anti-racism body <i>Kick It Out</i> at the turn of the millennium. This new research was initiated to discover the extent to which clubs had responded to specific Task Force recommendations surrounding social inclusion. This work was jointly funded by the Professional Footballers Association and the ESRC. It involved an extensive survey of professional football clubs to investigate the ways in which clubs had attempted to engage with their local minority ethnic communities around issues of playing, scouting, spectating, policing and employment. In total, staff at 88 professional clubs returned completed questionnaires representing a 96% response rate. Effectively, this report (5-7), which was the first of its kind, provided a unique national audit of a series of anti-racist strategies by professional football clubs in England aimed at combating racism and promoting social inclusion within the game. Key findings included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst around one-third of clubs explained minority ethnic non-attendance at their clubs matches in terms of fan concerns over racism (32%) and also cost (33%), a smaller, but significant number of clubs persisted in using familiar cultural stereotypes, such as views that minority ethnic groups 'like other sports' (24%) or that their members are prevented from attending matches because of religious and cultural factors (11%). • More than half (57%) of all clubs were unaware of any recent incidents of racism amongst spectators at their home matches. These included some clubs whose supporters had actually been involved in high profile incidents of racist chanting during the 1999/2000 season. • Three-quarters (76%) of all clubs felt it unnecessary to do more work specifically with black and Asian fans. Over half (52%) of all clubs also felt they were already open to all fans. • Whilst about 10% of young players aged 14+ in youth academies and schools of excellence were black, only 1.6% of these (estimated at 71 young people) were of South Asian origin. <p>This research is complemented by John Williams's later equity work at Leicester on gender and</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

fandom and the experiences and demands in sport of people with learning disabilities, and by Jim Lusted's published findings, based on Leicester research, on the implementation of The Football Association's Ethics and Sports Equity Strategy. From 2004, Lusted studied the implementation of The FA's Ethics Equity Strategy, which aimed to tackle inequalities, including racism, in English football, particularly in the often overlooked local, grass-roots form of the game. Case studies of five County Football Associations were undertaken to assess the implementation of the strategy, involving 57 semi-structured interviews with local football stakeholders and participant observation at County FA and National FA offices.

Research found resistance to change among long-standing County FA Governance personnel, attributed to components of amateurism including 'paternalism', 'protectionism' and 'fairness'. Here, many saw the equality strategy itself as being unfair and causing fresh problems, as it was argued to support 'preferential' treatment of some members over others. It also found that the 'club cultures' of County FAs were informed by ideas about 'race', often derived from Victorian British colonialism; this, despite widespread denials from key personnel of any racism in the game. (8)

Sport and disability

Between 2008 and 2010, Williams was the lead researcher in the first ever socio-historical study of sport for people with learning disabilities in the UK and of Special Olympics GB. Using original sources, the research charted SOGB's origins and wider impact, its complex relationship with the IOC, its funding, underpinning philosophy and growth, and also some of the limitations of its training activities and reach. It reflected on the future policy challenges faced by SOGB in a diverse modern Britain and an increasingly harsh economic climate. This work was collaborative with historians at De Montfort University, but Williams led the research group.

Funded by Leicester City Council and SOGB the research produced:

- The first ever observational and interview-based empirical analysis of the processes involved in bidding for and hosting a 'mega-event' of this kind.
- A qualitative analysis of the experience of athletes, family members, volunteers and spectators at the Games, one which directly addresses critical concerns about the alleged 'separatism' of Special Olympics in the wider context of the relationship between learning disability and sport.
- The first ever quantitative analysis of local public perceptions of the Games and of people with learning disabilities. This involved three local public surveys: six months before the Games; during and immediately after the Games; and six months after the event.
- A critical discourse and content analysis of the media (especially the television) coverage of the Games. (8)

The key Leicester researchers involved in this body of work were:

Eric Dunning (1960 – present, currently Emeritus)

John Williams (1979 – present)

Steven Bradbury (1998-2002)

Jim Lusted (2004-2008)

Research in the sport and inequality area continues at Leicester. In 2013 Williams has been working in with *Sporting Equals*, the sports equality and policy body, on evaluating equality policies at Premier League football clubs. From Oct 2013 *Sporting Equals* will co-fund a PhD studentship on the exclusion of British South Asians from UK sport.

3. References to the research

1. Williams J. et al; Digest of Football Statistics (from 1993 to 1997) The Football Trust' (1995/6/7); FA Premier League Fan Surveys 1995-2001, Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research, published by the FA Premier League
2. Football League Supporter Surveys (1998 to 2001) Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research, published by the Football League
3. Dunning, E. (1999) 'Sport in the process of racial stratification' in E. Dunning (ed.) Sport Matters, London: Routledge, pp. 179-218
4. Bradbury, S. (2001) *The New Football Communities A survey of professional football clubs on issues of community, ethnicity and social inclusion*, Manchester: the PFA

Impact case study (REF3b)

5. S. Bradbury & J. Williams, (2006) 'New Labour, racism and new football in England' Patterns of Prejudice Vol. 40 No. 1 pp. 61-82;
6. J. Lusted (2009) 'Playing games with 'race': understanding resistance to race equality initiatives in English local football' Soccer and Society 10 (6): 722-739
7. Carter, N, & Williams, J. (2012) 'A genuinely emotional week: learning disability, sport and television' Media, Culture and Society 34 (3): 211-227

4. Details of the impact

Impact arose in two key areas: (a) For the first time, evidence-based policy to improve provision for supporters was introduced to the sector; (b) Research crucially underpinned the development of anti-racism and other equity strategies and initiatives.

(a) Providing an evidence base

An accurate understanding of a club's fan base underpins today's anti-racism policies and initiatives. The annual national fan surveys compiled for the first time at Leicester in the mid-1990s offered new sociological data to clubs, fans, administrators, sponsors and local authorities about the demographic characteristics of different fan groups. Until then, even major sports clubs around the world knew very little about their own supporters and their habits and attitudes towards their clubs. The research enabled clubs to make evidence-based policy for the first time, shaping crucial policy debates about inter alia transport use, spectator facilities, local and non-local fan communities, family and female fans, fan experiences of racism and hooliganism, and patterns of consumption around different types of English Premier League and Football League clubs and Premier Rugby clubs.

The Football Trust was a Government body set up to improve safety at football stadia. The Trust pioneered the use of academic research on football by commissioning the University of Leicester to work on the Digest of Football Statistics. The Trust's former Deputy Chair said: "A major impact of the Leicester research was to demonstrate beyond doubt to the UK football authorities the relevance and importance of research. This impact is still felt in the modern game – the Premier League and Football League today are much more research-aware as a result of the Football Trust initiative in partnership with the University of Leicester." (A)

The Head of Supporter Service at the Premier League also testifies to the impact of this early work into the assessment period: "The work on National Supporter Surveys initiated and conducted for the Premier League at the University of Leicester was ground-breaking. No other sport anywhere in the world had conducted research of this kind, or in this sort of detail. It certainly has had a major practical impact on the way in which Premier League football clubs understand their supporters and their needs. The importance of research on the demographics of fans and on their match-day habits, pioneered at the University of Leicester, remains something which is central to our current work on developing and improving football supporter services." (B)

(b) Shaping policy and underpinning anti-racism and equality initiatives

Leicester's research has impacted on the national policy work of the Professional Footballers Association (PFA) and The Football Association (FA). Dr Williams has worked closely with the PFA and FA and with national anti-racism organisations *Sporting Equals* and *Kick It Out* throughout the assessment period to ensure the findings of Leicester's work are translated into practice. Williams has chaired one of only two major anti-racist strategy groups in England (Foxes Against Racism) and was a founder member of the Asians in Football Forum.

Steven Bradbury and Jim Lusted each produced Leicester-based research co-funded by The FA and the PFA, respectively, on racism in football that fed directly into national policy at local and national levels. Williams contributed to research which has informed national policy on sport for people with learning disabilities.

A former Chair of the Professional Footballer's Association and the current Governance and Regulation consultant on The FA Group said: "The work of these colleagues from Leicester has collectively demonstrated the ways in which barriers to progression in football for both black and South Asian people operate in both institutional and very practical, everyday ways... for example, it has indicated definitively that some professional club staff and local football officials still held rather

Impact case study (REF3b)

stereotypical views of some ethnic minorities.

“This research was instrumental in the introduction of more race monitoring at football academies and race awareness training in the professional game. It was also instrumental in developing recent ‘ant-racist’ policies, including those adopted by the Professional Footballers Association, to increase the numbers of black coaches in football by proposing that at least one candidate for every senior coaching/managing job in the professional game is from a minority ethnic background.”

He also confirmed that Jim Lusted’s work on County FAs had impacted on the development of FA policy for dealing with racism at the local level and fed directly into The FA’s policy development on race awareness issues. “The research indicated how members of local County FAs inadvertently discriminated against ethnic minorities and offered recommendations for change. These recommendations have been instrumental in the establishment, inside The FA, of forums to produce policy on opposing race exclusion in local football. The research has also been central in the establishment of Race Equality Advisory Groups at national and local County FA level, thus ensuring more representation, and more equal treatment, of people from minority ethnic backgrounds in local football.”

He said: “Williams has also been a key figure in promoting, through his research, better access for young South Asians and (my own) new coach bursary programme, The Whole Game Initiative, has drawn extensively on some of these Leicester findings and will have a major impact in promoting more opportunities in professional football for BME coaches.” (D)

A leading authority on equality and diversity and CEO of Sporting Equals, a national organisation which offers extensive training programmes and strategic support to enable clubs and sports governing bodies to implement a social inclusion framework within their organisations, said the research and support work on equality issues in local and national sport had been of considerable importance for Sporting Equals in its continuing work nationally with professional sports clubs and sports governing bodies.

“William’s research and his work with Sporting Equals has shaped anti-racism policies at clubs, including Leicester City and Liverpool FC. His work insisted that clubs and governing bodies reflect on their own practices and work to eradicate informal forms of racism. He confirmed “change has occurred here, in terms of race monitoring and clubs achieving Race Equality Standards. The practical positive impact of the work conducted at Leicester on sports equality (especially in football) has been widely felt, highlighting a number of crucial access, policy and training issues that we at Sporting Equals are addressing with our clients and partners in sport.” (E)

CEO of Special Olympics GB, the national body which organises sport for people with learning disabilities, said: “The research work undertaken on GB Special Olympics 2009 by John Williams at the University of Leicester and colleagues from De Montfort University is unique in its detail and scope. Its impact on Special Olympics and on sport for people with learning disabilities has been to help directly to shape future policy in this area and to help people working in this field develop their strategies on issues such as media coverage of learning disability sport, ethnicity and Special Olympics, the importance of volunteering, and the structure of future games. The Leicester research has also helped bring awareness and knowledge about learning disability sport to a much wider audience both inside and outside the academic community. SOGB has been able to put the Leicester research to very practical use and in this sense its impact will be long-lasting and consequential for those involved in learning disability sport.” (C)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- (A) Factual statement from the former Deputy Chair of the Football Trust.
- (B) Factual statement from the Head of Supporter Services, Premier League.
- (C) Factual statement from CEO, Special Olympics GB.
- (D) Factual statement from the former Chair of the Professional Footballer’s Association and current Governance and Regulation consultant on The FA Group.
- (E) Factual statement from the Chief Executive, Sporting Equals.