Chapter 10

Scotland

Sectarianism as racism in football? The cut and thrust of an ongoing debate

Alan Bairner and Stuart Whigham

The history of Scottish football has been punctuated by regular episodes of verbal abuse and not infrequent outbursts of violence, primarily, but not exclusively, associated with the rivalry between Glasgow's two biggest football clubs, Celtic and Rangers. These events have traditionally been characterised as sectarian and as evidence of persistent religious bigotry. In Scotland, the term "sectarianism" is generally used to describe the continuous ethnic, political and religious rivalries and tensions between Protestants and Catholics although these terms are no longer necessarily linked to regular church attendance. More recently, however, the debate has moved on with some researchers preferring to use the word "racism" to describe the anti-Irishness directed at Celtic Football Club and its followers and others contending that the word "racism" is inappropriate in this particular context. Meanwhile, legislators and Police Scotland have sought ways to tackle the problem regardless of what terminology is used.

This chapter assesses the use of the term "racism" rather than "sectarianism" in relation to Scottish football and, specifically the rivalry between the so-called "Old Firm" clubs. In order to contextualise this debate, the chapter commences with an account of the degree to which sectarianism has shaped Scottish society and football across time, with a consideration of the shifting dynamics in contrasting periods. Attention then turns to the ways in which these broader developments have, in turn, influenced the specific ethno-religious, political and ideological associations of each club's support base across time, respectively. This approach thus facilitates consideration of the broader context within which an assessment of the debate of whether or not the ongoing blight of sectarianism in Scottish society can be usefully re-framed as a matter of racism.

Historical sectarianism in Scottish football

As Bairner (1994, 1996) has argued, considering the lack of congruence between sporting nationalism and political nationalism in Scotland, it was safer for many Scots to display sporting nationalism in response to the internal

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divisions within Scotland along ethno-religious, regional and political lines. However, the ethno-religious demographics within the Scottish society have undoubtedly framed much of the discussion on the politics of Scottish football, and in particular, the controversy around the expression of "sectarian" political identities.

Although sectarianism has been argued to be a declining issue in Scottish society and sport, the historic polarisation between the oppositional religious, political and ethnic attachments of the "Old Firm" clubs of Celtic and Rangers means that these divides have not been eradicated (Bairner, 2001; Bradley, 2013; Flint and Kelly, 2013; Kelly, 2011). Past academic studies on these divides have thus stressed that the existence of ethnic, sectarian and 'racial' discrimination undermine any notions of a singular Scottish identity (Bairner, 1994; Bradley, 1995; Boyle and Haynes, 2009; Dimeo and Finn, 2001; Finn, 1991a, 1991b; Horne, 1995; Kowalski, 2004).

As Kowalski argues "[f]ootball, the so-called 'national game', still provides an important focus for the perpetuation of the sectarian divisions that have marred Scotland since the second half of the nineteenth century" (2004, p. 73), and sectarianism has therefore been a common topic in academic reflections on Scottish sport and society. Bairner (1994) contended that the hegemonic position of the Glaswegian clubs of Rangers FC and Celtic FC due to their association with Protestantism and Catholicism, respectively, epitomised the interconnection between sectarianism and support for Scottish football club teams. For Bairner, both clubs have been able to attract supporters from outside the immediate geographic proximity of their home city of Glasgow, drawing supporters from the surrounding West Coast area of Scotland (despite a number of other football clubs in the West Coast) and other areas of Scotland due to the religious and political connotations of each club – in a way that other clubs in Scottish football have been unable to replicate. Furthermore, both clubs also attract extensive support from other international contexts such as Northern Ireland/Ulster, the Republic of Ireland and North America.

Although similar arguments have been made regarding the quasi-religious affiliations to other Scottish football clubs historically, such as in the case of Hibernian FC and Heart of Midlothian FC in Edinburgh, most academic analyses have conceded that the contemporary influence of sectarianism on these clubs is not evidenced to the same extent as in the 'Old Firm' rivalry (Holt, 1989; Kowalski, 2004; Kelly, 2007a, 2007b, 2013; Kelly and Bairner, 2018).

Contemporary sectarianism in Scottish football and Scottish politics

The issue of sectarianism in Scottish football and wider society has prompted legislative action by the Scottish Government, led at the time by the Scottish National Party (SNP). This resulted in the introduction of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012

(Crawford, 2013; Davis, 2013; Flint and Kelly, 2013; Rosie, 2013; Waiton, 2013). Flint and Kelly (2013, p. 3) identified the major catalyst for the introduction of this bill as:

> the so-called 'shame game' between Celtic and Rangers. . . . This match, played on 2 March 2011, resulted in thirty-four fans being arrested inside the stadium, three Celtic players booked, seven Rangers players booked, three Rangers players sent off, managers Ally McCoist and Neil Lennon squaring up to one another at the final whistle and widespread public condemnation from politicians, journalists and football officials.

This 'shame game' was accompanied by other events in Scottish football related to sectarianism during the same period, including incidents involving threatening devices and messages sent in the mail to Celtic fans and officials, controversies regarding refereeing decisions and actions, a physical assault on Celtic manager Neil Lennon by a Heart of Midlothian fan, and disciplinary action by UEFA against both Rangers and Celtic for discriminatory songs in European fixtures (Flint and Kelly, 2013; Flint and Powell, 2014; Rosie, 2013).

In the belief that the existing legislation to deal with offensive and/or threatening behaviour in football was inadequate, the SNP Government proposed and successfully passed the new legislation (Crawford, 2013). However, both the content of the Bill and the process of its passing drew significant criticism from opposition political parties, sections of the Scottish media, the general public and academics (BBC News, 2011a, 2011b; Crawford, 2013; Flint and Powell, 2014; Waiton, 2013, 2014; Walker, 2012). As a leading critic of the legislation, Waiton (2013) suggested that the passing of this Act was symptomatic of an 'anti-sectarian industry' in Scotland which had resulted in elite control over what it means to be 'tolerant' in contemporary Scottish society. Waiton (2013, p. 99) argues that

> anti-sectarianism, within this context, is no longer fundamentally about challenging religious (or political) sect-like behaviour but is part of a wider framework of psychic protection, where everybody, but especially those defined as 'vulnerable groups', is protected from emotional hurt, that is from being offended.

For Waiton and other academics who support his position (Crawford, 2013), this has led to the demonisation of football fans who wish to express their cultural and ethno-religious identity freely. They also argue that the Act had ironically led to intolerance towards such individuals and groups and, ultimately, resulted in restrictions on their freedom of speech. Although other academics adopted more cautious positions on the relative merits and drawbacks of the Act (Flint and Kelly, 2013; Rosie, 2013), Celtic FC released an official club statement demanding a formal review of the "unhelpful and

counter-productive Act" (Celtic Football Club, 2014), thereby highlighting the difficulties faced by governmental policymakers when intervening politically within the domain of sport.

The ongoing controversy surrounding the Offensive Behaviour at Football Act therefore led to a sustained public and political campaign to repeal the Act. Following the 2016 Scottish Parliament election, which saw the SNP lose its parliamentary majority, the opposition parties voted to revoke the Act in March 2018 (BBC, 2018). However, given that parties from across the political divide accepted that sectarianism remained a problem in Scottish society, despite their opposition to the nature of the Act per se, it was apparent that the decline of sectarianism in Scotland was still too slow to refute concerns about its impact on society.

Contemporary sectarianism – Scottish football and the 2014 independence referendum

These potential impacts of sectarianism in contemporary Scottish society also played out in the constitutional debates during the Scottish independence referendum of 2014. Despite the failure of the pro-independence SNP to achieve sufficient electoral support for Scottish independence and the serious decline in its electoral performance at the 2024 General Election, the prospect of Scottish independence remains salient within Scottish and British politics (Dalle Mulle, 2016; Ichijo, 2009; Leith and Soule, 2011; Mycock, 2012). Given that the ethno-religious, socio-economic and political stratification of supporters of Celtic and Rangers still have to be linked to their personal voting dispositions (Armstrong, 2014; Bissett and McKillop, 2014; Bradley, 1997, 2013; Giulianotti, 2007; Kelly, 2007a, 2013; Walker, 2014, 2016), it was unsurprising that speculation emerged regarding the impact of footballing loyalties on voting preferences in the 2014 referendum despite its relatively marginal status within the constitutional debate (Jarvie, 2017; Whigham, Kelly and Bairner, 2021; Whigham and May, 2017). In this light, as part of the ongoing opinion polls before the referendum took place in September 2014, a Panelbase opinion poll (see Table 10.1) commissioned in May 2014 by the Wings Over Scotland website presented data on the independence referendum voting preferences simultaneously of Scottish football fans (Wings Over Scotland, 2014a, 2014b).

The only major deviation from the average voting trend (46.3% favoured Scottish independence, while 53.7% preferred to stay in the Union) was the significant difference in the voting intentions of Aberdeen fans (only 25.8% in favour and 74.2% against), in terms of discrepancies based on the assumptions made in past academic analysis of the politics of Scottish football. The most interesting results were the voting intentions of Rangers and Celtic fans. Given the aforementioned associations between Rangers and expressions of Britishness, Conservativism and unionism (Bairner, 1994; Bissett and

Table 10.1 Scottish independence referendum voting intentions by Scottish football club support (Wings Over Scotland, 2014a, 2014b)

Club	"Yes" Vote Intention	%	"No" Vote Intention	%
Rangers	63	52.5%	57	47.5%
Celtic	50	54.3%	42	45.7%
Aberdeen	8	25.8%	23	74.2%
Hearts	14	48.3%	15	51.7%
Hibs	8	47.1%	9	52.9%
Dundee United	8	47.1%	9	52.9%
Other	60	50.0%	60	50.0%
No interest	165	42.7%	221	57.3%
Total	376	46.3%	436	53.7%

McKillop, 2014; Bradley, 2013; Flint and Kelly, 2013; Holt, 1989; Kowalski, 2004), and Celtic's historical association with the political "left", the Labour Party, and republican sympathies (Bradley, 1998; McDougall, 2013; Walker, 2014), it was surprising that the two Glasgow clubs represented the only "Yes" supporting clubs in this opinion poll, which obviously challenges some of the traditional political stereotypes. It is therefore more than appropriate and also timely to consider the degree to which the respective stereotypes of the "Old Firm' clubs" fans, as outlined earlier, continue to hold true in the fluid political climate of contemporary Scotland.

Rangers

Historically, Rangers FC and their supporters have commonly been associated with Protestantism, Orangeism,[1] Conservativism, loyalism (in relation to the Irish and Northern Irish political context) and unionism (in relation to Scotland's constitutional status) (Bairner, 1994; Bissett and McKillop, 2014; Bradley, 2013; Flint and Kelly, 2013; Holt, 1989; Kowalski, 2004; Whigham, Kelly and Bairner, 2021). It has therefore been argued that the club's symbolism has shaped Scottish society and politics outside of the domain of football, given the oppositional religious, political and ethnic attachments of Rangers and their rivals, Celtic (Bairner, 2001; Bradley, 2013; Flint and Kelly, 2013; Walker, 2014). However, some disagreement remains regarding the extent of their impact. Notwithstanding this caveat, Bradley (2013, p. 67) argues that Rangers historically became:

> a symbol of a number of dominant, privileged and institutional features of Scottish-British life, particularly in terms of allegiances and affinities with royalty, empire, unionism, freemasonry and Protestantism, prov[ing] highly attractive to Ulster-Scots in Scotland's central belt.

Turning attention to the issue of whether these historical associations persist for Rangers supporters in the current political context in Scotland, with specific reference to attitudes towards demands for Scottish independence, recent analyses have questioned the validity of the historic stereotypes of Rangers fans. For example, in their introduction to their edited collection "Born Under the Union Flag: Rangers, Britain and Scottish Independence", Bissett and McKillop (2014, p. 19) argue that

> It is often taken for granted, by combatants on both sides of the independence debate, that a Rangers fan will or should be a dyed-in-the-wool Unionist, whose No vote is a foregone conclusion. No doubt there are many such Rangers fans. But there are also many who intend to vote Yes, just as there are supporters of Celtic, Aberdeen, Hibs, Dundee United and Hearts who intend to vote No. While no one would wish to portray Rangers supporters as paragons of virtue, lazy stereotypes can also surround the club.

Similar arguments are made elsewhere in the same collection by fellow contributors, with Richardson (2014, p. 25) suggesting that while

> the Rangers fan base taken as a whole may lean more towards Better Together than Yes Scotland, I know many fans who are strongly committed to independence . . . the idea of the right-wing, Unionist Rangers fan is simply not borne out by the political landscape of Scotland over the last 20 to 30 years.

Duff (2014, p. 110) put forward a more differentiated view:

> Odd as it may seem, I know of many independence-supporting Rangers fans who see no contradiction in associating themselves with the British flag at games whilst simultaneously supporting the breakup of the United Kingdom. They consider the Union Jack to be part of their identity as a Rangers fan, not part of their national identity. For most football fans, the culture that surrounds the match day experience can be packed away at the end of the 90 minutes and kept locked up in the understairs cupboard until the next match.

Therefore, although the historic attachments of Rangers to Protestantism, Orangeism, Conservativism, loyalism and unionism are deemed to still have a part to play in the contemporary era for some supporters, the shifting political climate in Scottish politics more broadly is argued to have impacted upon the Rangers fan base, undermining the "lazy stereotypes" of the club highlighted by Bissett and McKillop (2014).

Celtic

In the case of Celtic FC, Bradley (1995) suggests the club's symbolic position for Irish Catholic immigrants in Scotland – a section of Scottish society that perceives itself as a victim of prejudice, sectarianism and, more recently, racism – has been central in cementing the popularity of Celtic. For Bradley, the establishment of Celtic, and before that of Hibernian Football Club in Edinburgh, allowed integration of the Irish Catholic community into the football culture of Scotland, an important step given the importance of football within the domain of Scottish society, especially for males. The resultant integration process has been argued to be in stark contrast with the sporting culture found in the Republic of Ireland. There, the formation of the Gaelic Athletic Association and its strategy of promoting a distinct Irish sporting culture centred on Gaelic games and pastimes, in opposition to so-called foreign games including association football (Bairner, 2002; Bradley, 1998, 2007; Jarvie, 1993; Jarvie and Walker, 1994; Sugden and Bairner, 1993). Others have outlined numerous examples of historic discrimination against this section of the Scottish population within Scottish football and Scottish society in a wider sense, resulting from the connection between Celtic and issues of ethnic and ethno-religious identity associated with Irishness, Catholicism and republicanism (Dimeo and Finn, 2001; Finn, 1991a, 1991b; Horne, 1995).

However, as is the case for Rangers, it has been advocated by some that the historic political associations of Celtic have softened. For example, Celtic supporters have been argued to have a stronger affinity with the Labour Party in comparison with fans of other Scottish football clubs, as well as left-leaning political and ideological tendencies (Bradley, 1998; McDougall, 2013; Walker, 2016). With regard to the matter of Scottish independence, Walker (2014, p. 38) observed

> Leading Celtic figures, such as past Chairmen John Reid and Michael Kelly, and current director Brian Wilson, are amongst the most prominent anti-independence commentators and this reflects enduring cynicism to Scottish Nationalism within the Labour Party that has traditionally drawn such strong support from the Catholic (of Irish descent) community in Scotland.

Given the conflict between the unionist position of the Scottish Labour Party and the republican ideology associated with Celtic's symbolic position in Scottish society, the constitutional debate in Scotland during the period of the Scottish independence referendum of 2014 resulted in an ideological dilemma for Celtic supporters. Allied to the decline in the fortunes of the Labour Party in Scotland (until their recent recovery in the 2024 UK general election), the rise of the SNP to power and the growth of political nationalism have been linked to numerous Celtic fans switching their political allegiances

to the SNP and the cause of Scottish independence (Tomkins, 2014; Walker, 2014; Whigham, Kelly and Bairner, 2021).

On sectarianism and racism in contemporary Scottish football

As outlined earlier, the shifting dynamics of the ethno-religious and political allegiances of each club means that it would clearly be foolish to use football club support as a proxy or predictor for identifying an individual's political preferences. It would be equally rash to completely dismiss the notion that an individual's affiliation and identification with a football club may have some role in their cultural and political socialisation. Furthermore, whether racism, as opposed to sectarianism and bigotry, is a factor in contemporary Scottish society is open to debate. In light of this, attention now turns to examining the shifting nature of the political and ethno-religious attachments of each club to consider their relevance to the ongoing debate.

According to McBride, "the Irish . . . tend to be neglected in academic work on race and racism in Britain" (2018, p. 69). Thus, "the common-sense explanation of sectarianism marginalises claims of the Irish as an ethnic minority and a racialised group, and the 'equivalence' frame which focuses on 'Protestant-Catholic relations' crucially neglects the historic unequal power relations" (McBride, 2018, p. 89). Does this mean then that we can replace the word "sectarianism" with "racism" in discussions about the biggest, and arguably most insidious, football rivalry in Scotland?

The 1978 UNESCO Declaration on Race defines racism as "a theory claiming the intrinsic superiority of racial or ethnic groups which would give to some the right to dominate or even eliminate others, presumed inferior, or basing value judgments on racial differences" (cited in De Benoist, 1999, p. 13). However, as De Benoist (1999, p. 11) argues, "Today the word 'racism' has so many contradictory meanings that it takes on the aura of a *myth* and is, therefore, difficult to define". Thus, "because of a certain affinity, 'racism' can be used as the correlate of a whole series of other terms: fascism, the extreme Right, ant-Semitism, sexism, etc." (De Benoist, 1999, p. 11) and even become synonymous with phobias of any "Other, e.g., ageism, misogyny, anti-young, anti-police, anti-workers, anti-married people, etc." (De Benoist, 1999, p. 32). This was not always the case. As Grosfoguel (2016, p. 10) asserts, "since colonial times color racism has been the dominant marker of racism in most parts of the world". He concedes, however, that the colour of one's skin "is not the only or exclusive form of racist marker". Thus, "in the colonial history of Ireland, the British constructed their racial superiority over the Irish, not through the marker of skin color, but rather through a religious marker" (p. 11). As a consequence, "what appeared at first glance to be a religious conflict between Protestants and Catholics was in fact a racial/colonial conflict" (p. 11).

It is this conflict that, according to some scholars from Finn (1991a, 1991b) onwards, was exported to Scotland and took root with the arrival of thousands of Irish Catholic immigrants in the nineteenth century. They were met with racist prejudice and discrimination in a country which had undergone an extensive reformation of the Christian religion. The result, according to McBride (2018), has been that "in relation to Scotland, sectarianism and racism are not two separate phenomena" (p. 69). McBride (2018) further argues that "Irish Catholics historically were a racialised group which suffered structural discrimination and societal prejudice" (p. 89). Elsewhere, she claims that "understanding sectarianism as a modality of racism, which as Miles and Brown (2003) argue is inextricably bound up with nationalism, emphasises the need to consider the impact of historical colonial relations between Britain and Ireland" (McBride 2022, p. 352). This is supported by Reid (2013) who writes that "the ethno-religious bigotry experienced by the Irish in Scotland is a particular form of racism that is Scotland's national demon" (p. 230).

According to Nazir, James, Abdurahman et al., however, "The relationship (if any) between sectarianism and racism is complex" (2022, p. 788). It should also be noted that McBride agrees that, although sectarianism is certainly a contested term, "it is equally contentious to talk about anti-Irishness in Scotland as a type of racism" (2018, p. 71). One wonders, indeed, whether the racism, if that is what it is best described as, which is evidenced in football rivalry and reflected in the wider society is actually bi-directional with Celtic fans represented not only as victims but as morally superior not only to Rangers fans but also to Scottish Protestants, a majority of whom are no longer religious in a meaningful sense, or, more accurately perhaps Scots without an Irish catholic heritage. The implication is that it is they alone who are able to identify with oppressed peoples around the world, most strikingly and laudably, the Palestinians. There is a danger that this could turn into an essentialist belief about the virtues of the Irish in this regard, which can be easily refuted by consideration of the Irish American experience, also a product of large-scale immigration in the nineteenth century.

Racism and the Irish

According to Rolston (2003), there was no doubt that, upon their arrival in America, "the Irish Catholics were feared and despised for much the same reasons as before . . . their poverty, their tendency to political rebellion and, perhaps most importantly of all, their Catholicism" (p. 44). Another commentator, writing in the Celtic fanzine *Not the View*, noted that "anti-Catholic prejudice has deep roots in America and has only in recent decades begun to fade away" (Tirnaog, 2023, p. 28).

However, "when hostility between black and white did erupt, it resulted from the Irish setting out on the road to upward mobility" (Rolston, 2003, p. 45). Ignatiev (2009, p. 70) argues that "while the white skin made the Irish eligible

for membership of the white race, it did not guarantee their admission; they had to earn it" (in opposition to no less a figure than Daniel O'Connell and to the nationalist and republican movement in Ireland itself). For example, the Irish nationalist Young Irelander John Mitchel, while in America, defended slavery. He was excused for doing so by Arthur Griffith, who founded the Irish political party Sinn Féin in 1905. He wrote in the introduction to *Jail Journal*, Mitchel's memoirs, "Even his views on Negro-slavery have been deprecatingly excused, as if excuse is needed for an Irish nationalist declining to hold the Negro his peer in right" (cited in Rolston, 2003, p. 50). Representatives of the Irish community even insisted that "they were enlisting to fight in the Civil War to defend the Union, but not to free the slaves" (Rolston, 2003, p. 46). In such ways did "the Catholic Irish eventually come to establish their "white" credentials . . ." (Rolston, 2003, p. 47).

Racist attitudes also became apparent in American sport, most notably in the city of Boston. Thus, the Boston Red Sox, a baseball team, "hampered by a pronounced strain of racism invoked by ownership and management as well as by the city, whose liberal credo towards freedom and equality of opportunity for all races throughout most of the nineteenth century became badly eroded" (Barney and Barney, 2007, p. 2). The General Managers at the time were Eddie Collins and Joe Cronin, both with Irish heritage, Collins in County Cork and Cronin with roots in County Killarney (Railton, 2024).

This is not to deny that "supporters of clubs like Celtic have a long history of struggling against oppression" (Banal, 2023, p. 8). But this description does not necessarily apply to all supporters of Celtic and what is meant, one wonders, by the phrase "clubs like Celtic"? Presumably, Rangers is not one of these. Indeed, in the words of Tirnaog (2023), "I wonder if there is a support in British football with less self-awareness than some of those who follow Rangers" (p. 27). The writer goes on, "it's almost as if anti-Catholic bigotry is the last acceptable prejudice" (p. 29). The clarion call of "We are the People" so beloved by many Rangers supporters is a demonstration of supposed superiority, perhaps even an implication that others are inferior human beings or not even human at all (see Shirlow and McGovern, 1997). Nevertheless, might it not be possible that anti-Protestant bigotry, or perhaps more accurately, anti-Scottishness exists in sections of the Celtic fan base? Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that Celtic supporters were implicated in what was one of the most blatant incontestable examples of racism in Scottish football, which happened almost 40 years ago.

By the time he signed for Rangers in 1987, Mark Walters, a Black footballer, had already experienced the racism that had infected the grounds of many English football clubs in that era. However, Walters (2018) recalls, "if I thought the abuse I had suffered in England was bad, it was about to fly off the scale when I joined Rangers" (p. 115). Prior to making his debut at Celtic Park, home to the other half of the "Old Firm", according to Walters, "the abuse started the moment we got off the team bus" (p. 116). Despite losing the game, Walters

was "singled out for the type of stick I had never experienced before" (p. 116). During the game, he started to think, "Hang on a second, I've just run a metre inside that line and there is a scary array of missiles that have been thrown at me. . . . Probably the scariest items were the darts, as they could've taken my eye out" (p. 117). For the sake of balance, it should be added that by his own admission, Walters was treated even worse by fans of Heart of Midlothian. He writes, "if I thought the scenes at Celtic Park were bad, then what I endured at Tynecastle – both on and off the park – was ten times worse" (p. 119). He goes on, "the fall-out from that game brought the subject of racism in football – a problem Scotland apparently didn't know had – to a head and the following day the papers went to town on the subject" (p. 121). It is ironic that, as we have seen, numerous commentators have argued that the fans of one of the teams most implicated in these seems are themselves the victims of racism.

It is true that the behaviour of some Celtic fans towards Mark Walters was condemned by many, perhaps most, of the others. Speaking on their behalf, Tirnaog (2023) wrote, "The treatment of Rangers player Mark Walters that day was as disgraceful as it was unacceptable" (p. 27). He continued, "racism has no place in any decent society and perhaps it was all the more depressing that it occurred at the home of Celtic, a club which has faced many barriers and much discrimination in its history" (pp. 27–28) and ended, "it was a wake up call to all who follow Celtic and indeed to the wider Scottish society that we weren't immune to the sort of racism that was so prevalent in England at the time" (p. 29).

Conclusion

There is certainly no denying that Britain has a history of racist stereotyping of the Irish (de Nie, 2004). It is also undeniable that Irish Catholics suffered discrimination in a variety of areas of Scottish society into the second half of the twentieth century. However, it is widely accepted, although certainly not by all, that discrimination of this type has all but disappeared (Devine and Rosie, 2020), transferred perhaps to more recent immigrants whose arrival in Ireland itself has also prompted a rise in racism (Gusciute, Mühlau and Layte, 2022; Cannon and Murphy, 2024). This is not to deny that bigotry and sectarianism are still to be found in Scotland. A considerable amount of which is directed towards those of Irish Catholic heritage and, above all, people associated with Celtic FC. Indeed, as has been articulated earlier, the ethno-religious and political fracture lines in Scottish society are still contended to shape the contours of life for many Scots, both within the context of sport and society more broadly. It is to argue, however, that the terms that have been used in the past to situate the rivalry between Celtic and Rangers and the implications of that rivalry are still apposite. To introduce the concept of racism into the debate is arguably to make more than they deserve of the rhetorical and, sadly, on occasions violent excesses in which the fans of these clubs engage. It also

runs the risk of diminishing the power of the word when used to describe the treatment of truly oppressed people.

Note

1 Orangeism is the principles and practices of the Orange Order, a Protestant organisation that supports the supremacy of Protestantism in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

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