

Laundered Hate: Euro 2020 and the Mainstreaming of Alt-Right Conspiracies on Twitter [abstract only]

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Laundered Hate: Euro 2020 and the Mainstreaming of Alt-Right Conspiracies on Twitter

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Abstract

In examples of anti-white racism, conspiracy theories are frequently employed to ‘explain’ the very ways in which the values and beliefs of ‘White society’ are assumed to be undermined or undervalued. In this regard, the resort to conspiracy has remained a prominent characteristic of white nationalist movements, most notably, the ‘alternative right’ (alt-right). Increasingly these conspiracies have infiltrated popular and political discourses, serving as both a point of criticism and debate amongst mainstream media outlets. By critically analysing the significance of conspiracy, this paper will explore the formal importance of conspiracy theories in aiding and perpetuating the dissemination of alt-right politics in sport.

Paying particular attention to the development of alt-right conspiracies—from fringe online communities to popular social media spaces, such as, Twitter—we examine how online criticisms of the ‘take the knee’ protest, during the 2020 European Football Championship, sought to deride the tournament for being subject to a cultural Marxist, ‘woke agenda’. Detailing the extent to which alt- and far-right discourses have become mainstreamed, we first address how the decision to take the knee before the start of England’s games became linked to criticisms of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, and second, we reflect upon the modality of conspiracy and its role in perpetuating examples of anti-white racism through fear, paranoia, and racial hate. Together, these conclusions are used to reflect upon the role of sports journalists as well as the reporting—or, rather, laundering (Klein 2017)—of online hate in public news coverage. For this reason, our conclusions speak to the growing importance of conspiracy in media coverage of sport and the conceptual and analytical significances it provides for examining online hate.

Bio

Jack Black is a Senior Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University and affiliated with the Centre for Culture, Media, and Society, where he is Research Lead for the ‘Anti-Racism Research Group’. An interdisciplinary researcher, working within psychoanalysis, media, and cultural studies, Jack is the author of *Race, Racism and Political Correctness in Comedy: A Psychoanalytic Exploration* (Routledge, 2021) and co-editor of *Sport and Physical Activity in Catastrophic Environments* (Routledge, 2022).