

Asians, Cricket and Ethnic Relations in Northern England

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The 1990s have been dismal for English cricket. The England team is among the also-rans of test cricket. The creation of the England and Wales Cricket Board in 1997, a new governing body for all levels of cricket, indicates the anxiety among cricket enthusiasts about the future of the game in England. But one encouraging aspect of recreational cricket in the 1980s and more particularly the 1990s has been an increase in the playing of cricket among those of South Asian descent in England. This paper discusses whether the playing of cricket by Asians in England represents an assertion of Asian values and identities or adaptation to white English cultural practices and appraises what the ethnic dimension to recreational cricket reveals about race relations in late twentieth-century England. The material for the paper is drawn primarily from four towns in the North of England - Blackburn, Bolton and Pendle (formerly known as Nelson) in Lancashire and Bradford in Yorkshire. All four towns have significant Asian populations and relatively high numbers of Asians who play cricket regularly. The paper is part of an ongoing study of racism and cricket in twentieth-century England.

Asian cricket clubs

Throughout the twentieth century Blackburn, Bradford, Bolton and Pendle have been strongholds of cricket playing among whites and localities where league cricket of a very high quality has been played. In the three Lancashire towns leading league clubs have often engaged current or former test match cricketers as their professionals. In 1991 those of South Asian descent formed slightly over 2% of the population of England and Wales whereas more than 13% of the population of Blackburn and Bradford were Asian and more than 9% in Pendle and 6% in Bolton. Reliable statistics for the Asian populations of these towns in the later 1990s are not available but as the average age of Asians is lower than that for whites, the 2001 census will most likely show an increase in the Asian

proportion of the populations. By 2000 half the school leavers in Bradford will be Asians.¹ The Asian populations in these towns, primarily of Indian or Pakistani descent, are culturally heterogeneous, with language, religion and ancestral origin focusing differing social identities. Bradford with a population of over 450,000 is the largest of the four towns. In 1991 73% of Bradford's Asian population was of Pakistani descent, 19% Indian and 6% Bangladeshi. 76% of South Asians in Bolton were of Indian descent, 56% in Blackburn but less than 2% in Pendle. In the three Lancashire towns most of the Indian population have ancestral roots in the state of Gujarat whilst the Pakistani population is predominantly from the Punjab and Azad or Free Kashmir. Almost all Asians in Blackburn and Pendle are Muslims. Nearly 60% of those of Asian descent in Bolton are Muslim with almost all the remainder being Hindus. In Bradford, just over 80% of the Asian population are Muslim with 10% being Hindus and a further 10% Sikhs. Migration to all four towns began in the 1960s, with employment in textile factories being a major cause.

The exact numbers of Asian males in the four towns playing cricket regularly is not known. It is also difficult to be sure about the precise numbers of teams which play each week but press reports of local cricket suggest that between a fifth and a third of teams playing regularly are Asian though how many Asians play for more than one club or who play only an occasional game is not clear. The proportion of the Asian population who play is higher than the proportion of whites who play, which is the case in other Northern towns.² The Morgan recommendations for a restructuring of all levels of cricket in England show the concern of the English cricket establishment that the numbers playing cricket as a recreation in England were stagnant for much of the 1980s and 1990s, but in these four towns in the 1980s and 1990s cricket playing among Asians has grown spectacularly.³ Almost all clubs formed in the 1990s have been clubs for predominantly Asian players. The Asian presence in recreational cricket in these four towns is higher than in other team ball games. Indeed it can be argued that this enthusiasm for playing cricket emphasises how Asians have not become integrated into the mainstream of sport culture in England. This is in marked contrast to the experience of African-Caribbeans who have a strong presence in recreational and professional forms of soccer and to a lesser extent rugby league, though they remain underrepresented in the management of these sports. One Asian has played for the England rugby league team.⁴

In all four towns almost all cricket played on a regular basis takes place in leagues. In the three Lancashire towns the Asian presence in local cricket has been strongest at the lower levels of league cricket. No predominantly Asian clubs play in the Lancashire, Central Lancashire or Bolton Leagues, the most prestigious leagues in Lancashire, but there is a long tradition of clubs from these leagues engaging Asian players with experience of first-class cricket in India or Pakistan as their professionals. A study of ethnic involvement with cricket in Essex shows that in this part of Southern England teams which are predominantly Asian or African-Caribbean also tend not to play in the most prestigious leagues nor for clubs with the best facilities.⁵ In Bradford, two clubs situated close to districts with high concentrations of Asian inhabitants have mainly Asian players and play in the Bradford League, arguably the most prestigious cricket league in Yorkshire. The first teams of other Bradford League clubs in recent years have engaged Asian cricketers from overseas to play as professionals in their first teams but few local Asians play for them as amateurs. The Quaid-e-Azam Cricket League, named in honour of the founder of Pakistan, was set up in 1981 as a cricket league to provide opportunities for Asians who worked on Saturdays to play on Sundays and by 1996 this had two divisions each with ten clubs drawn from a large area of the North. Its standard of play is perhaps higher than that of any cricket league in England. Many of its players are employed as club professionals on Saturdays. It has enormous prestige in the Pakistani community, the Pakistan High Commissioner having been the guest of honour at its annual dinner.⁶ No league for exclusively Asian clubs has been formed in any of these four towns but the Pendle and District Cricket League, formed in the early twentieth century as the Nelson Sunday School Cricket League, and the Bolton Metropolitan League, established in 1991 when the Second Division clubs left the Bolton and District Cricket Association, have become leagues with only Asian clubs. Asian clubs have usually joined existing leagues.

In the 1980s and early 1990s Asians other than professionals played for clubs whose players and members are nearly all Asians, Clubs with roughly equal numbers of Asian and white players have remained rare although in the Bradford Central League in 1997, a league with three divisions but whose clubs do not engage professionals, some clubs had teams which included three or four players with Asian names while at other clubs almost all players had Asian names. Asian clubs are

administered by Asians but in most leagues with Asian clubs, the Asian presence in league administration is not strong. An Asian club usually has drawn its players from a distinctive group within the Asian population, with religion, ancestral roots, kinship ties and residential districts, which are often connected, being the basis for club membership. Only the tiny number of Asian clubs which play at a higher level of cricket than most Asian clubs have players from a wide spectrum of Asian society. In Bolton the Deane and Derby club, the Muslim club which has climbed highest up the ladder of league cricket, attracts players from across local Muslim society and similarly Bolton Indians CC, the predominantly Hindu club playing at a higher level of cricket, has players from most sections of Bolton Hindu society. The concentration of Asian clubs at the lower levels of league cricket means that many talented Asians play at a lower level than their abilities merit. Interviews show that Asian cricketers are recruited from all sections of the Asian population and teams may include those who have entered higher education, blue-collar workers, those working for family businesses and often those who are unemployed. Traditional definitions of social class are not always applicable to the Asian population, but the occupational range of Asian recreational cricketers is at least as broad as that of whites. An important difference between Muslim, which make up the majority of Asian clubs in these four towns, and white clubs is the low level of involvement of women with Asian clubs. Hardly any Muslim women watch cricket except from the privacy of cars. At white clubs teas are usually prepared and served by women. At Muslim clubs, teas are often prepared at home by the womenfolk of players, but are almost always served in the tea interval by men.

Asians, cricket and ethnic tension

Consideration of whether cricket has discouraged racism in the four towns depends on how racism is defined. If racial prejudice is regarded as those forms of stereotyping which assume that all with a particular skin colour have innate rather than culturally determined characteristics which justify their exclusion from certain areas of social activity, then it can be argued that racist friction has been strong in these four towns in the 1990s. Asian levels of unemployment are higher than for whites with comparable skills and abilities. In Bradford in 1991 the unemployment level among Asians aged over 16 was nearly three times higher than for whites.⁷ More recent statistics of unemployment among Asians in specific

towns are not available but national figures show that whilst Asian levels of unemployment are still higher than amongst whites, the gulf has narrowed a little. In 1997 the national unemployment rate for whites was 6.4%, 8% for Indians and 20% for Pakistanis.⁸ Annual reports of community relations officers in all four towns record increased instances of what Asians and others from ethnic minorities have felt to be racist discrimination but this could reflect a greater willingness to report such instances rather than a growth in hostility from whites. In June 1995 Asian youths were involved in riots in the Manningham district of Bradford. The official enquiry into the causes and implications of these disorders concluded that among young Asians, and particularly Muslims, poor education, overcrowded homes, poverty and unemployment had created predispositions to tension and violence.⁹ Oral evidence suggests that the Salman Rushdie affair and what whites perceive as the spread of Muslim fundamentalism in international politics have raised ethnic hostility.¹⁰

Instances of ethnic prejudice in English first-class cricket are not difficult to find. The *Hit Racism for Six* campaign was organised in part to combat racist discrimination in cricket.¹¹ Black and Asian cricketers have been abused by spectators at test and county matches. The Gloucestershire and England fast bowler David Lawrence, the first black cricketer born in England to be selected for England, complained that a section of the crowd at Headingley 'call me nigger, black bastard, sambo, monkey, gorilla.'¹² Ethnic stereotyping and assumptions of white English moral superiority have been prominent in the outbursts of controversy and ill-feeling surrounding test series between England and Pakistan. The public row in 1987 between the England captain Mike Gatting and the Pakistani umpire Shakoor Rana prompted the former England batsman Tom Graveney to declare that Pakistani players had been cheating since 1951 and that When you go to play on the sub-continent you know for sure that two things will happen. You will suffer Delhi belly - and you will get done by the umpires.¹³ The former England captain Raymond Illingworth saw the Gatting-Shakoor Rana affair as part of 'an international plot to deprive this country of its influence in world cricket...Cricket-wise, Pakistan has always been iffy, and Pakistanis, in the main, difficult. Now they're being downright Bolshie. Given a chance they would trample all over us.' A few days later Illingworth commented Watch out next summer for more objections about English players who've had links with

South Africa.¹⁴ Gattling was deprived of the England captaincy in 1988 not as a result of his public row with Shakoor Rana but because he had been discovered with a barmaid in his bedroom during a test match against the West Indies. Accusations in 1992 that Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis were scouring one side of the ball were seen as further examples of an innate Pakistani tendency to cheat, but to Pakistanis such accusations expressed prejudice and stereotyping, especially as other forms of ball tampering, such as lifting the seam, were common among white cricketers in England. Imran Khan complained that 'our cricketers are looked upon as an undisciplined, unruly mob who put pressure on umpires, cheat, doctor cricket balls, whinge about umpiring decisions and are generally unsporting.'¹⁵

Prominent England cricketers went on rebel tours to South Africa in 1982 and 1990 and other first-class cricketers were employed as players or coaches in South Africa. By 1986 70 of the 370 first-class English professional county cricketers were employed in South Africa each winter.¹⁶ Many of the white cricketers who went to South Africa helped to coach black cricketers in the townships and may have found the apartheid regime abhorrent but believed that 'bridge building' or retaining sporting links with South Africa was the most effective method of provoking a relaxation of apartheid. They often justified playing in South Africa on the grounds that they were professional cricketers pursuing their livelihood by working in South Africa, an argument which shows that financial considerations must have been key factors in the decision to play in South Africa. Yet others saw playing in South Africa as strengthening the institutionalised racism of apartheid by giving it an air of acceptability and by showing that international boycotts of South Africa could be overcome. *The Voice*, a newspaper published in England for an African-Caribbean readership, described Mike Gattling's rebel tourists of 1990 as having 'ignored the plight of suffering blacks to take pots of gold in South Africa's evil, apartheid state.'¹⁷ In the late 1990s some of those who took part in the rebel tours such as David Graveney, Mike Gattling and Graham Gooch were involved with the management and selection of the England team and held prominent roles in county cricket

Despite these instances of apparent racial tension in English cricket generally, aspects of cricket in the four towns of this study have been free from racial tension. In 1998 Ishtiaq Ahmed, director of the Bradford Racial Equality Council, reported that 'little or no contact' between Asian

and non-Asian youths amounted to 'a kind of growing apartheid between minority ethnic communities concentrated in the inner city and the wider community of the district.' Where members of the ethnic minorities had made 'a genuine effort to reach out and to become an integral part of the wider community, their efforts have not been reciprocated or acknowledged and have often been met with hostility or rejection.'¹⁸ Cricket would appear to be an exception to this situation. Most Asian teams belong to leagues with white teams and play against white teams which can be interpreted as a form of ethnic harmony. Instances of overt racial animosity at cricket matches have been rare, though it is possible that Asian and white cricketers and the sports sections of local newspapers may feel obliged to underplay these. Oral evidence, on the other hand, reveals a strong undercurrent of prejudice and suspicion in cricket between whites and Asians. A study of racism and cricket in the Leeds region of Yorkshire but which included data collected from Bradford pointed out that whilst Asian players had experienced little overt racism during matches, it existed in more subtle forms. White cricketers often objected to Asian players not speaking English during matches.¹⁹ Many white players prefer to play against white teams and in all four towns have claimed that Asian sides often bring in talented unregistered players for vital matches and are often too competitive, yet at the same time white apologists for league cricket have traditionally celebrated the intensity of its competitiveness. One respondent in Bolton has said that some clubs with mainly white members had withdrawn from the Metropolitan League because it had become too 'unsporting.' His comments referred primarily to the playing of unregistered players by Asian clubs and the sense of outrage that when an Asian club had chosen to represent the league in an inter-league competition, it fielded players who had not played for it previously.²⁰ The sale of only soft drinks at the grounds of Muslim clubs is a further cause of irritation among some white players and reduces the opportunities for socialising after matches between Asian and white cricketers.²¹ "Rather than promoting deeper understanding between ethnic groups, the playing of cricket between whites and Asians seems to have reinforced stereotyped views of Asians among whites. Whites have frequently made comments in interviews when discussing reactions to Asian teams such as 'I don't want to sound a racist but...'. In the Bolton area the alacrity with which whites, without prompting, deny the existence of racism in local cricket suggests that others do believe that instances of

racism can be found in local cricket. The impression, and it must be stressed that this is an impression and not data collected on a scientific basis, which arises from interviews with whites is that most whites involved with cricket accept the Asian presence in cricket and in local society but have little desire to increase their social contacts with Asians.²² How whites play cricket in these towns does not seem to have changed as a result of the growing Asian presence in local cricket.

Cricket has often been celebrated as a symbol of Englishness. The match on the village green is still depicted as the purest form of cricket and used to create an immediately recognisable image of England. Cricket's supposed tradition of sportsmanship and fair play has been seen as congruent with Christian teachings but also as an expression of a distinctively English sense of moral worth. These forms of Englishness attached to cricket have been very much associated with a white England, with Englishness as a white moral capacity and given the imperial dimension of international cricket, had an important role in providing a moral justification for empire.²³ Yet interviews with whites, even those who have little sympathy for playing with or against Asian teams in these four Northern towns, have not criticised the Asian presence in local recreational cricket on the grounds that cricket is an essentially English activity and should remain such. None have argued that Asian clubs are causing cricket to lose its English character.

Asians have seen the failure of predominantly Asian clubs to be elected to the higher levels of league cricket as ethnic discrimination. In the Bolton area the failure in 1991 of the Deane and Derby club to be admitted to the First Division of the Bolton and District Cricket Association, a high standard cricket league though not usually considered to be on a par with the more prestigious Bolton League, led to accusations of racism, especially after the club had spent £80,000 on improving the facilities at its ground and when two predominantly white clubs from outside Bolton were admitted to the First Division. A banner proclaiming 'Apartheid here in Bolton. No politics in sport. All men are equal.' was displayed at a match between sides representing the Bolton Association and the Bolton League.²⁴ In 1993 one Bolton Asian described the Association as 'racist' and that 'they want no Black clubs in the competition.'²⁵ Whilst it is not clear how far these were individual protests, many Asians in Bolton did feel that there had been discrimination against the Deane and Derby club. Oral evidence has also shown that representatives of some

predominantly white clubs from the Association's First Division were pleased when the Second Division clubs, several of which were predominantly Asian, left to form the Bolton Metropolitan League in 1991. Oral evidence also shows that the refusal to admit Bolton Indians CC to the First Division of the Bolton Association has caused resentment among the Hindu population of Bolton.²⁶

Conflicting conclusions on the nature of ethnic relations in these towns can be drawn from the preference of so many Asians to play for Asian clubs. Officials and players at white clubs always insist that Asian players would be welcomed and that team selection would be based on playing ability, though to admit otherwise would be against the law. In the late 1990s some of the leading predominantly white clubs have approached talented Asian players in their late teens, but this has led other Asian cricketers to make comments such as 'they're only interested in you if you're a top notch player.'²⁷ The small numbers of talented Asian cricketers who play at the higher levels of league cricket in these areas suggest that many Asians expect that they would not be made to feel entirely at ease at predominantly white clubs. The increased number of Asian clubs formed in the 1990s reflects a continuation of ethnic tensions which has caused Asians to feel a need to strengthen their ties with those from the same background. But equally oral evidence shows that parents encourage Asian youths to form social ties with those having similar ancestral roots, religion, clan identity and language.²⁸ In part this reflects an importation into Britain of cultural attitudes forged in Asia and can be seen as a desire of Asians to retain contact with their own, but it can also be argued that the state of ethnic relations in England has done little to weaken a consciousness among Asians of their need to rely on such traditional loyalties.

Recreational cricket and Asian identities

The formation of clubs representing distinctive groups among Asians in the 1990s also reflects the intensity, and perhaps growing, heterogeneity and fragmentation of Asian society in Northern England, which can be related to the political tensions between India and Pakistan and what Asians interpret as rising levels of hostility from whites in England. In 1992 *Eastern Eye*, a weekly English language newspaper published in Britain for an Asian readership, claimed that 'Relations between Britain's Indian and Pakistani communities have reached an all time low. Tensions

in the Sub-Continent have found their way to British shores.' In Blackburn animosity between youths of Indian and Pakistani descent resulted in a week of street battles in which knives, petrol bombs and guns were used.²⁹ In 1992 fighting among the supporters of India and Pakistan caused a floodlit exhibition match between an Indian XI and a Pakistan XI at Crystal Palace in London to be abandoned.³⁰ At a local government election in Bradford where the Conservative candidate belonged to the Jat clan and Labour candidate to the Bains clan, the contest was between the clans rather than the political parties. 'Jat or Bains' became a frequent cry on the streets. In a neighbouring ward, it was thought that a Labour majority was cut from 1000 to 100 because Muslims voted for a Muslim Conservative candidate rather than a Sikh Labour candidate.³¹

The concentration of Asian teams at the lower levels of league cricket is not entirely the result of a white hostility towards Asians. Most Asian clubs do not own or cannot afford to rent well-appointed grounds. They have to use publicly-owned grounds which are usually the poorest quality grounds. A ground with good facilities is usually regarded as essential for admission to prestigious cricket leagues. The survey of Asian and African-Caribbean clubs in Essex showed that the poor quality of grounds and of facilities at predominantly non-white clubs had often been the reason for their non-admission to higher levels of cricket. In 1996 most of the 20 clubs in the Quaid-e-Azam League did not own their grounds but hired those of prestigious predominantly white clubs. The fact that white clubs were prepared to do this show that racist pressures in cricket were not too intense. On the other hand the well-appointed grounds of the Deane and Derby and Bolton Indians clubs has led Asians to suspect that racism must have played a part in their failure to be elected to the First Division of the Bolton and District Association. In the late 1990s some Asian clubs in Bolton have disbanded because of players becoming dissatisfied with the poor quality of the grounds and a feeling that restrictions on council spending had meant the maintenance of municipal grounds was deteriorating. These considerations have also caused some white clubs to disband.³²

The growth of cricket playing among Asians in these four towns owes something to the strength of cricket in India and Pakistan and the success of India and Pakistan in test match cricket in the 1980s and 1990s. Asians born in Britain made little impact on first-class cricket in England before the mid 1990s. Many Asians have played county cricket but most of these

had already played first-class cricket overseas before being invited to play in England. In 1993 only ten Asians born or educated in the UK were on the books of English counties but by 1995 this figure had increased to 21, though eight counties had no Asian qualified to play for England. In 1998 nineteen Asians qualified to play for England appeared in the county championship. One Asian respondent has claimed that the low number of British-born Asians engaged by the English counties reflects the view of Asian parents that education and the pursuit of reliable forms of employment are more attractive career options than the traditional insecurities of professional sport.³³

Playing cricket has been stimulated by a sense of pride in Asian achievements in test cricket. Interviews in Bolton, Blackburn and Pendle and the data produced in *Crossing the Boundary* show that Asians support the countries of their family origin rather than England in test cricket.³⁴ In 1992 Bradford city centre was brought to a standstill by Asians celebrating Pakistan's winning of the World Cup. Such support from Asians in England for India or Pakistan in test cricket has often strengthened a sense of the 'otherness' of Asians among English whites. The comments of Norman Tebbit in 1990 that the support for India or Pakistan at test matches played in England could be a sign that Asians had failed to become integrated into British society³⁵ and the speculations in an article printed in *Wisden Cricket Monthly* with what could be seen as the racist title of 'Is it in the Blood?' that Asians and African-Caribbeans playing for England were not committed fully to the England team, caused great offence to Asians living in England.³⁶ One Asian respondent argued that his support for Pakistan at test matches should have been accepted as just as unquestionable as support for the Scottish soccer team among Scots resident in England. He said 'No-one expects them to stop supporting Scotland.' Asians have also pointed that whilst they may support India or Pakistan in test cricket, they do support England in other sports. It seems probable that the accusations by white English players that Pakistani test teams have been habitual cheats would have strengthened a sense of rejection among English Asians. Besides being a celebration of Asian success in international cricket, the expanding numbers of predominantly Asian teams also indicate how white responses to Asian loyalties in test cricket have caused Asians to intensify their links with their traditional communities.

The difficulty of finding detailed evidence about recreational cricket

in India and Pakistan and especially about how this may have differed between localities in these two countries complicate appraisals about how far the playing of cricket by Asians in England attempts to retain in England the culture of cricket in Asia. The formation of clubs based on distinctive groups in the Asian populations express a desire to maintain social networks formed in Asia. The restricted role for women at Asian cricket clubs in England reflects the limited involvement of women with cricket, especially in Pakistan and among Muslims in India. Choosing Asian names and in some cases the names of ancestral villages for clubs can be seen as an attempt by Asians to give cricket in England an Asian character, but these are outnumbered by Asian clubs named after districts in English towns. Superficial accounts of recreational cricket in the cities of Pakistan stress its competitiveness and 'street-fighter' qualities. One Asian from Bradford who had played in Pakistan has recognised that Pakistanis in England play cricket in a highly competitive manner, but he has recalled that in Pakistan cricket was even more competitive and usually played with facilities worse than those in England.³⁷ It has been mentioned above that whites often complain about the competitiveness of Asian teams but at the same time whites have traditionally taken pride in the intense competition of local league cricket. Interviews with Asians in Bolton indicate that a majority of those who play for the adult Asian teams have spent their childhoods in Asia³⁸ and this could mean that playing cricket is a means of retaining contact with the familiar in a novel and perhaps intimidating environment

Asian cricket clubs express a desire to retain and assert Asian values, but equally it can be claimed that Asians feel that playing cricket reflects their town and county loyalties and their wish to be accepted as part of local society whilst retaining their Asian identities. Deane and Derby and Bolton Indians, the most prominent Asian clubs in Bolton, both play in the Manchester Association, one of the more prestigious cricket leagues in southern Lancashire. The Manchester Association and the Bolton and District Association have been placed on the same level in the hierarchy of cricket leagues resulting from the re-structuring of club cricket introduced under Lord MacLaurin's chairmanship of the England and Wales Cricket Board, but many members of these two Asian clubs would prefer their clubs to play in the Bolton and District Association, even though their efforts to join its First Division have been rejected. Members and supporters of the Deane and Derby club were especially offended

when their application to join the First Division was rejected and two 'white' clubs from outside Bolton were accepted. They stress that they are Bolton clubs and as such ought to belong to the Bolton Association.

In Bradford and other parts of Yorkshire there has been much resentment among Asians over the failure of a Yorkshire-born Asian to play for the county team. The unguarded comments by Brian Close, a former Yorkshire and England captain, in a televised interview in 1990 about 'our boys', that is whites born in Yorkshire and 'Pakistanis who have only just come over here' provoked great offence among Yorkshire Asians but it has been contended by one sports journalist that this caused Asians and the county club to consider how their relationship could be improved.³⁹ The county club made greater efforts to develop links with local Asian cricketers. It established an under-17 ethnic minority team and the Yorkshire Cricket Board has set up an Ethnic Minority Forum. In 1997 an employee of the county club said that it was 'desperate to find a homegrown Asian who could make the grade.' In 1999 the county club held trials for more than 200 youngsters of Pakistani origin.⁴⁰ No Yorkshire-born Asian, however, has played for the first team of the county club which has caused many Asians to suspect that the county club's efforts to discover Yorkshire-born Asians are little more than window dressing. The data collected for *Crossing the Boundary* showed that in 1997 there was still a widespread suspicion among Asians and African-Caribbeans that the Yorkshire club was still discriminating in favour of whites.⁴¹ A white sports journalist has argued that some local Asian cricketers have joined Bradford League clubs because they have realised that they could develop their potential to the level required by the county club by playing league cricket at a high standard, but for others the suspicion that the county club is not interested in Asians has caused them to strengthen their desire to play for Asian teams. Few Lancashire-born Asians have become Lancashire first-team players but this has aroused far less comment than the failure of a Yorkshire-born Asian to become established in the Yorkshire team. This may have been because the employment by Lancashire of Asian test match cricketers such as the Indian Farouk Engineer, when Yorkshire were playing only Yorkshire-born white players, and more recently Wasim Akram who enjoyed immense popularity among those of Pakistani descent. The disappointment among Asians in Yorkshire is a further evidence of the desire among Asians to retain their Asian identities whilst being accepted by whites as part of Yorkshire society.

Conclusion

This paper does not contend that cricket alone can unravel the full complexities of ethnic relations in the North of England, but it does claim that cricket provides an additional dimension for assessing the nature of ethnic relations in these four towns. The playing of matches between white and Asian teams and the presence of Asian teams in leagues containing white clubs is a form of racial harmony but closer examination indicates that matches between white and Asian clubs tend to reinforce the stereotypical views of Asians among whites. Few whites seem to enjoy playing against Asian clubs. The rapid growth in the number of Asian clubs indicates how Asians are in many ways outside the mainstream of popular culture in England and also suggests that Asians have felt it increasingly important to emphasise their traditional loyalties and identities. This desire among Asians to express their traditional loyalties through cricket owes much to cultural practices brought to England from India and Pakistan, but it seems that their experiences in England have bolstered their sense of the need to adhere to their traditional identities. The perspective on racial relations provided by recreational cricket reveals that the sense of 'otherness' between whites and Asians and between different groups of Asians are not weakening but may well be strengthening.

Notes

- 1 *The Bradford Commission Report. The Report of an Enquiry into Wider Implications of Public Disorders which Occurred on 9, 10 and 11 June, 1995*, HMSO, London 1996, p. 19.
- 2 G. K. Verma and D. S. Darby, *Winners and Losers: Ethnic Minorities in Sport and Recreation*, Falmer, London 1994, p. 121, shows that in Greater Manchester, which includes Bolton and also Oldham and Rochdale, other towns with large numbers of Asians, that among males aged 16-24 more of Indian and Pakistani descent play cricket than do whites. For every 8 whites who play regularly, 18 of Indian descent and 12 of Pakistani descent play regularly.
- 3 Statistics about the numbers of predominantly Asian cricket clubs have been collected from interviews with club players and officials and with sport development officers, annual editions of the *Lancashire Cricket Yearbook*, *Bolton Evening News*, *Bradford Telegraph and Argus*, *Lancashire*, *Evening Telegraph* and *The Nelson Leader*.
- 4 R. Fletcher and D. Howes, (eds.), *Rothmans Rugby League Yearbook 1995-96*, Headline, London 1995, p. 418.
- 5 I. McDonald and S. Ugra, *Anyone for Cricket? Equal Opportunities and Changing Cricket Cultures in Essex and East London*, Centre for Sport Development Research at Roehampton Institute and the Centre for New Ethnicities Research at the University of East London, London, 1998.
- 6 *Guardian*, 1 June 1990; *Quaid-e-Azam Sunday Cricket League Handbook Season 1996*.

- 7 *District and Ward 1991 Census Digest*, Chief Executive's Research Section, Bradford Metropolitan Council, Bradford, p.37.
- 8 *Labour Market Trends*, Office for National Statistics, London, December 1998, table 3.
- 9 *The Bradford Commission Report*, p.11.
- 10 Interviews with Mr. T. B. (Muslim), A. Khan (Muslim), Mr R. Khan (Muslim). Some of those who agreed to be interviewed did not wish to be identified. For a discussion of how different groups of Muslims in Britain view the Rushdie affair see Tariq Mohood, 'British Asian Muslims and the Rushdie affair' in J. Donald and A.T. Rattansi, (eds.), *'Race', Culture and Difference*, Sage and the Open University, London 1992.
- 11 For a description of the aims of Hit Racism for Six, see I. McDonald, 'Six of the Best: Moves to Combat Racism in Cricket', *Cricket Digest*, Autumn 1997, pp. 12-3.
- 12 B. Holland, L. Jackson, G. Jarvie and M. Smith, 'Sport and racism in Yorkshire: a case study', in J. Hill and J. Williams, (eds.), *Sport and Identity in the North of England*, Keele UP, Keele 1996, p. 166.
- 13 *Daily Mirror*, 10 December 1987.
- 14 *Daily Mirror*, 10, 12 December 1987.
- 15 *Sun*, 8 July 1992.
- 16 *Times*, 16 October 1986.
- 17 *Voice*, 16 July 1991.
- 18 *Bradford Racial Equality Council Annual Report 1997-1998*, Bradford REC, Bradford 1998, p. 5.
- 19 J. Long, M. Nesti, B. Carrington and N. Gibson, *Crossing the Boundary: A Study of the Nature and Extent of Racism in Local League Cricket*, Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds 1997, pp. 17, 27.
- 20 Interview with Mr J. S. (white).
- 21 Interviews with Mr. A. Raja (Muslim), Mr. S. Mahmood (Muslim), Mr F. H. (white).
- 22 Interviews with Mr. J. S., Mr. E. H., Mr. F. H.
- 23 For further discussion of cricket, Englishness and morality, see J. Williams, *Cricket and England: A Cultural and Social History of Cricket between the Wars*, Cass, London 1999.
- 24 *Bolton Evening News*, 29 June, 15 July 1991.
- 25 *Eastern Eye*, 29 June 1993.
- 26 Interview with Mr. R. Patel (Hindu).
- 27 Interviews with Mr. R. Khan (Muslim), Mr. T. B. (Muslim).
- 28 Interviews with R. Khan (Muslim), Mr. N. Ghardia (Muslim), Mr. R. Patel (Hindu).
- 29 *Eastern Eye*, 4 August 1992.
- 30 *Times*, 29 July 1992.
- 31 *Bradford Commission Report*, pp. 88-9.
- 32 Interviews with Mr. E. F. (Muslim), Mr. A. M. (Muslim), Mr. J. S. (white).
- 33 Interview with Mr. R. Patel (Hindu).
- 34 Interviews with R. Khan (Muslim), Mr A. Raja (Muslim), Mr. N. Khan (Muslim), Mr. E. Ferooz; *Crossing the Boundary*, executive summary.
- 35 *Times*, 21 April 1990.
- 36 *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, July 1995, pp. 9-10; interviews with Mr. A. Ali (Muslim), Mr T. B. (Muslim).
- 37 Interview with Mr. Hanif Helifa (Muslim).
- 38 Interview with Mr. A. Ali (Muslim), Mr. M. Mahmood (Muslim).
- 39 Interview with D. Markham of the Bradford *Telegraph* and *Argus* group.
- 40 *Guardian*, 1 September 1999.
- 41 *Crossing the Boundary*, p. 21.