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## **“Getting inside the wicket”: Strategies for the social inclusion of British Pakistani Muslim cricketers.**

### **Introduction**

Since the early 1990s cricket followers have become increasingly accustomed to viewing men of South Asian heritage taking to the field of play, for the England national team as well as for county and domestic teams (Burdsey, 2010; Fletcher, 2010). The ‘positive’ representation of these British Asian cricketers, and the passion of British Asian communities for cricket more generally, have led some to argue that the sport is simply ‘in their blood’ (Werbner, 1996; Raman, 2014). Yet, seemingly favourable representations of elite British Asian players in mainstream media, must not be taken uncritically as ‘proof’ of cricket as colour-blind and meritocratic (Burdsey, 2010; Fletcher, 2011; McDonald and Ugra, 2001; Valiotis, 2011). Hylton and Chakrabarty (2011) argue, for instance, that in sport and the arts, ‘positive’ news-stories can often mask social exclusions and problematic recruitment policies, rendering cultures of inequity invisible and thus unremarkable. So whilst there have been some progressive changes within cricket to engage racially diverse communities, and to address racism (McDonald and Ugra, 2001), British Asian players, clubs and leagues - contrary to the realities signified by mainstream media - remain relatively ghettoised, languishing on the peripheries of the sport (Lawrence, 2011), and often playing in leagues that are not recognised by the sport’s governing body, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).

Cricket in England is generally comprised of a number of tiers: first-class county cricket leagues and competitions; minor counties cricket; and recreational clubs and leagues, which are often organised on a regional or local basis. Outside of this mainstream structure, non-ECB-affiliated leagues exist, for instance the Bradford Cricket League (ECB, 2015). It is the role of the ECB to manage, market, and develop the sport from professional to grassroots levels of play. The recent Ashes 2013 series win (by both the men and women's teams) illustrates excellence as a continuing priority for the ECB, as detailed in their most recent strategic plan 'champion counties' (ECB, 2013). In 2013/14, the ECB identified increasing the number of British Asians participating in cricket as another key priority (ECB, 2013). In turn, county cricket teams, such as Yorkshire County Cricket Club, began to adopt proactive measures to recruit more British Asian men, including those of Pakistani heritage (Hylton et al, 2015). Arguably, tapping into this talent pool of "home-grown", British-born, South Asians, supports elite performance agendas, which in so doing, rewards local mainstream cricket clubs financially. The authors of this paper argue that addressing social inclusion and sporting excellence are not mutually exclusive objectives. On the contrary, we argue that promoting the inclusion of British Asian cricketers is likely to abet elite development. To this end, tokenistic and re-active policies that aim to 'get more Asians into cricket', are not likely to succeed unless the cultural, religious and ethnic heterogeneity of British South Asian communities are understood and translated into policy and practice (Burdsey and Randhawa, 2011; Carrington et al, forthcoming; Horne and Jary, 2001).

Implementing transformative change however may require challenging traditional practices as well as the nominal, everyday behaviours of those involved in running the game. Stated differently, cricket, we argue, will fail to capitalise on the potential of “home-grown” talent if the strategies designed to include them are inadequate and/or do not address the complexity of barriers to their inclusion. In this paper, we therefore build on the work of Burdsey (2010), Fletcher (2010, 2011, 2013), Malcolm (2010) and Valiotis (2009), by using empirical research to critically inform policy development. We specifically explore strategies to address the inclusion of British Pakistani Muslim (BPM) men in cricket. Thus while research in the field may be theoretically informed by discourses about inclusion and empowerment, we will suggest they must also speak to policy-makers ‘on the ground’ by demystifying academic jargon, making it clear and easy-to-understand and action (Adams, 2010; Best, 2009; Bi, 2011; Burdsey and Randhawa, 2011). In order to achieve the aims of this paper, we will do the following: (1) contextualise the experiences of BPM men in the North of England; (2) outline how the research was conducted; (3) explore the empirical data, flagging-up areas of concern for cricket development officers; and (4) conclude with a set of recommendations for best practice.

### **The Social Inclusion/ Exclusion of BPM men: A brief history**

In the North of England, the case of the Bradford 12 highlights the discrimination experienced by British-born Pakistani Muslims. In 1981, 12 young BPM men were arrested for intent to use petrol bombs against a group of (white) skinheads, who had planned to invade and attack the young men’s community. The men never used the

bombs. Those arrested were members of the Black<sup>1</sup> Youth League (previously known as the Asian Youth Movement) that had assembled to campaign for justice on a number of fronts: aggressive and unfair immigration controls, police harassment of Black youth and wider struggles for justice against racism; a concern that was real and life-threatening to them as, at the time, a growing number of Black people had been murdered by fascist organisation in Southall, Deptford and other parts of the country (Cowell et al, 1981; Malik, 2009; Reicher, 1984). Public spaces in Bradford, Leeds, Birmingham, London, and further afield, in Los Angeles, were all used to demonstrate support of the Bradford 12 and their political mission (Tandana, 2011).

Since this episode, and the Rushdie<sup>2</sup> and Honeyforde<sup>3</sup> affairs, the negative representation of BPM young men has become even more common-place. In 2001, the alienation of BPMs erupted on the streets of Bradford, Oldham and Leeds, prompting an investigation in the form of the Parekh Report. The report concluded that ethnic enclaves existed in the North of England and that without intervention, could lead to levels of ethnic segregation evident in America. Other terrorist attacks (9/11, 7/7, Charlie Hebido), the 'Trojan Horse' threat (Birmingham), the rise of Isis (Iraq), and the Asian paedophile ring (Rochdale), have also exacerbated anti-Muslim discourses of separatism and extremism. Despite claims from Muslims worldwide, that Islam is misunderstood and that mainstream media often misrepresents their faith as a religion

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, 'Black' is referred to as a political identity that incorporates the activism of many ethnic minority groups included those of African Caribbean and British Asian heritage.

<sup>2</sup> Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*, published in 1988, incited considerable unrest both in the United Kingdom and in the wider international community since for some within the Muslim community Rushdie was guilty of blasphemy.

<sup>3</sup> The Honeyford affair arose after an article written by a school headmaster, Ray Honeyford, in the *Salisbury Review*, in 1984, had criticized multiculturalism in schools, 'political correctness' and the home environment of migrant families as limiting factors for educational performance lie in.

that encourages violence, sexism and intolerance of other religious groupings, a culture of Islamophobia is thriving.

In light of such events, the social inclusion of BPM communities, has been and continues to be a topical area of enquiry for both academics and policy-makers, who continue to respond to changing and intersecting political and social discourses about racism, anti-racism, immigration and terrorism (Hammonds and Bhandal, 2011). Hylton and Chakrabarty (2011) claim that sport and the arts can play a significant role in bringing communities together (see also Darnell, 2012; Long, Robinson and Spracklen, 2005). In the U.K., past government initiatives have aimed to use sport and the arts to address the social exclusion of disaffected and disadvantaged communities (PAT10, 1999). The potential of cricket, in particular, as a tool for community development should not be disregarded; this is a sport that is dear to many British Asians, thus increasing the chance of success if implemented effectively. Hence, there is a real opportunity to work towards equality and inclusion within cricket. As previously mentioned, the ECB are committed to increasing participation and broadening representation within the game and have invested in schemes such as Chance to Shine (targeting Primary Schools) and StreetChance (targeting deprived communities) in efforts to engage under-represented groups. These schemes are delivered by professional staff employed by county cricket boards with the remit to broaden the participation base, support the development of clubs, and to promote talent identification. Additionally, national governing bodies of sport in England receive funding from Sport England based on the development and delivery of 'whole sport plans' (strategies that outline how their sport will be developed over a set period of time, usually four years). A key element of the ECB's current whole sport plan is to target South Asian communities in a number of cities across the country,

including Leeds and Bradford, in order to increase participation levels (Sport England 2014). As such, County Cricket Boards – who are responsible for overseeing the development of the sport within their county regions and who receive funding from the ECB to do this work - have developed ongoing strategies aimed at specifically increasing the involvement of Black and Minority Ethnic Groups in the game (for example, Lancashire County Cricket Clubs 'Minority Ethnic Community Development Plan' which was originally developed in 2003). Funding via whole sport plans has therefore pressurised national governing bodies to change the nature and extent of their development work, and resulted in a greater focus upon aspects of social inclusion. However, the extent to which this work has been/is successful is questionable (Spracklen and Long, 2011). Analysis of Sport England's Active People Survey (which analyses participation statistics for people aged 16 and above in England), demonstrates that participation in cricket has decreased from the first Active People Survey in 2005-06 to the latest survey in 2013-14, but indicates a marginal increase in participation amongst black and ethnic minority groups (Sport England 2014). Arguably the use of statistics such as these is limited as they do not provide any insight into the experiences of BPM players. Additionally, due to the nature of current funding arrangements between national governing bodies and Sport England, there is significant pressure for development officers to hit participation targets, but not necessarily to demonstrate changes to the sport to make it more equitable and inclusive (Spracklen and Long, 2011). Research by Searle (2005), Burdsey (2011) and Fletcher (2012) indicates that there are still fundamental issues within mainstream cricket systems and structures, which are experienced as exclusionary for many BPM men.

## **The Research**

In line with Burdsey (2011) we aim to critically unpack the culture of local cricket in order to understand and 'give voice' to the experiences of BPM players. Thus, while the participants' experiences remain central to the following discussion, our analysis seeks out subtle "differences" and "convergences" in the testimonies given, recognising that BPMs constitute a heterogeneous rather than homogeneous group of people. This approach signals an epistemic break from popular discourses that represent British Muslim communities as uncivilised, problematic and absolute (Lawrence, 2011). The centring of marginalised voices and stories, therefore, is as much a political strategy as it is an epistemological position. In this sense, documenting the feelings and experiences had by a diverse group of players - as well as the ways in which they have felt both included and excluded from mainstream structures of cricket - helps identify more efficient and realistic ways of developing socially inclusive practices (Hylton and Chakrabarty, 2011). In other words, while the following sections will not make bold "truth" claims about *our* readings of BPM cricketers' realities, we do suggest that they are the ones best placed to identify mechanisms which are critical for their own social inclusion.

In order to enact this methodologically, during this study two of the authors interviewed 10 BPM players. Initially, a gatekeeper was identified and contacted, who provided a list of names and contact information of amateur participants, from in and around the north of England. We chose to focus on amateur players, given academic research and mainstream media coverage about their lives and cricket playing experiences are often surpassed by testimonies of elite professional players. Other amateur participants were selected using a snowball sampling technique; we relied on



the social networks of recruited participants to access other potential participants. The interviews were semi-structured in nature and lasted for approximately 60-90 minutes, questioning participants' engagement with cricket in the U.K., the social significance of cricket for them, playing experiences, opportunities for progression and development, the rise and establishment of South Asian leagues, popular representations of BPMs in and through cricket, the relevance of discrimination (including Islamophobia), and the challenges facing local cricket clubs in the North of England at the time of the research. All of the interviews, apart from one, were recorded (Mushtaq requested not to be recorded and so notes were taken during and after his interview). Interview transcripts were subsequently coded and analysed to decipher key issues relevant to the study.

The BPM amateur players we interviewed represented a heterogeneous group: they were similar and/or different to each other in terms of their social identities and cricket playing careers; they ranged in age from early 20s to late 40s; they came from different parts of the North of England; and they spanned three different generations. Notably, some had represented predominantly 'British Asian' teams, while others predominantly 'white' teams. Their reasons for playing cricket included their desires to forge a professional career and/or to play simply for recreation and fun. In this paper, we will use pseudonyms to refer to our research participants. All the names used were verified for authenticity with BPM friends of the researchers. We have also given false names to any clubs and/or leagues that were mentioned to us by the research participants. As a final note about the research, as well as conducting semi-structured interviews with our amateur cricketers, the two authors who were involved in the fieldwork kept a diary in which we began to note our analysis of issues raised by talking with participants,

particularly in relation to matters concerning 'race', ethnicity, religion and the potential of sport to both exclude and include ethnic minority groups.

We do not argue that the strategies which emerged from our reading of participants' testimonies are fail proof, importantly the context of each club should be accounted for in terms of their individual social history, the socio-political and cultural context of the surrounding local community, and the resources available to clubs to support social inclusion initiatives. Thus, the strategies identified in this paper are responsive to the needs of the BPM community, who live in urban areas across different parts of North England, during 2006-8. Whilst the research was conducted nearly a decade ago, we argue that it still has salience as debates about the alienation and disaffection of BPMs continues to pose particular challenges for local politicians, policymakers and indeed sports practitioners. Arguably, on-going manifestations of inequity and state-based forms of exclusion can have direct consequences for the material and social security of BPMs. Therefore, lessons from this period of time are still important and need to be evaluated to develop and implement more pro-active strategies in cricket, that address the precise nature of BPM men's exclusion with the aim of facilitating inclusion. The rest of the paper broadly addresses six key findings relating to: feeling out of place; recruitment and selection policies; social networking; the enemy within; community empowerment; and home and belonging.

### **Feeling Out of Place**

In the North of England, like elsewhere in the country, there appears to be two prominent cricket cultures which are arguably divided in terms of race and ethnicity (McDonald and Ugra, 1998; Searle 1993; Fletcher, 2010). McDonald and Ugra (1998) understand these two main cricketing cultures as the following: (1) a 'white', middle-aged, rural, county board-affiliated body of players and teams which play on good quality facilities in the company of a polite audience; and (2) an 'Asian' cricketing culture in which teams tended to be younger, urban, non-affiliated and use inferior pitches and facilities, which play host to large groups of raucous spectators. Historically, the reason for the emergence of separate leagues relates to the impact of racism. Tahir, a first-generation man in his late 40s, who is the chairperson of a separate league, 'ZE', in the North of England, explains:

Some of the early Pakistani Muslim communities living in Bradford began to play cricket together at their local parks. Playing cricket for them was socially significant as it was a way to remember their lives in the Indian sub-continent as well as a way for them surviving as a group in an otherwise alien/ racist society in this country.

Overtime, the 'ZE' league became more popular in terms of the number of players and teams affiliated (Khan, 1996). However, the 'ZE' league has not remained completely separate from mainstream cricket in the North of England. Tahir suggests that in the last 10 years or so, there has been a greater degree of interaction between players that belong to teams within the 'ZE' league, and those which play for (largely white) mainstream cricket clubs. This may simply involve players representing both leagues during the weekend: playing for a mainstream club on a Saturday and then an

'alternative' club on a Sunday. However, it is worth noting that the 'links' between these two cricket cultures has perhaps been inevitable, due to wider socio-demographic changes to various urban areas in the North of England. To explain this change, Tahir believes that some of the predominantly 'white' teams, who used to play for mainstream leagues, have had no choice but to recruit BPM players from local 'Asian' teams and leagues. This has been in order to prevent their clubs from closing. Hence, according to Tahir, 'local British Pakistani Muslim boys were not taken on-board pro-actively, but because they had to'.

In this sense, the right to play cricket in mainstream leagues was not a pro-active strategy implemented by clubs; rather it was a necessity. Haroon, a young second-generation player, captures this point in relation to his experiences of playing for a predominantly 'white' team in Lancashire:

I am better than my brother and he always used to come back with a smile on his face and that was after Saturday/ Sunday at cricket. I used to come back, it would be a more intense game and everything, but...you feel excluded half the time, you are feeling lonely, and it's like, why would you want to give up your weekend for that?

Due to this sense of exclusion, Haroon goes on to document how he felt he was being forced to consider to play for an 'Asian' team, like his brother had been doing, or, worse, quit the sport altogether. Thus, while the right to play cricket may have been granted because of a convergence of interest, it is clear that representing teams where BPM players are in a minority can make them feel out of place.

## **Recruitment and Selection Policies**

Many of the BPM players in this study further claimed that within the 'white', mainstream spaces of cricket, that the right to play at higher levels of the sport was problematic; they had to be either '100% better than the 'white' lads' (Amir), 'get more wickets and really, really stand out' (Zarheed), and be 'really, really good so they have no other option but to select you' (Faisal). Shahny (an older, first generation player and a manager at a predominantly 'Asian', formerly 'white', cricket club) and Faisal (a young, second generation player at a predominantly 'Asian' club) further summarise the views of their BMP cricket playing peers:

...people may be really, really good in the lower level and never get a chance to go on to higher levels...If there are two kids one 'Asian' and one 'white', both of the same calibre and there is only one position to select, 90% of the time, the 'white' guy will be selected (Faisal).

I think that officialdom, or officials, play a big part in terms of cricket, running cricket, involvement in cricket, selecting, recruitment, coaching. *That's where the problems are in cricket.* You know you can have a really good 'Asian' kid, the best 15-year-old in Yorkshire and he won't get to the top...there are going to be people that are selecting and coaching and influencing. And I've talked to a lot of good young cricketers and lots of dads whose son's are really, really good but they don't quite make it because of favouritism, racism, bias, call it what you want, but ultimately it's about some bloke recruiting and selecting for higher

levels and good young Asian cricketers...seem to have really negative experiences of county trials or club trials (Shahny).

The perception of unfair recruitment practices was common amongst the research participants. This is contrary to popular opinions held by dominant ('white') groups, who view cricket as a sport which has suitably acted against the taboo of *overt* racism. In simple terms, for these people, it is seen to be socially inclusive (Malcolm, 2002).

### **Social Networking**

In order to facilitate their progression to higher levels of the game, a number of the younger BPM players suggested in their testimonies that all players, regardless of their ethnic background, had to form good relationships with their 'white' counterparts, including both the club captain and other significant members of the club:

Samir:...to get to know 'white' people, more exposure basically.

Asif:...because if you don't know A, B or C of the cricket club you won't be able to go ahead, you won't be able to progress.

Zarheed: You need to have a good relationship with every person at the club like the chairman, the selector, the professionals and your team captain. If you haven't got good relations with them your place is a bit in doubt. You get me? So, if the 'Asian' guys aren't socialising that much, than the selector or captain might think *he's not one of us*.

Zarheed, who has played for a pre-dominantly 'white' team goes on to explain that from his experiences he believes a chairman will have favourites, who have been at the club since they were kids, and who have socialized with them on and off the field-of-play. Hence, as an established and valued member of the team, they will be selected despite their (poor) performances whilst BPM players will get 'dropped for no reason'. Samir, who has also played for a predominantly 'white' club, offers his thoughts on this issue:

Although I went to an 'Asian' school and an 'Asian' high school, I started getting used to it from cricket. You know I *blended in* with the 'white' guys and stuff. I started to obviously get a bit more comfortable with them.

Zarheed and Samir are suggesting here that developing congenial relationships with established and important members of the team is important. While this is not to suggest camaraderie between teammates is problematic - on the contrary this may improve performance and results - it is to argue that socialising off the field-of-play, and in the clubhouse, is as important a practice as it is on it.

To further illustrate this point, Fletcher and Spracklen (2014) note that some BPM men, for religious reasons, feel uncomfortable because of the predominance of a drinking culture in English cricket. Those players who were "strict" with their adherence to religious dogma, often perceived the laddish social rituals of English cricket to be incompatible with their interpretation of Islam: 'It didn't matter how good you were or how you performed on the pitch it was all about the drink really' (Haroon). In the case of Haroon, as he did not drink alcohol, and did not feel comfortable around others who did, he reported feeling like an "outsider". This alienated Haroon from his team mates

and the club's selectors, and most importantly affected his playing career. Haroon speculated that even after becoming the leading run scorer for his team, he was not recommended for trials with the county league because of his reluctance to drink alcohol or socialise with his team mates outside of cricket. On the other hand, Zarheed, who also played for a predominantly 'white' team, told of how he often attended post-match drinking rituals: 'Obviously they know I'm Muslim so I can't drink, so they won't obviously force me or say to me to "try". But they might say it to me for a joke'. Furthermore, although he does not directly suggest social compliance to be a contributory factor, for Zarheed, who was recommended for trials with the elite Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) academy, conformity to the social etiquette of the game certainly did not hinder his career progression.

### **The Enemy Within?**

The wider social inclusion of BPM men, within the local communities of the North of England is often linked to the power of sports, like cricket, to manage racialised tensions and to produce a sense of social inclusion. Interestingly though, community development projects can reinforce the notions of BPM groups as in need of rehabilitation, so that they are discouraged from engaging with violent and/or criminal activities. The popular representation of BPM men as deviant 'Others' is however, in stark contrast to how these cricket players understand their own personal and cultural identities. To develop this point further, one of the authors noted the following after talking with Mushtaq, a club member of a predominantly 'Asian' (previously all-'white') team, and whose experiences of discrimination as a first-generation migrant to the North of England, led him to join the Asian Youth Movement:



I know we read about terrorism in the newspapers, but hearing someone tell me (one of the authors) about how they made petrol bombs, in order to protect themselves from fascist organisations in the 1980s, was nevertheless a poignant moment... Mushtaq, tells me that after their release from police custody, the group dismantled and they were given help (by the government I assume) to find jobs 'to get back into society'.

Mushtaq's lived experiences are by no means representative of BPM men more generally. However, his story is important, because it exposes how the state often positions marginalised men as deviants, in need of special assistance, so they might be (re)integrated (read: assimilated) 'back into society'.

Whilst the racial and ethnic tensions within the local communities of (the North of) England may have changed and altered, media emphasis on the deviant nature of BPM men has nevertheless heightened. Players and various cricket club managers, unsurprisingly, respond angrily to how BPM men are popularly represented and/or how the state generally continues to position them. The following two quotes together reveal younger BPM cricketers' deep and enduring sense of frustration:

Samir: Before coming here, I saw the news on the BBC. I thought...I am going there and I am going to study in Bradford, what is the climate going to be like? I don't want to get in trouble with someone I don't even know. I did call my parents up, they said it's alright as the people causing the riots [in 2001] were

BNP<sup>4</sup> and even 'white' people hate the BNP...in the news there are some criticism about the BNP but not much. Most of the criticism was against 'Asian' people, which I thought was a bit weird because the BNP instigated that...If you motivate something racially people are going to reply to that, they can't just be sitting there and be beaten up by someone and not do anything about it. Plus, the police never did anything...No prosecution was ever done [to the BNP] but still now they are prosecuting 'Asian' people, for what?

Shahny: We are not interested in extremism because it doesn't affect our young people in this area. They are bothered about jobs, education, sport, girlfriends, boyfriends; those are the issues I am facing with people in this area...the lads, they face constant barriers, constant negativity. You know wherever they go, it's like attitudes in their face. Forget talking about them, let's talk about what they have to face. In my lifetime and in my work, when you talk to young people about what they have to put up with, not many adults would put up with that.

Sadly, as previously stated, members of the BNP are seen as rogue individuals and the ubiquitous nature of racisms (at personal, cultural and institutional levels of this social world) are still ignored and/or popularly thought to be a thing of the past.

### **Community Empowerment**

In his interview with one of the authors, it became clear that Amir, a first generation settler to the North of England, who was in his late forties and managed a pre-

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<sup>4</sup> The British National Party (BNP) are a far-right political party in the United Kingdom. They hold the belief that many towns and cities across the U.K. are being 'ethnically cleansed', and that immigrants should be returned back to the country of their ethnic origin. Unsurprisingly, many media and political commentators have branded their politics as fascist or neo-fascist (Copsey, 2007)

dominantly Asian (previously all-‘white’) mainstream cricket club, felt that people in positions of power (meaning agencies of the government) should do more to address the disenchantment felt by BPM boys and men. As much of the discourse about BPMs is problematic, those involved in organising opportunities for sport, specifically cricket, in their local communities felt that these development projects were conceptually flawed, and hence, unlikely to facilitate social cohesion between BPMs and ‘white’ young men. Amir passionately claims the following:-

...do you know the politics because these young lads do and if you want a real debate then come and sit with them, let’s get it on. But if you want to come here and patronize us that we have got £80 million to tackle extremism, let’s do something to bring ‘white’ kids and ‘Asian’ kids together, it will fill a few reports and hit a few targets. That’s what we are faced with so it’s just bullshit. It’s just constant bullshit and tokenism around us. And you know communities, a lot of people that I work with, they won’t take it, they won’t have it...For me, the government can put in a lot of money in to a project about cohesion and this nonsense, but they are all time-bounded, it doesn’t mean anything. But if you put money into clubs that are already doing things like voluntary sport and leisure time activities, this is how you mix kids together, ‘white’ kids and ‘Asian’ kids, and you do it in a way that they want to do it...it’s better doing it that way than by setting up a project and bringing 6 from one end of town and 6 kids from another end of town, and doing something, then them going back home.

Summarising the views of Amir, successfully mixing ‘white’ and ‘Asian’ people in and through the context of cricket is possible, but the legacy of such projects is questionable.

However, what is clear is that many local people like Amir are critical of how social inclusion initiatives do not respond to the wishes and needs of the community; rather, they perceive themselves to be disempowered by government endorsed top-down community sports interventions and programs.

It would however be wrong to completely dismiss the efforts of macro-level agents like the government altogether, some local projects have been supported by funding from various state institutions including from the police. Moreover, despite the general level of antagonism felt by many BPM people towards the police (see above), some younger generations of BPMs like Habibe, argue that when local police authorities listen to the needs of their communities, change through macro- and meso-level support is possible:

...with some of the local lads we have just started a youth club where we do all sorts of sport for the kids and stuff... people used to say don't get the police involved because you will only get into more trouble...But we got the police and local council involved. Now we have local people patrolling the area.

Indeed, the introduction of BPM police officers may be strategic, due to the history of difficult relations between both groups, but it does represent a positive change. That is, more local BPM community members are becoming police officers and/or working as community support officers. Hence, through this adapted form of regulation, the police are better able to work with as well as support local community sport and leisure projects (see Watson and Ratna, 2011).

## **Home and Belonging**

Almost 10 years after the 2001 riots in the North of England, arguably progressive changes in the race and ethnic relations between community members living in those areas has been evident (BBC News, 2011). However, what is problematic here, and not questioned by Habibe, is that in terms of public and media opinion: (1) the police are still not questioned about their role in such public riots; and (2) BPM men are still seen as perpetrators of these events. Unfortunately, the media review of the 2001 urban riots reinforces rather than challenges the dominant perception of BPM males as deviant 'Others' (BBC News 2011). Hence, as Amir notes, changes are temporal and could even revert back to out-dated colonial notions of non-belonging at any time:

...I'll say it openly because with the Empire and the bigger picture and that, which is a bit more complex, I like them [the England football team] to get to the finals, semi-finals, whatever, cricket or football, and lose because it puts them in their place, because once they get a bit over the top, Rule Britannia and this nonsense starts coming out and then the English start coming out with the Tebbit test...

Through his localized position of 'home' within the nation, he argues that his reluctance to support England (at football or cricket) is not because he does not want them to do well, but as a backlash to media re-articulations of Britain being 'Great'; reminiscing about a time before the wide-scale immigration of people like Amir from the ex-colonies (Carrington, 1998). He feels particularly alienated from this discourse as it is one that imagines him, and other British Asians more broadly, as somehow harming the nation, because of their supposedly tainted and insular cultures, religions and identities (Gilroy, 1992). He further links this to debates about the perpetual reference to the Tebbit Test

every time Pakistan (or any other nation from the Indian sub-continent or the West Indies) plays England, something he sees as 'nonsense' as he understands that belonging is multiple and fluid rather than simply being a case of either 'for us' or 'against us' (Burdsey, 2006) . Thus, the right to support whichever team he wishes, in light of the multi-racist past of this country, is significant and one that media, public and social commentators rarely acknowledge.

Cricket clubs and those in the game therefore must develop more of an understanding of this history. As Amir notes further, the local culture of cricket cannot be separated from wider socio-political debates:

The problem is much more complex...unless they want to address that then I'm afraid you are always going to create people who are disenchanted and think 'I don't give a shit'. Do you know how it feels? Well I'm sorry but do you know how it feels when brothers and sisters in Palestine are dying? And you're involved in projects and you go on marches and stuff, don't get suckered into how it feels for people on a red bus in London. Look at the bigger picture. You can't separate it, and that's what I find so frustrating... they (the state)treat it as a job (managing a cricket club). It's not a job, the whole human work that we do, it's not a job, it's much more complex, it's much deeper.

Amir's point supports Parekh's review of the urban riots in 2001, which analysed the notion of 'divided communities'. Although rejected by many politicians, Parekh argued that until the government and others in positions of power acknowledge the historical legacies of racisms, and how this has (re)created emerging patterns of exclusion,

discrimination and alienation (of British Asian groups, including those of BPM backgrounds), then possibilities for a new multicultural nationalism – one that is socially, politically and culturally inclusive of the racial and ethnic groups that constitute modern Britain – remains a utopian fantasy.

Amir is advocating community development work to be more than a job: it is ‘human work’. Until, governmental agencies and other hegemonic institutions recognise the alternative stories and voices of ethnic minorities, and take this ‘human work’ seriously, then the potential of sport as a vehicle to facilitate social inclusion and tackle social exclusion (locally, nationally and globally) remains an unrealistic avenue for significant change (see Coalter, 2013).

### **Conclusion – Making Recommendation**

The context of cricket cannot be divorced from changes in the local-global context (Burdsey, 2010; Carrington and McDonald, 2001; Fletcher, 2010) as issues prominent in the public domain are played out, negotiated and challenged by ethnic minority players ‘in the field’. In this paper, what is evident is that popular representations of BPM men as deviant ‘Others’, further serves to alienate them from life within the nation even though they see themselves as ‘normal’, ‘cricket lovers’ and not ‘terror suspects’ (Dwyer et al., 2008). Thus, whilst cricket officials may suggest that it is not within their remit to comment or get involved in wider political affairs, arguably it is a space where real changes can be felt and experienced. However, the majority of sport development professionals, such as those employed by County Cricket Boards, to manage the development of the sport are often employed from ‘within’ the game. Thus, it is likely that they have only had positive experiences of the sport, and find it difficult to

understand the experiences of those from 'outside' cricket. In most cases, they are not experts in community development and whilst honest in their endeavours to increase participation, may be guilty of what Ledwith (2011) describes as good work rather than transformative practice, stemming from 'thoughtless action' where strategies are undertaken without a real understanding of the social and material conditions that cause exclusion in the first place. Indeed, sensitising those working in cricket to the subjective realities of BPM men, is a good way to start creating a sympathetic and welcoming environment whereby players do not have to explain themselves, justify their identities, and counter arguments about terrorism being representative of their families, communities and the wider Pakistani/Muslim diaspora. Achieving this goal can be supported by other policies which also demonstrate respect and understanding of BPM men's experiences of the game:-

**Recruitment and Selection** – the lack of BPM men playing at the elite levels of the game reproduces the popular notion that they are simply not talented enough; there must be a peculiarity pertaining to British Asian culture/ religious identities that prevent their career progression (Burdsey, 2004a; 2004b; 2011). However, as Carrington and McDonald (2001) suggest, it would be naïve not to recognize positive changes to cricket, which is in part linked to the greater degree of ethnic minority players representing 'white'/mainstream clubs for example, but cricket still requires policy intervention before people can claim with a greater degree of certainty, that the sport is meritocratic and selection policies are fair. BPM men's right to play cricket at higher levels then must be supported by a clear commitment from the ECB, county and club-level managers/coaches, which demonstrates *how* they secure impartiality in the selection process. In American football, the *Rooney Rule* has been an especially



successful strategy in addressing the dissonance between the numbers of black players in proportion to the numbers securing management positions in the sport. The *Rule*, has resulted in more black coaches being hired by leading American Football franchises (Madden and Ruther, 2010). In cricket, this may require major infrastructural changes in terms of current talent development policy and processes; nonetheless, this is one sure way of evidencing a commitment to an agenda serious about the greater inclusion of BPM players, and British Asian men more broadly.

**Creating a welcoming environment** - The recruitment of BPMs may be enhanced if talented players felt that the social and cultural rituals associated with cricket were not conditional to their acceptance in teams, and most importantly, their selection credibility. Thus, the pressure to 'blend-in' would be lessened and BPM men would be more comfortable knowing it was their performance on the field, and not networking capabilities in the clubhouse, that would count. Interestingly, and in opposition to the explanations offered by 'white' players and officials (Malcolm, 2002), some of the participants of this study claimed it was not necessarily the case that they disapproved of off-field socialising, but rather that their religious beliefs were not accommodated by the dominant, white (Anglo) middle-class male culture of cricket and, more fundamentally, they were not *respected*. This viewpoint has further implications for cricket agencies in terms of creating inclusive environments in and outside of the clubhouse so that BPM players do not feel (un)intentionally affronted. Such socialising activities could include meals together where drinking was not pre-dominant. Indeed, another way to negate social expectations is to implement a more 'professional' approach at local levels of the sport. Interestingly, with wider changes to cricket

nationally and globally, Tahir believes that pressure to 'blend in' may decrease. His view is based on the following belief:

To 'white' players the bar culture was more socially significant to them than the actual playing of the game. It was a way of reinforcing their local affiliations to the communities they belonged to. They were social sides who didn't play cricket! However, the alcohol culture in cricket is changing as many overseas professionals who play for teams in the mainstream league do not drink (due to the impact of sports nutrition). Additionally as 'paid' professionals they go from club-to-club, for them local affiliations and a sense of community are not important. Hence, social aspects of playing the game are not as significant as they used to be. Therefore, the 'Asian' boys who are not so into the bar culture will have more opportunity to be part of the team than ever before...(Tahir)

In short, reinforcing a culture of professionalism at local levels of cricket would be one-way to decentre off-field drinking, and opportunities for laddish behaviour. Arguably, Tahir's statement provides hope for the future career development of BPM players.

**Community-led empowerment** - After speaking to a number of BPM players, it is clear that a range of community practices are already being run to support their participation. Yet, top-down government initiatives on the most part are seen to be disempowering and patronising; there is a general apathetic view of BPMs as unwanted outsiders, disloyal to the nation. This is a complex issue but one that can be greatly improved: (1) by taking the time to find and engage with BPM grass-roots practitioners like Amir to share best practice and strategies that have been successful in including

BPM men; (2) to formalise links between mainstream local cricket clubs and predominantly Asian teams e.g. coaching 'buddy-up' systems and working with local BPM partners (see Habibe's testimony); (3) to invest in community development training for staff from the ECB and County Cricket Boards to support this work; and (4) respect rather than condemn BPM men's support of international teams other than England. Assuming that support for Pakistani is tantamount to a dislike of England and white English people per se simplifies the nature of identities, misconstruing BPM men's allegiances to the 'home' nation. Indeed, by shifting the lens to county levels of the game, it is apparent that BPM men are fiercely proud of their regional identities and roots. Fletcher (2012), in his study about British Asian cricketers in Yorkshire - which also included the testimonies of first and second-generation BPM men - found that they acted, behaved and adopted value-systems which embodied their sense of Yorkshireness. Yet, despite pledges of allegiances to the county, Fletcher found evidence to suggest other 'white' cricketers in Yorkshire still could not imagine them as someone who 'truly' represented the county. Thus, despite BPM men seeing themselves as inherently Yorkshire, this identity embodiment is ignored, and they continue to be viewed as disloyal outsiders to the nation more broadly. Importantly for policy makers, therefore, policies should be developed from the grassroots upwards and based on stories of those who experience the first-hand realities of social exclusion (Bi, 2011). Thus, a greater sensitivity is required amongst cricket development officers if they wish to engage with BPM communities, in a way which appreciates their multiple and varied levels of support and identity, at national and regional levels of the sport, which accepts and empowers them without re-producing problematic and alienating narratives about their citizenship and belonging (as indicated in Amir's testimony).

The strategies identified in this paper suggest recommendations that the ECB and county cricket boards could action and embed within their policy and practice. Mindful of Fletcher et al's(2014) assertion, about necessary and sufficient conditions for change in relation to their work about South Asian cricket players and coaching, that only when these (and possibly additional) recommendations are taken collectively, rather than focusing upon one or another, that such changes may have the desired effect. That is, the development of a more inclusive sport, supporting the (re)creation of an environment which would potentially lead to rises in the number of BPMs participating in the game. We acknowledge that the testimonies used here are only a snapshot of BPM men's experiences, and on-going and further research is needed to fully understand their cricketing needs and desires. Furthermore, the views and values of development officers working within the sport would be beneficial to this analysis, adding depth to how inclusive changes could be effectively administered, managed and monitored. Thus, with the engagement of development officers, reflecting on their policies and practices, is BPM men's growing involvement in cricket likely to be achieved and sustained (see Spracklen and Long, 2011).

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