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Currency exchange: sporting capital, cricket and South Asian communities

Kevin Hylton and Jonathan Long

Leeds Beckett University Carnegie School of Sport, Leeds, UK

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the involvement of members of South Asian communities in cricket (in Bradford and Leeds, UK). The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) identified that despite the high level of interest in cricket within these communities, relatively few were participating in opportunities provided through ECB structures; instead, they were engaged in various forms of 'informal' cricket. Using data from a small-scale survey and group interviews, this paper speaks to issues of diversity and equality utilizing Rowe's theory of sporting capital framed with insights from Critical Race Theory (CRT). We argue that Rowe's model should be refined by incorporating the concepts of cultural competence and cultural wealth. Doing this can safeguard against deficit models of capital that stress what people lack rather than what they possess. This provides the sporting establishment with better insight to how their sport is perceived and engaged with by those outside the mainstream.

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Introduction

In 2014 The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and Yorkshire Cricket[1] identified the need for a better understanding of the various South Asian communities and their relationship with cricket. Research for the ECB (Eureka! 2013, 2014) found that no less than 30 per cent[2] of grassroots cricketers are drawn from ethnic minorities [*sic*], and the game is particularly popular among those from South Asian Communities (the Active People Survey indicates that Asian adults are more than six times as likely to play cricket as their White counterparts). Eureka! (2013) found in their market segmentation exercise that over the course of their busiest week in June there were c.375,000 'Core' 'Occasional' and 'Cameo' players that the ECB understood as their active market. This they juxtaposed with the lesser known 'Informal' 'Lapsed' and 'Potential' cricketers more likely to be found in South Asian communities.

This paper sits in an intriguing socio-historical space. It was written to improve levels of cultural competence among policymakers and practitioners in sport, and more specifically cricket. The authors are concerned with the way 'race' is underplayed in sport policy and

CONTACT Kevin Hylton k.hylton@leedsbeckett.ac.uk Leeds Beckett University, Carnegie School of Sport, Leeds LS1 3ES, UK

theory; hence the turn to a consideration of how elements of Critical Race Theory (CRT) can enrich our understanding of sporting capital. Further, the research on which this paper is based (Hylton et al. 2015) was concluded, and indeed the original version of this paper written, before the ex-Yorkshire bowler, Azeem Rafiq drew worldwide media attention to racism in English cricket, particularly in Yorkshire. In sharing his story of attempts to fit into cricket culture, the difficulties of struggling to retain his own cultural identity, the constant racial abuse and consequent related serious mental health issues that emerged, Rafiq drew further attention to some of the issues that underpin the experiences of South Asian communities in grassroots cricket outlined in this theoretical paper.

Rafiq's claims led to a year-long public inquiry by Yorkshire County Cricket Club. As noted by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport parliamentary committee, the Yorkshire inquiry concluded that Rafiq was a victim of unacceptable *inappropriate behaviour* over a period of 10 years (DCMS 2022). This led the DCMS committee to announce that governance within the sport had failed because racial discrimination in the club should not be met solely with *heartfelt apologies* (DCMS 2022). After Rafiq's subsequent oral evidence to the DCMS, it was reported that:

> We were convinced by Azeem Rafiq's moving evidence of how he had been subject to racial discrimination and his conviction that this was not simply a personal issue but an endemic problem across the whole of cricket (DCMS 2022, 4).

In this paper, we show how this blindspot not only undermines understandings of sporting capital but also compromises efforts to promote inclusion in sport. We outline potentialities for cricket stakeholders in how they think and organize around the game to make it more ethnically inclusive. The significance of 'race' in cricket and scholarly deliberations is central to how we propose a nuanced and racially literate consideration of sport.

However, though the revelations by Rafiq and others are compelling and clear reasons for work on racism in Yorkshire Cricket, in response to the needs of the Yorkshire Cricket Partnership our research among South Asian communities was tasked to address three of their service outcomes, which were to get:

- more people playing cricket and participating in other ways
- more people improving their skills (whether playing or otherwise involved)
- more members, spectators, and audiences.

In light of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) action plan for 'Engaging South Asian Communities' (ECB 2018) we reflect on that research, which recognized the need for a better understanding of the relationship the various South Asian communities have with cricket in Bradford and Leeds. Of particular interest to Yorkshire Cricket was how they could better engage those playing informally outside the networks of the governing body. The difference between the large numbers playing informally and the relatively few in affiliated clubs prompted concerns that not enough was being done to encourage inclusion, a concern that ECB and Yorkshire Cricket are keen to address and tailor their 'offer' to take to the South Asian market. Doing this means understanding the diversity among 'South Asian' cricketers while also recognizing how other important identities intersect.

Critical race theory and sporting capital

The DCMS inquiry into racism in cricket was sceptical of the South Asian Communities action plan when they argued that,

> the existence of the South Asian Action Plan shows that the game was aware of an issue and our evidence from both Azeem Rafiq and the Quaid E Azam Premier League indicates that anyone involved in cricket should have been aware of the underlying racism throughout the game. (DCMS 2022, 4)

Indeed, this has been the subject of previous research (e.g. Long et al. 1997). The determination of Critical Race Theorists to challenge ways of thinking where dominant institutional practices are concerned led us to reflect upon the proposition that South Asian cricketers were under-participating in more formal cricket because they were not playing in the customary forms and spaces where they could be 'seen'. Taking this a step further, we wished to problematize cricket's ideology of the 'level playing fields' of equal opportunity, to consider how racialised dynamics work in the case of provision and participation in Yorkshire. This engenders questions such as: 'Is the lack of participation purely about South Asian communities not wishing to take part in cricket?'; 'Is there something more nebulous to unpack regarding taste preferences?'; 'What does cricket "look like" for South Asian groups?'; and therefore 'What "counts" as cricket?'. In each case, the underpinning ideas of the national governing body (ECB) and its regional partner (Yorkshire Cricket) need to be balanced by taking account of the voices of South Asian cricketers.

Sporting assessments of South Asian involvement in cricket typically take one of two forms, either chastising an elitist sporting establishment for being blind to ethnic constructions of sport or blaming minoritised ethnic communities for not integrating but 'keeping to their own'. To offer more productive interpretations of this mismatch between two worlds of cricket, we draw on Nick Rowe's theory of sporting capital (Rowe 2015) because it offers an analysis of the invisible 'capital' that propels participation (Rowe 2018). We frame this with insights from Critical Race Theory (CRT) (e.g. Hallmon et al. 2021). In making our link with sporting capital, we agree with Shaw (2016, 22) that:

> By having a solid knowledge about the research context before deciding what theory to use to analyse it encourages not only personal motivation but avoids a slavish adherence to one theory over others, when a previously unused theory, or combination of theories, might be more appropriate.

We use sporting capital with critical race theory to examine how policymakers might improve their understanding of how 'race' is manifest and managed in their domains.

Our turn to sporting capital and CRT incorporates notions of cultural competence and cultural wealth (Yosso 2005), and challenges deficit models of capital which presume sovereign forms of taste preferences and valued competences among sport organizers. We contend that not only will this let key stakeholders within the game recognize how their sport is perceived and engaged with by those outside the mainstream (in this case South Asian communities) but will also contribute to an improved recognition of community/outsider cultural competences and the value this knowledge can add by refining established ways of working with and for diverse ethnic communities.

Sporting capital is acknowledged by Rowe (2015) to be related to but distinct from the concepts of human capital (e.g. Becker 1964), cultural capital (e.g. Bourdieu 1986) and social capital (e.g. Putnam 2000). As an influential senior sport administrator, he questioned the effectiveness of public investment in sport and the lack of improvement in participation by proposing the idea of sporting capital to give policymakers and providers a better understanding of the key drivers of sport participation. In this model, sporting capital is conceived as 'the stock of physiological, social and psychological attributes and competences that support and motivate an individual to participate in sport and to sustain that participation over time' (Rowe 2015, 45). In terms of what we want to discuss here, the psychological domain includes self-efficacy, self-esteem, and personal identity; the social domain includes participation by family and friends and connections with social locations; and the physiological domain includes strength, ability and physical literacy.

According to Rowe, people are expected to have more or less motivation to participate depending upon their stock of sporting capital. Whether that turns into participation depends not just on the level of motivation, but the nature of the external barriers encountered. Participation in turn may then increase or decrease sporting capital depending upon the quality of the experience (unlike theories of consumption capital that focus on increasing capital through participation). The encounter with barriers similarly has the potential to both increase and decrease sporting capital. Rowe explains that sporting capital is framed and shaped by the socio-cultural context in which someone lives (Rowe 2015, 46), a wider socialization process. It is this socio-cultural context that we shall examine here.

Rowe acknowledges that he has 'omitted specific explanation or empirical analysis of the relationship between sporting capital and participation in sport by people from different ethnic groups' (Rowe 2018, 8), but argues that as a theory of participation it is a universal one. His contention is that the higher the level of sporting capital the more likely an individual is to participate in sport. Importantly for us, Rowe suggests that higher levels of sporting capital make people more resilient in the face of negative sporting experiences, thereby increasing the chance of continued participation. However, in terms of return on investment, he argues that those wanting to increase sport participation would do well to focus on those with mid-range levels of sporting capital. It is there (arguably amongst our informal cricketers) that an increase in sporting capital is most likely to pay dividends in turning non-participants into participants.

The absence of a specific focus on ethnicity by Rowe can be made good by our CRT frame that disrupts supposed race neutrality by centrally positioning racial issues. The core tenets of CRT oblige scholars to consider the significance of 'race' and the systemic and insidious permanence of racism (Bell 1992; Rollock and Gillborn 2011; Hawkins, Carter-Francique, and Cooper 2017; Hylton 2018) in social structures that are often theoretically explained and organized using concepts such as everyday racism (Essed 1991; Roithmayr 2014), microaggressions (Sue 2010; Burdsey 2011), interest convergence (Delorme and Singer 2010; Hylton and Morpeth 2012) and colour blindness (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Cleland and Cashmore 2014; Rankin-Wright, Hylton, and Norman 2016). At the heart of this are the privileges of whiteness and the supremacy of Whiteness (Frankenberg 1992; Long and Hylton 2002; Fletcher 2014; Gillborn 2016; Fletcher and Hylton 2018). The normalization of privilege means that members of society are judged against the

characteristics that are held by privileged voices. The privileged characteristic is the norm; those who stand outside are aberrant or 'alternative' (Wildman and Davis 1997, 316).

Critical Race Theory is described in the *Handbook of Theory in Sport Management* as:

> A theoretical *framework* that has a 'race' centred focus used as a departure point to incorporate and better understand the experiences of ethnically diverse intersecting identities and disrupt related forms of racialised oppression. (Hylton 2016, 322)

While 'race' may languish marginalized in sport studies we want to elevate it by acknowledging its social significance. Racism is described not as a one-off aberration by an individual or organization but structural, systemic, 'pedestrian rather than spectacular' (Holland 2012). CRT views commonly accepted but racialised processes of Whiteness as problematic and needing disruption. The transformation of racialised social structures is an explicit element of critical race theorists DNA (Bell 1992; Roithmayr 2014).

Hylton (2018a, 7) maps how CRT offers an explanatory framework that accounts for the role of 'race' and racism in sport and is a useful tool to reveal a clearer understanding of the dialectic of 'race', sport and society. It requires a weather eye to be kept on the way sports like cricket share a 'sport for all' ideology, labouring under the assumption that it is a meritocracy with everyone having the same chance to participate and progress. Kilvington and Price (2017) lend their voice to a strong lobby of critics contesting this. In doing so they join commentators such as Bradbury, Van Sterkenburg, and Mignon (2015) on 'race' and gender leadership in football across Europe, and Lusted (2009) on institutional resistance to diversity in sport. They contend that almost inevitably in such circumstances sport is cast in a dominant White image.

In relation to 'capital', Whiteness is a process that has been described as being about 'unearned assets' that tend to advantage White people over racialised others, thus crediting them with socio-culturally created privileges that can enhance their participation and performance. The omnipresence of Whiteness in sport is exacerbated by a lack of diversity in positions of leadership that can often lead to blaming the 'other' for being 'hard to reach' (Mahoney 1997). Whiteness is a racialised process that is often described as invisible and unremarked which may explain the relative ambivalence and lack of cultural competence of stakeholders attempting to incorporate racialised groups into their sporting and leisure cultures. In the case of forms of leisure like cricket, White people are less likely to see how White spaces, cultures and norms exclude some as they include others.

In addition, to better understand the place of 'race' in the cricket ecosystem, measuring the social, physiological, and psychological domains provides the basis for determining more nuanced levels of sporting capital. Rowe recognizes the contribution of socialization, environment, barriers and constraints in affecting opportunities and participation. Our experience of working with key stakeholders in sport is that it is at these very junctures that expertise is most vulnerable and therefore it is here that the fissure between theory and practice requires attention. In his 2015 paper, Rowe was concerned with those who stop participating; in our case we are concerned with those who do participate, but not in the formal manifestations of the sport recognized by the governing body and also for reasons that are not 'universal'. Thus, we problematize how the notion of a sport, and the capital which is valued within it, maintains a deficit model in which minoritised ethnic communities struggle to measure-up to the norms of Whiteness, colour-blindness and the presumed ideals of meritocracy.

Methodology

The *Sporting Future* strategy produced by the UK government (HM Government 2015) and Sport England's subsequent strategy, *Towards an Active Nation* (Sport England 2016), promoted the social benefits of sport, signalling that 'sport for sport's sake' is no longer sufficient, in and of itself, to warrant public funding (Long and Bianchini 2019). Both strategies were promoting equality and being open to all. However, sports participation data from the UK indicate that Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities tend to exhibit lower levels of sport generally, but that this varies according to ethnicity (Long and Hylton 2002). Sport England's (2020) report on race and ethnicity reinforces this point using two years of Active Lives[3] data. Indeed, one of the main exceptions is the relatively high level of involvement in cricket within South Asian communities (Eureka! 2014; Sport England 2020). However, neither the government nor Sport England are themselves providers of sporting opportunities; instead, they are dependent on organizations like the national governing bodies (NGBs) of sport and their sporting partners.

In this context, the South Asian Cricket Action Plan published by the ECB in 2018 sought to offer a more inclusive approach to providing opportunities. As a contribution to the action plan, our study in Bradford and Leeds explored attitudes among those from South Asian communities who engaged in informal forms of cricket, seeking reasons why they are less likely to be members of ECB affiliated clubs or watch professional cricket at the stadiums (ECB 2018). These cricketers may, for example, play 'pick-up games' in local parks or street cricket, largely 'under the radar' of Yorkshire Cricket and mainstream amateur and semi-professional clubs. The research enquiry was rather different from the normal one of how to get non-participants active. The people in question were already participating, just not playing 'cricket' as conceived by the authorities.

However, though we briefly outline the methodology here and thereafter describe findings, we do this as context for our central discussion about what Rowe's ideas, framed by CRT, can tell us about how such reports can be better interpreted by policymakers. The study, conducted in Bradford and Leeds, comprised eight group interviews, composed of South Asian males apart from one all-female group, and a self-completion questionnaire. In the same way that Shaw (2016) outlines the value of a theoretical framework we use CRT to underpin our methodological choices and to make our interpretation of findings robust. Hylton's turn to the 'spirit' of CRT (2012, 28) was also evident in the way we included prominent elements of our critical framework, in particular the challenge to race neutrality. Our methods gave due recognition to the lived experiences of South Asian communities, which informed how we represented them as holders of knowledge in accord with the 'spirit of CRT'. Our efforts to ensure the 'descriptive rigour' outlined by Shaw (2016, 24) enhanced the potential for laying bare racialised processes that might affect participation. Building further on Shaw's idea of 'close distance' to the topic we ensured a theoretical framework that reflected the politics of the researchers and interests of the participants alike (Shaw 2016, 26).

The analytical procedures of 'close distance' have to be deployed with caution (Shaw 2016). CRT methodology requires researchers to give voice to under-served and marginalized ethnic communities in sport while also making transparent their own ontological starting points. Recognizing researchers' position as political actors, something that is

often overlooked, we are clear about our social justice standpoint. In the interest of rigour, interpretations of data were subject to scrutiny by each member of the research team. By working to explain the way South Asian communities engage with cricket we recognized participants not just as a source of data, but of answers too (Hylton 2012, 24). The outcome was a contribution to the empowerment of participants that disrupted the ideas dominant among key stakeholders in cricket's establishment.

All participants in the study described themselves as being of South Asian origin. Participants were accessed through the extensive networks of Yorkshire Cricket Community Development Officers and the researchers. The value of group interviews is well documented elsewhere, though this is rarely from a decolonizing, critical race perspective that facilitates new or counter-stories from South Asian communities (Blaisdell 2009; Tuhiwai Smith 2012). Our focus groups (6–17[4] attendees) were conducted in a range of local community facilities and focused on how to improve the three ECB service outcomes (above) for South Asian communities (Hylton et al. 2015).

The numerical group advantage of focus groups, familiarity and kinship of friends and acquaintances encouraged a more confident and relaxed conversation among those in attendance and helped to modify the researcher-participant power differential. They addressed participants' views on barriers to participation, preferences for contexts and versions of cricket, talent development, spectatorship, and communications. Each focus group was recorded using a digital recorder and subsequently transcribed. While some of these participants might demonstrate high or low levels of sporting capital, the majority were in that mid-range that Rowe (2018) considers most important to focus on to ensure dividends in participation.

The self-completion questionnaire was conducted with informal cricketers after the focus groups phase so that those discussions could inform the questions we included. The questionnaire generated mainly nominal and qualitative data ($n = 80$) with 73 male and 7 female responses. Our approach to data generation was designed to address the needs of the Yorkshire Cricket Partnership (YCP) and its service outcomes. The survey addressed informal cricketers' own participation (including helping at a club or umpiring), any involvement with more formal cricket, watching cricket (including the Yorkshire team), improvements for the future, and demographic details. Questions were validated through a pilot study and the resultant data were validated against the rich data of the focus groups. The data were analysed in Qualtrics using simple frequency counts, percentages and textual responses to open questions.

The focus group data were analysed using an immersive dialectical process as CRT, data and ECB research questions coalesced. We agree with Shaw's (2016, 24) view that 'rigour is often confused with objectivity and validity, which have little bearing in qualitative research'. Critical social research is fundamentally subjective and eschews notions of (pseudo)objectivity. There is not an objective test of accuracy in the process of analysis but experience, researchers' moderation, and triangulation help to facilitate rigour and confidence. Hence, qualitative research requires an informed and robust approach to research planning, analysis and explanation.

In the spirit of CRT, we aimed to move beyond simple description to ensure that the political implications of the fieldwork were clearly revealed for policymakers and practitioners to understand where they needed to change policy and practice (Ladson-Billings and Donnor 2008).

Findings

Insofar as Rowe's three domains (physical, psychological, and social) combine to establish estimated levels of sporting capital, some were raised in our study more than others. While physiological capital was raised, for example, in relation to presumed characteristics of South Asian players and playing styles drilled by ECB coaching, the majority of observations impacting participation related to the social domain, and to a lesser extent, the psychological.

Preferred forms of cricket

It was clear from the survey that the shorter forms of cricket were preferred. They would generally be described as informal, social, and play-orientated. Most of these versions of cricket would not be played in the club environment where regular practice and matches tend to focus on prescriptive league and cup formulas. However, two-thirds of those surveyed said that they would like to play more often and went on to indicate some of the enablers that would allow them to do that.

Social networking

37% of those surveyed did not know an established club they could play for, and over a quarter did not even know anyone who played for a club (28%). Their social networks did not enable them to make those links into more formally organized mainstream cricket. Rowe considers such networks to be within the social domain of sporting capital, underpinning what has been described elsewhere as social capital (e.g. Putnam 2000). For our respondents this was also linked to the psychological domain through esteem factors related to the impact of group connectedness on perceptions of self and group relations.

Within the social domain of the sporting capital model there are variations in the level of social capital held by different individuals and groups due to their networks and social location. As with sporting capital, proponents of social capital can be criticized for their limited consideration of race and ethnicity. Nonetheless, used as a conceptual tool within a CRT framework social capital helps to highlight important issues (Hylton 2008). When writing about social capital a distinction is commonly made between bridging and bonding forms[5] (Nicholson and Hoye 2008; Walseth 2008). Bonding capital reflects how people known to each other, or people like them, remain connected (intra) while bridging capital connects people outside their normal social circles (inter). The Department for Culture, Media and Sport in the UK was particularly interested, commissioning Delaney and Keaney (2005) to explore the correlation between forms of social capital and the strengthening of community and civic bonds. Aquino et al. (2020) contend that 'the nature of informal sport, the spontaneous coming together to play, creative use of public space and a range of convivial practices, generate a sense of urban belonging'. For those seeking to promote social inclusion, bridging social capital is usually seen to be more valuable than bonding social capital as the process of 'bridging' is taken to be a requirement of integration (Long 2008). This is why writers like Putnam (2000), Siisiäinen (2000) and the DCMS (2015) were so interested in sport as a mechanism for increasing inclusivity among those most marginalized in society.

However, Nichols, Tacon, and Muir (2013) found that, in practice, sports clubs were not particularly good at building bridging social capital, which reflects the difficulty mainstream cricket clubs appear to face in encouraging and recruiting South Asian members. Notwithstanding that, for reasons outlined below we assert the importance that bonding capital has for enhancing the sporting capital of the participants in our study. A less analysed, third form of social capital is also significant in the current circumstances. Linking capital operates vertically between people of different status/power (e.g. linking into the policymaking hierarchy), while bridging and bonding operate horizontally (see for example the ONS review by Foxton and Jones 2011). However, we found little evidence of cricket producing linking capital for these players which suggests little connectedness between cricket's leaders and the South Asian grassroots.

Barriers and facilitators

Considering Rowe's model of sporting capital and the interests of ECB, we asked about what restricted involvement in cricket by members of the South Asian communities. The barriers mentioned related to community facilities, family priorities, racism and the club environment, gender, and segregated provision, often operating simultaneously. As our original report noted:

> … issues of time (e.g. for volunteering), personal commitments, resources and the community, culture and religion emerged consistently as interconnected factors that influenced individual and community approaches to, and perceptions of, cricket. (p23)[6]

Any success in overcoming barriers and constraints can of course become enabling. However, what key stakeholders in cricket may have missed in their assessment of the high number of South Asian people playing informally in cricket is that for many players cricket is just not a priority. Indeed, organized sport itself is not a priority. This statement disrupts the very foundation of normative cricket and sport development models. We reported that, 'in contrast to employment, education, religion and family commitments that emerged as key elements of productive participation in the wider community, cricket was largely peripheral' (p.24). Elsewhere, Hallmon et al. (2021, 1) noted that 'mothers felt the need to protect their children from programmes that perpetuated racist stereotypes, tokenism, and discrimination'. We shall return to the operations of racism, but over and above that what we found was a lack of parental support in encouraging children to play cricket seriously because of its position in a hierarchy of appropriate use of time and suitable vocations. The significance of time scarcity as a constraint on social participation by immigrants has also been emphasized by Murad and Versey (2021). However, this element of the social domain of sporting capital is rarely entertained by governing bodies of sport. Rowe (2015, 45) adopts a normative view of 'when' and 'where' participation is likely to occur:

> Someone with high levels of 'sporting capital' will have a wide network of family and friends who are themselves sporty and will be well connected to the 'social locations' in which sport takes place including, for example, sport clubs, gyms and community sport centres.

He then suggests that such networks facilitate rather than work against sustained involvement in sport, so the question for cricket stakeholders remains, 'How is it that South

Asian communities can enjoy *our sport* and yet not play in greater numbers in *our system*?'. The answer lies in whose system is privileged and how traditional notions of inclusion and participation can be modified to embrace other forms of participation beyond the norm. It is in these spaces that deficit models of sport reside, where bridging (inter) capital is prioritized over bonding (intra) capital and perhaps where South Asian communities are homogenized and their differences from formal cricket culture emphasized. Such models suggest that if sport is not adopted in particular forms and at particular times then it is dismissed as not really sport. In some ways, discourses that deploy notions of 'hard-to-reach' say more about the disposition of practitioners and policymakers than they do about potential participants. Yet, because of that, they still help to reveal the challenges behind encouraging 'Informal' South Asian cricketers., volunteers and spectators.

Rowe (2015, 46) makes it clear in his theory of sporting capital that opportunities, barriers and constraints will have an impact on participation. He also rightly argues that levels of sporting capital must be understood using a socio-cultural frame that acknowledges the role of socialization and environment, and that geography and sub-population particularities must be part of these considerations. Where everything is equal, Rowe expects two people with the same sporting capital to have the same level of participation in sport. However, our research participants demonstrated the difficulty in establishing parity even *within* the South Asian communities. One of the focus group participants compared his own experience of accessing more formal cricket 'offers' to those of others whose family priorities limited their choices. He plays regularly yet is aware of community dynamics and the reluctance of some families to prioritize cricket over what they see as more important worldly pursuits:

> My parents have given me that guidance to chase my dreams and to go and play cricket and enjoy my cricket like I do. But there's quite a lot of players where they haven't had that encouragement or even found it difficult to get to matches. Either because their parents are working or … .[7]

Another focus group member identified the generational and class related impacts of cultural priorities in relation to domestic responsibility:

> As is the case for most of our fathers in this room. They couldn't run around, they couldn't take you to cricket practice because they had six other kids to feed, a wife to look after, a house, mortgage to pay.

The nuances of these cultural dynamics remain beyond the ken of many governing bodies because of their lack of cultural competence and ethnic diversity. Cultural competence flaws are usually seen in terms of something that is lacked by the group supposedly constituting the policy 'problem'. However, to understand 'the problem' requires an appreciation of the different cultural competences in play. Our point is that there are forms of cultural competence which are borne out of a lived reality and a cultural wealth that may be invisible to the knowledge formers among the network of sport stakeholders if these, in this case South Asian, voices are absent. This was an issue that emerged in several different circumstances regarding culture and institutionalized issues relating to 'race' and racism. In addition to fundamental cultural leanings towards other 'more serious' pursuits, Yorkshire Cricket and the ECB have to contend with the spectre of 'race', something that has again been brought home to them forcefully by the events referred to above.

Racism and self preservation

The study showed how 'race' and ethnicity were significant in how research participants experienced more formal cricket spaces. Their encounters with racism were diverse and complex. Even in the process of denying racism's impact, some still could not fully accept its absence. One player said of racism in club cricket, *I think that's gone now. You can always make excuses, you know, 'the club's racist' and stuff like that. I think that has gone to an extent* (emphasis added). Others were adamant that they had experienced racism on the pitch and in social environments in clubs. These players were quite specific in naming spaces and places where racial dynamics played out in a way that alienated South Asian cricketers:

> He'd walked past or run across … so he's made the noise of an explosion. Yes, the racism is there, and people are doing things to try and tackle it. But it's swept under the carpet a lot as well. So again, that persuades or dissuades, it depends which way you want to look at it, the Asian members to set up their own leagues, to arrange their own fixtures, to forget being part of a club.

The suggestion here is that the racism faced by South Asian communities in more traditional, competitive club settings is enough to cause a haemorrhaging of enthusiastic, if disappointed, cricketers. They leave such environments due to their negative experiences attributed to what have been described as microaggressions (see also Burdsey 2011; Ratna 2011). These can be experienced in unwelcoming environments through images or antithetical behaviours likely to offend South Asian cricketers racially or through disrespectful representations of their culture. The 'noise of the explosion' is a form of 'new racism' that draws on signatures of culture and difference, in this case by invoking Islamophobia in using stereotypical imagery of terrorism. The racialization of these South Asian identities is a xenophobic façade for all Asian (read Muslim/Islamic irrespective of actual religious identification) bodies. Teams racialised as Black or Asian often begin with such shared experiences of racism that lead to forms of self-exclusion, resistance and defence against uncomfortable racialised social settings (Carrington 2004; Hawkins, Carter-Francique, and Cooper 2017).

In reinforcing the importance of Rowe's sporting capital, this also signals something else; the traditional social setting is not the only place where cricket can occur *and* be a catalyst for improved participation. Far from there being lower participation among Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups, there is much socially valuable engagement in cricket. Reconfiguring club environments might make them more inclusive and increase social benefit. We reported that:

> A consequence of the dislike for some of these environmental factors is that where South Asian players are part of affiliated clubs they sometimes withdraw from the social aspects of the club, thus exacerbating stereotypes of insularity. Many are aware of the criticism they face but remain conflicted, especially about the presence of alcohol. *And I get a lot of this, 'well, the Asians just come and play and then they bugger off home'. I said, 'well what alternatives do you have apart from alcohol and the bar, think about what you can offer, have you asked them?'* (p26)

If an appreciation of sporting capital is to inform cricket development, it needs to ensure that participation initiatives recognize the place of cultural context and history. For instance, the history of Yorkshire County Cricket Club (YCCC) and its exclusionary

policies of the past (Williams 2001) are still salient for South Asian communities today. Even though YCCC has been trying to improve its practices it is hard to escape a history that has left people in the South Asian communities with a feeling of not being wanted: *Yorkshire racist, don't like Asians* (p25). Although those who do attend matches at Headingley[8] find it better than the dominant image in their community would have led them to believe, they are still deterred by drink and hyper-masculinity. This might have particular local significance, but the principle of the past impacting the present is equally relevant regardless of geographical context.

In sporting capital terms, the pressures that led some to withdraw require more careful consideration of the way the social and psychological domains of cricket are interwoven. What South Asian communities experience in cricket spaces can directly affect notions of identity, self-confidence and the self-efficacy (psychological domain) needed to maintain contact and interest in sporting pursuits (Rowe 2015, 45). Rowe's physiological domain of sporting capital leading to mastery and higher performance is tempered here by the revelation by some cricketers that they are willing to preserve their own wellbeing by playing lower-level cricket to protect themselves from being made to feel unwanted, uncomfortable or out of place in the club environment. The logic of sporting capital theory in this case is compromised by the lived realities of South Asian voices:

> They are there because maybe out of necessity. Some of them might enjoy it, but some of them … This is the only place I feel comfortable so that's why I stay in the Asian League. I might be good enough to play somewhere better but …

Some participants believed that this legacy of exclusion and forced separation still influences where South Asian players play and with whom. The acquisition of physical capital, which is associated with participation, cannot compensate many South Asian cricketers for the racialised social and psychological barriers in more formal cricket environments.

Migration history and community wealth

In addition to the dominant Whiteness, cultural norms and racism of mainstream provision, the place of history, migration and community development also constitute part of the argument why some South Asian cricketers prefer to play among themselves. 'For those involved in the Bradford Khalifa League theirs was a response to the fragmentation of the South Asian diaspora in England' (p31). The league provided an important service and opportunity to network with other migrants from Southern Asia now in different parts of the UK. An Indian Gujarati Muslim commented: *So when you go to another town, then we get to know who's there, how we're related and [are] able to build that further through the medium of cricket really*. The league had other aims as well, including building bridges between generations and is made-up predominantly of South Asian men: *I mean our organization, […] There aren't many outsiders that can get in and there aren't many from within that go out*. The lack of 'outsiders' and the inward facing community aspect of the league is viewed here as a strength as its original goals are met on a weekly basis. Moreover, this quote obscures the bridging across heterogeneous South Asian communities. It also demonstrates the power of bonding cricket presents within South Asian communities, becoming a celebration of community development and

cohesion. The attraction of this cricket opportunity was emphasized in the following exchange when asked about the number of people in the league who prefer to play outside mainstream cricket:

> Respondent 1: I would say 80% prefer to play in the community.
>
> Respondent 2: For instance, like us three play for [team], we just play every week and we're not really interested in playing in mainstream leagues because of all the commitments of university, work … We're not really interested or excited to play in the league.

Operating in this cultural orbit they have little knowledge of formal cricketing opportunities because they have no need. It is important to recognize that the ability of an NGB or county to convert recreational players to regular participants or spectators revolves around their understanding of what the critical motivators may be. It is not simply the sporting capital of South Asian individuals that needs to be considered, but also the sporting capital of the organizations running the game and providing opportunities to participate. A Eurocentric model of participation cannot be applied where the drivers of change are so diverse across populations. To exclude such considerations in strategic action planning would deny the relevance of the socio-cultural frame. When this is done it leads to the adoption of a colour-blind approach that assumes 'race' does not matter (Burdsey 2011; Hylton and Morpeth 2012). Burdsey (2011) found this to be entrenched in cricket and by downplaying racial disparities they are systematically perpetuated.

Participants also argued that resistance to coaching initiatives might be reduced if greater cultural competence was apparent among coaches who understood how local communities function and their preferences for style/format of play and mode of communication. There was a sense that South Asian coaches would be more accepted, their views more culturally sensitive and reflective of the expectations of parents and guardians than those culturally outside local communities.

> [I]f you get that, and you pick the right people, invest in the right people, their passion should resonate through the communities and everything else. And I think I would find it would just have a bit of a knock-on effect.

There was agreement that a co-cultural coach would be able to offer qualities to the coaching experience that coaches external to the community might struggle to understand. This is the cultural wealth that Yosso (2005) describes as the unacknowledged capital in racialised communities upon whom deficit models are often imposed by practitioners. Yosso illustrates the importance of recognizing how cultural knowledge, skills and abilities should be intrinsic to all considerations of capital. In asking the question 'whose culture has capital?' she disrupts traditional ideas of sovereign skills and abilities to include attributes valued by 'others' outside the purview of knowledge-makers. This kind of challenging reveals the limitations of normative approaches and ascribes value to knowledge of language, culture and religious norms that supports the ability to welcome others.

> As Asians when we're talking, sometimes we'll be speaking English, fluently speaking English and then fluently there will be some words in an Asian language that will come out. Because we feel comfortable like that.

In some cases, it was felt that South Asian coaches had too low a profile and were not even known to each other; indeed, it transpired that several focus group members were

qualified coaches. Despite being qualified they had a sense of being overlooked by the coaching organizers; just one example of where it would be beneficial to develop linking capital (see also Norman et al. 2014; Fletcher 2014). These feelings of invalidation are themselves a form of microaggression which Sue (2010) has linked to subtle forms of everyday racism, leading to the kind of psychological stress revealed by Burdsey (2011) in cricket and Hylton (2018) more broadly in sport. For example, when we raised this issue it was reported that:

> I only know one Asian coach that has worked with [_club__] and I don't think he's working directly for the YCB or Yorkshire Cricket Club. He's worked with some of the Yorkshire staff, but he's the only one. There's many of us in this room. I was a Level 2 coach when I was 18, but I still wasn't asked to go onto Level 3. That's barriers from the county club. They should be looking to progress.

Conclusion

This small-scale study has identified areas worthy of further consideration. In particular, the need for more research that extends beyond the relationship between South Asian Communities and cricket, to the necessity for further explication of sporting capital among those traditionally marginalized in terms of 'race', gender, disability, class and their intersections. Nonetheless, unpacking empirical data with theoretical insights offered by sporting capital and CRT allowed us to identify policy implications for cricket's key stakeholders. Moreover, the ECB also has the benefit of research conducted in three other cities; the total informed the South Asian Action Plan (ECB 2018). Our point is that if Yorkshire Cricket and the ECB wish to increase participation, they not only need to reduce visible racial discrimination but adopt policies and practices that are truly anti-racist, being founded in an ability to see cricket from the standpoints of other ethnic groups.

We have stressed the need for differentiated cultural understanding specific to localized communities so policymakers might question the transferability of these lessons. Similarly, those unfamiliar with cricket might reasonably question the application of these observations across other sports. However, we assert the generality of the past impacting the present. At the same time it is clear that the way this materialized in Azeem Rafiq's case with Yorkshire County Cricket was in part because of the high profile cricket has in the communities concerned, which has implications for relationships with the sport and its organizing bodies.

Among research participants, shorter versions of the game are preferred and many certainly do prefer to play cricket outside the established club system (*We run cricket teams, we do not run clubs, and there is a difference between the two*) because of lifestyle demands and personal preferences. It was to the frustration of some research participants that rather larger numbers in the local South Asian communities do not want the responsibility of establishing a cricket club. They reported greater value being attached to education, work, family, and community than pursuing progression and success through the formal game. In Rowe's terms this lack of involvement in club cricket does constrain the development of sporting capital, highlighting how capitals operate at the collective as well as the individual level. The associated lack of facilities means not just lack of entry to the formal league network, but also detracts from a sense of identity. Another likely consequence is a lack of interest/investment in development and support (e.g.

coaching the young, organizing and officiating); and a lack of organized administrative structures threatens future participation, for example through a reported absence of a culture of volunteerism.

The concern to encourage cricketers into more formal cricket 'offers' is not just about helping cricket shed its White image, though this element of the cricket environment cannot be ignored in practice or in theory; the shift to club cricket would also change the nature of the sporting capital held by these informal cricketers and increase the likelihood of continued participation. However, our research revealed a different perspective on cricket participation among South Asian players that conflicts with traditional deficit accounts. In terms of the substitutability challenge that was the concern of Downward and Rasciute (2010) this study provided cricketing bodies with insights regarding the nature of the challenge stemming from different conceptions of cricket which has serious implications for the culture of traditional cricket environments. Highlighting the voices of South Asian cricketers has made them more visible to some of cricket's key stakeholders.

Valuing different cultural competences and recognizing the implications for developing sporting capital would promote a different approach. We urge sport's decisionmakers to recognize diversity inside and outside their ranks to enable a more culturally sensitive approach to their offer for under-served communities. Where ethnic boundaries are maintained rather than dismantled, cricket authorities will not only struggle to improve participation and socialization in formal spaces but will also have little effect on participation in informal ones. These social dynamics can be better understood where the cultural competence of cricket authorities is enhanced and deployed with empathy for South Asian experiences and aspirations. Insider knowledge is required if players and spectators are to be attracted to diverse cricket spaces, which means picking and investing in the right people. Applying Rowe's theory of sporting capital, fortified by insights from CRT, would encourage sporting bodies to engage directly with processes that influence participation within marginalized communities which should include diversifying the workforce, being open to ethnically appropriate ideas and promoting an inclusive culture.

Importantly, cricket remains popular among South Asian communities in Bradford and Leeds. In many of these informal cricket environments, bridging occurred across South Asian communities rather than in the direction of the predominantly White cricketing establishment. Commonly questions are asked of racialised individuals who choose (or otherwise) to be outside formal sport/leisure structures about measuring-up against norms of Whiteness. Rather than being mystified about why people might choose not to participate in 'recognised' forms of the game it might pay to address the question: 'If you have cultural and social sporting competence/capital in one environment, if it is not valued in the other, why would you choose to operate in the other?' This points to a need for cricketing institutions to provide support (like coaching) to these more informal structures preferred by players from South Asian backgrounds.

Rowe (2018) contends that the higher the level of sporting capital the more likely an individual is to participate in sport. In such cases Rowe's use of sporting capital requires a deeper reading and explication in that it is not a road map for increasing elite or recreational participation but more a device to illustrate the salient factors for consideration in any sport participation plan (policy in practice). The first of those is what should ideally frame the decision-making of key stakeholders regarding physiological, psychological,

and social elements needed to build a conducive environment for cricket. Second, it should also involve questioning who should contribute to establishing this enabling environment. Third, we need to consider how the new sporting offer will reflect community taste preferences; and (fourth) what success will look like in comparison to traditional provision. It is not just our own sporting capital that is significant in shaping participation, but the sporting capital of those around us, whether in the cricketing set-up or our own community. If influential others have the capital that causes them to value sports participation, our own participation is more likely to endure because the capital we have acquired assumes greater worth.

Some of our research participants could be described as having moderate levels of sporting capital, but others already had high levels in physiological, psychological, and social terms. Yet it is apparent that even those higher levels are not enough to facilitate movement into mainstream cricket clubs and participation pathways. Those in the ECB networks and these informal cricketers are utilizing and developing their sporting capitals in different, though not entirely separate ways. Every now and again those preferences intersect and people may move from one realm to the other. This led to our use of the analogy of currencies and a consideration of the different currencies in play. As in some countries with two forms of currency, both are used even if one is valued over the other.

Rowe's (2015, 47) claim to an 'integrated theory that explains and provides insight into the reasons for participation and non-participation in sport and of the variations in participation across different sub-groups', is strengthened by the application of a critical race frame. We agree with Rowe (2015, 59) that adopting the theory of sporting capital would let policymakers 'avoid offering sport in ways that could be counter-productive turning people off rather than on to sport'. We go further, arguing that in their policies sporting bodies should embrace alternative representations of sport like those pursued by our research participants, and actively facilitate involvement on their own terms.

Notes

1. This is taken to be Yorkshire County Cricket Club, Yorkshire Cricket Board and Yorkshire Cricket Foundation combined.
2. Active People Survey 6 recorded 28.4% of those playing at least once every 4 weeks as being from BME communities.
3. Previously the Active People Survey.
4. The one larger group (n.17) was facilitated as part of a pre-arranged meeting of prominent South Asian cricket leaders (players, coaches and officials) we were invited to attend. Like the other focus groups this one was recorded and transcribed, with multiple researchers present to manage additional group dynamics and avoid group capture by dominant individuals.
5. For the OECD definition of social capital, including the nature of bonding, bridging and linking, see: https://www.oecd.org/insights/37966934.pdf.
6. Page references like this refer to the original report:
7. We use italics here to distinguish direct quotes from participants.
8. Home ground of Yorkshire County Cricket Club.

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