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Cricket and Diasporic Identities in Post-Imperial Britain

One of the most notable features of cricket in post-imperial Britain is the incorporation of diverse minority ethnic groups. When West Indian batsman Brian Lara achieved a world record test match score of 375 he did so against an England side which contained the British Afro-Guyanese player Chris Lewis, British Indo-Guyanese player Mark Ramprakash, and from which the British Jamaican fast bowler Devon Malcolm had recently been dropped. Consequently Lara,

touched the collective brain and heart of a dispersed people and fuelled their unity and hope ... the spectacle of cricket had provoked a sudden new regional pride and confidence ... (but) the Caribbean was unequivocally a part of English cricket too. Like the English health and transport systems, it could not function effectively without the essential Caribbean contribution. Lara's achievement had also been integrally linked to the diaspora ... Now the Caribbean was on both sides. (Searle 1995: 32)¹

This chapter seeks to examine the relationship between cricket and identity in diasporic communities living in Britain. Again we see the importance of cricket's apparently paradoxical position as both the game of (British) Empire yet simultaneously the sport which most closely resonates with notions of Englishness. In this instance cricket provides a particularly fruitful case study of the multifarious ways in which identities are created, contested and negotiated. The role of cricket within diasporic communities is also fundamental to an assessment of the role of cricket in shaping contemporary identities in Britain.

Conceptualizing diaspora

The concept of diaspora has had an increasing impact on studies of race, nation, migration and identity in recent years. Prior to 1990 diaspora was largely used with reference to the Jewish and African experience of geographical resettlement which was almost always 'forced' (Kalra *et al.* 2005: 8). In this context diaspora was a descriptive term which 'referred to displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through migration, immigration, or exile' (Brazier and Mannur 2003: 1).

As the application of diaspora has broadened to encompass a wider range of peoples, so its theoretical purchase has increased, moving from a simple descriptive tool to a concept used to capture a multi-faceted and fluid social process (Kalra *et al.* 2005). Concomitantly, diaspora has developed from a term centrally concerned with migration, movement and geography, to being an area of study characterized by a concern with identity construction and contestation. In these more recent and more theoretically sophisticated analyses, diaspora has come to refer to 'the doubled relationship or dual loyalty that migrants, exiles, and refugees have to places – their connections to the space they currently occupy and their continuing involvement with "back home"' (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996: 14).

There are a number of reasons why diaspora has increasingly come to be preferred to terms such as migrant and migration. Many of the people whom we now describe as diasporic are not in fact migrants, but the off-spring – the second, third generations, etc. – of those who formerly experienced migration. Second, the term migrant reproduces nation-centric sociology, where nation and society are unproblematically equated and analysis is confined to the former. Third, migrant is to be rejected because, when used as a euphemism for 'not from this place', it marginalizes, racializes and 'Others' particular people. "Immigration" has become, *par excellence*, the name of race, a new name but one which is functionally equivalent to the old appellation' (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 222). Fourth, migration implies a one-off event – an act of dis-/re-location – and a one-way process in which older affiliations are severed to be replaced by new affiliations. In contemporary societies migrations are more commonly multiple and multi-directional.

A central contribution of the development of diasporic studies has thus been to disrupt the traditionally held view that the links between place, culture and identity are immutable. Where previously it was assumed that there exists some strong bond between the nation and national identity, diaspora studies have highlighted that these connections are far from straightforward. But not only can diasporas be conceived of as 'Janus-faced', looking both forwards to where a person was and backwards to where they had come from, increasingly focus has been placed on the essential hybridity of diasporic people (Brazier and Mannur 2003: 9). Building on Anderson's (1983) notion of the nation as an 'imagined community', Appadurai (2003: 31) suggests that we consider *imagined worlds*; that is to say, 'the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread across the globe'. Diaspora reflects the impact of both the local and the global on peoples' conceptions of self; a 'multiplicity of belongings and identities' (Kalra *et al.* 2005: 16). For example, as Paul Gilroy (2003) argued via the notion of 'The Black Atlantic', Black British diasporic identity is a product of the intermingling of Caribbean, North American and British cultural styles.

The hybrid identities which characterize diasporic communities do not necessarily entail a postmodernist fragmentation of identity, in which 'culture becomes a free-floating mosaic, its pieces constantly in flux' (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996: 3). Rather, they are always and everywhere rooted in power relations – in political, economic and cultural processes – and must be viewed as the products of 'a long history of confrontations between unequal cultures and forces' (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996: 9). For instance, the hybrid identities of the Black and South Asian diasporas in Britain are rooted in the experiences of the British Empire. These experiences provide a set of social relations which both enable and constrain the contemporary construction of diasporic identity. Cricket, as we will see, is integral to this.

Use of the concept of diaspora allows us to develop different frameworks for understanding identity formation. For Stuart Hall (1990), diaspora consciousness is produced through difference, and this difference is most clearly marked in contrast to homogenizing notions of the nation. A stereotyped national culture is defined (in this case Englishness) against which the diaspora's 'pervasive image of otherness' is constructed (Burdsey 2010a: 316). '[C]ulture becomes a euphemism for "race" as, despite the changing nomenclature, cultures are interpreted as being fixed and discrete' (Burdsey 2006: 15). Symptomatic of this process is the development of 'new racism' (Barker 1981) which leads minority ethnic groups to be excluded not solely on the basis of race, but on the intersection of race, culture and nationality. The 'emphasis on culture allows nations and race to fuse. Nationalism and racism become so closely identified that to speak of the nation is to speak automatically in racially exclusive terms' (Gilroy 1993, cited in Burdsey 2006). Diasporas, therefore, do not lead to the disappearance of national identities; indeed as we will see sometimes quite the opposite. They may entail either the reinforcement of a sense of national belonging or even generate a new or more unified sense of nationhood within the diaspora than has previously been evident in the 'homeland'. While diaspora consciousness has most commonly been identified in cultural configurations such as music, film and literature, and while the use of diaspora in the study of sport is less common (Burdsey (2006) and Carrington (2010) are notable exceptions), it is no less applicable.

While the concept of diaspora has been embraced and advanced by writers more influenced by cultural studies and/or postmodernist or poststructuralist ideas about the fluidity of social relations, the main themes of diaspora resonate with the key ideas of Elias's sociology. Like Elias's sociology, diaspora is inspired by multidisciplinary. Like Elias's sociological theory, the concept of diaspora focuses on the importance of process and the relational construction of identity. Diaspora is premised on the assumption that geographies, nationalities and ethnicities are socially constructed. But Elias's historical sensitivity alerts us to the fact that while the use of the concept of diaspora is relatively new, and indeed has changed in meaning in recent times, the human processes which it describes

are not (Brubaker 2005). As we saw in the previous chapter, colonization entails many of the same features encapsulated in diaspora, including multiple movements, dual loyalties, and hybrid identities. What perhaps separates these two analyses is relative power. That is to say, while diaspora may be preferred to 'race', it continues to bear the legacy of inequality and discrimination which largely inspires the sociological study of race. Logically, however, it does not have to do so.

This chapter employs the concept of diaspora to structure and interpret the cricketing experiences of the Black and South Asian diasporas in Britain. The examination of the multiple ways in which British minority ethnic groups engage with cricket suggests that the game plays a unique role in the construction of diaspora consciousness. Through these various cricketing experiences we can clearly see the dynamism, hybridity and contextuality of identity construction. In illustrating the multiple ways in which these multiple communities culturally engage with cricket we can begin to understand the game's social significance in contemporary Britain.

The Caribbean diaspora and cricket spectatorship

In 1950, inspired by Sonny Ramadhin and Alf Valentine, the West Indies side beat England at Lord's for the first time. The reaction of the English press to this defeat was characterized by 'magnanimity and unthreatened paternalism' and a certain amount of pleasure that the 'imperial children (had) come partially of age' (Wagg 2005: 183). Contemporary journalists commented upon, and generally welcomed, the 'pleasantly strange' scenes of victory celebration at Lord's (cited in Wagg 2005: 183). The West Indians were congratulated on the joyous and skilful way in which they played the game. As we saw in Chapter 3, by implication the English could be self-congratulatory about the success of the imperial civilizing mission.

But the victory was also 'celebrated by elated West Indians throughout the Caribbean and Britain' (Searle 1990: 35). From this point in time, West Indian supporters became remarkable for both their number and the style of their support, particularly at the Oval in London, but to a greater or lesser extent at all of England's test match grounds. Whilst cricket crowds in the Caribbean were portrayed as rather more threatening (major crowd disorder incidents occurred in Georgetown, Guyana in 1953–54, Port of Spain, Trinidad in 1960 and Kingston, Jamaica in 1968), West Indian spectators at matches in England continued to be seen as carnivalesque and fun-loving. Following the 1963 series in England, a *Daily Mail* journalist suggested that, 'West Indian crowds seemed to have achieved as much as Frank Worrell's players ... (turning test cricket) into something everybody could enjoy' (cited in Wagg 2005: 191). Supporters from the Caribbean diaspora were juxtaposed

against what Paxman (1999) calls their ‘curiously passionless’ English counterparts.

Initial experiences of day-to-day living in Britain entailed a significant disjuncture for the self-image of Caribbean immigrants. On arrival in Britain the subtle skin shade distinctions which had operated in the Caribbean (see Chapter 5) were rendered meaningless, with the British population perceiving black-skinned immigrants as a monolithic mass. The experiences of British racism led immigrants from the Caribbean to put aside their ‘Island chauvinism’ (James 1993: 240), and increasingly develop a shared Caribbean identity. Whilst almost inevitably such new identities were not clearly defined, the English ‘helped Afro-Caribbean people in Britain “*feel West Indian*” and “*feel black*”’ (James 1993: 244. Emphasis in original). This changing sense of identity was fuelled by cricket attendance. Television coverage of England-West Indies tests provided one of the few graphic depictions of the presence of large numbers of Black people in Britain and further projected an image of unity within the Black diaspora. Thus the visits of the West Indian cricket team not only served as one of the few forums in which a Caribbean identity could be demonstrated and celebrated, they acted as a centripetal force to create a greater sense of unity in the Black diaspora.

While expressions of Caribbean diaspora identity were initially received in a largely convivial, albeit inquisitive, manner, West Indian supporters would subsequently become depicted not simply as different or ‘other’ to English cricket spectatorship norms, but as intrusive and threatening. The 1976 West Indian tour was a turning point, for by the end of the summer – during which, it will be remembered, the legitimacy of the team’s playing tactics were widely scrutinized – English cricket administrators asked the West Indies captain Clive Lloyd to address the behaviour of the team’s supporters. Spectators were urged to be quieter on the grounds that noise levels, like the bowling which inspired them, were considered to be ‘intimidatory’ (Wagg 2005: 195). Subsequently, throughout the 1970s and 80s, ‘complaints about the “endless din”, “mindless cacophony”, “inescapable racket” of the West Indian fans ... became commonplace on “Test Match Special” and in the columns of *The Times* and *Telegraph*’ (Marqusee 1998: 171).² In 1984 it was claimed that supporters had assaulted England’s Jonathon Agnew as they ran on to the pitch in celebration. ‘In 1950 and 1963, West Indian supporters celebrated; in 1976 they made intimidating noise and left debris; now, in 1984, they “attacked”’ (Wagg 2005: 198).

The stigmatization of spectator behaviour was augmented by substantive regulation. From the 1980s restrictions were imposed on the use of musical instruments (especially drums, klaxons, whistles) as well as on the display of flags and banners. The amount of alcohol that could be brought into cricket grounds was restricted, and bars were closed at various points in the day. Whilst the decade had opened with West Indian fans proudly proclaiming

the 5-0 victory over England as a 'Blackwash', the decade ended with many commenting on the 'notable absence' of Black spectators at English test grounds. For Searle the motivation was quite sinister; 'the British cricketing establishment and its watchdogs were attacking expressions of the enthusiasm, loyalty and wit of the Caribbean people' (1996: 49). Marqusee likewise suggests that the message for West Indian supporters in England was clear: 'unless they behave like "English" people, they are not welcome at English cricket grounds' (1998: 171). This process reached its zenith (or nadir) when in 1990 Norman Tebbit, a leading member of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government, announced his 'cricket test' which effectively used the support for national cricket teams other than England as the basis on which members of minority ethnic groups in Britain could be castigated for 'failing' to assimilate into British society. As Kalra *et al.* (2005: 36) argue, the 'Tebbit test', 'can be understood as a reactionary response to diasporic consciousness on the part of an overtly coercive nation-state unable to comprehend the openness of diaspora and the practical consequences of transnational, post-imperial movement'.

Cricket had thus contributed to the creation of a Caribbean identity amongst the Black diaspora; it provided a forum in which these identity 'games' could be played out. But in juxtaposing supporter styles and politicizing diasporic identities, cricket subsequently became a mechanism for the construction of exclusionary barriers which ultimately reduced this collective sense of self. Indeed Crabbe and Wagg (2000: 82) note that, more recently, West Indian sports fans have been discouraged by 'the cultural insularity and contingent racial inclusions' that characterize English cricket and have consequently identified more closely with the soccer teams of the individual islands, most notably Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. The history of 'othering' and regulation have therefore effectively reduced the potential of cricket to be a forum for the expression of both West Indian and Caribbean diasporic identities.

The South Asian diaspora and cricket spectatorship

This backdrop of restrictive regulation of West Indian support and the marked decline in the number of Black British cricket spectators meant that there was an underlying irony to the marketing of the 1999 ICC Cricket World Cup in England. Billed as a 'Carnival of Cricket', images of young Black males dominated publicity materials. Steel bands and calypso music were used at the media launch to bolster this impression. According to Crabbe and Wagg, 'carnival (was) invoked as a "non-British" cultural signifier' (2000: 71) in an attempt to broaden the appeal of the tournament and hence tap into a (assumed) latent demand for cricket within Britain's minority ethnic communities.

The irony was compounded by the major development in spectatorship trends which emerged during the tournament, for it was in 1999 that public

attention began to focus on the presence and the passion of cricket fans from the South Asian diaspora. Commentators were struck by the degree to which the games involving Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka seemed to be dominated by supporters from the South Asian diaspora whose spectatorship style, like that of the West Indian spectators fifty years earlier, was performative, celebratory and conscious of national identities. It did however have distinctly South Asian characteristics. When Pakistan won the 1992 ICC Cricket World Cup, British Pakistanis 'brought Bradford city centre to a standstill' (Williams 2001: 178). The emergence of a group of British Indian cricket supporters at the 2003 ICC Cricket World Cup in South Africa was dubbed the Bharat Army (Burdsey 2010b). When India won the inaugural Twenty20 World Cup in 2007 impromptu celebrations led to street closures in Leicester. For these fans 'games represented an important cultural space in which to celebrate both a love of cricket and distinctive elements of their ethnic identities' (Crabbe and Wagg 2000: 77).

Why did cricket spectatorship become central to South Asian diaspora consciousness much later than it had for the Caribbean diaspora? Although there are dangers in falsely universalizing British Asian experiences, Valiotis' (2009) discussion of the British Pakistani community may have wider relevance. Valiotis argues that cricket only became popular among British Pakistanis during the 1970s as the earliest migrants had 'lacked a strong consciousness of the concepts of nationhood' (2009: 1795). Most first generation migrants identified more strongly with their home regions and conceived of cricket as a recreation rather than as a vehicle for nationalism. Increased governmental interest and funding for the game in Pakistan, as well as some notable competitive successes, combined with a sense that a permanent return to Pakistan had become increasingly unlikely. Cricket was appropriated as a nation-building tool by Pakistani politicians, but its adoption by members of the Pakistani and Muslim diasporas in Britain was more complex. Among these groups cricket 'is not just a statement of defiance, nor is it about cultural exclusivity, it is a narrative for integration into English society as well as an additional discourse in the debate about Pakistani national identity' (Valiotis 2009: 1796). It may also be the case that changes to English cricket spectatorship, described in detail in the next chapter, helped legitimize the more vociferous expression of (Pakistani) national identity at English cricket grounds.

That cricket should come to play such a role in identity construction for the South Asian diaspora is no accident. Werbner (1996) has argued that cricket occupies a peculiar space for young Pakistani males in particular. For diasporic communities a challenge of living in the West is how to preserve and reproduce identities in ways which are not solely linked to high culture and traditions (for example through religion) but which transcend and transgress traditional Muslim communities. Cricket is an activity which is 'not specifically Islamic' but which 'mesh(es) with Islamic traditions' (Werbner 1996: 95).

As a sport with a colonial history which predates the formation of the Pakistan state, cricket is seen by elders in this community as a legitimate alternative to Islamic high culture and thus a permissible activity for the diaspora's youth. It provides 'an expression of controlled masculine aggression and competitiveness ... a popular expression of modern Pakistani nationalism and friendly competition' (1996: 94–5). 'Through support of the national team ... young British Pakistanis express their love of both cricket and the home country, along with their sense of alienation and disaffection from the British society' (1996: 101). But in using cricket in this way the diaspora also utilizes a cultural form which engages the emotions of white English/British communities. Clearly distinct from, and in some senses oppositional to, English cricket spectatorship styles, supporting the Pakistan cricket team provides an escape from the restrictive normative codes of English cricket (Crabbe and Wagg 2000). There have certainly been racist and Islamophobic incidents involving England cricket supporters and those from the Asian diaspora (Crabbe and Wagg 2000; Marqusee 1998; Williams 2001), but if one compares them for example to a sport like football, we can see that Valiotis' citation of 'numerous disturbances and confrontations' (2009: 1804) exaggerates the problem. While fundamentally expressing the hybridity of diasporic experience, ultimately 'When it comes to cricket, it seems, blood is thicker than the English rain' (Werbner 1996: 104).

Diasporic identities and grassroots cricket

Spectatorship at international cricket matches may be the most public forum for the expression of diaspora consciousness, but participating in the grassroots level of the game has provided more continuous opportunities for the generation of social identities. While continued engagement with cricket is not prohibited by migration to countries where cricket is a culturally marginal sport (see, for instance, Joseph O'Neill's (2008) fictional portrayal of the role of cricket in diasporic communities in New York in *Netherland*), settlement in Britain means that continued participation can as easily be seen as evidence of similitude as an act of separation. However while the game itself is not perceived as 'other' in this context, contestation over the practices and rituals performed as part of the game has emerged. In such contexts the hybridity and complexity that diasporic consciousness entails, are particularly prominent. It is in this context also that the most graphic fusion of culture, nation and race is evident.

A number of research projects in the late 1990s focussed on the role of race relations in grassroots cricket in Britain (for overviews see Malcolm 2002b and Williams 2001). Notable among these were the work of Greenfield and Osborn (1996) examining cricket league regulations for migrant or 'overseas' players, Long *et al.*'s (1997) examination of racism in local league cricket in Yorkshire,

and MacDonald and Ugra's (1998) investigation of equal opportunities and cricket cultures in Essex and East London. The latter two studies highlighted elements of institutional and cultural separation within cricket. Examples of racial inequality and minority ethnic exclusion included experiences of racial abuse, instances when Black and Asian cricketers perceived themselves to be discriminated against in club cricket (i.e. the problems encountered trying to arrange fixtures against 'established' clubs with predominantly white memberships), and an inability to gain access to certain leagues or competitions.

A perception that different ethnic groups played the game in culturally specific ways was identified as the basis of much of this exclusion. Players at predominantly white clubs aspired to a mythical and monolithic stereotype of English 'village green' cricket, the core of which had been 'invented' in the nineteenth century by Nyren, Pycroft, etc. (see Chapter 2). They critiqued the cricketing cultures of the diasporas which included partisan support and/or eschewed alcohol-based post-match socializing. The regulation of migrant and overseas players in semi-professional cricket leagues was similarly identified as motivated by 'attempts to preserve part of the fast disappearing rural idyll' (Greenfield and Osborn 1996: 288). Black and South Asian players were thus depicted as 'other', and their presence was seen to undermine this ideal of cricket and Englishness.

The central consequence of the racist and discriminatory experiences of members of the Black and South Asian diasporas is to 'naturalis(e) social formation in terms of a racial-cultural logic of belonging' (Solomos and Back 1996: 19). Racial inequality became rationalized as a product of voluntarily adopted cultural difference. 'Caribbean' cricket clubs were formed in many communities as were leagues which sought to cater for South Asians, the most notable of which was probably the Quaid-I-Azam league catering for British Pakistani cricket teams. Cricket therefore also reveals the 'complexity and contingent nature' of ethnicities in contemporary Britain (Crabbe and Wagg 2000: 86). A more detailed picture of the impact of this process of 'othering' on diaspora consciousness can be illustrated through three further studies of minority ethnic participation in grass roots cricket.

First, based on a study of the Caribbean Cricket Club (CCC) in the Chapeltown area of Leeds, Carrington (1998) suggests that cricket has acted as a focal point for the broader Black community in an otherwise hostile white environment. Members enjoyed the 'relaxed and secure' setting which the club provided (1998: 285) and the cricket pitch and clubhouse acted as physical markers of the club's, and therefore the community's, existence. Consequently, the actions and attitudes of club members came to be seen as indicative of the Chapeltown African-Caribbean community more generally. It was important to members, for instance, that their facilities were clean and in good order for, they felt, visitors would use this as a gauge of standards of cleanliness within the broader community.

The club also came to be seen as a symbolic marker of the Black diaspora *per se*, with opposing players viewing CCC as in some way connected or akin to the West Indian test team. Matches became racially charged as victories by white teams came to be seen as revenge for English defeats (Carrington's research took place in the immediate aftermath of West Indian test dominance). Conversely members of CCC viewed winning as 'a way of challenging the logic and efficacy of the racism they faced in their day-to-day lives' (1998: 291). Victories on the field of play thus became a form of cultural resistance. Through cricket the Black masculine identities which have largely been subordinated to white masculine identities through the experiences of colonialism and post-colonial discrimination (Mercer 1994) were bolstered and strengthened. Though such fillips for racial and masculine pride may only be temporary, cricket ultimately provided an arena in which self identity, local community identities and a Caribbean identity were literally and metaphorically 'played out'.

Second Stuart's (1996) analysis of the Oxford Caribbean and Casuals Cricket Club (OC&CCC) illuminates aspects of local community politics and thus suggests that diasporic identities can be more complex and more internally contested than might be inferred from Carrington's study. The club came into existence following the merger of the Casuals Cricket Club and the Cowley West Indian Club. In contrast to Carrington's emphasis on the link between CCC and community identity, Stuart argues that players' club affiliations were primarily based on convenience and family and friendship ties rather than a broader diasporic identity. Casuals had revolved around two Barbadian families which 'allowed their friends to play' whilst the Cowley West Indian Club had been run by 'one or two individuals' (Stuart 1996: 125–126). Thus the idea that these two clubs have represented 'African-Caribbean identity (was) ... far from the truth' (Stuart 1996: 127). Rather, the influence of a few Barbadian elders led to the dominance of a particular version of Barbadian identity. Moreover, the Oxford Caribbean and the Cowley West Indian club merger was 'far from smooth' (Stuart 1996: 127) as individuals exploited the club as a vehicle to bolster their positions as community leaders. A 'Black' identity was only promoted during attempts to obtain public funding. Thus, 'the image of a unified and homogeneous African-Caribbean community was but an illusion ... far from representing the whole African-Caribbean population in Oxford, the cricket club represented a few individuals' (Stuart 1996: 125).

This is not to say, however, that cricket did not play a significant part in diaspora identity construction, as the names chosen for these clubs suggest. Stuart, like Carrington, notes that outsiders viewed OC&CCC as a surrogate for the West Indies test side. He further argues that players often pandered to this stereotype, attempting to play in the West Indian 'tradition' of aggressive fast bowling, flamboyant scoring and countering spin bowling with attacking batting. For such men, 'cricket represented social status [and] social mobility'

(Stuart 1996: 125) and playing in this particular style, against largely white teams, represented a form of resistance to the everyday racism encountered in Oxford. Cricket therefore served to bolster a generalized 'Caribbean' or 'West Indian' identity as well as a sense of Black masculinity. But Stuart's work also highlights the internally fractured nature of affiliations within the Black British diaspora. At certain times and places local/island-based identities came to the fore. At other times, divisions arose between those who wished to express a community identity through cricket and those for whom such identities had less resonance. It is clear, however, that members of the Black British diaspora, 'construct and select specific images from the Caribbean to produce a new identity in keeping with their experience in Britain', and that '[diasporic] communities in Britain [are] positioned and repositioned in relation to the dominant presence' (Stuart 1996: 128). Identities, however, are also constructed in relation to the presence of, and power relations *between*, diasporic factions.

Third Williams' (2001) discussion of British Asian participation in grassroots cricket suggests an even greater level of fragmentation and hybridity of South Asian diaspora consciousness. Williams argues that Asian participation in grass roots cricket has primarily been as part of ethnically homogeneous teams. Some of these, such as those in Bolton, were first formed in the 1960s and their number increased rapidly in the 1980s (Williams 1994). Reflecting Valiotis' (2009) account of Muslim and Pakistani diaspora identities, a key finding of Williams' work is that it exposes the danger of attributing 'false universalism' to Asian communities. Cricket clubs tend to reflect not only national affiliations but a wide variety of distinctive group identities: 'kinship, clan identity, language, residential area, religion and ancestral villages or towns in Asia' (Williams 2001: 176). Where initially caste had been a significant factor in the creation of Hindu cricket teams it has waned in significance post-1990. Since this time the number of Muslim teams has grown considerably (while overall the number of cricket clubs in Britain declined), stimulated in part by the success of the Pakistan national team, but perhaps also by a growing Muslim identity in Britain which in turn stems from a recognition within the diaspora that residence in the United Kingdom is likely to be 'irreversible', and thus an identity linked to nation (Pakistan) is problematic (Werbner 1996). Only the clubs which play at the higher levels of competition, such as Deane and Derby in Bolton, attract players from across religious, ethnic and class groups within the South Asian community (Williams 1994).

The complexity of identities is best illustrated through a number of contradictions. While most of Williams' respondents argued that 'cricket promotes inter-racial contact and ethnic harmony' (1994: 62) the failure of Asian teams to gain entry to the highest leagues in the Bolton Association is seen by some as evidence of discrimination. While Williams interprets the absence of leagues solely consisting of 'Asian' teams as evidence of limited

prejudice, the prominence of ethnically homogeneous teams could be taken to imply the opposite. In addition to this, however, it is notable that some of the leading 'South Asian' clubs (for example Bolton Indians) have incorporated local affiliations into their titles as a way of indicating multiple aspects of identity. Another club, formed by Muslims with ancestral roots in a particular Indian village, is called Red Rose CC, and thus emphasizes Lancashire identity.³ For Williams, 'cricket playing among Asians expresses a determination to maintain Asian identities and culture in England' (2001: 178). Williams contrasts the impact of South Asian cricket on British society to the invisibility of other South Asian cultural forms in Britain as a reason for the degree of significance with which the game is held.

Diaspora and professional cricket in England

As this chapter's introduction illustrates, diasporic communities have also become integral to the elite game in England. Research focussing on members of diaspora communities who engage with cricket at this level shows the continuation of certain themes in relation to identity construction – namely the dynamic hybridity of diaspora consciousness – but also some context specific characteristics which stem from the rather unique experience of being selected to be a nation's representative.

At its broadest, we can see that diasporic involvement in English elite cricket has been contoured by certain cultural stereotypes. Early sociological analyses of English cricket illustrated how a disproportionately large percentage of Black British and British Asian cricketers tended to be 'stacked' into particular playing positions (Malcolm 1997). Following the participation patterns established in the Caribbean, Black British cricketers were significantly over-represented in the role of fast bowler, while following the participation patterns established in the Asian subcontinent, British Asian cricketers were significantly overrepresented as batsmen and spin bowlers. This pattern of positional occupancy was replicated amongst the diasporic cricketers selected to play for the England cricket team. Starting with Ranjitsinhji in 1896, England's cricket selectors have showed a propensity to select British Asian batsmen (England captain Nasser Hussain would be another notable case in point) and spin bowlers (such as Min Patel), while also largely selecting fast bowlers from the Black British community (for example Devon Malcolm, Chris Lewis, Norman Cowans). These positional patterns have become less distinct in recent years as the dominant trend has been for the proliferation of British Asian, and a decline in the number of Black British, cricketers. For instance, Steen (2004: 24) noted that whilst the 1994 edition of *The Cricketers' Who's Who* featured thirty-three England qualified players of 'Caribbean extraction', the 2004 edition featured just eighteen. Williams (2001) demonstrates the

growing number of British Asian county cricketers in the 1990s and Burdsey (2010a) estimates that in 2009 there were approximately twenty British Muslims playing for English first-class counties. However, it remains the case that such participation patterns have both influenced, and can be taken as an indication of, the role of cricket in the expression of diasporic identities.

Players from the Black and South Asian diasporas have experienced different degrees of racism as they have negotiated access into English county cricket. Although a report by the England and Wales Cricket Board's Racism Study Group (ECB 1999) found that none of the county players to whom they spoke in their research cited experiences of racial prejudice or discrimination (though 82 per cent of non-white respondents 'believed' racism existed in the game), a number of cases of racist abuse of Black players (tellingly all fast bowlers) by spectators have entered the public domain. In 1985 David Lawrence recalled how a group of Yorkshire supporters threw bananas at him and called him 'nigger, black bastard, sambo, monkey, gorilla'. In an incident at Southampton, Middlesex and England fast bowler Norman Cowans was subjected to chants of 'black bastard, black bastard' (Searle 1990: 33). Most famously controversy dogged the career of Devon Malcolm. Chairman of the England cricket selectors, Ted Dexter, invoked racist stereotypes by accusing Malcolm of 'having no cricketing brain' (Searle 1996: 52). When Malcolm questioned whether England cricket manager Ray Illingworth's treatment of him would have been different had he (Malcolm) been white, the ECB threatened to punish Malcolm for 'bringing the game into disrepute'. The ECB remained intransigent even when another England player, Dermot Reeve, alleged that he had heard Illingworth racially abuse Malcolm (for a fuller discussion see Marqusee 1998: 300–302). To compound the prejudice Malcolm experienced within the game, at a Buckingham Palace function to which both the West Indies and England cricket teams were invited, the Duke of Edinburgh asked Malcolm, 'Why are you wearing an England blazer?' (Searle 1995: 33).

Such experiences show that the practice of 'othering' similarly exists in elite cricket in England. Searle (1996: 51) for instance has spoken about the 'in-out' attitude of the selectors towards particular Black England players, illustrated through the high proportion of Black British players whom the press have dubbed 'one-test wonders' (i.e. Neil Williams, Joey Benjamin). The publication of Robert Henderson's (1995) *Wisden Cricket Monthly* article, 'Is it in the Blood', most publicly drew attention to diasporic identity issues amongst elite players. Henderson launched a debate about whether the inclusion of players born or brought up outside Britain was beneficial to the England cricket team on the (unsubstantiated) basis that the effort, or 'desire to succeed', could not be as great as amongst 'native born and bred players' (1995: 9).

Perhaps as a consequence of entering the game later, examples of overt racism directed towards British Asian players are fewer. Burdsey (2010b) notes that the impact of the Asian diaspora is such that it is now possible to speak

of the British Asian cricket star. The most prominent British Asian cricketer of recent times has been Monty Panesar. The first Sikh to play cricket for England, Panesar's public reception stands in marked contrast to the 1990s debate about players of overseas 'origin'. It might be argued that the focus on Panesar's 'visual otherness' – his wearing of a turban and growth of a full beard – betrays a lack of respect for difference and thus exposes an undercurrent of racism. However, an equally significant aspect of the public reception for Panesar is the broad feeling of affection for the player, and the absence of the expression of hostility. His shortlisting for the 2006 BBC Sports Personality of the Year award is indicative of the breadth of his public appeal but the stance taken by the English press over the racial abuse of Panesar during the early stages of England's 2006–07 tour to Australia is probably more revealing. When Cricket Australia's James Sutherland was reported to have called Panesar 'a stupid Indian', the *Sun* (18 November 2006), traditionally a newspaper relatively antipathetic to multiculturalism, retorted, 'For your information, A – Monty's not stupid, B – He isn't Indian.' Whilst ten to twenty years previously it was English supporters and administrators who were alleged to have racially abused minority ethnic cricketers, in the twenty-first century racism started to be depicted as something others inflicted upon British minority ethnic groups. Consequently Burdsey concludes that 'cricket appears to represent a more progressive sporting space than sports such as football' (2010b: 261–2).

Burdsey's research with British Asians playing county cricket in England illustrates the central role the sport plays in the construction of 'a sense of diasporic British Asianness' (2010b: 256) which is dynamic, fluid, fragmented, context specific and, at times, contradictory. He points, for instance, to the varied signifiers which players from the Asian diaspora use to express their identities (Indian, English, British Asian, British Muslim, etc.). He also demonstrates how identities are further complicated by the representational nature of elite sport, for many of the players to whom Burdsey spoke expressed a sense of allegiance to, and a desire to play for, England (or at least the national cricket team). The embrace of this aspect of identity did not, however, equate with the rejection or marginalization of another, such as religion or heritage, but was a consequence and manifestation of hybridity; 'a desire to construct a multilateral social identity that simultaneously emphasises their British citizenship and ethnicities' (Burdsey 2010b: 264). These issues came to public prominence in 2006 when Sajid Mahmood represented the nation of his birth, England, against that of his father's, Pakistan. During the game Mahmood was barracked by sections of the Pakistan support who chanted words like 'traitor' and 'reject'. Interviewees reflecting on the case of Mahmood expressed little sympathy with the spectators. British Asian professional cricketers understood and supported Mahmood's embrace of multiple identity positions and denied that his embrace of English cricket could or should be equated with a rejection of his Pakistani heritage (Burdsey 2010b).

Burdsey's (2010a) focus on British Muslims' experiences in English professional cricket adds to our understanding of the relationship between cricket and identity amongst the South Asian diaspora by illustrating the interdependence of religious and national identities. While the degree of religious adherence varies markedly between players, many of those interviewed defined Islam as an 'all-encompassing way of life' (2010a: 324). They further expressed a preoccupation with being 'good' Muslims and correlatively inferred that their identity as elite cricketers was essentially marginal to their religious identity. While some noted that they had experienced elements of prejudice while playing, especially from spectators and away from their 'home' county, these could not be described as frequent. Players further argued that their cricket participation did not particularly conflict with their attempts at religious observance. Issues related to the consumption of alcohol, provision of halal or vegetarian food, and public nudity required negotiation at times, but players' comments suggested a relatively high degree of accommodation, or at least an increasing sensitivity towards difference in English cricket. Burdsey concluded by noting that some British Muslim cricketers argued that it was important that they used their relatively privileged and prominent positions to challenge dominant perceptions of Muslims as extremists and/or terrorists.

Conclusion

Cricket permeates diaspora communities and (male) consciousness in numerous ways. For some cricket may primarily be experienced as infrequent spectatorship at international games; for others it may be a physically active and more regular leisure pursuit. For a smaller number cricket may become a source of employment. But whether it is in relation to spectatorship or participation, and whether this takes place at a grassroots or elite level, cricket plays and has played a key role in identity formation of a variety of British minority ethnic groups.

The identity formation we see in relation to cricket and diaspora is particularly complex. Diasporic identities are dynamic as, for example, illustrated by cricket's status as firstly a centrifugal force for the generation of a Caribbean identity, which became superseded by a return to, and strengthening of, Island-based identities promoted through football. Individuals may hold a multiplicity of identities at any one point in time. Diasporic identities may be 'janus-faced' (for example British Pakistani) or characterized by an even greater degree of hybridity (such as the caste specific teams of Hindus in Lancashire). Religious (for example Muslim) identities commingle with national identities (such as Pakistani) according to changing social conditions (i.e. the belief that 'returning home' is a more distant possibility). Perhaps most significantly diasporas can create identities which are determined by neither 'heritage' nor

contemporary conditions but are a product of the interdependence of the two. Diasporas do not just continue national identities, they are not always 'just' hybrid, they can be something unique, new and context specific.

The role of cricket in the identities of diasporic communities living in contemporary Britain is one consequence of the role that the game played in the British Empire. Because cricket was diffused at this particular time, and via particular routes, it came to hold a particular significance for the Black and South Asian diasporas which constitute the major part of Britain's minority ethnic communities. Much less obvious but equally significant in this equation is the nineteenth century construction of cricket as the quintessential English game, for just as the 'demand' for participation in the game is mediated by the game's significance in colonial cultures, so the 'supply' of opportunities is mediated by cultural ideologies of what it means to be English and what Englishness means.

Previous analyses of the multicultural character of cricket in contemporary Britain have largely focussed on aspects of racism and racial inequality. While the ever-present backdrop to this and thus to diaspora identity is the resistance of the 'host' community through the mobilization and realignment of forms of English national identity (Kalra *et al.* 2005: 36), one common failing is the logical inconsistency with which diasporic and 'domestic' identities are treated. As we have seen here, diaspora consciousness is fluid, relationally constructed, and context specific. It would, therefore, be something of a contradiction to consider English national identity as static and monolithic. Indeed there is considerable evidence to suggest that notions of Englishness and their expression in relation to cricket have also changed considerably in recent years. It is to an investigation of this that we turn in the next chapter.