# SPORTS EQUITY STRATEGIES AND LOCAL FOOTBALL IN ENGLAND

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by

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# Abstract

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This study traces the implementation of The English Football Association's *Ethics and Sports Equity Strategy (E&SES)*, which aims to tackle inequalities - including racism – in English football, but particularly in the often overlooked local, grass-roots form of the game. Case studies of five County Football Associations were undertaken to assess the implementation of the *E&SES*, involving 57 semi-structured interviews with local football stakeholders and participant observation at County FA and National FA offices. Following critical realist principles, the structural conditions of local football were outlined using historical documentary evidence, tracing the legacy of amateurist ideas of fairness and apoliticism, and identifying the exclusivity of 'club cultures' at County FAs. The influence of more recent policy developments that have politicised and professionalised the local game were then assessed.

Research found resistance to change among long-standing County FA Governance personnel, attributed to components of amateurism including 'paternalism', 'protectionism' and 'fairness'. Here, many saw the *E&SES* as being *unfair* itself and causing fresh problems, as it supported preferential treatment of some members over others. Such an intervention was therefore seen as unnecessary and unwarranted, so long-standing amateurist conditions were legitimised and reproduced by key actors. The 'club cultures' of County FAs were also informed by ideas of race, often derived from Victorian British colonialism; this, despite widespread denials from key personnel of any racism in the game. The notion of 'colour-blind' racism was used to explain this often contradictory process. This colour-blind sentiment made any use of ideas of race as a form of resistance to County FA policy or procedure necessarily problematic.

The structural conditions of local English football harbour complex processes of racialised exclusion that require further interrogation. Utilising 'whiteness' to account for the racism here has merit, but risks missing some of the wider mechanisms behind exclusion; something a critical realist framework may be better placed to identify.

# Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

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**1. Opening remarks on football and equity policy**

This thesis is the product of research undertaken for a three year CASE studentship, reference number PTA-033-2004-00070. CASE is an ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) scheme that encourages the collaboration between academics and the public/private sector. The research was majority-funded by the ESRC, with The Football Association (The FA) acting as the industry collaborator. The FA provided some basic funding and, most importantly, negotiated unprecedented access to the research field of local football governance. Research for the thesis was carried out by the author (Jim Lusted) with assistance and guidance from his supervisor John Williams at the Centre for the Sociology of Sport, University of Leicester, and Lucy Faulkner, Equality Manager at The FA (hereafter referred to as the 'research team' where appropriate).

The overall aim of the research was to trace the implementation of the policy contained in The FA's key equality document, the _Ethics and Sports Equity Strategy_ (_E&SES_), in local, grass-roots football. The _E&SES_ was adopted by The FA Council (the key decision making body in The FA at the time) in November 2002, and it provides a strategic framework upon which existing and future social inclusion activities in football can be guided. While claiming to cover the whole 'football family' - including the professional game – the _E&SES_ has a strong emphasis on implementing change at the non-professional grass roots level, where The FA enjoys apparent autonomy of control, via its regional governing bodies which are called County Football Associations (hereafter referred to as County FAs). The research was particularly concerned with how the new equity strategy was being received and incorporated into the day-to-day

activities of local County FAs. More specifically, the research explores, in some detail, the implementation of those initiatives aimed at increasing the general involvement in local football of ethnic minorities, which were couched within the policy rhetoric of race equality. As such, much of the analytical focus for the study was informed by discussions around the connected ideas and discourses of 'race'[1], ethnicity and racism.

The FA's *Ethics and Sports Equity Strategy* is the first official document of its kind to be produced by English football's governing body and it formalises The FA's commitment to equality in the game. Despite the significant developments in social attitudes towards exclusion and discrimination since the 1960s, it seems that these shifts have had little direct impact upon The FA; there is, at least, little evidence of any direct policy intervention of this kind prior to the *E&SES*. One of the key concerns of this thesis - particularly in the early chapters - is to explore the question of *why* exactly The FA decided to adopt such a strategy at this particular moment. I argue that The FA's recent commitment to sports equity can best be understood by tracing some potential sources of its origin and development in British social and political history in relation to sport. My specific focus in this thesis is 'race' equality, and I should state from the outset that the analysis here is overwhelmingly focused on men. Given the patriarchal development of the game, and indeed the limitations of space in this thesis, I am not directly discussing the increasingly numerous experiences of women in the local game, and have specifically kept my comments regarding 'race' and racism limited to predominantly *male* social relations.

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[1] The reader will already note the varied use of 'scare quotes' around the term 'race'. I have largely avoided the use of scare quotes in my analysis as I have prefixed the use of the term with the caveat *ideas* of race, to explicitly recognise its dubious ontological status in social research. When using policy language, I have used the original format (usually without scare quotes). Scare quotes have only been used when the term is ambiguously deployed (often by others). A more detailed discussion of the use of 'race' concept is given in Chapters 4 and 7.

A handful of influential individuals within (and outside) the organisation itself can take some credit for driving the idea of equity higher up the agenda at the FA; indeed, the slow but emerging consensus about the need for greater equity within the organisation and the wider game is in no small part the product of significant 'lobbying' from proselytizers of the equity cause, both inside and outside The FA. Nonetheless, while these 'agents of change' have contributed to the apparent shift in the prevailing FA occupational and professional culture, we must also consider the *structural* origins of the emergence of sports equity. The rising recent British Government interest in sport (originating largely from the deliberations of the Wolfenden Report in 1960) through Sport England, and the significantly increased revenue generated by the professional game in England since the Premier League breakaway from Football League clubs in 1992 (see Williams, 2006) combined to place significant political pressure on The FA in the late-1990s. This pressure was channelled mainly through a dramatic rise in available central (government) funding to the governing body. This new set of external pressures challenged the traditional autonomy of The FA, which had previously been largely left to set its own policy agendas. In many ways, these external influences have helped to insert equity issues directly into The FA's policy remit at the beginning of the 21st century.

At first glance, we might have expected The FA to commit itself, formally, to the ideals of equality and anti-discrimination much earlier than 2002. Public calls for a stronger consideration of equity issues in football have been prominent for many years, coming mainly from specific interest groups, including 'anti-racist' pressure groups such as the Anti-Nazi League and more recently the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), but also from other 'anti-discriminatory' bodies, including the Women's Sports Foundation

(WSF). Despite this sort of prompting, there is actually relatively little evidence of any meaningful activity on this front from The FA prior to 2002. This was even though changing public attitudes towards discrimination more broadly, have helped shift British Government policy and legislation (including via the creation of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975; the Race Relations Act 1976; the Disability Discrimination Act 1995; and the Human Rights Act 1998). At the same time popular, and later more statutory, 'anti-racist' campaigns emerged in British football and began to be widely recognised and supported from the early 1990s onwards (Garland and Rowe 2001).

Meanwhile, incidents of overt discrimination *within* English football are not new. The FA's decision, for example, to refuse its member clubs permission to host women's football matches in 1921 effectively stunted the growth of women's football in England for almost 50 years (Woodhouse and Williams 1991; Lopez 1996). Similarly, the overt and often aggressive *fan* racism of the sort that plagued the English game in the 1970s and 1980s has rarely been seen as a *central* concern for The FA - until recently. Incidents of collective, overt racism in English football are much more sporadic today than they were 20 or 30 years ago, while women's football has slowly emerged as a force again in England from the early 1990s – and with some FA support. It might be suggested that a document such as the *E&SES* seems long overdue. It has taken almost 140 years for, arguably, English sport's most influential, and symbolically it's most important, governing body to produce a strategy designed to deal with discrimination and equity in the national game.

One of the key developments in the process of adopting equity principles at The FA was that those within the organisation must take the important first step of *acknowledging*

that processes of social exclusion do indeed operate within The FA and within the wider football cultures that it inhabits. This acknowledgement is, however, far from universal in football. I explore in depth in later sections of the thesis how this 'denial' of racism remains a barrier to change. It is particularly evident perhaps in local football settings. An underlying theme of the *E&SES* is to identify some of the exclusionary practices that exist within the organisational structures of the game (The FA 2004a; 2004b). This kind of institutionalised exclusion is something which remains fervently denied, not only in football but in British sport more generally (Long 2000). As part of the background research to the *E&SES* document, The FA undertook a large-scale monitoring survey of its own organisation, a survey which offered evidence to support anecdotal claims that English football's governing body was unrepresentative of British society, particularly in relation to issues of gender, ethnicity and disability (The FA 2002). Around this time, The FA faced increasing external scrutiny regarding its tackling of under-representation and covert discrimination: this came, firstly, from the government-led Football Task Force (1998); then it came via a report by the Independent Football Commission (2004); then, it came later from the Commission for Racial Equality (see Welch et al, 2004). At the same time, Sport England, initially through the Sporting Equals campaign, had set up a Race Equality Standard (2001; 2004) which it made compulsory for all national governing bodies for sport to meet in order to qualify for future Sport England (effectively any public) funding. Academic discussions about 'race' and football meanwhile especially emphasised at this time the way sports administrators continued to shift responsibility for general problems of inequality and discrimination onto 'external' actors around the game, notably the 'hooligan' football supporter (Back et al. 2001).

## 2. Sports Equity and 'fairness' - the double bind

It is difficult to think of any other social or cultural setting, other than English sport, that so confidently – and so regularly and publicly - claims to be 'fair'. The 'level playing field' analogy of access to and participation in sport - regardless of age, 'race', gender or any other form of social stratification - has been confidently espoused within the structures and cultures of English sport for many years. In many ways, the systematic challenge to what Long (2000) terms this hegemonic 'sporting innocence' has emerged as one of the contemporary central concerns of the sociology of sport, particularly in relation to the impact of ideas of race and racism in shaping different experiences within sport (Williams 1992; Bryson 1994; Kivel 2000; Long and Hylton 2002; Collins 2003; Wiggins and Miller 2003; Long and McNamee 2004; Blackshaw and Long 2005; Burdsey 2007; Coalter 2007). An increasing body of research has highlighted the contrary position: that an emphasis on 'fair play' on the pitch, court or playing field has tended to obscure the exclusionary practices that have probably always existed in the social and cultural spaces away from – and sometimes including - the playing area (see, for example, the collection of articles in Sugden and Tomlinson 2002). Whether expressed through exclusion on grounds of class (Holt 1989), gender (Bryson 1994), colonialism (James 1967) or explicitly 'race' (Carrington and McDonald 2002), evidence of such inequalities highlights the complex and contradictory ethical frameworks of sport. However, despite these analyses, the idealised 'level playing field' – arguably the Holy Grail of governance for all political philosophies and sporting practices – is probably still the dominant 'common sense' interpretation of the role of sport in British society, and it remains remarkably persistent today in policy circles.

This ingrained, and perhaps peculiarly British or English ideology of 'sport for all', may then provide the basis for an understanding of why sport has been slower than other social forums in acknowledging and addressing inequalities such as racism; inequalities that are re-enforced and 'normalised', particularly within the structures and cultures of local football in England. The hegemonic representations that continue to connect sport with equal opportunity have, in many ways, deflected attention away from the exclusionary practices that sport inevitably plays out (see Long et al. 2005). This might also help begin to explain why the concept of 'sports equity' itself is a peculiarly contemporary term; it entered UK sport policy circles via the Sports Council as late as 1991, having been adapted from debates around social exclusion and sport in Canada and Australia (White 1991). This concept will be discussed in much more detail later, although it is probably useful to provide a working definition of it from the outset. The Sports Council defined the term 'equity' in the early 1990s as follows:

> Sports equity is about fairness in sport, equality of access, recognising inequalities and taking steps to redress them. It is about changing the structure and culture of sport to ensure it becomes equally accessible to everyone in society, whatever their age, race, gender or level of ability.
>
> (Sports Council 1991: 4)

Discussions around social equality and sport – at least within policy circles – have thus always had the notion of *fairness* at their heart, and they appear deliberately to connect equality to the fair play ideal. But where does the connection between sport and fair play actually come from? The moral positioning of 'fair play' in the sporting arena has a long history and its legacy remains prominent today. There is the philosophical argument that the moral commitment to fairness in sport forms an intrinsic concern of the sporting contest (Loland 1998; 2002). It has also been suggested that fair play and

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adherence to the rules of the game are strongly connected to the components of 'play' in its widest sense (Huizinga 1970). The long-standing link between fair play and sport might also be attributed to the strong connection between gambling and sporting activity; the historical connections between the two requiring that the sporting contest must at least be seen to be un-tampered with and thus providing an equal chance of success upon the bet (Holt 1989: 179-194). But perhaps the strongest connection between sport and fairness in England can be found centred in the complex Victorian ideals of amateurism, and thus the public focus on 'fairness' in sport is arguably more prevalent in British – especially English - sport than perhaps it is elsewhere.

Prizing the *integrity* of the sporting contest over any final result or outcome remains a strongly British amateur legacy, originating from the public schools of Victorian Britain (Dunning 1999). In domestic discourse, these ideals are also often seen as being connected strongly to the key historical characteristics of 'Britishness' itself. In his farewell speech as Conservative leader, Michael Howard, for example, recently espoused the longevity of, 'a very British value: the value of fair play' (*The Guardian*, 6th October 2005). While this commitment to fairness as laid out by the rules lends itself particularly well to the constitutive laws of the game, the regulative rule of 'playing fair' appears to have become historically confused. In this sense, the relationship between sport and fair play appears to be something of a double bind. Put simply, the social obligations of sport remain contested – what exactly is the role of sport in the social realm today? Is it to try to solve all the ills of society, or actually to provide a space *away* from the pressures and constraints of everyday life? Should one *only* play fair and adhere to the rules on the sports field, while off the field legitimately adopt exploitative, discriminatory and exclusive practices in other areas of life, such as the workplace?

On the other hand, should sport be used to foster the egalitarian ideals of social equality and fair treatment of all, when society actually appears to espouse exactly the opposite? The latter view is often articulated when sport is seen as one of the few cultural milieus that remain above and beyond the remit of social, economic and political influence – it inhabits what Coalter (2007: 9) terms a 'mythopoeic' social space. This 'mythopoeic' understanding of sport is developed further in this thesis and it is a concept to which I shall return. I will ask: what is the significance of the historic commitment to sport as somehow 'sacred', as existing outside the normal realms of social, political and economic change? And how might this, in turn, influence the commitment – or resistance – to late-modern social equality initiatives in British sport?

## 3. Some opening remarks on Critical Realism

In order to begin to explore some of the issues raised so far, I have called upon the philosophical principles of Critical Realism to guide the underlying arguments made in this thesis. Critical Realism (CR) is a relatively recent movement in philosophy, and its genesis is normally located in the work of Roy Bhaskar (see Archer et al. 1998; Carter 2000; Sayer 2000; Cruickshank 2002a; Carter and New 2004; Danermark et al. 2006). The critical realist project represents an attempt to resolve some of the 'problems' of the traditional polemics in scientific enquiry, particularly the sociological concerns of structure and agency. In this sense, CR has been referred to as representing the gradual shift from an 'either-or' approach on such matters to a 'both-and' stance, attempting something of a synthesis of the most plausible components of the traditional dualisms (Danermark et al. 2006: 2-6)

For Critical Realists, reality exists 'independent of individual consciousness; in common sense terms … "things out there" that exist even though we may not perceive them directly' (Carter 2000: 56). This ontological stance is one important development from empirical realist or objectivist thought. CR ontology claims to have several layers, and is thus often referred to as being stratified (Carter 2000: 69-72; Sayer 2000: 12-13; Danermark et al. 2006: 20-21). Here, three key levels are said to exist; the 'real', the 'actual' and the 'empirical'. Seeing the social world as 'layered' we can reject the empiricist notion that reality is simply *everything* we can observe. Methodologically, Danermark et al. propose that CR can offer 'guidelines for social science research, and starting points for the evaluation of already established methods' (2006: 73). This seems to adhere to the increasingly pragmatic approach to methodological design in the social sciences in recent years, and has informed the design of the research on which this thesis is based.

I will return to such matters, in much more detail, in my discussion of research methods in Chapter 4. There I will also consider how questions raised by CR in relation to key ontological and epistemological issues are perhaps particularly pertinent for studies – like this one - that engage with notions of 'race', ethnicity and racism. But before moving on, **t**here follows a brief reader's guide, chapter by chapter, to the structure of the thesis.

## 4. The structure of this thesis

I follow these brief introductory remarks with a broad overview of some of the key debates around ideas of race and racism in Chapter 1. Here, I pay particular attention to conceptualisations of 'race' and racism – in both academia and policy circles – and trace

how they have shaped the anti-racist interventions into English football since the 1980s. I pay particular attention here to research into anti-racist and 'race' equality campaigns aimed at local sport organisations, led by the 'Sporting Equals' Standard scheme (2001, 2004).

Chapter 2 provides a broadly chronological overview of the most pertinent social, cultural and political conditions that have contributed to ideas of equity in English football. It concentrates on the origins of modern sport in Victorian Britain and the significance influence this period has had on the development of British sport more recently. The predictable focus here is on the development of *amateurist* ideologies. Chapter 2 focuses on two particular components of these ideologies, firstly morality and fair play, and secondly, the notion that sport should properly be 'sheltered' from political interference – in order to trace the legacy of amateurism in British sport. What emerges from this review is an apparent gradual increase in political intervention, while ideals of fairness in sport are strongly retained. The overlapping and contesting agendas of governments, interest groups and other institutions of social change have produced, in turn, a complex mesh of contexts and influences from which equity policy finally emerges.

The latter part of Chapter 2 extends this historical account in order to discuss some of the more recent – and arguably most dramatic – changes in English football since the early 1980s, at time when the right wing neo-liberal Thatcher government was forced to deal with the problems of hooliganism and overt racism in the professional game. I discuss how later administrations have begun to use sport – including local football – as a vehicle for policy delivery, thanks largely to the increased funding provided to Sport

England by the National Lottery. This review explores the social inclusion agenda promoted by New Labour in the late 1990s and beyond.

The first sighting of any empirical findings can be found in Chapter 3, where I offer a general overview of the structure and organisation of local football – informed by both primary data and secondary documentary evidence. The focus here is on the local governance structures – County Football Associations. The chapter provides the reader with a 'flavour' of the way local football is, and was, organised and controlled locally - something otherwise neglected in the majority of studies of local sport. In particular here I discuss the historic and current relations of power within these organisations, pointing to the strong control enjoyed by County FA Council Members – volunteers who make many of the most important decisions for the local game. I also introduce here some of the major changes that have taken place in English football in recent years – including those raised in Chapter 2 – and discuss how they have begun to effect the long-standing structures and cultures of these local associations. Important here is the increasing central involvement of The FA and the 'top-down' approach to the running of the local game, something quite novel for the previously relatively autonomous County FAs.

Chapter 4 offers an account of the methodological considerations that have informed the research strategy and design for this thesis. It contains the usual overview of methods used and an evaluation of their effectiveness, including details of the use of historical documentary evidence and the case studies undertaken at County Football Associations, which involved participant observation and semi-structured interviews. I also summarise the key techniques of data analysis that were deployed to make sense of this raw data. The chapter also considers briefly broader ontological and epistemological

considerations – issues that I argue are often neglected in studies of this kind. Using the principles of Critical Realism, I show how, by being clear on the ontological and epistemological assumptions we make in social research of this kind, we can produce a more robust and reliable analysis of the phenomena under investigation. Studies utilizing a notion of 'race' are particularly important here, as I suggest that the often muddled ontological status of 'race' in many accounts has confused much research in this area.

Chapter 5 then provides a detailed overview of the particular policy under scrutiny in this thesis – The FA's *Ethics and Sports Equity Strategy* (E&SES). I show how much of this document stems largely from detail contained in Sport England's own equity policy (2002). There is a discussion here about the notion of 'equity', a new concept introduced by Sport England in an attempt to move beyond previous programmes aimed at increasing diversity and equality in sport provision. Here, I suggest that the long-standing approaches based around equality of access and opportunity, have – rather ambitiously – been replaced by a strategy that advocates positive action and internal structural change.

The two chapters that follow draw most extensively upon the data collected using the methods outlined in Chapter 4 to begin to assess the reception of the E&SES into local football. Chapter 6 further explores this last point by providing an empirical overview of the general reception at County FAs to the implementation of the E&SES. I use illustrative quotes and notes from participant observation to show how – particularly among the long-standing Council Member volunteers – many of the principles of the E&SES clash with the amateurist assumptions about 'fairness' of those who control the

local game. I account for this resistance by pointing to the traditional inertia of local football governance; a rejection of the modernisation and reform of local football, and a scepticism towards any real *need* for an equity strategy in the local game.

Chapter 7 takes many of the arguments laid out in the previous chapter and investigates the ways in which ideas of race are used to legitimise the authority of long-standing power holders in the local game. The process of such racialisation is complex and often contradictory and I use the term 'colour-blind racism' to account for the ways in which the denial of racism can act as a key component of contemporary discrimination and exclusion in the local game. I critique the dominant theoretical paradigm in this field of study – that of whiteness – by referring to 'race' as a propositional idea, following the critical realist argument made by Carter (1998, 2000). I argue that this approach – one that includes specific reference to the structural conditions within which ideas of race become activated – might offer a more fruitful interpretation of the continued patterns of exclusion in local football. I then end with some brief conclusions in the final section.

# Chapter 1
# 'Race', racism, anti-racism and equity in English football: an overview

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A community officer at a small Football League club told us how he had taken a letter offering support to the 'Let's Kick Racism Out of Football' campaign to the club chairman for his signature. The chairman responded by stating 'I'm not signing that, I'm a racist', to which the community officer replied 'Well, sign it anyway', which he duly did.

(Back et al. 2001: 165)

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review some of the research that has engaged with issues of 'race', racism and anti-racist interventions in English sport, particularly football. It is not meant to be an exhaustive account of what has now become a significant body of work in this particular field (Carrington 2004). Indeed, as I discuss in more detail later, much of the literature in this area has actually focused on interventions in the *professional* game, tackling, in particular, overt spectator abuse, and is therefore of little direct relevance to my study. What *is* of value in these accounts is that they help us to understand the key theoretical themes that have characterised the development of this area of study, including a slowly emerging interest in racial equality policy and activities in local, grass-roots sport. Particularly relevant here are the dominant sociological approaches to understanding racism in English football – evident from the 1970s onwards - and how such analyses have informed anti-racist and race equality sport policy interventions (Carrington 2004). I do not want to dwell too much on the specific *nature* of such policies here, as a detailed overview of the policy history of sports equity can be found later in the thesis (mainly in Chapters 2, 3 and 5). Here I

engage more rigorously with the literature on the origins and development of *sports equity* in Britain and that covering 'anti-racist' interventions in English football.

My brief overview of sociological investigations on 'race' and racism in English football is structured around four 'stages' that characterise this area of study. These 'stages' also broadly reflect the increasing theoretical sophistication in the growing body of research into racism in English football.

- Firstly, the connection (in both academia and sport policy) made between racism and *fan hooliganism*

- Second, and following the *'cultural turn'* in Sociology, the exploration of 'race', identity politics and resistance to racism, particularly in local sport

- Third, the shift in focus to the structural and institutional basis of racialised discrimination, a position that is theoretically informed by use of the concept of *'whiteness'*

- Finally, the emerging attempts to *evaluate* anti-racist policy interventions and their implementation in local sport organisations

The last two themes are particularly relevant to my study and therefore take up the bulk of this chapter. Research led by Jonathan Long and colleague from Leeds Metropolitan University (LMU) has focused on the implementation of the *Sporting Equals Racial Equality Standard* (Sporting Equals 2001; Long et al. 2003; Sporting Equals 2004; Long et al. 2005; Spracklen et al. 2006). This body of work represents one of the very few sustained attempts to describe the reception of - and indeed the resistance to – racial equality (RE) principles in local sport organisations in Britain (see also Swinney and

Horne 2005, for an analysis of the Scottish context). The LMU research is also informed theoretically by the concept of 'whiteness', as explored by the authors elsewhere (Long and Hylton 2002, Hylton 2005, Hylton 2008a). In order to make sense of the everyday racism which pervades the structures and cultures of British sports organisations, these authors call for 'an appreciation of the hegemonic position in sport being one of (male) whiteness' (Long et al. 2005: 44). They identify three underlying themes in their research, namely *priority, process* and *principles* (Long et al. 2005: 55; Spracklen et al. 2006: 37). Given the relevance of this research to my study, I spend some time outlining their key findings, broadly following the key themes identified by the researchers. I try to interpolate this overview with other relevant literature that both consolidates and also adds to some of the LMU findings. Other material I cover, at times, challenges some of the claims made here. But let me begin by briefly sketching out some of the approaches of the early research on racism in English football.

## 2. Early research on racism in English football: the 'coat-of-paint' theory and the 'racist/hooligan couplet'

> The academic analysis of racism and sport remains within a limited analytic framework and isolated from wider debates about race and racism. There is a real gap between contemporary social theory relating to questions of race … and the literature on the sociology of sport.
>
> (Back et al. 2001: 33)

The above quotation reflects the sentiment that sport and leisure Sociology has relied largely on under-theorised notions of 'race' and racism in its analysis, both in Britain (Carrington and McDonald 2001a: 6-12; see also Hylton 2005) and further afield (Birrell 1989; Kivel 2000). At times, this weakness appears to have led to the adoption

of 'common-sense' understandings of 'race' and sport, be it crude attempts to explain black athletic ability on the basis of racial 'science' (Entine 2000, St. Louis 2004; Spracklen 2008), or in focusing on the function of sport as being uniquely placed to foster 'good' race relations in an otherwise fractured society (Cashmore 1982, Jarvie & Reid 1997, Allison 2000). Birrell (1989) suggests that this might be because early interest in the problem of racism in sport historically came from academics who were predominantly sport sociologists (for example, Cashmore 1982;  Jarvie 1991; Dunning 1999) rather than those with a specific expertise in the sociology of 'race' and racism. Perhaps the most plausible reason for this lack of relative theoretical sophistication might also be explained by the early *focus* of research in this area on English football. I want to spend some time outlining this early research as it has had some significant influence on both academic debates but also particularly on the development of 'anti-racist' sport policy in Britain.

The sociological 'problem' that preoccupied much of the early research on British football from the late 1970s onwards was football hooliganism, led especially by the work of the so-called 'Leicester School' (Dunning et al. 1988; Williams et al. 1989; Murphy et al. 1990). The dominance of this research theme meant that academic work on football was heavily focused on the professional game, on football fans, and on violence. In addition, much of the explanatory purchase of this early academic scrutiny relied upon a specific interpretation and application of the concept of social class, one drawn from the Eliasian framework of the 'civilizing process' (Dunning and Elias 1986). Alan Bairner (2006) provides a very useful overview (and critique) of this approach to understanding football hooliganism, recognising also that the overwhelming

focus on this topic led to the relative neglect of other areas of potential interest in British football (see also Duke 1991).

Given this very specific early research focus it is perhaps not surprising, that early investigations on racism in English football were couched, quite narrowly, within this theoretical paradigm. I find Gilroy's (1987; 1992) notion of 'coat-of-paint theory of racism' describes well the approach adopted at this time. This type of theorisation 'sees racism on the outside of social and political life – sometimes the unwanted blemish is the neo-fascists … -  yet racism is always located on the surface of other things' (Gilroy 1992: 52). In the late 1970s the most notable overt manifestation of racism in English football was the racist chanting and abuse emanating from fans of the professional game, usually with violent overtones. This was widely understood at the time as part of a wider link between far-Right fascist political movements, such as Combat 18, and some of the core perpetrators of violent hooliganism (see, for example, CCCS 1981).  It was also connected to forms of aggressive nationalism and xenophobia of the type then encouraged through the wider context of support for the England national football team (see Merkel and Tokarski 1996). The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) research was particularly informed, theoretically, by wider debates concerning the connections then drawn between ideas of race and nation, led by the work of Paul Gilroy (1987; 1993; 2000). The research focus here, therefore, tended to be on the football hooligan as a *racist/xenophobic deviant*.

Challenging this kind of overly-simplistic fan typology was research that emphasised, instead, an emergent anti-fascist fan sub-culture, one that was explored in the increasingly influential football fanzine movement (Garland and Rowe 2001: 74-81).

This body of work was important, as it sought to locate the origins of an anti-racist political movement in football, firmly, as a grassroots, localised response. This is something I will return to later in the chapter. Either way, these early accounts tended to mirror popular interpretations of racism in both political and common sense discourse of the time; namely, that racism is largely an individual phenomenon (Bonilla-Silva 2001), a 'package of irrational beliefs: a prejudice' (Barker 1991: 1) or a relatively simple intellectual error (Bonnett 2000).

Some of the implications of this early research focus on racism in British football have been detailed extensively by Back et al (1999; 2001) who first coined the phrase the 'racist/hooligan couplet.' Their account provides a useful critique of these early studies of racism and sport and their – largely tentative - engagement with wider explanations of racism in football cultures and institutions. This interpretation of racism can be seen as a form of *individual* prejudice (perhaps informed by Eliasian interpretations of 'race' as an example of the established/outsider power binary (see Dunning 1999: 179-219)), and has been particularly influential in shaping our early understanding of racism in British football. This approach also shaped early anti-racist sports policy (Back et al. 1999: 425). I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 2, as it has important implications for the development of sports equity policy in Britain. Suffice to say here that the merit in the analysis of Back et al. is that it highlighted not only the theoretical origins of research on football and racism, but also how the forging of racism with hooliganism informed the major British Government inquiries on football in the 1980s and 1990s, led by Lord Justice Popplewell (1986) and later, Lord Justice Taylor (1990).

There are a number of important implications of this relatively narrow type of analytical focus on racism in British football. *Firstly*, such research had the effect of *externalising* the problem of racism in British football, by locating it firmly in the hands of a relatively small number of hooligan fans who were seen to be – more or less - motivated broadly by fascist political ideologies. This approach was perhaps encouraged by public bodies as it was a particularly convenient way of conceptualising sporting racism for both the British Government and the controlling football organisations for a number of reasons that I discuss at length in Chapter 2. One of these relates to the *second* point: that this narrow focus on the deviant and racist hooligan deflected attention away from investigations into the wider structures and cultures of football and their role in perpetuating complex forms of racialised discrimination inside the game.

Finally, the early research focus on the hooligan and on football fans also, arguably, left a legacy of prioritising professional, elite, football in sociological studies over local sport. Within this specific theoretical frame there appears little interest or need to investigate the local, grassroots game in England. This, despite the fact that many of these so-called hooligans were very likely to have been local footballers themselves, often representing their local communities (or pubs) in local football leagues (Williams 1994). Some of the limitations of this early work were significantly exposed by a body of work that was largely informed by critical cultural studies and identity politics. It is to these studies I now briefly turn.

## 3. Identity politics, 'race' and sport: The cultural turn

This early research focus on the combination of violence and racism in British football also reflects the theoretical dominance of figurational theory in the emerging field of the

sociology of sport in Britain in the 1970s. Not surprisingly, research informed by other theoretical perspectives - particularly the neo-Marxist traditions informed by the work of Antonio Gramsci - has since challenged the early claims of figurationalists. Jarvie and Reid (1997: 213-215), however, suggest that work of this kind on 'race' and sport was produced largely out of the broader critique of the crude determinism of Marxism that had begun to dominate British Sociology in the 1960s and 70s. The focus on 'race' and racism might also be attributed to the emerging significance of the race relations paradigm (outlined earlier) to sociological analysis, particularly in the 1970s (Miles 1982). Among other things, neo-Marxist accounts of 'race' and sport criticised previous approaches by claiming that these early accounts were essentially 'Eurocentric and failed to consider the experiences of non-Western peoples' (Jarvie and Reid 1997: 214). The implication here is that new forms of social analysis – including the centralising of the study of 'culture' - were required to explore and improve our understandings of 'race' and racism. In this respect, notions of power, resistance and representation emerged as particularly important in social analysis, including in sport (Hall 1992; Carrington 1998; Carrington and McDonald 2001b; Sugden and Tomlinson 2002).

In addition to this, and particularly relevant to the topic of 'race', research studies based around matters of social identity also became popular. As Kivel (2000: 79-80) suggests: 'researchers have examined the intersection of leisure and identity in an attempt to understand leisure's role in the process of identity formation.' Jarvie and Reid's first point is most pertinent here, in that research of the kind I discuss here gives epistemological priority to the reporting of the experiences of the 'victims' of racism in sport, rather than the (empirically, as well as theoretically) weak analyses of mainly white, male academics (MacClancy 1996; Carrington and McDonald 2001a; Hylton

2005, 2008a). These studies are largely ethnographic in design and approach and they provide a 'voice' that articulates the often complex relationship that exists between the experience of racism and the formation and negotiation of social identity. In addition, this theoretical path opened up investigations into cultural hegemony and the (often complex) forms of resistance to racism in sport, exemplified by CLR James's seminal text *Beyond a Boundary* (James 1967). This broadly neo-Marxist tradition was also informed by a form of 'standpoint' research, developed by an emerging 'Black' studies paradigm and interest in the politics of 'race', which have been extensively described elsewhere (Jarvie 1991; MacClancy 1996; Carrington and McDonald 2001b).

Some edited collections on sport such as Jarvie's *Sport, Ethnicity and Racism* (1991) emerged in the 1990s. The use of the term 'ethnicity' here emphasises the response of this field to the 'cultural turn' in Sociology in the late 1970s, led by the work of Stuart Hall and others at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Hall 1992; Rojek 2003). It also reflects the general discomfort with the use of the term 'race' in sociological analysis and its association with crude scientific racism, as I discussed earlier in this chapter. The use of the term 'ethnicity' here also reflects the emergence of cultural racism in analyses of racism and sport, shifting attention, again, away from the more crude interpretations of biological racism that characterised early studies of sporting racism, including practices such as 'stacking', particularly in the USA. It is within this new theoretical frame that investigations into the structures and cultures of British sport – and their contribution to racialised exclusion - have gone beyond its previously narrow focus on the elite, professional game. While still a widely neglected area of research, local, grassroots sport appears to be of increasing interest to sport sociologists, usually in one of two ways:

- *Firstly*, the case has been made that local sport is worthy of investigation in its own right – particularly studies of local racism (which seem somewhat over-represented in the field of local sport)

- *Secondly*, in the suggestion of an important link between the professional game and its local, grassroots level, one which is often ignored in analysis of professional sport and fan cultures such as those mentioned earlier.

In one of the very few academic studies on the social significance of local football, Williams (1994) identifies the importance of grassroots football to local communities and especially to young, working class men. This is not only a British phenomenon, of course; local football across the world is a hugely popular 'voluntary' pastime. Football's world governing body, FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) suggests that over 250 million people worldwide actively play the game (FIFA 2004), while The FA (2004c) estimates that around half the population of England are 'involved' in football at some level. Local football acts for many people – especially younger men – in local communities as pretty much the only site for active local voluntary collective participation: '[It] provides for administrative experience, especially for working class men, and for the comradely post-match social activities which occur in pubs, club houses, and at fund-raising events' (Williams 1994: 158).

Moreover, local sports fields can still provide for largely non-formal social encounters between (usually young male, but increasingly female) players and officials from different social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds who might otherwise lead very separate lives. The local game in England, therefore, provides an opportunity to routinely 'play out', in real settings, local understandings of difference, particularly those drawn from

ideas about and around 'race' (Williams 1994: 160-162; Carrington 1998; Burdsey 2007). Williams' account appears to contrast with recent concerns about local community volunteering, which is otherwise argued to be in sharp decline in Western industrial societies (see Putnam 2000). There *is* some evidence, however, to suggest that, even since the mid-1990s, this voluntary commitment has experienced a significant decline, both in football and in sport more generally (Sport England 2003; Nichols et al. 2005).

British research tends to suggest that racism in sport is often more entrenched and is more likely to occur at the local, rather than at the professional, level. Long et al. (2000), for example, found that 62% of local football club secretaries surveyed in West Yorkshire thought that racism was 'the same' or 'worse' at grass roots level compared to the professional game. Research on local sport, including football (Burdsey 2004b), rugby league (Spracklen 2001), and cricket (Carrington 1998; Carrington and McDonald 2001c) all suggests that racism is more prevalent in the local setting in England than at the professional level. But Long's (2000) investigation into racism in grass roots football is one of the few studies to discuss the role played by the local *governance* structures of sport in Britain.

Given the relatively low profile of local football in the national British media - alongside its more limited economic value - it is perhaps not surprising that the grass roots game has been widely neglected in the Academy, despite some interesting avenues of research, including those introduced above. What seems more strange is that in the now well-established research field of 'football studies', there has been very little attempt to make sense of the obvious connections between the local game and its professional

equivalent. It is regularly suggested, for example, that the connections between the grassroots game and professional football in England are increasingly tenuous, particularly between elite players and local supporters. Certainly, it is more difficult to track examples in the globalised elite game of the 'local boy done good', drinking with fans in the local pub after the match (see, for example, Imlach 2006); perhaps this alone is seen in some quarters as justification for a relative neglect of the arena of local football in favour of the more dramatic (and high profile) changes taking place at the elite level?

The relative decline in prominence of the 'local lad' playing for his local elite professional club is rooted in increasing player mobility and migration and foreign player recruitment, particularly at the elite end of British football (Lanfranchi and Taylor 2001, Magee and Sugden 2002). At the same time, the rising economic power of the elite game in England has probably further 'disconnected' top professional players, coaches and owners from the grassroots levels of the game. These trends are, in and of themselves, of course, sociologically interesting, and yet it seems to me that of at least equal academic interest is exactly how these changes are impacting upon the long-standing, influential connections that continue to exist between the various levels of the game in England. These links have been particularly usefully explored in football most recently by Daniel Burdsey (2004a; 2004b; 2006; 2007) in his work on the recruitment paths of British Asian players from the local game into professional clubs in England. Indeed, tracing the connections between the grassroots and the professional game can be particularly useful in understanding how aspects of racism operate in British football. Burdsey (2007: 51), for example, claims that 'extending analyses of 'race' and racism in football to grass roots amateur level … helps to further establish why British Asians are

failing to make it as professionals.' He points to the preponderance of all-Asian leagues at the local level in England (an issue explored more fully in Bains and Johal 1999) and the relative lack of complex connections between them and professional club recruiting networks. In England, for example, recruitment of players into the professional game has traditionally relied on the longevity of informal connections between professional club scouts and select, local amateur clubs, as Williams (1994: 160) identifies:

> Knowledge of local male networks and of the interface between local, non-league and professional football is a significant currency inside the male communities which manage, play and support the game at the local level. The 'scouts' of professional clubs have a special, near-mystical status in this culture as they trawl the top local leagues in search of young men who have the elusive and indefinable 'right stuff.

Burdsey (2004a) shows how this 'trawling' process invariably misses many of the established local British South Asian local football clubs in England, providing one reason for the continued absence of British Asian players in today's British professional game. To fully understand how racism operates and impacts across global sport, we need a much better understanding of the structures and cultures found at the local grassroots in different types of societies. For example, the apparent local ambivalences shown in Spain towards the Spanish national football coach Luis Aragones' following his racist abuse aimed at Arsenal's Thierry Henry in 2004 (Lowe 2004; Bradbury and Williams 2006), is likely to be better understood if located within the peculiarly *Spanish* interpretations and experiences of immigration and racialised difference in civil society, including in local leisure and sport.

## 4. Institutional racism and 'whiteness' in English football

The largely ethnographic and interview-based accounts mentioned above are important, because not only do they provide an insight into the strategies employed to resist forms of racialised exclusion, but they also give us something of a revised version of the history of British sport. By hearing these accounts, we begin to see how the 'other' has been both constructed within British sport and simultaneously written out of British sport history. These types of studies have, however, been criticised in that their narrow focus on identity and on the 'victims' of racism neglects the sources of such exclusion, or as Kivel puts it, how 'individual identities and experiences are produced through oppressive social structures' (2000: 81). Daniel Burdsey himself asks, pertinently, 'while we know there is racism in football, do we really know exactly where, how and by whom it is instigated?' (Burdsey 2004a: 296). Carrington and McDonald (2001c: 50) meanwhile claim that the question of 'who "owns" cricket is the subtext to understanding racism in cricket.'

The impact of the 1999 MacPherson inquiry in Britain into the murder of the black, London teenager Stephen Lawrence has been extensively discussed elsewhere (see Rattansi 2007), and its findings regarding institutionalised racism have also had a significant impact on sports policy in Britain (Carrington and McDonald 2003, Long et al. 2005, Swinney and Horne 2005). It is perhaps no coincidence that the main research focus on sport and racism at this time shifted from the 'victims' of racism to an interest in the structures and cultures of the organisations of sport themselves. Kivel (2000: 81) highlights this shift in analysis, thus:

> If we really want to understand leisure experience, identity and difference, we
> need to understand how discourses about race … operate within leisure. Perhaps

now we should shift our thinking away from the margins and look squarely at the centre to understand how certain groups, by virtue of their markers of identity, are and continue to remain at the centre while others remain at the edges of society.

Kivel's call represents an important new direction in the most recent research focus on 'race' and racism in British sport - what has been generally referred to as 'whiteness' studies (see Dyer 1997, Spracklen 2001, Long and Hylton 2002, King 2005, Hartmann 2007, Nayak 2007). The focus here has been on the exclusionary practices that derive from hegemonic British football structures and cultures informed and sustained by 'whiteness.' In short, more recent studies have tended to move *away* from a focus on the excluded and more towards those who *do* the excluding in sport. Long and Hylton's (2002: 89) introductory account of whiteness in British sport uses the concept to refer to the 'unmarked and un-named cultural practices which promote structural privilege and unchallenged norms.' They use the term to describe the normalising – and therefore invisible – dominance of whiteness in sporting cultures and structures, so that whiteness is deemed to be '"inside", "included", "powerful", the "we", the "us", the "answer"' (2002: 89). Moreover, whiteness (in the sense of 'white supremacy' at least) is seen to be institutionalised in English sports, including football. Long and Hylton call on evidence collected from a previous study of local football (Long et al 2000) to highlight the overwhelming white representation on local administrative organisations, including those tasked with disciplining its local players (Long and Hylton 2002: 99). But this approach is perhaps best illustrated empirically in King's work on racism and coaching in English football (2004a; 2004b). In his account of the experiences of black coaches on football coaching courses, King describes the pressure to adopt a 'white mask' (coining Franz Fanon's phrase) in order to be accepted into the (white) cultures of

English football. This again is evidenced in Burdsey's (2004b, 2007) work, especially in his account of semi-professional Asian players 'de-emphasising' their ethnic identities in order to assimilate into dominant cultures defined by whiteness.

While studies of whiteness remain relatively novel in English sport, wider debates in this field illustrate some of the problems with its current usage. In essence, whiteness appears to mean many things to many people (see King 2005). There appears to be some conceptual muddle as to its application which includes whiteness as: an identity (Long and Hylton 2002); a political project; a symbol of modernity (Nayak 2007); or even as an attempt to re-assert white privilege in US higher education (King 2005). When whiteness is discussed in these ways without wider reference to power relations and other social mechanisms, there is a danger of reifying 'white' so that being white can somehow, in and of itself, *explain* social privilege. As others have shown (see Goldberg 1993, Solomos and Back 1996, Carter 2000), despite claims to the contrary, the paradigm of whiteness, invariably, relies on an essentialist account of ideas of race; ones which invariably give notions of 'white' and 'black' some degree of fixed permanence and thus explanatory power. In this sense,  studies of whiteness in sport run the risk of giving race ideas an ontological certainty that we should otherwise try to avoid (I discuss this issue in more detail in Chapter 4).

## 5. Evaluating Anti-Racist & Race Equality policies in English football

One of the common criticisms of anti-racist policy development and rhetoric is that while it is generally agreed what it is 'against' and trying to challenge, there is widespread confusion over what it proposes to *replace* current circumstances with (Gilroy 1992; Bonnett 2000; Bradbury 2002). This idea that anti-racism is somehow

morally 'right', but without any detailed blueprint of what exactly 'right' looks like, mirrors wider concerns about the increasing use of sporting interventions for wider social projects, such as crime reduction, health promotion and social inclusion. There has recently been some conjecture, more broadly, about the social impact of sport policy interventions, and particularly about whether there is any academic credibility in commonly held assumptions that sport is, inherently, a positive social force for change (Spracklen, 2003, Coalter 2007). These policy impact studies have begun to critique the implicit and intrinsic moral virtue of sport in a number of ways. For example, in his overview of the role of social capital in sports policy, Long (2008: 219-225) pays attention to the highly exclusive nature of many sports clubs and voluntary associations.

There is a growing body of academic research which has the specific aim of evaluating the impact of equity policy interventions into sport (Henry 2001; Houlihan and White 2002; Blackshaw and Long 2005; Swinney and Horne 2005; Green 2006; Coalter 2007, Tacon 2007). In football research the focus has been on the effectiveness of a range of 'anti-racist' initiatives, including national campaigns such as *Kick It Out* and more localised activities, including those that have arisen out of the activities of fan groups (Garland and Rowe 2001) and those connected to the Football in the Community schemes hosted by professional football clubs (Williams & Taylor, 1994; Burdsey 2007). The first, formal national policy intervention involving race equality in local English sport was a campaign called Sporting Equals. This was set up in 1999 as a collaboration between Sport England and the Commission For Racial Equality, as a response to similar initiatives set up for women in sport (e.g. the Women Sports Foundation) and for the disabled (the English Federation for Disability Sport). It is in the nature of these rather transient policy interventions that, in 2004, Sporting Equals

was effectively superseded by The Equality Standard, an overarching framework for equality activities in sport. I discuss these policy developments in much more detail later, so I don't wish to dwell on them here.

The significance of Sporting Equals here is in the research that it commissioned on its work at the turn of the Millennium. Jonathan Long and colleagues from Leeds Metropolitan University (LMU) (Long et al. 2003; Long et al. 2005; Spracklen et al. 2006) undertook research on the impact of the Sporting Equals *Charter* and *Standard* on sporting organisations in England over a period of several years, beginning in 2002. Importantly, these authors make the point from the outset that 'the project has been concerned with the structures of sports organisations, rather than people participating in the sports themselves' (Long et al. 2003: 1), reflecting the general shift in policy emphasis from the 'victims' of racism to the organisational structures and cultures, as previously discussed. A survey of the 67 national sport organisations receiving Sport England funding was undertaken by the LMU group, with 37 National Governing Bodies (including The Football Association) and eight National sports associations (including the Football Foundation) responding. This survey was followed by case studies of the organisations representing five sports (athletics, cricket, hockey, rugby league and swimming) and one 'umbrella' organisation (responsible for disability), involving semi-structured interviews with a range of representatives from all levels of each organisation (local, national, club etc.). The findings tell us a number of important things about the reception – and limitations - of race equality initiatives in British sporting organisations. This work provides the most detailed research currently available into many of the areas discussed in this thesis. It is worth, therefore, spending some time summarising the key findings.

### (i) Sporting Equals Racial Equality Standard

> We should not exaggerate resistance to the project of the *Standard*, but there is some around principles, process and priorities. Not all subscribe to the need to combat racism and promote racial equality; some who do are not persuaded that the *Standard* is the best way to achieve this, and among those who are, many feel that other problems should be addressed first.
>
> (Long et al. 2005: 55)

The above quotation encapsulates the headline findings of the research undertaken by the LMU group. Elsewhere, they categorise their findings using three key areas, namely: *priority, process* and *principles* (Long et al. 2005: 55; Spracklen et al. 2006: 37). I extend this framework to *five*, more detailed and interrelated, themes from within which I discuss their findings. These are:

- The low priority of racial equality at sport organisations
- The differing uptake of racial equality within the different tiers of sports organisations (e.g. local and national levels)
- The effectiveness of the policy itself
- The limited resources available for racial equality activities
- The lack of expertise on racial equality within sports organisations

Starting with the first issue, the report identifies a broad sense that racial equality is relatively low on the list of priorities of sports organisations. The findings suggest that this lack of priority takes two main forms based around the failure to acknowledge the need and importance for such interventions into sport. *Firstly*, a *denial* of the problem of racism in their sport. Here, 44% of organisations surveyed reported that there was *no* significant discrimination in their sport (Long et al. 2003: 16-17). It was also suggested

that racial equality is very hard to 'sell' in areas of low ethnic diversity (2003: 24-25), something also noted elsewhere (Swinney and Horne 2005). In addition, fundamental racial stereotypes are sometimes used to explain the relative lack of ethnic minority involvement in a sport, such as 'the perpetuation of the myth regarding bone density and 'their' [ethnic minorities] (un)suitability for swimming' (Long et al. 2003: 32). This notion of 'denial' has been explored further by Long elsewhere (see Long, 2000), where he attempts to make some sense of the various *narratives* of these denials. Such claims about the 'absence' of racism tended to be rooted in the assumed meritocratic nature of sport – the 'level playing field' that offers anyone the chance to get involved, perform and become successful in sport (Long 2000). For Long, these processes of denial form an integral part of many sporting cultures, particularly in local sport.

*Secondly*, these findings suggest a broader unease with the way that sport is increasingly perceived to be being used to promote racial equality. Sixteen per-cent of respondents felt that national governing bodies for sport do not even have an obligation to promote racial equality, while 40% felt the same about national sports organisations (Long et al 2003: 47). While there was widespread agreement that racism is wrong, its roots (and responsibility to oppose it) were often externalised to the 'wider society' and certainly to those institutions which lie outside the remit of sport itself. This mirrors the interpretation of racism in football outlined earlier in terms of the racist/hooligan couplet (Back et al. 1999), and perhaps is a legacy of that deep-seated sentiment. In addition here, however, there is also the suggestion that sport may not, necessarily, be in the best position to encourage racial equality, in that 'sport will never achieve more equality than the rest of society. As general attitudes change, sport will naturally improve' (Long et al 2003: 22).

Also, some respondents voiced discomfort in the way that they saw sport being used as a form of 'social engineering', suggesting that such racial equality work can actually make the situation regarding discrimination worse: "a concentration on race would encourage segregation through making some people a 'special case'" or "I don't like separate action plans – it looks like we're giving preferential treatment" (quoted in Long et al 2003: 31). All these issues contributed to the somewhat 'cool' reception of the Sporting Equals *Standard* and even some *resistance* to its introduction and use (Long et al, 2003; Long et al. 2005; Spracklen et al, 2006). Using case studies of a small number of sporting associations, the LMU research was also able to pay attention to the workings of the different 'levels' in such organisations, including both national bodies and their local and regional branches that are specifically responsible for the grassroots of their sports. This is particularly relevant, of course, in the case of professional football and its relationship with the County Football Associations – something I explore in more detail in Chapter 3. Here, it becomes very clear that there is some disparity in opinions on racial equality from the national organisations and their local counterparts:

> While the [National] organisation is committed to action on race equality at national level and is actively disseminating policy delivery downwards through its intermediary structures, they feel it is at yet too early to assess the impact locally, even implying that they were *encountering some resistance.*
>
> (Long et al, 2003: 25) [my emphasis]

National sports bodies appear to be the driving force behind addressing racial equality issues in their sports; they provide the strategic framework from which local associations are expected to follow. This can lead to a lack of 'ownership' of such

policies at the local level, which, in turn, might mean that the SE *Standard* has relatively little impact at the local, grass roots level (Long et al 2003: 3). In addition, there was evidence of different levels of uptake across the grassroots, dependent on a range of factors that included personal commitment, local expertise, and local demography. In the latter case, areas with low levels of ethnic diversity were seen to be particularly 'lax' in both establishing a consensus behind the need for racial equality, and in the level of implementation of such plans. Although not specifically covered in the LMU research, there is also evidence to suggest that some of the resistance to racial equality policies – and indeed evidence of racial discrimination – is more entrenched at the local levels of sport (Williams 1992; Williams 1994; Carrington 1998; Long et al. 2000; Carrington and McDonald 2001b; Spracklen 2001).

The point made here about the differential between national and local levels of organisation is an important issue to consider for this study. While The Football Association at national level might be said to have a clear strategy, framework, resources and expertise in the arena of racial equality, real change in the structures and cultures of *local* football in England can only be made by those directly responsible for the local game – the County Football Associations. It is therefore important to go beyond the policy rhetoric of The Football Association and explore, in more detail, the conditions within which County Football Associations operate, and more specifically, their attitudes towards The FA's national *E&SES*, as this is very likely to differ, in important respects, from those of the national governing body. In this sense, the previous focus, on the professional and elite structures of the game that I outlined earlier, are only likely to tell us so much here.

The *third* area of concern for the LMU research was the Sporting Equals policy itself. Here, the researchers unearthed concerns within sports organisations about the nature of the particular racial equality policy that was being adopted (the SE *Standard*). Aside from wider questions about the specific *need* for a policy of this kind – and the role of sport in promoting such a policy – there was clearly some unease expressed about the actual process involved in reaching the *Standard*. Two particular concerns - the so-called 'tick-box exercise' and also a fear of 'token gestures' - mirror wider issues concerning policy implementation that have been explored elsewhere (see Shaw and Penney 2003, Coalter 2007). The 'tick-box exercise' refers here to the overly prescriptive and largely self-reporting nature of the SE *Standard*. The *Standard* requires a portfolio of evidence to be presented and evaluated by an SE panel before an organisation can be awarded the appropriate level of the *Standard* (preliminary, intermediate or advanced). Concerns were raised about the overly bureaucratic and time consuming nature of this task (Long et al, 2003: 19), but also the *inflexibility* of the processes involved in reaching the *Standard*. Moreover, there was some scepticism expressed about any long term changes that might occur as a result of obtaining the *Standard*. As one respondent put it: 'real change is going to take a long time and whilst we can provide genuine evidence of the steps being taken to achieve it, ticking boxes cannot really be proof of sustained commitment by all who are a part of our sport' (quoted in Long et al 2003: 21).

At times, working towards the *Standard* seems to have been a strongly instrumental process for those involved. Reaching its requirements and following due process (including ticking the appropriate boxes) seemed more important to many than any particular long term outcome:

> We rarely had a conversation about how to address things, it was all about a form, how to fill it in, take you through the panel process etc. It wasn't saying 'Let's forget the form and let's sit down and look at the sport, let's decide where the shortfalls are, what priorities within that should be, and look to fill them.'
>
> (reported in Long et al 2003: 24)

This emphasis on following due procedure rather than anticipating and implementing long-term, sustainable outcomes on race equality has been explored in detail elsewhere (see Horne 1995; Hylton and Totten 2001; Swinney and Horne 2005) and appears to be characteristic of the long-standing commitment to equality of opportunity and access, over and beyond any particular commitment to equality of *outcome* (Horne 1995; Houlihan and White 2002; Swinney and Horne 2005; Coalter 2007). Perhaps because of this strongly instrumental approach to the SE *Standard*, the LMU research also identified a distinct lack of local ownership of racial equality policies and plans. Some respondents felt that because of this emphasis on the *process,* rather than on the *outcome*, much of the race equality work involved was essentially 'gestural' (Spracklen et al. 2006: 301) and tokenistic (see Horne 1995, for more on this).

This sense is exacerbated by the apparently contradictory responses found in the research on SE. Despite the fact that 83% of sports organisations surveyed said they were developing equity policies, we have already seen evidence of the widespread *denial* of the existence of racial discrimination, and a denial that sports organisations should even be centrally involved in promoting racial equality. Put bluntly, the suggestion here is that without the threat of penal financial measures imposed on those without equity policies in place (in this case, through the possible withdrawal of Sport England funding), there may be little incentive and motivation to undertake such work: 'Some national sports organisations also acknowledge the need to get tough eventually

in pursuit of racial equality. It was suggested that it may be necessary to implement punitive measures such as withholding [local] grant aid' (Long et al. 2003: 26).

This also helps explain the dissonance between formal policy and actual practice identified in this research, particularly at the 'coal-face' of local sports provision. One respondent, for example, was 'quite open in reporting either a minimal, or nil, impact of racial equality policies, since no real measures have been taken by the organisation' (Long et al, 2003: 31). Another example, taken from local rugby league, illustrates the point further:

> One (ex-elite player from a minority ethnic group) describes his own recent experience of racial abuse from opponents while playing local league rugby. This occurred despite the club involved having all the desired policy statements/constitution in place. In his view, this represents … a 'stagnation' of action plans.
>
> (Long et al, 2003: 33)

Another point that comes out of the LMU SE research concerns the difficulties experienced in *monitoring* the progress made as a result of adopting racial equality plans. Again, this is a concern of wider sport policy in general, and has been discussed elsewhere (Blackshaw and Long 2005; Coalter 2007). At the national level, the increasing popularity of 'evidence-based' policy, characteristic of the broader political ideologies of New Labour (Green 2006; Coalter 2007), appears to demand the collection of quantitative and qualitative data as a means of assessing and measuring change. This includes setting and measuring targets for participation levels among diverse groups, alongside the mention of 'various forms of attitude measurement' (Long et al, 2003: 26). At the local level, however, the LMU SE research uncovered a rather different picture.

This seems to be largely the result of the inconsistent – and sometimes non-existent – collection of baseline data, such as participant demographics, which is needed to measure change over time. Results from the survey suggest that only 62% of sports organisation undertake ethnic monitoring of their staff, while 49% undertake an audit of their participants and 18% of sports organisations said they had no formal monitoring process at all (Long et al 2003: 16 & 46). Overall, the picture that emerges from this research is that, particularly at the local level, there is little robust monitoring and evaluation of the impact of adopting racial equality *Standards*. As such, evidence of change comes in the form of anecdotes, or is simply ignored.

There are a number of possible causes of this lack of robust monitoring. Two of these are directly related to the final two themes that the SE research explores: that of available resources and appropriate expertise. Again, the issue of resources is a common theme in sports policy research (Houlihan 1997; Henry 2001; Houlihan and White 2002; Coalter 2007). While sport has received unprecedented public funding since the introduction of the National Lottery and New Labour's financial commitment to Sport England (Green 2006), allocation of these funds *within* national sports organisations is an issue. Contests over funding between national and local organisations, and within local organisations impact on the availability of resources in these different settings. In the latter case, the issue of local priorities becomes especially important. Simply put, those issues that local (and national) associations deem most pressing are likely to receive the most funding. Given the relative lack of commitment to racial equality – particularly locally – it is perhaps not so surprising that racial equality work receives relatively little in the way of resource. When asked about resource allocation, only 16% of sports organisations had a specific budget for racial equality, while 20% said *no*

resources were allocated to this area at all. The majority, 60%, said that racial equality was integral to other programmes, therefore implying that such work has to compete with other activities.

This apparent relative lack of available resources is also likely to be a factor in the ability to properly monitor progress, as discussed above. The LMU research found that 'almost half the national sports organisations consider that they lack the resources (human and financial) to tackle racial equality effectively' (Long et al 2003: 39). While such support is often provided nationally and through governmental organisations, in the form of expertise and guidance, this rarely appears to be the case in the form of additional financial resources. There is also the suggestion from the LMU research that the lack of additional resources necessary to undertake racial equality initiatives can be an easy 'get-out' clause for those sports organisations which may have little other motivation to fully embrace them. At the lower levels of sport, where volunteers dominate the scene (particularly local clubs, coaches, governance Councils etc.), lack of free time becomes especially influential in the resistance to 'new' initiatives that are integral to the modernisation of local sport (Sport England 2003; Nichols et al. 2005). In this sense, additional support is not always easily available, even with the money in place to fund a designated post. The LMU research found that 73% of the people responsible for racial equality within sports organisations are members of staff, suggesting that voluntary involvement in this area is somewhat limited.

The final point discussed in the LMU research is the issue of *expertise*. By this, I mean the personnel who have the skills, knowledge and experience to be able to identify, devise and implement racial equality initiatives within their organisations. Throughout

the 2003 research, there is widespread acknowledgement from sports organisations of their concern to have more help and support in implementing racial equality. Sixty-two per-cent of survey respondents said it would be helpful to have a racial equality forum and would also welcome promotional material to use, and 58% said it would be helpful to identify examples of good practice. A further 51% would welcome advice and consultancy (Long et al 2003: 17). There was also the suggestion that - particularly at the local level - knowledge and understanding of issues of racial equality varied widely. One response notes, for example: 'a very wide range of attitudes and levels of understanding of race equality issues – from the extremely enlightened to the ignorant, verging on racist, response' (Long et al 2003: 21). The LMU research connects the *level* of local expertise with the particular demography of the local setting. In places with high ethnic diversity, knowledge and awareness of the need for racial equality is clearly more prevalent than in areas of low ethnic diversity. Overall, the findings show relatively few people from the ethnic minorities are involved in running and organising British sport: 40% of sports organisations said they had no ethnic minority staff (or did not collect figures on such issues), while 68% could not identify any ethnic minority coaches and 76% any ethnic minority officials in their sports. This lack of ethnic diversity has been identified elsewhere, within football (Welch et al. 2004). The implication of this low level of ethnic minority representation in sports organisations – for the LMU research at least – is the relative lack of expertise, knowledge and interest in racial equality issues in British sport as a whole. Establishing specific priorities link, as we have seen, with access to particular forms of knowledge and expertise. This suggests that local priorities tend to be based around immediate and pragmatic problems concerning the recruitment of players, coach education and the recruitment and retention of officials, over and above any other areas of concern, including race equality.

## 6. Summary

This chapter has provided a broad review of both the origins and the development of theoretical understandings of issues of 'race', racism and anti-racism in English football. It is interesting to see how such academic approaches broadly reflect those undertaken by sporting organisations charged with implementing anti-racism and equity in English sport. Tracing this development of our understanding of racism in football helps to identify how such a topic has become increasingly problematised in social research; from the rather crude interpretations of the racist as deviant hooliganism, right through to a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the racialised power relations that exist inside the English game, informed by notions of whiteness. In briefly discussing this latter theoretical frame, I hinted at some criticisms of the use of the concept of whiteness alone to fully explain the types of racialised exclusion that exist in the local game, particularly those that reify ideas of race in giving it causal powers. It is as if we can somehow explain racism in local football by locating it within a narrow focus on white identity and power. This is a theme I return to later in Chapter 7, where I discuss possible alternatives – or modifications – of the current usage of the concept of 'whiteness' in our understanding of the sources of racialised exclusion in English sport.

Having detailed the key theoretical approaches specifically related to racism in English football, I want now to explore the origins of ideas of 'fairness' in British sport. I argue that these have a significantly longer history than the much more recent anti-racist interventions in English football that I discuss here, but also that their impact is crucial for developing a wider understanding of the resistance expressed today towards race equity initiatives in English local football.

# Chapter 2
# Ideologies of 'fair play' in British sport and the route towards an equity policy at The Football Association

'The sand of the desert is sodden red, -
Red with the wreck of a square that broke; -
The Gatling's jammed and the colonel dead,
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.
The river of death has brimmed his banks,
And England's far, and Honour a name,
But the voice of schoolboy rallies the ranks,
"Play up! play up! and play the game!"'
**From Vitai Lampada, by Henry Newbolt**

## 1. Introduction

The language of 'equity' is still relatively fresh in sports policy circles in the UK. The term emerged in the early 1990s, and represents an important shift in debates around political intervention and social equality in sport. The sports equity approach that emerged out of early Sport England research (White 1991) came from a concerted effort to rejuvenate equality policies in an arena that had previously adopted principles of equal opportunity and access (Hylton and Totten 2001). Sports equity, crucially, placed a statutory duty on the sports organisations of Britain to begin, proactively, to encourage equality and to challenge discrimination within their sporting domains. Despite the relative infancy of this particular approach, the idea of equality in sport – particularly in its related form of 'fairness' - has a much longer history. This is one which, in many ways, has formed an integral part of the structures and cultures of modern British sport and, indeed, the cultural identity of the British.

This chapter draws upon relevant literature to explore, briefly, some of the key elements of British sports history that help account for the (late) emergence of the contemporary equity agenda in British sport and at The Football Association. I am concerned especially here with tracing the origins and development of long-standing ideas of 'fair play' in British Sport – including in football – because I think these conditions can tell us much about how equity policies have been shaped in recent years and also how they have largely been received, so far, by local sporting bodies. I identify a number of social, cultural, political and legislative '*signposts*' which allow us to analyse the significance of some of the key moments that have shaped the conditions for the emergence of the sports equity policy agenda in football, which was eventually manifested in The FA's *Ethics and Sports Equity Strategy* (The FA 2004a). My discussion of fair play in British sport is structured around two central themes of British sport history:

- *Firstly,* the significance of 'moral' concerns (particularly those connected to the notion of 'fair play') in the cultures of British sport.

- *Secondly* – and related - the changing relationship between sport, politics and social policy in Britain

The former tells us that the relationship between sport and the moral code of 'fairness' is rather complex. Here, a sometimes contradictory picture emerges of the ways in which ideas of equality and fairness have traditionally informed British sporting cultures. Throughout its history, in fact, British sport appears to have played an important symbolic role in shaping what one might describe as the 'moral compass' of the British, and this has occurred, largely, with little or no direct government intervention. Moreover, the cultures and structures of British sport seem guided and shaped by

paternalistic assumptions that sport can, and should, act as a useful moral guide for individuals and society. The longevity – and centrality - of these ideas about equality and fairness in British sport - combined with the relatively late intervention of government in this arena - appears, in turn, to have created a number of challenges and tensions for the implementation of the late-modern equality initiatives in sport that now so dominate discussions of contemporary sports policy in Britain.

On the other hand, the relationship between sport and direct political intervention in Britain is indeed a relatively new one and one only slowly increasing in its intensity. This trajectory can be traced from the firmly 'apolitical' nature of organised sport in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, up through the troubled years of the inter-connection of international sport and politics between the wars, and through to the 'welfarist' agendas in the UK that immediately followed, to the more overt British Government intervention in sport initiated by the Conservative John Major administration in the early 1990s. This 'equality agenda' in sport was much more strongly and publicly promoted by New Labour in the late 1990s. In this sense, we can see that sport in Britain has shifted, significantly, from its self-perception as a strongly defended 'private' social arena, a leisure retreat from work and politics, into a resource that potentially can be used, quite instrumentally, to deliver on a range of government policy objectives.

The two key themes discussed here are connected in a number of important respects. Indeed, one of the ways in which British sport has been identified historically as being inherently 'fair' is that it is apparently *free* from overt political interference and, by inference, from the threat of moral 'corruption' or overt social engineering. It is the

uneven development of this particularly problematic relationship that this chapter explores in some detail.

We can go right back to ancient sporting festivals such as the pre-modern Olympic Games to inform this discussion. The connections made between physical activity and social morality can be found in the writings of Plato (McIntosh 1979; Holt 1989; Birley 1993; Dunning 1999). These early ideals of sport as a vehicle for moral education resurfaced through the 'fair play' ideals of the Victorian muscular Christianity movement in Britain and the fostering of a specifically *amateurist* sporting moral code enacted through sport in the mid- nineteenth century Victorian public schools (Young 1969; Mason 1988; Holt 1989; Hall 1994, Huggins 2004, Taylor 2008). Crucially, however, at this time overt political interference in British sport was widely frowned upon. Instead, the origins of modern sport in Britain were firmly rooted in the private sphere of members clubs and voluntary governing bodies – organisations that were often guided and peopled, primarily, by products of the English public schools system and which were strongly associated with amateurist sentiments of '*sport for sports sake*'.

This deep commitment to the values of amateurism in British sport continued into the twentieth century and between the world wars, where the commitment to amateur ideals led British politicians to decide against intervening directly in sporting arenas - despite the increasing politicisation of the *international* sporting arena in Europe, especially with the rise of National Socialism in Germany and of Fascism in Italy (Beck 1999; Martin 2004; Polley 2008). The emergence of a new post-war social democratic contract in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s changed the political landscape sufficiently to provide some of the conditions required for the first major and overt intervention by government

in British sport. Here, amateurist ideals became re-worked and re-moulded through the 'Sport for All' slogan which encapsulated new plans for the use of sport and recreation to deliver on social welfarist ideals (McIntosh and Charlton 1985; Hylton and Totten 2001; Coalter 2007).

The following review expands upon this schematic summary in a little more detail, focusing, chronologically, on these six key historical periods:

- Pre-modern sport

- British Victorian sport

- Inter-war sport in Britain

- Post-war reform and sport

- Neo-liberal marketised sport

- New Labour's third way agenda and sport

Included in the last two sections above are more detailed discussions of some of the contemporary changes in British *football* and British society which have supplied some of the conditions required for the emergence of the sports equity agenda at The Football Association.

## 2. Pre-modern sport, morality *and* politics: an intrinsic link?

> All that I know most surely about morality and the obligations of man, I owe to football.
>
> (Albert Camus, cited in Allison 2001: 13)

It has long been assumed that sport has an important role to play in negotiating and reproducing ethical considerations of 'morality', although the term itself has been open to a range of interpretations. Sigmund Loland defines morality as 'a sub-class of social norms and values of a group of people … for instance … how we should act so as to do good to others' (Loland 2002: 18). In this sense, the moral code of 'fairness' relates both to the *values* we associate with the term, i.e. playing to the rules in sport, but also the *norms* of social action i.e. not simulating a foul, or diving. McFee (2004), meanwhile, connects the notion of morality with a process towards 'right-thinking or right action' (2004: 133). One final interpretation of morality comes from Goldberg (1993), who provides a more critical take on the term, viewing it in terms of power. For Goldberg, morality is inherently *social*; that is, a product of social relations which invariably 'requires subjects to give an account of their actions. These accounts … tend more imperatively to legitimate or to justify acts. Morality is the scene of this legitimation' (Goldberg 1993: 14). This latter understanding reminds us of the constructed nature of morality, despite its claims otherwise, alongside the usual critical sociological questions of *whose morality, for whom, and why*?

The genesis of the idea that sport should play a pivotal role in learning how to 'do good to others' is invariably located in Victorian Britain. But physical activity has had a much longer relationship with the ethical considerations of morality. Carr (1998), for example, finds evidence of an attempt to connect morality with physical activity in the writings of Plato in Ancient Greece. The above quotation from French philosopher Albert Camus, summarises much of the sentiment routinely espoused in sporting cultures today; chiefly, that sport has the power to foster moral considerations of social equality, perhaps like no other comparable social arena.

Actually, it seems that there is more than an element of poetic licence in the creation of this Camus quotation, which is a concoction made up from an obscure 1953 interview with the Frenchman (see Allison 2001, on this). While, no doubt, helping to increase sales of 'Philosophy Football' T-shirts, there is a broader significance in the 'doctoring' of quotations such as this one. The association of morality and the sporting contest appears, perhaps for some of its keenest proponents, as an inherent, essential bond (Huizinga 1970; Fraleigh 1984; Loland 1998; McNamee and Parry 1998; Loland 2002; McFee 2004). Despite the presentation of sport as a morally-loaded activity, the misrepresentation of Camus's words is a useful example of how the 'natural' connection between sport and morality might better be understood as one that is actually undergoing continual social construction and re-enforcement. In other words, it might be better to see sporting morals as the product and reflection of wider social forces and power relations in both sport and the wider society (Goldberg 1993).

Despite this, there is some evidence to suggest an 'intrinsic' connection between sport and morality, or what has been called the 'moral laboratory' of sport (McFee 2004: 140-148). This view comes, in the main, from the field of philosophy, and has been discussed extensively elsewhere (Fraleigh 1984; D'Agostino 1995; Loland 1998; McNamee and Parry 1998; Loland 2002; Butcher and Schneider 2003; McFee 2004). The focus here has tended to be on the moral responsibility that sporting rules place on participants. With regards to the morality of 'fairness', this has usually been highlighted in the requirement that all participants adhere to – or at the very least acknowledge the existence of - the rules of the game. In his seminal text on the social significance of *homo ludens* – human at play - Huizinga (1970), for example, suggests that one of the

inherent components of 'play' is that one must abide by both the informal, and formal, rules that govern the play experience. Loland (1998; 2002) has applied some of these ideas specifically to sport, suggesting that fairness in sporting contests can best be understood as a 'moral norm system' that makes up a fundamental component of sport itself (Loland, 2002). He makes a persuasive case that an activity becomes a sport when its participants are abiding by a number of rules that define its very existence. Sport is a 'rule-governed practice' requiring shared consent in relation to these rules in order for a sporting contest to exist. Thus, 'to play football, all players must agree upon what it means to score goals and that it is forbidden to handle the ball' (Loland 2002: 7). This 'formalist' approach to the significance of rules in sport has been criticised by McFee (2004), primarily on the basis that rules are regularly broken during sporting contests and yet this does not affect the integrity of the game itself. Secondly, McFee argues that there appears to be a hierarchy of rules, some of which it may be more acceptable to break than others. Not only do we have fixed, written down rules and regulations, we also have a 'spirit' emergent around the rules in which the game is played (McFee 2004: 129). 'Fair play' is thus one of the important moral concerns of the *spirit* of the rules of sport.

Much of the philosophical literature on sport and morality fails to address the crucial *social* context that informs decisions around rules and the ideas that emerge from them; something that Goldberg's (1993) definition of morality outlined earlier addresses. This seems, in part at least, because of the determination to identify the moral content (or 'laboratory') that sport appears to possess. Of course, this commitment to fair play has a distinctly *social* character to it, something Loland does acknowledge (2002: 7-11). While it might be argued that sport contains some morally intrinsic components, we can

also identify a number of moments when such morals are contested and negotiated. The moral norms found in sport are likely to be the product of its wider social context, including relations of power, over and above any essential, functional characteristics (see Goldberg 1993).

Alongside the common-sense view of sport as being of moral virtue, Western sports cultures have - until very recently at least – also keenly emphasised the apolitical and 'unbiased' nature of their structures and organisations. There is demonstrably less historical credibility in this assertion. While this claim may remain ideologically useful, we know that even the very early forms of sport - such as the Olympic Games in Ancient Greece - were subject to much political interference and manipulation. McIntosh (1979: 12) claims that, 'no one in classical Greece pretended that sport was free of politics.' There is evidence, for example, of early forms of 'political' intervention in the control of spectators with the Pythian Games, for example, banning the carrying of wine into the stadium (Dunning and Elias 1986). Pre-modern British festivals, based around Shrove Tuesday and Lent, became important expressions of religious observance in Medieval Britain (Holt 1989). For the aristocracy, victories at local jousting tournaments enabled the gentry to 'win local popularity [and] become part of the European elite' (Birley 1993: 22).

So, early forms of physical and sporting activity, particularly those involving competition, can be seen to have contained at least a rudimentary commitment to the morality of fair play, while also being subjected to political interference. Throughout the Middle Ages in Britain, while there is evidence of sustained political interference in sport and leisure, importantly this is largely driven by the determination to curb what

appears to have come to be seen as the *immoral* nature of sporting and physical activity, especially among the lower orders. McFee (2004) makes the point that sport might better be seen as a 'sphere of morality', so as not to reject the possibility of sport having a negative moral impact. The British elite at this time (be it the Church, the monarchy or the aristocracy) made repeated attempts to intervene politically by outlawing or inhibiting early forms of sports, for a variety of reasons including those connected to morality, but also because of concerns about personal safety and social control (Green 1953; Young 1969; Dunning and Elias 1986; Mason 1988; Holt 1989; Birley 1993). In the 14th Century, for example, a royal decree declared:

> For as much as there is great noise in the city caused by bustling over large balls … from which many evils might arise which God forbid: we command and forbid, on behalf of the King [Edward II], on pain of imprisonment, such a game to be used in the city in the future.
>
> (cited in Young 1969: 14)

Many of these pre-modern sporting activities and festivals were associated with *immorality* – how one ought *not* to act - particularly when they involved violence, heavy drinking and gambling, and they often caused riots and public disorder (Birley 1993). Alongside the determination of the authorities to curb such violence and social conflict in popular festivals and sport, other sporting activities - such as archery - were actively encouraged to aid the preparation for war (Holt 1989). Later, the Puritanical movement of the 16th and 17th centuries imparted a similar view of sports as immoral by emphasising the 'idleness, drinking and profanity generally associated with sport and the alehouse' (Holt 1989: 29), although this was perhaps more to do with sport being played

on the Sabbath than it was to any significant concerns over moral virtue (Holt 1989; Mason 1989; Houlihan 1991).

## 3. The Victorians, moral education and sport – 'Play up and play the game'

This account of ancient sport highlights the peculiarly *social* characteristic of sport: remaining firmly a product of its very specific social conditions, and thus it is open to political contestation as much as is any other social sphere. Not only does this counter the attempts by philosophers to assert the *intrinsic* morality of sport, but it also tends to run directly against the sporting ideologies that were the specific product of Victorian Britain. It was here that, through the ideals of *amateurism*, modern sport came to be seen as belonging firmly *outside* the broader processes of social, economic and political influence. At the same time as the emergence of a specifically amateurist ideology of sport, one that was apolitical and 'unbiased', it is also here where ideas of physical activity as a vehicle for moral education became firmly institutionalised and popularised in British sport (Holt 1989, Birley 1993, Allison 2001).

The influence of the Victorian period on modern sport is well documented and it forms a vital component of scholarly accounts of the history of British sport, including Association football (Green 1953; Young 1969; McIntosh 1979; Holt 1989; Mason 1989; Birley 1993; Dunning 1999, Taylor 2008). The transition from rudimentary 'mob' or 'folk' football into organised 'Association' football, for example, tells us some important things about this period and the emerging cultural and social significance of team sport. This is the period in which wider public and official perceptions of sporting activity began to shift from those which emphasised the pleasurable, sometimes immoral, socially corruptive practices of the past, to one appropriate for fostering an

approved and 'civilised' moral sensibility among its participants. McIntosh captures the moment of this change well:

> [Moral] condemnation [became] expressed in phrases taken from boxing – 'to hit a man when he is down', to 'hit below the belt' or from cricket – 'it's not cricket', denoted disapproval and 'play the straight bat', 'face the bowling', 'hit straight from the shoulder' denoted the game. 'Play the game' was a general injunction to behave morally. Sporting phrases from an earlier age, such as 'jockeying for position' or 'winning his spurs' rarely had moral overtones.
>
> (McIntosh 1979: 27)

Historically speaking, sporting practices in Britain appear, therefore, at this time to have become the 'benchmark' from which morality in other spheres of life could, and should, be judged. It was here that the ideology of amateurism – where moral ideals around 'fairness' are integral - emerged and began to shape the sporting cultures and the key institutions of British sport. We can probably trace the origins of this new 'moral' component of amateurism back to the public schools of mid-nineteenth century Victorian Britain. It is widely recognised that many of the modern team sports we know today, including association football, emerged from types of games played in the public schools of Victorian Britain (Green 1953; Young 1969; Mangan 1981; Dunning and Elias 1986; Holt 1989; Mason 1989; Hughes 1989/1857; Birley 1993; Guttmann 1994; Hall 1994; Dunning 1999; Giulianotti 1999; Allison 2001; Huggins 2004; Dunning and Sheard 2005; Watson et al. 2005; Taylor 2008). In the context of rising concerns among the British aristocracy about preparations for war and the 'moral fibre' of an increasingly unruly elite male student population, physical activity in teams came to be seen as a useful addition to the public school curriculum and an appropriate vehicle via

which one might instil qualities of discipline and leadership, as well as a 'moral' education, among aristocratic young men (Holt 1989).

There was, by no means, general agreement on the wider benefits of physical activity for the British aristocracy. Holt (1989: 75), for example, points to Samuel Butler, head of Shrewsbury School up to 1838, who claimed that football was 'more fit for farm boys and labourers than for young gentleman.' These young gentlemen, for Butler at least, were still much more suited to the more leisurely upper class pursuits of the hunting of game, hares, stags and venison (Birley 1993). Indeed, given the association of sporting activity with immorality during the Middle Ages, these new forms of Victorian sport were, perhaps, always likely to attempt to distinguish themselves by overtly emphasising the *positive* moral values, and the 'gentlemanly' nature of these newly emerging contests.

The determination of the British upper classes to maintain a distinction between themselves and those from less privileged class positions forms a central component of the figurationalist thesis of the development of British sport (Dunning and Elias 1986). Elias's notion of the 'civilizing process' pays particular attention to the ways in which the British upper classes tried to maintain and reinforce class distinctions via their public adherence to refined manners and highly regulated forms of self-control (Dunning and Elias 1986; Dunning 1999; Dunning and Sheard 2005). This stemmed largely from the early impact of the industrial revolution and the creation of a burgeoning middle class and petit-bourgeoisie, all competing for the sort of status and wealth enjoyed previously only by the aristocracy. It is these emergent class tensions that appear also to have

moulded the overtly moral-laden nature of Victorian sports, later to be exemplified in the amateurist sporting ethos in Britain (Jarvie 2006).

Alongside this emphasis on distinguishing modern forms of sport from its supposed 'immoral', working class past, Victorian sport in Britain also focused on ideas identified from 'classical' Ancient Greece; a time and place where, as we have seen, physical activity was viewed as an important pursuit for moral satisfaction and education. Indeed, the notion of 'healthy mind, healthy body' was popularised particularly through the re-working of all things *classical* during the Renaissance movement of early modern Europe. We can see how the ideals of equality and fairness were much more widely embedded within the rationale for physical exercise at the time of the Enlightenment – equality being part of the so called 'social contract' between newly emancipated individuals (Goldberg 1993).

This neo-classical revival of the moral value of physical activity became exemplified in the 'muscular Christian' movement of Victorian Britain, the significance of which has been widely noted (Mangan 1981; Holt 1989; Hughes 1989/1857; Hall 1994; Allison 2001; Dunning and Sheard 2005, MacAloon 2005). Here, the very practice of *playing* sport was to become identified as a form of religious observance, thus re-working the 'healthy mind, healthy body' ethos into a *spiritually* active mind and body (Watson et al: 2005). Connecting religious education with sport and physical activity provided a major impetus for the formation of modern sport in key Victorian public schools, such as Eton, Harrow and Rugby. Physical activity was to play major a role in developing Christian morality, which included, 'school spirit, teamwork, duty, protection of the weak, individual virtue' (MacAloon 2005: 692). These Christian ideals were informed

by broader notions of fairness and equality that underpinned both the moral composition of religion and, later, sport. Of course, this connection between Christianity and fairness also provided the rationale behind colonial exploitation and Empire building during this time, something I discuss in more detail shortly.

Thus, a commitment to Muscular Christianity helped introduce physical activity into the Victorian public school curriculum. Alongside these noble aims of increasing the 'moral worth' of their charges, physical education became a useful tool of control for school masters, helping to wrestle back some authority over their apparently unruly pupils, keen to exercise their superior social status (Dunning and Sheard, 2005; Holt 1989). Public schoolboy revolts and disturbances in late 18th Century Britain were regular occurrences, while the abuse and mocking of masters was also common, particularly among those sections of the young elite who considered themselves to be of higher social standing and thus in no way subservient to their largely middle-class masters (Holt 1989: 78-80).

Increasing numbers of public schools across the country thus began to place a growing emphasis on physical activity in their curricula. It was here that the forms of modern sport that we know today, including Association football, were created. Sporting physical activity in teams became organised, codified and regulated. Given the previously violent and often unruly nature of early forms of sport in such settings, Dunning suggests the emphasis here was on 'civilising' these sporting activities, in line with broader social shifts at the time (Dunning and Elias 1986; Dunning 1999). This gave modern sport a number of universal characteristics, including: limitation on numbers of participants; specialisations, such as kicking or throwing; centralised rule

making; written rules; in-game sanctions, such as free kicks; and the institutionalisation of roles, such as the office of referee (Dunning 1999: 61-62).

All the components of modern sport listed by Dunning are connected in one important way - one that distinguishes these sports from earlier forms of physical activity - the emergence of *rules* and *regulations*. The pre-occupation of a group of ex-public school men with producing a set of universally recognised rules or laws, laws which would allow the schools to play each other without disagreement at football, after all, prompted the establishment of The Football Association in 1863 (Young 1969). We have already discussed the centrality of rules and laws to philosophical debates around morality in sport, but it was the specific conditions of Victorian Britain that gave rise to the introduction of *codified* rules for the establishment of modern sporting contests (Dunning 1999). The importance of implementing rules and regulations remains a (perhaps the) fundamental duty of County Football Associations, as I will discuss in Chapter 3.

It is useful to return, briefly, to our philosophical analysis again in order to understand the impact of the implementation of sporting rules during this time. Loland (2002) identify two forms of rules: *constitutive* rules provide the very framework that literally defines the sport (e.g. running with the ball in hand is no longer football), while *regulative* rules refer to the social and cultural customs and norms that 'place constraints, restraints and conditions upon activities' (e.g. playing fair, conforming to the social expectations of others, etc) (Loland 2002: 3, see also D'Agostino 1995). So, while an adherence to the constitutive rules – those that are literally written down in law - are a necessary pre-requisite of any sport, it is the *regulative* rules that are of particular

interest to this thesis. These regulative rules are based on moral judgements of what is right and wrong, and therefore remain more subjective and open to cultural interpretation. In this case, the key historical figures in the formation of British sport promoted the ethos of sportsmanship and honesty; the authentic values of a 'true' sportsman were therefore directly connected, in terms of social status, to the Victorian British gentleman amateur (Holt 1989).

Thus, we can begin to trace the origins of the social and cultural connections between sport and fair play in Britain. An adherence to the rules (playing fair) is not only a pre-requisite for modern sport to take place, but the *cultural convention* of fair play has also become a structurally regulative thematic that has been institutionalised within British sport. This is not to say that this dominant fair-play ethos was always hegemonic; the rise of working class professionalism in team sports in the late 19th century, for example, was to challenge strongly the amateur sentiment of 'sport for sports sake'. But, paradoxically, it was this emergence of the professional in late nineteenth century football that arguably reinforced and consolidated ideas around fairness and amateurism as an expression of class position, as much as a moral principle. One was either a 'gentleman' or, in Dunning's words, a 'Barbarian' (Dunning and Sheard, 2005). The cultural commitment to excessive demonstrations of 'fair play' amongst amateur sporting gentlemen was strengthened, in as much as professionalism could be demonstrated to have introduced overt displays of unacceptable partisanship, cheating and other forms of dysfunction into modern sporting contests.

The arrival of professionalism in team sport also helps us make sense of Victorian attitudes towards *political* involvement in sport. Despite evidence of political

intervention in ancient, pre-modern and early modern sporting festivals, the development of modern sport in Victorian Britain was associated with maintaining the intrinsic integrity of the newly-formed modern sports by firmly eschewing any overt political intervention in their construction and performance. It is less clear why this apoliticism became so strongly connected with Victorian sport. While, as we have seen, the formation of modern sport was heavily informed by the politics of class and by the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation, overt government interest in these newly formed sports remained almost completely absent. The emerging sporting governing bodies of the Victorian period were seen as largely private member's organisations, which were broadly left to 'govern' their own games, as they saw fit. This situation was positively encouraged by those involved in the 'sportization' process (Dunning 1999; Murphy et al. 2000). As already mentioned, an integral component of the amateur movement was that sport should be located, firmly, as an activity to be undertaken purely for pleasure, enjoyment, satisfaction, and, later, as a form of moral education. These ideas are rooted in approaches to leisure practice that pre-date the British public school sportization movement. The aristocracy and landed gentry of early modern Britain held leisure pursuits such as hunting to be distinctly separate from any form of work; they were to be undertaken purely as a means of recreation and self expression.

Whatever the reasons behind the nature of sport at this time, the Victorian period clearly plays a crucial role in forming many of the attitudes that remain firmly held in contemporary sporting cultures in Britain (as later Chapters will show). Of particular importance here is the way in which sport – quite deliberately - became a site of some considerable moral significance, one in which values or 'norm systems' (Loland 2002) that include fair play and equality, became ingrained, predominantly through the

ideology of amateurism. In addition, but related to this point, is also the determination of those involved to keep sport somehow 'sacred': that is protected from external influence (particularly after the arrival of professionalism), and above all apolitical (and thus 'fair'). There is little evidence of any direct, concerted government interest or intervention in these early Victorian forms of modern sport.

## 4. Victorian sport, Empire building and the racialised 'other'

So far, I have discussed the ways in which sport came to represent an important vehicle for the development of moral virtue in Victorian Britain, while also being the subject of political intervention, despite claims to the contrary. These processes of amateurism were, of course, not confined to these shores; indeed the moral virtue of sport was also identified as having an important role to play in the British colonial 'missions' of the mid to late 19th Century. This was a time when early Western European nation states were positioning themselves as global powers, with Britain developing its own Empire through the formation of colonies across the world. There are numerous accounts of the role played by sport in this process of colonialisation and Empire building (see James 1967, Mangan 1992, Guttmann 1994, Holt 1994: 203-279). Sporting prowess was not only an important indicator of suitability for selection into high-office colonial roles but games played by those stationed overseas were also a vital source of entertainment and leisure (Holt 1994: 204-211). In addition, participation in British sports such as in football and cricket were seen as influential tools to 'socialise' and 'educate' the colonised into the ways of wider British morality including Christian values (James 1967, Mangan 1992, Guttmann 1994). This, of course, mirrored the way sport was also being used in the same light at home. There is also evidence to suggest that these early encounters with the colonial 'other' were, in many ways, seen as 'fair' interventions by

the Victorian Empire builders – the majority of whom were drawn from the same public schools and old-boy networks that played such a crucial role in the formation of modern British sport. It might appear counterintuitive to propose that this colonialism had anything to do with principles of 'fairness' – particularly given the invariably barbaric and brutal domination that characterised British rule overseas, not to mention the institutionalisation of slavery in this period (Miles 1989, Goldberg 1993, Solomos and Back 1996). A closer look at the reasoning behind the expansion of Empire, and the key interpretations of human differences at this time, however, suggests ideas of fairness *were* important here. There are three broad phases of European thought towards ideas of difference during this time, that seem interwoven between religious (Christian) interpretations and that of the emerging science of the Enlightenment.

- The early dominance of religious explanations of the world from the middle ages up to the 17th Century informed understandings of differences between humans – including physical appearance and behaviour – as reflecting God's will. These differences reflected God's selection of the 'chosen' and the 'damned' which, in a Eurocentric interpretation saw 'blackness' as heathen and savage; a symbol of God's damnation (Miles 2003: 38)

- These ideas were challenged by early scientific notions of environmentalism – that people's appearance and behaviour was better described in reference to their immediate environment hence, for example, darker skin in warmer climates

- The emergence of a racial science, or biological determinism of humans fixed the category of 'race', placing people into a scientifically credible hierarchical order

In each case, we can see how notions of 'fairness' underpinned – or legitimised - the morality of control of the colonised 'other'. Early religious interpretations compelled Christians to undertake 'missions' to save and redeem the 'savage heathens'. In other words, early missionaries were simply acting in the best interests of the colonial 'other' in helping to save their souls in the face of God. In order to do this, Christian missionaries were *required* to take control – or even exploit – the colonised, as it was in their interests for them so to do. The later ideas of the influence of the environment on appearance and behaviour changed little in this sense, in that it retained the possibility of the 'heathen other' being susceptible to change and, therefore, it was part of a Christian's duty to attempt convert and civilise the colonial 'other'. While this monogenist (Solomos and Back 1996: 35) notion – that humans were essentially all derived from one being (Adam and, ultimately, God) – remained the dominant interpretation of the human population, we can see how these civilising missions were informed by a 'paternalist fairness' to give everyone a chance to be converted. It was only in the late 19$^{th}$ Century – with the Enlightenment and modern science gaining credibility - that ideas of race as describing fixed, unchangeable and hierarchical species of humans became the common interpretation of such difference: known as polygenism (Solomos and Back 1996: 35). Given the fixed nature of these 'races', combined with rather crude interpretations of Darwin's theory of evolution - a *social* Darwinism – such colonial missions became more about 'proving' the superiority of one 'race' (white Europeans) over others (Miles 2003: 39-44). It was these specific ideas of 'racial'

superiority that also legitimised the economic exploitation of people as slaves over and above the previous 'paternalistic fair' attempt to redeem the heathen from the wrath of God (Goldberg 1993).

I have already shown how Victorian amateurism, including the rhetoric of fairness, often intertwined with an underlying exclusivity – particularly informed by class relations – in the development of modern forms of British sport. The above account also shows how racialised exclusion characterised early Victorian encounters with the colonial 'other', where sport played an important role in these civilising missions. I will discuss the legacy of this particularly in Chapter 7.

## 5. The inter-war years and the emergence of international sporting competition

If the Victorian era marked the birth of the link between modern codified sport and the ideals of amateurism informed by a commitment to fair play - an apolitical 'sport for sports sake' - the period spanning the turn of the 19th Century and the inter-war years in Britain provided a number of challenges to such ideas, issues that I can cover only very briefly here. British sport's governing bodies, such as The FA began to aggressively protect the autonomous control they enjoyed over their sports. British Government involvement in sport during this period has been characterised as being 'at arms-length' (Beck 1999), despite growing pressures to intervene in a world in which international sport was growing and was increasingly politicised. A powerful social and moral commitment to the ideals of fairness in sport – felt as much by British politicians as by the British sporting establishment (Polley 2008) – continued to defend British sport from overt political interference, showing the hegemony of amateurist ideology in sport at this time. But the tensions that emerged out of this deep-seated commitment to amateur

ideals were considerable, particularly in the context of an increasingly politicised international sporting arena from the 1920s up to the Second World War.

Peter Beck (1999) provides a richly detailed account of the agonising and 'hang-wringing' that occurred among British Foreign Office staff in weighing up whether or not politicians should attempt to exert some political 'authority' over sport in Britain in the 1930s. The iconic image of the England football team lined up in preparation for their international match against Germany in Berlin in 1938, each team member offering up the Nazi salute, is emblematic of the dilemmas facing the British Foreign Office at this time. Indeed, sport played an important symbolic role in the formation and consolidation of Fascism across Italy and Germany (Houlihan 1994; Arnauld and Riordan 1998; Mangan 1999; Martin 2004). These emerging political movements quickly identified the propaganda potential of sports such as football – sports that were becoming both popular and internationalised - as cultural sites with potentially huge ideological and political significance.

The more liberal political ideologies in play in Britain at this time made the situation regarding politics and sport rather more complex. In one sense, the British Government remained at pains to promote the public autonomy of sports governing bodies, such as The FA, in allowing them to make their own decisions on the involvement of national teams in what had now become highly politically significant sporting contests. After all, many key Foreign Office personnel shared the same public school values and backgrounds as the British social elites and the men from The FA (Polley 2008). Beck (1999) suggests that there is little or no evidence of any British Government involvement in the decision-making of British sporting governing bodies at this time; no

involvement, for example, in The FA's controversial *sporting* decision to host Germany in 1935 at White Hart Lane and to play Germany again at football in Berlin in 1938. Correspondence between Home Office and Foreign Office staff regarding the latter fixture included the comment: 'The match is a private affair arranged by private individuals and it is not clear why the Government should interfere' (cited in Polley 2006a: 457).

Rather than being seen as politically naive and incompetent, Beck (1999) prefers to view these actions as an active form of *realpolitik*, whereby the British Government attempted to make their own political capital out of sport by re-affirming their stance on keeping sport apolitical. This was led firmly, of course, by their own liberal ideologies, not to mention their commitment to public school-based amateur principles. The British Government was keen to distance itself from totalitarian ideologies - including its control all aspects of civil life (such as sport) - and thus committed itself to a more liberal approach of maintaining the autonomous status of British sporting governing bodies. So, while there were, no doubt, discussions between politicians and sports administrators during these times, they were largely kept behind the scenes and were informal. As Beck (1999) suggests, at least the *later* stages of the inter-war period should not be seen as one characterised by apolitical non-intervention in sport; rather, the decision to protect the autonomy of sport's governing bodies was itself an overt political decision, one chosen to emphasise liberalism and reject a totalitarian political philosophy. Indeed, non-intervention in sport became seen as an integral characteristic of Britishness, no less:

> In 1935, The FA was described by one British Minister as a 'quite independent body' and, during the inter-war period, the non-governmental nature of

football's governing bodies … was frequently presented as a distinctive British trait in a world characterised by ever-closer political-sporting links.

(Beck 1999: 24)

This account helps us to identify the 'hidden' political motivation behind the non-interventionist stance that might otherwise be missed by a simple reading of events at this time. It also hints at the political laissez-fairism of amateurism that I expand upon in Chapter 6. But was this stance driven purely by a commitment to liberalism? There is also evidence to suggest that the decision to respect the autonomy of sport in Britain was also heavily informed by a commitment to *cultural* ideas about amateurism that, while informed by liberal politics, were also the result of the wider social and cultural considerations discussed earlier. The determination to uphold the uniquely *amateur* traditions of sport in Britain appears to be strongly felt by British diplomats at this time. Polley (2006a) rightly emphasises the background of many of these men: they were public school-educated, many of them keen sportsmen, and they would have been firmly committed to the amateur ideals of 'sport for sports sake' and fair play instilled in them during their education. Polley goes on to suggest that the very 'art' of diplomacy at this time was itself characterised by principles of amateurism, principles that 'allowed officials to use their personal and social networks … many examples of semi-official, unofficial and private letters referred to in the Foreign Office files on sport' (2006a: 462).

Despite the remarkable restraint that successive inter-war British politicians displayed on the sensitive question on whether to intervene in sporting affairs, this period marks an important moment in British sport. It is here that the consequences of decisions *not* to intervene in an overtly political way in an international sporting arena awash with

political interference elsewhere began to be seen in a more negative light at home. Without the onset of the Second World War, we may well have seen more challenges to the principles of 'apolitical' British sport, free from external influence, challenges that might well have proved too strong to resist. Certainly, the 1950s provided a very different climate for sport and politics in Britain, one that began to embrace, much more willingly, the idea of at least 'soft' forms of political intervention in British sporting contexts.

## 6. The post-war 'golden age' of welfare

The period in Britain just after the end of the Second World War has been referred to by sports policy academics as the 'golden age of welfare' (Houlihan and White 2002). One of the outcomes of the economic depression, public sacrifice and sense of national unity produced by the war effort was a shift in political ideology towards a more welfarist brand of social policy. The establishment of the welfare state, out of the Beveridge report (Sir William Beveridge 1942), provided the basis for a number of important wider ideological shifts in public policy, and sport was no exception. The aim here was to challenge inequality by providing financial benefits to those in need, and greater equality of access to health, education and housing provision, regardless of income. This was later to be expanded into the realms of the arts and cultural activities, promoting an ideal of equality of access to all, for all. Underpinning this ideal was a post-war political ideology of State intervention; of a social and *collective* responsibility for welfare of all. It was this which was to provide the basis for the beginnings of a debate in sport regarding equity.

It is at this point that many influential accounts identify the origins of British governmental interest in sport, and thus the beginnings of sport policy development in the UK (Coughlan 1990, Houlihan 1991, Henry 2001, Houlihan and White 2002). The work of the Wolfenden Committee (1960) marks, for many, the start of the formal connection between sport, social policy and politics in Britain and, in the political climate of welfarism, the slogan 'Sport for all' was born. There is evidence to suggest the existence of a British Government agenda connecting sport and social welfare prior to the Wolfenden watershed. We have already examined Beck's arguments about the tortured relationship between government policy and sport in Britain in the 1930s. But Coghlan (1990), for example, points to the formation of the Central Council of Recreative & Physical Training (CCRPT) in 1935, a body designed to improve the health and fitness of the nation (particularly in those of soon-to-be military fighting age) that was grant-aided by the Ministry of Education. After the Second World War, this became the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR), a 'quango' concerned particularly with non-school and adult sport and recreation in a post-war climate of unemployment, poor health and difficult social conditions for many British people. Again, this new body relied largely on government grant aid. The publication of the 1944 Butler Education Act also marks a formal British Government interest in sport prior to Wolfenden; the Act made the provision for local sports facilities, a statutory requirement for all Local Authorities, thus placing sport and leisure firmly at least on the *local* government agenda.

The famous football defeat of England by Hungary at Wembley in 1953 marked the emerging significance of sport for the British in shaping both international relations and, more pertinently, British national politics. Coghlan (1990) refers to the 1950s as a

moment when the national demand for international sporting success in Britain increased sufficiently for government to begin pressurising the previously autonomous English sporting governing bodies to produce elite athletes who could be successful on the international stage, such as in the Olympic Games and football World Cups. England first competed in the World Cup finals only in 1950, some 20 years after the first tournament had been staged. This increasing British government interest in sport – albeit still informal and at 'arm's length' – is important here as it helps us to understand the wider social and political conditions that led to the commissioning of the Wolfenden Report. It also helps us begin to account for the apparent political consensus that followed, a consensus which finally began to place sport more firmly on the agenda for government policy and intervention.

So, whilst the Victorian era had nurtured the idea of sport as a (non-political) tool for social reform, the political ideology of welfare, combined with the increasing symbolic importance of international sporting success, led the way for the Wolfenden report sixty years later to officially confirm sport as a site of legitimate public and governmental interest, rather than a purely private pastime. Sport thus officially became a matter for public concern in Britain, shifting it from its previous status as a 'non-political', private, recreational activity to one appropriate and amenable to the formalised arena of state social policy. And within this so-called 'golden age' of welfare, issues of social inequality and exclusion were now routinely included in debates about the formation of early British sport policy. Initially, the policy focus was directed at:

- Funding issues and the organisation of sport, particularly for the young

- Physical Education and sport in schools

- The national youth service and its uses of sport to appease some of the difficulties stemming from an increasingly disenfranchised youth and concerns about the impact on them of rising youth unemployment.

The social-democratic post-war era also ushered in a number of important pieces of legislation aimed at extending broader rights of citizenship to the British population. This came largely in the commitment towards establishing greater equality of opportunity, initially in the workplace, then later to cover the provision of goods and services in the wider society. The Equal Pay Act in 1970 paved the way for the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and the Race Relations Act (1976), both of which made discrimination in employment on the grounds of gender or 'race' unlawful. A Disability Discrimination Act was to follow much later in 1995, thus hinting at the variation in treatment of the various strands of the socially and physically disadvantaged. The initial equal opportunities legislation at this stage was limited in its scope and power (particularly in its application to sport), and yet it provided the crucial legal grounding necessary to begin to challenge discrimination and to increase access to the workplace and access to leisure opportunities. It was within the paradigm of equality of opportunity and extending access that sport development policy was to form in Britain, first emerging in the 1970s.

## 7. Welfare reform, market-led equal opportunity and the 'target-group' approach

The early 1970s in Britain saw the birth of the Sports Council (1971), which emerged from a much smaller sport advisory group, itself established in 1965 out of a recommendation from the Wolfenden report, to advise government on all aspects of amateur sport. At this stage, professional sport in Britain still enjoyed a largely

autonomous relationship from government. The newly established Sports Council had two key priorities, both of which came, largely, from recommendations from Wolfenden:

- The first was to support the voluntary sports sector, including in its administration and the development of sport governing bodies. Local sport had, historically, relied upon volunteers and a rather ad-hoc administration.

- The second priority was to target resources towards improving sports facilities across the country.

With regard to the latter, Local Authorities were targeted, both as sources of funding and as potential delivery mechanisms for the development of such facilities. It was within this context that Regional Sports Councils were established to work more closely with local authorities in the development of sports facilities. Coghlan (1990) points to the significant gains made from this local, devolved approach to facility development. He reports that while only approximately three leisure centres were in existence in Britain in 1964, by 1980 this figure had risen to over 400 (1990: 24). Fred Coalter (2007) argues that the formation of the Sports Council and the subsequent development of local sports facilities in Britain during the early 1970s highlights the political sentiment that public provision for sport should be available for all, leading to welfare-informed recreation policies underpinned by a determination to 'democratise areas of public leisure' (2007: 9). For much of the mid-to-late 1970s and into the 1980s, however, this approach was to change significantly. In the mid-1970s the British economy suffered from the effects of a global recession and periods of sustained economic crisis. Henry (2001) outlines the steps taken by the then Labour government in an attempt to counter this decline, which included taking a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF),

devaluing the pound and, inevitably, cutting public expenditure. The resultant rise in unemployment and the decline in public spending served only to increase social unrest at this time, particularly in inner city areas.

In light of these changing economic circumstances, the wider political consensus on welfare began to crumble, with increasing calls from the political Right (and, indeed, the Left) to reform the welfare agenda (Houlihan and White 2002). The rise in popularity and political influence of neo-liberal political thought in the mid-1970s began a movement for welfare reform, distancing itself from interventionist policies and collective responsibility and looking towards an ideology of individual choice and responsibility within a meritocratic and liberalised framework. This shift reached something of an early climax in 1979, when the Conservatives returned to power under Margaret Thatcher on a profoundly neo-liberal ticket. This promised an end to the growing economic crisis that had largely been attributed to the 'affluence' of Labour's social democratic roots, and its seeming inability to manage public finances, albeit in a dramatically changing economic landscape. The Conservative Party shifted the focus of government towards greater economic competitiveness in an increasingly competitive global market, thus substantially leaving national welfare-statism behind.

These significant economic and political changes in the late 1970s played an important role in shifting the nature of British governmental interest in sport. Coalter (2007) argues that these underlying social changes prompted the British State to see sport as a possible way to alleviate the problems stemming from the current economic crisis, rather than pursuing any radical structural re-organisation of the economy. Thus, we see a policy shift to 'recreation *as* welfare' (Coalter 2007: 10), a period in which

participation in British sport became politically encouraged, in light of its supposed benefits in improving health and reducing crime and social unrest. Accordingly, the Thatcher years saw a period of 'rapid expansion in sports development, paralleling the increasing availabilities of facilities and the first signs of a nascent sport and recreation services profession' (Houlihan and White 2002: 28). In other words, a sports industry was being born in Britain, both publicly (from Local Authority schemes) and privately (through booming private sector sports provision). This rise in private sports facilities mirrored the move towards a convincing mixed economy of the kind that was being encouraged by a Conservative ideology shaped substantially around and through private enterprise. This was partly as a result of the increasing role being sculptured for the private sector in the leisure industry and in leisure provision. Thatcher's 'performance' of this ideological shift from welfare to meritocracy outlined above led to reductions in public spending, particularly in areas such as sport; areas that did not have a strong and established legacy for attracting public funding. Within this enforced 'rationalization', sports development activities and particularly interest in *sports equity* in Britain began to lose their political and funding priority.

A separate sports 'industry' seems to have developed sufficiently well to undertake some sports development activities, autonomously of government funding and policy. This was led, in the main, by Local Authority sports development units, particularly in those Labour-led authorities with a commitment to maintain public spending. These organisations were informed, largely, by 'target group' approaches to increasing participation. This new 'industry' also hints at the increasing role of new interest groups who, at this stage, had little influence on government. But, as we will later see, these were to become ever more influential in later years. Above all this, however, was the

Sports Council, which was to become the most significant body in Britain in driving sports equity during this period.

The Sports Council prioritised the initiative for more sports facilities over any other policy strand (see Sports Council 1973; 1981). Once facility development had progressed sufficiently, a debate began around the nature of under-represented groups in sport. Of particular interest to government here was the underprivileged and racialised 'inner city' youth sector, upon which fears about crime and associated social problems were already well focused. Government concern in this area became heightened by the high-profile street riots of 1981, especially in Toxteth in Liverpool and Brixton in South London, which led to a burgeoning political interest in the possible use of sport provision as a means of 'managing' and controlling urban unrest.

This new policy interest guided the Sports Council into following a 'target group' approach to sports participation; that is, to focus on 'this and that' particular under-represented group. The target group method was necessarily narrow in scope, and it was also fatally underpinned by a political philosophy of reactionary short-termism. As such, it was limited in its capacity to provide a comprehensive strategy aimed at dealing with the broader issues of sports equity. In this sense, sports equity policy of the 1970s and 80s was limited, serving only to 'manage' a specific crisis at a specific time. The encouragement of sports participation amongst disaffected youth came initially through 'Action Sport' schemes, and linked sport provision to wider issues of urban governance and policy that became a central concern of the assailed Thatcher government (Houlihan and White 2002). While the target group approach was implemented for a specific purpose, it actually became the dominant tool for promoting the involvement of other

under-represented groups in sport, particularly women and ethnic minorities. Such projects were largely initiated at the local level, with Local Authorities usually at the heart of activities to encourage traditionally excluded groups to get involved in sport. Such activities fitted neatly into wider Local Authority activities based around policies of equal opportunity and equality of access across (mainly Labour) local councils. Sporting governing bodies in the UK, at this stage, had neither the resources nor the inclination to embrace the equal opportunity agenda in any meaningful way. Their concerns lay, instead, with elite performance (including the development of sporting academies), coaching provision, and governing their sport appropriately and efficiently at the grass roots level.

## 8. Neo-liberal responses to hooliganism and the emergence of 'anti-racism' in English football

The problem of hooliganism in British football was to direct government attention firmly onto the professional game from the 1970s. Eric Dunning (1999: 132) points out that, 'from the late-1960s until around the middle of 1990 … soccer hooliganism was routinely regarded as one of England's major social problems.' It is surprising, then – especially since official reports on hooliganism had already been published in Britain the 1970s - that in our account of the role of central government concerning sports provision and equity issues in the UK, it was not until the period covering the late-1970s to the mid-1980s that misbehaviour among football fans in Britain really comes strongly into the mainstream agenda of national politicians. Of particular interest here is the overt racism that accompanied much of the most serious hooliganism at this time. With the rise in prominence of black (mainly African-Caribbean) players in English professional

football from the late 1970s, came routinised racist chanting from the terraces (Williams, 1992).

In Chapter 1, I discussed the impact of the early focus on hooliganism for studies of 'race' and racism in British football. Back et al's (2001) notion of the 'racism/hooligan couplet' summarises this well, suggesting that early analysis of racism in football tended to point the finger towards the 'deviant' hooligan as the key source of such racism. Interestingly, these authors go on to suggest that the location of the racism problem firmly and solely in the lap of the hooligan fan (allied with racist political activism) was particularly convenient for the football authorities at the time. This 'explanation' of racism deflected any possible concern from government or any other external regulatory bodies that racism might actually be endemic in the coaching, playing and administrative structures of the sport. Indeed, there is little firm evidence of any direct attempt by government to tackle concerns about racism in football head-on at this time.

It was only the sequence of tragic events in the English professional game in the 1980s that eventually prompted substantial British Government intervention in football in England beyond extending prison sentences and producing legislation for dealing with hooligans (Taylor, 1991). A sequence of tragedies – including fatalities – at Bradford, Heysel and Hillsborough in that 1980s produced a raft of legislation and new procedures on stadium safety and fan control. Prime Minister Thatcher even suggested that the English professional game, itself, might not be worth saving (Giulianotti 1994).

Hooliganism was initially blamed for the disaster at Hillsborough Stadium in 1989, in which 96 Liverpool fans died, actually as a result of police mismanagement and severe

overcrowding on dangerously penned terracing (Taylor 1991). This tragedy, ironically, was premised on police expectations about likely fan (mis)behaviour and also on new developments such as perimeter fencing that had been put in place by governments and the football authorities designed to *control* hooligans in England. The condition of football stadia was now of prime public concern in Britain. Hillsborough, after all, had occurred only four years after a fire in the dilapidated stadium in Bradford. The events of 1989 prompted the British Government to commission the Taylor report (Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Taylor 1990), a surprisingly liberal intervention by a high court judge which heralded a new relationship between government and the football industry in England. While the British Government and the English game were taxed with formulating new ways to make the professional football environment safer for all in the new era of the game, a wider under-swell of anti-hooligan and anti-racist grassroots activity was beginning to gain a stronger hold in the professional game. Back et al (2001) suggest that this new opposition to hooliganism and racism originated, importantly, among fans, for example through organised fan groups and the club 'fanzine' movement, rather than from any concerted efforts by government or the established football bodies.

This new direction in what might be called 'the cultural politics of fandom' was motivated by a concern among those describing themselves as 'real' (authentic) fans to challenge what was argued to be the hegemonic representation of the young English male football fan as a violent, probably racist, hooligan – an image, arguably, perpetuated as much by government and the football industry as by hooligan fans or the British tabloid mass media. This new approach to articulating more 'acceptable' forms of English male fandom also borrowed from a small, but increasing popular, cultural

discourse of anti-racism. Indeed, these oppositional fan movements in English football 'often mirrored the anti-racist campaigns around music in the late 1970s' (Williams 1992: 24). Clearly these cultural developments – for example, *Rock Against Racism* - echoed wider debates around the world regarding matters of social equality. The mid-to-late-1960s, for example, was a particularly iconic time for the civil rights movement in the USA which was based largely around the campaign for equal rights for blacks and Hispanics. In Europe, the general strike of 1968 in France, led by students and trade unions led calls for improvements in worker's rights and conditions and, briefly, threatened a raft of radical changes in the connected spheres or politics, economics and culture that seemed (at least initially) to have issues of equity at their very core. First wave feminism in the early 1970s espoused similar concerns, but this time around the politics of gender. The world seemed to be changing – and even English football was changing too.

## 9. John Major, the National Lottery & the FA Premier League

Back inside the arenas of sport, the early 1990s marked a key moment in the transformation of elite professional football in England. Following the recommendations from the Taylor report, and the political and social fall-out from the English football tragedies of the 1980s, elite club football in England began an ambitious (and now unavoidable) process of modernisation and one of aggressive commodification. In 1992, The FA Premier League was born – a breakaway league of the leading clubs which consolidated its autonomy and financial power through exclusive television rights' deals. The satellite television industry was in its early days in Europe and still struggling for subscribers. The merged BSkyB company founded a convenient (and later highly profitable) relationship between itself and the elite English clubs, with exclusive

coverage of the new FA Premier League fixtures granted to the Sky Sports channels in return for unprecedented funding (Williams 1994). Both aspects of this relationship were crucial: BSkyB needed exclusive rights to a cultural form that was guaranteed to secure new subscribing audiences across national boundaries, while the FA Premier League clubs were also in urgent need of additional funding to undertake new marketing initiatives, stadium improvements and other safety requirements that had been laid down by the Taylor report.

Meanwhile, at grassroots level, John Major's Conservative government of 1990 was widely argued to have providing a renewed impetus for British government interest in sport at a time of apparently increasing political apathy about it. Unlike Thatcher, Major had a keen personal interest in sport, one which initiated the re-surfacing of a political belief and commitment that issues of sports provision should come more strongly under the aegis of central government. This renewed political interest under Major helped provide much of the political context for the production of, arguably, one of the most influential post-war documents in British sports equity policy. The *New Horizons* report (Sports Council 1991), came out of an investigation into developing sports performance. It envisioned a sporting culture in which 'individuals had the opportunity to choose, as of right, the level, frequency and variety of activity to suit their individual aptitudes and desires' (Sports Council 1991: 8). While, to many, this sounded like a simple re-working of the idealised 'level playing field' amateurist rhetoric of the past, the report introduced the novel concept of *equity*. Indeed, it was the Sports Council (later re-named Sport England), through the *New Horizons* report, that formally initiated the sports equity agenda as we know it in Britain today.

The first considered institutional response to the persistent co-problem of racist chanting among football fans did not arrive until 1993. Importantly, this came initially not from government or The FA, but from the player's union, the Professional Footballers Association (PFA), responding to calls that its members be protected from racial abuse and harassment. The PFA joined forces with the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) to form football's first national anti-racist campaign 'Let's Kick Racism Out of Football' (LKROOF). LKROOF offered a 10-point action plan and invited clubs and the football authorities to 'sign up' to it. With the support of high-profile football celebrities, the campaign soon became both national and popular and it encapsulated a growing trend for football to be utilised for 'positive' ends; to be 'seen as a medium for changing attitudes in the wider society rather than particularly a problem in itself' (Back et al. 2001: 192).

It is important to emphasise here that a collective anti-racist movement among English football fans had actually been in place for quite some time before the football authorities launched their own campaign. It is probable too that, rather than any particular ethical commitment to anti-racism or to the notion of equality in the game, the pressure for elite football clubs to provide safer and more profitable football environments prompted the English football authorities to support - or at least to tolerate - the emerging national anti-racist campaign (Garland and Rowe 2001). The FA, initially, offered a somewhat sceptical and conditional welcome to the new campaign, but gradually it also became more involved in it and became more supportive of it financially. Huge media interest in several high-profile racist incidents in English football in the early 1990s helped: they included the brilliant Frenchman Eric Cantona's televised kick at a fan who was allegedly making xenophobic comments to him after the

Manchester United player had been sent off at Crystal Palace in 1995. It also included anti-Irish chanting, fascist salutes and serious violence at an Ireland v England international match in Dublin shortly after. The role of LKROOF in placing such issues higher on the media and political agenda should not be underestimated. Indeed, by 1997 LKROOF had been successfully re-launched as *'Kick It Out'*, increasing its profile and cementing its place as a prominent 'cultural' player in the 'new' football industry (Garland and Rowe 2001: 54-59).

While what was described as a new 'anti-racist' agenda was in its genesis in English professional football, around this time (the early 1990s) there were also serious - but seemingly separate - discussions taking place around broader equality issues in grassroots UK sport. The term 'sports equity' emerged in Sports Council circles in 1991, following research undertaken on equality policy interventions overseas, particularly in Australia and Canada. Anita White, then Head of Development at the Sports Council had a keen interest in the concept, one that had arisen out of her work undertaken on gender equality, and which had originated from a relatively sophisticated feminist critique of sport, developed from the 1970s. White had the foresight to see that an integrated approach to tackling the predominant forms of inequality (sexism, racism, poverty, disability discrimination) in sport would give such a movement more impetus and power. The Sports Council adopted the new concept of 'equity' to symbolise a new approach to sports policy, with regard to inclusion. This involved two key directives.

- *Firstly*, that equity was to take on the themes introduced in early sports development policy that concentrated on equality of access and opportunity to participate in sport. The new equity approach was to identify and challenge the

dominant cultural structures and practices in sport that were, perhaps less overtly, discriminating against certain sections of society.

- *Secondly*, this suggested a move away from the target-based approach that had become the dominant model for increasing participation among under-represented groups.

White identified, in turn, *three* key weaknesses in the target group approach that needed re-dressing:

- *Firstly*, such groups were rarely as homogenous as they were being treated; the needs of people with disabilities, for example, were extremely wide ranging and yet these people were often seen as one group.

- *Secondly*, such target groups 'resented the stigma of being "targeted" and labelled as disadvantaged or deprived' (White 1993: 4).

- *Thirdly*, and related to the first two, the omission of the need to address the structures and cultures within organisations involved in sports provision had to be rectified. This suggested that rather than focusing on the needs and interests of the target groups themselves (bluntly, 'blaming the victim'), those in positions of power had to consider their own procedures and practices in relation to equity, and particularly in relation to issues of accessibility.

The Sports Council's sports equity strategy was to mark an historic shift in the direction of equity work in sport. It was adopted by the Council as early as 1990 and yet, as we know, it took another 12 years for its bases to be finally considered by The FA. We know that it wasn't until the mid-1990s that The FA began even to acknowledge publicly the issue of racism in football, let alone offer its support to any serious anti-

racist movement in the sport. Houlihan and White offer another possible explanation for this near glacial pace of change in the wider world of sport:

> The equity policies had little impact on the sports development community, partly because of the weak influence of the Council at the time, and partly because the ideas they contained did not fit with the immediate priorities and concerns of governing bodies or Conservative-controlled Local Authorities.
>
> (Houlihan and White 2002: 64)

In other words, those who were not particularly interested in equity had little obligation to consider it. It looked as though The FA simply did not feel that equality was an area of central concern to the organisation, or to the sport. Why this might be the case is explored elsewhere in the thesis in much more detail. Even the British Government appeared suspicious of a possible equity development in sport; in 1994 Ian Sproat, then Minister for Sport, called the Brighton Declaration[2] 'political correctness in excelsis' (quoted in Houlihan and White 2002: 65).

The new *Kick It Out* campaign in football eventually gained additional financial support from the FA, and from the new Premier League in the mid-1990s. The PFA maintains its leading funding role today, while the (now disbanded) CRE withdrew its financial backing to concentrate on other ventures in the sport policy arena, as we shall see. The FA's financial support for *Kick It Out* was often mentioned in its defence when the governing body came under fire from football supporters, politicians and activists who claimed that the governing body was not taking racism in the game seriously. While The FA now were prepared to accept and condemn the existence of spectator racism in an

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[2] The Brighton Declaration emerged from the International Sport Conference in Brighton in 1994, of which delegates from 82 countries signed up to a statement to develop a sporting culture that respects and values the involvement of women in all forms of sport (see Sports Council 1994).

'external' context (i.e. on the terraces and in the stands), there was still little acknowledgement of the possibility of racism existing internally - *within* the elite football organisations - and even less any recognition of exclusionary practices that might have been occurring in grass roots, local football (see Bradbury and Williams, 2006).

Locating racism as an external issue (i.e. racism as a concomitant of hooliganism) masked the extent to which racist practice continued to occur within the game itself (Back et al. 1999). As such, much of the remedial work on racism in football was focused on the areas dominated by hooligans; i.e. among the spectators of the professional game. The drive to address spectator racism was also a result of government focus on this area, while the limited resources and minimal media interest in non-professional local football meant that little attention was paid to the amateur game in this respect. In addition, the lack of an obvious 'external' source of racism in local football made this fledgling policy approach much less suited – and less necessary – in the local setting. Interest in 'equality' activities or campaigns at the more local, amateur level of football development was largely led by Local Authority sport development units, as early as the 1980s in some areas (Houlihan and White 2002) and later by the Football in the Community (FITC) schemes run out of the professional League clubs. Both these local institutions tended to be constrained by limited funding and more localised policy issues. They also tended to focus, more broadly, on increasing participation, rather than on actively tackling discrimination (Williams and Taylor 1994). This fact, combined with the lack of interest and understanding of anti-discrimination among the FA's local representatives, the County Football Associations,

meant that their impact on local football at this stage remained somewhat limited. I will return, of course, to this local setting in much more detail later.

In mapping the recent origins of interest in broadly anti-discrimination activity in football, it becomes clear that racism and the drive for *race* equality very soon dominated proceedings. Indeed, it is much harder to trace a groundswell of activity around issues of gender equality, disability provision and anti-discrimination, or any wider social inclusion agenda – from the football authorities, player's union or the fans themselves. Clearly, the early prominence and contingent acceptance of 'anti-racism' in this setting is the result of the connections drawn between hooliganism - which was the government's main concern at this time - and *fan* racism. Later, *Kick It Out* - not surprisingly, given its own agendas - seems to have encouraged the momentum of the 'anti-racism' trajectory in football, thus largely ignoring the other forms of exclusion that are explicit within the game. It is also important to note here that virtually all such anti-racist activity was aimed at the *professional* game; little if any attention or national resource was allocated to the amateur, grass roots game, beyond token involvement, be it by government, the FA, LKROOF, the CRE, or any other parties.

**10. New Labour, social inclusion and evidence-based sport policy**

The final period to be considered here comes in the form of that dominated by the centre-left liberal political ideology of 'New Labour'. Under Tony Blair, New Labour entered government in Britain in 1997, inheriting the effects of 18 years of neo-liberal Conservative social policy. John Major's interest in sport as a potential tool of government for dealing with crime and youth alienation was taken on significantly by Blair. Sport came to be seen by his administration as a possible vehicle for social change

and a potential deliverer of wider policy objectives, including in the fields of health, crime and social inclusion. New Labour consolidated sport funding following its introduction of the National Lottery Act 1998, widening the activities that such funding could support and giving sport approximately £200 million per year (Houlihan and White 2002: 95-100). As a result of this extra funding, Sport England gained unprecedented power in the arena of sports governance in England in the late 1990s. One of its key roles remains the allocation of government funding to sports governing bodies. Most sports governing bodies still rely on this grant aid as their main source of income. Sport England took the initiative in 2001 to attach the allocation of its funding to certain criteria that sporting organisations were required to adhere to, including the principles of sports equity. While The FA has relied rather less in recent years on Sport England funding, due to the large commercial income that now resulted from merchandising and the sale of satellite TV rights to England matches, Sport England funding for The FA still remained considerable. In this new context, The FA clearly felt compelled to follow Sport England's funding guidelines and now began to consider its core requirements. Additionally, pressure continued to be put on football to use its lead position in sport as the 'national game' with the largest, mixed-class crowds in England to be the key figure in many policy initiatives and to set the lead example to other sports (Mellor 2008).

Crucially, as we shall see, the concept of equity goes much further than the 'market-led' approach to addressing inequality that involves equal opportunity and equality of access to services. More fundamentally, it requires sports organisations and the sporting industries to identify and challenge the discriminatory practices that go on *inside* their sports, and, more radically, within the structures and cultures of their own organisations.

As already mentioned, up until this point the main focus of The FA's 'anti-discrimination' activity was to encourage the demise of the 'racist' football hooligan as the obvious external source of such exclusionary practices, rather than to look at The FA's - and football's - own internal processes. These appeared to be central to reproducing patterns of exclusion, inequality and under-representation of ethnic minorities.

In 1999, The Sports Council was restructured into four bodies to cover England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland – mirroring plans for political devolution at this time. The Sports Council thus became, in effect, Sport England, a new body which was to be given significant powers and influence as a result of Blair's political commitment to sport, alongside the huge rise in funding given to it through the now burgeoning National Lottery funds. Sport England, under the aegis of New Labour's social inclusion agenda, was to drive the equity project up the priority scale of sports policy in England. Prior to this development, The FA seemed less inclined to tackle racism directly, as its rather tenuous relationship with *Kick It Out* shows. As we have also seen, other equity issues, such as gender equality and provision for disabled football, seem even less of an FA concern at this time.

Driven outside of sport by the widespread criticism of the police investigation into the death of the black teenager, Steven Lawrence, in 1993, Blair's government finally agreed to a public inquiry into the routine practices regarding issues of 'race' of the Metropolitan Police Force in 1999. The subsequent MacPherson report (MacPherson 1999) concluded that the police had been institutionally racist in its handling of the case. The impact of this finding on other organisations – including sports bodies – was

obvious and immediate. Following the CRE's withdrawal of funding to *Kick It Out* in 1997, a year later Sport England combined with the CRE to launch 'Sporting Equals', an initiative designed to address institutional racism and to promote race equality in all sports (as discussed in Chapter 1). It was set up to provide necessary guidance to the governing bodies for work in this area. The issue of racism in *organisational* practice had finally become a concern for sports organisations. It was clear, too, that the increasing popular opposition to overt racism in English football meant that anti-racist activity could be predicted to be well received by the sporting community as a whole, over and above other, supposedly less pernicious and less socially damaging, equity agendas, such as those around gender or disability equality. Sport England clearly sought to capitalise on this good will established in football to address similar issues for sport as a whole. Sporting Equals first produced a charter, which constituted: 'a public pledge, signed by the leaders of sport, committing them to use their influence to create a world of sport in which all people can take part in watching, playing and managing sport without facing racial discrimination of any kind' (Sporting Equals 2004: 28).

In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the LMU evaluation of the Sporting Equals interventions in local sport, so I will not dwell here on the impact of such initiatives. Briefly, the Sporting Equals charter soon came to be seen as something of a 'paper tiger' as it enabled governing bodies and other sports organisations to identify themselves with race equality causes, without actually compelling them to do any real practical work or commit to structural or cultural change. Soon after, Sporting Equals produced a Race Equality *Standard*, which encouraged organisations to work towards gaining the preliminary, intermediate and advanced level awards of the *Standard*. This preliminary level then took on a more practical significance for sports organisations as it was to

provide one of the funding conditions for Sport England grants, a marker that would enable Sport England to ensure that the 'governing bodies of sport and sporting organisations it funds demonstrate acceptable equity standards' (Sport England 2002: 4). The Sporting Equals *Standard* remains influential in sports equity policies today, particularly in The FA's own *Ethics and Sports Equity Strategy* (*E&SES).* Indeed, many of the requirements, suggestions and principles of the Sporting Equals *Standard* went on to provide the underlying pillars of The FA's own equity policy.

I want to go on now to discuss in more detail The FA's *E&SES*; it will be shown here how the previous approaches of Sporting Equals and Sport England's Sports Equity policy fed directly into the new FA strategy.

## 11. Sports Equity and The Football Association

As the public prominence of both *Kick It Out* and Sporting Equals in the 1990s and early 2000s showed, tackling racism and promoting race equality became the unchallenged equity 'lead' for English football. As we have already seen, this early dominance for the project of opposing racism in football, in part originates from the determination of legislative organisations to connect the problem of racism *directly* to that of football hooliganism. There was relatively little concerted, overt pressure at this time to tackle, seriously, other forms of discrimination in British sport, such as those linked to class disadvantage, sexism or disability discrimination. The change in direction at The FA from a mainly publicity campaign opposing racism towards a more complex and overarching policy of equity can be traced to three key developments, which I discuss in some detail below. These are:

- Government plans for an integrated equalities commission;

- The transposing of this new direction on Sport England policy

- A number of internal policy developments within the FA itself.

The proposal by the Blair administration to bring the disparate strands of the British equity agenda together under one single government-sponsored organisation was a subject for protracted discussion and it was not a universally popular move. But the 2004 government White Paper 'Fairness For All: A New Commission for Equality and Human Rights' (Department of Trade and Industry 2004) began to formalise plans to fuse the existing equality commissions that focused on 'race', disability and human rights, respectively, into one 'mega-body' dealing with all questions of equality. Following the passing of the Equality Act in 2006, the *Equality and Human Rights Commission* was formed in October 2007, essentially 'merging' the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality, and the Disability Rights Commission. As well as highlighting the government's concern for a more holistic approach to tackling social exclusion, this approach also fitted well with the rhetoric of New Labour's promise for 'joined-up' government, one which claimed to offer greater efficiency, collaboration and better value for money from public services (Giddens 2000; Mellor 2008).

From this political development around equity, Sport England followed, by promoting its own, more holistic, approach to sport development planning. This manifested itself in the 'whole sport plans' that Sport England requires governing bodies to create and work towards, prompting increased collaboration and integration within specific sports whose federated organisations may have operated relatively autonomously in the past. This is

certainly the case for local football, whose complex relationships with the professional game bodies and the national governing body is clearly evident. This greater integration, plus the adoption of other Sport England directives required for future funding - such as for equity - forced governing bodies for sport to work much more collaboratively and more holistically in policy development. The FA was thus compelled to adopt this approach with regard to equity. Being the lead organisation in football, The FA also used this approach to try to maintain some form of 'control' over the numerous and disparate activities of the various bodies operating in and around the professional game (such as the FA Premier League, the Football League, the Professional Footballer's Associations and Football In The Community schemes) on their work in race equality, the promotion of women and girls' football, disability football, and in the arenas of social deprivation.

In 2000, the FA launched a new football development strategy that was to transform many of the local activities and responsibilities of the governing body. Largely instigated by the then Chief Executive Adam Crozier, The FA tasked itself with reforming the grassroots game (FA 2004). Within this strategy, emphasis was particularly placed on increasing lower-level participation, which included targeting those groups that were traditionally less involved in the game. Clearly, principles of equity - or at least those of equal opportunities – would now have a much more prominent place in FA activity and direction than had hitherto been the case. Partly in light of these developments, key personnel at The FA who were tasked with dealing with equity issues – people who were installed in their posts mainly to meet the demands on equity placed by Sport England funding - chose this as the opportune moment to move forward in creating an overarching equity policy, one that would cover

existing activity in race equality, gender equality, disability football and also work in areas of economic deprivation.

The decision to tackle equity and to devise a comprehensive sports equity strategy for The FA can thus be traced to three developments:

- The proposed changes to the Government's equality commissions

- Sport England's own more strategic approach to equity and funding

- The FA's own ambitions for football development at the local level.

Significantly, perhaps, many of those involved in this new equity initiative inside The FA came from backgrounds in child protection; an important, but limited, policy area that seems to have been taken up rather earlier than that of equity per se, and one with more concerted interest and backing within The FA. The FA's child protection programme, called 'Goal', also plays a major role in informing the institution's activities in terms of broader social inclusion activities (Brackenridge 1994; 2004). The Football Association had now publicly committed itself to making the issue of equity a key component of all its future activities. In November 2002, the FA board approved an *Ethics and Sports Equity Strategy* (2004a) in a report designed to co-ordinate all equity based activity into one, holistic approach that would cover all areas of the football industry.

## 12. Summary

While this chapter should not be read as an exhaustive overview of British sports history, I have nonetheless tried to identify, in a broad way, the origins and development of ideas of fairness in sport and the historic relationship between sport and politics. Later, I concentrated specifically on the political interventions into British sport that are guided by principles of fairness and equality. There is evidence to suggest that some moral attachment to fairness in sport underpins the very definition of sporting activity, and yet history shows that sport was just as often seen as an immoral pursuit as one inherently morally virtuous. In addition, it was the Victorians who both re-asserted the fair-play ideals with sport while also firmly locating sports governance and control firmly out of the reach of politicians. As the latter section of the chapter suggests, English football from the 1970s went through turbulent times. This was a period when government was prompted to intervene in the sport, especially given the increasing concerns around fan hooliganism and social unrest at English professional matches in the 1970s. A number of high-profile 'disasters' blighted the English game in the 1980s – connected, sometimes wrongly, to fan misbehaviour – and these only served to increase the intensity of this intervention, culminating in the production of the Taylor report in 1990. During this period, and as I intonated in Chapter 1, the earliest institutional anti-racist interventions in football were largely couched within these attempts to quell hooliganism, and, as such, they focused on the fascist, deviant fan as the main source of racism in the game.

The 1990s began to see the fruits of some of the reforms proposed by the Taylor report. This, combined with the injection of much needed finance from exclusive TV deals with the FA Premier League created the conditions for the emergence of a dedicated anti-

racist campaign – Let's Kick Racism out of Football. While this covered the professional game, local sport also benefitted from increased revenue and early discussions within Sport England around equity gradually gained momentum. Sport England gained greater prominence in British sports policy with the rise to power of New Labour's centre-left, social market ideologies of the 1990s, and its increasingly serious interest in a managed form of State intervention in British sports policy. With the additional funding power gained from the National Lottery, Sport England was to link an agenda for change (primarily based on equity and social inclusion principles) with funding to its sports governing bodies. This produced pressure on many sporting organisations in Britain to take equity seriously, perhaps for the first time. Eventually, this included the most powerful and the most discussed sports governing body of all, The Football Association. The FA's *E&SES* thus provides an important framework for continuing equity principles to be followed both by The FA internally, and by football as a whole.

I now turn attention more specifically to the location of interest for the E&SES and this thesis; that of local football. Drawing upon a combination of documentary evidence and primary empirical data, the next chapter offers an overview of the historic and contemporary structures of the local game, particularly its governing bodies, County Football Associations.

# Chapter 3:
# The organisation and control of local football in England

**1. Introduction**

As the previous chapter may have implied, there is relatively little academic work on the historic and contemporary organisation of *local* football in England. More especially, very little has been published on how local football here is governed and controlled. While we have some material on the nature of sport organisations, particularly in the USA, Canada and Australia (Slack 1997; Wolfe et al. 2005; Gomez et al. 2008) none of these studies are concerned directly with the structures and cultures of English County Football Associations, the dominant organisations of domestic local football. Intriguingly, County FAs have been referred to, mainly in passing, in studies of racism in local sport and in a study of child protection in local sport (Brackenridge 1994, 2004), which at least suggests their centrality to some of the issues covered by the sports equity agenda. I want to address this relative absence here by providing a very broad overview of these organisations, including saying something about their origins, their traditional composition and their reproduction over time. I draw here on historical evidence and also call upon data collected during my time at the case study County FAs, including discussions I had with local stakeholders, to inform my account of the structures and cultures of these local associations. Details of the specific methods of data collection deployed can be found in Chapter 4. This overview is, necessarily, generalised in order to give the reader just a 'flavour' of the types of organisations that control the local English game today. It might also be read as an overview of the particular 'field' under investigation, defined by Bourdieu (1991: 358) as 'the system of the institutions and agents whose interests are bound up with sport'; in this case local English football.

How, then, has this 'field' emerged, changed and developed since its origins in Victorian Britain? The structures of all levels of English football have undergone significant change since the late 1980s, and the implications of this for the *professional* game in England continue to be extensively examined elsewhere (see Williams and Wagg 1991; Hamil et al. 2000; Williams 2006). The publication of the Taylor Report in 1990, and the subsequent formation of the FA Premier League in 1992, clearly mark significant moments in the recent development of professional football in England. The aggressive marketing, branding and global commodification of the elite levels of the English game over the last two decades has seen unprecedented economic growth in professional English football, with Premier League clubs generating a reported 2.3 billion Euro in 2006/7 (Deloitte & Touche 2008). At the grass roots level, however, recent transformations have received much less academic (and public) attention but they have been no less dramatic. While The FA has, arguably, had a declining influence inside the professional game in England in recent years, at the local grass-roots level it has probably strengthened its influence, in part as a response to recent fears about the possible decline of the local game. Thanks largely to the rise in income generated by the professional game, but also increased government funding through the National Lottery, local football in England has enjoyed unprecedented economic investment since the late 1990s. The Football Foundation, a trust set up out of recommendations by New Labour's Football Task Force (1999), distributes funds from government, the Premier League, and The FA. It claims to have invested £100m in the local game since its inception in 2000, including £40m in 2007 (The Football Foundation 2007).

Largely because of this extra resourcing – combined with the political impetus provided by New Labour - The FA has initiated a series of recent reforms in local English football. These reforms have been channelled through County FAs, thus changing the traditional role, purpose and structural organisation of County FAs across England. I engage more fully with the impact of these initiatives aimed at modernising and professionalising the grassroots – which includes the implementation of the *E&SES* – in Chapter 6. Here, I suggest, simply, that this modernisation agenda itself has contributed to *some* of the resistance at County FA level aimed towards the *E&SES* and local race equality initiatives.

What I plan to do in this chapter, therefore, is provide a broad introduction to the historical and contemporary organisation of local football in England, paying particular attention to its main local governing structures, the County Football Associations, and its key power holders, voluntary local Council Members. This introduction includes an overview of:

- The emergence of County Football Associations in Victorian Britain
- The traditional structures and cultures of County FAs and their reproduction
- The new conditions of existence for County FAs since the 1990s
- The increasing interest and investment in local football in England

This review of the structures and the cultural conditions of local football in England is particularly important because, as I argue in Chapter 6, much of the local reception of The FA's *E&SES* can be traced back to some of these historical features. I begin, then, with a brief account of the origins and early development of local football in England.

## 2. The emergence of County Football Associations in Victorian Britain

I spent some time in Chapter 2 outlining the social and cultural conditions within which codified British sport, including English football, emerged. I suggested that as modern sport evolved in Britain it was freighted with dominant ideals of moral virtue (articulated most notably here through the peculiarly English amateur ideal of 'fair play'). These sensibilities about the role of sport were also informed by the principles and beliefs of the muscular Christian movement, which equated physical activity with servitude to God and religious duty (Holt 1989; Hall 1994; MacAloon 2005). These developments occurred during the maturation of capitalism and industrialism in Victorian Britain, and were informed by rising class tensions between an increasingly mobile and ambitious urban middle class, an uncertain aristocracy whose 'natural' authority was being challenged by such traumatic economic and social change, and a working class struggling to benefit from these shifting relations of production (Huggins 2004: 20-49). Modern sport played an important role in articulating some of these emerging class tensions. Not least, because of the transformation of the role of sport in Victorian public schools in the mid-nineteenth century key features of the ethos of amateurism became much more widespread and influential. As I tried to suggest in Chapter 2, 'amateurism' in this context stood not only for moral virtue but also for its delineation of existing class distinctions, most notably those expressed via the notion of the amateur 'gentleman' and the eponymous professional sporting 'barbarian' (Dunning and Sheard 2005).

Key aspects of the amateur ethos - especially those relating to English ideals about 'fairness' – effectively underpinned the formation and development of early County FAs - as well as many of their routine practices. In addition, the origins and dynamics of

local football in England tell us much about relations between County FAs and the national FA in London. This relationship seems always to have been a fractious and difficult one, with local organisations effectively competing with the national body for meaningful control of the game in the early days. This, combined with a strong, enduring sense of local autonomy among County FAs, has implications for the situation today in which the national FA has become much more directly involved in the day-to-day activities of governing local football than it has been in the past.

There are a number of authoritative accounts of the history of British football which cover the emergence of the game from its relatively unorganised, violent 'mob' origins in the Middle Ages to the codified, modern form we know today (Green 1953; Young 1969; Wagg 1984; Walvin 1994; Russell 1997; Taylor 2008). Many of these accounts suggest that modern, codified football originated from the public schools of Victorian Britain around the mid-1800s. There is, however, evidence to suggest that some sports clubs were formed as early as 1830 around the public house, workplace and local Church districts, and thus developed relatively independently of public school influence (Harvey 2001; Taylor 2008: 24-29). This highlights the often overlooked early involvement of working people in the development, especially of northern local football clubs. Harvey's account is particularly useful here in that he problematises the role played by the public school old-boy clubs in the origins of modern Association football.

Matches between these early old-boy football clubs were actually relatively small in number due to wide range of rules the game was being played under due to its public school roots. Eton, for example, favoured the 'wall game', which included a rudimentary offside law, known as 'sneaking'. Rugby school had a handling game

similar to today's rugby union, crucially with no 'hacking' involved. Winchester developed positional awareness, with 'ups' (attackers) and 'behinds' (defenders), thus establishing defined roles within the game. Harrow perhaps provided the strongest link to the laws of modern Association football, with its rules prescribing the 'free kick', handball, and even the conditions for player dismissal (Dunning 1999; Harvey 2001; Dunning and Sheard 2005). Serious competition between early clubs that were using opposing codes was nigh on impossible. In an attempt to resolve this conflict, The Football Association was formed at the Freemason's Tavern in October 1863 following a series of meetings in London. Representatives from 11 clubs were present at the first FA meeting. These included a handful of influential figures predominantly from the southern, London based 'old-boys' clubs including from the Kensington School, while Charterhouse also sent a representative to observe the meeting (Taylor 2008: 28)

These early meetings of The FA were devoted to formulating an agreed set of rules (laws) which could unite warring clubs under a common banner. Harvey (2001) shows how these early FA meetings were highly fractious, with numerous disagreements, rather than the general consensus that has been suggested elsewhere (for example in Walvin 1994). Indeed, it appears that it was only the native cunning of the first FA secretary, E. Morley and his chairman J. Pember that successfully pushed through the adoption of the non-hacking, mainly non-handling, Cambridge Rules (derived from Cambridge University) over an earlier consensus which had favoured keeping both handling and hacking. As Harvey remarks:

> It is curious that historians have never drawn attention to the reality of the events that occurred during the FA meeting of 1 December 1863. Pember and Morley staged what was effectively a coup against the existing consensus regarding the

rules by taking advantage of the non-appearance of a number of delegates who were sympathetic to the football played at Rugby.

(Harvey 2001: 68)

With the non-hacking, more 'civilised', kicking game thus forced through as the preferred code for the new FA, the conditions were effectively set for the later split between the rugby and football codes in 1871. But what does this account of the origins of English football tell us about the organisation of the game today? Of particular interest here is the challenged early position of The Football Association as the embryonic national governing body for Association football in England. The FA began life with relatively little centralised authority and control over its local members and rivals. Harvey's account confirms the early *contested* authority of The FA, claiming that an identifiable football culture existed in Sheffield and its surrounding areas in the 1850s, significantly prior to the formation of The FA. Without the support of the by now well established and well organised Sheffield local association – who by 1867 had more clubs and players than The FA in London (Taylor 2008: 31) - The FA might well have been sidelined due to its lack of national support and poor lines of communication. As Harvey (Harvey 2001: 70-71) summarises: 'essentially, the FA exerted very little influence on clubs in the London area and the body would have withered to irrelevance had it not been for the activities of sympathizers in the provinces.'

Interestingly, in 1870, the much larger Sheffield Football Association (established in 1867) finally agreed to become a member of The FA from London and, following further tinkering with the laws, the game began to rapidly expand northwards and eventually throughout the country. Following the introduction of the FA Cup in 1871, the first international fixture took place between England and Scotland in 1872. Shortly

after this, the Scottish Football Association was formed in 1873, while the Welsh FA was formed in 1876. Between 1875 and 1880, seven more regional FA bodies were established, including in Birmingham (est. 1875), Lancashire (1878) and Northumberland and Durham (1879) (Fabian and Green 1960: 57-58). The geographical location of these regional bases is telling; their distance from London perhaps reflected early feelings of alienation and a relative lack of representation within a new 'national' FA that was firmly rooted in the South of England and in the capital city.

This geographical dispersal of control of early football also had further long term significance for the emerging North/South split of the professional and amateur forms of the game (Tomlinson 1991). The London-based FA was made up, predominantly, of old-boy networks of public school graduates; these players had fiercely amateur ideals developed from their class and schooling experiences. For them, football was a site – like other sports - for the generation of moral virtue and expressions of 'fair play' aimed at promoting the ethos and values of 'sport for sports sake', rather than the 'win at all costs ideologies' allegedly favoured by sports professionals, the lower classes, and partisan members of northern sports crowds (Tomlinson 1991, Huggins 2004; Taylor 2008). In the North, for example, early football clubs - such as Darwen F.C. in East Lancashire - had been established in working class industrial districts as intensive sites for sporting competition, providing local workers with a sense of collective local identity outside of their normative working lives (Baker 1979).

These crucial early differences to the 'meaning' of the Association game across regional and social class divisions provided the basis of a much more fundamental split as football clubs began to formalise their activities - including their revenue raising - as

thousands of spectators now flocked to the crude new football stadia that were being constructed, especially in the North and Midlands in the late nineteenth century. The struggle between the values of amateurism and the emerging professionalism in football has been extensively documented, of course (Green 1953; Mason 1988; Holt 1989; Allison 2001; Huggins 2004; Taylor 2008) and I do not wish to dwell on it here. What is more relevant for our purposes is that those ex-public schoolboys who were involved in the formation of the southern-based Amateur Football Association in 1909 (Porter 2006) – become even more fervent in their commitment to 'amateur' values in the face of the expansion of sporting professionalism and its presumed evils. In the northern football associations, however, there appears to have been a much more pragmatic response to football professionals (Green 1953; Harvey 2001), although the governance and control of the *local* game remained unpaid and strongly amateur. As the elite levels of the English football became almost exclusively professional by the early part of the twentieth century, this encouraged the amateur game to become increasingly recreational and  - more importantly - very strongly *locally* organised, both in terms of its administration and its control (Taylor 2008: 76-79).

This very brief account of early football history in England shows that, regardless of the attitude of local County Associations to The FA in London in these formative years, regional County FAs effectively shared the same basic values and sense of duty, which was essentially that of governing the local game for no financial recompense. This work included: administering the registration of clubs; the organisation of local and regional cup competitions; providing referees for matches; and controlling on-field discipline by the application of fines and bans for infractions and holding 'court' disciplinary hearings for disputed cases. It is these administrative and punitive functions that have largely

remained – until very recently - the main focus of the operation of County FAs in England for some 150 years. Throughout this period, the County FAs have been strongly voluntary organisations, mirroring the organisation of leisure more broadly in Victorian Britain and later periods (Mason 1988; Huggins 2004). This heavy reliance on volunteers mirrored, in its principles and actions, some of the values and cultural nuances of the Victorian 'gentleman amateur' (Holt 1989: 98-117). Indeed, many County FAs in England were, themselves, set up by ex-public school graduates: Nicholas Lane Jackson, old-Etonian, founded Middlesex FA and the bastion of amateur football clubs, Corinthians for example (Cox et al. 2002: 244; Taylor 2008: 83). A small group of old-Etonians also had important early roles at The FA, including Charles Alcock (FA Secretary 1870-1895). Major Marindin (FA President 1874-1890), Lord Kinnaird (FA President 1890-1923) and Jackson himself (mentioned in FA committees, dates unknown) . These founding fathers of the 'field' of local football - there are no women of note mentioned in any of this early history - embodied some of the peculiarly Victorian sporting ideals regarding amateurism, 'fair play' and meritocracy in sport, and they tell us much about the 'habitus' of local sports governance in England today.

**3. The traditional structures and cultures of County FAs and their reproduction**

Notwithstanding the general picture sketched above, it is difficult to generalise too much about English County FAs because of their locally distinctive characteristics. County FAs vary significantly in terms of size, geographic coverage and playing statistics. One of the largest, Birmingham FA claims to register around 2,500 clubs and 75 leagues (Birmingham County Football Association 2008), with Huntingdon FA, perhaps the smallest, having just 116 member clubs and only two leagues (Huntingdon Football Association 2007). These wide variations in size and scope inevitably have an

impact on the structural organisation of local Associations. While County FAs share the remit of administering the local game and enforcing the rules of the parent body (The FA), the process by which they select personnel to perform this task also varies. In addition, the specifics of the localities of these County FAs - including local demography - and the key individuals who have dominated their local associations, all play a part in making each Association different in a number of ways. That said there is a remarkable similarity, broadly speaking, across the County associations of England that means some cautious generalisations can be made here.

County FAs are comprised of a Council of representatives from their local game – known as Council Members. This Council is the historic 'hub' of the association and is the place where key decisions are made and priorities set for the local game. Like most sports organisations, these positions 'represent and defend the interests of the practitioners of a given sport and draw up and impose the standards governing the activity' (Bourdieu 1991: 258). Council Members have traditionally been the life-blood of local County FAs. Our survey of County FAs reports that 1442 local FA Council Members are in place at the 38 County FAs who responded, an average of 38 Members per County FA. This compares to a total number of *paid* staff of just 379 across these Associations.[3] These local FA councillors are all voluntary (notwithstanding expenses claims and other 'perks', such as free match tickets) and are in elected positions. Each of the local County FA Councils in England and Wales select one of their members to represent them on the national FA Council in London – perhaps the most prestigious honour available in local football. These local representatives make up approximately half the national FA Council membership. Despite (or perhaps because of) this national

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[3] It should be noted that the survey made no distinction between Development and Governance staff in collecting this data. It is possible that Development staff were not counted in some of the responses, so the figure for staff is likely to be higher in actuality

representation, and because of The FA's wider responsibilities in the professional game – e. g. in running the FA Cup competition and the England national team - the local associations have been largely left by The FA to govern their own local football matters, but within a national framework. As I showed earlier, aspects of this local autonomy can be traced back to the origins of the formation of The FA as a national body. Given the highly localised origins of football clubs in England and the 'disputed' roots of local football governance, County FAs have, perhaps, always seen themselves as being relatively autonomous from central FA control. This autonomy has been aided by the financial independence enjoyed by most County FAs, which – until recently – were largely able to generate much of their own income from local membership fees and disciplinary fines. It is only relatively recently that County FAs have become more dependent on central grants from The FA to balance their books, following a general decline in club affiliations.

County FA Council Members sit on a number of committees at the local association that make day-to-day decisions on a variety of football matters, including discipline, cup competitions, grounds and facilities, affiliation, referees, and so on. Local FA Councils are dominated by older volunteers, (almost always) men who have the necessary spare time to commit to such duties (they are required to attend meetings anything from monthly to daily). Longevity of service is encouraged within the structures and rules and regulations of each Association. After a number of years of consecutive service on the Council (varying from 10-20 years) life vice-presidencies are awarded. The benefit of life vice-presidency – aside from the status and prestige of such an honorary position, often rewarded symbolically with a gift such as an FA tie – is the reward of a permanent post on Council, with full voting rights. Vice presidents are therefore protected from any

future election and can serve indefinitely. Given the longevity of service needed to gain a vice-presidency, these positions tend to be filled by older Council Members, who have become very well known locally and amongst their Council peers.

Figure 6.1 shows a typical, traditional organisational structure of County FAs. The Councils of these associations have the local offices of president, a chairman and a secretary (now mostly replaced by a paid Chief Executive), who historically have held the power in the organisation in the sense that they have casting votes and can, almost literally, set the agenda for the various committees. In most cases, these positions of power are dominated by vice-presidents – in fact at some of the County FAs I visited vice-presidency was a *requirement* to be considered for president or chairman. As a result of these structural arrangements, decision making is invariably controlled by a small number of County FA personnel who know each other well and have (until recently at least, as the next section suggests) held exclusive control and influence over almost all County FA activities.

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                 ┌─────────────────────────┐
                 │   FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION  │
                 └─────────────────────────┘
                            ↕
                 ┌─────────────────────────┐
                 │   COUNTY FA COUNCIL     │
                 └─────────────────────────┘
                            ↕
  ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
  │               COUNTY FA COMMITTEES                            │
  │ Incl. DISCIPLINE, REFEREES, REP. TEAMS, COMPETITIONS, RULES,  │
  │                    YOUTH, COACHING                           │
  └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            ↓
                 ┌─────────────────────────┐
                 │    COUNTY SECRETARY     │
                 └─────────────────────────┘
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        ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
        │     GOVERNANCE ADMINISTRATION        │
        │   Incl. AFFILIATIONS, FINES, CUPS    │
        └──────────────────────────────────────┘
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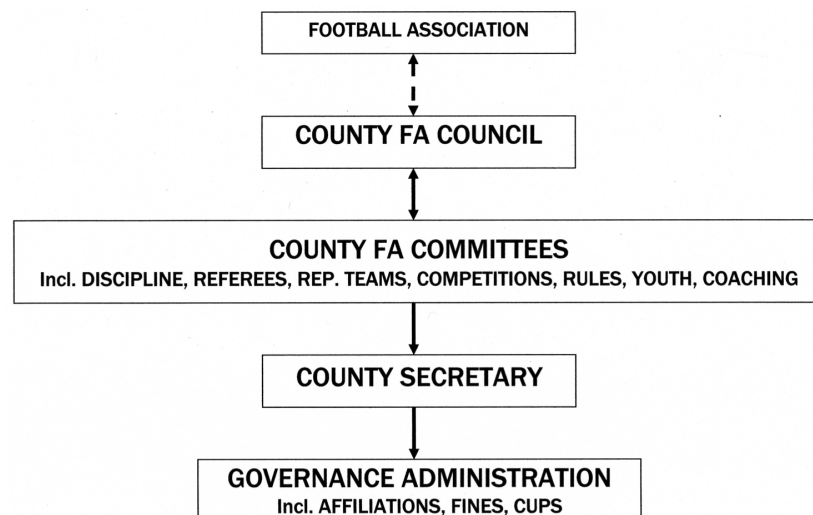
**Fig 3.1: A Traditional County FA Structure**

To become a Council Member, one must be nominated, and then elected, by a recognised local body. These bodies represent various components of the local game (such as local leagues) and they vary between associations. Figure 6.2 outlines the route one would take to become a local County FA Council Member, and possibly right up to the national FA Council itself. At each level of representation, one must be firstly nominated and then duly elected to take up the position.

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┌──────────────────────────────┐
│   REPRESENT COUNTY FA ON     │
│     NATIONAL FA COUNCIL      │
└──────────────────────────────┘
      ┆ NOMINATION ↑ ELECTION ┆
┌──────────────────────────────┐
│    REPRESENT LOCAL BODY      │
│    ON COUNTY FA COUNCIL      │
└──────────────────────────────┘
      ┆ NOMINATION ↑ ELECTION ┆
┌──────────────────────────────┐
│   REPRESENT CLUB/ORG ON      │
│   LOCAL BODY (e.g. LEAGUE,   │
│          DISTRICT)           │
└──────────────────────────────┘
      ┆ NOMINATION ↑ ELECTION ┆
┌──────────────────────────────┐
│      CLUB/LOCAL BODY         │
│      REPRESENTATIVE          │
└──────────────────────────────┘
      ┆ NOMINATION ↑ ELECTION ┆
┌──────────────────────────────┐
│      LOCAL FOOTBALL          │
│        VOLUNTEER             │
└──────────────────────────────┘
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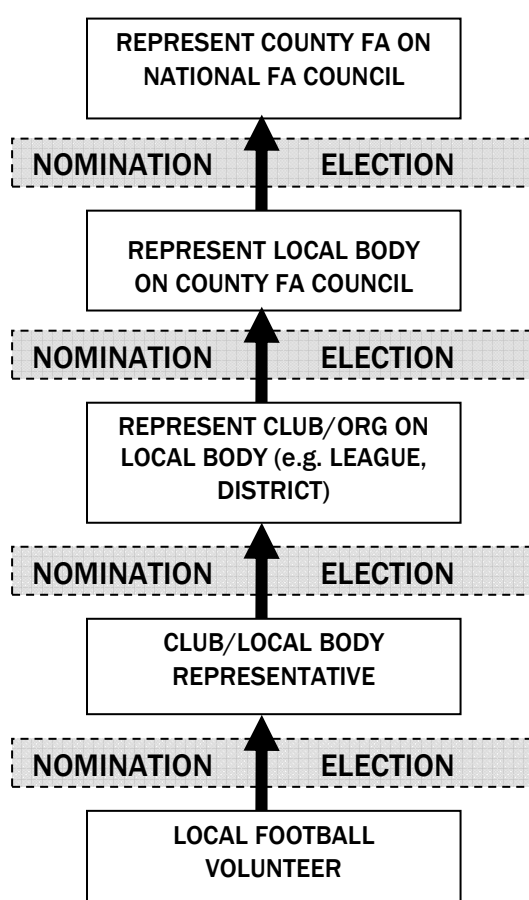
**Figure 3.2: Representative arrangements in local football**

These bodies that make up County FA Councils have remained remarkably stable over the history of local associations. At one County FA I visited, the local Boy's Brigade and Independent School had a permanent position on Council, reflecting more the

historic origins of the local game than its contemporary make up. There is some variation across the County FAs on how such representation is organised. At the five case study County FAs I investigated, there were significant differences in both local structures and procedures for representation on Council. For example, at one County FA representation was divided into 'divisions' of clubs, whereby one person is elected to represent clubs in a mini-region of the area covered by the association. Representation onto the County FA can therefore be divided geographically to ensure that all geographic areas of the County have a spokesperson on Council. At another, a similar divisional representation was in place, although in this case the divisions appeared to be based around the historic standards at which clubs played, so that every *level* of the game was represented. Perhaps the most common structure of representation at County FAs is through the local league structure, in which each league provides one elected spokesperson from their own club membership to sit on the County FA Council.

Whichever local route one takes to get voted onto Council, there is another 'tier' of election prior to this, which is onto the league or divisional committee as a club representative. Even below this, one must firstly be elected as the club representative. In other words, and as Fig 6.2 illustrates, it can take a number of years, several election successes and no little commitment before someone can apply to become a Council Member at the County FA. And once in this position, crucially, existing County FA Councils have the final power of 'veto' for newly elected members. Their constitutions allow for members elected by their local representatives to be refused entry to full Council upon a vote of existing members.

To reiterate: County FA Council Members have always been voluntary, unpaid positions. Like the majority of sporting and leisure pursuits that emerged in Victorian Britain, local football has historically relied heavily on voluntary commitment and a sense of local public duty. Aside from the County FA, those who play, coach and referee the game reflect the large numbers of committed, dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers that populate local football. Quite often, such Council Member and club administrative roles in local football are a way of staying involved in the game once active playing days have come to an end. As one County FA Council Member put it in an interview with the author in 2005: 'I wanted to get involved in football somehow, so I thought it would be an opportunity … I could get involved in football somehow, on the administration side'

The central motivation behind these administrators – and a key component of the habitus of the local game - is to '*give something back*' to the game, a view implicitly informed by the values of amateurism. This is more than simply finding something to occupy one's time 'once the knees have gone'; local Council Members I spoke to talked about their determination to help their local footballing communities for, seemingly, very little in return. These positions involve plenty of hard work, long hours and extraordinary commitment – the type of voluntary duty which is seen to be in sharp decline today (Putnam 2000). The following quotations represent sentiments found at all the County FAs I visited:

> It takes me over an hour to get in [to County FA Headquarters], 'cos I live … 40 miles away … But no I do it because I like doing it, I'm very involved in doing it, I'm proud to be on the County … I'm absolutely delighted with the honour.
>
> President, County FA 3, 2006

> [My wife] sees very little of me … even when we came [to the County FA] today she said 'You should have left your bed there from yesterday', and 'I'll see you when I see you', that sort of business.

<div align="right">President, County FA 1, 2005</div>

The voluntary sentiment of 'giving something back' is very powerful here, but the mention of 'honour' in the quotation above is, perhaps, also telling. Arguably, there is a sort of 'double bind' in these forms of local commitment, in that they combine genuine altruism among proselytisers, with the pursuit of rather more subtle and nuanced expressions of local power and status that are sourced in its exclusivity. In addition to this, many of the local FA Council members interviewed had common professional backgrounds in the police force, teaching and similar public-service positions of authority and paternalistic control. While some local FA Councils contain over 50 representatives, they are often effectively led and directed by a much smaller number of people who - usually through their long service and continued and intense commitment and local knowledge – have gained permanent vice-presidency positions and dominate the higher positions of authority on Council, such as those of president and chairman of Council and chairs of key committees. Given the length of time needed to become ex-officio members, strong friendships and close personal networks often form amongst and between these key Council Members, giving local associations a pronounced habitus of familiarity and informality and a feeling that football meetings double up as 'social' gatherings for County FA people.

These relationships between unpaid volunteers resemble bonds of common interest friendships, rather than those as work colleagues, as noted elsewhere (Sport England 2003). In their broadest sense, County FAs operate as members clubs; organisations that contain mostly like-minded, similar people and they act as a place to reinforce shared

values and, very often, to sustain the personal and social identities of those involved. Charles Handy (1988: 86-88) uses the notion of 'club cultures' to refer to a type of voluntary organisational culture that resonates here. He uses the analogy of the organisation as a spider's web, with power and influence rising as one gets closer to the web's centre. This type of club culture also emphasises the centralisation of power among very few individuals in the organisation. As Handy suggests (1988: 86-87):

> [Club culture] can sound like a dictatorship, and some club cultures are dictatorships of the owner or founder, but at their best they are based on trust and communicate by a sort of telepathy, with everyone knowing each other's mind.

These club organisations have been noted as places that encourage the development of social capital – at least the types of 'bonding' capital mentioned by Putnam as being an important component to the development and sustenance of communities (Portes 1998; Putnam 2000; Nicholson and Hoye 2008). These 'clubs' are, however, also avowedly exclusive group formations. While Putnam points to other forms of social capital that are more inclusive, in the sense that communities become increasingly diverse – 'bridging', in his terms – there is little evidence to suggest this type of club *inclusivity* at English County FAs. Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital might be more pertinent here, describing as it does 'the degree to which individuals have absorbed the dominant culture' (Burdsey 2007: 69) of, in this case, the County FA 'club'. My observations during meetings and interactions with County FA personnel, suggest strongly the atmosphere and common relationships characteristic of exclusive member 'clubs'; whose commonality derives from a very narrow interpretation of amateurism, and, as I explore more fully in Chapters 6 and 7, access to such cultural capital is effectively

excluded from large sections of their local football membership. This kind of exclusivity is also noted by Handy (1988: 89) in his overview of club cultures:

> [A] lot of time is spent selecting the right people and assessing whether they will fit or not. It is no accident that some of the most successful (sic) club cultures have a nepotistic feel to them; they deliberately recruit people like themselves, even from the same family, so that the club remains the same.

I found examples of this selective recruitment from both my interviews and in the survey data. New applicants for Council membership were often seen to lack the required cultural background, motivation, skills or knowledge to be suitable candidates. Discussion of this 'politics' of volunteering – including the election and selection of local representatives – has been remarkably absent in the literature on sports volunteering in the UK (Arai 1999; LIRC 2003; Nichols et al. 2003; Sport England 2003; Nichols et al. 2004; Nichols et al. 2005). In defence of this body of work, the *type* of sports volunteer who tends to receive academic and policy research attention seems to be the short-term, casual volunteer, rather than the long-standing sports volunteers who have significant power and responsibility for the running of their local sport - men such as local FA Council Members. In short, these potential new volunteers are often accused of lacking the necessary cultural and social capital to be eligible to enter the County FA 'club':  As one County FA chief executive put it in 2007: 'The problem is to recruit the right people who can contribute to the work of the CFA. We can get plenty of volunteers to join, but not the right people'

Meanwhile, on the other side of the fence, there is a feeling from potential or ex-Council Members – notably those from of a different demography to the majority in terms of age and ethnicity - that their voices will not, or are not, taken seriously:

> When I was on Council it felt like you were beating your head against a brick wall. Your ideas, as a youngster coming through, were always swept… not swept aside, but pushed aside. Almost like a petulant child: 'He doesn't know what he's doing'.
>
> Disciplinary Manager, County FA 1, 2005

> There's only a point of going on these [County FA] committees if they're going to take on board what you say. At the moment the way its set up, with the old school, they would never accommodate the views of a young Asian.
>
> Local club secretary, County FA 2, 2006

In the latter case, ideas of race take on added significance in appropriate cultural capital for the local football habitus. For the latter respondent at least, the requirements for entry into the local County FA 'club' appear to be heavily racialised. I return to this issue in Chapter 7. In both of these cases, one of the key indicators of this sense of entitlement and 'authenticity' is long-term involvement, and therefore age. One respondent reports feeling that he was being treated as a *child*; the other refers to the '*old* school'. There are, of course, strong connections here with the forms of paternalism closely linked to aspects of Victorian amateurism (Roberts 2002). Fig. 6.3 highlights the dominance of *older* Council Members on County FAs. Only around 3% of them might be considered to still be of an active playing age. Given the bureaucratic and multi-levelled admission procedure to County FA Councils discussed earlier, alongside the reward of vice presidencies for long-term involvement, this type of age profile is probably to be expected.
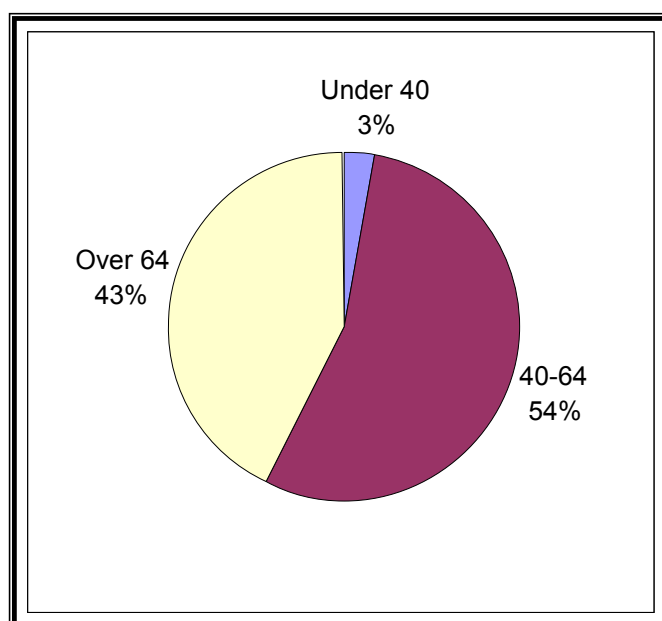
**Fig. 3.3: Approximate age of Council members at County FAs**

**Source: Survey of County FAs, 2007**

Younger Council members, people who may come into local football administration today with rather different ideas and different approaches aimed at meeting new challenges, are overwhelmingly under-represented on local FA Councils across England. This might be due, in part, to very real problems of recruitment but, as we suggested earlier, it is also partly due to the very strong commitment that existing Council members have to a number of core values and principles which they feel might be threatened by effectively 'opening up' access to a new generation of local volunteers. They are also likely to point to the lengthy admission procedures demanded by Council, procedures that require numerous nominations and elections, effectively excluding younger members and, crucially, those who are relatively new to the game or are seen to have less long-term history of involvement in the development of football. These include females and the racialised 'other'. This hints at some of the difficulties the traditional structures and key personnel who control the local game in England face in adapting to wider social and cultural changes. Table 6.4 shows the make up of these

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'clubs' within County FA Councils; they are overwhelmingly male and white. These figures bear little resemblance to the demography of the local game across the country, particularly in terms of players and coaches. In some places, people from ethnic minority backgrounds are significantly represented on the field and in administrative roles inside local football clubs. A recent survey for the Leicestershire County FA, for example, identified 15% of its local players as being from ethnic minority backgrounds, with 70% of local clubs claiming to have an ethnically diverse membership (Bradbury et al. 2006).

| Council Members | Number (n=1442) | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 36 | 2.5% |
| Male | 1406 | 97.5% |
| Ethnic minority | 6 | 0.4% |

**Table 3.4: Breakdown of Council members at County FAs: by sex and ethnic background**

**Source: Survey of County FAs, 2007**

The relative 'exclusivity' of these County FA 'clubs' is shaped by rather complex and sometimes contradictory processes, not least because members of 'club cultures' tend to find it difficult to recognise the exclusivity of their organisations, often pointing to their

democratic, meritocratic and transparent structures instead. In Bourdieu's words, 'when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a 'fish in water'; it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, cited in Burdsey 2007: 69). As I show in Chapters 6 and 7, the perceptions of local FA Council Members are, overwhelmingly, that their organisations are open, fair and accessible to all. The 'invisibility' to those involved of these excluding structures and processes tells us much about the habitus of the local game but also has obvious connections to recent discussions of 'whiteness', whereby those who gain power from the consequences of racism invariably fail to identify the underlying racialised sources of their success (Dyer 1997; Long and Hylton 2002).

These sorts of local 'club cultures' tell us much about the 'field' of local football governance in England. During my time inside the County FAs, there was a very strong sense that this 'club' membership held significant prestige for its privileged members. Many Council members I spoke to talked of their 'honour' in serving on the County FA Council, and the respect they felt they gained, locally, from being seen in the obligatory 'blazer and tie' the official County FA uniform. This uniform is a stark example of Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital – there is no clearer expression of club membership than adorning the County FA crest on one's person. One of the perks of being a Council Member is the rule that allows all such members free entry into any affiliated football club ground. The prestigious nature of this 'club culture' - that has been sustained over decades - reinforces the feeling, locally, that the local County FA and its officers and members are the privileged and distanced arch-controllers, and the hub of local football governance in England.

The recognition of long-service, in the shape of the rewards of permanent posts for Council Members, also reflects a wider commitment to honouring the local history of County FAs. At all the case study County FAs I visited, the preservation and glorification of continuity and local sporting history was a common trait. Perhaps the most obvious example of this was the 'honours board', a displayed roll-call (usually going as far back at the formation of the County FA) that details the name of the president, chairman and secretary of the Association and their years in office. In addition, the walls of all the County FAs were decorated with a range of plaques, portraits, rosettes and other football souvenirs – symbolic celebrations of local achievement and personnel. Clearly, these are local sporting organisations that pay particular attention to their past, possibly, sometimes, over and above plans for the future. This devotion to heritage – even to the point of perpetuating 'myths' about successes and key figures in the game - is recognised as a general feature of sport cultures (Polley 1998, 2003, Collins 1996). In continually re-inventing this past, we should be aware of what Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983: 1) call 'invented traditions' which are:

> A set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature … they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past ... the peculiarity of 'invented' traditions is that the continuity with it is largely fictitious. In short, they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition.'
>
> (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983: 1)

This aggressive commitment to amateurism, for example, may have less to do with faithfully preserving the historical foundations of organisations like County FAs; rather,

they are perhaps more a means of challenging forms of change (particularly the professionalisation of the local game) that I discuss further in Chapter 6.

It would not be an over-statement to say that many of local FA Council volunteers have given up most of their spare time lives – and more - to the local game, with relatively little expected in return. While this kind of volunteering is not exclusive to football, the sport does dominate the figures here. Recent research has suggested that around 15% of the English population volunteer in some capacity; 26% of these in sport, one-third of these in football (Sport England 2003: 7-8) These volunteers, arguably, keep the local game going through its darkest times, and yet many of the proposed reforms of the local game - initiated by the FA's *Blueprint for Football* in 1991 - have impacted directly upon these volunteers more than on any other figures in local football, a pattern recognised elsewhere (Arai 1999). So, while they continue to be central figures to running local football in England, dedicating many, many hours to its smooth operation, the early 1990s marked the beginnings of what has proved to be a sometimes difficult, and certainly contested, period of rapid change in the running of the local game in England.

### 4. The new conditions of existence for County FAs since the 1990s

Although very little hard evidence is available on this score (see The FA 2007), there was a strong narrative underlying many of the comments of my respondents that participation in the more traditional versions of local football in England – that is in male, 11-a-side weekend matches - has been declining from around the late-1970s onwards. At the heart of this recent decline appears to be the reduction of institutional support and associated facilities for the 11-a-side game. Many sports clubs prior to the

1970s were organised around the workplace, with public and private sector occupations and businesses offering facilities and time for their employees to participate in football. Taylor suggests that from the 1970s - and certainly by 1990 - most facilities for football were provided by local authorities over private businesses (Taylor 2008: 256), which is backed up by comment from some of my respondents:

> This area, particularly, was flourishing some years ago with company sports grounds … you name it [a Company] and they had half a dozen pitches and shop teams, and all of that's gone. That's because of the economic side of society, I suppose, and business.
>
> Council Member, County FA 1, 2005

One of the crucial aspects of this type of sports club formation at workplaces was the provision of sports facilities, funded privately (often substantially), by companies themselves. The decline of such provision has coincided with a reduction of investment in Local Authority sport and leisure, particularly during periods of severe economic recession in the 1980s (Houlihan and White 2002). For some of my respondents, this decline in Local Authority facilities marks one of the key moments in the gradual decline of the game as a whole:

> [The decline in 11-a-side football has] been brought about, I think, in the decline of standards of Local Authority playing facilities. Why should people pay good money and end up in mud heaps, in dressing rooms with broken glass on the floor and no hot water - if they've got any water at all?
>
> Chief Executive, County FA 1, 2005

General participation in local football is actually unlikely to have declined in real terms. The growth of private sector, small-sided football centres and leagues, beyond the

affiliating control of The FA, have probably accounted for much of the decline in local FA-affiliated football (The FA 2004c). The decline in participation in the traditional forms of the local game – importantly, the place where The FA generates most of its local income - remains a central concern at The FA. There are obvious economic implications of this decline, not least for local County FAs. The FA is well aware of this and is trying to address such problems. The new *National Game Strategy for 2007-2012* has *'Growth and retention'* as one of its four core policy pillars, emphasising The FA's central concern to increase participation and, in turn, generate much needed local income.

This decline in affiliated 11-a-side football can be traced to a range of social and economic factors, including changes in work patterns, lifestyle and investment in sport facilities – common to many sports in Britain (Henry 2001; Sport England 2004; 2005; 2006). In addition, following the neo-liberal Thatcherite reforms of the mid-1980s outlined in Chapter 2, the privatisation of sport and leisure provision has led to an increasingly competitive and diversified leisure industry - including the emergence of the private sector small-sided football centres. This small-sided version of the game is argued to be much more aligned to contemporary leisure behaviour, offering a wider choice of participation, including on weekday evenings, shorter lengths of time for leisure activities, and more predictable travel and time costs. (Coalter 2007; Jackson 2008). Sports companies, such as five-a-side providers *Goals,* have grown rapidly over recent years, with sales up 26% from 2006 to 2007 to £20 million. The *Goals* website makes clear the current 'gap' in the market for such provision (Goals Plc 2008) stating that: 'Five-a-side football is one of the fastest growing sports in the UK and that there is

a major commercial opportunity to satisfy significant potential demand through the provision of "next-generation" facilities. The market is relatively undeveloped.'

This emerging private provision of non-FA affiliated local football has undoubtedly taken some traditional football participation to another place. The *National Game Strategy 2007-12* (The FA 2007) explicitly recognises the increasing competition that exists in the football leisure industry, highlighting some of the changes that need to be made to compete with this new private provision. These include the facts that:

- Children are facing increasing time pressures, greater choices in leisure options, and are demanding more flexible formats of football

- Changing lifestyle patterns are having a significant impact on the adult 11-a-side game; players require greater flexibility in football provision

- The increasing costs of hiring facilities for training and playing matches for junior clubs are providing barriers to participation

There is no doubt that local football has been affected, significantly, by the decline in the traditional 11-a-side game. County FAs, local leagues and local clubs were largely left to deal with the consequences of this decline, and there is little evidence – in policy terms at least – of any external assistance prior to the 1990s. Competitions and teams either merged or folded, while the sharing of facilities became commonplace (Taylor 2008). County FAs have also had to adjust to the falling revenues as a result of this 'drop off' in participation, meaning the tightening of local budgets to avoid running up debts. Many of today's County FA Council Members have witnessed this gradual decline in commitment to the traditional view of the local game. This is felt particularly

keenly at these key voluntary administrative levels. Growing up in the post-war 1950s 'golden age', when sports' participation and voluntary community service to sport probably reached their peak in the UK (Henry 2001; Houlihan and White 2002), and football participation reached a peak (Taylor 2008: 253), their experiences of the game today contrast sharply with that of their youth. To them, it seems particularly difficult now to recruit people who are willing to serve in the way they were (see Figure 6.5) and there is evidence to suggest this is also the case for British sport more broadly (LIRC 2003).
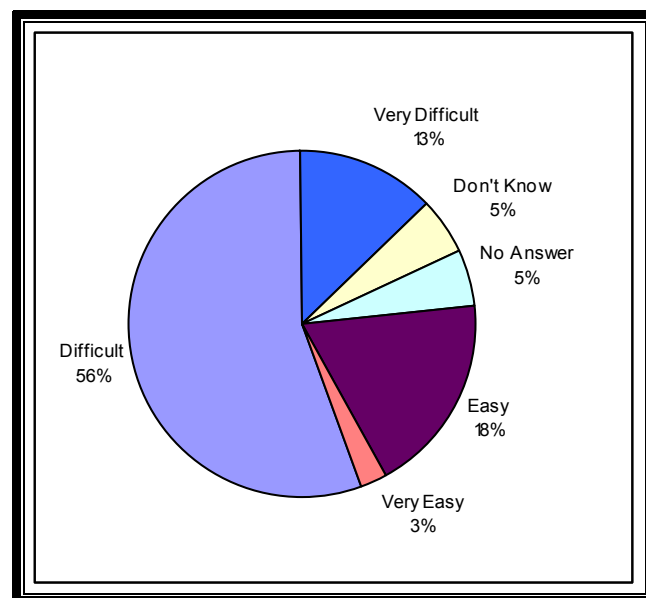


**Figure 3.5: How do you find the process of recruiting new Council Members?**

**Source: Survey of County FAs, 2007**

The society in which these Council Members grew up also appears, to them, to contrast sharply with the one they experience today. The shift towards the wider consumption of leisure and to the participant as 'client' is not one they easily recognise from their youth. In addition, post-war attitudes towards equality, including 'race' relations and multiculturalism in the 1950s, for example, bear little relation to today's more liberal

approaches to such matters, a situation which is perhaps reflected best in changes to government policy and legislation over this time period (Carter et al. 1987; Carter 2000). The rapid pace of change in the local game in England – combined with the sustained process of reform led centrally by The FA - raises concerns about the *suitability* of those currently in key decision making positions to adapt to such changes. Put simply, the more 'traditional' local County FA governance structures, and the types of members County FAs typically appear to have attracted and to have retained, might not now be best placed to deal with some of the complex issues facing today's local game, particularly in terms of:

- Local revenue generation for new and renovated facilities and development courses

- The handling of complex cases of ill-discipline, including those concerning charges of racism

- Adjusting current football provision, including rules and regulations, to meet the new complexities offered by the growing cultural diversity that exists in many of our major towns and cities

As I show in Chapters 6 and 7, the questioning of the knowledge and skills of those in charge is something that was regularly voiced during my research. Clearly, local FA Councils are not reflective of their local footballing communities and therefore seem unable to acknowledge and fully register recent changes in sport participation and changes in wider social attitudes around sport. A new influx of younger Council Members might help to diversify the representation of views across the local game and

to reinvigorate the links between local FA Councils and the range of participants they are now responsible to.

It is in this sense that we can begin to see why The FA's *E&SES* has been produced specifically to deal with issues of possible exclusion and social inequality in the contemporary local game. This discussion raises a common thread that will be explored further in Chapters 6 and 7, namely: the capacity of the structures and the personnel in local football in England to both *embrace* and *adapt to* the changing nature of grass-roots leisure participation in contemporary British society. But while anecdotal evidence suggests the relative decline of 'traditional' local football, it is worth putting this into perspective. Recent research shows that sport remains the most popular form of all voluntary activities in British society. In addition, local football significantly leads other sports, with over 400,000 volunteers contributing over 90 million volunteer hours each year (Sport England 2003). The local game in England, therefore, continues to attract large numbers of players, coaches, managers, referees and administrators, the vast majority of whom receive no payment at all for their time and efforts. Without this long-standing voluntary commitment – almost always driven by a sincere sense of community participation and altruism - the local game in England would struggle to survive on anything like the scale and quality it does today, particularly given the increasingly competitive markets for leisure.

Perhaps it is precisely *because* of the devotion and self-sacrifice which characterises the contribution of these long-standing volunteers, that many of them also display what one might describe as a strongly 'protectionist' approach to their positions and to the local football landscape. But this sort of attachment can also make the initiation of change

and implementation of new policies - such as the *E&SES* - particularly problematic. I discuss these crucial matters further in Chapters 6 and 7.

**5. Rising interest and increased investment in local football in England**

In Chapter 2 I attempted to outline the important political, economic and social context that helped shape British sports policy over the last 30 years, and thus provided the conditions for the emergence of an equity agenda in sport. What I want to do briefly here is to assess how these broader processes of social change have impacted on local football and especially on County FAs as organisations. While County FA structures and personnel have remained relatively stable during the period of 11-a-side decline in the local game over the last 30 years, other football bodies – The FA perhaps more than any other - and the approach of government, have changed significantly during this time. The relationship between the professional and grassroots games has also shifted radically during this period. Like the majority of sporting organisations in Britain, for much of its history the 'private' FA has remained largely sheltered from the sorts of external influence and pressures that have impacted upon public sports bodies. Since the 1990s, however, The FA has come under much more sustained external scrutiny than at any other time in its history. We can say therefore that the 'field' of English football has become less autonomous and opened up to a wider range of institutional and agential interests. Relations between The FA and other organisations have fluctuated considerably over time. Figure 6.6 is a rather crude interpretation of the traditional relationships between The FA and its key external 'partners' *before* the 1990s, but it does provide a broad, if over-simplified, overview of the historic situation

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┌──────────┐     │ DOMESTIC FOOTBALL│  │  INT'L FOOTBALL  │   ┌──────────┐
│ GOVERN-  │     │     BODIES:      │  │     BODIES:      │   │          │
│  MENT    │     │ PLAYER'S UNION   │  │   FIFA, UEFA     │   │  MEDIA   │
│          │     │     (PFA)        │  │                  │   │          │
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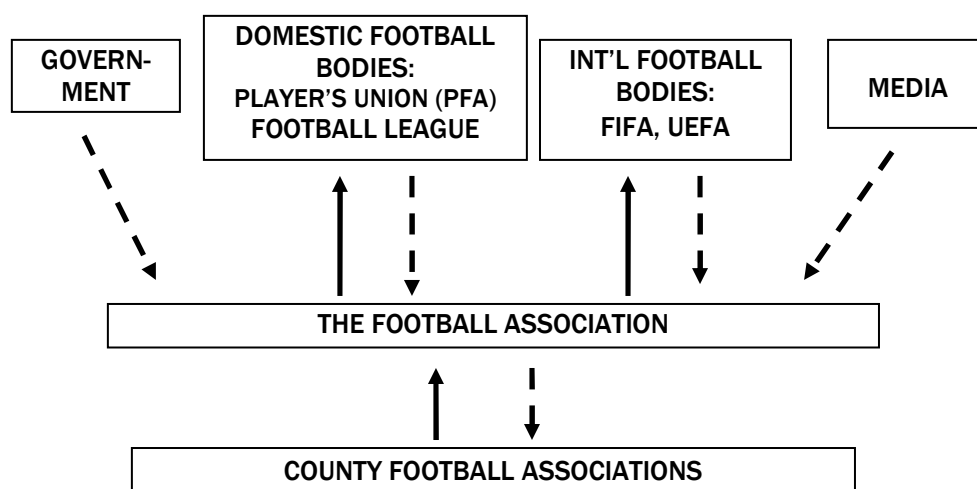
**Fig. 3.6: Influences on The FA: pre-1990s**

In Chapter 2 I discussed, at some length, the complex and changeable relationship between government and sports organisations in Britain, emphasising how successive British governments had decided that sport should be run autonomously by governing bodies, a policy that was, in part, informed by the 'amateur' ideal of keeping sport and politics in resolutely separate domains. Meanwhile, private businesses (such as media companies and sponsors) historically had relatively little direct policy input into organisations such as The FA. For one thing, football at this time was seen as having relatively little 'brand value' or useful investment potential, particularly given the problems of hooliganism in the English game and football's perceived working class *niche* market at that time. The private sector was rarely strongly courted by The FA, again partly because of the deeply entrenched anti-commercial and 'amateur' ethos of those running the game. Many senior football administrators at The FA felt particularly uncomfortable about connecting, too directly, *playing* sport with an overt focus on commerce and revenue raising. While the international and European governing bodies

and the English leagues have had sometimes problematic relationships with The FA, they have also typically reached some accord concerning its benchmark rules and regulations for football.

As a member's organisation at the grassroots, and because of the troubled early history of The FA discussed earlier, The FA has traditionally been *led*, in both policy terms and its general direction, by its local (County FA) representatives, with these making up over half of The FA's own national Council and sitting on its numerous decision-making committees. This relationship between County FAs and The FA has also been shaped by the relative financial independence that local associations have traditionally enjoyed. Prior to the late 1990s, the scarcity of funds held centrally by The FA for local football meant that it was the County FAs which generated local revenue to balance their books. This financial independence has traditionally enabled County FAs to decide on how to shape local policy within the national framework and also how to allocate their resources locally. As such, and as I intonated earlier, local football in England has been strongly informed by patterns of *local* (rather than *national*) policy and decision making. But from the 1990s onwards The FA became the subject of significantly increased external scrutiny, interest and investment from the British Government, and also from football and non-football bodies in England (see Fig. 6.7). These new interests and influences, along with the wider changes in the 'market' society they reflected, helped to shift the organisational and philosophical underpinnings of English football from that of a relatively under-commercialised 'private member's' national association, to that of a substantial corporate business, albeit one that retained a strong 'public service' remit.

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│ GOVERN-  │  │ NATIONAL FOOTBALL│  │ INT'L FOOTBALL   │  │    MEDIA/        │
│ MENT     │  │ BODIES:          │  │ BODIES:          │  │  CORPORATE       │
│          │  │ FA PREMIER LEAGUE│  │ FIFA, UEFA       │  │  SPONSORS        │
│          │  │ FOOTBALL LEAGUE  │  │                  │  │                  │
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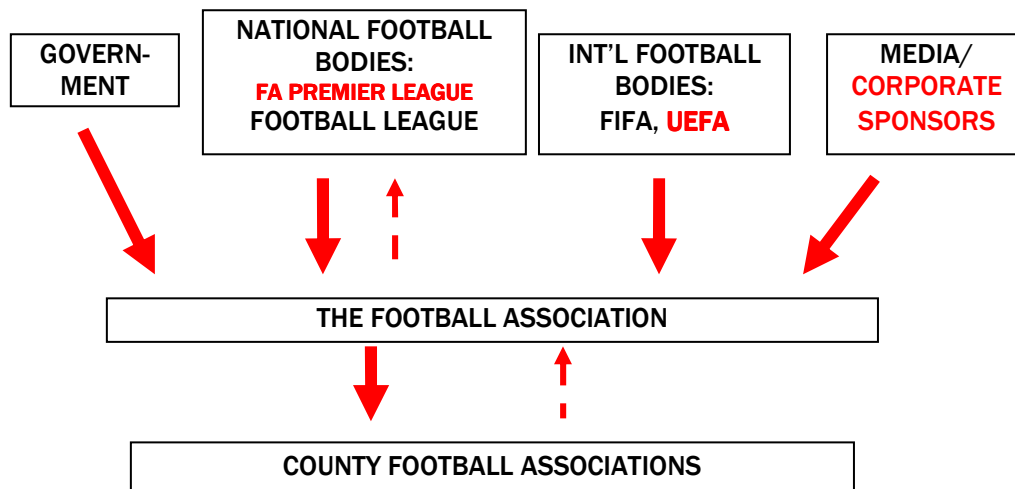
**Fig. 3.7: New Influences on The FA: post-1990s**

After the debilitating football tragedies of the 1980s, Prime Minister John Major's early
interest in trying to use sport as means of improving health among the young and
bolstering the social fabric of Britain in the early 1990s was later picked up strongly by
New Labour, which took this more interventionist approach a stage further in local sport
(Green 2006). Labour attempted, formally, to mobilise participation in sport – especially
perhaps football - in order to deliver across a range of social policy objectives, including
reducing crime, raising health indicators and promoting social inclusion (Brown 1999;
Mellor 2008).   The early 1990s in England had also seen dramatic changes to the
professional game, including the formation of the elite FA Premier League in 1992 and
the exclusive TV coverage rights and associated revenues that poured into the sport
from satellite television, especially BSkyB. In addition, corporate sponsors were now
being overtly *encouraged* by The FA, as the professional game in England became
much more 'marketised' and more aggressively commercial in its outlook. This

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increasing government and commercial interest in the game began, in turn, to contribute

to the structural transformation of The FA: it would now operate along much more

rationalised modern business lines, rather than as a traditional English sporting

governing body (Hamil et al. 2000).

One of the key documents that began the *national* discussion of how to challenge the

decline in the grass roots game was The FA's *Blueprint For Football*, published in

1991. Most people focused on the *Blueprint's* radical plans for the formation of a new

FA Premier League, but this document also raised growing concerns about the condition

and future funding of *local* football in England at that time (Bradbury and Williams

2006; Williams 2006). It effectively began a debate about how to transform the local

game through processes of reform and modernization, *alongside* similar developments

that were being suggested at the professional level. As a result of these various

developments and external pressures from government and the business world, Fig. 5.7

illustrates aspects of the shift in approach at The FA which followed: from a

substantially *bottom-up* or relatively federated and *democratic* style of management to a

much more '*top-down*', more autocratic, approach to decision making and policy

implementation. These changes have, in turn, meant that The FA has become

increasingly involved, in both the day-to-day activities and the strategic direction of

*local* County Associations.

Importantly, although this more 'top-down' approach to local policy making was rapidly

emerging at The FA, because of the strength of representation of the County FAs on the

national FA Council, change was never absolute in this area. Burdsey (2007: 69)

reminds us that 'fields' are, essentially, 'arenas of contestation where individuals can

maintain – or indeed challenge – the existing distribution of power and capital'. Local English football is no different. The potential for policy recommendations and other matters relating to grassroots football to be voted down at FA Council was considerable at this time, via the continued strong input nationally from the County FAs. Towards the end of the research period, recommendations from the Burns Review into the structure of The FA (Lord Burns 2005) were beginning, significantly, to alter the role of The FA Council. This change is likely to have an impact on the strength of representation of the local game at national level, although whether this is good or bad news for the local game it is probably too early to say. Certainly, there appears to be some early disquiet from the traditional members of the association, even though only a watered down version of Lord Burns' recommendations were approved by The FA Council in 2006 (The Guardian, 15th July 2006).

The wider social, cultural and economic changes that occurred in British society at this time, coupled with the increasing policy interest in the game from government, sparked a number of policy developments at The FA, some of which were covered in Chapter 2 and, in specific relation to equity policy, in Chapter 5. Despite these new initiatives, however, the single most important change in the game was probably the sharp rise in sponsorship and TV income that football was able to generate as a result of the new nexus of commercial interests that began to attach themselves to the FA Premier League and the England national team.

Put simply, the bourgeoning new finances of the sport meant that The FA was now able – probably for the first time - to *invest* seriously in grassroots football. It also needed to be *seen* to be spending part this commercial windfall locally and wisely, particularly in a

climate in which concerns were now routinely raised at global influences in football and the widening financial gap between the professional elite and the rest of the professional and amateur game. These concerns were expressed alongside increasing calls from fan groups and some politicians for greater external regulation of football – something all footballing bodies remained keen to avoid, as witnessed in the tensions that emerged from the meetings of New Labour's Football Task Force (1998; 1999). While ushering in the breakaway FA Premier League, the FA's *Blueprint For Football* also made a number of recommendations for the grassroots game. This included responding to the effects of the decline in participation which were particularly felt at the smaller County Associations, where revenue was already very limited. In addition, County Associations were urged to become limited companies in order to shelter their members from the threat of legal action that pertained under the traditional County structures, and to pave the way for County FAs to undertake new activities for their own revenue generation and re-investment. In 2000, Adam Crozier - a man steeped in the corporate worlds of commercial marketing and advertising (see Conn 2004) - became Chief Executive of The FA. His recruitment was significant as it confirmed the transformation of The FA to a more honed, image conscious and commercially driven sporting body.

One of Crozier's key achievements in his brief time in the post (he resigned in 2002) was the approval of the *National Game Strategy (NGS)* for The FA in 2000. The NGS proposed a wholesale shift in the way the grass-roots game would now be organised and managed, emphasising the need to *modernise* and *reform* the traditional remit of County FAs. Crucially, the *NGS* paved the way, in turn, for the *Football Development Strategy* (FDS) in 2001. The latter provided the framework for developing local football, aiming primarily at stemming the decline in the grassroots game by providing new

opportunities for people to participate in football in their region, while also facilitating some of the new requirements of government policy for sport. The *E&SES* marks one of a number of important new initiatives (including Charter Standard 'kite-mark' for football clubs, and also Child Protection initiatives) that have emerged very recently in the grassroots game. Their origin can be traced largely to pressure from *external* sources - in this case to the British Government, through the auspices of Sport England (White 1991; Sport England 2002). They are initiatives to which The FA has signed up and it is committed to implementing them into County FA practices and the local game, via a strongly centralist, *top-down* policy drive. Such interventions from the centre in the day-to-day activities of local County Associations mark an unprecedented shift in the routine management and organisation of the local game in this country.

## 6. Summary

This chapter has provided a broad overview of the 'field' of local English football; both the historical conditions of its organisation and the more recent changes that have contributed to the current state of play in the local game. The latter account includes some of the structural and cultural components that contribute to the development of County FA 'habitus'; one that is a quite exclusive 'members club' which have centralised control in the hand of a few influential figures and which can be extremely difficult to break into from the outside without the required cultural capital. I argue in the following chapters that these historic structures and cultures provide the crucial contextual conditions in which the E&SES is being placed – and sometimes resisted.

Following on from Chapter 2, I have also shown here how 'modern' local football in Victorian Britain was informed heavily by the ideals and values of amateurism; ideals

that were, in many ways, actually strengthened by the challenges raised by professionalism in the early 1900s. This was especially the case at the grassroots level, where the amateurs strengthened their grip over the organisation and governance of the local game. The Football Association struggled to gain real authority over football in the regions, leading to the fractious relationship The FA has had (and continues to have) with the relatively autonomous County FAs. From its early development, local football in England has relied very heavily on voluntary commitment – in this case, the dedication and devotion of County FA Council Members, many of whom have given up much of their non-working and retired lives to help organise, administer and control local football in their area.

I also suggested that since the early 1990s *local* football in England has undergone a period of significant and possibly unprecedented change – most of which appears to have gone without remark in the Academy. These changes stem from increasing interest in the game from government and commercial interests, initially in the professional game and later at the local level – significantly widening the range of interests that needed to be accommodated in this 'field'. At the same time, it is evident that The FA has recently taken a much stronger and a more influential role in County FA activities, stimulated by broader processes of commercialisation, bureaucratisation, centralisation and modernisation. A combination of New Labour's instrumental use of sport to try to deliver on a range of social policies (including social exclusion), and a widespread fear of the decline in football participation at local levels, coupled with the emergence of private sector competition for football provision, have initiated this change in emphasis. This has come about in the form of an attempt from the centre to modernise and professionalise the *local* game.

Accordingly, The FA appears to be shifting its emphasis from a 'bottom-up' organisational culture to a much more strongly 'top-down' form of managerialism, although this should be seen as part of a more fluid process of struggle and contestation between the range of interests in the local game. Allied to wider changes to British public and commercial culture, The FA at national level has also shifted from a 'private members' type amateur structure and philosophy to a much more corporate model, but one with a residual public service remit. Through these processes, the long-standing power holders at County FAs - voluntary FA Council Members - appear to have been, or at least feel they have been – relatively sidelined by many of these developments.  In the next chapter I discuss in detail the methodological considerations that have guided this research, including a detailed account of the methods used and data analysis deployed – all within a Critical Realist framework.

# Chapter 4
# Methodology

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"Algy met a bear, the bear was bulgy, the bulge was Algy … the individual may consume what Durkheim and others have called social facts, but he will bulge most uncomfortably, and Algy will still be there … I suspect that actual investigators will often, though perhaps not always, prefer to have Algy outside the bear"

(Gellner 1973: 262; cited in Archer 1998: 360)

## 1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research strategy, design, methods and procedures for data analysis used for this study. It considers the ways in which the research process satisfied the broad aims of the study, which were to critically assess the implementation of The FA's *Ethics and Sports Equity Strategy* in local football in England and analyse the sources of local resistance to some of its policy initiatives. As chapter 5 highlights in more detail, the *E&SES* provides a strategic framework from within which existing and future social inclusion activities in football can be plotted and delivered. The *E&SES* has two key elements of emphasis which are central to the key issues of this thesis:

- *First*, while claiming to cover the whole football family - including the professional game – the *E&SES* places a very strong emphasis, in fact, on implementing change at the grassroots level where, theoretically at least, The FA enjoys some autonomy of control. In the professional game a range of bodies, including the Premier League, the PFA and the Football League also exert considerable influence. The research was, therefore, primarily located within the local football environment in England, exploring especially how the new

strategy was being received and incorporated into the day-to-day activities of County FAs, the regional governing 'arm' of The FA nationally.

- *Second,* the *E&SES* (implicitly at least) prioritises the case of ethnic minorities and the tackling of racist discrimination, but it does this largely within the policy rhetoric of 'race equality'. Much of the analytical focus for this study – and integral to the methodologies used herein - has involved a critical examination of popular conceptualisations of 'race', ethnicity and racism.

There is, inevitably, a strongly *prescriptive* element to this study. As a CASE/ESRC funded project, much of the design and methodology for the project was reasonably fixed prior to my selection as the PhD candidate and lead researcher. Therefore, while there was room for some manoeuvre, I was more or less required to follow the prescribed research strategy and design. This is not to suggest that I had a strong determination to follow an alternative methodological approach to the study, but it should be acknowledged that some sections of this chapter may read as something of a 'retrospective fallacy' (Bourdieu 1990: 18). In this context, I make a legitimate (theoretical and logical) case for the choice of research strategy, design and methods in the knowledge that many of these aspects were already chosen without my explicit involvement and input. I say this out of a commitment to a reflexive sociology that demands a critical assessment and evaluation of the research process, and in particular of the methodological approaches adopted and the data analysis techniques followed. This said, I was able to add my own input on the methodology by choosing to undertake a sustained historical documentary analysis of the history of local football governance – something that was not specifically proscribed in the project but included after consultation with the research team.

All studies that take social phenomena as their objects of analysis are informed by philosophical considerations of ontology and epistemology; that is, claims made about the consistency of the social world and the ways of gaining appropriate knowledge about it. I have already made some important points regarding the types of assumptions which underpin this research in my brief discussion of Critical Realism in the Introduction.  While I do not intend to rehearse those again here, it is useful to try to clarify the theoretical and philosophical framework within which the thesis sits, and also identify the logic (Grix 2002) behind the research process followed here, including its design and chosen methods of data collection.

In order to locate the philosophical framework which has guided this research within wider debates about research methodologies, I will briefly – and inevitably, crudely – outline the key traditions that have tended to inform social research. I will then suggest that the preferred theoretical approach for this study - Critical Realism – appears best placed to overcome some of the inherent difficulties associated with the ontological and epistemological stances previously adopted in the social sciences. I will try to show why a critical realist approach might be particularly useful in investigating 'race', ethnicity and racism and in meeting some of the broader aims of the research.

## 2. Ontology, epistemology and the social sciences: a brief overview

Discussions around the philosophy of science and the process of social research tend to take the stance of an 'either-or' (Danermark et al. 2006: 2) view of the competing paradigms of thought. Confusingly, the terms used to define these different philosophical positions are multiple – sometimes it is unclear whether the terms used are referring to ontological or epistemological positions, or even a conflation of the two.

Terms popularly employed here include objectivism and constructionism, positivism and interpretivism (Bryman 2001: 16-19); Aristolean and Galilean, positivism and hermeneutics (von Wright 1993); objectivity and relativism, naturalism and interpretivism (Lazar 1998); empiricism, subjectivity and idealism (May 1999: 10-14) and foundationalism and anti-foundationalism (Cruickshank 2002b; Danermark et al. 2006: 7-10). While each of these accounts varies in different ways, they tend to focus attention on two key questions that are integral concerns for the social researcher. These are: What is the nature of the social world, and, how can we gain appropriate knowledge of social phenomena? (Grix 2002)

The first of these two questions broadly relates to the contested notions of reality and meaning. The debate here centres on the possibility of an objective social world that exists independent of us as social actors. While this is often referred to as realism, I prefer the term objectivism here as it highlights the attempt to make social phenomena credible objects of scientific enquiry. This school of thought can be traced back to the origins of the discipline of Sociology, highlighted by Durkheim's concept of social facts (1938). These facts, for Durkheim, existed prior to, and were external from, individuals and therefore were an external social reality that could be treated as objective phenomena, much in the same way as natural phenomena could. This last point connects with positivist epistemology, which broadly refers to the use of the procedures of natural scientific enquiry to gain knowledge of social phenomena.

Perhaps the main criticism of the approach of objectivism and positivism is in terms of the problem of meaning (Lazar 1998). To talk of an independent social reality becomes problematic when one considers the agential ability of social actors to construct,

negotiate and reflect upon both their actions and the world around them (Bryman 2001). Moreover, given the particular topic under enquiry – that of the social world and social relations – suggestions that the social scientist can be completely detached from the subject under investigation is tenuous. In light of these criticisms, another school of thought emerged, particularly guided by the ideas of Max Weber. Weber was particularly concerned with understanding motivation beyond individual social action – encapsulated in his notion of *verstehen* (Weber 1970). This marked an attempt to counter objectivism and its stress on an independent social reality, to emphasise instead the constructed nature of the social world, hence the term 'constructionism' (Bryman 2001). Weber's 'methodological individualism' became a useful counterpoint to positivist epistemologies, by suggesting our object of enquiry for social phenomena should be the observance and interpretation of individual social action, rather than any attempt to uncover social facts or generalisable laws and rules of society in any grand sense.

## 3. The uses of Critical Realism

As the name suggests, Critical Realism (CR) shares with empiricism and objectivism the ontological claim about the existence of an objective reality. In this sense, CR rejects the relativist propositions of constructionism and interpretivism that emphasise sociology as an essentially hermeneutic discipline distinct from natural science (Carter and New 2004: 1-3). What CR rejects in the arguments of empiricism is that this objective reality can be directly observed and measured, to the extent that we can claim knowledge of the social world via social facts and generalisable laws. Importantly for CR, reality exists 'independent of individual consciousness; in common sense terms, a belief in "things out there" that exist even though we may not perceive them directly' (Carter 2000: 56).

This is further explained by the concepts of intransitive and transitive dimensions of knowledge (Sayer 2000: 10-11). Put simply, intransitive objects are the objects of scientific enquiry; in Sociology, they refer to the social phenomena that we wish to investigate (for example, social inequalities and the unequal distribution of resources). Transitive forms of knowledge are those theories and discourses that are employed to explain the intransitive world (e.g. racism). Therefore, while transitive knowledge may be different, contested and changeable - dependent on our interpretation of it - the intransitive object upon which such theory is based remains the same and, ultimately, can lie beyond the realm of observation.

This ontological stance is one important development from empirical realist or objectivist thought. CR ontology claims to have several layers, and is thus often referred to as being 'stratified' (Carter 2000: 69-72; Sayer 2000: 12-13; Danermark et al. 2006: 20-21). Here, three key levels are said to exist: the 'real', the 'actual' and the 'empirical'. While there is little room here for detail, the important point is that by seeing the social world as stratified or 'layered' we can reject the empiricist notion that reality is simply *everything* we can observe. For CR, the situation is more complex: 'the real is whatever exists … regardless of whether it is an empirical object for us and whether we happen to have an adequate understanding of its nature' (Sayer 2000: 11).

The methodological implications of this ontological 'depth' (Sayer 2000) are by no means clear cut. Key proponents of CR have themselves identified the difficulty in converting these ontological assumptions into a reliable practical blueprint for actually doing social research (Carter 2000; Carter and New 2004: 1-18; Danermark et al. 2006; Yeung 1997). While this is no doubt partly the result of the fact that CR is in its infancy

as a theoretical framework, in some ways the very attempt to use CR to guide methodology somehow misses the point:

> Critical realism does not claim to develop a new method for social science. On the contrary, it criticises any ambition to develop a specific method for scientific work. There is no such thing as *the* method for critical realism.
>
> (Danermark et al. 2006: 73) [my emphasis]

What Danermark et al (2006: 73) propose, instead, is that CR can offer 'guidelines for social science research, and starting points for the evaluation of already established methods.' This seems to adhere to the increasingly pragmatic approach to methodological design in the social sciences in recent years. The notion of 'triangulation' has been employed to emphasise an increase in validity and reliability of data with the use of a range of data collection methods. One of the clear methodological implications of CR proposed by Carter (Carter 1998; Carter 2000) is the notion of *analytical dualism*. This refers, in part, to the long-standing sociological dilemma of structure and agency (Carter and New 2004: 3-7). Earlier theories have either privileged one over the other (commonly identified in the approaches of objectivists and constructionists respectively), or, more recently, attempted a synthesis of the two, including Giddens' structuration (1984) and Elias' figurational sociology (1978).

The stratified ontology proposed by CR makes it possible to claim a real *separation* of structure and agency, or, in CR terms, 'the parts' and 'the people' (Archer 1998: 376-379; Carter 2000: 68). In this respect, it seems that a CR methodology must take into consideration both the views of social actors ('the people') and their interpretation of their social environment, *but also* locate these views within the specific social, cultural

and historical structures ('the parts'). Perhaps the work that most closely resembles this approach is that of Pierre Bourdieu, whose notions of 'field', 'habitus' and 'capital' have articulated this distinction between structure and agency most clearly in the social sciences (Bourdieu 1988, 1990, 1991; see also Burdsey 2007: 67-70). Where appropriate, Bourdieu's dualist approach is called upon to understand the findings discussed in the remaining chapters. The methodological implications of this dualist approach will be elaborated upon shortly, when the specific methods of data collection for this research are discussed in more detail, including the use of historical documentary evidence.

The CR stance on the structure/agency debate is further articulated through the concept of the *emergent* properties of social phenomena. CR emphasises the evolving nature of social relations, deriving (intentionally or otherwise) from previous social action and structural conditions, thereby stressing the relative autonomy of these relations from individual social action. Following this approach, 'it becomes impossible … to interpret or understand agency as a mere reflection of structural relations, discursive formations or whatever, just as it becomes impossible to see structural relations as a mere expression of agency' (Carter 1998: 7). Informed by this analytical separation of structure and agency, the final component of CR used to guide this thesis is the *morphogenetic* approach to historical analysis, proposed in the work of Margaret Archer (1995; 1998) and helpfully explored empirically by Carter in his discussion of post-war UK Immigration policy (2000-139). Figure 4.1 emphasises the important temporal, ontological distinction between structure and agency. This model places a methodological importance on three key stages of analysis.

- Firstly, the historical -and therefore *previous* - conditions (social, political, economic) that provide the context within which agency can best be interpreted and understood

- Secondly, the social interaction which takes place between agents

- Finally, the outcome of this interaction, or the influence of agency on the nature of structures can be understood, with the possibilities of the structural and cultural realm being either reproduced or transformed (Archer 1998: 368-379).

**Structural conditioning**

$T_1$

**Socio-cultural interaction**

$T_2$                                    $T_3$

**Structural elaboration**

**Structural reproduction**          $T_4$
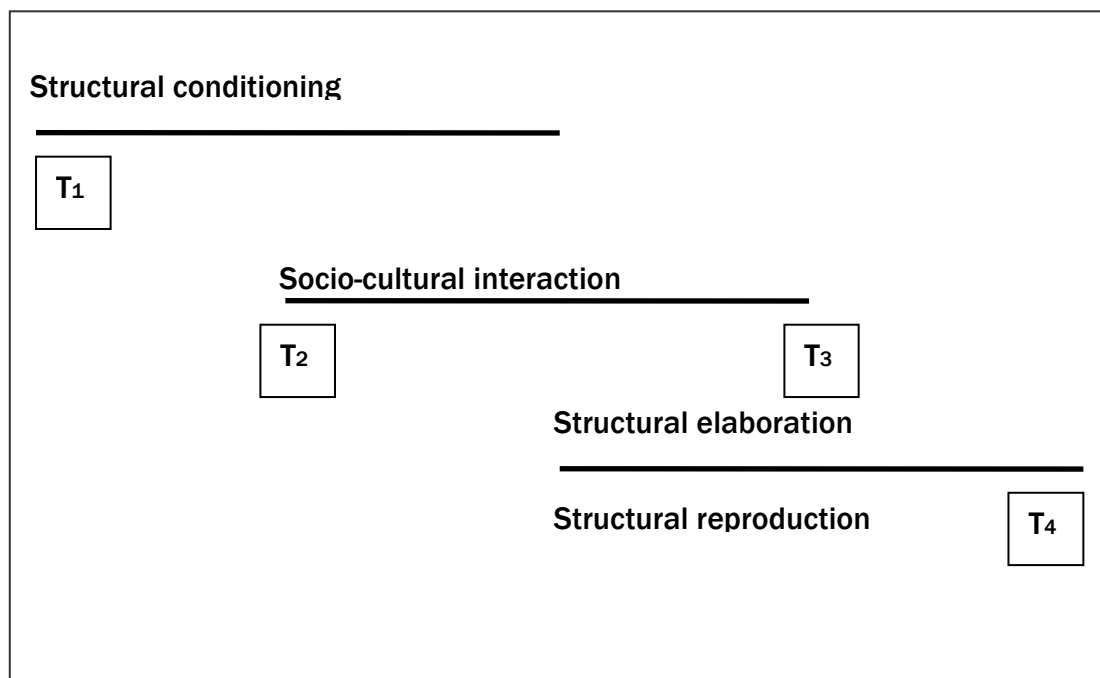
**Figure 4.1: The morphogenetic/static cycle (Archer 1998: 375)**

Although relatively limited in its application in research so far, I contend that this model has the potential to be an especially useful device in the evaluation of policy implementation, such as the The Football Association's *E&SES*. The principles of the morphogenetic model have been useful in both the construction of the research design and methodology, but also in the specific *structure* of the thesis – its combination of history and sociology – and in the analysis of data collected for this thesis. The chapters

which discuss in detail the empirical findings of this study (Chapters 3 & 5-7) display, to a varying extent depending on appropriateness, the key elements of CR that I have briefly outlined here. This includes: analytical duality ('the parts' and 'the people'); stratified ontology (real, actual, empirical); and the morphogenetic model (structural/cultural conditions, social interaction, structural elaboration/reproduction). The first of these phases (structural conditioning) demands the use of historical documentary evidence to provide the important historical context that I offered in Chapters 2 & 3. I want to emphasise that this adoption of CR principles as a meta-theoretical framework for the study is not to apply its ideas in a dogmatic or deterministic fashion. One of the appeals of CR is that it is a necessarily critical approach, both of the social practices it studies as well as of other theories (Sayer 2000: 18). I take this notion of critique to include, not only the adoption of competing theoretical positions when they seem more appropriate, but also the continual and reflexive re-assessment of the CR thesis itself.

## 4. Critical Realism and studies of 'race', ethnicity and racism

These philosophical considerations of questions of ontology and epistemology are perhaps particularly pertinent for studies that engage with notions of 'race', ethnicity and racism. It has been argued that many of the studies in this field tend to pay lip service to such considerations. By not making clear the ontological status of terms such as 'race' (i.e. what it actually is describing), while also avoiding discussions of epistemology (how to gain knowledge by using such a term), such studies tend to adopt largely unproblematic definitions that derive from common-sense, policy concepts of the time (Goldberg 1993, Carter 2000; Gunaratnam 2003). It is as if, by placing the concept within scare quotes, researchers can avoid any discussion of what they are

actually referring to when they use the term 'race'. I will suggest below that, in line with Carter (2000), the use of scare quotes for the term is not necessary, if, we emphasise that we are discussing *ideas* and *interpretations* of ideas of race rather than referring to a distinct and fixed categorisation of humans. This use of the term is discussed in much more detail in Chapter 7.

Given the policy oriented nature of this project, alongside the strong, direct input and collaboration I have received from The FA, it has been a significant challenge to maintain some academic distance from the normative categories and terminology around notions of 'race', ethnicity and racism used in this field. A study, such as this one, of the local reception of a policy document on 'race', and the associated rhetorics that may employ such terms in an unproblematic manner, must be particularly aware of how it intends to approach the subject under inquiry. It is important, therefore, to provide some brief comments on the range of approaches that sociologists have employed in previous investigations of 'race', ethnicity and racism, before offering a justification of the critical realist approach that has broadly guided the research strategy of this project.

The social significance of ideas of race, ethnicity and racism can be seen as mirroring the more traditional sociological arguments around the primacy of either structure or agency (Giddens 1984; Layder 1994), itself subsumed within the wider philosophical debates outlined earlier in this chapter. The earliest studies of 'race' were informed by the structural theoretical framework of functionalism (see Miles 1989, Goldberg 1993, Solomos and Back 1996) and emphasised the objective nature of social phenomena; 'race' was therefore seen as a natural classification of humans. This assumption about the nature of the social world initiated ideas of race as having an independent

ontological status of their own. In other words, 'racial' groups can be broadly classified and have some essential existence that sociologists are able to treat as an independent variable – social facts - in their studies of the social world.

Thus, 'the use of a concept of race is an attempt to capture certain structural, objective, ontologically real features of social reality and to apprehend real social relations of difference' (Carter 2000: 10). This approach remains particularly popular in the type of social research that utilizes statistics of 'race' and ethnic categories to attempt to explain social phenomena. The national census data is a good example of this; in 1991 the census introduced a question to gather data on the ethnic make-up of Britain. Such data have frequently been used to attempt to explain the social world through the explanatory power of discrete, homogenous 'racial' or ethnic populations (Gunaratnam 2003). Within policy circles, this use of 'race' and ethnicity remains widespread. Sport England, for example, employs 'racial' categories regularly in its attempts to explain levels and rates of sport participation. Large-scale research projects into sport, such as *The Active People Survey 2005/6* (Sport England 2006)*, The Sport England Equity Index 2002* (Sport England 2002) and *Understanding Participation in Sport* (Sport England 2005) all adopt 'racial' or ethnic categories, without comment.

These approaches have been criticised by constructionists who prioritise agency and interpretivism in their account of 'race'. They suggest that while there may be no ontological reality to 'race' – because of its more recent scientific invalidity – nevertheless it plays an important role for social actors in interpreting the social world they inhabit. One of the first (and most enduring) attempts to use this approach came from Robert Park, a neo-symbolic interactionist from the Chicago School, who first

devised a theory of race relations (Park 1950); that is, the notion that some forms of social relations can be specifically understood sociologically as relations *between* 'races', because people interpret them in this way. As Carter (2000: 11) suggests, 'Park's approach rested on the … assumption that we interact with each other not directly but on the basis of our ideas about them [other social actors]. The proper "facts" of society are therefore the imaginings we have of each other.' This approach was later developed by John Rex (1979; 1983) to provide a Weberian class analysis of the 'race relations' paradigm that became dominant at this time. This approach adopted much of the earlier analysis. But, according to Carter: 'Rex, like Park, places a critical emphasis on the meanings social actors attach to certain sorts of social relations, regarding them as defining how such relations should be described theoretically' (2000: 13). In other words, the race relations paradigm required social scientists to place an emphasis, not on the scientific value of the meaning of 'race', but simply on the common sense view of what the term 'race' referred to.

Robert Miles (1982; 1984; 1993) has been most forceful in his critique of the 'race relations' approach outlined above. Miles is particularly concerned about the ontological weight placed upon ideas of race that, in effect, were being perpetuated and reified through the race relations theoretical framework. He summarises thus:

> I acknowledge that the world of everyday/political discourse identifies a race/race relations situation/problem. What I wish to question is the way in which common sense discourse has come to structure and determine academic discourse so that it, too, admits the existence of 'races' and 'relations between races' (Miles 1982: 3)

The concern for Miles here is that the utilisation of the term 'race' for any form of social analysis not only leads to a distorted understanding and explanation, but also reifies the meaning of 'race' in everyday discourse, thereby perpetuating ideas of 'racial' difference. Miles is keen to identify 'race ideas' as being historically specific and located in certain sets of political, economic and material circumstances (Miles 1982; 1989; 1993). 'Race' is, therefore, seen as an ideology which distorts our understanding of the social world, and, from the Marxist perspective of Miles, the underlying nature of relations of capitalist production:

> Race … is an idea created by human beings in certain historical and material conditions, and used to represent and structure the world in certain ways, under certain historical conditions and for certain political interests. The idea of race is, therefore, essentially ideological
>
> (Miles 1993: 45).

In an attempt to address some of the theoretical problems related to studies that invest 'race' with explanatory power – be they led by objectivism or social constructionism – Carter (1998; 2000) proposes the use of Critical Realism. As I have shown, CR attempts to resolve some of the long-standing tensions between structure and agency by focusing attention on the ways in which underlying and relatively enduring social structures impact upon everyday social interaction. Miles' concept of 'racialisation' helps overcome some of the difficulties of the traditional approaches to 'race', ethnicity and racism. He defines racialisation as occurring 'where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of biological human characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities' (Miles 1989: 75). Racialisation therefore emphasises both the historical conditioning of ideas of race alongside the process whereby such ideas become *acted upon* and made socially

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significant. While not a proponent of CR himself, Miles's critique of the race relations framework and his development of the notion of racialisation appears to fit well with CR notions of analytical duality, stratified ontology and the morphogenetic model.

Carter (1998; 2000; 2004) has taken some of the Miles critique and applied it specifically to the CR tradition. Following the key approaches recommended by CR which I have already discussed, Carter (1998: 5) proposes that: 'the identification of racist practices (that is, practices based on race ideas) will depend on recognising *empirically* which discriminatory outcomes are generated by which mechanisms of social relations and under what conditions.' The research focus for this study, therefore, prioritises an understanding of the specific historical and contemporary conditions that enable generative mechanisms – such as ideas of race - to impact upon social relations which, in turn, produce empirically observable discriminatory outcomes.

I will now discuss the specific research design adopted here, before spending some time describing and reflecting on the various methods chosen to collect the data for this project.

## 5. Research design

### (i)Historical, Intensive and extensive approaches

Research design has been defined as 'the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions' (Yin 2003: 20). In light of this, I want to briefly outline the process I followed in selecting the most appropriate methodological tools to collect data to address my key research questions. I felt it necessary to spend some time outlining the key principles of CR, as it provides the

'meta-theoretical' framework for considering the most appropriate design of the empirical investigation (see Cruickshank 2002b for more on this). I will outline below the logic behind the choice of my methodology, and show, where possible, how this logic is informed by the principles of CR outlined earlier.

The research for this thesis broadly followed four different routes;

- Firstly, the analysis of *historical* documentary evidence to provide an account of the structural conditions of local football governance

- Secondly, some *preliminary* participant observation at the national headquarters of The FA

- Thirdly, organisational *case studies* via participant observation and interviews at County Football Associations in England

- Fourthly, a *large-scale survey* using a questionnaire aimed at all County FA Chief Executives/County Secretaries.

Five County FAs were eventually chosen as case studies in a variety of settings to allow for some comparative analysis of the main organisational and individual responses to the implementation of The FA's new *Ethics and Sports Equity Strategy* (*E&SES*). In addition, a survey questionnaire was distributed to 48 of the 55 FA affiliated associations, including the 46 County FAs in England, the Amateur Football Alliance (governing parts of London) and the English Schools Association (school football). Other affiliated associations - the Army, Navy and Air Force, Cambridge and Oxford Universities, Independent Schools, and the Women's Football Conference - have different remits to these other organisations and so their relationship with FA policies such as the E&SES were identified as been markedly different to County Associations.

The aim here was to collect some benchmark statistics on a variety of issues regarding recognition and the implementation of *E&SES* at these organisations, while also assessing some of the attitudes of officers at local County FAs regarding the various merits and limitations of the policy.

This approach incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, or in CR terms, the use of both *intensive* and *extensive* research procedures (Sayer 2000: 20-22; Danermark et al. 2006: 161-167). CR attempts to overcome the previously rather dogmatic 'either-or' approach to methodology that emphasises the positivist traditions of quantitative methods on the one hand, and the hermeneutic traditions of qualitative research on the other. Danermark et al (2006: 162) comment that such an approach, 'has a restraining influence because it suggests that the *only options* are a positivist or a hermeneutic/phenomenological science' (my emphasis). As we have seen, CR prefers, instead, to adopt a 'both-and' attitude to methodology, wherever possible. As in many of the other debates introduced above, such a dichotomy or dualism simply fails to consider the various merits – and pitfalls – of the techniques that fall within the qualitative/quantitative categories.

In recent years a much more pragmatic approach appears to have been pursued with regard to the qualitative/quantitative methodological divide, and yet the ontological justification of such a stance remains unclear. Bryman (2001) and Creswell (2003) offer good core-textbook examples of this merging of approaches. They each propose that 'multi-strategy' approaches are becoming increasingly popular within social science research, but they fail to identify the ontological reasoning behind this. Perhaps this lack of clarity is the reason why both authors insist on the retention of the

qualitative/quantitative divide, despite their simultaneous calls for pragmatism. Multi-strategy tends to be justified through the notion of 'triangulation' briefly discussed earlier, whereby the deployment of both qualitative and quantitative methods can lead to the 'cross-checking' of data to increase the validity and reliability of results obtained. Led by the logic of analytical dualism and the ontological *separation* of structure and agency, CR proposes the use of the most suitable research design to the particular task in hand, rather than claim any particular increase in reliability as a result of deploying a multi-strategy – or any other - approach. Analytical dualism emphasises the need to investigate both 'the parts' and 'the people'. It seems to me that focusing on these different 'layers' of society will necessarily require different methodological – and in this case with the use of historical evidence – disciplinary approaches to acquire relevant empirical data for both projects.

The differences and similarities between the CR categories of intensive/extensive and the more widely used qualitative/quantitative distinctions have been summarised well by Danermark et al (2006: 162-165) and there is little room here to discuss these in any detail. The similarities are relatively straightforward:

- *Intensive procedures* mirror qualitative approaches in that they attempt to investigate how a process works in a particular case or small number of cases, and in documenting aspects of social action. Data collection tends to take place within the context of the agents under investigation, using mainly interviews and ethnographic forms of data collection (Sayer 2000: 21).

- *Extensive research*, on the other hand, relates to more quantitative methodologies in that it aims to identify regularities, patterns, and the distribution of these patterns within a population. Typical methods here might

include the use of large-scale surveys of a usually representative sample, questionnaires and the use of statistical analysis (Sayer 2000: 21).

What these terms 'intensive' and 'extensive' provide for is the freeing up of research design and the methods associated with quantitative/qualitative terminology so that they can be used much more pragmatically to suit the particular empirical task at hand. In other words, we can begin to see how the language of CR allows us to decide: first, what our particular concern is (i.e. identifying the historical conditions that provide the structures within which sports equity policies are implemented); and, second, undertake either an intensive or extensive research procedure – whichever is best suited – to collect the necessary data required. That is: 'the research methods we employ to examine processes is a matter of appropriateness – which works best to get at what we want' (Carter 2000: 156).

I want now to outline in a little detail the *types* of research design the current project utilised. The majority of this account focuses on the County FA case studies that were undertaken, with only some brief words on the survey used. This broadly reflects the emphasis that each design was given in the study, in that the survey material ended up as a relatively small and limited component of the data collected over the three years of the research.

*(ii) Case studies*

The aims of the research were to assess the implementation of The FA's *E&SES* in local football sites of governance. More specifically, I attempt to identify and explore some of the deep generative mechanisms that might help to explain aspects of the widespread local resistance to such policies. In order to meet these aims, as well as establishing the

historical context for discussions about sports equity, my research was designed around *intensive* case studies of five County FAs across England. The case study approach was chosen because, as Martin Denscombe argues (1998: 36-37), the case study enables data to be collected in some depth; it focuses on relationships and processes; it takes place in the natural setting; and it can facilitate a number of data collection methods. In this case, the methods of participant observation and semi-structured interviews were combined in a number of effective ways (these are discussed in more detail later).

The question of *access* to the particular field under investigation is an important consideration for undertaking case studies (Yin 2003). Where the subject under investigation is policy for addressing racism, access can become particularly problematic (see Solomos and Back 1993 for an account of some of these difficulties). At the risk of stating the obvious, the aims and rationale for this thesis – studying the implementation and resistance to the *E&SES* - relied heavily upon *prior* negotiated access being agreed for it to be undertaken effectively. Had this access not been granted, the research aims would have had to have been significantly altered. This kind of access to the field of local football governance is, as far as I am aware, unprecedented: to my knowledge, no researcher has before had this type of privileged and sustained *intensive* access inside County FAs.

The existing research on local football governance (outlined in Chapter 1) has, no doubt, been constrained by restraints on access that have, in turn, influenced the nature of the research aims and design. Research sponsored by the Commission for Racial Equality (Welch et al. 2004) on recruitment into professional football is an example of an *extensive* large-scale survey that, while offering a 'bigger picture' in terms of the

distribution of employment opportunities across the industry, was unable to identify and evaluate the relationships and cultures that shape to the recruitment channels of football organisations. On the other hand, the ethnographic work undertaken by Burdsey (2004a; 2004b; 2007) is a useful example of how *intensive* procedures involving participant observation and interviews tend to deal well with the 'victims' of racism (Carrington 1998) and their experiences of racist subordination, thereby missing out the processes and cultures in organisational structures – what we might call the 'sources' of racism. While there are likely to be a number of practical (and theoretical) reasons why such research has been designed in these ways, I would suggest that constraints on access - particularly into the institutions of power and control in the local football setting -  have previously made the use of the case study design in local football research almost impossible.

In this research, access provided by The FA enabled the researcher to spend extended periods inside different County FAs collecting in-depth data (including historical documentary evidence) to be later collated and evaluated. By being located within County FAs, I was able *physically* to experience the organisation and its structures and was thus able to gain richer, more detailed, data as a result. The data collected, following CR principles, contributed significantly to an understanding of the forms of social action that are shaped by the particular generative mechanisms at work. These have emerged, in turn, from some analysis and understanding of the historical and structural conditions within which the governance of local football has traditionally operated in England. Multiple case studies were undertaken for a number of reasons. Yin (2003) makes the relatively straightforward claim that, by undertaking more than one case study, data is likely to be more valid (including having construct, internal and

external validity) and therefore more reliable and robust. Yin suggests that single case studies are most appropriate when researcher's feel comfortable in being able to select a particular case that exemplifies one of either a representative case, an extreme case, or a revelatory case (Yin 2003: 41-42). Given the relative lack of previous data and an appropriate theoretical frame to inform this subject area, it would have been rather difficult to claim the research team were in a position to be able to identify County FAs that might meet such rigid criteria. At the same time, however, we should acknowledge the use of a 'selecting procedure' for the choice of County FAs. They were by no means chosen at random, and the factors involved in selecting the case studies are discussed later in this chapter.

The multiple-case approach allows for the logic of 'replication' to be addressed, thereby testing and generating theory in a range of different local settings. Put in another way, by asking the same types of questions to the same types of people but in a range of different local settings, one should begin to build a better picture of some of the key issues (or generative mechanisms) at play. This works particularly well when there are several organisations that do the same thing (i.e. govern local football) and have the same history (i.e. Victorian Britain) available for study (Yin 2003: 46). As I discuss in more detail below, County FAs across England are by no means uniform. Indeed, their subtle differences were an important factor in the choice of County FAs for this research. Nonetheless, the *similarity* of role, purpose and function of these organisations made the use of multiple case-studies particularly appropriate here.

While the case study approach contains some common components, it is by no means a uniform research design. There are a range of different types of case studies usefully identified by de Vaus (2001: 221-229), whose typology includes;

- descriptive or explanatory

- theory testing or theory building

- single case or multiple case

- holistic or embedded

- parallel or sequential

- retrospective or prospective

These distinctions are particularly useful in outlining the types of case studies used for this research. The distinction between descriptive and explanatory cases, for example, helps distinguish between the case studies undertaken at the early stages of the research, from those undertaken at the end. At the start of this study, given the paucity of prior research in the area, not to mention the limited personal experience of the lead researcher of English local football (at least in the local governance structures), the first case study was rather descriptive in nature. Perhaps Yin's (2003: 3-5) notion of the 'exploratory' case study better describes the earliest case study, particularly in relation to its connection to theory - the second dualism identified by de Vaus. The first case study followed a largely inductive approach (although as I discuss in more detail later, this still might be better termed 'abductive') in the sense that theories were not by that stage fully constructed, or available to be appropriately tested. Exploratory case studies are useful in finding out the 'what' component of the research aims and questions (Yin 2003: 6), and in this sense, logically relate to the principles of grounded theory (Glaser

and Strauss 1999; Bryman 2001; Ezzy 2002; Charmaz 2003), whereby any overt, explicit commitment to prior theory is avoided. Moreover, this type of case study, combined with a grounded theory approach, is useful in generating theoretical concepts within which to develop theoretical propositions. There is little room here to discuss the connections between grounded theory and CR, but there has been some suggestion of a logical connection between these two approaches (Danermark et al. 2006).

The latter case studies took the form of explanatory cases, which 'seek to achieve both more complex and fuller explanations of phenomena' (de Vaus 2001: 221). Given the range of data collected – and the theory generated – by the previous four case studies, I was able to more explicitly follow a deductive theory testing approach in the final case study. In this sense, the types of activities I was observing, the questions I was asking, and the people I chose to interview were strongly informed by the previous cases. The final two types of cases proposed by de Vaus – parallel/sequential and retrospective/prospective – refer to the temporal nature of case studies. It may have been beneficial to undertake the case studies at exactly the same time. Given that the research was undertaken over a three year period, the development of policy implementation observed at the County FAs visited is likely to have been, in part at least, the result of the relative maturation of the policy itself. Starting at County FA No. 1 in 2004, for example, the awareness and development of the *E&SES* was at a significantly different stage to 2006, when the final County was visited. The case studies were actually done consecutively, one after other. This was primarily because only one person was able to do the research at any given time. The sequential nature of the case studies did have the benefit of generating and then testing theory, as outlined in figure 4.2 below.

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The case study design also proved a little problematic in another sense. It was constrained by the requirement to maintain the anonymity of each County FA visited, at the request of the co-funder of the project, The FA. As the research got under way, it became clear that to undertake a detailed case study of each organisation, I would need to spend some time considering the local terrain. This would include a discussion of the local conditions, past and present, including demographics, but also more detail of the key personnel who had played important roles in the development and formation of the structures and cultures of the organisations under investigation. Because of the constraints around anonymity and confidentiality, it became clear that undertaking a case study in its strictest sense would be very difficult to undertake.

As such, and with some of the more obvious local conditions, nonetheless, taken into consideration, the case studies became more *comparative* in nature, in the sense that data were used directly to compare findings between each organisation and identify key recurring themes across the board, while also attempting to make some sense of any anomalies that appeared to stand out when comparing findings in different settings. To protect the anonymity of the County FAs I visited, I have replaced their names with number when I refer to them explicitly (e.g. County FA 1, 2 etc.).

```
                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │       PRIOR THEORY       │
                    │  (lit review, supervisor,│
                    │  researcher assumptions  │
                    │           etc.)          │
                    └──────────────────────────┘
                          │        │      │
                          ▼
                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │  PO at The FA │
                    └──────────────┘
                          │
         ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
         │  PO at CFA 1 │──▶│ INTERVIEWS at │
         │              │   │    CFA 1      │
         └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘
                │
         ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
         │  PO at CFA 2 │──▶│ INTERVIEWS at │        PO = participant
         │              │   │    CFA 2      │        observation
         └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘
                │                                     CFA = County Football
         ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐         Association
         │  PO at CFA 3 │──▶│ INTERVIEWS at │
         │              │   │    CFA 3      │
         └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘
                │
         ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
         │  PO at CFA 4 │──▶│ INTERVIEWS at │
         │              │   │    CFA 4      │
         └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘
                │
         ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
         │  PO at CFA 5 │──▶│ INTERVIEWS at │
         │              │   │    CFA 5      │
         └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘
                          ▼
                ┌──────────────────────┐
                │   SURVEY of all CFAs  │
                └──────────────────────┘
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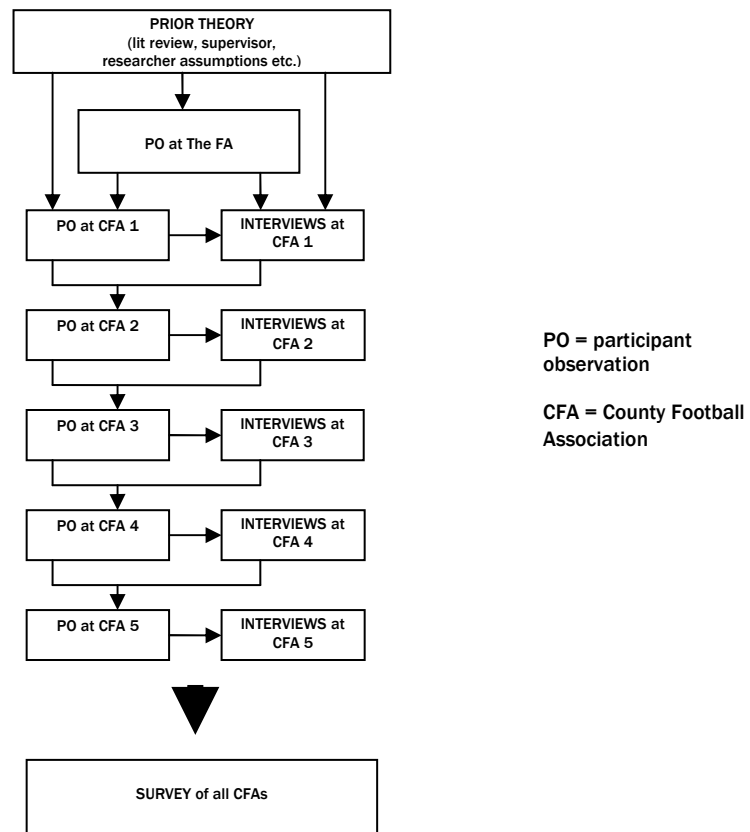
**Fig. 4.2: Theory generation through sequential case studies**

*(iii) The survey*

It is quite common for quantitative data collection to take place prior to the use of any

qualitative methods (May 1999; Bryman 2001; Creswell 2003). This often makes sense

when a study requires some broad, generalisable data upon which to inform the broader

research question and to identify key themes upon which one may wish to focus. In this

particular setting, however, we had a range of relatively recent large-scale surveys from

which to derive some of the 'scene-setting' necessary for an investigation of this kind.

This includes a detailed report on racism in grass roots football (Long et al. 2000), the

aforementioned CRE survey of football recruitment (Welch et al. 2004) and some

'internal' research undertaken by The Football Association itself on the demography of local football (The FA 2002).

We decided to begin the research with a six month spell of participant observation in the national FA HQ in London from which we aimed to identify those key areas we could then explore further at the County FA level. This worked well; it was more appropriate to use qualitative methods early on in the research, as I was able to acquire the depth and level of knowledge required regarding key issues in contemporary local football and its governance. This would have proved more difficult, for example, via use of a survey questionnaire, which tends to be much more adequate at testing theory rather than generating new knowledge or theory (Bryman 2001). The research team discussed the possibility of undertaking two surveys – one early on in the research and one at the end – to open up the option of assessing how much had changed in both the structural make-up and cultural attitudes to the initiatives encouraged by the *E&SES* over almost a three year period. We might, for example, have expected to have seen a more diverse representation within the organisations, and perhaps some 'softening' of attitudes towards some of the ideals of sports equity at the local level. But given the problems associated with assessing social attitudes using the survey method, we settled on one survey, to be conducted towards the end of the research period.

This survey data were useful to the collaborative partner in the research, The FA, as well as for the thesis itself. These offered The FA with some benchmark statistics of County FA personnel and the general 'state of play' with regard to the stage of implementation each County FA was at with respect to the *E&SES*. As I will discuss in detail later, much of the survey data we collected suggested that the *E&SES* remains in its very early

stages of implementation, with the pace of change perhaps slower than we had anticipated in some localities. The survey data also confirmed the extent of the local resistance to the *E&SES* that our case studies had also unearthed. The survey produced a very high response rate of 79%, with 38 out of the 48 County FAs responding. Data from the survey have provided a range of benchmark statistics on the demographic make-up of the local Associations. It has also provided national data on the current extent to which *E&SES* has been implemented locally, alongside an evaluation of the relative impact of the key initiatives that the *E&SES* has driven so far.

The questionnaire was sent, via email, to County FA chief executives and it contained mainly 'closed' questions, for which answers were provided in a drop-down box. Open ended answers were encouraged only when the range of answers did not match the appropriate response (e.g. 'other – please state'). A small number of questions asked for respondents to describe a *procedure* of their organisation - for example the recruitment of Council Member staff onto their Council. All types of question were relatively easy to code. Once coded, data were placed into the excel package and, where necessary, were transformed into the appropriate graphics that have been used at a number of junctures in the thesis

### (iv) Data collection

Data collected for the project were primarily assembled using intensive methods, guided by the realist approach. Realism attempts to collect the type of data that facilitates the analytical dualism 'between what people say, that is the claims they make, and what people mean; that is, how they employ ideas discursively to make practical sense of their social milieu' (Carter 2000: 85). In other words, we need to know exactly *what*

people say about ideas of race and racism – in this study, *when* ideas of race are deployed to articulate resistance to 'race equality' policies - while also trying to make some sense of *why* they say the things they do – i.e. what outcomes are produced by the utility of ideas of race in local football governance. I have already outlined why the case study design was particularly suited to this task, but it is worth re-iterating that one of the key strengths of case study design is its capacity to draw on a range of data collection methods.

In order to understand the *social milieu* that Carter (2000) suggests people try to make practical sense of, it was important to build up a relatively robust picture of the structural conditions that underpin County Football Associations – what Bourdieu (1988) would call the 'field' of local football governance in England. Documentary evidence, both secondary and primary, has been identified elsewhere as an important source of knowledge in the social sciences and sport (see Bryman 2001, May 1999, Polley 2006b, Rojek 2005). A range of documents – historical and contemporary – were sought out and analysed and became an important source of evidence for many of the arguments made in the thesis.

To find out *what people say*, we used semi-structured interviews with representatives from all levels of football; from national and regional FA managers, County FA staff and volunteers, to local club secretaries, managers, coaches and players. Where appropriate, interviews were also undertaken with external stakeholders in the local game, such as Local Authority staff, Football in the Community staff and representatives from local community groups. In addition, an extensive questionnaire was sent to all chief executives/FA County secretaries, who were asked a range of

questions around the implementation of the policy itself, and its relationship to the key priorities of the County FA. Figure 4.3 outlines the number of interviews undertaken in each category.

| Location | Interviewee | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | County FA Council Members | County FA Staff Members | Local Football Representatives | |
| **County FA 1 (March – April 2005)** | President<br><br>Chairman<br><br>3 x Council members | Chief Executive<br><br>Discipline Manager<br><br>3 x Development Staff | 2 x Club Secretaries<br><br>Football in the Community Officer<br><br>Referee<br><br>Regional FA Manager | **15** |
| **County FA 2 (Feb – March 2006)** | President<br><br>Director<br><br>2 x Council members | Chief Executive<br><br>Discipline Officer<br><br>4 x Dev Staff | 3 x Club Secretaries<br><br>Local Equity officer<br><br>Former County FA 2 Chief Executive | **15** |
| **County FA 3 (Aug – Sept 2006)** | President<br><br>2 x Council members | County Secretary<br><br>Discipline Manager<br><br>2 x Development staff | Local Equity Officer<br><br>Former County FA 3 Development Manager<br><br>Club Secretary | **10** |
| **County FA 4 (Nov 2006)** | 3 x Council members | Chief Executive<br><br>Development Manager | 2 x Club Secretaries | **7** |
| **County FA 5 (March 2007)** | President<br><br>2 x Council members | County Secretary<br><br>Discipline Manager<br><br>2 x Development staff | 3 x Club Secretaries | **10** |
| **Total** | **18** | **21** | **18** | **57** |

**Table 4.3: Numbers and categories of interviews**

In order to aid the more explanatory task of analytical dualism – *what people mean* (Carter 2000: 68-69), extensive participant observation was undertaken via the case studies in a range of local football settings. These included periods: inside the offices of County FAs; in coaching sessions; in development workshops; in FA conferences and at local football matches. There are some pertinent points to make about the data collection process. Taking each method in turn, I discuss below in some detail the procedures followed, including the sample selected for study. I also discuss the limitations here, including issues of reliability and validity of data. Once this is completed, I end the chapter with a discussion of the processes of data analysis, briefly discussing how the data were handled and transformed so that they could direct the discussion chapters that make up the bulk of the rest of this thesis.

### *(v) Documentary Analysis*

A range of secondary and primary sources were selected and analysed throughout the thesis. The review of secondary evidence, largely in the form of academic texts but also more popular sports history books, might be read as something of an extended literature review in this thesis (particularly Chapter 2), and yet this also forms an important methodological stage in the study as it helps to provide an account of the previous structural conditions emphasised in Archer's first stage of the morphogenetic cycle. The procedure followed here was similar to the conduct of any literature review; the identification of key texts and key debates, general journal article searches and reviews, tips from colleagues and follows ups from reference lists from other texts. This secondary evidence provided the basis for Chapter 2 but, as subsequent chapters will show, has also informed the analysis of the empirical data collected through qualitative methods to be discussed shortly.

The primary evidence that I selected and analysed for this task came largely from the libraries of the County FAs I visited and also the main FA library at Soho Square. This primary evidence forms much of the content of Chapter 3, and provides a flavour of how County FAs have historically been organised along with a sense of the cultural values that have dominated these organisations. Remarkably, I found minute books for County FA Council and Committee meetings often dating right back to the foundation of the organisations. These were helpful in providing facts such as dates, founder members, matters discussed and so forth; they also could be read for style and content to build up a picture of the types of organisations these early County FAs (and indeed The FA) were and why they were formed in the first place. In addition, a significant amount of more contemporary documents were analysed, including relevant policy documents at The FA (seen in Chapter 5) but also important were County FA annual handbooks, which detailed the names and numbers of key personnel over many years, along with the committee names, structure, and representation of various local groups within the local football community. These handbooks proved a crucial source of information here. Marwick's (2001) 'catechism' for analysing primary sources was particularly useful in offering a framework for which to 'read' this material. Broadly speaking, the catechism is a four stage process involving:

1. Approaching the source critically

2. Analysing the source context

3. Analysing the source content

4. Assessing the validity and reliability of the source

Being aware of the wide range of historical contexts that the various primary sources were written in was a particularly important consideration here.

### *(vi) Participant observation*

I undertook observation at a wide range of locations and settings over the three-year period of the research. During this time, the nature of such observation varied considerably. Using Gold's (1958, cited in Bryman 2001) classification of observation roles, this varied from complete participant, where I was actively involved in the day-to-day activities of a particular setting, to complete observer where, other than my physical presence, I had no interaction with the particular setting concerned. At the extreme end of this latter 'observer' role, it seemed quite clear to me that my presence bordered on the 'invisible', particularly at large-scale meetings where I was not introduced and never asked to explain my attendance. This was, however, the exception, and it is important to acknowledge that, even in the role of 'complete observer', my presence in a variety of settings is likely to have been noted, and might have influenced the nature of the range of discussions I observed. Comments during meetings such as 'You'll be interested in this, won't you?' and 'Don't write that in your report!' gave clear indication of the influence my (often silent) presence may have had on the proceedings in front of me.

Despite this occasional direct acknowledgement of my presence, there were times when I was surprised at the very candid nature of the interactions I observed, particularly given the awareness of participants of the focus of my study (normally described as 'Looking at the implementation of the *E&SES'*). On one occasion I was invited to attend a disciplinary hearing at a County FA. This was a very formal setting, where three Council Members and the Disciplinary Manager waited for the defendant to arrive. I

was placed in the corner of the room with a notebook in front of me. One member of the panel decided to narrate a story about a previous employee of the Association who was 'known' to have had sex with a female employee in the adjacent room. The story involved not only a verbal description but also a physical re-enactment of the supposed sexual activity. Such accounts can, of course, be interpreted in a number of ways – were they being 'juiced-up' for my benefit? But such instances also suggest it was unlikely that interactions were being modified or censored as a result of my presence.

*(a) Participant observation at The FA*

The research began with an extended period of participant observation at The FA's central headquarters at Soho Square, London in 2004 and 2005. I was invited to 'shadow' the Equality Manager at The FA for a period of about six months. During this phase of participant observation my involvement was led by the activities of the Equality Manager. Relevant meetings, conferences, projects and other activities were routinely observed (and are discussed in more detail later in this section). At the end of this period, an interview was undertaken with the Equality Manager to assess her views of what to expect at County FA level, and what was expected of The FA itself at this early stage of the policy implementation. This period felt, very like an extended traditional 'work experience'. I was provided with my own desk, a computer log-in, a telephone, my own security pass and, to all intents and purposes, I was regarded as a new member of staff. I spent roughly half my time desk-based, and was given a range of administrative duties to do, from small pieces of research to stuffing envelopes.

Crucially, this phase of the research allowed me to become familiar and knowledgeable about The FA as an organisation. I could also identify where the Equality Department

fitted within the wider structures of English football governance. I attended a number of meetings in which the Equality Manager outlined the key aims and objectives of the *E&SES* to a number of departments at The FA, including the referees' department, the customer services department, various elements of football development and also compliance and regulation. At the same time, this period also allowed me to develop contacts with important local figures in the 'race equality' field in the local game. One of the most productive meetings I attended was The FA's race equality advisory group. Here, around 20 local stakeholders were invited to debate some of The FA's policies, as well as act as informal 'ambassadors' for The FA's race equality activities nationally. These contacts became important for my research – some of them were important interviewees who were able to articulate their experiences and key concerns in their dealings with both the national and County FAs. They also acted as 'gatekeepers' and important 'stepping stones' to other relevant contacts in the local areas where my case studies were situated.

Finally here, it was during this period that I first, formally, entered the setting of local football governance and was exposed to some of the dominant cultures of the key members of these associations. I attended the Annual County FA Conference in December 2004, for example, which included workshop sessions that exposed me not only to some of the key contemporary issues affecting the day-to-day activities of County FAs, but also to a conference dinner which highlighted the specific cultural resources that dominate this sort of setting. This included, for example, ritualised standing for the National Anthem prior to dinner and the archetypical 'old-school' after-dinner speaker, with the usual array of politically insensitive material, received with a mixture of hearty laughter alongside the rolling of some scandalised eyes!

*(b) Participant observation at County FAs*

County FAs were selected for the study by a process of negotiation and the weighing up of a number of factors including location, personnel and 'condition' and size of the organisation. For example, County FA No.1 was chosen as a potentially helpful introduction to some of the key issues the project was addressing. It was also located conveniently for the researcher, it had staff that were well known and 'trusted' by The FA, and it also had significance in terms of its geographical location, size, and existing relationships with The FA for us to feel that it was of sufficient research interest. Some of these criteria were also employed for the selection of other County FAs for detailed study. I say more about these issues later.

Observational settings at the County FAs varied considerably in terms of their location, intensity and focus. The office space in which I was located was usually determined by the County FA staff and availability. I had the opportunity to request moving into different departments during the case study visit, and virtually all requests were accommodated. Tim May (1993: 153) suggests that participant observation is regarded as the 'most personally demanding and analytically difficult method of social research' (May 1993: 153). It certainly provided me with a number of challenges. Firstly, there was the obvious interpersonal awkwardness of an 'outsider' coming into a (usually tight-knit) already occupied physical space. The experience reminded me of the 'first day at work' feeling, where you have no understanding of the types of appropriate interactions and office-cultures that you step into. The strategy I tended to follow in this respect was keeping rather quiet, out of the way, and not wanting my presence to significantly alter the nature of the office environment. As time went on, and as a result of usually informal interactions (I found offering to make the tea a useful ice-breaker) I

tended to slowly become accepted into the institutional space. May (1993: 157) suggests that 'to become part of a social scene and participate in it requires that the researcher is accepted to some degree', and I was always conscious of the need to 'earn' this acceptance.

### (vii) Semi-structured interviews with local football stakeholders

Having completed the participant observation periods - which varied in length from around two weeks to five weeks, depending upon the case study - I undertook a number of semi-structured interviews with key local stakeholders. These interviews usually took between 30 minutes and an hour, and were taped for convenience. At the start of each interview I gave each respondent a brief overview of the project using a standard script to maintain consistency. I then made clear the guarantee of the anonymising of all responses and of the County FAs associated with respondents. In the vast majority of cases, respondents appeared more than happy to co-operate; indeed, I often had to cut short interviews or responses to some questions due to time constraints. Interviews took place in a range of settings, but I tried to ensure the location was a comfortable setting for the respondent. This was the respondent's own place of work, or their home, their local football club ground or even the storeroom of the local greengrocers, with crates of fizzy drinks for seats!

The selection of interviewees was led by information gained through participation. With the exception of key staff, such as the chief executive and County Development Manager, other staff members and Council Members were selected because of their local expertise, knowledge, status or particular interest in the topic of the research. While informed by my own observations, the choice of interviewees was also heavily

reliant upon the advice and recommendation of key County FA personnel. This was particularly useful for identifying one or two Council Members and local volunteers who I generally missed through observational work because most meetings arranged for Council Members are scheduled for evenings. I tended to ask staff to recommend people who were 'interested' in the topic of equity for whatever reason, so I could collect data most relevant to my study.

The available research on voluntary sports organisations (Slack 1985; 1997; Long 2000; Sport England 2003; Nichols et al. 2005), along with the relatively 'closed' nature of staff recruitment into County FAs, suggested that I might obtain a rather narrow range of views about County FAs and their operations. I was conscious that, by relying on County FA staff for interview and for the selection of other interviewees there was the possibility of skewed sampling, with organisations pushing their 'preferred' interviewees and thus opening up the possibility of bias in the findings. I tried to counter this by calling on my own connections with external bodies; organisations I felt might be able to suggest a wider range of potential respondents. These included organisations such as *Kick It Out*, local Football in the Community Schemes, local anti-racist sport groups and activists and other relevant contacts. This process sometimes took the form of snowball sampling (Bryman 2001), whereby one respondent provided details of others, who, themselves, made other recommendations, and so on. Although I conducted only a relatively small number of interviews at each locality (about 10 in each), this technique proved useful, particularly in reaching respondents of whom the County FA may have been unaware, or may even have been avoiding recommending as an interviewee, perhaps because their views were challenging to the organisation.

Only once was there any difficulty in reaching a respondent I felt was an appropriate contact but whom the County FA appeared to try to dissuade me from interviewing. The person concerned was a particularly outspoken local Council Member, who the County FA chief executive concerned suggested had a current dispute with the organisation that could potentially 'bias' the findings collected from an interview. After some reflection, I decided to inform the County FA CEO that I would, nonetheless, like to interview the person. The request was acknowledged and finally accepted, although not without some reservation.

## 6. Data analysis

> Too many times, investigators start case studies without having the foggiest notion about how the evidence is to be analyzed. Such investigations easily become stalled at the analytic stage.
>
> (Yin 2003: 109)

The comment above, regarding handling case study data, reflects a common concern within the social sciences; once we have collected our data, what are we supposed to do with it and how do we make sense of it? I suspect this is, in part, a legacy of the empiricist tradition of the social sciences where, as May (1999) suggests, the facts simply speak for themselves, with no need for any specific procedures of interpretation. Extensive (quantitative) data, such as those produced by the survey, is often amenable to the use of relatively straightforward descriptive statistics. These, at least to some extent, may well be argued to 'speak for themselves' such as, for example, the percentage demographic breakdown of Council Members. The task facing researchers using data collected through intensive (qualitative) procedures is arguably more formidable in this

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respect, given the complexity and subjective nature of such raw material. I want to spend a little time here discussing how I analysed the data collected through the intensive (qualitative) procedures, not only because they provide the bulk of the material discussed in the main findings Chapters (6 & 7 and also Chapter 3), but also because these procedures were significantly more complex and time consuming than those used to interpret the survey data. I begin by providing an overview of the key principles of qualitative data analysis and then offer a brief discussion of the approach I have borrowed for analysing my own data – that of grounded theory. I will then describe the procedures I deployed to analyse the data, offering an example taken from early on in my research. This includes the preparation and interpretation of the data collected. I end by briefly discussing the procedures followed when analysing data collected from my questionnaire.

### i) Analysis of Case Study data

Analysing intensive data can be a notoriously messy business. The data collected during the case studies of County FAs (interview transcripts and participant observation field notes) were richly detailed and vast in size. To avoid being swamped or 'stalled' by the expanse of data collected through the case studies, it was vital to be guided by some relatively simple principles of qualitative data analysis. Denscombe (1998: 287-288) usefully outlines four key principles of qualitative data analysis:

- Analysis should be grounded in the evidence collected (not rely upon abstract theorising)

- Interpretation of findings should be derived from careful reading and re-reading of the data itself

- Analysis should avoid wherever possible the introduction of researcher preconceptions

- The process should be iterative, that is, moving back and forth from collection to analysis through constant comparison of data

All of these principles seem to be directly concerned with the relationship between theory – that is, our explanations of social phenomena – and the raw data we have collected. Each statement appears to attempt to refute the logic of deduction, where a prior theory or explanation is tested (or refuted) through the collection of data. Denscombe suggests that qualitative methodology tends to be inductive, that is, theory is generated from the data collected, hence a 'move from the data to the theory and from the particular to the general' (1998: 288).

### (ii) Grounded theory, Critical Realism and abductive logic

The notion of induction in social scientific studies has been explored in more detail in the development or 'discovery' (Glaser and Strauss 1999) of grounded theory. This marks an attempt to make qualitative methods appear as scientifically rigorous as the more popular and dominant quantitative approaches in the social sciences of the 1960s, particularly in the USA (Ezzy 2002: 7-10; Charmaz 2003: 252-254). It was also a critique of the logic of deduction:

> [P]revious books on methods of social research have focused mainly on how to verify theories. This suggests an over-emphasis in current sociology on the verification of theory, and a resultant de-emphasis on the prior step of

discovering what concepts and hypotheses are relevant for the area that one wishes to research.

(Glaser and Strauss 1999: 2)

Grounded theory is informed by the symbolic interactionist influences of the Chicago School (where Glaser studied) an approach that emphasised the importance of the ethnographic study and a commitment to interpreting meaning behind social action. Given these interactionist origins, it may seem counterintuitive to propose a synthesis between grounded theory and Critical Realism as I do here. Grounded theory has often been characterised as a representation of inductive principles of scientific inquiry, whereby theoretical explanation is generated directly from findings. This does not tell the whole story. Charmiz (2003) provides a nice summary of the philosophical underpinnings of grounded theory, which, she suggests, have become increasingly muddled over time. Rather than rejecting the principles of scientific realism in favour of a strictly hermeneutic focus, she argues that grounded theory draws upon many objectivist ontological positions, not least the suggestion that an independent reality can be uncovered and understood through (albeit radically different) forms of analysis. The notion of *abduction* has been used to attempt a synthesis of the deductive and inductive approach, and it is useful because it overcomes some of the more fundamental criticisms of both; namely, the rigid dependence on theory *a priori* to the collection of data (deduction), or alternatively, the suggestion that data can be collected without any reference to prior theory at all (induction) (Ezzy 2002). Abduction also resembles the Critical Realist notion of 'retroduction', which in turn reflects an attempt to analytically separate structure and agency by first mapping the structural conditions before understanding the social interaction that subsequently takes place, The logic of abduction was developed by Charles Peirce, whose ideas suggested that:

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> The discovery of new understandings did not occur either through simplistic deduction alone, or through simplistic induction alone, Rather, abduction followed by induction and deduction involved a complex process of inference, insight, empirical observation and logical reasoning.

(Ezzy 2002: 15)


In other words, abductive procedures acknowledge the early presence of theoretical postulations – in Critical Realist terms, knowledge of the structural conditions - but at the same time they allow empirical data to inform such explanations at an early stage. This *iterative* approach is more pragmatic in the generation of knowledge and is appealing as it describes much more clearly the processes I followed when trying to make sense of the data collected for this study. Certainly, I was unable to follow a deductive 'theory testing' approach for the study, given the lack of previous research and theoretical postulation available on the area concerned (see Chapter 1). On the other hand, it would be naïve to suggest that at no time was I informed by wider theoretical propositions *during* the research, both from my own observations and from the interview data. Indeed, there were several moments during the study where the research team proposed a number of key themes to investigate further. It soon became apparent, for example, that the ideas concerning the inherent 'fairness' in sport, connected to the ideals of *amateur* principles, were a central, recurring theme within the setting of local football governance. The analysis of historical documentary evidence was an ongoing process, and rather than provide a picture of the structural conditions *prior* to undertaking the case studies, this historical analysis was completed *at the same time* as the data collection. As such, as amateurist ideas became more commonly articulated by respondents, we were able to combine this with our historical evidence and focus in more detail on this topic for our later case studies, particularly in the types of questions

we were able to ask our interviewees. Another way of viewing this approach as congruent with Critical Realism is the notion of emergence, where 'situations in which the combination of two or more features gives rise to new phenomena, which have properties irreducible to those of their constituents' (Sayer 2000: 12). Critical Realism is concerned with identifying the generative mechanisms behind emergent properties and, in this sense, an iterative or abductive approach can identify early possible mechanisms which can then be tested in later settings for their validity.

### (iii) Case study data analysis

The procedures followed in analysing my case study data can be summarised as involving three stages: preparation of data; interpretation of data; and verification of data (adapted from Denscombe 288-303). I will briefly discuss what I did during each stage.

Firstly, it is important for data to be prepared and transformed once collected to be able to make any useful sense of it. Perhaps the hardest task here was preparing my copious and often rather muddled and unclear field notes taken during participant observation – an inherent hazard of this method (May 1999; Bryman 2001). For the first case study, I used two note books; one to make 'open' notes on meetings and on the practicalities of the case study (such as what I did, when I did it and so on), and one to make more reflective, critical comments on these observations. This second note book became particularly useful in identifying some of the emergent themes that I felt I may want to pursue – similar to what has been termed 'memos' (Denscombe 1998; Glaser and Strauss 1999; May 1999; Bryman 2001; Ezzy 2002; Yin 2003). This made preparing the data for analysis a little easier, as I was able to separate the more descriptive data from

my early reflections of them. During other case study periods I used the back of the note book for reflective comments and the front of the book for more descriptive notes. The following table provides an example of the different types of entries recorded during participant observation on day 1 of County FA 2 case study:

| Descriptive entries (summary of field notes) | Reflective entries (summary of field notes) |
| --- | --- |
| Day 1 – am<br>Used personal laptop to record key statistics of CFA, including ethnicity data from census, and player/club/league statistics for CFA. First look at CFA handbook<br><br>Day 1 – pm<br>Meeting with CFA Chief Executive; discussed the key priorities of CFA as he saw it:<br>    referee development<br>    discipline on pitch<br>    customer care/service | Day 1 – am<br>Mostly P/T staff; recent recruits are much younger and more females than previously; All staff located in one office; CEO overlooks from long window in his own office<br><br>Day 1 – pm<br>My 'Stand up-Speak up' (anti-racist campaign) wristband was noticed by CDM; he produced some Kick It Out wristbands from his draw and give me one; a gesture of solidarity or proving his credentials? |

**Figure 4.4: Field notes from participant observation**

The semi-structured interviews I undertook were all taped (apart from the second half of only one interview, where the tape – unbeknown to me – stopped half way through). This enabled me to capture the 'complete' data, which were then typed up into a full transcript. I decided, simply, to type them up verbatim, without the sometimes used transcription 'codes' for silences, emphasis, and so on. This was simply a time constraint, given that it took approximately six hours to type up one interview. I have

also kept audio file copies of all interviews, in the knowledge that if I wanted to review the tone in which a comment was made, I could refer back to the original source.

Secondly, and most time consuming of all, was the process of interpreting the data I had collected. Here, I called specifically upon some of the principles of grounded theory. This was particularly useful here because it 'offers qualitative researchers a set of clear guidelines from which to build explanatory frameworks that specify relationships among concepts' (Charmaz 2003: 251). In order to shift from description to explanation of the data, I interpreted my raw data using codes, categories, themes and concepts. By way of illustration, I will use one particular example taken from the first case study to show how I used these techniques to turn my raw data into valid theoretical clauses.

As I have already described, I used the first case study (County FA 1) as a kind of *exploratory* case. I had little previous data and knowledge to go on, other than a spell of participant observation at The FA. This was my first venture into a local football setting, so I was, therefore, very keen to get a broad picture of the data from the interviews to begin to identify some of the key issues and responses. Given the large amount of data collected (12 interviews each lasting about 45 minutes), I wanted to try to map out these key findings to enable early coding and comparison of the data. Figure 4.5 is an abridged version of a table I created from some of the interview transcripts.

The use of this table transformed the detailed raw data into a format that could be more easily coded and analysed. It was during this initial process that the study might be described as inductive, as I relied heavily on responses to guide my later data collection and to generate initial theories and explanations. Even at this stage, however, these early

periods of data collection might better be described as abductive in their approach. Fig. 4.5 shows, on the header row, the broad themes used to guide the semi-structured interviews. These themes were generated by wider theoretical speculations; in this case, the topics of conversation that were likely to provide the most appropriate data for the aims of the study, such as: respondent's views of the role and priorities of their County FA; the influence of FA policy on the County FA; and their feelings towards the necessity of the *E&SES*. Given the relatively large number of interviews (57) I undertook during the case studies, along with the obvious constraints of time, the semi-structured nature of the interviews ensured greater coherence and comparison of the data. This is not to say that interviews were rigid and proscriptive. The themes selected were, necessarily, broad and flexible; there were times when interviews focused much more heavily on some sections than others, and I tried (again, notwithstanding the obvious time constraints) to allow interviewees to direct the emphasis of the interview.

| Topic/ respondent | Prior experience | Motivation to join CFA | Role of CFA | Priorities of CFA | Type of CFA | Internal politics | Influence of National FA | Views on Sports Equity | Change in local football | Reasons for low ethnic minority involvement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **CM1** | Works team | Intrigue | Allow football participation | Stop decline in 11v11 | Forward thinking<br><br>Used by FA as model | Dev staff FA, but seen as MCFA staff | FA policy sometimes forced upon CFA, don't consult | Crucial, everyone should be able to play football<br><br>People jumping on ethnic bandwagon | Decline in parents behaviour<br><br>No volunteers | In their make up<br><br>MCFA seen as unapproachable<br><br>Those involved in MCFA see no barriers |
| | Club sec, league sec, MCFA | Personal ambition | Education | Recruit volunteers | 20 years ago – didn't need dev, more volunteers<br><br>20 years time – FA will regionalise, close CFAs | Was a split, them and us | FA funding staff at CFA, over reliance on FA money | No problem in the past, why concentrate on it now | Culture change – lifestyle, don't want to help | It's the communities problem – perceived barriers don't exist |
| **CM3** | Player | Giving something back | Governing football in county | Develop youth football | Forefront – MCFA staff poached | Dev staff have helped communication with members | FA dictate policy and activities for CFAs because of funding CFA rely on – no choice but to accept | Not a football issue, but one for society as a whole | Increase in black teams – the better teams were black | Cultural issue with Asians – don't integrate as well as blacks |
| | Coach, manager, club Sec. MCFA | | Recruit and retain referees | Address lack of facilities | Council is clicky, closed shop | | CFA should be given more financial autonomy | | More refugees, immigrants | Blacks early involvement means established clubs now |
| | Got involved through kid's team | Personal ambition | Support, develop and broaden participation | Address decline in participation | Referee bias on discip committee | MCFA Still seen as fine collecting body only | Requesting cash from volunteers may be the final straw to their involvement | Football encourages integration and gives people something to do (other than commit crime) | Decrease in interest in playing football, costs, lack of facilities too | No barriers at MCFA, just perceived problems<br><br>Onus on e/m community to get involved |
| **CM5** | referee, league admin posts, refs association | just retired, time on hands | organise football, provide best facilities and conditions | tackle bad behaviour, esp youth | very well run, by people who are with it | quite different | MCFA GP committee sets priorities, but increasingly led by FA | Fairly important, more important now because of change in society - more fair | increase in BME popn, esp Eastern European, leads to decline in behaviour - they need to learn how to behave, on a short fuse | less racism discip cases than people expect, more people play the race card as excuse |
| | Referee, referee training instructor | not ambitious, just wanted to help | create a positive football environment | address decline in 11v11 football<br><br>stop loss of facilities | used to be run by immovable people who were past it, resistant to change<br><br>fair and open, esp in discip cases | we' appreciate what 'they' are doing | FA put money into Counties, they have say in activities, but still some battles<br><br>FA directives necessary to ensure uniformity across counties | less fair in the past - due to tradition of game (white, male) - we must be able to put our prejudices aside | more teams of same ethnicity developing | low BME representation on council is a bad thing, but they don't want to get involved<br><br>BME happy being in their own communities |

**Figure 4.5: Exploratory coding of interview data, County FA**

Figure 4.6 is a representation of the next steps in the analysis of interview data. It is an illustration of the processes undertaken from original interview quotations to the generation of theoretical concepts useful for analysis. Within grounded theory, there is a wide range of different terminology used to describe the stages within this broad process; for this illustrative example I have taken the terms used by Denscombe (1998: 292), namely, codes, categories, themes and concepts. In some instances, the terms categories and themes seem to refer essentially to the same stage (cf. Bryman 2001; Ezzy 2002), but I prefer the separation of both terms because, as I will outline, they mark a distinction between description and analysis.

Firstly, codes were used to, rather crudely, describe and summarise a passage of interview text, with little attempt made at interpretation of the data. Fig. 4.6 shows, for example, how two of the interviewees referred explicitly to joining the County FA to further their 'career' in local football, which I refer to as 'personal ambition'. Next, codes were placed into broader categories that summarised the usually numerous and often unwieldy codes into a smaller group of 'umbrella' terms (Denscombe 1998: 292). I tried to keep these categories largely descriptive in nature, so as to be able to then generate themes by identifying the key relationships and patterns between categories. Fig. 4.6 is a useful example of identifying, through codes and categories, the underlying motivation behind joining a County FA. The themes that emerged were that such volunteering can be understood as both an altruistic obligation while also being a vehicle to access local power for those wanting to become involved. The final stage is the generation of concepts, what Denscombe (1998: 292) terms 'generalised statements.' Using the example in Fig. 4.6, it soon became apparent that longstanding ideas concerning 'fairness' and

'amateur' principles in sport were particularly important in explaining the motivation

behind people joining County FAs.

| Quotation | Code | Category | Theme | Concept |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| "Being a chairman of a league and you've got a body running you, you want to see, as far as I was concerned, what that body was actually doing for football" | Curiosity | Having a say | Status through local football | Amateurism |
| "I felt that if I'm going to go into football as deeply as I had done, I wanted to go right the way through as far as I could" | Personal ambition | Become a local stakeholder | | |
| "I don't see any point in being vice chair of anything unless you are prepared to step up, so … had an interview with certain [CFA] officers and was elected" | Personal ambition | | | |
| "The benefits from a personal point of view is helping football in the County. I still have a very active role in youth football" | Helping football | Giving back to football | Voluntary duty | |
| "I came on without any sort of ambition to move up and I found myself moving up season by season" | Altruism | | | |
| "id packed up work some years previous to that and they wanted someone to organise their county cups so I stepped in" | just retired | Use of free time | | |

**Figure 4.6: Generating theoretical concepts through interview data**

## 7. Summary

I have used this chapter to broadly locate my research strategy and design within wider concerns of ontology and epistemology; something I have argued is generally lacking in much social analysis and particularly in studies that engage with notions of 'race' and racism. I propose that the principles of Critical Realism are most appropriate to help meet the key aims of the research, including gaining appropriate knowledge with which to analyse the implementation of the *E&SES* in local football. In particular, I have advocated the use of historical analysis in order to understand, more fully, the structural conditions within which social interaction takes place. This is directly informed by CR ideas of analytical dualism (the separation of structure and agency) and Archer's morphogenetic cycle.

A series of iterative or abductive case studies of County Football Associations – which utilised documentary analysis, participant observation and semi-structured interview methods – was used to generate data in order to assess the local reception of the *E&SES*. I also showed how, through the use of codes, categories and themes, I was able to generate concepts and theoretical propositions to begin to account for some of the findings I collected.  In the next chapter I turn specifically to the policy under investigation – The FA's Ethics and Sports Equity Strategy – and outline the nuts and bolts of the document, before moving on to discuss in some detail the empirical findings that outline the response to the E&SES among County FA representatives.

# Chapter 5
## The *Ethics & Sports Equity Strategy* and The Football Association

### 1. Introduction

What follows is a critical overview of the contents and objectives of the new FA *E&SES* strategy. Before this, however, it will be useful, briefly, to outline the circumstances that pressed The FA to produce such a document at this time. The role of government, largely managed through Sport England, is particularly crucial here. As we shall see, the principles that lay behind the FA's *E&SES* are largely derived from Sport England policy, an approach which is informed, mainly, by work on gender equity. It will be demonstrated, however, that it is the issue of combating *racism* which has led (and, as we shall see, continues to lead) in the debates regarding tackling inequality in and through the cultural arena of football

In this chapter I also turn to a discussion of the relatively new football development activities launched by The FA in 2000, and how the new social inclusion agenda in sport has found a strong ally within this new FA programme for grass roots football. Next, I provide a brief overview of The FA equity strategy itself; some of its key components, aims, objectives, the groups it is aimed at, and other specific issues that the strategy wishes to address. The FA's principle equity publications (2004a; 2004b) provide numerous examples of 'good practice' in this area, which will be referred to where appropriate. Central here is the move by sports governing bodies *away* from a theory of equal opportunities towards one espousing greater pro-activity and a policy of positive action.

Finally, I identify some of the key partners and stakeholders directly involved in delivering the new FA equity strategy. Here I offer a broader picture of how The FA plans to implement its equity agenda in local football. This also provides the basis for further investigation of these local organisations and the key personnel who may offer varying degrees of resistance to the strategy's proposed outcomes and its methods of implementation.

## 2. The strategy explained: what is this 'equity' anyway?

The sub-title above was a response from a local club secretary I interviewed for the research. It reflects the novelty of a concept that is relatively new in sport policy. As we have already seen in Chapter 2, The FA's use of the term 'sports equity' can be traced back to the Sports Council's policies of the early 1990s. Indeed, Anita White, then head of Research at the Sports Council, was a key consultant for The FA in the preparation of its new *E&SES*. It is worth spending a little time outlining Sport England's notion of equity, as the FA's *E&SES* is heavily derived from, and is deliberately correlated to, these original ideas.

To reiterate, the use of the word 'equity' was a deliberate attempt to introduce a 'new' concept into the sport policy arena to try to rejuvenate debate and a policy approach that focused on using sport as a site to tackle inequality (White 2005). Here, equity was introduced in an attempt to build on existing work based on equality of opportunity, work that focused on increasing and improving individual access to sport. Equity implies the requirement of an element of pro-activity and 'positive action' in order to enable previously excluded groups to become actively involved in all forms of sporting culture, not only in participation. Crucially, it also requires institutions to

*identify* that inequalities *do* exist within their sports (something often previously denied), and to challenge the notion of the 'level playing field' which is historically and routinely cited in English sport to deflect criticism that it is a possible site for exclusionary practices. In other words, while examples of racism, sexism and disability discrimination might be expected to be found in *other* social arenas, such problems were presumed to be largely absent from the sporting landscape. If they did exist, their roots were presumed to lay in external causalities, such as football hooliganism.

Turning now to concentrate on The FA's own equity strategy, we see how it follows the conceptual framework laid down by Sport England's work on equity in the early 1990s, which culminated in the latter's own Equity Policy (Sport England 2002). Indeed, much of the FA's *E&SES* rhetoric is directly taken from this document. This can be confirmed by looking at the underlying themes that provide the foundation to The FA strategy, before identifying some of the practical approaches that aim to deliver these objectives.

The FA's *E&SES* has four underlying themes, which are summed up by the following 'key phrases' found within the document:

- Fairness and respect for all people
- Equality of access and opportunity
- Recognising that inequalities exist and taking practical steps to address them
- Football needs to ensure it is equally accessible to all members of society.

(The FA 2004a: 3)

These key elements provide important insights into the basis of The FA equity strategy. They can best be understood as coming from two distinct schools of thought with regards to tackling inequality. Let us briefly focus on the first two statements, before concentrating on the final two, which are more strongly associated with Sport England's equity concept.

*Fairness, respect, equality of access* and *opportunity* seem to reflect the longer-standing agendas of equal opportunities that have been followed more closely by public sports organisations and other statutory bodies in Britain, particularly in Local Authority sports development activities. Importantly, there is little evidence to suggest a coherent strategy of equal opportunity being followed by The FA until the introduction of the *E&SES*. In this sense then, the *E&SES* is the first public commitment by The FA to some of the longer- standing principles of equality of access and opportunity publicly associated with the rhetoric of the Thatcher governments (White 1991, 1993, Henry 2001, Houlihan and White 2002). These approaches to inequality tend to be driven, largely, by an obligation to adhere to the anti-discrimination legislation set up mainly as a result of the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 70s. They outlaw discrimination within public service providers on the basis of 'race' (Race Relations Act 1976), sex (Sex Discrimination Act 1975), disability (Disability Discrimination Act 1995) and, more recently, the Human Rights Act (1998), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of several criteria. In line with such legislation, the *E&SES* covers issues related particularly to the sub-groups of women and girls, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities, although a fourth section, 'social inclusion' is often referred to, relating to areas of particular economic deprivation.

This legislation outlaws discrimination on the basis of the above criteria in relation to public service provision. The recent amendments to these laws (e.g. in the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000) also placed a legal obligation for equality on any organisation providing goods and services to society and its members. As the Sporting Equals Standard outlines, 'it makes it unlawful for any public authority to discriminate ... [it] will apply not only to statutory bodies … but also to any private or voluntary body when it is carrying out public functions' (Sporting Equals 2001: 11). This advice was clearly targeted at sports organisations and governing bodies which, technically, remained private membership associations (and sometimes limited companies), despite their public service ethos.

Thus, internal equal opportunities policy largely covers the rhetoric - the underlying themes - of the first two FA statements on equity. As recent history has shown, however, such rhetoric has meant, in practice, very little incentive or requirement on behalf of organisations to do anything other than ritually 'encourage' its staff not to discriminate, and to attend to possible structural discrimination, largely in the area of staff recruitment. Additionally, there is considerable debate as to the effectiveness of the above legislation in actually outlawing such behaviour, particularly given the relatively small number of cases which are proven and prosecuted under such laws (Anwar et al. 2000). In the context of sports development, equal opportunity work - for the historical reasons mentioned above - has tended to be the remit of Local Authority departments as the key public bodies in sport provision. Private organisations, as non-statutory bodies (such as The FA), had little compulsion to take any positive steps towards challenging discrimination until the change in legislation.

As such, simply *announcing* an equal opportunities policy seems to be all that is demanded at this level. The FA provides ample 'evidence' for this in several ways:

- Having an equal opportunities policy (that can be found in the staff handbook)

- Having no claims for discrimination against The FA in relation to the recruitment of staff since records were kept[4]

- Having equal opportunities training for staff recruiters

(The FA 2004a)

Additionally, one of the initial funding conditions attached to Sport England's equity requirements was that organisations, at the very least, must commit to some form of anti-discrimination policy, which the *E&SES* explicitly provides. A condition of Sporting Equals preliminary Standard is to, 'make a clear public commitment to achieve racial equality' (Sporting Equals 2001: 20), which initially means signing up to the Sporting Equals Standard.

The first two FA clauses or phrases thus provide the foundation principles of equal opportunity, social justice and a determination to increase the participation of under-represented groups, by providing equal access to services and by eliminating overt forms of discrimination. As I have shown however, the concept of sports equity demands more pro-activity on behalf of organisations and it places the burden of change on sports bodies themselves, rather than placing the onus on the individual or on target groups. Two crucial elements of this pro-activity are summed up in The FA's final two statements in the *E&SES*. *Firstly,* of fundamental necessity here is,

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[4] The recent high profile – but unsuccessful - claim of unfair dismissal and sexual harassment by former FA secretary Faria Alam has, of course, challenged that record (see BBC News 9th September 2005)

'recognising that inequalities exist'. While implicit in equal opportunity activity, this statement hints at one of the crucial aspects of sports equity: the need to address *both* the cultures and structures within the sporting organisations that reproduce systems of discrimination and exclusion. It implies an obligation on behalf of the providers of services to change, rather than requesting change in the habits of its customers. This element is perhaps the most contentious of the *E&SES*. It, firstly, requires the acceptance of an organisational responsibility for some of the exclusionary practice that goes on within football Governance structures. Secondly, it also becomes controversial when positive action is misunderstood (as it often is) for affirmative action. The latter implies a US-style positive discrimination, one that insists on quotas for opportunities (such as jobs) for certain types of people, notably those from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The FA's *E&SES* refers less explicitly to the requirement for change within football organisations, but offers more veiled examples of the types of internal change that are necessary to comply with equity policy. For example, The FA acknowledgement that: 'there is a lack of representation from minority ethnic communities on boards and committees' (The FA 2004a: 5). This 'problem' of representation is certainly likely to be a difficult idea to 'sell' to many people within football, perhaps particularly those within the local game who may have little background or experience in the rhetoric of equity and its related policies and practices. In addition, The FA statement that 'football needs to ensure it is equally accessible' implies an emphasis on sporting institutions *themselves* to change, rather than place the main onus on people from under-represented groups. This is directly in line with Sport England's concept of equity already outlined. The statement thus implies that the existing structures,

policies and procedures within The FA are currently *not* equally accessible; in other words, that The FA, as an organisation, is, directly or indirectly, actively excluding certain people from the services and opportunities it provides.

## 3. Avenues and pathways for equity delivery

Whilst equal opportunities strategies are adhered to, primarily, in order to comply with anti-discrimination legislation, or to external forms of compulsion, the pro-active strategies encouraged by sports equity tend to be driven by more internal 'professional' standards and charters, such as those mentioned above. This is an important distinction to make as it has potential implications for the implementation and popularity of such policies. In short, it is likely to be easier to 'sell' equity principles to relevant stakeholders if the justification for change is compliance with appropriate legislation and to protect against prosecution. By the same token, it may well be much harder to convince people to adopt equity policies on the basis of internal and informal concerns to make football a 'fairer' cultural setting and employment provider. These underlying themes of the strategy provide the overall aims and objectives for equity in football. Promoting the rhetoric of equity and inclusion is an obvious necessity, but the *E&SES* goes further by providing a number of avenues or pathways through which the strategy can be practically delivered. They can be broadly located within the following six themes:

- Responding to reports
- Opportunities to participate and progress
- Raising awareness
- Education and training

- Rules and Regulations

- Monitoring and Evaluation

Taking each category in turn will help us to understand the *practical* basis upon which the strategy will be implemented. Rather than being seen as separate and distinct categories, however, they inform each other and link together in a number of ways. In other words, they should not be seen in isolation, as 'stand alone' areas of activity; rather, they provide the ground for an overall platform of delivery of The FA's *E&SES*. Additionally, each area can be seen to originate from existing sport policy, whether it be from Sport England, Sporting Equals or other directives already mentioned. As such, we can say that the *E&SES* is a largely derivative, or at least a 'well tried' piece of sport equity policy.

Integral to the remit of the Equity Department at The FA is the need to comply, not only with the legal equality framework mentioned above, but also with the non-statutory internal sport policy standards, again briefly outlined earlier. The process of completing standards such as the Race Equality Standards of both *Kick It Out* and *Sporting Equals* requires the evidencing of a number of benchmarks relating to commitment, policy and planning, participation and public image, and administration and management (Sporting Equals 2001). In many respects, much of the *E&SES* at The FA appears specifically framed to provide a coherent and structured response to such internal sporting standards. Indeed, it could be suggested that developing the strategy itself was prompted as a response to increasing numbers of standards and external requirements.

The FA recently achieved the intermediate standard for Sporting Equals. This Standard requires a large amount of consultation with the complete range of departments within The FA, including those covering refereeing, compliance and governance, County FAs, and all development activities. As a result of this process, existing equity activity is identified and evidenced, which allows for a benchmark of current work, including examples of good practice. It also helps to establish areas of concern that require attention or extra resources. These standards provide some of the framework that the *E&SES* has taken and utilised for the development its own equity strategy.

In addition to the standards set by sporting policy bodies, The FA is also compelled to respond publicly to the ever-increasing number of independent reports addressing equity issues in football. These have recently included papers by: the CRE (Welch et al. 2004); the Football Task Force (1998); and the Independent Football Commission (2004). It is interesting to note that most of these reports have been based around investigating the issue of racism and race equality, again underlining the fact that 'race' is *the* key equity motivator within football. Such reports have tended to include recommendations for The FA to consider in helping to eliminate racism, particularly 'institutional' racism within the industry itself. They also tend to offer action plans and timescales for the institutions of the sport (including the professional league organisations) to work towards, in order to achieve their respective recommendations. While it is open to debate how pertinent, and indeed how well informed, such reports are, if nothing else they do compel The FA and other football bodies to respond publicly, and to begin to allow external parties to monitor their equity work. The importance of such reports in this sense must, therefore, not be underestimated when

considering the delivery of The FA's equity strategy and the management of its 'public face' on equity issues. Indeed, one of the strategic uses of the *E&SES* for The FA (intentional or otherwise) is to provide a ready-made public response to such criticisms, by providing evidence of the work they are already undertaking in this area.

The second component of the *E&SES* is increasing the opportunities to participate and progress. This concentrates, in the main, on the issue of representation, or more specifically, under-representation of those groups that are central to the equity agenda. This is also an integral aspect of the Sporting Equals Race Equality Standards, outlined above. Again, the focus here is usually on the *involvement* of ethnic minorities, and particularly on those of Asian heritage, who are especially absent from the professional game. Another concern is that players of African-Caribbean heritage are severely under-represented in other roles in the football industry, particularly, it is argued, in positions of real power (King 2004a). A recent audit undertaken by The FA also shows, however, a similar pattern of under-representation within the sport among the disabled, while figures for female involvement are only slightly more encouraging. Here we see the detail of broad attempts to 'open up' the structures of the football industry that have, for many reasons, been characterised by insular, nepotistic and relatively 'closed' relationships. The *E&SES* thus commits The FA to attend to matters of representation and thus to making the game more reflective of the wider national, and local populations.

An example here is an area of particular concern: that of the make up of the numerous FA committees, who meet to decide policy on all areas of both the governance and development of the game. Indeed, 'The FA acknowledges that its committees are not

representative of the wider community it serves' (The FA 2004a: 3). FA committees consist of FA Council members, the majority of whom are elected representatives of the County Football Associations (a more detailed overview of the structure and organisation of local football can be found in Chapter 3). One key reason for the fact that the FA Council is 99.9% white is likely to be the procedures in place for election onto local FA Councils. While this procedure varies locally, being elected onto Council usually requires significant experience as a local club and local league secretary. League secretaries are elected by league members, before the league then selects its representative for the local FA. Once on Council, the person elected as the local representative for the national FA is usually the person deemed as having most local control or power (e.g. the chief executive) or someone of long-service at the association (usually a life vice-president, having served 15 consecutive years on Council).

The *E&SES* challenges this particular practice of relatively 'closed' selection procedures, based on longevity, by following the Sporting Equals suggestion of promoting the idea of 'co-options of expert advisors to committees to increase representation from under-represented sectors, filling gaps in skills and knowledge' (The FA 2004a: 5). It is interesting here that rather than *transferring* power from existing committee members to others on the margins co-option provides only a limited, if additional, opportunity for representation, and 'nearness' to power. In addition to the national FA committees, County Development Plans also have targets and key performance indicators in place to ensure wider representation in all areas of activity, for example, on coaching and refereeing courses.

Thirdly, the FA's *E&SES* identifies the importance of *raising awareness*. A key aspect to the equity agenda is to increase public awareness of the activities involved in the strategy, particularly among people from the specific groups that it is targeting. Again, this determination to communicate equity activity can be traced both to Sport England's equity policy and to the standards required by Sporting Equals. Indeed, The FA's submission for the preliminary standard level to Sporting Equals states that: 'The FA's use of positive images of racial equality is clear. Publications, conferences and promotions all show examples of best practice in racial equality' (The FA 2004a: 33). In the *E&SES*, this manifests itself in a communications strategy, including the use of high profile celebrity FA 'ambassadors', such as Robbie Earle (a black ex-pro Jamaican international footballer), to host publicity events, including The FA 'Football For All' conferences held in Derby in 2004 and Bradford in 2005. These conferences are important sites for the presentation of the strategy and outcomes of the *E&SES*, and they also provide concrete examples from the grassroots that show some of The FA equity work that is already taking place.

While activists in the area of grassroots football are probably right to remain sceptical, it cannot be denied that some equity work within local football development strategies is now taking place, with local initiatives being used as models of good practice for future equity work elsewhere. The FA also has regular columns in the popular ethnic minority press, including *The Eastern Eye*, and *The Voice*, busily disseminating 'positive' news stories on equity and football development. The FA have also established an 'ethnic media group' that offers consultation on how best to reach groups who might be less likely to engage directly with the popular press, particularly in relation to recruitment advertising. The FA does face the problem of local

resistance, groups and individuals who argues that the equity message from the centre is mere rhetoric and is producing little real change at the grassroots. Indeed, one of the key aspects of the *E&SES* is to try to overcome these objections by providing practical examples of activities that, it is claimed, are beginning to challenge the traditional structures of the game and make it more inclusive. The FA equity documents do show a wealth of local examples in this respect (The FA 2004a; 2004b).

'Education and Training' is a central theme in the *E&SES*, and a vital component to the delivery of the equity agenda in football. Again, it is also a central component in Sporting Equal's standards. As we have seen, the concept of equity refers to a changing of the structures and cultures of sporting institutions. As such, an element of re-education or re-training is required to begin, firstly, to challenge the beliefs and attitudes among those who may struggle to identify with the values associated with equity. This come in the shape of The FA's 'Football For All Equality Workshop', which is a form of diversity training well established in other professions and which follows a similar route of respecting difference, 'tolerance', and promoting good 'race relations', gender equity and understanding of disability. In the FA's own words:

> The FA is currently implementing a three hour Football For All workshop dealing with generic sports equity issues. The workshop deals with the meanings of sports equity, equal opportunities and positive action, the benefits and barriers to sports equity; appropriate and acceptable language; unfair and inappropriate behaviour and ways to challenge and report this; actions to take and make football more accessible.
>
> (The FA 2004a: 20)

The FA has also piloted a race awareness module at West Riding County FA, which all of its London staff have already attended. They have also encouraged professional and amateur players charged with racist abuse to attend such workshops. It is thought that specific 'bolt-on' modules on 'race', gender and disability may well be added to the generic diversity training module as required. At the time of writing, a handful of FA 'Race Equality Workshops' had also been delivered, predominantly to County FA personnel. In addition to this training, meetings to disseminate good practice have been called to share ways in which to apply, practically, the ideas of equity into people's sporting professions. Training and re-education is a huge task for The FA. This is not least in terms of overcoming scepticism among many senior colleagues who feel they 'know it already', or who may take it as a personal insult to have some of their deep-seated beliefs and assumptions challenged, often by trainers who hold positions of lower status. Additionally, the task is enormous, simply because of the wide range of professional activities and spheres of influence within football upon which The FA proposes to train its equity eye. The *E&SES* refers to the following, for example: human resources; referees; spectators; County FA staff; clubs; stewards; and FA line managers. But there are many more areas that will also need to be considered. Each section will have its own peculiarities and specific needs, and some groups may be more likely to embrace equity than others, for a wide range of reasons which are explored elsewhere.

If it is the case that 'football needs to ensure it is equally accessible to all members of society' (The FA 2004a: 3), then it is important to make sure that the governance of the game does not discriminate against any of its member participants. As such, a whole-scale review of the rules and regulations of football (one of The FA's central

remits), will need to take place. This has culminated, so far, in a review of The FA Handbook, the document which outlines all the rules and regulations of the game. So far, two key amendments have been made. Firstly, the tightening up of guidance for referees on available punishments in relation to racist abuse on the playing field. As such, 'racist remarks [now] constitute a dismissal offence in accordance with Law 12 – the use of offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures – and must be punished accordingly' (The FA 2004a: 9). It is clear, however, that legislative change like the above must be followed up with specific training for, in this case, referees, who may need guidance as to what constitutes racist abuse. Following on from this, The FA is currently evaluating the process of *reporting* racist incidents in the local game, trying to make such reporting channels more accessible to those wishing to make complaints, and increasing communication between parties with regards to any complaints made.

Secondly, the dominant Christian religion ethos found within the normative discourses of local football has been challenged. This has come in the form of rule B5, which currently states that no local football player will be compelled to play on Easter Sunday, or Christmas Day. An amendment went to the FA board in 2005 to state that 'a participant cannot be compelled to play football on *bona fide* occasions where religious observance precludes such activity.' This has been a particular issue for teams containing Muslim players who, for various reasons, may find it difficult to play during the holy month of Ramadan, and yet have been penalised by their clubs and/or local leagues for their non-attendance at fixtures. Given the relatively unchanging nature of The FA rules since its founding in 1863, a review of the rules is likely to

uncover a number of similar cases that require updating or modifying, in order to reflect the nature of contemporary British society.

Finally, the new *E&SES* suggests that a key element in delivering its objectives lies in monitoring and evaluating any progress that is made on delivering equity in football. Monitoring progress is likely to be a largely quantitative process, involving collecting demographic data on ethnicity, gender, and disability. During The FA's consultation processes for the *E&SES*, it undertook a comprehensive personnel audit across all levels of FA activity, including County Football Associations. Such data are important as they provides a baseline upon which comparisons can be made in future years with regard to the number of females, people with disabilities, and people from ethnic minorities involved within The FA in delivering football services, down to grassroots level. Additionally, football development activities have targets set with regards to involvement of people from such groups, and specifically, each County FA football development team have participation targets to reach in areas such as, coaching courses, referees courses and so on. Also, each County Development Plan contains key performance indicators, of which equity targets are a key component. Given the absence, until relatively recently, of any specific participant typology data, initial surveys in all FA activities are deemed necessary to provide a benchmark for future comparison. These data also offer an insight into the current make-up of those involved in football, particularly at a local, grassroots level, where analysis of this kind has been very patchy at best.

Evaluating the impact of any policy implementation is likely to benefit from a more qualitative approach to data collection, in combination with the quantitative data

collection mentioned above (Bryman 1988, Long et al 2005, Coalter 2007). Such qualitative analysis in this setting is likely to come in the form of discussions and presentations of good practice in recruiting and retaining people from under-represented groups in football, so that they can become long-term, sustainable stakeholders in the local game and be central figures in future decision-making in such a setting. The dissemination of such information should be linked to The FA's communication strategy for equity, including presentations at conferences. Additionally, such good practice should be utilised for the training purposes outlined above.

## 4. Key agencies involved in delivering equity in football

The Ethics and Sports Equity Department (now re-named the Equality and Child Protection Department) at The FA is acting, primarily, as the facilitator in the implementation of the strategy, although this nominally includes only two full time staff members. Clearly, strong commitment and collaboration is required by the key stakeholders in the game to enable the delivery of all the above. Having approved the *E&SES*, The FA board has committed its own organisation to follow principles of equity and the prescriptions of the strategy as the sport's governing body. It is clear from the documents mentioned above that much of the strategy is focused on FA activity and internal change. The professional game in England, however, is also controlled by a number of other influential stakeholders (the Premier League, Football League, Professional Footballers Association, League Managers Association etc), which will need to co-operate in these arenas for The FA to achieve its equity ambitions in the professional game. The *E&SES* is thus written in a way that provides all the key professional football bodies with a structural blueprint that can guide the

direction of their own equity activities. It also attempts to develop a uniform approach to equity within professional football across the various bodies. Part of the need for such a document for football, it is argued, has been the largely unstructured, spontaneous nature of equity work in recent years, both internally within The FA, and also among the different footballing bodies. This more holistic approach recalls recent developments in sports policy more generally. It fits neatly, for example, into Sport England's 'whole sport plan' policy, which requires specific sports agencies to collaborate and prepare strategies for the whole of the sport, not just their own agencies.

Additionally, one of the key findings from a recent report from the Independent Football Commission (2004), specifically on tackling racism in football, was that there was inadequate collaboration and consultation between the key football bodies, which limits the potential success of anti-racist activity for football. Indeed, an important group known as the 'All Agency Review Team', which brings together representatives from the key football agencies for regular meetings, was established as a direct result of a recommendation from the recent CRE report on racism in football (Welch et al. 2004). While the professional game tends to maintain its position of primacy in many of the activities of The FA, supported by the influential football bodies concerned solely with the professional side, the *E&SES* also makes clear that it is to cover *all* aspects of football, including the local game. In this arena, the collaborative bodies for The FA's equity agenda will be very different. The key players here will be the County Football Associations, who govern their local game and host The FA's regional development teams. As we shall see in later chapters, these local bodies have their own historical and structural peculiarities that may mean they may take some

convincing about this new FA strategy. Local football clubs themselves must not be forgotten in this context. They play important roles in the delivery of local football, and with the introduction of The FA's Charter Standard Scheme, whereby clubs are required to adhere to certain standards (including tentative equity statements), larger local football clubs are likely to become increasingly central drivers of change in terms of The FA's equity agenda at the local level.

In addition to County FAs and their member clubs, Football In the Community (FITC) schemes, controlled mainly by the PFA, are also likely to be involved locally in several ways, notably as delivers of future equity activities. FITC schemes, set up from 1980s onwards, are connected to professional clubs (though increasingly rarely funded by them), and are aimed at engaging local communities, often children from deprived backgrounds, and such an agenda seems to have a natural ally in issues of equity. Indeed, it could be said that FITC has led the way in trying to use football to address inequity at the local level. One other agency of importance here is the Local Authority, notably via their Sports Development Teams. In a similar way to FITC schemes, they have a history of attempting to use sport to engage their local populations, particularly the young, and those from under-represented groups in sport. Collaboration here seems less structured. The FA introduced the idea of Local Football Partnerships (LFPs), which were established to bring key stakeholders in local football together to discuss pertinent topics and lobby appropriate bodies where necessary. Again, as we shall see, these LFPs seem to have a mixed impact in their various local settings. However, some, such as the Greater London Football Partnership (GLFP), have become important and influential bodies, in particular in relation to issues of equity.

## 5. Summary

In taking a closer look at the detail of The FA's *Ethics and Sports Equity Strategy*, it is clear that such a strategy is, largely, derivative from government thinking, manifested in Sport England's policy and research. This includes new ways of tackling exclusion represented by the notion of equity: these attempt to go beyond providing equality of access and opportunity to a focus on internal change and positive intervention. In addition, it is impossible to make sense of the origins of the *E&SES* without referring to other internal sporting standards and reports, particularly that of Sporting Equals. Indeed, as we have seen, the *E&SES* not only utilises many of the practical approaches to equity change that is evident in Sporting Equals standard, but it can also, subsequently, be seen as a document that is a *direct response* in providing evidence on the basis of the criteria set out by the standard. The FA's *E&SES* also represents compliance with the anti-discrimination laws of the UK by promoting longer-standing ideals of equality of opportunity and access.

Having outlined the key principles of the E&SES, in the remaining two chapters I focus in detail on the empirical findings from the research project. The next chapter discusses the early reception of the E&SES at County FA and among the key personnel described in Chapter 3 – County FA Council Members. Chapter 7 concentrates more specifically on the various ways that ideas of race are deployed to inform the widespread resistance that, as the following chapter suggests, the E&SES has been met with.

# Chapter 6
## Leading from the front?
## Resistance and tensions in the implementation of The FA's
## *Ethics and Sports Equity Strategy*

_____

> It is all too easy, without proper thought and proper decision making processes, to put the ethos of the place in front of the goals to be achieved. 'The cause is all', it is said, 'to stand for something is perhaps more important than to achieve'; 'to be in there striving is what counts'.
>
> <div align="right">(Handy 1988: 6)</div>

> You've got to let things just naturally evolve; you know - stop thinking that football can be the answer to everything.
>
> <div align="right">Council Member, County FA 4, 2006</div>

## 1. Introduction

I have spent some time in this thesis tracing the historical conditions that have shaped the structures and cultures of local football governance from its Victorian origins. In addition, I have outlined some of the more recent, significant changes in policy that have taken place in shaping local English football. Detailing the structural conditions of this 'field' of enquiry is an important component of a critical realist investigation, in that to explain contemporary social action and phenomena more fully we need to have a clear understanding of the *context* within which such action takes place (Archer 1995; Archer 1998). Sayer (2000: 16) usefully reminds us that, 'what actors do at any given time is likely to be affected by dispositions which were "sedimented" at some earlier stage … in this sense, the past and other places (now absent) are present in the here and now.'

The influence of prior structural conditions on any given social phenomena can vary in explanatory weight, of course, depending on a number of potential factors (Sayer 2000). But in the setting of local football in England I have found it fruitful to return to the early conditions in order to explain some of the tensions that have emerged around the implementation of the *E&SES* locally in the early twenty-first century. As Chapter 3 suggested, the particular 'field' of local football governance seems characterised by the reproduction of traditional practices – particularly those related to the dominant ideological framework of amateurism. I now want to discuss this framework in more detail, and identify where amateurism has informed local responses to the new equity agenda in football and especially the implementation of the *E&SES*. This discussion is concerned principally with how notions of 'fairness'-imbedded in the structural conditions of the English game as I showed in Chapter 2 – interact with sports equity principles.

This project is guided loosely by Archer's model of the morphogenetic cycle (Archer 1995) in an attempt to outline the 'situational logic' behind the reception offered the *E&SES* in County FAs. In other words, I am linking the historical conditions and origins of English County FAs to the actions and responses of County FA personnel today, to show how their actions are reproducing and/or transforming these prior structural conditions. Along the way, I try to identify some possible generative mechanisms that provide the 'logic' behind such resistance to the *E&SES*; this is important because 'explanation depends on identifying causal mechanisms and how they work, and discovering if they have been activated and under what conditions' (Sayer 2000: 14). Put more simply, I want to suggest here that the attempt to introduce 'top-down' FA-led policy interventions on equity into the grassroots of the

English game, has been met by a habitus that harbours long-standing and strongly-held beliefs about English sport's historic, non-partisan 'fairness.' In Chapter 7, I go on to show how this habitus, when confronted with new equity interventions such as the *E&SES* have effectively combined to reinforce contemporary forms of racialised exclusion in local football.

What follows, then, is an illustrative account of the reception the new *E&SES* received in selected County FAs. I concentrate particularly on those views offered by County FA Council Members because, as I showed in Chapter 3, they remain the long-standing controllers and decision makers in local football governance. In making sense of these views, I also call upon the comments made by other local stakeholders – those who are 'outside' of these traditional structures and habitus - whose views expose, more clearly, the origins and nature of such resistance to equity initiatives. These latter responses also articulate a range of tensions that have emerged as a result of recent attempts to implement the *E&SES* into local football.

The previous chapter introduced the reader to some of the difficulties involved in embracing change among the volunteers who have run the local game, relatively independently, for many years in England. I am conscious of risking overstating levels of local resistance to the *E&SES*, although scepticism towards race equality initiatives has been noticed elsewhere in British sport (Horne 1995; Long 2000; Swinney and Horne 2005; Spracklen et al. 2006). What these accounts have largely failed to do, in any detail at least, is explore either the deeper origins of this resistance or the situational logic behind such a response. It should be said that there are ongoing equity activities and projects being led by Development teams at County FAs; equity

is part of their portfolio of targets and work plans as laid down by The FA's Development Strategy detailed in previous chapters. Crucially, there is no similar embedding of equity into the day-to-day activities of Governance departments, and the evidence collected here paints a picture of some considerable unease at County FA level concerning equity initiatives. This discomfiture is further evidenced by the widespread difficulties – even exasperation - expressed by those (including Development Officers at County FAs) who are responsible for, or have a real interest in, promoting and implementing race equality.

In attempting to make sense of such resistance, I draw upon some of the key tenets of English amateurism that I suggest underpin the habitus of local football governance. These might be broadly divided into notions of *paternalism* and *protectionism*. I have spent some time in Chapter 2 discussing the origins of these two aspects of the English amateur tradition in sports administration. Here I want to suggest that far from these 'traditional' values being a thing of the past, as often mentioned in accounts of professional sport (see Allison 2001), in the setting of English *local* football governance they continue to project an ideological hegemony. Moreover, much of the resistance to the *E&SES*, and to race equality generally, can probably be traced to a commitment to the 'fair play' ideals derived from the paternalistic traits of the founding fathers of the modern game in England, allied to a strongly protectionist commitment to keeping 'politics' and 'social engineering' out of local sport. The following key themes have emerged directly from the interview data, and they are consolidated by the observations made while at the case study County FAs. They are summarised as follows:

1. The traditional inertia of local football governance that is informed by:
     - The largely reaction-based duties of County FAs
     - A philosophy of laissez-faire non-intervention
     - An emphasis on local paternalism and the retention of local autonomy of control

2. Resistance to the modernisation and reform of local football is driven by:
     - Opposition to the perceived 'politicisation' of local football
     - Opposition to the professionalization of local football

3. Scepticism surrounding the need for an equity strategy which involves:
     - Seeing equity as interfering, 'political correctness'
     - An emphasis on the mythopoeic status of fair play and equality in local football
     - The rejection of positive action and the promotion of 'meritocracy'
     - Seeing equity as counter-productive and 'stirring up' new problems

The first theme reflects a much broader and more generalised feature of the organisational cultures of County FAs. The second refers to the general reception locally of 'external' initiatives on local football governance that began with The FA's *Football Development Strategy* in 2000. The final theme draws upon these broader sources of resistance, in order to articulate quite specific concerns raised around the perceived 'imposition' of an equity strategy in local football. All these themes are inter-related. For example, much of the scepticism aimed at the *E&SES* and race equality agenda appears to be the result of wider resistance to the processes of rising 'external' involvement in the affairs of local County FAs.

In a small number of cases there was some confusion locally about what 'equity' actually refers to; in some of my interviews and at some of the meetings I attended,

there seemed to be some conflation between wider FA-led initiatives and the specific equality agenda. On a few occasions when I asked interviewees directly what they thought about the equity strategy, I was usually asked to provide some clarification on exactly what I meant. This relative lack of awareness is likely to be partly down to the strategy's infancy, but there was also a real sense that the *E&SES* was 'just another policy' coming down from The FA's Development Strategy team. This rather weary view is important because, as I will go on to show, resistance to race equality activities here cannot be explained only by simple prejudice or a narrow focus on 'race', as previous studies – especially those that focus on 'whiteness' - have tended to emphasise (Long 2000; Long and Hylton 2002; King 2004a; Spracklen, Hylton et al. 2006; Burdsey 2007). The purpose of the following section is, therefore, to show how ingrained ideologies of 'fairness' and opposition to 'political interference' in English sport provides some of the rationale - and acts as generative mechanisms - behind the resistance in local County FAs to the *E&SES*.

## 2. The traditional inertia of local football governance in England

As we have seen, historically County FAs have been largely able to shape their own local priorities, decision making and structural make-up (albeit within the confines of The FA's overall rules and regulations for the game). It was perhaps predictable, then, that evidence would emerge of widespread discomfort concerning the increasing external intervention from the centre in the affairs of County FAs. Such discomfort represented a much broader pattern of resistance to change of almost any kind among those who control local football. This type of organisational 'inertia' is a common component of organisational theory and has been widely noted elsewhere (Handy 1988; Morgan 2001). In such accounts, resistance to change is seen as almost

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inevitable among key personnel (Coughlan 1993), particularly those who appear to have something to 'lose' from such developments. This inertia has interestingly also been evidenced in sporting governing bodies and associations (Brackenridge 1994; Slack 1997; Skinner et al. 1999). Common mitigating factors within local football organisations include a claimed lack of available resources (financial and personnel) to support any meaningful development, as has been noted with regard to race equality initiatives (Long et al. 2005). The historic reliance on volunteers and the lack of significant financial investment in local football is likely to make this setting particularly sensitive to issues of resource. But the *E&SES* promised *extra* resources for local football, so it might have been expected to be warmly embraced by County FAs. My findings suggest this was not the case and that there are several possible reasons why. These include the historic role of County FAs as bodies that typically *react* to changes, a broader *laissez-faire* approach to change, and the *protectionist* culture in local football governance that encourages a strongly local autonomy of control. As I discuss each of these factors in turn, their common roots in the specific amateur traditions of English sport become clear.

### (i) County FAs as 'reactive' organisations

As I briefly outlined in Chapter 3, historically the purpose and role of County FAs has been to organise and *govern* the local game, according to rules and regulations set nationally by The FA. Specifically, this has included:

- Managing the affiliation process of clubs

- Administering County Cup competitions

- Handling cases of on and off field indiscipline, including the application of fines and bans for infractions and, where necessary, organising disciplinary hearings for appeals

- Running local representative teams

- Providing referees for local leagues

These functions have been the core focus of County FAs in England, and they are still seen as the most important components of their current role. By the very nature of these governance duties, County FAs have tended to be *reactive* organisations, typically *responding* to the needs of their members, while also dealing appropriately with whatever disciplinary issues have been reported to them. As two County FA secretaries put it:

> We [the County FA] are there to ensure that football is played in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Football Association and played in accordance with the laws of the game. So one of our main duties in the past - and still is today - is to do with all the misconduct that takes place on the field of play.
>
> County Secretary, County FA 3, 2006

> Fundamentally I perceive it [the role of the County FA] as the regulating body … that is, first and foremost, what a lot of people perceive it as and, first and foremost, it has to be one of its core functions.
>
> County Secretary, County FA 5, 2007

County FAs have often been seen by many of those involved in the local game and by County members themselves, to be the distant *controllers* of local football who

uphold discipline and administer club affiliation fees and representative and cup competitions. The remit to act primarily as regulator and law enforcer is one that necessarily requires action to be taken *after* something else occurs. One of the routine duties I witnessed at County FAs was staff trawling through referee reports of ill-discipline and reacting accordingly (usually by processing player bans and fines). In addition, one of the biggest administrative duties of the County FA is ensuring that all clubs are properly registered and affiliated with the association. These types of duties have formed the core activities of County FAs, which were created to ensure that local football was enacted within a national framework of laws and administrative rules, and that if any of those laws or rules were transgressed, action could be taken.

This strong (some might argue obsessive) commitment to the traditional role and duties of the association can be seen by modernisers and those outside traditional structures as a form of intransigence and a contributor to organisational inertia. The quotation below, for example, comes from a Development Officer housed at a County FA. It reveals an obvious frustration at the 'blind' commitment at the local level to the traditional functions of the organisation, and to the lack of a more flexible or a more pro-active approach to governing the local game:

> [The priority at County FAs is] as it was 100 years ago: it's about governing the game, it's about affiliations. I don't think that the County itself sets out development plans saying: 'Look, we're going to go and start attracting 11-a-side clubs', or 'We're going to start looking at small-sided football …' Their brief hasn't changed from what it was in the early days [of the Association].
>
> County Development Manager, County FA 1, 2005

The increasing recent interest in the local game, particularly from the British Government, has begun to impact significantly on the traditional structures and

personnel of County FAs. *The Football Development Strategy 2001-2006* (The FA 2000) reflects an attempt by the governing body to professionalise, or 'bureaucratize' (Slack 1985) local practices, thus testing the previous autonomy enjoyed by the local bodies. In addition, it began to alter the role of County FAs, with Development staff put in place locally by The FA in London to deliver the *national* objectives of the FDS into the local game. These included work on coaching and equality targets for ethnic minority, women, girls and disability participation. Work of this specific kind did not previously come under the remit of County FAs, as these comments suggest.

> Coaching … 30 years ago … was a bit unheard of in the country. But that wasn't one of the main priorities, because, financially, there was no money there to pay for it. It was all done by volunteers.
>
> President, County FA 3, 2006

> All the County FA used to do was, basically, administer the game. They didn't try to develop it … I think if we said to a club secretary 20 years ago 'I'll come and meet you on a Thursday night, or at training on Saturday to talk about developing links with schools', it just wouldn't have been heard of.
>
> Development Officer, County FA 1, 2005

It is really only since 2000 that County FAs have begun to consider – or been forced to consider - their role specifically as *developers* of the local game. Their previous reluctance in this area seems to be mainly due to a lack of financial resources and a heavy reliance on unpaid volunteers, although during my time at County FAs it was often casually suggested that in the past – and even today - consciously *developing* the game was either unnecessary (due to the large number of participants already involved) or undesirable (a form of 'social engineering' or political interference that was tampering with the '*natural*' development of the game at the local level). County

FA men typically believed that the game had a guaranteed longevity, given its seemingly healthy and widespread popularity. Also, promoting and developing the game was seen by many local volunteers as something that was *already being routinely undertaken* - as part of the day-to-day role of local FA Council members, something often used to criticise the newly-installed football Development teams:

> Some people's perceptions - maybe the 'old school' people, I'll call them - they think, 'Well we've done it for 50, 60 years without them [Development staff], why do we need them?'
>
> Development Officer, County FA 1, 2005

Given the different ethos and objectives of the governance and development roles in local County FAs, alongside their disparate funding streams, salaries and work patterns, the relationship between the new FA development staff and the longer-standing governance team at County FAs at local levels has invariably been strained. In many cases, Development teams are seen as direct employees of the National FA and, as such, there is very little local ownership of their activities and even staff at County FA level. Figure 7.1 offers a summary of some of the key polarities involved here, especially in the period since 1990:

| National FA: Development | | County FA: Governance |
|---|---|---|
| Professionalism | ---------------------------- | Voluntarism |
| Facilitate | ---------------------------- | Control |
| Reform | ---------------------------- | Tradition |
| Expansionist | ---------------------------- | Protectionist |
| Externally regulated | ---------------------------- | Semi-autonomous |
| Public service remit | ---------------------------- | Private member's club |

**Figure 6.1: Governance & development tensions in English football**

At the County FAs I visited these were two, very separate, departments working towards very different goals and in often contrary ways. In short, the new Development teams seem to stand for often the very opposite of the long-standing governance structures of the game, not least in their approach to pro-active change and planned intervention.

*(ii) Laissez-faire non-intervention: protecting the status-quo*

The sentiment that sport should be valued for its intrinsic pleasure alone – 'sport for sport's sake' - is one of the strong components of the English amateur tradition, and one that has become increasingly important given the challenges recently posed by the professionalization of sport in Britain and further afield (O'Brien and Slack 1999; Skinner et al. 1999). Much of the disquiet about external intervention in County FAs was couched within a protectionist interpretation of the amateur tradition. The Council Member quoted below, for example, downplays any wider possible significance of football, or any potential it might have as a possible vehicle for social change:

> I don't think football is the answer to all social problems in the world. They all [The FA] seem to think it is but it's not, it can't be. It can't be. People play football because they *want* to play football … I don't see this at all, as being the answer to all the ills in the world.
>
> Council Member, County FA 4, 2006

> As far as I'm concerned I'd rather stay away from that area [equity], just let everyone play football … I think, in my considered opinion … if they just let it flow – we didn't have it in the past.
>
> President, County FA 1, 2005

This sort of 'non-interventionist' or 'protectionist' stance was common, and yet they were often countered – sometimes by the same respondent – by an emphasis on the 'power' of football to produce social benefits. The idea that football is a force for good is a central to the rhetoric around The FA's *E&SES*, but it has its origins in the early paternalist instincts of Victorian school masters, keen to use sporting activity to instil moral virtue and 'character' among their pupils. Indeed, some of those I interviewed rehearsed this sort of paternalism themselves. In reply to a question about whether he thought football was a good arena for addressing social issues, one Council Member (County FA 1, 2005) said: 'I think it's as good as any, yeah. It encourages team work, meeting of the opposition from a different background, and I believe coming through that is friendship and some respect.' What is interesting about this kind of response is that they were often couched in terms of a wider discomfort that the game might now be being manipulated to produce 'artificial' changes and benefits. The phrase, '*if they just let it flow*', here suggests that it is *only* the historic and intrinsic qualities of 'good' contained within football itself that can provide benefits to those who play the game.

I would suggest that these sorts of comments reflect not only a discomfort with external intervention but also the broader *laissez-faire* attitude of those running the local game towards its development and evolution. The preferred sense here is that 'things will sort themselves out, eventually', thanks to football's intrinsic benefits. As such, there is no need to pro-actively intervene in its normative work. There are obvious similarities here between this type of 'laissez-faire' approach and the historic 'arm's length' relationship between British governments and sporting organisations. In Chapter 2, I showed how all parties remained committed to sheltering English

sport, in the inter-war years, from political intervention in an attempt to protect its autonomous, non-partisan status. There are also, of course, parallels here with the wider recent dominance in Britain of neo-liberal politics and economics, which relies on the 'invisible-hand' of the market to provide an apparently 'neutral' means of allocating resources (Lindsay 2005).

One of the main ways my respondents attempted to justify this 'laissez-faire' approach to policy was to suggest that such a stance had been successful in the past and so it remained the most suitable approach to local football governance. If it ain't broke why fix it? After all, it was only relatively recently - since 'external' bodies had begun to interfere with this traditional approach – that the local game had been seen to decline. Here it was assumed that maintaining the status quo in the shape of the traditional governance style (essentially, leaving Council members to govern the local game) would be the optimum approach.

### (iii) Local paternalism and the retention of autonomy of control

The protectionism associated with the long-standing structures and the reproduction of personnel at County FAs is undoubtedly strongly motivated by self-preservation. There is, however, also a real sense of genuine pride – particularly among long-standing volunteers – in the way that County FAs continue to govern the local game. Much of this view stemmed from a strongly-rooted *paternalism* among those long-standing volunteer Council members, a paternalism which echoes some of the traits of the earlier muscular Christians. Paternalism also represents an assumption about expertise: that is, those currently in control feel that only *they* have the specific skills and experience necessary to make decisions for the greater good. When I asked my

respondents how they viewed their own County FA, opinions varied considerably. But among the longer-standing Council Members I interviewed – those who had invested many years of time and effort and a considerable amount of 'psychic income' into the organisation - saw their local County FA as being generally progressive and they usually compared it favourably to other associations, as below:

I feel that [County FA] are one of the 'forward' associations within the County Associations and I say that because The FA do come to us quite a lot, whether they admit it or not. But they've had one or two people from this Association gone to work for The FA, so they must appreciate that we've got people here that are dedicated to football within [the County].

President, County FA 1, 2005

We're the envy of a lot of other Counties because of what we've done here, but that's the way we operated … It's one of the Counties [sic] that we get people coming and asking us: 'How do you do that and how do you do that?'

President, County FA 2, 2006

The FA seems to think that the [County FA] is, sort of, one of the leading lights. And we're very proud of that, to be truthful. We've won a couple of awards over the years, been set up as perhaps one of the areas that can be used to pilot certain programmes, initiatives, call it what you want. So I think that's a strength, as far as that's concerned.

County Secretary, County FA 3, 2006

This sort of local pride is probably to be expected, not least among those for whom work for the local County FA has represented a central part of their lives. But there is also an overwhelming sense among these volunteers that the local County FA has already recruited the 'right kinds' of people with the necessary skills and experience required to represent the diverse interests of the game in the most appropriate way:

We've got a 50-plus Council membership here, and you look at all their occupations. I don't think there's anything happens in [the County] that we haven't got somebody that's involved in that particular sphere of [County] life. So that's one thing as the President: if someone asks a question, you can say 'Oh, so and so is involved in that, lets talk to him.' Or, 'Talk to her' or whatever.

President, County FA 2, 2006

There was also a sense here that local Council Members – particularly those in the most powerful roles, such as local president and chairman – saw themselves as best placed and the most suitable candidates to ensure the local game is run in the 'appropriate' way. As the President of County FA 2 (2006) put it:

The responsibility [of president] really is to be the person that the Council are coming to for long term advice, short term fixes, if you like, if they're not sure where to go. As the president I'm ex-officio [non-voting member] of all standing committees, and I'm a director of the limited company.

In this respect, those in control of key decision making at County FAs tended to view themselves as 'naturally' the best men to judge what is needed for their local game, given their experience and knowledge of local conditions. This type of confident local paternalism almost inevitably leads to resistance when activities and decisions that effect local football bypass these long-standing and legitimised decision-making routes. The allocation centrally of funds for *local* development projects, for example, was a particular bone of contention for one Council Member:

I'm a great believer that Football Foundation money should not be distributed from Soho Square [The FA], but it should be distributed at this level. The

> County knows where the money is needed. *They* don't know up there. These people fill in these grandeurs forms and send them all up there and these people up there [at The FA in London] haven't got a clue locally, have they?
>
> <div align="right">Council Member, County FA 4, 2006</div>

There is, of course, some credibility in the suggestion that local representatives are likely to have a deeper understanding of the needs for local football in their area; indeed local input is an important theme of both the *E&SES* and also The FA's Football Development Strategy more broadly. But given the laissez-faire approach that dominates this setting there seems little recognition among long-serving members of any demand for change – and this sentiment solidifies when combined with support for the status quo evoked by the view that local experts instinctively know what is best for the local game. Many of the respondents I spoke to who were 'external' to these long-established County FA networks - including local football club representatives and FA Development staff - were concerned that those in control of the local game had simply failed to adapt to social and cultural change articulated through the local. This was particularly evident when these critics were asked about the changing demography of local users:

> Council members … would infer that there isn't a problem, an equality problem. 'Football is there for everybody. We should all be able to get into it. Football shouldn't change to meet the needs of those special groups. Football's football, and if they want to play it they should comply with what they've got, what's being offered'. And, obviously, that's the problem. We need to understand what it takes to involve the people that we serve, because as a County FA we serve our County.
>
> <div align="right">Development Manager, County FA 4, 2006</div>

<div align="right">226</div>

In this respect, many of those outside the traditional County FA structures felt that those in charge of the local game were un-representative and lacked understanding of the changing contours of local sport.  These concerns were also sometimes raised by people *within* County Associations, including this Council Member (interviewed in 2005) who is referring here to County FA members of the local disciplinary panel: 'I [think that] an awful lot of people, black and white, could go away with the impression - the correct assumption - that, really, they [Council Members] don't have a clue about what they are doing.' We can begin to see here how the traditionally laissez-faire approach to County FA policy and practice – derived, we would argue, at least in part from the established amateur traditions of English sports administration – can help us better understand the negativities associated with apparent challenges from 'outside' to local expertise and to this essentially 'non-interventionist' doctrine.

There *are* times when those who control County FAs *do* act assertively to protect the status-quo. For example, one response to the perceived challenge to local Governance authority posed by new Development departments is to block or sideline Development activities – particularly those that might be expected to impact directly on long-standing governance structures. In four out of the five County FAs I visited Development teams were located in a separate office to other County FA staff. While the availability of space is an obvious difficulty here, the symbolism involved in the conscious separation of these departments - often with Development staff being housed upstairs or in less accessible parts of the building – was clear. The differential treatment of these departments did not go unnoticed by those involved. One Development Manager, for example, recalled the recent move of his Development team from outside temporary accommodation into the main FA office headquarters.

His account is worth reciting at length because it neatly articulates in its upstairs/downstairs discourse the status divisions and the general *internal* tensions at many County FAs today, where Governance still controls office space and finance:

> Funding was given to the County FA to develop the offices downstairs for the Governance [staff] to move down and us to move up[stairs]. Fantastic! Not a problem. We've had to move all our own equipment from the Porta-cabin across, which we did in one day. Which took them upstairs [Governance staff] one week to do. All those people downstairs had a personal letter from the president thanking them - the Governance staff - thanking them for the hard work and going above and beyond their duties. We've not had a thing. Not had a thank you. Not had anything. Alright, so that's one little instance. The next instance is - you'll know yourself - all new carpet throughout the building, come to our office. What have we got? The old carpet - they wouldn't replace it.
>
> Now it would have cost them a tiny amount to replace that, so it's like they [the Governance staff] don't care about us. And it's psychological, and the staff see it. And the staff get upset about it, and it's right. They *are* right. It's [the] little things they don't think about, 'Oh, stick Development upstairs. They'll be alright. Everyone downstairs, they've had new desks. They've had new chairs. They've had new carpets. They've had new this, new that. Upstairs we've not had one single thing. All we've got is their old offices that we've moved into, and that's all we've had.
>
> County Development Manager, County FA 3, 2006

The following comment comes from a Development Manager who attempted to become more involved in the local decision making structures of the County FA he 'joined':

I requested to go on the Board of Directors to speak on behalf of Development and that's been refused … I would have thought that would have been quite a useful thing to have. But I think the answer came back … because finance and budgets were being discussed at these meetings, that I shouldn't be privy to that type of information.

<div align="right">County Development Manager, County FA 2, 2006</div>

Attempts by FA Development teams – people who are charged with delivering *E&SES* locally, of course - to integrate into the existing structures of County FAs have clearly been problematic, usually because of the overtly 'protectionist' responses of those in charge from Governance. The committee structure is traditionally an important component of local County FAs and a legacy of earlier voluntarism and the ideology of meritocracy in local sports administration. Most of the County FAs I visited had set up a Development Committee, but it was almost universally criticised for its perceived procedural impotence:

To be perfectly honest, I think its [County FA Development Committee] an absolute waste of time. … I think there's about 16-18 people on the Committee, and I would say there are about four or five of those people who are actually interested in what we are doing. The rest couldn't care less. The rest are there because they've been nominated onto a committee. In fact it goes as far as - and I've been to about three Development Committee meetings - and at two of those meetings someone has actually fallen asleep!

<div align="right">County Development Manager, County FA 3, 2006</div>

It's [Development Committee] not a popular committee to be on. I mean, it's probably one of the most hated committees actually. I don't think the Development side of it like … hav[ing] to come in front of a bunch of old fogies who aren't really interested, have just been put on this committee because there wasn't any other one for them to go on, why should we

[Development staff] have to sit and explain to all of them what we've been doing at work this month?

Council Member, County FA 4, 2006

In short, English County FAs are organisations that characteristically have little structural or cultural experience of dynamic change: instead their key figures and routine practices promote inertia and stasis. Given the ingrained protectionist and paternalistic features of these local Associations, it is little surprise that there was resistance to The FA's new *E&SES* policy at the local level, It was generally identified as top-down, overt 'political' interference in local football from the centre: an unwelcome attempt to professionalise the grassroots game, via an attack on its rootedness in the values and principles of amateurism and voluntarism.

## 3. Resistance to modernisation and reform in local football

The types of tension and forms of local resistance to change I have touched upon here reflect not only the historic conservativism of County FAs, but they also highlight a more general scepticism about the processes of modernisation and reform led by The FA since 2000. Initiatives introduced as part of these reforms are generally seen by County FAs as being instigated by government and other bodies that are *external* to football. In this sense, for its detractors, the *Football Development Strategy* marks the first overtly major 'political' intervention into the 'non-political' arena of English local football in its long history. In addition, an important component of this reform has been to professionalise aspects of the running of the local game by introducing paid staff into the local Association, staff who work towards key performance indicators (or targets) and who are responsible for implementing a number of regulatory standards, including the Charter Standard club mark, child protection and

equity initiatives. These two elements have provoked widespread resistance within local County FAs, whose administrators implicitly identify with the historic amateur ideals of local sport: that it should be free from external 'political' interference and that the values of voluntarism should always be prized over those of professionals.

### (i) Discomfort in mixing football with politics

In Chapter 3 (see also Chapter 6), I showed how the increasing centralisation of policy in The FA has, in many ways, been driven by government and specifically by New Labour's attempts to utilise sport as a vehicle for policy delivery. This has inevitably caused a number of tensions locally. These new, nationally-driven, initiatives have been interpreted as a threat, not only to the autonomy of decision making at County FAs but also to one of the key principles of amateurism: that of keeping sport apolitical. As one local FA Council president commented in 2007: 'Well, of course, I think we've generated this political correctness business that I don't think has done anyone any good at all basically … with a lot of the - how shall we put it  - compulsory legislation and things that are coming in now.' This perceived 'political' intervention has also shifted local priorities and the key focus of the target audience of County FAs *away* from its traditional membership:

> I think its [recent changes at the County FA] been pressures from above.  You know: the money's got to go towards ladies, got to go towards disabled, got to go towards ethnic minorities, go to go whatever, rather than just put it into football.

<div align="right">Council Member, County FA 4, 2006</div>

The increased involvement of The FA nationally in *local* County FA activities has raised tensions, not least because of the perceived 'imposed' nature of much of this policy shift from above. In the past, policy changes were often shaped by the County FA themselves, through their representatives on FA Council (such as the affiliation of Sunday football in 1960 and women's football in 1969). New initiatives today are experienced as being increasingly driven by *external* bodies, including politicians, a direction of travel which is regarded as anathema to the history and traditions of local sports administration in Britain. In discussing the *E&SES*, for example, one County FA president clearly identified the origins of such initiatives as deriving directly from the MacPherson inquiry of 1999 into the death of Steven Lawrence, a murder that sparked British Government interest in addressing institutional racism:

> I think you've got to just go back to the Lawrence report, I don't think you've got to say anything more than that. The Lawrence report changed the view of the government. It changed the view of every institution of the country, and to be accepted you'd got to go along and think about what was in the Lawrence report. I don't think I need to say anything more than that.
>
> President, County FA 2, 2006

This kind of 'political' intervention into the grass roots game is relatively new and opposes the peculiarly British *amateur* ethos of sport. Lincoln Allison (1986: 96), for example, reminds us that many British sports organisations – including County FAs - were founded on, 'a cultural tradition which demands that "politics" is treated as dirty and peripheral in comparison to the interests of the club and the sport.' This powerful legacy clearly remains. Recent policy changes implemented by The FA 'from above' are widely interpreted locally as a challenge to the perceived 'impartiality' that comes as a constitutive part of the fabric of British local sport. The imposition of these

*national* policies is, at times, also seen to ignore the local specificities and the policy input that remain integral components of the highly localised cultures of County FAs. With policy direction perceived to be driven from the centre – by 'them' -  and also by non-FA bodies, it is often felt that such initiatives have 'bypassed' the traditional routes of consultation for such matters – i.e. the local County FA Councils - to the detriment of local football. The introduction of a national player database, called CAS, especially symbolised this power drain to the centre:

> Well, I think we've lost a bit of control. In fact, lost a lot of control to Soho [Square]. Their staff's increased; they've got to do something. They've tended to take over a lot, which I don't think has been good for the game.
>
> Council Member, County FA 2, 2006

> At times there [are] odd occasions where there's a feeling that there's a bit of a 'Big Brother' thing, whereas things are designed so that you may only do it their way and not, sort of, customise it.
>
> Disciplinary Manager, County FA 1, 2005

> To me, in recent years since I've been on, for example, the County FAs have lost their independence, you know the CAS system and everything is run from Soho Square and these people here really administer this office down the line from what they want at the top.
>
> Council Member, County FA 4, 2006

Commenting about a recent 'consultation' exercise between The FA and its local stakeholders regarding the new *National Game Strategy* for the grass-roots, called 'Your Game, Your Say', another Council member voiced his frustration at what he argued to be the lack of any real engagement with or listening to local representatives:

They're too prescriptive in what we do. You know we had this thing the other day about the future. What's it called, 'Have your say' or something [referring to The FA's 'Your Game, Your Say' consultation project]? Well it wasn't *our* say.  They prescribed what the meeting was about! Are you with me? It was totally prescriptive. We had to conform to what it was *they* wanted us to say. Everybody turned up here thinking 'Ah! We can say what we like tonight', but we all sat down and it was all these screens and everything else. And, basically, you're going to tell me what we think you should tell us! Totally prescriptive: we didn't have our say at all.

<div align="right">Council Member, County FA 4, 2006</div>

In light of all this, the introduction of the *FDS* into County FAs signifies a considerable reduction in local input and local decision-making. At one County FA I visited, I spoke at length with the president of the local association. He felt strongly that the introduction of FA Development teams into local associations and the general increasing intervention locally of The FA was the beginning of a much broader process of 'streamlining' and restructuring of the way local football governance would be organised in the future:

> My concern…. is that the FA will regionalise into five areas within the scope of the English FA and I think, possibly, that the smaller associations will be swallowed up by the big five, gradually. I think - and I hope that the associations will kick against it - this is no axe to grind with the FA.  It's just the way I can see things going.

<div align="right">President, County FA 1, 2005</div>

### *(ii) The professionalisation of local football administration*

In recent years – and largely as a result of The *Blueprint For Football* in 1991 - almost all FA County Associations have changed their status from voluntary associations to limited companies, essentially operating now as local businesses.

Results from our survey give a strong indication that this option has been widely taken up:

- 92% of County FAs are now incorporated
- Only 26% of County FAs still have a 'county secretary' in post
    - 55% have a chief executive officer(CEO)
    - 16% have a company secretary
    - 3% have an executive officer

**Source: Survey of County FAs 2007**

This move has helped protect local members from individual liability, but it also allowed County FAs to expand their income generation in the light of increasingly difficult economic circumstances. It also mirrors the increasing role and influence of the ideologies and practices of private business in the British public sector, led by the Thatcherite drive to introduce private sector principles into previously public service provision. More recently, New Labour has encouraged Public Private Partnerships, initiatives that have cemented the role of private business in public service provision.

This operational and cultural change in County FAs strikes a potential death knell for those long-serving volunteers, whose huge commitment to the local game underlines their view that its administration should continue to be a largely voluntary pastime undertaken solely *for the love of the game* – and that these amateur ideals should be preserved, even in the face of wider societal change. For some, the traditions of volunteering have been inexcusably traduced locally by the professionalised expectation of financial reward for services; the Weberian ideal type of rational, goal-

oriented action of the sort that typically characterises capitalist societies (Weber 1970):

> People don't volunteer to do anything today. They won't do something for nothing, in my considered opinion. If there's something at the end of it, they might do.
>
> <div align="right">President, County FA 1, 2005</div>
>
> The philosophy of life is that you don't do something unless you get paid for it. I think that it's not only us. It is [the] boy scouts, girl guides, it's everything isn't it? People can't get anybody to volunteer.
>
> <div align="right">Council Member, County FA 4, 2006</div>

Predictably, there is also a perceptible scepticism from this direction about some of those who *expect* to be paid for their new involvement in the local game, either directly through a salary or by setting up their own private companies, such as coaching teams. This sort of resentment was often clear to those employed to undertake development activities at the local County FA. They regularly expressed concern that long-standing volunteers were sceptical of their appointments. As one member of the local Development staff put it (County FA 1, 2005): 'One of the biggest things that has been thrown at us is: "We used to do your job voluntarily, and you're getting paid for it now."' Extending the Weberian social action analysis a little further, we might interpret this sentiment among local volunteers to mean that 'authentic' forms of social action in local football governance are best served by *traditional* actions and, more specifically by *traditional authority* that, 'rests on a belief in the importance of continuity with the past and the legitimacy of those who represent that continuity' (Cheal 2005: 75).

| County FA Staff | Number (n=379) | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 169 | 44.6% |
| Male | 210 | 55.4% |
| Ethnic minority | 4 | 1.1% |

**Table 6.2: Breakdown of staff at County FAs**

**Source: Survey of County FAs 2007**

It is only since the mid 1990s, and mostly since 2000 that County FAs have employed any paid staff. It is significant to note that the profile of paid staff at County FAs is in stark contrast to that of Council Members; for example, women now make up almost half of the total County FA workforce (see Figure 7.2). As I discuss in later chapters, this suggests that the re-organisation of some areas of County FA work – such as in part-time administration – appears to reflect wider changes in the British workforce as a whole in recent years.

But could these new local paid providers ever be *quite* as dedicated, committed, knowledgeable and enthusiastic about football as the old style, unpaid volunteers? Involvement in local football is perceived, in this sense, as changing from a leisure pursuit and a taxing but personally rewarding public duty, into much more of a

'business' that must deliver measurable outcomes for customers. For many, this sort of cultural and professional transformation compromises their very motivation for being involved in the local game in the first place – why they give up so much of their time to volunteer.

One key change brought about by this 'professionalisation' of the local game via the move to limited company status has been the introduction of a County FA Board (see Fig 6.3). This board is a smaller group of members – survey results show an average of 12 - who are usually elected from the local FA Council and who make decisions on financial matters of the local association. In some ways, this change has removed some of decision-making powers from the wider representatives of the local game, those people who are represented more strongly on Council. At the same time, such reforms have encouraged County FAs to consider, more closely, their financial health, and to undertake activities to ensure their financial stability for the future. It also streamlines and speeds up local decision-making. In other words, County FAs have begun to consider their long term viability in financial, and not simply in football, terms.

For the majority of associations I visited, the Football Development Officer was the first real *employee* of the local Association. The majority of local roles, prior to 2000, were largely honoraria for all but the largest County FAs, those who may have been able to afford some modest recompense for their own county secretary. In light of the tensions caused by the *Blueprint for Football*, such a shift towards paid staff in local associations was probably inevitable. But new salaried Development staff were sometimes met with deep suspicion and scepticism by local volunteers. Since the

introduction of the *FDS* from early 2001, the structure of local associations has also become increasingly complex and specialised. Alongside the introduction of a Board of Directors of the Association, the *FDS* created a Development department in each County FA. As Fig. 7.3 suggests, this new department is not strongly integrated into the traditional day-to-day activities of the longer-standing Governance team – in part because of their very different structural and cultural underpinnings, as discussed earlier (see Fig. 7.1). This relative lack of integration of Development is another source of local tensions.
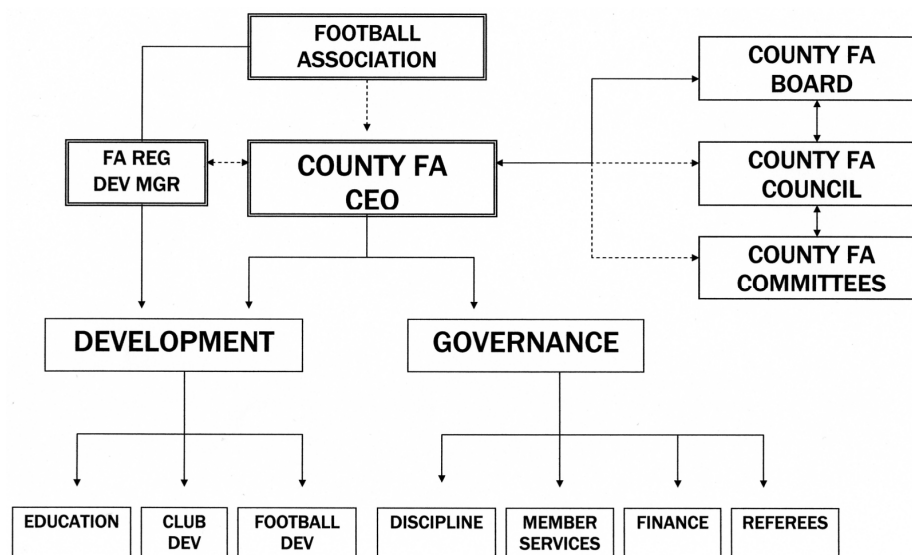


**Fig. 6.3: County FA structure since 2000**

## 4. Scepticism surrounding the need for an equity strategy

I have spent some time outlining some of the broader sources of resistance to new interventions at County FAs, and I have tried to show that much of this can be traced to a strong commitment to volunteerism and the principles of amateurism. In turn I

suggest that this broader culture of resistance to change, and general inertia within local County FAs, are contributory factors in fuelling the scepticism towards the equity initiatives proposed by the *E&SES*. While this organisational inertia is crucial, there are also specific objections to equity and 'race' equality that go beyond simple conservatism. Inside County FAs I had time to discuss the *E&SES* at length. A common view expressed by key local figures was that there was little actual *need* for a new strategy – and certainly not for *this* County FA. I became particularly intrigued by this stance, not least because of the weight of evidence collected by others suggesting the contrary (Long 2000; Long et al. 2000; Long and Hylton 2002; Burdsey 2004a; King 2004a; 2004b; Burdsey 2007). People I spoke to who were 'external' to the County FA – such as local ethnic minority football club secretaries – made a clear case to suggest that something like the *E&SES* was desperately needed for the local game. Even some (although it must be said a minority of) County FA Council members themselves raised concerns about discrimination in the local game and within organisations, including within County FAs. The following quotation comes from a local ethnic minority club secretary I interviewed in 2006 who raised concerns about inequities in several aspects of the local game:

> What is the local league and the national [FA] doing about recruiting on an equal par to get people through the employment of County FA? That is one issue, yeah, and it's not working at the moment. What are they doing about putting Asians or people from ethnic minorities onto their committees? That's another thing that we've touched upon. The third thing is, when they're promoting clubs that are aspiring, why is there no transparency there? Why are you getting the white clubs that are being pushed through the leagues year after year into the Senior League? That's where everyone wants to go, why is that happening?
>
> Club Secretary, County FA 2, 2006

Views like these were regularly articulated across the County FA areas I visited, especially by local representatives of ethnic minority clubs. When asked about the general *attitudes* of his Council Members towards equity issues, one senior FA Development officer was rather more blunt:

> To be perfectly honest, the majority of them [Council Members] are just God damn racists – if I'm going to be open and honest. They're sexist, they're racist, and that is, to be perfectly honest, that's how they are.
>
> County Development Manager, County FA 3, 2006

There is clearly a schism here, one that divides those who have been traditionally in control and those on the 'outside' of these local structures of power. I want to spend the remainder of this chapter discussing some of the complexities around the resistance to equity initiatives in local football. In Chapter 7 I refer to this as a form of 'denial' among those who control the local game, a denial not only the existence of racism in local football, but also of their own role in perpetuating such exclusion.

### (i) Political correctness and tokenism

> *Interviewer:* 'Why are The FA adopting the *E&SES* strategy now?'
> *Disciplinary Manager (County FA 3, 2006):* 'I honestly don't know. I don't know. Political correctness could be a factor.'

I mentioned earlier that there is a general discomfort in local football about what is perceived by some to be its increasing 'politicisation' since new FA-led initiatives took hold from 2000. In essence, the *E&SES* is seen by many local administrators as an overtly political intervention: a kind of 'political correctness' which is not only unnecessary, but is potentially damaging in its own right. Again, this connects strongly with laissez-faire sentiments about allowing football to 'sort things out for

itself', without the need for external interference or social engineering. This is perceived to be a general late-modern 'ill', and not one confined to football:

> Not just football is doing it … Local Councils having to employ people from ethnic minorities, people with disabilities. It just seems to be that everybody is trying to force people to do things and I just don't think its right. If it happens and just naturally evolved, then that's all well and good.
>
> Council Member, County FA 4, 2006

One of the most common ways in which the *E&SES* was dismissed by local volunteers was the suggestion that it was no more than a political 'stunt', one that, at best, might provoke tokenistic and essentially meaningless and short term change. Commenting on some football sessions being run as part of the equity initiative in a local school for children with disabilities, one Council Member said in 2007:

> I work in a special school so many hours a week, and yeah I know Les [Development worker] is going there on a Thursday afternoon to deliver. But is it just purely tokenism. That's what I think, you know, it is: tokenism. They think they've got to do it so, therefore, they do this sort of, an hour and a half for some children who can't read, write. [They] can't do lots of other things in life. But they go and do some football with them. Are they doing that because they want them to be footballers, or just as a token to say The FA want you play a little bit of football? They'll never play football, ever in their lives. Are you with me? They'll have these six taster sessions for an hour and a half, and never touch the thing again.
>
> Council Member, County FA 4, 2006

This view actually reflects much wider concerns – not only from long-standing volunteers but also from Development staff and local club representatives – that equity activities such as these are motivated, less by any real commitment to change

but more because they 'tick' certain requirements that are usually attached to government funding. More broadly, this type of perceived 'political correctness' seems to aim already limited resources at 'new' groups who are seen by key local decision makers as a poor choice for funding allocation, with no proven long term benefits to the local game:

> We don't think all the big money has gone where it should have done. It's gone on wasted schemes. It's gone on wasted efforts. It's gone on wasted communities. and a lot of money has gone down the drain. Whereas the 11-a-side game at a local level continues to struggle, and we don't feel the money's gone where it should have done. I think everybody feels that way: everybody.
>
> Council Member, County FA 4, 2006

One of the potentially most significant equity interventions stimulated by the *E&SES* that had taken place at one County FA I visited was the co-option of a former referee from an ethnic minority background onto the full Council. This was a radical step in an almost completely white local Association. But most people within the Association were sceptical about the merits of this approach, which were seen to contravene key tenets of sporting 'fairness':

> I think it's had limited success. [The co-opted member] is an excellent fellah. I have no problems with him at all, except for the fact that we co-opted him onto the Council to sit on various committees - one of them being referees committee. Now he doesn't come very often to the meetings which is a bit disappointing.
>
> County Secretary, County FA 3, 2006

A local County Development Manager was even more cynical about the co-option:

> I'll be honest… I think it's perceived as a token gesture. And I'll be perfectly honest, I would see it as a token gesture. And I do see it as a token gesture. Add to the fact that the women on Council are token gestures and I think it's wrong, to be perfectly honest.
>
> County Development Manager, County FA 3, 2006

This type of cynicism directed towards the *E&SES* and its policies reflects not only a strong rejection of 'external' interference – in this case seen as 'political correctness' or 'tokenism' – but it also objects to the ways in which the *E&SES* had been *imposed* on County FAs and therefore had challenged the previous authority of County FAs and their capacity to decide local priorities for themselves. Of course, one of the main reasons for The FA-led equity interventions was that the vast majority of local associations had decided that equity was *not* on their list of local priorities or obligations. I found little evidence of equity or race equality activities taking place at County FAs *prior* to the introduction of Development teams in 2000. This raises the question of why, exactly, might this be the case?

### (ii) The mythopoeic status of fair play and of being 'unbiased' in local football

In Chapter 2 I spent some time outlining the centrality of the values of 'fairness' and the belief in a lack of bias in the development of British sport since its origins. I suggested that Victorian ideals about 'fair play' were an important component in the formation of modern sporting codes such as for Association football, and that later they became an ingrained feature of prized amateur ideologies, particularly when faced with the rising challenges of professionalism in team sport. This powerful legacy of 'fair play' and of 'non-bias' continues to frame the actions and outlook of

those controlling local sport in Britain. A common response in my interviews and observations with key County FA personnel - particularly when discussing the *E&SES* - was to emphasise the crucial importance of 'fairness.' The ideal of fair play was used not only as a benchmark that one must continuously work to maintain – what football *should* be like - it was also used when describing a fundamental component of existing local football culture – what the game *was* and *is* like. Ideals of 'fairness' were regularly called up to describe how the local game is governed, both in the past and the present, and its centrality was often proudly espoused:

> I think that equality is the essence, as far as I'm concerned, of football, of sports. Local football, sports in general. Everybody should be allowed to play football; women, girls, whatever.
>
> President, County FA 1, 2005

> When disciplinary [reports] come in here, I'm not bothered whether it's a disabled footballer, a black footballer, a woman footballer, a West Indian or whatever. They get dealt with in exactly the same way.
>
> Disciplinary Manager, County FA 3, 2006

Both these quotations provide useful examples of how the key objectives of County FAs fit neatly with the values of fair play and of being seen to be 'unbiased'. The first relates to participation. There was a very general consensus that the more people played the game, the better: to deliberately *exclude* some people from participating would be counterintuitive. The second refers to another central duty of the County FA: handling ill-discipline in the game. The County FA acts as the local 'judge' for cases of ill-discipline, even arranging court-style hearings for those cases that become disputed by both parties. These sites are often the touchstones for accusations of racist practices. At two County FAs I visited, I was able to sit in on two such hearings. The

panel stuck closely to procedure and rules, and was at pains to make clear to me that such hearings were conducted fairly and without bias to either party.

This fair play rhetoric also emerged in discussions around understandings of *difference* in local football. The implications of this combination are further explored in Chapter 7, where I contend that this stance can tell us much about the contemporary forms of *racialised* exclusion in the local game, and how such exclusion continues to be legitimised by those in control at County FAs. When asked about the involvement of people from ethnic minority backgrounds, the 'fairness' rhetoric was often powerfully deployed:

> I get on, get on with everybody and there is no reason why you can't. And that don't matter: coloured kids, everything.
>
> > Council Member, County FA 2, 2006

> There's no such thing as black footballers. They're footballers who happen to have black skin, that should be the start of it all. We are all equal under God's eyes as far as I'm concerned.
>
> > Disciplinary Manager, County FA 3, 2006

> Football has been for all. As I said, my club has taken everybody from any ethnic background over the years. There's no question mark. If you can play football, you play for the club. And [I] would say every other club in the town and county does exactly that same policy.
>
> > Council Member, County FA 4, 2007

For those responsible for governing the local game in England, there is an immutable sense that being unbiased and committed to 'fairness' already underpins all their duties. The contrast between this approach to equality on the volunteer Governance side and that of the professional Development teams in many ways mirrors some of

the key differences between these departments that I crudely summarised earlier in Figure 7.1. Within Development work, equity initiatives were formally written into core work programmes as part of wider reform and the process of professionalization. Governance staff saw equity as much more informally implemented within their day-to-day activities. Table 7.4 below summarises in detail the ways in which the key components of the *E&SES* were differentially imbedded by the County FAs I visited.

This expressed long-standing commitment to being 'unbiased' and 'fair' helps us begin to understand why many within the local game remain unconvinced that a new equity strategy is actually *necessary* for local football. As I show in Chapter 7, this interpretation of 'fairness' actually emerges as quite a narrow one, particularly in relation to issues of equal treatment and 'race'. Indeed, the commitment to these ideals of fair play appears to not only block potentially progressive change in this area but also to act as an important mechanism for local 'race' exclusion. The last row of Table 6.4 deals with typical reactions of those at County FAs to the principles of positive action – a core component of the equity strategy. This component was probably the most contested aspect of the entire *E&SES* and, as the table suggests, it appears to clash directly with the longer-standing ideals of 'fairness' that County FA representatives seem so committed to. I want to spend some time describing this discomfort with positive action among those who favour a much more 'meritocratic' notion of equality.

| Aspect of The E&SES | Governance Department | Development Department |
|---|---|---|
| *Policy* | 'Fairness' is seen as core concern of traditional structures (e.g. rules etc.) | Equity is a core pillar of FDS 2001-6 |
| *Provision* | Activities such as handling discipline cases are inherently equitable (unbiased) | Written into formal work programmes (e.g. targets for BME coaches) |
| *Resources* | Funding for equity would need to be found internally | Funding is accessible from The FA and other partners |
| *Staffing* | New equality agenda is treated with suspicion and scepticism | Staff expertise/interest in promoting the equity agenda |
| *Approach to positive action* | Resisted: it goes against 'equal treatment for all' & the 'fairness' ethos of Governance | Encouraged: it fits with Development principles of increasing participation |

**Table 6.4: Fairness and the *E&SES* in
County FA Governance and Development departments**

*(iii) The rejection of positive action and the promotion of meritocracy*

This chapter is slowly building up a picture of the range of mechanisms responsible

for resistance to the *E&SES* and other equity interventions in local football. They

include the organisational inertia and conservatism that characterises local football

governance structures and cultures; the preference for laissez-faire non-

interventionism; and the local protectionism regarding decision making. This offers

the broader context for local resistance. In addition - and related – there is widespread disquiet about what appears to be the increasing 'politicisation' of the local game in England. For some, equity work is seen as a political 'gimmick' and, as such, its interventions are unlikely to have any real success or impact.

On top of this, I have also suggested that the local scepticism towards the *E&SES* can be traced to the sentiment that local football in England – and particularly its governing structures – is already inherently 'fair' and 'unbiased'. The *E&SES* is seen by some as an unwelcome and mechanical attempt to replicate dominant values; values that are already ingrained in the day-to-day activities of English County Football Associations. As a result, there is simply little need for an equity strategy, let alone the sort of positive action plans which require organisations to acknowledge that inequalities exist *within* their own structures, and which compels them take positive steps to address them (The FA 2004a; 2004b). This is something that my governance respondents found extremely hard to understand or accept. These forms of 'denial' have been noted elsewhere (Long 2000; Bonilla-Silva 2003b; Swinney and Horne 2005) and they seem particularly salient in discussions around 'race' and equal opportunities. We can begin to see how the 'situational logic' identified throughout this chapter among governance volunteers might lead to interpretations of 'equity' as giving *unfair* advantage to one group over another – with no justification or legitimation for such preferential treatment.

One of the central rhetorics of English amateurism – despite its capacities for social exclusion - is that of 'meritocracy'. The notion of the 'level playing field' of sport is a common assertion in British sporting cultures and it is particularly common in debates

around race equality (Long 2000; Long et al. 2000; Long and Hylton 2002; Long and McNamee 2004, St. Louis 2004). In this sense British sport, but perhaps particularly English football, has often been viewed as a site where the *best* players can achieve the highest rewards, regardless of their ethnic background. Indeed, the achievements of prominent athletes from ethnic minority backgrounds – particularly black footballers - are often used as evidence to demonstrate the essentially meritocratic nature of British sport (Jarvie and Reid 1997; Allison 2000). This emphasis on the inherent meritocracy of local sport is a rhetoric which is central to the rejection of the core tenets of positive action. Competitive sport *must* be meritocratic because, above anything else, sporting clubs want to win and to be successful:

> We've got Shabaaz in the first team, Hussein, who's a local lad, plays for the first team, Ali plays for the third team. Come along to the club with some other friends, he's made it and that's it. If you're good enough you'll play and it doesn't matter who you are. At the end of the day football teams have to pick people on good enough to play, not on the fact you must have two Asians in your team. You can't do that can you? It's a competitive game.
>
> <div align="right">Council Member, County FA 4, 2006</div>

> Don't forget this: one team [local club] was two white lads and all the rest coloured, West Indian. Now we took them in our league and sure enough we got them promoted to the Senior League, where they are now. So I mean there was no bias in the way of them.
>
> <div align="right">Council Member, County FA 2, 2006</div>

These meritocratic pretensions invariably have the effect of denying not only the need for positive action, but also that there are any real problems of discrimination or exclusion in the game at all. In its essence, football is open and accessible to all, and

to suggest otherwise simply goes against the core principles of local football – the striving for success and achievement. This attitude reflects not only the make up of clubs and local league competitions, but also representation on the County FA:

> We've got a black Afro-Caribbean member here. We've got a lady [sic], and I would say that's about equal to the proportion involved in it. So, you know, within the county. You know [black member] is one twentieth of [this] FA and it's probably one twentieth of the players in [this county] have black and ethnic backgrounds.
>
> Council Member, County FA 4, 2007

One way of making sense of these responses is to consider the different interpretations of social stratification as either 'horizontal' of 'vertical' (St. Louis 2004). St. Louis discusses this in relation to what he terms 'multicultural common sense'. The version of diversity that is viewed horizontally is strongly egalitarian, in the sense that groups – in this case groups defined by ideas of race – are viewed, in relativist terms, as equal and judged on their appropriate merits and pitfalls. This 'horizontalism', which St. Louis identifies as an important component of contemporary multiculturalism, fails to recognise the vertical ordering of such groups, particularly in the sense that they denote superiority and inferiority. The responses that I have just discussed represent this horizontal version of difference, whereby each group or collective has an equal opportunity of success – hence the 'level playing field' analogy (see Swinney and Horne 2005 for more here). This also avoids acknowledging the barriers and constraints – historic and contemporary – that might place some groups and collectives at a disadvantage to others, thus avoiding the issues of power that characterise vertical interpretations of difference. While this 'verticalism' does seem to be acknowledged in the *E&SES* – recognising inequalities and taking steps to address them - those at County FAs adopt a much more horizontal

interpretation of difference. This marks another tension between these late-modern policy interventions and the longer-standing structures and cultures of the local game.

### (iv) Equity as counter-productive: stirring up new problems

Given that the *E&SES* is widely seen here as both unnecessary but also unfair, the next logical step is that it is not racialised exclusion but the *E&SES* itself which is *causing* new problems and difficulties in the local game – in short, the new FA policy is seen as divisive and counter-productive. The following quotations suggest that the *E&SES* is perceived as making local football less 'fair' and more discriminatory:

> I think that the fact that they take some of these things on board [E&SES practices] makes things more divisive than what they were before. It divides the community rather than brings it together.
>
> <div align="right">Council Member, County FA 4, 2006</div>

> With a lot of the, shall we say, compulsory legislation and things that are coming in now, the object is to attract people into football to play the game, to referee the game, to administrate, to be a workforce supporter. A lot of these things, I'm afraid, are going to have the opposite effect: that, you know, you've got to do this, or you've got to that.
>
> <div align="right">President, County FA 5, 2007</div>

In essence, the imposition of *E&SES* – and of centralist FA interventions, more broadly – are seen to contribute to a range of new ills and challenges which have to be remedied by long-standing volunteers in the local game. This is part of the increasing pressure placed on volunteers since the reforms have taken hold. These sorts of pressures have been identified elsewhere (Nichols, Taylor et al. 2003; Nichols, Taylor et al. 2005) and they result not only in more time being required to implement these reforms, but also for volunteers to have new specialist knowledge and skills.

Having outlined aspects of the general local resistance to the introduction of the *E&SES*, I am now in a position to try to map the 'situational logic' (Greener 2005) of this resistance in Figure 7.5 following Archer's morphogenetic cycle (Archer 1995). Firstly, we must understand the structural organisation of local football – the County FAs as 'reactive adjudicators' of the game; controllers rather than facilitators. County FA structures and cultures are necessarily *protectionist* as evidenced from their localised origins and early autonomy of control. This protectionism is also generated by two components of amateurist ideology, namely fairness and paternalism. At stage two, that of social interaction, County FA Council Members continually activate and reinforce the conditions of County FAs as fair and unbiased. Because of this attachment, positive action or pro-active intervention is interpreted as damaging this level playing field and therefore unjustifiably *preferring* one group over another. It is here we can see that equity might be interpreted locally as being inherently *unfair*. This situational logic extends further in the suggestion that, given its inherent unfairness, it is the *E&SES* that seems to be causing new problems and difficulties in the game. This interaction with the ideas of the *E&SES* therefore produces an elaboration or reproduction of the prior structural conditions, leaving the *E&SES* and equity principles to be seen as an unnecessary addition to the structures of local football governance. Because of this it is effectively resisted. This reproduction of prior structures is also informed by an implicit assumption that the historic and current power relations in the game remain best suited to effective governance and, as such, its members feel justified in protecting this control.
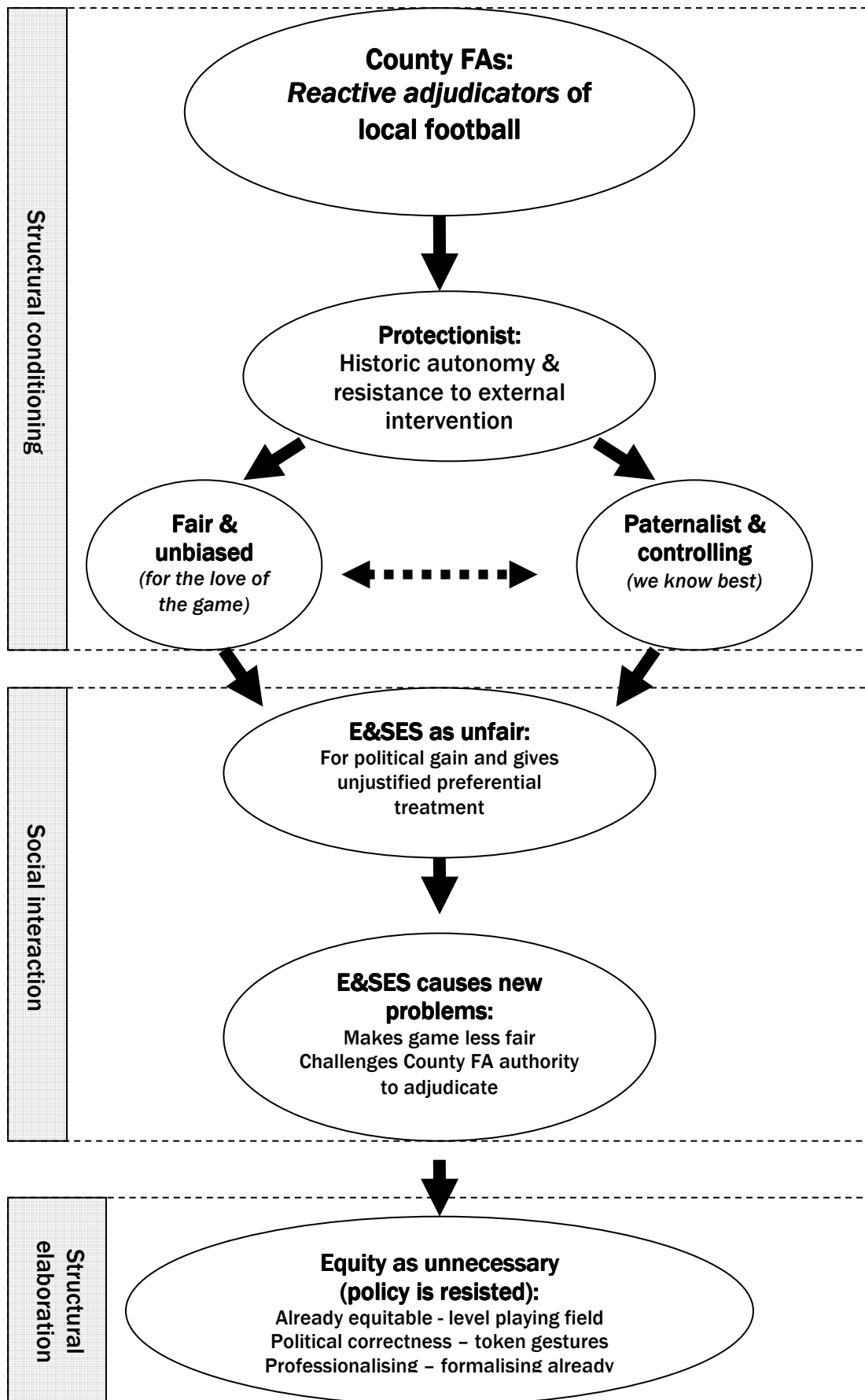
**Structural conditioning**

County FAs:
*Reactive adjudicators* of
local football

Protectionist:
Historic autonomy &
resistance to external
intervention

Fair &
unbiased
*(for the love of
the game)*

Paternalist &
controlling
*(we know best)*

**Social interaction**

E&SES as unfair:
For political gain and gives
unjustified preferential
treatment

E&SES causes new
problems:
Makes game less fair
Challenges County FA authority
to adjudicate

**Structural elaboration**

Equity as unnecessary
(policy is resisted):
Already equitable - level playing field
Political correctness – token gestures
Professionalising – formalising already

**Figure 6.5: The 'situational logic' of local resistance to the *E&SES***

## 5. Summary

This chapter has used illustrative responses from interviewees at and around my case study County FAs in an attempt to understand and interpret local resistance among key figures in local football Governance to the implementation of The FA's *E&SES* and the equity agenda more generally. My main aim here has been to show how several core founding tenets of the English game provide an underlying rationale for opposition to equity strategies. In this sense, the structural and ideological conditions for the reception of *E&SES* seem to play a crucial role in the local responses activated. I started with some rather broad assertions about County FAs being characterised by *inertia*, suggesting this is the case because of their traditional role as reactors, and because of their laissez-faire traditions of non-intervention and their attempts to retain a local autonomy of control. I then showed how previous attempts to intervene in the activities of County FAs – led by The FA's *Development Strategy* in 2000 – prompted concern locally about the modernisation of the game, including its perceived 'politicisation' and professionalisation.

It was only then that I began to discuss the actual reception of the *E&SES* and the equity agenda in the local game.  The wider structural and cultural context just outlined can tell us much about the local discomfort felt towards equity initiatives. I also showed how elements of the *E&SES* challenged some of the underlying assumptions about 'fairness' and 'meritocracy' at County FAs – and are therefore all the more problematic. Inside County FAs the general view was that, actually, there was very little *need* for an equity strategy for the local game. Put simply, issues of equality are claimed to have already been informally delivered by these organisations, and by the mythopoeic 'power' of football to create a level playing field. As such,

positive action interventions were generally seen as tokenistic, indications of 'political correctness' and of external 'meddling' in an environment that was inherently fair and unbiased. Indeed, this sentiment was felt strongly enough by some to suggest that the *E&SES* and the new equity agenda in local football was itself *causing* new problems and producing a new range of resentments and difficulties for those who govern the local game in England.

I want to finally turn, in Chapter 7, to the rather more specific nature of these new forms of local resistance and resentment, particularly those in which ideas of race became particularly influential.

# Chapter 7
## Legitimizing racialised exclusion in local football -
## Who is playing the 'race' card - and why?

_____

**1. Introduction**

The scope of The FA's *E&SES* is such that it does not only focus on 'race' equality
but covers the spectrum of the equity agenda, including women and girls and people
with disabilities. As such, I have tried, thus far, to identify - and account for - the
resistance to the *E&SES* in its broadest sense by outlining some of the conditions that
have shaped the 'situational logic' of such resistance. Secondly, I have taken what
might be viewed as an 'unorthodox' theoretical stance in my analysis, one that is
informed by a critical realist interpretation of the concept of 'race' as outlined by
Carter (1998; 2000). At its simplest, this marks an attempt to avoid *reifying* 'race' -
that there actually exists distinctive 'racial' differences among people – in favour of
understanding social relations and processes *without* giving 'race' such causal powers.
As I showed in Chapter 4, these sorts of conceptual pitfalls are not only found within
'race' equality and 'race' relations policies (including the E&SES), but also in
sociological analysis that give causal explanatory weight to 'racial' differences. Carter
sees race ideas as propositional forms, or as constituting claims that people make
'about the nature of the world' (Carter 2000: 139). Thus:

> Race ideas are only activated by actors' uses of them as interactional
> resources. The use of these ideas by people may carry all sorts of
> consequences, but such consequences are a property of social action, of people
> doing things (stereotyping, discrimination, using violence). They are not
> caused by *race*.

> (Carter 2000: 74) [Original emphasis]

Following this route, and informed by Archer's morphogenetic cycle (Archer 1995), I have explored the broader structural and cultural conditions and posited some plausible generative mechanisms behind the *general* resistance to the *E&SES*. This has been done largely without direct reference to 'race'. In this penultimate chapter, I want to focus more explicitly on the race equality components of the *E&SES* in order to explore some of the ways in which ideas of race inform the habitus of local football governance and how they become activated as part of this resistance. There is obviously much to say about gender relations – including those which are open to being racialised - that are activated in this setting. At the same time, there is a real need for more research on the provision of, and reception for, disability sport in local settings. There is little scope here for me to attempt either of these projects, although I hope that the preceding account of the structural conditions or 'field' of the local game may provide a useful starting point for future research in these areas.

My decision to focus on notions of 'race' and racism here is informed by a number of factors. Firstly, as I have shown, the equity agenda in English football has been dominated by anti-racism. This focus initially came from fan groups in the 1970s who opposed racism and fascism on the terraces, but it continued into the high-profile 'statutory' anti-racist campaigns such as *Kick It Out* in the early 1990s (Garland and Rowe 2001). This focus was also evident in many of the interviews I undertook with local football representatives, who would typically alight on the 'race' issue whenever I asked them about equity in its general sense. Secondly, there are important distinctions to be made *between* the 'target groups' identified by the *E&SES* as its core concerns – many of which do not appear to have been recognised by policy

initiatives in this area. Crucially, women and girls football, and football for people with disabilities is organised *outside* the existing and long-standing structures of the local game in England. They are, in other words, not part of the 'mainstream' game and, as such, they represent *new* forms of the game that invariably have been organised and set up around, rather than *within*, the existing County FA structures. These forms of the game have also, largely, been controlled and managed by FA Development staff – often by dedicated women's and girls or disability officers. I think this helps explain the rapid rise in participation of these forms of the game. The FA is confident enough to set big target increases in these areas by 2012: they aim for 25% more adult female  teams, 50% more girls teams and 50% more male disabled teams (The FA 2007: 12).

Race equality initiatives in football aimed mainly at racialised males, specifically involves their greater *integration* into the existing, long-standing structures of the game outlined earlier. In this sense, the structures and cultures of local football governance in England – and the activation of race ideas in this setting - might offer insights into the specific forms of racialised exclusion that routinely operate in the contemporary game at the local level. Finally, when I discussed equity and the *E&SES* with my interviewees, and during observations at County FA meetings and in office exchanges, ideas of race and racism clearly dominated the equity agenda. In short, it was the issue that people wanted to talk to me about and was invariably the most contested and fractious topic that arose from discussions about the implementation of *E&SES*.

My aim here is to discuss, explicitly, the ways in which interpretations of difference based around ideas of race become activated in the local game. The subtitle of this chapter, 'who is playing the race card', is meant to draw attention to the multiple ways in which race ideas are deployed by different people in different positions and for different reasons. My focus here is on the interpretations of 'race' made by those in control of the governance of the local game. I suggest that ideas of race are activated by some of the generative mechanisms associated with some of the tenets of amateurism - 'fair play', protectionism and paternalism – that have traditionally dominated in the English game. Here, I argue that race ideas contribute to the legitimation of the traditional networks of control established inside County FAs. I argued in Chapter 6 that the implementation of the *E&SES* has led to a general consolidation and *reproduction* (rather than any significant transformation) of the core structural features of County FAs. Via the following discussion of the activation of race ideas we can identify how the exclusion of the racialised 'other' is perpetuated in the local game in England today. The discussion which follows is centred on three key interpretations of 'race'. These are:

- The racialisation of County FA 'club cultures'; a process informed by
    - Cultural incompatibility
    - Re-working the amateurist 'civilizing mission'

- The denial of racism through 'colour-blindness'

- The rejection of race ideas as a form of resistance to County FA authority

As these themes might suggest, the uses of race ideas by key figures of the local game are complex and, at times, even contradictory. This complexity is often missed in

other accounts of racism in sport, particularly by those that use narrow conceptualisations of 'whiteness' (see Chapter 1 for a brief critique of this approach). In my discussion of these three themes, I try to illustrate the ways in which ideas of race are activated – primarily by County FA Governance personnel - to justify local resistance to the *E&SES* and to perpetuate patterns of racialised exclusion in the local game. Here, I am using the notion of *racialisation* to describe 'those forms of social interactions and social relations that come to be understood by actors and agents in race terms' (Carter 2000: 46), rather than giving the concept of 'race' any explanatory or causal power in its own right. This implies the need to develop a reworking of the currently dominant theorisation of 'whiteness', at least those that appear to give ideas of race ontological certainty.

## 2. The racialisation of 'club cultures' at County FAs

I have implied at various stages in this thesis – both in a historical context in Chapter 2, and more contemporarily in Chapters 3 and 7 - that ideas of race appear to remain important sources of power and authority to those in charge. In this section I explore some of the evidence that exemplifies the types of situations where ideas of race are activated in local football governance. I am particularly concerned here with how these ideas contribute to the protectionism and paternalism outlined in Chapter 6. I want to do this by outlining the ways in which the habitus of County FAs might be seen as – despite claims to the contrary - *racialised*; that is, to recap: 'those forms of social interactions and social relations that come to be understood by actors and agents in race terms' (Carter 2000: 46).

In Chapter 3 I suggested that relations and networks within local County FAs could best be characterised by the concept of 'club culture' (Handy 1988), one based around

familiar and long-established networks of friendships and contacts, culminating in one or two key figures (usually long-standing vice-presidents) dictating proceedings. Locally, such relationships allow for the transfer of information and knowledge about all aspects of the local game and they provide the raw materials for opportunities to participate and progress locally. The local County FA Council offers opportunities for like-minded people from similar backgrounds to congregate and 'bond' in a non-work, relatively relaxed environment. The County FA meetings resembled gatherings of long-standing, closely knit friendship groups more than boardroom-style business meetings or open forums. This form of networking is often seen in a positive light, particularly in sport policy rhetoric where the establishment of trust, social bonding and the formation of a committed local football community is encouraged – in, short the development of social capital (Portes 1998; Putnam 2000; Blackshaw and Long 2005). The positives of these types of bonds are very obvious for those already inside these networks but are possibly less visible to those outside: the following quotation provides a nice illustration of these benefits:

> If you've got a problem and he [County FA chief executive] can help you then he will. I know, sort of off the record. But you know if a club got a hefty fine say £250, and they can't pay it by the end of the month, he'll say: 'Well, give me £50 for five months.' He shouldn't, but he will, are you with me?
>
> Council Member, County FA 4, 2007

The way this 'favour' is articulated here is particularly interesting. By inserting the clauses 'off the record' and 'he shouldn't do it' it hints at the illegitimacy and opaqueness of these sorts of informal, but rewarding, arrangements. As I suggested earlier, and as others have noted (Bourdieu 1990, 1991; Blackshaw and Long 2005; Burdsey 2007), the distribution of such capital can be quite *exclusive* in nature and

can work as an important source of power over others. Membership of this often elusive and intangible local network can, for some, be simply unachievable. Even something as mundane as flexibility on payment of fines is not typically open to *all* clubs in this particular County – and certainly not to those labelled ethnic minority clubs.

In this context, ideas of race appear to inform and reinforce the 'symbolic boundaries' (Spracklen 2001) of this sort of local 'club culture.' Indeed, as has been noted elsewhere, a critical interpretation of social capital allows us to view it as 'an asset that is unequally distributed in sport, as well as a process that reinforces racialised inequality' (Hylton 2008b: 264-265). Importantly, for those who are established and influential members inside these key networks of the local game – people such as vice-presidents and other senior figures at County FAs - information and knowledge of this kind is freely available and exchanged regularly. Given that this information is typically exchanged normatively but rather exclusively, those on the inside of such networks are often entirely unaware even of the existence of such 'invisible' forms of privileged access to information, power and channels of decision making – an 'absence' which is a key component, of course, of the 'whiteness' paradigm (Frankenberg 1993; Long and Hylton 2002; King 2004a; Garner 2006) although, note, also characterised more broadly and without reference to 'race' by Bourdieu's notion of habitus (1990; 1991; Burdsey 2007), as the 'fish in water' analogy mentioned earlier (in Chapter 3) highlights.

During my time at County FAs, I observed many interactions and exchanges in which ideas of race were deployed to construct what we might call the local football 'other'.

These incidents were characteristic of the types of 'everyday' racism that Essed, among others, has identified (1991). There is nothing particularly novel in the presentation of evidence such as this in sport, and there are plenty of examples elsewhere similar to those described below (see for example Long et al 2000; Back et al 2001; Spracklen 2001; King 2004a: 2004b; Burdsey 2007). What is significant in the evidence presented below is that it comes directly from the governance structures and thus the key decision makers of the local game. One example of this is the casually deployed stereotypes that both articulate the fixed boundaries of 'race' while also locating some firmly external to the County FA 'club'. During participant observation at one County FA, it was very clear that these symbolic boundaries included a range of well established ideas about race. I made observational field-notes on the following interactions between Governance staff members at one County FA office that appear stark in their casual nature, particularly considering my own overt presence in this office at the time:

> [*Staff member takes a phone call and asks a staff member for assistance*]:
> Some 'ragga'[5] wants information on coaching courses.

> [*Staff member takes phone call*]:
> 'I've got a Mohammed on the phone – '*Mohammed'* (using fake, accentuated Indian accent).

> [*Staff members talking to each other*]:
> A: Where did you get your jeans from?
> B: Eisenegger [local clothes store]
> A: I is not a nigger. I is a white man.

---

[5] Possibly in reference to 'ragamuffin', a derogatory term associated with people of Caribbean origin

[*Staff member commenting about dress and manners associated with black youth culture*]:

You know, the way they wear their baseball caps like that, and their tracksuit bottoms; it really gets on my tits!

[*Another conversation between staff about the clubs (Tottenham & Arsenal) they support*]:

A: How many players do you have in your team who are English?

B: Jermain Defoe [Black forward, England international]

A: No I mean *truly* English. That takes out (Ledley) King too.

B: And Ashley Cole!

[*Staff member discussing Jose Mourinho, Chelsea FC coach*]:

Gyppo Mourinho – he's such a little pikey; gyppo, gyppo, gyppo.[6] [chanting]

There are a range of complexities here in the use of race ideas, including about nationality, language, skin colour and culture. These tell us much about the range of context within which ideas of race can be manifested. This is something, sadly, I have too little time to explore in any detail here. These types of informal conversations were relatively widespread at one particular County FA and, although they were less evident in other settings, similar forms of 'banter' between staff members and volunteers in this setting were a feature of the routine nature of interaction at the County FAs visited. Such informal exchanges represent the kinds of 'systemic, recurrent and familiar practices that activate underlying power relations' (Burdsey 2007: 48) and, in this case, play an important role in racialising the 'club culture' of County FAs.

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[6] Terms 'gyppo' and 'pikey' refer to people from traveller communities, possibly a reference to his Portuguese nationality

One of the defining features, then, of exactly who is *eligible* for membership of this informal 'club' are sentiments revolving around ideas about race. Clearly, in this kind of semi-public setting, those identified as the racialised 'other' – be it on grounds of nationality, culture or appearance - seem placed firmly *outside* of the symbolic and material boundaries of County FA cultures and structures – as, of course, do the policy issues of racism and unequal treatment. Occasionally, even Council members – accepted 'members' of the local FA 'club' – revealed the explicit role played by race ideas in forming the cultural capital necessary to be accepted into the County FA club, particularly among older members:

> I think, if I would be sort of honest … [County] FAs with the older guys, and I've looked at some of the average age in the 70s, perhaps early 80s, I think that would be unacceptable. They would not want an Asian or black [on Council].
>
> Council Member, County FA 4, 2006

The confidence with which such ideas concerning race are articulated so overtly is no doubt a product of the shared networks of trust and similitude which derive from the forms of 'bonding' capital outlined earlier, what Long and Blackshaw refer to as the 'dark side' of social capital (2005). These sorts of comments were never openly challenged and so they seemed to be legitimised, thus contributing to the normative reproduction of racialised club cultures. As a consequence of the very narrow channels of recruitment in County FA Councils across England, the privileges and information transfer that takes place at the highest levels of the grass-roots game holds its relative exclusivity. Those few people from ethnic minority backgrounds who had managed to negotiate their way through some of these boundaries and onto Council also testify to some of the difficulties they faced once they had 'arrived':

> [A referee] joined the County as a councillor and wanted to put something
> back into football … After a year on council, I mean, he felt fairly unwelcome.
> … He complained to me at a couple of incidents of what he perceived to be
> bias, and he lasted a year, and he stopped … I've had a run in with a number
> of people, councillors. I'm not saying that the Council's racist, but there
> certainly are racists within the council and, unfortunately, they are in positions
> of power. And I've had a very unhappy sojourn on Council.
>
> <div align="right">Council Member, County FA 1, 2005</div>

Evidence of this kind is important as it tells us that alongside the forms of racialised exclusion that has been shown to take place on the pitch among players of the local game (see Bains and Johal 1996; Long et al 2000; Burdsey 2007), similar processes are in place within the key governance bodies of the local game. It is tempting to analyse this racism in local sport as others have - by using the concept of 'whiteness'. This is particularly evident in Colin King's influential account of racism in football coaching and his utilisation of essentialist concepts of 'black' and 'white' (King 2004a; 2004b). For King, 'whiteness' can be understood is a 'structure of action' (2004a: 1) implying that it is 'whiteness' itself which produces the racism he powerfully identifies. Moreover, to be admitted to the privileged 'club' of elite football coaches, King follows Fanon's notion of the 'white mask' to suggest that one must 'act white' – implying that whiteness has also a *cultural* component. This reflects wider theoretical difficulties in essentialising phenomena that are better conceived as social constructions, explored usefully by Sayer (1997). Returning to Carter's interpretation of 'race' as propositional forms and ontologically dubious, there is little to gain by suggesting that these club cultures exist *because* of 'whiteness' per se, i.e. because someone is, in essence, 'white'. Rather, I want to

propose an approach that tries to make sense of these racialised club cultures by returning to the structural conditions of local football outlined earlier. What is it about these conditions that encourage – or at least allow for – ideas of race to become an important component in the habitus or local football governance? While these structuring historical conditions – those involved in the formation and construction of values of modern sport in Britain - might simply be regarded in some quarters as components of King's (among other's) form of 'whiteness', I remain unconvinced that the concept is alone appropriate for the more broader analysis I have tried to perform here. Moreover, it runs the real risk of reifying notions of 'race' – making 'race' real – and avoiding an analysis of the conditions that shape the activation of ideas of race.

As we have seen, historical interpretations of 'race' bound to theories of racial science and European colonialism were, of course, integral aspects of the development of modern British sport at home and overseas (Mason 1988; Holt 1989; Brailsford 1991; Birley 1993; Huggins 2004). These sorts of ideologies connect well with the Victorian British sporting values upon which English County FAs were modelled – such as paternalism and protectionism - and which continue to dominate in local associations today (see Chapter 6). I explore below two ways in which these longer-standing ideas of race are used to rationalize the racialised domination of local individuals and networks in local sport:

- Firstly, the lack of diverse involvement in the game is often seen, at the local level, as the result of cultural *incompatibility* –grounded in assumptions about fixed 'racial' differences – of a sort that is found in 'other' groups which are

defined, among other ways, in terms of biological difference (such as skin colour), nationality and/or religion.

- Secondly, and related, some local groups are deemed to lack the necessary knowledge and experience – cultural capital - to be *entitled* to govern and control local football. As such, they are often subjected to sustained processes of control and assimilation – processes of 'civilising' - into this authentic British footballing culture.

I will discuss briefly how each of these interpretations, related to longer-standing principles of amateurism, were manifested in the interactions I captured during my research.

### (i) Cultural incompatibility

As County FAs are, invariably, seen as 'open' and 'democratic' organisations by their members, situational logic might dictate that those on the outside must actively 'choose' not to become involved in these local networks, or are simply unsuited to positions of power. This approach - one that externalises the blame of under-representation (Long and Hylton 2002: 128) onto the racialised other - is based on the premise of cultural and biological difference, which helps to legitimize the status quo – itself an important constitutive component of County FA structures as Chapter 3 showed. This essentialism of cultural difference is a key component of hegemonic sporting cultures and discourses in Britain, as others have noted (Back et al. 2001; Burdsey 2007). It is thus the *inherent* cultural tradition of non-participants that

provides the key barriers to their involvement, along with their unwillingness to conform to this hegemonic practice, as the following accounts suggest:

> The actual culture of certain minorities can hold them back to get involved. The Asian population, basically, are an insular population; certainly the older population. Where you've still got the same old ways, their creed, etc, etc, and they weren't into socialising outside of their situation.
>
> <div align="right">Council Member, County FA 1, 2005</div>

> If you've got a team of blokes playing hockey, ten of them were Asian. Because that's the game they played over there. Cos they've got no bloody grass over there!  When they come over here ... why play soccer?
>
> <div align="right">Local club secretary, County FA 2, 2006</div>

> We attract no Asian footballers because, whatever people say, it's not their game… they want to play cricket.
>
> <div align="right">Council Member, County FA 4, 2006</div>

It is interesting that all the comments here refer explicitly to '*Asian*' participants. This may be because of the relative willingness of male members of other minorities to adopt dominant cultural practices and conform to the requirements of the habitus; as King phrases it, by 'playing the white man' (King 2004a, see also Burdsey, 2004b, 2007). Indeed, the capacity to concur with British football's peculiarly *masculine* cultural practices are said to constitute important aspects of 'black' forms of cultural accommodation and resistance within British sport (Carrington 1998). The comments above also typically conceptualize the racialised other as *players*, rather than people in any other positions, and particularly in those crucial 'behind the scenes' roles that involve decision making and denote powerful status in the local game. This type of

contingent acceptance is also countered or challenged by the routine processes of discipline and sanction that the County FA in England uses normatively to control its players. There are, of course, other elements to this cultural incompatibility: factors such as nationality, citizenship, religion, language, to name but a few, all inform the symbolic boundaries of County FA. It is partly because of this that I am wary of utilising the notion of 'whiteness' – that inevitably points to the binary of black/white skin colour - to fully explain the exclusionary and racist practices of County FAs.

In Chapter 6 I introduced the idea of 'paternalism' as a key structural historic feature of local football governance in England. The principle of *'we know best'* is a central component of the existing power relations in English local football, and I want now to discuss the ways in which this kind of paternalism is routinely activated by ideas of race.

### (ii) Continuing the 'civilising mission'

It is a well rehearsed argument that sport is intertwined with forms of social control (see Eitzen 2000). We can go back to the origins of sport in Victorian Britain (see Chapter 2) to recall some of the roots of this control through modern sport. As the public schools of nineteenth century England began to embrace organized sport and leisure as sites for the promotion of 'muscular Christianity' and 'rational recreation', so British sport became entangled with political projects of the time. For example, upon election in 1868 (just five years after the formation of The FA), British Prime Minister Gladstone pronounced his mission to 'pacify Ireland' using sport and leisure – including the offices of The FA - as the key vehicles (Birley 1993). Further afield, the rise of the nation-state in Europe and Empire building through colonial expansion

was also aided by the use of sport and leisure. Colonial subjects faced 'civilising' missions that imparted the dominant cultural values of Britishness, often through the sporting contest (James 1967; Holt 1989; Brailsford 1991; Huggins 2004) although this process may not have been as straight forward and one-sided as is often characterised (see James 1967).

As I suggested in Chapter 6, these long-standing connections between sport and the British 'missionary spirit' (Birley 1993) have been fostered and re-worked through the frame of 'paternalism.' At times, this sort of paternalism is activated by ideas of race in the local game, as the comments of this local Council member reveal:

> We do get problems of misbehaviour. Some of them [ethnic minority players] seem to be on a very short fuse and some of them seem to have to learn how they can, and can't, behave on a football field. It could be that they are deprived anyway, the Eastern Europeans. It could just be the way they go on in their own environment, I don't know.
>
> Council Member, County FA 1, 2005

As Richard Holt (1989) suggests, the Victorian cult of amateur sport in England was informed by the increasingly popular social-Darwinist theories of human evolution. This 'racial science' posited the existence of discrete, unalterable 'races' of people, 'differentially endowed, such that some were inherently superior to others' (Solomos and Back 1996: 43) Thus, encounters with the racialized 'other' had the effect of reinforcing this hierarchy, through both violent control and by imparting appropriate hegemonic ideologies including, of course, a uniquely British sense of 'fair play.' Not too much seems to have changed today, at least not if we go by the following account:

> [This city] has a number of areas that are deprived … immigrant populations, asylum seeker populations … Whether it be sport or bible reading ... it can give them something to do. If they haven't got anything to do … are they going to go out mugging or, you know? You just don't know what people do.
>
> Council Member, County FA 1, 2005

I will go on to show shortly how a key remit of the County FA is indeed that of discipline and control; to implement rules and regulations, and to judge local disciplinary cases and appeals. This putative 'civilising' mission in local sport gains particular resonance when it is directed at the racialized 'other', particularly those whose cultural incompatibility is noted and whose own traditions and values are seen to be significantly different to 'authentic' British local football traditions. Finally here, this 'civilizing' mission is related to the notion of paternalism in another way. In Chapter 6 I showed how forms of paternalism attached to ideologies of amateurism were normatively used to legitimise and justify power relations in the local game. This was routinely combined with a meritocratic rhetoric in order to suggest that those in control at County FAs were there because they were best placed, in terms of their skills and experience, to make the important decisions in local football. This, along with the significant commitment, time effort  they devote to the game – all voluntary and unpaid, and often taking up a large proportion of their lives – provides the conditions for County FA officials rationally to claim *entitlement* to such positions. In short, in order to receive the benefits of privileged networks one must show one's credentials and be assessed accordingly – in other words, evidence the appropriate cultural capital. This selection process might be constituted out of informal cultural practices, but it is also structurally imbedded within County FAs, as seen by the nomination and election system outlined in Chapter 3. Again, there is evidence that

such entitlement is activated by ideas of race, as the quotation below suggests in a response to the (distant) prospect of diversifying local FA Council membership:

> If you're not careful, any [ethnic minority people] that do come forward are the more outspoken [ones] that don't want to go through the system. But [they] want to break into having a platform for themselves.
>
> President, County FA 2, 2006

It is difficult to see how this kind of entitlement is measured by members themselves. The following quotations are taken from one Council member (County FA 4, 2006) and they are juxtaposed here because they reflect something of the contradictions involved in judging this sort of entitlement:

> I represent football because I love football … I just think I can do a reasonable job representing it, on the [local] FA.

> He claims to speak for all Asians in [this area]. What gives him that dictate I have no idea, you know. And that is the problem, at the end of the day. You know, he speaks for his own little world. He speaks for himself more than anything.

My reading of this is that in order to be 'entitled' to representation in local football, one cannot explicitly utilize ideas of race as a legitimate example of cultural capital; in this Council member's view, local service for football, should be based simply on one's 'love of the game' – a core component of the amateurist habitus. Because the local game is 'raceless', something I explore later in this section, any *explicit* use of race ideas – in this case 'speaking for all Asians' is clearly inappropriate and unacceptable. This concept of 'entitlement' has been explored recently elsewhere, in

the context of racism and social conflict in the East End of London (Dench et al. 2006). Here, researchers reveal a 'culture of entitlement' at the heart of conflict between long-term (mainly white) residents and more recent migrants (mostly arriving from Bangladesh). This was typically manifested as resentment of the allocation of housing and other forms of welfare to people who were deemed to be less entitled to them – migrants – because of their recent arrival and their relatively minor national contribution in terms of tax and public service, for example in the Second World War. This may be simplifying matters, but it is not difficult to find parallels with local football: not least because many County FA volunteers would have war service too. Entitlement in this setting might include the amount of money paid to the game over years (including affiliation fees and associated costs of running a club) but also the long-service and voluntary commitment that, as I have shown, are important sources of cultural capital in local football.

This type of 'culture of entitlement' that exists in the local game in England is particularly open to the activation of ideas around 'race' for several reasons. Firstly, while there is, of course, evidence of the long history of the racialised other in English football (for example, in Vasili 1998) there, nonetheless, remains a powerful sense of 'invented tradition' in local English football; this has sport as being populated by a homogenous group of people – usually identified as 'white' males. Players such as Arthur Wharton, Walter Tull, not to mention the hugely popular women's teams of the 1920s such as the Dick, Kerr's Ladies (Jacobs 2004) are notable absentees from this local football history. The longevity of service which is a central facet in the building of this entitlement is, of course, less accessible to some participants, particularly those who have arrived in Britain in the post-war 'wave' of migration in

the 1950s and beyond. In addition - and for many of the reasons I have touched upon in this thesis - some people have effectively been excluded from the organised structures of the game for many years. We can see this in the make-up of local County FAs and in the types of separate development of ethnic minority clubs and leagues that have occurred in some parts of Britain in the post-war period.

The evidence discussed so far tell us that ideas of race are an important factor in the formation and articulation of the habitus of local football – not only on the field of play but also, importantly, within the organisations that are responsible for governing the local game. Given these, often explicit and overt, activations of ideas of race in this setting, how are we to make sense of the continued and persistent espousal of those in charge of the game being fair, unbiased and keen to retain the level playing field of local football? One explanation might lie in the notion of colour-blindness, as football being perceived as 'raceless' by its key power holders. It is to this idea I now turn.

## 3. The denial of racism through 'colour blindness'

In the last Chapter I showed how the FA's *E&SES* was argued to challenge the inherent 'fairness' of local football, an intrinsic value that many long serving FA Governance volunteers felt was a defining feature of how the game was, and is, governed locally. The *E&SES* itself was seen to challenge the fundamental 'level playing field' ideologies and meritocracy of local football. In order to understand this kind of interpretation – and the underlying social interactions that support these ideas – we need to begin to account for this apparent denial of inequalities in the game, including those sourced from ideas of race. This project becomes even more

important in light of the comments above that evidence quite clearly and, at times, starkly, the processes of racialised exclusion that take place in English local football governance.

The 'denial' of racism has been noted elsewhere in the cultures of local football in England (Long 2000; Long et al. 2000; Back et al. 2001; Long et al 2002; Long and McNamee 2004; Burdsey 2007; see also Horne 1995, Swinney and Horne 2005). Long (2000) has identified some of the key forms this denial can take. These include:

- Arguments about 'merit': 'There have always been black players'; 'If they're good enough, they'll get in the team';

- Assertions about character: 'Everyone gets abused. You've got to learn to take it';

- Strategies of transferring blame: e.g. Ethnic minorities 'aren't interested';

- Arguments about social change: 'It was only a problem in the past'.

The first and last points seem particularly relevant here. I have already highlighted the importance of perceived 'meritocracy' to the dominant structures of local football governance, in that it legitimates paternalism ('*we know best*') but also it serves to reject the potential use of positive action and pro-active interventions in favour of more laissez-faire approaches to policy formation. In addition, there is a firm conviction – particularly in the professional game, but also in the more elite levels of amateur football – that the very intensively competitive nature of the game, and the striving for success within it, necessarily transcends any possible negative associations with matters of 'race' (Burdsey 2007: 46). Put simply, if you're good enough, you get in the team - irrespective of background. This final point also

emphasises the importance of the laissez-faire philosophy in sport; that football must be left alone to somehow 'naturally' sort out any problems of these kind.

My FA interviewees at local level, almost without fail, adopted a 'colour-blind' stance to matters of 'race' and equity: that is, ideas of race were largely irrelevant and were profoundly *un-activated* in social, voluntary and professional settings, as illustrated below:

> I don't care if they're black or white, Asian, or whatever. Get somebody on there who does a job, and helps run the league.
>
> Council Member, County FA 1, 2005

As Burdsey points out, many people working in the game propose that 'football literally sees no colour' (Burdsey 2007: 47). There is, of course, an obvious contradiction here between the types of comments discussed earlier and the colour-blind rhetoric that often accompanies it. Colour-blindness has significant currency in English football, and we can trace its origins by returning briefly to the early anti-racist interventions of the 1990s. Like other anti-racist and 'race' equality initiatives of the time, such campaigns tended to emphasise *similarity* and integration among people rather than celebrate the plurality of difference that is more common in multiculturalist approaches (Gilroy 1992; Bonnett 2000; Back et al. 2001; Garland and Rowe 2001). In essence, campaigns such a *Kick It Out,* particularly in their early days, concentrated solely on challenging racism and this was largely done by pointing to the colour blind *universalism* of football fans and players (Garland and Rowe 2001; Burdsey 2007). One could argue that the default response to racism in football was to claim colour-blindness as if to exemplify ones anti-racist credentials. But this 'colour-

blind' approach is also generated by the routine emphasis in these circles on the game's inherent 'fairness'; that the *E&SES* is not required because English local football is, and has always been, fair and non-partisan. This sort of situational logic perpetuates the activation and sustenance of 'colour-blind' rhetoric in this setting. Superficially, of course, this sort of sentiment in the game might appear to be progressive, particularly because it evokes universalism and an apparent rejection of ideas of race as important considerations for the organisation of local sport. Yet, as I have shown earlier, there certainly seems to be widespread evidence that 'race' remains not only an important mediator in social relations, but is also woven into relations of power and privilege in local football. This kind of rhetoric was therefore most usually deployed *in combination with* more broadly-based denials of racism and of other inequalities in the game. This 'colour-blindness', therefore, demands to be problematised in order to show how it masks more subtle forms of exclusion that continue to rely, primarily, on ideas of race.

I want to propose that the concept of 'colour-blind racism', coined by Bonilla-Silva (2001; 2003a; 2003b) actually helps describe the 'emergent property' of a combination of colour-blindness and the denial of racism. I do this with some caution, because there are a number of difficulties with Bonilla-Silva's interpretation of the concept, not least because it draws heavily upon the racialised history and politics of the United States rather than on a specifically British context. Bonilla-Silva describes a societal and cultural shift, 'whereas white privilege was achieved through overt and usually explicitly racial practices, today it is accomplished through institutional, subtle and *non-racial* means' (Bonilla-Silva 2001: 21). The problem here is that, following Carter (2000), Bonilla-Silva seems to suggest that 'race' in itself (in this

case 'white privilege') is causally implicated in the generation of racism. But rather than erroneously giving 'race' this sort of explanatory and causal power, we simply need to read Bonilla-Silva's approach as one based around propositional *ideas* about 'race'. In this way, we can agree with Bonilla-Silva that historic social relations – such as slavery, in his case – relied heavily on the explicit activation of (hierarchical) ideas of race to legitimize a range of actions. In his analysis, racialised privilege is now drawn from non-racial means. I take this to mean that discrimination can occur today *without* explicit reference to ideas of race, although, crucially – as I have already shown – this does not mean that processes of racialisation simply disappear. Such ideas about 'race' remain *implicit* in social interaction that takes place in contemporary local football governance in England. It is in this sense, then, that 'colour-blind racism' can be a useful means of describing the ways in which ideas of race are overtly rejected by those in authority at local County FAs in England and yet remain available; implicitly a source from which such figures derive their power and authority.

'Colour-blind racism' is a key component of the denial of racism and simultaneously a way of deflecting attention from the processes of racialisation that exist within local football governance structures. In this sense, we can also see how colour-blind racism is a component of the resistance to the principles and implementation of *E&SES*. It is often highlighted by the refusal to identify ideas of race as activated on the playing field. As one local FA Council member put it (County FA 2, 2006): 'It's just straight [sporting] rivalry, one [team] trying to beat the other, irrespective of whether they're black, white, yellow, green or whatever.' This approach interpolates with a commonly-held view that when someone *does* claim racism in local sport – for

example, in a disciplinary case, an area I focus on later in this section - it is more likely to be identified by others as a 'heat of the moment' incident, frequently a case of mis-identified sporting 'banter'. In the words of one local football club secretary, for example:

> The problem is, right, if you've got buck teeth and you're playing a game of football and you upset somebody, alright, somebody will say: 'You buck teeth bastard ...' Because that's the way of the world. And if you've got a black guy, you'll say: 'You black bastard!' Now, they're perhaps not being racist over there. It's just a comment, because *you* are black, and *you* are white. Or if you've got ginger hair, everybody calls you ginger.
>
> Local club secretary, County FA 2, 2006

Such rivalry is seen here as purely 'sporting', and so quite unconnected to issues of 'race', and by implication, to racism. This approach to discrimination on the pitch has obvious implications for those charged with reporting incidents (referees), and those handling disciplinary cases involving racism (local FA Council members). Moreover, as I explore later, the processes of denial involved here make both local resistance on the basis of 'race' and racism, and challenging racialised exclusion through the implementation of equity principles, very difficult to sustain, especially when those in control regularly avow apparently non-racialized, 'colour-blind' sentiments.

There are obvious parallels between these notions of 'race' denial and 'whiteness', although I have already raised some concerns over narrow approaches that tend to give explanatory and causal power to 'race.' Long and Hylton (2002) refer to the 'normalising' process of 'whiteness' in local sport, whereby racialized privilege becomes so routine it is invisible to those whom it empowers. Again, I argue that

Bourdieu's notion of habitus provides a similar – but less narrow – theorisation of the invisibility of cultural practices for those most embedded in them; the 'fish in water' analogy. For such people it seems sincerely difficult to locate race ideas in their own identities and immediate social relations; they see themselves, in other words, as 'raceless' (Dyer 1997). It is not difficult to understand how people who see themselves – and are invariably identified by others – as 'raceless' are situationally located to adopt a 'colour-blind' approach and, of course, to deny the existence of discrimination or inequality on the basis of race ideas. Others have shown how such privileged structural conditions have become institutionalized in sports settings (Back et al. 2001; King 2004b; Burdsey 2007), so that power is seen to come from a structural location (in this case County FA membership) rather than being identified as individual culpability or intention.

Manual Castells' (2004) interpretation of identity includes those that are deployed to 'legitimize' positions of power, and are found in those who have an interest in perpetuating the status quo (such as those long-serving members at English County FAs). Legitimizing identities actively work to *reproduce* the structural conditions that work in their favour. This becomes particularly clear in a critical assessment of the activation of ideas of race in the club cultures at County FAs, which I discussed earlier in this chapter. We can see, therefore, how 'colour-blind racism' might be perceived or identified as a structural condition – in combination with the other conditions I outlined in Chapter 7. Perhaps more pertinently for the arguments made so far in this thesis, there is also a logical combination of these ideas with the persistence of fair play ideals and the protectionism of County FA structures and cultures. We can begin to see, therefore how these aspects of local football act as

generative mechanisms behind the forms of 'colour-blind racism' I have outlined here.

Given that administrators and officials of English County FAs see themselves as part of an inherently anti-discriminatory and 'unbiased' operation, any potential use of ideas of race as a basis for change is necessarily problematic, and they are invariably connected by them to concerns about 'political correctness' of the type I outlined in Chapter 7. These directly challenge cherished values and ideologies concerning sporting meritocracy and 'apolitical' amateurism. Adopting 'colour-blindness' justifies the denial of racism and is thus one way in which those whose interests lie in maintaining the current system *rationally* (in their terms) reject the changes proposed by the *E&SES.* I move on now to end this section by exploring in more detail this rejection of 'race' as a legitimate form of resistance in local football.

## 4. Race ideas as a form of resistance to County FA authority

I have shown so far how ideas of race are activated to inform the symbolic boundary of the County FA club cultures discussed earlier. In addition, I have proposed that the notion of 'colour-blind racism' helps begin to understand the strong denial of racism that accompanies many sentiments towards the resistance to the E&SES. What I want to conclude this chapter with is a discussion of the implications of this approach when County FAs – despite their claims to do otherwise – are accused of racism, or are forced to address such accusations in the local sport they control. It is the local responses to situations such as these that I now want to turn.

When accusations of racism are made in the local game, they traduce many of the core assumptions that underpin the structures and cultures of the governance of the

game that I mentioned in Chapter 3. They also, of course, threaten to expose the forms of racialised exclusion that perpetuates in local football governance. Allegations of racism promise to completely disrupt the sporting status-quo and to invite active intervention from outside. Racism is generally seen in the local game as a political and social problem, one which is external to sport. Accusations of racism also represent the intrusion of non-sporting values of bias and unfairness, and so on. It also, of course, implicitly exposes the forms of racialisation that mark out the boundaries of the County FA 'club' – something those with membership are otherwise at pains to deny (something I discuss later in this section). It is not surprising, therefore, that allegations of racism in local sport do not tend to be treated with much sympathy by those who are in control. But how exactly are these allegations *rationalised* by those who manage the County FA? For this we need to return to the ways in which ideas of race are generally interpreted and articulated in these local settings.

I have already shown how ideas of race are perceived by many County FA governance volunteers to have little relevance to the normative interactions and relations that take place in and around the local game – that local football is 'raceless'. This colour-blind approach effectively rejects the existence of inequalities because it simply views 'race' as unimportant. One of the implications of this is that in instances in which ideas of race are activated by social actors in an overt sense – by claiming the occurrence of racism, for example – they are given very little credence. What typically occurs here is a form of victim blaming; the common assertion that the complainant is '*playing the race card.*' This rejection of race ideas is actually indicative of a much more general resistance in Governance to assertions about the

existence of inequalities in the local game. A useful example of this is in situations where ill-discipline and rule transgression are dealt with, and I will focus my comments here particularly on this traditionally prickly aspect of local football governance.

Racist abuse suffered by players has long been held to be a barrier to participation in the local game (Bains and Patel 1996; Bains and Johal 1999; Long et al. 2000; Burdsey 2006; 2007). The experience of abuse in some geographical areas has even discouraged participation in FA-affiliated competitions, sometimes leading to the type of separate development more commonly seen in the female and disabled forms of the game. This has typically involved the setting up of non-affiliated leagues and cup competitions aimed at specific ethnic minority communities (Bains and Johal 1999; Burdsey 2007). These developments appear, at least partly, to be due to frustrations among participants that County FAs have been unable to deal adequately with such abuse and to protect these participants from discrimination or 'racial' violence. We have some useful material from the *victims* of these episodes (Long et al. 2000, King 2004b, Burdsey 2004a). But how should we interpret such episodes of abuse from the position of those who are responsible for dealing with such incidents – namely, County FA disciplinary personnel? Here, accusations about racism are often seen as a crude and duplicitous way of trying to resist or undermine County FA decisions and policies – the authority of The FA - including its imposed fines and bans for players. Indeed King (2004b) shows how those who seem to resist this authority tend to be accused of having a 'chip on the shoulder'. Of course, accusations about racist abuse are also seen as an attack on the 'fairness' and the unbiased values of the Association itself: 'They [ethnic minority players and clubs] feel that they are picked upon,

singled out, judgement passed upon them because of that race card' (President, County FA 2, 2006).

One County FA president offered an anecdote from his working life to explain why he thought some people feel they are being unfairly treated in sport:

> We ran a car hire firm, and had a list of prices. Now, any Asian or black person will come up [and say]: 'Ah, but that doesn't apply to us.' So, why doesn't it apply to you? 'Oh, well, we barter. That's too much money to pay. Now I'll pay you what I think it's worth …' I think that is a little bit in football, that: 'Bloody hell, I've been fined by County again … its only because we're coloured.'
>
> President, County FA 3, 2006

This perceived - and finely calculated - 'resistance' to the authority of the County FA can be sourced to direct accusations of racism – 'You're fining me because I'm black' – or to more complex accusations about the alleged inability of County FAs to deal, effectively, with often violent and racialised incidents during matches, one of the most brutal of which is described here by a local club secretary:

> Our club was attacked, it was a racist attack. The first team were playing in [local village] in the year 2000, give or take 6 months. We were attacked by about 20 white lads with bottles, bits [sic] and everything like that. Our players got put in hospital. The police investigated, okay, and they put the lads away for a total of about 28 years. That was a policing matter. But it happened during the game. What is the [County] FA's and the local league's reaction to that? They said that 'it's nothing to do with us'. Not even a letter [from the County FA].
>
> Local Club Secretary, County FA 2, 2006.

Even complaints of racism made by match officials – supposedly strong allies of County FAs in their attempts to maintain discipline and enforce rules and laws - are open to these forms of denial when ideas of race are activated:

> I remember one - we used to call him Prince Monolulu - who were a ref[eree]. He was - I don't know - a Nigerian prince or something. Well, I was chairman of a [disciplinary] meeting, and I kicked him out of the bloody meeting. And I have never come across a liar like him. Ooh, he were a killer! He says: 'The crowd got me', and all this, and: 'I was locked in a toilet because it keeped [sic] me safe.' But when I found out, I [did] some research of me own. There were one man and a dog watching the match, you know what I mean?
>
> <div align="right">Council Member, County FA 2 2006</div>

Where local disciplinary action *is* taken, there is often the sense that County FAs are unable to judge, effectively, incidents of violence that are directly *provoked* by racist abuse during matches. This is asserted in the following, brief, account from the secretary of a local club:

> We've been involved with teams: just because we've beaten them 6-1, 6-2, they can't handle it so they start fighting. Next thing you know it's bang: 'You guys [referring to his own team] are the bad boys'.
>
> <div align="right">Local Club Secretary, County FA 1, 2005</div>

Of course, by failing to properly acknowledge the routine and often banal persistence of racism in the local game, an incident of violence - such as the one reported above - that may have been provoked by racist abuse, is likely to be treated with some scepticism by County FA disciplinary personnel. For them, instead, a case of possible

racist abuse opens up a potential slippery slope of allegations around other forms of non-racialised 'difference':

> I've charged a couple [of players], like, with racist behaviour, which I would think is what you're looking at. I've charged a couple of those this season. That's one where it's gone beyond the comment. But you get ridiculous things here. I mean, I got a report off a referee reporting improper language to him because a player had said, you know, called him 'Jock' and told him to 'Go back to Scotland'. And, you know, 'I'm English', so where do you draw the line with this?
>
> Disciplinary Officer, County FA 4, 2007

All decisions on discipline made by County FA officials are open to appeal - subject to an up-front payment by the complainant of around £50, which is refunded only if the appeal is successful. Clubs can then request a personal hearing where they make their case in front of a panel of Council members. One of the effects of the 'colour-blind' approach to allegations of racism is that many people I spoke to who had been subjected to racist treatment decided to simply 'disengage' from the disciplinary procedure, effectively accepting the decision made by the County FA:

> We try to avoid them [disciplinary hearings]. Its all one sided … there's no point arguing with these guys … What are you going to do? They just want to have a laugh at me. They'll see the case today, they'll see an Asian guy and say, 'Nah, we're not going to change our minds'.
>
> Club Secretary, County FA 1, 2005

This fundamental lack of confidence in local systems among those in the local game who find themselves subjected to racist abuse and discrimination, paradoxically has the added effect, of course, of inadvertently legitimizing the decisions being made by

County FA personnel regarding discipline on such matters. Challenges to County FA decisions are widely seen as pointless. And yet for County FA personnel it is the very *lack* of challenge to their decision-making, combined with a similarly low level of reportage of incidents of racism (for many of the same reasons), which serves to legitimise their own denial of the existence of racism in the local game. Hence, when asking about racism in local football, local Council members often point to the relatively low number of reports and charges of racism as evidence for their claims that racism does not really exist in local sport. Another implication of this perceived inability to deal with racist incidents at County FA headquarters is the message this sends out to local member clubs and players. As one FA Development Officer put it:

> These players from that team just totally racially abused a club and their players for, basically, coming from certain country. And it's just: 'Why did they do that?' And, now - okay it is isolated - but the proof of the pudding is how well, when it goes to a hearing at [this] County FA, they deal with it. If they don't deal with it strongly, it sends out a message that you can do it.
>
> Development Officer, County FA 1, 2005

The 'race card' is also claimed to be used by ethnic minorities to seek *unfair* privileges within English local football networks. This reflects the discomfort that exists locally about the types of preferential treatment that the *E&SES* is seen to stand for, which I discussed in Chapter 6. Further than this, County FA members also suggest that, by strategically 'playing the race card', local participants were knowingly able to secure *unfair* advantages for their own clubs. This challenge to the fundamental principles of British sport - the ideals of 'fair play' and the 'level playing field' – raised serious questions about 'entitlement' among those who were simply unable to use the 'race card' in this way. As one Council Member (County FA 2) put

it in 2006: 'There's loads of money going into ethnic football and, if I tell you, that does get the backs up of a lot of white clubs - that they're seeing so much going. You see, it's not an even basis, I think they've [white clubs] got to take a lot of this.' On this basis, the entire equity agenda could be identified as corrupt:

> At the end of the day, if there's not an issue there, if there's no racism within the town and within football, why is there even a [anti-racist themed coaching] course? … He [course organiser] invited girls from St. Margaret's, which is 98% Asian, and Highdean which is 98% Asian. Well, that is not equal opportunity football for all. That is football for Asians, see what I mean?
> Council Member, County FA 5, 2007 [Schools replaced with fictional names]

Adopting these sorts of positions produces cynicism about policies aimed at encouraging those identified as ethnic minorities to have more of an active stake in the local game. Simply put, colour blind racism allows those at County FAs to deny that ideas around 'race' and racism are prevalent at all in English local football. As such, any claims to make such matters an 'issue' can be depicted as nothing less than 'political manipulation', an attack on the non-partisan and intrinsic 'fairness' of the County FA a status which, as I have shown, is routinely reproduced and reinforced through its very resistance to the FA's *E&SES*.

English County FA members routinely return to the basic premise that there is very little (or no) 'real' racism within the game. As we have seen, when racism *is* claimed – particularly in cases of ill-discipline - Council members are prepared to go to some lengths to counteract such accounts. It is in their interests to deny the existence of racism in local football in order to defend the very principles and values that historically underpin the County FA's mission. Given their personal commitment to

these organisational values - embedded via the very significant voluntary commitment and long-term dedication of Council Members - such claims about 'racism' are also interpreted as potential threats to the authority of the institution and its officials. Such claims also, of course, raise the possibility of the exposure of the processes of racialised exclusion that I detailed earlier – a structural arrangement that certainly privileges those current 'club' members and thus have an interest in protecting. As I suggested in Chapter 6, the *E&SES* is seen by some local FA officials as a route to simply encourage new problems and generate new tensions, again a way of rejecting such challenges. As one Council Member put it in 2005 (County FA 1): 'I want them [ethnic minority communities] to play football, but why are people emphasising the ethnic minority side of it - I think that, in my considered opinion, is causing a barrier.'

Those who attempt, by their own hands, to resist or respond to racism locally, are seen, instead, to be using ideas of race to resource a much more fundamental, and *illegitimate* political project. The use of 'race' here has a pernicious and ulterior motive:

> I think what The FA has done is just pander to these people for too long, and they just feel that they can get things, even without being representative - which they are. They *do* get things without being represented; they *do* get their money; they *do* get their grants; they *do* get their courses; they *do* get all the benefits of being part of the FA, without actually being represented by the people that actually make the decisions for them.
>
> Council Member, County FA 4, 2007

We can return to our discussion of 'whiteness' for a possible explanation for the perceived illegitimacy of this kind of 'race'-based resistance. For those in power in County FAs, race ideas are likely to bear little relation to their own interpretations of

sources of privilege and status; a key feature of 'whiteness' is this type of 'malevolent absence' (Garner 2006). It is in this sense that we can understand why, despite the often overt evidence I discussed earlier regarding the racialised nature of the County FA 'club', none of those within this group who I interviewed would describe it in the ways I have done. When emphasized in this way, race ideas are therefore seen as a device used to claim unfair advantage and privilege, challenging not only the values of the County FA, but also the long-standing – and, of course, racialised - power relations of local football governance. Clearly here, this colour blind racism, combined with the types of resistance to the *E&SES* derived from the sorts of values outlined in Chapter 6, contribute to the denial of inequalities, especially from the Governance structures of the game. This transfers directly to the issue of racism. Perhaps understandably, those who have long-standing and strong connections to their local County FA and whose own identity is strongly tied to its public perception are likely to feel uncomfortable with the charge that the local governing body might be, directly or indirectly, racist. What this approach does, however, is compel those involved to *deny* accusations of racism at all times – whilst simultaneously denying there is any real problem of discrimination of any kind within the game.

This 'denial' about racism usually manifests itself in the suggestion that when ideas of race are activated, they are specifically manipulated to resist local County FA authority and to gain unfair advantage over others by '*playing the race card.*' The notion that some local people are skilled in this way has obvious implications for the local Governance resistance of a top-down FA policy that aims to achieve race equality and tackle racism at the local level. For many who run the local game, while racism in local football may have been a serious problem in the past, overt racist

abuse on the pitch has largely been eradicated – the relative lack of reports and proven cases provides their own evidence on this front. As a result, there is real scepticism generated by the assumption that people who deploy ideas of race are getting 'special attention' when, in the minds of many local officials, the issue of racism is invariably flagged up by them as an 'excuse' for their own failure or as a cover for indiscipline. It is a flagrant attempt, in short, to obtain special treatment – special favours - and, in many people's eyes, unfair access to resources for their clubs.

## 5. Summary

To summarise some of the main themes of this chapter, ideas concerning cultural incompatibility and a determination to control the racialized 'other' seem to be masked by the rhetoric of 'colour-blindness'. Here we begin to see how more subtle forms of exclusion operate locally to discourage members of minorities out of football governance structures. As King (2004a) and Burdsey (2007) have shown, football networks regularly place the onus on the 'other' to conform to the hegemonic codes of British football, insisting that they assimilate by rejecting their own interests and cultural values. The cultural capital required to gain entry to the County FA 'club' is therefore narrow and often the exclusive property of a select few. This process of 'othering' also provides another technique for legitimizing the power among those in current control of the local game. Constructions of the 'other' are, necessarily, connected to understandings of the self (Said 1995); constructing a racialized 'other' who requires controlling and civilizing thus vindicates the self (in this case, FA Council members) as the most appropriate person(s) to control and educate the constructed 'other'. In addition, we can see through the routine functions of the structures and cultures of local football governance that a 'culture of entitlement' is

evident, one that necessarily activates ideas of race in constructing the symbolic boundaries to entry that operate to maintain the relative exclusivity and homogeneity of the County FA 'club'.

In this chapter I have tried to show how and why the, often complex, ideas about 'race' become activated in the domain of local football governance in England. I have referred to the structural conditions shaping English local football (outlined in Chapters 2 and 3) and the ways in which some of these conditions serve to activate race ideas. One of the outcomes of these processes is the routine reproduction of historic values and structures in English local football. Resistance to the *E&SES*, then, has not only blocked change, but it is also informed by the processes of racialisation identified in this chapter. I have approached this project following a critical realist understanding of 'race' as a propositional idea. I have thus been keen to avoid allocating the concept any significant analytical or causal power.

I also suggested that the 'club cultures' I describe as existing inside County FAs are easily susceptible to being racialised. Here, the 'symbolic boundaries' that frame membership of these networks are strongly informed by ideas of race – although a range of other factors also shape this boundary formation. I introduced the idea of 'entitlement' to try to account for the paternalism and protectionism which is championed among long-standing power holders in the local game to justify their positions of control. Here, I suggest that long-term involvement in the game – voluntary commitment and 'selfless' dedication over many years – has an important currency in this culture of entitlement. This prioritisation of long-term involvement

and of history, especially disadvantages the racialised 'other' and thus serves to both perpetuate and rationalise 'racial' exclusion in the local game.

I suggested earlier that much social analysis - including studies of racism in sport - has utilised a too narrow notion of 'whiteness' to explain the types of racialised exclusion which operate in settings of these kinds. My concern here is that using 'whiteness' in this way can miss the broader context – or the shaping structural conditions – within which such forms of exclusion take place. 'Whiteness' studies thus run the risk of locating contemporary racism – specifically, here, in English local football - within a small number of aged individuals for whom multi-cultural Britain is much less of a 'lived' experience than it has been for subsequent generations. In addition, this focus on their own 'whiteness' is offered causal weight by such theorists. This approach not only essentialises and reifies 'race' - gives it an ontological certainty for researchers – but it also neglects the *structural* sources of such discrimination and its reproduction. As Morgan (2001: 59) reminds us:

> The organisation is not simply a passive recipient of racism; it actively reproduces it in many formal and informal ways. Organisational programmes to tackle racism should not, therefore, treat it simply as an expression of individuals' attitudes but as a set of institutionalised practices within the organisation and society as a whole

The denial of the existence of racism in local football comes, largely, out of an overt 'colour-blind' rhetoric about 'race', but it also masks longer-standing interpretations of the racialized 'other'. I have used the term 'colour-blind racism' here to describe this process. This includes ideas of race associated with colonial domination (Holt 1989; Miles 1989) and is also characterized by notions of cultural incompatibility.

Rejecting the activation of ideas of race as nothing more than a form of resistance to authority in local football is a major barrier to implementing equity principles in this setting and it connects with the previous uses of 'race' I have outlined. If racism – and thus the overt use of race ideas - is *denied* through colour-blind rhetoric, there is likely to be reinforced suspicion among the relatively powerful when race ideas are used to challenge them by the relatively powerless in this field.

# Conclusions

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The Football Association can, and regularly does, rightly point to the achievements of its recent equality initiatives in the English game. Women's elite football in England is more high profile now than perhaps at any stage prior to its heyday in the early 1920s, while local women's and girl's football is often pointed to as the fastest growing sport in the UK (The FA 2004b; 2004c). Meanwhile, disability football was showcased at the recent Paralympics in Beijing, where the UK sent teams to compete in the 7-a-side tournament for people with cerebral palsy, and five-a-side version of football for the visually impaired – both squads being largely the product of The FA's new Development activities. In addition, the anti-racist activities of The FA have contributed to help curb the pernicious, overt racist crowd chanting and abuse that was widespread during the 1960s and 70s. These headline achievements are, however, less important for the local game, with the national focus still placed firmly on curbing fan racism. The early obsession with the deviant hooligan – in both policy and academic circles - has inevitably meant that discussions about racism in the English game have been narrowly directed to fan behaviour in the professional game. Having silenced most of the overt racist chanting in English football crowds, while also leading the way in strongly condoning similar incidents overseas - including those aimed at English players – one might be forgiven for assuming that racism is no longer an issue in English football. This kind of denial of racism at the local level emerges as a strong feature of this thesis, and it appears to be mirrored in wider celebrations that suggest that English football has somehow moved to a kind of 'post-racist' environment.

One very recent incident in the professional game highlights this 'post-racist' sentiment well. On 29th September, 2008, Tottenham Hotspur travelled to Portsmouth to play a Premier League fixture. The Portsmouth side contained Sol Campbell, a black British former Tottenham player, who had left the London club some years earlier to join arch rivals Arsenal. The move was highly controversial, not only because of the identity of the club he chose to join, but also because by letting his contract run down Campbell effectively became a free agent. This meant Tottenham were unable to command what would have been a substantial transfer fee for the player. Since then, some sections of Tottenham fans had continued to roundly abuse Campbell. The match against Portsmouth was no different, and the following chants were later reported to have been heard on the south coast:

He's Black, he's bent
His arse is up for rent,
Sol Campbell, Sol Campbell
                              (cited on online fan's forum, Sportingo, 3rd October, 2008)


Sol, Sol, wherever you may be,
Not long now 'til lunacy,
And we couldn't give a f***
When you're hanging from a tree,
Judas **** with HIV
                              (cited at Football365.com, 1st October, 2008)


Portsmouth Football Club reported the abuse to The FA, and later reported the incident to the Police. This example is intriguing in that it prompted a very detailed debate about the *precise* nature of the abuse. While some claimed the chanting was racialised – the above example is certainly ambiguous - interestingly, much of the media coverage emphasised the homophobic nature of the chanting (Hampson 2008). The following comments posted by readers in response to the Football365.com article

gives us a glimpse of this debate, led by those who refused to accept that the chanting might have been racialised:

> Yeh, let's not take it too far now. I am a black Arsenal fan and I don't think the spuds' [Spurs] chant was racist. Harsh, but not racist. Sol moved to us [Arsenal] on a free [transfer] and, add to that, he was their best player at the time. Unfortunately, Sol is gonna get this kind of treatment from spuds fans for the rest of his footballing career. Mitchmalice (Football365.com 2008)

> So, what's racist about it? People just love to bring racism into everything – it's nothing to do with racism. Why are the police involved? Absolutely ridiculous, what can they do about it? Joerillibee (Football365.com 2008)

Tottenham fans were adamant that the chanting had had no racist content. Indeed, the forum comments attached to the article in Sportingo (2008) are illuminating in their attempts to demonstrate the specifically anti-racist credentials of Tottenham's fans. These included the fact of the club's large Jewish fan base, and the regular anti-semitic chanting that is directed towards Spurs supporters by other fans. Homophobic chanting is clearly regarded in this sort of context as less problematic in English football than is its racist equivalent.

Clearly, too, contemporary forms of racism in the professional game are messy, complex and sometimes contradictory. What is clear, however – despite the claims to the contrary by the Spurs fans involved and the English football authorities alike – is that problems of racism have by no means disappeared in the stands or inside the professional game. Nor are they absent from local football. There is an emerging body of research (detailed in Chapter 1) that has begun to focus attention *away* from the football fan and towards the institutions responsible for running the game. This

research suggests that the routine and banal operations of such organisations play as much a part in perpetuating racialised (as well as other forms of) exclusion as they do in contributing to its abolition. But in developing our understanding of exactly how, and why, this occurs, we do need to move beyond approaches based on often narrowly constructed conceptions of 'whiteness' and which tend to lay the blame for racism at the hands of a relatively small number of old, white, male power holders at the heart of these organisations. This sort of narrow institutional research focus has also been overwhelmingly aimed at those responsible for managing the *professional* game in England. The handful of serious investigations on local football have remained largely centred around the experiences of local participants – the victims - who are regularly subjected to exclusion on the grounds of ideas of race.

What, then, is my own modest contribution to this debate? Firstly, thanks largely to the privileged access provided for me inside County FAs, I have been able to investigate the day-to-day activities of these local governance bodies. I have been able to study local football administrators and present data gathered directly from those who make the important decisions that shape the local game (including the distribution of resources) and those who are responsible for adjudicating and enforcing rule transgressions and on field ill-discipline. In effect, I would argue that this thesis marks the beginnings of a response to Daniel Burdsey's (2004a: 296) pertinent question: 'While we know there is racism in football, do we really know exactly where, how, and by whom it is instigated?'

I have attempted to take up this challenge in what some might consider being a rather unorthodox way. I have taken something of a multi-disciplinary approach to the

questions concerned. I have done this by trying to knit together: a foundational context from British sports history; some relevant insights from the arena of philosophy and sport; work on the development of British sports policy; and, finally, theoretical approaches drawn from the discipline of Sociology. In doing so, I have tried to provide a synthesis that might be better used to interpret the 'field' of local English football.

Guided by the principles of Critical Realism, I have deliberately spent time trying to outline some of the complex structural origins of the exclusionary practices under investigation. I have tried to show the importance of the historical legacies of modern British sport in shaping the structural conditions of local football in England today. A historic commitment to 'fairness' in British sport, in connection with the development of an English sporting amateurism - not least in terms of the principle of playing the game for its own sake and for no extrinsic benefit – has been crucial in this context. We have also seen how, historically, British sport protected itself fiercely from external political interference – from any attempt to use sports in projects that might be described as involving any type of political or social engineering. We have seen how these sporting ideals around 'fairness' and non-intervention also promoted a range of exclusivities, predominantly those based around class, but also those associated with gender and ideas of race.

At the same time, we have identified what I have called the 'protectionist' and 'paternalistic' nature of amateur sporting administration in England. The local organisations that were formed to govern these early codified sports - in the case of football, the English County Football Associations – have harboured remarkably

stable and uniformly hegemonic ideologies informed by sedimented versions of amateurism, 'fairness' and the benefits of meritocracy. I have tried to show how, even today, many of these English sporting ideals concerning perceptions of 'fairness' and 'meritocracy' operate in local football, effectively to racialise forms of sporting exclusion and disadvantage at the local level of English sport.

I have used this historical overview to try to better contextualise the reception of the *E&SES* in local football. It became clear during the fieldwork that this legacy played a formative role in shaping a broad resistance to the *E&SES*, but I wanted to take this point further by trying to make some sense of why this kind of resistance was so commonly and uniformly articulated. Aside from the usual models of organisational change popular in policy studies that make general points about the difficulties in embracing change of any kind, I was keen to identify some of the key mechanisms that might be implicated in this type of resistance or inertia. Here, and following Critical Realist philosophy of science, I came up with a situational logic with which to explain the roots of such resistance. Returning to my historical analysis of Victorian sporting amateurism, I suggested that changes seen as externally politically driven – particularly those to accompanied a move to professionalise an otherwise strongly voluntary arena – were resisted because they directly clashed with the principles that dominate this particular 'field'. Going further, I showed how a policy aimed at increasing equality in the game (such as the *E&SES*) could also be seen to challenge the long-standing structural principles of amateurism. This includes the commitment to fairness and to the 'level playing field' of sport which remains a key component of the cultures of local football. As such, the *E&SES* was seen by many on the Governance side of the local game to be inherently *unfair* because of the preferential

treatment it is seen to afford some over others, not to mention its association with overt political correctness and external interference and engineering.

Moreover, these core ideologies and values make important connections with residual ideas about 'race' and difference, a toxic combination which may help us better understand the exclusionary practices that continue to operate in local football in England today. I presented evidence to suggest that the exclusive 'club cultures' that exist in local football governance are routinely subjected to processes of racialisation. Here, entry into the 'club', and access to the required cultural capital involved, was often mediated by ideas of race. Some responses here suggested that a powerful form of racialised paternalism was in place here – something almost akin to the earlier civilizing missions of the British Empire, where the spread of Christianity and specifically 'British' values to the racialised 'heathens' was seen as the very duty of responsible colonialists. I also introduced the notion of 'colour blind racism' because this concept might help explain some of the complex ways in which ideas of race – and racism – are denied, while being simultaneously deployed in order to maintain the current unequal power relations in the local game.

My discussion of the ways ideas of race are activated in the setting of local football Governance was self-consciously guided by Carter's (1998; 2000) Critical Realist approach to such phenomena. Here I wanted to try to avoid what I, and others, perceive to be the ontological muddle that characterises many studies in this area. I was particularly careful to stick firmly to the ontological claims about 'race' as a propositional form, ideas that can be activated by agents to make sense of their social environment. I have avoided, for example, referring to actors in 'racial' terms such as

'white', 'black', 'ethnic minority', and so on. I have also steered away from using 'race' or the more fashionable term ethnicity as a causal factor. It is from this stance that I pointed to a number of concerns I have with the use of the concept of 'whiteness' in an explanatory sense in relation to forms of racism that exist in similar social settings. My core concern here is that this term risks simplifying the reification of 'race', giving it an ontological certainty with which one can study society. Within this sort of framework, we often simply lay the 'blame' for racism on 'white' people, with the teleological consequence that it is their very 'whiteness' which makes them racist. I'm not sure this helps us identify the complex sources and origins of racism in any meaningful way. There is also the problem that 'whiteness' can be conflated as a catch-all term (Owen 2007), as if to account for all of the mechanisms that lie behind racialised forms of exclusion in sport, some of which I have suggested in this thesis as emerging from much deeper and more profound historical processes that risk being missed if we concentrate too narrowly on ideas of race alone.

In the main findings sections of this thesis I have emphasised the specific interest those in control of the local game have in continuing to *reproduce* the structural conditions I have discussed in my earlier historical review of the origins of British sport and organised local football. I argue that this daily and banal determination to legitimize the long-standing power relations in the local game tell us a lot about the more general resistance that, frankly, exists in opposition to almost all new policy interventions in this setting – or at least those that threaten such arrangements. This shows us how the structural conditions of local football governance in England are routinely reproduced and defended and are, therefore, remarkably resistant to change. These observations might be regarded as among the most significant outcomes of the

thesis; they suggest that such practices – and the outcomes of them - are likely to be maintained as long as they go relatively unchallenged structurally. There is a widespread feeling in the game that once the 'old-school' white, male members of the County FA 'club' are replaced over time by more 'enlightened' local football volunteers – those drawn from more multi-cultural contexts, for example – most of the problems associated with racialised exclusion are likely to be magically resolved. This kind of laissez-faire approach is, of course, a key component of the habitus of local football governance as I have described it in this account. This thesis offers a cautionary note about this sort of theorising about a kind of 'natural progress' towards an equitable local game. The habitus I have outlined is not the exclusive property of the few who currently control the local game in England; it is relatively enduring and, I would suggest, it is logically structured to reproduce its own key components, reinforced, of course, by the routine forms of social interaction it moulds. We should be wary, therefore, of the kind of ambitious – and sometimes prematurely celebratory - rhetoric of the sporting authorities in England in their claims to have moved sports such as local football onto some 'post-racist', equitable sporting landscape.

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