Sport, London 2012 & Young British Asians

A sociological study of young British Asian sports participation, consumption & identity, post-London 2012

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Abstract

Sport, London 2012 & Young British Asians: A sociological study of young British Asian sports participation, consumption and identity, post-London 2012 – Alison Forbes

This thesis explores the sporting interests and experiences of a small sample of young British Asians, drawn from two UK cities: Leicester and Wolverhampton. Framed in the immediate post-London 2012 period, the thesis focuses, broadly, on three key themes: sporting consumption practices pre- and post-2012; the construction of local, national and ethnic identities through sport; and participation opportunities for 'doing' sport for British Asians in these two different locations.

Preparations for London 2012 included promises of a nationwide sporting legacy that would 'inspire a generation' of young people to get involved in local sporting activities and reconnect the UK's diverse communities. However, British Asians representing Great Britain in Olympic sport remain an infrequent sight, despite the presence of large British Asian amateur sporting communities. Twenty-eight semi-structured interviews were completed with a sample of young British Asian males and females to explore, within this context of elite-level underrepresentation, the local impact of the Games on the overall British Asian sporting experience.

A central theme within this research was the generational shift apparent in the feelings of belonging to England and Britain, as citizens and sports fans. The alternative structure of competition in the Olympic Games promoted an inclusive national identity; one that celebrated difference and diversity and offered a way in to the national collective that is sometimes lacking in other contexts. However, my sample of young British Asians did not notice increased local opportunities to be physically active, and thus their participation habits remained stagnant. Despite initial positivity and increased feelings of belonging during the Games, London 2012 was not the transformative moment promised. Positive local effects were, at best, ephemeral.

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<u>Contents</u>

Abbreviations

AIFA	All India Football Association
AIFF	All India Football Federation
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
BCCI	Board of Control for Cricket in India
CFA	County Football Association
CSL	Chinese Super League
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
ECB	English Cricket Board
EPL	English Premier League
FA	Football Association
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
ICC	International Cricket Council
IFA	India Football Association
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IPL	Indian Premier League
ISL	Indian Super League
KIO	Kick it Out
LOGOC	London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games
LTA	Lawn Tennis Association
MLS	Major League Soccer
NGBs	National Governing Bodies of sport
ODI	One Day International
Team GB	Great British Olympic Team

Chapter 1

Introduction

On the 6th July 2005 Britain celebrated as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) revealed that London had been selected to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It had been London's 'seductive' legacy promises that had proved triumphant in the final round, with London's (and by implication Britain's) diverse and multi-ethnic communities strategically placed at the heart of the successful bid. The subsequent promotional build up to the Games continued to celebrate Britain's diversity, and a group of Olympic and Paralympic athletes, from a variety of different ethnic and faith backgrounds, eventually represented Great Britain at the London 2012 Olympic Games. Indeed, the continued public promotion in the UK of ethnic and cultural diversity around the Games prompted claims that Team GB represented 'a powerful symbol of an inclusive and authentic national pride, shared across our multi-ethnic and-multi faith society' (Katwala, 2012). Astonishingly however, out of the 541 athletes that made up the Great British team across a wide range of sports in 2012, only Rajiv Ouseph (a badminton player, born in Britain to Indian parents) and Welsh-born footballer, Neil Taylor (who has dual-heritage from a Welsh father and an Indian mother), could claim any heritage connection to the large South Asian diaspora in Britain.

Considering British Asians (through birth or citizenship) - I discuss later the terminology used in this chapter - collectively and comfortably, make up the largest percentage of the minority ethnic groups in the UK (4.9% recorded by the Office for National Statistics as of the 2011 Census), they are critically underrepresented in the makeup of elite GB athletes. This underrepresentation extends far beyond Team GB in 2012 however, as British Asians are largely absent from most elite professional sports in the UK. It is only in cricket where we might argue that this is no longer the case (see Burdsey, 2010; 2013). It is currently unclear what impact

the lack of British Asian representation in elite sport - and by implication, the absence of relevant sporting role models - has on young British Asians, particularly in terms of their participation in sport at grassroots level, their sense of national identity and belonging, community cohesion, and in terms of their consumption of, and interest in, global mega-events such as the Olympic Games.

This absence of British Asian athletes in the professional and elite amateur spheres of UK sport has prompted some sociological explorations of the role that sport plays in the lives of these young people. In particular, in this thesis I plan to investigate how young British Asians use sport to negotiate both national and ethnic identities, and, how sport, in the post-London Olympic Games era, contributes to their (and our) understanding and articulations of 'Britishness' and belonging. Furthermore, the apparent exclusion or lack of success of members of these communities in the realms of most professional and elite level amateur sport might well impact on the perceptions that young British Asians have of different sports and on their potential access (or perhaps lack of access) to such sports, as well as highlighting cultural and other potential constraints on their participation.

In an effort to explore some answers to these questions, this thesis offers a small comparative study analysing young British Asians' sporting experiences in two English cities. Leicester and Wolverhampton were selected as suitable research sites, in conjunction with my funding partners Sporting Equals (a national equality organisation working within the sports sector), due to the mixture of ethnically diverse residents living in each location, along with the historical development of thriving British Asian sporting communities which had laid down roots in these two cities in what we might call the 'post-migration' era.

Particularly important here is the proportion of those residents who trace their ancestry back to the Indian subcontinent (those countries that are now India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka). It might be expected that local practices and provision, levels of integration, the impact of place, the strength of regional identity and the role of faith and gender are all likely to combine (among other things) to provide very different pre-conditions for young British Asians' involvement in

sport. This heterogeneity and place difference has implications for sports policy makers - and is therefore part of the rationale for conducting a comparative study, and for selecting Leicester and Wolverhampton as research locations, a decision that is discussed in more detail in the chapter on methodology.

London 2012 and Olympic legacy

'Legacy' has become a significant concept for the IOC and it is now a fundamental requirement to be included in any host city bid documents (Leopkey and Parent, 2012). In 2005, the London 2012 bid team made a predictably bold pledge: 'Choose London', it said, 'and we will create an extraordinary legacy for the UK and the world' (DCMS, 2012: 8). In its Olympic bid, London and Britain set itself a challenge that had never been achieved before by an Olympic host, despite previous pledges: to harness the power of the Games to inspire more young people from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds into sport (Hughes and Hodgetts, 2013). The London bid team made five, hugely ambitious, legacy promises, commitments that aimed to: make the UK a world-leading sporting nation; transform the heart of a 'reclaimed' area of East London; inspire a generation of young British people into sport and physical activity; make the Olympic Park and its accommodation a blueprint for sustainable living; and demonstrate that the UK is a creative, inclusive and welcoming place to live in, visit and do business. It is the legacy promises to 'make the UK a world-leading sporting nation' and to 'inspire a generation' of young people into being more physically active, that are probably of most direct relevance to the key aims of this thesis.

The mantra of the Games – and, also, a key legacy promise - was to 'inspire a generation', and ensure that sport was accessible for everybody in the UK, whatever their age, background or ability. Sport, then, from grassroots to elite level, and across schools, sports centres and community venues, according to the DCMS (2012) remained at the very heart of the programme for a wider Games legacy. One of the key elements of the proposed 2012 sport legacy was to address falling participation rates. It was hoped that by creating a new generation of community and elite sports facilities and by somehow 're-energising' the offer of competitive sport in its schools, Britain, inspired by a home Games, would be able to tackle the

large numbers of young people who were turning away from sport at an early age. The 'people' element of the legacy plan, as outlined by the DCMS (2012) aimed to help, in mainly unspecified ways, to 'reconnect' communities across the UK, thus spreading the benefits of the Games across the whole country and enhancing the potential of the Games to drive social change.

In the post-Olympic period in the UK, the new reality for sport and the wider ambitions of 2012 is starting to take shape. Critical commentators are increasingly questioning the so-called 'success' of the Games and debate continues in relation to the outcomes of the legacy promises (The Economist, 2017). A recent YouGov survey found that only 7% of Britons were inspired by the Olympics to take up sport, and would forego Team GB Olympic success in favour of better access to sport for all (Pro Bono Economics, 2017). It is argued that Games impact depends how you interpret the legacy promises, and, indeed, who you ask. The British sporting aim at the next Olympic Games, Rio 2016, was deceptively simple: Great Britain wanted to be the first host nation to *increase* its medal count immediately after hosting its own Games. Team GB succeeded in this aim, by winning 27 gold medals and 67 medals altogether in Rio, thus surpassing the total medals won in London (65) and finishing ahead of China in the medals table.

As Sebastian Coe – chairman for the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) - claimed, London's legacy promise to 'inspire a generation' was not just about local participation. Part of its impact was to be measured in relation to GB's future performance in elite level sport. Britain's elite sports competitors have set post-war records at the last three Olympic Games. However, despite enormous increases in financial investment from the National Lottery at elite level (£347 million of National Lottery money was invested in the last Games cycle), general participation rates in sport and physical activity in Britain have actually fallen since 2012 (Bull, 2016; The Economist, 2017). Furthermore, local council cuts imposed by central government meant that sport and leisure facilities were suffering in pretty much every UK county. As Bull (2016) has rightly argued, for the 2012 legacy to have any chance of succeeding, the same amount of time, energy,

money, and effort invested in the 2012 Games in London needed also to be invested nationally in the grassroots levels of sport.

As we have seen, the supposed 'inclusive' character of Britain's cultural identity, binding in its diverse communities through sport, was a key element of London's successful bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games (MacRury and Poynter, 2010). However, London's triumphant bid occurred in a period of significant turmoil and global uncertainty: Britain's recent participation in the calamitous war on Iraq had attracted considerable international condemnation. Whilst the events of the 6th of July 2005 saw a mass televised celebration in Trafalgar Square when Jacques Rogge, President of the IOC, announced London as the successful hosts of the 2012 Games, the euphoria in the capital proved to be short-lived. Less than 24 hours later, during the morning rush hour, a series of coordinated suicide bombers detonated explosive devices on London's transport system, killing 52 people and injuring over 700 more. The perpetrators were all British citizens (three were British-born to Pakistani migrants, and one was a Muslim convert born in Jamaica) and the attack reignited debates about the cohesiveness of Britain's multi-cultural societies (Falcous and Silk, 2010).

Research rationale

The general paucity of professional British Asian sportsmen in Britain - despite their presence in lower amateur and grassroots sporting structures – has received considerable media and academic attention, particularly in the case of football (Bains and Johal, 1998; BBC Sport, 2013; Burdsey; 2007a; The Independent, 2015; Johal, 2001; Kilvington; 2016). Given the routine public discussions concerning the lack of British Asian representation in professional football, it is interesting that, statistically, football participation at grassroots level for British Asians is actually very similar to the national average. Significantly, both Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin men in the UK are more likely than their White counterparts to take part in football, this trend having been apparent for over two decades (Bains and Patel, 1996; Sport England, 2000; Long et al, 2009). This sort of statistical evidence

contradicts the oft-cited, but erroneous, assertions made by many in the football community in the UK that the lack of professional British Asian players owes most to their relative absence at amateur grassroots levels (Johal, 2001). Proof of a vibrant British Asian footballing community at local levels, however, provides confirmation that there are clearly existing barriers to progression for people from such backgrounds from grassroots to professional sport, and invites the question why British Asian men are not appearing in any significant numbers in the professional game (Long et al, 2009). This thesis will revisit some of these issues by drawing on the views and experiences of young British Asians today in relation to football and other key sports.

The relationship between grassroots and elite level sports participation has been the subject of considerable academic attention in attempts to investigate some of the potential explanations for the relative absence of British Asians from top professional sporting spheres in the UK. Daniel Burdsey's (2007a) seminal work on the lack of British Asian professional footballers, now published a decade ago, highlights some of the complexities in this area. Not much has changed since. Burdsey's early work, seemingly, paved the way for a few other studies to offer their own accounts, detailing the shortage of British Asian footballers, often by making comparisons with professional cricket, an arena where British Asians are proportionately better represented (Ahmad, 2011; Bradbury, 2010; Burdsey, 2010; Kilvington, 2012; Kilvington, 2013; Kilvington, 2016; Saeed and Kilvington, 2011). This sort of analysis of British Asian sporting exclusion and relative success, however, has not much been extended beyond the boundaries of British Asian sporting males and beyond these two core team sports, football and cricket.

As I have already indicated, the dearth of elite British Asian athletes across all sports was particularly noticeable in the Great Britain Olympic team at London 2012. Whilst White (and often middle class and public school educated) athletes were prominent in Team GB, several high-profile Black (African and African-Caribbean) British athletes also competed for Great Britain. Erroneously, this limited but very visible diversity was used to reject claims of racial inequality in elite-level sport, even though, owing to the ethnic, class and educational backgrounds of the athletes

concerned, Team GB was still largely unrepresentative of multicultural Britain (Burdsey, 2016). The proportion of African and African-Caribbean athletes representing Team GB in 2012 is particularly relevant here, given that statistically the number of British Asians is considerably more than those who identify as Black British. This may be significant because it suggests that perhaps, as in professional team sports such as football, there are highly specific barriers for British Asians' sporting involvement, barriers that do not exist in the same way for the rest of the UK's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) populations.

This is not to say however, that there are *no* barriers in sport for other BAME groups in the UK. Indeed, as Hylton and Morpeth (2012: 381) have argued, the diversity of the British athletes in the GB track and field team at London 2012 'belies the historical whiteness and racialized disparities and inequalities and exclusionary and institutionalized processes' that impact more broadly on the BAME groups in the UK. What is clear then, is that BAME groups are likely to face disproportionately more barriers in elite level sport than their White counterparts, and that this is especially the case, it seems, for potential British Asian competitors in all sports with the partial exception of cricket. One might anticipate that their almost complete absence from the ranks of those performing for GB in 2012 could indeed significantly impact on the Games' capacity to 'inspire a generation' of young British Asians.

Traditionally, the Asian body has routinely been 'othered' and positioned as antithetical for participation within the sporting arena (Johal, 2001; Burdsey, 2007a; Burdsey, 2009; Kilvington, 2012; Kilvington, 2016). The perceived physical inferiority of South Asians continues to restrict opportunities within professional sport in the UK, particularly in football, where British Asians have been charged with facing the assumption that they lack the competence, but also the desire, to compete at the top level of professional sport (Fleming, 2001; Johal, 2001; Burdsey, 2007a; Kilvington, 2016). Some broadly unfounded, but commonly cited, stereotypical beliefs about British Asians' absence from professional sport is that they are, as a group, 'too weak' or 'too small' to compete, a claim which is often attributed to their 'different' heritage and culture and to the (by White British

standards) 'irregular' diet of those from the subcontinent, and their adherence to religious requirements, such as observing Ramadan, a month of daylight fasting. These oft-cited explanations, typically made by key gatekeepers to academies at professional clubs, clearly could restrict the opportunities of British Asian players to reach the elite echelons of professional football. Whilst these stereotypes seem remarkably resilient, findings by Kilvington (2013) also highlight the ignorance of many of these gatekeepers, scouts and coaches who fail to recognise that both unconscious and explicit racism remains an issue in football, thus reinforcing 'common-sense' explanations about the perceived 'meritocratic' nature of the sport.

Cricket – long established and enormously popular on the subcontinent, of course - is the only sport in which British Asian players have seemingly successfully challenged and partially overcome such assumptions about their sporting competence, and South Asians have been reasonably successful in cricket in the UK at an elite level. This relative success suggests that perhaps there is something quintessentially different about cricket, something that enables and encourages British Asian participation - possibly due to unusual parental encouragement or the international success of the heritage nations which has served to provide role models and wider community approval - compared to other sports in the UK. What is also different about cricket is that coaches and cricket administrators in the UK probably 'expect' to find good British Asian cricketers because of the success of their heritage countries in the global game.

What many of these 'common-sense' explanations about the supposed 'meritocratic' nature of sport fail to consider, however, is the fear and actuality of racism and exclusion – whether real or perceived – racism that may keep BME groups away from specific sports (Porter, 2001). Essentially, blame is firmly pointed towards British Asians themselves, and not typically attributed to the institutional racisms and cultural exclusions that many British Asians have faced, and continue to face, at both grassroots and elite levels (Kilvington, 2016). Is low British Asian involvement in most elite level and professional sport merely a reflection of a lack of engagement at the grassroots? When analysed as a homogenous category, South Asian migrants might actually broadly conform to this

view (Long et al, 2009). However, closer investigation suggests the picture is far more complex (Bi, 2011).

When viewing participation figures by individual sports, the disparity is illustrated and there are some considerable variations from the general patterns of low sports participation within the British Asian diaspora (Long et al, 2009). Surveys documenting sport and physical activity participation in England suggest that, considered as a single ethnic group, those of South Asian heritage do the least amount of sport in the UK (Long et al, 2009). But what these surveys do not typically analyse is the number of British Asian sports participants *outside* of official sporting structures and leagues (for example, the Asian and West Indian Cricket Leagues remain largely unrecognised by the England and Wales Cricket Board [Bi, 2011]). The stories of British Asian participants playing recreational sport, and the reasons for the preference for this type of participation, is likely to highlight important barriers that National Governing Bodies (NGBs) must address if they are to increase their BAME participation levels at the grassroots.

Whilst the absence of British Asians in elite level sport continues to draw both media attention and academic debate, their relatively low levels of sport and physical activity participation in recreational and grassroots sport has recently drawn the attention of national sports organisations and policy makers, including Sport England. The development and subsequent implementation of the equality standard for sport (which outlines a commitment to ensure equality of opportunity across all groups in society prevails) has encouraged NGBs to attempt to address inequality and promote participation and sporting inclusion to all sections of the community (Bi, 2011). Sport England, as key funding providers, have recently challenged NGBs in the UK to demonstrate a commitment to improving their sporting provision for Britain's minority ethnic populations. Furthermore, in an effort to drive up participation figures to secure funding, particularly in the post-Olympic Games era, NGBs are targeting previously untapped markets. Consequently, under such scrutiny these organisations are now much more willing to invest financially in projects aimed at developing sporting provision for previously excluded communities.

London's selection as hosts for the 2012 Games was a potentially significant moment for Britain, a chance to reinforce, through sport, a sense of a collective and inclusive British national identity. Most international sporting contests draw on *English* rather than British loyalties and identity constructions. This might have been especially important for members of the large British Asian diaspora in Britain, many of whom feel excluded from ethnically exclusive and narrowly White notions of 'Englishness'. The structure of international competition in the Olympic Games - where athletes from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland come together, unusually, to compete under the single, inclusive banner of Great Britain - offers a sociologically significant lens via which to explore the nexus between 'Britishness', ethnicity and sport. Whilst there is a developing body of literature that has started to explore the relationship between British Asians and English national identities (see Fletcher, 2011; Raman, 2014; Ratna, 2014), the impact of the 2012 Olympic Games on experiences of a wider (and potentially more inclusive) British identity has hitherto been excluded from explorations of the nexus of British Asians, sport, national identity and feelings of belonging.

Perhaps surprisingly, the paucity of British Asians in nearly all elite level UK sports does not seem to have prompted more empirical research that stretches much beyond the sport of football. Additionally, current research on sport and national identity has focused narrowly on British Asians and English national identity. Set in the post-London 2012 period, this thesis aims to explore some of the impacts of the Olympic Games on participation and identity questions for a sample of young British Asians living outside London, in Leicester and Wolverhampton.

This issue will be explored from three broad angles:

- Firstly, how did the London Olympic Games impact on young British Asians' sense of national and ethnic *identities* and understandings of notions of 'Britishness' and belonging?

- Secondly, how do these absences from elite level sport impact on the *consumption* of global mega-events such as the Olympic Games*?*

- Lastly, what impact on *participation* and perceptions of access to sport does a lack of British Asian professionals in sport (reinforced at the 2012 Games), and thus an absence of Asian heritage role models, have on the British Asian community?

Partnership funding

The ideas for this thesis evolved out of an already established partnership between the University of Leicester and Sporting Equals, and the willingness of national organisations like this latter one to invest in research. The ambition of Sporting Equals to be the premier UK organisation for the promotion of equality and diversity within sport, allowed this collaboration to happen, funding a PhD opportunity at the University of Leicester, working in partnership with Sporting Equals. A brief research rationale was created which established a number of key objectives for the project. The goal of Sporting Equals here was to map out perceptions of different sports among samples of young British Asians as part of a wider plan to become a key provider of research on sport in different sections of the BAME population in the UK. This current research provides Sporting Equals (and others) with theory and data that may help inform future sports policy in the UK and, hopefully, improve the sporting experience for British Asians as participants and perhaps, too, as potential administrators and employees in sport.

As a result of their national partnership with Sport England, Sporting Equals work closely with various NGBs, local authorities and professional sports clubs, as well as with many social and health sector programmes dedicated to promoting sport and healthy lifestyles. Sporting Equals, in the parlance of this sector, see themselves as the 'go to' organisation in relation to BAME sports participation. They have a strong national network of delivery partners on the ground and at the heart of BAME communities, and they help these delivery partners to set up and run initiatives within BAME communities. Their growing research and development profile enables the organisation to provide training, toolkits, and information and

they also actively evaluate local projects to enhance their research output and to continue to promote best practice.

In direct relation to this thesis, Sporting Equals' investment is based on gaining 'meaningful' qualitative data, mainly on attitudes to three selected sports – tennis, swimming and athletics – data that can provide some insight into the leisure and sporting lives of young British Asians, and ultimately provide the selected NGBs with insights that might enable them to work towards improving sporting provision for potential participants from such communities. It is to the rationale for selecting these three sports for additional analysis - tennis, swimming and athletics - that I now turn.

Three focal sports: tennis, swimming and athletics

Their partnership with Sport England sees Sporting Equals acting as expert advisors on equality and diversity issues to five 'primary' UK NGBs (Football Association, Lawn Tennis Association, Amateur Boxing Association England, Swim England and the English Cricket Board) and four 'secondary' NGBs (British Athletics Association, Rugby Football Union, British Cycling and Table Tennis England). In collaboration with Sporting Equals – and in line with both their interests as expert advisors and the broader aims of this thesis – British Asian experiences and perceptions of three sports, tennis, swimming and athletics, were selected as being of special interest for the research. The reasons for this were fourfold:

- Firstly, to enable Sporting Equals to fulfil their remit of acting as expert advisors on aspects of equality and diversity to selected National Governing Bodies, it was important to choose key sports from the nine NGBs Sporting Equals are currently supporting and working with as partners.

- Secondly, each of the selected sports has a statistically low representation of British Asian participants at both amateur and elite levels (Long et al, 2009; Sport England, 2017), something that NGBs are consistently challenged

about by Sport England. A lack of BAME participants threatens the secure funding that many of these sporting organisations rely heavily on.

- Thirdly, the additional thesis emphasis on the impact of the London 2012 Olympics on British Asians and sport meant that it was necessary to select sports that are prominently contested in the Olympic Games.

- Finally, each of the sports selected for special attention are relatively 'gender neutral' in that, in theory at least, both males and females have relatively similar opportunities in terms of access to these sports, and they can participate in them at both amateur and elite levels. This was important when selecting the focus sports because (and this is something the thesis aims to rectify) female voices have, thus far, been relatively absent from research on British Asian sports participation in the UK.

Research suggests that inequality and discrimination continues to persist in both the provision of, and access to, sport and physical activity opportunities for British Asians (Bi, 2011). Whilst a great deal of work has already been conducted in relation to equality of access at recreational and grassroots levels of sport, issues continue to endure regarding the transition of British Asians from the grassroots to the elite level echelons of sport. As part of the national partnership with Sport England, Sporting Equals are working closely with governing bodies to try to 'bridge this gap' between recreational and structured elite sport to try to provide new pathways for British Asians to excel in sport and, ultimately, secure the attention of elite British club, as well as regional and national selectors.

For example, The FA in England has developed a football talent identification scheme, which aims to showcase British Asian talent to professional football club academies. Two of the football clubs involved to date are Tottenham Hotspur and Queens Park Rangers (Sporting Equals, 2015). Despite the lack of evidence for the argument in the professional game that the absence of British Asian professional sportspeople is due to a lack of interest and low participation in amateur sport, this explanation is still regularly cited. Crucially, arguably the more plausible arguments

- that external barriers, such as 'colour-blind' policies, institutional racism, and the complex exclusionary effects of White privilege - continue to be underplayed in their impact (Cleland and Cashmore, 2013).

The noticeable shortage of British Asians in Team GB in 2012 - thus further reinforcing perceptions around transition from grassroots to elite level sport - has prompted sociological interest in the wider role and importance of sport in the lives of young British Asians. The staging of the Olympic Games in London provided an interesting and symbolically significant moment for the exploration of the complexities involved in constructing British national identities through sport, and the ways in which the Games shaped and reinforced the contested concept of a British Asian identity (Hylton and Morpeth, 2012; Mitra, 2014). As Burdsey (2007a: 150) has ably demonstrated, 'very little attention – either in academe or in the media - has been given to the role that football plays in the articulation of ethnic and national identities for British Asians.' I would extend this argument, by suggesting that very little attention has been paid, more generally, to how sport helps shape the national and ethnicised local identities of British Asians.

The overarching aim of this thesis therefore is to explore the impact (if any) that the London 2012 Olympic Games had on young British Asians who are 'interested' in sport. I also investigate their experiences within, and perceptions of, sport in the UK in terms of both their access as participants, and as consumers of sport. The impact of the 2012 Games on young British Asians has hitherto been excluded from wider explorations of sport and British Asian identity. Furthermore, popular explanations for the underrepresentation of British Asians within professional sporting spheres have tended to exclude the potential impact of absences of their representation at London 2012 from their analysis. This thesis aims to fill that gap. In doing so, it may be useful to enumerate my more detailed research objectives. These objectives are to:

i) Explore the general impact of the 2012 Olympics on young British Asians, in terms of their participation rates, identity construction and their consumption of sport.

ii)   Analyse the local impact of the relative lack of British Asian role models in sport (including the Olympics) on young British Asians.

iii)   Evaluate the current role of sport (in terms of both spectatorship and participation) in the lives of young British Asians (both male and female) in two locations, and the cultural and other constraints on such participation.

iv)   Collect relevant information in different locations on the perceptions young British Asians have of specific (Olympic) sports and on their potential access as participants to such sports.

Defining terms: identity, ethnicity, generation and diaspora

This section provides some important definitions of the concepts that will be drawn upon throughout the thesis. A common criticism within social science research has been the tendency to employ concepts without providing clear and unambiguous definitions of their use (Verkuyten, 2005; Gunaratnam, 2003). This failure has even led to suggestions that the use of terminology without definition is academically redundant (Gil-White, 2006). Accordingly, I begin here by defining my understanding of the terms ethnicity, identity, generation and diaspora, and by outlining how these concepts will be used throughout this thesis.

Identity has become one of the central concepts in social science thinking and has been classified as somewhat of a 'buzz word' within the social science disciplines. Debates around identity in relation to British Asians and sporting loyalties have begun to be examined (Burdsey, 2006; 2007a; Devan, 2012; Fletcher, 2011; Mitra, 2014; Ratna, 2014). Verkuyten (2005) argues, however, that its extensive and rather careless use has resulted in the loss of a significant and coherent meaning, and thus this conceptual vagueness has ensured that the term 'identity' has also somewhat lost its original analytical purchase. As Brah (1996: 20 – italics in original) puts it:

The idea of identity… is singularly elusive. We speak of 'this' identity and 'that' identity. We know from our everyday experience that what we call 'me' or 'I' is not the same in every situation; that we are changing from day to day. Yet there is something we 'recognise' in ourselves and in others which we call 'me' and 'you' and 'them'. In other words, we are all constantly changing but this *changing illusion* is precisely what we *see* as real and concrete about ourselves and others. And this *seeing* is both a social and a psychological process. Identity, then, is an enigma which, by its very nature, defies a precise definition.

Whilst a precise definition of identity can prove problematic, it is important to at least attempt to address some of the criticisms surrounding this term by locating its use in relation to my specific research topic. Verkuyten (2005), for example, suggests that identity is not necessarily about the individual or about society in isolation, but it is about the relation of the two. To elaborate, identity refers to the 'intricacies, paradoxes, dilemmas, contradictions, imperatives, superficialities, and profundities of the way individuals relate to and are related to the world in which they live' (Verkuyten, 2005: 42). This is perhaps especially the case for *national* identity, a subjective category that can be based upon a range of criteria that is open to a wide range of interpretations.

I would contend that sport - and perhaps in particular types of sports fandom - is one pertinent site to explore the wider questions of national identity, affiliation and belonging for British Asians. As Ratna (2014: 289) argues, 'sport offers a vehicle for exploring identities and inequalities as it reflects, and is a part of, wider social struggles for power and representation'. Questions relating to sporting allegiance and national identity illustrate the multifaceted nature of identity suggested above and, as such, the term identity remains both complex and contested. For example, cricket victories by teams from the subcontinent over England are often met with huge celebration among sections of the British Asian diaspora because, through victory in sport, such communities can challenge, symbolically, the domination their colonisers once had.

As this thesis aims to demonstrate, for many young British Asians, identity negotiation is a peculiarly complex process. Often, young British Asians construct their identity in opposition to how other (White) people view them. This is particularly important perhaps within the sporting arena. British Asians' multifarious and layered sporting allegiances can mean that they are often charged, via stereotypical assumptions, in ways which suggest that they are 'torn between two cultures' (Ratna, 2014). They therefore may risk, in certain circumstances, accusations of being 'plastic' Brits, people who cannot be 'authentic' fans or representatives of British or English national sports teams because of their dual heritage. Consequently, racist ideologies and questions around lineage and belonging continue to manifest themselves through and around British sport.

The complexity of defining identity also extends to how people self-describe their own *ethnicity,* a term that is, itself, socially constructed. Like identity, ethnicity is not a fixed category, but one that is liquid, dynamic and subject to change (Gunaratnam, 2003). Thus, it is necessary to outline some of the problems a White researcher inevitably faces when writing and researching about people from a British Asian background. As Burdsey (2007a: 8) rightly suggests, 'failure to recognise the significance of ethnic differences between researchers and their participants would demonstrate methodological and epistemological naivety'.

I am very well aware that the meaning of ethnicity for me, as a White academic, might be different from how my research participants understand such terms. Furthermore, I am consciously aware of my own Whiteness and my background as a middle-class female academic, and that this could potentially have significant implications for research with young people who do not share the same background or history (a more detailed discussion of these tensions is developed in the methodology chapter). Most may come to understand their ethnicity using the restricted terminology enforced upon them within various legal forms (for example the Census), where they are required to tick one box which best describes their background.

To avoid enforcing such restrictions on my own participants, on my information sheets I left a space for my participants to define ethnicity in their own way. This process of self-definition highlighted a number of different variations used by my participants to describe their ethnic background. Ethnic categories included British Indian, English Indian, Indian, Pakistani, British Pakistani, and British Asian. These variations serve to illustrate the difficulty and lack of precision involved in referring simply to more broad categorisations, such as 'British Asian', when describing these research participants. However, as I will explain in the next section, sometimes such categorisations, problematic as they are, remain unavoidable.

The concept of *generation* is one that has received substantial critical analysis from scholars, particularly those working within the field of the social sciences (Kertzer, 1983; Alwin and McCammon, 2007; Waters, 2014). As a term that has multiple meanings, the conflation of the concept of generation has resulted in studies that are both 'methodologically flawed' (Kertzer, 1983) and conceptually confusing (Alwin and McCammon, 2007). Multiple definitions of generation exist, and thus to avoid conceptual confusion, authors must make it clear to the reader which category (or categories) of generation they are using within their analysis. Kertzer (1983: 126) categorises generation in four different ways: 'generation as a principle of kinship descent; generation as cohort; generation as life stage; and generation as historical period.' I refer to the term generation in this thesis as a principle of kinship descent which has been widely employed within studies of immigration. For Alwin and McCammon (2007: 221) 'this concept of generation serves as the fundamental unit for defining kinship relations, for example, parents, grandparents, children and grandchildren.'

The concepts of first, second and third generation are widely deployed within academic literature and social policy concerning matters of immigration and settlement. The first generation commonly refers to the first group of people within a kinship to migrate from their homeland and settle elsewhere. Second generation is the term commonly used to describe the children of migrants born in the new place of settlement, with third generation denoting the grandchildren of the original settlers (for example, see Waters, 2014). However, researchers have outlined some

key analytical problems with this use of generation. Kertzer (1983: 141) for example points out a number of instances where strict usage of first, second and third generation is problematic:

(a) Unless the migration was restricted to a brief period, people sharing the same generational location in fact belong to different historical periods, confronting different historical conditions at their arrival and coming from a society that itself was different from the one earlier migrants had left.

(b) Parents often migrate with their children, and occasionally three-generation families migrate together. In such cases we are either left with the anomalous case of children and their parents belonging to the same 'generation' with some immigrants of a certain age being considered first-generation (having no parent accompanying them) and others of the same age being considered second-generation (arriving with their parents).

(c) Related to this point, immigrants can range in age from infants to octogenarians. Does it make sense to lump these together as members of the same generation? The cultural imprint of foreign birth on the 80-year-old is entirely different from the imprint on the infant.

Similarly, Waters (2014: 19) argues that using generation in this way can effectively homogenise an immigrant generation that migrates from ancestral countries that have become very different over time:

While both a newly arrived eighteen-year-old Pakistani arriving in Britain to attend university in 2012 and an eighty-year-old who left Pakistan soon after its creation in 1947 would both be classified as 'first generation', the Pakistan they left behind is quite a different society and the Pakistani identity and culture they carry with them reflects these changes. They are of the same 'immigrant generation' but very different historical generations.

Notwithstanding some of these problems, generation has been identified as an important variable in studies of immigration (Waters, 2014). Of my 28 participants,

25 were born in England and, using generation as a principle of kinship descent, they fit quite neatly within the generally accepted usage of third-generation. However, two participants were born in India and migrated as infants with their parents, and one was born in Germany and moved to England with his family aged eight. My participants are therefore a mixture of second (but mostly) third-generation British Asians, but they share a commonality of all growing up and receiving their education in 21st century Britain.

Alwin and McCammon (2007) suggest that in virtually all societies, within a family, each generation will experience life differently. Previous studies have suggested that descendants of different kinship generations have more choice over how much to identify with their country of ancestry (Jimenez, 2010; Waters, 1999), and that as the commonality of intermarriage increases there could be a significant ethnic demographic loss of identity (Muttarak and Heath, 2010). Age at arrival is therefore identified as a key variable in shaping how successfully immigrants and their descendants assimilate into British culture, and how this impacts on feelings of belonging and national identity.

The concept of *diaspora* describes groups of people who share some form of collective history from a place of origin, but who have now dispersed. As Anthias (2001) points out, diaspora is a particular type of ethnic category that exists beyond the boundaries of nation states, as opposed to within them. Kalra et al (2005) usefully describe this as being *from* one place, but *of* another. The South Asian diaspora, then, is not fixed in one country, but exists across numerous boundaries, and is a collective of migrant communities who are connected to a specific place of origin – in this case, the Indian subcontinent. The concept of diaspora has been widely drawn upon within sociological studies to describe those who trace their ancestry back to the Indian subcontinent, and in particular it has been used to help analyse the negotiation of identity in several different social fields. Sport, in the post-migration era, has become an, 'integral feature of how we conceptualize and experience the notion of being part of a diaspora', but, as yet, 'theories of diaspora

have been applied sparingly to sporting discourses' (Fletcher, 2015: 141; see also Burdsey et al, 2013).

The relationship between British Asians and sporting identity is one area where theories of diaspora have been explicitly used. Debates concerning British Asian identities and sporting loyalties have typically drawn on the concept of diaspora to account for the multifarious ways in which British Asians connect with each other and with their homelands. Brah (1996: 16), for example, describes the concept of diaspora as, 'an interpretive frame for analysing the economic, political and cultural modalities of historically specific forms of migrancy.' The practice of diaspora for South Asian migrants suggests that they can identify with one another across numerous different boundaries, such as 'caste, class, religion and at times, also nation' as part of a wider collective identity (Raman, 2014: 2). Indeed, this idea is articulated within the literature on South Asians and cricket in the UK, where it has been argued that British Asians have come together (almost regardless of their backgrounds) to play cricket the 'South Asian' way (Raman, 2014). With this in mind, diaspora is a particularly useful concept in thinking about how young British Asians experience sport and how sport contributes to their understanding of a British Asian identity, particularly considering Brah's (1996) assertion, that diaspora ought to be conceptualised as a state of consciousness rather than a state of belonging.

The term diaspora can be useful to describe the offspring of South Asian migrants. Though the children and grandchildren of South Asian migrants are not migrants themselves, they share a collective origin. I am interested in exploring the impact of the 2012 Olympics on identity for young British Asians who trace their ancestry back to the Indian subcontinent, but, who also identify with British markers of identity and their own British heritage. This complex relationship has significant implications for the naming and examining of those migrants, who, in one sense, share a collective history of origin from the subcontinent but, conversely, have very different backgrounds encompassed by a number of varying economic, cultural and social factors. It is to this debate that I now briefly turn.

The 'terminological chaos' of working with ethnic categories

One problem that soon became apparent in conducting and writing up this research was the difficulty of finding suitable terminology that would adequately describe the research participants within my study. The complexities relating to the use of racial and ethnic categories within research, and the subsequent debate about the most appropriate way to describe those who have migrated to Britain from the Indian subcontinent, continue to persist (Burdsey, 2007a; Bradbury, 2010; Ratna, 2014; Sayyid, 2006). As discussed above, the descriptors my research participants used to self-define their ethnicity were quite numerous, and as such, the participants did not fall neatly into a single ethnic category. These sorts of heterogeneous ethnic self-descriptions are a common feature of research with groups who trace their ancestry back to the Indian subcontinent, and provide researchers with what Gunaratnam (2003) describes as 'terminological chaos'. Yet, although plenty of ways of labelling ethnicity were highlighted by my participants, regrettably - but necessarily - these have been overridden to be grouped here into a broader 'British Asian' category.

This general categorisation is not without contestation: Burdsey (2007a: 10), for example, argues that the term British Asian 'possesses decreasing explanatory power due to the heterogeneity of the groups and the diversity of identities, lifestyles and experiences represented within it'. Whilst I understand, of course, the tremendous diversity that exists amongst young British Asians today - a label that is further fragmented by various personal and structural dimensions including religion, gender, class, age and socio-economic status (amongst others) - the term 'British Asians' currently remains the most used and best understood terminology to describe British citizens who trace their ancestry back to the Indian subcontinent. What this discussion demonstrates, however, is that there is no simple way of talking about the children, or grandchildren, of South Asian migrants who settled in Britain. Thus, naming and examining race and ethnicity is an extremely problematic process.

Such reliance on general categorisations results in researchers running the risk of reproducing 'essentialized' or 'deterministic' categories of race and ethnicity,

problems which have specific implications for research that aims to address, 'the complex, dynamic and socially situated effects of racial and ethnic categorizations' (Gunaratnam, 2003: 29). Essentialization points to our need to categorise, yet the problem with doing so is that it implies 'an internal sameness and external difference or otherness' (Werbner, 1997, cited in Gunaratnam, 2003: 29). Using the term 'British Asian' in an unproblematic way, demonstrates the difficulties in this area. Whilst 'British Asian' is a term that is conceptually understood by both British Asians themselves and the wider UK population, it nonetheless remains at risk of obscuring the fractured relationships that are apparent within the Indian subcontinent and the obvious heterogeneity of settlers who have migrated to Britain from different places and at different times. Again, this further supports the need for localised, comparative research in different areas in the UK, along with an awareness that a 'one size fits all' approach does not work in relation to British Asian communities in the UK.

One of the challenges for White researchers working within the restrictions of existing social categories is therefore to find a way in which categories (such as race or ethnicity) can be identified and disrupted to avoid essentialization. Bradbury (2010: 25), for example, recognised that categories such as Asian are 'conceptually limited and [their use is] subject to significant academic contestation'. Consequently, he highlights the need to:

> Develop linguistically a terminology which is suitably nuanced to capture the commonalities and specificities of BME cultural identities and structural experiences, whilst seeking to avoid ethnic reification or contributing to processes of political disempowerment.

Despite recognising the dilemmas involved in using broad categorisations - for example, 'Black' and 'Asian' -the lack of suitable, alternative terminology remains a problem. This has led to concepts operating 'under erasure', meaning that some concepts have passed their analytical sell-by date, and are no longer 'good to think with', but have yet to be replaced (Gunaratnam, 2003: 31). For this reason, and following both Burdsey (2007a) and Bradbury (2010), I use categorisations which

are commonly cited and understood by those ethnic groups themselves, as well as by the wider population, but only as explanatory markers of ethnic identity through which processes and experiences can be examined.

I use the term 'British Asian', therefore, to refer to people who trace their ancestry back to the Indian subcontinent, but who, through birth or residence in Britain are afforded British *citizenship*. All my young participants self-described their ethnic identities as dual British Asian or British Indian/Pakistani, and thus identified with a British marker of identity. Of course, I am aware that not all people of South Asian heritage backgrounds – even if by birth or residence are afforded British citizenship – choose to preference the 'British' aspect of their identities. As Burdsey (2007a: 11) identifies in his discussion of terminology, the term British Asian, 'is used to reflect their changing citizenship rather than a conscious identity choice' and its use does not 'suggest that they necessarily felt or feel themselves to be British as an automatic corollary of migration.' Following both Ratna (2014) and Burdsey (2007a), I apply the term 'South Asian' to describe populations who are physically resident in the Indian subcontinent, migrants in the period *before* their migration to Britain and/or those who adhere to South Asian cultural values and norms that are said to stem from that subcontinent. The 'terminological chaos' in this area is elucidated because it seems that the 'British Asian' and 'South Asian' categories are sometimes used interchangeably. Crucially, it is important to avoid homogenising British Asians and consequently, where possible in the fieldwork chapters, I will refer to the ethnic identities of the group in question as they chose to describe themselves.

The thesis structure

In **Chapter Two** I argue that examining the sporting heritage of my participants and their families provides some important framing context for continuing debates in the UK around national sporting affiliation and British Asian identities, today. In this first context chapter I briefly examine sporting cultures and traditions in the origin states of most British Asians – the Indian subcontinent. I begin by documenting the modest Olympic successes in hockey for both India and Pakistan, which, for a period of time in the early to mid-twentieth century, was widely

considered to be the subcontinent's 'national' sport. I also consider the rise in the popularity of cricket - based on more recent international successes for the teams in the Indian subcontinent – and the role and importance of football in this part of the world.

Chapter Three, a second context chapter, explores the wider historical, social and political factors that underpinned and facilitated the displacement of migrants from the Indian subcontinent, and the hostility faced by many upon their arrival in the UK. A consideration of these factors helps to contextualise diasporic British Asian identities, and the consequential hybridised attachments to both Britain and their ancestral 'homelands'.

Chapter Four moves on to focus on the contemporary sporting practices of British Asians in the post-migration period. Here I examine what is already known about the contemporary British Asian sporting experience. I do so in order to highlight the gaps in our understanding that this thesis aims to make a very small contribution towards filling.

Chapter Five provides an overview of the methodological approach selected for the research. Here, I explain and justify the use of a qualitative research approach which is underpinned by an interpretive epistemological position, and I reflect on my role as a White female academic conducting research with young British Asian participants. Next, I document the procedures undertaken to select appropriate research sites and participants, and to collect and analyse the data.

Chapter Six is the first of four fieldwork chapters. Here, I address the sports consumption practices of my participants. I analyse the British Asian fan experience within localised 'live' sports settings, as well as through more mediated forms of consumption. I also consider the role that sport plays in helping to shape particular sporting identities.

In **Chapter Seven** I explore how notions of 'belonging' are negotiated and articulated in the context of national sporting affiliations. The chapter begins by

addressing the national sporting affiliations of my participants in relation to football and cricket. The second part of this chapter then moves on to explore British Asian identity using the lens of the Olympic Games.

Chapter Eight focuses specifically on the participation stories of my participants. It documents the key influences in getting them involved in sport and physical activity, before moving on to explore barriers which may limit their participation opportunities. The last part of the chapter focuses on the local sporting opportunities that my participants perceive to be more readily available to them.

Chapter Nine documents more closely the experiences and perceptions of my three key sports, swimming, tennis and athletics. I analyse the (perceived) accessibility of each of the three sports for my young British Asian participants. Here I also explore the potential barriers (whether real or perceived) that may continue to limit British Asian access to these sports in a competitive setting.

Finally, **Chapter Ten** provides some conclusions by bringing together the key findings of the fieldwork chapters.

Chapter 2

Context (1): South Asian Sporting Heritage & Identity

Introduction: global sport and South Asian heritage

In its entire history, India has won a combined total of 28 Olympic medals. For the world's second most populous nation - China is the most populated country in the world, and consistently successful in Summer Olympic Games – India's Olympic medal total might be considered, in comparison, a derisory return. Nearly half of India's rather underwhelming medal tally has been obtained by the men's national field hockey (hereafter referred to as hockey) team, who have won eleven Olympic medals in total: eight of those being gold. In its most successful period, between 1928 and 1956, the Indian men's hockey team won a record-equalling six consecutive Olympic gold medals.

The Indian nation's only other Olympic gold medal was won at the 2008 Beijing Games, by shooter Abhinav Bindra, in the men's 10m Air Rifle event. Men's hockey has also won all but two of Pakistan's total Olympic medal haul since independence: three gold, three silver, and two bronze. The dominance of India and (post-partition) Pakistan's men's national hockey teams on a world stage are why hockey, for much of the twentieth century at least, was regarded as the Indian subcontinent's 'national' sport. Cricket in India started to gain more prominence and achieve international recognition towards the latter part of the twentieth century, and in the twenty first century it has been propelled to 'national' sport status on the Indian subcontinent.

As cricket is not currently contested at the Olympic Games, the International Cricket Council (ICC) Cricket World Cup (the third biggest international sporting competition behind the FIFA Football World Cup and the Rugby World Cup) remains the flagship tournament of international cricket. India has won the competition twice, and Pakistan once. The ICC Champions trophy is the key One Day

International (ODI) format international cricket tournament. Again, since its inception, the subcontinent nation states, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, have all been victorious. The introduction of the ICC World Twenty20 tournament in 2007 - the international championship of Twenty20 cricket - has also resulted in more success for the teams of the Indian subcontinent on a world stage. India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have all won the tournament once since its inauguration. So, in all formats of cricket, subcontinent states have been successful on a world stage. Yet, in terms of wider *international* success for the subcontinent states, arguably cricket still lags some way behind hockey. Nevertheless, cricket on the subcontinent has achieved national sport status whilst hockey, once regarded as such, has been on a near continuous downward spiral in popularity in the post-war period.

This chapter largely focuses on the history of sport in India, as much less is known and written about the much shorter sporting histories in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka: histories that are further complicated by the partition of the subcontinent 70 years ago. In 1947, immediately after independence from British rule, the Indian subcontinent was partitioned into two independent nation states: a Hindu-majority India and a Muslim-majority Pakistan. The partition caused mass-migration but also resulted in catastrophic and violent religious divisions: 17 million people were displaced and over one million reportedly lost their lives in the ensuing conflict (Devan, 2012). Communities that had coexisted, sometimes uneasily, under British rule were now fractured along religious lines and were fighting over territory. In 1971 India and Pakistan fought over the separation of East Pakistan, which ultimately became Bangladesh (Bates, 2011).

In what follows, I want to provide some historical context of sport on the subcontinent. I begin by briefly documenting the modest Olympic histories of India and Pakistan. The Olympic successes of both India and Pakistan in hockey means that this section largely focuses on this sport of upper-class colonial sporting heritage. Next the chapter moves on to mapping the rise in popularity of cricket which, based on more recent international successes has risen in status across the subcontinent states. Since independence it is cricket that has become the most significant vehicle for passionate nationalism on the subcontinent, but also for

members of the large South Asian diaspora now living elsewhere. Cricket and hockey are, of course, not the only sports played on the Indian subcontinent, but their success on a world stage ensures that they continue to be the key sports commonly associated with it. Consequently, this chapter focuses heavily on cricket and hockey and argues that perhaps success in these two sports has been detrimental to the development of other sports in India, especially football. The historical significance of football on the subcontinent focuses on the juxtaposition of rising national interest in European football set against a relative decline in interest in the local game. However, the new Indian Super League (ISL) for football launched in 2013 may signal a revival in football's fortunes.

The Olympics and hockey: subcontinent successes in sport

It is impossible to discuss the modest Olympic history of both India and Pakistan without focusing, almost exclusively, on the success of the respective national hockey teams. Majumdar and Mehta's (2009) work on *India and the Olympics* makes that point. In fact, the only other sports given any significant attention in this account are cricket and football - which in the earlier part of the twentieth century had rivalled hockey in relation to domestic popularity in colonial India. But cricket only usurped the Olympics in terms of national support and global success in India with the arrival of the television era. Unfortunately for hockey, India's most successful years in that sport came before the 'boom' years for satellite television networks. During the male hockey 'golden years' – between 1928 and 1984 India won eight Olympic Gold medals, and Pakistan three, of the total of thirteen available – hockey, understandably, held much of the national spotlight in these countries during this period. The later rise of European field hockey in Germany and Holland, the impact of globalisation – and the introduction of satellite television – all helped undermine this supremacy: and, as discussed in more detail in the next part of this chapter, cricket on the subcontinent was the sport mainly to benefit.

The 1948 Olympic Games, held in London, were of critical importance for the newly independent India, who for the past 200 years had been living under British colonial rule. For the first time India was offered an international platform to compete

against its former colonial masters, now playing under the new tricolour of the motherland, as opposed to representing British India. It was the hockey success at those Games – defeating their former colonisers 4-0 in the final to claim their fourth consecutive gold, but the first as an independent nation – that effectively cemented hockey as the national sport of India. As Majumdar and Mehta (2009) note, even when India won Olympic gold medals in previous Olympic Games, cricket and football had enjoyed similar levels of popularity at home. Britain had refused to compete against India in this period, and this had effectively relegated hockey in the Indian sporting hierarchy.

The India victory in London in 1948 projected this newly independent state straight to the top of world sport, albeit in this rather narrow field. Moreover, hockey had consolidated its new position as India's national sport because it, 'offered a substitute to religion as a source of emotive attachment and spiritual passion' (Majumdar and Mehta, 2009: 99). However, in 1948 most Indians 'back home' were more concerned with the violent political conflicts associated with the partition from Pakistan, which lead to the first of three wars. Whilst the respective Olympic teams were contesting in London, the areas around the borders between the two countries were in turmoil and the Olympic Games were pushed to the periphery of national consideration (Majumdar and Mehta, 2009).

India won another gold medal for hockey in Helsinki 1952, defeating the Netherlands 6-1 in a one-sided final. They then claimed their sixth consecutive gold medal in Melbourne 1956 by defeating arch-rivals Pakistan 1-0 in the final. This was the first time that India and Pakistan had met in a competitive match, but it was the Indians who were under the most pressure to secure victory. Whilst they successfully defended their Olympic crown once more, it was clear that this tournament had been much more taxing for the Indian players, and that other nations were now 'catching up' in terms of tactics, stamina and quality of play. Their supremacy on the international stage was under threat (Majumdar and Mehta, 2009). The standard of hockey elsewhere had improved significantly, and India's dominance was clearly coming to an end.

Indian hockey in decline

In 1960, in Rome, India finally lost its Olympic hockey crown – to Pakistan, who won the match 1-0 in front of a record crowd. More hockey gold medals followed for India, in 1964 and 1980, but change was coming. By the early 1970s, India could routinely defeat the England cricket team. Moreover, the Olympic Games, increasingly, would have to compete for attention in a nation that seems to be only really interested - accentuated by developments of new television technologies - in cricket. By 2007 India's most popular Hindi satellite news channel, Aaj Tak, could exclude all other news coverage in favour of focusing solely on the build-up to the inaugural 2007 Twenty20 cricket World Cup final in South Africa, where India were to meet, and ultimately beat, Pakistan. As Majumdar and Mehta (2009: 213) suggest, an alien visiting earth that day might have concluded that 'cricket was the only news in the country.' Indeed, the news across India's fifty-plus twenty-four-hour satellite news channels focused, almost exclusively, on the game that day.

By 2007 it was clear that the extraordinary dominance of cricket in public focus in India had become immensely frustrating for those who played and watched other professional sports. Less than a week after India's triumph in the Twenty20 World Cup final in South Africa, four of India's increasingly neglected hockey players, along with an assistant coach, even went on a hunger strike to protest that they should be treated on an equal footing with the country's cricketers. There was little hope of this happening now. Indeed, after their Twenty20 World Cup victory of 2007, India's cricketers were showered with gifts and prize money, gestures that had never been replicated for the country's remarkable 32-year winning streak in Olympic hockey. It is to mapping the development and then success and continued domination of cricket within the national consciousness of the Indian subcontinent that this chapter now moves.

Mapping the diffusion and success of cricket in the Indian subcontinent

England's colonial history is central to the diffusion of cricket around the world (Malcolm, 2013), with the game spreading to the British colonies as part of the British Imperialist expansion. Ever since British soldiers descended on the shores of the Indian subcontinent in the 1700s, and facilitated the diffusion and associated ethic of cricket, the sport has developed into an integral part of South Asian culture and identity (Mustafa, 2013). Davis and Upson (2005: 295) confirm this view by suggesting that cricket on the subcontinent is more than just 'an indigenized version of a gentlemanly pastime' and serves instead as a vehicle for passionate nationalism. The cricketing cultures that were transported onto Indian soil have since become a defining feature of their post-colonial identities (Raman, 2014). And, as we will see in chapter three, they remain a key feature of diasporic British Asian identities.

The Parsi community – an ethno-religious minority who migrated from Persia to the Gujarat region - were the first to start playing cricket in India. They were, reportedly, the first Indian community to enter into commercial and intellectual contact with the British, being transformed from a farming community into an entrepreneurial one that ultimately stimulated migration to Calcutta, a centre of commerce (Bhattacharya, 2005). The Parsi community thus became known as the 'middlemen', acting as cultural brokers between the British and Indian society (Mustafa, 2013). The Parsis appropriated various different facets of colonial culture, but, particularly, the sporting and athletic ethos of the British, and in 1908 they established their own sports club – the Calcutta Parsi Club – exclusively for men to play cricket (Bhattacharya, 2005). Their involvement in the colonisers' game led to other communities in the subcontinent taking an active interest, and thus cricket eventually started to spread around the region. Cricket clubs elsewhere were originally formed along religious lines and tournaments developed which involved matches between teams representing different religions (Mustafa, 2013). Fletcher and Lusted (2017) advise caution when considering the diffusion of cricket as a sport that was simply taken up without contestation by the former colonies.

Whilst it was the British who first introduced cricket to the Indian subcontinent, the people of South Asia have since taken up the game and formed their own cricketing identities. Ultimately, cricket became a central tenet of South Asian male identity.

British colonial rule remained in the subcontinent until independence in 1947 when, following the Second World War, the British simply no longer had the resources with which to remain in control (Dalrymple, 2015). However, this hard-won independence proved to be a short-lived triumph, one which 'opened a social, historical and geographic wound that has yet to fully heal', as the Indian subcontinent was partitioned and the nation states of India and Pakistan were created (Rosen, 2012). The partition resulted in a dramatization of violent divisions between the subcontinent's Hindu and Muslim communities. A devastating civil war in East Pakistan in 1971 ultimately resulted in the creation of Bangladesh, and India and Pakistan fought over the Kashmir territory in 1947, 1965 and 1999. Since the creation of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh as separate countries, over 10 million people have migrated across the regional borders (Devan, 2012), and there is now a significant number of South Asian migrants who have attained British citizenship. The relationship between the mainly Muslim population of Pakistan and the majority Hindu population of India, perhaps inevitably, remains hostile and fractured.

The often-intense post-partition cricket encounters between India and Pakistan, which began in 1952, continue to act as a reminder of previous conflicts between the two countries. Such encounters have even been described as 'thinly disguised wars between antagonistic nations' (Appadurai, 1995: 42-23). The outcome of such contests means more than merely sporting pride, with national identities staked and on show and masculine national pride at stake. However, despite Nair's (2011: 575) assertion that these cricket encounters now act as a 'bridge of peace between two hostile neighbours' there continue to be instances where national security is at risk due to the potential for conflict between cricket followers of the two nations. In 2008, for example, religious tensions resurfaced when Islamic militant attacks were carried out in Mumbai, resulting in 164 deaths (Giulianotti and Klauser, 2012). Consequently, recent cricket matches between India and Pakistan have been staged

away from home due to national security risks and the threat of possible terrorist attacks, like those that occurred in Mumbai in 2008. The second edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) season was also forced to relocate due to national security risks - instead taking place in South Africa in 2009. These tensions have also caused scenes of violence across Britain. For example, violent disorder was reported in London and Leicester in June 2017, after Pakistan defeated India in the ICC Champions Trophy final and India and Pakistani cricket fans clashed over the result. These sorts of violent disturbances on the subcontinent, in the UK and elsewhere continue to act as a hasty reminder of the long-term effects of the post-partition conflicts.

As a rapidly developing and industrialising country today, India is becoming a major player in the international sports arena – Delhi, for example, hosted the Commonwealth Games in 2010 - but cricket remains the only fully international team sport that the men from the subcontinent compete in (and are successful at) on a world stage (Nair, 2011). India's first Test Match victory over England came in 1952, but on English soil in 1983 India won the Cricket World Cup for the first time, providing cause for national celebration and an opportunity for public reaffirmation of heritage identity for members of the Indian diaspora who had migrated to the UK. To fully understand the significance of cricket (and sport more widely), and its role in shaping Indian society, it is imperative to consider the wider social and political contexts in which the game is played (Carrington and Andrews, 2013). When thinking along these lines, it is therefore understandable that South Asians, and the British Asian diaspora in the UK, regard victory over England in cricket as symbolically important because by beating their colonisers, or 'the masters at their own game', they can demonstrate that they are no longer living in the shadow of British rule (Burdsey, 2007a: 95). Cricket in India continued to gain strength in the latter part of the twentieth century and the Indian cricket team has been considered a major international force since at least the late-1960s.

Whilst it is clear that cricket is now considered the national sport of India, it was not until the 1980s that it really assumed centre stage as a focal point for identity formation on the international stage. The rise, in the late-1980s, of the Indian

teenage cricket sensation, Sachin Tendulkar, cemented this shift, especially among the young. Before this time, hockey was still considered the national game and both cricket and football were only relatively popular (in some areas more than others). The rise of professional cricket's wider popularity in India is directly related to the expansion of Indian television networks and the birth of satellite television (Majumdar and Mehta, 2009). A faster mode of consuming the game was encouraged so that commercial connections would be viable due to the large number of people watching. Consequently, televised cricket in India (and in other parts of the world) encouraged sports consumers to become more results orientated; they cared more about the outcomes of a game than the skills needed to play (Chakrabarty, 2005).

Chakrabarty (2005) illustrates this change with reference to the innovation of limited-over one-day (and later Twenty20) cricket, in which result-orientated talent displaced the more nuanced skills that the much more contemplative Test cricket called for. This has become much more apparent since the introduction of Twenty20 cricket – focused on big-hitting and high-scoring in glamorised city settings in only twenty overs – resulting in a 'mediatized mass spectacle of the game of cricket' (ibid: 5). As Gupta (2004) has asserted, field hockey's fall from the 'national' sport of India can be attributed to the fact that its most glorious phase came well before the era of live television coverage in India. Furthermore, as Majumdar and Mehta (2009) suggest, cricket administrators adapted best to new forces of commercialisation and globalisation and to resulting changes in television technology and reach. The administrators of hockey and soccer found it more difficult to change and, in any case, their sports lacked cricket's mass urban base on the subcontinent and, as a result, they were left behind.

Inspired by the success of the Premier League in English football, the recent development of the Indian Premier League for cricket - a fast, hard hitting, shortened city-based and prime-time version of the game, which has demonstrated it has the potential to draw substantial crowds and boast astronomical revenue-creating potential – has divided commentators and academics. Founded by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in 2007, the tournament is now in its

11th year. Eight franchise clubs representing a range of Indian cities contest this new professional Twenty20 cricket league, which has taken the cricketing world by storm and helped relocate the financial power in the world game to India. One might even suggest, perhaps, that the sheer popularity and national influence of cricket in the subcontinent – especially in an era of globalisation – has critically hindered the development of other sports in India and the subcontinent.

Football's historic 'failings' on the subcontinent

Football first started to become popular in India in the 1880s (Ray, 2006). Majumdar and Bandyopadhyay (2005b: 124) suggest that football's early pioneers were officers and men of Trading Farms and Regimental Battalions, European professors of educational institutions, and naval officers who played sport in India's main ports, such as Calcutta and Bombay. According to local press accounts, the earliest football match on record in the subcontinent was played in Calcutta in 1854 when Calcutta Club of Civilians played against the Gentlemen of Barrackpore (Majumdar and Bandyopadhyay, 2005b). It was mainly the British educational institutions that continued to promote its development among Calcutta youth, although it is argued that they were not solely responsible for the early popularity of football in India (Dimeo, 2001; Mangan, 2001). Soldiers, businessmen and administrators are also believed to have played their part in football's importation and early development (Majumdar and Bandyopadhyay, 2005b).

It is well documented that British Asians in the UK have remained closely attached to their successful heritage national cricket teams, but this is not the case with their much less high profile respective national football teams (Burdsey, 2007a). After all, India and Pakistan have both won Cricket World Cups since the early 1980s, whilst the national football teams from the subcontinent have never yet qualified for a FIFA World Cup finals tournament. India were ranked at an all-time low of 171 (Pakistan are ranked in 201st place) in the FIFA world rankings as recently as 2014 (FIFA, 2017). Nevertheless, it is significant, then, that until the interconnected processes of globalisation and the creation of modern national television networks in India facilitated cricket taking centre stage, 'soccer had a legitimate claim to be among the most popular spectator sports in India' (Majumdar and Mehta, 2009:

217). The failure of India's football governing bodies to capitalise on this popularity means that the domestic and international interest in football today is limited – but growing - for both those who continue to live in India but also for the wider Indian diaspora now living elsewhere.

Domestic football in India was - and is - characterised by regional rivalries. Of the most significant is the Kolkata derby featuring fierce rivals Mohun Bagan and East Bengal. A record crowd of 131,000 gathered in 1997 to witness the semi-final of the Federation Cup, with East Bengal claiming a 4-1 victory (FIFA, 2011). After a modest start on the international stage – Indian football competed in the Olympic Games for the first time as an independent nation at the 1948 Games – a brief period of success ensued between 1956-62 and, briefly, the future of Indian football internationally looked quite promising. In fact, after showing some promise in the 50s and 60s, critics suggested that the future of Indian football looked bright (Bandyopadhyay, 2009). India featured in football in their first Olympic Games in London 1948 and, whilst they did not win a game, they impressed against a far superior French side. The Indian national football team qualified for the 1950 World Cup finals in Brazil but, for various reasons including limited finances, were unable to attend. They quickly recovered, and were victorious in their first Asian Games in 1951, clinching the gold medal by defeating Iran 1-0 in the final.

In the 1950s India played football barefoot, and whilst they won numerous plaudits for the skill and style of play, it was clear that the national team would be unable to match the growing professionalism of other international teams and the mandatory wearing of boots resulted. The introduction of boots seemed to pay immediate dividends because India made it to the semi-finals of the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne (Bandyopadhyay, 2009; Majumdar and Mehta, 2009). Whilst they could not follow up that success at the 1960 Games in Rome – where they failed to progress past the group stage – the experience proved pivotal in India's quest to perform well at the 1962 Jakarta Asian Games. They went on to win the gold medal after beating South Korea in the final. This victory was tipped to propel India to new heights, but it proved a false dawn as the rising football powers of the South and Middle East – Iran, South Korea and Japan – dominated in Asia. India has failed to

qualify in football for any Olympic Games since 1960 and no subcontinent team has ever competed in the World Cup finals. The popularity of international and domestic football has thus continued to decline as the performances of the Indian national team spiralled downhill (Majumdar and Bandyopadhyay, 2006).

This is not to say that those living on the subcontinent are no longer interested in consuming elite level football. In fact, Majumdar and Bandyopadhyay (2005a: 257-258) describe modern India, in particular, as a 'soccer crazy' nation where 'the English Premier League is the staple weekend diet for Indian soccer aficionados'. Globalisation in this case is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, watching football in India is booming, but this has been at a cost. The interest of Indian football fans in the major European football leagues has been detrimental to the development of domestic Indian football, and consequently, success on the international stage has proved difficult to achieve. Whilst football clubs could once draw in large crowds (Dimeo, 2003; Ray, 2006), on the whole, local attendances are falling rapidly and sponsorship figures for local leagues have been decreasing. Yet, some Indian football fans are willing to pay handsomely for cable television channels such as ESPN/Star Sports and Ten sports (Majumdar and Bandyopadhyay, 2005a) which enables them to watch high-quality European and Latin American games (Bandyopadhyay, 2009). Moreover, local clubs continue to recruit lower level foreign players as a desperate measure to try to improve the standard of football in India. Critics argue - rather as they do in England - that this policy can significantly impact the prospects of local football players who are paid less - and play less - than their overseas counterparts (Majumdar and Bandyopadhyay, 2005a).

One of the defining issues for sport in India today - football included - is the struggle for governance and control of sport, which is an escalating problem, in part due to deep-rooted political and ethnic tensions between Indian provinces. In 1892, and based in Calcutta, the India Football Association (IFA) was formed and acted as a guiding body for Bengal/Indian football. The IFA wanted to be more than just a regional institution, though, so posing as the governing body for soccer in India it sought to govern the development of football across the whole country (Majumdar

and Mehta, 2009). However, in 1935, the All India Football Association (AIFA) was formed by rival state associations in protest at the national ambitions and assumptions of the IFA (Majumdar and Mehta, 2009). A battle for supremacy ensued between the IFA and the AIFA, which was only resolved by bringing about a compromise after a representative from the Army Sports Control Board suggested that a supreme all-India governing institution be formed (Majumdar and Mehta, 2009). As a result of the compromise, in 1937 the national All India Football Federation (AIFF) was established (Ray, 2006). Despite such machinations and conflicts, what is clear is that there is a substantial number of Indian heritage people, especially men, who are interested in football but it has proved difficult for the AIFF to capitalise on such interest, largely due to their failure to appreciate the importance of professionalism and of driving forward the commercialisation of Indian football (Bandyopadhyay, 2009).

Numerous reasons have been put forward for India's continuing shortcomings on football's international stage. Firstly, India showed little capacity or desire to keep abreast with global developments in football. The formation of FIFA back in 1904 – football's world governing body – meant that the laws of the game started to become standardised, but the AIFF did not become affiliated until 1948 (there are now 209 member associations). Barefoot football survived in India until the AIFF made the wearing of boots mandatory in 1954 (Bandyopadhyay, 2009; Ray, 2006). A second example of India's failure to adhere to the requirements of standardised competition was their insistence to play 50-minute matches in domestic competitions (Ray, 2006). Again, this meant that India was at a significant disadvantage in international competitions as they were unable to sustain the stamina required to compete for 90 minutes, like their foreign competitors. It was not until the 1970s that the duration of domestic football matches in India was increased, firstly to 70, and then 90, minutes (Ray, 2006). As a result, Indian football has arguably been playing a century-long 'catch up' with other more developed nations. Looking at their current international ranking perhaps it is too little too late? No team from the subcontinent in the FIFA World Cup finals is a trend that does not look likely to change anytime soon.

Another costly problem was that the Indian governance structures failed to recognise the potential commercial force of football. The AIFF remained an amateur organisation at a time when the changing dimensions of the global game meant that football elsewhere in the world was becoming professionalised. This resulted in tension building up between the domestic clubs and the Indian national team. Financial remuneration and contractual obligations to domestic clubs meant that players were reluctant to represent the Indian national team, which insisted that they play for free (Bandyopadhyay, 2009). Consequently, 21 players demonstrated their commitment to their respective clubs over the nation by walking away from a national India training camp in 1981, which was supposedly preparing the players for the 1982 Asian Games (Bandyopadhyay, 2009). This issue was eventually resolved, with the AIFF agreeing to compensate for the players' loss of earnings when representing the national team.

The 'rebirth' of Indian football?

Off the back of the global success of the Indian Premier League in cricket, India have recently introduced a football equivalent, namely the Indian Super League. Launched in 2014, the ISL is very much a mirror of the IPL and is an attempt to raise domestic standards and public interest in football, and, at last, recognise the importance of commercialisation and professionalization for the success of a domestic league. Eight teams, representing different Indian cities, are franchise-owned by a mixture of India's leading industrialists, sports and film celebrities. The aim is simple: as football seems increasingly like a vehicle for exercising 'soft power' in the world, India (like China) wants to become a global football power as it seeks to qualify for the 2026 FIFA World Cup finals. The ISL is aimed at encouraging the mass population of India to take up football in a bid to produce a large enough pool of talented Indian players capable of representing the country (Indian Super League, 2015). With the league still in its very early stages, it is currently unclear if it will have the desired impact. Average attendances in the first few seasons were promising, with average crowds standing at 25,371 in 2014 and 26,376 in 2015. The 2016 season saw a decline in average attendances with figures down to 20,136, although Kerala Blasters have consistently had an average home crowd of above 47,000 spectators for the previous three seasons. What is certain, however, is that

cricket is still seen as the national game in the subcontinent, and domestic football remains in cricket's wake. This, presumably, is a result of India's growing synergy between sport and business and its success on the international cricket stage, which ultimately has led to the shift in cricket governance and power from West to East (Haigh, 2011).

Arguably, the central aim of the ISL is to try and emulate the commercial and global success of the IPL, though this seems impossibly ambitious. Looking at the current state of football in India, however, there is not too much to lose. India's place within the official FIFA world rankings can only be described as dismal. The significance of this impresses when one considers the general popularity of football in India and the sheer size and population of the country (currently, the Indian population stands at over 1.25 billion people). However, there has been some sort of football resurgence of late, as India have climbed up to 101st in the latest FIFA world rankings (as of April 2017) after a string of recent victories. Since their all-time low of 171 in the official rankings in 2014 India have played 20 matches, winning 11, losing 7 and drawing 2 (FIFA, 2017).

One of the main issues facing the nascent Indian Super League for football is the competition provided by other (rather more established and more commodified) new football leagues, such as Major League Soccer (MLS) in the USA and the Chinese Super League (CSL). The capacity of these rivals - especially the state-backed CSL - to attract talented players from Europe and South America is helped in no small measure by the astronomical wages that they seem willing to pay. By contrast, the calibre of players that the Indian Super League has attracted since its inception has been rather underwhelming. With the exception of a few high-profile players scattered across the eight clubs, many of the foreign players in India have been signed from clubs in the lower divisions of European Leagues. Whilst modelled on the hugely successful IPL, the same finances have not been invested in the ISL and consequently the levels of attendance and interest have remained significantly lower than its booming and successful cricket equivalent.

Globalisation and sport on the subcontinent

The globalisation of sport and advances in media technology now mean that sports fans can consume sport in real time from all corners of the globe, almost irrespective of where they live. This is particularly important, perhaps, for those members of the South Asian diaspora living in Britain. Fans of different sports can now connect with their favourite teams and develop or maintain heritage national affiliations from wherever they are in the world. For British Asians this means that they are able to show continued affiliation to sport in the subcontinent, whilst at the same time also demonstrating fandom for local sporting clubs in Britain. Of interest in this thesis, is how young British Asians today *choose* to consume sport in these new conditions and how they decide on which sports clubs and which national teams in sport to support. It has been generally assumed that younger British Asians even today will continue to demonstrate an affiliation with the national cricket teams of their country of ancestry (Raman, 2014). However, the picture is very different in relation to football and the globally successful Premier League. Young British Asians are becoming increasingly more visible as fans of the England national team in football, but they are also following the domestic game very closely (Ratna, 2014).

Traditional forms of cricket in England, it has been argued, have failed to capture in the same way the 'global sporting imagination', particularly due to its complex laws and the length of playing time required, which are described as a 'turn off' for the late-modern casual spectator fed on 'fast' media and short packages of TV sporting action (Rumford, 2007). Twenty20 may be a game changer in this respect. Recognising the declining interest in test cricket, world cricket has developed a more spectator friendly version of the game, aimed at introducing cricket to a new audience. The popularity, especially of limited overs cricket, is growing and so too are its revenue and fan base (Rumford, 2007). Advances in satellite technology over the last two decades have enabled the spread of cricket to a more global audience. Furthermore, the introduction and proliferation of one-day internationals and especially the creation of Twenty20 cricket has seen a shift in the focus of the world game.

The traditional form of five-day Test cricket has been affected by the rapid increase in popularity of these more spectator and TV-friendly forms of cricket, which are especially prominent in India. This transformation has provided new forms of promotion and consumption around an action-packed, faster-paced and more aggressive version of the game. These newer versions of cricket are classed as more marketable, both globally and in the subcontinent, and consequently, better revenue-generators than the traditional 'first class' version of cricket, which is played for up to five days, and often in front of very small crowds (Rumford, 2007). Indeed, after the immense success of other Twenty20 domestic cricket tournaments (such as the IPL in India and Australia's Big Bash tournament), an equivalent domestic tournament has been launched in England. Plans are also afoot for a city-based new model of Twenty20. The ECB, in relation to the recent proposals, have expressed their desire to recruit the next generation of fans for cricket and have suggested that 'by building new teams, we can be relevant to a whole new audience and bring this very diverse, multicultural Britain in to our stadiums' (BBC Sport, 2017). On the surface, at least, the formation of a new Twenty20 tournament in England, aimed at an urban base, could have a significant impact on domestic cricket. But will it attract British Asian support?

Football, on the other hand, is a sport that has been truly globalised for some time. Many EPL clubs now recruit players from all around the world, with players from 67 different countries registered at Premier League clubs at the start of the 2013/14 season (Harris, 2013). A global audience now tunes in to the domestic leagues of all the major footballing nations in Europe (including the English Premier League (EPL), the Spanish La Liga, and the German Bundesliga). Elite clubs, such as Manchester United and Real Madrid, boast fans from across the world and they increasingly and aggressively promote themselves as global brands (Rumford, 2007: 204). The global appeal of the EPL is in stark contrast to the case of most domestic professional cricket in England, where the large majority of players are resolutely English, crowds are routinely small (except for the Ashes series and the home test series against India), and TV audiences are generally dwarfed by those watching football. Furthermore, UK satellite broadcasters, Sky and BT Sport and international broadcasters, have together paid a record £5.136 billion for live

Premier League TV rights for three seasons from 2016-17, demonstrating the mass appeal and commercial value of the EPL. Its global player recruitment policy and its aggressive TV marketing has helped develop the global brand awareness of the EPL, which cricket is constrained by its limited formats and its colonialist past.

EPL's Manchester United claim that of their supposed 659 million global fan base, over 50% are based in Asia (Wall, 2015). United have certainly successfully tapped into the Asian market in recent years, including conducting an annual tour of Asia within their pre-season schedule. The club have recently outlined their plans for 'digital domination', teaming up with Indian based technology giants HCL Technologies to develop a platform which will provide their fans from over 200 different countries with a 'unique' digital fan experience, aimed at improving how their global fans interact with the club and enjoy the overall fan experience. Moreover, the club have realised the commercial market value of signing players from East Asia to play for Manchester United, with the recent purchase of both Park Ji-Sung (of South Korean heritage) and Shinji Kagawa (a Japanese international) demonstrating that the club are cognisant of 'the growing merchandising value of the yellow pound' (Williams, 2006: 103). The siting of a Manchester United club souvenir shop in Bangkok further demonstrates the club's extending global reach. What is interesting for us in this regard, is that Manchester United have recently employed scouts to go to India to scout local footballing talent with the view of offering young potential footballers a trial at the club's youth academy. This could have significant implications in terms of further developing Manchester United's fan base in India, but also for aspiring young British Asians who, thus far, have had no noteworthy role-models to aspire to, playing in the English Premier League.

Summary: football versus cricket, East versus West

This chapter has focused on the initial diffusion of hockey, cricket and football to the Indian subcontinent, and their development up to and until post-independence. Despite the dominance of India and Pakistan's men's hockey on a world stage for a large proportion of the twentieth century, it is cricket that became known as the 'national' sport of the subcontinent, after some notable international victories combined with a successful reaction to forces of globalisation, commercialisation

and the development of satellite television networks helped to dramatically grow its fan base. Significantly, the Indian subcontinent lived under British rule until 1947 but now subcontinent cricket teams frequently beat England in all cricket formats. It is important to examine the sporting heritage of the subcontinent because it provides important framing context for discussions around ethnicity, national identity and sporting allegiances within a UK context for young British Asians today.

Indian finance now largely shapes and dictates international policy for cricket. This recent shift in power has seen international cricket effectively controlled by a former British colony and it makes cricket a putative 'global' sport that contrasts with other global sports, which are overwhelmingly controlled by Western interests (Mustafa, 2013). The West's international sporting monopoly has been especially challenged by the ICC relocation from its historic London base to Dubai in 2005 and the emergence on the subcontinent in 2008 of the limited-overs IPL tournament, which has contributed to a considerable shift in power in international cricket governance (Burdsey, 2015; Gupta, 2009).

The idea of a globalised audience for sport is a relatively recent phenomenon. India is the focal point for the globalisation of cricket and for the post-Westernisation of the game. The formation of the IPL has provided a new focus for generating cricket finance through its substantial TV audiences and sport/business synergies (Haigh, 2011). The shift of administrative leadership away from the West also points towards, potentially, a more global future for cricket. The IPLs current 'brand value' is estimated to be over US $5.3 billion (India Today, 2017). This shift of administrative power away from its historic Lords base in London and the recent relocation of the ICC to Dubai in 2005, is somewhat due to the declining status and power of cricket in England (Agur, 2013; Gupta, 2004; Haigh, 2011). Cricket is now some way behind Premier League football in England in terms of its more limited economic power compared to the EPL, its restricted reach to ex-colonial states, and its TV audience scale and profile. However, cricket is still very much the national game of India. India alone produces over half of world cricket's income and now has the largest TV audiences for the sport (Devan, 2012; Rumford, 2007).

The dominance and international success in cricket of teams from the subcontinent, combined with the success of the IPL and its resulting televising in countries around the world (including in the UK) is likely to have been significant in the continued support among British Asians for their respective national heritage cricket teams and interest in the IPL that has been reported by scholars exploring cricket and British Asian national identities (Fletcher, 2011; Raman, 2014). Indeed, As Fletcher and Lusted (2017: 2) have recently asserted, the association between 'Britishness', 'Englishness' and ethnic identities is particularly intriguing, not least because of the historical colonial associations between sport and the British Empire and more recent connections between sport and far right fascist/nationalist politics.

In the next chapter I want to focus more explicitly on questions of national identity in sport for British Asians and to explore some of the key arguments in relation to their interest and support for subcontinent cricket, alongside increasing levels of British Asian fandom for English Premier League clubs and the England national football team.

Chapter 3

Context (2): Whose Side Are You On?

Revisiting debates about sport & British Asian identity

Introduction

In 1990, Conservative MP Norman Tebbit, in an interview with the Los Angeles Times, famously and controversially suggested that Britain's migrant communities must be more willing to demonstrate publicly an allegiance to the English national cricket team in order to signal their commitment to fully assimilate into a 'British way of life'. Failure to support only England in any given sporting context, according to Tebbit, would mean that migrants had failed to pass what has since been dubbed the 'Tebbit test'. In questioning the loyalties and citizenship of British Asians, he argued:

> 'A large proportion of Britain's Asian population fail to pass the cricket test. Which side do they cheer for? It's an interesting test. Are you still harking back to where you came from - or where you are?' (Norman Tebbit quoted in Farrington et al, 2012: 87)

The 'test' imposed by Tebbit caused something of a media frenzy in England and sparked widespread debate in the UK about the relationship between national identity and sport, especially in relation to Britain's minority ethnic communities. As Burdsey (2007a) has emphasised, in relation to the 'rules' of the 'Tebbit test', it is purported that inhabiting multiple forms of identification and supporting different allegiances could pose a threat to the stability of British society and even the modern British state itself. These assumptions exemplify the racist political rhetoric of the New Right, whereby the central claim of the argument alleged that, 'retaining cultural attachments to their 'homeland(s)' prevented the assimilation of minority ethnic groups into the national polity and thus was likely to result in social conflict, rather than cohesion' (Burdsey, 2007a: 79).

Identity as a sociological concept

Identity is a concept that remains a 'hot topic' and at the heart of contemporary sociological debate (MacInnes, 2004). What identity means depends primarily upon how identity is thought about, as different ways of theorizing about identity each point to a different type of definition (Lawler, 2014). Broadly speaking, conceptualisations of identity have tended to take two forms, and can be categorised from either an essentialist or a non-essentialist perspective, with tensions existing between the two opposing positions. The essentialist conception views identity as fixed, with one authentic set of characteristics which all share and which do not alter across time (Woodward, 1997). Conversely, a non-essentialist view regards identity as fluid and focuses on subjects' differences, in addition to common or shared characteristics. Fundamentally the latter conceptualisation views identity as a social and collective *process*, and thus considers identity as a socially constructed entity. It is this non-essentialist view that is the focus of discussions about identity in this thesis.

Two influential positions have materialised in the sociology of identity in recent years, which can be broadly grouped around notions of self-reflexivity and habitus (Adams, 2006). One of the key stalwarts of reflexivity is Anthony Giddens (1991: 5), who proposes that self-identity has become a reflexively organised endeavour:

> The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems. In modern social life, the notion of lifestyle takes on a particular significance. The more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and the global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options… Reflexively organised life-planning, which normally presumes consideration of risks as filtered through contact with expert knowledge, becomes a central feature of the structuring of self-identity.

This assertion, that reflexivity increasingly constitutes self-identity in late-modern societies, is also supported by Beck (1992), and other more nuanced versions have developed which have led Adams (2003) to suggest that an extended reflexivity thesis is commonplace in sociological theory. However, those who have emphasised the reflexive nature of self-identity are criticised for 'employing an excessively weak concept of social structure, which fails to account for the restraints on agency' which persist in contemporary societies (Adams, 2006: 513).

Conversely, Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field offer a very different analysis of contemporary identity. Field is defined as 'a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 97) and refers to a 'structured system of social positions occupied by either individuals or institutions engaged in the same activity' (Thorpe, 2009: 496). Individuals live within a range of different institutions (or fields), for example families, educational settings and peer groups. Woodward (1997) suggests that, within these institutions we implement what we might consider as varying elements of choice and autonomy, but each field has a material context along with a set of symbolic resources which shapes and dictates the way we represent ourselves within different contexts. For example:

> Although we may, in common-sense terms, see ourselves as the 'same person' in all our different encounters and interactions, there is also a sense in which we are differently positioned at different times and within different places, according to the different social roles we are playing… Consider the different 'identities' involved in different occasions, such as attending a job interview… or visiting a shopping mall… We may feel, literally, like the same person, but we are differently positioned by the social expectations and constraints and we represent ourselves to others differently in each context (Woodward, 1997: 22).

In essence, the field in which we are acting influences how we position ourselves in identity terms. Young British Asians, for example, are likely to position themselves differently in family contexts in comparison to how they might position themselves

within their peer groups. Indeed, Woodward (1997) identifies that in some cases, the identities we assume might well be in conflict with each other. She uses the examples of being a parent and being a paid worker, where conflict might arise in relation to the different demands of work and family life. Some young British Asians (although certainly not all) might find conflict between the demands and expectations of family life and sport, and this can perhaps be further complicated by gender, where in some instances young British Asian females are expected to enact certain family roles that are likely to shape and restrict their leisure time (Ratna, 2014). These examples allude to the social expectations and constraints outlined by Woodward (1997).

Habitus refers to a set of embodied dispositions, perceptions and appreciations, including tastes, which orient our practices and give them meaning (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). In other words, habitus refers to the organising principles concerning how individuals perceive and react to the social world around them. As outlined above, fields entail certain responses, and Adams (2006) suggests that these responses by individuals to themselves and their surroundings occur to the point of habituation. He argues that habitus is formed unconsciously, thus resulting in the characteristics of the habitus being defined as habitual.

The habitus in this sense is both a "structured structure" – the effect of the actions of, and our interactions with, others – and a "structuring structure" – it suggests and constrains our future actions (Bourdieu, 1992: 53, cited in Thorpe, 2009: 499). Essentially, habitus is both the "embodiment of our social location" (i.e., class, ethnicity, race, sexuality, gender, generation and nationality) (Noble and Watkins, 2003: 522) and "the structure of social relations that generate and give significance to individual likes (or taste) and dislikes with regard to practice and action" (Laberge, 1995: 136, cited in Thorpe, 2009: 499). Habitus is thus defined in relation to field and, 'though established dispositions become transposable between fields, the possibility of a lack of fit is always possible' (Adams, 2006: 517). The potential for this lack of fit is where the opportunity for reflexivity can emerge.

Bourdieu's notion of habitus has been criticised as being overly deterministic, and neglecting individual agency. This is in contrast to those who embrace reflexivity within their work (such as Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992), although they also face similar criticism for overlooking the importance of social structure. Of course, the structure/agency dialectic is a perennial sociological debate. Adams (2006: 516) has described this conflict as 'a theoretical impasse', one that has contributed to the emergence of a hybridization of reflexivity and habitus in sociological literature. Whilst Bourdieu's determinism casts a shadow over claims for agency, his concepts of habitus and field are still useful for conceptualising a reflexivity/habitus hybrid. For example, Adams (2006: 517) notes that 'Reflexivity is bounded in advance by the limits of social structure as embodied in one's habitus.' McNay (1999) is one author who has explored the relationship between habitus and reflexivity in relation to gender identity, and suggests that Bourdieu's notion of habitus and field is essential to reduce the subjectivism which is implicit within the extended reflexivity thesis.

Identities, of course, are relational and produced within systems of inequality. This is why we cannot completely discount the impact of social structures on identity formation. Whilst identity involves some element of choice, there are many constraints in the world that limit an individual's degree of agency. The relationship between the ways in which people live and understand their lives and the kinds of social categories available to them is at the heart of struggles to understand how identity is both constructed and experienced (Lawler, 2014). Hall (1996) emphasised the need to understand identity as produced in specific historic and institutional sites. Similarly, Scott (1992) underlines the need to consider the political, historical and social conditions in which categories are formed. Woodward (2004) makes an important point when she accentuates the potential mismatch between how we see ourselves and how others might see us. For instance, in relation to the current thesis, some young British Asians might identify with an English national identity, and yet be denied acceptance into this category by others. There are many different contexts in which identities are constructed and negotiated.

Identity categories - social categories, formed on the basis of social divisions – form part of people's shared identities (Lawler, 2014). For Lawler, identity categories remain important because they inform people's sense of themselves and how they view others. However, she recognises that reducing identity solely to social categories obscures the tensions within and between identities, and implies that identities are finished products, as opposed to active engagements with the social world. Lewis and Phoenix (2004: 119) concur with the idea of a fluid and adaptable identity formation, and summarise the changes in the definition and use of the category 'Black' to emphasise the notion that 'identities are diverse and changing, rather than singular and fixed'. Furthermore, they emphasise that people who belong to the same ethnic group do not necessarily share the same social characteristics. In this context, Lawler (2014: 4) poses an interesting question:

> Is it really the case that people, in living their lives, see their identities as endlessly contingent, endlessly 'choose-able' and changeable? While analysts highlight the instability and fragmentation of identities, is it the case that this is how identities are necessarily experienced?

These questions bring us back to the core debates about structure and agency. Weir (2009) highlights a Foucauldian theorising of identity - which focuses on third-person, ascribed identity – to emphasise that identity can be a source of oppressive constraint produced by disciplinary regimes. She states that: 'for Foucault, when we go looking for ourselves and our meanings, what we find are identity categories… which serve to delineate boundaries between normalcy and deviance, and to police those boundaries through mechanisms of self-surveillance' (Weir, 2009: 538). Different approaches give varying emphasis to the agency which can be exercised in taking up identities, but all include some interrelationship between the personal and the social (Woodward, 2004).

The increasing migration of people across the globe has produced identities which are located in and shaped by different places. The concept of diaspora is thus useful for helping us to understand these identities which cannot simply be traced back to one source or located in one 'home' (Woodward, 1997). Diaspora helps to challenge

the essentialist conceptualisations that view identity as rooted in kinship and the truth of a shared history, instead positing an understanding of identity as fluid and contingent, and formed in particular historical circumstances (Gilroy, 1997; Hall, 1990). Burdsey (2007) agrees that identities are complex and multifaceted, created in specific contexts, and fluctuate across time and space. Young British Asians are growing up in a different historical period to the one that their parents or grandparents migrated to. Many UK cities now have established British Asian communities and third-generation British Asians are developing their identities as citizens in 21st century Britain. Thus, through examining diasporas we can try to understand how both global and local influences are helping to shape the identities of second and third-generation British Asians (Burdsey, 2007). The next section in this chapter contextualises some of the discussions of diaspora in relation to sport, and considers how sport is used by young British Asians to negotiate a sense of belonging and national identity.

Sport, national belonging and identity

Sport, of course, can be - and often is - utilized as a vehicle to display and reinforce a sense of belonging and national identity (Nair; 2011; Rumford, 2007). Sport has thus proven to be a popular sociological site to examine issues around race, nation, culture and identity. For instance, in the field of the sociology of sport there is now a hefty literature on the multifaceted construction of British Asian identities within specific sporting arenas (Amara and Henry, 2010; Burdsey, 2006a; 2007a; 2007b; 2010; Fletcher, 2011; Madan, 2000; Raman, 2014; Ratna, 2011; 2014; Valiotis, 2009). Much of the literature here, though, focuses almost exclusively on cricket and football, and, despite a few exceptions, there is a relative paucity of material exploring South Asian *women's* experiences (see Ahmed, 2011 and Ratna, *passim* for notable exceptions).

Tebbit's controversial comments, underpinned by racist undertones that marginalise migrant communities in Britain, have been criticised as representing an essentialist interpretation of 'Britishness' and 'Asianness' to be avoided, because such narrow interpretations 'demonstrate a lack of sensitivity to the concepts of diaspora, hybridity and multiple identities' (Fletcher, 2011: 620). These concepts

have proven useful theoretical tools for the debates concerning British Asian identities and sporting loyalties and have helped to articulate the complexity of British Asian diasporic identities (Burdsey, 2006a; 2007a; Fletcher, 2011; Madan, 2000; Raman, 2014; Valiotis, 2009). Although most of the work here has focuses, perhaps excessively, on cricket and football, as two of the most popular team sports in England (in terms of competitive participation) these sports do provide a useful starting point for discussions about the ways in which notions of masculinity, belonging, 'Englishness' and 'Britishness' are constructed, contested and in some cases resisted by British Asians. As Fletcher (2011: 619) correctly asserts, questioning whether British Asians should be supporting England in sporting contests involving teams from the Indian subcontinent presumes that a correct answer exists. Instead, he advocates that a more pertinent question is, 'if British Asians are not supporting England, why not?' This question is especially significant perhaps when we look at sporting events like the Olympic Games which, unlike cricket and football, are defined in international competition by a British, rather than a narrower English, identity.

There is widespread agreement, at least, that British Asian identity formation, and the politics associated with sports fandom is complex. Various conditions impact upon the sporting affiliations and attachments of British Asians and therefore fandom and national identity should not be reduced to an either/or affiliation with their country of ancestry and the country of residence and settlement. Those who demonstrate discontent at the large numbers of British Asians who choose to support their country of ancestry in cricket, for example, fail to appreciate the function that association with such sports teams perform for diasporic populations (Burdsey, 2007a). The rather simplistic notion of being 'for us' or 'against us', according to Ratna (2011: 118), fails to account for the much more 'convoluted' social relations that have shaped, and continue to shape, the lived realities of young British Asians today.

However, young Asians continue to be accused of having 'divided loyalties' or of being 'caught between cultures' if they do not demonstrate support for only one country (Ratna, 2014). The reality is that for many British Asians to show singular

support for England is predicated on their experiences of either acceptance and integration or racism and marginalisation. For Burdsey (2007a: 87), demonstrating support for national teams from the ancestral 'homeland' is fundamentally 'a prominent means of constructing and maintaining an 'imagined community', enabling the celebration of histories and traditions, sustaining familial and kinship ties, and creating symbolic links for British-born generations.' But it also provides a foundation upon which to reject aspects of 'Englishness' that are exclusionary or oppressive. Thus, British Asian identity is better understood as a constant process of negotiation, one that is highly context specific, so moving us away from essentialist interpretations and understandings to see British Asian identities as fluid and hybrid in a way that is much more appropriate and necessary.

Historically, as we have seen in Chapter 2, cricket has been seen as a cultural location for South Asian migrants to display resistance to British cultural norms and values. This resistance stems, in part, from the alleged early exclusion of South Asian migrants to the UK by the White majority, who initially opposed South Asian heritage players entering the social spaces of established English cricket clubs (Raman, 2014). Experiences of exclusion is a key feature of much of the work on British Asians and cricket participation. For example, British Pakistani cricketers in Bradford reported feeling excluded from mainstream cricket competitions, largely due to racist attitudes which served to marginalize their involvement, and consequently, denied them opportunities to play in official county and league structures (Valiotis, 2009).

As a response to the social and cultural conditions found in Britain upon their arrival, many South Asian migrants felt compelled to create their own cricketing networks, thus providing their own spaces to play, which included wasteland and parks (Raman, 2014: 13). The racism and exclusion that many British Asians faced (and continue to face) in cricket is often used to justify their allegiance and support of the national cricket teams of their ancestral roots (See Fletcher, 2011; Raman, 2014). A participant in Valiotis' (2009: 1798) study captured this idea when he stated:

'We may embrace Englishness, wear the national team shirt with pride, paint the cross of St George onto our cheek, but when we attend cricket or football games and hear chants such as "I'd rather be a Paki than a Turk", witness mass Nazi salutes, are spat on, and, at worst, are assaulted, it tends to make it difficult to cheer the country of our birth.'

Thus, when considering the centrality of exclusion and hostility to the British Asian experience, it is perhaps unsurprising that supporting 'anyone but England' continues to be a definer of some young British Asians' sporting affiliations.

The impact of the British Rule of the Indian subcontinent on attitudes towards Britain must also be accounted for, and the historic symbolic importance of victory over their former colonisers cannot be underestimated. As one of Raman's (2014: 5) participants expressed, the political tensions between Britain and its formal imperial subjects have not been forgotten, and so the cricket tours of England by the Indian and Pakistani teams became the focal point for anticipation, excitement and potential pride, and the (sometimes) rather vain hope that they would "give England a thrashing" on English soil.

Although UK-based support for the Pakistani cricket team was limited in the early post-war tours to England, this has changed dramatically over the past forty years and support for the visiting nations from the subcontinent now sometimes outweighs the 'home' support for England (Valiotis, 2009). When British Asians booed members of the England cricket team during the 2009 ICC World Twenty20 match at Lords between India and England, familiar arguments about the sporting allegiances of the Asian community in England were reignited (Fletcher, 2011). However, as Burdsey (2007a) points out, the processes of migration and settlement in the UK had profound repercussions for ideas here about 'race' and nationhood. The implications of the settlement of South Asians continue to resonate in contemporary Britain and the often-negative attitudes towards their presence continue to shape the sporting supporter preferences of many young British Asians.

All this means that subcontinental cricket boasts large numbers of British Asian fans who choose to follow national representatives from their respective countries of ancestry. As Raman (2014: 5) has asserted, although many may have anticipated something different upon their arrival in the UK, the 'politics of belonging have not followed a simple path to integration through the generations'. One South Asian migrant in Raman's study recalled how he had pictured 'playing cricket on a village green with [his] English friends' believing that a shared love of cricket would bring people together. In reality, many South Asian migrants experienced a very real sense of alienation upon their arrival to Britain, and cricket was a symbolic way of emancipating South Asians from the struggles of everyday life because it provided a space within which to reaffirm and celebrate their 'Asianness' whilst negotiating an identity closely tied to their homelands or country of heritage. By creating their own domestic cricketing networks in England, South Asian arrivals played cricket together and watched and supported their homeland national teams, thus creating spaces of diasporic connectivity while maintaining meaningful links with 'home' (Fletcher, 2011; Raman, 2014; Devan, 2012).

Young British Asians, cricket and national sporting heritage

Affiliation with national teams of the homeland is frequent and perhaps expected amongst the older generations of migrants from the subcontinent. These loyalties have been forged over time and, despite acculturation into English ways of life, they are unlikely simply to dissolve (Raman, 2014). However, national affiliations are seemingly more complex with regards to the younger generations of British Asians, who have been born and brought up in Britain. Where do the younger generations' loyalties lie? Raman (2014) expressed some surprise in finding that even amongst the younger generation of his British Asian sample, allegiance to homeland sports teams was often ardent and unquestioning. Cricket ties, especially, are seemingly deeply rooted in family tradition and culture. What's more, colonialism is actively remembered, and the ongoing social exclusion of migrant communities in Britain serves to reinforce the ongoing attachments to 'homeland' teams, thus providing a template for understanding conflicts over ownership of the game, and wider perceptions of injustice.

The British Asian community in England is now truly multi-generational. Thus, generational difference in relation to national affiliation and belonging is becoming more apparent, especially for those British Asians who have been born, brought up and educated in Britain and feel very closely aligned with British culture. As Fletcher (2011: 617) notes: 'The lives of young British Asians are grounded through a combination of the cultures and traditions of their parents and the Indian subcontinent, and in the culture and social practices of Britain'. Consequently, despite Raman's (2014) assertion that even amongst very young British Asians support for the homeland teams was undisputed, he also reported an emerging and growing separation between younger and elder generations, as the former's dual ethnicities and cultural hybridity comes between them.

To offer some articulation of this growing hybridity of younger generations of British Asians, within cricket young British Pakistanis have been reported to find pride and hope in new Pakistani heritage-England cricketers, such as Sajid Mahmood, Kabir Ali and Owais Shah (Sadar, 2006). More recently, this list might include all-rounder Moeen Ali. There have also been noteworthy Indian heritage cricketers - such as Monty Panesar - representing the England national team (Burdsey, 2013). This increasing list of South Asian heritage players representing England, Burdsey (2015: 3) argues, is a challenge to English cricket's historic role as a 'sporting symbol of hegemonic whiteness'. Although sport is often bound up with considerations of national identity (Nair, 2011; Rumford, 2007) the sporting allegiances of British Asians are often separated from considerations of national identity and citizenship, and instead they exhibit a hybrid identity which enables traditions and histories to be celebrated, whilst at the same time providing space for 'being proud' of their British citizenship (Fletcher, 2011; Khanum, 2013). Consequently, in relation to cricket, some British Asians will support England, whilst others will support England and Pakistan (or India) with equal passion. Some may even switch support, depending on context.

There are times, indeed, when British Asians are likely to prioritise different aspects of their identities, depending upon context and situation. Raman (2014), for example, found that cricket could bond South Asians together, sometimes within a

wider South Asian category, but also to articulate a narrower Indian or Pakistani identity. Furthermore, participants within his study also expressed ease with British cultural norms and, at times, felt 'at home' in Britain. Similarly, Fletcher and Lusted (2017) propose that connection with and belonging to England and notions of 'Englishness' or 'Britishness' are context bound. As Burdsey (2007a) articulates, sport embodies the fragmented nature of identity, which is indicated through the examination of the contrasting affiliations of young British Asians in football and cricket. This is significant because, as this chapter demonstrates, whilst many British Asians articulate support for the national cricket teams from their respective countries of ancestry, there are certain contradictory trends that are evident, for example in relation to British Asians and English football fandom. With this in mind, I now turn briefly to considerations of British Asian football fandom and debates concerning British Asians and national identity in this context.

The 'Ingerland' factor: British Asians & football support

There is some evidence to suggest that young British Asians are, in increasing numbers, supporting the England national football team and are taking an active interest in the domestic game in England, thus demonstrating support for a wide range of clubs in both the EPL and the Football League (Burdsey, 2007a; Ratna; 2014). Nevertheless, persisting British Asian support for their countries of ancestry in cricket has led to accusations that they might be caught 'between two cultures', and the belief that British Asians are not (and perhaps cannot ever be) authentic England football fans because their loyalties are supposedly divided between England and their ancestral places of 'home' (Ratna, 2014). However, there are many challenges to the idea that British Asians are in some way 'compromised' in their 'Britishness' by being loyal supporters of England at football and of national teams from their country of ancestry in other sports. This kind of reductive argument ignores, of course, the core complexity of British Asian identities. As Ratna (2014: 300) argues:

> 'Celebrating India in cricket and England in football is just a hybrid aspect of who they are. British Asians should be able to entertain dual identities without arising fears of divided loyalties.'

This assertion – about divided loyalties – is an accusation young British Asians are often subjected to, especially in relation to key subcontinent sports such as cricket. Supporting different nations in key sports such as football and cricket merely illustrates the complex relationship between sport and national identity for many younger British Asians. This is an area of sporting identification that has been widely explored within the literature in attempts to offer some possible explanations for this development. Top of the list here, of course, are allusions to the elite status and international successes of subcontinental national cricket teams, in contrast to the extremely weak official rankings of subcontinent football teams in FIFA's global 'league table' (Burdsey, 2007a; Ratna, 2014). Ratna (2014) also emphasises uncertainty about their wider acceptance as 'full' British citizens as a key contributing factor for some young South Asian 'heritage' sport supporters. However, this seems to be a somewhat contradictory account because, whilst exclusion has been frequently cited as a justification to demonstrate support for subcontinental cricket teams, there does not seem to be the same rhetoric of supporting 'anyone but England' operating in football contexts. Furthermore, family influences, location and generational changes are all likely to influence different levels of attachments to national teams.

Significantly, perhaps, the FIFA Under-17 football World Cup is scheduled to take place in India in 2017. India, as hosts, will automatically qualify, and this is likely to impact positively on domestic football in that country. Nevertheless, it is pretty clear that, despite the emphasis in India on international development and the recent advances of the ISL, football remains some way behind cricket and the standard of football played generally on the subcontinent remains relatively low. In stark contrast to cricket, its national football teams remain relative minnows on the international circuit. Preliminary qualifying matches for the 2018 FIFA football World Cup are currently taking place. Pakistan did not get past the first preliminary qualifying round, having lost 3-1 to Yemen. India and Bangladesh both reached the second preliminary qualifying round but then finished bottom in their respective groups. Significantly, India won only one of their qualifying matches in this second

qualifying phase, losing the other seven. Even Guam, a tiny island in the Pacific Ocean with a population of a mere 180,000 finished above India in the group table.

To put this performance into some context, India's latest recorded population was estimated to be over 1.25 billion people. Although Burdsey (2007a) has reported on some mild interest and curiosity within the British Asian diasporas when subcontinental football teams have played exhibition matches in the UK, he, perhaps unsurprisingly, confirmed that there was very little evidence of any fully-fledged support or affiliation for the national team. It could be argued, then, that, compared with cricket, football takes on an entirely different role within the construction of identities among young British Asians. As Burdsey (2007a: 81) argues in this regard:

> 'The diverse sporting allegiances of young British Asians enable them on the one hand to persevere or engage with the cultures and traditions of the subcontinent, and on the other to emphasize the permanency of South Asian settlement in Britain and the status of South Asians as British citizens.'

Thus, allegiance to football is related to their own permanent residence in England and, is an important part of mainstream British culture. In this sense, specific sporting identities can be emphasised and a sense of belonging might well be achieved through sporting affiliation. Nevertheless, in relation to football, certain contradictory trends regarding sporting allegiances do seem to be evident. For example, whilst cricket allegiance to teams in the subcontinent is often attributed to a rejection of exclusionary aspects of 'Englishness', young British Asians seem not to be expressing the same kind of rejection in football contexts.

Significantly, too, British Asians who choose to play football are often met with some of the same cultural constraints in relation to their participation in cricket (this issue in terms of implications for participation is dealt with in more detail in the next chapter). That many young British Asians in England closely follow the England national football team, and that many males follow the fortunes of clubs in

domestic English leagues is thus especially pertinent when considering that British Asians have faced significant barriers to entering English professional football as players. British Asians following football in England have also been subject to racist abuse from some members of the White-British population (Burdsey, 2007a; Burdsey and Randhawa, 2011). As Burdsey (2007a: 99) argues, the fact that increasing numbers of young British Asians now affirm their support for England in football does not change the fact that notions of 'Englishness' remain deeply problematic for them. Everyday experiences of racism, in and out of the football arena, continue to act as a reminder to British Asians that they are not uniformly accepted or welcomed and these experiences can, understandably, taint their sense of belonging to the nation (Ratna, 2014). Thus, Burdsey (2007a) suggests that we must remain cautious about the extent to which affiliation with the England football team signifies a palpable 'improvement' in racial equality, either in football or in the wider society.

Of the very few British players of South Asian origin currently playing professional football in England, none are known to aspire to play international football for countries from the subcontinent. The reasoning for this seems straightforward. For most professional footballers in England, being selected to play for one's country still represents the pinnacle of one's career. However, the same cannot be said for international football on the subcontinent (Burdsey, 2007a). Furthermore, the rules put in place by the AIFF dictate that only those who possess Indian citizenship can represent the Indian national team. This is significant because, of course, it effectively excludes the large South Asian diasporas that have migrated away from the subcontinent and suggests that the primacy of Indian identity is seemingly more important that any future international footballing success.

As this chapter has argued, young British Asians can be loyal supporters of *both* England teams and teams of their country of ancestry in sport. Moreover, showing support for different national teams in sport does not mean that British Asians are not 'authentic' England fans, nor authentically British, as some critics (including Norman Tebbit), seem to suggest. It merely highlights the fact that national identities remain 'complex and contentious' within the sphere of multicultural

Britain and English sport (Burdsey, 2006a: 12). It should come as little shock that young British Asians have complex sporting affiliations, influenced by a diverse range of personal and community features and underpinned by wider social factors (Burdsey, 2006a). Following the Indian cricket team thus allows young British Asians to celebrate the cultures and traditions of their heritage, whilst support for England football is more reflective of the culture and social practices of Britain. These issues of belonging and identity have, thus far, not been explored in the same way in relation to Britishness. Do such attitudes change when Britain is being represented in international sporting competition, and if so, why might this be? Exploring the complexities of young British Asian identity through the lens of the 2012 Olympic Games may offer some potential answers to this question.

The Olympics, success narratives and British multiculturalism

Whilst much of the work on young British Asians and sporting identity has been focused on two sports, cricket and football, a small body of literature has emerged that has started to explore multicultural British identity in the context of the Olympic Games. The research has focussed mainly on the individual success stories of boxer Amir Khan and distance athlete Mo Farah - the 'fantastic Brits' - and their representations within the British media as proof of a multicultural and inclusive British society (Burdsey, 2016; Black; 2016). They have also been used to highlight coverage of the so-called 'Plastic Brits' – those of dual heritage who have previously competed in international competition for other countries but have switched allegiance to Britain (Poulton and Maguire, 2012). Amir Khan, a champion British born boxer of Pakistani heritage, made headlines in the 2004 Games in Athens as the first British Olympic silver medallist of South Asian heritage. Khan's achievements later in the professional boxing arena propelled him into the media spotlight and he has subsequently been constructed as something of a role model for a modern, multi-ethnic Britain (Burdsey, 2007b). More recently, Mo Farah – a Muslim of Somali heritage - has emerged as a leading distance runner, securing success for Team GB by winning gold in the 5,000 and 10,000 metre races at both London 2012 and Rio 2016 and firmly securing his status as one of the top British athletes of all time.

The narratives surrounding Farah's achievements at the London 2012 Olympic Games, in particular, have been presented as an affirmation of Britain's achieved multiculturalism, and thus the perceived validation that sport is 'meritocratic' and that ethnic and religious backgrounds are no barriers to sporting success (Burdsey, 2016; Black, 2016). This rhetoric of multiculturalism was largely appropriated due to the assorted ethnic backgrounds of representatives of Team GB, which were used as evidence that racial inequality in elite sport in the UK no longer exists. However, as Burdsey (2016) emphasises, the biographies of the participating British athletes actually highlighted ethnic, class and educational backgrounds that were still largely unrepresentative of multicultural Britain. For example, British Asian communities within the UK are underrepresented as participants, were near absent at the elite levels of sport governance, and were much more likely to be employed within poorly paid roles at the Games than competing. Critical readings of the media representations of Farah have led to conclusions that his British acceptance was something that needed both to be achieved and performed (Black, 2016), and that 'the wider multicultural ramifications of his achievements are more conditional, ephemeral and limited than is widely suggested' (Burdsey, 2016: 22).

The academic literature that has explored the successes of Khan and Farah has mainly focused on analysing media representations. Furthermore, the small body of work that has started to emerge on articulations of British identities in the context of the Olympic Games has focused on White British athletes. What is still unclear is how these successes of a Pakistani-heritage boxer and a Somalian-born Muslim, Mo Farah. might have impacted on young British Asians' interest in and consumption of the 2012 Olympic Games, and on their identity construction and national affiliations. Perhaps the lack of British Asian representation within Team GB will have more of an impact on the large South Asian diaspora in Britain. This thesis explores how the Olympic Games in 2012 helped shape the perceptions of access to sport and British national identities for a sample of young British Asians in Leicester and Wolverhampton.

Summary

Sport's importance, both pre-and post-migration, provides some vital context for discussions about hybrid national identities and feelings of belonging for the large British Asian diasporas now citizens in the UK. Cricket – owing its popularity to both history and recent successes of subcontinent teams on an international scale - is one of the few international team sports in which countries from the subcontinent continue to perform on a reasonably equal footing (or better) with their colonisers. Thus, cricket dominates the airways, press reports and sporting minds of those interested in sport on the subcontinent, but also many of those who have migrated or been born away.

A consideration of the wider historical, social and political factors that underpinned and facilitated the displacement of migrants from the Indian subcontinent helps us to contextualise British Asian diasporic sporting identities, and the consequential hybrid attachments they have to both Britain and their 'homelands'. As indicated here, research suggests that many British Asians are choosing to follow the national cricket teams of their ancestral countries. Interestingly, though, many also closely follow the fortunes of English domestic football clubs and the England national football team.

The resulting complex national affiliations have attracted a considerable amount of academic attention in relation to cricket and football. These issues will be explored further in this research in discussions of generational change. Arguably, what is currently missing from this landscape of research on sport and national identity for young British Asians is the impact of widening the lens to explore diasporic identities in a wider British context. Thus, the lens of the Olympic Games may add another layer of complexity in relation to the national sporting affiliations of young British Asians. In the he next chapter I turn my attention to the literature pertaining to the sporting experiences of young British Asians within a UK context.

Chapter 4

Context (3)

British Asians in Recreational & Professional Sport

Introduction

South Asian migrant communities were largely met with hostility upon their arrival in the UK in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, particularly perhaps in council house areas that were inhabited mainly by the White working class. As Burdsey (2007a) has shown, such anxieties developed from the perceived threats to employment and housing that new South Asian migrants were perceived to represent. This hostility also translated to sport and stories of marginalisation and exclusion from mainstream sporting practices have been well documented (Raman, 2014; Burdsey, 2007a; Kilvington, 2016). Statistically, some sections of the British Asian populations are also at higher risk of diseases relating to physical inactivity and thus they pose a significant challenge to sports policy makers and NGBs who are being challenged to increase diversity and participation within their sports if they wish to continue to receive the sort of central funding that they rely on so heavily for their existence.

As Chapter 2 demonstrated, there is a considerable sporting history on the subcontinent, in which hockey, cricket and football all feature prominently. Thus, football was not an entirely 'new' sport for South Asian migrants, and whilst cricket does take centre stage in the subcontinent, this did not mean that South Asian migrants were *only* interested in cricket, as perhaps many policy makers and commentators have been led to believe (Kilvington, 2016). The purpose of this chapter then is to document what is already known about the participation of British Asians in sport in the UK.

The chapter begins by providing some context for the current picture of sport in the UK, highlighting the need for further local research and insight into the physical activity patterns of young British Asians. This context has been framed recently within the rhetoric of multiculturalism which dominated at the London 2012 Olympic Games, and the optimistically diverse participation legacy that played a significant part in London's success in securing the Games. Next, I move on to discuss the patterns of participation for British Asians since the mass post-war migration in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Here I discuss the historical importance of football and cricket for British Asian migrants, but also the implications of the continuing absence of British Asian professionals in sport. Much of this work focuses on male sporting practices. Much less is known, and has been written about, British Asian *women's* sporting involvement. The final section of the chapter deals with this issue, and it outlines some of the key barriers to sport and physical activity participation that many British Asian women face.

Health, sports policy and the Olympic legacy

It is easy to see why the British Government and other policy providers are interested in growing participation in sport and physical activity at grassroots levels. Physical inactivity in the UK has a significant burden on healthcare costs and the economy: the annual cost of physical inactivity in England is estimated at £900 million (Townsend et al, 2012). Understandably, improving the health of the nation is proclaimed to be a top priority in the UK, and the promotion of sport and physical activity is therefore high on the agenda for both the sport and health sectors. Britain's successful Olympic bid was underpinned by one of the most ambitious legacy programmes ever (Carmichael et al, 2013). The most crucial of these legacy promises for improving health was a commitment to increase participation in sport among the general UK population. The 'inspire a generation' tag-line consequently became a prominent feature in the build-up to the London Games. It was widely believed at the time that if an increase in participation in sport and physical activity in the UK was to be achieved, then the 2012 Games needed to capture the attention of the younger generation, and inspire them to take up sport (Hughes and Hodgetts, 2013).

Physical activity statistics around the time of the Games suggested that less than half of adults met the UK Government recommendations of 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity per week, a figure believed to reduce the risk of chronic health conditions (Department of Health, 2011; Townsend et al, 2012). These physical activity statistics become even more significant for ethnic minority communities, where overall sport and physical activity participation before the Games was well below the national average (Long et al, 2009). When analysed as a homogenous category, men and women of South Asian heritage are, statistically, the least likely to meet physical activity guidelines, with Bangladeshi (26%) and Pakistani (28%) men having the lowest prevalence of meeting UK government physical activity recommendations, compared with men from other ethnic backgrounds. This pattern is also true for Bangladeshi and Pakistani women, at 11% and 14% respectively (Townsend et al, 2012). It is worth noting though, that when specific sports are examined the picture can change significantly (Bi, 2011). For example, closer investigation of the statistics reveal that a high proportion of young Pakistani and Bangladeshi-origin men play football or cricket, in a recreational capacity, or in sporting structures and leagues that are unrecognised by mass participation physical activity surveys (Long and Hylton, 2014). This demonstrates the need to be cautious when examining physical activity statistics alone. Local insight is thus of considerable importance to understand the patterns of physical activity, along with the barriers or reasons for exclusion for British Asian communities.

Health professionals have identified low levels of physical activity as a major risk factor in the contraction of various diseases and illnesses. It is widely reported that BAME groups in the UK suffer disproportionately higher levels of certain health problems that are directly linked to their low levels of sport and physical activity participation (Townsend et al, 2012). As well as reporting the lowest levels of physical activity, research indicates that people of South Asian origin are also more likely to report poor health than the White European population (Gatineau and Mathrani, 2011). Research suggests a clear trend in the inequalities in the health status of minority ethnic groups in Britain. In particular, the British Asian

population are at greater risk of coronary heart disease and of type two diabetes (Gatineau and Mathrani, 2011).

It is not surprising, then, given the current panic about a so-called obesity epidemic, that sport policy makers in the UK have especially highlighted British Asians as a key target group in need of extra provision and encouragement. There is a consensus that the successful promotion of health benefits of sport and physical activity need to address 'deep-rooted influences on health behaviour in at-risk groups' which include cultural influences for the UK BAME population (Netto et al, 2010: 249). Promoting the benefits to health of increased physical activity is a high priority to reduce health risks for the BAME community. Whilst improved health and wellbeing seems to be the main focus, British Government sport policies over the past 40 years have also centralised the importance of improving the sporting experience for British Asians, as well as attempts at promoting greater integration through sport, within and between communities in the UK (Fletcher and Lusted, 2017).

Despite the hyperbole of multiculturalism around the London 2012 'back the bid' campaign, not all sections of the host population would be the beneficiaries of a so-called Olympic legacy. As Hylton and Morpeth (2012) argue, race 'matters' in Olympic legacy discourses and single mega-event policies seemingly neglect the micro-details of accumulated historical factors, such as entrenched racial inequalities in sport. Myths of fairness, equality and the meritocratic nature of sport are commonplace, which work to cloud the reality of institutionalised racisms that continue to restrict British Asians as sports participants at amateur and elite levels of sport (Hylton and Morpeth, 2012; Kilvington, 2016). For Hylton and Morpeth (2012: 389) it is difficult to visualise how Olympic legacy promises of increased participation is going to affect structural fractures within the governance and delivery of UK sport when there is a continued,

> 'Hierarchy of participation symptomatic of a public sports development system that reinforces patterns of inclusion and exclusion on the intersecting issues of ethnicity, class, gender and disability.'

One key issue relating to the potential success of an Olympic participation legacy for all communities is the lack of British Asian sportspersons representing Great Britain (Burdsey, 2007b). Only a handful of recent Team GB Olympians have been of British Asian heritage, and out of those it is only Amir Khan who has had any Olympic success, winning the lightweight boxing silver medal at the 2004 Athens Games. At London 2012 there were only two British Asian heritage sportspeople in the 541 strong GB team, reinforcing this point about their exclusion from Olympic disciplines. Despite the dearth of British Asian athletes, the assorted biographies of other British athletes were used to reject claims of racial inequality in sport (Burdsey, 2016), much in the same way that the presence of professional Black players has been used to deny the existence of racism and discrimination in football, although empirical evidence suggests otherwise (Burdsey, 2007a; Kilvington, 2013). It is currently unclear how this limited British Asian representation impacted upon young British Asians' interest in consuming the games, and how low British Asian representation might influence the perceptions that young British Asians have of their access as participants to core Olympic sports.

Whilst British Asian involvement in cricket and football have been explored in some depth, little is known about experiences in sports such as tennis, swimming and athletics. NGBs of sport in the UK are being challenged to increase diversity, with threats of funding cuts if they fail to demonstrate a commitment to increasing participant numbers and the range of communities from which they are drawn.

Although caution must be exercised when focusing on participation statistics, we have seen above that, in overall terms, those people of South Asian origin are less physically active than other ethnic groups in the UK. This thesis may provide some meaningful qualitative data that can provide insight into the leisure and sporting preferences and lives of young British Asians and ultimately provide selected NGBs with insights that might enable them to work towards improving sporting provision for potential British Asian participants. Understanding the reasons behind low levels of physical activity for these communities, and exploring their experiences,

perceptions and barriers is of crucial importance if sport and health policy are to be successfully implemented.

Young British Asians as sports participants

i)   Cricket: It's a man's world...

As has been pointed out, it was initially cricket which quickly established itself as the most popular sport to both play and watch for many first-generation South Asian male migrants who settled in the UK. This is perhaps unsurprising, given cricket's importance and prominence on the Indian subcontinent especially from the middle of the twentieth century onwards. Upon their arrival, many younger South Asian men in the UK played some form of cricket as a way to re-inscribe ideas of identity, establish new social networks and create a sense of diasporic connectivity (Raman, 2014). Furthermore, the first generation of South Asian immigrants recognised that sport (and mainly cricket) could be an 'effective means of maintaining ethno-cultural solidarity in the face of geo-political and social dislocation' (Johal, 2001: 161). Essentially, though, in search of a new life, migrants came to the UK only to be faced with a new set of problems in relation to experiences of social exclusion and separation from the mainly White populated working class areas to which they were relocated. As Valiotis (2009) highlights in relation to the British Pakistani diaspora, many of these aspiring South Asian sportsmen in England were denied opportunities to access local mainstream cricket, which resulted in the formation of familiar and specifically South Asian cricket teams and leagues – but these were now relocated to England. Not only were they denied access to participation opportunities, these early South Asian migrants were also subjected to abuse for their supposed inferiority and expressed cultural difference, and because of their resistant support for sport from their country of ancestry. As discussed in the previous chapter, in this wider context of marginalisation and relative exclusion, many of those in the second generation of the South Asian diaspora felt distanced from England and chose to support sports teams from their country of ancestry, as opposed to those from their country of birth.

In the UK, Indians have been playing cricket collectively since at least the late 1940s and the post-war migrations from the Indian subcontinent (Burdsey, 2010). The popularity of cricket for the Pakistani diaspora in the UK developed slightly later. Valiotis (2009) asserts that within mainstream 'official' cricket leagues in England today, strict social etiquette and even Victorian ideals continue to be observed. These ideals and mannerisms have often served to alienate British Pakistanis. Furthermore, he argues that cultural practices, such as the collective post-match alcoholic drink, were used effectively to exclude British Pakistani Muslim players from mainstream cricket leagues and they were consciously utilised by those in charge to justify such marginalisation. Whilst supporting the country of ancestry is, for many British Asians, a celebration of cultural heritage, I would argue that this allegiance also serves as a reminder of how the structures and etiquette of local cricket in England continue to effect and confirm this marginalisation - For British Asians, in this context, sporting allegiance to one's country of origin can, indeed, be viewed as a site of cultural resistance.

Valiotis (2009) further suggests that the international successes of the Pakistani cricket team from the 1970s onwards, increased the demand for cricket among England-based Pakistanis. Consequently, British Pakistanis began to identify even more strongly with the Pakistan national team and, more significantly, with people in the UK who lived elsewhere but who shared their own cultural heritage. The success of Pakistani cricket players – in test, county and local professional league matches – served to empower, symbolically, male members of the Pakistani diaspora in Britain, and it provided a cause for celebration of a displaced sense of national identity and belonging. Prior to the recent successes of the Pakistani team and its players, Valiotis (2009) argues that the first generation of Pakistani migrants to the UK were relatively unconcerned with cricket: it performed no useful identity work. However, cricket's appeal to relocated British Pakistanis grew once Pakistani players began to perform on the international stage with unequivocal success (Valiotis, 2009: 1796).

The international cricketing success of Pakistan – the 1992 World Cup champions, 2009 ICC World Twenty20 winners and a recent 2017 ICC Challenge Cup victory –

has served to provide a strong re-affirmation of heritage identities among, especially, the young males of the Pakistani diaspora in the UK. The spread of cricket's popularity against a backdrop of Pakistani sporting success, and the growth and development of the digital sports media have enabled young British Pakistanis to remain 'connected' with cricket in the subcontinent. In terms of its popularity for the South Asian diaspora living both in the subcontinent and in the UK, it might also be argued that cricket is one of the few sports where there are highly visible role models to which young British Asians – including Pakistani-origin males - might aspire.

ii)   British Asians and participation in football

In a similar fashion to the establishment of Asian cricket teams, the formation of British Asian men's football clubs in England developed as a result of the processes of exclusion from amateur venues and White local amateur leagues that South Asian migrant communities faced upon their arrival in the UK (Johal, 2001; Burdsey 2006a; 2009). This rather pragmatic response to form all-Asian clubs thus provided safe and de-pressurised sites, spaces that enabled South Asians to play the game with less intense fears of racism, marginalisation or discrimination (Johal, 2001). The creation of such clubs has resulted in a burgeoning culture of amateur British Asian football that has existed since the post-migration epoch (Burdsey, 2006a). Many of these clubs, although initially established   as all-Asian entities, have now diversified their playing squads and many are comprised of players from a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds.

As many early South Asian migrants discovered, the practice of intentional and obvious discrimination based upon physical characteristics, which can best be characterised as overt racism (and usually taking forms such as openly verbal or physical abuse) was, at one time, commonplace within local English football (Saeed and Kilvington, 2011). However, a general greater sensitivity now surrounds expressions of overt racism in most cultural arenas in Britain, which has contributed to its decrease in local football, at least in its more obvious forms (Kilvington, 2013; Saeed and Kilvington, 2011). Contemporary anti-racist initiatives in football, such as the 'Kick it Out' campaigns, have helped to reduce

incidents of overt racism from the terraces of professional football matches, offering recognised ways to report the sort of abuse that is no longer accepted as part of the game (Frosdick and Newton, 2006).

There have seen some noteworthy policy developments aimed at tackling racial inequalities in English football since the turn of the twenty first century. The Football Association (FA) in England introduced its own Ethics and Sports Equity Strategy in 2002 and, more recently, have introduced new tougher sanctions against all forms of discrimination within the game as part of their 2012-2017 inclusion and anti-discrimination action plan. Ostensibly, the introduction of such strategies might suggest that attempts have been made to oppose overt forms of racially motivated abuse in both the professional and amateur spheres (The FA, 2016; Lusted, 2011). The severity of the punishments in relation to the high-profile incidents are perhaps questionable though. For example, in 2012, ex-England and Chelsea captain John Terry was found guilty of racially abusing fellow professional player Anton Ferdinand. He was banned for four games and fined £220,000, equivalent at that time to an estimated one week's wages (BBC Sport, 2012). In contrast, for example, to Joey Barton's potentially career-ending 18-month ban and £30,000 fine for alleged match gambling, Terry seems to have got off lightly. On the surface here, the message sent out by the FA is that a tougher stance is required against gambling than it is concerning issues relating to overt racism. These incidents of reported racism, however, at least at the elite level in the UK, have become less frequent in recent times.

Despite incidents of overt racism in football no longer dominating the headlines, racism in English football remains an issue. It is argued that racism is now occurring in more nuanced and subtle, and thus more complex, forms, with covert racism being embedded within English professional football (Burdsey, 2007a; Kilvington, 2013; Saeed and Kilvington, 2011). Whilst Kilvington (2013) refers specifically to the exclusion of British Asian players from the professional spheres in England, covert forms of racism have a wider impact. For example, ex-professional Black players' experience and expertise is frequently being overlooked in relation to coaching and managerial roles (Bradbury et al, 2016). Moreover, whilst between 20

and 25% of full-time players at professional football league clubs are from BAME backgrounds - the vast majority of African background or decent – (Cashmore and Cleland, 2011) there is a lack of Black faces within senior administrative positions, in boardrooms and in key decision-making roles in football (Bradbury, 2013). Critics have argued that relatively little progress combating racism has been made over the past forty years, compared with what we are often led to believe (Kilvington, 2017; Onuora, 2015).

With regards to the very low numbers of British Asian professional football players in the UK, key stakeholders within professional football have been scrutinised for their role in allegedly keeping potential British Asian players on the periphery of the elite echelons of the game. Researchers have suggested that the key gatekeepers of British professional football have been instrumental in restricting the progress of British Asian players (Johal, 2001; Kilvington, 2013; Kilvington, 2016). The reasons for this are threefold, and reflect much more subtle and nuanced (or covert) forms of racism than that which probably inhibited early South Asian migrants from progressing in the insular fabric of local-league amateur football.

One notable finding in the work of leading scholars on British Asians and football is a relative ignorance of the British Asian footballing community.   Although now somewhat dated, Bains and Patel's (1996) ironically titled ground-breaking report 'Asians can't play football', and later work by Bains and Johal (1998) illustrated well that British Asians can and do play football. More recently, Burdsey (2006a) cites the erroneous assertion made by many key gatekeepers that British Asians lack enthusiasm or proficiency at a high level. Similarly, Johal (2001: 156) suggests that the 'invisibility' of South Asian heritage professional football players has been incorrectly used to 'arrive at the simplistic assertion that this British ethnic minority has no great interest or aptitude for the sport'. Research also suggests that gatekeepers of British football continue to deny its popularity amongst British Asians, citing instead their preoccupation with cricket as a defining factor (Kilvington, 2013; 2016). Kilvington (2016) argues, especially, that for third-generation British Asians, football, and not cricket, is arguably the number one

sport to play and watch. Clearly, any suggestion that British Asians have no aptitude or desire for football is simply unfounded and misguided.

The second key factor that research suggests is serving to exclude British Asians from reaching elite levels of football is the enduring myth of South Asian physical inferiority. Even now, South Asian heritage males supposedly lack physicality and are regarded instead as being weak, soft and effeminate, and thus not fit for the rigours of elite level male football in England (Back et al, 2000; Burdsey, 2007a; Fleming, 2001; Johal, 2001; Saeed and Kilvington, 2011). Burdsey (2007a: 106) has suggested that these sorts of negative 'physical stereotypes' strongly influence beliefs about footballing competences, which clearly has implications for progression between amateur and elite levels of football.

Thus, Kilvington (2012; 2013), has argued that if football gatekeepers continue to adhere to such notions of South Asian physical inferiority then recruiting British Asian footballers is likely to be regarded as a gamble and, consequently this negative perception is likely to influence scouts who are likely to refrain from targeting predominantly British Asian locations for players (Kilvington, 2012: 210). As Burdsey (2006a) suggests, the Catch-22 lack of British Asian professional football players has meant they have been unable to combat such claims about their physical inferiority. These sorts of hegemonic beliefs about physical competence work to exclude potential British Asian players from progressing from amateur to professional football, which means continue to be overlooked by the scouting system.

In short, rather than focus on the proclivities of recruitment, British Asians continue to be blamed for their own exclusion from professional ranks (Bains and Patel, 1996; McGuire, 2001; Kilvington, 2016). However, Kilvington (2013) explicitly argues that it is, in fact, the football system and its institutionalised exclusion that maintains and exacerbates the exclusion of British Asians. Initially, all-Asian football structures in Britain developed because of overt forms of racism that denied them opportunities and justice in amateur local-league football. Yet, instead of recognising this fact, gatekeepers continue to insist that these all-Asian local

football structures are, in fact, proof of timid, self-segregating, choices made by such communities. Thus, they problematically deny the existence of racism within football and engender what has been called a no-blame 'colour blind' ideology (Johal, 2001; Cleland and Cashmore, 2013; Lusted, 2009; Kilvington, 2013).

Framed by the misconceptions outlined above, there is a clear denial of racism within English professional football structures (Lusted, 2009). When challenged about their views on the lack of British Asian players in professional academies, key gatekeepers argue that global sport is of necessity 'meritocratic' and that if British Asian players were talented and strong enough to play at the top level then they would reach the elite levels of football. This argument, of course, neglects a focus on the institutional racisms that are helping to keep young British Asian players from reaching professional academies. Some of the empirical work exploring British Asian representation in football in the UK has led to recommendations for reform. With the aid of oral testimonies, Kilvington (2013) has recently demonstrated the persisting nature of institutional racism within football. His work makes two key recommendations for change: educating current gatekeepers about the nature of British Asian exclusion; and constructing (or in some small cases developing) links between professional clubs and all-Asian football structures.

In response to the continued underrepresentation of British Asians in professional football and, in consultation with key stakeholders, the FA has developed a plan to increase the number of Asians in football. The *Bringing Opportunities to Communities* (2015) document outlines the FA's vision, which is for Asian communities to be proportionately represented throughout structured football in England. To achieve this rather ambitious aim, the FA have committed to creating projects and programmes locally and nationally which will enable County Football Associations (CFAs) and existing clubs and organisations to develop their offer, their infrastructure and their participation levels, based on diversity targets.

The FA's vision is, on the surface, about driving positive change. However, whether the motivation that drives the plan is based on a general commitment to tackling inequality and underrepresentation within the game or an aim to meet

participation statistics to secure funding is unclear. The plan is aimed at the grassroots game, as this is where the FA feel that they have the most control and thus an opportunity to meet their targets to increase both participation and diversity. Although I agree that tackling some of these issues at a grassroots level will, on some levels, help to address some of the issues regarding the underrepresentation of British Asians within all echelons of the game, I am more cautious than the FA who claim that increasing general British Asian participation at grassroots levels will inevitably filter through to an increase in the number of professional British Asian players.

Racism cannot, in isolation, explain the absence of British Asian players from professional football in the UK. However, Burdsey (2007: 39) argues that it must be placed at the centre of any analysis. It influences patterns of inclusion and exclusion, and experiences of belonging and marginalization. As Kilvington (2016; 2013) argues, there has been a long history of denial in the game and a failure to appreciate the increasing complexities of contemporary racisms. One of the key recommendations for reform, he suggests, is to shift the analysis away from British Asians as the problem and get 'under the skin' of the institutions that construct and maintain racial inequality and disadvantage. Of interest to this thesis is the perceptions and explanations among my young sample for the relative lack of Asian sports professionals in other sports. There is currently little research on this matter beyond football, so it is important to explore with them notions of cultural difference and institutional racism and the extent to which this might operate in other sports.

So, where are the British Asian sports professionals?

As alluded to previously, much has been made of the disproportionately low number of British Asian professional sportsmen and women in the UK, particularly in relation to their presence in the general population (Burdsey, 2007a; Kilvington, 2016). The absence of British Asians at elite sporting levels as role models may well operate as a significant barrier for some members of the British Asian community,

although to my knowledge, this is not something that has been explored empirically with young British Asians who are interested in sport. I want to explore empirically the impact that a lack of elite-level British Asian athletes (including in the Olympic Games) has on their interest and engagement with sport.

Historically, South Asians have effectively been excluded from participation in many professional sports, but the representation of a small number of British Asians playing in English first-class cricket seems to suggest that professional cricket might be a rather different case, certainly in the twenty-first century. Although a large percentage of the British Asian participants play in unaffiliated cricket clubs and leagues, there is also some representation in the top English county clubs. Burdsey (2010) claims that, unlike in other professional sports in the UK, the number of elite British Asian professional cricket players in England (estimated at 30 in 2009) is a significant representation of this community in a professional playing capacity. Currently, the Pakistani-heritage, Birmingham born all-rounder Moeen Ali is a star of the England test team – the ninth Muslim to play for England. However, Hopps (2013) has highlighted the fact that the majority of recreational, non-professional British Asian players in England continue to play in cricket's so-called 'shadow' leagues, outside of the traditional affiliated club network, which impacts on their potential to progress into first-class cricket. In this sense, there are some parallels with football because those playing *outside* of affiliated leagues are not typically visited by county representatives.

The significant numbers of British Asians in English first class cricket is in stark contrast to their near absence in professional football, even though football is so well populated at an amateur level in the UK by males with an Asian heritage. Role models do exist in world cricket, of course, and this may help in providing an explanation why more British Asians are inspired to play elite level cricket. Stereotypically, too, people of South Asian origin are expected to like, and to be good at, cricket - but not at other sports. The same cannot be said for football.

A CRE survey in 2004 found just seven British Asian footballers registered at professional clubs in England and Wales; the same survey also found only ten young

British Asian players based at Premier League Academies. By February 2008 the number of British Asians registered as football professionals had dropped to five, and fewer than 1 in 100 of young players in Premier League and Football League Academies were of South Asian origin. Not much has changed over the past twenty years, since Bains and Patel's (1996) 'Asians can't play football' report - the first to specifically focus on British Asian exclusion in English football – captured empirical data on the barriers facing British Asian players. In the last two decades, there have been, on average, between five and ten British Asian players with full-time professional contracts in English football (Kilvington, 2017). Few British Asian players have made an impact at the top level in England though ex-Huddersfield Town midfield player Adnan Ahmed is one of those who have played for the Pakistan national team. The relative lack of British Asian role models in sport (apart from those who play cricket, of course) further serves to reiterate the assumption that South Asian heritage young people are more suited to academic disciplines and professional careers than they are to a life in sport (Ismond, 2003, cited in Burdsey, 2007a).

Saeed and Kilvington (2011) argue that a British Asian player in the Premier League or in the Football League Championship would challenge negative sporting stereotypes about their sporting competence and physicality, and provide a welcome role model for young British Asian players to aspire to. They suggest that a footballing equivalent of Indian cricket star Sachin Tendulkar (or Moeen Ali) might lead to an increase in the popularity of football within Asian communities in the UK. Of course, Tendulkar is widely regarded as one of the most highly acclaimed sports performers of modern times (Nalapat and Parker, 2005), and thus has been a highly visible Indian sporting role model. Whether a British Asian in, say, the Football League Championship would have a similar impact is therefore questionable; they would likely lack visibility beyond the supporters of that team. It can probably be argued that those few British Asian players who have played in the Premier League or in the lower reaches of the English Football League did not have any major impact in challenging the negative stereotypes about the competence of British Asian players. It is perhaps more feasible to suggest that it would take a British Asian player to make a breakthrough in one of the top Premier

League clubs and even be selected to play for the England senior team before they would get the type of recognition – or have an impact – which is, in any way, equivalent to that of Tendulkar in cricket.

Sport and British Asian women

Notwithstanding the growth of research on race and ethnicity within the sport and leisure spheres in the UK, there continues to be a relative paucity of research on BAME *female* experiences, particularly among those of South Asian background and heritage (Ahmed, 2011; Burdsey, 2009; Ratna, 2011) - although there is a small body of useful material on *Muslim* females and Physical Education (Benn *et al*, 2011; Benn and Pfister; 2013; Dagkas *et al*, 2011). Furthermore, some research with British Asian women in particular sports is beginning to emerge (for example, Ratna's (*passim*) work on British Asian female footballers, and Samie's (2013) work on British Pakistani female basketball players).

South Asian heritage women as a sub-group appear to present the biggest challenge of all to sports policy providers in the UK, due to the range of various religious and cultural constraints they exhibit. Of all the minority ethnic groups in the UK, British Asian women are least likely to meet recommended amounts of physical activity to benefit their health (Babakus and Thompson, 2012), meaning that, not only are they at risk of significantly higher rates of coronary heart disease, but they are also at a higher risk of general mental and physical illness, due to a lack of exercise (Snape, 2005). Sports interventions in the UK are required to consider the religious, cultural and social factors that affect particularly British Asian women's participation in sport (Fishbacher *et al*, 2004; Kay, 2006). Research on the barriers to sport for British Asian women outline various cultural and social limitations that may inhibit these women from having full access to facilities and the necessary opportunities to experience physical activity or sports participation (Walseth and Fasting, 2004).

Typically, too, females playing sport has often been regarded as antithetical to the traditions of British Asian family culture, religion and the traditional gender roles of South Asian men and women (Babakus and Thompson, 2012; Ratna, 2011). Gaining educational qualifications and learning about domestic roles is of higher

value to many British Asian parents and students than participating in sport and physical activity – especially for girls - and this is often reflected in the oral testimonies of parents of young British Asians (Johnson, 2000), and indeed, those of young British Asians themselves.

Ratna (2011), for example, describes how some British Asian women are still expected by family to conform to traditional South Asian female roles of being the cook and cleaner. Although this can be a more prominent feature of specific South Asian cultures it can also be generally true of wider sections of the UK population. Consequently, sports participation has been low on the agenda for many younger British Asian women. Some Muslim females in Britain have reportedly been prohibited from participating in sport, even if the initiatives meet the gender-segregated requirements of Islam, thus further demonstrating the influence that family can have on Muslim females (Kay, 2006; Snape, 2005). Older generations of British Muslims have experienced little effective education about the supposed value of sport and physical activity, for example in relation to potential health and social benefits. The restricted, traditional gender roles expected of women of South Asian culture can continue to restrict their participation in sport and physical activity outside the home.

Islamic requirements usually state that Muslim women must participate only in gender segregated sessions when physically active (Kay, 2006; Walseth and Fasting, 2006). The lack of single sex provision in local sport often acts as a barrier to Muslim female participation and therefore is an essential element to consider when designing sporting initiatives to target the British Muslim female community (Kay, 2006; Walseth and Fasting, 2003). However, the requirement for gender-segregated provision is not universal, and those younger Muslim females who adopt more Westernized practices may not necessarily be constrained by a lack of such provision (Kay, 2006). Simply adopting a 'colour blind' approach, involving viewing the female members of the UK South Asian community as a homogenous group is also likely to be counterproductive (Bi, 2011; Johnson, 2000). There is a need for more local research and interventions, in concert with the local target population who must be at the heart of decision making to ensure that their voices are heard

and that their requirements are met. This further supports my own rationale for localised research – including female respondents - in two UK locations.

As an example of a female-targeted intervention, *Steps to Health* was a programme implemented between 2001 and 2004 in Bolton, a post-industrial town in the north west of England. The project aimed to address health and employment disadvantages amongst South Asian heritage women, using the medium of sport and exercise. By targeting the provision of training opportunities in health and fitness instruction to local British Asian women, the project provided enhanced employment opportunities for that section of the community. Furthermore, using South Asian heritage women to facilitate exercise classes addressed various barriers which often prohibit Muslim female involvement in sport and exercise in these communities (Snape, 2005). Research suggests that females of South Asian descent are more receptive to sport and physical activity if sessions are run and attended by people of a similar socio-cultural background to themselves (Snape, 2005). However, the Bolton programme also demonstrated how some women continue to face additional barriers to their participation. For example, due to her husband's religious beliefs, one female eventually withdrew completely from the programme. Her husband felt that it was not appropriate for a Muslim woman to exercise in public, nor was it appropriate for his wife to encourage other Muslim women to do the same (Snape, 2005).

This experience also reflects the findings in Kay's (2006) study of young Muslim women, whose sports participation depended largely on the views of the wider family on sport and physical activity for women. The presence of real cultural pressures that Muslim and some other South Asian heritage women must overcome to be able to participate in sport and be physical activity offer a challenge to all providers that needs careful consideration. Some resistance to cultural norms highlights the fact that sport can be used effectively as a site of challenge and resistance to the dominant, masculine and hyper-competitive nature of sport – reflecting some views from critical theory, including critical feminism. Despite a relatively low level of physically active British Asian women, Snape (2005: 153) has argued that this does not reflect the prevailing interest of such groups in sport

because: 'Asian women are interested in taking part in active recreation, and assumptions that low participation rates reflect a lack of motivation or desire are misguided'.

Some British Asian women who express a desire to be physically active are concerned about the potential stigma which may become attached to them, often directed by other members of the South Asian community. Taking time out to exercise is often considered selfish and individualistic, as a British Asian woman's proper focus should be on the family and this should take priority over all other activities (Babakus and Thompson, 2012). Recent research has identified the need to get members of the wider South Asian community 'on side' to promote sport for women and to recognise the benefits to them of physical activity on health and social well-being. This technique has included providing sports and physical activity initiatives for various generations of family members. Lack of free time can also act as a restrictive barrier for South Asian heritage women, as many mothers are expected to assume almost complete responsibility for childcare and domestic chores (Babakus and Thompson, 2012). Moreover, inappropriate local facilities are often cited as a barrier to their participation in sport. Muslim adult females are required by Islam to participate in gender-segregated sport which is out of the view of men, and to adhere to cultural and religious mores about clothing, including covering arms and legs and wearing a headscarf.

Although over the last decade positive steps have been made in the recognition that South Asian women are a target group that may need tailored sporting provision to meet their diverse cultural and religious needs, they are still underrepresented in sport at grassroots and elite level, and a radical shift in sports policy is arguably required to address this fact (Amara and Henry, 2010; Snape, 2005). Furthermore, people of South Asian origin – including women - report generally poorer health than those of other ethnic groups and the wider population, further demonstrating a need for specific and culturally tailored exercise and sporting provision. The lack of targeted sporting provision for the British Asian community is an issue that, until fairly recently, had been largely neglected by local sports policy facilitators. However, addressing their sporting provision and opportunities using targeted

initiatives is argued to be of growing importance for sports policy makers and providers in increasingly ethnically diverse societies (Amara and Henry, 2010).

Nevertheless, British Asian women in the UK have made some progress, for example in elite level cricket. Notably, the Bengali-origin Isa Guha played 107 times for England between 2002 and 2012, topping the world bowling rankings in 2008. Guha now hosts IPL cricket on ITV. But one of the general criticisms of much of the sociological literature on British Asians involved in sport in Britain, is the absence of women from many accounts. Aarti Ratna's work has begun to fill this void, yet there is still a general paucity of academic literature exploring the experiences of British Asian women in sporting contexts. In the case of football, white female voices are often still centralized as representative of *all* females who play the game. Ratna (2011: 382) is highly critical of the stereotypical nature of past research on UK sport that, 'mostly serves to render invisible the multiplicity of British Asian females' experiences'.

Historically, with a few partial national exceptions, football as an institution has generally discriminated against female players and, more recently, against Muslim female players, in particular. The crux of many discussions about South Asian Muslim women as footballers or other sportswomen has tended to focus on the requirements of Islamic dress codes. Ahmed's (2011) recent study identified cases where Muslim female players had been unable to compete because of the incompatibility of requirements of wearing the hijab and the laws that govern football. Muslim women's refusal to remove headscarves has resulted in them being ordered off the pitch, most notably, in an Olympic qualifying game between Iran and Jordan in 2011, when Iran were automatically disqualified due to their players' refusal to remove the hijab.

The hijab had been banned by FIFA for safety reasons, including the potential danger of choking. However, these claims about additional dangers have been proven to be largely unfounded. Furthermore, FIFA rules for football in the 2012 Olympics prohibited any political, religious or personal statements as part of the kit requirements. Brian Barwick, the chief executive of the FA in 2007, explained that

although sensitivities to people's cultural mores and philosophies were important, adhering to the laws of the game held a greater priority for everyone (Ahmed, 2011). Despite an initial strong stance, FIFA have since made a U-turn on the hijab ban, and in 2014 the rules around this were altered accordingly.

As I have pointed out, many South Asian cultures have rather 'traditional' ideals about femininity, ideals which are often embodied through dress and behavioural standards. As others have pointed out, women of South Asian descent are commonly viewed as, 'passive victims of their own culture and wider social structures of inequality and constraint' (Ratna, 2010: 117). By participating in sports such as football – a game traditionally dominated by White males – British Asian women are challenging not only the established views on the role of women in general, but also of Asian heritage women in particular. It seems that many Muslim women are forced to negotiate between cultural norms and their football participation to embody a compatible Muslim female sporting identity (Ahmed, 2011; Ratna, 2011). The concept of intersectionality, which Ratna (2010; 2011; 2013) draws heavily upon throughout her work, goes some way to explore the interconnections between various social attributes, framing the idea that identities are multiple and interconnected at a conceptual level. Essentially, whilst it is possible for British Asian Muslim women to have a sporting identity, it has to be compatible with other forms of their ethnic and religious identity and thus the negotiation must be consistent with other facets of their identity.

Like the findings of academic work on British Asian men in football (see Burdsey, 2007a), many of the women who featured in such studies felt excluded by football clubs that were made up of majority White players, whose behaviour could be 'unconsciously racist' because it made female Muslim players feel inferior or even excluded (Ahmad, 2011: 449). It is interesting and ironic that the same women who often felt excluded from the domestic women's game in the UK went on, as British citizens, to represent Great Britain in football at the World Islamic Games in 2005. Although there is little scope to develop this argument further here, this incongruity merely highlights the complexity and multiplicity of Muslim female experiences within football cultures in the UK and globally.

Of course, gender plays a major role in defining peoples' relationship with sport. This study includes the voices of young British Asian males *and* females on an equal footing, thus acknowledging the impact of gender on issues relating to participation, identity and consumption. Centralising the voices of the target population in research is fundamental to understanding general, but also more localised, barriers to sports participation. Furthermore, by including participants from various ethnic and religious backgrounds and both genders this thesis ensures that British Asian experiences are not homogenised.

Summary

A lack of British Asian participants in official UK sporting structures has captured the attention of academics and sports policy makers. Evidence suggests that low levels of sport and physical activity participation for those of South Asian heritage is contributing to their relative ill health. One key legacy promise from London 2012 was to 'inspire a generation' of young people into sport. However, general British participation rates have actually decreased in the post-Olympic period. One key issue in relation to the potential success of inspiring young British Asians has been the extremely limited representation of athletes of South Asian heritage in Team GB at London 2012, potentially reinforcing negative stereotypes about British Asian competence and their desire for involvement in competitive sport. Promoting sport and physical activity to British Asian communities continues to be a high policy priority.

Academic interest, thus far, has focused mainly on the absence of British Asians as sports professionals in most sports, especially as there is a clear interest in consumption and recreational participation by British Asians in many sports. The literature pertaining to both South Asian experiences as participants but also to them as sports consumers focuses almost exclusively on two sports, football and cricket and are overwhelmingly centred on *male* voices. Owing to their popularity amongst the large British Asian diaspora – these sports are pertinent sites for exploring experiences as participants. I want to *add* to the existing literature, on

football and cricket, by using the experiences of my own British Asian participants. But, in making an original contribution to knowledge in this area, I will also explore the perceptions and experiences of British Asians in relation to other key sports.

Using the London Olympic Games as a convenient lens for my analysis, I will consider if a lack of elite-level British Asian athletes has an impact on the interest and engagement with sport of my respondents, and also how such absences might shape the perceptions of young British Asians in relation to their own ability and capacities to access opportunities within amateur sports settings. I include the views of male *and* femal*e* British Asian participants, in order to offer some gender balance compared to the sociological literature exploring British Asian sporting experiences.

Finally, my hope is that this approach will provide NGBs with some valuable qualitative data on the perceptions that young British Asians have of sport in general and three Olympic sports in particular, especially in relation to their perceived access as possible participants. Kilvington's (2013; 2016) work has clearly highlighted that issues such as its institutionally racist policies and practices may be continuing to side line potential British Asian footballers from opportunities at the professional levels of football in the UK. Are these issues also active within other sporting arenas in the UK? What could sporting NGBs do to promote a more inclusive space for British Asians who might consider playing tennis, or who may want to be involved in swimming and athletics at recreational, but also at competitive, levels? Before moving on to my fieldwork chapters, I next discuss methodology.

Chapter 5

Methodology

Introduction

Framed within the post-London 2012 period, the purpose of this research is to explore, sociologically, the role and importance of sport in the lives of a sample of young British Asians in Leicester and Wolverhampton. More specifically, I consider the impact that a lack of elite-level British Asian athletes in 2012 may have had on interest and engagement with the London Games, and how such absences shape the perceptions of young British Asians in relation to their own sporting ability and access to opportunities within amateur sports settings. Furthermore, the thesis explores the relationship between sport and national, local and ethnic British Asian identity construction, using the tool of the London 2012 Olympic Games.

The question of the social distribution of the supposed benefits of hosting a sporting mega-event such as the London 2012 Olympics has raised various concerns about inclusiveness and the purported success of such mega-events in this respect. As Horne and Manzenreiter (2006) enquire: which groups actually benefit from mega-events, and which are excluded? Research with peripheral or excluded groups - including *listening* to marginalised voices - is required to explore the otherwise silenced and 'alternative' stories that can help us better understand the experience of the Olympic Games from differing social, cultural and place perspectives (Silk, 2011). The rhetoric of multiculturalism was a key factor in the bidding for the 2012 Olympic Games (Amara and Henry, 2010; Burdsey, 2016). Promises about multiculturalism and inclusion, unsurprisingly, played well with the IOC. The ethnic make-up of Games stewards, the much-lauded multi-ethnic Opening Ceremony on British history, and the involvement of local schoolchildren in 'celebrating' the London Games may have offered some early examples. Yet, British Asian participation at the London Olympics centrally as athletes was extremely limited.

Horne and Manzenreiter (2006: 17) have argued that academics should critically reflect on the effects and supposed benefits of sports mega-events. They recognise that such events can 'provide novel ways in which research into national and cultural identities can be approached'. The Olympic Games provides a salient site for analysing the ways in which the British Asian (and other minority) populations construct aspects of their personal and national identities through such events, and how they engaged (if at all) with the Great Britain sporting 'project' in 2012. In addition, centralising the experiences of young British Asians within the broader frame of the London Olympics will provide more detailed insight into the potential effect of the Games on their current and future participation in sport. Over-reliance on statistical data in surveys around the time of the Games to answer such questions is often unhelpful because, almost inevitably, recognition and sports participation is likely to peak during this period and, in the case of many sports since the Olympics, this initial spike in both interest and participation may soon recede (Sedghi, 2015).

In this chapter I discuss the theoretical issues and practical matters pertaining to data collection. The chapter begins by outlining the chosen research design and justifying its selection in relation to my own epistemological standpoint. I then move on to discuss various methodological issues, including the selection of appropriate research sites, negotiation of access to the chosen sites, and formulating and accessing a research sample. Finally, I explain and justify the specific methodological procedures used during this research, focusing on data collection, analysis and ethical considerations.

Research philosophy

Research paradigms - the set of basic beliefs that guide action - shape how qualitative researchers see the world and act within it (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The purpose of this section then, is to outline the research paradigm that underpins this project. Denzin and Lincoln (2000a) suggest that a paradigm encompasses four

key elements: axiology refers to questions of ethics in the social world, ontology concerns the nature of reality and the nature of the human being in the world, epistemology relates to the relationship between the knower and the known, and methodology is concerned with the most appropriate means for gaining knowledge about the world (cited by Silk et al, 2005). The two most commonly defined research paradigms – positivism and interpretivism – are often explained in crude oppositional terms and debates concerning the persistent conflicts between positivist and interpretivist approaches to social science research are widespread (for example, see Hughes; 1990; Lazar, 2004; Lincoln et al, 2013).

The positivist tradition is primarily concerned with producing what it claims is objective, value free, generalizable forms of knowledge. In searching for a reality that is independent of the researcher's own opinions about the social world, positivist researchers distance themselves from the phenomena that they are investigating (Silk et al, 2005). The positivist school of thought regards 'true' or valid knowledge as that which is coldly 'scientific', whereby 'the principles and methods of the natural sciences are used to study human behaviour which… is objective and tangible in nature' (Gratton and Jones, 2010: 24). Being able, scientifically, to measure an objective reality is central to a positivist ontology. This particular stance lends itself to certain ways of knowledge generation, centred on 'controlled data collection, objective distance between the researcher and the subject, quantitative measurement, hypothesis testing and statistical analysis to prove causality' (Silk et al, 2005: 6). As such, positivists reject the premise that qualitative research can be scientific at all, even suggesting that qualitative researchers 'write fiction, not science', and have 'no way of verifying their truth statements' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 8). Those who work within positivist traditions have also referred to qualitative researchers as 'journalists' or 'soft scientists' thus dismissing qualitative research as essentially 'unscientific', 'exploratory', or 'subjective' (Ibid: 8). In short, for such critics, qualitative research holds a subordinate status – or no status at all - within the scientific arena.

In response to the accusation that qualitative research is not scientific, Elias (1986, cited in Ormston et al, 2014) has argued that it is the discovery and not the method

that legitimises research as scientific. In contrast to a positivistic stance, the interpretive position rejects the idea of an objective reality 'out there', instead advocating that human subjects are impacted by external social forces, forces which result in individuals constructing their own subjective versions of reality (Arksey and Knight, 1999). To this end, the interpretive paradigm argues that human behaviour cannot be fully understood or explained in terms of causal relationships devoid of feelings or emotions, and therefore it broadly rejects the positivist assumptions that social phenomena can be measured objectively (Hughes, 1990). For example, to reduce identity formation or perceptions of different sporting contexts simply to some quantitative 'score' assessed on a continuum provided by a scale on a social survey would neglect the complexity and the complex meaning of these issues for British Asians in my own research.

The adoption here of an interpretivist approach to knowledge creation is founded on the belief that the social world cannot be sufficiently understood without the use of interpretation (Johnson, 1987, cited in Leitch et al, 2010). Interpretivists argue that natural scientific methods alone are inappropriate for the study of the social world, because human beings have the capacity to think and reflect. Furthermore, unlike objects or other animals, human beings can interpret and change their behaviour to reflect different social situations. The way in which people interpret their own lives and their environment is, of course, dependent upon the culture in which they live and help create. Therefore, to understand social action, we need to uncover the meanings that actions hold for people (Abbott, 2010). But we must also do so, 'according to their own subjective frame of reference' (Williams, 2002: 203). Harris (2007: 2) supports this view, when he explains that:

> 'An interpretive approach promotes the uniqueness of human enquiry, celebrating the permanence and priority of the real world of subjective first -person experience. In attempting to see the world from the participants' point of view, the aim is to try to understand how individuals construct social reality.'

Broadly speaking, and without discarding the importance of structural inequalities, for my own approach to research I adopt a relativist ontological position, one which is underpinned by the existence of multiple realities. As explained by Guba and Lincoln (1994), a relativist ontology assumes that reality as we know it is constructed inter-subjectively through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially. Furthermore, as Bernstein (1983) has suggested, conceptions of truth are relative to the person or group holding them. An interpretive epistemological approach is thus adopted within this study. Exploring phenomena within a structural frame but from the viewpoint of those being investigated is a key feature of a sophisticated interpretive epistemological position, that, as Ormston et al (2014) articulate, rejects the idea that completely objective and value free social research is achievable. Instead, these theorists argue that interpretive researchers value their participants' perspectives as the primary means via which we can explore and understand the social world.

In exploring the role and importance specifically of sport in shaping identity, and in keeping with the key features of an interpretive approach, emphasis is placed here on the oral testimonies of my young British Asian research participants in order to try to capture and understand 'the particular behaviours, meanings and realities of individuals within particular social settings' (Silk et al, 2005: 7). As Hughes (1990: 90) has argued:

> The socio-historical world is a symbolic world created by the human mind and cannot be understood as simply as a relationship of material things... nature and culture were inherently different and required different methods of study.

As a product, in part, of the human mind, society is thus regarded as being substantially subjectively constructed and so, 'causal, mechanistic and measurement orientated models of explanation [are] inappropriate, since human consciousness was not determined by natural forces' (ibid: 91).

To place these issues in the context of research on race and ethnicity, and in agreement with other scholars who write from an interpretive position, I have described how and why I consider identities to be fluid and to be produced through complex social relations. They take on distinct forms and meanings within different social contexts (Gunaratnam, 2003; Fletcher, 2011; Burdsey, 2007a). Given my understanding of identity as fluid, interchangeable and socially constructed, this necessitates that the emphasis for my data collection is placed upon trying to capture the lived experiences of the research participants in question. That is:

> 'If we are to take seriously, and also interrogate, ideas about 'race' and ethnicity as socially produced, relational and given particular situated meanings through individual experience, then *narratives* of identity are of critical importance. Such accounts are important as sites where we can explore, analytically, the relations between social and subjective processes of 'race'-making, and where we can examine the relations between theory and the lived experiences of 'race' and ethnicity' (Gunaratnam, 2003: 110, emphasis added).

The aim of this thesis, then, is to give voice to often silenced and 'alternative' stories or narratives, to help us better understand the sporting experiences of my sample of young British Asians from differing social, cultural and place perspectives. Analysing the lived experiences of young British Asians as sports participants and consumers of sport, and how sport contributes to articulations of 'Asianness', 'Englishness', 'Britishness', and feelings of belonging, relies on adopting research tools that can produce rich, in-depth data – or as Geertz (1993) would have it 'thick description'. Adopting a more positivist approach would impose a frame and not allow for a sufficient depth of data to be produced and collected to address my key sociological questions. Consequently, this would lead to an inadequate attempt at understanding the meanings and lived experiences of my young participants. Hughes (1990: 94) delivers his own telling riposte to those who take a positivistic approach to social science research when he states that:

> 'Even though it is more than possible to describe, empirically, patterns of social action by using all the elegant correlational apparatus of positivist social science, this would fail to… give an adequate account or interpretation of *why* the pattern of interaction occurred as it did, when it did and where, in terms faithful to its status as a human product.'

This forms the rationale for my adopting a qualitative approach in this research and it builds upon the interpretive epistemological standpoint favoured, and it focuses my work on analysing the thoughts, perceptions and experiences of the research participants. To paraphrase Silk et al (2005), by rejecting the idea that research can be carried out in a social vacuum insulated from wider society and the biography of the researcher, embracing the interpretive paradigm allows us, instead, to recognise the complexity of the social world, the role that the researcher plays within the world, and the meanings that people attribute to everyday life. Like Silk et al, I refute the notion that, within research in the social world, the knower and the known can be separated within knowledge production. Finally, as Amis (2005) rightly acknowledges in the context of conducting interviews for social science research, it is imperative that the interviewer understands, reflexively, the ways in which their role will affect the data collected and therefore they must reflect on their own personal background and characteristics and how that might affect the collection and interpretation of the data. Thus, it is to the debates concerning the relationship between the researcher and their research participants, particularly in relation to White researchers conducting research with minority ethnic participants that I now move.

Reflexivity: locating the 'self' in research

There seems to be little agreement within the research field on 'race' and ethnicity on whether being from a similar social and ethnic background to your participants is actually advantageous, or not. Of course, there is always an underlying issue in relation to the role of a researcher and their capacity to speak, so to speak, on 'behalf' of the research participants within their studies. This is especially the case perhaps where a White researcher is conducting research with ethnic minority

research participants. It is certainly an issue that must be considered within the domain of interpretive research. As Andersen (1993: 41) puts it:

> 'The problems of doing research with minority communities are compounded by the social distance imposed by class and race relations when interviewers are white and middle-class and those being interviewed are not. For white scholars wanting to study race relations... conclusions in the literature are daunting. How can white scholars elicit an understanding of race relations as experienced by racial minorities? How can white scholars study those who have been historically subordinated, without further producing sociological accounts distorted by the political economy of race, class and gender?' (cited in Gunaratnam, 2003: 79)

Back (1996), however, demonstrates a concern with those who claim to be able to speak 'for' their research participants because they possess some form of 'insider' status. I do not claim to speak *for* my interviewees, but I recognise that I am in a privileged position as an aspiring academic, and in producing a PhD I have a forum to share the testimonies of my research participants, despite my own very different social background. Gunaratnam (2003) is critical of the methodological strategies which have become increasingly reliant on matching the ethnicity of the interviewer and the research participant. Her critique focuses on what she calls the 'binary thinking' that regards racialized commonalities as critical to the success of interracial interviewing and she challenges the strategies of ethnic matching, not least because this potential 'solution' neglects other differences of gender, class, disability or sexuality.

Not only would it would be extremely difficult to ensure that the characteristics of a researcher completely matched those of the research participants, but it is also unnecessary because having similar backgrounds would not necessarily guarantee an increased rapport. As Ratna (2011) has pointed out, ethnic matching can, potentially, have the opposite effect. She reflects on the implication raised here that British Asian researchers who undertake studies with other British Asian participants might, consciously or otherwise, allow their own Asian heritage to bias

their work and thus might be charged with the criticism that they cannot make their remarks and observations from an 'objective' viewpoint. (Would the same admissions be made by a White researcher, one wonders). As a British Asian female academic, reflecting on her own research with other British Asian women, Ratna highlights the fact that this kind of ethnic commonality does not necessarily impact positively on the data collected. She suggests that:

> 'Matching social identities of the researcher and the research participants is not always conductive to understanding the complexities of their lives… Commonalities between the researcher and participants do not always guarantee rapport or the ability to elicit relevant information' (Ratna, 2011: 387).

In her own experience of conducting research with fellow British Asian females, Ratna was aware that some participants would not share particular pieces of information with her for fear of being judged by someone from the same ethnic and religious background.   There is clearly a case to argue that differing social backgrounds of researchers and their participants do not, *of necessity*, obstruct the research process, as long as these differences are made clear and that we are cognizant of how these differing social constructs might impact on responses and the interpretation of the research participants' reported experiences. Indeed, according to Amis (2005), no methods used to collect data can be completely free from such interpretation and, as a consequence, issues such as class, race and gender are always central to debates about how we conduct research. As he suggests, everything we see or hear is analysed against the frame of reference we bring to the field, 'a frame that is both epistemologically and conceptually based.' (Amis, 2005: 125).

Within an interpretive research approach, it is necessary always to 'appreciate that the research participants, the research field and the researcher are involved in an interactive, dynamic process whereby each affects the others' (Oliver, 2008: 138). My position as an 'insider' at the University of Wolverhampton, in comparison to being an 'outsider' within the research site in Leicester meant that with many of my

sample in Wolverhampton I had a previously established relationship and thus did not have the same challenges to build a rapport as were evident in Leicester. For some of the participants in Leicester, my status as an 'outsider' conducting research on British Asian groups did not seem to impact overtly negatively on the interviews, and many respondents provided detailed accounts of their racialized experiences within sport. However, it was also clear that some of the participants were a little more reluctant to 'open up' in the same level of depth to someone who, to them, was an unknown White female researcher from a university base and a distinctly different social background.

Clearly then, my own Whiteness could have acted as a barrier between me and some of my research participants. Furthermore, for the male participants, I was perhaps more subconsciously aware that I needed to try and reduce the distance between myself, as a White female, and them as young British Asian males. For some of the male participants in Leicester, my sporting knowledge and role as an active player probably helped me to develop some credibility within the interviews.

Research design

Due to the exploratory and interpretive nature of the research objectives, the methodological approach utilized in this study is qualitative. To reduce identity formation or perceptions of different sporting contexts to a quantitative 'score' on a continuum from 'strong' to 'weak' is highly likely to underestimate 'the complexity, variability and flexibility of ethnic minority individuals' positioning in relationship to the nation in which they are living' (Vadher and Barrett, 2009: 454). Furthermore, national sports surveys fail to capture the nuances and more localised barriers that young British Asians are likely to face in relation to sport participation. As I have already illustrated, such surveys problematically tend to homogenise the experience of Britain's minority ethnic communities. Indeed, in much of the available survey analyses, British Asian experiences are discussed within the broader heading of the BAME population. A more qualitative approach will allow the voices and real-life experiences of these young British Asian participants to be a central feature of the analysis, something which is key if we are to understand the role sport plays in their lives and in their identity construction.

The study is comparative in nature, as it proposes to collect and analyse data from two different UK locations. There is scope to make further comparisons with faith, gender, class, place and other social markers as important variables. The nature of comparative studies remains contested and, in particular, debates on whether single-country studies can be classed as comparative continue to be manifest (Lor, 2010). Notwithstanding this, the general consensus is that a comparative approach can provide an important analytical framework to identify, analyse and explain similarities and differences both within and across societies (Hantrais, 1995; Ghorra-Gobin, 1998). The comparisons made here will contribute to existing literature in the field in an original way because, to my knowledge, such an approach has yet to be undertaken elsewhere in the UK on this area of work. Furthermore, three of the key sports under study here - tennis, swimming and athletics –are known to have low British Asian participation and little academic attention has been paid to these sports in this area of work (Long et al, 2009; Sport England, 2017). A comparative approach also benefits the selected NGBs, as they will be able to identify strengths and limitations of current policy in the different research locations and – with the support and expertise of Sporting Equals – they might develop best practice considering the different demographic, social and cultural settings that characterise these different areas. This is especially important because *national* sporting strategies might not be the answer to British Asian participation problems in different locations and more localised research may enable us to better understand some of the nuances that help define different British Asian communities and experiences across the UK.

A qualitative interview-based study comparing two research sites was selected as the most appropriate research design for this project. The two sites are defined by their different locations, in Leicester in the East Midlands and Wolverhampton in the West Midlands. It was necessary to utilise an approach that could help facilitate discussions with young British Asian participants around issues pertaining to race, ethnicity, religion, gender and identity in the context of sport. Previous research exploring the experiences of British Asians in sport has tended to utilise ethnographic approaches (for example see Burdsey, 2007a; Fletcher, 2011; Ratna,

2011; 2014). However, these studies have tended to focus on the experiences of British Asians as participants in one sport (usually either cricket or football) and so having access to British Asian football or cricket clubs was paramount to successfully generating data about the players' experiences within these contexts. My own research is focused on a more general sample of young British Asians who are 'interested' in sport drawn from two sites, respondents who would be able to discuss their interests and experiences in relation to a number of different sports. This was important, particularly in relation to their knowledge and perceived access as participants in specific, pre-identified sports. I was interested here in British Asian perceptions of particular sporting spaces and the socio-cultural conditions that underpinned this perspective. Although some elements of ethnographic work were adopted in relation to obtaining access to a proportion of the participants in this study, observation did not form a key element of the data collection process.

Yin (2014) emphasises that the analytic benefits of having more than one research site can be substantial, although single and multiple site studies both have merit (Amis, 2005). According to Amis (2005), a comparative study allows for the emergence of difference based upon particular characteristics. British Asians are not a homogenous sub-group, as the statistical data in the selected locations indicates. The large British Asian diaspora in each city vary quite considerably in terms of origins, income, occupation and faith affiliations. It is plausible to assume, then, that there might be significant local differences in the sporting experiences of young British Asians living in these two locations. Using two research sites in different geographical locations allows me to consider, at least in a preliminary way, the impact of 'place' on the sporting experiences of young British Asians and this contributes to one element of this comparative study. Other variables such as ethnicity, faith and gender are also considered in the analysis and the importance of these characteristics can therefore also be explored.

Selecting the research sites

The research sites selected for the case studies were Leicester and Wolverhampton. A third location, Bradford, had also been tentatively included within the initial research proposal. However, logistics intervened and it became clear that due to issues of time and access including a third research site at this time was probably unachievable. The decision was reluctantly taken to focus on two data collection sites only. Within qualitative research, cases tend to be selected based upon the particular characteristics that they possess (Amis, 2005). The criteria for selection here were three-fold. Firstly, each site needed to be comprised of a significant proportion of ethnic minority, and specifically South Asian heritage, participants. Secondly, my funding partners Sporting Equals had already identified geographical areas of interest in relation to providing a local picture of sport to primary and secondary NGBs as part of their own remit from Sport England. The third reason was to explore the 'reach' of the Olympic Games in non-host cities in relation to the legacy claims set out by the organisers: namely, that London hosting the Games would benefit all UK communities. The cities of Leicester and Wolverhampton met the selection criteria and thus they were selected as appropriate locations to conduct the study.

Leicester is a city in the East Midlands region of England, and with a population of 329,839 it is the most populous municipality in the region. Historically, the city was an important base for the boot, shoe and hosiery industries. The history and makeup of the ethnic minorities who found a home in Leicester has contributed to a wider public perception that they have been generally well integrated into local structures and into the wider society. As one of the most diverse cities in the UK, Leicester's population is now comprised of nearly 50% of what were previously minority ethnic residents. This diversity is substantially owed to an influx of 20,000 educated, English-speaking (mainly Hindu) Indian migrants in the 1970s who had been expelled from Uganda, along with significant early migration waves from India, Pakistan and the Caribbean, which had resulted in long-established African Caribbean and South Asian communities settling in Leicester since the early 1960s (Singh, 2003). More recent migrants from Somalia and parts of Eastern Europe have continued to shape Leicester's multicultural profile. Today, the city of Leicester

actively portrays itself as a model of civic multiculturalism, one popularly regarded in Britain as a fairly prosperous city, that has developed a reasonably successful approach to managing ethnic diversity and promoting tolerance between its many communities (Singh, 2003).

It has been argued that it is the English-speaking (mainly Hindu) South Asians who migrated from Uganda in the early 1970s that have had the most significant impact in shaping Leicester's cohesive multicultural identity today (Williams and Peach, 2017). Their 'twice migrant' status meant that they arrived in Leicester with skills in English, a good educational background, entrepreneurial experience and transferable skills, all of which was significant for their ability to adapt to their new surroundings and contribute positively to the local economy and public services, including by establishing a successful local Asian business sector (Singh, 2003).

Leicester today has the highest population in the UK of British Indians at 28.3% of the local population, and the highest proportion of Hindus outside of London at 15%. Due to its diverse BAME profile and its location for senior professional sports clubs in football, cricket, basketball, and rugby, Leicester has become a key research site for Sporting Equals, who have developed various partnerships and conducted research among sections of Leicester's different BAME communities. The city's diverse ethnic profile is also strongly expressed in involvement in local male sport (Bradbury, 2011; Campbell and Williams, 2014). The demographics and sporting heritage of Leicester, along with Sporting Equals' recognition of the city as a key hub for conducting research with BAME groups, thus made Leicester an ideal location for the research.

Wolverhampton is located in the West Midlands area of England, whose promotion to city status was achieved only in the year 2000. The surrounding area near Wolverhampton has long become known colloquially as 'the Black Country', supposedly because when, during the heavy industrialisation of the area, with its lock making and iron and steel works in the late 19th century, pollution from local factories covered the landscape in black soot and, allegedly, left the local soil black. The gold and black strip of the local football club, Wolverhampton Wanderers FC

originates from the city's motto, which is duly shaped by its industrial heritage: 'Out of darkness cometh light.' The two contrasting colours represent light and dark, respectively. Because of its heavy industrial heritage, Wolverhampton has probably fared less well economically and in other ways in recent years when compared to Leicester. It certainly has attracted less of the fashionable, positive coverage of working multi-culturalism compared to that now afforded to Leicester.

Wolverhampton had an influx of migrants as early as 1812, when Irish workers came to the area as seasonal farm workers, having been attracted initially due to the region's strong Roman Catholic sentiments. The main period of South Asian immigration to Wolverhampton occurred between 1961-71, with the figure of settlers in this period rising from 1,756 to 12,120 (Wolverhampton History, 2005). At roughly the same time, there were also migrants arriving from other Commonwealth countries, particularly from the Caribbean. Their reasons for migration were similar. In the post-war years Britain had a labour shortage and so migrants from other countries arrived to take on relatively low paid manufacturing jobs. Although initially workers planned to eventually to return home, this was not the case, and many of the migrants' families joined them in Wolverhampton.

According to the 2011 Census, Wolverhampton then had a population of 249,470, so it is a slightly smaller place than Leicester. BAME residents now make up 35.5% of the city's population, with 18% being categorised as Asian (Office for National Statistics, 2011). Wolverhampton has the second highest Sikh population in England, with Sikhs representing 9% of the city's population (Express and Star, 2013). Some 3.7% of the city's population self-identified as Hindu and 3.6% identified as Muslim. Wolverhampton had been identified by Sporting Equals as a key location for engaging in research on sport given local sporting traditions and the large local proportion of BAME residents in the city. One of their key anticipated outcomes is to increase the participation in sport of BAME groups, and conduct research which can help inform various NGB strategies to engage this large untapped market in their own sporting practices.

Place will constitute one important variable element of this comparative study. Due to the differing demographic make-up and history of the two cities selected for this research, it might be reasonable to expect different kinds of responses from the different sites. For example, Leicester is often cited as a successful multicultural model, and so we could expect that some of my sample of interviewees might speak more positively about issues around 'race' and racism in sport in this city, where such matters are potentially less contested in general terms. Owing to the structure of the fieldwork chapters, and the potential for repetition, the accounts of my respondents in Leicester and Wolverhampton are not presented separately in this thesis. Instead, where appropriate, I will make observations about the potential impact of place within the overall analysis. In addition to these discussions about place impact, ethnicity, faith and gender will all be variables touched upon within the analysis. Of course, the complexity of making meaningful comparisons when all or many of these variables are in play cannot be underestimated.

In the fieldwork chapters that follow I note the attribution of all interviewees when their comments are included, to make it clear to the reader exactly whose voice they are listening to. In addition, a more comprehensive table is included towards the end of this chapter to provide some demographic detail about my sample of interviewees in both Leicester and Wolverhampton.

Initiating access and formulating a sample in two different locations

Gaining access to a chosen research site and research participants can be a difficult task for researchers. As Arksey and Knight (1999) suggest, permission to undertake the research must be sought by the researcher as early on as possible, especially as there are often numerous hurdles to be negotiated before the data collection takes place. Because two research sites were chosen for this project, the process of gaining initial access and recruiting research participants differed in each location. Access in Leicester needed to be negotiated through a 'gatekeeper' – someone with the power to grant access to the research setting and required research population.

To be eligible for selection in the project the participants needed to self-identify as British Asian and be 'interested' in sport, although not necessarily active in that sense. For participants to be classed as 'interested' they needed to have indicated, in an initial eligibility screening questionnaire, that they are either physically active, or showed some interest in watching or reading about sport through various media outlets. Whilst I was interested in hearing from people who did play sport, I was also interested in sports consumption and in finding out more about some of the barriers young British Asians might face to being physically active. To provide some background and demographic detail about each of the participants in this study a table is included in appendix 1.

The sampling technique utilised was a mixture of purposive and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling, as defined by Silverman (2013), requires the selection of participants who satisfy the criteria in which we are interested and is a commonly used sampling technique within qualitative research. In this case, my criteria were young British Asian males and females who were 'interested' in sport. Convenience sampling is where participants are selected on the basis of convenience (for example in accessibility or location). Gratton and Jones (2010) express that this type of sampling must be treated with caution. However, although my two research samples differed slightly in age, all participants were aged 24 or under and thus can be considered 'young' British Asians. The following section describes the process of initiating access and formulating a sample at a college in Leicester and a university in Wolverhampton. The following will highlight some of the complexities of collecting data from participants, and the challenges that were faced throughout the data collection process.

Leicester

Gaining initial access to a 'gatekeeper' within Kings Sixth Form College in Leicester was relatively straightforward. Sean (a pseudonym) had worked with my lead supervisor on previous projects and thus was selected as the most appropriate first point of contact. However, whilst it proved quite simple to arrange our first

meeting, which took place in March 2014, arranging a follow up meeting to 'get the ball rolling' proved much more difficult. Despite the first contact being positive, where preliminary access to British Asian students within the college was granted, subject to approval by senior management, it took over seven months to organise our next meeting. This was mainly due to numerous cancellations and other commitments, and the college summer vacation. This is one of the problems when relying on a gatekeeper for access into the research site, as delays, such as the ones I experienced, are often out of the researcher's hands.

Due to the difficulties of arranging a follow up meeting with Sean I contacted another member of staff (Paul) at the college who I hoped would agree to act as a substitute gatekeeper. We met in September 2014 to discuss my research and the possibility of using college students as participants. A verbal agreement was made pending approval of senior management, to whom I wrote a short proposal outlining my research. The college senior management team approved my request in early October. A follow up meeting with Paul was then arranged and we discussed some of the finer project details such as a strategy for recruiting research participants. To approach and recruit a range of participants an eligibility questionnaire was distributed to approximately 500 Year-13 students at the college. The aim of the questionnaire was to get students to confirm consent and volunteer to be contacted as part of the research, whilst simultaneously acting as a screening process so that only eligible students were recruited. Again, this started out relatively positively. Out of the 500 questionnaires distributed, 443 were completed and returned. 163 students had provided an email contact, indicating that they were willing to be contacted to be involved in the research. Out of these 163 students, 89 students matched the eligibility criteria for the research and were invited to attend an initial focus group interview.

Aware that some of the originally willing participants might have changed their mind, I over-recruited to the focus groups. Five focus groups were arranged with approximately 20 participants invited to each. However, it seems that this recruitment process had been somewhat of a shortcut. The students had little information about who I was, having not met me in person. Furthermore, due to the

nature of the timetable at the college, it was only possible to arrange the focus groups at the end of the college day. It is likely that both these factors impacted significantly on turnout. Out of 89 students invited to the focus group discussions, only two students actually turned up! Consequently, and because these two participants turned up individually, as their scheduled focus groups were on different days, I opted to use the opportunity to interview each of them as part of an ad-hoc pilot study. This meant that I got to test some of the questions that I had prepared for suitability.

After this initial setback, I met with Paul to discuss other potential avenues to recruit participants. We decided that I ought to spend some time in the college, talking to some students more informally about my research so that they became familiar with who I was and why I was there. I also reconsidered whether focus groups were the most appropriate data collection method due to the logistics of the college day. I was advised that the girls' college basketball enrichment programme was comprised mainly of students who would be eligible to be involved in my research. Enrichment is a timetabled activity that is compulsory for all students and includes a range of additional activities and qualifications beyond A Level qualifications. All college sports teams training sessions run during enrichment time, meaning that students playing in college sports teams attend training sessions as part of their normal college day. As a keen sportswoman, I accepted the invitation to come and take part in the basketball sessions. Having failed to recruit participants to the initial focus groups, this was a conscious effort to get to know some potential research participants, and make it more likely that they might give up their time as part of my research.

The enrichment sessions were split into two, with an 'A' team – those who represented the college basketball team – and a 'B' team – those who were interested in and enjoyed playing basketball but were not currently part of the college team. As expected, the level of competency varied quite significantly between the A and B team sessions. For example, and as I noted in my fieldwork notes with the B team:

The level of basketball is low and play is very unstructured. There were no breaks in the session, because the intensity doesn't require it. Some of the girls at the start were taking selfies. There was lots of cheering and squealing within the session. The game was competitive but not overly serious. People don't seem to care too much about winning. (Field notebook, 26.01.15)

The relatively relaxed and 'unserious' sessions with the B team were quite different to training sessions with the A team, which were much more structured:

There is a competitive spirit in training sessions with teams wanting to beat each other. Friendly high-fives and hugs are commonplace. Encouragement is also regular, with cheers and clapping if someone scores a good basket – or, if someone who isn't necessarily overly skilled at shooting scores a point. Nikesh stops the girls and provides coaching points throughout the sessions. The sessions are also played with loud background music – usually RnB (or urban type music), which lightens the mood in the session. (Field notebook, 03.02.15)

Whilst it had been a significant period of time since I had played basketball, by attending enrichment sessions at the college I quickly developed my competence. This helped me to shift from feeling like an 'outsider', and thus I started to develop some rapport with potential interviewees, which I recorded in my field notes:

Today I played with the 'A' team for the second time and I am starting to feel more accepted now. Last time I played they didn't really pass me the ball at the start of the session. It was only after I had managed to intercept the ball a few times and demonstrated that I could play basketball quite well (because I'm generally sporty as opposed to actually being good at basketball per se) that the girls began to pass to me and encourage me. Today, one of the girls asked if I was going to be playing on the girls' basketball team and seemed genuinely disappointed when I said I couldn't because I wasn't eligible. (Field notebook, 03.02.15)

Playing basketball with the girls provided me with an opportunity to talk to students on a more informal basis about their sporting habits, both at college and beyond. After a few weeks taking part in basketball sessions, I invited a number of the girls to be interviewed. Four female participants were recruited in this way. As the most appropriate time for the girls to be interviewed was in their free periods, interviews were conducted on an individual basis as the logistics of arranging a group interview within the college day meant that it was not possible.

Whilst playing basketball had enabled me to reach some potential female interviewees, I still needed to recruit male participants. Furthermore, to ensure that not all female participants were recruited through the basketball enrichment programme, I needed a way to target other female respondents. I was invited into various tutor groups (the ones to which my questionnaires had mainly been distributed) to discuss my research with the students. By using the initial questionnaire responses I could identify which students had already volunteered to get involved, and I targeted those tutor groups. Another five female participants, and nine male participants were recruited in this way.

Wolverhampton

As a member of staff at the University of Wolverhampton, there was no need for a 'gatekeeper' to provide access to potential participants for the research. With the setbacks and access issues at the first data collection site in the East Midlands, it was important to try and get back on track in relation to the timely completion of the data collection phase of the Wolverhampton research. Thus, a mixture of convenience and purposive sampling techniques were deemed the most appropriate means to eliminate the time-consuming process which had hindered the data collection in the East Midlands. As Gratton and Jones (2010) acknowledge, a convenience sample is chosen because of its convenience in relation to access and location, although this can have an impact on the type of data that is collected.

In addition to the convenience sampling technique, I also utilised purposive sampling which again allowed me to reach potential participants in a more time-efficient way. I contacted all eligible students on the Sports Studies and

Development degree programme that I taught on to see if they would be interested in taking part in the research project. This was initially done via email, where I provided an overview and detailed the main aims of the study. I recruited seven male participants in this way, who all agreed to take part. Accessing eligible female participants proved to be more of a challenge as there were no British Asian females on the Sports Studies and Development degree. I contacted other course leaders in sport to see if they could identify any suitable female participants. I recruited two female participants in this way. A third female participant was recruited through my own sporting interests. I was aware of some young females in the Wolverhampton area who fit within the eligibility criteria and contacted them via social media. Another two potential participants agreed to take part in the study but did not turn up to the arranged interviews. After trying to rearrange on numerous occasions, I made the decision to focus on the data that I had been able to collect and moved on to the data analysis.

Methods of data collection and analysis

The data for the project were collected using semi-structured interviews. As Bryman (2016) suggests, the nature of semi-structured interviews means that the focus is on research participants' own perspectives. Semi-structured interviews also allow the researcher to deviate from the interview guide where necessary. For example, the researcher might want to ask some follow-up questions to get more information on a particular aspect or topic. In practice, using semi-structured interviews enabled me to ask interviewees for clarification, or press for more detail about various topics. The interviews all took place within the respective institutions in which the participants were based. In Leicester, Paul had arranged for me to conduct the interviews in a small meeting room at the college. In Wolverhampton, the interviews took place in small tutorial rooms on campus. These settings were well-known to the research participants.

Interviews generally lasted between 30 – 90 minutes, although one interview lasted for nearly two hours. The interviews with the Leicester sample were generally shorter in length due to a number of factors. Firstly, apart from the girls who I had played basketball with, I was unknown to the research participants. This provided

some difficulties in relation to establishing rapport with some respondents, although not all. For example, some of the male respondents provided relatively short or blunt answers to my questions and thus we moved through the interview guide quite quickly. Even when I pressed for further information, one participant, in particular, seemed reluctant to discuss their experiences with me. Secondly, the age of the Leicester sample was slightly younger than in Wolverhampton. Participants in Leicester were aged between 16-18 years (most aimed to go to university), whereas respondents in my Wolverhampton sample were aged 18-24. Some caution therefore needs to be taken when trying to draw direct comparisons, as I need to remain cognizant of the potential impact that age might have. Finally, the interviews in Leicester were all conducted in either participants' 'free' periods, or in their tutorial session. All the lessons in Leicester lasted for one hour, which meant that there were some time constraints placed on the interview. Whilst an hour seems a sufficient amount of time, it often took participants between 5-10 minutes to arrive at the scheduled meeting point, and then some further time was needed to introduce myself, the project and complete informed consent forms. This usually meant that there was about 45 minutes to complete the interviews in Leicester. The university day is much more flexible, so fewer time constraints were placed on the interviews in Wolverhampton.

Each interview was audio recorded using a Dictaphone, with the written consent of the interviewee. Once each interview had been completed it was then transferred onto a laptop into a secure file. The files were processed through a transcription software system – Express Scribe - to aid the transcription process. The software used allowed me to alter the speed of the playback, which aided the transcription process and increased accuracy, allowing each interview to be transcribed verbatim. Of course, a verbatim transcript provides some potential issues with analysis, because people do not always speak in complete sentences. In practice, interviewees often part answered a question, and moved back and forth between current and previous questions when another example or incident was recalled. This lack of sentence structure in talk therefore sometimes requires the researcher to reconstruct the text, adding in punctuation and sentence structure so that the data makes some sense in written form. The raw data gets 'cleaned up' by the

researcher so that it is intelligible to readers who were not there at the time of recording (Denscombe, 2014). To make this clear to the reader, where words have been added or altered later to ensure coherence and sentence structure they are placed in square brackets.

Words in qualitative research do much more than simply describe something. As Denscombe (2014: 281) notes, 'text and talk might be treated at a surface level for the facts and information they contain, [but] the words can also be used as a basis for 'reading between the lines' to see what lies beneath the surface.' It is the role of the researcher to interpret any 'hidden meanings' within the written text (the reading between the lines), which can be analysed in relation to background assumptions (what the words imply) but also how they underlie social structure and interaction. A Thematic and narrative analysis was therefore considered to be the most appropriate form of analysis, because it facilitates an analysis of the participants' constructions and interpretations of a social and personal world (Denscombe, 2014). To facilitate the analysis of the data, first it needed to be organised into logical and manageable chunks.

The first phase of data analysis begun with a process of coding, which followed the series of steps as outlined by Bryman (2016). To begin with, each transcript was read through to act as a reminder of the conversations that had taken place and some general notes were taken about potentially interesting, important or significant ideas that were discussed within the interviews. During the second reading of the transcripts, notes were made in the margins. At this stage patterns started to emerge, and codes were assigned to the text. In this early coding phase, numerous codes were identified which then had to be condensed into a more manageable number of core themes. All the data were then arranged into the coded themes, which included headings such as 'discussions of national identity' as an example. This process enabled me to eliminate those sections of the interviews that were not directly relevant to the thesis and helped to reduce a vast amount of data into more manageable extracts. At this point I could begin to identify comparisons between different places and participants' stories and experiences. The themes

provided the basis for analysis, and the data was used to construct a story of my participants' sporting experiences, post-London 2012.

Ethical considerations

Conducting research ethically is extremely important to protect the participants involved, but to also protect the researcher and institution for which the data is being collected. Consequently, all research undertaken at a university requires ethical approval to be granted prior to the collection of any data. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that all participants involved in research are fully aware of what their participation entails, and that they give their consent to take part. One of the most common principles to achieve this is through informed consent (Oliver, 2008). Parental consent was also sought for 16 year-olds. All interviews began with a short introduction of who I was and the presentation of an informed consent form which participants were asked to read. The form outlined the aim of the study and the participant's role within it. It also informed participants that they were free to withdraw from the research should they wish to, with no negative consequences. After giving each participant time to read the form I offered a verbal overview of the project, and explained how the information they provided would be recorded, stored and used within the research. The participants were given the opportunity to ask any further questions before they completed and signed the consent form.

Another key element of research ethics is ensuring anonymity for the participants. All participants were advised that their identity would be protected via the use of a pseudonym. There are some potential methodological implications with attributing pseudonyms to participants who have distinctly different social backgrounds to your own. Some researchers exploring issues around 'race' and ethnicity in sport have chosen to attribute numbers as opposed to ethnic-based pseudonyms to refer to their participants. The rationale here was to avoid the use of stereotypical Asian names which could provide a 'confrontational' space. Ratna (2011: 389), for example, adopts this approach because 'South Asian pseudonyms do not necessarily reflect the changing modern times' that many of her British Asian research participants have grown up in.

This is something I carefully considered. One way to overcome this issue is to ask participants to choose their own pseudonym with which they would like to be known. In hindsight, this would have eliminated the sometimes-tricky issue of providing convincing pseudonyms to my young British Asian participants. However, my aim is to provide a voice for the life stories of young British Asian people, and I feel that being referred to by numbers might take away the human and personal element of their stories for some readers. For this reason, I did choose to attribute pseudonyms, as opposed to numbers, to my participants.

Summary

A qualitative research design - utilising semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection tool - was selected on the basis of my interpretive epistemological stance, and the type of knowledge that I wanted to produce. I aimed to use the data I collected to generate rich and in-depth material *in their own words* about young British Asians' experiences within sporting contexts and their perceptions of sport, and how such experiences perhaps impacted on their ongoing identity negotiations. I wanted, especially, to discuss the impact of London 2012 on questions of their national identity through sport. I relied on a relatively small sample of research participants – common in this type of research – selected from two different English cities: Leicester and Wolverhampton.

This chapter has presented a rationale for the chosen approach, and I have also discussed some of the methodological issues involved in producing a qualitative research study, including negotiating and maintaining access to research sites and recruiting research participants. I have also detailed briefly here the methods used to generate and analyse my data. In the next chapter I move on to discuss my findings in relation to consumption practices around sport in my sample.

Chapter 6

The Sporting Consumption of Young British Asians

Introduction: Notes on current research on fandom

Were my participants sports fans? This question may be more complex than it sounds. Academic studies on *male* sports fandom have received a considerable amount of attention within the sociology of sport literature. Within this work, various conceptualisations of fandom have emerged that, as Crawford (2004) suggests, often lead to complex questions around consumption and authenticity. Crawford's (2004) work takes into consideration the societal changes that have impacted on the experience of being a sports fan and, as a result, how they have increased the diverse ways in which fans now 'connect' with sport in their everyday lives. He suggests that despite the growing volume of research on fans, it is still the experiences of those who attend 'live' games that most discussions focus upon. Consequently, the voices of those who connect with their favourite sports teams via other mediums – internet, purchases, TV coverage - have traditionally been marginalised. Developments in media technology have resulted in a myriad of ways for sports fans to stay connected – even if they are unable to attend live events. Perhaps, as Crawford (2004: 21) suggests, a move away from 'rigid distinctions of fandom' is required to reflect such developments and bolster the resistance to accepting traditional models of fandom.

One of the most cited accounts which seeks to assess qualitatively different types of sports fandom is Giulianotti's (2002) sociologically informed theorisation of sports fan identities. Giulianotti's model proposes a 'taxonomy of spectator identities', comprised of four categorisations (supporters, followers, fans and flaneurs) which fit within an axis underpinned by two binary oppositions (hot-cool and traditional-consumer). Without trying to oversimplify the taxonomy proposed, the basic premise is that due to the intensive hyper-commodification of elite level football in England (with its increasing ties with corporations and business institutions, and perhaps most notably a new relationship with satellite television) sports

identification has been moving away from a basic supporter model - associated with traditional place and family identification with local clubs - towards more consumer-orientated forms of identification, characterised by an increasingly media-driven, market-centred relationship to the club in question.

The model proposed by Giulianotti (2002) however, it not without its critics. As Pope (2012), in her comparative work on female football and rugby fans, points out, there is potential for considerable overlap between these categories of supporter identity. As a result, Pope (2012) argues that we need to re-evaluate the model to account for such overlaps, especially when examining the motivations of *female* fans and supporters drawn to some of the smaller professional sports clubs. She argues that whilst 'hot' and 'cool' forms of fandom are clearly ideal fan types, some cases do not fit easily into either category and so on a continuum between 'hot' and 'cool' fandoms, varying levels of fan attachment are likely to co-present (Pope, 2012: 183).

In contrast to the burgeoning literature on traditional male sports fandom, there is still a paucity of research on what we might call 'non-traditional' fans (namely women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds). However, empirical research on female sports fans has started to emerge over the last decade (see Jones, 2008; Pope, 2012; 2015). The consensus here suggests that female fandom can take many forms, but all women consistently must negotiate their marginalised status as fans because of prejudicial beliefs among men about the supposed inauthenticity of female fandom. Despite these developments in one marginal group - the field of female fandom research - there remains little empirical work on the experiences of fans drawn from minority ethnic backgrounds, and in particular, British Asian voices remain largely absent from this area of enquiry. The place/identity issues involved here are complex. Jones (2008) has suggested that research with such 'non-traditional' male fans might yield interesting and insightful results, especially when considered in relation to the experiences of other types of 'non-traditional' fan.

The aim of this chapter is to explore my participants' experiences as sports consumers and it focuses on their consumption and interest in domestic sport in the UK. It is, regrettably, dominated by the voices of my male participants and many of our conversations were about one sport, football. Only one female participant – Jess – was as interested in watching sport as she was playing it, so her experiences as a British Indian female sports fan is the only non-male voice represented here. The chapter begins by analysing the 'live' British Asian fan experience in order to explore the realities and perceptions of being a British Asian sports spectator. Next, I consider the experiences of those who support their (mainly football) teams from afar, and who, for various reasons have limited opportunities to consume 'live' sport at the stadium. The final section considers the role of domestic football fandom in helping to shape sporting identities, and the function it might serve in relation to questions of assimilation into mainstream British culture.

Consuming 'live' sport: Experiences at the stadium

Whilst many British Asian males (and increasingly Asian females) profess to be supporters of a range of elite Premier League clubs, evidence suggests that their presence at live football matches, on the whole, remains quite low (Burdsey and Randhawa, 2012). However, some statistical evidence is beginning to emerge that suggests a recent increase in BAME attendance at live EPL matches, implying a new trend in spectatorship patterns may be in process. Although we do not know what proportion of these attendees were British Asian, attendance figures for the 2014/15 season would seem to show that the percentage of the BAME population attending 'live' Premier League matches was at an all-time high of 16% (Premier League, 2015). Does this signal convincingly a changing demographic of football fans attending live EPL matches? By contrast, in the 2003/4 Season the BAME figure was a mere 1% (Christopher, 2015).

Despite the recognition by some football clubs that issues of racism and the cost of attendance could act as disincentives for BAME fans (Millward, 2008), a large proportion of clubs have assumed, perhaps naively, that the non-attendance of particular ethnic minority groups is linked to their preferences for other sports, to religious or cultural reasons, or for their preference of consuming football matches

on television (Bradbury, 2010; Ratna, 2014). Whilst these might indeed be factors that serve to reduce British Asian attendance at football matches in the UK, it is more likely that there are also other reasons for their non-attendance.

There is a strong consensus in the research community that it is the hegemonic 'Whiteness' of football which deters some British Asians fans from attending live games, through fear of being exposed in an intimidating and unfamiliar football space (Burdsey and Randhawa, 2012; Kilvington, 2016). Statistically, incidents of overt racism or discrimination on the terraces are reducing, at least according to the results of an anonymous online fan survey of 2,500 British football supporters (Cleland and Cashmore, 2013). Whilst 67% of those who watched football between 1990-1999 reported witnessing or experiencing racism at matches, fewer respondents (50%) reported similar incidents occurring between 2010-2012. However, despite this slight decrease in incidents, many fans within the survey (which was completed by a sample of 95% White fans) recognised that racism was still an issue at football, but that it was more covert and nuanced forms of 'new racism' that were present below a relatively harmonious surface. Racism (in all its guises) has been identified as a significant contributing factor that might well be a deterrent for some British Asian football fans (Burdsey, 2012; Burdsey and Randhawa, 2012). Of interest here, is whether perceptions of racism and discrimination continue to be a factor that impacts on 'live' football consumption among my own samples.

My data rather supports the notion that British Asian football fans are not overtly excluded from attending football matches because of racial discrimination. Yet, *perceptions* of racism within football stadia can hinder British Asian fans from wanting to attend live games just as much as actually *experiencing* racism first hand (Burdsey and Randhawa, 2012). Cleland and Cashmore (2013) also found that the historical fear of racism at football matches remained for some fans. Were fears over safety an issue for my sample of British Asian supporters? Certainly, historically, racism was an ever-present threat:

> **Abid:** Yes, because it was unheard of, an Asian going to a football match. I grew up thinking I couldn't go. I have a friend and his Dad took him to a Villa game fifteen years ago and he was one of the first Asian people to go from our community. People used to ask about his experience going, and if there was any trouble. It [fears over safety] was an issue, and it was unheard of [that British Asians would attend live matches] then. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

This quotation makes reference to the wider perceptions of hostility for British Asian supporters at one period in time in the West Midlands area. Although Abid did eventually start to attend some local live Premier League fixtures with a friend, his affinity to Liverpool FC had already developed. Fears over safety by older family members at live matches meant that attending fixtures at his local club, Wolverhampton Wanderers, was out of the question. If Abid wanted to consume football as a young boy then this had to be done via other mediums, such as consuming on television. His experiences attending a Premier League fixture, whilst not especially off-putting for him, personally, reinforced some of the perceptions of hostility in the stands for British Asian supporters. Abid recalls racial abuse being directed towards him by a section of away fans because of the colour of his skin, though he dismissed the abuse as simply 'banter' between fans of rival clubs:

> **Abid**: A close friend of mine was a Villa fan. So, we used to go [to some of their games]. They were playing Newcastle and we were sitting right next to the away fans and were having banter. And they called us 'Curry cunts'… It wasn't taken in a racial way; we didn't get angry and react. We didn't really take any offence, as we were young and confident. We just swore back. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

The response by Abid, to dismiss what was on the face of it racial abuse as 'banter', is consistent with findings by Jones (2008) on gender abuse. Female football fans often downplay overt sexism and suggest that abuse was just a 'fundamental part of football culture.' Female football match officials adopted similar strategies within a male dominated environment. They also broadly accepted that sexist abuse was

an underlying element of football culture and that being visibly affected by it would show signs of critical weakness – something that they felt they must avoid, almost at all cost (Forbes et al, 2015). Similarly, Burdsey (2011) points out that pressure is placed on British Asians to downplay discrimination in sport. For Abid, dismissing this sort of crude racial abuse as 'part of the game' paradoxically is a potential way of resisting the exclusionary practices apparent within football culture. It allows him and his friends to 'fit in' as part of an unvarnished, mainly White, working class male football culture.

This attitude could be construed to be potentially problematic, of course, as it suggests that, in particular scenarios, racism (or sexism) ought to be accepted as opposed to being challenged. Abid expected that he would be subjected to racial abuse at football, based on his experiences as a local league player: 'It [being referred to as 'Curry cunts'] didn't shock me either. [I think] that comes from me playing football and getting abused racially then [too].'

Whilst overt racism in the terraces and stands (such as the racist chanting Abid describes, or direct abuse towards British Asian fans) was, at one period, a major issue within British football stadiums (Cleland and Cashmore, 2013), the introduction and work of various organisations such as the national anti-racism campaign Kick it Out (KIO) has meant that, to some extent, overt, collective racist behaviour is no longer quite so obvious inside British stadia. Football fans may be becoming less tolerant of the perpetrators of racist abuse and racism is now punishable by law.

The work of KIO and other bodies, though, has really only been partially effective, and it is not without its critics. For example, both Cleland and Cashmore (2013) and Randhawa (2011) argue that in 20 years KIO and governing bodies have failed to create positive and sustained change. For some, this is attributable to the local, national and international governing bodies' reluctance to challenge (particularly the more covert forms of institutional) racism. This structural 'colour-blind' racism that exists within football's authorities, Cleland and Cashmore (2013) argue, means that such organisations have failed to put racial equality at the top of their agendas,

choosing to focus instead on the commercialisation and global expansion of the game.

Premier League clubs - many of whom, on the surface at least, support anti-racist policies, not least because more inclusive stadiums might potentially mean increased fan attendance - are now generally regarded as safer places to visit for minority ethnic fans in the UK (Burdsey and Randhawa, 2012). My own research broadly supports this view. It was only Abid, the oldest of my participants, who discussed the fear of racism as a major deterrent at a particular period of time for the British Asian communities. The perception of my slightly younger sample of British Asians based in Leicester was that major football stadiums were not regarded today as problematic spaces. The wider impact of globalisation on the pitch – players from different cultures and ethnicities - and an increased presence of stewards which see supporters in breach of any conditions associated with crowd behaviour liable to be arrested or ejected from the stadiums (and in some cases, given significant bans from re-entering it), has helped to create a more 'diverse and family friendly' atmosphere at football.

However, such shifts at recently gentrified Premier League locations are perceived not to have filtered down in the same way to the lower tiers of the game. Stadiums here are often considered more threatening, and less inclusive and multicultural spaces. Zayn, an Arsenal fan, alluded to racism within lower-league football:

> **Zayn:** So, I go to [Arsenal] games [but] I don't go to [local lower league club] games as they are so racist; very racist. I think [that is] because people are from a working-class background. You get 'Chavs' and you find, in general, there is more racism amongst them than others. There's kind of a hooliganism type element to it really. And I find that's getting more glorified now than before. Like [the] 90s & 80s was really bad. Then, they did a lot of campaigns to stop it [racism]. But I never saw it amongst my youth but now I'm starting to notice it more, definitely. Like, if I go to an Arsenal game, I won't hear any racism at all. (British Pakistani, Muslim, male, Leicester)

Zayn has no real experience of lower level football. In this sense, his comments support Burdsey and Randhawa's (2012) assertion that *perceptions* or expectations of racism at sporting fixtures can be as off-putting as actual experiences. Furthermore, Zayn's support for cosmopolitan and diverse Arsenal reflects his own experiences as a British Pakistani male - growing up in the outer suburbs of Leicestershire – but someone who has been the victim of racial intolerance as a football player. He wants to follow a club where racism has, in his experience, been eradicated, and thus his experiences in the stadium as a fan will not be tainted, as his experiences as a player were.

Such negative perceptions about fear of abuse (whether real or perceived), at football stadiums, meant that even if these young British Asians wanted to attend 'live' matches in the past, parents or other family members might not have been so supportive:

> **Abid:** Many years ago, my granddad spoke about football in the sense that you don't want to go as you will get beaten up because you are Asian. My parents used to say [the same thing]. 'You can't go to a game you will get battered'. Football was painted like that. Having said that, many years ago someone I know [an Asian] who is also a Liverpool fan got slashed in the face by Everton fans. Everyone discussed that in the community and so people used him as an example [of why you shouldn't go]. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

Here a single incident – actually, with no confirmed racial element – is nevertheless used to justify perceptions of football stadiums as routinely violent and unwelcoming spaces for British Asian fans. Such perceptions can obviously be censorious, and thus British Asians may choose to consume their sport in other ways, such as watching on TV or – like Zayn - choosing to support clubs who they perceive to be more inclusive and racially tolerant. These perceptions - that certain, larger successful Premier League clubs are more welcoming and offer more inclusive spaces - are bound up in their perceived metropolitanism and their global

reach and thus their ability to attract a cosmopolitan mix of both players and spectators.

A recent significant increase in active British Asian supporter groups, especially in locations with significant British Asian populations, means that some other Football League clubs are now slowly being considered as more welcoming and more inclusive places. Historical perceptions of English football stadia as being exclusively 'White spaces' are starting to give way to perceptions of a more multicultural and diverse football audience. This may be connected to a change in supporter profile as clubs recognise the wider gains which might be possible from attracting new fans into football from more affluent, middle-class backgrounds.

The Punjabi Wolves (Wolverhampton) and Bangla Bantams (Bradford) are perhaps two of the most established and high-profile Asian supporter groups, whose continued presence in significant numbers at live football matches have helped to remove some of the perceived racialized dangers of live attendance for minority ethnic fans, whilst also promoting a sense of collective identity and belonging. Jess, a Wolverhampton Wanderers season ticket holder, considers her club to be actively inclusive of fans from diverse social backgrounds:

> **Jess:** Wolves itself, as a club, there is even a group called Punjabi Wolves, so they do a lot of charity work for people in Wolverhampton. As a club, they are really accepting of Asians. Even where I sit, all my dad's friends sit, as they have been there for years and they all sit in the same place. Everyone knows we are going to be there and they are used to us. When we sit in our seats it's fine. But when I walk into the ground I can tell people are like, 'Oh...an Asian girl coming to watch football.' It's a big thing. I have a season ticket and I go every week. I'm used to it now and it's one of those things that I expect. I've always had it...when I've played, watched or coached football. (British Indian, Sikh, female, Wolverhampton)

The introduction of dedicated supporter groups such as the Punjabi Wolves has helped increase the number of Asian heritage attendees at Wolves matches: fans

who are no longer quite so concerned over issues of personal safety or casual racism delivered under the guise of 'banter' (Khan, 2010). However, the phrasing of Jess' response – 'they are used to us' - suggests that there might be a perceived tolerance of the presence of British Asian supporters as opposed to their real acceptance as part of the fan culture at Wolves. For instance, Jess is more aware of her own identity as a British Indian female as she is entering the stadium, suggesting in her response that some people in other sections of the stadium may still be surprised by her presence. Although Jess is well aware that her role as a British Asian female fan is doubly transgressive, fans from a more diverse range of ethnic backgrounds are beginning to become more visible within football stadiums in England. Dedicated British Asian supporter groups could be argued to have provided some of the encouragement and sense of personal security – for example by attending games in large groups – that Abid's parents and grandparents found lacking, and this may have helped to change this generation of British Asians' perceptions about negative experiences at UK football stadia.

Ali, a British Pakistani male, felt that attending *cricket* matches in England was a more inclusive experience than football because of the lack of segregated, 'tribalised' affinities at cricket and thus the different character and organisation of the crowd:

> **Ali:** With cricket, everyone is together, the crowd too. They would probably end up sitting together. And when the game's finished, a good handshake and that's it. I think with football, it's a bit more aggressive. You have one team one side and one the other. If someone loses it always tends to kick off. (British Pakistani, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

Deeply embedded narratives about historical violence between opposing fans is still strongly associated with football in the UK. As Ali identifies fandom in relation to cricket - but is also the case for rugby union and rugby league – rival supporters are mixed in the stadium and there is little need for crowd control. Such histories ensure that British Asian fans are aware of potential conflicts at the football stadiums, even if they have not witnessed any violence or abuse themselves. Whilst

these beliefs ensue, many British Asian fans might choose to follow their favoured football clubs in alternative ways.

Supporting from afar

Whilst British Asians have made few inroads in England as elite football players, it is clear that many young British Asians are now passionate followers of English Premier League clubs. The findings presented here thus reinforce Burdsey and Randhawa's (2012: 105) evidence which suggests that 'British Asian football supporters engage widely in the varied forms of twenty-first century football consumption' despite their continued absence as professional players, coaches and administrators. Indeed, many of the young male participants (and a small number of female participants) interviewed here, regard themselves as committed football fans; some travel considerable distances to attend 'live' games, whilst others mainly consume football via the media.

Traditionally, sport venues in England have been considered as sites where local fans could express and celebrate their strongly local identities. However, recent shifts towards greater geographical mobility, more pervasive merchandising activities and the impact of what Taylor (1995) has described as a 'media saturated society' means that it is increasingly common for sports clubs to draw their support from outside their specific locality (Rowe and Gilmour, 2009). As Giulianotti (2002: 28) suggests, 'the old ritual sublimations that served to bind sports fans to their club and community have been replaced by the mass consumption of televised, market driven sport.'

In other words, global television coverage has, to an extent, dissolved local team identification in football, but also in all sports. Whilst fandom can be (and sill often is) socially inherited - for example passed on from older generations of supporters in the family - this is not always the case today. New football attachments and sensibilities around consumption provides today's fans with a greater element of choice and the reasons given for supporting clubs outside of the immediate locality are numerous. As Sandvoss (2003) asserts, in the late-modern era initial reasons

given for supporting a club are often independent of geographical factors, and this is especially the case when the first contact with football is made through the media.

Many of the young British Asian interviewees who were born and raised in Leicester followed football clubs that are based (and therefore play their home games) a considerable distance away from Leicester. Only one interviewee from Leicester actually described himself as a supporter of Leicester City FC. There was a similar trend in Wolverhampton: of the five participants who were active football followers none professed to support the Championship club Wolverhampton Wanderers; instead they identified Manchester United, Chelsea and Liverpool as their favoured football clubs. This section aims to explore some of the reasons why this might by the case.

'Consumer' fans - those who are regarded as 'bandwagon jumpers' of successful clubs - are often regarded as passive and inauthentic. Rowe and Gilmour (2009) indicated that global consumers of the EPL were dismissed as distant, 'mediated fans'. In the case of British Asian supporters though, their complex heritages are argued to attenuate local ties (Williams and Peach, 2017; Burdsey, 2004). Recent research by Williams and Peach (2017), framed by Leicester City's unlikely EPL title win in 2016, emphasises the complexities of local heritage and belonging in provincial sporting places like Leicester. In an era in which British Asian sporting place connections remain attenuated and consumer fandom is rife, according to one Asian fan in their study supporting one's modest local club could be perceived as 'opposing the flow': something which goes against the more 'traditional' supporter choices of British Asian fans in supporting more successful, but distant, EPL clubs.

Nearly all my sample of young British Asians professed not to have a strong sense of *local* identity. They typically did not use place as an identifier symbol. For a proportion of my interviewees, this relative lack of attachment to the local area for identity purposes could be attributed to house moves between different UK towns and cities. However, there were also participants who were born in their immediate and current localities who also broadly rejected local or regional identities. Abid, for example, recalled the South Asian community that he grew up in as extremely

insular, with many people restricting themselves to the immediate confines of an area largely inhibited by other South Asians, and reluctant to venture out of these 'safe' spaces. As has been documented elsewhere, some members of the South Asian communities that migrated to the UK integrated into their new surroundings much more easily than others (Singh, 2003).

Many South Asian migrants were met with hostile attitudes upon their arrival to Britain. In sport, as we have seen, British Asian heritage players were largely excluded from entering the social spaces of local English cricket and football clubs, and so were forced to create their own networks (Raman, 2014). This hostility has been used to justify the allegiance of British Asians to national cricket teams of their ancestral roots (Valiotis, 2009). It is reasonable to suggest that the hostility migrants faced upon their arrival also deterred them from entering the White social spaces of British football stadia, particularly at a time when football hooliganism and racism were rife. Consequently, connections to local sports teams – and the cities they symbolically represent - did not develop amongst many first-generation British Asians.

Even now, football crowds in Britain in multicultural cities are comprised of an overwhelming majority of White fans. Although my sample of young British Asians did not necessarily cite fear of racism as a key prohibiting factor for their attendance at live EPL or English Football League football matches, it was clear that, for some, historical tales of hostility and verbal and physical abuse directed towards South Asian fans had worried older generations and continued to resonate. This resulted in different traditions of support for those whose families had been football fans. Perceived dangers of entering the 'White space' of British football stadiums often meant that it was better to connect via television, and an overwhelming majority of the slightly older males in my British Asian interview sample came from families that supported successful (and, thus, regularly televised) First Division and then Premier League clubs, such as Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool.

Crawford (2004: 53) argues that a sporting connection to place can be 'imagined' rather than 'physical' and thus people may form non-local sporting allegiances for

many different reasons. Abid feels no local attachment and justifies his support for Liverpool FC broadly in terms of core consumption themes and the quality of product on offer:

> **Abid:** Where I'm from is it important? There is no relationship [with Wolves] and I don't think I need to support my local club. I see football for football, and as a sport. [I want to watch] great footballers and games, as opposed to [the team] where I live. A lot of my family members are Liverpool fans and I guess it was through their conversations about Liverpool's success in the 70s and 80s that influenced me. If I am going to pay money to watch football, then I will pay to watch my team. I shouldn't have to be local to be a fan. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

The key motivation to support Liverpool expressed here is linked to that club's perceived quality and success. In choosing Liverpool, Abid emphasises this club's superiority over his local Championship club, Wolves. A lack of rooted generations of local support for a local football club may mean, of course, that young British Asians are somewhat more 'free floating' as potentially active fans. Whilst support here is still inherited – older generations of British Asians chose to identify with successful clubs via family members – this is often over their local hometown (or adopted hometown for those who were born elsewhere) club. Another reason for this could well relate to the perceived hostility at local stadiums, and so earlier generations of British Asian supporters chose to follow teams they could never attend but could regularly watch on television. Those clubs which have the most success and television exposure then would be the most 'logical' club to support. Furthermore, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven, young British Asians are clearly motivated in their sports consumption practices by narratives of success. This was evident, too, in relation to academic success with the incentive of a desirable career at stake. As will be discussed in Chapter Nine in relation to sport and national identity, too, possibilities for success, and thus for reflected esteem, is a key motivator for making choices about supporting England in sport or a national sporting team from the subcontinent.

Jas highlighted assumptions about British Asian support for successful clubs and family allegiance in relation to his support for non-local Manchester United:

> **Jas**: Yeah, another stereotype! [I support] Manchester United. That's passed down to me. My old man supports them and I think - we have got three generations that were raised in Britain, my grandfather, my dad any myself - so my grandfather he supported Manchester United and I've only known [to support] Man United since I was a kid. So, I support United. But, yeah, that's another one [stereotype about British Asians]. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

Jas's fandom for United is obviously based on factors independent of geographical location. Like Abid, he claims a family connection, thus 'authenticating' his support for United. Jas actually distances himself from other fans who follow clubs based only on their success. He uses British Asian fans of a rival club, Manchester City, to demonstrate what he believes to be a form of rather superficial and inauthentic fandom:

> **Jas:** I was in the gym the other day, and I saw an Asian kid in a Man City shirt, and I just thought: Why do you like Man City? Is it just because that now they have come into the money they have come into the success that now you like Man City? Last year, there was a guy on our course, a Muslim guy, who just said: 'Yeah, I support Man City because they are good now. Those were his exact words! (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

Jas considers his own support of Manchester United to be an enduring one and properly rooted in family tradition – if not in place ties. His motivations to support Manchester United, he claims, are independent of their recent success. Supporting clubs outside of the immediate geographical locality, combined with increasing costs of attending 'live' matches, possible racism, and the increasing accessibility of matches on television, have all contributed to British Asian fans following their chosen EPL clubs in alternative ways.

Most young British Asian fans had to 'follow' their clubs in de-localised ways, usually via televised games, as they were largely reliant on others to provide transport and to finance ticket purchases. They are 'media fans' as Dixon (2014) would describe them. The following quotations from Hassan, Raj and Abid reflect the typical ways in which many young British Asians engaged with their favoured (if distant) football clubs, and the key reasons for their largely media consumption of football:

> **Hassan:** [I watch] at home or at a friend's house on TV. I go to Manchester sometimes but not that often, maybe about three times a season. [That's] with my cousins and uncles [who live] in Bolton so if I go to visit then they take me. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Leicester)

> **Raj:** I don't really want to go by myself... Getting transportation there and back as well. Say, for example, if I wanted to ask my dad to come and he's not really a big sports fan, I don't think that he would be too interested. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Leicester)

> **Abid**: I watch football at home as it's not very often I can get tickets to watch games. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

Developments in media technology mean that these British Asian football fans can now connect with their clubs in a variety of ways and these have been a significant factor in the growth in the global fan base that some English clubs can now boast. 'Global' fans can support a club without ever attending a live match – or even visiting the host country. Global supporters of elite English clubs are often coined as 'glory supporters': people who only support clubs that have had some recent success and, thus, their authenticity as loyal fans is often challenged. However, this is not necessarily the case with British Asian fans, who are less fixed by their local identity due to their complex heritage.

> **Abid**: I watch most things in the comfort of my own home with the missus. Sky Sports is on 24/7 [at home], it's always on! I am a strong Liverpool fan:

merchandise, tops, I have all the apps on my phone. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

These British Asian football fans often explained their fandom in terms of a series of 'acts of consumption' (Sandvoss, 2003: 17), which can include the consumption of matches but also their related products. As Dixon (2014: 17) attests, 'the symbolic presence of the team colours and badge... [act as] a symbol of self and group identity that harbours an emotional connection.' Here Abid displays his commitment to Liverpool through the consumption of televised games as well as the purchase of sport related consumer goods (Crawford, 2004: 114). This ties in with the notion that 'wearing the shirt' suggests some form of symbolic identity and commitment and acts as a signifier of fan dedication and authenticity (Back et al, 2001: 82). Abid associates his display of LFC goods as proof that he is a 'committed' Liverpool fan, and Sky Sports being on '24/7' at home confirms that football is an important – and 'safe' - part of his everyday life.

The functions of football consumption

Football knowledge in the UK has a currency that allows male spectators to demonstrate masculine traits and bonds through their interactions around the game. As Davis and Duncan (2006) emphasize, men can emphasize empowerment through their display of sporting knowledge and such displays can lead to bonding within social settings. For many young British Asian male fans, football knowledge, so to speak, acts as a particular currency that allows them to negotiate a sense of belonging and attachment to Britain. Hence, British Asian male fandom is about more than just sport; it's also about social belonging (Ratna, 2014). One particular response, from Saad, to the simple question of 'Do you watch sport?' stood out in this regard:

> **Saad:** Yes, actually, I love it! Sport is my life. I watch football every day. If you ask me a question about a German football team I will probably tell you the answer right now. I know my sport inside out. (British Pakistani, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

Here Saad equates being a 'proper' football fan with knowledge of clubs outside of England. He is displaying his football knowledge, as Dixon (2013: 40) has argued, as a form of 'popular' cultural capital – though this should not be confused with official cultural capital in a Bourdieusian sense, because football knowledge does not necessarily equate to some kind of upward mobility, except perhaps in a symbolic sense with other 'knowing' fans. Instead, popular cultural capital in relation to football knowledge equates to the increased esteem it can create amongst peers within a particular 'community of taste' (Fiske, 1992). If the community of taste is football, then Saad is likely to accrue considerable popular cultural capital due to his broad range of international football knowledge, which he has acquired mainly by consuming sport via the media. Dishaan, on the other hand, has taken an active interest in developing knowledge of one specific football club: Leicester City:

> **Dishaan:** [I support] Leicester. Most of my mates are Leicester fans. There is about four of my mates [that I go to watch live matches with]. That's all they talk about, so you get into it, and you start to do research. And you start to like them. (British Asian, Hindu, male, Leicester)

Although Dishaan acknowledges that he and his friends 'talk about other clubs too', it is collective displays of fandom towards and knowledge of Leicester City that hold currency here: an example of group affiliation (Wann, 1995). Localism per se seems less binding in a group sense. By attending 'live' matches with friends, social links can be strengthened and maintained, especially if, as he highlights, Leicester City is a regular feature of their conversations. It also allows Dishaan to both explore and confirm aspects of his personal local identity, which he describes as 'extremely important'.

If knowledge and displays of fandom for particular football clubs can result in an accumulation of cultural capital, then the contradiction of dual fandom – that is, identifying as a fan of more than one club – is an interesting feature of supporter identity to explore. Dual fandom perhaps seems more likely in countries where a very large league dominates or where a lower standard of domestic football means

one might be a local fan but also display similar behaviours towards a larger foreign club. As Doczi and Toth (2009) indicate, in a globalized world where the most televised sporting leagues are now widely accessible, global fans are increasingly following the results of foreign competitions and might therefore become enthusiastic supporters of a foreign club. The number of Manchester United 'fans' based in the Far East demonstrates this point. Whilst they might not ever be able to attend a 'live' match at Old Trafford, the proliferation of Premier League matches televised abroad, along with Manchester United's aggressive marketing strategies aimed to capitalise on the Asian market means that many United 'fans' can consume their sport from afar.

Dual fan allegiance can also be evident within a single country and that was the case for a small number of British Asian participants who identified as supporters of more than one English club. The British Asian fans in this study seemed to demonstrate a more tenuous connection with their local clubs. This can perhaps be attributed to historical fears of live attendance at a time when football stadia were perceived as much more threatening 'White' spaces than they are today. Furthermore, Wolverhampton Wanderers and Leicester City (historically) have been relatively unsuccessful, regional clubs, often floating between the upper divisions of the league structure. Football fandom might well be reflective of a search for satisfaction and success in aspirational British Asian households, and this might explain why many British Asians are fans of the Premier League's 'bigger' clubs.

Dual fan allegiance is perhaps not quite as controversial when the two clubs play in different leagues in the football pyramid – indeed many fans of professional Football League clubs might also 'look out for' the local non-league football results or 'follow' an EPL club. But, dual fandom becomes much more problematic if the two clubs play in the same league. As Doczi and Toth (2009) suggest, supporting two *English* clubs is perhaps where the real essence of dual fandom can be analysed. The presence of dual fandom in my British Asian sample is illustrated in the following quotations:

Jess: I'm a Chelsea fan, and that doesn't really go down very well with anyone. I've always supported them. I watch Premier League games mainly. I've also got a Wolves season ticket, so I go there as well. I love watching football. (British Indian, Sikh, female, Wolverhampton)

Baasit: I go to quite a few Leicester games, but I'm actually a [Manchester] United fan. I do go to Old Trafford to watch games, but [it's] mainly on TV. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Leicester)

Jai: I support Liverpool but I don't go to watch them, I go to watch Wolves games, so local games. I've been quite a few times with family, but mainly I go with my friends. (British Indian, Hindu, male, Wolverhampton)

Here, dual fandom offers possibilities of success but also shows a willingness to reinforce local identities by integrating actively in support of a home-town club. Dual fandom is also a mechanism for young British Asians to connect socially with other local fans. Interestingly, Baasit and Jess display somewhat contradictory characteristics in relation to their levels of commitment to their supposed 'second clubs'. Whilst Baasit emphasizes that his primary loyalties lie with Manchester United (he would support Manchester United when the two teams [United and Leicester] played each other) he also attends a number of 'live' Leicester City matches. Similarly, whilst Jess identifies first and foremost as a Chelsea fan, she has a local season ticket for Wolves. For Jess, supporting two clubs is not so problematic because these clubs do not currently play in the same league. On her terms, she would only have to 'negotiate' reflexively this dual fandom should either club get promoted or relegated, or should they be drawn against each other in a cup competition.

It is reasonable to assume that Baasit and Jess's dual fan loyalties may be driven by competing motivations in relation to the sports fan motivation scale developed by Wann (1995). Supporting one club alone may not provide fans with the required outcome. Consequently, they may be motivated to support more than one club because of the different functions they serve. Whilst they have to connect with their

favoured clubs through the media, they are motivated to do so because associating with a successful EPL club can promote greater self-esteem and provide better entertainment (It is worth noting here that the data was collected prior to Leicester City being crowned the unlikeliest of Premier League champions in the 2015/16 season). The main motivations for attending 'live' local fixtures are related to the social aspects of group affiliation and family tradition.

Summary

This chapter has explored the consumption practices of sport among my sample of Midlands-based young British Asians. Mostly, these have been young male fans of football. The chapter demonstrates that consuming sport, 'live' or through other mediums, was an important element of many of my male interviewees' identities. Deeply embedded narratives about historical violence and racism between opposing fans at live sporting events were, at one time, a major deterrent for British Asian football supporters. However, my sample of young, mainly third-generation, British Asian sports fans suggested that fears of racism at football stadia were no longer off-putting. My interviewees were positive about the perceived inclusiveness at the larger, successful Premier League clubs, based mostly upon the visibility and acceptance of a cosmopolitan mix of global players and spectators. Even the stadia of smaller provincial clubs lower down the football league, such as Wolverhampton Wanderers, were no longer perceived to be problematic spaces by my participants.

In keeping with previous research on British Asian domestic football fandom, my participants were often passionate fans of English Premier League clubs, young people who engaged widely with various forms of twenty-first century football-based consumption. Even those who attended live local matches often professed to be more ardent supporters of the more successful (and more distant) Premier League clubs, despite not being able to regularly attend live matches. We must consider *why* many British Asian fans are not supporting their local clubs, instead choosing to preference more consumer-orientated forms of identification. The place and identity issues involved with British Asian fans are complex, and thus many British Asian supporters do not fit neatly within more traditional (and less

flexible) models of fandom. This sort of consumer fandom is often regarded as passive and inauthentic, although the complex heritages, combined with historical threats of violence that deterred many British Asians from entering the White social spaces of British football stadia, could well explain the relative lack of connections to local sports clubs for first-and second generation British Asians. Such perceptions of football stadiums as hostile or unwelcoming spaces likely promoted alternative forms of consumption, such as watching on TV, and so early generations of British Asian supporters forged connections with successful – and thus regularly televised – First Division (and then Premier League) clubs. Consequently, this pattern of local fandom was not transmitted down or inherited by my mainly third-generation British Asian interviewees.

Most of my sample still did much of their sports consumption at home. A lack of local affinity, combined with high costs for tickets and travel and supporting distant Premier League clubs effectively excluded a large proportion of my young British Asian sample, particularly in Leicester. Thus, it was much more convenient to follow clubs in more consumer-orientated ways, for example watching televised games, or 'following' clubs through various social media platforms. Fears over safety though, despite being historical deterrents to live sports consumption, were not cited as problematic by my young participants. Historical perceptions of British football stadia as hostile 'White spaces' are clearly beginning to change. Dedicated British Asian supporter groups, such as the Punjabi Wolves, have raised the profile of British Asians attending live matches and have perhaps begun to challenge negative perceptions of those spaces that were once a major deterrent for older generations of South Asian heritage football supporters. The success of these groups might be starting to finally attract local sports fandom. As we have seen, a number of football fans were citing dual supporter preferences: they had inherited the connections to successful Premier League clubs of their older British Asian relatives, but they were also regularly attending local club matches. Perhaps, in time, this will encourage stronger local affinities and increase live attendances at local clubs, and less young British Asians will be looking to the regularly televised top Premier League clubs to satisfy their consumption practices.

Perceptions of hostility and actual experiences of racism and discrimination were a key feature of the first-generation migration experience, in relation to sports consumption around football, but also to sports participation. Are stories of racism and discrimination still central to the experiences of sports participation by my sample of young British Asians? What factors prohibit participation in sport and physical activity? It is the sports participation stories of my mainly third-generation British Asians that are explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

The Impact of London 2012

British Asian identities & Olympic Sport

Introduction

A lack of British Asian representation in elite level football in England does not seem to impact on its popularity in these communities: many younger British Asian men (and women) are passionate supporters of English Premier League clubs and many of the England national team (Burdsey, 2006a; Ratna, 2014). However, we have seen how showing support in sport for more than one country may result in questions about 'divided loyalties' and that even third generation British Asians are sometimes charged with being 'caught between cultures' (Fletcher, 2011). Whilst there is a consensus that analysing the construction of national identities through sport can enable a wider sociological understanding of the nuances and complexities of contemporary British Asian identities, previous research in this area has focused almost exclusively on football and cricket. The aim of this chapter is to extend the analysis beyond these sports to explore national identity and sport affiliation through the lens of the London 2012 Olympic Games. Of particular interest here is the extent to which my participants engaged (if at all) with the Games and, for those who did engage, how did the Games contribute to their understandings and articulations of national identity, 'Britishness' and belonging?

Despite a substantial increase in the number of studies on minoritised ethnic communities that have explored feelings and experiences of national belonging and identity, we still know very little about these in the context of sport. Aside from a few notable exceptions, the scrutiny and examination of the nexus of 'Englishness', ethnicity and sport can still be considered to remain in its infancy. Given this relatively underdeveloped research area, Fletcher and Lusted (2017) have proposed a conceptual framework that considers a range of possible avenues from which to explore this complex nexus. The four concepts that compose this

framework are the notions of diaspora, third space, hybridity and multiculturalism. I will return to these elements during the course of my own work in this chapter.

The chapter begins by exploring the different ways my participants described their own ethnic identities. It then moves on to examine the role of sport in constructing and negotiating especially national identities. In this section, I explore the national football and cricket affiliations of my young British Asian interviewees, which will then provide some context for discussions around identities and the Olympic Games. The second part of the chapter moves beyond these core sports to explore the wider impact of the 2012 Games on national identity and 'Britishness', thus, I hope, making an original contribution to research on sport and national identity.

Contested notions of 'Englishness' and 'Britishness'

Debates around the conflation of 'Englishness' and 'Britishness' tend to resurface in the build-up to any Olympic Games. At the centre of this debate in the run up to London 2012, for example, was a dispute about whether there would be a Great Britain team playing in the Olympic football tournament, especially as host nations are expected to compete in all Olympic events. Whilst Great Britain have won two gold medals in men's Olympic football tournaments (in 1908 and 1912), until London 2012, a team representing Great Britain had not competed in the Olympic football tournament since the 1960 Games in Rome. The omission of a Great Britain team in the Olympics is mainly attributed to the fact that the constituent nations of the UK have a long tradition of being represented by separate football teams, and have voting rights with FIFA to match. So, there were very real concerns that the independent status that the home nations enjoy in world football might well be compromised if they combined to play as Great Britain (or Team GB) in the Olympic Games (Ewen, 2012).

The contested concept of a British national identity in sport was bought to the fore in public debate at the London Games when the male Welsh footballers Ryan Giggs, Craig Bellamy, Joe Allen and Neil Taylor and the female Scottish players Kim Little and Ifeoma Dieke, all representing Team GB, elected not to sing the shared English and British national anthem, God Save the Queen, before their respective matches.

Vincent et al (2017) have noted that many Scottish and Welsh players and fans regard their primary Scottish or Welsh national identity as more important than a much less meaningful British identity. To further complicate matters, English and British national identities are, problematically, often considered as synonymous (MacRury and Poynter, 2010), perhaps contributing to the weaker connection to a British identity for many citizens of the other UK home nations. Owing to the current political situation in the UK, Fletcher and Lusted (2017) argue that the clear differentiation between 'Englishness' and 'Britishness' is required in order to accurately examine how national identity plays out in contemporary British sport.

As Fletcher and Lusted (2017) also point out, it was largely the English who were the key influencers of the origins and expansion of the British Empire, including the role of sport in this process. As such, any reference to sport and Britain, the British or the British Empire would be more accurately reflected in terms of discussions of England and the English. They argue that the process of 'internal colonization' must also be considered, which helps to account for the unequal power distribution between the 'home' nations within the Empire. For Fletcher and Lusted (2017: 2):

> 'The legacy of the role of sport in the colonial project of the British Empire, combined with more recent connections between sport and far right fascist/nationalist politics, has made the association between 'Britishness', 'Englishness' and ethnic identity(ies) a particularly intriguing one.'

Documenting some of my participants' self-descriptions of their own ethnic identities illustrates some of the key issues that help characterise the complexities in articulating young British Asian identities today. In expressing a deep sense of belonging and connection to Britain, 'identity' was frequently explained by my participants in relation to matters of citizenship. Being born and raised in England was often the primary explanation for a strong connection to England or Britain. Interestingly, in terms of feelings of belonging, several third-generation British Asians also distanced themselves from their parents or their grandparents' birthplace:

> **Sanj:** I am British; Asian is just my culture really. I know more about England than I will India. I have only been to India once, but I [have] lived in England my whole life. I have more rights in this country. (Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

> **Shivani**: I would identify as English Indian. I have more of an attachment to England than India because I was born here. I've only been to India once in my life. (English Indian, Hindu, female, Leicester)

Sanj and Shivani's comments reinforce this sense of England as home. Unlike first generation migrants, some of whom perhaps may one day have envisioned returning to their homelands, third generation British Asians now feel a much stronger sense of attachment to Britain and, in the examples above, a strong connection to England. Many have little experience of the subcontinent and express little desire to return or visit. In fact, many of my sample of young British Asian interviewees had travelled to their ancestral homes only a handful of times, if at all. How these feelings of attachment and belonging impact on the sports' supporter preferences of my sample is explored in the remaining sections of this chapter.

Although England was broadly regarded as 'home' there was a mixed response in relation to expressing connections to England and Britain. Interestingly, and in relative contrast to previous literature exploring 'Englishness' and 'Britishness', many of my participants in both Leicester and Wolverhampton seemed quite comfortable in aligning with an English national identity. Even some who identified themselves as British Asian pointed out that this identity was enforced due to restrictions on official documentation caused by the absence of a more specific English Asian category, as opposed to a conscious rejection of 'Englishness'. This is perhaps less surprising in Leicester, where British Asians, on the surface at least, are generally very well integrated into local multicultural networks.

A smaller number of interviewees did reject notions of 'Englishness', and instead highlighted their affiliation to a wider, and seemingly more inclusive British Asian

identity. For those participants, notions of 'Englishness' were rejected, primarily on the basis that, for them, being English was also synonymous with being White. By way of contrast, being British was regarded as a less binary marker of identity. For example:

> **Jas:** I'd say, with English, you predominantly think White. British, you could be anything, and still come under this British identity. I think it is easier to feel part of Britain as opposed to being English. When you fill out forms, you would never see "English Asian" would you? You see British Asian. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

> **Baasit:** If I was to say to someone "I'm English" they would look at me like "Are you stupid?" because I'm brown and they know that I'm Asian. So, I would say British Asian. I wouldn't say I'm English, because of my parents or grandparents. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Leicester)

The comments made here by Jas and Baasit are consistent with previous research, which suggests that many British Asians perceive 'Englishness' as an ethnically exclusive identity, one predicated on skin colour and phenotypical appearance (Burdsey, 2007a). Despite the city of Leicester being widely known for its supposed racial harmony, it was clear that a small number of my Leicester sample did not feel able to associate themselves with a specifically English national identity. However, while others in Leicester and Wolverhampton found appropriating an English identity relatively unproblematic, for some it was *others'* narrow understandings of 'Englishness' which meant that a wider British maker of identity was somewhat 'forced' upon them, due to prejudice and their phenotypical appearance. This was the case, for example, for Abid:

> **Abid**: I'm British Asian, and my views are Western views, and that's purely because I was bought up here in England. I think if I could call myself English I would, but I'm not *White* English. I can't help that my parents are Asian. I speak the language very well and what makes me any different to a White English [person]? There have been times that people have said "You can go

on as White as you like but you are a Paki!" If you ask me, I have no choice but to say British Asian. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

In this example, Abid's visible South Asian heritage in the eyes of others makes him incompatible with a supposedly fixed, racially homogenous English identity. These varied accounts thus indicate the complexities and ambiguities pertaining to the formation and articulation of national identities for my sample of interviewees (I explore the impact of the Olympic Games on feelings of belonging later in the chapter). Overall, these cases support the view of Fletcher and Lusted (2017), who argue that in the globalised, multicultural and multi-ethnic British society of the twenty-first century, it is becoming increasingly difficult to define what 'Englishness' is. Having briefly highlighted some of the nuances of English and British identity construction for my participants, the chapter now moves on to explore issues around identity in the context of national sporting affiliations.

National identity and sporting affiliations

In this thesis, national identity is regarded as a subjective category, in that it is based upon various criteria, including, but not limited to, perception, image, ethnicity and sense of belonging to a nation (Polley, 2004). As Fletcher and Lusted (2017) have argued, inclusion and exclusion are key defining factors during the process of national identity formation, and ethnicity likely plays a defining role in this process. For example, some ethnic minorities may identify more strongly with the ancestral roots of their parents or grandparents, whilst, as indicated in the previous section, others might feel a much closer connection to the country that they currently inhabit. Thus, young British Asians tend to emphasise and prioritise different elements of their ethnic, national and religious identities in specific contexts.

This conceptualisation of national identity is adopted here because it recognises that national identity is not a fixed category, and so dual or multiple identities (such as British Asian and/or English Asian) can be apparent and operational in this context. Multiple national identities are not conflicting for many young British Asians. To the disapproval of Lord Tebbit and doubtless others, young British Asians do not feel that they have to demonstrate support for England teams in all

sporting contexts to feel fully assimilated into a British way of life. In fact, they do not necessarily have to demonstrate any allegiance to English national teams to consider themselves English and to feel committed to an English national identity.

Hybridity then, is a relevant conceptual tool to explore British Asian identities: 'British' and 'Asian' are not exclusive cultural categories but dynamic and fluid identities that can fuse in sporting and other arenas to form hybridised identities (Fletcher and Lusted, 2017). Thus, British Asians can be *both* British (or English) and Asian and be comfortable with more than one sense of ethnic identity. Indeed, Fletcher (2011) suggests that it would be naïve to try to simplify what is actually a complex process of identity negotiation. Such simplicity risks leading us back to the narrow understanding of 'Britishness' that Norman Tebbit once propagated regarding British Asians and their cricketing allegiance. Those comments, in which Tebbit argued that to fully assimilate to the British way of life migrants must cut all ties to the homeland and show an unquestioned sporting support for England, demonstrated an ignorance and lack of sensitivity to the complexities of diaspora, hybridity and multiple identities in today's Britain. Furthermore, his conflation of 'Englishness' and 'Britishness' also tends to reinforce the slippage between these overlapping and sometimes conflictual national identities.

The context of sport is perhaps one of the most significant means through which notions of 'Englishness' and 'Britishness' are constructed, played out, contested and resisted, especially perhaps for young BAME males. At the same time, the context of sport also exposes some of the subtleties and complexities inherent to their manifestations (Burdsey, 2007a). These data highlight many of these complexities that are often articulated in, what might seem, to some, to be somewhat contradictory terms. For example, whilst Jas and Baasit both reject an English identity, they actively support the England national football team. This perhaps demonstrates that connections and attachments to England and Britain are flexible and context bound, as Fletcher and Lusted (2017: 18) argue:

> 'In some instances, minoritised ethnic communities may feel a strong association with English and/or British national identity and work hard to

integrate and align themselves to such cultural markers, while on other occasions those same people may feel equally strongly excluded from such ideas and reject (and/or be rejected by) the idea of a national identity – or certainly one which calls itself "English"'.

Jas and Baasit's explicit *rejection* of an English national identity is centred on feelings of a relative lack of belonging and the seemingly exclusive associations routinely made by others between 'Englishness' and Whiteness, something that Asian appearance obviously calls into question. Burdsey (2007a) reported similar contradictory trends in English football. He highlighted the fact that one significant factor in justifying British Asian support for cricket teams of the subcontinent is their marginalisation in other national sports from player and supporter collectivities. The same excluding factors are not used in the same way, however, with regards to support for, or even a desire to represent, the England national football team.

Due to the continuing presence of racism and patterns of racialized exclusion in England, Burdsey (2007a) advises caution regarding the extent to which British Asian affiliation with the England football team demonstrates a tangible improvement in racial equality, either in football or wider society. For example, Jas's recollection of how he felt when purchasing and wearing his first England football kit acts as a useful reminder of the perceived incompatibility between 'Englishness' and 'Asianness':

> **Jas:** I remember when I [asked my] dad [for] an England kit. He looked at me funny and asked "Why?" So, I said: "England are playing, aren't they? I want to support England." I remember buying it and the woman that was serving me was White, and I felt like she was looking at me to say "What are you buying this for? *You're Brown*." When I used to wear it I just felt like people were looking at me to say: "What is he wearing that for?" (British Asian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

For many British Asians, openly supporting England is predicated on their presence being approved of by White British people (Fletcher, 2011). Ethnically exclusive notions of 'Englishness' reinforce the supposed incompatibility of being 'Brown', Sikh and supporting England, and thus Jas must negotiate, and consequently justify, why he feels entitled to wear an England football shirt. At a time when Jas was being excluded on ethnic grounds while playing football at a local club academy, it seemed strange to his father that he would want to associate in this way with the country of the very people who were excluding him as a player.

However, whilst ethnically exclusive notions of 'Englishness' might restrict easy identification with the England national team in football, it is worth remembering that a considerable number of Black and mixed-heritage players currently represent England. Whilst there has been no British Asian representation within the senior international football squad, the presence of players from other ethnic backgrounds and heritages thus challenges notions of Englishness that are quite so heavily racialised. This could well be a defining factor for young British Asians who do choose to support England, even if rejections of British South Asians as England fans draw on forms of cultural racism, that are applied very differently to British people of Caribbean heritage.

Despite a lack of representation within elite level football in England, many British Asian men (and women) – even if, like Jas they have faced exclusion as a participant - are keen supporters of English club football (Ratna, 2014). This was reflected in the findings of this study in relation to support for English Premier League clubs and for the England national team. However, their professed 'love' of English football may be questioned if young British Asians also choose to follow Pakistan or India in cricket: then they might be charged with being 'caught between two cultures' and displaying unacceptably divided loyalties (Burdsey, 2007a; Fletcher, 2011; Ratna, 2014). Thus, understanding British Asians' hybrid and multicultural identities is paramount if we are to move away from assimilationist models that promote acceptance into the dominant culture only on the condition that minoritised ethnic communities must de-prioritise their own cultural history and heritage (Fletcher and Lusted, 2017).

My participants illustrated well the hybrid nature of their identities through their discussions about national sporting affiliation. Supporting England (in football) but also a team from the Indian subcontinent (in cricket) continues to reflect the complexities of British Asian identity – and the relative strengths of these countries in different sports. In England, young British Asians must negotiate between their desire to belong and have a successful national sporting affiliation, whilst also maintaining a sense of attachment to their ancestral 'home' (Fletcher, 2011). Showing a sporting allegiance to England (in football) but also to a national team from the Indian subcontinent (in cricket) serves different (and somewhat competing) functions, reflecting the hybrid nature of multicultural British Asian identities. Who do my sample of British Asians support?

> **Mit:** My friend [recently] asked me [about] cricket and I said India. When he asked me [about] football I said I'm not sure. I don't think India have that recognition at football as much as cricket or hockey. So, I support England. (British Indian, Hindu, male, Leicester)

> **Saad:** Yes, definitely, I support England. The better example would be cricket, when Pakistan play I would be gutted if they lose. My team for football is defiantly England! (British Pakistani, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

Supporting England in football and India or Pakistan in cricket was commonplace in my samples, regardless of faith, ethnicity or gender. Burdsey (2007a) and Ratna (2014) postulate many reasons for differential supporter preferences like these. One key explanation obviously reflects the status and relative success of England and teams of the subcontinent in the respective sports in question. The findings here are consistent with Ratna's (2014) argument, that interest and support for India and Pakistan is rooted in heritage pride and the history and success of cricket teams from the subcontinent. The absence of any equivalent level of success in football in the subcontinent is reflected in the lack of comparable interest. The subcontinental states all compete internationally in football, but mainly in

international tournament qualifying matches. Their inferiority on a world stage means they spark little interest from the large British Asian diaspora in England. For example, when international teams from the subcontinent have played exhibition games in England in low-achieving sports, they have struggled to attract British Asian supporters in any significant numbers (Burdsey, 2007a).

Supporting England in sport reflects the permanency of settlement and ties locked within the British element of a British Asian identity. For many of my interviewees, justification for support for the England national football team was straightforward: England is home, the country in which they were born and raised. Furthermore, for some, supporting England allowed them to feel 'a part of the culture' (Sanj, British Asian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton). For Sanj, watching England football matches with friends at the pub meant he could express an important part of his identity as a British Asian male because it allowed him to connect with others *across* boundaries of race and ethnicity. Watching football at the pub is also reflective of recent developments in English football fan culture (Weed, 2008). These justifications of support for England reflect both the permanency of his settlement here and his wider connections to British culture and its influences.

In contrast, the justification for showing support for teams from the Indian subcontinent were multifarious. In some cases they related closely to matters of family and heritage, in others maintaining a sense of 'imagined community' across space and time, serving to maintain diasporic connectivity, and also allowing British Asians to distance themselves from the specific elements of Englishness that they feel most uncomfortable about (Burdsey, 2006). These constitute deeper reflections of issues around acceptance and belonging within British society. The following exchange with Zayn, for example, illustrates the latter in English football culture, and it may help to answer Fletcher's (2011: 619) persistent and important question: 'If British Asians are not supporting England, why not?

> **Zayn**: I follow England but I wouldn't say I support England.

AF: Can you explain that a little more?

Zayn: In this country, although I do play football, I don't feel like I'm welcome to play football. I understand why a lot of Asian fans don't support England. You feel like you're not welcome to play football in your country so why would you support your country's team? [It's] quite sad really, as we live here, this is your identity, and you've socialised here but then you don't feel like you're a part of it. I feel quite bad saying it, but I wouldn't say I supported England at all. I would watch the England games, but I can't say I would have supported them, or wanted them to win. (British Pakistani, Muslim, male, Leicester)

As Ratna (2014) has argued, some British Asians feel aggrieved that their presence in England is not accepted or especially valued and experiences of racism taint their sense of belonging in England. Zayn's experiences of institutional racism in the football arena reported earlier serve as a reminder that not all within the English football community welcome his presence as a participant. There can be parallels drawn here between Zayn's experiences of exclusion within football circles and similar reported findings in relation to cricket (Valiotis, 2009; Fletcher, 2011; Raman, 2014). As Raman (2014: 3) has asserted, experiences in sport mean that, 'the children of migrants have not always felt at "home" in Britain'. Those who were excluded from mainstream cricket competition and subjected to hostility and racism as participants and spectators, consequently distanced themselves from supporting England, and often this lack of acceptance here was deemed as justification for showing an affiliation to national teams from the subcontinent (Fletcher, 2011; Raman, 2014). Because of his experiences of prejudice and exclusion in English football culture as a player, Zayn overtly distances himself from showing support for the England national football team.

The findings presented here also highlight the importance and influence of family and local context, as well as the extent of (dis)connection to the Indian subcontinent for some second - but especially third - generation British Asians. For many young British Asian cricket enthusiasts, for example, their interest is mainly rooted in family tradition. Jai (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton) attributed his

affiliation to the India national cricket team to his socialisation: 'My grandparents are Indian, so you just grow up supporting them'. Other participants also cited family traditions and heritage as important influences. Nita, a British Indian female from Leicester, suggested that: 'We support India because it's where our family are from originally. Having family who support India makes you want to support them as well'.

Previous research has made clear the role that cricket played throughout the migratory experience, becoming an integral part of many British Asian families' lives (Raman, 2014). It would make sense that those who were introduced to cricket within family contexts at a young age might 'naturally' continue to follow teams from the subcontinent, even when relocated to England. Whilst family was a key factor for some participants in this respect, other testimonies suggested that it was not always a straightforward matter. The following lengthy extract from Jas illustrates the complexity of negotiating a manageable and functional British Asian identity, where generational differences are bound up with feelings of (dis)connection and belonging:

> **Jas:** If all of my family were in the same room together, everyone would be supporting India. I would say you would get my generation supporting England, maybe secretly, but I don't think you would want to show it as much because - especially with the older people - they would question the fact that you are Indian. They would say "Are you actually Indian? Are you actually Sikh? Because you are there supporting the English and the English just call you a Paki." If I would've told my grandad that I was buying an England shirt he would have said "What do you want to wear that for?" That's probably because [of] the way he was treated back when he first came over to England. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

Here, several key issues are emphasised, constructions which reflect the complex building of national sporting affiliation among younger British Asians today. Firstly, the influence of significant others in demonstrating and expressing supporter preference. Second, the impact of the persisting memory of new arrivals about

maltreatment and racism. Here, third-generation British-born Asians, who are perhaps more likely to feel connected to England and support English national sporting teams, are potentially outnumbered in family contexts. In such circumstances they might be a little more reserved in demonstrating their support. Jas goes on:

> **Jas**: So, it depends on which generation you look at, really. If you look at my generation, then they would probably support England over India, purely for the fact that they have lives here and that is all they know. Whereas, if you go back, to my parents or my grandparents, they would be supporting India. I know for a fact if we were all sat together in one room no one would stand up and say: "Yeah, I am supporting England". Secretly, in their heart they probably are, but no one would stand up and say so. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

Exactly *who* one is watching sport with is thus extremely important, especially perhaps in terms of expressing national preference. Hassan also alluded to a similar scenario when England played India at cricket:

> **Hassan:** It depends who I was watching it with. If it was with my uncles they are big Indian fans, I can't celebrate England. They would just all stare at me, awkwardly. If I'm at home I always want England to win. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Leicester)

In some family contexts, there is still significant pressure on second and third-generation British Asians to show support for national teams from the Indian subcontinent. Failure to do so can result in one's ethnic or religious identity being scrutinised by significant others, as demonstrated by Jas. This scrutiny is bound up in historic racial tensions between early British South Asian settlers, who were subjected to racial abuse from some sections of the White English population. The use of the term 'the English' in Jas's testimony is telling here. This is an overt attempt by the earlier generations of South Asian settlers to distance themselves from an English identity from which they felt alienated and disconnected. And yet,

in relation to sport, first generation migrants demonstrating support for India and Pakistan is, perhaps controversially, regarded as proof of their unwillingness to fully embrace England as their home, notwithstanding the way they were treated upon their arrival (Ratna, 2014). Importantly, my findings offer a demonstration, from this small sample at least, that more young British Asians are now feeling more connected to England and so are choosing to support England national teams in sporting contexts.

One significant finding here is that fervent and unquestioning support for national cricket teams from the Indian subcontinent was not displayed by all participants who were followers of cricket. In the following extract from Ali we can see how he describes his allegiance to England as both a cricket and a football fan – despite some parental reservations:

> **Ali:** I would say [I support] England, as I am from here. I know my dad would want me to play for Pakistan but England is my home country and I would love to play [cricket] for [England] and represent them. The younger generation don't really like visiting their own country and prefer England. I've spent all my life here. I love England! My education [is] here, my job is here, my family is here. Even when the football [is] on I support them and put the [English] flag outside, go to local pubs and watch an England match. Some people would think "An Asian man at the pub watching the football. How does that work?" But I feel like I'm at home. They welcome me with open arms. You don't have to be White just to support England. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

These extracts, from Hassan and Ali, rather conflict with previous research which tends to suggest that younger British Asians continue to support cricket teams from their country of ancestry, even if they support the England football team. For Fletcher (2011) and Raman (2014), cricket fandom was treated by their research participants as a separate issue to their British citizenship. However, it is clear that Ali's support for England in both cricket and football relates closely to his sense of attachment and belonging in England. One possible explanation for these

generational changes, as we have seen, is that the ethnic constituency of the England cricket team has changed even over the past 10 years. Moeen Ali, Adil Rashid, Haseeb Hameed and Zafar Ansari - four British Muslim players of South Asian origin - were all representing England in the 2016/17 cricket tour of India (though Ansari has since retired to pursue other interests), a significant change in comparison to past England squads. Indeed, Moeen Ali – an identifiably Muslim man - has become a key player for England since his international debut in 2014. This increased visibility of South Asian heritage 'role models' representing England may well be contributing to changing perceptions of 'Englishness' amongst young, third-generation British Asians.

Because they may show support for England in sport, it is argued that younger generations of British Asians are losing a connection with their South Asian heritage, and thus their 'Asianness' is questioned. Similar tensions were reported in findings by Ratna (2014), who indicated that some older generations of British Asians were worried about the decreasing significance of ethnic and religious identities and heritage amongst the younger South Asian generation. Due to stylistic and cultural shifts and their attempts to become more accepted within British culture, their heritage affiliations were becoming diluted, and could eventually be lost. The following extract from Jess alludes to similar issues and complexities for third generation British Asians today:

> **Jess:** When England play India [at cricket] it's a bit of a conflict. I remember one year there was a big game and all my family were over from India and half were supporting England, half India. You get a bit ridiculed by your family. They say "Why are you supporting England? We're Indian!" Me, personally, I have always said "I'm born here and I'm an England fan", and I don't feel like I have that much [of a] connection to India. I know my grandma would say India all the way. My mum and my dad are not from India, but their parents are, so they feel really connected. Myself, I was born here. I have been [to India] four or five times. Yes, my family are from there, but I don't have a connection. It's generational. (British Indian, Sikh, female, Wolverhampton)

Clearly, Jess feels a closer attachment to England than she does to India. Her family may play a part in why she chooses to follow the fortunes of English national sports teams and takes less interest when India compete in international competition. These findings reported here contrast with Raman's (2014) whose third-generation British Asians unquestionably demonstrated their allegiance to the (cricket) teams of their ancestral homeland. A similar loss of connection to the Indian subcontinent was discussed by Jas, also a third-generation British Indian:

> **Jas:** My dad loves cricket, and when the cricket is on [TV] and India are playing he would support India. All [of] my family would support India over England. But because I am further down the generations, I don't feel the same passion that my dad does towards India. The further back you go [in generational terms] they would always stick towards your Indian teams, as opposed to supporting England. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

Clearly, the relationship first (and in some cases second) generation migrants have with England is different from that of subsequent generations. For the older generation, 'loyalties to home teams have been forged over time and thus are unlikely to dissolve' (Raman, 2014: 11). As Fletcher (2011) points out in relation to how cricket is used as a means of articulating diasporic British Asian identities, the cultural hybridity and dual ethnicities of many third-generation British Asians has resulted in a growing separation from the attachments and sentiments of their elders. Whilst the young British Asian interviewees in this present study are not dismissive of their Asian heritage – they regard their culture and religion as highly important elements of their identity – they do not have the same affiliations to national sporting teams of the subcontinent as their parents and grandparents do.

It is also clear that whilst the lives of young British Asians are grounded through a combination of the cultures and traditions of their parents and distilled memories of the Indian subcontinent, the culture and social practices they experience in

Britain are becoming increasingly more important (Ratna, 2014; Fletcher, 2011). Generational differences are therefore a key contributing factor to shaping younger British Asian identities around national sport affiliations. Perhaps, over time, British Asian supporter preferences might also evolve to challenge even sub-continent cricket's heritage claims to British allegiance.

It has been argued that, for British Asians, supporting England in football and India in cricket is simply a hybrid aspect of who they are (Fletcher, 2011; Ratna, 2014). Significantly for Ratna (2014), differential supporter preferences were about enabling young South Asians to 'mix in' and feel a part of both their local and family communities but also a part of England, the country where they now live. As such, she concluded that 'the identities of British Asian men and women are a hybrid fusion of their South Asianness and a performance of Englishness' (Ratna, 2014: 306). As the rejection of support for England national sporting teams often relates to experiences of racism and exclusion, do these feelings of belonging through sporting affiliation change when the team concerned is less narrowly presented in gender terms and represents a seemingly more inclusive Great Britain identity? It is to explore this possibility that this chapter now moves.

Exploring British Asian identities through the lens of the 2012 Olympic Games

The London 2012 Olympic Games bid (and its successful staging in London) was based on the premise that by hosting the Games, London (and the UK) could engage, celebrate and cohere its diverse and multi-ethnic communities. Such seductive narratives were uncritically accepted by many: it was widely stated that London 2012 would '*inevitably* create lasting legacy benefits' by ensuring that sport was accessible for everybody, regardless of their background (Hylton and Morpeth, 2012: 379). However, in the post-Olympic period the reality is starting to take shape. After an initial (and perhaps predictable) spike in interest and participation in sport in the immediate post-Games period, participation rates in England and Wales were soon falling (Lovett and Bloyce, 2017; Sedghi, 2015). We are left to engage with the pragmatic realism that single mega-event policies cannot be the

answer to the sort of deeply entrenched class and racial inequalities that continue to exist within sport (Hylton and Morpeth, 2012).

The successes of British BAME athletes, Mo Farah and Jessica Ennis, at the London Games were widely regarded as validation of the rhetoric of ethnic and cultural diversity and inclusion that had been promoted in London's successful Olympic bid, and in the subsequent build up to the games. Farah, a Black Muslim of Somalian heritage and Ennis, born in Britain to a Jamaican father and English mother, were lauded for their Olympic successes (both winning gold medals in their respective athletic disciplines) and portrayed as positive role models for Britain's diverse and multi-ethnic communities (Black, 2016; Burdsey, 2016). There was however, the (perhaps problematic) absence of a high-profile British Asian athlete with realistic medal hopes representing Great Britain at the Games. Although Rajiv Ouseph and Asian-heritage footballer Neil Taylor both competed in the Games, neither enjoyed much profile or success and so they were not rewarded with the same celebration and recognition as Farah and Ennis. This absence may have fueled some familiar refrains about the alleged lack of desire or aptitude of British Asians to compete in high-level sport or to represent Britain in international competition. It may even have convinced some that British Asians do not have the required physical characteristics to be successful in 'meritocratic' elite-level sport. Moreover, the successes of Farah and Ennis could be used to reject claims of racial inequality in elite-level UK sport. In short, if British Asians were good enough and determined enough to be competing at the top-levels for Great Britain, then they would be in the 2012 London Games.

The impact of the London 2012 Olympic Games, on a wider (and potentially more inclusive) British identity has hitherto been under-researched from explorations of British Asians, sport, national identity and belonging. The structure of international competition in the Olympic Games - where athletes from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland come together to compete under the banner of Great Britain - offers a sociologically significant lens via which to explore the nexus between 'Britishness', ethnicity and sport. Does this alternative structure of international competition impact upon young British Asians' sense of affiliation or belonging

when we extend the analysis to include athletes and teams representing Great Britain? Did the limited British Asian representation in Team GB impact on such potential affiliations or on my interviewees desire to watch?

Consumption of the London Olympic Games

The summer of 2012 was a significant period for sport in the UK as, after a seven-year build up and a 64-year absence the Olympic Games finally returned to London. 'Inspiring a generation' was one of the key legacy claims that a successful London Games was set to deliver for British sport. If this was to be achieved, then the Games needed to capture the imagination of the next generation, and to do so well beyond the city of London. Interestingly, Mitra's (2014) study of the Games' impact in Southall - a London borough comprised of a large proportion of South Asian heritage residents - demonstrates that not all residents even in London paid much attention to Team GB, so how those communities in towns and cities beyond London would react remained inconclusive – and a concern. As MacRury and Poynter (2010: 2962-2963) have pointed out, the organisers of the Games needed to sell its value not just to an affluent south-east but to all areas of Britain. However, that was unlikely to be a straightforward task:

> 'London's cosmopolitan character and its identity as an international hub or metropole may sit well with the aspirations of Olympism and the interests of an IOC familiar with the hazards of the host city using the games to aggressively promote nationhood, but it may also serve, domestically, to (further) distance London from the rest of the UK. The value of London 2012 as a vehicle for establishing a new 'British' identity is at once diminished; hence the concern of its organisers to stress the value of the games to all parts of Britain.'

There was some limited attempt to directly engage with those further afield, because matches in the Olympic Games football tournament were played across six UK cities, including Coventry in the West Midlands. London hosted both the men's and women's football finals at Wembley Stadium. It was unclear, though, how those people living in non-host towns and cities in the UK - people who might well have

been very disconnected from the enthusiasm, 'buzz' and Olympic 'spirit' found in many of the host locations – would engage with the Games or celebrate and display a British identity around its TV consumption.

It has been argued that an influx of British Asian sporting role models would likely have positive implications for inspiring the next generation of British Asian athletes, and also to help conquer the negative stereotypes about British Asians and sporting competence (Saeed and Kilvington, 2011). But there has been little attempt to substantiate such claims with empirical evidence. Interestingly, the paucity of professional British Asian football players does not appear to impact on its popularity in Asian communities or deter British Asians fans from supporting domestic English clubs or the England national team. The aim in this first section then is, in the context of the underrepresentation of British Asians in Team GB, to explore empirically the impact on my participants' consumption and interest in the London Olympic Games.

Perhaps, quite predictably, with a mixed small sample of male and female participants with varying interests in levels of participation and sport consumption more generally, there were mixed levels of reported engagement with the Games. Some respondents would have been quite young when the Games took place – 13 or 14 years of age. Their connection to the Olympics was likely to be restricted to TV coverage only. Of 28 interviewees, four had attended an Olympic event 'live' (Shivani, Jess, Jas and Raj). This level of live engagement with sport is not dissimilar to that reported in relation to football and cricket. But of those who were 'interested' in watching Olympic events, most consumed the Games on TV. About half of my participants watched some of the Games, although very few seem to have embraced it in the way that the organisers were hoping. This is potentially crucial, because my sample of participants were young people who were already 'interested' in sport. Based on this response, what chance was there of a more general British Asian audience connecting with the Games at all?

The most common explanation given for *not* taking an interest in the Games was because of the absence of preferred sports in the Olympic Games package. Why no

cricket? For example, Mohammed, when explaining his lack of interest in the Games, suggested this was 'because there is no cricket. I'm not really interested in running or anything, just cricket'. Mit, a cricket and football enthusiast, gave a similar reason for his lack of engagement with the Olympic Games:

> **Mit**: I think it's because [during] the summer time I was participating more and watching a lot more cricket than actually following the Olympics. There's not really a lot of sports that they do in the Olympics that I like. (British Indian, Hindu, male, Leicester)

The IOC has been expanding the Games in search of a younger audience, but this expansion has not yet embraced, for example, Twenty20 cricket. Clearly, the official rhetoric in London around participation and multiculturalism in relation to the Games was not enough to engage some sporty British Asians in the provincial British cities of Leicester and Wolverhampton. Indeed, although much was made of Britain's diverse and multi-ethnic make-up and there were general celebrations of Britain's multi-ethnic GB athletes, there is no denying the fact that Team GB remained profoundly unrepresentative of multi-cultural Britain (Burdsey, 2016). Were my participants cognizant of the scant representation of their own Asian heritage athletes in Team GB? Did this affect their interest in the Games?

> **Baasit:** Yeah, I definitely did notice [the lack of British Asian athletes at London 2012]. My dad and my grandma noticed it as well. It just made us feel like we weren't prepared to take on that risk and try that I think we should do [...] My grandma thinks that Asians aren't really getting a fair chance, but I think it's just that we don't push ourselves. I'm into sport anyway though so [not seeing British Asians] didn't have much of an effect on me. It probably would have for people who aren't into sport and I think seeing more [Asian heritage athletes] would have had a positive effect. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Leicester)

> **Shivani:** Yeah, I did notice it [the lack of Asians in Team GB]. It's not really a big thing to me. I can see how it would be to some other people, but I just

think if you're good at something then you would obviously be in it. Yeah, I can see how it can put people off. Like [people might think]: "Oh, there's no Asians in the Olympics, they're all White people. There's probably no point in even trying." But [I think] if you really want something, you can go and get it. It's nothing to do with your race; it's mainly about ability. So I guess I can see why it may put people off, but at the end of the day it's about you and how much you want it, not about what other people think or how other people see you. (English Indian, Hindu, female, Leicester)

Baasit and Shivani, both Leicester based young Asians, have an interesting take with regards to the lack of British Asians in the British Olympic team. Firstly, both attest to the meritocratic nature of sport, and thus do not attribute the absence of British Asian athletes to discrimination or forms of institutional racism. Hard work seems to have its own reward. For Shivani this belief might be partly explained by her success as a county level basketball player, someone who did not feel she had missed opportunities because of her ethnicity. Instead, she stressed that gender constraints were more problematic for aspiring female basketball players. Her background as a county level basketball player meant that she took great interest in the men's and women's Olympic basketball tournament.

Baasit, seems to dismiss his grandma's suggestion that forms of racism might restrict opportunities at elite sporting levels for British Asians. Both participants here did recognise the potential impact that limited Asian representation in Team GB may have for others, and particularly for those who are not that interested in sport, but might be attracted to mega-events like the Olympic Games. However, for both young participants poor Asian representation was not something that affected their interest in engaging with the Games or supporting Team GB.

In contrast, a few participants, especially from my slightly older sample in Wolverhampton, suggested that a lack of British Asian role models did in fact impact upon their own interest in consuming the Games:

Abid: Role models are what people strive towards. [People think] if they can do it, then so can I. If Ronaldo was a Pakistani how many Pakistanis would be playing football today? Would I watch the Athletics more [if more Asians were involved]? Yes! People relate to culture; they relate to colour. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

Saad: I reckon a few people that are interested in sport, like me, would be more interested [in the Olympics] if they see someone with the same culture doing well. You would want to support and watch them. It makes a big impact: it's a role model for people to aspire to. [If you] see someone is doing well [then you believe that] it can happen to anyone. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

In terms of the capacity of the Games to inspire these young people to feel engaged and involved, Team GB needed to reflect more the multi-ethnic and multi-faith nature of life in Britain, and to provide an array of potential role models for British Asians to aspire to. Significantly, both Abid and Saad allude to the positive impact that a South Asian heritage role model might have had in promoting sport as a viable option to pursue. Not only might this engender greater belief about possibilities for sporting success, but this may well also influence Asian parents' perceptions of sport as an achievable career option, producing encouragement rather than the existing pervasive skepticism.

For some participants' there was a sense of disappointment that British Asians were not better represented in Team GB, although this did not necessarily act as a deterrent to their watching the Games:

Nita: I didn't see many [Asian competitors], they were mostly either Black or White. I would like to see more British Asians, because Britain is a multicultural country. So, in order to show that, there needs to be more people from different cultures representing the British team. (British Indian, Hindu, female, Leicester)

Nita is implicitly critical here of the official Olympic rhetoric of 'multicultural Britain', because the make-up of Great Britain was clearly not reflected in the ethnic make-up of Team GB. Whilst there were mixed responses here on to what extent the lack of British Asian athletes in Team GB affected overall interest in the Games, the minimal Asian presence in Team GB only served to emphasise the exclusion of British Asians from elite level sport in the UK. Interestingly, some of my Leicester based participants still reinforced their perceptions of sport as meritocratic. How did this impact upon my participants' sense of belonging and feelings of connection to Team GB? Which teams and athletes did they watch?

National affiliations and the Olympic Games

According to Horne and Manzenreiter (2006), sports mega-events, such as the Games, can provide novel ways to approach research on national identity and sport. London 2012, for instance, provided a particularly interesting case study around British Asian identities, because international competition in the Olympics uniquely 'dissolves' national differences in favour of a combined British identity. It was also a potentially significant moment for India and Pakistan's Olympic teams, particularly if these nations could forge an emotional and cultural connection with the large British Asian diaspora living in the UK. As Mitra (2014) has emphasised, despite India's emergence as an economic superpower, and despite the continuing success of the Indian cricket team on a world stage in all formats of the game, India has been a persistent underachiever at the Summer Olympics. However, it was believed that London 2012 could produce India's best-ever Olympic performance, particularly after the success of the 2010 Commonwealth Games hosted in Delhi, in which the hosts finished in an impressive second place in the final medals table (Mitra, 2014). What other ways did this fact impact on the way British Asians connected with the Games and identified with its athletes and teams, including those from India and Pakistan?

Mitra's (2014) study suggests that the performance of Indian athletes at the Olympic Games was of more importance for the Indian diaspora in Southall than any successes of Team GB. This reluctance to follow Team GB was attributed by that author to a divide within British society, one that 'cuts across ethnic lines and

manifests itself deeply in sports' (Mitra, 2014: 3). He likens this divide to recent cricket encounters in England, where British Asians have gathered *en-masse* to demonstrate vociferous support for their country of origin. The support for India in Southall that reportedly eclipsed any semblance of backing for Team GB was presented as an example of this phenomenon in the context of the Olympic Games.

For my small sample of Midlands-based young British Asians, knowledge of and support for the Indian and Pakistani Olympic teams was extremely limited, thus contrasting with Mitra's (2014) findings and claims. Perhaps this should come as little surprise: after all, neither country has internationally-known athletes for the general public or had realistic medal hopes. It may also suggest that unless it is cricket, young British Asians are not really that interested in the sporting aspirations or the success of their countries of ancestry. Comments made by Jas and Jess about their support and interest in the Indian Olympic team summed up the general consensus of my interviewees. Were they interested in India at the Olympics?

> **Jas:** Not really, no, because I know the standard of the India's national team wouldn't be that high. So, I was only really concerned with watching Great Britain. My family were following Great Britain as well, I don't remember them being overly bothered about watching India. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

> **Jess:** I know India don't really do well [at the Olympic Games]. If I saw someone [competing] that was in the Indian team I would be like: "Go for it!" but I wouldn't follow them. (British Indian, Sikh, female, Wolverhampton)

Jas's response is of particular interest, especially because he reports that his family objected to him openly demonstrating support for England and were all big fans of the Indian national cricket team. Cricket, of course, helps maintain diasporic connectivity for South Asian migrants. The elder generations of Jas's family rejects 'Englishness' based on their experiences of racism in England. It might seem a little surprising, then, that Jas's family did not take an interest in the fortunes of the

Indian Olympic team. That Jas's family were following Team GB in 2012, perhaps indicates that even first and second generation British Asians - who have traditionally felt more closely affiliated with their countries of ancestry - feel increasingly able to identify, less problematically, with a more inclusive British identity in sporting contexts. There was, for example, no mention of India and Pakistan's previous Olympic successes in hockey.

So, as in relation to football and cricket, my interviewees were only really interested in watching India in sport if the latter offered prospects of success. Lacking strong medal hopes, there was little British interest in the Indian Olympic team. Although some interviewees mentioned shooting as a top Indian sport, it was more of a cursory nod to a discipline in which India have had some modest Olympic success in the past, more than a genuine interest in the fortunes of Indian athletes. Those who did mention India in the Olympic Games could not recall the names of any athletes representing the Indian team, or where they finished in their respective disciplines. By way of contrast, many of my young British Asian interviewees followed the fortunes of prominent BAME Olympic athletes, as well as some international figures:

> **Baasit:** I watched Mo Farah [and] Jessica Ennis. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Leicester)

> **Zayn**: I remember Louis Smith [gymnast], [Usain] Bolt, Mo Farah as well… I think that was who had the most media attention on them really wasn't it? [I watched] the track events. Athletics is the key thing that everyone hyped up about so I took a big interest in that. I did enjoy watching it on TV, especially the 100m, [the] big events, the ones that were most talked about. Because, if people are talking about it you want to see what it is and watch it. (British Pakistani, Muslim, male, Leicester)

Many of my sample of British Asian interviewees picked out BAME athletes representing Team GB as their stand-out memories of the Games. High-profile successful British Athletes Mo Farah, Jess Ennis and Louis Smith were selected as

memorable and inspiring performers at the Games. Other globally recognised stars such as Usain Bolt, flamboyant Jamaican sprinter and 100 metre Olympic and world record holder, had also attracted interest, not unnaturally. Although not explicitly stated in the examples here, the fact that these athletes had been included in marketing material promoting the multicultural nature of Team GB, may well have played a part in their selection as key performers in the Games.

Another noteworthy observation, regarding which athletes young British Asians engaged with, was that male interviewees routinely listed high-profile *female* athletes when recalling memorable Olympic moments. For a short period of time during the Games, young British Asian men were interested in consuming and actively following women's sport. During sports mega-events like the Olympic Games, national identity seemingly overrides all other identity markers (including race and gender). Wensing and Bruce (2003), for example, argued that at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, gender lost its place as the primary media framing device; aboriginal athlete Cathy Freeman featured as a symbol of national reconciliation. A similar strategy was in place during the promotion of London 2012. Mo Farah was frequently used as a symbol of Britain's achieved multiculturalism (Back, 2016).

Interestingly, Nita pointed out that, in her opinion, heritage backgrounds were insignificant; it was those athletes who demonstrated commitment and passion to achieve their success that inspired her:

> **Nita:** People who are really outstanding, like Usain Bolt, who has broken world records. Or people who are from here [the UK] who have achieved really high. Tom Daley, he started at such a young age and he has achieved so much since then. That's what inspires me. People who have always had that passion to succeed. It's not really about where someone is from, or their background, but more about how hard they work and how much they have achieved. (British Indian, Hindu, female, Leicester)

Clearly, my sample of young British Asians to some extent embraced the Games and Team GB more so than those in Mitra's (2014) study of slightly older South Asians

from Southall in London, whose limited interest was reserved only for the Indian athletes. Again, this mirrors findings in the earlier part of this chapter, providing further confirmation that third-generation British Asians are aligning with English and British identities much less problematically than older first or second generations felt able to.

Team GB, Britishness and belonging

One of the key underlying issues regarding the rejection of an English identity related to feelings of a lack of belonging, based, in part, upon phenotypical appearance which excluded young Asians from ethnically exclusive White notions of 'Englishness'. One crucial part of the process of national identity formation is about understanding who is included and who is excluded, with ethnicity likely to play a defining role within this process (Fletcher and Lusted, 2017). The general consensus among my own participants was that their acceptance as 'English' was predicated on meeting predetermined criteria based, in their case, largely on skin colour. Fletcher and Lusted (2017: 4) suggest that 'national cultures like the 'English' are not repositories of shared symbols to which the entire population accesses with equal ease.' Instead performances of 'Englishness' are heavily racialised. For those that did not meet such criteria, 'British' is considered a more fitting and 'open' identity, one which held prospects of representing both inclusion *and* difference. This feeling of being excluded from a narrow 'English' identity based on phenotypical appearance did not necessarily have a negative impact on all my interviewees; some showed strong support, for example, for the multi-racial England national football team.

Opposition to Team GB *playing football* at the Olympic Games has been an historic area of conflict and debate for some time. Representatives from the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish football associations voiced their concern about the impact that coming together as a Great Britain team might have on the future independence of their respective national associations in future international football competitions. An exception was made for the 2012 Games, but only on the basis that is was a one-off occasion (BBC, 2015). This opposition, MacRury and Poynter (2010: 2690) have argued, 'reflects the paradox of identity that contemporary Britain faces when it

comes to participation in international sporting events.' Although a Great Britain football team was a unique recent departure, it provided an opportunity for my interviewees to follow a football tournament within the Games, but one that reflected a seemingly more inclusive British identity.

Zayn, who had expressed a resistance to showing support for 'England' football and cricket teams agreed that he felt much more comfortable adopting a wider and more inclusive British sporting identity for the 2012 Olympics. Thus, showing support for Team GB at London 2012 was not as problematic as showing support in sport for England:

> **Zayn:** Yes, I supported the GB team in the Olympics. I actually feel like it's more equal [than England]. Although it was still mostly people from White backgrounds, I liked the fact that there were people from different countries, and not just England. (British Pakistani, Muslim, male, Leicester)

Zayn's positive response supports Fletcher's (2011: 624) argument that 'for many British Asians, the label 'English' is the very antithesis to their inclusion [and so] many… prefer to endorse the more liberal politics of "Britishness."' Here, Zayn seems to equate his own British Asian identity with those of the other constituent countries that make up Great Britain. Although these were still, mainly, athletes from White backgrounds he seemingly feels able to connect to the GB cause, based on a likely shared rejection of 'Englishness'. Zayn's less problematic identification as 'British' is attributed to a sense of belonging to a wider collective who are not excluded by a British label in the same way that primarily White, ethnically exclusive, notions of 'Englishness' tend to exclude many people from alternative ethnic backgrounds. Perhaps more compelling as a commentary about Zayn's complex identity politics through sport is a fascinating account of how British Muslims might align themselves with a figure like Mo Farah:

> **Zayn:** Something that's quite common amongst the Muslim background is to support Muslims. I think it comes down to that fact that they feel they're not a part of England, so they just support people with the same faith because

they feel more at home within them. I think that is why some people were interested in Mo Farah: Asian people can familiarise themselves with him because he's quite similar. He has said that he suffered from racism and maybe they will relate to that and the fact that they don't really feel welcomed. That's why they might support him, as they've had a very similar up-bringing. Blood-wise, he's not English, he has come from somewhere else, but has been brought up here, just like most British Asians are. (British Pakistani, Muslim, male, Leicester)

Zayn indicates what he called a 'blood-wise' notion of national identity and belonging. In this case he rejects a sense of national identity and belonging relating to citizenship and birthplace, and implicitly suggests that British Asians might feel a stronger connection to their ancestral roots: a connection that's in their blood. For British-born Muslims, the conceptualisation of diaspora as a state of consciousness, as opposed to a sense of rootedness or belonging, facilitates a connection with others who share similar aspects of identity and experience. There is a perception here that British Asians who are Muslims would be able to identify with Farah because of their similar migratory experiences and their shared religious affiliations, even if they have different ethnic backgrounds. A shared religious identity and shared experiences of racism are the foundations for Zayn's connection with Farah. Indeed, faith was a key marker of identity for several of my young participants, and was more important than ethnicity in some cases. Many felt more comfortable identifying role models with shared faith backgrounds.

We must be cautious, however, with claims that particular Olympic athletes can act as appropriate role models for Britain's diverse multi-faith and multi-ethnic British Asian communities. For example, Jas distanced himself from British Muslim champion boxer Amir Khan and rejected the notion that he could be considered as a role model for *all* British Asians, while Sanj expresses similar sentiments about his Sikh identity:

Jas: I want to make sure people know me as a Sikh, and not a Muslim. I don't share the same affiliation towards Amir Khan as say a Muslim would… I don't

share no connection with him. It's the same with Nasser Hussain and cricket. Although he was the England cricket captain, he is still a Muslim. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

Sanj: If there was a Sikh boxer fighting I would naturally be more focused on him. You don't really see many Asian boxers, so I would want to see how good he was. (British Asian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

Clearly, for some British Asians it is faith, as opposed to ethnicity, which is a key marker of identity. A Muslim athlete of South Asian heritage simply may not work for those of other faiths. Jas, who although supported England at football felt that an English cultural identity was more aligned with being White English, also discussed the more inclusive messages circulating around sport, Great Britain and the Olympics. He articulated this in relation to his presence and feeling of acceptance at the London 2012 Games:

Jas: I was actually there [...] We went down [to London] just to check out the atmosphere. Even though I was Asian, I didn't feel as if I was any different from a White person. I felt a part of it; I felt like, yeah, I am finally being accepted. I would say that is probably one of the only examples where I feel like I've been accepted in society, in terms of my colour. It was one of the only times I could actually feel like: Yeah, I'm a part of this. You're proud to be from Britain. I felt proud to be British. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

Jai - a big India cricket fan - also clearly felt better able to connect with the British aspect of his identity during his TV watching of the London 2012 Games:

Jai: Me and my brother used to watch pretty much all of it, really. We watched most of the tournament, the opening and closing ceremonies, the finals, the whole tournament really. [We were supporting] Team GB, [we] got [official Team GB] t-shirts and everything. (British Indian, Hindu, male, Wolverhampton)

These articulations are clearly related to a feeling of belonging in Britain that is not apparent when considering the potential of an English national identity. The international and cosmopolitan crowd present at the Games had an impact on Jas's sense of self and helped dissipate those feelings of alienation around England. Clearly, for both Jas and Zayn, a more inclusive British Olympic Team, including athletes from a range of different ethnic and faith backgrounds (although very limited South Asian heritage representation), helped strengthen their feelings of belonging in Britain. The same incompatibility is not evident between being British, Asian, and demonstrating support for teams and athletes representing Team GB, as is experienced in relation to England.

Because 'Britishness' is not viewed by my participants as such an ethnically exclusive space, in the same way that they conflate 'Englishness' with Whiteness, then there is a stronger sense of belonging through sport, allied to positive experience of a more inclusive British identity. The feeling of acceptance discussed by Jas, *despite* his phenotypical British Asian appearance, allowed him to identify with his own - but also others' - understandings of 'Britishness'. Demonstrating support for Team GB at the London Games clearly did not generate the same sorts of response as when Jas purchased an England football shirt: those 'funny looks' that reinforced a sense of difference.

In the case of London 2012, inhabiting a British sporting identity acts as a 'third space', one where some British Asians can feel - and are comfortable demonstrating - a real sense of belonging, whilst also 'bridging the void between their national and ethnic identities without fear or constraint' (Fletcher and Lusted, 2017: 15). Identifying as British Asian does not illicit the same exclusionary responses that are experienced when young British Asians demonstrate support for England national teams.

London 2012 was promoted in the UK as an event to unite a wide range of diverse UK communities through sport, and, if successful, had the potential to drive wider social change. How were the central messages within the promotion of the Games

received by my participants? Abid outlined his detailed and scathing view of the short and long-term local effects:

> **Abid:** The Games did bring about excitement amongst individuals from different backgrounds, even my mum, and she knows nothing about sport! The advertising included individuals of all different backgrounds, and, the media being a powerful tool had a huge influence on peoples' perceptions. This positive mediated coverage of togetherness did bring about unity. I would certainly say I felt this and the people I engage with felt the same, at the time.
>
> Since the Olympics though, there has been various race and hate crimes committed in the UK. So, I would say that the Games failed in their longer-term efforts in using sport to bring people together. The messages of togetherness were plain and clear in the media, but the real work on the ground at the time, and even now, was virtually non-existent. I'm sure there was loads going on in London, but Wolverhampton, I would say it's questionable that not a lot was happening apart from broken promises in terms of the wider impact the games was going to have nationally. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Leicester)

This critical view of the longer-term effects of the Games were shared by many of my participants. As for many people in Britain, the optimism around London 2012 seemed to vanish after the Games had finished. There did not seem to have been any identifiable local cohesive effects.

Summary

This chapter demonstrates that a sense of belonging and connection to England and Britain, and subsequent notions of 'Englishness' and 'Britishness' as articulated through sport, are complex and context bound. My research highlights a clear generational shift in feelings of belonging and connections to England and/or Britain as citizens. Several respondents distanced themselves from the birthplaces

of their parents or grandparents and instead aligned themselves with an English or British national identity through sport. Broadly speaking, the findings here complement previous research into the sporting affiliations of British Asians, although one significant new insight did develop out of this research. Whilst different supporter preferences continue to be commonplace, mediated by the complex heritages of my respondents, there was also a group of interviewees who actively chose to demonstrate support *only* for England in both football and cricket. This perhaps indicates that generational differences are a key contributing factor to demonstrating how identity work is done in relation to particular national sports teams. In time, will new generations of British Asians eventually eschew their historic heritage connections and align more comfortably with English sporting identities? Or will a residual sub-continent connection and Britishness prevail?

I have tried to focus, in the second half of this chapter, on shifting the lens of analysis away from England sports teams towards exploring pan-national teams representing Great Britain in home mega-events, to explore how this would impact on feelings of belonging for some British Asians who feel excluded from racialised notions of 'Englishness'. The unusual amalgamation of the UK's constituent countries under a broader Great Britain team in the Olympic Games provides an appropriate lens to examine the relationship between a wider British national identity, sport and belonging. Demonstrating support for Team GB did not elicit the same sort of exclusionary responses to displaying allegiance to England in international sporting competition for my British Asian participants. Team GB engaged them in identity terms, and this support fostered a feeling of national belonging through sport that had previously been deficient in their lives.

The final two fieldwork chapters in this thesis now turn to explore the impacts of the London 2012 Olympic Games on localised participation opportunities in sport.

Chapter 8

Young British Asians' experience of sports participation

Introduction: London 2012 participation legacy

The London 2012 Olympic Games promised to deliver a nationwide legacy that would 'inspire a generation' of young people to get involved in local sporting activities. The Games organisers wanted to harness the power of the Olympics to inspire more young people from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds into sport, with a view to address falling participation rates. South Asian heritage communities – statistically the least likely to meet Government recommended physical activity guidelines and a community with high-rates of chronic physical inactivity related illnesses - were clearly a key target group. However, with the absence of a high-profile British Asian athlete, one might feasibly anticipate that this lack of representation from the ranks of those performing for Team GB in 2012 could significantly impact on the Games' capacity to 'inspire a generation' of young British Asians to be physically active. Indeed, a lack of South Asian heritage role models is consistently cited as a major barrier to increasing the sports participation rates of young British Asians (Kilvington, 2013).

The focus of this chapter is on the participation patterns in sport and physical activity of my sample of young British Asians in Leicester and Wolverhampton. One of the key aims of the thesis is to analyse the UK sporting landscape through the lens of British Asian participants who are 'interested' – but for various reasons not necessarily active – within local sport and physical activity. In the first part of this chapter I aim to evaluate the cultural and other constraints that are placed upon young prospective British Asian sportsmen and women that might limit their

participation levels within formal sporting structures. The second part of the chapter explores the impact of London 2012 on local sports participation. Did the London Olympic Games 'inspire a generation' of young Midlands based British Asians?

Perceived barriers to participation in local sport and physical activity

Barriers that might restrict participation opportunities for British Asians, whether real or perceived, have been widely discussed within the sport literature (Lawton et al, 2006; Burdsey, 2007; Jepson et al, 2008; 2012; Dagkas, 2011; Kilvington, 2013). Whilst some of the issues cited have typically included more generic problems, for example around a lack of time, cost and transportation, there are also some specific barriers for sections of British Asian communities which have been argued to develop from perceived differences in culture; barriers that other ethnic minorities do not necessarily face. Cultural issues regarding dress-codes and mixed sex facilities continue to restrict participation, especially for some British Asian females. Furthermore, issues around 'race', and cultural and faith discrimination continue to be cited as potential barriers to participation within formal sporting structures. But, despite a multitude of potential constraints to participation, and as demonstrated within my earlier context chapters, British Asians are interested in sport and physical activity as participants, fans and consumers. My own data suggests that my sample of young, Midlands based British Asian males and females are certainly 'interested' in participating in sport or physical activity, but that there are various barriers that, at present, stand in their way. It is these issues that are to be explored in more detail in this section.

i)   Education takes priority

South Asian culture is popularly supposed to prioritise education over sport and leisure (Johnson, 2000). Prevailing stereotypes suggest that British Asians and their families are more career-driven than other ethnic groups, which means that academic success is more important to them than sporting competence. These perceptions stem from deeply embedded cultural expectations about the sorts of

reputable and aspirational career options that young British Asians should be striving towards. These stereotypes are also rooted in real world experience. My participants typically cited particular 'white collar' and professional positions as careers which their parents would support, such as being a doctor, dentist or lawyer. Many British Asian families in my sample do not consider careers in sport as appropriate. Abid, a young Muslim from Wolverhampton, suggested that the desire to have local community 'bragging rights' among parents with respect to career outcomes for their children can lead parents to drive their off-spring to pursue particular career paths:

> **Abid:** Your parents want you to be a doctor so they can brag about it. It's all a competition "My child's better than yours"… and I was very much a part of that competition. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

This was a regularly featured discussion within the interviews, including for females as well as males. Indeed, issues around gender, place and faith did not seem overly-significant here compared to the priority focus of parents for education over sport. The following quotations echo the experiences and beliefs of many participants in relation to the difficulties for engaging in sport:

> **Hassan**: I don't think Asian people's parents support their kids enough in sports. They would prefer them to do better in education and stuff like that. I don't think they believe that you can do that good in sport. Some parents are just like that, and it's accepted that education comes before sports. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Leicester)

> **Shivani:** I can see why it's hard to pick sport instead of an actual career path. I'm not saying that sport isn't a career path, but I can see why there's not many [Indian professional sportspeople]. Because if you're from a strict family [they will] push you to be a doctor or a dentist, rather than become a basketball player, or a football player. (English Indian, Hindu, female, Leicester)

The above testimonies suggest that younger British Asians do not always accept that sport is entirely ruled out as a possible career option, but they emphasise that a potential career in sport is not something that necessarily holds value (or benefits from suitable role models) within British Asian cultures. Jas felt fortunate to have parents who were supportive of his ambitions to play sport seriously, but he was also able to rehearse commonly held arguments from family members about the lack of Asian-heritage sports professionals being used instrumentally as a justification that young Asian people should not 'waste time' playing sport:

> **Jas:** I was just lucky that my parents were proper supportive, because I know other Asian families that wouldn't invest their child's time in playing sport. Purely for the fact that they say "Well, no one [from an Asian background] has actually made it so what's the point in you playing because you're not going to make it?" I know a lot of people whose parents just didn't invest a lot of time in them and in the end, they just gave up playing [football]. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

The absence of visible high-profile British Asian role models in most top-level UK sports seems to negatively influence levels of parental support. Consequently, pursuing high-level sport or a career in the sports industry is discouraged by many families.

A 'lack of time' was the most cited explanation restricting involvement in sport for my Leicester based sample. Although all interviewees were active to some degree, nearly all suggested that they would like to do *more* sport, and perhaps move from playing recreationally to playing for a local sports club. However, at present, they felt that they were unable to show the required commitment to make that step. This perceived lack of time was directly related to prioritising education at present, especially as members of this age group were focused on gaining the required grades to get access to university places and pursue various 'post-academic' careers.

Whilst on the surface, a lack of time might not necessarily provide an insight into different social and cultural barriers that those of South Asian heritage may face, a deeper exploration verifies that a 'lack of time' in this context often comes from a quite specific articulation of sections of British Asian culture, one which prioritises accredited educational attainment and qualifications above the less obviously concrete outcomes of sport, especially as examinations loom:

> **Baasit:** College work, now, can actually interrupt sport because it's coming closer to exams, so I need to pay more attention. Sometimes I don't play on Sundays for my team. I'll say to my [club] manager: "I'm concentrating on my work this week", so it has kind of affected it [sports participation] recently. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Leicester)

Given this priority focus on education at this stage of the process, some of the Leicester group suggested that they were only able to consider participating recreationally in sport at this time, because playing for sports clubs would be disrupting and simply 'too much of a commitment' (Hassan, British Asian, Muslim, male, Leicester).

Many young British Asians who are active sporting participants rely heavily on family support in many ways. This might include at the basic level encouragement to play, but it also involves the provision of transport and finances to participate. If the parents of British Asian youngsters do not see the immediate value in sport, then they may be much less likely to support their children to commit to playing sport at local amateur clubs. Their narrow instrumentalism is an issue here, especially in the sense that possibilities of later achievement in professional sport is focused on as the only real measure of value. Sport, of course, has other perhaps less tangible benefits: improving health, character development, having fun, socialising and meeting new people, amongst a host of other benefits. Most amateur players of any sport, even able ones, never go on to play at a professional level, but this does not mean that sport may not constitute an important feature of their lives. A narrow focus on the benefits of sport, one that relates solely or mainly to the possibility of developing a sporting career is an obvious problem. Young people in

other communities may experience it too but physically active British Asians may have to negotiate it rather more carefully in relation to prevailing family and cultural attitudes in their own communities.

British Asian parents are typically instrumental in providing and promoting opportunities to be physically active for their children. Some of my interviewees suggested that their involvement and interest in sport was little more than tolerated by their own families. Should they show a culturally 'unhealthy' interest in sport they could be reminded that it did not constitute a desirable career and so focus should remain on performing well academically, first and foremost.

ii) 'Because I'm a girl': Cultural barriers

Much of British Asian culture remains very family-centred, and some participants suggested that they did not have much time for sport because they had other kinship priorities that took precedence. Of course, gender, as well as ethnicity, plays a significant role in defining one's relationship with sport. Typically, British Asian females playing sport has tended to be regarded as antithetical to the traditions of British Asian family culture, religion, and to the gender roles that young females are expected to perform (Ratna, 2011; Babakus and Thompson, 2012). For example, Ratna (2011) has suggested that many British Asian women are still expected by their family to conform to highly conventional and rather conservative female roles of being the homemaker, cook and cleaner. Aahana highlighted her own role within the family and the expectations of her as a Muslim female:

> **Aahana:** Because I'm a girl I'm expected to do the housework. I will go home and have chores to do and things, so I wouldn't have the time to fit in something like that [sport]. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Leicester)

For Aahana, 'chores' must come before sport or physical activity, which, perforce, remains low on her agenda. Jess, who is Sikh, also emphasised her expected family role, one profoundly shaped by gender and culture:

Jess: You are brought up in an environment where it's very important for the girls to do the [house]work and boys don't. When we have people around my mum will always ask me to get up and help her in the kitchen. I have always challenged that and said: "Well, what about him?" [brother]. She gets so annoyed, but I just have get on with it. (British Indian, Sikh, female, Wolverhampton)

As Dagkas et al (2011) argue, parental attitudes are extremely influential in the lives of British Asian young people. The above testimonies seem to confirm that these attitudes are applicable to many British Asian females, and perhaps regardless of faith. Some parents did not support their daughters' participation in sport because it was transgressive of culturally prescribed gender norms: it was not regarded as 'ladylike' – fitting in with wider assumptions about gender identities. It was Nina's father who emphasised the opinion that girls should dress in gender–appropriate ways and should not play sport:

Nina: He always used to moan that I was wearing tracksuit bottoms… I used to play football in the road and he would tell me off, and say [I] need to be like a lady and not play sport. (British Asian, Muslim, female. Wolverhampton)

Jess, a keen football player, also had to negotiate negative and unsupportive family attitudes as her sporting ambitions became more serious, and less about more gender-neutral child's play. This contrasts with the family support that she had experienced when she was a young girl. Here she discusses some of the wider community and extended family barriers she faces playing football as a young adult, and the reactions from some family members about her continued participation in football:

Jess: Our culture is very like: "Girls shouldn't be playing sport." When you're a young kid they let you get on with it, but as you get older they want you to stop. Luckily for me, both of my parents were born here and they are not very traditional. They are accepting of it [participation in sport]. I don't think

they really wanted me to play football… but it got to the point where they were like: "If she wants to do it, let her." My grandma, though, she is always asking when I am going to stop playing football. She has made comments like: "Once you finish your studies, it's time to get married" and: "How are you going to find a husband playing football? They [potential future husbands] are not going to like it." She genuinely wants me to stop, as she thinks it will stop my chances of finding a husband. (British Indian, Sikh, female, Wolverhampton).

Culture, gender and generation are all in play here. As Dagkas et al (2011) also found, there are clear generational differences reported here in appreciation of the value and importance of physical activity versus what is deemed culturally appropriate behaviour for females. Ahmad (2011) demonstrated similar findings, where British Asian female football players had to contest traditional cultural norms – norms that derived from their South Asian heritage - to continue to participate. Challenging such attitudes and even working towards 'educating' parents and other family members about the developmental, psychological and the physical benefits to health that continued competition and physical activity can bring is thus a key challenge.

Some females in my sample encountered a unique set of challenges that are not typically faced by their Western European-origin counterparts. Islamic cultural and faith traditions, for example, usually require that Muslim women participate in gender segregated physical activity (Kay, 2006; Walseth and Fasting, 2006). Responses will vary here, of course. Many Muslim girls in the UK will be coached in sport by men, especially in school settings. But many Muslim females are also expected to wear faith-appropriate clothing, and this is especially the case when men might be present. Muslim females in this study alluded to such issues around 'appropriate' dress for sports, matters which tied in closely with their community beliefs about bodily displays, especially in front of men:

Aahana: I would be expected to wear shorts and stuff [to play sport]. I would never dress like that. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Leicester)

> **Nina:** In Islam, as a Muslim, you need to wear loose clothing. You're not allowed to show your body. No man is allowed to look at you when you are playing [sport]. On a day to day basis you have a lot of guys looking at you, so I don't see the difference when you're playing [sport]. My uncle said this to me - he's quite religious - so he was like: "You're not allowed [to play sport]. You have to have a scarf on and need to wear lose clothing so no other man can see." Basically, as a Muslim female, you are not allowed to attract another man's attention. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Wolverhampton)

Religious and cultural requirements which relate to modesty and appropriate dress, and which might prohibit some Muslim females from being physically active in the presence of men, ensures that some of them have restricted opportunities to participate in physical activity. It is not uncommon for Muslim females (and some males) to be unable to play sport or engage in physical activity simply because available local facilities are deemed to be culturally inappropriate (Harkness and Islam, 2011; Jepson, 2012). Sumera plays basketball in college but she also attends a 'ladies only' recreational basketball session at a local leisure centre twice a week. She emphasises the importance of single-sex provision for her continued involvement in basketball:

> **Sumera**: If men were there as well, then I wouldn't actually take part. Even in tournaments, if I was told to play and males were there, I wouldn't be comfortable playing. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Leicester).

Cultural limitations and constraints can effectively prohibit some British Asian women from routine involvement in sport and exercise. Muslim women, in particular, risk exclusion from full access to local facilities and the opportunity to experience collective sports participation. Clearly, when designing sports initiatives, single sex provision is an essential element in services in areas with substantial Muslim populations. However, whilst Sumera confirmed that she would not take part in sport in the presence of men outside of college, having a male

teacher did not restrict her participation within her college enrichment sessions. Did she need a female coach?

> **Sumera**: Not really, because when I found I had a male teacher, it was fine to do it [sport] as long as I dressed appropriately. Previously I wasn't feeling so comfortable in [what I was wearing], as it was too short. When I asked if I could wear something longer he said: "Yes, as long as it doesn't come in anyone's way, you're welcome to wear what you want"... If I was to wear short stuff with my friends in basketball on a Saturday I wouldn't mind as it's girls only, and no men are allowed. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Leicester)

Women-only spaces are a priority for some, but not all Muslim females are quite so restricted if these spaces cannot be provided; it is down to local cultural and faith variations and individual preference. Women in Ahmad's (2011) study had to compromise, and consistently negotiate a compatible Muslim identity with a sporting identity. It is clear here that continued participation of some Muslim females in sport and exercise means dress codes needed to be flexible and allow the participants to choose clothing that is both appropriate to their religious beliefs, but also appropriate for the sport. It is this positive 'can-do' attitude about potential issues around dress code and male coaches which allowed several Muslim girls to participate in basketball sessions at a local college in Leicester.

iii)   _Experiences of racism and discrimination_

Research conducted with British Asian sports men and women have reported that managing experiences of racism and discrimination is a key factor within both professional and amateur sports settings (Johal, 2001; Burdsey, 2007a; Kilvington, 2017). My findings reinforce this work by confirming, perhaps unsurprisingly, that racism and discrimination are prevalent within local sporting contexts in both Leicester and Wolverhampton. Some perceptions of such issues within elite sport reported here are possibly speculative (none of the interviewees in my sample were competing at a professional level). However, two male participants based in Wolverhampton – Jas and Abid – had played, or had achieved trials with, local

Academy clubs, and so their stories shed some light on their experiences of discriminatory practices within such settings.

The absence of British Asian players in the English Premier League is often used to justify the assumption that discrimination against Asian heritage players is embedded within English football culture. One respondent, Baasit, suggests that the absence might be down to a 'lack of ability or interest' of potential Asian players. In this sense, whilst my sample of British Asian players had to negotiate negative attitudes from the wider community, 'stereotypes about sporting competencies are also reproduced by British Asians themselves' (Burdsey, 2007: 35). Indeed, Baasit alludes to the same stereotypical view – that British Asians may indeed lack in both ability and interest - that many British Asians involved in the field are working so hard to quash. Additionally, as McGuire et al (2001) argue, young British Asians' negative perceptions about their own ability can be influenced by the general paucity of Asian heritage role models in elite-level sport.

Popular explanations around the underrepresentation of British Asians as professional athletes allude to them allegedly lacking both the competence *and* the desire to reach such levels (Fleming, 2001; Burdsey, 2007a), as well as an ignorance from key gatekeepers, for example about the interest of British Asians in football (Johal, 2001). Wider, common stereotypes have suggested, in the past, that British Asians do not possess the required characteristics to be successful in elite level sport. Being 'too small' and having the 'wrong diet' often features, leading to an assumed physical inferiority, views which might have justified overlooking potential British Asian prospects (Fleming, 2001; Johal, 2001; Kilvington, 2017). In this sense, these barriers work hand in hand to maintain the status quo. Misinformed assumptions about British Asian physical capabilities, for example, might add weight to the arguments that Asians are simply 'not good enough' to play high-level sport. This attitude may then be reinforced - even by British Asians themselves - and a perceived lack of desire is fused with more nuanced reasons for their absence and lack of success in careers within high-level sport. Professional football may be a prime example of these self-reinforcing processes. What is more, allied with academic and career pressures from the family, this kind of belief is

likely to be reinforced by the parents of many young British Asians. Football aspirant Mit's comments, about his own uncertainties about the possibilities of playing elite level sport, may add weight to some of these popular misconceptions:

> **Mit**: I have that fear, talking about Premier League footballers, and not being able to get to that level. I always think I'll have no chance […] There's a lot of Asian [football] followers, but I've not seen many actual Asian players. I'm not sure they [professional football clubs] select many Asian people. Perhaps because a lot of Asian people just like following football rather than actually playing it. I just think it's at the back of their minds, that because of being Asian they won't get selected. I might be wrong [...] I don't know; it's hard to explain. [I feel that] there is more chance of playing cricket at a professional level than football. I think that, actually, could be a reason why more people tend to play [cricket]. (British Indian, Hindu, male, Leicester)

Mit's explanation for the lack of British Asian-heritage players making it into professional clubs and their academies is based on his belief that British Asian people are more likely to want to spectate than play. Burdsey (2007a: 18) suggests that due to a widespread, but mistaken, belief, in the 'meritocratic nature of British sport… the under-representation of British Asians in professional football frequently is perceived to be a result of a lack of participation at lower levels of the game.' However, as this (and other studies) confirm (see Johal, 2001, and, more recently Kilvington, 2017), there are large numbers of British Asian players playing recreational forms of football. So why doesn't recreational interest translate to participation at local senior amateur and professional clubs? A more likely rationale is the widespread failure to acknowledge how patterns of inclusion and exclusion are influenced by racial power relations (Burdsey, 2007a). Zayn suggests that a similar picture is present in relation to discrimination in local amateur football settings, which can be off-putting for young British Asian players:

> **Zayn**: You do risk racism playing in the normal [mainstream] league. That's why they [British Asian players] would rather play in an Asian League, because generally you're less likely to suffer anything. I do remember there

being quite a lot of racism in football. Asian people play more recreational football than White people do [but] playing in a league does not appeal to them. I know people who have been on trial at places like Coventry [City] but the appeal just wasn't there. You go through the fact that you're the minority and you do stand out… There is a bit of a cultural barrier.

I think they [Asian heritage players] are definitely treated a bit differently. When it comes to the social side they are not that involved because they're not as welcomed… I wouldn't say it's racism. I think it's just - well in a way it *is* [racism] - but football isn't associated with many Asian players, so when someone is playing it's not 'normal' if you know what I mean? (British Pakistani, Muslim, male, Leicester)

Zayn, a young man who had experienced racism and discrimination in football, suggests here that seeing elite Asian players is likely to be considered 'not normal' and thus this could serve to reinforce the popular misconception that British Asian players lack 'appeal' or 'skill'. Interestingly, whilst Zayn highlights instances of discrimination, he is hesitant to confirm that social exclusion inside professional clubs is overtly racially motivated. This verifies previous work that has suggested that racism in sport is increasingly manifest in informal, subtle, and sometimes even unintended forms (Burdsey, 2007a; Kilvington, 2017). Consequently, the existence of racism in sport is not always that easy to detect.

Jas, who had played recently at the Wolverhampton Wanderers Academy, confirmed some of the experiences that have been more speculated about above. Here, he speaks about his experiences at a professional club academy trial:

Jas: It was hard… There was segregation. None of the people wanted to mix with us. Through the whole trial process no one would talk to me… I had to make extra effort just to get involved. [The same happened] even when we were playing. It was only when the manager actually pointed out to the team and said: "Do you know what. This guy is always in space but no one is playing him the ball." [...] I just felt like they singled me out just because I was

Brown. There were loads of times where I used to say to my mum and dad I don't want to play anymore because it was horrible. I was at the point of quitting *so* many times. Every day after training, I was going home and thinking: I don't want to do it, I don't want to come back. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

Here, forms of exclusion seem to be practised by fellow players, rather than by coaches. The consequence could be British Asian players moving down a different route, perhaps to the relative sanctuary of playing football in an all-Asian team or league. Whilst overt forms of racism are possibly decreasing in local sport, this is not clear proof by any means that racial discrimination no longer exists there, but just that it is working in more nuanced forms (Burdsey, 2007a; Kilvington, 2017). Only a few (seemingly) isolated incidents were reported when I discussed experiences of overt racism within sport with my interviewees. Participants did, however, allude to issues about integration, and to ideas relating to the supposed competence of British Asian players.

This is not to say that 'older' forms of explicit racism have been completely eradicated. Many of those who had played sport within a local amateur club, or at a local academy club, suggested that they had often been on the receiving end of racial slurs:

Jas: I used to play for [local British Asian club]. When we used to play a lot of teams you would hear: "Oh, the Pakis are here", those sorts of comments up and down the side lines. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

Abid: There were lots [or racist comments]. People on the touchline would shout: "Paki" and things like that […] I've had a few things chucked at me. There was one incident that ended with a mass brawl, spectators [were] punching each other. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

Carrington (1998) has also indicated the importance of all-Asian sporting clubs as significant social spaces, but also as a means of practicing cultural resistance. Whilst

racism, when explored in isolation, cannot explain the absence of British Asians from professional football, Burdsey (2007a) argues that it must be placed at the centre of any analysis, as racism continues to influence patterns of inclusion and exclusion, and processes of belonging and marginalisation in a variety of ways. One of the key issues here is that often blame is attributed to British Asians themselves, and institutional racisms and cultural exclusions are too frequently underplayed or even ignored (Kilvington, 2017). These sorts of barriers might, of course, also impact on people from other ethnic minority populations in the UK, and in similar ways.

In this chapter so far I have considered some of the perceived barriers those of South Asian heritage continue to face as they try to engage in sport. I have also looked at barriers to those with ambitions in female sport. It is to the perceptions of the current local opportunities available to play sport or be active in the cities of Leicester and Wolverhampton in the post-London 2012 period that this chapter now turns.

Local sporting opportunities post-London 2012

As has been made clear, I want to be explicit that the British Asian population in the UK is not a homogenous sub-group, and the experiences in sport for these communities is likely shaped by local traditions and practices and by local provision. Consequently, future policy in this area will need to consider the impact of *location* and other factors in developing policy and practice in relation to the different demographic, social and cultural settings that exist within localised target areas. National strategies may not necessarily be the answer to local participation problems because of the nuances – involving faith, social class, local identity traits and experiences etc. – which characterise the very different British Asian experiences in communities within the UK.

One of the consistent messages from the DCMS legacy action plan emphasised the desire and commitment to ensure that the benefits of hosting the Olympics extended beyond London to the rest of the UK. Tessa Jowell MP – minister for the

Olympics and London – stated that: 'Those with the potential to be elite athletes must have every chance to achieve sporting success. Everyone should have an opportunity to participate in events linked to the Games' (DCMS, 2008: 2). This desire, to extend legacy benefits nationwide, provides a context for exploring my sample of young Midlands-based British Asians perceptions of the success of the London Olympic Games legacy: 'to inspire a generation'. Did they recall increases in sport and physical activity opportunities locally? I begin first by exploring more general perceptions of access to local sport before turning my attention to the impact of London 2012.

i) *'There are loads of opportunities to play sport... for boys!': Local perceptions of sport provision*

The perceptions that young British Asians have of opportunities to play sport or be physically active varied greatly, their experiences often shaped by gender. Many of the male participants were actually very positive with regards to opportunities to play sport in both Leicester and Wolverhampton. In particular, they cited the existence of a number of available local football and cricket clubs as supporting evidence for their opportunities to play sport:

> **Baasit**: It's quite good, because there's like clubs, football clubs especially, all over the city. That's [the same] with cricket as well, we used to go to away matches all over the place. So I think there a lot of places for people to go to. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Leicester)

> **Humza:** There are loads of opportunities to play sport. One of my friends who plays football plays for a team and my other friend plays for a cricket team as well. And when I wanted to join a football team I noticed that there were many teams around. There are opportunities for people to go and join. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Leicester)

Jai: I think cricket is easiest to get into, there's a lot of clubs that are Asian based. There are teams in Wolverhampton and the majority of them are Asian. (British Indian, Hindu, male, Wolverhampton)

Whilst these and other male participants could identify a wide range of opportunities to join local sports clubs, there were very few who actually participated within those clubs. Much of the sport and physical activity cited was recreational only in nature. This may seem to support existing research on the relative absence or exclusion of British Asians from many 'White' dominated local amateur sports clubs. One of the key issues here is that practices which serve to maintain unequal avenues of inclusion by shaping which ethnic groups do, or do not, feel able to access such opportunities can be symptomatic of forms of unconscious institutional racism. Institutional racism can be hard to detect and so young British Asians might not always recognise these pervasive sorts of barriers to participation or, even if they do, they may inadvertently continue to reinforce the view that they, themselves, are perhaps the problem. As Burdsey (2007a) has suggested in relation to professional football - but it is also applicable to other sports which have a low representation of British Asians - analyses of low participation rates must desist from regarding British Asian communities as 'the problem' and try to identify the root structures and attitudes which help maintain racial inequality and disadvantage in sport and other domains. Kilvington (2017) has also echoed this view, ten years on.

In contrast to the largely positive response of male participants to available sporting opportunities in Leicester, only one Leicester female thought that there were plentiful opportunities for girls and women to get involved in sport or physical activity in the local area. These views were largely based on perceptions of open, public local sporting provision – a sort of 'race'-blind accessibility - rather than on any specifically BAME opportunities with local sports clubs. Sumera was quite positive about local opportunities for physical activity and playing sport in 'integrated' Leicester:

Sumera: Yes, there is there are many leisure centres and they do different activities. I'm not just talking gyms and stuff: they do have physical sports activities in places. You can get involved within the leisure centres. Most leisure centres have been quite friendly and they don't say much about the people that come. A variety of people come and they accept them. It's not like you can't come if you're White, or you can't come if you're Black. Everyone can come. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Leicester)

One female footballer in Wolverhampton, Jess, also spoke very positively about the opportunities available for women in the local area to join a women's football club:

Jess: Yes, in terms of women's teams there is quite a lot, in the Midlands anyway. I've never felt like there is a barrier for me to play in a women's team [because] there is a lot [of local teams]. If you just want to go for a kick about it's not that easy. Sometimes I ask my brother if I can go with him and he says no as he plays with his friends. These are the people I used to play with when I was a kid and as I got older I got left out. I think it's mainly because they think I'm going to get hurt and stuff. I feel restricted if I just want to go for a kick about like most boys do. (British Indian, Sikh, female, Wolverhampton)

Here, Jess provides something of a double-edged story: she highlights the existence, locally, of women's football clubs but also the difficulties that older girls face to play football recreationally. Whilst male participants often cited football as a recreational activity, one they participated in 'naturally' and on a regular basis, females who wanted to play in this recreational sense found this avenue effectively closed as they got older.

The stories of other female participants lacked some of the relative positivity of those of Jess and Sumera. These females generally felt that there were fewer opportunities to get involved in sport and physical activity, especially in and around Leicester. This may have been connected to the fact that the Leicester sample was younger, and less experienced, than that in Wolverhampton. Sometimes, this

perceived lack of opportunities was directly linked to some of the gender-specific barriers that some females within British Asian communities routinely faced. Others, simply lacked confidence to explore local possibilities and whilst they acknowledged that there might well be opportunities to participate, they did not know how to get involved or, if they did, they lacked the motivation or confidence to pursue such opportunities. Others were perhaps just a little more naïve in terms of the knowledge of the of sports clubs which might be available for them to join:

> **Avani:** It [sport] would be [something I would like to get involved in] yes. But there's not many [rounders] clubs [in Leicester]. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Leicester)

> **Aahana:** I want to get involved, but I'm not able to take advantage of the opportunities because I don't really have time and also my self-confidence is really low. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Leicester)

Perceptions that there are few sports clubs that might welcome British Asian females to join are likely to be associated, in some cases, with strong ties to a small, local area, or a simple lack of local connections. When discussing the opportunities to get involved in sport in Leicester, Avani admitted that she wasn't really 'aware of that many'. She suggested that to improve sporting opportunities in Leicester for females from her own background, communication and marketing had to change:

> **Avani:** There could be more leisure centres for different kind of sports and [local clubs and leisure centres should] advertise to everyone about [the opportunities], because there might be something that people don't know about. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Leicester)

Building more publicly funded leisure centres is unlikely to be on the agenda for local authorities anytime soon, given these current times of austerity and the financial squeeze on local resources. However, Avani perhaps makes a valid point in relation to increasing awareness amongst Asian females, who could be better

targeted as potential customers than is currently the case. Others alluded to similar arguments in relation to their lack of awareness of sporting opportunities:

> **Nita:** I don't know where all the centres are, or where to go and play sports. I only know the ones that I have been to [and there are] some in town. I don't really know many others. They don't really advertise the prices as well, do they? Because that's mostly what people think about: the prices of these clubs. You have got to proper research it. Even on the websites it's not always clear what the prices are. If they were a bit clearer, then that might make more people want to go. Even a taster session or something or advertising in the college would be good. (British Indian, female, Leicester)

> **Niya:** Well, I don't think there's much advertisement [so] you won't find [out] what's going on. Maybe if your friends are doing something you will find out by that. But I don't really know much [about] any clubs in Leicester. I've not seen any posters or anything like that. You don't know how you're going to contact them. But if you quite determined you might go to the extra length. (British Indian, Hindu, female, Leicester)

As Niya emphasised, British Asian (and other) females who lack what seems to be the required 'determination' to find out about opportunities for sport in the local area are unlikely to have information thrust upon them. Are they left outside local information loops about sport – or is this a more general phenomenon for young people in cities such as Leicester? Are young British Asians more bound to their own local communities and networks so less likely to be plugged into sporting networks outside their local neighbourhoods? Whatever the source, their participation habits seem unlikely to change too much while this information deficit is unresolved. But perhaps appropriate pathways and provision is also an issue here? Female interviewees typically argued, for example, that there were more incentives and opportunities for British Asian boys to play for sports clubs within school – while girls, necessarily, had other interests:

Aahana: I think it's less in girls [sport] to be honest. I know quite a few guys that are Asian and are interested in sports: I think there is a lack of Asian girls. Going back to school it was like that as well. I went to a school where it was mainly Asians and when we had lunch you could see all the boys play football and all the girls were just walking around and stuff. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Leicester)

This idea that sport is less 'in' Asian girls reproduces and reinforces widespread assumptions and understandings about sport and gender of course. But there are also implications here in terms of Asian girls lacking the confidence to find and play for a sports club, either inside or outside of school. A relative absence of girls who express interest in sport - and a relative lack of educational or promotional work to engage them more – can also mean reduced opportunities in school for those who are already engaged. Shivani, a county level basketball player for Leicestershire, discussed her frustrating experience of trying to play basketball at her local school:

Shivani: My secondary school [was] a bit rubbish: they didn't have a basketball team; all our secondary school was into was rounders and football. I tried as much as I can to push for a basketball team, but just nobody would start the coaching session. I even offered to coach and everything, but no one did anything about it. I was the only girl [who liked basketball] because the PE groups used to be split off, boys and girls. Every time [we did] girls' basketball no one would do anything and it was so easy just to dribble past them and score. It's really hard to get girls that are actually interested and want to actually get better and have some potential to play basketball. (British Indian, Hindu, female, Leicester)

This is likely to be a common experience, of course, for many talented 'sporty' girls in school, irrespective of ethnicity. Fortunately for Shivani, she played basketball at a club at a local leisure centre, so she was able to access coaching and play outside of the school context. However, many girls in my samples lacked the skills and confidence to join a club, especially if they had little chance to develop their knowledge and skill set in a school team first. Another student, Avani, who also

played for the college basketball team, suggested that she did not have the opportunity to play for a team outside of college. Our conversation about the issues involved in joining a team outside of college is of interest here:

> **AF**: And is a basketball team outside college something you would be interested in joining?
>
> **Avani:** I would, but I don't know of any club that I could join. A couple of the girls play for the Warriors [local inner-city community club].
>
> **AF:** So, would you not play for Warriors?
>
> **Avani:** Well, because they have played with each other for a long time. I wouldn't be too keen on joining.
>
> **AF:** So, what would make you join a team outside of college?
>
> **Avani:** Probably like (pause) the girls that play for Warriors are at a higher level than me, so if they do different levels so everyone could participate. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Leicester)

Avani begins with the same argument about a lack of knowledge about clubs that she could join in the local area, even though she then indicates that she played basketball with a number of girls on the college team who also played for a local club. There seems to be a perception here – and it may be widespread among females in sport from different backgrounds, more than among males - that a certain (high) standard of performance must be reached before entertaining opportunities beyond school or college. This attitude of course has major implications for females beyond compulsory education, as they would then be required to seek out their own sporting opportunities. For example, Avani, who has been a very active basketball player since primary school, is at risk of dropping out when she leaves college because of perceptions about her own competence. The arguments from gatekeepers about British Asians lacking the necessary experience or competence to play in higher level sport have not necessarily been extended beyond male participations, and in sports such as football and cricket. However, it seems that *self-perceptions* about a lack of ability or experience in sporting contexts are also present, but this time are more likely to be discovered in the testimonies of British Asian females.

ii)   Did the London Olympic Games 'inspire a generation'?

Two of the five key London 2012 legacy promises pledged by the DCMS, the central government department responsible for sport, were closely linked, based on the Games' perceived capacity to 'inspire' young people. Legacy promise one emphasised the government's desire to 'make the UK a world-leading sporting nation', whilst legacy promise three focused more generally on engaging and 'inspiring a new generation of young people' to get involved in local activities inspired by the Games. The DCMS (2008) claimed that, if Team GB could achieve their projected 2012 medal target (finishing at least 4th in the overall medal table), then, inevitably, the next generation of young sporting talent would be inspired to seek out participation opportunities. This notion, that the performances of elite athletes will positively impact on increases in sporting participation for the wider population, is often referred to as the 'Trickle Down Effect' (Hindson et al, 1994) or the 'demonstration effect'. The athletes representing Team GB were consequently branded as role models to the next generation of young aspiring athletes and to the wider population.

In the post-Olympic period, we are beginning to see attempts to quantify the 'success' of the Games in relation to the key legacy promises in academic, media and government publications (Carter and Lorenc, 2013; DCMS, 2016; Gibson, 2015). Despite Lord Coe claiming a successful legacy, based upon Britain achieving an increase to their total medal tally at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, critical commentators have focused on the falling participation rates since 2012 to question the Governments claim that London 2012 would make the nation 'fitter and healthier'. Only 7% of Britons reported feeling 'inspired' by the Olympic Games, according to a recent online survey of 2000 respondents. The other respondents suggested that sport is too expensive, local facilities are poor or non-existent, or they lack the time or confidence to participate. Furthermore, they wanted to see funding channelled into sport for all initiatives instead of elite sport to help drive up participation figures (Pro Bono Economics, 2017).

Of the 28 participants interviewed for this study, 8 said that they felt 'inspired' by the London Olympic Games. 13 interviewees explicitly stated that they did not feel 'inspired' by the Games and a further 7 suggested that did not engage enough with the Games to feel 'inspired'. Significantly, there was a relatively even split in my sample in Leicester. 7 were reportedly inspired, 6 were not inspired and 5 could not comment. In contrast, the majority of my sample of participants in Wolverhampton stated that they were not inspired by the Olympic Games (7). Only one interviewee in Wolverhampton felt 'inspired' by the Olympics and 2 did not engage enough to comment.

Abid and Jas summed up the general sentiment of the 'success' of the Olympic Games in terms of inspiring young people to become more active and in relation to increased participation opportunities in Wolverhampton. Lots of general excitement and 'hype' surrounded the build-up to the Games, but on the ground in local communities nothing had really changed:

> **Abid**: I thought that [London] being selected to host [the Olympic Games] might be the trigger for [increasing] participation at grassroots. […] We did well as a nation, but the underlying objectives with [increasing] participation I don't feel were successful. Hosting the Games hasn't really helped anything. […] In the short term it did, in terms of raising awareness around the importance of sport and the Olympics. I guess it's always the host cities that reap the reward of a major event, but surrounding cities have to make do with the hype and hope that the Games might bring some benefit to them. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

> **Jas**: To my knowledge there weren't any schemes put in place after the Games. There was the proposed legacy that the Games would inspire a generation, but I think these were created in London and the surrounding boroughs. I don't think it reached the heights that they wanted in terms of inspiring a generation. Especially not in Wolverhampton. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

For my respondents in Wolverhampton, the excitement surrounding the build-up to the Games was short-lived. The Games came and went but the lasting legacy promise of increased participation at grassroots levels were left lacking. According to my interviewees, they had not noticed an abundance of extra local provision or opportunities after the Olympic Games.

Interestingly, there was much more positivity surrounding the perceived 'success' of the Games in inspiring a generation of young people in Leicester. However, whilst 7 respondents said that they were 'inspired' by the Olympics, only 2 actually translated this inspiration into an increase in participation. Even then it was only for the short-term:

> **Nita**: I tried pole vaulting three times at an outdoor pursuit centre. The school took us there before [the Games] to do rock climbing, abseiling, all these outdoor things. I was like how is the pole able to hold your weight? I wanted to try it really bad, so I went with my family afterwards as it's near my house, and it was great. It was really hard to hold yourself up as you think you're going to snap the pole. (British Indian, Hindu, female, Leicester)

> **Friya**: In secondary school they set up a whole activity range and I signed up to do horse riding. We had to write a letter saying why [we had chosen an activity] and I said because of the Olympics. I did horse riding for 6 weeks. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Leicester)

One explanation for the potential feeling of increased opportunities here might well relate to the slightly younger age profile of my Leicester sample, who would all have been at secondary school during 2012. School settings were cited as extremely important spaces for promoting the sporting legacy. Niya, reported feeling inspired but her participation habits did not change in the post-Olympic period:

> **Niya**: Well it did [inspire me]. In that summer we watched the Games and thought oh that looks so fun, I wish I could do it! It did make me think I want to do this and that, but there's nowhere to do it. Then you're just like it's not

possible and with your studies, time, and you don't know [about] much going on in Leicester. (British Indian, Hindu, female, Leicester)

Overall, with only two participants reporting a temporary increase in sports participation post-London 2012, it seems reasonable to conclude that the London 2012 Olympic Games, for my sample of young Midlands based British Asians, failed in its overall promise to make young people do more sport. Furthermore, my participants in both locations did not report a feeling of increased opportunities to be physically active in the post-Olympic period. Lovett and Bloyce (2017) suggest that a more strategic approach that clearly communicates participation opportunities is vital when trying to leverage legacy opportunities into impacts. The majority of my interviewees were not aware of opportunities to participate in local sport or physical activity, so even those who were inspired did not become more physically active as a result of London 2012.

During the bidding and planning stages the DCMS (2008) made an ambitious target that, as part of the legacy of London 2012, aimed to get an additional two million adults participating in sport by 2012, and grow overall participation rates to 50% by 2020. To achieve this aim, the DCMS (2008: 3) recognised the need to provide 'better support and information to people wanting to be active.' The demonstration effect was an integral part of this plan for increased participation. The DCMS (2008: 19) claimed that: 'Hosting the London 2012 Games will help our best athletes... inspire every person, young and old, to take part in a range of sporting activities and to lead healthier, more active lives.' However, previous research has demonstrated that there is little evidence that hosting sports mega-events encourages people to adopt physically active lifestyles, and have called into question the validity of a so-called 'demonstration effect' (Carter and Lorenc, 2013; Lovett and Bloyce, 2017; Weed et al, 2009). As Kohe and Bowen-Jones (2016) have noted, the Olympic Games might positively influence young peoples' feelings about physical activity or sport, this does not automatically result in sustained changes in participation or attitude. My own research corroborates this view.

The absence of any high-profile British Asian athletes with realistic medal prospects might well have played a part in any potential impacts the Games could have on some members of the British Asian community. Jas, for example, highlights his sense of disappointment, and consequent lack of inspiration:

> **Jas**: I wouldn't say it was an inspiration for me personally, nah. It was just a shame that it just dawns on you, the lack of Asian people. More than anything else, for me, that was the only downfall, that in the Olympic Games there weren't any Asian people there [representing Team GB]. I feel like it would have been more of an inspiration for me if there were more Asian people there. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton).

Whether this inspiration would have been enough to reengage Jas in competitive sport is unclear. As Lovett and Bloyce (2017) have argued, there has been limited success in producing a legacy of increased participation in the post-Games period for the general population. With the additional context of the underrepresentation of British Asian athletes at London 2012, the demonstration effect was even more unlikely.

Summary

Even my most active participants often cited various barriers to their sporting participation. A lack of time, due to a preferred family/parental focus on educational attainment, was a key factor which reduced available leisure moments for all participants. Female interviewees faced additional cultural barriers that related, in most cases, to the traditions of British Asian family culture, religious requirements and an expectation to conform to traditional British Asian gender roles. Whilst male participants were much less restricted by such traditions, experiences of discrimination and racism within formal sporting structures meant that many participated in a recreational capacity, outside of mainstream sporting

structures. A lack of success at elite level also worked to restrict opportunities for British Asian males, many of whom perceived such levels of excellence simply to be unobtainable.

Overall, male British Asian participants were generally more positive about the opportunities available to them to get involved in playing sport or of being physically active. Females in both locations suggested that there were perhaps more barriers – at home, in college/university and in the world outside - to their involvement, barriers which prohibited them from being as active in sport as was possible for some British Asian males in the samples. Particularly in Leicester, my female respondents were much less likely to seek out their own participation opportunities.

About half of my Leicester sample reported feeling inspired by the London 2012 Olympic Games, yet only two actually increased their levels of participation by trying a new sport. In contrast, my Wolverhampton sample were less positive; only one participant here suggested that they felt inspired by the Games. The biggest issue reported was the lack of sporting provision in the post-London 2012 period. Particularly in Wolverhampton, participation opportunities had not visibly increased off the back of the Games. The demonstration effect was relied on heavily by the DCMS (2008) who expected, despite a lack of evidence in this approach, that watching successful athletes competing for Team GB would automatically be enough to inspire the next generation of potential participants. My research findings broadly support previous studies that have argued that, although the Olympic Games can positively influence peoples' feelings about sport and physical activity, this does not necessarily result in long-term changes in participation. The absence of a high-profile British Asian athlete competing at the Games is likely to have lessened the potential success of the demonstration effect for my samples.

In the next chapter I move on to explore the experiences and perceptions of my samples of three specific Olympic sports: swimming, tennis and athletics.

Chapter 9

Three Key Sports

British Asian experiences & perceptions of swimming, tennis and athletics

Introduction

Inequality and discrimination continue to persist in terms of both the provision of - but also access to - sport and physical activity for British Asians (Bi, 2011). Perhaps particularly in football, issues such as institutionalised racism continue to deter or frustrate potential British Asian participants from playing at amateur levels and they are likely to limit progression opportunities into the elite echelons of the professional game (Burdsey, 2007a; Kilvington, 2016). Much less is currently known, though, about the perceptions British Asians might have of other sports, especially selected individual sports. Do perceived class and ethnicity barriers apply here?

The diverse ethnic make-up of athletes representing Great Britain at the 2012 Games was widely regarded as a positive representation of a diverse and inclusive modern Britain, a place that has benefited from mass immigration since London last hosted the Games in 1948. Katwala (2012) refers to the Team GB medal haul – where athletes representing Great Britain as a result of immigration and integration accounted for over a third of the total GB medals won – to point out the positive contribution that immigration has made to British sporting success. But, despite the ethnic diversity of Team GB, the almost complete absence of British Asian athletes posed key challenges for inspiring the next generation of young British Asians.

The aim of this chapter, then, is to explore the level of interest and engagement among young British Asians with the three 'Olympic' sports identified as one of the focal points for this study. These sports are: swimming, tennis and athletics. More specifically, the chapter will explore the image of these sports for my samples, and if the absence of British Asians from high level competition arenas for these sports helps shape the perceptions of young British Asians about their own abilities and access opportunities within such sporting settings. In addition, I want to try and document any barriers which may be specific for BAME young people in accessing these three Olympic sports, for which there has been recent Olympic success for Team GB.

The chapter is structured so that each of the three focus sports are analysed in turn, before concluding with some broader recommendations on how to engage more potential British Asian athletes.

i)   <u>Swimming</u>

The DCMS (2008) legacy action plan made clear the intention to use the London Games as a way to revitalise competitive sport for young people. It also emphasised the need to stem the tide of young people dropping out of sport. Increasing and sustaining recreational physical activity was thus central to the central legacy promise of increasing participation across the UK. Consequently, swimming was highlighted as a key sport; one that could inspire competitive and recreational participation. Since the London 2012 Olympic Games however, the number of people swimming recreationally in the UK has declined. This trend has been evident since the late noughties, bar a brief - and perhaps predictable - spike in the immediate post-Olympics period. Issues regarding a lack of facilities, overcrowding, increasing costs, and advances in technology in other sports, have all been advocated as potential factors contributing to the relative decline of recreational swimming (Lowbridge, 2015).

The latest Sport England participation figures indicate that 5.7% of the English population swim at least once a week, making swimming one of the most popular

recreational 'keep fit' activities for both men and women (Sport England, 2016). At a local level, weekly participation rates stand at 4.54% in Leicester and 4.47% in the Black Country (Sport England, 2017). But, recent figures from the Amateur Swimming Association revealed that ethnic minorities in Britain are three times less likely than White people to know how to swim, a fact that Akinwolere (2015) attributes to the absence of visible BAME role models at competitive levels, alongside a lack of parental encouragement. Governing bodies with low BAME representation are being challenged by sports ministers and Sport England to do more to involve underrepresented groups.

White swimmers tend to dominate competitive local swimming clubs and galas. For example, all the promotional imagery on the website of The City of Leicester Swimming Club in 2016 serves to highlight the relative lack of ethnic diversity within one very well known, highly competitive amateur swimming club in Leicester. A lack of ethnic diversity is also apparent within elite level swimming, with the limited ethnic representation at the previous two Olympic Games confirming this view. Achieng Ajulu-Bushell – born in England to a British mother and Kenyan father - has represented Great Britain and England on an international stage, but did not feature at the London Olympics and retired from competitive swimming after a plateau in form. Only White competitors represented Team GB in the Olympic swimming team at both the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Games.

The lack of diversity of competitive swimming is not just an issue in Britain though. Simone Manuel, of African-American descent, became the first Black female swimmer to win an Olympic gold medal, when she triumphed at Rio 2016. Afterwards she emphasised her desire for the victory to 'inspire other hopeful swimmers' and she said she looked forward to a day when 'the focus would be on the sport as opposed to skin colour' (BBC, 2016). The dearth of ethnic diversity at an elite level is likely to continue to feed into the diversity issues in grassroots swimming, especially if it reinforces the perception that particular sports are 'naturally' the preserve of particular ethnic groups.

There is a paucity of academic research that has explored swimming as both a recreational and competitive activity, despite the prominence of swimming as a popular leisure activity in the UK and globally (Light, 2010). Studies that do exist have indicated various personal, social and health benefits of swimming. For example, Light (2010) highlighted various positive benefits that swimming participation entailed for the social and personal development of children. In the nineteenth century, swimming was deemed as one of the only socially acceptable sporting activities for women because of the associated health benefits (Parker, 2010). Lawton et al (2005) suggested that various religious and cultural barriers seriously restricted female Pakistani and Indian origin women's involvement in swimming. Still, little is known about the perceptions of swimming as an activity for young British Asians.

As we have seen, the problem of the transition of British Asians from grassroots to the elite levels of sport has been widely commented on, especially in relation to football (see Burdsey, 2007a; Kilvington, 2016 for examples). Yet the picture is similar in terms of the demographic make-up and lack of BAME progress for many elite-level sports within the UK. This fact has hitherto received significantly less academic attention than that focused on football and, to a lesser extent, cricket. Furthermore, a sport such as swimming faces some potentially significant cultural issues, which are not as evident in other sports and which may work as barriers to participation for particular sections of the British Asian community (Lawton et al, 2006). The focus here, therefore is to identify in a preliminary way, some of the barriers that might restrict the involvement of young British Asians in the competition pool. Furthermore, the findings presented here also document my participants' wider perceptions of competitive and recreational swimming.

In my own small samples, both male and females of different faith backgrounds and locations cited swimming to be an extremely popular past-time in their communities when they were younger. Two female interviewees in Leicester (Niya and Avani) swam competitively as children. However, a clear 'drop-off' period was evident – when British Asian children left the pool – which mostly occurred during the transition from primary to secondary school. An increased workload was

attributed to their drop-out and Niya now struggles to find the time even for recreational sport. The reasons cited here are broadly similar to those reasons given for the teenage drop-off from other sporting practices.

It was mainly my female respondents who identified significant cultural barriers which might limit or prohibit their opportunities to take part in swimming – for example, at a basic level for some Muslim participants, the need for gender segregated provision. However, the increasing popularity of female-only swimming sessions for many different types of customer meant that respondents were generally satisfied that suitable female-only provision was in place and so this was not cited as a major barrier for those who had been active swimmers. Recreational provision for Muslim (and other Asian) women is extending, of course, with sports providers increasingly recognising the need to provide sessions tailored for South Asian heritage female requirements. Lawton et al (2005) reported dissatisfaction with provision for Asian communities but my research, conducted a decade later, seemed to tell a rather different story. Aahana, a Muslim female from Leicester, used the female-only swimming sessions offered by her local pool on a regular basis. However, Jess, a Sikh girl, highlighted some of the obstacles she faced in relation to swimming - which included a lack of family support or sanction for these 'inappropriate' activities for females:

> **Jess:** For Muslims I guess it's stricter. But then again, I know if my mum wanted to go swimming when she was still with my dad, he would have [had] an issue with it. He would be like: "Is there going to be any men there?" It's kind of a controlling thing that Asian men have over women. It's not just [Muslim] women, it's [part of] Asian culture: that women should not show parts of their body off. (British Indian, Sikh, female, Wolverhampton)

Here we can see that faith beliefs around single sex provision can tend to extend beyond the Muslim community. Jess's family were influential in her active sports participation when she was much younger. But she had now reached an age when they believed that Jess should be considering settling down and starting her own family. Accordingly, they were becoming much less supportive of her participation

across all sports. In relation to swimming, Jess suggested that she still felt 'restricted' by the traditional beliefs of her parents and grandparents. She added that:

> **Jess:** With my family commenting [negatively] on my football [participation], it would be even worse if I was swimming as they would be like, "Why are you parading around like that?" (British Indian, Sikh, female, Wolverhampton)

It is clear here that 'modesty' issues face many females in the wider Asian population (but also on occasions males). This concurs with research by Jonson (2000) who found that, gender and faith differences notwithstanding, modesty issues were a clear disincentive amongst across some people in all British Asian groups for playing certain sports and for exercising. Body image and barriers relating to modesty are not just restricting females from South Asian backgrounds, though. As recent research by Sport England (2015) indicates, feeling 'self-conscious about appearance' is an issue for many women, and so female only sessions are also appealing to women of other (or no) faith backgrounds.

Competitive swimming clearly faces significant challenges to increase the involvement of females from particular sections of the British Asian community. As a child, Avani, for example, used to be a competitive swimmer in Leicester, although like many others she dropped out of active swimming when she reached secondary school level. She discussed her memories of competitive swimming:

> **Avani:** I used to do swimming in primary school and compete in tournaments, but I stopped when I came to secondary [school]… We [female family members] used to go to female [only] sessions too, and we used to see a lot of Asians there. But… I never used to [see other Asians] when I used to compete. I think it's the swimwear that's the problem. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Leicester)

Poor provision for competitive female-only swimming sessions after the age of puberty, as girls move into secondary school, may be an issue here, especially perhaps for Muslim females. However, we need to proceed with some caution: analysis of female swimmers from other faith backgrounds seem to cite a similar drop out age (Monteiro et al, 2017).

As the above material indicates, swimming was a popular recreational leisure activity among some of my respondents, something they had enjoyed, especially in family contexts, when they were younger. Some had even swum competitively for clubs in the past. However, swimming was not an activity that was regularly cited as one which is popular now. Apart from female-only sessions, there were no access issues cited in relation to swimming. The participants in Leicester, for example, were all pretty confident that swimming pools in the city were easily accessible at reasonable cost, and therefore it is perhaps not a lack of facilities that is mainly at issue here:

> **Niya:** There are quite a few swimming pools here [in Leicester]. It's easily accessible and it's not that expensive. (British Indian, Hindu, female, Leicester)

> **Mit:** In year five and year six I used to go [swimming at] the [local Leicestershire] leisure centre. I still go there sometimes. I haven't been since last summer, but I used to go there swimming quite a lot... I've seen a lot of Asian people swimming. (British Indian, Hindu, male, Leicester)

Swimming, therefore, was quite a popular family and community activity for many British Asians in the sample: within familiar and acceptable contexts. But it seemed that many in my sample had just fallen out of the swimming 'habit' as they had got older, and other interests and priorities had taken swimming's place. Some did, however, recognise that there was a lack of British Asian representation in competitive swimming, and they offered some potential suggestions for this outcome. Nita, for example, alluded to the GB Olympic Games teams and Olympic sports in terms of accessibility and opportunity for BAME competitors:

Nita: I think boxing is multicultural. The British [Olympic] team is. But there are other sports that aren't, like swimming or cycling. [It's] mostly White people doing those. I don't know why it's not happened [more integrated squads], but it would be nice if it did. It would help to show Britain as a more multicultural country. (British Indian, Hindu, female, Leicester)

Nita's comment rather reinforces the point about the dominance of White athletes in elite British swimming. The lack of British Asian representation here could be associated with history and tradition for British swimming and the lack of the same for British Asians. Current GB teams may do little to challenge this popular perception at grassroots level. Instead, for British Asian males football and cricket work better as significant social spaces for demonstrating acceptable masculinities and forming friendships. Deeta commented on the dominance of football and cricket for the British Indian population and offered her views regarding swimming for the earliest of British Asians:

Deeta: Most traditional Indians are interested in cricket [and] they are interested in football now. But swimming? I don't think Indians are able to swim, especially parents. I think the children do [know how to swim]. But they [first generation migrants] didn't learn how to swim in their time. (British Indian, Hindu, female, Leicester)

According to this view, generational change might produce more familiarity for younger British South Asians in the pool today. What it does not tell us, of course, is whether these young people are encouraged *by their parents* to swim. Jas, a British Sikh male, also attested to the White dominance in sports such as swimming, raising its unfashionable status, its bodily exposure issues, but again the instrumentality in South Asian culture in relation to leisure:

Jas: I'd say [swimming is] dominated by White people on the whole. Elder Asian generations do not [encourage] their children [to swim] because they see no viable career path and, due to the lack of Asian sports-people as a

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whole, they would much rather direct interests into other subjects. I always tried to get out of swimming during school because I did not see it as a major sport. I was more interested in the more 'mediated' sports, such as football. I think, as well, for a lot of people it [resistance to swimming] could be a bit of a body phobia. Some Sikh people do not feel comfortable baring their skin as it goes against some of the elder traditions. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

One respondent (who has faced reported discrimination within sport) discussed his perceptions and experiences of racism in swimming in rather intriguing social class terms:

Zayn: I think swimming is quite easily accessible… anyone can go. There is not much discrimination in the swimming pool. You find that within upper class sport there is racism, but I think in working class White backgrounds there is more racism. It's maybe just the scenario that people are in, but there's more aggressive, more abusive racism [in working class sport]. In upper class sports it's kind of embedded. When it comes to stuff like swimming it's quite open minded. I think people have …. I wouldn't say there's a stigma, but [I think] people just see swimming as a bit of an effort. (British Pakistani, Muslim, male, Leicester)

Zayn's comments are interesting. For one thing, he does not identify difficult access issues as being simple matters of discrimination. He does however, acknowledge that perhaps overt racism exists more obviously within what he deems to be 'working class' sport. Within 'upper class' sport he alludes to other forms of perhaps hidden, or institutional, racisms that can work to disadvantage or exclude people from BAME backgrounds without being easy to identify or combat. Intriguingly, he seems to regard swimming as falling in between; as being somewhat 'de-classed' as a sport, thus avoiding, somehow, even the possibility of racism altogether. He concludes that South Asians may avoid competitive swimming for other reasons; it is 'a bit of an effort.'

Most people in the samples did not identify serious access issues, at least with regards to recreational swimming. Even those who faced more specific cultural barriers - for example British Muslim females - could access swimming, if only for reduced periods of time. A lack of available facilities - or even a lack of knowledge about those facilities - is less likely to be the root cause of the clear drop off in participation in swimming that was evident among my participants. When swimming was offered on an institutional basis – for example in school – participation was relatively unproblematic. But, out of school maintaining such activity seemed much more difficult and it lacked parental support for generational, cultural and instrumental reasons.

ii.   Tennis

Tennis is a popular recreational and club sport in the UK. It is not especially expensive to play and public parks offer free provision. However, it is widely regarded as a rather exclusive sport to play regularly or seriously in Britain, with only those from particular social backgrounds being seen to have the opportunity to play and socialise in organised tennis clubs (Lake, 2011). Due to the relatively exclusive nature of even amateur tennis clubs – the East Midlands region has 122 clubs, with 33 in Leicestershire alone - there is often tension between older, more established, members and younger, newer members (Lake, 2011). In response to accusations about the exclusive nature of tennis, the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) claims to have actively tried to reduce perceived barriers relating to social exclusion. Consequently, exclusive membership arrangements and clothing restrictions have been removed from many clubs, although, as Lake (2011) argues, it remains unclear whether these changes have had the desired impact. The annual Wimbledon lawn championships, hosted by the All-England Club, remains popularly fixed as part of the English middle-class summer social programme.

There is clearly some recent BAME heritage in British tennis. Arvind Parmar, a former British professional tennis and Davis Cup player, is of Indian descent. He retired only in December 2006. Anne Keothavong, a former British number 1, was born in Hackney in London to parents who had fled from their war torn home

country of Laos in the 1970s. The mother of current British tennis professional and former number one, Heather Watson, is from Papua New Guinea. There are some prominent and successful role models here. There has also been some Indian national presence in professional tennis. Vijay Amritraj is the most revered Indian tennis professional, winning 18 singles titles in a career stretching from 1973 to 1988. He later became a sports commentator and actor. Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi is the only Pakistani tennis player to appear in a grand slam final, in doubles in the USA in 2010. At the London 2012 Olympic Games, India had athletes competing in the singles and doubles competitions. Somdev Devvarman won gold in the men's singles event at the 2010 Delhi Commonwealth Games, but was defeated in straight sets in the first round of the more competitive 2012 Games. India's men's doubles pairings, Leander Paes and Vishnu Vardhan, and Mahesh Bhupathi and Rohan Bopanna, were both eliminated in their respective second round matches in 2012. The women's doubles pairing of Indian number one Sania Mirza and Rushmi Chakarvarthi failed to progress past the first round. Overall, both India and Pakistan performed poorly in the 2012 Olympic tennis tournament, and ultimately commanded limited media attention.

In contrast, Great Britain's Andy Murray – a rather feisty and truculent Scot, who is probably not all that easy to classify in conventional class terms – won the Olympic Gold Medal in London 2012, so tennis attracted extended UK media coverage during the Games. Nevertheless, the testimonies of young British Asians in my samples suggested that tennis was widely seen as really not for them: it was regarded as the preserve of White middle-class English people, who were seen to dominate local amateur tennis clubs. It was strongly believed by my respondents that one had to have a specific kind of social and cultural capital to be able to engage with the tennis community in Britain beyond public courts, either competitively or recreationally. This sort of view meant that tennis was not generally considered to be a viable option for British Asians as potential participants. Respondents wondered, for example, at their likely reception at a 'typical' English tennis club:

> **Jess:** I would probably be really nervous to go to a tennis club, as people would be like: "What's she doing here?" It's definitely not a sport Asians do;

it's more of an English White person's [sport]. Even for an Asian male person, I think it would be difficult.' (British Indian, Sikh, female, Wolverhampton)

Jas: There was no opportunity for me to play tennis because of the area I was living in. For me, it seemed that tennis was only an option in more affluent areas. If I think about seeing people play tennis, it's White [people]. [It is the same with] professional tennis as well. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

Despite the available role models, potential young British Asian participants are discouraged from tennis due to these continuing perceptions of White exclusivity, and a fear of not 'fitting in'. Notwithstanding the recent introduction of more progressive LTA policies, including hiring community coaches and establishing school-club links (Lake, 2011), such assumptions are still commonplace among young people in my sample of British Asians. As Long and Hylton (2012: 9) have emphasised: 'the prevailing Whiteness [within the] culture of sport establishes a clear set of norms that deter participation by the wider community.' It is reasonable to assume that the culture of British tennis is still perceived as exclusive in a way that works to exclude potential British Asian participants from considering taking up the sport in a serious way.

Racial stereotypes can work to limit visions of what is deemed possible, and thus construct barriers to participation. Only Arvind Parmar (1996-2006) has played tennis professionally in England as a South Asian, but he is relatively unknown in comparison to other British players who were playing professionally at the same time (middle class Tim Henman, for example, is widely recognised, despite never having competed in a grand slam final and winning only one major tournament). Currently, there are no well-known South Asian-heritage role models in elite tennis for young British Asians to challenge negative perceptions of the UK system – though the dominant Williams sisters, from the USA, offer other powerful models for BAMEs in terms of global tennis.

As previous research has indicated, it is important to address the 'everyday Whiteness' of sporting cultures and organisations (King, 2004) to try to address some of these issues. Should British tennis ever have a successful and visible South Asian heritage role model, it is possible that perceptions would perhaps start to change. At present, those who did manage to overcome initial barriers to accessing tennis as elite players might yet be faced with racist stereotypes about their entitlement and competence. Indeed, 'not being good enough' was a key issue identified by young British Asians in terms of their wider tennis ambitions. One respondent *had* accessed a local tennis club. Here he discusses his experience of tennis culture in England:

> **Zayn:** When you go to tennis clubs, people you're surrounded by tend to be more upper-class people. The last time I played tennis was a long time ago. I played within a group, and the only reason I went is because my auntie was a member. (British Pakistani, Muslim, male, Leicester)

Whilst Zayn alludes here to a very stereotypical view held about people who play tennis in clubs – 'upper class' – his account carries some weight because it is based on his own experience. Long and Hylton (2011) suggest that shortfalls in sporting capital (in the form of lack of basic knowledge and contacts) for the BAME community serves to limit their participation and involvement in sport. Zayn's comments reinforce this position and the rather exclusive nature of most UK tennis clubs. For example, he was only able to gain access through an existing member (his British Asian aunt) and he did not have what he thought was the required sporting or cultural capital to access a club by himself. Lake's study (2011) also emphasised that the culture of English tennis clubs make them extremely difficult to access for new members and, consequently, the chances of people failing to return even after making contact are high.

As well as prevailing perceptions around English tennis and its White exclusivity, my respondents also indicated a problem in terms of a perceived lack of local tennis facilities. They could easily identify and reproduce stereotypes about the types of people who they imagined play tennis in England, but they also lacked awareness

about existing courts or tennis clubs in the local area. In addition to a lack of facilities, cost and transport were also routinely identified as key barriers to playing tennis:

> **Nina:** No [I don't have access to a tennis club]. The local leisure centre don't do tennis, so I would have to Google where to go and [find out about] local clubs and stuff. I think travelling [anywhere else] would be a problem though. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Wolverhampton)

> **Abid:** Around our community and where I live, there are no [tennis] facilities. [There are] no tennis courts and [there is] not much provision for tennis. It's not watched [on television] and we don't really talk about it much. Tennis throughout my life personally, I don't think there has been facilities and [even if there were] it is too expensive. You have to travel [to a tennis club]. For Asians, if you have to travel then it's going to be a no go. Unless you smack it right in their garden. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

Whilst Abid makes a rather flippant comment above about putting all facilities on South Asian doorsteps, he reinforces both a stereotype and perhaps a view rooted in reality about the reluctance of many British Asians to travel far outside those local areas for sport; areas which offer a sense of community safety and familiarity. Tennis at club level tends to be a suburban, rather than a city centre, sport in the UK. It seems clear that a lack of sports provision for tennis and a relative lack of easily accessible and affordable tennis facilities and clubs aimed at all sections of the community, has resulted in very few of the participants in this study ever experiencing playing even moderately competitive tennis. These barriers to tennis (local facilities, cultural issues, cost and transport) are often cited by British Asians as barriers which prohibit their general involvement in sport and physical activity.

Along with the issues illustrated above, there were other reasons identified why tennis might not be popular for young British Asians – including a familiar lack of family support:

Chanda: With an individual sport, it requires a lot more support from your family, because you have to take that person to training and stuff. If they are part of a football team, their friends can take them and stuff. With Asian families and support it's not very good. Training in tennis would be a lot of effort and it would require a lot of [family] support. (British Indian, Hindu, female, Wolverhampton)

Many young people in the sample had at least played some tennis at some point, mostly at school, and so they were able to discuss their experiences of playing the sport in this setting. A few had also played tennis outside of school, perhaps with family and friends, either at parks or leisure centres. None of the participants were members, or had ever considered becoming a member, of a tennis club, and those who continued to play did so very sporadically, and in a fun/recreational capacity only. Similar to the situation highlighted in swimming, one of the issues which emerged here is the rapid drop-out rate for young people who may once have played and even enjoyed tennis, but who no longer felt able to continue to do so. There were two main reasons cited for giving up on tennis. The first was that respondents thought they lacked proficiency; tennis was perceived to be simply too difficult a sport to pursue:

Mit: I just can't play! It's too hard, way too difficult. I had a few good shots here and there but I couldn't play. I've played it before, but not very much. I think it's a really difficult sport, to be fair. My friend he plays tennis and he is Asian - but I just don't know much about it. (British Indian, Hindu, male, Leicester)

Aahana: We did play tennis in school and I did enjoy it a lot. But I don't think I was really good at it, so I wouldn't think about playing it now. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Leicester)

These views may be connected to a lack of adequate coaching or guidance in schools and other settings. Playing tennis for pleasure involves some planning and

resources and an adequate level of proficiency to make even a friendly exchange work. By contrast, sports such as football and cricket could be arranged on a highly informal basis. The second reason highlighted here was that young people broadly preferred other (team) sports, and so were not interested in playing tennis now:

> **Avani:** We used to play [tennis] in GCSE PE but I wasn't that interested in it. I just preferred other sports, like rounders and netball. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Leicester)

> **Jas:** [Tennis is] not a popular sport, not like football or cricket. Based on the demographics of where Asian people live, I just don't think there are many opportunities available to participate. Like, with football you can just get a bunch of mates and go to the park. It's more difficult to do that for tennis [...] When I look at the people I know, they would only be interested in the major sports. They wouldn't be bothered about tennis. I know tennis is a big sport, I enjoy watching it, but they wouldn't be bothered about trying to make a career out of tennis because it just hasn't got that same presence [that] football has. I think it would be a lot harder for Asian people [to get involved in tennis] because most Asian families typically don't believe you should play sport, they just think it is a waste of time because you're not going to make a career out of it. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

The global nature of football and cricket, combined with their popularity in the UK and on the Indian subcontinent, means that, in comparison, most other sports command much less media coverage and thus acquire much less popular attention. Tennis was also widely seen as unfashionable in consumption terms for these urban young people. Moreover, *the* summer sport for most British Asian males who are interested in sport is, historically and culturally, cricket, not tennis. This has a significant impact on the interest of young (especially male) British Asians in sports such as tennis, both as participants and also as potential consumers of sports-related goods.

iii.   *Athletics*

Athletics is currently the second most popular sport in the UK in terms of weekly participation rates, having seen a rapid surge in participation over the last decade. The latest Sport England statistics indicate that there are now 2.4 million weekly participants in running, track and field (Sport England, 2016). Interestingly, though, out of those weekly participants, only 5.8% (or one-in-20) belong to an athletics club. What this indicates is that there is an extremely large number of recreational participants in this figure. The most likely reason for this is because running (or jogging) is classified as an athletics discipline. Furthermore, this would explain the boom in participation rates in athletics, as the number people running for 30 minutes or more on a weekly basis has grown exponentially in the last decade. The introduction of Parkrun in 2004 (a free, timed weekly 5k event organised and run by volunteers in over 400 locations across the UK) is the most likely cause for the significant growth in running, and consequently, for the statistical increase in athletics participation.

There is a long and successful local history of athletics in Wolverhampton and Leicester. Between the mid-1970s and early 1980s Wolverhampton and Bilston athletic club was one of the leading athletics clubs in Great Britain, winning the National League Division One title for men, consecutively, from 1975-1982. Numerous Olympic, Commonwealth and European medallists have represented the club, including Tessa Sanderson, the first Black British woman to win an Olympic gold medal. There is also a more modest but reasonably successful local history of athletics in Leicester.

Speaking with young British Asians in Leicester about athletics highlighted that they were perhaps not as knowledgeable as members of my Wolverhampton sample about what, exactly, the sport entails. Potential interest here would spike only when an Olympic Games was in the public eye (so only once every four years). In terms of participation, very few young people were able to discuss athletics in any rounded or structured way (talking perhaps, instead, in a limited way about specific events). School is where most people's first real (or only) contact with

different athletics events occurs. Whilst many school annual 'sports day' competitions have moved to include a wider variety of sports, athletic disciplines still make up a large majority of the events. For many, this is where they learn if that have specific skills in running, jumping or throwing (the track and field events). One male respondent had 'enjoyed' athletics at school, suggesting that the running events were his favourite, especially hurdles. But he had also enjoyed the long jump, having taken part in these events at school. However, many local schools today do not have the facilities to make athletics an integral part of the PE curriculum. For this reason, my respondents were less able to discuss their experiences in athletic disciplines as they could in other sports. Some discussed their experiences of running, although this was in more informal ways, for recreational purposes, as opposed to for competitive athletics.

Young British Asians in Leicester did not necessarily hold stereotypical perceptions about the types of people who participate in athletics. When I asked my participants about the sorts of people they thought were involved, they suggested that, to their knowledge, it was a highly integrated sport, linking people from a range of different ethnic backgrounds:

> **Raj**: I don't know too much about athletics in Leicester but I do know some people that go to athletics and they come from different backgrounds, Asian people as well. (British Indian, Hindu, male, Leicester)

> **Avani:** I've seen a mixed background [competitor]. Like, most of my friends do running and they do athletics. (British Asian, Muslim, female, Leicester)

In Leicester, athletics was not viewed as an activity that was exclusive for people from a particular ethnic background. One could feasibly suggest, then, that issues around not feeling welcome or being ill-at-ease in athletics cultures were less apparent in discussing athletics than in tennis, football and cricket. For example, Muslim respondent Zayn suggested that he thought athletics to be both open and inclusive:

Zayn: Athletics is quite easily accessible. I think it's quite inviting, as well. I wouldn't say there's anything to deter people. (British Pakistani, Muslim, male, Leicester)

Under-representation of British Asian elite sportspeople within athletics may be difficult to trace back to issues about fears of racialised exclusion or discrimination, at least when analysing the views and perceptions of young people in Leicester. These participants were unaware of any such incidents in athletics, and the fact that they knew friends who were involved served as the justification for their understanding in this vein. The positive picture of openness and integration in athletics was not always shared in the same way in Wolverhampton. One respondent, in particular, claimed to be very aware of existing racial stereotypes, ones which might be operating in this field, and he was an advocate of trying to resist, through his actions and choices, these sorts of developments:

Jas: When it came to athletics, I would always try and be different. So, the stereotypes that Asians are excluded from [sport], I make sure, yeah, I'm there. Just to show that, do you know what, we can do that. We [Asian people] have got it in us to do sprinting, or long distance [running]. I just wanted to prove it's not always about [Asians] playing cricket or hockey. Back in school – I was already running a lot through my football anyway – so I thought, yeah, I can do cross country. So, I put myself forward for that, because I knew not many other Asian people would do that. The Asian people are more inclined to go and play hockey or cricket and I deliberately didn't do those sports. (British Indian, Sikh, male, Wolverhampton)

Here we can see Jas actively trying to break down what he thought were likely misconceptions about the athletic abilities and preferences of British Asian males. Two females from Wolverhampton discussed their perceptions of people who were involved in athletics:

Chanda: When you watch the Olympics, it's the Black culture that takes over. You get the occasional White [competitor] but I don't think I've ever seen an

Asian person. I find with Asian lads, it's all about football. [It's like] nobody has ever told them about other sports. (British Indian, Hindu, female, Wolverhampton)

Jess: I think people have to be really strong to get into athletics. Being a strong Asian female in the Asian community can be a bit off-putting for a husband. [Your family also ask] how are you going to look after your family and kids, if you have so much commitment with sport? (British Indian, Sikh, female, Wolverhampton)

If these young people did not see British Asian athletes competing at professional or amateur levels, there was, perhaps, an additional layer of complexity facing young female British Asians – as Jess indicates – because there are also family and cultural pressures, to conform to a specific ideal, routinely in play here. Jas discusses some of the implications that a lack of visible elite level Asian heritage athletes has on such perceptions:

Jas: It's damaging, because straight away, when you play sport you always look at someone first before you play and you judge them on what they look like and think: "How good are they?" For Asian people trying to get into sprinting, people are automatically going to judge them and think 'He isn't a sprinter'. Name me another Asian sprinter. You can't. It's tough, because you look at that [lack of professional Asian sprinters] and you think: Well no one else has done it, there's got to be a reason why no one else has done it. So, do you know what? I'm not going to do it [play that sport].

In this challenging example, the paucity of visible Asian representation in any of the athletics disciplines is argued to be a major disincentive. It works, often subconsciously, to restrict the opportunities of potential young British Asian athletes. Who will take them seriously? Jas goes on:

Jas: Coincidently, your parents have the same influence. They are going to say: "Don't do it, because we don't know a Sikh guy who has made it to be a

100m sprinter and represent England, so what makes you any different?"
[This happens] regardless of how good you are. What makes you any
different? That's where *their* stereotypes come in and then you think, well
you might as well just concentrate on your studies. (British Indian, Sikh,
male, Wolverhampton)

I have already highlighted that those South Asians who were supported by parents
and encouraged to be physically active at a younger age are the people who are still
participating, more formally, later in sport. A relative lack of facilities to compete
in athletics in a recreational way (safe green spaces, parks etc) has perhaps meant
that British Asians have had little real chance to experience athletic events. The
young people I spoke to in Leicester had all participated in sports, either at primary
or secondary school, or else because their families had offered some
encouragement for them in certain sports away from school. Athletics, however,
was not one of these sports. Avani made some suggestions about how this might
change:

> **Avani:** I don't think athletics is as accessible [as other sports]. Maybe
> because there is a lack of facilities and there isn't many clubs either. But if
> you got into it from primary school, then you can get more into it and there
> will be more opportunities as you're good at it. (British Asian, Muslim,
> female, Leicester)

Others suggested that there was also a lack of facilities – or at least *awareness* of
such facilities – for example, in Wolverhampton:

> **Jai:** You never really hear about athletics clubs. If I wanted to go to a club, I
> wouldn't know where to start. (British Indian, Hindu, male, Wolverhampton)

> **Abid:** I have never known of an [athletics] club. I don't believe there is one
> [near] to where I live, to be honest. Athletics for Asians isn't really big – we
> don't discuss it – even though we did it at secondary school. Then, if you
> asked me what was the main reason for that I would probably say there

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wasn't anywhere [to go to participate] anyway. (British Asian, Muslim, male, Wolverhampton)

The perceived lack of available opportunities and facilities, and lack of effective marketing meant that, despite observations that athletics could be welcoming to some BAMEs, it is probably fair to say that my sample of young British Asians who are 'interested' in sport was very unlikely to pursue athletics, in either a recreational or competitive capacity.

The latest Sport England strategy – *Towards an Active Nation* – has, perhaps, recognised the need to make better connections between schools and communities, in order to facilitate the continued participation of young people in sport when they leave school. Had my participants had more experience and been made more aware of available opportunities in athletics, they might have had a very different perspective about the potential of athletics, and of opportunities to get involved in it in their local areas.

Summary

Despite swimming being one of the most popular recreational 'keep fit' activities for both men and women in the UK, regardless of faith or ethnic background, recreational participation levels here are decreasing steadily. Moreover, White swimmers continue to dominate competitive local amateur and elite level swimming, and images of swimming. For females, cultural and religious barriers (such as adhering to suitable dress codes, the need for gender segregated provision and issues of modesty) are clearly a barrier to competitive (and in some places, recreational) swimming. However, broadly, my participants believed that swimming had been relatively successful in meeting their needs and in providing suitable access opportunities in a recreational capacity.

Out of the three focus sports I have looked at in this chapter, swimming was considered probably the easiest to access for recreational purposes. A lack of elite-level British Asian representation among swimmers was not cited as especially off-

putting and it did not alter my young participants' perceptions of access at this level. The paucity of British Asian competitive swimmers, though, did impact negatively on the perceptions of access for young Asians as potential competitors.

Tennis is considered by my sample to be a much more exclusive sport, one which was only accessible to those of a certain class and ethnic background. Fears of 'not fitting in' to this particular social space and cultural setting were commonplace, and this stereotype of 'tennis people' was perpetuated by the dominance of White elite-level players on the professional tennis circuit. In contrast to swimming, my participants also believed that they had restricted access to opportunities to play tennis, even at a recreational level. This was generally deemed to be due to a lack of appropriate facilities and resources and the required family support needed to be involved in a sport like tennis.

The dominance of Black and mixed heritage athletes at the amateur and elite levels of track and field for some seemed to reinforce popular stereotypes about the physical (in)competence of British Asians, which some respondents believed were likely to be hindering South Asian participation levels in athletics. Again, a lack of visibility of familiar role models at elite-levels ensured that parents continued to encourage academic pursuits over sporting endeavours. The absence of elite-level role models only seemed to strengthen parents' perceptions of their children's likely fate in pursuing local sport instead of focusing on study or career. Like tennis, my sample of participants were unaware of local opportunities to get involved in track and field and they did not know about their local athletics' clubs. Apart from road running, the perception is also that athletics is defined by its competitive base: who did athletics just for fun?

Raising awareness about the clubs and activities available is clearly something that could be usefully promoted within British Asian communities and in schools hosting a substantial South Asian intake. The best way to do this, as suggested by my research participants, was perhaps to make stronger connections with local faith centres and other local institutions. This method has also been championed by Sporting Equals as an appropriate model to engage faith communities and increase

provision and access to previously inaccessible sports. Taking opportunities *to* British Asian communities, as opposed to expecting communities to seek opportunities outside local neighbourhoods, seems to be the key message if NGBs in the UK want to drive up the participation rates of Britain's large South Asian communities.

Chapter 10

Some Conclusions

Introduction

In this thesis I have set out to explore the sporting interests and experiences of a small sample of young British Asians, mainly in the post-2012 Olympic period. My participants were drawn from two different Midlands locations and my interest has focused, broadly, on three key themes: the construction of local, national and ethnic identities through sport; sporting consumption practices pre- and post-2012; and participation opportunities for 'doing' sport for South Asians in these two different locations. At the heart of London's winning pitch to host the 2012 Games was a familiar theme: the promise to 'inspire a generation' of young people in Great Britain, to transform their lives through sport, ultimately leaving behind a visible legacy of a fitter, healthier and more integrated nation.

In this sense, hosting the 2012 Games was also pronounced in the UK as an opportunity to unite Britain's diverse communities through sport, fostering greater community cohesion via increased local community engagement, and by promoting a new more resilient and more 'cosmopolitan' British identity. The UK's ethnic and cultural diversity was routinely showcased during the bidding process and in the subsequent build up to the Games. A range of high-profile GB athletes from different heritage backgrounds featured here, alongside images of diverse, multi-ethnic communities in the Games' bid advertising and marketing material.

However, despite the rhetoric of diversity and inclusivity central to the promotion of London 2012 – and visible in the performance of some GB elite athletes at the Games - British Asian participation at the London Olympics as athletes was extremely limited. Evaluations of the success of the London 2012 'legacy promises' are now starting to emerge – in academic and news publications - but the experiences and stories of British Asians, the largest of Britain's minority ethnic groups, have hitherto been omitted from the analysis. This thesis represents a

modest contribution to knowledge, one that aims to address this omission, and explore 'alternative' stories that can help us better understand the experience of sport and the impact of the Olympic Games from differing ethnic, cultural and place perspectives (Silk, 2011).

Context & rationale for the thesis structure

As discussed in chapter five, I have utilised a multi-site interview-based approach for this research in order to consider the impact of 'place' in my analysis of the young British Asian sporting experience. The vision for the 2012 legacy extended beyond London to the whole of the UK, and it proposed to engage young people in even the most distant, 'disconnected', culturally distinctive or disadvantaged UK communities. Thus, qualitative research on the British Asian experience and the 'reach' and impact of the Games in two different locales, can add to our understanding of the social distribution of the intended benefits of hosting a sporting mega-event, especially in non-host locations. My funding providers Sporting Equals helped identify Leicester and Wolverhampton as two key sites to explore the localised British Asian sporting experience and to try to account for the local nuances that characterise the sporting experience and the condition of different groups of younger male and female British Asians in locations across the UK.

To explore fully the British Asian sporting interests and experiences in twenty first century Britain I have argued that it is important to first consider the sporting heritage of my participants and their families on the Indian subcontinent. Chapter two, the first context chapter, thus maps aspect of the historical development of hockey, cricket and football for South Asians – sports that had spread to the subcontinent as part of the British Imperialist expansion – from the twentieth century to the present day. For much of the twentieth century, India and Pakistan dominated world hockey, winning a combined total of 18 Olympic hockey medals. This dominance resulted in hockey being regarded at certain junctures as the 'national' sport on the subcontinent (Majumdar and Mehta, 2009). However, towards the end of the twentieth century cricket gained more prominence on the subcontinent. Again, cricket's growing relative importance to people of

subcontinent heritage is attributed to sporting success on a world stage, a trend that has continued into the twenty-first century, especially in India. The introduction and proliferation in cricket of TV-friendly ODIs and then Twenty20 cricket has arguably been the catalyst for the shift in focus and financial power in the world game to India. Hockey has ultimately been relegated in global sporting terms and in the Indian sporting hierarchy, and cricket has become a defining feature of post-colonial South Asian identities (Raman, 2014).

As chapter three demonstrates, of the established sporting traditions on the subcontinent it was cricket, especially, that travelled with the large South Asian diaspora who migrated to the UK in the middle of the twentieth century. This relocation was prompted, largely, by the post-partition civil wars that divided the subcontinent, experiences and exigencies in other countries, and the supposedly better standard of living offered in Britain. However, the arrival of South Asians in Britain was often met with resentment by White British people, including from working-class communities, people who already occupied low income jobs and inner-city estates and who were anxious about the perceived threat these new arrivals posed to their culture, employment and housing. This early hostility towards South Asians also extended to local sport: experiences of racism and exclusion were commonplace for first-generation migrants who, trying to adapt to their new conditions, attempted to access local UK sports networks and clubs only to face opposition and rejection from these already established White social spaces (Johal, 2001; Raman, 2014; Valiotis, 2009). As a response to the social and cultural conditions found in Britain upon their arrival, in some locations South Asians felt compelled to create their own sporting leagues, and, unsurprisingly, they continued to display allegiance and support for successful subcontinent national sports teams (Fletcher, 2011; Raman, 2014).

A consideration of the wider historical, social and political factors that underpinned and facilitated the displacement of migrants from the Indian subcontinent to the UK can help us to contextualise British Asian diasporic sporting identities today, and the consequential hybridised attachments they have to both Britain and to their 'homelands'. Third-generation British Asians regularly express their own complex

hybrid identities, and through sport this often results in support for ancestral cricket teams, but alongside a following of the *England* national football team (Burdsey, 2007a; Ratna, 2014). However, as established in chapter four, not all British Asians are able to access sporting opportunities as participants, even today. Thus, a resistance to demonstrating connections to, or support for, England in sport is routinely underpinned by a sense of lack of belonging, or opposition to the exclusionary and oppressive practices within White sporting institutions that have restricted their access as participants.

Much of the, often excellent, existing academic work investigating British Asian sporting experiences has focused specifically on football and cricket as core sports, and almost always on *male* voices. Work on South Asian females in sport has tended to have a rather narrow focus, usually emphasising their Muslim identities and constraints. It is fair to say, too, that much of the research on sport and national identity in this field has hitherto focused quite narrowly on male British Asians and their reactions to constructions of an English national identity. London 2012 thus provided an opportunity to extend the analytical lens to explore these key identity/sport themes for both males and females, but this time in relation to a wider, and potentially more inclusive British label, and in relation to other key sports, apart from cricket and football. It provided a pertinent occasion to include *female* voices within the analysis, given that the Olympics is one of those few global sporting occasions when gender difference is routinely trumped by national affiliation (Wensing and Bruce, 2003).

Having outlined the key parameter of my work, I now move on to discuss the main empirical contributions of my research.

Significance of the findings

i)   *Young British Asians and sports consumption*

Studies of sporting fandom are now commonplace. Traditionally, these studies have focused on male sports fandom, although empirical research on female sports fans has started to emerge over the last decade (see Jones, 2008; Pope, 2012; 2015). Furthermore, despite the growing volume of research on sports fans, it is still the

experiences of those who attend 'live' games that most discussions focus upon. Consequently, the voices of those who connect with their favourite sports athletes or clubs in other ways – internet, purchases, TV coverage – are still rather marginalised. There remains little empirical work on the experiences of what we might call 'non-traditional' fans, and British Asian voices remain largely absent from this area of enquiry. Whilst the first fieldwork chapter was not especially framed by the context provided by the London Olympic Games, exploring general patterns of sporting consumption can help us to understand the role that sport plays in the lives of young British Asians, and it provides some useful background to the analysis of the consumption practices during London 2012 explored in chapter seven.

Despite some misinformed assertions that young British Asians (especially males) are only interested in watching and playing *cricket*, it is evident that many young British Asians are in fact passionate football supporters, who engage widely in various forms of twenty-first century football consumption (Burdsey and Randhawa, 2012; Ratna, 2014). For my sample of active (mostly male) fans, consuming sport – and particularly football - was a key feature of their sporting identities. These fans regularly watched televised games and sports related news programmes; they engaged with their clubs via internet platforms; and they purchased club-related merchandise. However, in keeping with the findings of the small number of studies which have explored British Asian football consumption, consumer-orientated forms of identification prevailed. Relatively few of my research participants were fans of their *local* football clubs or regular attendees at club matches (see Burdsey and Randhawa, 2012; Fawbert, 2011).

As Burdsey and Randhawa (2012) have argued, at the macro level the British Asian sports fan experience can be characterised as one littered by experiences of racialised fear and exclusion. Historical threats of violence – like those discussed earlier by Abid from Wolverhampton – deterred many first and second generation British Asians from entering the potentially threatening White social spaces of British football stadia. This might well help us to explain the lack of active early connections to local football clubs for many first (and even second) generation

British Asians. The persisting issue of racism (in all its guises) and their consequent marginalisation as football fans that resulted in exclusion from football stadia, likely prompted alternative (and safer) forms of sporting consumption. Early generations of British Asian supporters who were somewhat forced to consume sport via television – in the safety of their own homes – thus forged connections, not via attenuated links with the local, but with distant, successful, and regularly televised, First Division (and then Premier League) clubs. Those fans who develop their support through the media are often regarded as passive and inauthentic 'consumer fans' (Giulianotti, 2002). British Asian fans who did attend matches of larger Premier League clubs may well be seen by other local fans as triply transgressive: by skin colour, culture and place.

The stereotypical 'success' narrative evident in British Asian identities explored in other fieldwork chapters (for example, that justifying national sporting affiliations in chapter seven, and the emphasis in chapter eight on the importance placed on academic achievement) might well also come into play in directing the sporting preferences of British Asian fans. As we have seen, given the history of hostility directed towards South Asian migrants in the UK, place connections and articulations of local identity through sport are likely to be both fractured and complex. Because of historical fears of racism, my data suggests that local traditions of fandom have not typically been passed down through generations of support and have not usually been socially inherited by my third-generation British Asian interviewees.

My sample of British Asian sports fans did, however, suggest that fears about potential racism at elite English football stadia were no longer considered as a major deterrent to their 'live' attendance. Instead, and like the findings of Burdsey and Randhawa (2012), their non-attendance at football matches mirrored elements of the explanations provided by other football fans, regardless of their ethnicity: high-ticket prices and steep travel costs (to distant Premier League clubs); the ease and convenience of consuming sport on TV; and other leisure and social commitments that made alternative forms of consumption preferable. My data also highlight a sense of growing confidence around the idea of attending live matches

at Football League clubs (see also, Burdsey and Randhawa, 2012). Perhaps this suggests that the historic perceptions among earlier generations of British Asians of UK football stadia as (near) exclusively White and somewhat 'dangerous' spaces and enclosures are slowly beginning to change, at least, for some younger sections of the British Asian community.

The role that the relatively recent introduction of dedicated British Asian supporter groups might have played in eradicating some of these negative perceptions about British football stadia must be considered. These groups have certainly raised the profile of local affiliation and help cement patterns of live attendance among British Asians, and it could be argued that attending games together in sizeable groups might provide some greater sense of personal security. Perhaps, also, as Zayn points out, fears of racism are diluted today at the safer, more sanitised Premier League clubs, where live attendance is considered much less problematic compared to the hostility one might expect at more 'racist, working-class, lower league clubs'. These perceptions – that certain, larger successful Premier League clubs are more welcoming, more cosmopolitan and more inclusive spaces today – are connected to their perceived metropolitanism, their global reach and, consequently, their ability to attract a more diverse mix of both players and spectators. However, Jess, a season ticket holder at less successful Championship club Wolverhampton Wanderers, demonstrated the positive relationship she felt existed between the club and its British Asian fans, facilitated by the dedicated supporter group Punjabi Wolves. This local manifestation had helped to foster a sense of inclusivity and local belonging. Despite herself also professing to support Chelsea FC, Jess's regular attendance at local, lower-league club matches, can perhaps be interpreted as indicating a possible shift in supporter preference. Some lower league clubs with limited, but active, British Asian supporter groups could perhaps draw more significantly on their local Asian communities for support as a result.

ii) The Impact of London 2012: British Asian identities and Olympic Sport

My overarching research question was to try to explore the impact of the London 2012 Olympic Games on the young British Asian sporting experience. One of the key original contributions of my study has been to consider both male and female experiences in relation to the Games and British national identities, and to their potential participation in, and perceptions of, key Olympic sports. London 2012 thus provided a salient opportunity to broaden the analytical lens within the context of the UK hosting a global sporting mega-event. Here, I will briefly summarise some of the key findings relating to the construction of national and ethnic identities and the impact the Games seems to have had on my sample re their national sporting affiliations and the construction of a British national identity through sport.

One of the most significant findings relates to the generational shift in feelings of belonging and connections to England and/or Britain, as citizens for my sample of young British Asians. Overall, there seems to have been some cultural 'relaxation' in terms of young British Asian association with an English national identity, one which contrasts with previous findings in this area (for example, see Fletcher, 2011; Raman, 2014; Valiotis, 2009). Several of my young respondents even explicitly distanced themselves from any meaningful kind of identification with their heritage countries. However, this was not a complete shift. Some of my participants did reject attributions of 'Englishness', instead choosing affiliation to a more inclusive British label. Although, despite their resistance to being described as 'English' subjects or citizens, they did, nevertheless, support the England national football team.

Previous research has pointed to the hybridised nature of British Asian supporter preferences; many younger (and some older) British Asians routinely demonstrate their support for the England football team, alongside that for their respective national subcontinent cricket teams. A sizeable group of my respondents demonstrated the same. Supporting England in some sports (especially football) reflects the permanency of settlement and also wider connections to both British

culture and localised English influences. Conversely, supporting a subcontinent cricket team was, seemingly, rooted in family heritage and traditions, which was constitutive of a form of distinction and a sense of pride in South Asian cultural history and heritage – despite, of course, their stronger alignment to England and/or Britain as local actors and citizens.

But, my research also highlights a smaller number of participants who actively chose to demonstrate support *only* for England in both football *and* cricket. This significant finding perhaps suggests that generational and family differences are likely to be key contributing factors in how identity work is done in relation to younger South Asian identification with particular national sports teams. One possible explanation, too, relates to the shifting ethnic constituency of the England cricket team that, in the twenty first century, is fairly reflective of the multi-ethnic make-up at least of many parts of urban England. The increased visibility of South Asian heritage role models in English cricket (including in the national team) may well be contributing to changing perceptions of a sporting 'Englishness' for young British Asian sports fans. Indeed, in a more general sense, for a large proportion of my samples, self-describing as 'English' did not seem quite as problematic today as previous research in this area has perhaps indicated.

The structure of international competition in the Olympic Games – which means that athletes from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland come together to compete under the banner of Great Britain – meant that London 2012 offered a sociologically significant lens via which to explore the nexus between 'Britishness', national identity, sport and belonging for young British Asians. The idealised vision of the London 2012 legacy was one of improved cohesion; the Games were promoted as a unique opportunity to unite Britain's diverse communities through sport and drive social change. If successful, London 2012 would inspire mass participation in sport in Britain, local community engagement, and, ultimately, promote a new modern British 'cosmopolitanism', one that centred on the positives of diversity and inclusion. Significantly, for those who rejected an English national identity through sport, the Games presented an opportunity to connect with a potentially more inclusive British version of sporting allegiance.

However, regardless of the London 2012 Games legacy promise, the overall interest and excitement my male participants displayed in relation to the London Olympic Games was limited. This is in stark contrast to the levels of domestic and international sport watched by my samples, especially by young males. This relative neglect of even a British-based Olympics is perhaps not all that surprising given the dominance of cricket and football for British Asian males, the 'unfashionable' nature of many Olympic sports for young people, and the four-year cycle of the Olympic Games. After all, cricket is not a current Olympic sport, and the Olympic football tournament is a poor relation to the FIFA World Cup, with an unfamiliar Team GB outfit comprised of mainly under-23 players, few of whom were drawn from top clubs.

Clearly, then, the official rhetoric in London, around participation and multiculturalism in relation to the Games, was simply not enough to engage some young sporting male British Asians in the provincial British cities of Leicester and Wolverhampton. Paradoxically, my *female* interviewees reported, in contrast to their relatively low levels of sports consumption more generally, a much-increased interest in the Games. It might be that a TV 'spectacle' such as the Olympics, with plenty of high profile female competitors, provides a less restricted opportunity for women generally to engage in as sports consumers. For example, there is a substantial coverage of Olympic events on free-to-air (rather than subscription) TV channels, and the national-infused, less masculinist Olympic spectacle may engage even those who are not usually interested in watching sport (the opening ceremony was reported to have been watched by many of my participants and their families).

My participants were well-aware of the rhetorics about inclusion and diversity launched in the build-up and repeated during the Games. My participants who had rejected 'Englishness', or at least certain exclusionary elements of an English national identity, were much more at ease at connecting to the Great Britain Olympic team (Team GB). This alternative structure of international sporting competition engaged them in identity terms, and a seemingly more inclusive British moniker for national sporting identity offered them a way inside the national

collective that had been previously lacking. The Games thus promoted the sort of feeling of national belonging through sport that had been previously absent in their young lives. My participants attributed this feeling of being included to be more compatible with a British Asian identity; one that allowed notions of acceptance via a global sporting event, regardless of phenotypical British Asian appearance. Thus, this identification and support for Team GB did not elicit the same exclusionary responses evident when young British Asians tried to show their support for *England* national sports teams. However, despite these comments about an initial positivity and a tangible sense of inclusion *during* the Games, my participants were rather sceptical in terms of how much the Games had helped build bridges between the UK's diverse communities on a longer-term basis. As for many people in the UK, much of the Olympic positivity and hype around 2012 seemed to disappear once the Games had completed; there were no local or lasting positive effects that were easy to identify.

Although much was made in the national fervour and media coverage about the Olympics of Britain's diverse and multi-ethnic make-up, and there were general media celebrations of Britain's multi-ethnic crop of track and field athletes, there is no denying the fact that Team GB remained profoundly unrepresentative of multi-cultural Britain (Burdsey, 2016). Whilst there were mixed responses to questions about what extent the lack of British Asian athletes in Team GB affected overall interest in the Games, the minimal Asian presence in Team GB only served to reinforce the exclusion or absence of British Asians from elite level sport in the UK. Indeed, those interviewees who had admitted only limited engagement with the Games suggested that more British Asian representation would, or may have, increased their desire to watch more. But, for most people the lack of British Asian athletes in Team GB did not seem to impact on a wider sense of enhanced national identity and belonging generated by the Games.

iii)   Young British Asians' experience of sports participation

Preparations for London 2012 included promises of a lasting sporting legacy across Britain. The DCMS (2008) wanted to 'harness the power' of the Olympics to inspire more young people from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds into sport, with a view to addressing falling participation rates. Young British Asians were clearly a key target group. I summarise in this section barriers to participation for my sample of young British Asians and consider the success of the London 2012 'inspire a generation' legacy for this BAME group.

My research highlights three main barriers to sport and physical activity participation for my samples. Particularly in Leicester, members of my younger British Asian sample were cognizant of family pressures and the need to prioritise educational attainment above recreational pastimes, and thus sport participation suffered as a result. Cultural barriers were reported by my female participants in both locations; more traditional domestic cultures – especially for Muslim and Sikh interviewees - significantly impacted on leisure time, alongside ingrained cultural assumptions about gender appropriate activities. Even those participants who were active had to negotiate and perform a compatible British Asian female identity alongside a sporting identity. An additional cultural barrier for some Muslim females was the stricter religious requirements of gender segregated activity and appropriate dress. Male respondents in both Leicester and Wolverhampton reported experiences and incidents of racism and discrimination, events which had subsequently impacted on their willingness to play certain sports in anything other than a casual recreational capacity.

The perceptions of opportunities to play sport varied greatly by gender. Although, for a variety of reasons, many of my male participants only played sport recreationally, they were well aware of the existence of local amateur football and cricket clubs should they want to join them. My female respondents, especially in Leicester, generally felt that there were fewer opportunities for them to be active. This they attributed, in part, to some of the gender-specific barriers some females within British Asian communities typically face, alongside a lack of knowledge of

local opportunities and something of a crisis of confidence relating to their own athletic ability. Many young people in my female samples, especially my slightly younger respondents in Leicester, believed that a certain level of proficiency (which they lacked) was required to join even a community sports club.

Despite mixed levels of engagement with the London 2012 Olympic Games as TV watchers or consumers, my samples of young British Asians did not typically report examples of increased local sport participation opportunities in the post-Olympic period and, consequently, their participation habits did not change. Perhaps strategically, the Games organisers had promised that elite level success at the Games would instigate a 'trickle-down effect' that would inevitably lead to increases in local participation. Young people (regardless of faith, ethnicity or gender), it was assumed, would be inspired to seek out local participation opportunities. My slightly older sample of British Asians in Wolverhampton were critical of the lack of sustained impact of the Games at grassroots levels; Team GB were successful, but not much transpired locally off the back of such successes and, consequently, the lasting legacy promise remained largely unfulfilled. Interestingly, my sample in Leicester were much more positive about the perceived 'success' of the Games. However, only two participants actually translated this into participation, and again, it was only for the short-term.

iv)   Three Key Sports: experiences and perceptions of swimming, tennis and athletics

As I have already indicated, most sociological research on British Asians and sport participation has focused on two sports, football and cricket. There is a dearth of empirical research exploring British Asian experiences and perceptions of access to other key sports, including three selected by this project: swimming, tennis and athletics. My preliminary findings, albeit from very small samples, are summarised here.

Out of the three focus sports I looked at in chapter nine, ***swimming*** was considered probably the easiest to access for recreational purposes. London 2012 did not seem to have an impact here. In fact, a lack of elite-level British Asian representation among swimmers was deemed unsurprising and was not typically cited as especially off-putting. It certainly did not seem to alter my young participants' perceptions of access at this level. The biggest barrier to swimming – particularly for females – related to religion and culture. The issues of modesty, and the consequent need among some females for gender-segregated provision and adherence to suitable dress codes was cited as the biggest potential barrier to both recreational and competitive participation. However, more broadly my data suggests that swimming has actually been relatively successful in meeting local needs and in providing suitable access opportunities, at least in a basic recreational capacity.

Despite this general perception about providing suitable swimming provision, albeit at limited times, swimming was not a regularly cited as a popular leisure activity for my British Asian samples. A lack of knowledge about local facilities and high-costs were not key issues here. Swimming was easily accessible at public swimming baths, and usually at an affordable price. And yet there was a significant drop-off reported by both my male and female respondents for swimming during adolescence. Interestingly, nearly all my participants had experienced and enjoyed swimming when they were younger.

Playing ***tennis*** reasonably seriously is considered by my sample to be a much more exclusive activity than swimming. Despite recent attempts by the LTA to reduce perceived barriers relating to social exclusion, my findings – similar to those of Lake (2011) – demonstrate that organised tennis is regarded as a sport which is only accessible to those of a certain class and ethnic background. The general perception of my participants was that they did not possess the required agency or social capital to access local clubs; fears of 'not fitting in' to this particular social space and cultural setting were commonplace. This feeling of (self) exclusion was largely perpetuated by a lack of basic local club knowledge and contacts, and perceptions of high costs for membership and transport. The stereotype of 'tennis people' was

reinforced by the predominance of White elite-level players on the professional tennis circuit. Even the recent rise of BAME heritage elite players in both the USA and England – especially in the women's game - have not altered perceptions that the GB culture of tennis is an exclusively White, middle-class space.

In contrast to swimming, my participants also believed that they had restricted access to recreational opportunities to play tennis. This was generally deemed to be due to a lack of knowledge of local appropriate recreational tennis facilities and resources, and the perceived required family support needed to be involved to resource and play an individual sport like tennis. My participants highlighted the difficulty of informal, recreational participation as a key deterrent to tennis; you needed someone to play *with*. It was much easier and more commonplace to 'arrange' loosely to play football and cricket on an informal basis.

My Leicester sample did not regard **athletics** to be an ethnically exclusive sport, and so perceived barriers to participation here were more generic: a lack of interest in athletics, limited awareness of facilities and few previous experiences of 'trying out' athletics disciplines were cited. However, in Wolverhampton interviewees did point out some more specific barriers to their involvement in local athletics. Jas, for example, discussed the lack of successful Asian heritage athletes as significant to peoples' perceptions of access: that British Asians in athletics are not taken seriously as competitors. Parallels can perhaps be drawn here with research on the 'Asian frame' (see Kilvington, 2012), where the lack of elite representation is used to reinforce negative stereotypes about Asian sporting competence. These restrictive stereotypes also impact on the levels of support potential British Asian competitors are likely to receive from family. Less specific barriers, such as the lack of knowledge of local athletics clubs, were also featured among my participants in Wolverhampton.

As Bi (2011) has argued, inequality and discrimination continue to persist in the provision of, and access to, sport and physical activity opportunities for potential British Asian participants. It is clear that the absence of British Asian role models at competitive and elite levels of swimming, tennis and athletics did, albeit unevenly,

help shape the perceptions of my own sample of young British Asians about their abilities and access to opportunities as potential competitors. The complete absence of a British Asian athlete in any of these three sports at the London Olympic Games certainly did little to challenge established conventions about access and cultural distinctions regarding these three sports in the minds of young British Asians.

Reflections

This thesis has explored the sporting life-worlds of small samples of young British Asians and has also used the London 2012 Olympic Games as a lens via which to explore their national sporting experiences and identities. One important element was to try and provide a picture based on the experiences of males *and* females (see the work of Ratna, Ahmed and Samie *passim* as notable examples of studies of Asian females and sport). Of course, sport remains an exceptionally masculine domain, and the sociological study of sport more broadly reflects this dominance. I must admit that, in many ways, my own study also reflects this imbalance. Typically, my male participants were rather more talkative than were my females, and they had more experiences as participants and consumers to draw upon. This disparity is particularly clear in chapter six, when I explored general sports consumption practices. One plausible explanation for this is the additional cultural constraints placed on British Asian females, made clear in chapter eight. Of the females who were physically active in sport, only two were really interested in consuming domestic sport as active fans. In contrast, sports consumption was a key feature of nearly all my male participants' sporting identities.

To account for potential place difference, I collected data in two Midlands cities: Leicester and Wolverhampton. This approach, as far as I am aware, has not previously been adopted, nor used in exploring the legacy impacts of the London 2012 Games. Relying on a single locale would place constraints on any conclusions one might draw regarding the wider impact of a home-Games. Using two locations, of course, still limits the conclusions which can be drawn. It was never my aim here to generalise about the British Asian sporting experience, but instead to report how the Games were received and impacted on young British Asians in two specific, pre-

selected cities outside London. I expected perhaps, due to Leicester's multicultural profile and the city's positive reputation for a multi-culturalism that works, that my sample of Leicester participants might have reported a more positive sporting experience. In reality, place difference did not seem to have such an impact. It was in fact gender that impacted more significantly on the way young British Asians respond to and experience sport.

To summarise: the original contribution to knowledge made in this thesis was manifest in exploring the British Asian sporting experience in the context of the London 2012 Olympic Games. It has also added to sociological knowledge of young British Asians and sport. Additionally, I have contributed to the continuing debates about the *impact* of the London 2012 Games in two UK cities. Immediately after the 2012 Olympics completed, public debate about the purported success of the London Games ensued, particularly in relation to the five key legacy promises. Despite the seductive vision that hosting the Games could 'revolutionise' young peoples' attitude to sport, for my sample of young British Asians in Leicester and Wolverhampton, London 2012 was not the transformative moment promised. Positive local effects were, at best, ephemeral.

Appendix 1
Research participants' demographic data

LEICESTER

Name	**Gender**	**Ethnicity**	**Religion**	**Birthplace**	**Age**	**Sporting Background**
Aahana	F	British Asian (Indian heritage)	Muslim	England	18	Swims to keep fit
Avani	F	British Asian (Indian heritage)	Muslim	England	17	Enrichment basketball
Baasit	M	British Asian (Indian heritage)	Muslim	England	17	Plays football for local club, used to play cricket at county level
Deeta	F	British Indian	Hindu	England	16	Played netball at school and enrichment basketball
Dishaan	M	British Asian (Sri-Lankan heritage)	Hindu	Born in Germany, moved aged 8	17	Plays football recreationally, used to play at local club. Also plays badminton recreationally
Friya	F	British Asian (Bangladeshi heritage)	Muslim	England	16	Occasional recreational swimmer
Hassan	M	British Asian (Indian heritage)	Muslim	England	16	Plays football recreationally

Humza	M	British Asian (Indian heritage)	Muslim	England	16	Plays football recreationally
Kiran	M	British Indian	Hindu	England	17	Does martial arts at a local club
Krusha	F	British Indian	Hindu	Born in India, moved aged 5	17	Played netball at school
Mit	M	British Indian	Hindu	England	18	Plays cricket at club level and football and volleyball recreationally
Nita	F	British Indian	Hindu	England	17	Played netball at school
Niya	F	British Indian	Hindu	Born in India, moved aged 3	17	Former club level swimmer, recreational badminton
Raj	M	British Asian (Indian heritage)	Hindu	England	18	Club basketball and recreational football
Sharav	M	British Indian	Hindu	England	16	Plays football recreationally
Shivani	F	English Indian	Hindu	England	17	County level basketball, England trailist
Sumera	F	British Asian (Pakistani heritage)	Muslim	England	18	Basketball enrichment and recreational basketball
Zayn	M	British Pakistani	Muslim	England	17	Recreational football, former team player

WOLVERHAMPTON

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Religion	Birthplace	Age	Sporting Background
Abid	M	British Asian (Pakistani heritage)	Muslim	England	24	Former academy football player, now coaches
Ali	M	British Asian (Pakistani heritage)	Muslim	England	20	Plays cricket at club level
Chanda	F	British Asian (Indian heritage)	Hindu	England	21	Physique bodybuilder and fitness model
Jai	M	British Indian	Hindu	England	20	Plays cricket at club level
Jas	M	British Indian	Sikh	England	23	Former academy football player
Jess	F	British Indian	Sikh	England	24	Club level football player and coach
Mohammed	M	British Pakistani	Muslim	England	19	Plays cricket at club level
Nina	F	British Asian (Pakistani heritage)	Muslim	England	23	Plays recreational sport

Saad	M	British Asian (Pakistani heritage)	Muslim	England	21	Plays football at club level
Sanj	M	British Asian (Indian heritage)	Sikh	England	22	Boxes at local club

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