

UNIVERSITY OF PAISLEY

**POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA AND
QUALIFICATION IN CAREERS GUIDANCE**

SESSION 2004/5

LABOUR MARKET STUDIES PROJECT

'What factors contribute to the low levels of participation by Scottish ethnic minorities in Scottish Professional Football and how can this situation be addressed?'

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Abstract:

A study into the causal factors of the very low level of participation experienced by Scottish ethnic minority groups in relation to Scottish Professional Football. Encompassing the historical context of Ethnic minority football in Scotland and the current level of participation. Research in the form of a survey, questionnaire and 'desk-based' study into what factors are inhibiting participation and how it could be improved, and a discussion of the factors highlighted by the research.

Introduction

The proposed area of study of this project is concerned with the extremely low levels of participation of Scottish ethnic minorities in the labour market that constitutes Scottish Professional Football. Whether as professional sportsmen, or as part of the wider professional football infrastructure, Scottish ethnic minorities are under-represented when viewed in terms of their proportion of the Scottish population. In this study I shall attempt to ascertain what factors contribute to this status quo and what possible solutions could be utilised to address this labour market imbalance.

Context

There exists a long and varied history of ethnic minority players being involved in Scottish Professional football. For example, Andrew Watson, who was born in Guyana, was capped three times for Scotland between 1881 and 1882.¹ He began his career in 1876 with Queens Park and is believed to be the first Black footballer to have become an international. For most of the intervening century, professional footballers from ethnic minorities were a rare sight in the Scottish game. This is a situation however that has radically altered in the last two decades due to three factors. The increasing globalisation of professional football coupled with the introduction of the Bosman Ruling, which allowed freedom of movement between EU members for professional footballers, and the influx to the UK of families from the commonwealth in the post-war period amongst whom football was a popular pastime². The import of ethnic minority players, such as Mark Walters to Glasgow Rangers and Paul Elliot to Glasgow Celtic, in the mid-eighties was the beginning of a trend that has since become commonplace. Some of the most celebrated and popular players who have been involved with Scottish football in the last few years, such as Henrik Larsson, have represented ethnic minority groups. While such players have become relatively commonplace in a Scottish game that has become increasingly multicultural, the vast overwhelming majority have been '*imported*' into this country either on the basis of talent or, in many cases, because their wage expectations represent value for money for the professional clubs.

The perturbing scenario present in Scottish football today is that while ethnic minority players are thriving and contributing greatly to the game, none of these players have been born and bred in Scotland and come through the youth development system. They have been brought in from other countries as '*the finished article*'. As far as I have been able to ascertain, the only Scottish ethnic minority player to have achieved a modicum of success in the last few years has

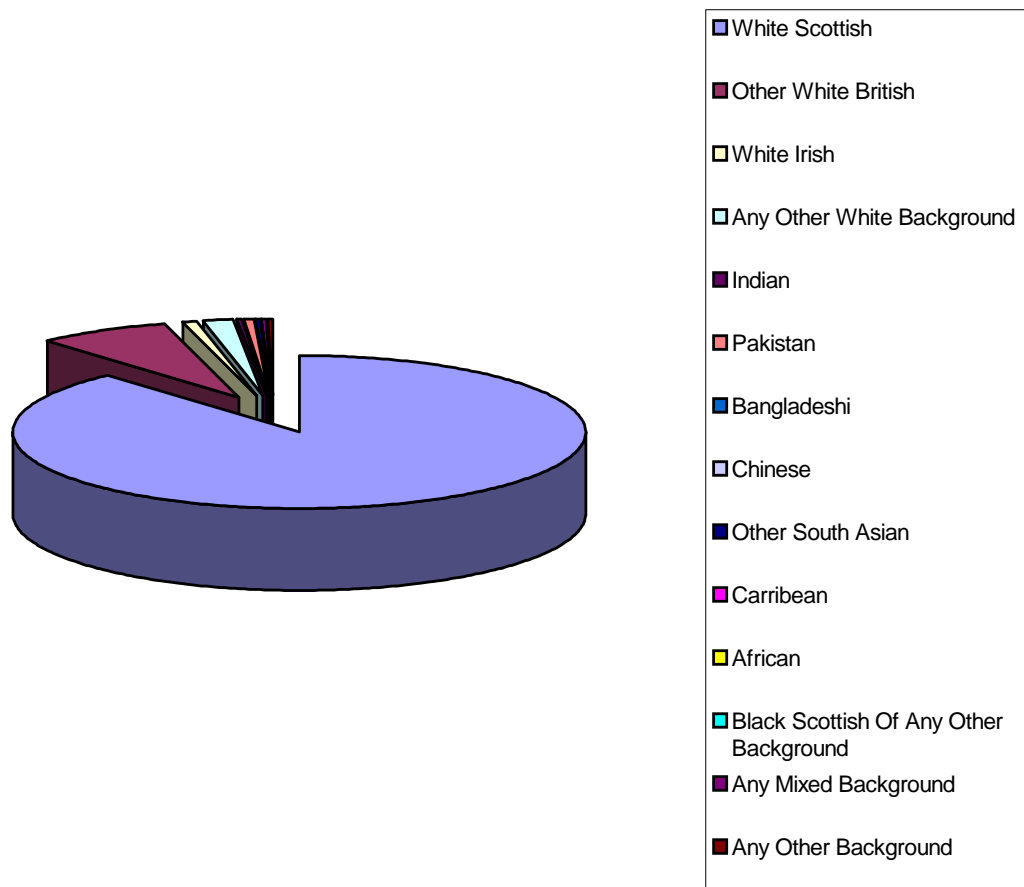
¹ <http://www.archives.gla.ac.uk/gallery/awatson/default.html>

² Garland, J and Rowe, M. (2001) Racism and Anti-Racism in Football. London:Palgrave

been Kevin Harper who represented Hibernian Football Club and was a Scottish under-21 international.

According to the 2001 Census, ethnic minorities constitute 2.01% of the total population of Scotland (see chart below).

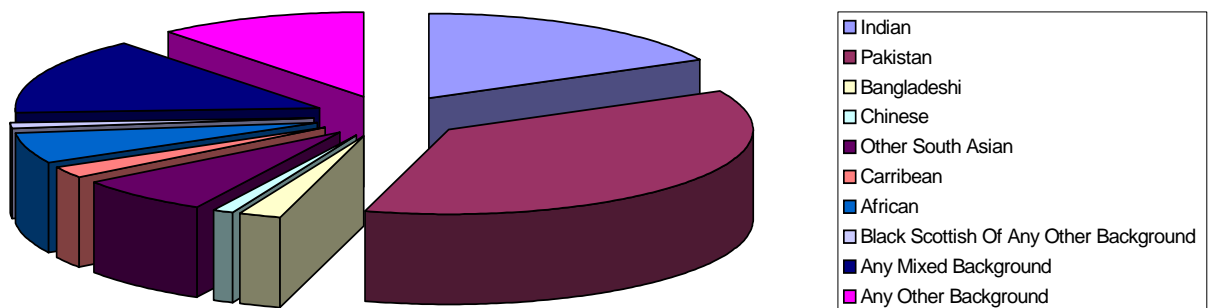
Scottish Population by Ethnic Group (2001 Census)



The 2001 census places the population of Scotland at 5,062,011 inhabitants. Therefore, at 2.06% of the total population, there are just over 100,000 Scottish people from ethnic minorities. Furthermore, 70% of the total ethnic minority population consider themselves to be of Asian ethnicity (see chart below).³

³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk>

Minority Ethnic Group Composition (2001 Census)



According to official figures, the size of the minority ethnic population has increased since the 1991 Census. Whilst the total population increase between 1991 and 2001 was 1.3%, the minority ethnic population increased by 62.3%. Therefore, Scotland's ethnic minority groups are set to increase in size at a much faster rate than the rest of the population. The composition of Scotland's ethnic minority groups is of relevance to this project as my research was conducted with Asian footballers who form the majority grouping within the ethnic minority groups in Scottish society. Although no quantifiable statistics were available at this time, it can be estimated that there are at approximately 1000 full-time professional footballers involved in the

Scottish game.⁴ Hypothetically, in an equitable society you could presume that ethnicity was not a barrier to participation in professional football. Using these criteria, you could expect the percentage of ethnic minority footballers to be an approximation of their percentage of the population as a whole. If this was the case then, according to my tenuous calculations, you could expect to find around twenty footballers from Scottish ethnic minority groups involved in the game. Of course, in reality Scottish football and society does not function in this manner but my point is to highlight the fact that there are currently no professional footballers from Scottish ethnic minority groups making an impact in the sport. Although Scottish football, at least on the playing side, is meritocratic in nature, you could still reasonably expect at least some representation from the ethnic minority segment of the Scottish population in some capacity. The fact that this has rarely been achieved suggests that there are some form of barriers preventing a higher level of participation. What these barriers may be and how they could possibly be eroded will be ascertained in this project. Now that the context for this study has been established, I shall elaborate on the research methodology I utilised in an attempt to evaluate the causal factors of this apparent under-representation of ethnic minorities in what is considered to be the national game.

Research Methodology

The research methodology that I have utilised to facilitate this project encapsulates three components:

- Quantitative research in the form of a sample survey.
- Qualitative research in the form of a questionnaire.
- '*Desk-based*' research by using the Internet and available literature.

⁴ This figure was calculated on a presumption of an average squad size of 18 full-time professionals for the 30 teams represented by the Scottish Football League added to the 437 players currently employed by the 12 teams that constitute the SPL. It has to be taken into account that it may be fairly inaccurate due to the fact that many Football league teams are semi-professional in nature and squad sizes are anything but uniform.

The quantitative research was comprised of a matrix-based survey (appendix 1) that was distributed to Asian footballers that regularly train at the Firhill Football Complex in Glasgow. Some of the players surveyed were affiliated to S.A.S.A, the Scottish Asian Sports Association, which recently organised the finals of the U.K Asian Football Championships, which were held at Ibrox Stadium last year. The statements that I utilised in the survey were as follows:

1. Scottish footballers from a minority ethnic group face cultural barriers that limit their participation.
2. Scottish footballers from a minority ethnic group face structural barriers that limit their participation.
3. I have experienced negativity associated with my ethnicity when playing football in Scotland.
4. Scottish professional football is inherently racist.
5. Racism is still prevalent among some Scottish football fans.
6. I have witnessed racial abuse when attending a Scottish football match.
7. A successful Scottish player from a minority ethnic group will encourage others.
8. More Scottish ethnic minorities involved in the infrastructure of Scottish football will encourage greater participation.

I used the above statements in the belief that they would be able to provide me with a general picture of what grassroots ethnic minority footballers perceived as being factors influencing their participation in the game. The survey that was carried out was only a sample of 10 and thus must be treated as only a marginal indicator of views that are currently held by Scottish ethnic minorities involved in the lower echelons of Scottish football.

I attempted to gather qualitative research for this project by way of an e-mailed questionnaire (appendix2) but only received two replies out of a total of ten sent out. The rationale behind this was to gather the views on the low levels of participation in Scottish Professional football by ethnic minorities from people involved in the game in some sort of professional capacity. The responses that I did receive were from Stuart Rafferty, a Football Development Officer based in Inverclyde who is jointly employed by Inverclyde Council and the

SFA. His remit is to promote football at a community level and encourage greater participation in the game among young people. I also received a response from Prem Singh, secretary of the Scottish Asian Sports Association, whose remit is to widen the participation of Scottish ethnic minorities in sporting and leisure activities. The final element of my research in this study was to utilise information from written and electronic sources in order to inform my viewpoint and contribute to an evaluation of the issues at hand.

Data Analysis and Findings

I shall first analyse the data that was collected via the matrix survey of Scottish ethnic minority footballers⁵:

In response to the statement '*Scottish footballers from a minority ethnic group face cultural barriers that limit their participation*', 20% of the survey very strongly agreed while 80% strongly agreed.

In response to the statement '*Scottish footballers from a minority ethnic group face structural barriers that limit their participation*', 40% of the survey strongly agreed while 60% agreed.

In response to the statement '*I have experienced negativity associated with my ethnicity when playing football in Scotland*', 90% very strongly agreed while 10% strongly agreed.

In response to the statement '*Scottish Professional Football is inherently racist*', 10% agreed while 90% disagreed.

In response to the statement '*racism is still prevalent among some Scottish football fans*', 100% very strongly agreed.

In response to the statement '*I have witnessed racial abuse when attending a Scottish football match*', 50% strongly agreed, 40% agreed and 10% disagreed.

⁵ It has to be noted that the participants in the survey were entirely of an Asian ethnic background.

In response to the statement '*a successful Scottish player from a minority ethnic group will encourage others*', 90% very strongly agreed and 10% strongly agreed.

In response to the statement '*more Scottish ethnic minorities involved in the infrastructure of Scottish football will encourage greater participation*', 70% very strongly agreed, 20% strongly agreed and 10% agreed.

While the exceptionally limited nature of this survey and the conditions under which it was enacted have to be taken into account, it raises some interesting questions as to how Scottish football is viewed by ethnic minorities in this country. The participants overwhelmingly believe that there are cultural barriers that need to be overcome in order for ethnic minorities to fully participate in Scottish football. What these barriers may be will be discussed later in this report. The participants are also of the opinion, although feelings are not quite so strong on this matter, that there are structural elements to Scottish football that limit the potential participation of ethnic minorities. Alarming, 90% of the participants responded very strongly that they had experienced some form of negativity in relation to their ethnicity whilst actually playing football in Scotland. Again while stressing the limited scope of this survey, this provides a worrying indication of discrimination in the lower echelons of Scottish football. I included the next statement '*Scottish football is inherently racist*' as a qualifier to attempt to judge the level to which the participants believe Scottish football is racially discriminatory in nature. The fact that 90% of the participants disagreed with this indicates that, while they have experienced racism, they do not believe this to be true. The fact that racism is probably still an issue in Scottish football is again highlighted by the opinion of the totality of the participants that racism is still prevalent among some people who like to think of themselves as fans of Scottish football. Again the issue of racism in Scottish football is highlighted by the responses to the question of whether the participants had witnessed racial abuse while attending a Scottish football match. The varied responses received however indicate that the experience had not been uniform and could be dependant on a number of factors such as the number and nature of games attended. The participants are almost unanimously of the very strong belief that a successful Scottish ethnic minority footballer

could provide a positive role model and encourage others into the game. Similarly, they are of the strong opinion that an increase in the numbers of ethnic minorities involved in the infrastructure of the game could help to encourage and increase the participation levels of ethnic minorities in terms of those actually engaging in it at a higher level.

I shall now summarise the qualitative data that I received from the professionals who responded to my questionnaire:

1. *What barriers, if any, do you believe to be causal factors in inhibiting the participation of Scottish ethnic minorities in professional football?*

Barriers indicated by the responders included cultural elements such as an interest in other sports and parental influences. Prem Singh indicated that academic attainment was often a priority with Asian parents who placed little or no value on sporting achievement and were more concerned with their children finding suitable employment. Other factors highlighted were a lack of positive role models from similar backgrounds who had succeeded in the game or established a role in the football fraternity. While, ethnic minorities were commonplace in Scottish football, no one had really broken through at grassroots level to the professional game. Stuart Rafferty stated that *'as yet no one has been able to come through the system and set a precedent that others can follow'*. Both responders also mentioned lingering elements of racism as a causal factor that could prove to be an inhibiting factor on ethnic minority participation.

2. Do you think that racism is still prevalent in the professional game?

Both responders were of the opinion that while racism was not prevalent in the professional game, a minority of idiotic fans continued to ensure that it had not been altogether banished. Stuart Rafferty elaborated on the fact that ethnic minority players were an easy target for moronic opposing fans to abuse and that sectarian

abuse was still a shameful part of Scottish football. Prem Singh acknowledged that covert racism could be in effect in the professional game, arising as a lack of understanding or ignorance of cultural differences and an unfamiliarity with ethnic minorities.

3. What measures can be taken to increase the participation and success of Scottish Ethnic minorities in professional football?

The responders elaborated on a number of factors which could increase the participation, and therefore, potential for success of Scottish ethnic minorities in professional football. Stuart Rafferty emphasised the importance of the Scottish Football Association's focus on community coaching which is an inclusive programme to encourage participation from both young people and all other areas of society who would not have previously become engaged in the sport. He also highlighted initiatives such as the Show Racism the Red Card campaign that looks to tackle racism, and therefore widen participation, by working with school children and football clubs and promoting ethnic minority football stars as positive role models. Prem Singh also highlighted the work that S.A.S.A is doing, in terms of holding events like the U.K Asian Football Championships, to raise awareness and increase participation in the game. Both responders were of the opinion that educating the youth and raising their awareness of issues such as racism was the key to eventually increasing the participation of ethnic minorities in the professional game.

Discussion of Factors Inhibiting Participation

My research, although limited, has led me to ascertain that there are a complex number of factors, often inter-related, that are causing the current low level of participation in Scottish professional football by Scottish ethnic minority groups. Cultural barriers to participation in football are a real issue among Scotland's Asian population. Parental influence and pressure in this culture is perhaps stronger than most and thus, parental attitudes towards football have a bearing on participation levels. Many Asian parents are more concerned with their offspring doing well and securing a respectable career as

opposed to what they may view as wasting their time playing a game. Many parents do not envisage sporting activities, which they see as 'a casually organised pastime'⁶ as matching the aspirations they have for their children.

Racism, no matter what its form, remains a considerable causal factor that inhibits the potential for a higher level of participation by Scottish ethnic minorities in the professional game. Racism by fans at football matches is abhorrent and would likely deter young fans from ethnic minorities from ever returning or considering a future in the sport. As Roddy McNulty, Scottish co-ordinator for the Show Racism the Red Card Campaign, has stated:

*'Over the last few seasons incidents of racist abuse have occurred at Scottish football grounds - both large and small. This abuse, directed at ethnic minority players, is both completely unacceptable and illegal. Racism at and around stadiums is not only intimidating for the players themselves, but also for fellow supporters who come from ethnic minorities. No person should ever feel discouraged from attending games through fear or hatred. Particularly at this time of financial crisis for Scottish football, our clubs must ensure that no person should feel discouraged from attending games through fear of hatred.'*⁷

As has been pointed out earlier however, overt racism by moronic fans is only one form of discrimination affecting ethnic minorities attempting to participate in Scottish football. Racial stereotypes also have their part to play as this report on Asian football in England States:

'The problems which we have identified in professional football clubs on this issue have stemmed from an ignorance and a lack of understanding or regard for the Asian population. This constitutes a conventional form of institutionalised racism. We have evidence to support our assertion that such ignorance, such a lack of understanding has perpetuated and reinforced a series of myths held of Asians generally, and of Asian footballers specifically. This is

⁶ SportScotland(2004). Sport and Ethnic Minority Communities: Aiming at Social Inclusion

⁷ Amnesty International (Scotland) (2004). Football in Context

*particularly borne out in comments by clubs on levels of interest and participation in football amongst Asians. The fact that so many professional football clubs, quite confidently assert that interest and participation levels in football amongst British Asians is low is just one example of the way in which false assumptions are made of Asian footballers. The other overriding obsession amongst professional football clubs seems to be that Asians generally do not conform to the physical specifications required of professional footballers.*⁸

Covert racism in this form can be as equally detrimental to the participation levels of ethnic minorities in football as the more overt forms of discrimination. Similarly, the methodology of becoming a professional footballer in Scotland tends to discriminate against Scottish ethnic minority players. Systems of scouting and recruiting young players are well established in this country and are completely focused on non-ethnic communities. Clubs usually spot potential players at a very young age with tried and tested scouting and feeder networks. If a player is outside of these networks then he faces the risk of being passed by. Even if an ethnic minority player is spotted at a young age, their journey through the ranks will be more traumatic than most due to their probable cultural isolation and lack of familiar reference points and connections.

The lack of successful Scottish ethnic minorities who have come through the Scottish football system creates a potential problem in terms of participation. Until someone from a minority group truly succeeds, there is a lack of a positive role model to encourage young people. At present, it is too easy for young ethnic minority footballers with potential to become apathetic and believe that success is unattainable. What ethnic minority football in Scotland really needs is a trailblazer to encourage others and show an example of what can be achieved. Distressingly, the current status quo in Scotland is that ethnic minority football is becoming increasingly separate and unequal from the mainstream.

⁸ Bains, J and Patel, R.(1996) Asians Can't Play Football. Birmingham:D-Zine

Discussion of Solutions to Increase Participation

As outlined earlier, there are many initiatives and changes underway to make Scottish football a more equal and inclusive sport. The 42 Scottish league clubs have recently adopted UEFA's Ten Point Plan that sets out protocols that national associations and clubs should adopt as the framework for action to challenge racism:

1. *Issue a statement saying the club will not tolerate racism, spelling out action it will take against those engaged in racist chanting. The statement should be printed in all match programmes and displayed permanently and prominently around the ground;*
2. *Make public address announcements condemning racist chanting at matches;*
3. *Make it a condition for season ticket holders that they do not take part in racist abuse;*
4. *Take action to prevent the sale of racist literature inside and around the ground;*
5. *Take disciplinary action against players who engage in racist abuse;*
6. *Contact other clubs to make sure they understand the club's policy on racism;*
7. *Encourage a common strategy between stewards and police for dealing with racist abuse;*
8. *Remove all racist graffiti from the ground as a matter of urgency;*
9. *Adopt an equal opportunities policy in relation to employment and service provision;*
10. *Work with all the other groups and agencies, such as the players' union, supporters, schools, voluntary organisations, youth clubs sponsors, local authorities, local businesses and police, to develop pro-active programmes and make progress to raise awareness of campaign to eliminate racial abuse and discrimination. (Uefa 2005)*

This framework should eventually help to erode any vestiges of discrimination left in the Scottish game at a National and Club level. It

is up to bodies such as the SFA to ensure this doctrine is adhered to whilst doing everything that it can to promote participation levels in the game in ethnic minority communities. Football Clubs should also be doing as much work as possible to promote Scottish ethnic minorities participation in football. An example of good practise, and something that can be built upon, is the sponsoring of the U.K Asian Football Championships by Glasgow Celtic and Glasgow Rangers. This type of event helps to raise the awareness of ethnic minority football and can only result in increased participation in the future. The current Show Racism the Red Card Campaign and others like it should further increase the likelihood in the future of Scottish ethnic minorities becoming more active in Scottish professional football. Its programme to spotlight racism, provide positive ethnic role models and educate the young should help to eliminate discrimination and make future football success for Scottish ethnic minorities a more realistic outcome. The awareness and acceptance of cultural differences that these programs promote are designed to have an impact on broader Scottish society. It is only when they start having the desired effect that we will see a positive change on the participation levels of Scottish ethnic minorities in football. The catalyst that could really accelerate the process would be the emergence of a Scottish ethnic minority player at the very pinnacle of the professional game.

Conclusions

In this labour market study I have attempted to ascertain the causal factors behind the low levels of participation experienced by Scottish ethnic minorities in the context of Scottish Professional football. I started out by outlining the historical context of Scottish ethnic minority footballers and evidenced the almost total lack of participation at this current time. I then evidenced my research methodology and elaborated on my limited findings. Subsequently, I utilised my research to attempt to elaborate on what factors were inhibiting Scottish ethnic minority involvement with Scottish professional football and attempted to ascertain what measures are

being taken to improve the current situation. In conclusion, for Scottish football to live up to its moniker as '*The National Game*', it needs to continue the progress being made and ensure that every group that resides within this nation is able to participate effectively and equally.

Appendix 2

E-mailed questionnaire utilised to elicit qualitative data.

What barriers, if any, do you believe to be causal factors in inhibiting the participation of Scottish ethnic minorities in professional football?

Do you think that racism is still prevalent in the professional game?

What measures can be taken to increase the participation and success of Scottish Ethnic minorities in professional football?

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