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# **Regional Cricket Identities: The construction of class narratives and their relationship to contemporary supporters.**

From the 1880s onwards English cricket experienced a subtle change, with the blending of the professionals from the industrial north and the amateurs from the genteel south.<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

Cricket in the North and South of England, has historically been attributed or 'imagined' in diametrically opposite and stereotyped terms. As the above quote from a display at the Bradman Museum at Bowral in NSW, Australia implies; namely a 'competitive' professional North and a 'genteel' amateur South. This paper will examine the 'invention' of these regionalised narratives, identify sources, and question the extent to which these opposing identities exist.

Studies in national and northern identities are relatively common, but as yet research into southern sporting identities is relatively rare. This paper aims to highlight the stereotypical nature of the cricket identities of the North and the South. It will be argued that these identities are 'class-based' representations that reflect the values of those classes with influence over the game in each region. This is to be demonstrated by examining these regional presentations, with a particular focus on Yorkshire and Surrey, as each was presented in a specific and oppositional way to the other. These oppositional presentations aside, Yorkshire and Surrey have been chosen because they are the two most successful cricket clubs in English County Championship (ECC) history, and of course represent the North and the South of England. After an analysis of these representations', the paper will then look for any empirical differences in the styles of play within and outside of the ECC that might support these oppositional identities. This evidence will then be used in conjunction with the results of a questionnaire survey of 400 supporters (200 Surrey and

200 Yorkshire) to confirm whether these 'imagined' identities have any authenticity and suggest the extent that they influence contemporary supporters' today?

### **The construction of regional identities**

Richard Holt highlights these widely 'imagined' regional cricket identities in a description of Herbert Sutcliffe of Yorkshire and Jack Hobbs of Surrey (both professionals) opening the batting for England:

They were a pair whose virtues of northern *grit* and southern *grace* seemed to combine the perceived characteristic regional virtues of the English perfectly (Holt, 1996a: p. 62).

In a previous paper I have argued that five factors contributed towards the development of these cricket regional identities, or 'virtues':

1. Location: with regard to a regions geographical 'independence' from the national centre of power, influence and culture.
2. The industrial revolution and its inherent population growth in the North.
3. Social and legal reforms and the increasing levels of power and influence acquired by the working-classes.
4. The patronage, provision and presentation of cricket, and which class/demographic controlled or influenced the game, at county and specifically more local levels.
5. The media: a region either having an early autonomous regional press – or a 'representative' journal and how these media presented their representative and lower level cricket, their players and other regions (Stone, 2008: p. 512).

The cricket historians H. S. Altham and E. W. Swanton noted the importance of industry to the North in the process of cricket's development, as he regarded 'industrial life' as more conducive "in one respect at least" to "professional cricket than that of the agricultural south" (Altham and Swanton, 1947: p. 96). This was of course the hand-eye co-ordination of hand loom weavers, prevalent at famous Yorkshire 'nurseries' such as Lascalles Hall

from the 1820s. In sharp contrast, Altham and Swanton viewed the South in very different terms, regarding the region as: “residential and parasitic, while the manufacturing cities of the midlands and the north became increasingly powerful magnets to vigorous youth” (Altham and Swanton, 1947: p. 96). As much of the South was industrial (albeit on a smaller scale), and much of the north remained agricultural, one has to ask what other factors combined to form these regionalised cricket ‘virtues’.

The apparently positive effects of the Industrial Revolution, and the wider social context aside, reasons for these perceived regional characteristics, lie in not just the geographical and physical differences between regions, such as their location, but the resulting differences in ‘independence’ that arose from them. In this concern, the central source for both the different narratives and the extent that they permeate the local consciousness is the factor listed fifth; the regional press.

Benedict Anderson in this regard has argued how the production of novel and newspaper, with its arbitrary content, as a “self-contained object, exactly produced on a large scale” (Anderson, 1991: p. 34), began the process which enabled populations (over time) to associate themselves (individually and collectively) as a community, or ‘region’ with shared customs, traditions, language and to a lesser extent religion (Anderson, 1991: p.188). It was through the specific language used across these various media that these communities began to imagine themselves, (Anderson, 1991: p. 146) and in the context of this paper, this process was central to the construction of the northern and southern cricket identities under examination. Due to its proximity to London, Surrey has never had a consistent regional press. Surrey supporters from the earliest days of the ECC had to rely upon the ‘nationals’, journals such as *The Graphic*, or weekly papers such as the *Surrey Advertiser*, which did not begin publication until 1863. In the North however, and

particularly in Yorkshire, there existed a series of regional newspapers from the early 1700s, and Yorkshire still has numerous regional dailies today.

Outside of the regional press cricket has been written about by a veritable *first XI* of authors and poets, including Charles Dickens, George Orwell, Siegfried Sassoon, P. G. Wodehouse and Lord Byron. But it was the work of Old Ebor, his successor at the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, J. M. Kilburn, and Sir Neville Cardus of the *Manchester Guardian*, who presented regionalised portrayals of county cricketers to a predominantly northern public. Kilburn wrote:

Cricketers are products of their environment and grow as they do grow because of the impulse of their setting ... To contemplate Arthur Mitchell in the acquisition of an *unsmiling, purposeful* century is to appreciate the hard, unyielding Yorkshire hills (Cited in Holt, 1996b: p. 146. Italics added).

While Kilburn emphasises the dour utility of the northern professional, in the South, journalists and historians similarly produced a dialogue, which attributed certain characteristics to players; such as the *Wisden* contributor Gordon Ross's description of the "bloody minded" (Birley, 1999: p. 295), Surrey professional Jim Laker. Ross describes the Yorkshire (Bradford) born spinner, who learnt his cricket in the leagues, thus:

In the man himself there lies the *casual* air of a southerner; no visible hatred of a batsman as *bred*, shall we say, in a Trueman (Ross, 1972: p. 161. Italics added).

This allegedly describes a man who *casually* achieved 1,944 first-class wickets at 18.41 and was later banned, following the publication of his book *Over to Me* in 1960, from both the Oval and Lord's!

Cardus in one of many 'character portraits' combined the two; highlighting the apparent regional and class-based characteristics of players, and adding no little contemporary snobbery. In *Cricket* Cardus wrote:

What's *bred* in the bone will come out at cricket – if only men will trust to their own impulses and not seek to find formula, a dependable way of *getting things done efficiently*. A true batsman should in most of his strokes tell the truth about himself. An innings by Lord Aberdare comes straight out of Debrett's. And an innings by Richard Tyldesley comes straight out of Westhoughton (Cited in Brodribb, 1948: 19. Italics added).

In this passage we witness a thinly veiled 'class' assumption – and one based on very disingenuous data at that. Apart from an oblique critique of the professionals and their 'industrial' 'efficiency', Cardus compares Lord Aberdare's batting, which achieved the modest average of 28.96, to Debrett's, the "modern authority on all matters of etiquette, social occasions, people of distinction and fine style" ([www.debretts.co.uk](http://www.debretts.co.uk)). Sadly Cardus chooses to juxtapose Aberdare's apparently 'tasteful style' with the batting of Richard Tyldesley. One of four sons of the Westhoughton Club's professional to play professionally for Lancashire; Tyldesley's batting (average 15.65) is likened to the industrial town of his birth. One may not initially see a problem in this analogy, except that Tyldesley (who was elected *Wisden* cricketer of the year in 1925), was a *bowler*. The latter description of Tyldesley's "comically crossbat" (cited in Brodribb, 1948: p. 19) shots, which, none-the-less, helped him to achieve a century for Lancashire in 1922, once again does not cast a flattering light on either the man or the locality of his birth. As to the genuine nature of 'a true batsman', Cardus leaves us none-the-wiser.

Cardus in this short but revealing passage then states that, "the game has infinite variety, played by men free to be themselves" (cited in Brodribb, 1948: p. 19). Even by glossing over the amateur/professional distinction, what Cardus implies between the lines is a

collection of men apparently unable to escape their upbringing and by definition 'class', which is odd as Cardus himself managed via some incredulous social climbing, and no little talent as a cricket writer and music critic rose to become associated with the cricket establishment and, late in his life, a Knight of the Realm. Cardus, as has Ross, invokes both the amateur ideology and dubious social anthropology in his writing, suggesting that 'what is *bred* in the bone', be it amateur 'genius' or a 'casual' style, the industrialized professionalism of 'getting things done efficiently' or the 'hatred' of batsmen are inescapable.

Cardus however, did not totally allow regional distinctions to override social ones. Earlier in the same passage he states:

There must constantly be style in a national game. And I mean the style that is the man himself. Spooner was an elegant and charmingly mannered batsman because he was (and is) an elegant and charmingly mannered man. But Hirst is not less a stylist. When he thrust his right foot massively over the wicket and pulled a ball a yard on the offside round to square-leg – when he did all these things he let us understand that he came from a county broad as ten thousand beeves of pasture (cited in Brodribb, 1948: p. 19).

On the face of it this statement by Cardus appears harmless enough. However the above passage reflects the latent snobbery of Cardus and his time. The Liverpool born Reggie Spooner, a favorite of Cardus, the Marlborough educated aristocrat and amateur Lancashire cricketers "elegant and charming" (cited in Brodribb, 1948: p. 19) or 'cultured' batting style and personal character could, arguably, not be described in a more complimentary manner. In contrast Cardus's description of the Yorkshire professional George Herbert Hirst, suggests a raw 'inelegant', 'uncultured' style as much as it conveys the vastness of the Yorkshire Ridings – even the sentence appears ugly – and there is no suggestion that his personal character is counter to this unflattering description. Via this

initially innocent looking description of Hirst, Cardus, implies that both ‘the man himself’, and his region (notice how Spooner’s place of origin is overlooked), were as ‘uncultured’ as his comparative batting style.

Anthony Bateman has illustrated how Cardus did not always express class-based regional associations implicitly. Cardus wrote in 1922 that: “Too many Lancashire, Nottinghamshire, and Yorkshire elevens have overdone the collectivist philosophy, turning out just “utility” teams, mechanically efficient” (Cited in Bateman, 2009: p. 271), again echoing the Altham-esque links to industry, professionalism, and northern cricket; with a glancing blow against Socialism thrown in for good measure. In a Yorkshire context Dave Russell has also emphasised how the ‘utility’ of the northern professionals, such as Hirst, and the ‘amateur’ qualities of Yorkshire’s southern opposition, be they predominantly amateur or professional sides, was a common theme in the Yorkshire media. He argues that these ‘identities’ were used as both a point of distinction, and as a means for the region of Yorkshire to bond, despite inherent inequalities within the county itself. Russell regards the “democratisation” (Russell, 1996: p. 60) of the Yorkshire amateur captains’ in the regional media being a key constituent in the construction of the Yorkshire regional identity. The opposite may be said of Surrey in particular. The Surrey professionals were, it would appear, ‘assimilated,’ into the ‘amateur culture’ advocated by the MCC, the southern county clubs, the southern press, and *Wisden*. Unlike the Yorkshire media, this was not done in order to achieve a “broadly agreed self-image” (Russell, 1996: p. 51), but in order to maintain the hegemonic façade of the South as a bastion of amateurism, amateur values, and distinct from the North in cricketing terms.

Although Russell suggests that the composition of (working-class professionals and amateur captain), and presentation of ‘united’ Yorkshire County Cricket Club (YCCC)

teams against those of the 'privileged' 'amateur' elite of the South, "pushed the issue of class difference *within* [Yorkshire] into the background" (Russell, 1996: p. 65). Working-class confidence and influence present in Yorkshire cricket outside of the ECC would lead us to believe that this was not necessarily the motive for this presentation. As Bateman notes, Cardus preference was to associate "Spooner's [aesthetic] performance ... with the gentility of the southern shires rather than the industrial heartland of his native county" (Bateman, 2009: p. 271), stating that:

Spooner told us in every one of his drives past cover that he did not come from the hinterland of Lancashire, where cobbled streets sound with the noise of clogs and industry; he played always as though on the elegant lawns of Aigburth; his cricket was 'county' in the social sense of the term. ... I'll swear that on that day long ago there were tents and bunting in the breeze of Manchester while Spooner's bat flicked and flashed (cited in Bateman, 2009: p. 272).

Just as the utility of the northern professionals was associated with industry, the pleasing nature of Spooner's amateur 'drives past cover' were associated with the largely fictional rural idyll and the South. Although Russell's 'assimilation' of amateurs holds true for Yorkshire's amateur captains' and Lord Hawke in particular, Cardus's flattering description of Spooner highlights how 'class', and implied class-based characteristics may also be regarded as an intra-regional point of distinction as well as a wider inter-regional one.

These journalists and authors created a uniformed point of distinction between northern and southern cricket by emphasising a player's professional or amateur status – an indicator of 'class' in itself – and/or the apparently 'class-based' playing characteristics of each in their writing, namely the stereotyped: elegant and casual 'southern' amateur(istic) cricketer, and the dour, purposeful professional northern cricketer – in spite of the many

conflicting realities.<sup>2</sup> C.L.R. James astutely critiqued Cardus in particular, and the wider inequalities inherent in English cricket in stating that:

Mr. Cardus circumscribes his vision of Lancashire and Yorkshire professionals within the muse of comedy. Their West Indian counterparts would crack any such limitations like eggshells (James, 1990: p. 80).

The differing narratives of the ECC aside, it may be correct – as a general observation – to state that the only difference between these two cricket clubs’ was the Yorkshire’s specific policy of selecting Yorkshire born players alone. However, there were indeed very real physical and ideological differences between Yorkshire and Surrey cricket elsewhere.

### **‘Friendly’ Club and ‘competitive’ League cricket**

The sources of the distinct regionalised narratives under discussion lie not in the County Championship and the Yorkshire and Surrey County Cricket Clubs’, but between the club cricket played across the South, and what *Wisden* described somewhat disingenuously as “the menace of the ... Yorkshire leagues” (cited in Birley, 1999: p. 214). Cups and leagues have been played across the North since the formation of the Heavy Woollen Cup in Huddersfield in 1883; in Surrey however, town or village sides played a so-called ‘friendly’ version of the game, where the ‘playing for points’ did not grab a major foothold until as late as 1968! In light of these distinct differences in regional cricket, is it any wonder that two differing narratives emerged?

If these narratives were based solely on the cricket played, *perhaps*, yes. On closer inspection, the two ‘codes’ had plenty in common. Leagues in the Midlands and the North were operated as predominantly “amateur combinations” (Birley, 1999: p. 152), with strict qualifying criteria, and very limited numbers of professionals.<sup>3</sup> Despite accusations of

'commercialism' from certain sections in the South, northern leagues and cups were not strictly operated for 'profit', but frequently as charity fundraisers, and it appears that individual Clubs' were run – rather like most *Premier League* teams today – on a 'playing success first' basis. What this would suggest, is that these narratives are 'class based' representations of the values of those who controlled or influenced each 'code', and were possibly used as a deliberate mode of distinction from the other.<sup>4</sup>

In the North cricket was ultimately influenced by ordinary working men. Despite the formation by Yorkshire 'Gentlemen' in 1899 of the "ostensibly non-competitive Yorkshire Cricket Council" (Light, 2008: p. 81), Rob Light has recently written that Yorkshires "elite clubs ... founded on the middle class principles of recreational reform ... came to be fundamentally influenced by the traditional popular values of the sport" (Light, 2008: p. 82). Values, which had emanated from 'community' teams such as Lascalles Hall from the 1820s, and persisted following the drawn-out process in establishing a single representative Yorkshire team.<sup>5</sup> However, 'friendly' amateur cricket did and indeed does persist in Yorkshire, albeit in a somewhat 'pigeon-holed' manner.

A contemporary of Cardus, Marlylebone Cricket Club (MCC) and I Zingari<sup>6</sup> stalwart, The Right Honorable Gerald French D.S.O. in asking the logical question addressed above, displayed similar class prejudices and flawed opinion regarding cricket in the leagues and the northern cricket supporter:

Northern club cricket is largely centred in the leagues, where the game, in many respects, differs considerably from club cricket as played universally in the south. This being the case, the question naturally arises, what is the reason for this sharp contrast in two parts of the same country? The answer is surely to be found in the pronounced difference in temperament between northerners and southerners (French, unknown: p. 134).

French regarded the northerners' 'character' as "being more susceptible, perhaps, to the excitement aroused by the struggle for points [and] the opportunity of betting". This prejudicial view of the northerners' naturally contrasted greatly to his contention that their "brethren of the south ... like[d] their club cricket for its own sake, unadulterated by commercial influences" (French, unknown: p. 134). Somewhat incredulously, A. C. L. Bennett, a committee member of the strictly amateur Club Cricket Conference (CCC) echoed these sentiments in 1951:

League cricket, in my view, is ideally suited to the northerner. His character, outlook on life, and temperament differ widely from those of his southern counterpart; he loves a gamble; he likes a game to be invested with a keen, competitive atmosphere; he wants the result to be a practical kind of triumph—something, for instance, that may make his favourite team League champions (Bennett, 1951: p. 233).

This appears to have been the influential 'establishment' view in the South until the introduction of semi-professional leagues in the late 1960s. From 1915, Club cricket was highly influenced by what became the CCC, who maintained the middle/upper-class control of cricket in Surrey that the Aristocracy had established from the 1700s. The CCC at its peak had over 2000 clubs registered in the South of England,<sup>7</sup> and strongly advocated the amateur ideals of non-professionalism, non-commercialism, playing the game for its own sake, while crushing any attempts to form leagues. Following one such challenge in 1949 the CCC "Chairman Mr. Jack Cooper... one of the shining lights of Barclays Bank cricket ... made a statement to the press" (Bennett, 1951: p. 235):

... This Council considers the introduction of competition cricket in the south is not in the *interests* of club cricket and that no alteration to the objects and rules of the Conference is desirable (cited in Bennett, 1951: p. 236. Italics added).

The apologists for league cricket, such as Ivan Sharpe saw things in a different light to Mr. Cooper:

The keenest cricket of all ... it is a far cry ... from Lord's and far removed from the pattern of the headquarters game ... Superior people say it isn't cricket. 'Slap-dash' they call it. Lord's probably doesn't think much about it. Too hurried, too tense; no poetry in it, no science ... The northerner has reached the stage when he prefers pep in his play. This league cricket goes far to meet the *demand* (cited in Williams, 1999: p. 23. Italics added).

The language is revealing; whose '*interests*' in the South and '*demands*' in the North were being served? Although the societal sources of the southern (Surrey) narrative (and control of cricket) are apparent, and in light of Bennett's post-war opinions, historically consistent, they do not explain how an abundance of apparently 'genteel' amateur cricket produced a series of competitive, professional and successful Surrey teams. This apparent inconsistency is not an issue regarding cricket in Yorkshire, as the uniformed 'competitive' image, and egalitarian social history of Yorkshire cricket would demonstrate.

### **Dissecting the narratives**

So what does this mean? In basic terms the 'professionalized' county game differed only in Yorkshire's selection process, whereas in the lower levels of cricket, regional differences lay in the selection of, in many cases, a solitary professional and the playing for points or silverware. One would not realise it from orthodox cricket histories, but across the Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire borders numerous leagues and cups such as the West Surrey Village Cup, The l'Anson Cup, the Aldershot and District League and the Farnham and District League existed around the turn of the century. These leagues and cups it would appear were phased out of, if not total existence (the two World Wars apart, the l'Anson Cup (now a league of three divisions) has operated continuously across these borders since 1901), then certainly the southern cricket narrative. Similarly, as stated, wholly

amateur club cricket, such as that played by the York Club, did, and does still exist in Yorkshire. Although these hidden similarities, and particularly the underlying basis of the different narratives, are relevant for future studies, it is the apparent differences, as perceived and presented in the regional media, that contributed much towards the opposing discourses and subsequent identities. However, those who controlled and/or presented the game in each region contributed far more by emphasising and even exaggerating them.

Pierre Bourdieu has argued that working-class values associated with sport, such as competitiveness, effort, physical and mental strength, as allegedly witnessed in Yorkshire by its media, contrast with the upper classes values of disinterest, form and grace as advocated by *Wisden*, the southern amateur elite and their biographers.<sup>8</sup> If the literature was entirely factual Bourdieu's theory would be a reliable explanation of both class character, *Habitus*,<sup>9</sup> and the perceived regional identities of Yorkshire and Surrey. What requires clarification however, is the extent that these discourses are based upon accurate depictions of regional identities, and what cricket *really* 'means' to the supporters of Yorkshire and Surrey.

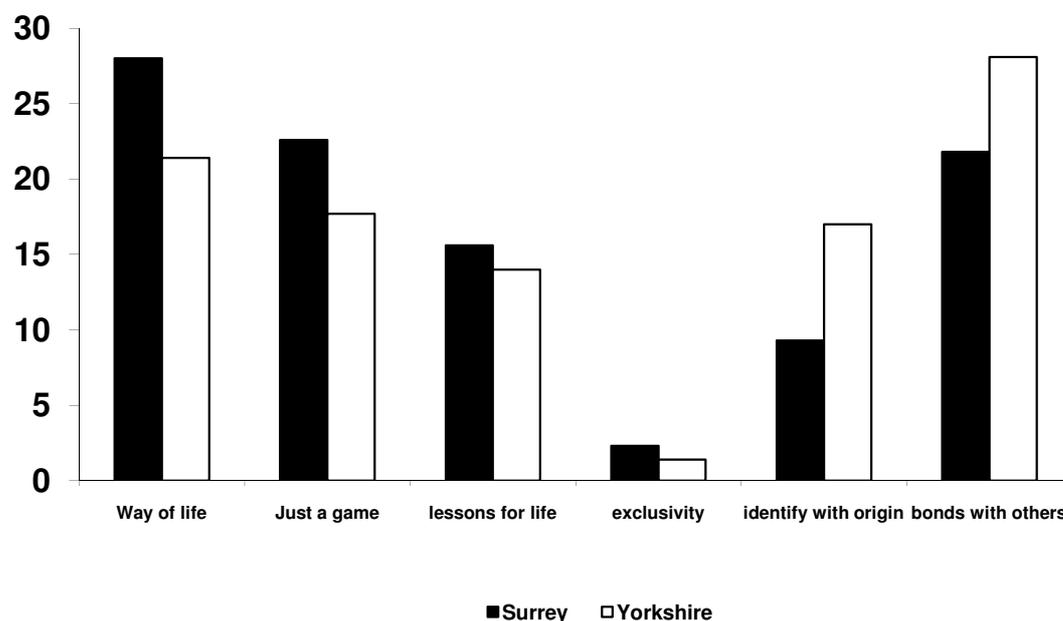
In this concern, if theories such as Gramsci's *Hegemony*<sup>10</sup> and Anderson's *Imagined Communities* are correct, the values attributed to cricket, by those 'classes' who controlled the game regionally and its representation, via the regional or 'establishment' media, will form these meanings. Of course the other factors mentioned previously, which also contribute towards these multi-faceted regional identities and the strength of feeling towards a region and its cricket club, would need to be considered. However, this paper argues that, the influence exerted by those controlling cricket and its presentation in the regions outside of the ECC is of primary importance.

## Contemporary supporter survey

So what does cricket mean to the supporters of Yorkshire and Surrey, and how do these meanings relate to the values espoused by those who controlled cricket regionally? Unlike previous historical work, this study allows the supporters to express the meaning of cricket for themselves via a questionnaire survey carried out during the 2002 season. 400 questionnaires were distributed in total, and both Yorkshire and Surrey achieved a 41% response rate.

Although one could not claim the data to be 100% conclusive, a discernable difference reflecting the class-based narratives does exist. As we can see in *Graph 1*, over 50% of the Surrey respondents regard cricket in some-what 'amateuristic' terms; cricket being seen as 'a way of life' or 'just a game'. This meaning, in many ways, reflects values of amateurism, which had such a strong presence in the South, via the upper/middle-class men, with similar attitudes to French and Bennett who ran organizations such as the MCC, Surrey County Cricket Club (SCCC) and the CCC until relatively recent times.

Graph 1: What does cricket mean to you?



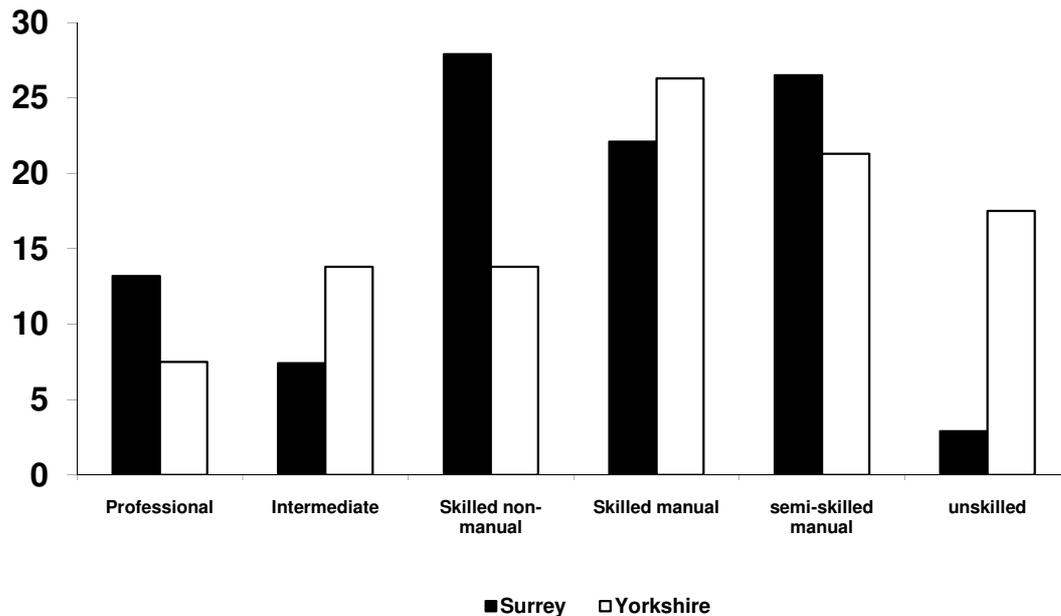
The Yorkshire respondents' on-the-other-hand regard cricket in very different terms. The Yorkshire respondents' placed great importance on cricket's ability to function as an "identity ceremony" (Hendricks cited in Struna, 2000: p. 191) with 45.1% preferring to see cricket as a means for bonding or identifying as a community, or region.

This 'meaning' of cricket while not necessarily an inherent working-class value, does hint at a regional consciousness, lacking among the Surrey respondents'. By regarding cricket as a catalyst for 'bonding' as a community or region, the Yorkshire respondents' view cricket as 'more than a game' or perhaps more accurately 'a game with more meaning'. The data reflects the egalitarian and 'wider' community based (in terms of both population size and clubs representing towns) nature of cricket in the region, the popular values instigated by the working-class men (and women), who either influenced or followed cricket via the various 'Yorkshire' or more local sides from the early 1820s, and the latter YCCC (from 1863) to the present day. The organizational structure of 'football style' cricket leagues in Yorkshire being indicative of this popular culture. The Surrey data clearly displays the upper/middle-class values traditionally associated with cricket as controlled by the CCC in the South, which would indicate Bourdieu's theoretical frameworks suitability as providing the most adequate explanation for this data, and yet the data is ambivalent in this respect.

In terms of class upbringing, which would assist in the development of Bourdieu's ideas regarding *Habitus*, the Yorkshire respondent's were more likely to have had a more working-class upbringing, than those from Surrey. As *Graph 2* demonstrates, 65% of the Yorkshire respondents' father's professions were at 'skilled manual' or below. This contrasted greatly with the Surrey respondents', of whom, 48.5% of their father's

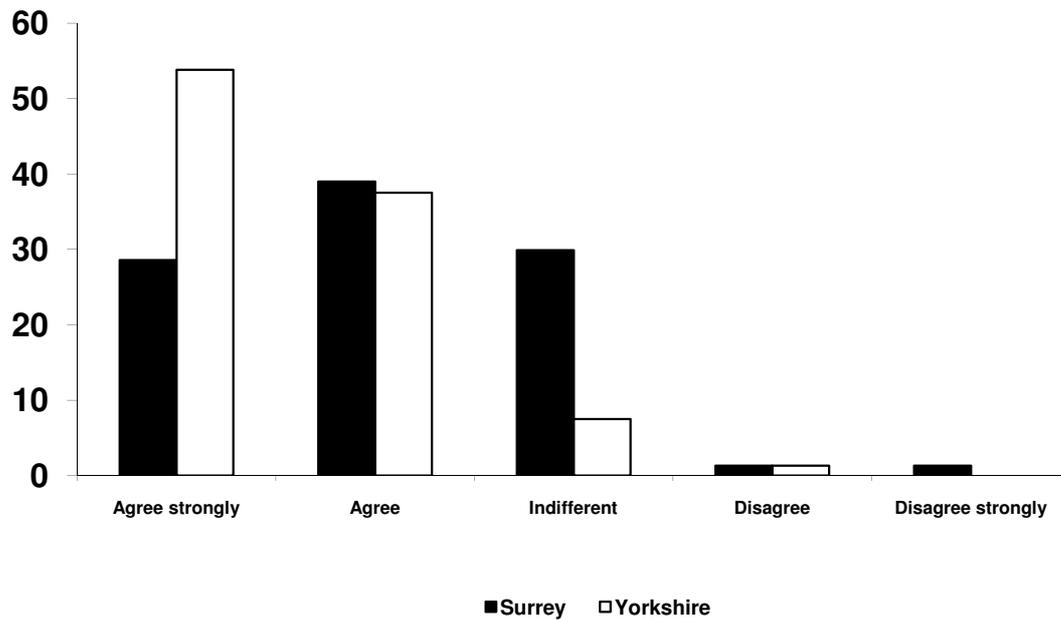
professions were at 'skilled non-manual' or above. But despite this being the case, it requires pointing out that the Yorkshire respondents' formed a more 'middle-class' demographic than those supporting Surrey.<sup>11</sup>

**Graph 2: Respondents' father's profession**



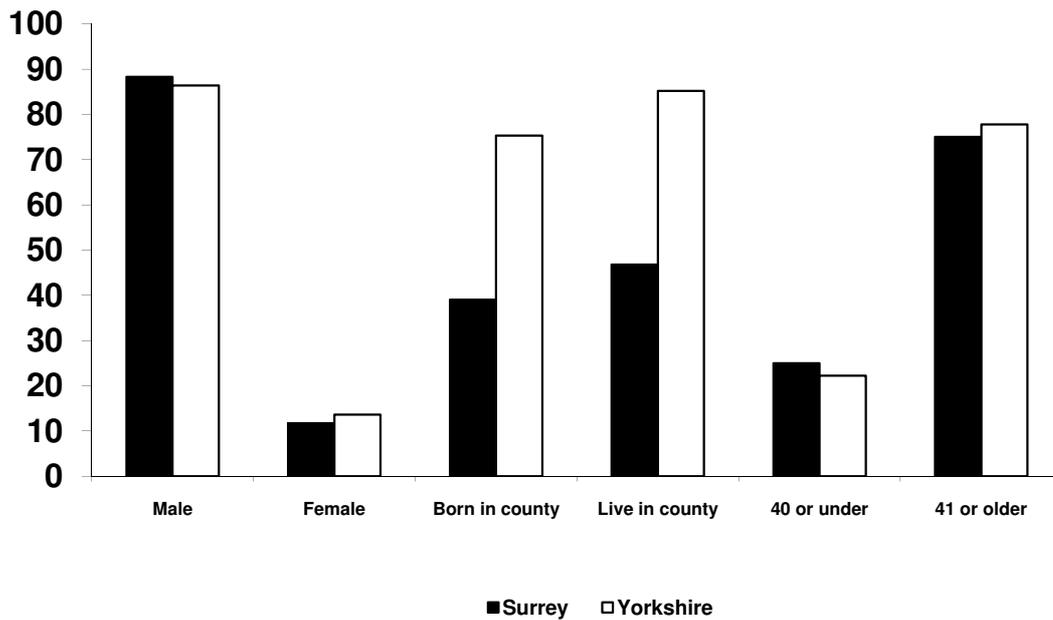
The Yorkshire respondents' association of cricket and region may be seen more clearly in *Graph 3*, when they were asked to express regional pride specifically, but behind this somewhat unsurprising data lie some obvious contributory factors and outcomes.

**Graph 3: “I am proud of where I come from regionally”**



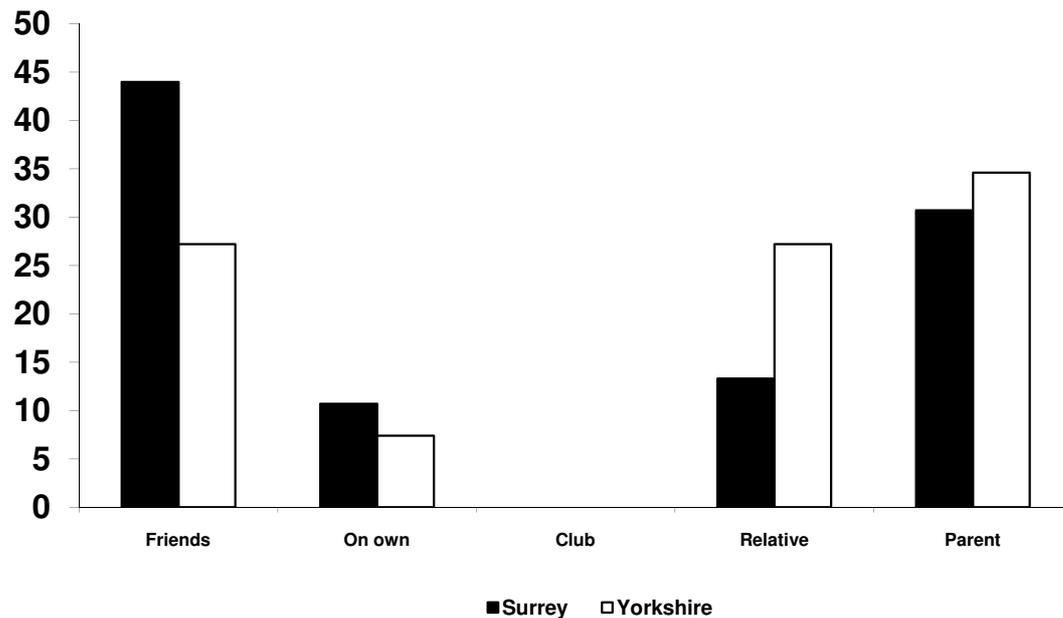
The regional pride clearly felt by the Yorkshire respondents' is embodied in attendance at the matches of the YCCC, and John Bale has noted that the supporters of Yorkshire 'consume' more cricket than anyone else in the UK (Bale, 1982: p. 91). The survey data appears to confirm this, with 70.3% of the Yorkshire respondents attending four or more county matches in the previous season, compared to just 52% of the Surrey respondents. Why should the Yorkshire supporters choose to watch so much more cricket? One answer may lie within the birth/residency data, and how respondents were introduced to their respective team. Looking at the supporter profiles, we see that both are similar in sex and age, but a crucial difference, regarding regional pride, and match attendances, lies in the birth and residency data. As we can see in *Graph 4*, almost double the Yorkshire respondents were either born or now reside within the region.

Graph 4: Supporter profiles



Allied to this is another significant statistic, which is likely to strengthen the Yorkshire supporters bond with cricket generally, but in this concern, the YCCC in particular. It would appear that Yorkshire has a tradition of familial support for the YCCC. 62% of the respondents' attended their first YCCC match with a parent or relative, unlike their Surrey counterparts, of whom almost 45% attended their first match with '*Friends*'. It would appear therefore, that many of the Yorkshire respondents' were introduced to the 'live' YCCC cricket experience much earlier in life than their Surrey counterparts, which most likely occurred outside of Surrey,<sup>12</sup> or their 'home' county, as the birth and residency data would indicate. Differences that clearly impact upon the way the respective supporters came to learn about their representative cricket club and its associated regional importance.

Graph 5: First match attended with...



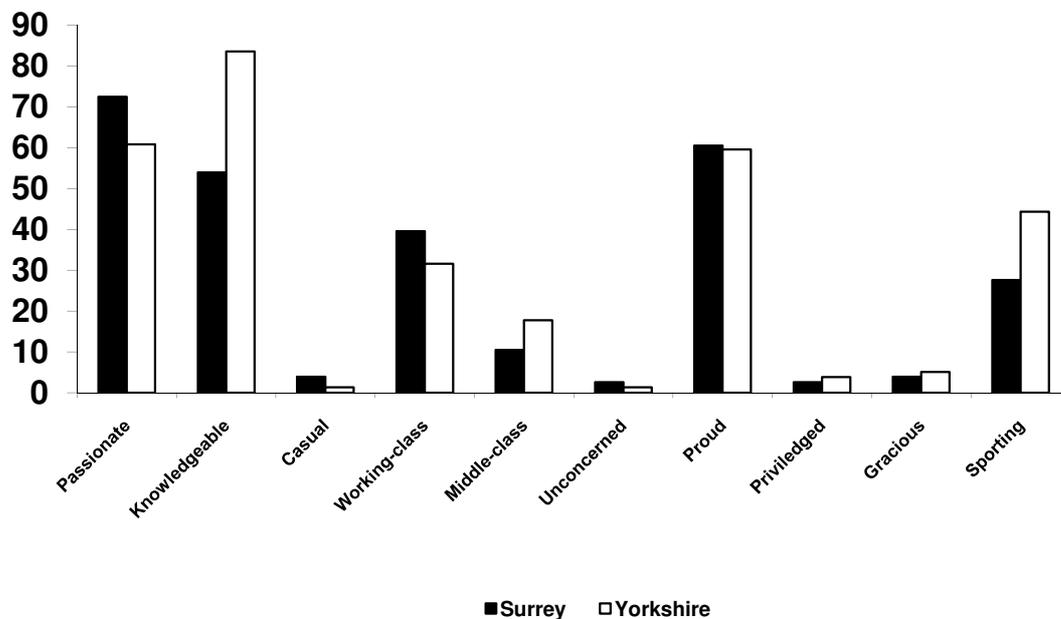
All the above data may indicate why the Yorkshire respondents' watch more cricket than those from Surrey. And yet the most revealing factor as to the pervasive power of the Yorkshire regional press, and the uniformed projection of the Yorkshire regional cricket identity, appears when we compare both views of Yorkshire and Surrey as 'imagined' from within and from outside.

The historical and literary evidence suggests that Yorkshire and Surrey supporters value different aspects of cricket, different traits in their sporting heroes and regard the game differently in term of class 'values'. Although both sets of respondents expressed similar concerns over drunken behaviour at (particularly one-day) matches, when asked to express their opinions about both their own supporters and those of the other county, the degree of stereotype awareness/adherence differed. Yet as will be argued below this data, given the historical development of each county and its representation/location was not surprising. While the Surrey respondents could provide no coherent 'character' to their own

supporting style, the Yorkshire respondents regarded themselves (and to some extent) the Surrey supporters in highly stereotypical terms.

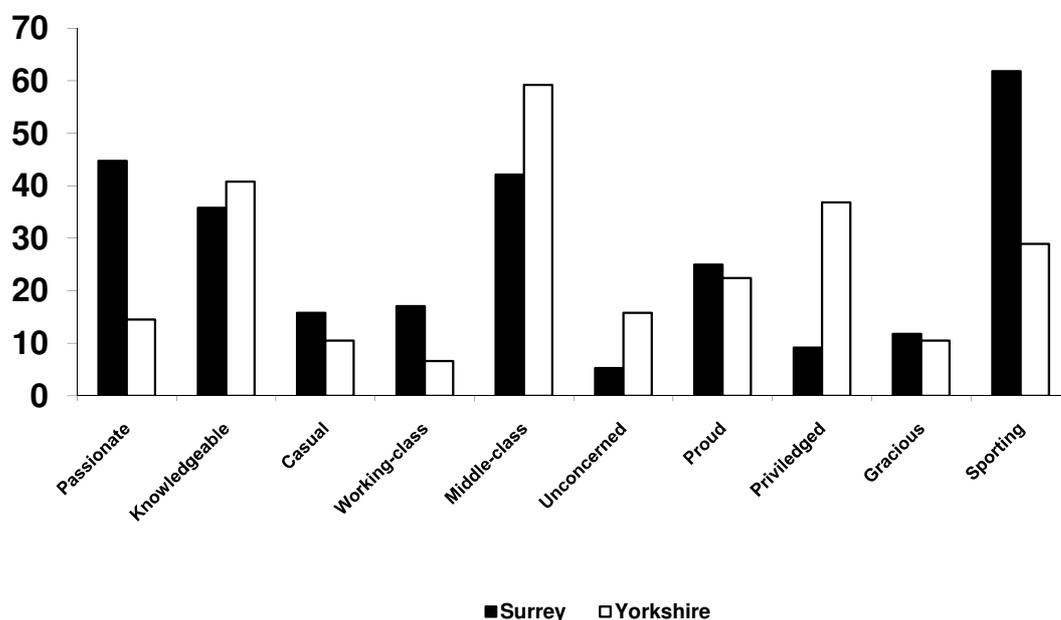
The *'Knowledgeable'* category aside, the Surrey respondent's imagined views of the Yorkshire identity in *Graph 6*; closely resemble those of the Yorkshire respondents themselves. This data indicates that elements of the stereotypical image of Yorkshire, have been highly internalised within the county, and accepted as accurate elsewhere.

**Graph 6: Comparison of Yorkshire's 'self identity' to Surrey's 'imagined identity' of Yorkshire.**



The opposite may be said regarding Surrey. Here, as we can see from *Graph 7*, the data is very mixed. Reflecting both the lack of a regional press capable of presenting an accurate, consistent and clear image, and the rather 'romantic' and somewhat insincere nature of the 'amateur' southern narrative presented in *Wisden* and promoted by the CCC at the 'grass-roots' levels of cricket. Both the Yorkshire and the Surrey data also indicates how certain adjectives, or perceived regional 'traits' as promoted by those in control of cricket and its regional image have influenced these cricket regional identities.

Graph 7: Comparison of Surrey's 'self identity' to Yorkshire's 'imagined identity' of Surrey.



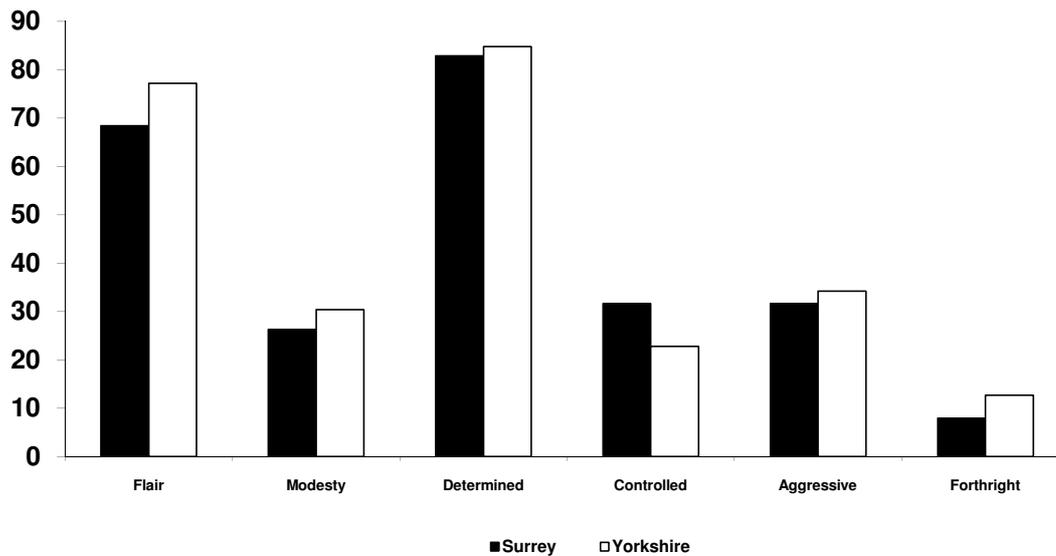
If we examine the data more closely, it is apparent that adjectives, such as *'Passionate'*, *'Proud'*, *'Sporting'* and *'Privileged'*, and class categories such as *'Middle-class'*, have become ascribed to specific regional identities via the distinct narratives of both the ECC and two, apparently class-based, regional 'codes' of cricket. The Yorkshire data while being on the whole uniform, does, when compared to the Surrey data, highlight specific 'stereotypical' traits that each ascribe to themselves, or each other, in-line with each cricket regions literary portrayal. Regarding Yorkshire, both sets of respondents' closely regard Yorkshire supporters as *'Passionate'* and *'Proud'*, and reference was made, in unsolicited scribbles, to "professional Yorkshiremen", "God's own county and all that", "speak as I find" and even that Yorkshire supporters' were "too passionate".<sup>13</sup> This possibly explaining why only the Yorkshire respondents' themselves see Yorkshire supporters as *'Sporting'*.

Concerning the Surrey data in *Graph 7*, similarly 'stereotypical' ideas of the South, as Russell (1996) has highlighted in the Yorkshire regional press, such as '*Middle-class*' and '*Privileged*' are ingrained upon the Yorkshire respondents' consciousness despite the Surrey respondents' more working-class demographic. The Surrey supporters' were described, again voluntarily, as being "smug", "corporate prawn sandwich boys, with no real knowledge of the game", or as one respondent put it: "a load of stuck up b\*\*\*\*\*s".<sup>14</sup> The Surrey respondents' themselves regarded SCCC supporters as '*Sporting*' – a trait very much in-line with the dominant amateur ideology of the regions cricket and presentation – and a surprisingly '*Passionate*' group. Being '*Passionate*' a value, along with Yorkshire's self-imagined '*Sporting*' side, falling outside of the stereotypical narratives each representative regional media wished to portray.

These somewhat selective literary portrayals, have arguably led some historians to attribute stereotypical traits to the North and the South. Holt has argued that in the North, spectator interest "centres on the appreciation – more so than the south – of certain qualities of team and individual play" (cited in Phelps, 2001: p. 44). Nicholas Phelps work *The Southern Football Hero and the Shaping of Local and Regional Identity in the South of England* indirectly questions the validity of Holt's notion that "the unforgiving duels of batsman and bowler, the strange mixture of guile and grit" (Holt, 1990: p. 266) were aspects of cricket that appealed solely to audiences in the North. Phelps was quick to state that Holt himself had noted that: "The point is not that the North was necessarily more aggressive but that it was *perceived* and *presented* as such both in the South and by plenty of Northerners themselves" (Phelps, 2001: p. 45 italics added). This presentation Phelps notes "must have played an important role in shaping southern perceptions of the north, and indeed in sharpening northern self-consciousness" (Phelps, 2001: p. 45). Northern and southern spectators, Phelps concluded, valued very similar characteristics in

a (football) player and although the Yorkshire and Surrey respondents conferred different 'meanings' to cricket, the data describing the '*desired player characteristics*' that they admired, almost mirrored each other (*Graph 8*).

**Graph 8: Desired player characteristics.**



This conclusive data and the work of Phelps, questions the validity of Holt's notion that 'the strange mixture of guile and grit' (and overt 'aggressive' competitiveness) were aspects of cricket that appealed solely to audiences in the North. This view, as Phelps and indeed Holt himself propose, may be incorrectly based on the specific literary presentation of the sport in each region not being entirely reflective (but particularly in the South) of the attitudes of the actual consumers.

Regarding other aspects of regional identity, and the attitudes associated with cricket consumers, an interesting phenomenon occurred within the Yorkshire respondents'. As *Graphs 6* and *7* display, a number of character traits were listed as options (e.g. *passionate, privileged, working class, middle class*) to describe the traits inherent in both regional identities, however, many of the Yorkshire respondents chose to list their own.

Somewhat regretfully, for the supporters of Yorkshire, these involved (as highlighted by many of the Surrey respondents') some of the less desirable, and more 'infamous' aspects of the Yorkshire stereotype (e.g. "dour", "bloody minded", "argumentative", "critical", "belligerent", "prejudiced" and being "set in their ways").<sup>15</sup> This theme *persisted* when asked what the best and worst things about their own supporters were. 11.3% of the Yorkshire respondents choosing to voluntarily highlight racism as the YCCC supporter's worst trait. A trait not mentioned, by any of the Surrey respondents.

This is interesting for three reasons. Firstly, apart from the fact this was not a direct 'option' in the survey, the Yorkshire respondents are perhaps displaying a form of 'group disgrace', by commonly citing what many 'outsiders' believe to be one of the worst afflictions of Yorkshire cricket generally. The negative press coverage given to incidents such as Brian Close's "unguarded comments ... about 'our boys' ... and 'Pakistanis who have only just come over here" (Williams, 2000: p. 51), similarly racist comments directed towards players such as David 'Syd' Lawrence the ex-Gloucestershire and England bowler or the alleged 'reputations' (for racism, or shall we say 'cultural ignorance') of famous players like Fred Trueman, appears to be largely accepted by Yorkshire supporters.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, this may regretfully indicate both personal experience of witnessing such incidents, or again the pervasive (and uniformed) nature of the media coverage of such incidents. Thirdly, in direct contrast to their Yorkshire counterparts, the Surrey respondents' regarded themselves as beyond reproach, with almost a quarter of the Surrey respondents – when asked to highlight the 'worst aspects' of the Surrey supporters – stating that SCCC supporters had "none!"<sup>17</sup> This lack of, or reluctance to be self-critical may be an indication of the 'group charisma' felt by Surrey respondents as a consequence of the county's status security as a founding 'region' of cricket, a comparative lack of controversy (regards racism etc) during its history, and the somewhat 'positive' nature of the Surrey Club's

media representation – thanks in no small part to its seat at the cricket establishment's table, and no-doubt its proximity to London.<sup>18</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the attitudes framing the game for cricket supporters appear to be hegemonic. In this concern Anderson's ideas regarding the influence that the printed media has over the construction of identities is born out, with the Surrey supporters appearing to 'buy in' to the "false doctrine"<sup>19</sup> of those who controlled the ECC and club cricket and their presentation in the region, despite the changes of the late 1960s. But having adopted these cultural values and meanings, they do not display the expected class demographic inherent in either Bourdieu's theory<sup>20</sup> or the perceived Surrey of the northern media. One may conclude from this data that the confused nature of the Surrey identity stems from an inherent 'falsehood' in the narratives that represented Surrey cricket. And yet, the pervasive and hegemonic nature of these narratives still influence the games meaning to Surrey supporters; even though semi-professional league cricket, like that played in Yorkshire since the 1890s, has been played across the county for over forty years.

In Yorkshire, the comparatively late development of cricket in the region, high working class numbers and autonomy, allied with a regional press happy to universally represent egalitarian 'Yorkshire' or perhaps 'working-class' values helped to develop and promote a uniformed identity for Yorkshire cricket.<sup>21</sup> The 'agreed' and consistent narrative of Yorkshire cricket 'from below', which was very much in opposition to the amateur dialogue emanating from (amongst other sources), the Long Room at Lord's does not represent an orthodox hegemonic process. And yet this narrative 'from below' has created a uniquely defined regional identity, which – as the data indicates – has been largely accepted within

both Yorkshire and Surrey as accurate. This uniformity is based upon the consistency of the region's presentation, and, unlike Surrey, it would appear that certain 'accuracies' inherent in the perceived cricket identity of Yorkshire.

Regardless of the accuracy of each narrative or their sources, it is clear that the media presentation of cricket, within and outside of each region, has reflected the values of those groups with influence or control in each region. And these 'stereotypical' narratives of representative ECC sides or the lower tiers of cricket – be they in a 'home' or 'away' regional context – proved highly influential. The presentation of class-based stereotypes regarding professionals and amateurs, their specific styles of play and the literary 'stacking'/association of professionals with the North, disguised the often numerous similarities between the two regions representative cricket teams, and the 'codes' of cricket at the lower levels of the sport. Furthermore, social prejudices', widely held by the upper/middle-classes – particularly within the South prior to the 1960s, generated a hostile image of league cricket, as the antithesis of amateurism. Despite northern league cricket's emphasis upon provision for the amateur cricketer.

As a final point, the survey data reveals, how a more 'orally historical' approach may help in obtaining more adequate explanations of identities and their reproduction within regions or groups previously thought to represent 'commonality' or indeed 'difference'. While the survey data indicates specific cultural differences, supporting patterns and the numerous reasons for them, most interestingly, this process produced empirical evidence of the continued influence that two distinct, and class-based, regionalized narratives – as promoted by those with influence over each county's cricket provision and its presentation for almost 200 years – still have over the regional meaning of cricket today.

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<sup>1</sup> A more disingenuous display perhaps was witnessed at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. The 'Bodyline' display showed footage of Bill Woodfull being hit under the heart and Bert Oldfield having his skull fractured by balls from Harold Larwood. Sadly this footage was incorporated without any reference on the information cards or commentary to the fact that both balls were delivered to conventional non-bodyline (Leg Theory) fields. I watched half-amused/half-concerned as an Australian man in his mid-thirties almost spat with disgust on witnessing the footage; no doubt, not for the first time.

<sup>2</sup> Ermott Robinson reportedly said to Cardus; "Ah reckon, Mr. Cardus th'as invented me." Cited in Callaghan, J. *Yorkshires Pride: 150 Years of County Cricket*, 9. Also see Dobbs's critique of Neville Cardus in Dobbs, *Edwardians at Play*, 119–36, and Birley's chapter 'The Aesthetic Fallacy' in *The Willow Wand*, 163-174.

<sup>3</sup> The Lancashire League strictly restricted professionals to one per side from 1900. Genders, R. *League cricket*, p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> Roland Bowen has argued that this style of competitive cricket was adopted in the north as a deliberate move away from the false morality he believed was being woven into the cricketing ethos of the south. Bowen, R. *Cricket: A History*, p. 116.

<sup>5</sup> Rob Light adds another ingredient to the construction of regional identity recipe. Arguing that the somewhat slow process of establishing a solitary representative Yorkshire County Cricket Club, out of the disparate sides that existed in the major towns and cities, meant that the values now associated with the Yorkshire identity were already fixed, prior to the YCCC's ECC debut versus Surrey in 1863. Light, R. "In a Yorkshire Like Way': Cricket and the Construction of Regional Identity in Nineteenth Century Yorkshire'. Forthcoming article in *Sport and History* (2009).

<sup>6</sup> I Zingari (the Gypsies) were the most exclusive cricket club within the MCC, and members had to be nominated by an existing member to join.

<sup>7</sup> Club Cricket Conference Australian Tour Brochure 2008, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction: A Social critique in the Judgement of Taste*, (1978)

<sup>9</sup> *Habitus*. According to Bourdieu, this is an agents resulting 'personality' of tastes and values, made up of three distinct but overlapping 'capitals'; namely Financial, Educational and Cultural. A parents financial capital, affects educational capital, which in turn influences an agents cultural, own financial capital etc. All three, post childhood, influence and act upon each other, and according to Bourdieu, an agents habitus governs their choice in behaviour towards, and tastes in, everything from politics to sport and even sexual partners.

<sup>10</sup> See 'Hegemony' in *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, Oxford, 1998, 272-273.

<sup>11</sup> 'Class' is a fluid, subjective, historically located and contested term. Subsequently, in the context of this paper, the concepts of 'working' or 'middle-classes' are necessarily conventional and 'commonsense'; as the respondents were likely to couch their responses in these regionally imagined and subjective terms.

<sup>12</sup> The Oval has not been located within the Surrey boundaries since the formation of the City of London in 1888.

<sup>13</sup> Survey data, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2002. It appears that the respondents enjoyed the opportunity to 'discuss' their own and each others character.

<sup>14</sup> Survey data, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Survey data, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> See also Malcolm, D. "Clean bowled' cricket, racism and equal opportunities' in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2: 307-325, April 2002.

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<sup>17</sup> Survey data, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> A peripheral factor may have been the fact that SCCC went on to win the County Championship of 2002, while YCCC were relegated.

<sup>19</sup> Altham, H. S. and Swanton, E. W. *A History of Cricket*, 399. See also Bowen, R. *Cricket: A History*, 116.

<sup>20</sup> Bourdieu's idea that certain 'classes' exhibit or attribute different 'values' to sport, or specifically here, cricket, is somewhat undermined due to the apparent 'imposition' of these attitudes on the cricket supporters from 'above' rather than being a 'natural' consequence of class upbringing.

<sup>21</sup> Dave Russell and Tony Collins argue that 'Yorkshire' values are not necessarily 'working-class', and they doubt whether the working class ever really acquired power within Yorkshire cricket, suggesting that we witness sections of the middle class who happily buy into the values of professionalism, commercialism, playing to win etc. However, the recent work by Rob Light, would suggest that these groups were influenced by pre-existing working class values, and my data suggests, whichever (class) group formed the cricket culture in a given 'region' first, they appear to have influenced cricket's meaning from then on, which in the very loosest sense does form some kind of 'power'.

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