

What are the religio-racial boundaries of contemporary English
identity?

Rosalind Bennett

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Supervisor: Dr. E. K. Wilson

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England Team

23 players made up the official England team for the UEFA European Championships 2020. As they are referenced at points throughout this thesis, the squad and positions are listed here.¹

Manager

Gareth Southgate

Goalkeepers

Jordan Pickford
Aaron Ramsdale
Sam Johnstone

Defenders

Kyle Walker
Luke Shaw
John Stones
Harry Maguire
Kieran Trippier
Tyrone Mings
Conor Coady
Ben Chilwell
Ben White
Reece James

Midfielders

Declan Rice
Jack Grealish
Jordan Henderson
Kalvin Phillips
Jadon Sancho
Mason Mount
Phil Foden
Bukayo Saka
Jude Bellingham

Forwards

Harry Kane (Captain)
Raheem Sterling
Marcus Rashford
Dominic Calvert-Lewis

¹ "Squad," England, UEFA.com, accessed January 30, 2022, <https://www.uefa.com/uefaeuro-2020/teams/39--england/squad/>.

England Football Results

England played nine games throughout the seven-week period, and the games are referenced throughout this thesis. The games, scores and goal scorers are listed here.²

Warm Up Games

2nd June 2021

England **1**

(*Bukayo Saka*)

Austria **0**

6th June 2021

England **1**

(*Marcus Rashford*)

Romania **0**

Group Stage

13th June 2021

England **1**

(*Raheem Sterling*)

Croatia **0**

18th June 2021

England **0**

Scotland **0**

22nd June 2021

England **1**

(*Raheem Sterling*)

Czech Republic **0**

Round of 16

29th June 2021

England **2**

(*Raheem Sterling & Harry Kane*)

Germany **0**

Quarter Final

3rd July 2021

England **4**

(*Harry Kane (2), Harry Maguire & Jordan Henderson*)

Ukraine **0**

Semi Final

7th July 2021

England **2**

(*Harry Kane & Denmark own goal*)

Denmark **1**

Final

11th July 2021

England **1 (2)**

(*Luke Shaw*) (*Harry Kane & Harry Maguire*)

Italy **1 (3)**

² "All the UEFA EURO 2020 results," UEFA.com, published July 11, 2021, <https://www.uefa.com/uefaeuro-2020/news/0254-0d41684d1216-06773df7faed-1000--all-the-euro-2020-results/>.

Abstract

This thesis uses the framework of formal versus moral citizenship to examine the unfolding discourses emerging over Twitter during the European Championships 2020. This will be done by focusing on the tweets of British politicians, the official @England twitter account, the Mayors of English cities, journalists at British newspapers and current and former England footballers. This allows for the identification of key messages of significance, myths, symbols and narratives about race, religion and English identity. The overarching argument presented is that to be English is considered to be English-speaking, white and Christian, or secular. From the outset, the tournament was characterized by intense debate since the players decided to ‘take the knee’ in solidarity with the global Black Lives Matter movement. Many people supported this decision, but others felt it was not only a non-English problem, but also a ‘Marxist’ movement or simply a meaningless gesture. As the team progressed throughout the tournament, their success meant that many accepted the players moral citizenship. They were granted contingent insider status as they had showed their dedication to the team and country. However, once the players failed at the final, they were judged to have let down the nation. This moral status was taken away and they received intense levels of abuse. As football is a microcosm of broader society, this seven-week-period reflects broader conceptions of English identity and nationalism and highlights the influences of historical events, as well as the influences of factors such as religion and race.

Introduction

The last few years have been an interesting time for English identity and the exploration of England's broader place in the world. Current unfolding events such as the UK's departure from the European Union, increasing nationalist ideologies developing in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and an increasingly multi-heritage society, have brought questions of English identity and belonging to the forefront. Additionally, these questions are consistently informed by historical events, such as World War 1 & 2, Colonialism and the British Empire and myths of famous Englishmen. These events are often referenced in the media and popular culture, and therefore shape many widespread beliefs, specifically on historical conceptions of identity, religion and race. Therefore, this thesis is set to explore the religio-racial boundaries of contemporary English identity. This will be done by answering the main research question: 'what is the relationship between religion, race and identity in contemporary English nationalism?'

A key site where the parameters of English identity are contested and identified is sport. Sports such as football, cricket and rugby are extremely popular in England, especially as this is also one of the only times when England represents itself on a global stage – every other instance would be a representation of Great Britain or the United Kingdom.³ Football is specifically relevant, however, as there is no other mainstream sport in which a 'non-amateur national team have *only* specifically represented *England*' in international competitions.⁴ Additionally, sportsmen often become well known stars and celebrities, and take on active roles in different areas. This thesis will focus specifically on the European Championships 2020. This tournament was ultimately postponed from 2020 to 2021 due to Covid-19 – but is herein referred to as the Euros 2020. This tournament was especially relevant as the Euros 2020 were characterized by a heated public debate about race and English identity. The English football team had chosen to 'take a knee' before games played in this tournament in a move to show global solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, which elicited a variety of responses.⁵

Before the beginning of the official tournament, England played two warm-up games, and some of the fans who were present in the stadium booed the team while they 'took the knee', whereas other fans were cheering.⁶ The beginning of the tournament was characterized by debate over whether this team was a good representation of England's current culture - multi-heritage, inclusive, strong leadership – or if they represented the un-English, supposed "Marxist" Black Lives Matter movement, and this was nothing more than gesture politics.⁷ However, this debate stretches further than this, and reflects the idea that there are people who deserve or do not deserve to represent their nation. As the tournament proceeded,

³ Jessica S.R. Robinson, "Tackling the anxieties of the English: searching for the nation through football," *Soccer & Society* 9, no. 2 (2008); 219.

⁴ Tom Gibbons, *English National Identity and Football Fan Culture: Who Are Ya?*, (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014), 7.

⁵ Joe Coleman, "TOUGH STANCE Gareth Southgate confirms England players will take the knee at Euro 2020 and says his squad 'don't want to give oxygen to those who chose to boo them,'" *talkSPORT*, June 5, 2021, <https://talksport.com/football/890837/gareth-southgate-squad-boo-england-players-knee-euro-2020/>.

⁶ William Pugh, "MORE BOOING SHAME Fans boo England players taking the knee against Romania after Southgate vows to continue despite Austria backlash," *The Sun*, June 6, 2021, <https://wwwthesun.co.uk/sport/football/15182119/fans-boo-england-players-taking-knee-romania-southgate/>.

⁷ Claudia Williams, "The meaning of taking the knee," July 16, 2021, https://www.tortoisemedia.com/audio/the-meaning-of-taking-the-knee/?utm_source=instagram&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=the-meaning-of-taking-the-knee.

players were celebrated for their success, but when they failed at the final game against Italy, players that were judged not to be performing to standard were sent abuse over social media – all those that were judged as failures were black men. Bukayo Saka, Marcus Rashford and Jadon Sancho all missed their final penalties, and these were the men whom the abuse was directed towards.⁸

Therefore, this thesis is informed by these considerations and argues that the Euros 2020 reflected that English nationalism produces a particular kind of moral citizenship. This is the type of citizenship that needs to be earned, and is delineated by imagined cultural-boundary markers of English identity. These cultural boundary markers are a complicated entanglement of religion, race and mythology that have emerged over a long history in England, as well as with England's involvement in countries around the world.

Using an intersectional lens, this thesis will explore how the discourse surrounding the England team progressed over the tournament. There are several factors in the discussion of English football, such as religion, race, class and gender, as well as the historical events that are relevant in the shaping of English identity and nationalism. To only consider one of these factors would provide a distorted picture, as each factor is of great importance. The term intersectionality was popularized by Kimberlé Crenshaw, and whilst this was specifically in relation to black women and marginalized groups, the key features are widely applicable. Her key message is that 'race, gender, and other identity categories are most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination' and that identity politics 'frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences'.⁹ Therefore, intersectionality offers a way of 'mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identity and the ongoing necessity of group politics'.¹⁰ This allows us to recognize that the categories which are important for analysis, such as 'race or gender', but also class and religion, are 'socially constructed', but that 'is not to say that that category has no significance in our world'.¹¹ These categories 'have meaning and consequences' and the most significant thing to identify is the 'particular values attached to them and the way those values foster and create social hierarchies'.¹²

This thesis will focus on the Tweets from elected officials, former and current footballers, the official @England twitter account, and high-profile journalists. The method of discourse tracing analysis will follow the discussions at a number of intersecting levels. Using a range of voices will build up a reliable trace of the events. This will allow for identification of key messages of significance, myths, symbols, and narratives in the discussions about race and English football. The predominant focus is on politicians, as Twitter is used by 90.9% of British politicians as a way of communicating with the public.¹³ All tweets used have a minimum amount of 1690 likes, which is the average number of likes on tweets globally.¹⁴ Twitter has become an important part of the newscape in recent years

⁸ Sam Cunningham, "Rashford, Saka and Sancho subjected to 'thousands' of abusive messages after England's defeat to Italy," *iNews*, July 13, 2021, <https://inews.co.uk/sport/football/rashford-saka-sancho-england-fans-racism-1102082>.

⁹ Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1242.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1296.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 1297.

¹³ "Politics Social," accessed 30 January, 2022, <https://www.politics-social.com/>.

¹⁴ "The Twitter Engagement Report 2018," Mention, accessed 30 January, 2022, <https://mention.com/en/reports/twitter/>

and plays an important role in shaping public discourse and opinion, as it facilitates quick communication with a variety of users.¹⁵

Using discourse tracing analysis from this seven-week period will follow a range of voices and build up a reliable trace of the events. This will answer this overarching, key question:

What is the relationship between religion, race and identity in contemporary English nationalism?

This will be answered through five sub-questions, with each chapter exploring one sub-question. Chapter 1 will examine the role of religion and race in national identity and the creation of cultural boundary markers that delineate moral citizenship. This will also explore the core concept of moral versus formal citizenship. Therefore, the first sub-question will be:

What is the relationship between religion, race and national identity?

The second sub-question relates to the historical relationship between religion, race and identity in historical English nationalism. The second sub-question is:

What has been the relationship between religion, race and identity in historical English nationalism?

The third sub-question will focus on methodological and ethical concerns when researching religion, race and identity:

How should the relationship between religion, race and identity be analysed?

The fourth sub-question will focus on the manifestations of English nationalism during the Euros 2020. It will ask:

How did the relationship between religion, race and identity in contemporary English nationalism manifest during the 2020 European Football Championships?

The final sub-question will discuss the implications of the findings laid out in chapter four. These findings will be related to existing research on the concepts of religion, race, identity, English nationalism and historical conceptions and events. This will also explore new developments that have developed with modern technology, such as the proliferation of social media.

The overarching argument presented is that there is a specific type of Englishness that is accepted. A journalist for the Spectator, Charles Moore, summed this up in 1991 by stating ‘Britain is basically English speaking, Christian and white, and if one starts to think it might become basically Urdu speaking and Muslim and brown, one gets frightened’.¹⁶ Despite this being stated decades ago and in a small, right-wing paper, this is reflective of the ‘British

¹⁵ Julian Ausserhofer & Axel Maireder, “National Politics on Twitter, Structures and topics of a networked public sphere,” *Information, Community & Society* 16, no. 3 (2012): 294, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.756050>.

¹⁶ Amir Saeed and Daniel Kilvington, “British-Asians and racism within contemporary English football,” *Soccer and Society* 12, no. 5 (2011): 603, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2011.599581>.

press's general approach to questions of asylum and immigration'.¹⁷ His view of the fear over the 'erosion of the perceived 'indigenous' national culture ... echoes an imminently nostalgic vision of England and thus promotes a model of the nation's identity that reflects historical yearning'.¹⁸

The players of the England team disrupted the status quo through their decision to 'take a knee' as this was a move determined by some to be non-English whilst representing England. This was initially scrutinised by many from the dominant insider group – those who are 'English-speaking, Christian and white'¹⁹ - but as their success grew, the dominant insider group granted praise and extended moral citizenship to the footballers. However, the fact that three young, black, men – Bukayo Saka, Marcus Rashford and Jadon Sancho - were held responsible for England losing the match and missing out on being the winners of the Euros 2020 highlighted how this moral citizenship can be rescinded. The abuse they received following the loss reflects the argument that they were only temporarily seen as belonging to England in both a formal and moral way, and their moral citizenship was rescinded when they were judged to have let down the nation. This framework, as well as historical conceptions of religion, race and English nationalism, will be further explored in the following chapter.

¹⁷ Saeed and Kilvington, "British-Asians and racism within contemporary English football," 604.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Chapter One: What is the relationship between religion, race and national identity?

To answer the research question ‘what is the relationship between religion, race and identity in contemporary English nationalism?’ it is important to begin with an exploration of national identity and nationalism, and its relationship with religion and race. This will then be related to the concept of formal versus moral citizenship to highlight how the relationship between race, religion and nationalism manifests in notions of belonging and not belonging.

National Identity

The term national identity is defined as ‘the maintenance and continuous reproduction of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths, and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of nations and the identification of individuals with that heritage and those values, symbols, memories, myths, and traditions’.²⁰ It is thought that the ‘symbols and traditions that anchor our identities - whatever those might be - are a fundamental human need’.²¹ The concept of the nation is defined as ‘a named human population occupying an historic territory and sharing common myths and memories, a mass public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members’.²² In imagining the nation, it ‘can be grasped as a ‘sacred communion of citizens’, a felt and willed communion of all those who assert a particular moral faith and feel an ancestral affinity. Its sacred properties help to create cohesive national identities and engender a sense of national self-confidence and exclusivity’.²³

The term nationalism is both a theory and a practice. In theory, the term means that ‘each ‘nation’ should have its own ‘state’’.²⁴ This means that ‘one’s own ethnic or national tradition is especially valuable and needs to be defended at almost any cost through creation or extension of its own nation-state’.²⁵ This is something that ‘can empower large numbers of ordinary people’ as it provides a way for people to advance the ‘interests of its own ‘nation-state’’.²⁶ Nationalism is also most prevalent when people of the nation or a specific ethnicity feel threatened, but it can also ‘be stoked up’, likely under ‘the guise of an imagined threat or grievance’.²⁷

There are several key components of the nation. The first are the people, who are ‘not just an imagined political community, but a willed and felt communion of those who assert a moral faith and feel an ancestral affinity’.²⁸ There is also the ‘‘sacred territory’, its historic and ‘inalienable’ homeland’.²⁹ These have ‘acquired greater sanctity’ as ‘secularisation has become more common’ as ‘the transfer of awe and reverence from the deity and his or her

²⁰ Anthony D. Smith, ‘The ‘Sacred’ Dimension of Nationalism,’ *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 3 (2000): 796, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298000290030301>.

²¹ Afua Hirsch, *Brit(ish): On Race, Identity and Belonging* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2018), 312.

²² Smith, ‘The ‘Sacred’ Dimension of Nationalism,’ 796.

²³ *Ibid.*, 792.

²⁴ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Smith, ‘The ‘Sacred’ Dimension of Nationalism,’ 803.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 807.

‘church’ to the location of the shrine and its worshippers, for here all the members participate equally by virtue of being ancestrally related to the territory in question’.³⁰ Additionally, ‘golden ages’ are important to the nation. These are episodes of ethno-history which have come to appear as ‘canonical’ or ‘high periods’ for later generations of the community. In the case of England, the ‘golden ages’ are events such as World War Two, and the British Empire. These events are considered to ‘embody the inner or true virtues of the community and fulfil its vision of its own glory’.³¹ Therefore, they ‘serve as models and guides for future action, and a mirror for the nation’s destiny’.³² These periods of ‘golden ages can restore its identity to a community and create a feeling of collective exaltation, of the extraordinary, thereby showing it how it can renew and transcend itself.’³³ Finally, the idea of ‘national sacrifice’ and the ‘glorious dead’ are important in the nation. This is a focus because ‘the symbols and ceremonies of the cult of the glorious dead, which have become so central to the celebration of the nation, mingle feelings of awe and pride, piety and purification, grief at the loss of loved ones, and a determination not to forget their heroism’.³⁴ However, this is also because ‘they turn people’s minds away from the futility of war and the waste of mass death. Instead, they dwell on the cleansing role of self-sacrifice in the destiny of the nation, the need for each generation to emulate its glorious ancestors and noble predecessors, and the importance of solemnly rededicating the present generation to the sacred communion of the nation and its destiny.’³⁵

Religion

Religion has many different definitions. The definition and conceptions are shaped by history, and therefore responds to different needs, pressures and questions. This ranges from the idea that religion is ‘the belief in Spiritual Beings’, as stated by Edward B Taylor,³⁶ to Johnathan Z. Smith’s statement that ‘religion is solely the creation of the scholar’s study’, and therefore has no existence outside of academia.³⁷ However, other definitions see religion in different ways. The definition used in this thesis was created by Durkheim and defines religion as ‘a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions - beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in single moral community called a church.’³⁸ This definition is used because it is applicable in different contexts, but emphasises that ‘religion must be something eminently collective’³⁹. Additionally, different societies will have different myths and rituals that are important at different times, so it is not a prescriptive view of religion.

Historically, religion has been ‘not only at the centre of society but also marked the centre of life in that society from marking the times of day (ringing bells or mullahs calling for prayer), the yearly calendar (festivals and saints’ days) to providing education and

³⁰ Smith, “The ‘Sacred’ Dimension of Nationalism,” 807.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 808.

³⁴ Ibid., 809.

³⁵ Ibid., 809.

³⁶ Edward B Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, (New York, NY: Harper (The Library of religion and culture), 1958 edn), 5.

³⁷ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xi.

³⁸ Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001 edn), 46.

³⁹ Ibid.

learning (schools and universities), health and welfare (alms houses or monastery hospitals)'.⁴⁰ Religion and culture are tied together, as many 'cultures tend to derive from a religion or have a religious core to them and from these we acquire our own identities as we acquire a specific culture, which in turn often reflects a specific set of relations and so makes religion a vital part of us and our identity, who we are'.⁴¹

The role of religion in the world, and more broadly in national identity and international order, is often disregarded and 'unseen'.⁴² Religion in the modern day is often considered in 'simple superficialities such as church attendance or wearing a veil'.⁴³ This, in part, is due to the system of secularism. Casanova considers there to be three elements essential in the development of modernity: '(1) the increasing structural differentiation of social spaces resulting in the separation of religion from politics, economy, science, and so on; (2) the privatization of religion within its own sphere; and (3) the declining social significance of religious belief, commitment, and institutions'.⁴⁴ In the modern day, secularism 'does not simply insist that religious practice and belief be confined to a space where they cannot threaten political stability or the liberties of "free-thinking" citizens. Secularism posits a particular conception of the world ("natural" and "social") and of the problems generated by that world'.⁴⁵ Therefore, religion has not been 'squeezed out the frame of a secularising modernity', but it has 're-emerge[d] within it in new guises'.⁴⁶ It is important to state for this case that 'customs and rituals of national commemorations, holidays and festivals, elections, (vocal) music, sport, and the cult of the glorious dead ... create the closest bond and arouse the most fervent collective emotions'.⁴⁷

Race

The concept of race, as we know it today, stems from the end of the eighteenth and the middle of the nineteenth century.⁴⁸ As European colonial expansion continued throughout the world, there was an understanding by Europeans that they were superior to those they were encountering around the world.⁴⁹ Today, modern society understands race in terms of skin colour as this is 'the most obvious distinction between 'races' although there is nothing in human biology that suggests that humanity should be divided on grounds of skin colour'.⁵⁰ This follows the idea that there is an 'organic belonging of specific people, territories and states that in effect excludes and racializes all "Others"'.⁵¹

When researching and writing about race, much of the focus is on blackness. However, 'whiteness' is an invisible construct, so its presence has become regarded as

⁴⁰ James Dingley, "Sacred communities: religion and national identities," *National Identities* 13, no. 4 (2011): 390.

⁴¹ Ibid., 397.

⁴² Smith, "The 'Sacred' Dimension of Nationalism," 814.

⁴³ Dingley, "Sacred communities: religion and national identities," 397.

⁴⁴ Talal Asad, "Religion, Nation-State, Secularism," in *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, ed. Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 178.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 185.

⁴⁶ Smith, "The 'Sacred' Dimension of Nationalism," 811.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 813.

⁴⁸ Saeed and Kilvington, "British-Asians and racism within contemporary English football," 603.

⁴⁹ Hirsch, *Brit(ish)*, 312.

⁴⁹ Smith, "The 'Sacred' Dimension of Nationalism," 796.

⁵⁰ Saeed and Kilvington, "British-Asians and racism within contemporary English football," 603.

⁵¹ Ibid.

invisible, normal, neutral even'.⁵² There is a lack of desire to focus on whiteness as whiteness has been 'centralized forever, so they're no longer interested in making it the subject', but this centralization has been intentionally done to 'continue its dominance, and it's never been the object of inquiry to understand 'its paranoia, its violence, its rage.'⁵³ Additionally, 'white history is seen as 'history', black history is seen as 'black history' – a specialist subject for those who wish to opt out of the mainstream.'⁵⁴ This reflects how central and taken-for-granted whiteness is: white people make up the dominant-group in England.

In recent years, discussions around race and racism have become increasingly mainstream. This is seen in the global protests that began after the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis, USA.⁵⁵ His murder was followed by growth of the Black Lives Matter movement in the US and around the world, expressed through protests and action on social media.⁵⁶ These events unfolded in the UK a year before the Euros 2020, but since these protests began players had been taking the knee before games in their league matches.⁵⁷ A statue of Edward Colston was toppled in Bristol, and 'became a monument of national awakening to realities of black British history'.⁵⁸ As a notable slave trader, he left much of his wealth to the city and is credited with the building of much of Bristol's infrastructure, but as this statue had no reference to his role in slavery people had tried to correct this, but to no avail. The toppling of this statue was met with a variety of reactions: for instance, a group of mainly white men, referring to themselves as the Democratic Football Lads Alliance, went to London the day after the toppling of the Colston statue in what was referred to as an anti-Black Lives Matter protest in order to 'protect Britain's monuments to heroes'.⁵⁹

Just before the Euros 2020, it was decided by the England team they would 'take the knee' in solidarity with the global Black Lives Matter movement. The action of 'taking the knee' is continually misunderstood. Dominic Raab MP said it 'seems to be taken from the Game of Thrones', whereas others believe they are 'kneeling to a Marxist ideology that would destroy capitalism'.⁶⁰ In fact, it was started by Colin Kaepernick, a quarterback in the NFL for the San Francisco 49ers. Taking the decision to take a stance against the racial injustice and police discrimination in the US, he at first decided to sit for the national anthem. However, as some people found that offensive, Kaepernick consulted a US Army Special Forces veteran and ex-NFL player on the most respectful way to protest.⁶¹ This was still met with anger from some people, including then US President Donald Trump, who said

⁵² Hirsch, *Brit(ish)*. 308.

⁵³ Steven W Thrasher, "Interview Claudia Rankine: why I'm spending \$625,000 to study whiteness," *The Guardian*, October 19, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/oct/19/claudia-rankine-macarthur-genius-grant-exploring-whiteness>.

⁵⁴ Hirsch, *Brit(ish)*, 309.

⁵⁵ Valerie Wirtschafter, "How George Floyd changed the online conversation around BLM," *Brookings*, June 17, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/how-george-floyd-changed-the-online-conversation-around-black-lives-matter/>.

⁵⁶ Wirtschafter, "How George Floyd changed the online conversation around BLM."

⁵⁷ "EURO 2020: Gareth Southgate says England determined 'more than ever' to take the knee after being met with boos," *Sky News*, June 5, 2021, <https://news.sky.com/story/england-determined-more-than-ever-to-take-the-knee-at-euro-2020-after-being-met-with-boos-12325763>.

⁵⁸ David Olusoga, *Black and British* (London: Macmillan, 2021), 531.

⁵⁹ Melissa Reddy, "Football's emphatic rejection of racists must continue and be expanded on a greater scale," *The Independent*, June 15, 2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/premier-league/football-racists-black-lives-matter-democratic-football-lads-alliance-protests-a9566321.html>.

⁶⁰ Williams, "The meaning of taking the knee."

⁶¹ *Ibid*.

“‘Wouldn’t you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, ‘Get that son of a bitch off the field right now. Out! He’s fired. He’s fired!’”⁶² Kaepernick has not played since 2016. This gesture did continue and was used in the Black Lives Matters protests in 2020, after the killing of George Floyd. Many people are opposed to this gesture for various reasons. For instance, it has been tied to other political statements such as the promotion of Marxism and defunding the police.⁶³

A lot of the discussions on race are reflected in the idea of the ‘good immigrant’. Immigration is a concept closely linked to race through historical events, such as the legacy of the Empire. People with an immigrant/non-English heritage background often believe ‘we must be good, we must be grateful’, and despite being legally allowed to live in the UK unconditionally, it is felt that their ‘right to be here is somehow conditional upon good behaviour, gratitude and adequate displays of the intention to assimilate’.⁶⁴ This is reflected in the decision to ‘take the knee’, both in England and the USA. This decision was taken with offence, specifically from white citizens, for a variety of reasons, but possibly because this was a way of separating white and black people. This was therefore taken as a display of a ‘bad immigrant’: not appearing grateful and separating themselves from the in-group, and not integrating or assimilating. This reflects the idea that the concept immigration, and the people in the nation with a multi-heritage background, are often a ‘toxic scapegoat for the nation’s problems’ and often exploited by far-right politicians.⁶⁵ The concept of the nation as an imagined community of people, residing on sacred land, with a common history of the ‘golden ages’ has led to ‘a hardening of white identities, hell-bent on nationalism, insularity and the closing of borders and minds on the one hand, and a crisis of non-white identities on the other, which feel alienated and confused about belonging’.⁶⁶ This idea of good and bad immigrants, as well as the confusion over belonging, are core ideas in the framework of this thesis: formal versus moral citizenship.

Formal versus Moral Citizenship

The concepts of formal and moral citizenship are key as a theoretical framework in this thesis. Citizenship has become moralised, and both dimensions are ‘important in understanding power configurations between the established and the outsider’.⁶⁷ This theoretical framework is inspired by van Campenhout & Houtem in their work on theorizing deservedness of migrants in international football. Their focus is on the player Mesut Özil, a player eligible to play for both Turkey and Germany, although chose to play for Germany. Their essay focuses on legal nationality in international football, which they find sustains ‘a rigid ‘inter-state world view’.⁶⁸ This contributes to the fact that the ‘determination of ‘who is ‘we’ and who are ‘they’ ... is dominantly bordered along national lines’, which means that ‘there seems to be a crucial difference between *formal* and *moral* citizenship’.⁶⁹ Their

⁶² Bryan Armen Graham, “Donald Trump blasts NFL anthem protestors: ‘Get that son of a bitch off the field’.” *The Guardian*, September 23, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2017/sep/22/donald-trump-nfl-national-anthem-protests>.

⁶³ Williams, “The meaning of taking the knee.”

⁶⁴ Hirsch, *Brit(ish)*, 281.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Gijs van Campenhout & Henk van Houtem, “‘I am German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose’. Theorising on the deservedness of migrants in international football, using the case of Mesut Özil,” *Sport in Society* 24, no. 11 (2021): 10.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

framework finds that, in the realm of football but also in broader society, people with nationalities and heritages from outside of England are traditionally judged to be belonging to the nation in times of success. This means they are granted their moral citizenship by the in-group, and therefore obtained contingent insider status. However, in times of failure, their belonging and loyalty to the nation can be scrutinised, and their moral citizenship withdrawn.

Formal citizenship is granted by the government, and with that citizen has certain ‘duties and obligations to a state and in return enjoys certain rights within the legal borders of that state’.⁷⁰ This formal citizenship is separate to moral citizenship, which is ‘in line with Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of ‘social and cultural capital’ – ‘the sum of accumulated nationally sanctified and valued social and physical cultural styles and dispositions (national culture) adopted by individuals and groups, as well as valued characteristics (national types and national character) within a national field: looks, accent, demeanour, taste, nationally valued social and cultural preferences and behaviour, etc.’’⁷¹ For ‘immigrants, or even the children of immigrants, to be recognised as fully ‘integrated’ members of the (national) society’ is very rare,⁷² and ‘formal and moral citizenship ... can vary over time as well over different kinds of outsider groups’.⁷³ This reflects the concept of the ‘good immigrant’: despite being granted formal citizenship and therefore being allowed to live in the country unconditionally, ‘in the perceptions of others, our right to be here is somehow conditional’.⁷⁴ It is up to actions of others, specifically the dominant in-group, to determine whether outsiders are seen as ‘‘proper’ nationals’.⁷⁵ Some people are ‘able to position themselves (and are recognised) as unconditionally belonging to the nation’, though this depends ‘on the positions a person is assigned on various markers of difference and sameness, most notably those of race, ethnicity, culture, nation and religion’.⁷⁶ This reflects the importance of some concepts used largely throughout this thesis. Specifically, the concepts of religion and race are part of the cultural boundary markers that delineate moral citizenship.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to provide an understanding of the formal versus moral citizenship framework, and an exploration of the concepts of religion, race, nationalism and national identity. Though traditional forms of religion have diminished, this does not mean its role in national identity has. There is a sacred dimension to the nation, which involves the people who are within the land and boundaries, and consider themselves to have a shared history and language, as well as culture. These concepts are closely linked to the research question as this research has shown an interdependent relationship between religion, race and nationalism. Therefore, this chapter has sought to provide an extensive background to situate further knowledge, which will in turn answer the research question ‘what is the relationship between religion, race and identity in contemporary English nationalism?’.

⁷⁰ van Campenhout & van Houtem, “‘I am German when we win, but I am immigrant when we lose’”, 10.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Hirsch, *Brit(ish)*, 283.

⁷⁵ van Campenhout & van Houtem, “‘I am German when we win, but I am immigrant when we lose’”, 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Chapter Two: What has been the relationship between religion, race and identity in historical English nationalism?

This chapter will seek to situate the formal versus moral citizenship framework specifically within the English context. This will be achieved through an analysis of cultural boundary markers that have developed over time, as well as examining a variety of historical events that influence English nationalism. This will begin with an exploration of the concept of citizenship, and determining who is typically considered the in-group and the out-group. This will then be followed by an examination of two major historical events – the British Empire and World War Two – and how these have impacted modern England, specifically in the way these have shaped perceptions about belonging and Englishness. There will also be a specific exploration of the role of religion in England, as well as mythology, and how this has developed historically and is relevant in the modern day. Finally, there will be a focus on football specifically, including the displays of nationalism and its history with dealing with racism. This chapter will help to situate what constitutes formal and moral citizenship, and why this is so. It will also reflect the fact that English identity is very interconnected with a variety of factors, including religion and race, and how this identity has shifted over time.

Citizenship in England

The framework of formal versus moral citizenship framework differentiates between two distinct forms of citizenship and this chapter will further explore the events that have shaped the view of moral citizenship. A lot of the history of England has created a perception that ‘different groups are perceived to be (and made to feel) more or less national than others’ within a ‘delimited national territory’.⁷⁷ There is a group of people ‘who are able to position themselves (and are recognised) as unconditionally belonging to the nation’, and therefore ‘are recognised and belonging... have a more settled sense of identity, and access to whatever benefits the in-group accrues, but are also able to make judgement about the status of other people’.⁷⁸ Through treating citizenship as a ‘possibility instead of an actuality’, it becomes a virtue, and a ‘mechanism of in- and exclusion of the nation-state’.⁷⁹ The core issue is the ‘sense of control or agency’, but this dynamic has been referred to as essential as by differentiating the ‘other’ allows for establishing the ‘in-group as a coherent entity’ and this boundary establishes a ‘homely space in which those who “belong” can feel secure’.⁸⁰

In the case of England, the ‘insiders’ are white, English-speaking and Christian. Despite decades of immigration and interaction with other nations, this sense of English ‘identity and place is seen to be under threat from a seemingly powerful “other” that has arrived “here” in the past forty years’.⁸¹ These ‘undomesticated “others” pose’ a threat to ‘previously taken-for-granted practices, objects and social spaces’, and there are attempts to ‘reassert the dominant group’s identity’.⁸² In other words, these debates around immigration reflects the idea that “Our” culture belongs ‘here’ within the bounded homeland, whilst the

⁷⁷ Michael Skey, “‘A sense of where you belong in the world’: national belonging, ontological security and the status of the ethnic majority in England,” *Nations and Nationalism* 16, no. 4 (2010): 718.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Willem Schinkel, “The Virtualization of Citizenship,” *Critical Sociology* 36, no. 2 (2010): 266.

⁸⁰ Skey, “‘A sense of where you belong in the world,’” 725.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 729.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 730.

culture of ‘foreigners’ belongs ‘elsewhere’.⁸³ Immigration to the UK has happened for a variety of reasons over previous decades, but much has come with Britain’s interaction with the world through the British Empire. This was especially prevalent since World War Two created a large employment gap, the majority of which was filled by people from Britain’s Empire.

The British Empire

The relationship between religion, race and identity in English nationalism cannot be understood without analysing the history and relevance of the British Empire. At its height Britain ‘ruled over 25% of the world’s land area from London’.⁸⁴ In 1950 the Empire ‘covered large tracts of Africa, South Asia, Australasia and the Americas’ and was a ‘major source of raw materials and food, and ... was integral to British national identity’.⁸⁵ The growth of the Empire, combined with the way World War Two was perceived, which will be explained shortly, led to the decision to not join the European Coal and Steel community.⁸⁶ This was due to the fact that this would cut Britain off from their Empire, and what they considered ‘the disutility ... and because of their longstanding discomfort with continental entanglement’.⁸⁷ Additionally, this decision was ‘product of the utter peculiarity of recent British events’, namely the perceived success during World War Two and the reliance on the British Empire.⁸⁸

The Empire has shaped ‘the constitution of self and other’ which ‘has often been defined in relation to colonisation, and there is a large body of work that has demonstrated the degree to which racial categories have informed debates around national belonging’.⁸⁹ The history of race and black people in England and Britain is not widely known, being ‘erased ... and even disputed despite more than fifty years of archival discovery’.⁹⁰ There is not the space in this thesis to discuss the full history, but there is a ‘widespread misconception that black history began with the coming of that one ship’ (the Windrush).⁹¹ This makes it appear that ‘black British history is exclusively a history of black settlement in Britain, rather than a global story of Britain’s interaction with Africans on three continents’ through trade, slavery, and colonization.⁹²

Historical events influence modern decisions. The British Empire was built on the idea of ‘the inferiority of non-white, non-Christian, non-Europeans’, and this has been an ‘underlying ideology’ for generations of people.⁹³ The history of colonialism in the UK has also been linked to the decision to leave the EU. It was argued that ‘England has been

⁸³ Ruth Wodak, “‘Us’ and ‘Them’: Inclusion and Exclusion – Discrimination via Discourse,” in *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, ed. Gerald Delanty, Ruth Wodak & Paul Jones (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 67.

⁸⁴ Ben Carrington, “‘Football’s coming home’ but whose home? And do we want it?: nation, football and the politics of exclusion,” in *Fanatics: Power, Identity and Fandom in Football*, ed. Adam Brown (London: Routledge, 1998), 103.

⁸⁵ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London, Vintage, 2005), 160.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Skey, “‘A sense of where you belong in the world’,” 717.

⁹⁰ Olusoga, *Black and British*, 10.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 523.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 524.

⁹³ Hirsch, *Brit(Ish)*, 24.

‘forgotten’ and unfairly submerged, with the belief that Britain is, or should be, the ‘greatest nation on Earth’.⁹⁴ Therefore, the vote drew ‘on deep reservoirs of imperial longing in the majority population’.⁹⁵ This discussion was ‘made more alluring precisely through the erasure of the racist underside of the actual Empire project of yesteryear’ and focusing on the ideals and nostalgia which suggested ‘how great Britain can be in the future, but also to invoke warm collective memories of a now lost world where Britain was the global hegemon of the capitalist world economy’, in the ‘glory days of economic, political and cultural superiority, where everything from ships to spoons were marked with a Made in Britain stamp.’⁹⁶ A large crux of the Brexit arguments focused on immigration, positioning immigration from the EU as a ‘security threat to the British population.’⁹⁷

By leaving the EU, there was a belief that ‘we could also restrict the entry of such “undesirables” and make Britain safe again.’⁹⁸ This increased violence against those perceived to be non-British – in the four weeks after the referendum, ‘more than 6,000 racist hate crimes were reported to the National Police Chiefs Council’.⁹⁹ These attacks ‘made little attempt to distinguish between black and brown citizens and white European migrants – in their eyes, they were all outsiders.’¹⁰⁰ The majority of these attacks happened in England, and the most frequent targets were Eastern European migrants, Muslims, black people and Jewish people.¹⁰¹ People were attacked for speaking a foreign language, or for presumptions on their right to be in the country.¹⁰²

This speaks to the concept of heritage, and who deserves to be classified as English or British. In the perception of the in-group used in this thesis, the phrase ‘English-speaking, Christian and white’ make up the core ideas.¹⁰³ This definition does create questions. For instance, many of the migrants from the EU would fulfil these criteria, but to many would not be considered to belong. If they were to have children who grew up in the UK, the children would perhaps be eligible, which highlights that it is not necessarily essential to have English heritage to be considered English. Additionally, it could be argued that English-speaking also means an English accent, but as there are so many regional accents this would not be possible to consider. Therefore, this definition will not change to include consideration of English-sounding or English-heritage, but it is important to note that people will vary in their conceptions of who belongs to England, and whether they want to belong.

There is still a large amount of immigration to the UK, specifically from African countries, and the British African population has expanded. However, black workers in the UK are twice as likely to be in insecure types of employment; black people are more than twice as likely to be murdered; black people are three times more likely to be prosecuted and

⁹⁴ Alisa Henderson and Richard Wyn Jones, *Englishness: The Political Force Transforming Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 4.

⁹⁵ Satnam Virdee & Brendan McGeever, “Racism, Crisis and Brexit,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41, no.5 (2018): 1805.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 1806

⁹⁹ Ibid., 1808.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 1808.

¹⁰¹ Jon Burnett, “Racial Violence and the Brexit State,” *Race & Class* 58, no. 4 (2017): 87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396816686283>.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Saeed and Kilvington, “British-Asians and racism within contemporary English football,” 604.

sentenced than white people when accused of a crime.¹⁰⁴ Blackness is ‘still associated with negative ideas – with crime and violence, poverty and underachievement, or migration from a dark continent’¹⁰⁵ and ‘has become inextricably linked with class to assume ‘urban’ identities’, with undertones of an uncontrollable inner-city threat’.¹⁰⁶ Government campaigns have targeted immigrants and there has been an increase in deportations of people who have lived in the UK for decades, or were born in the UK. Often, even though they lived legally, they ‘would be unable to provide the extensive documentation required under the new immigration laws’.¹⁰⁷ This highlights that, despite having obtained their formal citizenship, immigrants and descendants of immigrants do not always feel secure in their belonging or identity. Any person who appears physically to not be white and Christian is assumed to be a ‘bad immigrant’, or someone with no moral citizenship, until proven otherwise, as is reflected in the policing statistics and government campaigns. This messaging from formal institutions can spill over into the public, and means there is often a distance between the in-group, and those who have a contingent status.

World War Two

Despite ending 77 years ago, World War Two has a large influence in English attitudes and culture, and is also key in understanding the relationship between religion, race and identity in English nationalism. The concepts of ‘national sacrifice’ and the ‘glorious dead’ that are important in the idea of the nation are reflected in common discourses about World War Two. In Britain, World War Two ‘seemed to confirm everything that was right and good about national institutions and habits’ and was seen as a war ‘fought between Germany and Great Britain and the British had emerged triumphant and vindicated’, which created a ‘quiet sense of pride at the countries capacity to suffer, endure and win’.¹⁰⁸ By 1945, Britain was insolvent, having ‘mobilized more completely, and for longer than any other country’ meaning rationing continued for longer than any other nation,¹⁰⁹ but the British people were ‘remarkably tolerant of their deprivation’.¹¹⁰ In the media, documentaries and films of the time, there was a ‘celebration of Englishness, strongly coloured by shared recollections of suffering and glory in the recent war’ and ‘the country is presented .. as it truly stood in 1940: alone’.¹¹¹

There are constantly ways of remembering the sacrifices and the dead. For instance, annually on the 11th of November, there is a nationwide two-minute silence at 11am, the anniversary of the end of World War One and now used as a way to commemorate all those who have died in wars. Additionally, on Remembrance Sunday, also in November, there are large remembrance services at war memorials across the country, including one in London which is attended by the Royal Family and politicians, and is broadcast on national news. Many TV Presenters also wear red poppies pinned into their clothes for the weeks prior to Remembrance Sunday, as do much of the general population, with poppies being sold in schools, supermarkets and shops.¹¹² Proceeds are donated to the British Legion, a charity that

¹⁰⁴ Olusoga, *Black and British*, 525.

¹⁰⁵ Hirsch, *Brit(ish)*, 160.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁰⁷ Olusoga, *Black and British*, 528.

¹⁰⁸ Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, 161.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹¹² Becky Morton, “Remembrance Sunday: Nation falls silent to remember the war dead,” *BBC News*, November 14, 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-59280848>.

supports military veterans and their families.¹¹³ The large ceremonies and national celebrations, combined with permanent structures, reflect the emphasis placed upon ‘the symbols and ceremonies of the cult of the glorious dead, which have become so central to the celebration of the nation, mingle feelings of awe and pride, piety and purification, grief at the loss of loved ones, and a determination not to forget their heroism’.¹¹⁴ However, this is also because ‘they turn people’s minds away from the futility of war and the waste of mass death. Instead, they dwell on the cleansing role of self-sacrifice in the destiny of the nation, the need for each generation to emulate its glorious ancestors and noble predecessors, and the importance of solemnly rededicating the present generation to the sacred communion of the nation and its destiny.’¹¹⁵

An additional important concept is the Blitz, or Dunkirk, Spirit. In the wake of any crisis in Britain the media and government will often refer to or invoke the notion of the ‘Blitz Spirit’. The key idea is that British people can ‘Keep Calm and Carry On’ and remain resilient ‘in the face of unexpected adversity’.¹¹⁶ From 1940-41, there were many attacks on people’s homes in the UK, known as the Blitz. A lot of propaganda was focused on the ‘innate gumption of the British people’ and the ‘official rhetoric was of ‘taking it’, of ‘keeping calm and carrying on’’.¹¹⁷ The slogan ‘Keep Calm and Carry On’ was created for a poster during the Second World War, and despite never being released, it captured the ‘core of Britain’s wartime stoicism’ and has ‘flourished’ in use over the last 75 years.¹¹⁸ There is an idea that it is better to have the rhetoric of ‘courage, resilience, and well-earned pride’ than ‘language of trauma and victimhood’.¹¹⁹ For instance, before the final game against Italy, whilst reporting on an interview with Gareth Southgate, the England football team manager, the Spectator determined that ‘it was a kind of Blitz spirit that allowed his side to prevail over Germany in the round of 16’.¹²⁰ In this interview, Southgate stated ‘people have tried to invade us and we’ve had the courage to hold that back. You can’t hide that some of the energy in the stadium against Germany was because of that.’¹²¹ This reflects the attention given to World War Two in broader society, as well as in football. This event has shaped conceptions about a variety of things, such as what constitutes a typically English attitude and approach to challenges, and how to perceive the people who died in World War Two, specifically. The people who died in World War Two are held up as an example of the glorious dead, and the period of the War years are an example of a time to be proud of.

¹¹³ “Who we are,” Royal British Legion, accessed January 30, 2022, <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are>.

¹¹⁴ Smith, “The ‘Sacred’ Dimension of Nationalism,” 809.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Richard Overy, “Why the cruel myth of the ‘blitz spirit’ is no model for how to fight coronavirus,” *The Guardian*, March 19, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/mar/19/myth-blitz-spirit-model-coronavirus>.

¹¹⁷ Juliet Gardiner, “The Blitz Experience in British Society 1940-1941,” in *Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe 1940-1945*, ed. Claudia Baldoli, Andrew Knapp & Richard Overy, (London: Continuum, 2011), 168.

¹¹⁸ Overy, “Why the cruel myth of the ‘blitz spirit’ is no model for how to fight coronavirus.”

¹¹⁹ Simon Wessley, “Victimhood & Resilience,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 353, no. 6 (2005): 550, <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMp058180>.

¹²⁰ Katja Hoyer, “What’s the problem with Gareth Southgate’s ‘war talk’?,” *The Spectator*, July 10, 2021, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/what-s-the-problem-with-gareth-southgate-s-war-talk->.

¹²¹ Jason Burt, “Gareth Southgate interview: ‘It won’t be enough for me and the players if we don’t win it now’,” *The Telegraph*, July 9, 2021, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/euro-2021/2021/07/09/gareth-southgate-interview-wont-enough-players-dont-win-now/>.

England and Religion

As a legally secular country, there is technically a separation between Church and State, which is considered ‘one of the foundational dimensions of Western secular modernity’.¹²² However, England does have an established religion, the Church of England. This means that England has historically been considered a ‘Christian Country’ – a sentiment that was asserted by two of the last Prime Ministers, David Cameron and Theresa May.¹²³ However, there is simultaneously a ‘growth in numbers of those identifying as being non-Christian’ as well as a ‘decline in numbers of those choosing to identify as being Christian’.¹²⁴ There has been a growth in the amount of people identifying with different religions in England, especially influenced by immigration. Many European societies are having to adjust to the ‘continued existence of religious communities in an increasingly secularized environment’.¹²⁵ Moreover, there is an assumption that the secular and religious are very distinct and binary, yet in reality ‘the line between these political categories is far more blurred’.¹²⁶

There is still a sense that Christianity is not just a religion in the UK, but is perceived as part of the fabric of society.¹²⁷ Religion is often used as a dividing factor amongst the population: some people emphasise the “‘Judeo-Christian values’” of the community, and contrast that to an ‘imagined other comprised variously of multiculturalists, Muslims, and secular cosmopolitans’.¹²⁸ This highlights that religion is used in English society as a tool to identify those inside and outside of the mainstream group. As mentioned previously, when referring to the dominant insider group, there is a general assumption that the insider group will be ‘English-speaking, Christian and white’.¹²⁹ These words were first written by Moore in 1991, yet they are extremely relevant today, particularly because of the way that the UK as a whole, and England specifically, has chosen to ‘ignore the country’s postcolonial reality and thus avoid the challenges which arise from the coexistence of groups of different ethnic and religious backgrounds in modern communities’.¹³⁰ It is clear, though, that Christianity is declining in popularity: 1% of people aged 18-24 identify as Church of England, and the number of people identifying as Christian has fallen from 66% to 38% since 1983.¹³¹ The role of religion and Christianity is not irrelevant, however, as the English culture is still reflective of the Judeo-Christian values, such as an emphasis on the Christian holidays of Christmas and Easter. Therefore, whilst this thesis uses Moore’s statement of ‘English-speaking, Christian and white’, this will become English-speaking, Christian/Secular and white, as people do not necessarily follow Christianity now, but do live in a secular society influenced by Christianity.

¹²² Luca Mavelli & Erin Wilson, “Post secularism and International Relations,” in *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics*, ed. Jeffrey Haynes (London: Routledge, 2016), 251.

¹²³ Chris Allen, “Cameron, Conservatives and a Christian Britain: A Critical Exploration of Political Discourses about Religion in the Contemporary United Kingdom,” *Societies* 8, no. 1 (2018): 6.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹²⁵ Jürgen Habermas, Tony Blair & Régis Debray, “Secularism’s Crisis of Faith,” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2008): 19.

¹²⁶ Mavelli & Wilson, “Post secularism and International Relations,” 263.

¹²⁷ Allen, “Cameron, Conservatives and a Christian Britain,” 9.

¹²⁸ Siobhan McAndrew, “Belonging, Believing, Behaving, and Brexit: Channels of religiosity and religious identity in support for leaving the European Union,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 71, no. 5 (2020): 868.

¹²⁹ Saeed and Kilvington, “British-Asians and racism within contemporary English football,” 604.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Harriet Sherwood, “UK secularism on rise as more than half say they have no religion,” *The Guardian*, July 11, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/11/uk-secularism-on-rise-as-more-than-half-say-they-have-no-religion>.

It is necessary to view and discuss secularism and race in connection because it is important to view the way they are intertwined. The system of secularism is positioned as neutral, but is still ‘managed by power and circumscribed by nonminority, that is, white, forces’.¹³² Race and secularism are entwined, as ‘whiteness is secular, and the secular is white’.¹³³ The majority of work on secularization thesis has ignored the experiences and history of enslavement and colonization.¹³⁴ Race, gender and sexuality are largely absent from the study of the secular.¹³⁵ Therefore, the secular is situated as white, disembodied and European, but this is positioned as the given. This is reflective of the discussion of the in-group: as Christianity is accepted as part of the culture in England, and the secular is so entwined with whiteness, this reinforces the acceptable in-group.

English Mythology

A final historical component to consider is that of mythology: the entanglement of race, religion and mythology have created cultural boundary markers of identity. The three lions have become a representative of the England team and have been worn on their shirts since the first international game against Scotland in 1872.¹³⁶ The first to use the lion motif was Henry I, who was known as the Lion of England as there was a lion on his standard when he became King in 1100. He married a woman whose father had a lion on his shield, so it became two lions, and a third was added when Henry II married a woman who had a lion in her family crest. Richard the Lionheart (King from 1189 to 1199) used the three golden lions on a scarlet background as a symbol of the English throne, and it has appeared on the Royal Arms of every succeeding monarch.¹³⁷ This emblem has been on the English football strip since 1872. Given its connotations and history, this ‘must be read politically as connotative of royalty in addition to its more overt communication of the qualities of power, bravery and courage’.¹³⁸ The most famous football song is titled ‘Three Lions (Football’s Coming Home)’ by Baddiel and Skinner, a comedy duo, and was written for the Euros 1996, firmly cementing the association between the lions and English football in popular culture.

The Euro 2020 tournament took place within the broader context of a turning point in British politics: the devolution of 1997 secured national governments for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, affording each a ‘significant level of political autonomy’, and also meaning that ‘the Englishness of the football team rose in importance’.¹³⁹ Up until then, England fans had used the red, white and blue Union Jack, but then switched to using the English flag - a red cross on a white background, St. George’s cross.¹⁴⁰ By 2006, 10 million St George Cross

¹³² Vincent W. Lloyd, “Introduction: Managing Race, Managing Religion,” in *Race and Secularism in America*, ed. Johnathon S. Kahn and Vincent W. Lloyd (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 5.

¹³³ Lloyd, “Introduction: Managing Race, Managing Religion,” 5.

¹³⁴ Tracy Fessenden, “Critical Intersections: Race, Secularism, Gender,” in *Race and Secularism in America*, ed. Johnathon S. Kahn and Vincent W. Lloyd (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 259.

¹³⁵ Fessenden, “Critical Intersections,” 260.

¹³⁶ Sean Ingle, “Why do England have three lions on their shirts?,” *The Guardian*, July 18, 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2002/jul/18/theknowledge.sport>.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Christos Kassimeris, “The Semiotics of European Football,” *Soccer & Society* 15, no. 2 (2014): 195.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Tom Gibbons, “Contrasting Representations of Englishness During FIFA World Cup Finals,” *Sport in History* 30, no. 3 (2010): 431.

flags were bought by 27% of English adults.¹⁴¹ The increased display of flags helps to ‘foster an air of excitement and carnival that maximises both the levels of interest in sport and the support offered to the national team’ as well as a ‘symbol of a collective experience, of group identity’.¹⁴² There are, however, a few negative connotations with the St George’s Cross: when displayed not during a football tournament, many people associate this with far-right actors. It is considered that in the Euro 96 tournament, the St George’s cross was ‘reclaimed’ from a ‘minority of far-right-wing’ groups, like the BNP and the National Front.¹⁴³ However, the flag is still considered ‘a source of menace when associated with crowds of drunken white men’ by some.¹⁴⁴ However, the symbols such as the three lion’s emblem, the football songs, and the St. George’s cross are immensely important during international football tournaments. They have ‘the all-important qualities a distinct sense of collective identity’.¹⁴⁵ These symbols are important as they are a way of creating group cohesion as they give ‘natives identity and unity and marks their distinction from geographically rival outsiders; it serves as a reminder of civic interconnectedness and dependence’.¹⁴⁶

English Nationalism as shown through Sport

Sport is very relevant in England as, when played internationally by national teams it is some of the only representation that England has alone on the world stage. Cricket, rugby and football are extremely popular, and when played internationally by the national team.¹⁴⁷ The English (as opposed to the British) have ‘few of the cultural or political trappings that have come to be associated with the nation’¹⁴⁸ and therefore ‘English identity is the least precise of all the domestic nationalisms’ within the UK.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, football is essential in articulating an English identity - it has been written that it ‘is difficult to specify anything, other than war and royalty, which articulates national identity quite so powerfully as the England team competing in the latter stages of a ... competition’.¹⁵⁰

Sport is considered ‘central in symbolizing a nation’s identity’ and ‘assumes a heightened political status in standing *in for* a particular image of the nation.’¹⁵¹ Sportsmen representing their state are ‘primary expressions of their imagined communities’ as ‘the imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people’.¹⁵² The focus on the national football team during a tournament ‘creates an amusing and carnivalesque feeling of seemingly innocent togetherness’ as it makes ‘the imagined community, the ‘we’ of the nation feel ‘real’, at least for

¹⁴¹ Lorraine Brown, Steve Richards & Ian Jones, “Sojourner perceptions of the St George Cross flag during the FIFA 2010 World Cup: A Symbol of Carnival or Menace?,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 49, no. 1 (2014): 103.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁴³ Gibbons, “Contrasting Representations of Englishness During FIFA World Cup Finals,” 430.

¹⁴⁴ Brown, Richards & Jones, “Sojourner perceptions of the St George Cross flag during the FIFA 2010 World Cup,” 113.

¹⁴⁵ Kassimeris, “The Semiotics of European Football,” 195.

¹⁴⁶ Michael Serazio, “The Elementary Forms of Sports Fandom: A Durkheimian Exploration of Team Myths, Kinship, and Totemic Rituals.” *Communication & Sport* 1, no. 4 (2013): 304.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479512462017>.

¹⁴⁷ Robinson, “Tackling the anxieties of the English: searching for the nation through football,” 219.

¹⁴⁸ Tom Gibbons, “English national identity and the national football team: the view of contemporary English fans,” *Soccer & Society* 12, no. 6 (2011): 874.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 876.

¹⁵⁰ Carrington, “‘Football’s coming home’ but whose home? And do we want it?,” 102.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 143.

some time, provided of course that the national football team performs well.’¹⁵³ This reflects the broader questions over who deserves to represent the nation: when the team are believed to be and positioned as representatives of the entire nation, their successes and failures are that of the whole community. Therefore, people are often proud and feel a togetherness of the nation in times of success, but disappointment and anger in times in failure.

At times of major sporting events, this is ‘“hot,” or overt nationalism’ as there are ‘waved flags and success celebrated by millions’.¹⁵⁴ The national press ‘make heroes of its (most likely male) sporting champions, and fervently celebrate most national victories.’¹⁵⁵ The ‘citizens of a nation are continually reminded of their belonging to the imagined national community, whether this is through statements from politicians, symbols on coins, national flags, or simply by seeing a national flag hanging outside a public building’,¹⁵⁶ and nowhere is ‘everyday nationalism more apparent for the masses than in the male sporting realm’.¹⁵⁷ This overt nationalism was present in the Euros 2020, as reflected by involvement from politicians from the beginning, as well as the celebration by many people of the team in times of success.

English Football and Racism

As the international football team is thought of as a representation of the whole community, there will inevitably be strong emotions in times of both success and failure. In the modern day, social media has made it considerably easier to communicate with people. Therefore, while racial chanting and abuse has declined in stadiums, social media abuse is increasing.¹⁵⁸ Since the 2016/17 Football League season, FIFA disbanded their ‘antiracism’ taskforce, claiming that the mission had been ‘completely fulfilled’ as football was considered to have entered ‘a new “post racial” era in which racism is no longer considered the norm or embedded within fan cultures’.¹⁵⁹

However, this racial abuse is now happening in more ‘complex, nuanced and often covert ways that go under the radar of football authorities and beyond the capacities of anti-racist groups’.¹⁶⁰ Before the internet, fans were only able to express their opinions at games or through a ‘print fanzine... an often-humorous magazine-type publication written through supporters’ eyes, which was usually sold at every other home match’.¹⁶¹ Now, there are fan websites and discussion boards, and fans can communicate constantly and anonymously.¹⁶² A 2013 study showed that ‘80% of fans feel that social media allows for racist thoughts to be communicated in ways that were not

¹⁵³ van Campenhout & van Houtum, “‘I am German when we win, but I am immigrant when we lose’”, 1929.

¹⁵⁴ Ali Bowes and Alan Bairner, “Three Lions on Her Shirt: Hot and Banal Nationalism for England’s Sportswomen,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 43, no. 6 (2019): 534, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723519850878>.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 533.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Jamie Cleland, “Racism, Football Fans, and Online Message Boards: How Social Media Has Added a New Dimension to Racist Discourse in English Football,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 38, no. 5 (2014): 416.

¹⁵⁹ Daniel Kilvington & John Price, “Tackling Social Media Abuse? Critically Assessing English Football’s Response to Online Racism,” *Communication & Sport* 7, no. 1 (2019): 68.

¹⁶⁰ Daniel Burdsey, “They Think It’s All Over . . . It Isn’t Yet! The Persistence of Structural Racism and Racialised Exclusion in Twenty-First Century Football,” in *Race, ethnicity and football: persisting debates and emergent issues*, ed. Daniel Burdsey (New York: Routledge, 2011), 7.

¹⁶¹ Cleland, “Racism, Football Fans, and Online Message Boards,” 416.

¹⁶² Ibid., 417.

available 20 years ago', because they can broadcast their thoughts 'anonymously via smartphones and computers'.¹⁶³

This racism has been reported to be stoked by the British press, where issues are 'commonly written and spoken about in a tone which suggests anxiety over the erosion of the perceived 'indigenous' national culture - in Moore's words, English-speaking, Christian and white'.¹⁶⁴ Black people are often questioned, as both 'spectators and players', for their loyalty to the national team.¹⁶⁵ This reflects the dominant group is supported by the press. Therefore, the dominant group is able to question the loyalty of those that are deemed to be judged to be responsible to the 'erosion' of the dominant, English culture.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to examine historically important events, as well as modern conceptions, that contribute to a greater understanding of English identity and nationalism in order to examine thoroughly the relationship between religion, race, and identity in contemporary English nationalism. This chapter has sought to explore these components in English history, while also highlighting that these components cannot be looked at in isolation. This began with an exploration of the conception of citizenship, specifically through looking at the formal versus moral framework. The historical events of World War Two and the British Empire are essential in understanding modern English identity as they have shaped many conceptions and are still referred to today. They represent a time when England views itself as having ruled the World, or stood alone against the enemy. The history of the British Empire has shaped many ideas about race and immigration, and World War Two has shaped ideas about English attitudes and heroes. These events are both frequently held up as 'golden periods' for the English nation specifically because they are times when English people defended their land, showed strength and were willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of the nation. English mythology was examined to understand the influence on existing symbols and signs, many of which are used to represent the nation year-round, but take on a special characteristic during English international sport tournaments. Additionally, the relevance of religion was examined in the English context. There was also an examination of sport, specifically football, which is necessary within the context of this thesis. The intertwining and interconnectedness of all the above components is relevant in this exploration. Historically, we can see that the 'insider' group and the sense of belonging in England has been reserved for English-speaking white people, who are Christian, or secular. On occasion, people who do not fit this profile may be able to assert themselves as an insider using language, culture, and historical conceptions. However, people who do not fit the category of the dominant group are required to prove their loyalty to the nation, and will only be judged as belonging, or obtaining their moral and formal citizenship, in times when they are judged as being successful.

¹⁶³ Cleland, "Racism, Football Fans, and Online Message Boards," 418.

¹⁶⁴ Saeed and Kilvington, "British-Asians and racism within contemporary English football," 604.

¹⁶⁵ Carrington, "'Football's coming home' but whose home? And do we want it?," 102.

Chapter Three: How Should the Relationship Between Religion, Race and Identity be Analysed?

In order to answer practically the research question ‘what is the relationship between religion, race, and identity in contemporary English nationalism’, this thesis will focus on discourse produced through online media, specifically through Twitter. This chapter will determine specifically how this was done, as well as addressing ethical concerns.

Twitter has become an important part of the newscape in recent years and plays an important role in shaping public discourse and opinion. Twitter is a unique platform due to ‘the speed, the public nature of communication and the manifold possibilities to link messages to users (@-mentions), external content (hyperlinks) and topics (hashtags)’ which has ‘attracted many different actors.’¹⁶⁶ Due to its widespread use, it has ‘lowered barriers to participation’ in politics, with Twitter being used to ‘campaign, to coordinate protests and to disseminate and discuss news’.¹⁶⁷ Politicians have been found to use Twitter predominantly for ‘campaigning, for self-promotion and to spread information rather than to engage in conversations’, and that their tweets ‘are often event-related and their numbers increase in proximity to those events’.¹⁶⁸ Twitter is used to ‘spread and comment on the news’ which results ‘in a stream of information, opinions and emotions related to current events’ which is ‘enabling citizens to maintain a mental model of news and events’.¹⁶⁹ Therefore, ‘political conversations on Twitter can be viewed as spheres of communication’ where ‘not only are traditional political actors important, but new influencers also emerge, for instance, bloggers, activists and tech-savvy backbenchers’.¹⁷⁰

To examine the development of the discourse throughout the Euros 2020, a discourse tracing analysis will be used. Following the Discourse Tracing methodology, as outlined by LeGreco and Tracy, will allow for an examination of discourses at a number of intersecting levels: in this case, through accounts with a large public following, including elected politicians and current and former England footballers. Using a range of voices will build up a reliable trace of the events. This will allow me to find patterns, significance, myths, symbols and narratives in the discussions about race and English football.

All tweets will be taken from public Twitter accounts, meaning they are open to anyone for viewing. These will not be anonymized, as they would be easily found. Ethical issues concerning using data in social research are focused on four themes, as separated by Diener and Crandall, which are:

- ‘Whether there is harm to participants
- Whether there is a lack of informed consent
- Whether there is an invasion of privacy
- Whether deception is involved’.¹⁷¹

As the only information forming the analysis of the thesis is public tweets from notable figures, there is no invasion of privacy or deception involved. They have not consented

¹⁶⁶ Ausserhofer & Maireder, “National Politics on Twitter,” 292.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 293.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 294.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 294.

¹⁷¹ Gerald Griggs, “Ethnographic Study of Alternative Sports by Alternative Means: List Mining as a Method of Data Collection,” *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics* 6, no. 2 (2011): 86.

directly to being used in analysis of this thesis, but this would only be necessary when their behaviour ‘occurs in a private context’.¹⁷²

Tweets used in this thesis have been found using Twitter advanced search. I used this function to examine the tweets from political figures from the warmup games up until a few days after the end of the tournament. As 90.9% of British politicians use twitter, there was a large amount of potential for these actors to influence and comment on the discussions surrounding the tournament.¹⁷³ Politicians accounts examined include the leaders of the major parties in England, the deputy leaders of the major parties, the Home Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nigel Farage (founder of the UKIP party), and the Mayors of different English cities. Following this, I used the advanced search function to examine the tweets from the 26 players who played in the England team in this tournament to see their tweets from this period. I also read each tweet throughout the tournament posted by the official England twitter account (herein referred to as @England) throughout the key dates. Additionally, I used the twitter advanced search function to search for tweets with key words. This included words such as ‘England’, ‘football’, ‘players’, ‘team’, ‘race’, ‘taking the knee’, ‘Three Lions’ and ‘religion’. Many searches were done in the aim of not missing key tweets from other high-profile accounts. The tweets used provide a variety of perspectives from people across England.

All tweets used have a minimum level of engagement as well as being from prominent accounts. Engagement is defined as a total number of times users interacted with a tweet, meaning any clicks, retweets, replies, follows, likes are counted.¹⁷⁴ All tweets have a minimum amount of engagement of 1690. This is the average amount of engagement on a tweet, according to a Twitter report.¹⁷⁵ This is for all tweets issued over a certain period of time, but there are not specific numbers of the average engagement for people with larger followings or in different sub-sections of users. Effort was made to determine a more detailed number related to the likes and engagements, on average and per party, from a British MP, but this information was unfortunately unavailable. The number of 1690 is therefore viewed as the minimum amount of engagement for a tweet to be classed as popular. However, the tweets used in this thesis range from around 2500 likes up to 1 million likes, so over the threshold for minimum amount of engagement. This shows that tweets played a vital role in the discussion and progression of discourses as many people saw them, which could have influenced their opinions and conduct.

Tweets were initially gathered and put into a document in chronological order, with headings to separate each into pre-game discussion and post-game discussion for each game. This allowed exploration of the progression of various discussions, and identification of key and repeated themes. Tweets were then coded to determine which key theme they were representing and were then organised according to popularity of theme. The following chapter, chapter four, features discussion of the seven main themes that became apparent through the use of the discourse tracing methodology. Chapter five then expands on the broader implications of these findings. This will be concluded in the final chapter, and possible further sites of exploration will be examined.

¹⁷² Griggs, “Ethnographic Study of Alternative Sports by Alternative Means,” 87.

¹⁷³ “Politics Social,” <https://www.politics-social.com/>.

¹⁷⁴ “About your activity dashboard,” Help Center, Twitter, accessed January 30, 2022, <https://help.twitter.com/en/managing-your-account/using-the-tweet-activity-dashboard>.

¹⁷⁵ “The Twitter Engagement Report 2018,” Mention.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to explain the way in which religion, race and English nationalism will be researched in the context of the Euros 2020. This was done through an explanation of LeGreco and Tracey's discourse tracing methodology and Diener and Crandall ethical considerations, which is necessary in any methodology, but especially when using the words of real people. This methodology and ethical considerations are necessary to build an accurate picture of the progression of discourses over Twitter during the Euros 2020.

Chapter Four: How did the relationship between religion, race and identity in contemporary English nationalism manifest during the 2020 European Championships?

This chapter will chronologically follow the progression of England in the Euros 2020. This will allow for the exploration of the research question ‘what is the relationship between religion, race, and identity in contemporary English nationalism?’ in the context of a real-world example. The following chapter will follow the discourses as they developed throughout the tournament. This allows for exploration of the progression of the framing of the England team, and the way their citizenship, Englishness and sense of belonging were framed.

As previously explored, football is important as a site of expression of identity. These take on religious and racial notions. For instance, in England, there have been arguments that football is filling an ‘enormous vacuum, a God shaped hole in our lives’ that has emerged alongside the decline in religion.¹⁷⁶ There is a lot of religious language used, such as ‘the sacred turf’ or referring to stadia as ‘temples’ ‘that the “faithful” flock to’, as well as star players and managers being ‘worshipped’ and ‘resurrected’ when they return from injury.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, football grounds are ‘one of the largest public arenas in which racism can be openly expressed’.¹⁷⁸ Often, black people are accepted if it is clear that they are supporting the same team as those they are around, but their ‘acknowledgement and racial inclusion are temporary and contingent’.¹⁷⁹ Black players and fans can be both included and excluded simultaneously. For instance, fans and players can be in the stadium and cheering when playing well, but experience abuse such as ‘monkey grunts’ and throwing bananas.¹⁸⁰ Black people are often seen as ‘contingent insiders’ and “‘white’ is defined as normal’.¹⁸¹ This speaks to the framework of formal and moral citizenship: people who are not English-speaking, white and Christian/Secular are accepted conditionally, and any action that is not received well can result in the removal of moral citizenship, as well as abuse.

This was a very significant tournament for a variety of reasons. Specifically due to the timing, as the team were ‘walking onto the pitch against the backdrop of a contentiously negotiated Brexit, a poorly managed pandemic that’s left hundreds of thousands dead, and tense ongoing conversations about a society further split by poverty, racism, and homophobia.’¹⁸² Additionally, as England had not won an international football tournament since 1966, the further that England progressed, the more emphasis was placed on making history and the possibility of ending ‘55 years of hurt’ because England had ‘FINALLY reach[ed] first major tournament final since 1966’.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁶ Chris Oakley, *Football Delirium* (London: Karnac Books, 2007), 148.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁷⁸ Les Back, Tim Crabbe & John Solomos, “Racism in Football. Patterns of Continuity and Change,” in *Fanatics! Power, Identity and Fandom in Football*, ed. Adam Brown (London: Routledge, 1998), 71.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 78-79.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁸² Sophie Mellor, “‘It’s coming home’? England allows itself to hope for first soccer trophy in 55 years – and all the economic pop that might mean,” *Fortune*, July 7, 2021, <https://fortune.com/2021/07/07/its-coming-home-england-euros-soccer-economic-benefits/>.

¹⁸³ John Hutchinson, “IT’S FINALLY HAPPENED: The stats behind England’s 55 years of hurt as Three Lions FINALLY reach first major tournament final since 1966,” *The Sun*, July 8, 2021, <https://www.thesun.co.uk/sport/15533800/england-euro-2020-italy-southgate/>.

This chapter will follow the progression of the tournament through the different stages of the tournament. It will begin with an examination of the two warm up games which were held before the start of the official tournament. The second sub-section will examine the days immediately prior to the start of the tournament. This is a relevant point of analysis as this is when Gareth Southgate, the manager of the team, released an open letter titled 'Dear England'. The third sub-section will analyse the group stage, in which England played Croatia, Scotland and the Czech Republic. This will be followed by analysis of the Round of 16, the round where the top 2 teams from each group go through to play another random team: in this round, England played Germany. The fifth sub-section will focus on the Quarter Finals, in which England played Ukraine, followed by analysis of the Semi Finals, where England played Denmark. Analysis will end with a focus on the final against Italy and the resulting online abuse. This analysis will focus on the framing of the players throughout the tournament on Twitter, and the way this progressed throughout the tournament. This will be done through the focus on identity markers and the way that the discourse shaped the concept of moral citizenship for the players on the England team. This will allow for the practical answering of the research question 'what is the relationship between religion, race, and identity in contemporary English nationalism?'

Warm Up Games

Prior to an international tournament, it is customary for teams to play 'friendly games', where the result does not have an impact on the main tournament, to warm up and to see how players, teamwork and tactics work on the pitch. The first friendly game was against Austria on the 2nd of June 2021. England won the game 1-0, with their one goal being scored by Bukayo Saka, his first senior international goal.¹⁸⁴ The second game was against Romania, which again was one by England 1-0, on the 6th of June 2021. The goal was a penalty scored by Marcus Rashford, who was also the captain of the side. This was his first time captaining the England team, and the 100th goal of his career.¹⁸⁵

These were the first games where the England players 'took the knee' prior to playing. Some fans who were watching the game in person booed while the players were kneeling. However, other fans were supportive and applauded. This split in the fans prompted statements of support from the manager of the team, Gareth Southgate, and the FA. This was a pivotal moment in the tournament because it became clear that there would be very opposing views that would be relevant, but it also became an important topic of conversation, both for politicians, the team and ordinary English people.

These two opposing views were shaping very distinct discourses. On the one hand, there was a lot of celebration of the team and specific players. For instance, Bukayo Saka was repeatedly celebrated for his goal at the Austria game. His was commended by the @England page and described scoring a goal as 'the moment I always dreamt of growing up'.¹⁸⁶ Additionally, there was celebration of Marcus Rashford as he captained the side against

¹⁸⁴ Andy Baber, "England 1-0 Austria," *England Football*, June 2, 2021, <https://www.Englandfootball.com/articles/2021/Jun/02/20210602-England-austria-match-report>.

¹⁸⁵ Bradley West, "England 1-0 Romania," *England Football*, June 6, 2021, <https://www.Englandfootball.com/articles/2021/Jun/06/20210606-England-romania-match-report>.

¹⁸⁶ Bukayo Saka, Twitter, June 3, 2021, 12:05am, <https://twitter.com/bukayosaka87/status/1400227150104571905?lang=en-GB>.

Romania, and this was his first-time captaining. Additionally, he scored ‘100 goals for club and country’ during this game, so was similarly praised.¹⁸⁷

Alongside this celebration, opinions were divided about the decision to ‘take the knee’. On the one hand, there was a lot of support for the decision. Manager Gareth Southgate conducted an interview in which he stated that ‘we are determined more than ever to take a knee in this tournament’. He expands that the experience that the players have had with racism is so immense that they are ‘sick of talking about the consequences of should they, shouldn't they. They've had enough’. He also emphasises that ‘they know the power of their voices. They know the fact they could make a difference’. This interview was broadcast by a major channel, Sky Sports News. Southgate ended the interview with a stipulation that he would not discuss the decision any further, and neither he nor the players would take any more questions on it throughout the tournament.¹⁸⁸ There was a large amount of initial support from a variety of actors. Many Members of Parliament from the Labour Party – the main opposition – were supportive, as were former English footballers. For instance, a tweet from former footballer Gary Lineker received 198,500 likes for his statement ‘If you boo @England players for taking the knee, you're part of the reason why players are taking the knee.’¹⁸⁹

On the other hand, there was backlash to the decision. Conservative MPs did not post on Twitter, but two Conservative MPs made statements on Facebook condemning the decision – Lee Anderson MP, who stated he would not watch any games, and Brendan Clarke-Smith MP, who stated he would watch the games but not any of the pre- or post-match coverage.¹⁹⁰ Other people were very vocal on Twitter, however, such as Nigel Farage. He quote tweeted the interview with Gareth Southgate, meaning he added his tweet in a link to the original tweet. He referred to the Black Lives Matter movement as ‘not only Marxist but divisive too’ and spoke for all England fans by saying they ‘will hate this, they just want to watch a game of football’.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ @England, Twitter, June 6, 2021, 9:21pm, <https://twitter.com/england/status/1401635253555433473>.

¹⁸⁸ “EURO 2020: Gareth Southgate says England determined 'more than ever' to take the knee after being met with boos,” *Sky News*, June 5, 2021, <https://news.sky.com/story/england-determined-more-than-ever-to-take-the-knee-at-euro-2020-after-being-met-with-boos-12325763>.

¹⁸⁹ Gary Lineker, Twitter, June 6, 2021, 10:31am, <https://twitter.com/garylineker/status/1401471779034574848?lang=en>.

¹⁹⁰ Jessica Murray, “Tory MP to boycott England games in row over taking the knee,” *The Guardian*, June 6, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jun/06/tory-mp-to-boycott-england-games-in-row-over-taking-the-knee>.

¹⁹¹ Nigel Farage, Twitter, June 6, 2021, 2:01pm, https://twitter.com/nigel_farage/status/1401524686912200711.



This initial period of discussion before the start of the official tournament was extremely important as it set the tone for the following weeks. The positivity and praise shown towards players for their performance is expected when performing well, but when coupled with a debate characterized by a heated public debate about race and English identity, it created the circumstances for a divisive few weeks.

‘Dear England’

On the 8th of June 2021, Gareth Southgate wrote an open letter, titled ‘Dear England’, which was published online on the Players Tribune.¹⁹² As Gareth Southgate doesn't have a twitter account, this was an effective way of communicating with the public. As this was just after the warm-up games, but just prior to the start of the tournament, this time frame was also pivotal in the evolving discourses. Several interesting messages were presented by Southgate. He begins with a discussion of what it is like to represent your country, ‘in this shirt, you have the opportunity to produce moments that people will remember forever. You are part of an experience that lasts in the collective consciousness of our country.’ He also explores the concept of identity, and that ‘everyone has a different idea of what it actually means to be English’. He explains that his ‘sense of identity and values is closely tied to my family and particularly my granddad. He was a fierce patriot and a proud military man, who

¹⁹² Gareth Southgate, “Dear England,” *The Players’ Tribune*, June 8, 2021, <https://www.theplayertribune.com/posts/dear-england-gareth-southgate-euros-soccer>.

served during World War II' which has meant Southgate 'always had an affinity for the military and service in the name of your country'.¹⁹³

He also discusses how footballers 'are role models' and they 'recognize the impact they can have on society' but do not need to 'just *stick to football*'. He describes it as the players 'duty to interact with the public on matters such as equality, inclusivity and racial injustice, while using the power of their voices to help put debates on the table, raise awareness and educate'. Whilst discussing the decision to 'take the knee', he questions the value of the abuse players receive over social media, for instance, 'why would you choose to insult somebody for something as ridiculous as the colour of their skin?'. He knows that these people are 'on the losing side. It's clear to me that we are heading for a much more tolerant and understanding society, and I know our lads will be a big part of that'. He knows that he and the team 'will be judged on winning matches' but really 'there's much more at stake than that. It's about how we conduct ourselves on and off the pitch, how we bring people together, how we inspire and unite, how we create memories that last beyond the 90 minutes'.¹⁹⁴

The reactions to this letter were, again, rather mixed. Reactions from Labour Party were very supportive, whereas the Conservative Party ignored it. Leader of the Labour Party, Kier Starmer, seemed to endorse this letter when he tweeted it, along with the statement 'This is England.'¹⁹⁵ This again highlights the role that football has in politics: for an elected Member of Parliament to support the manager of the national football team so openly reflects the importance of football, but also the respect that Gareth Southgate has in his role.



Despite not being a stage of the football tournament, this letter to the English public, combined with the reactions from others, represents not only the importance and entanglement of football in politics, but also in historical and present conceptions of identity,

¹⁹³ Southgate, "Dear England," <https://www.theplayerstribune.com/posts/dear-england-gareth-southgate-euro-soccer>.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Kier Starmer, Twitter, June 8, 2021, 9:19pm, https://twitter.com/keir_starmer/status/1402359612326678530?lang=en.

the role of England in the international community and the debate surrounding the way that racial differences are dealt with in England. This chapter has sought to further establish the connection between religion, race, and identity in contemporary English nationalism at the very beginning of the tournament.

Group Stage

The group stage is the first round of the European championships. Each qualifying team is randomly split into six groups, with four teams per group. In the same group as England was Scotland, Czech Republic, and Croatia. Therefore, each team played three games. Each win is worth three points, each draw is worth one point and each loss is worth nothing. At the end of the games, two teams with the most points from each group go through to the next round.

Just before the start of the Group Stage the ‘Queen’s Birthday Honours’ list was released. This is a list of people who demonstrate extraordinary efforts in a variety of fields. In the 2021 list, released on the 11th of June, two footballers were listed. Jordan Henderson was awarded an MBE for services to charity, and Raheem Sterling was awarded an MBE for services to racial equality in sport.¹⁹⁶ Marcus Rashford was awarded an MBE a year previously, in October 2020, for services for vulnerable children.¹⁹⁷ All three players received a large amount of support and recognition, including over Twitter and in the press.

The first game was against Croatia, at Wembley Stadium in London. England won the game 1-0, with the only goal being scored by Raheem Sterling. This was the first time England had ever won the first game of the Euro tournament.¹⁹⁸ The day after this first game against Croatia, more focus was granted to the political side of this tournament. Firstly, a spokesperson for Prime Minister Boris Johnson stated that ‘fully respects the right of those who choose to peacefully protest and make their feelings known’, but when it came to the decision to ‘take the knee’ the Prime Minister was reportedly ‘more focused on actions rather than gestures.’¹⁹⁹ Secondly, Priti Patel MP, the Home Secretary, referred to the decision of the England players to ‘take the knee’ as ‘gesture politics’, and said spectators had the right to choose whether or not to boo this.²⁰⁰ These were both said in interviews, and therefore not on Twitter, but the Labour party used this as an opportunity to compare the ideas of ‘gesture politics’ to what they saw as gesture politics as performed by the Conservative Party – such as the thanks levelled towards the National Health Service during the Covid-19 pandemic, but not increasing the pay of the staff.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁶ Cabinet Office and the Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, “The Queen’s Birthday Honours List 2021,” Gov.uk, accessed January 30, 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-queens-birthday-honours-list-2021>.

¹⁹⁷ Adam Marshall, “Rashford ‘Honoured and Humbled’ to Receive MBE,” *Man United*, October 9, 2020, <https://www.manutd.com/en/news/detail/marcus-rashford-reacts-to-being-awarded-an-mbe>.

¹⁹⁸ Paul Eddison, “England 1-0 Croatia,” *England Football*, June 13, 2021, <https://www.Englandfootball.com/articles/2021/Jun/13/20210613-england-v-croatia-match-report>.

¹⁹⁹ Paul MacInnes, “Boris Johnson refuses to condemn fans booing England taking the knee,” *The Guardian*, June 7, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/jun/07/boris-johnson-refuses-to-condemn-fans-booing-england-taking-the-knee>.

²⁰⁰ Darren McCaffrey, “The Home Secretary said “we should learn from history, not rewrite it”,” *GB News*, June 14, 2021, <https://www.gbnews.uk/news/priti-patel-taking-the-knee-is-gesture-politics/105544>.

²⁰¹ Angela Rayner, Twitter, June 14, 2021, 10:23pm, <https://twitter.com/angelarayner/status/1404550023573016582?lang=en-GB>.



The second game was against Scotland, again at Wembley Stadium in London. This game ended in a nil-nil draw, meaning that no team scored a goal and both teams received one point.²⁰² There was a lot of suspense and coverage for this game, specifically because it was against Scotland, so as neighbours, they are also considered rivals. Many famous faces from both sides of the border were in attendance. There was again a lot of positive words about the team. For instance, the Mayor of Manchester stated ‘they [the England squad] seem to me to be great ambassadors for what we should be all about as a country’.²⁰³

²⁰² Peter White, “Three Lions Held by Auld Enemy,” *England Football*, June 18, 2021, <https://www.Englandfootball.com/mens-senior-team/fixtures-results/2021/20210618-england-scotland-match-report>.

²⁰³ Andy Burnham, Twitter, June 18, 2021, 7:33pm, <https://twitter.com/andyburnhamgm/status/1405956790882390023>.



Andy Burnham 
@AndyBurnhamGM



I like this England squad on and off the pitch.

They seem to me to be great ambassadors for what we should be all about as a country.

Never, ever boo them.

Cheer them to the rafters with all your heart.

Good luck lads!

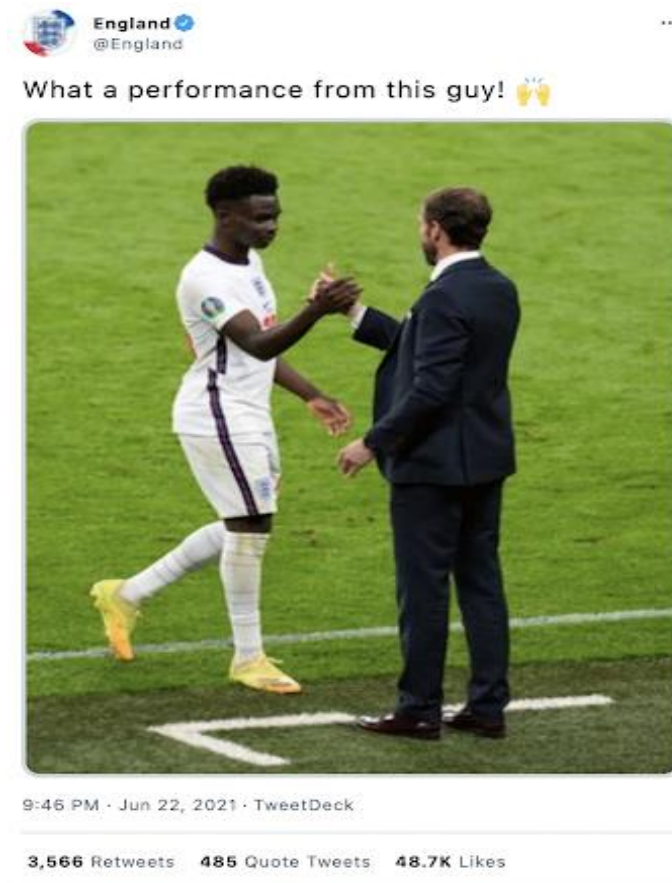
7:33 PM · Jun 18, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

397 Retweets 37 Quote Tweets 6,611 Likes

The third and final game of the group stage was against the Czech Republic, again at Wembley Stadium in London, on the 22nd of June. Having won one game and drawn the other, it was mathematically clear that England would be going through this group stage into the next round, no matter if they won, drew or lost this game. However, the same excitement and discourse was continuing. This game was won by England 1-0, as Raheem Sterling scored the winning goal.²⁰⁴ There was a lot of praise levelled at individual members, such as Saka, as an image of him shaking hands with Southgate was tweeted with the caption ‘What a performance from this guy!’²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Andy Baber, “Three Lions Top Euro Group,” *England Football*, June 22, 2021, <https://www.Englandfootball.com/mens-senior-team/fixtures-results/2021/20210622-czech-republic-england-match-report>.

²⁰⁵ @England, Twitter, June 22, 2021, 9:46pm, <https://twitter.com/England/status/1407439997872005128>.



This section sought to highlight the discourses that were emerging and continuing throughout the group stage – the first stage in the Euros 2020. It was still a divided time, and football was being used to convey political messages. This again reflects the importance that this tournament took on: not only was it characterized by intense debate over the decision to ‘take the knee’, but this expanded into other areas. The tournament was used as a vehicle to highlight the issues within the National Health Service, for instance.

The group stage of the Euros highlighted other important discussions, such as who deserves to be a representative of England. Many people positioned this team as an excellent representation of England. It is interesting in the first place that so many people had an opinion on this: as the England football team, they are of course in a position to represent England on a global scale. However, the debate is over whether they are a good representation outside of football. With the proliferation of social media and the way that the debate about taking the knee unfolded, this team were gaining global recognition.

Despite the prevailing debate and political messaging, there was still a large audience focused on the football. The celebration of the players based on their skill is rather standard during an international tournament when the team are playing well. However, it is notable that so much emphasis on the footballing ability was being placed upon two of the players who would later go on to miss the penalties at the final: Bukayo Saka and Marcus Rashford. While Saka predominantly received praise over Twitter, Rashford was receiving it on a more national scale. He was awarded an MBE for his services to vulnerable children a year prior to the Euro 2020, but had continued to do a lot of charity work, led multiple campaigns to

provide food to children and topped the Sunday Times Giving List.²⁰⁶ This has afforded him a lot of popularity, as evidenced by his cover on Vogue magazine, and three portraits of him hanging in the National Portrait Gallery.²⁰⁷ At this point in the competition, some people had not yet accepted the players' moral citizenship, emphasising the fact they had contingent outsider status by refusing to accept the decision to 'take a knee', ignoring the football, or complaining that footballers should stick to football.

Round of 16

After finishing at the top of their group, with two wins and one draw, in the group stages, England went on to the 'Round of 16'. This is the top two teams from each group, who play other top teams, until eight go onto the next round, the quarter finals. The game against Germany, again at Wembley Stadium, was won by England by two goals to Germany's zero. The goals were scored by Raheem Sterling and Harry Kane (the England Captain).²⁰⁸

For winning this game, players were referred to as 'heroes' and there was a large amount of celebration. Celebration from the Labour Party continued. One example is David Lammy's tweet in which he celebrated by waving an England flag in front of Wembley stadium, captioned by the words 'No one's telling me I'm not English today'.²⁰⁹ Somewhat surprisingly, however, support for the England team also started to appear from the Conservative Party, who at this point had not posted anything of support on Twitter. Prime Minister Boris Johnson posted images of himself watching the Germany game multiple times, the first of which is with his wife, Carrie Johnson, sat on a table in their home in London with the football on the TV, and captioned 'Come on England!' followed by the St. George's cross emoji.²¹⁰ It is not entirely clear what caused this sudden support, but he remained supportive over Twitter for the remainder of the tournament.

²⁰⁶ Howard Lake, "Marcus Rashford is the youngest person to lead The Sunday Times Giving List," *UK Fundraising*, May 26, 2021, <https://fundraising.co.uk/2021/05/26/marcus-rashford-is-the-youngest-person-to-lead-the-sunday-times-giving-list/>.

²⁰⁷ Edward Enniful, "Marcus Rashford & Adwoa Aboah Lead An Inspiring Army of Activists On Vogue's September Cover," *Vogue*, August 3, 2020, <https://www.vogue.co.uk/news/article/september-2020-issue-editors-letter>.

²⁰⁸ Tom Harle, "Sterling and Kane Fire England Through," *England Football*, June 29, 2021, <https://www.EnglandFootball.com/mens-senior-team/fixtures-results/2021/20210629-england-v-germany>.

²⁰⁹ David Lammy, Twitter, June 29, 2021, 4:12pm, <https://twitter.com/davidlammy/status/1409892440337702914>.

²¹⁰ Boris Johnson, Twitter, June 29, 2021, 6:00pm, https://twitter.com/BorisJohnson/status/1409919708107845633?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweteembed%7Ctwterm%5E1409919708107845633%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.indy100.com%2Fviral%2Fboris-johnson-matt-hancock-twitter-euro2020-b1874983.



This game against Germany was important not only because of progressing in the tournament, but also because of the history between England and Germany. Firstly, a clear historical event is the World Wars. Prior to the match, the FA warned England fans that they were not to sing any anti-German songs, such as the children's song 'Ten German Bombers' which makes fun of German casualties during World War Two.²¹¹ The fact that there was an expected anti-German sentiment reflects that discrimination in English football runs deep and is not limited to black players and fans, but also other nations as well.

Secondly, in addition to the War talk, there is another reason for the focus on this game against Germany specifically. At the European Championships 1996, Gareth Southgate missed an important penalty against Germany. Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, also tweeted to celebrate Gareth Southgate following a recent trend looking at 'How it started' in comparison to 'How it's going', which has usually been used to show a 'glow up', a big change from how things were in the past.²¹² This tweet compared Gareth Southgate immediately after missing the penalty against Germany in the Euro in 1996, compared to him celebrating with the crowd after the win against Germany by the team he manages.²¹³

²¹¹ Conor Clark, "England fans threatened with ban if they sing anti-German song," *Express*, June 25, 2021, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1454582/england-v-Germany-fans-threatened-ban-euro-2020-uefa-fa>.

²¹² Sadiq Khan, Twitter, June 29, 2021, 6:54pm, <https://twitter.com/sadiqkhan/status/1409933312643186689>.

²¹³ Sam Cunningham, "Gareth Southgate penalty miss: How Euro 96 heartbreak against Germany made England boss the man he is today," *iNews*, June 29, 2021, <https://inews.co.uk/sport/football/gareth-southgate-penalty-miss-germany-euro-96-england-manager-1074779>.



This ‘Round of 16’ was important for a variety of reasons. As the Prime Minister now seemed to support the England team, there was a shift in the discourse created and perpetuated by the Conservative Party. This created and legitimised the support for the football team for many people and opened the feeling of success to the wider public, whilst putting the debate over the decision to ‘take the knee’ towards the back of people’s minds.

Interestingly, this round also spoke to historical events and concepts of English identity. This win put an increased focus on the leadership of Gareth Southgate as this game was seen as a vindication moment and legitimized his role as Manager. In terms of football, England beat the West German side in 1966, which is England’s only ever victory at an international tournament. World War 2 is often a factor when England play Germany. Germany won international football tournaments in 1970, 1990 and 1996, and a popular chant from England fans was ‘two world wars and one world cup’.²¹⁴ Additionally, prior to the England v Germany game in 1996, there was an article in the Daily Mirror titled ‘ACHTUNG! SURRENDER!’.²¹⁵

However, many sources predicted that the game between the two in the Euros 2020 would be friendly as the rivalry between England and Germany is not as great as it once was. Despite this, there was still an air of apprehension as there a belief that sport can be a reflection of warfare, as explained by Orwell. There is a possibility that by ‘sending forth a team of eleven men, labelled as national champions, to do battle against some rival team, and allowing it to be felt on all sides that whichever nation is defeated will ‘lose face’’, and

²¹⁴ Simon Kuper, “England’s one-sided football rivalry with Germany loses its bite,” *The FT*, June 28, 2021, <https://www.ft.com/content/495dc000-cc14-4475-85e4-7c5cd2dd3425>.

²¹⁵ Christopher Young, “Two World Wars and One World Cup: Humour, Trauma and the Asymmetric Relationship in Anglo-German Football,” *Sport in History* 27, no. 1 (2007): 2.

therefore international football can be considered ‘war minus the shooting’.²¹⁶ There has been a rivalry for many years. It was clear that the FA was concerned about anti-German sentiment as they issued a warning, but there is no record of anyone being removed for singing or chanting anything anti-German. However, the historical rivalry in war and football meant that this victory was very important.

This victory legitimizes the team and their actions, as they are now seen as successful. As England have not won an international tournament since 1966, the progression against a German side was a significant moment and highlighted to many people that this could be the year to win again. Through discourses that focused on historically important factors in English identity, this stage of the tournament was important in determining the relationship between religion, race, and identity in contemporary English nationalism.

Quarter Finals

On the 3rd of July, the England team won against Ukraine. This game was played at the Stadio Olimpico, in Rome. England scored four goals, whereas Ukraine scored zero. The four goals were scored by Harry Kane (who scored two), Harry Maguire and Jordan Henderson.²¹⁷ There was a lot of celebration of this win on twitter, The @England account tweeted about how this game was the ‘first time the #ThreeLions have scored four in a major tournament knockout game since 1966’.²¹⁸

Support from politicians continued. For instance, just before the game, the Prime Minister tweeted a video of himself supporting the FA Respect Campaign, where he signed a ‘huge @England fan in support’ of the initiative. He goes on to say that ‘discrimination has no place in football, and we want to ensure a fun and inclusive environment for everyone’.²¹⁹ He signed his name to a massive England flag that had been laid out in the street outside of his home and offices in London. Other notable politicians tweeted, including Angela Rayner, deputy leader of the Labour Party. Her tweet stated ‘Thoughts with Lee Anderson tonight, you’ve missed a cracker mate’.²²⁰ Lee Anderson is the Conservative MP who stated he would boycott the games as long as England were taking the knee. Despite her tweet being positive about the game – referring to it as a ‘cracker’, meaning a brilliant game – there is also an element of political point scoring as this tweet served as a reminder to people that there were Conservative MPs who were very against the team, and now may be considered foolish to miss all this success.

Finally, the celebration was not just limited to politicians and the @England account, but celebrities sent their congratulations too. For instance, famous former England footballer, current TV pundit and face of the Walker’s Crisp Brand Gary Lineker tweeted that

²¹⁶ Peter J Beck, “War Minus the Shooting’: George Orwell on International Sport and the Olympics,” *Sport in History* 33, no. 1 (2013): 83.

²¹⁷ Paul Martin, “Three Lions Storm Into Semi-Finals,” *England Football*, July 3, 2021, <https://www.Englandfootball.com/mens-senior-team/fixtures-results/2021/20210703-ukraine-v-england-uefa-euro-2020-match-report>.

²¹⁸ @England, Twitter, July 4, 2021, 1:10pm, <https://twitter.com/england/status/1411658656245035009>.

²¹⁹ Boris Johnson, Twitter, July 3, 2021, 9:11am, <https://twitter.com/borisjohnson/status/1411236088459542531>.

²²⁰ Angela Rayner, Twitter, July 3, 2021, 10:01pm, <https://twitter.com/AngelaRayner/status/1411429883482460160>.

he is ‘very proud’ of the team, and they are ‘credit to themselves, their families, their sport and their country, both on and off the pitch’.²²¹



Many people agreed with the sentiment of Lineker’s tweet and the belief that the team represent more than football. The celebration and pride in these men goes beyond just the players, but also to their families, who are a credit to ‘their sport and their country’. By positioning them as a strong representation of England, this shows that many people see their moral citizenship as secure. By not only performing well at the football, but also by taking a stand against racism and using their platforms to help vulnerable people, they are all seen as model citizens.

Semi-Finals

The semi-final game against Denmark was at Wembley Stadium, in London. England won this game 2-1, as Denmark scored an own goal (so one goal was awarded to England, but an England player did not score it), and Harry Kane (Captain) also scored.²²² Prior to the game, there was a lot of excitement, especially as the last time the England team had got to an international semi-final was 1996. This anticipation was echoed by Raheem Sterling in this tweet showing a cartoon version of the England team, arms linked, walking up to Wembley Stadium, flanked by England fans, and a lion mascot. This image is captioned ‘Together as one’ followed by a love heart and an England flag emoji. He also uses the hashtag #BoyFromBrent.²²³

²²¹ Gary Linekar, Twitter, July 3, 2021, 11:10pm,

<https://twitter.com/garylineker/status/1411447208549965824?lang=en-GB>.

²²² Ross Lawson, “England Seal Historic Euro 2020 Final Spot,” *England Football*, July 7, 2021,

<https://www.Englandfootball.com/mens-senior-team/fixtures-results/2021/20210707-england-v-denmark-uefa-euro-2020-semi-final-report>.

²²³ Raheem Sterling, Twitter, July 7, 2021, 3:07pm,

<https://twitter.com/sterling7/status/1412775291643121668?lang=en>.



Sterling regularly refers to himself as the ‘BoyFromBrent’ in his tweets. Brent is the borough of London where he grew up, as well as where Wembley stadium is situated. This reflects that he still sees himself as just an ordinary boy who did well to represent his country, but this is also important as he immigrated to England from Jamaica as a child and has spoken about the way the media talk down and disparage him for his heritage. He was born in Jamaica, but after his father was killed in a gang turf war when Sterling was two, he and his family moved to England. The media has been accused of being racist in their description of Jamaica: in the *Times* on the day of the quarter-final against Ukraine, a headline referred ‘to the violent Jamaica streets he left aged 5’.²²⁴ This perpetuates the stereotypes associated between black people and violence.²²⁵ He has discussed how he blames the media for ‘fuelling racism’ against him and other black footballers – Phil Foden (a white player in the Euro 2020 for England) was described as a ‘starlet’ who bought a ‘new £2 million home for his mum’ but when Sterling bought a house his headline was ‘Young Manchester City footballer, 20, on £25,000 a week splashes out on mansion on market for £2.25million despite having never started a Premier League match’.²²⁶ This contrast in language facilitates and encourages hatred from fans, and he felt calling it out was essential for future players. Repeatedly referring to himself as the #BoyFromBrent emphasises his Englishness. Whilst highlighting that he considers himself just a boy from London, but juxtaposing this to playing at Wembley, arguably the most famous place in Brent, this shows how far he feels he has come.

²²⁴ Kimmo Matthews & Andrew Ellson. “Euro 2020: Support for Raheem Sterling from both at home and on the violent Jamaica streets he left aged 5.” *The Times*, July 3, 2021. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/euro-2020-support-for-raheem-sterling-from-both-at-home-and-on-the-violent-jamaica-streets-he-left-aged-5-68tt0g6kr>.

²²⁵ Lauren Crosby Medlicott, “Tired and outdated, the backlash over ‘violent’ Jamaica being linked to Sterling’s glory,” *Metro*, July 8, 2021, <https://metro.co.uk/2021/07/08/the-backlash-over-violent-jamaica-being-linked-to-sterlings-glory-14882004/>.

²²⁶ Raheem Sterling, “Black, England & Proud,” posted December 11, 2020 for the Facebook and Refresh series, video, https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=393888102032423&_rdr.

There was, inevitably, a lot of celebration once the game was over. For instance, player Jordan Henderson tweeted images of a celebration after Harry Kane scored a goal and tweeted the words ‘Not much else to say about this group!! We kept fighting till the end. One more game to go!’ followed by a lion emoji, a St. George’s cross emoji, and a love heart emoji.²²⁷ There was also a lot of celebration for Gareth Southgate again. Additionally, there was thanks extended to the fans, with the @England football account tweeting ‘We’ve done this together’ followed by a love heart emoji, and ‘Thank you so much for your support tonight’, followed by four images of fans celebrating the goals and result.²²⁸

A tweet from Sunday Times Journalist, Hannah Al-Othman, featured a video of ‘boys at a local Muslim school celebrating Harry Kane’s goal last night’, and added the phrase ‘It fills my heart that national football is now for everyone’.²²⁹ There was a lot of celebration at this result and further progression, and this implies that it is this tournament when it became for everyone, but that brings up questions such as who did they feel it was for before now, and what has changed in this tournament to encourage these people to watch it, did they not watch it before? This tweet is reminiscent of the cricket test from 1990, designed by Conservative MP Mr. Tebbit. To be officially integrated, immigrants had to be able to cheer ‘for the England side in a match in which England is playing one’s country of origin’.²³⁰ It is probable that this tweet was meant in good faith to show that some Muslims do support English football, as there may have been doubts previously. There are doubts about the loyalty and belonging of Muslims to the nation of England: a study found that 35% of people in the UK believe that Islam is a threat to the British way of life.²³¹ Additionally, 32% of people believe there are ‘non-go’ areas which are dominated by sharia law and which non-Muslims cannot enter in Britain.²³² Even though this game was against Denmark, it reflects that people are surprised and impressed to see this group of young Muslims support England. This reflects their moral citizenship could be granted in this instance as they are shown to be assimilating.

²²⁷ Jordan Henderson, Twitter, July 7, 2021, 11:05pm,

<https://twitter.com/jhenderson/status/1412895523359571968>.

²²⁸ @England, Twitter, July 8, 2021, 1:30am, <https://twitter.com/england/status/1412932111955283972>.

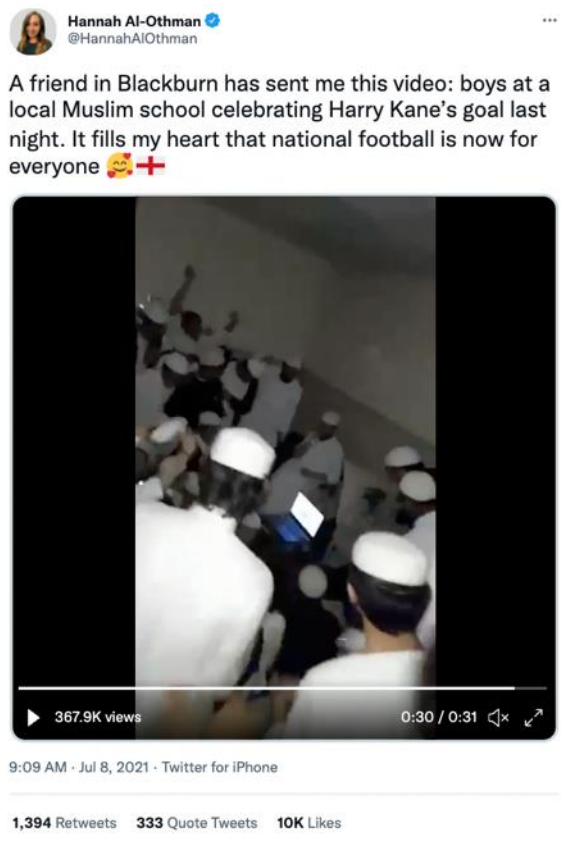
²²⁹ Hannah Al-Othman, Twitter, July 8, 2021, 9:09am,

<https://twitter.com/hannahalothman/status/1413047627072131074>.

²³⁰ Hirsch, *Brit(ish)*, 281.

²³¹ Frances Perraudin, “Third of Britons believe Islam threatens British way of life, says report,” *The Guardian*, February 17, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/17/third-of-britons-believe-islam-threatens-british-way-of-life-says-report>.

²³² Perraudin, “Third of Britons believe Islam threatens British way of life, says report.”



Additionally, support was once again extended by the Conservative Party. Priti Patel MP, Home Secretary, tweeted an image of her wearing an England shirt and celebrating a goal, captioned with the words ‘Just brilliant. Well done #Three Lions. Football’s coming home’ followed by the England flag emoji.²³³ This was referred to as hypocritical by some people. For instance, Diane Abbott, a Labour MP, referred to Patel as a ‘hypocrite’. She quote tweeted Patel’s original tweet with the statement ‘This is the woman who refused to condemn people booing the same England team for taking the knee.’²³⁴

This stage of the tournament reflected the highest excitement yet. This was the furthest that England had got in a tournament since 1996, and the large number of goals highlighted that this was a team who were good enough to play in the final. Through an increase in MPs supporting the team, their moral citizenship expanded. This is because the MPs legitimized the fact that this England team is not only a valid representation of the nation, but something to be proud of and celebrated. The celebration from a variety of politicians who had previously appeared to see this England team as an illegitimate representation of the nation highlights how football was so popular in this period, and to not be seen supporting the team could have been a missed opportunity. This stage emphasised the nature of belonging to the imagined community of English people as many English people were seen to be celebrating the achievements in person and online, reflecting the idea that the success of the team was just as much a success of the English population. People seemed to not discuss the decision to ‘take the knee’ as much – these discussions did not necessarily

²³³ Priti Patel, Twitter, July 7, 2021, 10:51pm, <https://twitter.com/pritipatel/status/1412892001767460873?lang=en-GB>.

²³⁴ Diane Abbott, Twitter, July 8, 2021, 8:36am, <https://twitter.com/hackneyabbott/status/1413039342872895488>.

seem to matter to people as long as the team was being successful. Therefore, there was a focus on the progression and celebration of the team.

Final

After winning against Denmark, England went through to face Italy at the finals, held at Wembley Stadium, London. Both teams scored one goal each during the 90-minute game, which meant the game went to extra time, and then as no one scored, to penalties, where Italy scored 3 and England scored 2. Italy won the tournament, and England came second.²³⁵ This game was immensely popular, and was the most watched TV event in the United Kingdom for 24 years.²³⁶

In the run-up to the game there was a large amount of excitement. Due to the high scoring game against Ukraine, there was a general belief that England could win this game. Many good luck messages were sent to the team, including from Prince William, who tweeted a video message with the phrase ‘the nation is behind you’.²³⁷ Also, a message was sent by the Queen. This letter was tweeted by the Royal Family twitter account and included that she was sending her ‘good wishes for tomorrow with the hope that history will record not only your success but also spirit, commitment and pride with which you have conducted yourselves’. Her message also included reference to the World Cup win in 1966 when she was ‘fortunate to present the World Cup’ to the team, and ‘saw what it meant to the players, management and support staff to reach and win the final’.²³⁸ This focus on history is also reflected in many other tweets. The @England team account tweeted a video with the caption ‘Time for history. Time for heroes. COME ON ENGLAND!’ followed by the England flag emoji.²³⁹ Additionally, Nigel Farage, who had been very vocal in his criticism of the England team, specifically their decision to ‘take the knee’, tweeted an image of himself at Wembley stadium for the final. Wearing a waistcoat in the style of the St George’s Cross, he tweeted ‘Oh, great day. Come on England!’²⁴⁰ This was a notable turn, and he was reportedly met with boos when he was inside the stadium, with some throwing bottles at him.²⁴¹

Similarly, this tweet by Zarah Sultana, a Labour MP, again highlights political division between the Conservative and Labour parties. Despite many Conservative MPs seemingly changing their stance on the England football team to supportive throughout the tournament, Lee Anderson MP continued to boycott the games. However, he did state he would ‘check his phone for updates’. This clearly shows an interest in the tournament, but a refusal to feel truly involved. Sultana asks, ‘how much must he dislike anti-racism to skip the

²³⁵ Will Jennings, “Penalty Heartbreak for Three Lions in Final,” *England Football*, July 11, 2021, <https://www.Englandfootball.com/mens-senior-team/fixtures-results/2021/20210711-italy-1-1-england-uefa-euro-2020-final-match-report>.

²³⁶ “UEFA Euro 2020 impresses with 5.2billion cumulative global live audience,” UEFA.com, September 2, 2021, <https://www.uefa.com/insideuefa/about-uefa/news/026d-132519672495-56a014558e80-1000--uefa-euro-2020-impresses-with-5-2-billion-cumulative-global-liv/>.

²³⁷ The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Twitter, July 11, 2021, 9:31am, <https://twitter.com/kensingtonroyal/status/1414140341213667329>.

²³⁸ The Royal Family, Twitter, July 10, 2021, 6:33pm, <https://twitter.com/royalfamily/status/1413914297198071812?lang=en>.

²³⁹ @England, Twitter, July 11, 2021, 8:00pm, <https://twitter.com/England/status/1414298552134688772>.

²⁴⁰ Nigel Farage, Twitter, July 11, 2021, 8:49am, https://twitter.com/nigel_farage/status/1414129671877369857?lang=en.

²⁴¹ James Bickerton, “Bottles thrown at Nigel Farage as he arrives at Wembley for Euro final to ‘loud boos’,” *Express*, July 12, 2021, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1461300/nigel-farage-news-euro-2020-final-wembley-boosing-fans-throw-bottles-england-v-italy-latest>.

first England final in 55 years?’ followed by a mind-blown and clown emoji.²⁴² This reflects a focus on the history making element of this stage of the tournament, as well as highlighting the unusual stance he is taking. It is clear that he still cares about the game, so has accepted them on some level as a representation of England, but refuses to concede that the decision to ‘take the knee’ is in anyway secondary to the football.



This section sought to highlight the reaction in the run-up to the final. There was a clear sense of excitement that this could be a historical event. Political division was also evident as there was a focus on the Conservative MP who declined to watch the game, which was seen as irrational for such an important event. This build-up arguably created a large pressure-cooker for the team: if they were to win, they would be celebrated as heroes. As there was so much emphasis on winning and making history, however, there was inevitably going to be disappointment when the team did not live up to these large expectations. This is not a way of legitimizing the preceding racism but does reflect that even though moral citizenship was granted, it came with a large focus on making history and performing successfully.

Aftermath of the Final

Five penalties were taken by both teams, but England scored two and Italy scored three. The three that were missed for England were taken by black men - Marcus Rashford, Jadan Sancho and Bukayo Saka. Almost immediately after the final whistle blew at the final, there was a barrage of racist tweets directed at the players. Twitter has reported that their automated tools immediately took down 1622 tweets during the final and in the proceeding 24 hours. Others were reported, and by the ‘14th July, 1,961 Tweets had been removed proactively following the Final, with a total of 126 removed from reports.’²⁴³ Whilst Twitter is a global platform, the vast majority of racist tweets came from UK accounts, and 99% of the accounts suspended for racist abuse were identifiable directly to a person.²⁴⁴ Despite the

²⁴² Zarah Sultana, Twitter, July 8, 2021, 7:56pm, <https://twitter.com/zarahsultana/status/1413210398514352135>.

²⁴³ Twitter UK, “Combatting online racist abuse: an update following the Euros,” *Twitter Blog*, 10 August, 2021, https://blog.twitter.com/en_gb/topics/company/2020/combatting-online-racist-abuse-an-update-following-the-Euro.

²⁴⁴ Twitter UK, “Combatting online racist abuse: an update following the Euros.”

racist abuse, it is interesting to note that ‘the word “proud” was used more often on the day following the Final than on any other day this year, as people expressed their support for the England team.’²⁴⁵ Additionally, a petition was set up immediately to ‘Ban racists for life from all football matches in England’, and at the time of writing, 1,266,598 people have signed it.²⁴⁶

The @England account was very active immediately after the loss against Italy. The @England account retweeted the FA statement on discriminatory abuse, which ‘condemns all forms of discrimination’ and states that they have been ‘appalled by the online racism that has been aimed at some of our England players on social media’.²⁴⁷ The England twitter account adds that they are ‘disgusted that some of our squad - who have given everything for the shirt this summer - have been subjected to discriminatory abuse online after tonight’s game’.²⁴⁸ There was a large amount of praise focused on what the team had accomplished. This praise was also evidenced by the @England account, who tweeted a cartoon-like image of the three players who missed a penalty, Sancho, Saka and Rashford. Sancho and Rashford have their heads in their hands. Their shadows are lions, representing their strength, but also their belonging to the nation.²⁴⁹ The ‘Three Lions’ icon is very important in English football as it is the badge, but also dates back to Richard the Lionheart and other Kings who used the Lion emblem to show their courage and strength in battle.

²⁴⁵ Twitter UK, “Combatting online racist abuse: an update following the Euros.”

²⁴⁶ Change.org, “Ban racists for life from all football matches in England,” Accessed 30 January, 2022, <https://www.change.org/p/football-association-and-oliver-dowden-sec-of-state-dcms-pm-boris-johnson-ban-racists-for-life-from-all-football-matches-in-england>.

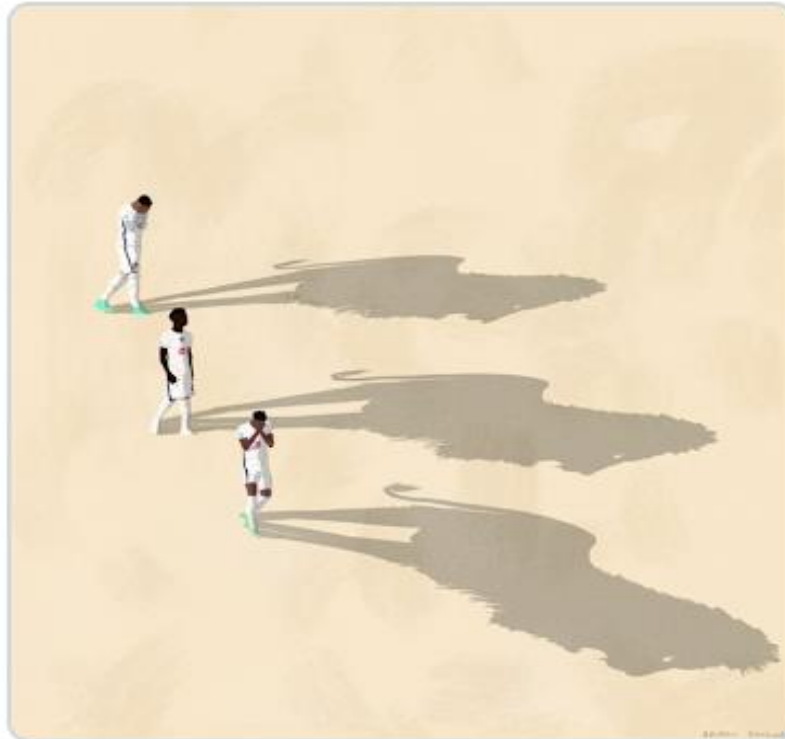
²⁴⁷ John Scheerhout, “FA Condemns ‘disgusting’ racist abuse of Marcus Rashford and other England players minutes after England’s Euro final defeat,” *Manchester Evening News*, July 12, 2021, <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/fa-condemns-disgusting-racist-abuse-21028100>.

²⁴⁸ @England, Twitter, July 12, 2021, 2:06am, <https://twitter.com/England/status/1414390646169821186>.

²⁴⁹ @England, Twitter, July 13, 2021, 12:20pm, <https://twitter.com/england/status/1414907459567767553?lang=en-GB>.



Our three lions. ❤️



Bukayo Saka and 2 others

12:20 PM · Jul 13, 2021 · Twitter Web App

70.7K Retweets 4,157 Quote Tweets 599.7K Likes

All three players issued statements over Twitter in the following days. All three of these players included a picture of themselves, standing alone, immediately after missing the penalty.²⁵⁰ Sancho and Rashford signed off their statements with their initials and their playing number, signing it JS7²⁵¹ and MR10²⁵² respectively. They all apologized for their missed penalty, as well as discussed their own personal history with their English identity, as well as racist abuse they received. Additionally, they all thank those who have been positive and shown their support for the individual players and the team. Aside from these three players, many other players in the England team issued statements over Twitter. Many included their pride in the team and their achievement in getting as far as they did. Many players also defend Saka, Rashford and Sancho, and their disgust with the racist abuse they received, especially when they put themselves in a position of stress after having represented their country and made history.

There were, again, politicians involved at this point. For instance, Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland, stated that the England team are ‘a credit to their country, to sport

²⁵⁰ Bukayo Saka, Twitter, July 15, 2021, 4:20pm, <https://twitter.com/bukayosaka87/status/1415692762708680717>.

²⁵¹ Jadon Sancho, Twitter, July 14, 2021, 5:33pm, <https://twitter.com/sanchooo10/status/1415348669809823751>.

²⁵² Marcus Rashford, Twitter, July 12, 2021, 8:46pm, <https://twitter.com/marcusrashford/status/1414672529717964807?lang=en>.

and to basic decency'.²⁵³ Green MP Caroline Lucas tweeted her commiserations to the team, as well as the statement 'thank you Gareth Southgate for showing what leadership based on respect, humility, graciousness & truth can deliver'.²⁵⁴ As a vocal critic of Johnson, this message was echoed by many who saw Southgate's example of leadership as true and good, in stark contrast to that of Johnson. Angela Rayner tweeted her support of the team, including their on and off the field action. This included 'Marcus Rashford wouldn't need to campaign to feed children if the government didn't leave them to go hungry. The England players rightly take a knee because they are victims of racist abuse. Black Britons don't need to prove themselves to anybody'.²⁵⁵ These tweets and their popularity reflect the debate on race and moral citizenship: there is a consensus that they should be celebrated for what they have done over the past few weeks.

Messaging from the Conservative Party followed a similar message of condemning the racist abuse and praising the players, but this was not entirely consistent, and much of it was met with criticism. Johnson tweeted a video of himself discussing the racism in the House of Commons, stating 'We are working closely with the football authorities and the police to ensure we can track and take action against online abusers and will ban them from football grounds in the same way we would if they had committed these offences on our street'.²⁵⁶ Andrew Rosindell MP tweeted that 'We are all proud of our England team, who have had the support of the whole country over recent weeks, but please focus of (sic) football, not politics. If you win for England, you win for everyone'.²⁵⁷ Finally, Home Secretary Priti Patel tweeted 'I am disgusted that @England players who have given so much for our country this summer have been subject to vile racist abuse on social media. It has no place in our country and I back the police to hold those responsible accountable'.²⁵⁸

One person who considered Patel's message as hypocritical was Tyrone Mings, an England player, who tweeted this reply. A lot of the Conservative messaging focused on the responsibility that fell to social media companies, and how they should be doing more to ensure this racist abuse is either not possible or tracable to people. However, Mings accuses the Conservatives, particularly Patel, for legitimizing the abuse. His tweet states 'You don't get to stoke the fire at the beginning of the tournament by labelling our anti-racism message as 'Gesture Politics' & then pretend to be disgusted when the very thing we're campaigning against, happens'.²⁵⁹

²⁵³ Nicola Sturgeon, Twitter, July 12, 2021, 9:08pm, <https://twitter.com/nicolasturgeon/status/1414678106216927234>.

²⁵⁴ Caroline Lucas, Twitter, July 11, 2021, 11:14pm, <https://twitter.com/carolinelucas/status/1414347420767490048>.

²⁵⁵ Angela Rayner, Twitter, July 12, 2021, 11:53am, <https://twitter.com/angelarayner/status/1414538274677342216>.

²⁵⁶ Boris Johnson, Twitter, July 14, 2021, 8:33pm, <https://twitter.com/borisjohnson/status/1415394040137359368>.

²⁵⁷ Andrew Rosindell, Twitter, July 13, 2021, 1:12pm, <https://twitter.com/andrewrosindell/status/1414920742714683395>.

²⁵⁸ Priti Patel, Twitter, July 12, 2021, 8:14am, <https://twitter.com/pritipatel/status/1414483365558951937?lang=en>.

²⁵⁹ Tyrone Mings, Twitter, July 12, 2021, https://twitter.com/officialtm_3/status/1414655312074784785?lang=en.



This section focuses on the climax of the Euros 2020. This entire chapter sought to further explore the research question and the relationship between religion, race and identity in contemporary English nationalism by exploring these relationships during the 2020 European Championships. After weeks of debate about the decision to ‘take the knee’, an increased political focus on the tournament and a large amount of celebration and praise, the tournament ended in an unfortunate way, but as the players described, this was not unexpected for them. The decision to ‘take the knee’ in a move to highlight racial abuse seemed very relevant by the end of the tournament and highlighted to many people the reality of being a black person in England. This highlights how, when performing well, those on the England team with multi-heritage backgrounds were afforded a large degree of moral citizenship. They were judged to be successful representations of the nation. However, this was conditional. The words of criticism of the decision at the beginning of the tournament, as well as the focus on the team as heroes and history makers, had highlighted the conditional nature of these players. This speaks to important concepts used in this thesis. As mentioned previously, nationalism refers to the belief that ‘one’s own ethnic or national tradition is especially valuable’, and is especially present in times of crisis, but this can be ‘under the guise of an imagined threat’.²⁶⁰ The strong emphasis placed on distinguishing the insider group from the contingent outsiders can be seen as resulting from multiple historical events and conceptions of English identity, but also the way politicians interacted with this England football team, through placing a large degree of emphasis on how wrong the team were for taking the knee, and this could not be undone with a week of celebratory remarks and images. This accentuated the threat of this movement, as well as black players, to the in-group, which was seen through an attempt to reassert dominance and abuse players, moving them outside of the in-group and denying their moral citizenship.

²⁶⁰ Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationhood*, 4.

Chapter Five: What are the implications of the preceding analysis for our understanding of the relationship between religion, race and identity in contemporary English nationalism?

The above research highlights how important football is in the construction of English identity and nationalism. Football is a microcosm of the broader society, so this research also tells us a lot about contemporary English nationalism. This chapter will expand on the implications of the analysis focused on the Euros 2020 in the broader context of English nationalism, as well as in academia and previous research. This will establish how the research influences the relationship between religion, race and identity in contemporary English nationalism.

The main framework of formal versus moral citizenship has been essential in understanding the treatment of the players who missed the penalty, but also the way that belonging and citizenship are understood in England. As mentioned previously, this is a pivotal time in English politics: Brexit has created and expanded discussions of these topics, as has the increase of deportations, which has meant many people who came to the UK from the Commonwealth between 1948 and 1973 have been deported, despite the majority coming legally. This reflects the fact that citizenship is now seen as a virtue, and not an actuality.²⁶¹ This is important because historical events, such as the British Empire, a constant stream of immigration, a popularisation of mythology and the Church of England have positioned the ‘in’ group as white, Christian/Secular and English speaking. Immigration has continued, and while it may be debated, it is clear that it is needed in order for the ‘in’ group to remain – you can’t be an ‘in’ group if there is no ‘out’ group. Despite immigrants threatening what is taken for granted, this is necessary for the ‘in’ group to reassert their dominant identity.

This is what happened when the players faced racist abuse. After months of justifying the success of the players and their belonging to the nation, the ‘in’ group felt betrayed by those they had trusted to represent them. The core group of white, English speaking, Christian/Secular people decide who is in and who is out. It is true that all three players who missed their penalty were black and eligible to play for other nations – Saka for Nigeria, Rashford for St Kitts and Nevis, and Sancho for Trinidad and Tobago - but they are not the only ones eligible to play for other nations. Captain Harry Kane is eligible to play for the Republic of Ireland. Additionally, forward Jack Grealish and midfielder Declan Rice are eligible to play for Ireland, and both started their careers in the Republic of Ireland youth team.²⁶² However, they have faced no abuse or questions of loyalty, highlighting they are accepted as representatives of England. This reflects that conceptions are changeable, as the ‘Irish, who were once regarded as inferior as black people, have become ‘white’.’²⁶³

An important point of discussion in the idea of symbolism. The role of religion has often been ignored due to the logic that England is a legally secular country. However, religion and secularism are not distinctly separate, and their role in English identity and nationalism is underestimated. Traditional, Christian religion may have declined, but this

²⁶¹ Schinkel, “The Virtualization of Citizenship,” 266.

²⁶² Lauren Tavriger, “13 out of England’s 26 man squad for Euro 2020 could play for a different country,” *Best of Britain*, June 2, 2021, https://www.bestforbritain.org/13_out_of_england_s_26_man_squad_for_euro_2020_could_play_for_a_different_country.

²⁶³ Hirsch, *Brit(ish)*, 150.

does not mean that religion is irrelevant. Many religious symbols, motifs and traditions were ‘taken over and used by nationalists’, and ‘customs and rituals of national commemorations, holidays and festivals, elections, (vocal) music, sport, and the cult of the glorious dead that create the closest bond and arouse the most fervent collective emotions’.²⁶⁴ This is reflected in the above analysis: the sporting event of the Euros 2020 did create collective emotions, and the volume of both hateful and proud messages after the final reflects the fervent nature of these. Crucially, the tournament and discourses served as a reminder of belonging. Multiple tweets contained the St George’s cross emoji, whereas none included the Union Jack. Many tweets included images which included the flag – many images that featured the players and the crowds were littered with St George’s cross flags in the stadium. Additionally, the imagery of the lion was also continuous. From the very basics, the three lions crest is the profile of the @England account. There was also a lot of references to ‘our Three Lions’, indicating the fact that this team was a representation, but also a belonging, of the nation. Cartoon lions also showed up on twitter, including in a cartoon posted by Sterling, and the reflections of the three players who missed the penalties. Even if you did not use Twitter much, many of the tweets used above also were shown on other social media sites, and other sites also had many other images and statements related to the Euros 2020. Many houses and cars displayed the England flag, many people wore their shirts out in public, and there was national advertising that featured the players throughout. This was continuous from the beginning of the tournament but was more visible during the final – especially as shops put up posters that they would shut, and there was a national campaign to celebrate the three players who did miss penalties. This highlights how many people would have been exposed to symbols and motifs that, to many people, represent English identity, with the goal of arousing ‘fervent collective emotions’ and creating a cohesive group of fans.

Any international sporting event increases focus on the nation. Specifically, this research reflected the work of Smith and the ‘Sacred Dimension of Nationalism’. The Euros 2020 did reflect the key components of the nation. There was a ‘willed and felt communion of those who assert a moral faith and feel an ancestral affinity’²⁶⁵, which was evident in the support directed at the players throughout the tournament, but also the regular use of Twitter to give thanks to the fans, which emphasised the essential role that English fans played in the success of the 11 players who represented the nation. These players are seen as defending and representing the ‘sacred territory’ of not only the nation, but those who are ‘ancestrally related to the territory in question’.²⁶⁶ One manifestation of this was through the video of Muslim boys celebrating an England goal against Denmark, which highlighted a belief that football had become ‘for everyone’ and that more people consider themselves as belonging to England. Even though they may not be considered as English by some due to not fulfilling sufficiently Moore’s criteria of ‘English speaking, Christian and white’, they still showed strong emotions and connection to the nation during times of success.

The ideas of ‘golden ages’ and ‘the glorious dead’, also important components of the nation, were clearly reflected throughout the analysis. The notion of ‘high periods’, specifically the Second World War and the British Empire, are presented with ‘special nostalgia’ that embodies ‘the inner or true virtues of the community’.²⁶⁷ This reflects Orwell’s idea that sport is ‘war minus the shooting’, and that international football mimics

²⁶⁴ Smith, “The ‘Sacred’ Dimension of Nationalism,” 813.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 803.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 807.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 807.

warfare as it is an attempt to beat other nations and defend your pride and territory.²⁶⁸ This was used in overt ways, such as direct references to the soldiers who gave their life during the Second World War in Southgate's 'Dear England' letter. However, it also appeared in more covert ways. There was war-like language in a variety of tweets, especially the @England account. The team were reported to be arriving for duty, described as heroes, and determined to be making history. The history of colonialism has shaped a lot of ideas about how English people see race and national belonging.²⁶⁹ In part, this is because Englishness is characterised by 'a striking confluence between English national feeling and the longing for Empire' and therefore 'Englishness has been reasserted through a racializing, insular nationalism, and it found its voice in the course of Brexit'.²⁷⁰ Since the Euros 2020 were the first international tournament since the UK left the EU, this reflects the existing sentiments for many fans. The events of the Second World War and the British Empire are presented with reverence and nostalgia, this contributes to the celebration of the nation with feelings of pride, as well as not to forget the heroism of those who scarified their lives.

Social media has provided an interesting dynamic to modern research. It has made the barriers to participation lower: not only in communicating with elected representatives and vice versa, but also in abusing those you do not like. There are of course benefits to social medial, but the lack of regulation and an impartial complaints procedure has provided an online space that allows free communication and abuse. The fact that Conservative MPs shifted a lot of focus onto social media providers to improve their safety services could potentially show a confusion at the way social media is used. However, there was a lack of ownership or responsibility from politicians for, in Mings' words, 'stok[ing] the fire'. Even though this was directed at Priti Patel, who did refer to the decision to 'take the knee' as 'gesture politics', this message can arguably be directed at all politicians who used the tournament to discuss political messaging over social media. As barriers to communication are lower, politicians tend to comment on and discuss more topics, but this politicises and weaponizes these events. Even though they, by their very nature, take on a political reality through players and managers doing services for charity and interacting with governments, as well as taking on the role of representing the 'imagined community' and representing England on an international stage, politicians using the Euros 2020 as a tool to reflect the division and animosity between parties arguably legitimised the actions of ordinary people. To see such an event be so closely tied with national identity, belonging, representing the nation, (anti-) racism and many other political issues, such as the National Health Service, made this event much more than football.

This chapter sought to examine the implications of the analysis of the Euros 2020 in understanding the relationship between religion, race and identity in contemporary English nationalism. Through examining these concepts, using evidence collected through analysing the Euros 2020, this speaks to broader issues and concepts in English society. Religion and race have been informed by a variety of historical events and are intertwined, and ultimately the inside group is white, Christian/Secular and English speaking. This inside group choose who to grant moral citizenship to, and these decisions are informed by historical events that have shaped views on race, religion, secular and identity. The role of social media was also discussed to highlight how integral social media is in the modern world, and how different considerations come into practice when using social media as a tool.

²⁶⁸ Beck, "War Minus the Shooting": George Orwell on International Sport and the Olympics," 83.

²⁶⁹ Skey, "A sense of where you belong in the world," 717.

²⁷⁰ Virdee & McGeever, "Racism, Crisis and Brexit," 1808.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the religio-racial boundaries of contemporary English identity, specifically through close examination of the discourses that emerged throughout the Euros 2020. This was explored specifically through LeGreco and Tracy's method of discourse tracing analysis using an intersectional lens to ensure that a full picture of the discussions on Twitter were analysed. Discourse tracing analysis allowed for the progression of the discourse that emerged through the tweets of British politicians, the official @England twitter account, Mayors of English cities, journalists at British newspapers and current and former England footballers.

This thesis began with an exploration of the concepts of religion, race, nationalism and national identity. This established that there is a sacred dimension to the nation, which involves the people who are within the land and boundaries, and consider themselves to have a shared history and language, as well as culture. This determined that the concepts of race, religion and nationalism are intertwined in English culture. The second chapter used this previous research, but specifically situated this within the context of England by examining historically important events, as well as how these events have shaped modern approaches and attitudes, that contribute to a greater understanding of English identity and nationalism. This chapter sought to explore these components in English history, while also highlighting that these components cannot be looked at in isolation, due to their interconnectedness. The historical events of World War 2 the British Empire, and English mythology, as well as the relevance of religion and race, were examined in order to understand the way they have influenced modern conceptions of English nationalism. Therefore, the 'insider' group is determined, and those with both formal and moral citizenship in England are white people, who are either Christian or secular, and speak English. On occasion, people who do not fit this profile may be able to assert themselves as an insider using language, culture and historical conceptions. The third chapter explored the way in which religion, race and English nationalism were to be researched in the context of the Euros 2020. By exploring discourse tracing analysis and an intersectional theoretical framework, this allowed for the progression of the discourses to be followed effectively from the beginning to end of the tournament. This allowed for identification of key messages of significance, myths, symbols, and narratives in the discussions about race and English football.

The fourth chapter situated the relationship of religion, race and nationalism in the Euros 2020. The idea of an 'imagined threat' that can be pursued in pursuit of nationalism was an extremely relevant concept.²⁷¹ As the notable figures whose tweets were used in analysis placed a large degree of emphasis on this tournament, it was politicised from the beginning. As many of these people emphasised how wrong the team were for their decision to 'take the knee', they remained a possible threat, and their words could not be undone with a week of celebratory remarks and images when the team were doing well in the tournament. Eventually, when three players failed by missing the penalties in the final, they were moved out of the in-group and denied their moral citizenship. The final chapter sought to examine the implications of this research, and what this research said about broader issues in English society. It also explored the way social media has become an important consideration which is essential in modern analysis, but creates different issues.

²⁷¹ Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, 4.

This research was also relevant because, at its core, it focused on key issues in modern English society: football, social media and citizenship. The Euros 2020 were the first time an England team had made it to a final for 55 years, so there was a focus on the fact that this was historical, and this team was making history. Consistently throughout the tournament, the players were celebrated for their performance both on and off the pitch. For instance, Sterling, Henderson and Rashford have been awarded an MBE by the Queen for their charitable work, and three images of Rashford are hanging in the National Portrait Gallery. The online abuse directed at the players who missed the penalties was explored. Abuse has grown in ease and frequency due to the increase in social media. All three players issued a statement on Twitter, in which they apologised for their performance, thanked people for their kind words and actions. The FA condemned the abuse, especially as the players had ‘given everything to the shirt over the summer’, and many people commended the players. This included Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, Green MP Caroline Lucas, Labour MP Angela Raynor, and Conservative MP Priti Patel.

This is a very interesting time in English politics. As explained, the Brexit vote in 2016 and subsequent policy decisions have created, what some consider, a culture war. Even if it is not that extreme, there is a division between people and politics when it comes to the EU. There are also divisions in other areas, such as the stance on immigrants, what the UK needs to do about its colonial past, how involved religion should be in public institutions, whether Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should remain part of the United Kingdom, and what the response to the Black Lives Matter protests should be. Therefore, this thesis has explored English identity at a very interesting time in politics and culture, and explored how these issues came to fruition through the specific medium of an international football tournament.

There is clearly a lot of scope for further research regarding football, and this is also an extremely interesting time for race and religion. The European Qualifiers were held in August and September 2021 and determined which teams would continue to the World Cup in 2022. There were issues of racism here: for instance, Hungary fans booed the England team whilst ‘taking the knee’, and threw cups at the players. However, the Andorra team ‘took the knee’ with the England team, which saw much applause in the stadium. Examining the World Cup, being held in 2022, and the Qualifiers in 2021, may show if there is a development in attitudes from the Euros 2020, and could also be looked at beyond England. There are also other directions to explore, such as the growth of right-wing, predominantly male groups using football as a focus and a way to recruit, such as the Democratic Football Lads Alliance, racism, and Islamophobia in stadiums and on fan forums online.

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