Reading the Olympic Games: nationalism, olympism, globalisation, and London 2012

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Reading the Olympic Games:
Nationalism, Olympism, Globalisation, and London 2012

by

Allison Malia

A Doctoral Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

(May, 2014)

Supervisor: Professor Alan Bairner
School of Sport, Exercise, and Health Sciences

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Abstract

Nationalism and globalisation are two topics of great debate. In an increasingly connected world, these concepts are contrasted as opposites unable to coexist—with a rise in one there must be a fall in the other. In this study, these concepts are explored alongside Olympism through the medium of the Olympic Games. Historically, the Olympics are structured around nations/nation-states, and national teams, while still attempting to promote universalism, internationalism, and the unity of humankind. This work aims to explore how and why nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation are expressed in the Olympic Movement through a case study of the London 2012 Olympic Games and what the outcomes of these actions are. Backed by an interpretivist paradigm, this study focused on selected events in the lead-up to the London Games, starting in the summer of 2011, and culminated with a prolonged period of observation at the London Games, both at Olympic venues and the live site at Hyde Park. Throughout the course of data collection there was a focus on not only the institutions staging the Games but also the spectators taking part in them.

Keywords: Globalisation, London 2012, National identity, Nationalism, Olympic Games, Olympism
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# Abbreviations

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<td>TOP</td>
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Introduction

Sport is a common feature of most, if not all, modern societies. Regardless of what is being played, or for what prize, sports have embedded themselves in the lives of many. In Western societies in particular, it is almost impossible to avoid sport. The language of sport has been taken up for use in situations ranging from war and business to interpersonal relationships, and it is difficult to avoid sport when it is covered at least as extensively in the media as are politics. One is so accustomed to the seeming omnipresence of sport that it is possible to overlook its reach. With sport having a place in leisure, economics, politics, and even international relations, it is necessary to take a closer look at what its role is.

As Espy (1979) mentions, “the significance of the phenomenon of sport is not inherent but manifests itself in the uses to which it is put in society. Sport symbolizes the international environment and is also a pragmatic tool of that environment” (p. 8). The problem inherent in this perspective is to determine when or how sport is being used as a tool and when or how it is a reflection of our world. Yet, the two need not be mutually exclusive, and often are not; it is important to understand how sport is used in order to grasp what it does, or could, reflect.

However, not all sport is created equally. Elite, international sport is different in certain respects from domestic leagues, school sport, or simple recreation in the way it is structured. The important distinction is that it is the only version of sporting competition in which a person’s legal standing as a citizen of a nation-state dictates for whom they can compete. Writing on the concept of the nation, Anderson (2006) states, “nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time” (p. 3). The sentiment expressed by Anderson (2006) still rings true despite the logic behind the claims of globalists, such as the weakening of the territorial boundaries of nation-states due to certain economic, political, and social forces being able to elude nation-state control (Held & McGrew, 2000). In a sporting landscape with ever-increasing player movement and changing national citizenship, the nation-state, and an allegiance to one—even if not a person’s “home” nation-state—is still paramount.

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1 Throughout this work, nations will be the focus of discussion. However, as not all nation-states are singular, unified nations, in some cases it is necessary to recognise this reality. Therefore, as a simplified way of acknowledging this, I have
The Olympic Games are one example of a major sporting contest that is rooted in international competition, displaying vividly the truth of Anderson’s (2006) words. In reviving the Olympics, Baron Pierre de Coubertin was at once aiming to re-establish the power of his home nation-state, France, and looking to sport to transcend nationalism (Guttmann, 1992). De Coubertin foresaw a better world in which this was possible and he believed the Olympics could help create it. This is not to say that nationalism was an unintended outcome of the revival of the Games. Certainly, nationalism was built into them through the formation around national organisations and de Coubertin’s objective of proving French superiority. However, this was not the sole aim of their revival (Mandell, 1976). Ideals of universalism, and the unity of humankind were built into the ethos of the Games through the Olympic Charter and the creation of the ideals of Olympism.

Whether or not the Olympic Movement has held (or ever did hold) to these lofty ideals is widely debated. What needs to be examined is the difference between various parts of the Olympic Movement and how each is able to interact with these goals and walk the line between the (inter)national structure of the Games and the universalist values of Olympism that are central to the ideology of the Olympic Movement.

Jarvie (1993) writes, “despite the occasional idealist claims that sport itself often transcends the conflicts and problems of modernity, the changing world conditions and relations apply to everyone” (p. 60). This fact cannot be denied. Nothing exists in a vacuum, not even the Olympics. However, the goal is not to claim that the Olympics are never affected by the problems happening in the world. That simply cannot be done with examples such as the 1936 “Nazi Games” in Berlin, the 1972 attacks in Munich, or the boycotts of the 1980s being such integral parts of the history and evolution of the Games.

The Olympics are used here as an object of inquiry because they have produced an intersection of nationalism, globalisation, and universal values. They also form a prominent part of social and sporting life across the world and, through their organisational structure, occupy a unique place in the world of sports, politics, and economics. In this work, the discussion will focus on expressions of nationalism and Olympism against the backdrop of the globalisation of the Olympic Games, through employed the forms “nation(-state)” and “nations(-states)” when the discussion cannot center completely on nations or nation-states and must incorporate both.
an exploration of the London 2012 Summer Games. These topics are pressing issues in the world currently and, as such, are worthy of further analysis.

The choice of nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation as the foci of this work is not based solely in the foundations of the Games. Stepping outside of sport for a moment, debates about the condition of the nation-state system and globalisation are timely. Claims for the continuing dominance of the nation(-state) system compete with claims for the erosion of the nation(-state) as a consequence of the rise of globalisation based on different interpretations of the same evidence (see Berger, 2001; Gellner, 1981; Hedetoft, 1999; McCrone, 1998; Reis, 2004; Smith, 2001). Additionally, questions over the value of, and the need for, the Olympic Games in the face of rising costs and other criticisms (see Lenskyj, 2000; Shaw, 2008; Simson & Jennings, 1992), support the use of Olympism and the Games as the final element of analysis.

Central to these discussions is the concept of nationalism, itself a disputed term used to explain a variety of actions and beliefs. There are those who believe nationalism to be a negative, hostile, or destructive force (see Chatterjee, 1993, p. 4; Cronin, 2003; Gellner, 1997) and many others who believe that it need not be negative, that there are some forms of nationalism that can be relatively harmless (see Billig, 1995; Edensor, 2002; Eley & Suny, 1996; Smith, 1995). What must be taken into account is that while nationalism is an oft-used term, both in academic discussions and daily life, there is little agreement on what it means or its effects. There are a variety of different forms of nationalism proposed by theorists with a vast array of qualities attributed to them (see Billig, 1995; Boas, 1932; Brown, 1999; Edensor, 2002; Hroch, 1996; Kedourie, 1993). This is important to note because through an understanding of what nationalism can be, it becomes easier to identify certain behaviours as nationalistic.

Similar to nationalism, globalisation is also a much disputed topic with sceptics and globalists both claiming to have substantial evidence in support of their positions (Held & McGrew, 2000). The arguments both for and against globalisation can be seen in a variety of different areas from economics and politics to culture and technology (see Beck, 2000; Guillén, 2001; Held & McGrew, 2000; Hirst & Thompson, 2000; Holton, 1998). The commonality in all of these discussions, both sceptic and globalist, is the focus on the interconnections that exist, be they between individuals, a handful of nation-states, or the majority of existing nation-states.
Whilst there is no shortage of literature on either nationalism or globalisation, the majority of the literature focuses on providing a singular definition of one or both of these concepts, or attempting to prove they exist at all. The literature focusing on Olympism, however, tends to debate the Olympic Movement’s adherence to these values rather than question their existence or meanings.

The aim of this work is not to define these concepts in simple terms or to determine the truth of their existence; instead, the aim is to understand in more detail how and why these concepts feature in the Olympic Games. What will be demonstrated is how these concepts are able to coexist within the Olympic Movement, albeit unequally, and how the Olympics provide a venue for nationalism to be expressed in a relatively harmless way.

Evidence was gathered through taking part in the Games as a spectator and observing the ways in which nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation featured in the workings of the London 2012 Olympics. The goal was to gain a deeper understanding of how these concepts are built into the Games by organisers and how spectators bring their own sense of them to the Games.

In order to achieve this goal, the scope of the London 2012 Olympics was narrowed to include a handful of events from different stages of the Games beginning in the summer of 2011. From lead-up events to the live sites and competitions during the Games, a broad picture of London 2012 was assembled so as to take into account the multiple stages of the Olympics. Looking at only the competitions would not have provided a complete picture. In order to provide a panoramic perspective, the net needed to be cast wider to look not only at the institutions, which run the Games and thereby lead the way for nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation, but also at the spectators who are an integral part of the experience of the Games.

In this discussion, nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation will be explored through the lens of the Olympic Movement, with a particular emphasis on the Games themselves. However, it is also necessary to note that no major sporting event can be entirely separated from the spheres of politics, economics, and so on. In each case, there is an interaction that is necessary to explore more fully in order to understand what is happening within the realm of sport and how that, in turn, impacts the “real” world. It is possible to look at the link between the IOC and the Olympic sponsors as one example of this, and the link with the United Nations (UN) as another.
By examining the London 2012 Olympics, the issues of nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation can be brought to the forefront. With these issues holding an important place in the Olympic Movement, the Games provide an ideal opportunity to observe them as they happen. Many theorists have investigated these concepts within the Olympic Games through a variety of approaches and focusing on a number of aspects of the Games (see Chen, Colapinto, & Luo, 2012; Hargreaves & Ferrando, 1997; Hogan, 2003; Housel, 2007; Riggs, Eastman, & Golobic, 1993; Tomlinson, 1996). What this work aimed to do differently, however, was to be on the ground at the Games and explore the broader picture rather than focus on one particular area.

Through this research I aimed to answer the following interrelated questions: 1) How do nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation feature at London 2012? 2) Why are nationalism and Olympism expressed at London 2012? And 3) what is the outcome of these actions?

Perhaps the first question to address when speaking about the Olympics is: why use them to explore these topics? Whilst Olympism is not seen in other sporting events, universal values more generally could be explored alongside nationalism and globalisation in a number of national and international sporting competitions. However, the Olympics are unique. First of all, they are the only competition that makes a point of putting ideology at the forefront (Kidd, 1996). The stated prioritization of these values makes the Games a fruitful site for comparison. Secondly, the Olympics are the biggest sporting event in the world; over 200 nations(-states) compete in 33 sports (26 Summer, 7 Winter). Other events may boast as many nations(-states) or as many sports but none have both. The scale of the Games from the level of media attention, the size of the event, and the reach of the Games and the IOC into areas outside of sport are unmatched. Lastly, the fact that the Games have such an impact on host cities—the expenditure of billions of dollars, the disruptions to the daily workings of the city, and so on—makes them an interesting case to study.

However, the Olympics were not chosen solely because of their reach and impact. Even though without the above-mentioned “qualifications” the Games would not be as useful as a research subject, another reason was influential: my personal enjoyment of the Games. I have been a fan of the Olympics since I was 12. I grew up watching the Games and, since the 2000 Sydney Games, I have taken a significant interest. Since then, I have continued to follow with increasing fervour, learning as
much as possible, watching constantly during each edition, and becoming a collector of Olympic merchandise. London 2012 was my first time attending the Games and there was no shortage of excitement at the prospect of attending, as July 2012 grew closer. Being able to do research into the Olympics seemed like a logical choice.

This does not mean that critical observation was impossible during the research process. While I am an avid fan, and admittedly more reserved in criticisms of the Olympic Movement than many, it is not infallible. The Olympics has its problems but these problems do not wholly negate the positives of the Games or the lessons that can be learned from them.

One further question that must be addressed is why the focus was solely on the Olympics rather than taking the Paralympics into account as well. While the Paralympics share many features with the Olympics, such as size and ideology, they are still a separate event. The two are held weeks apart and are promoted separately even to the point where the rights to broadcast the two events can be purchased independently. Furthermore, while the Paralympics continue to grow in popularity, the Olympics are still widely held as the premier event and garner a larger audience and more of the organisational focus in the lead-up to the twinned events.

However, the consideration was not based solely on the distinction between the two events in terms of promotion and logistics. There are further differences between the Olympic and Paralympic Games that were also considered. Due to the different nature of the Paralympics themselves, and the vastly different histories of these two events, there is a different dialogue around the Paralympics, which leads to entirely different avenues that would need to be considered. Exploring the Paralympics as well would have required an expanded literature review and consideration of the theory and insights into the Paralympics as a departure from the narratives around the Olympic Games.

Although the Paralympic Games are worthy of similar studies and may provide equally rich data, with all of the above factors considered, the decision was made to concentrate on the Olympics so as to narrow the focus of an already broad topic.

In this work, I begin with an in-depth examination of nationalism and the factors that surround it in Chapter 1. From an exploration of the state, the nation, and the nation-state as the fundamental building blocks of nationalism, the discussion will move to nationalism and the many competing theories about its nature and its function.
in the contemporary world. Finally, I look at national identity as a feature of nationalism and how it can be used.

Following this, Chapter 2 explores the concept of globalisation through three ideal types: economic, political, and cultural globalisation. Beginning with economic globalisation, the debate between sceptics and globalists over the reality of globalisation is addressed through economic factors such as multinational corporations (MNCs). This analysis of the debate continues through a political lens by considering the roles of the UN and the European Union (EU). Additionally, cultural globalisation is addressed as another ideal type to round out the discussion. Finally, the role of the nation-state in relation to globalisation is considered.

Chapter 3 deals with the topics of nationalism, globalisation, and universal values in a sporting context. This chapter focuses on sport, sport national identity, and nationalism by looking at examples of institutional and spectator nationalism before moving into case studies of national identity. The case studies deal with sport national identity in two different contexts: the United Kingdom and the United States. From this, the focus shifts to globalisation. Following on, athletes become the focal point of the discussion leading to a case study of so-called “plastic Brits” ahead of the London Games. Finally, this chapter explores the issue of the interaction of spectators with other nations(-states) and national teams in a consideration of the pull of universal values over nationalism.

Chapter 4 moves the discussion on to the Olympics directly with an overview of the history and structure of the Games. First, the revival of the Games is considered along with two main elements of the modern Games: Olympism and the IOC. This is followed by an examination of the Olympic Truce and the Olympic Torch Relay and their evolution. Next, the legacy of the Games is explored with a consideration of the costs, human rights issues, politics, and boycotts that have become important features of the modern Games. Following this, the Games are put into perspective through the lens of mega-events, media events, and spectacles. Lastly, the Opening and Closing Ceremonies are explored for their importance to the Games and their relation to the concepts of nationalism and Olympism.

Chapter 5 shifts the conversation from a purely theoretical exploration of these topics into the details of my own research. This chapter focuses on the methodology and methods that informed this work beginning with a detailed examination of the methodology adopted. This is followed by a comprehensive explanation of the
methods that were employed during the research stage. Beginning with a consideration of alternative methods and moving on to those employed, including case study and ethnography, this chapter details how the research project was conducted.

Chapter 6 brings us to the findings and analysis, as I look first at what happened in the lead-up to the London 2012 Olympics. This chapter highlights three main elements: promotional materials, the “one year to go” celebration, and the 2012 Olympic Torch Relay. In looking at these three areas, the ways in which nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation are features of the Olympic Games becomes a clear focus of the work. I examine the institutional and spectator nationalism associated with these aspects of the lead-up to demonstrate how these forces are in play long before the Games officially begin.

Chapter 7 begins the analysis of the Games themselves with an examination of spectators at London 2012. Spectators at both the live site at Hyde Park and the Olympic venues are the focus as particular attention is given to their dress and behaviours and how these fit with understandings of nationalism and Olympism.

Finally, Chapter 8 concludes with a consideration of the institutional forces at London 2012. Particular attention is focused on Hyde Park and the Olympic venues for examples of institutional forces operating on a daily basis. Careful attention is paid to the promotion of British nationalism as well as nationalism more generally. Next, the role of globalisation in the Olympic Games, and its visibility at London 2012, comes under discussion. Lastly, the focus shifts to an exploration of nationalism and Olympism in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies.

As mentioned previously, this work aims to answer three questions: 1) How do nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation feature at London 2012? 2) Why are nationalism and Olympism expressed at London 2012? And 3) what is the outcome of these actions? What was found is that there is no single answer to these questions. Nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation are complex terms and their application to the study of the Games is equally complex. Spectators and institutions differ greatly in how they engage with these concepts and there are yet more variations within each group. However, whilst singular answers could not be found, discernable trends were discovered that shed additional light on nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation in the Olympic Movement.
Chapter 1 – Nations and Nationalism

Introduction

Differing theories abound as to how nations and nation-states arose, what qualifies as such, what their functions are in the contemporary world, and whether or not they are still relevant. The same is true of the related concept of nationalism. What is generally agreed is that all of these are, or have been, important not only in politics but also in the creation and maintenance of cultures. The concepts of nations, states, nation-states, and nationalism are examined in detail to provide a basis from which to understand their application to London 2012 as will be explored in the remainder of this work.

This chapter focuses on the debates surrounding these ideas in order to comprehend the complexities of each, and to extract the theories that are pertinent to this study. It is imperative to have a firm understanding of each of these concepts before using them to explore London 2012, as their usage is complex and widely debated.

Nations, States, and Nation-States

Perhaps the most convenient place to begin is with the concept of the *state*. As Parekh (2002) describes it, a state has six requirements:

First, it should be territorially distinct, possess a single source of sovereignty, and enjoy legally unlimited authority within its boundary. Second, it should rest on a single set of constitutional principles and exhibit a singular and unambiguous identity. […]

Third, citizens of the state should enjoy equal rights. […] the state represents a homogenous legal space within which its members move about freely, carrying with them a more or less identical basket of rights and obligations. Fourth, citizenship is a unitary, unmediated and homogenous relationship between the individual and the state. […]

Fifth, members of the state are deemed to constitute a single and united people. […] Sixth and finally, if the state is federally constituted, its component units should all enjoy the same rights and powers. (pp. 41-42)

These criteria are seen across the modern world in state formation with the possible exception of the fifth, the “single and united people” (Parekh, 2002, p. 42). In other definitions, the focus is on the institutions that form a state, rather than those over which the state rules (McCrone, 1998; Smith, 2001). The concept of a united people is
typically associated with the idea of the \textit{nation}. Dusza (1989) notes that in French legal theory, the state is, in fact, seen as “the juristically personified ‘people,’ the legal form of the ‘nation’ as a politically and mentally united plurality of individuals” (p. 85). However, while it is common to hear of \textit{nation-states}, a state does not need to be instituted on the basis of a unified nation. Smith (2001) argues that one nation under a state is actually a rare occurrence, and that the more likely case is a state instituted over multiple nations where one has a general majority. Yet, a nation may also be created after the establishment of the state. A prime example of this is the United States upon declaring independence from Britain. This act, combined with the ratification of the Constitution and the creation of the federal government, created a state. However, when this occurred, there was no nation as nothing united the former colonies aside from the newly founded state.

Despite this, the norm in the contemporary world is perceived to be the union of nation and state. Smith (2001) terms this coupling a \textit{national state} where a state is instituted over a population in which one ethno-national group is in the majority. More commonly, these national states are referred to as nation-states, the implication being that the dominant ethno-national group is the only group.

The historiography of the nation-state and its rise varies according to the individual theorist. According to Smith (2001), the national state dates back to the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. However, there is more widespread agreement that the 20\textsuperscript{th} century saw the rise of the nation-state as the standard basis for political legitimation (Duara, 1996; Eley & Suny, 1996; Shaw, 1997; Steger, 2009).

But why did the nation-state become the dominant political model in contemporary society? Robinson (1998) explains, “the nation-state system is the historically specific correspondence between production, social classes, and territoriality—a correspondence that led to a given political form that became the nation-state” (p. 565). Gellner (1981) indicates that the initial impetus was the changing nature of economics. He explains that modernity requires a homogenisation of culture in order to increase communication, equality, and mobility, and that this need for homogenisation stems from the increasing demands of specificity and technology (Gellner, 1981). This, however, does not explain the spread of the nation-state to those areas that are less economically developed than those in the West.

According to Berger (2001),
the establishment of the UN and the deepening of the Cold War provided the context for the universalisation of the nation-state as the key agent of development. After 1945 the nation-state was widely presented and understood as a constitutive element of capitalist (and socialist) modernisation in what became known as the First, Second and Third Worlds. (p. 892)

The nation-state is now the political aspiration for any state desiring legitimation in world politics. It is the outcome of world political opinion that the nation-state is now seen as the only legitimate international actor (Duara, 1996; Smith, 2001).

Furthermore, Meyer, Boli, Thomas, and Ramirez (1997) point to the reality of world culture as highly rationalised to explain the adoption of the rationalised nation-state as the dominant international system.

Of course, a discussion on the nation-state must ultimately be paired with a discussion of the nation. This term is used in a myriad of ways, from non-political references (such as Red Sox Nation), references to cultural or ethnic groups (such as the Cherokee nation and the Canadian first nations), to its use in a political context (such as the French nation). In each of these cases, the word nation takes on a different meaning. Even with only these three examples, it is possible to get a sense of the different ways in which the nation has come to be defined.

There are many claims as to what features constitute a nation. What is generally agreed upon is that a nation must have a limitation, that is, create a distinction between “us” and “them” (Anderson, 2006; Duara, 1996; Eley & Suny, 1996; Gellner, 1997). Duara (1996) explains this need by stating that the nation “is designed to include certain groups and exclude or marginalize others—often violently. […] As a relationship among constituents, the national ‘self’ is defined at any point in time by the Other” (p. 163). These distinctions of “us and them” are commonplace in modern society: ‘I’m American, not Canadian.’

While this notion of “us and them” is a typical way of thinking about the nation, what causes this distinction, how do nations create their boundaries? One common argument is that a nation is based on a shared language (Cobban, 1969, p. 118; Hroch, 1996). Part of this argument is that the ability to communicate with each other is essential to tie a nation together. Gellner (1981) offers a similar opinion on the use of language. However, rather than suggest that language is a basis on which to create a nation, he believes that language is necessary to keep the nation, and more specifically the nation-state, functioning (Gellner, 1981). One of the characteristics of
modern society, according to Gellner (1981), is that it is mobile; each person is trained to be able to move within the system through formal education. It is this purpose that makes language important.

However, language should not be seen as the only factor in creating a nation. Languages can be spoken in a number of different nations with little to no other similarities. Furthermore, while languages know no borders, neither does the ability to learn a new language. Learning a new language does not mean that an individual is now a member of a new nation, although it may be a requirement for entry into the nation-state. Therefore, while language can be an important factor in uniting a nation, it can seldom be considered a decisive factor.

These three elements of multiplicity, location, and adoption are not unique to language either. It is possible to see these same issues in the case of religion as well. For the same reasons, it can be said that religion, like language, can seldom be considered a decisive factor in the creation of a nation, though it may be an important element.

One factor that is routinely considered important to a nation, however, is territory. A nation must be associated with a homeland of some sort (Cobban, 1969; Smith, 2001). Cobban (1969) goes so far as to say that

[empires or federations] do not rest on the conception of a single patch of land, with the society living on it, which, since we have left behind the blood-tie of the primitive tribe, and unless we propose to revert to peculiar, communal religion as the bond of society, is essential to the sense of community. (p. 246)

By having a common territory, the nation is able to establish boundaries in two ways. First, there are the physical limits of the territory (in many cases, these coincide with the political boundaries of the nation-state) and, second, it gives a reference point for the members of a nation to identify themselves and others. This idea can be seen best expressed in the political realm with the notion of jus soli or birthright citizenship. Nation-states that have adopted this model bestow nationality or citizenship to those born within their borders, demonstrating that the territory that a nation occupies is an important part in the identification of those who belong and those who do not.

However, diasporic nationalism may pose a challenge to the conception of territory as integral to the conception of a nation. There are those who believe that a connection to the homeland is as integral in diasporic nationalism as it is for those who reside in their nation (see Chan, 2005; Misra, 2003), whilst others prioritise other
factors such as race or a sub-national identification over an attachment to the territory of the nation (see Lie, 2001; Madan, 2000). Just as some nationalisms may prioritise the role of language or religion whilst others do not, the same can be said for the role of territory.

However, a shared territory alone is not enough to bring a nation together. Another important factor is a shared history or culture. Renan (1990/1996) explains that two things constitute a nation:

One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. [...] The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion. (p. 52)

A unique experience serves to bring the nation together. This can happen with an event in recent memory, or it can stem from a collective history. These are experiences passed down in the nation and they serve to bind it together because nobody else can claim these events as their history in quite the same way.

Perhaps the most important factor in the creation and recognition of a nation, however, is the desire for some degree of sovereignty, be it cultural or political. The desire for sovereignty is usually associated with nationalists and nationalist movements (Hroch, 1996; Smith, 2001), rather than as a constitutive element of a nation. As Eley and Suny (1996) explain,

it is perfectly possible to satisfy nationalist grievance within a variety of state forms or political arrangements, of which federal ones or those making careful allowance for cultural autonomies are the most familiar. Indeed, it was probably the First World War and the triumph of Wilsonian principles in 1917–19 that made full political sovereignty the leading demand of even the smallest national minority, whatever the realism or viability. Until then, the principle of nationality might be articulated just as well through the call for cultural autonomy, with special regard for matters of language, institutions of learning, and religious freedom. (p. 10)

With the need for political sovereignty and the creation of a nation-state for international recognition, sovereignty has become an element of the nation.

Non-secessionist movements, calling for self-determination in specific areas, display this need for sovereignty in the same way as secessionist movements such as
those that can be seen in Canada with the division between the French-speaking and English-speaking populations or in the calls for an autonomous Scotland. Demands for self-determination without secession is what Axtmann (2004) calls nested sovereignty and “demands the right of self-determination over those jurisdictions of direct relevance to the indigenous people while at the same time acknowledging a shared jurisdiction over certain lands and resources on the basis of mutual consent (Tully, 2000)” (p. 265). Without calls for cultural or political autonomy, these communities remain what Smith (1995) calls ethnies.

In Smith’s (2001) view, the difference between a nation and an ethnie does not lie in the demand for sovereignty but, rather, in the presence of economic unity and “common rights and duties for all members” (p. 13). However, these distinctions fail to take into account the complex nature of the contemporary world. With an increasingly interconnected world, economies are now affected by happenings elsewhere, not isolated within a single nation or nation-state. Rights and duties for individuals are also being removed from the local context. In the EU there is now a system of shared sovereignty that underpins the ability to pass rights and duties to individuals in every member nation-state. With such factors being increasingly moved from the local to the inter- or transnational level, the remaining difference between an ethnie and a nation is the desire for (or possession of) sovereignty.

With these being some of the requirements said to constitute a nation, how is the nation to be defined? There are four definitions that are particularly useful to adopt to arrive at a solid working understanding of the nation:

- “A named human community occupying a homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a common public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members” (Smith, 2001, p. 13);
- “An imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 2006, p. 6);
- “Exclusive clubs. They are based on sentiment” (Gellner, 1997, p. 68);
- “A large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future. It presupposes a past; it is summarized, however, in the present by a tangible fact, namely, consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life” (Renan, 1990/1996, p. 53).
Together in the definitions proposed by Smith (2001) and Anderson (2006), all criteria for a nation, as outlined above, are present, so why draw upon Gellner (1997) and Renan (1990/1996) as well?

These two theorists point to something not yet mentioned: the idea of sentiment as a factor in the creation or maintenance of a nation. Anderson (2006) points out “that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love” (p. 141). It is this sentiment that connects members of a nation; the ties to territory and a past are part of the sentimentality that both creates, and is created by, the nation. Therefore, a nation can be seen as a combination of the above factors to create a group of people seen as distinct from others.

**Nationalism**

What is often associated with nations or nation-states, partly as a result of this sentiment or feeling of attachment, is the expression of nationalism. Nationalism can be regarded as an ideology or movement in which the goal is self-determination. As Kedourie (1993) points out: “Briefly, the doctrine [of nationalism] holds that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be ascertained, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government” (p. 1). However, nationalism can also be seen as the attachment to the nation, and its state, by its members. Hroch (1996) explains that nationalism is “that outlook which gives an absolute priority to the values of the nation over all other values and interests” (p. 62). Similarly, Boas (1932) defines nationalism as “the feeling of solidarity and devotion to the interests of the State on the part of its citizens” (p. 81).

While these definitions give an idea as to what nationalism is, there is still the question of how nationalism develops. Why do people choose to associate so strongly with a nation(-state)? According to Boas (1932),

the growth of modern, powerful States is the condition for the development of a strong nationalism. Without a State conceived as an organization that can enforce and develop national aspirations nationality can never become the basis of a driving force. (pp. 94-95)

According to Eley and Suny (1996), “for nationalism to do its work, ordinary people need to see themselves as the bearers of an identity centred elsewhere, imagine themselves as an abstract community” (p. 22). This can be seen in the national myths of the United States where it is the political line that the nation-state is a melting pot,
prizes freedom, justice, and liberty, and believes in the value of hard work. These are traits that Americans are said to have in common and it is this abstract identity, symbolically housed in documents such as the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, which unites Americans together.

Within the nation-state, the nation can be created either before or after the state with nationalism serving as both cause and effect. This can be seen in two examples. The first example is that of nation-states such as the United Kingdom or the United States where, as Hargreaves and Ferrando (1997) explain, the state encouraged nation-building and loyalty based on civic nationalism and citizenship rights. In this case, institutional forces created a nation based on the powers of the state. The second example comes from nation-states such as Moldova where already existing groups asserted their claim to self-determination over existing states. In cases such as this, the role of the state is not what created a nation. Rather, the existing nation, rather than the state, spawned nationalism. Eley and Suny (1996) state that, in this way, “nationalism both contributed to the formation of nationality,” (p. 11) as with nation-states such as the United States, “and evolved itself to become the political expression of mobilized nationalities” (Eley & Suny, 1996, p. 11) as with the break-up of the state of the Soviet Union and the formation of nation-states such as Moldova.

The role of nationalism and the effects it can have are as varied as theories about its meaning. Chatterjee (1993) writes, nationalism is now viewed as a dark, elemental, unpredictable force of primordial nature threatening the orderly calm of civilized life. [...] Like drugs, terrorism, and illegal immigration, it is one more product of the Third World that the West dislikes but is powerless to stop. (p. 4)

Eley and Suny (1996), however, are less convinced about the negative nature of nationalism. They hypothesise that, in one way, “nationalism and belonging to a nation may be the kind of ‘cultural recovery’ that could potentially lead—not to a politics of the blood—but to acceptance, even celebration, of difference” (Eley & Suny, 1996, p. 32). This optimistic view of nationalism is often pushed aside in the face of world events.

Nationalism is regularly identified as a cause of many international conflicts. When learning about the causes of the First World War in high school, for example, students are told to remember the acronym MAIN for the four major causes: militarism, alliances, imperialism, and nationalism. Nationalism is also considered a
dominant cause of World War II. With nationalism being seen as a factor in these
conflicts with such historical consequences, it is unsurprising that a negative
perception is often prominent. Gellner (1997) holds that “nationalism is not just a
phenomenon, it is also a problem […] one must still be perturbed by the havoc,
suffering, cruelty and injustice often brought by nationalism” (p. 102). Smith (1995),
however, points out that “the divisiveness and destabilization of so many nationalisms
is simply the other side of the coin of their popular, unifying and solidaristic
dimensions” (p. 153). There is no “good” or “bad” nationalism. The theory and
sentiment behind its use remains, to some degree, the same. The difference lies in the
uses to which it is put in any given society.

Banal nationalism.
Billig (1995) argues that nationalism is a concept often associated with the
peripheries; it is a movement outside of the established nation-states (typically the
more Western, democratic nation-states). It is this outlier status that gives the concept
of nationalism its negative connotations. Gellner (1997) alludes to these types of
ethnocentric or aggressive nationalisms when he states that nationalism is a problem
and it is the same as the negative aspects that Smith (1995) believes can be present.
However, the negative connotations are associated with only some types of
nationalism. Billig (1995) argues:

By being semantically restricted to small sizes and exotic colours,
‘nationalism’ becomes identified as a problem: it occurs ‘there’ on the
periphery, not ‘here’ at the centre. The separatists, the fascists and the
guerrillas are the problem of nationalism. The ideological habits, by which
‘our’ nations are reproduced as nations, are unnamed and, thereby, unnoticed.
[…] Having no name, it cannot be identified as a problem. Nor, by
implication, is the daily reproduction of the United States [or the United
Kingdom, Italy, and so on] a problem. (p. 6)

“Our” nationalism is the unproblematic, more neutral forms of nationalism that Eley
stresses, are not controversial and are mostly overlooked.

The daily habits that reproduce the nation are what Billig (1995) calls banal
nationalism. Banal nationalism can be seen in the routine activities that typically go
unnoticed: the flag hanging in a town square, the daily recitation of the pledge of
allegiance in the United States, and so on (Billig, 1995). These types of actions can be
classed as banal because they have lost much of their symbolic power and have become something of habit, rather than a deliberate attempt to make a particular statement on a particular day. Additionally, seemingly simple acts such as using words such as “we,” “us,” and “our” signal the presence of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) as these words are part of a daily contextualizing of the world and reinforce the ties between individuals and the nation(-state) s/he inhabits. Edensor (2002) reiterates the power of habit and routine by referencing institutional actions explaining, “the persistence of such common patterns over time underpins a common sense that this is how things are and this is how we do things” (p. 19).

While the symbols still hold power, that power is more limited. The impacts of these actions, items, and words have been relegated to specific instances. For example, the United States’ flag is not without symbolic power. It can still signal different ideas to different people: hope, freedom, power, money, or any number of other ideas. However, this power is not on display each time the flag is seen.

It is this type of nationalism, the non-fervent, non-extremist nationalism that occurs most often. This is also the type of nationalism that, as Billig (1995) notes, goes unnoticed. Nationalism is seen as a negative concept and, therefore, many are unwilling to label themselves as nationalists. What is done instead, is the use of another term with more positive associations, even if the sentiments are much the same. Billig (1995) explains, “‘our’ nationalism is not presented as nationalism, which is dangerously irrational, surplus and alien. A new identity, a different label, is found for it. ‘Our’ nationalism appears as ‘patriotism’ – a beneficial, necessary and, often, American force” (p. 55).

However, banal nationalism is, as with most labels, not without contest. Jones and Merriman (2009) argue that banal nationalism attempts to separate the mundane forms of nationalism from the hot or controversial forms when no distinction should be made. While they do not disagree with the general concept of banal nationalism, they propose that it is more appropriate to study everyday nationalism as even “banal signifiers of official nationalisms can be viewed by members of minority groups of nations as symbols of oppression to be resisted and subverted” (Jones & Merriman, 2009, p. 166). Edensor (2002) echoes this claim arguing that a shared feeling does not necessarily imply agreement and that objects or symbols may be shared despite differences in use and interpretation. Jones and Merriman (2009) further explain:
Different symbols of the nation are interpreted in different ways by different people: some in banal and unconscious ways; others in a more conscious and overt manner. It is impossible to make *a priori* judgements concerning the impact of everyday discourses of nationalism. (p. 167)

This point underscores the difficulty in interpreting the actions of others.

**National identity.**

A concept closely related to nationalism is *national identity*. Specific examples of the use of national identity will be explored later in relation to sport; for now, it is important to look at what national identity is. Hargreaves (1992) defines national identity as “an expression of difference from others based on perceived membership of a community within a given territory, or of a community with historic claims to a given territory” (p. 123). National identity as a tool for differentiation between people is a common theme (see Bell, 2003; Triandafyllidou, 1998) and relates to ideas of nationalism being centred on common memories and attachments (see Eley & Suny, 1996). Often, nationalism and national identity are spoken about in conjunction with one another and national identity is regularly considered a by-product of nationalism. Opp (2005) mentions that, “in regard to ‘nationalism,’ this term is certainly not identical with ‘national identification.’ However, identification with a nation is a feature of nationalism” (p. 657). What is important when considering national identity is to see how it relates to nationalism more generally and can be employed by both the state and by the members of a nation.

Bell (2003) writes,

> questions of personal and collective identity are fundamental in any attempt to grasp the dynamics of nationalism. To recognize oneself as a member of a particular nation – indeed to feel a powerful sense of belonging – and to be recognized by others as such, is a prerequisite for the formation of the inside/outside, self/other, us/them boundaries that define the topography of nationalist sentiment and rhetoric. (p. 64)

The need and desire to define oneself based on the exclusion of others is a feature of nations, nationalism, and certainly national identity. Triandafyllidou (1998) expands on this point by explaining that “this means that national identity has no meaning *per se*. It becomes meaningful in contrast to other nations” (p. 599). The national identity each of us holds cannot be fully understood unless it is positioned against another
identity. Triandafyllidou (1998) further illuminates this concept saying national identity makes sense only to the extent that it is contrasted with the feelings that members of the nation have towards foreigners. Fellow nationals are not simply very close or close enough to one another, they are closer to one another than they are to outsiders. (pp. 598-599)

However, an alternate approach to national identity could be considered. Whilst many theorists, including those cited above, portray national identity as something that is inside each and every individual and is consciously known, Billig (1995) explores national identity as something quite distinct from the individual. He states: “the problems start when one expects to find the ‘identity’ within the body or the mind of the individual. This is to look in the wrong place for the operation of identity” (Billig, 1995, p. 7). He further explains how “consequently, an identity is to be found in the embodied habits of social life” (Billig, 1995, p. 8). For Billig (1995), one’s national identity is not located within the individual but in the daily life of living in a nation that continually reproduces ideas of the nation and what it is to be a part of it.

The apparently latent identity is maintained within the daily life of inhabited nations. [...] national identity is more than an inner psychological state or an individual self-definition: it is a form of life, which is daily lived in the world of nation-states. (Billig, 1995, p. 69)

Just as the nation is daily reproduced by banal signifiers of nationalism, so too is the identity of those who inhabit the nation.

Although the approach to national identity taken by Billig (1995) is different from the others explored, the basic concept of national identity as a sense of who “we” are and that “they” are not part of “us” can still be seen. Yet, it should be noted that there is more to national identity than simply an “us versus them” dichotomy. National identity is a tool that is used as a part of nationalism to create and express bonds.

First of all, it needs to be understood that, as Biswas (2002) notes, “all national identities are constructed” (p. 179). National identities are built around ideas about the nation and members of the nation. The formation of a national identity relies on memories, history, myths, and territory to create a sense of who “we” are and what “we” can be (Bairner, 2001; Bell, 2003; Edensor, 2002). However, as with
nationalism more generally, there is the potential for conflict in the construction of a national identity. Just as there may be more than one nation in a nation-state and, therefore, more than one nationalism, there may also be multiple national identities (Hargreaves, 1992). All members of a nation may not agree upon a single national identity; there may be different conceptions of the nation leading to multiple national identities being expressed.

**Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, a number of key concepts, and the debates surrounding them, have been explored. The nation, nation-state, nationalism, and national identity are all integral parts of this work and it is necessary to understand how these terms are to be used. However, as demonstrated above, there is considerable debate surrounding the precise nature of each of these concepts.

Although the nation-state is widely considered the dominant political form in the modern world (especially since World War II) (Berger, 2001; Duara, 1996; Smith, 2001), and the state is recognised as the institutions that govern individuals (McCrone, 1998; Smith, 2001), the concept of the nation is more contested. Despite being widely recognised as a way to create a distinction between “us” and “them” (Anderson, 2006; Duara, 1996; Eley & Suny, 1996; Gellner, 1997), the characteristics that create this boundary are not universally agreed upon. Some theorists note how language can be used (Cobban, 1969; Gellner, 1997; Hroch, 1996) whilst others look to history and culture (Renan, 1990/1996). Still others emphasise the role of territory (Cobban, 1969; Smith, 2001) or the desire for some degree of sovereignty (Eley & Suny, 1996; Hroch, 1996; Smith, 2001). Despite these differences, it can be seen how a nation creates a boundary within which people can identify each other as a part of the same group in opposition to those outside.

This leads to the connected ideas of nationalism and national identity where one’s belonging to a nation can impact upon one’s feelings or sense of self. Just as there is no agreement on what factors definitively create a nation, nationalism is a much-debated subject as well. It can refer to a theory, which believes that nations are natural divisions and that they desire the right of self-determination (Kedourie, 1993) or it can refer to feelings of attachment to the nation through solidarity or a prioritising of the nation over other values (Boas, 1932; Hroch, 1996). Yet, with the concept of nationalism being used as a rallying cry for extreme behaviour throughout history, and as a primary cause of World War I, it should not be surprising that
nationalism can be seen as a negative ideology (Chatterjee, 1993; Gellner, 1997). However, not all believe that nationalism is inherently negative; it can be used in a positive way (Billig, 1995; Edensor, 2002; Eley & Suny, 1996; Smith, 2001).

One concept closely linked to nationalism is that of national identity. A national identity is used as an expression of difference from others with a basis in the membership of a particular nation (Bell, 2003; Hargreaves, 1992; Triandafyllidou, 1998). This identity draws on aspects of the nation—myths, history, and territory for example—in order to create shared bonds between members and to allow individuals to see themselves as part of the group (Bairner, 2001; Bell, 2003; Edensor, 2002).

Through the exploration of each of these terms, it can be seen how they interact with one another. In the following chapters, these concepts will be further explored using examples from the world of sport. However, in the next chapter, the conversation moves to a discussion of globalisation through economic, political, and cultural lenses.
Chapter 2 – Globalisation

Introduction

Just as it is necessary to understand the debates and theories relating to nations, states, nation-states, and nationalism before exploring their relation to London 2012, it is also necessary to explore globalisation in similar detail. Globalisation is a term used more and more frequently with little agreement on its meaning or existence. For this reason, it is important to note how globalisation is understood in this work before exploring specific examples.

In this chapter, globalisation will be covered through an examination of three ideal types: economic, political, and cultural globalisation. This will allow for an understanding of the different spheres where globalisation is regularly debated and which can be applied to sport, and the Olympic Games, in particular.

Internationalisation, Transnationalisation, and Regionalisation

As discussed in the previous chapter, the political standard in the contemporary world is the nation-state. However, this does not mean that changes have not begun to appear. According to Reis (2004),

> it is not that nationalism or statism, or both, are about to vanish. What is changing is the monopolist position of the nation-state as the organizer of identity and solidarity, on the one hand, and as the sole champion of sovereignty, on the other. (p. 253)

Along with the power of individual states, there are new forces emerging, both sharing those powers, and co-opting them.

These new forces come by way of MNCs, non-governmental organisations, political institutions, economic forces, technological innovations, media presence, and leisure pursuits such as sports. Through these, and other, avenues there have been increases in internationalisation, transnationalisation, regionalisation, and globalisation. Each of these processes can be seen emerging in particular ways and interacting in the modern world.

Internationalisation is based in the nation-state system. It can be defined as “growing links between essentially discrete national economies or societies” (Held & McGrew, 2000, p. 4). One prominent example of this is the UN. Transnationalisation is often used in similar contexts. However, Mann (1997) notes that transnational networks pass “through national boundaries, being unaffected by them” (p. 475). Following from this, regionalisation uses this framework of working across borders
in a more limited fashion. Whereas internationalisation operates without regard to location, regionalisation involves groupings of nation-states, often on the basis of geography. “Regionalization can be denoted by a clustering of transactions, flows, networks and interactions between functional or geographical groupings of states or societies” (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 2000, p. 55). Regionalisation is increasingly present in the world as evidenced by such organisations as the EU or groupings such as the North American Free Trade Agreement. In each of these cases, a geographical entity has formed to enhance aspects of the participating nation-states.

To speak of globalisation moves the discussion from interactions between individual, or groups of, nation-states to a larger scale. As the name implies, globalisation is characterised by a larger reach and an increase in the forces impacting upon the world. Robertson and Khondker (1998) state, “in its most basic sense globalization involves the compression of the entire world, on the one hand, and a rapid increase in consciousness of the whole world, on the other” (p. 29). Putting aside, for the moment, the extensive debate over whether or not globalisation is fact rather than myth, there is no consensus as to what it is. Is it tied to economics, politics, culture, or something else entirely? If it exists, what does it look like?

**Globalisation**

**Economic globalisation.**

When speaking of globalisation, it is common to refer to economic concerns. The rise of MNCs and the interdependence of the world’s financial markets are topics that can be discussed in relation to globalisation. The economic focus of some theorists can be seen in the following definition of globalisation: “Globalization in its radical sense should be taken to mean the development of a new economic structure, and not just conjunctural change towards greater international trade and investment within an existing set of economic relations” (Hirst & Thompson, 2000, p. 69). This definition points towards two aspects of globalisation that are prominent in the literature: the centrality of economic activity and a growing interdependence among nation-states. Whilst these elements are not universally agreed upon, they hold a position of importance in the debate over globalisation.

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2 It is important to note that this is an ideal type (as with forms such as political or cultural globalisation) and that it is virtually impossible to separate these concepts in reality. Many theorists will discuss globalisation in broad terms, addressing economics, politics, and culture together, even if the focus is on one aspect (see Guillén, 2001; Held, 2000; Holton, 1998).
The actuality, or possibility, of each of these conditions is frequently present in both sceptic and globalist literature. Sceptics tend to see globalisation as ideological or mythical and, therefore, treat it as a marginal concept whilst arguing that it is not, in fact, global in a geographical sense and, therefore, it is too ambiguous a term (Held & McGrew, 2000). Globalists, in contrast, see globalisation as a currently developing reality (Held & McGrew, 2000). They point to new technologies, the continuing emergence of inter- and transnational forces, and the capital and communication flows across borders, among other factors, as evidence that this transformation is taking place (Held & McGrew, 2000). It should be noted, however, that whilst sceptics typically look upon globalisation as primarily an economic concern, globalists view it as impacting upon other aspects of life including culture (Held & McGrew, 2000).

One major point of contention between sceptic and globalist schools of thought is over the presence, role, and stability of the nation-state. The continuing sovereignty of the nation-state in the world—be this political, military, or economic—is used by sceptics as clear evidence against globalisation, although globalists continue to dispute these claims. Indeed, globalists argue that transnational processes have fragmented the traditional nation-state (Held & McGrew, 2000). It is this fragmentation, they claim, that points to globalisation.

Globalisation is often portrayed as an either/or situation in competition with the nation-state and all that is associated with it (such as nationalism). Robinson (1998) offers a different perspective stating, “what is problematized is how globalization modifies the dynamics of the nation-state system (in IR [international relations]), or the international state system (in world-system theory), rather than how globalization transforms and transcends the nation state system itself” (p. 570). From this perspective, globalisation should be examined for how it interacts with the nation-state system and how the two are able to coexist.

Keohane (2000) writes, “sovereignty is often associated with realist thinking; and globalist writers sometimes argue that its usefulness and clarity have been diminished in the modern world” (p. 148). The basis for these claims stem mostly from an economic perspective, which relies on the increasingly interdependent nature of the world economy. Robinson (1998) writes, “a full capitalist global society would mean the integration of all national markets into a single international market and division of labor and the disappearances of all national affiliations of capital. These
economic tendencies are already well underway” (p. 581). Much of the reasoning behind this line of thought is limited to the presence, and success, of MNCs. Perraton, Goldblatt, Held, and McGrew (2000) explain,

for the hyper-globalization school MNCs are global companies able to shift production around the globe easily in response to differences in conditions. Governments are forced into a ‘beauty contest’ of offering increasing incentives for MNCs to locate in their country. (p. 296)

This so-called “reliance” on MNCs by nation-states is seen as weakening the nation-state in the same way that dependence on a regional body can be seen to weaken it. Held and McGrew (2000) advance the view that “state legitimacy is at issue because with greater regional and global interdependence, states cannot deliver fundamental goods and services to their citizens without international cooperation, and even the latter can be quite inadequate in the face of global problems” (p. 13). However, this is yet another claim to add to the debate over whether or not the existence of interdependence and economic globalisation is incompatible with the continuing existence and sovereignty of the nation-state.

Of course, sceptics offer their own interpretation of the role of MNCs. Holton (1998) puts forward a sceptical position, writing that MNCs typically still must rely on state infrastructures, and possibly favourable treatment financially, in order to operate successfully. Holton (1998) posits that this lends credence to theories that the nation-state is surviving. The point being made by sceptics is that these operations are inherently tied to nation-states in concrete ways. Not only must they physically locate in one or more nation-states, but in doing so, they must also submit themselves to the rules and regulations of that nation-state (as well as any regional bodies). As there is currently no global hegemon setting global standards for MNCs, each regional body and/or nation-state still has regulatory power within its borders.

**Political globalisation.**

As with economic concerns, political issues are often a focal point when discussing globalisation. The prevalence of groups such as the UN or the EU provides ample opportunities to explore globalisation in a political context. When concerned with political issues, one approach to globalisation is as follows: “[globalisation] denotes the processes through which sovereign national states are criss-crossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities, and networks” (Beck, 2000, p. 101). This definition emphasises the
diminishing role of the nation-state, as well as the increased interactions between nation-states and non-state actors, two concepts that can be regularly found in globalisation literature.

However, unlike economic globalisation, the case for political globalisation is more one-sided with sceptics able to provide more examples for the continuing power of the nation-state at the expense of globalisation. This may be a product of nation-states being unwilling to give up political sovereignty in the face of increasing globalisation in a number of spheres.

The UN is an appropriate place to begin to explore the political globalisation (or not) of the contemporary world, as it is an international organisation with a worldwide reach. In its basic structure, the UN is a collection of nation-states and is a venue for representatives of the nation-states of the world to come together. While admission to the UN comes with the agreement to follow certain rules (United Nations, 2013a), there is no overarching state. If a member chooses to go against the decision of the UN, it retains the sovereignty to do so. Thus, Holton (1998) argues, UN Conventions on human rights or on the rights of particular groups such as women, children, or refugees do not represent transnational legal initiatives that are binding on all nations but rather initiatives that emerge from a majority of member nations, which can only ultimately be implemented by judicially sovereign nations if they so wish. Influence and pressure may be placed on members who refuse or whose support is not translated into action, but this is as far as it goes. (pp. 115-116)

Nation-states have submitted themselves to an international body but that organisation, by design, is still firmly entrenched in the nation-state system, which means member states retain their sovereignty.

It should be noted that not all nation-states are part of the UN (although the overwhelming majority are) and there is no guarantee that a non-member nation-state will be granted entry (United Nations, 2013a). This fact can be used as evidence to support sceptic claims about globalisation, along with the continuing importance of the nation-state in this system. However, as the UN has continued to grow since it’s inception as well as to take on issues that increasingly have effects across the globe, there is still an argument for the UN as a force indicative of political globalisation.

Sceptics, however, are also able to point to the structure of the UN to support their claims. The two most recognisable of the six main bodies of the UN are the
General Assembly and the Security Council. In the Security Council, the inequality between Western and developing nation-states can be seen clearly with the United States, United Kingdom, Russia, France, and China occupying permanent seats (with veto power) alongside ten temporary members (elected for two-year terms) (United Nations, 2013b). From this perspective, it is possible to see not only the strong influence of Western or developed nation-states, but also the triad that has been established—the Americas, Europe (Western mainly), and Asia-Pacific—with their major players accorded special treatment within the UN.

Sceptics can even point to the strength of the UN in keeping the nation-state as a viable form of political organisation as validation of their claims. Giddens (2000) states, “concerted action between countries in some respects diminishes the individual sovereignty of the nations involved, yet by combining their power in other ways, it increases their influence within the state system” (p. 96). The UN has this effect on its members. While some nation-states, such as those mentioned previously, may gain more from membership, each nation-state can derive some benefit. Even if it is nothing more than representation in the General Assembly, every nation-state in the UN has a say on issues that come before it whereas, without the UN, many of the smaller, or politically weaker, nation-states would not even have that opportunity before being dominated by the wills of the more powerful.

However, globalists are still able to argue that the UN does support the existence of political globalisation. As Held (2000) asserts, “the UN remains a creature of the interstate system; however, it has, despite all its limitations, developed an innovative system of global governance which delivers significant international public goods” (p. 426). Yet there remain critics who claim that the UN does not do enough; it is not sufficiently powerful in the world because nation-states have retained so much of their power. That said, “the problem with using a ‘world government’ yardstick to judge UN performance, whether in conflict mediation or any other area, is that it treats the achievement of a global polity as mutually incompatible with the continuing autonomy of nation-states” (Holton, 1998, p. 120). Lastly, what the UN has managed to accomplish should not be ignored.

The UN, for all its weaknesses, functions as a single global forum for the exchange of views and as a body that attempts to broker and implement solutions to problems as defined by member states and a wider set of NGOs [non-governmental organisations]. The existence of such a worldwide forum
for discussion and interstate negotiation and problem-solving through the implementation of agreed policy measures, incorporating virtually all the nations of the world, on a limitless agenda of issues, is historically unprecedented. Such a forum may lack the power to coerce national governments into compliance, but it does possess influence and expertise in both political conflict resolution and wider socioeconomic matters. (Holton, 1998, p. 119)

The argument that Holton (1998) makes clear in this case is that the structure of the UN and its role in international politics does not detract from its role in globalising processes. The UN has managed to effectively tackle problems with a worldwide effect through international cooperation and discussion.

The UN is not, however, the only international political body that has a significant impact on nation-states and their sovereignty. On a regional scale, examples such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization can be cited. This is a political and military alliance that allows for the integration of military forces from member nation-states aimed at reducing conflict and protecting members (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, n.d.).

However, on a scale more comparable to the UN, the EU also holds a place of significant influence over its members. As previously mentioned, a triad has emerged in the world with three regions—the Americas, Europe, and Asia-Pacific—having a dominant role in world politics and economics. The EU can be seen as the political embodiment of this regionalisation of the world by formalising the European region. Members of the EU are European nation-states that are tied together judicially, politically, and, especially with the adoption of the Euro by most members, financially. However, just as with the UN, the EU can be used to support the claims of both the sceptics and the globalists.

Sceptics agree that there is regionalisation and an increase in cross-border activity, but these developments are seen to be at the expense of the development of global processes. According to Held and McGrew (2000), far from an integrated global economy, what the sceptical analysis highlights is the increasing organization of world economic activity within three core blocs, each with its own centre and periphery; namely, Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Americas. This triadization of the world economy is associated with a growing tendency towards economic and financial interdependence within
each of these three zones at the expense of integration between them (Lloyd 1992; Hirst and Thompson 1999). (p. 20)

It is clear that there is a distinction being drawn between internationalisation and globalisation.

On the other hand, while regionalisation may be dividing the world in new ways, it can be said to be acting in a way that moves world society towards the formation of global processes. Globalists argue against the continued reign of the state, claiming that states have been fragmented by international organisations, as well as by other factors, and that this penetration has led to fundamental changes in the form of the nation-state as well as its operation (Held & McGrew, 2000). For example, “the exclusive link between territory and power has been broken” (Held & McGrew, 2000, p. 11). Held and McGrew (2000) note, “new international and transnational institutions have both linked sovereign states together and transformed sovereignty into the shared exercise of power” (p. 11). Regionalisation, especially on the scale of the EU, has done just that, eroding some of the powers of the sovereign state in favour of a regional body.

**Cultural globalisation.**

Another facet of globalisation to consider is that of cultural globalisation. As with economic and political globalisation, this is an ideal type that cannot, in reality, be separated from larger processes of globalisation. However, looking at such instances as the flow of consumer goods and other cultural exports can increase one’s understanding of globalisation more generally.

Held and McGrew (2000) note that, historically, the rise in communications and transportation technologies contributed greatly to the global diffusion of western, secular philosophies such as socialism, science, and liberalism. They continue to explain that although the spread of contemporary popular culture does not yet match the impact of these, there is an unrivalled “scale, intensity, speed and volume of global cultural communications today” (Held & McGrew, 2000, p. 17). This can be seen through the dissemination of media such as films, books, and television. Herman and McChesney (2000) detail the oligopoly that exists in these industries with the United States being one of the leading players.

The reality of this claim of the influence of the United States often leads to discussions of concepts such as *Americanization, McDonaldization,* or *Coca-

the Americanization thesis builds on a number of key elements. One is the theme of predominant American ownership of key resources for the manufacture and transmission of culture, [...] Cultural homogenization, in this sense, is linked with the predominant role of the USA in the export of television, film, and news information. (p. 166)

This explanation of Americanization points to how cultural globalisation is able to take place. Although this focuses on the role of the United States (and its ability to do more than other nation-states in some or all of these areas) these processes are not exclusive to the United States. The ability to levy technology and advertising to disseminate cultural products, or the ability to manufacture cultural products is becoming increasingly easy to do (although this is not to underestimate the powers of influence and money). The rise of social media technology such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter allow for the dissemination of media in a relatively inexpensive way for those who can access the technology (an increasing population, although certainly not everybody). However, this is one of the key points that must be stressed about globalisation: its spread and effects are not equal.

Yet, until this point the discussion has implied that cultural globalisation means that a culture is transported to a new location and replaces what it encounters until all people are united by a single culture. This is not the case. As Smith (2000) explains, “images and cultural traditions do not derive from, or descend upon, mute and passive populations on whose tabula rasa they inscribe themselves” (p. 241). Giulianotti and Robertson (2007) use the term **glocalization** to refer to the interaction and connections between the global and the local. Rather than a unidirectional process, they argue it is more useful to think of how globalisation impacts upon the local and vice versa (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007). However, this is not to say that there are no homogenizing trends in globalisation (or glocalization), but rather that these should not be seen as the only trends to emerge (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007).

With all of these considerations of the impacts and ideal types of globalisation, it is useful now to turn to the role of the nation-state in the face of such forces.
The role of the nation-state.

One concern when discussing globalisation is the role of the nation-state. As international organisations continue to gain strength, and (some) individuals become more aware of their place in the world as a whole, questions arise as to the viability of the nation-state and its hold on individuals. In the previous sections, the viability of the nation-state was addressed in relation to economic, political, and cultural forms of globalisation, but what of its impact upon citizens? Does the nation-state still play a part in the lives of globalised individuals?

In the previous chapter, the necessary components for nation-building were outlined, including such aspects as a common history and attachment to a territory. These types of attributes are what theorists such as Smith (2000) are examining in relation to the construction of a global community. There is no attachment to the territory of the world as a whole as each nation(-state) has created attachments to particular areas. Neither are national customs or cultures the same; Smith (2000) is quick to remind us, “there are no ‘world memories’ that can be used to unite humanity; the most global experiences to date – colonialism and the World Wars – can only serve to remind us of our historic cleavages” (pp. 241-242). Here, again, it is posed that our differences are barriers to a global community. It is an historic attachment to our particular nations that is seen as overwhelming as there are no nation-building properties that are applicable on a global scale. Roudometof (2005) would argue against this perspective, however, asserting that cosmopolitanism, or an awareness of one’s place in the larger world, should not portend the fall of national identity. Roudometof (2005) further argues that the rejection of nationalism should not be equated with the rejection or negation of national identity.

Brown (2000) takes Roudometof’s (2005) argument further stating:

Some writers of a cosmopolitan disposition seem to assume that an emerging world community would require of its members an implausibly high level of loyalty, overriding all other obligations.

[...]

In practice, and quite sensibly, we recognize degrees of obligation towards family, friends, acquaintances, fellow citizens, and so on, and as long as this recognition does not lead us to disregard the interests of those in the outer circles of our concern there is no reason to see this as immoral. Priority to fellow nationals becomes contrary to the requirements of world community
only if it is pushed beyond the bounds of the quite defensible view that those nearest to us have the first, but not an exclusive, call on our sympathies. (p. 455)

What Brown (2000) points out here is not entirely far-fetched; it is something that we already do in our daily lives. Our identity is multi-faceted, divided between friends, family, city, and nation-state, as well as many others. The addition of a global identity need not be incompatible with these other loyalties.

**Conclusion**

In a discussion of the term globalisation, it is important to keep in mind that there is no agreement on its definition or even its existence (Held & McGrew, 2000). What can be done is to consider the evidence that can be found and to make reasoned assessments of the validity of the claims of globalisation. However, this work does not aim to prove or disprove either the sceptic or globalist theories directly. Rather, what has been presented is a reasoned consideration of the debate through the use of the ideal types of economic, political, and cultural globalisation.

With the rise of MNCs, the UN, and the EU, it is possible to see evidence on both sides of the globalisation debate both economically and politically. Through the rise of MNCs (Holton, 1998) and the global issues the UN addresses, such as human rights and the environment (Held, 2000), globalists can find support for their claims. However, through the need for MNCs to follow the laws and regulations put forth by the nation-states in which they operate (Perraton et al., 2000) and the sovereignty retained by nation-states within the UN (Holton, 1998), sceptics are able to challenge these claims.

Additionally, the spread of cultural sources such as television and films around the world (Herman & McChesney, 2000) adds another dynamic to the debate over globalisation through raising the question: is this globalisation or Americanization? Although evidence can be provided in support of Americanization (Holton, 1998) there is a third option promoted by Giulianotti and Robertson (2007): that of glocalization, which focuses on the interaction of the local and the global rather than a single hegemonic force taking control.

The nuances surrounding each of these concepts extend beyond what has been discussed here and are worthy of further consideration as a subject in their own right. However, this overview has highlighted some of the main ideas and debates surrounding globalisation in order to gain an understanding of how it can be
employed in exploring certain situations or institutions. The extensive debates over the actuality of globalisation will likely continue, but what is clear is that there is evidence to support both sides.

In the next chapter, the concepts of nationalism, globalisation, and universal values will be explored in a sporting context. The ways in which sports and its participants and spectators interact with these concepts is considered as this work moves to contextualise the research of the Olympic Games.
Nationalism and globalisation are much-discussed concepts across many disciplines at present. One area where this is increasingly the case is in the study of sport. With the prominence of spectacles such as the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) World Cup and the Olympic Games, in addition to the existence of world championships in most sports, and the migration of professional athletes at both the professional and international levels, this is unsurprising. In each of these instances, different aspects of nationalism and globalisation are displayed. Furthermore, as issues of non-discrimination and gender equality, among others, become more prominent in sporting discussions, one should not ignore the larger roles that universal values have begun to play in sport.

By looking at nationalism, universal values, and globalisation in the world of sport more generally, it provides a link between the political, historic, and economic focus of these concepts in the previous chapters, and the focus on the Olympic Games in the remainder of this work. As the Olympics operate within the wider context of sporting culture, this link is particularly useful. This chapter investigates the extent to which sport can be used as a space for the construction or maintenance of an identity, for expressions of nationalism or universal values by citizens or institutions, and for the development of globalisation.

**Institutional nationalism**

In a “Sport, Society and Science” class lecture, John MacAloon (2004) said “‘sports create the strange moment where the fate of a nation rides on the legs of one young woman, which is an absurd statement, but somehow manages to be true’” (as cited in Swyers, 2004, p. 2). What is interesting about this statement is the position of the nation. MacAloon (2004) did not state that the hopes and dreams of a team or individual’s fan base rests on the performance, but rather the “fate of the nation” (as cited in Swyers, 2004, p. 2). This is a powerful assertion. With beliefs such as this, it is worthwhile to explore the myriad ways in which the nation, or the nation-state, is embedded in sport.

Institutional nationalism can be seen when an institution—such as the military, a sporting organisation, or a school—uses its sites and resources to promote and display signs of nationalism. This could take the form of a school in the United States
declaring a week with an “American” theme where lessons are taught through this lens and the school is decorated with flags and red, white, and blue banners. Alternatively, it could be something much more subtle such as the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance each day in American classrooms.

As sports are regularly used as an escape from “real life,” the ways in which hockey reflects Canadian culture more generally, or how baseball reflects American culture, are not typical conversations when watching a game. What is discussed, or at the very least noticed, is the explicit association of sport and nationalistic propaganda. These types of expressions are common at sporting events around the world. One place that they can be seen is in the team uniforms through crests and colours. For example, the English football team’s badge has the Three Lions as homage to Richard the Lionheart, former King of England, and in France (as in many, though not all, nations(-states)) the primary colours on the uniform are the colours of the flag. The flying of the national flag at the stadium and the playing of the national anthem before the game are other common examples of institutional nationalism. To explore this concept further, the United States provides abundant examples of the ways in which institutional nationalism has penetrated sports.

One excellent example of institutionalised nationalism could be seen during the National Football League’s Super Bowl XXXVI. This game was played on 3 February 2002. Taking place four and a half months after the attacks of September 11th, this game was infused with nationalist sentiment. Even before the game began, examples of institutionalised nationalism were present. For example, the logo for the event was changed to the outline of the continental United States with an American flag colour scheme after September 11th to reflect a more patriotic mood in the United States (Branch, 2009). By using this shape and colour pattern, the logo was used to unite the overwhelmingly American audience watching or taking part in the event as Americans. Furthermore, broadcaster Fox Sports produced videos to be used before kick-off that made explicit the connections being drawn between September 11th, the United States, American football, and the Super Bowl. These videos included images of military personnel, the United States’ flag, police, and fire fighters, as well as members of the competing teams reciting lines from famous speeches in American history (Sportbuff99TV1, 2013a, 2013b). Furthermore, once the game began, the nationalist images did not subside in favour of focusing on the action on the field.
Typically, a Super Bowl half time show is a short musical concert to entertain spectators. However, in 2002, a different attitude emerged alongside the cheering, jumping spectators on the field and in the stands. At one point, Irish rock group U2 performed their song “Where the Streets Have No Name” while the names of the victims of the September 11th attacks were scrolled on an enormous screen behind them (tewing170, 2009). At the end of the song, to the delight of the audience, lead singer Bono held open his jacket to reveal that the lining was an American flag (tewing170, 2009). Through all of this, sport was being used as a vehicle to reaffirm the American audience’s support of the nation and stir support for any actions that would be decided upon to respond to the tragedy of September 11th.

Specific events such as this are not the only ways in which sport is used to promote national sentiment however. Many examples happen on a regular basis and can be easily overlooked; yet they are no less poignant. For instance, on the Fourth of July, Major League Baseball teams have worn specific hats where the team logo was coloured like the American flag. It is also customary for the President of the United States to throw out the ceremonial first pitch on Opening Day. Whilst these may not seem to be major occurrences, associating the game with the anniversary of the nation-state’s independence and bringing in political leaders to participate in sporting ritual are just as significant as the overt displays of Super Bowl XXXVI. Of course, this makes a great deal of sense when one thinks of baseball not simply as a sport but also as “the American Pastime.”

Perhaps the most ever-present example of institutionalised nationalism in American sport, however, are team names. Although most do not fall into this category, there are many examples from the past and present for example, the New England Patriots, Washington Nationals, and Philadelphia Independence. In each case, a particular part of United States history or American ideology is being evoked and used by the organisation.

Institutionalised nationalism, however, is not limited to the United States. As mentioned previously, many nations(-states) use national colours in order to brand their sports teams as an arm of the nation(-state). The use of a militaristic approach is also not uncommon. Drawing on the ideas of Paul Gilroy (2001), King (2008) makes note of the English chant, “the curious boast”—“two world wars and one world cup, doo dah, doo dah” (pp. 528-529)—noting how in this way sport, and specifically football, has a value comparable to that of war in national ideology by going so far as
to imply that sport and war are synonymous. These sentiments are not unfamiliar to sports fans when the language used to describe contests is deconstructed. Players prepare for battle, they march onto the field, and they are commonly referred to as soldiers or warriors.

In an Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) promotional clip for the 2010 FIFA World Cup game between the United States and England, this idea of sport as war was used to increase the viewer’s attachment to the American team and to convince him/her of the importance of the game. The narrative of the advertisement was intended to stir up emotions and bring the (assumed) American audience back to the American Revolution:

These are the times that try men’s souls, but he that stands by it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny is not easily conquered, yet we have this consolation with us: that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. (ESPN, 2010b)

When coupled with the images presented, it is difficult to miss the militaristic overtones. The Gadsden flag is clearly displayed at the outset and throughout the video are images of a military band drum corps. The United States’ flag is also prominent along with individuals in red, white, and blue, and a person dressed as Uncle Sam. Perhaps most tellingly, when the voiceover speaks of tyranny, the image shown is of a crowd of English fans cheering in support of their team (ESPN, 2010b). All of this combines to create a deliberate, institutionalised, militaristic presentation of nationalism using sport as the vehicle to excite the maximum audience.

Of course, the militarisation of sport need not be relegated to promotional material and language choice. Some aspects may be of a more day-to-day presence. The use of a military colour guard to present the national flag is a common example but sponsorships are not unheard of. Many such pairings in the United States are more of a partnership such as the National Football League’s Kickoff Live in September 2003 where 25,000 military troops were brought in for the programme by the Department of Defense (King, 2008, p. 536), but sponsorships happen as well.

The United States Coast Guard sponsored Women’s Professional Soccer during its three-year operation, acting as the official sponsor the All-Star Game. A sponsorship such as this not only served to create an implicit association between the two but it also used sport to promote the military. In this case, the association between the Coast Guard and Women’s Professional Soccer further reinforced the inclusivity
offered by the Coast Guard, as it was, at the time, the only branch of the military to allow women to serve in all divisions or specialties of the branch. These types of relationships help to promote specific ideologies as well.

As can be seen through these, and other, examples, Jarvie (2003) argues:

The nationalism that is connected to sport may be constructed in order to be manifested within and between different types of nations, to be real and imagined, to be a creative or reflective force, to be both positive and negative, transient and temporary, multi-faceted and multi-layered and/or evolutionary in its format. (p. 541)

In other words, nationalism can be used, manipulated, and fostered in a variety of ways to suit the needs or desires of the institution.

Spectator nationalism.

Nationalism is not limited to a tool used by those overseeing and, in some cases, manipulating sporting events. Displays that can be classed as nationalistic are often seen in the actions and practices of spectators. This poses an interesting problem in that it is sometimes difficult to tell if those overseeing the competition initiate the displays or if the spectator initiates them. For example, each person attending the United States versus Jamaica football match on 11 September 2012 was given an American flag in remembrance of September 11th (U.S. Soccer, 2012). This was a form of institutional nationalism yet there were probably many more American flags in the crowd as well as jerseys and other supporter’s items. Separating what the institution initiated and what the spectators initiated can be a difficult endeavour. However, practices by spectators—wearing certain clothes for example—can in some cases be separated and studied as spectator nationalism. Even when spectator and institutional nationalism collide—waving a flag given to them—it is possible to view the action of the individual as an instance of spectator nationalism as they have chosen to participate in an action.

In each specific case, the show of nationalism by spectators is typically seen as an “us versus them” situation; individuals support their side or team against the opposition. This notion of the nation(-state) (and its members) as part of a strict dichotomy was discussed earlier and is worthy of further consideration. In contrast to her own definition of community as something more active (an achieved, maintained membership), Swyers (2010) draws on the ideas of Arjun Appadurai (2006) who views community as more of an “us and them” based on an ascribed status. Using
Appadurai’s (2006) ideas, Swyers (2010) states, “the community becomes a label or identity marker, a totem, rather than a set of practices. Even when practices are considered, they are thought of emblematically rather than used to form relationships” (p. 148). In this way, certain types of banal nationalism, such as wearing specific colours, can be seen as a practice to mark oneself as a part of this community that one has been ascribed to: the nation(-state). Yet there is more to spectator expressions of nationalism in some cases.

Whether the expression of nationalist sentiment is of a political nature or is a showing of patriotic support or loyalty to the nation(-state) to which a person belongs, these acts are commonplace in sports of all kinds. But what makes these actions different from a person showing support for a local team? In other words, why should there be a critical examination of the actions of spectators of a national team, rather than a willingness to accept these actions as evidence of enjoyment of the game as would likely be the case if the subject were supporting a local team such as the Boston Bruins?

In both cases, many of the same actions and habits can be seen: the wearing of the team’s colours, waving of flags, and chanting in support of the team. By looking at the types of support given, at face value, there is little difference. It is both the meaning behind these actions and the meanings imposed upon these actions by others that distinguish them. As was demonstrated earlier, sports can be used by those in positions of influence to promote an ideology or to foster a sense of unity. In the case of spectators, however, their actions are able to both support these ideologies (or national identity, political policy, and so on) or to protest against them.

In the 1990s in (post-communist) Croatia, a new political system intersected with nationalist sporting loyalty (Vrcan, 2002). As Vrcan (2002) explains, a quarrel occurred involving the former President of the Republic of Croatia, Franjo Tudman, and the leader of a Croatian nationalist movement and football fan group (“Bad Blue Boys”) over the name of a football team. There was a politically motivated proposal to change the name of a Zagreb Premier League team from “Dinamo” to “Croatia” (Vrcan, 2002). Vrcan (2002) explains that the name of the team still held the same meaning for supporters in the post-communist era as it did under communism.

It was quite normal to expect that for the post-communist systemic world and systemic integration such a meaning might be experienced as too cosmopolitan and productivist, and, therefore, at least anational if not anti-
national. Its symbolic value might have created some kind of homogeneity and identification indeed but not one that was sufficiently coloured in national colours, which are considered to be the only normal and the only legitimate ones in the Croatian post-communist nation state. (Vrcan, 2002, p. 63)

This issue is essentially a conflict between spectator nationalism and institutional nationalism. The fans were still aligned with the previous national symbols, regardless of how they were now perceived by the government, whilst the institutions were attempting to move on and institute a new national identification; in this case, there was a deeply embedded national identity that was no longer aligned with what the state was, or wanted to become.

Another example of the distinction between the expressions of nationalism in the sporting realm as opposed to the political realm relates to the concept of the “90-minute patriot.” The expression of nationalism through a sporting event rather than in the political realm was used by Scottish politician Jim Sillars as a basis for criticism of the people of Scotland (Jarvie & Reid, 1999). He derided those who would stand and claim pride and loyalty to Scotland while watching the Scottish football team, or other sporting representatives, and yet, would not follow this politically by choosing independence from the United Kingdom (Jarvie & Reid, 1999). Manzenreiter (2006), however, believes that “the mass display of national symbols does not necessarily equate with nationalist attitudes” (p. 146). Similar sentiments are seen when Bairner (2001) writes: “sports fans may dress in national costumes and paint their faces in national colors without being remotely attracted to nationalist politics. In such ways, however, sport does provide us with an important arena in which to celebrate national identities” (pp. 16-17).

Furthermore, Bairner (2001) contends that to infer political disloyalty from a simple expression of sporting nationalism […] may be foolish at best and reprehensible at worst. However, we should not ignore the fact that in most nation-states there exists a hegemonic national identity that is not necessarily inclusive. In such instances, some citizens may well choose to celebrate an alternative national identity, with sport playing an important part in their activities. (p. 169)

What can be seen from this perspective is the assertion that sport need not correlate to politics. The decision to represent oneself as Scottish or specifically support Scottish
athletes may stem from a desire to identify with a particular nation of the United Kingdom rather than a rejection of the United Kingdom as a political entity.

Although Sillars used the term “90-minute patriot” as an insult to the loyalties of the Scottish public, the association of nationalism with sport over politics need not be negative. Sport provides a place to express an identity. One can be proud to be Scottish at a football match and still have no desire to separate from the United Kingdom in a political sense.

These examples of Croatian and Scottish nationalism reveal how sporting nationalism is not always confined to sport. In the case of Croatian nationalism, the fan group made their nationalist political desires apparent, as well as their loyalties in the realm of sport, and used one to influence the other. For “90-minute patriots,” however, the distinction between sporting and political loyalties causes a source of conflict due to the apparent disconnect between the loyalties held.

These are important examples because it makes clear that not all nationalist behaviour is explicit in meaning. Often, it is left to those observing the behaviour to infer what is meant. With no other information available, it is up to the viewer to interpret the actions in the best way s/he can. This is one point in the study of nationalism in sport where significant risks appear. The intentions behind actions of institutional forces can, in many cases, be reasonably assumed based on knowledge of the nation(-state) in which the events take place. With spectators, however, intentions must be assumed based on the available information, which can lead to a misinterpretation of the intended message. These situations beg the question, does intent matter? There is no simple answer to such a question and the issue of intent will be addressed throughout the remainder of this work.

**Sport national identity.**

As discussed previously, national identity is an idea related to nationalism. In relation to sport, national identity is a useful concept to explore because of the ways in which sport is often used to reflect a national identity and promote an image of the nation. Hayes (2001) writes, “sport, like no other cultural formation, mobilizes and heightens feelings of identification and collective belonging. It galvanizes the cultural construct of ‘us’. It helps to define who ‘we’ are by positioning ‘us’ in contradistinction to ‘them’” (p. 164). Through sport, members of a nation(-state) are able to identify with one another and share in a sense of self and also easily distinguish themselves from the “other.” Of course, sport does not provide a place for
identification for all members of a society as some may choose not to participate in the sporting landscape (Bairner, 2001). However, the reach of sport within societies, and between societies, makes it a useful avenue through which to explore nationalism and national identity.

**Sport and nationalism: case studies.**

One way to see how nationalism and national identity are used in sport is to examine specific examples. For the purposes of this section, two case studies will be explored. The first is that of the United Kingdom, a nation-state with a complex relationship to national identity. Rather than considering the United Kingdom’s connection to sport as a whole, here, the focus is on the formation of a united football team for the London 2012 Olympic Games. The second case investigates sport in the United States, a nation-state with a somewhat unique sporting culture that makes explicit use of nationalism and national identity on a regular basis. By using such diverse examples, it serves to illustrate the point that there is no one way in which to view nationalism and national identity and the ways in which they can be used.

**Team GB and a united football team.**

Although the United Kingdom may be one nation-state politically, there are many complexities that make it a unique case both politically and in the sporting world. In football, the complexities deal with the vast footballing history within the United Kingdom. With each of the four nations/localities (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) having its own history, teams, and rivalries, combining those teams becomes increasingly difficult.

Each of these nations/localities has a national body for many of the sports contested at the Olympics with only one team to represent them at the Games. The difference with football is not the situation but, rather, the implications of a unified team. By combining the four nations/localities under a single team, it was speculated that each could lose part of its unique identity. There was also the concern that this would not be a single exception for the London 2012 Games. However, the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games Limited (LOCOG) and the British Olympic Association insisted on a combined team at the London Games, as football is widely considered England’s national sport. This decision was made despite resistance from Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland who were concerned for their independent status.
Even in the face of assurances from the FIFA president, Joseph “Sepp” Blatter, that the singular participation as a joint team during London 2012 would not compromise the independent status of the four national teams, the fears still existed (“FIFA boss,” 2011). There may have been many reasons for this including the contradictory reports that detailed Blatter as stating that participation as a unified team would potentially harm the independent status of the four national teams (“Blatter,” 2009).

From the beginning, the LOCOG and the British Olympic Association wanted a joint team to compete in London though the idea was controversial outside of England (“GB football,” 2006; “No Scots,” 2005; “Wales oppose,” 2005). However, plans moved forward and in June 2011, the English Football Association and the British Olympic Association announced that an agreement was reached with the other national football associations for a combined team at London 2012 (British Olympic Association, 2011). This was met with resistance when the Scottish Football Association, Football Association of Wales, and Irish Football Association released a joint statement against plans for a Team GB denying that any agreement had been reached (Regan, Ford, & Nelson, 2011).

Despite protests from the Scottish, Welsh, and Irish football associations, there were players who made their desire to play for Team GB known. The most notable examples were Welsh captain Aaron Ramsey and teammate Gareth Bale. Aaron Ramsey expressed interest in playing explaining,

“Players, if given the opportunity, should go ahead and do it; I don’t see what the problem is. I’ve spoken to Gareth Bale and he’s up for it. I think the Welsh are fine with it. It’s up to the players.” (Press Association, 2011)

Yet, this support was followed by reassurances that his first priority will always be to the Football Association of Wales and the future of Welsh football. On Twitter, Ramsey posted an update saying, “relax everyone, there [sic] is absolutely no way I

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3 In all Olympic sports, there must be a national body that is representative of each sport taking part in the Olympic Games (IOC, 2011). In the case of the United Kingdom, there are two possibilities: 1) an umbrella organisation can exist for this purpose that encompasses the three or four (depending on the sport) respective nations/localities or 2) one of the national bodies can be appointed as the “lead” organisation. In the case of Olympic football, the British Olympic Association has given the primary position to the English Football Association (“Scots deny GB,” 2011; Taylor, 2011).
would play in the Olympic team if it was going to affect Wales [sic] identity as an individual nation!” (Ramsey, 2011).

These sentiments about not jeopardising the independent status of the national football associations constituted a common argument against the formation of Team GB football. Craig Brown, former Scotland manager, made his opinion clear asking: “‘are you going to put other players’ possibility of playing for Scotland at risk by being selfish and playing?’” (“Craig Brown,” 2011).

However, as a spokesman for the Scottish Football Association notes, the football associations could not stop players competing if they so desired (“Scots deny GB,” 2011). The truth of this statement was evident as the men’s squad featured five Welsh players while the women’s side included two Scottish players. Furthermore, since the Games, the Welsh men and the Scottish women have continued to feature players from the Olympic team in their line-ups indicating that there have been little to no repercussions from their respective football associations (at least publically).

It is important to ask, what were the factors at play in a debate such as this? What was seen, first and foremost, was a degree of attachment and a sense of nationalism with regard to the individual nations, at least in terms of football culture. Julie Fleetwing notes,

“Obviously the Olympics is a fantastic stage but I am Scottish through and through.

“It might mean our girls would not have the opportunity to play for the national team in the future because some of us went to play for Team GB.” (“Olympic football,” 2011)

Loyalties to the nation and to the national football programme were being cited as overriding individual desires in many cases such as Ramsey and Fleetwing.

Of course, part of this involves a sense of national identity. Former Welsh captain Neville Southall questioned the use of the Union flag if Team GB were to win a medal by asserting: “It’s not my flag. My flag’s a dragon”’ (Kelly, 2011). For Southall, this particular quote points to issues of representation. He positioned himself as a Welshman rather than a British citizen. Although both are technically accurate descriptions, in terms of national identity it is clear that “British” is not something Southall chooses to identify with. This is the ingrained nature of national identity. Who one plays for, representing one’s nation and one’s sense of self in some ways, become more important than the athlete’s desire to win.
Throughout this debate, there has been a focus on the football associations and the players. However, there is another party that has yet to be considered. The Olympics are about the athletes and the competition but they are also about the spectators. They could not survive without the millions of spectators around the world who watch either on TV or in the stadiums.

The football matches were well attended for the entirety of both competitions and Team GB was well supported in both Wales and England when they played. The stadiums were crowded but the spectators were also cheering and engaged and there were no reports of any instances of bad behaviour among spectators. The intense devotion to a team and the actions that sometimes accompany that—insults, taunts, fights, and so on—were absent from the football stadiums.

Prior to the start of the competitions, it could be suspected that the lack of a Team GB football culture, combined with the contentious relationship between fans of the home nations, could have harmed the ability for spectators to connect with the game (Kelly, 2011); chants, songs, and rituals associated with the game are part of the experience and what make going to a football match and being a supporter a desirable endeavour. However, with the Games having concluded, it is possible to see that this lack of an established culture was not a hindrance. Rather, the football culture was adapted to fit the game being played and there were chants of ‘Team GB’ and a number of typical England football chants were adapted to fit Team GB.

The intricacies of this topic are many and it would be possible to spend months attempting to comb through each of them and their impacts. What is clear, however, is that the reservations of the Scottish, Welsh, and Irish football associations were not enough to keep a team from taking part. The long-term impacts of the situation remain to be seen but the reality of the Team GB football competitions can help shed additional light on the impact of nationalism and national identity within the United Kingdom and within the Olympic Games.

*Sport and national identity in the United States.*

In the United States, sport is used as a place where national identity can be created and maintained, as there is one mainstream option for national identification. As Bairner (2001) correctly points out, the primary focus of American sports are

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4 One possible reason for this is the make-up of the crowd as many of those in attendance at the Games may not typically be fans of the sport they are watching. This will be addressed in Chapters 6 and 7.
domestic, as opposed to international, rivalries. Rivalries between Boston and New York or between the Green Bay Packers and the Minnesota Vikings of the National Football League are far more likely to be discussed, worried over, or seen as a reason to watch particular games than any international pairing. Of course, there could be many reasons for this, not least of which is the fact that the most popular sports in the United States—American football, baseball, and basketball—do not align with the most popular sports globally. Each of these sports was developed in the United States and are only slowly gaining popularity in other nations(-states). Basketball and baseball both enjoy a worldwide presence (baseball is particularly popular in East Asia as well as parts of the Caribbean) yet both still fall well short of the reach and popularity of sports such as football, cricket, and rugby. Because of this, international competition is either typically non-existent (as in American football) or dominated by the United States (as in basketball). It is precisely this unique sporting culture that has lent itself to identity formation.

In American sport, it is possible to see a mirror of many of the values and ideas held by the general population. Swyers (2007) speaks of the “pioneer spirit” saying,

Fredrick Jackson Turner’s 1893 ‘frontier hypothesis’ [7] persuaded many Americans that the qualities of ingenuity, fortitude and self-reliance they associated with the United States were developed and honed as part of a ‘pioneer spirit’. That spirit was a product of the frontier, according to Turner, and the frontier, he pointed out, was gone. (p. 198)

In the context of wider society, this led to anxiety, as Swyers (2007) explains. In relation to sport, it is possible to see the effect of this realisation.

Swyers (2007) points to the loss of the frontier as a gap that needed to be filled. What resulted was the education of citizens in national culture as schooling became compulsory in 1920 (Swyers, 2007). Through sport in schools, an American identity could be cast, not only replacing the loss of the frontier-based identity, but also, uniting all Americans into Theodore Roosevelt’s “melting pot” (Swyers, 2007, p. 198). Bairner (2001) remarks, “sport had become intimately involved in the construction and reproduction of an American national identity in particular by assisting the transcendence of ethnic, racial, and linguistic differences” (p. 95). In this way, the values of sport were also transferred to the wider society with notions such as “fair play” (Swyers, 2007, p. 199). Beyond a notion of inclusion through education,
American sport can also be seen as all-inclusive because of the relatively easy access to sport.

Robertson (1980) points out, the games which Americans made their own—baseball, [American] football, and basketball—have in common that they were, from their origins, available to all in American society. […] One of the characteristics of American games is their essentially democratic quality. Even those who are poor, if they are good athletes, can expect to get college scholarships, high pay, and upward mobility from American games. Those games were, from their beginnings, visible proof that the communities (and the nation) in which they were played were democratic and classless. (p. 256)

Although the reality of these notions of total access and a classless nation can be strongly contested, it is nonetheless what children in the United States are taught to believe—in schools and through political rhetoric—as they are growing up. The lessons within individual communities may not always reflect this attitude but it remains the standard institutional refrain coinciding with ideas such as the American Dream. Sport is contested on a level playing field and if a person tries hard enough and has enough natural talent, s/he can make it. In some cases, this is the truth. It is certainly not uncommon to hear hard-luck stories of college players or professionals who grew up poor or marginalised and used sport as a way to improve their lives. However, this avenue is never guaranteed.

Through examples such as these, a congruence of sporting and societal values can be seen. Exploring American sport more deeply adds to this perception of a unique American sporting culture. One example is the common movement of teams to different cities based on economic decisions, reinforcing the belief in capitalist values. It is in this context of a unique culture that a national identity is maintained through sport in addition to being expressed in sports.

This sporting identity is not contained within the United States however. With the increased potential to extend the reach of sport through international broadcast rights and international player signings, American sporting culture is being brought to the world. Baseball, America’s Pastime, is immensely popular in Japan, New York Yankees apparel is a common sight outside of the Unites States, and each year the National Football League plays at least one game in London. What can be seen
through these, and other, examples are the ways in which sports help to reinforce the presence of globalisation in addition to nationalism.

**Sport and Globalisation**

The worldwide diffusion of sport is difficult to ignore. That football is played around the world and that baseball is a fan-favourite in Japan are just two such examples. Furthermore, the existence of organisations such as the FIFA and the IOC shows that the governance of sport has moved beyond the reach of individual nations(-states). However, the importance of the nation(-state) remains evident with international competitions such as world championships, the FIFA World Cup, and the Olympic Games organised around national teams. Maguire and Tuck (1998) question the global nature of sport in this system stating that

the close affinity sport maintains with national cultures and identities also means that sport (which even in these global events is fundamentally ‘national’ in nature) undermines, and will continue to undermine, any regional political integration. (p. 111)

Their point is well taken and the logic behind this claim is sound, but it misses a component of sport that should not be overlooked: camaraderie. When team A competes against team B, the spectators may well be on opposite sides in a heated confrontation, but before and after the game, the shared interest in the sport has the potential to bring them together. This may not always happen, but the potential is there. Beyond that, supporting different national sides in sport does not necessarily imply opposite stances in the political realm. If that were the case, then the United States would have long since dissolved.

The system that is employed in sport is one that has no parallel in politics or economics. The recycling calendar of yearly seasons, starting over with a clean slate, and the ability to rebuild and change the fate of the team at any point (through trades, signings, injuries, and so on) is unmatched anywhere in the “real world.” Sport may be used by the “real world” and reflect aspects of it to its viewers, but it has its own set of rules.

From an economic standpoint, globalisation in sport can be seen through the areas of markets, sponsorship, and television broadcast rights. With regards to markets, it is possible to see teams from various nation-states playing matches abroad in order to increase their fan base in other markets. For example, each year there is at least one National Football League game played at Wembley Stadium and teams from
the English Premier League have played in the United States (both against other
teams from the Premier League or against Major League Soccer teams).

Sponsorships are often a way to extend the reach of one’s brand by aligning
the company’s products with a league or team in another nation-state. This can be
seen in Major League Soccer in the United States with not only a number of
companies from the United States but also those hailing from Germany, Austria,
Japan, and Mexico (Major League Soccer, 2013). This is particularly useful for
companies that may be less of a household name, such as Makita (Major League
Soccer, 2013).

Lastly, television broadcast rights are another avenue through which
globalisation can be seen. In the case of television, not only is the culture of the sport
being shown to those watching, but new fans can be created and, in turn, increase the
profits that can be made. This can be seen in the recent drive to sell the television
rights to the English Premier League in the Middle East, North Africa, southeast Asia,
Australasia, and the United States (Gibson, 2012b). However, it is not just
economically that broadcast rights have impacted upon globalisation. Because it is
now possible to watch games from around the world as the rights to show
competitions are sold to broadcasters in disparate locations, other links can be made
as well. New social and technological innovations that allow fans to discuss the
games with other fans (or common enemies) around the world can be seen facilitating
and reinforcing globalisation.

**Globalisation and athletes.**

It comes as no surprise that athletes train in foreign nation-states, live abroad,
and sometimes switch nationalities. Other than the spread of sports themselves, one of
the most common facets of globalisation in sport is the movement of players. It is not
unusual for athletes to look abroad for sporting opportunities whether it is for money,
a better sporting landscape, or a greater chance to play. In men’s football, players
often want to play in leagues such as the English Premier League because of its
reputation and the salaries on offer, which leads players to move to England to pursue
this goal. In basketball and baseball, it is often the case that players will make their
way to the United States to play in the National Basketball Association or Major
League Baseball, respectively, for precisely the same reasons.

Athletes who play a sport in a foreign nation-state can act as a portal through
which sports, and sometimes the culture that is associated with it, can be transferred.
The United States is not a nation-state that devotes much attention to football, yet, there was an enormous upswing in the interest in Major League Soccer when David Beckham signed a contract to play with the Los Angeles Galaxy. However, this sort of impact had the potential to go beyond the idea of sharing sport. One possible effect was an increase in globalisation economically as sponsors now had an increased interest in using Beckham as a spokesperson, allowing for a wider reach of the brand.

Additionally, drawing on the ideas of Maguire and Bale (1994), Wong and Trumper (2002) consider that there may be a type of global citizen emerging out of a group of migrating professionals. Moreover, Barber (1992) states:

Commercial pilots, computer programmers, international bankers, media specialists, oil riggers, entertainment celebrities, ecology experts, demographers, accountants, professors, athletes—these compose a new breed of men and women for whom religion, culture, and nationality can seem only marginal elements in a working identity. (as cited in Wong & Trumper, 2002, p. 174)

Although it can be argued whether or not nationality is in fact marginal to athletes (or any of the other professionals listed), the point is well taken. There is a growing class of individuals, of which athletes are certainly part, that is able to claim residence in two or more places around the world creating what could be called a type of global citizen. Wong and Trumper (2002), with reference to this class of globalised athletes, state that new “transnational practices have been facilitated by increasing regionalization, as an aspect of globalization, that reflects political, economic, and cultural alliances of certain nation-states” (p. 175). From this perspective, political alliances such as the EU are able to serve as a globalising force not only politically but also in the realm of sport by allowing easier movement of EU citizens among member nation-states. Logically, however, this argument cannot explain most cases of athlete migration as there is no other body comparable to the EU and it is certainly not only within the EU that athletes move.

A case study of “plastic Brits.”

It is becoming increasingly common to hear reports of athletes switching nationalities in order to continue to compete. Although this is increasingly common, this is not an entirely new phenomenon. In the lead-up to London 2012, the debate over athlete migration was cast into the spotlight in the United Kingdom with a focus
on so-called “plastic Brits.” Athletes labelled as such were competing for Team GB despite having other, or previous, national affiliations.

This is not the first instance of a situation such as this occurring in the United Kingdom. Perhaps the most famous example is that of Zola Budd. Budd was a native of South Africa who, in 1983, showed immense promise on the athletics track. However, due to the ban of South Africa over apartheid policies, she was ineligible to compete in the Los Angeles 1984 Games. Once The Daily Mail heard about the story, and saw an opportunity to sell papers, the paper’s editor became involved and ensured that she received British citizenship (through the link of a paternal grandfather) in less than two weeks (Burnton, 2012; Dwyre, 2009). This caused a great deal of controversy as it was seen as a manipulation of the system for personal gain (on the part of The Daily Mail) and as a way to circumvent the ban imposed on South Africa by the IOC (Burnton, 2012; Dwyre, 2009). Although the migration of athletes to Britain in 2012 was not under scrutiny for the political implications, the debate over the acceptability of these actions was still present.

One athlete in the spotlight as a “plastic Brit” was American-born hurdler Tiffany Porter. During a press conference ahead of the 2012 World Indoor Track and Field Championships in Istanbul, Porter was officially introduced as the team captain for the event. A member of the media subsequently asked Porter if she could recite the first verse of “God Save the Queen”—the national anthem of the United Kingdom (Hart, 2012). Porter denied the request but it is telling that she was asked at all. This was an attempt to have Porter prove her credentials not as an athlete, but as a British athlete. (Prior to the London Olympics, the coach of Team GB Athletics announced that he would ensure that all members of his team knew the national anthem (Davies, 2012) positioning this issue as an athlete’s version of the “Tebbit test.”) However, Porter was not the only member of Team GB to be born outside the United Kingdom. At that meet in Istanbul, The Telegraph listed five team members born outside of the United Kingdom: Porter, Shara Proctor, Michael Bingham, Shana Cox, and Yamile Aldama (Hart, 2012). Each of these athletes was labelled as a “plastic Brit” because they were not born or raised in the United Kingdom.

Of the five listed as foreign-born athletes, three have citizenship through at least one parent (Clarey, 2012; “Michael Bingham,” 2010; Turnbull, 2011), one is allowed on Team GB through her citizenship in a British overseas territory with no national Olympic committee (NOC) (Bull, 2012a), and one gained citizenship through
residency requirements (Stafford, 2012). Tellingly, Mo Farah was not listed among this group despite his presence on the team.

Farah is another who has British citizenship through a parent as he was born in Somalia (“Brian Viner,” 2008). Why is it that Farah is typically held up as a great British athlete and has not been embroiled in this debate over “plastic Brits”? One possible explanation is that despite being born in Somalia and living and training in the United States (Cram, 2011), Farah has never represented another national team in competition. Also, Farah moved to the United Kingdom at an early age and did so for reasons other than sporting success (“Brian Viner,” 2008). All five athletes listed as “plastic Brits” on Team GB in Istanbul have competed for another national team at various levels. For example, Aldama, who gained citizenship based on residency (after marrying a Scotsman and moving to the United Kingdom), has competed for her native Cuba as well as for Sudan (a flag of convenience for the 2004 Athens Olympics) (Stafford, 2012).

The controversy over whether or not an athlete should be able to change their national affiliation, for any reason, has stirred up differing opinions from athletes and media alike. After having her world record broken by Porter in 2011, Angie Thorp shared her opinion that “Porter’s dream would have been to run for America. But she wasn’t quite good enough, so she came over here and took somebody’s place instead!” (Bull, 2012b). From this, it is possible to see the assertions that simply having British parents does not qualify an athlete as British. Porter was being portrayed by Thorp as only an American and, therefore, as an interloper on Team GB.

Simon Hart (2011), a sportswriter for The Telegraph, expressed similar opinions. His problem was not whether or not these athletes have a legal right to compete for Team GB; rather, he asserted that these athletes “have no idea about national pride” (Hart, 2011). As an example, he cited Porter’s Twitter update in which she wrote: “It’s the 4th of July!!!!!! Wishing I was in the States to celebrate this special day! I’m definitely there in spirit though :-) [sic]” (Porter, 2011). Hart (2011) claimed that in the wake of the debate over “plastic Brits” and Thorpe’s comments, “the sensible thing for Ofili-Porter to do would have been to pledge her loyalty to her adopted country or, perhaps better still, just say nothing at all.” The message here was that an athlete could have only one national affiliation and any deviation from that serves as proof that “they” are not one of “us.” He continues saying:
As fans, we want to see athletes cavorting with the Union Jack to celebrate their medal because they really mean it.

We want to see the bottom lip quivering when the flag is hoisted and *God Save The Queen* rings out. (Hart, 2011)

One ESPN writer went so far during the Vancouver Olympics as to write: “This extension of citizenship – ‘You’re good? Your father visited Tbilisi? Gamarjoba!’ – has watered down nationalism (the good kind) more than ending the Cold War did” (Cyphers, 2010, p. 39). He even wondered if “a national flag is but one more sponsor logo” (Cyphers, 2010, p. 39).

Of course, not everybody was upset with the inclusion of foreign-born athletes on Team GB. Andy Bull (2012a), a sportswriter for *The Guardian*, referred to the term “plastic Brit” as an “ugly label” and, discussing the individual nature of the cases of changing nationalities, he says: “At best, those who lump Porter, Proctor and others together as ‘plastic Brits’ are simply oblivious to the nuances of their individual cases. At worst, they are being wilfully ignorant” (Bull, 2012a). Paula Radcliffe, an English runner, also spoke on the issue saying:

“I think you need to look at each individual case,” […] “I don’t think it’s by any means a case of Britain going round and buying athletes in, as has been the case in other countries.

“I think these are people who actually do feel an affinity with Britain, they want that opportunity to compete in the British kit with the Union Jack on their vest.” (“London 2012: Paula Radcliffe,” 2012)

During the Games, there was widespread support for all athletes wearing the colours of Team GB. Fans put aside any controversy over “plastic Brits” and supported those who represented Team GB and cheered their success. It is clear that there is no singular opinion on this trend of nomadic athletes and there likely will not be one. Whether it hurts nationalism or globalisation, this issue is still contested, as it becomes a larger part of the sporting landscape and the world landscape more generally. What can be seen, however, is the way in which this argument tends towards the ideological and when it comes time to actually support those in one’s team colours, “plastic” no longer matters for the majority.

**Sport and Universal Values**

Universal values have become increasingly attached to sport as attention to ideals such as solidarity, gender equality, non-discrimination, and respect for
opponents are amplified both within and outside of sport. This can be seen in the rise of attention on, and sanctions for, racist and homophobic behaviour in sport from football competitions in Europe to National Basketball Association games in the United States.

Examples of such attention to these issues include a $100,000 fine for Kobe Bryant for using a homophobic slur (NESN Staff, 2011) and FIFA’s new harsh regulations for racist incidents (“FIFA racism,” 2013). Further evidence can also be found in the rise of programmes such as “Kick It Out” against racism in England or the Union of European Football Associations’ (UEFA) “Respect” campaign against all forms of discrimination. The increasing presence of programmes such as these and their rising visibility—through partnerships with teams and leagues, and stadium and jersey advertisements—demonstrate a conscious attempt to incorporate these values into the world of football.

However, the reformation of behaviours that fall outside of universalist values is not the only area in which to see ideas of universalism. One prominent approach is to focus on the solidarity and unity of the worldwide population. Those in charge of promoting major international competitions use universal values, in addition to nationalism, to suit their interests. For example, in stark contrast to their “Glory” clip mentioned previously, ESPN released a promotional video for the 2010 FIFA World Cup with the theme “United.” With an array of images that correspond to the narrative, the viewer hears:

It’s not about politics, or religion, or the economy. It’s not about borders, history, trade, oil, water, gas, mineral rights, human rights, or animal rights.
It’s not about global warming, global pandemics, globalisation, GDP, NATO, or Kyoto. It’s not about elections, sanctions, proliferations, he-said/she-said, my land/your land, no-man’s land. It’s not about the stock market, black market, orange alerts, green homes, hope, change, fear, or loathing. It’s not about communism, socialism, or capitalism, war or peace, love or hate. This is about the one month every four years when we all agree on one thing: 32 nations, one world watching. 2010 FIFA World Cup. (ESPN, 2010a)

There are a number of interesting points in this narrative. To begin, the narrator explicitly states that the World Cup is not about globalisation, however, it is mired in it through sponsorships and media coverage for example. Yet, this advertisement plays on the universal value of solidarity. Not only does it presume that the entire
world is interested in the event and that everybody can agree on the choice to support such a spectacle, but it does so by glossing over some highly divisive issues. The narrative, in the way it is structured, implies that issues such as religion or political systems are secondary to football rather than issues that may impact upon the event.

This type of “united” rhetoric is often associated with events such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games. In 2010, when the FIFA chose the hosts for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups, Qatar, the chosen host for 2022, actually used this idea in the design of one of its proposed venues. As SportsIllustrated.com reports, the colours of the flags of all the nations participating in the 2022 FIFA World Cup Finals will decorate the face of the Al-Gharafa Stadium in order to symbolise friendship and support (“Qatar’s 2022,” n.d.). This idea is similar to the use of colour in the Olympic flag, symbolising a united world through representative national colours. This technique of inclusive representation is one way in which organisers of an event attempt to claim that the sporting contests transcend a simple competition between individual nations(-states). It also points to the institutional desire to push certain universal values alongside the international structure of the events.

Spectators are able to use sporting competitions in order to express universal values as well, although there may not be a conscious desire to break away from nationalism and display a more universal orientation. Giulianotti and Robertson (2007) claim: “supporters of most [football] teams are socialized into a cosmopolitan commitment to appreciating the aesthetic qualities and possibilities of the game itself, even if these are realized by direct opponents in crucial fixtures” (p. 173). Although many may be wary of a claim such as this, examples from other sporting competitions can be seen. At times, the thrill of sporting accomplishment may be enough to provoke a sense of a universal orientation.

There are two prominent examples of this “achievement as paramount” idea from the Beijing Olympics. First, there is Michael Phelps who made Olympic history by breaking Mark Spitz’s record of seven gold medals at a single Games. The magnitude of what he was attempting to do, combined with the impressive, and dramatic, fashion in which he was winning had fans from around the world watching and cheering him on in hopes of witnessing sporting history and a feat that will not easily be replicated. The same can be said for Usain Bolt who won both the 100 metre and 200 metre sprints in world record time, even while slowing to showboat at the end of the 100 metres. The type of dominance in the sport it takes to win those two
races, and to do so with apparent ease had many cheering him on. It was such a feat that when the mascots for the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics were introduced, Wenlock—the Olympic mascot—was shown in one instance standing in front of a Usain Bolt poster imitating his lightning bolt celebration (London 2012, 2010).

**Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, the complex relationship between sport, nationalism, universal values, and globalisation has been addressed, highlighting many of the key features of the debates regarding these concepts.

Nationalism can be approached in two ways, as discussed above: through institutions or spectators. In each case there is a particular goal being aimed for. In the case of institutions, it can be seen how they endeavour to promote nationalism for their own ends. For instance, the promotion of American nationalism during Super Bowl XXXVI was a chance to rally the American people in the face of impending political action as well as a chance to capitalise on the feelings of American nationalism in the general population. Spectators, on the other hand, may be looking to simply take part in the event in a way that is considered acceptable or they may be looking to express themselves in a more overt manner.

This expression of nationalism may also be an expression of a particular national identity. As Hayes (2001) notes, sport is a venue where these feelings of “us versus them” can be created. This could be seen through the two case studies explored. The case study of sporting national identity in the United States demonstrated one way in which national identity can be negotiated. With only one mainstream option for identification, sport can be used to reinforce a national identity promoted through the myths of the nation-state more generally. However, the example from the United Kingdom showed a much different side to national identity. With multiple nations/localities being politically joined in the United Kingdom, conflict occurred because of these feelings of “us versus them.” The desire to maintain a separate national identity through football (when many other avenues have been integrated into the United Kingdom as a whole) created a conflict and led to the distinction between being politically British while still maintaining a Welsh national identity for example.

However, sport is not only a place for the expression of nationalism or national identity. Globalisation has also become a feature of the sporting world
through increases in sponsorship, television broadcast rights, and perhaps most controversially, athlete migration. Seen through the case study of the debate over “plastic Brits,” the controversy that this has caused is quite apparent. There is a conflict between the globalising forces of migration and dual citizenship on the one hand, and nationalism and national identity on the other. This is likely a debate that will persist for some time as these forces continue to interact on an increasingly regular basis.

Finally, a consideration of the universal values of sport was undertaken exploring the ways in which values such as non-discrimination and solidarity have become a feature of sport. Through additional campaigns to bring these values into the culture of sport and the increased ability to follow, and therefore support, athletes from other nations(-states), universal values can be increasingly seen in sport. Although, this is not to say that they have been entirely integrated to this point.

In the next chapter, the focus shifts to the Olympic Games. The history of the founding of the modern Games as well as the founding principles and values of Olympism will be explored, followed by an examination of some of the legacies and controversies that have surrounded the Games. Through this, the links to nationalism and globalisation can be more clearly seen as the discussion continues toward the London 2012 Games.
Chapter 4 – The Olympic Movement

Introduction

The Olympic Games is a worldwide quadrennial festival of sport that aims to celebrate athletic achievement and promote peace and understanding. Today, they are a grand spectacle drawing millions of viewers from all over the world. In order to fully understand the Olympics, it is necessary to be aware of the history of the Games and their founding as well as the values of Olympism.

In this chapter, the history of the modern Games will be explored from their founding to the controversial legacies left behind. Additionally, the Games will be considered for their place as a media event, mega-event, and spectacle before looking at the Opening and Closing Ceremony and their role in the staging of the Games. This background provides the context through which London 2012 can be grasped and provides the foundation for an understanding of the core principles of Olympism as well as the approach to the Games used in this work.

The Foundation of the Olympic Movement

The Olympic Charter is the official codification of the regulations and ideology of the Olympic Movement. Because of this, the Olympic Charter outlines the definitions of the Olympic Movement as well as Olympism, two terms that create the ideological foundation upon which the Olympic Games are based. The first of these concepts, the Olympic Movement, is defined as:

the concerted, organised, universal and permanent action, carried out under the supreme authority of the IOC, of all individuals and entities who are inspired by the values of Olympism. It covers the five continents. It reaches its peak with the bringing together of the world’s athletes at the great sports festival, the Olympic Games. Its symbol is five interlaced rings. (International Olympic Committee [IOC], 2011, p. 10)

Continuing from this definition, the concept of Olympism is explained to further expand upon the ideology presented.

1. Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.
2. The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity. (IOC, 2011, p. 10)

These statements demonstrate the IOC’s expressed desire to promote universalism, the unity of humankind, education, social responsibility, and peace; yet, without a further exploration of the history of the Games and how these ideals have operated throughout the past 118 years, these declarations carry little meaning.

**De Coubertin and the Olympic Revival**

Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Games, was born into an aristocratic French family in the 19th century. Having been a young boy during the Franco Prussian War, de Coubertin witnessed his nation-state’s defeat and became deeply ashamed of this fact. He wished for France to be able to improve on the field of battle and once again become a leader in Europe and he saw sport as a way to do so (Toohey & Veal, 2000). Through observing American and British sporting institutions, along with reading Thomas Hughes’ *Tom Brown’s School Days*, de Coubertin was intrigued by the possibility of sport helping his nation-state (Guttmann, 1992; Mandell, 1976; Toohey & Veal, 2000). However, nationalist ambition was not the only motivation for the revival of the Olympics. De Coubertin also believed in the power that sport held and its potential to create peace and understanding. Shortly after the inaugural modern Olympic Games in 1896, he published an article in which he wrote

> Should this institution [the Olympic Movement] prosper—as I am persuaded, all civilized nations aiding, that it will—it may be a potent, if indirect, factor in securing universal peace. Wars break out because nations misunderstand each other. We shall not have peace until the prejudices which now separate the different races shall have been outlived. To attain this end, what better means than to bring the youth of all countries periodically together for amicable trials of muscular strength and agility? The Olympic Games, with the ancients, controlled athletics and promoted peace. Is it not visionary to look to them for similar benefactions in the future? (as cited in Mandell, 1976, p. 72)

De Coubertin aimed “to promote peaceful internationalism, a form of enlightened internationalism cultivated by a non-chauvinistic nationalism […] and sought to establish a balance between love for one’s country and love for mankind” (Spaaij,
With this idea in mind, de Coubertin announced his intention to revive the Olympics in 1892. In 1894, with a much warmer reception, he hosted the Sorbonne Conference, which established the IOC and named Greece as the first host of the modern Games to be held in 1896 in Athens (Toohey & Veal, 2000).

Yet, de Coubertin was not the first to attempt to revive the Olympic Games. There were previous attempts, some more successful than others, in North America, Great Britain, Germany, and Greece (Mandell, 1976). None of these were able to expand to the international level the way de Coubertin managed, but they were not attempts in vain. Certainly Dr. William Penny Brookes of Great Britain, founder of the Much Wenlock Olympic Games and co-founder of the National Olympic Association,

should also be credited with being one of the first to attempt to internationalise his Olympic revivals. In June 1881, 13 years before the Sorbonne Conference, which led to the emergence of modern Olympics as we know them, a Greek newspaper reported ‘Dr Brookes, this enthusiastic philhellene is endeavouring to organise an International Olympian festival, to be held in Athens’ (Furbank et al., 1996: 10). (Toohey & Veal, 2000, p. 30)

While this was ultimately rejected, Dr. Brookes’ idea lived on. He first met with de Coubertin in October 1890 and it was during this meeting that de Coubertin had the idea to pursue an international Olympic Games for the first time (Toohey & Veal, 2000).

As previously mentioned, de Coubertin was not simply concerned with resurrecting a tradition, he believed in the power of sport and saw the Olympics as a vehicle for his vision. Due to this, the Olympics were intended to be much more than a mere sporting contest. There is an ideology that accompanies the Games, although, there is often debate over the adherence to the official ideology.

**Olympic Ideology**

**Olympism.**

The Olympic Charter defines Olympism as a “philosophy of life” (IOC, 2011, p. 10), hoping for the values of Olympism to be adhered to outside of the Games as well. Olympism is a collection of values that de Coubertin, and now the IOC, promoted as being a valuable part of sport and life more generally. De Coubertin emphasised values such as the pursuit of excellence, the moral educational value of
sport, equal opportunities, fair play, and international understanding (Kidd, 1996). These are some of the same values that can still be seen as fundamental to Olympism despite changes to the Olympic Movement.

Generally speaking, Olympism can be seen as a composite of a range of universal values. In defining the seven fundamental principles of Olympism, references are made to the “harmonious development of humankind,” “respect for universal fundamental ethical principles,” “social responsibility,” “promoting a peaceful society,” and a “mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship” (IOC, 2011, p. 10).

Another value not explicitly stated, but implied throughout the text of the Olympic Charter is that of internationalism. As an organisation based in the nation-state system, internationalism and the recognition of the desire for peaceful cooperation between nation-states is a central feature of the Games. Additionally, “the goal of the Olympic movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practised in accordance with Olympism and its values” (IOC, 2011, p. 13). When combined with a belief in advancing equality between men and women, non-discrimination, and “a responsible concern for environmental issues” (IOC, 2011, p. 15), it is possible to see how Olympism corresponds to universal values.

There are those, however, who dispute this universality based on the frequent adjustment of the stated values of Olympism to fit with the changing social conditions of the modern world (Maguire, Butler, Barnard, & Golding, 2008). Maguire, Butler, Barnard, and Golding (2008) assert that “Olympic ideals are more accurately understood as the projection of the values of a specific patriarchal, Western, elite sector of society” (p. 172). Although there is truth in this statement, the type of values that the IOC aims to promote are the same types of universal values that are continually invoked by groups such as the UN.

What should be mentioned, however, is that of these universal values, the one most heavily used during the Games is the “mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship” (IOC, 2011, p. 10). Perhaps most striking, when taking the Olympic Games as a quadrennial festival of sport, is the fact that Olympism is defined as a

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5 The claims of equal opportunity were never seen as equal opportunity for all in the mind of de Coubertin, but rather for a specific population, which did not include women for instance (Kidd, 1996).
“philosophy of life” (IOC, 2011, p. 10). By defining Olympism in this way, it is not difficult to see that de Coubertin was aiming to create something more than a mere athletic festival when he revived the Games.

No other major sporting event aims to influence all aspects of our lives or aspires to social improvement as the Olympics claim to do (Kidd, 1996; Maguire, Butler, et al., 2008). One common theme that is present in many aspects of the Olympic Movement is the desire for universal understanding. Through acts of bringing people together from all over the world, be they athletes, coaches, media, or spectators, the hope is that common interests will lead to a greater cross-cultural dialogue. Yet does this happen?

Hoberman (1986) states,

there is no question that the theatrical qualities of the Games and the mystical sentiments they inspire, have given rise to a spectacular overestimation of their value to the cohesion of the world community. As a result, Olympic internationalism has been charged with a salvational mission for which it is unsuited. (p. 6)

Hoberman (1986) makes a valid point with this. The idea that a sporting competition, even one as large and revered as the Olympics, will achieve all of the aims of Olympism is highly unlikely. The “balance between love for one’s country and love for mankind” (Spaaij, 2012, p. 764) that de Coubertin sought has not materialised. As will be demonstrated in Chapters 6, 7, and 8, love of one’s nation(-state) far outweighs any sense of love for mankind or other values of Olympism. Some of the shortfalls of the Olympic Movement will be discussed in relation to the Olympic legacy, demonstrating further the truth of Hoberman’s (1986) claims. Yet, this need not be an indictment against the attempt to do so. Toohey and Veal (2000) assert,

while the contemporary world may be ambivalence [sic] about embracing Olympism as a whole ‘way of life’, there seems little doubt that it is seen as a particular way of conducting sport. The moral stance of the Olympic Movement has set it apart from lesser sporting phenomena. In publicly declaring adherence to a lofty set of ideals, the Olympic Movement lays itself open to criticism whenever it deviates from them. (p. 52)

Deviations are seemingly inevitable and, as will be discussed, critics are quick to call attention to the negative in spite of any positive outcomes. What these concepts
demonstrate is not simply the stated values upon which the Olympics are intended to rest but, also, the lens through which criticisms of the Games are framed.

With regards to Olympism in particular, critics often draw attention to the marginalisation of Olympism at the hands of nationalism and globalisation. Dyreson (2003) argues,

from the controversies over the ‘ground-zero’ flag’s entrance at the opening ceremonies to Russian and South Korean threats to pull out of the Salt Lake Games over alleged plots to favour North Americans and their wealthy television audiences, the 2002 Olympic Winter Games confirmed that the core of the Olympic Movement is about conflict and competition between nations and not some transcendent form of globalism. (p. 2)

Furthermore, Hargreaves (1992) notes:

as Mandell’s ‘Olympic paradox’ puts it: Olympic competition intensifies patriotism while concurrently endorsing internationalism. In practice the former (more accurately termed nationalism), despite the official disclaimers, clearly has swamped the latter, and it may be more difficult to shift the balance back in the other direction than we know. (p. 127)

Although claims such as these do not purport to spell the downfall of the Games, they do challenge the official rhetoric of the Olympic Movement and expose the idea that the focus on nationalism over Olympism can be seen as an in-built tension in the Games.

**The International Olympic Committee.**

Due to de Coubertin’s vision of the Olympic Games as a way to use sport for more than pure competition or national boasting, the Games were established with an ideology carried out through the IOC and the Olympic Charter. Although there is much debate surrounding the Olympic ideology and whether or not it is adhered to in practice, it is important to understand the stated guiding principles and those who carry them out.

To begin, the IOC is the main governing body of the Olympics established at the Sorbonne Conference in 1894. It has final control over all aspects of the Olympic Movement and is composed of up to 115 members (IOC, 2011). These members are to serve as representatives of the Olympic Movement to their nations(-states) (IOC, 2011). Within this body, the IOC is split into three groups: the Session, the Executive Board, and the President. Firstly, the Session is the annual meeting of all of the
members of the IOC during which the majority of business is handled such as selecting a host city, electing members of the Executive Board, and approving the reports of the IOC (IOC, 2011). Secondly, the Executive Board consists of the President, four Vice Presidents, and an additional ten members selected by the Session. It is this group which oversees such tasks as recommendations for election to the IOC, the procedures to accept and select candidate cities, and organising regular meetings with the NOCs and international federations (IOC, 2011). Lastly, the President, elected by secret ballot and chosen from members of the IOC, oversees the entire body of the IOC and its commissions (IOC, 2011).

The IOC has not escaped criticism despite the popularity of the Games. As IOC members are not chosen democratically (Simson & Jennings, 1992), and there is no system in place to ensure that the IOC is held accountable by those affected by their actions (Lenskyj, 2000; Simson & Jennings, 1992), the IOC has been painted by critics as an elitist organisation (Lenskyj, 2000; Toohey & Veal, 2000).

Others have looked to the IOC and its inaction on such issues as gentrification in host cities as the basis of their attacks (Hayes & Horne, 2011, p. 756; Horne, 2007, p. 88; Shaw, 2008, chapter 13). In advance of the London 2012 Games, Chilá (2012) found that a fee increase was to be applied affecting houseboats in the Lower Lea Valley:

The purpose is to control and reduce the number of boats clustering the waterways whilst allowing other visitors to moor in time for the 2012 Olympics. In a statement issued to the Guardian by Sally Ash, head of boating at British Waterways, she states: ‘The only way we can do this is through price, and some people will have to suffer’ (10 March 2011). (Chilá, 2012, p. 128)

That the IOC stands by and allows the Games to be used in such a way is one of the reasons for criticisms of their observance of official ideology. During the Sydney 2000 Games, it appeared as though the process of “cleaning” the city was headed in the direction of gentrification and the harassment of racial minorities (particularly Aborigines) leading Lenskyj (2000) to remark:

Although the IOC rule demanded a protest-free zone, it did not specifically require the street sweeps that by the 1980s had become a standard feature of most hallmark events. On these occasions, homeless people, sex trade workers, and beggars were harassed by police, evicted from downtown
neighborhoods, and often arrested. Such street sweeps have been documented during all Summer Olympics since 1984 [through 1996]. (p. 108)

Still others question the IOC on its record of overlooking human rights violations (Lenskyj, 2000; Zirin, 2008). The silencing of free speech or the restrictions on peaceful protests have been common complaints against the Olympic Movement (Lenskyj, 2000, 2002; Zirin, 2012). Furthermore, the increased security has not gone unnoticed as an affront to civil liberties (Zirin, 2012).

One of the most memorable instances in recent memory of the IOC coming under attack resulted from the Salt Lake City scandal. During bidding to host the 2002 Winter Olympic Games, it was discovered that the Salt Lake bid committee had been giving bribes to IOC members in exchange for their vote (Lenskyj, 2000). The claims of corruption in the IOC had been proven true and exposed for the public to see. However, with a change in personnel in Salt Lake City, the Games went on as scheduled and have remained a popular attraction to this day.

The Olympic Truce and the Olympic Torch Relay

The Olympic Truce.

At the time of the ancient Olympic Games, the Greek city-states were often in conflict with one another (Toohey & Veal, 2000) and the fact of this reality eventually led to the creation of the Olympic Truce.

The tradition of the “Olympic Truce” or “Ekecheiria” was established in Ancient Greece in the 9th century B.C. by the signature of a treaty between three kings: Iphitos of Elis, Cleosthenes of Pisa, and Lycurgus of Sparta.

Subsequently, all the other Greek cities ratified this “international agreement”, thanks to which permanent, recognised immunity of the sanctuary of Olympia and the region of Elis became a reality. During the Truce period, the athletes, artists and their families, as well as ordinary pilgrims, could travel in total safety to participate in or attend the Olympic Games and return afterwards to their respective countries. As the opening of the Games approached, the sacred truce was proclaimed and announced by the Spondophoroi, citizens of Elis who travelled throughout Greece to pass on the message. Proof that this Truce was respected is that, in Olympia, the Greeks never built walls to protect themselves, unlike all the other Greek cities. (IOC, 2012a, p. 1)
The idea of a world without conflict is one of the goals of the IOC and prompted the revival of the Olympic Truce in 1992 when the IOC issued a request to all states and international bodies to observe the call for a cessation of hostilities. The idea was then taken to the UN and was first addressed at the 48th Session of the General Assembly (United Nations, 1995). Having had a resolution passed calling for an observance of the Olympic Truce at the 48th and 49th Sessions of the General Assembly, it was once again brought before the UN in the 50th Session as an item titled “Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal” (United Nations, 1995). Part of this resolution was a decision to make the call for the observance of the Olympic Truce a biennial item, to be considered ahead of each Summer and Winter Games (United Nations, 1995). As a result, the UN has unanimously adopted a resolution asking for an observance of the Olympic Truce before each Olympic Games since (IOC, 2012a).

Of course, a true observance of the Truce with a halt to conflict is rarely upheld in today’s political climate. Recently, on the day the Beijing Olympics opened, Russia invaded neighbouring Georgia. This became a talking point due to the timing of the invasion as well as the fact that it broke the Olympic Truce. Yet, perhaps this should not have been seen as such a deviation from the norm. While the timing was noteworthy, it was certainly not the only conflict taking place at the time, and Beijing was not the only Games to take place while conflicts continued in other parts of the world. As Kidd (1996) states, “certainly, the Olympic Spirit – and even the declaration of an Olympic Truce during the Games – cannot prevent all armed conflict” (p. 9). However, in spite of disputes such as in Georgia or the continuing conflicts in Afghanistan during London 2012, the idea of the Olympic Truce is laudable and is used to encourage peace among nations.

Recalling the idea of the ancient Olympic Truce, where it was intended to provide safe passage to spectators and athletes, the same may be said of the modern Games. Due to advances in travel, those attending or participating in the Games no longer need to pass directly through areas of conflict; however, a symbolic component still mimics this safe passage. Despite political and/or armed conflict, citizens of enemy states are able to attend the Games. Indeed, those from nations engaged in conflict are able to make their way to the Games and participate in a normally peaceful event. The adoption of the Olympic Truce prior to each edition of the Games projects an image of the Olympic Movement and the UN as aiming for a
more peaceful world and it is this symbolism that gives the Olympic Truce meaning, not the upholding of it which would be impossible.

**The Olympic Torch Relay.**

In addition to the resurrection of the Olympic Truce, another connection to the ancient Games that is often mentioned is the Torch Relay. Yet, the modern Torch Relay first began in 1936 with the Berlin Games as a product of organising committee member Carl Diem; the ancient Games had no such ritual. However, in Athens there were flame races, called “lampadedromia,” to honour certain gods (The Olympic Museum, 2007, p. 4).

Despite the Torch Relay being a modern creation, it has become an integral part of the Games as it brings the Olympics closer to those who may not be able to attend and extends the reach of the Olympic Movement. The Relay’s origin is often a point of contention as it is associated with the Nazi regime, yet, despite the controversial beginnings, it has become just as much a part of the Olympic Movement as the Games themselves.

**Ritual and procedure.**

Before each Olympic Games, an actress dressed as a high priestess lights a flame at the Temple of Hera using a parabolic mirror as part of a larger performance culminating in the passing of the flame from the high priestess to the first Torchbearer waiting in the ancient stadium (The Olympic Museum, 2007). It is this flame that will be carried for the duration of the Relay and eventually set alight in the cauldron during the Opening Ceremony of the Olympics.

From its lighting, the flame is under the control of the Hellenic Olympic Committee who plan the ceremony as well as the first leg of the Relay which sees the Flame travel to the Panathenaic Stadium, used in 1896, where control then shifts to the host city’s NOC (The Olympic Museum, 2007). The organising committee for the Olympic Games is then responsible for the route and logistics of the Torch Relay as the flame makes its way to the Olympic stadium for the opening of the Games (The Olympic Museum, 2007).

**International Relays.**

While many previous Torch Relays made stops in multiple nation-states, the Athens 2004 Torch Relay was the first to be truly international. In 2004, after the

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6 The history and ritual is different for the Winter Games, however, the intent remains the same.
traditional journey from Olympia to Athens, the first segment of the Relay progressed from the Peloponnese to the Argosaronikos islands, ending again at the Panathenaic Stadium (Eden, Redgate, & Georgecink, n.d.). Following this portion of the Relay was a trip that brought the flame—and the Athens Games—to people in all five areas of the world and included stops in every previous Summer Olympics host city (IOC, 2012e). In doing so, the Olympic flame was brought to South America and Africa for the first time in history (Eden et al., n.d.). The final portion of the Relay was a 43-day tour of Greece (Eden et al., n.d.).

Through this Relay, the Athens organising committee was attempting to promote Olympism on a global scale and “[emphasise] global unity and human scale, as community heroes and local citizens carried the Olympic flame” (Eden et al., n.d., p. 19). The use of this route shared the Games with those from the past as well as the potential future—Africa and South America have yet to host the Games—and brought the Olympic Movement closer to a larger portion of the world than had ever been done previously. This theme was further built into the Relay through the adoption of the motto “Pass the Flame, Unite the World” (Eden et al., n.d., p. 19).

The Athens 2004 Torch Relay was an important moment in Olympic history because it was the first time that the Torch Relay could be said to truly reflect the attempted universal reach and ideals of the Olympic Movement. Along with the ideals of promoting peace and harmony, the Olympic Charter expressly states that the Olympic Movement “covers the five continents” (IOC, 2011, p. 10). In bringing the Torch Relay to each of the areas of the world, the attempted universalism of the event was highlighted. Furthermore, a concerted effort was made, for the first time, to reach out to those areas that have yet to host the Games and, therefore, have not experienced the Games or the Torch Relay first-hand. Lastly, those participating in the Relay were not only Greek but indigenous to where they carried the Torch (Eden et al., n.d.), ensuring that the Games really were brought to those outside of Greece.

After the success of the Athens Torch Relay, another international Relay was held for Beijing 2008. However, in 2008, the Relay did not unite the world as it served to turn the Olympics into a major political controversy. The 2008 Olympics were awarded to Beijing in 2001 and as the Games approached, the uproar grew louder and complaints were continually levelled against China’s human rights record and the continuing occupation of Tibet, among other issues (Horne & Whannel, 2010). These issues came to a head during the Torch Relay, as it became a
continuous, travelling protest site. The protests began at Olympia when an individual interrupted the speech of the president of the Beijing organising committee by waving a black flag with “Beijing 2008” and bearing the Olympic Rings formed by handcuffs. Along the route, protests were common, and some were more aggressive than others. In San Francisco, the route was changed at the last minute in an attempt to avoid the planned protests and whilst protestors hung two large banners on the Golden Gate Bridge reading “One World, One Dream” (the official motto of Beijing 2008) and “Free Tibet 08” (CBCnews, 2008).

In Paris, the protests caused more severe disruptions to the planned Relay. Due to hostile actions, the flame had to be extinguished four times and the majority of the route was completed with the flame safe inside a bus (Walker, Batty, & agencies, 2008). During one attempt to continue the Relay with the planned Torchbearers, a protester attempted to seize the Torch while Chinese Paralympian Jin Jing carried it. In a wheelchair, and unable to avoid the protester, she attempted to shield the Torch and was subsequently seen as a national hero for her actions (Graham-Harrison, 2008).

Just as the Athens Torch Relay was important for the way it was able to put into action many of the values that the IOC attempts to promote, the Beijing Relay was significant for the way in which it brought to light the power of the Olympics. The Games are used as a stage for the host city and the host nation-state, however, with the 2008 Relay, the stage was also used by world politics. Of course, this was not the first time that the Games have been used in this way—Tommie Smith and John Carlos in 1968 and the Black September terrorist group in 1972 are two examples—yet, the fact that this was not an isolated incident at the Games, coupled with the ability to quickly disseminate information today, made this particularly significant. The impact of globalisation, in this case the increased ease of communication due to technological advancements, were on display as these protests were broadcast by the world’s media and they were able to be coordinated in advance of the Torch’s arrival. As a consequence of the negative publicity and the inability to prevent a similar situation in the future, the IOC has banned future host cities from undertaking an international Torch Relay (“International torch relays,” 2009).

By requiring that all future Torch Relays be national in character, the IOC has placed itself in a position of conflict with their own ideas of universalism. These ideas can be seen in the symbolism of the Olympic flag and the commitment to moving the
Games to different cities, nation-states, and continents as well as the language used in the Olympic Charter. The rhetoric of the Olympic Games can also be cited as themes of solidarity and the unity of humankind recur with relative frequency. As mentioned previously, the motto for Beijing was “One World, One Dream” showing an emphasis on unity, and each Closing Ceremony features the refrain: “I call upon the youth of the world to assemble four years from now in [the next host city].” National Torch Relays do not provide as much of an opportunity for these values to be realised. Bringing the Olympic flame around the world in the lead-up to the Games not only creates publicity for the Games themselves it also, potentially, permits millions of people to get personally involved by watching the Relay pass through their local area.

What is interesting is that the IOC has decided that a trade-off of this sort is worthwhile in order to protect the Olympic message by having greater control over the events surrounding the Relay. This is not to say that protests cannot, or will not, happen but they will not be on the scale of those seen in 2008.

In addition, it appears that even before the events of 2008, the IOC was not entirely favourable towards international Relays. In the Technical Manual on Ceremonies, the IOC states:

- **Olympic Games** – The torch relay may be staged internationally. Any decision must have prior written approval of the IOC.

- **Olympic Winter Games** – The torch relay should be, in principle, limited to the national territory of the host country. Any change must be approved by the IOC.

- To avoid weakening the message by regularly organising international relays, the relay should not be organised in the same countries/cities every four years.

- After each edition, the international relays should be carefully analysed to ensure that a regular international relay does not weaken the message.

(IOC, 2005, p. 75)

The idea that taking the Olympic Torch Relay around the world on a regular basis would weaken the message is intriguing. It cannot happen any more often than the Games themselves, and it allows for a wider population to take part in them.

The intent of the Relay is often spoken about in relation to the ancient Games and although a national relay does not necessarily conflict with this interpretation based on the ancient flame races, the Torch Relay is more aptly comparable to the
Spondophoroi sent out from Elis. The lampadedromia was a race in honour of gods whereas the Spondophoroi were sent on a journey from Elis to announce to cities the dates of competition (The Olympic Museum, 2007). This is similar to the Torch Relay in that it is part of the promotion and the build-up to the Games. Furthermore, with the Olympic Truce being symbolically set forth in advance of the Games by the UN, the Relay can be seen as a parallel to the indication of the time of safe passage to the Games. When looked at from this perspective, rather than a preventative measure against possible protests, a national Torch Relay weakens the message.

**Olympic Legacy**

The Olympic Movement (cl)aims to uphold a set of lofty ideals, Olympism, as set forth in the Olympic Charter. If, and when, the Olympic Movement or the IOC fails to meet these standards of non-discrimination and drug-free sport, among others, there is a wave of criticism and calls for changes. Throughout the history of the modern Olympics, there have been many such instances and as the IOC becomes more involved in the world beyond the Games, this criticism will only increase in the face of such failures. George Monbiot, a critic of the Games, goes so far as to write:

> Everything we have been told about the Olympic legacy turns out to be bunkum. The Games are supposed to encourage us to play sport; they are meant to produce resounding economic benefits and to help the poor and needy. It’s all untrue. As the evictions in London begin [for the 2012 Summer Games], a new report shows that the only certain Olympic legacy is a transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich. (as cited in Shaw, 2008, p. 33)

What is it specifically that some so harshly criticise? The Olympic Movement claims to provide opportunities for positive improvement to the world through sport and can cite examples such as the symbolism of the Olympic Truce, projects similar to International Inspiration (a legacy project connected to the London 2012 Games) (British Council, n.d.), and their recent push for gender equality in the Games as support for their claims. However, critics have focused on other areas to attack the IOC and the Olympic Movement.

**Costs.**

With the world economy under strain, cost is a significant consideration and the Games are extremely expensive to host. Simply to bid for the Games, each bid city must pay $150,000 to the IOC and, if a city is selected as a finalist candidate city, it must pay a further $500,000 (IOC, 2007). These costs are only the beginning of
nine years of bidding, planning, and hosting the Games for the city that is chosen. Even for those cities that are not successful in their bid, the costs are high. It is estimated that it cost Chicago approximately $100 million in its failed attempt to win the 2016 Games (Smith, 2009).

Included in every city’s bid to host the Games is a projected cost. These costs can vary dramatically depending on what a city is planning in terms of security, city infrastructure, and venues. The four finalists for the 2016 Games presented proposed budgets ranging from $2.8 billion to $14.4 billion (Associated Press, 2009a, 2009b). The London 2012 Games have increased the cost of hosting the Games on multiple occasions and, in July 2010, in order to meet governmental budgets, $41.2 million was cut from the Games’ fund leaving the overall cost at $14.2 billion with two years to go (Associated Press, 2010).

Although costs are continually increasing with each edition of the Games, it should be noted that, while significantly less expensive in the past, the Games have never been cheap. The Lake Placid 1980 Games cost $363 million equalling less than $2 per person in the United States (using 1980 population data) as opposed to $6.30 per person for Salt Lake City and $8 for Atlanta (using 2008 population data) (Baade, Baumann, & Matheson, 2008).

Shaw (2008) criticises this type of spending in his work *Five Ring Circus*, writing,

> your government decides it’s more important to host a 17-day party than take care of the needy, the homeless and the dispossessed. Is this the action of a responsible or a corrupt and/or thoughtless government in thrall to special interests? (p. 38)

Those who hold this view are arguably justified in their belief that the money could be better spent. Despite the widespread belief (or hope) that the Olympics will have a positive economic impact, in addition to political gains, and provide an excuse for infrastructural updates within a city, little of this is typically the case. One glaring example is that of Montréal 1976, which left a debt so large it would not be repaid until 2006 (Zirin, 2008). Economists Baade and Matheson (2002) explain how “diverting scarce capital and other resources from more productive uses to the Olympics very likely translates into slower rates of economic growth than that which could be realized in the absence of hosting the Olympic Games” (pp. 145-146).
The legacy of the Olympic Games is fast becoming associated with high costs and potentially unmanageable debt. The need to spend more and out-shine the competition (both in bidding for and hosting the Games) has become a centrepiece of the Olympic Movement.

**Globalisation and the Olympic Movement.**

The worldwide nature of the Olympic Movement was established from the outset. The desire to continually include more and more nations (states) as participants and hosts of the Games led to the expansion of their reach. Along with this expansion, the IOC hoped to also promote the values of Olympism in these new areas. The reach of the Games was not only a positive for the IOC as a way to accomplish their goals, but it also was a product of, and reliant on, the increasing globalisation of the modern world. The ability for athletes and spectators to travel to the Games from around the world and the ability to reach new areas were dependent upon increasing links due to travel and communications improvements. However, along with this, and with the rise in the scale of the Games, came the expansion in the cost of the Games.

In order to cope with the rising costs of hosting the Olympic Games, and sustaining the IOC and its projects, there needed to be an increase in the revenue brought in. Although advertising had been part of the Games since its inception (IOC, 2012f), according to Barney, Wenn, and Martyn (2002), the branding of the Games as a commodity really began in Montréal in 1976, as this was the first time that the organising committee had the right to protect trademarked symbols for authorised use only. For these Games, 628 companies signed agreements, each worth CAN $50,000, leading to an intake of approximately CAN $5 million (after the deduction of costs), which was nowhere near the amount needed to finance the Games (Barney, Wenn, & Martyn, 2002).

The real turning point in the Olympic Movement, however, would come eight years later with Peter Ueberroth leading the marketing of Los Angeles 1984. By offering exclusive rights to companies that sponsored the Games, Ueberroth brought in $157.2 million through cash, goods, services, and so on, in addition to the sale of television rights for $286,914,000 (Barney et al., 2002). The ability to reach a worldwide audience of millions and the ability to associate with such a recognised brand as the Olympics is alluring for those who choose to become sponsors and that drives the ability to demand such sums from sponsors. Of course, these numbers
reflect the state of the Games in 1984, not the most recent Games in 2012. However, the trend has only continued upwards (IOC, n.d., 2012f).

The Olympic Programme (TOP) sponsorship scheme is the highest level of sponsorship in the Olympic Games (IOC, n.d.). Established in 1985, TOP runs in four-year cycles, each covering one Winter and one Summer Olympics (under the staggered system now employed) (IOC, 2012f). Each sponsor is branded an exclusive worldwide partner of the Games as well as a partner of the IOC, the two Games during the cycle, the two organising committees of those Games, all NOCs, and all Olympic teams competing in the Games (IOC, 2012f). Despite initial hesitation from some NOCs who were fearful of a reduction in their profits (by surrendering some of their ability to procure sponsors in their own nation-state) (Barney et al., 2002), TOP was eventually established and is one of the largest single sources of income in the Olympic Movement (IOC, 2012f). Since it’s initial cycle in 1985-1988, TOP revenue has grown from $96 million to $957 million in the most recent cycle from 2009-2012 (IOC, 2012f). With a roster of 11 companies from the United States, France, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, and Switzerland (IOC, 2012f), TOP demonstrates the worldwide reach of the Games and the desire of sponsors to reach a worldwide audience through the Games.

What is perhaps most notable about the large sums of money paid by broadcasters and sponsors alike is what impact that has on the Olympic Movement. The Games are very expensive to host, as was noted above, and these funds alleviate some of that strain. Barney et al. (2002) rightly observe,

> The IOC differs little from professional sport enterprises whose existence depends on the corporate sector. [...] without the infusion of corporate sector support and the careful nurturing of the Olympic brand, there would be fewer athletes at Olympic festivals, fewer events on the Olympic program, fewer bid cities, and greater public debt in cities staging the Games. (pp. 277-278)

Due to this, the IOC is constrained by the impact of the sponsors. In a sense, the IOC is unable to control the influence of corporations, and economic globalisation that accompanies them, as the funds they provide are the primary source of revenue that drives the Games. “When Games such as Atlanta receive over 70% of revenue from corporate sponsorship and television rights, the impact of corporate influence should not be understated” (Bousfield & Montsion, 2012, p. 830).
As Maguire, Barnard, Butler, and Golding (2008) argue, the values of Olympism have been overshadowed due to the influx of sponsorship and branding. They state:

The IOC purports to promote a message of internationalism, cosmopolitanism, environmentalism and ‘fair play’. [36] To achieve this, IOC officials defend their involvement with commercial interests on pragmatic grounds. Without such commercial support, officials argue, their movement would not achieve its goals of disseminating the ideals of Olympism. However, the development of the TOP programme and the policing of ambush advertising demonstrate the IOC’s current take on commercial activity. […] That is, the media/marketing/advertising/corporate nexus is concerned less with the IOC message, and more with building markets, constructing brand awareness and creating local and globalized consumers and identities. [39] (Maguire, Barnard, et al., 2008, p. 2050-2051)

The point being advanced is that claims that sponsorships are used as a way to further spread the values of Olympism cannot be supported, as the stronger force is the commercialisation of the Games. As noted above, the IOC is somewhat unable to avoid this as the sponsorship money is needed and yet it creates a disconnect between the promotion of Olympism and the ability of sponsors to capitalise on the Games as they see fit.

Whilst the IOC still controls the Games and sets the regulations that must be followed, they must also be acutely aware that the Games need to remain attractive to spectators in order to remain attractive to sponsors and to continue in the fashion that has become the norm. This desire to keep all parties interested can be seen in the recent push for newer sports (such as snowboard cross and ski cross in the Winter Games) that have the potential to attract a younger audience. However, perhaps the greatest resistance to the power of sponsors who use the worldwide nature of the event has been the ban on advertising within the venues. This is in direct contrast to most international and domestic professional sports, which actively find new ways to insert advertisements into the venue (both physically for those in the stadium and digitally for those watching at home).

The rise in technology, allowing for the fast dispersal of information and the extended reach of the Games, and therefore its sponsors, has had a direct impact on the Games. Globalisation has become embedded in the Games and, without
significant changes to how the Olympic Movement is run, it is going to remain firmly in place.

**Human rights.**

The high cost of the Games is not the only frequently voiced complaint. The attention, or lack thereof, to human rights by the IOC has been a complaint for decades. The 1936 Games in Berlin, the debate over apartheid (especially in the 1960s and 1970s), and the 2008 Games in Beijing have all been used to attack the IOC’s stance on human rights.

The IOC prides itself on being an open, inclusive organisation, free from discrimination and one that stands up for social justice. However, the reality differs greatly from this ideal. The legacy of the Olympic Movement has been tainted, in the eyes of many, by the recurrent failure of the IOC to stand up to injustice.

Perhaps the most contested Games in history, the 1936 Games in Berlin were a political test for the IOC. Having already awarded the Games to Berlin on 13 May 1931, the IOC was faced with a new hurdle when Adolf Hitler assumed control of the government on 30 January 1933—six days after the formation of the organising committee for the Olympic Games (Guttmann, 1992). Hitler chose to use these Games as a propaganda tool and the IOC did little to stop him. Even with assurances to the contrary, there was a systematic exclusion of Jews from the German Olympic team (Guttmann, 1992). This provoked calls for boycotts from several nation-states, including the United States; however, these did not succeed, in part, due to the influence of American Olympic Association member Avery Brundage.

Brundage was an avid believer in the Olympic Movement as well as the idea that it should be kept distinct from the politics of the world. He used these beliefs to justify ignoring what was really happening in Germany saying: “sport ‘cannot, with good grace or propriety, interfere in the internal, political, religious or racial affairs of any country or group’” (Zirin, 2008, p. 77). In addition, Brundage was also an unrepentant Nazi sympathiser. Often called “Slavery Avery,” he was unapologetic in his steadfast support for the Nazi regime going so far as to offer justification for the exclusion of Jews from the German Olympic team (Zirin, 2008). Because of such attitudes, the Games were allowed to proceed in Berlin where Olympic precedent was set. Berlin was the first Games to have an overtly lavish Opening Ceremony—complete with swastikas lining the walls of the stadium—and a Torch Relay. In spite of the “success” of the Games and the implementation of what many see as
cornerstones of the modern Games, Berlin 1936 remains mired in controversy as it painted the IOC as unwilling to engage in politics to correct an injustice.

The IOC has had to deal with similar allegations again recently in regards to the 2008 Beijing Games. Critics decried China’s human rights violations and its continuing occupation of Tibet and criticised the IOC for not speaking out against these actions. As discussed above, protests erupted across the world in the lead-up to the Games, often proving disruptive of the Olympic Movement as the Torch Relay was either stopped or re-routed in many cities along the way.

Earlier, in 1968, the IOC made it clear that they would not allow the Olympic Games to be used in national politics as the United States Civil Rights Movement continued. In Mexico City in 1968, gold medallist Tommie Smith and bronze medallist John Carlos, of the United States, took to the podium and protested the state of race relations at home. They stood with heads bowed, black-gloved fists raised, black beads around their necks, black socks on, and Olympic Human Rights Campaign buttons on their jackets (Zirin, 2008). For this political statement, IOC President Avery Brundage promptly sent the two home from the Games for violating the rules of the Olympic Charter (Zirin, 2008).

Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter expressly states: “No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas” (IOC, 2011, p 91). This is intended to keep politics separate from the Olympics with the hope of a competition of goodwill. However, the definition of politics is not clear. The use of national flags and the use of the Games as a way to increase the soft power that a host nation-state holds in international politics links the Games with politics in an intimate manner. The IOC itself is also not above getting involved in politics. This is done, however, with careful consideration of the costs and benefits of doing so. For example, in October 2009, the IOC was granted observer status by the UN General Assembly, giving the IOC the ability to promote sport and the values of the Olympics in new ways and in a distinctly political setting (IOC, 2009).

However, the most prominent example of IOC involvement in politics was the banning of South Africa from the Olympic Movement during the apartheid era. Despite racial discrimination being clearly contradictory to the sixth fundamental principle of Olympism (IOC, 2011), the South African NOC was not officially banned from the Olympic Movement until 1970 (after not having competed in the
Games in 1964 and 1968) (Ibrahim, 1991). It was not until 1991, with the first stages of the repeal of apartheid and promises of change and equal treatment in sport for all, that the IOC lifted the ban on South African participation (Ibrahim, 1991).

Perhaps the distinction should be made between political actions that benefit the IOC and those that do not. The use of the Games to advance the agenda of the host nation-state (whether it is proving economic clout or any other goal) benefits the IOC as it ensures that there will be cities willing to bid to host the Games. Furthermore, the nationalism associated with the Games (and the political messages that can be inferred from those) also benefits the IOC as it ensures the continuing interest of spectators who wish to express their national identity. Lastly, the example of the IOC involving itself in the issue of apartheid was done after much delay. Hoberman (1986) asserts that the expulsion of South Africa was “the preservation of the movement’s pluralism for its own sake” (p. 30). It could be seen as a benefit to the IOC to take action at that time as it helped to salvage their reputation and allow them to appear to stand up for their stated belief in non-discrimination. However, not all politics benefit the IOC and these are the political issues that the IOC aims to exclude.

Looking at examples such as these, it is possible to see that the IOC has a mixed history on human rights. A questionable adherence to the official belief that sports and politics should not meet has, at times, drawn sharp criticism from those who feel that the IOC has a responsibility to use its status to advocate for change. The reluctance of the IOC to step in, however, has not kept politics out of sport. The two have become entwined, for better or worse, in the Olympic Movement.

**Political Games.**

The Olympic ideology holds that sports and politics should stay separate, despite the desire to use sport to promote universal goodwill. One common criticism of the Olympics is that politics are built into the Games and the IOC simply chooses which issues it will address as it becomes convenient or too big to ignore, such as the case of South Africa and the policies of apartheid. It is often believed that politics are inbuilt in the Games due to the affiliation of athletes to national teams. If the Games are not supposed to be political, why are athletes not allowed to compete as individuals or on sponsored teams? However, the affiliation to a national team is no longer intended as a purely political statement. During the time of de Coubertin, it
was about national pride and which nation-state could be superior. Yet, as the Games have moved from their origins as a way to gain prestige off the field of battle and as a place for the preparations for battle, nations(-states) have remained as a way of identification.

The Olympic Charter refers to the territory that an NOC covers as a “country” and stipulates that this term refers to “an independent State recognised by the international community” (IOC, 2011, p. 62). However, despite the use of independence and the recognition of the international community as criteria for entry into the Olympic Movement, the IOC attempts to keep the politics of nation-states out of the Games. The politics are, in theory, though not in practice, eliminated due to the stipulation that NOCs be completely independent of political interference (IOC, 2011). With the stipulation of an autonomous NOC, the Olympics are using nations(-states) as a way to separate athletes into teams rather than using them as an overtly political statement. One reason that the nation(-state) may still be used is that it is a way to draw interest from spectators. With many spectators not following Olympic sports on a regular basis, the identification with the nation(-state) provides a reason to watch the Games and this identification would not be achieved with teams of corporations or individuals.

However, just as observers may not understand the intent of an individual waving a flag, the general population may not understand the intent of the IOC. Although overt political statements are not an intended outcome of the organisation of the Games by nations(-states), the general population is able to project their own political beliefs onto this system, causing the Games to take on political characteristics regardless of the intentions.

Despite the attempts to keep politics separate from the Games, they have managed to become a mainstay in the Olympic Movement as groups are able to use the high profile of the Games to draw attention to a variety of political causes. Two of the most well known instances of politics colliding with the Olympics were deadly events. The first took place in Mexico City days before the Opening Ceremony of the

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7 Despite far less stringent organisation during the early Games and the ability to enter as individuals until the Stockholm 1912 Games (Gruneau, 1984), national representation was still a feature of early editions. Mandell (1976) recounts the first Olympic Games while describing the outbursts of national pride from spectators at seeing their national flag raised in honour of a victorious fellow citizen.
1968 Games. The second occurred during the 1972 Munich Games and both showed how the Olympic stage could be used to draw attention to a message.

On 2 October 1968, ten days before the Opening Ceremony of the Mexico City Games, Mexican police and military officials in Tlateloco Square shot into a crowd of student demonstrators “angry at what they saw as the betrayal of the Mexican Revolution by an entrenched bureaucratic party” (Guttmann, 1992, p. 129). Estimates of the number killed range anywhere between 200 and 2,000 people as the Mexican government adamantly downplayed the event (Richman & Diaz-Cortes, 2008). The Games went on as planned but increased attention was given to the Mexican government and its attempts to cover up the events of that day.

Four years later in Munich, the political spotlight was back on the Olympics for another deadly incident. On 5 September 1972, a group of Palestinian terrorists, called Black September, took hostage ten members of the Israeli delegation (a coach was also killed in the initial struggle). The Israelis were held as the terrorists attempted to negotiate the release of over 200 political prisoners being held by Israel (Toohey & Veal, 2000). The German government intervened with a plan to free the hostages on the false promise that the terrorists would be allowed safe passage out of Germany. However, when they realised they had been tricked, the terrorists killed the hostages (Toohey & Veal, 2000).

In both of these cases, politics was an intruder at the Olympics in attempts to bring awareness to a cause. These events proved to the world, once again, that the Olympics are a stage, for better or worse, from which a message can be delivered. But what of the Games that become the message?

Boycotts.

Boycott movements are not new to the Olympics. Although boycotts are technically a violation of the Olympic Charter as “each NOC is obliged to participate in the Games of the Olympiad by sending athletes” (IOC, 2011, p. 56), boycotting nations (states) have been allowed to continue their participation in subsequent Games. As mentioned previously, there were serious calls for a boycott of the 1936 Games from multiple nation-states, however, boycotts became a staple of the Olympics in the 1970s and 1980s. The 1976 Montréal Games, 1980 Moscow Games, 1984 Los Angeles Games, and 1988 Seoul Games all experienced boycotts. In each case, the Games themselves were turned into a political statement by the boycotting nations (states).
In 1976, the boycott was a continuation of the debate over race relations in sport. The policies of apartheid in South Africa continued to be prominent in the world of sports and the expulsion of the South African NOC from the Olympics did not exempt the Games from suffering its effects. Twenty-eight African nation-states boycotted the Montréal Games because a delegation from New Zealand would be participating (Stockdale, 2012). Tanzania, which organised the boycott (IOC, 2013c), and the others were upset that New Zealand was allowed to compete after their national rugby team had toured South Africa (Stockdale, 2012). The 1976 Olympic Games, through the boycott by these 28 African nation-states, became a commentary on apartheid.

The 1980 Moscow Games and the 1984 Los Angeles Games were two sides of the same conflict being played out in front of the world. Against the backdrop of the Cold War, these Games provided a sporting parallel to the political standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Moscow Games suffered a boycott led by the United States, reducing the number of participating nations(-states) to 80, the lowest since 1956 (IOC, 2013d). The boycott was a political strategy by these nations(-states) to protest the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 (Tomlinson, 2000). During the following Summer Olympics in Los Angeles in 1984, the Soviet Union led a boycott based largely on revenge (Zirin, 2008). Despite the boycott, however, Los Angeles staged a successful Games, bringing in a profit and hosting 140 nations(-states) (a record at the time) (IOC, 2013b). The two warring superpowers which led these boycott movements, used these two Games as symbolic Cold War battlegrounds of East versus West. The absence of many delegations from the Western bloc in 1980 and the Eastern bloc in 1984 reflected a divided world.

Lastly, in 1988, North Korea led a small boycott of the Games held in Seoul, South Korea (IOC, 2013e). Just as in 1980 and 1984, the boycott was based on political solidarity among the abstaining nations(-states). The four nation-states which boycotted Seoul (North Korea, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, and Cuba (IOC, 2013e)) all had communist governments while South Korea, the perpetual enemy of its northern neighbours, embraced capitalism and was on a (shaky) path to democracy.

In addition to numerous other attempts, these boycotts have all had an impact on Olympic history. With Olympism touting the ideals of peace, harmony, and universal understanding, boycotts can be seen to stand in stark contrast to these beliefs by using the Games to undermine other nation-states or to speak out against
their policies. However, some boycotts, actual or attempted, can be reasoned as holding up the values of Olympism. The calls for boycotts of Berlin 1936 or the boycott of Montréal 1976 were acts by those nations(-states), or individuals, standing up against a perceived injustice in the host nation-state. The Olympic Charter lists its sixth fundamental principle of Olympism as: “Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement” (IOC, 2011, p. 11). From this perspective, a boycott of the Games is not necessarily destructive to the Olympic legacy or against the values of Olympism. Perhaps some boycotts should actually be regarded as standing up for Olympism when the IOC fails to.

When exploring examples such as the support for the 1936 Games, even when faced with evidence of the systemic exclusion of Jewish athletes from the German team, or the lack of action for so long against South Africa under apartheid, there is reason to believe that the ideals of Olympism are not always a primary concern of the IOC. The continuation of the Games and the desire to include as many nations(-states) as possible, so as to ensure a larger commercial reach, appear to be considered as primary while the Olympic Charter’s calls for non-discrimination (IOC, 2011) are pushed aside.

**The Olympic Games as Spectacle**

The history and the legacy of the Games are not the only important aspects to understand. Whilst they are necessary for a complete understanding of the Games as they currently operate, examining the spectacle of the Games is equally important. The Olympic Games is a quadrennial festival of sport that has evolved over time from comparatively small beginnings to a large-scale event costing billions of dollars. The impact of this change should not be ignored, as it is one of the reasons that the Games are able to occupy the position they do in the modern world. The ability to reach a worldwide audience and promote one’s city and/or nation-state is a crucial element in the continued success of the Games.

There are three terms that are regularly used to describe the Olympic Games: media event, mega-event, and spectacle. All three are legitimate descriptions of the Games and in each case there are certain characteristics that are being emphasised. The first, a media event, is characterised by the presence of the media, as the name suggests. Marivoet (2006) states: “As Jean-Marie Brohm (1992) has noted, a sporting performance is meaningless without the knowledge of the public at large, and so it is
difficult, if not impossible, to dissociate the sporting aspect from the media aspect” (p. 136). This is certainly seen in the Olympic Games with the overwhelming presence of television cameras and media personnel outnumbering the athletes (IOC, 2013a, 2013f). The media is an important aspect of the Olympics not simply because of their presence but because of what that attendance indicates. The interest of the media, particularly the United States television media, provides crucial revenue to the IOC (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006), which contributes to the continuance of the Olympic Movement.

Furthermore, the large turnout of the media allows for the dissemination of the messages presented within the Games and permits those narratives to be adapted for national audiences. Chen, Colapinto, and Luo (2012) explain that “sports media events and especially Olympic Games can be occasions to improve the image of a country” (p. 188), putting forth the idea that the use of the media provides benefits to a host nation-state. The advantage derives from the ability to reach beyond those in attendance. Alkemeyer and Richartz (1993) explain how “today, modern communications technology, particularly satellite TV, is responsible for the existence of a ‘global village,’ that can be likened to a worldwide theater” (p. 84). In the 21 years since, this statement has been reinforced through the development of new technologies and new ways of disseminating information quickly and through multiple streams in order to reach the maximum possible audience. At the same time, Housel (2007) and Liang (2010) remind us that national media are able to represent the images presented during the Games, including the Ceremonies, to fit their own narratives.

However, the Olympic Games are not a media event in the same way as a regular season Major League Baseball game can be considered one. The difference in scale between a baseball game and the Olympics is considerable and, therefore, in addition to being a media event, the Olympics are considered a mega-event. Roche (2000) explains that mega-events “can be said to be important elements in ‘official’ versions of public culture” (p. 1), and this can be seen in the Olympic Games through the use of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies as a way to present a mythical narrative of the nation-state. This will be considered in further detail in the following sections. For now, what is important to take from a discussion on mega-events is the way in which the Olympics have come to fit the model. Roche (2000) defines mega-events as “large-scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) events which have
a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance” (p. 1). Tomlinson and Young (2006) expand the definition further with the belief that a sports mega-event—particularly in the regular internationally inclusive events, and when constituted as a media event and global consumption—has worldwide impact. Such events are produced by alliances of the national state, regional politics, and expansion of the global consumer market. (p. 4)

Finally, Horne and Manzenreiter (2006) note that there are two defining features of mega-events: “firstly, that they are deemed to have significant consequences for the host city, region or nation in which they occur, and secondly, that they will attract considerable media coverage” (p. 2).

Considering these definitions together, it is possible to see how the Olympic Games are considered to be a mega-event. The Games indisputably occur on a large scale with mass appeal from an audience of billions. Furthermore, the international impact of the Games is one of the reasons that nation-states continue to host the Olympics—the opportunity to place the host nation-state on the world stage and display its economic, cultural, and political power (Chen et al., 2012; Hargreaves & Ferrando, 1997). Through the financing of the Games and the security forces in use (often a mixture of private companies, local police, and national defence forces) it is possible to see how the city and the nation-state must work together in order to host the Games successfully. This can perhaps be seen in clear detail through the 1992 Barcelona Games where local and national groups worked together despite holding different goals for the event (Hargreaves & Ferrando, 1997). The impact of the Games is also undeniable, whether one believes it to be for better or worse. The changes to the landscape of the host city through the construction of new stadiums and the possible infrastructural updates as well as the lasting economic impacts (be it debt or increased income from tourists or investors) all stem from the decision to host the Games. Finally, as has been demonstrated, the involvement of the media is not only considerable but also unavoidable.

The final term that is often used in relation to the Olympics is spectacle. Although this term is common in day-to-day usage, a spectacle in this sense has a more limited meaning. Tomlinson and Young (2006) define a “global sport spectacle,” such as the Olympic Games, as an event that has come to involve the majority of the nations of the world, that is transmitted globally, that foregrounds the sculptured and commodified body
and orchestrates a physical display of the body politic, and that attracts large and regular followings of on-site spectators for the live contest or event. (p. 3)

The application of this definition to the Olympics is easily done with two and a half weeks of sporting contests and millions of individuals attending the Games live. However, what is noteworthy is the way in which the Games can be compared to more general ideas about what constitutes a spectacle. It should come as no surprise that the Olympic Games are one of the biggest sporting events in the world and, therefore, would fit most definitions aimed at large-scale sporting events.

Manzenreiter (2006) paints a detailed picture of what constitutes a spectacle saying:

Spectacles in general aspire after grandeur, and acknowledgement as unique, exclusive and extraordinary. Ritual symbolism, various staging techniques and the distributional channels of national and international media networks are used to achieve these goals. As the whole spectacle adapts itself around its own sensual, audiovisual potentials, it is the sensually stimulating, dynamic and exciting form that attracts mass participation and gives the spectacle its distinctive visual appearance. (p. 156)

Again, it is possible to match the Olympics to this definition using examples such as the competition for new, innovative, and grand Opening and Closing Ceremonies or the numerous rituals imposed by the IOC in the formal staging of the Games. With the changes over time to the programme and the operation of the Games, the Olympics have come to embody the spectacular.

Perhaps most tellingly, the Olympics are able to satisfy the interchangeable audience-participant divide. Addo (2009) believes that where spectacle is being produced, there is a performance, and, by implication, an audience-performer divide. However, as case studies of the ta'ziyeh, a genre of traditional Iranian theater, suggest, these are not strict boundaries and they may shift at any moment, thus including the audience in the performance, and vice versa (Dabashi 2005). (p. 220)

In the case of the Olympic Games, it is possible to see this concept come to life as the audience stages their own performance. These performances entertain those viewing on television as well as the officials, volunteers, and athletes as those in the stands dress in costumes or face paint, wave flags, and participate in chants and generic cheering.
Although these definitions and examples give only a brief idea of how the Olympic Games can be considered as a media event, mega-event, and spectacle, they lay the foundation upon which to understand the Games.

The Ceremonies

Each edition of the Olympic Games includes an Opening and Closing Ceremony. These events are typically large-scale productions that tell a story about the host city or nation-state and are a way for the organising committee to leave its mark on the Games. Each Ceremony represents a chance for the hosts to present a mythical narrative about their nation-state and to show the ways in which they can attempt to outperform their predecessors. Through all of this, there is a battle between the messages of nationalism and Olympism. David Atkins, producer of the Sydney 2000 Ceremonies and executive producer of the Vancouver 2010 Ceremonies, said: “It’s one of the few moments where we really, truly become a global village with the exchange of cultures, comradeship, companionship, and where international relations can be expanded, explored and enjoyed. All of those things are embedded” (“Producing Olympic Games,” 2008). Perhaps this is the case but it seems to overstate the presence of the values Olympism in the Ceremonies as will be explored in Chapter 8.

The Opening Ceremony is able to draw in the audience and reintroduce them to the Olympics and to the host nation-state while the Closing Ceremony is the final chance to make an impression and to ensure that the Games are remembered favourably. Each Ceremony is a performance put on not only to entertain the audience, but also to provide a lens through which to view the host city and nation-state. Drawing on the work of Margaret Wilkerson (1992), Carlson (2004) writes, “theatre provides an opportunity for a community to come together and reflect upon itself,” serving not only as a “mirror through which a society can reflect upon itself” but also as an aid to shaping “the perceptions of that culture through the power of its imaging.” (p. 214)

This is the approach taken by each organising committee. The Olympic Ceremonies are large-scale spectacles through which the members of the host nation-state are able to look back on their own culture, identity, and history whilst others are introduced to a particular way of thinking about the host nation-state with the hope of garnering a favourable reaction.
Opening Ceremony.

The Olympics is, at its heart, a sporting competition. Athletes compete against one another and the organising committee cannot ensure that the host nation-state is well represented on the medals table by controlling the results. However, there is an implicit competition in the Games that has developed over time: to have the best Opening Ceremony. This is an informal competition and its outcome is highly subjective as personal opinions of what constitutes a great Opening Ceremony differ wildly from person to person. Nonetheless, this does not stop each host nation-state from attempting to out-shine previous hosts.

This competition, and a desire to prove that one host nation-state is better than the previous host, can trace its roots back to the 1984 Los Angeles Games where the Opening Ceremony was produced by Steven Spielberg in a display of the magic of Hollywood. Since 1984, each organising committee has tried to create something bigger and better through the Opening Ceremony: “Allying Hollywood showbiz flair with U.S. political rhetoric and ideology, the ceremonies set a standard and an expectation for spectacle that succeeding host nations have felt compelled to emulate or to surpass” (Tomlinson, 2000, p. 171). Gotham (2005) believes,

as the standards of what constitutes spectacle and novelty constantly escalate, the extraordinary becomes ordinary and tourism becomes “the chance to go and see what has become trite” (Debord, 1994, no. 168). The main point is that spectacles must continually stimulate new forms of gratification and revelry if they are to remain attractive and profitable. (p. 234)

The one-upmanship of the Opening Ceremony certainly fits with this theory. As the Opening Ceremony is constantly becoming bigger and flashier, the audience comes to expect this type of a performance. With the spectacle, as opposed to the sport, being a primary reason for many to take interest in the Olympics, this is an important aspect to consider when bidding to host the Games. The IOC needs to sell tickets and keep audiences interested in order to continue to operate from one edition of the Games to the next. This competition not only helps the running of the Games from an economic standpoint but also, as mentioned, gives the host nation-states a chance to prove their worth on the world stage, keeping nation-states interested in bidding for that chance.

Perhaps the epitome of this desire to out-do the previous host in recent memory was the Beijing 2008 Opening Ceremony. With thousands of performers, use of all available space within the stadium, and larger than life props (IOC, 2010),
Beijing 2008 was a show of Chinese efficiency as much as it was a story of a mythical narrative. The ability of the performers to work in unison with such precision and on such a large scale left many in awe of what they had just witnessed. It was a common refrain that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to top Beijing (reinforcing the idea of a competition) and comparisons were inevitably drawn both before and after London 2012’s Opening Ceremony (Brennan, 2012; Forde, 2012; Lyall, 2012; Voigt, 2012; Williams, 2012). Of course, with a subjectively judged competition such as this, there is no singular way to determine who has produced the better Ceremony; aspects such as scale, ingenuity, and technology are all taken into account.

What is perhaps more interesting to focus on, rather than who out-did whom in these terms, is to look at the content of the shows. The Opening Ceremony is regulated by the IOC, requiring aspects such as raising the flags of the Olympic Games and host nation-state, accompanied by their respective anthems, and the parade of nations. The required elements, however, take up only approximately half the length of the Opening with the remaining time left to the organising committee to stage a show of its own design. What is noteworthy about the display is how the nation-state is the prominent feature. Even the elements required by the IOC are imbued with national sentiment. Hogan (2003) states:

Although the ceremony ostensibly celebrates all member nations, in practice, both compulsory and interpretive elements mirror the values and experiences of the host nation. This narrative serves not only as an affirmation of national identity but also as an extended advertisement for the host nation and an opportunity to promote tourism, international corporate investment, trade, and political ideologies. (p. 102)

The Opening Ceremony provides a chance to celebrate the nation-state on the world stage. Edensor (2002) comments that “the most obvious and recognisable ways in which national identity is performed are at those national(ist) ceremonies with which we are familiar, the grand, often stately occasions when the nation and its symbolic attributes are elevated in public display” (p. 72). Thus, it is commonplace for the primary purpose of the Opening Ceremony to be a way to promote the host nation-state and show the positive features associated with it. Although notions of Olympism, particularly that of unity, are routinely incorporated in some aspects of the Ceremony, the nation-state is clearly the main focus.
Tomlinson (1996) depicted the Seoul and Barcelona Opening Ceremonies as “the collapse of history into a contemporary mythical narrative” (p. 597). What this means is that there is a stylised and edited version of a nation-state’s history, or narrative, that is being presented. Hall (1992) describes the “‘narrative of nation’” as “‘a set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols and rituals which stand for or represent the shared experiences, sorrows, and triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation’” (as cited in Hogan, 2003, p. 101). Billig (1995), while not using the term “mythical narrative” explains how “nations often do not have a single history, but there are competing tales to be told. […] The historical tales emerge from struggles for hegemony” (p. 71). He continues stating, ‘the voice of the nation’ is a fiction; it tends to overlook the factional struggles and the deaths of unsuccessful nations, which make such a fiction possible.

Thus, national histories are continually being re-written, and the re-writing reflects current balances of hegemony (Billig, 1995, p. 71)

This narrative may be referred to as mythical (or fictional as Billig (1995) claims) because of the editing that has taken place with events being omitted for their negative connotations (typically) and others being held up as more significant because they contribute to a positive image. This analysis can be extended beyond Seoul and Barcelona into each edition of the Games. In this way, sport, and specifically the Olympics, is being used to disseminate and enforce an institutional nationalism not only among the citizens of the host nation-state, but also among all those watching or taking part.

Thus, the Opening Ceremony can serve as a resource to maintain and reinforce a national identity to citizens of the nation-state and to change the perceptions of “outsiders” through a piecemeal historical presentation. “The role of an Olympic ceremony’s artistic director and of all those involved in the making of the Olympics is thus not only to express what is already known and established but also to transform it and model it” (Traganou, 2010, p. 237). However, it is important to note that when a mythical narrative is constructed, the individual or group responsible can choose to frame the narrative in whichever way they desire. Because of this, there is no single mythical narrative; there is only the one that is being employed at that moment.

However, highlighting the presence of common features and themes is not meant to imply that the Opening Ceremony (as well as the Closing Ceremony) has not gone unchanged since its inception. It has become more elaborate and athletes have
started to take advantage of their place in the Ceremonies to take photographs and participate by watching the event unfold. Alkemeyer and Richartz (1993) assert that the changes in the Ceremonies have transformed them into “spectacles, an accumulation of performances with ritual traces that increasingly took on the character of entertainment” (p. 85). This view of what a spectacle is and how the Olympics has become one is not wrong but it is simplistic. Rather, Kellner’s (2001) description of a spectacle as “‘those phenomena of media culture that embody contemporary society’s basic values, serve to enculturate individuals into its way of life, and dramatize its conflicts and modes of conflict resolution’” (as cited in Manzenreiter, 2006, p. 148), provides a more complex and fitting account within which the Ceremonies can be considered. The performance is certainly a spectacle in the sense of being something extravagant to look at and be entertained by, yet it goes deeper than that.

What has happened with the Opening Ceremony, in particular, is that the nation-state has been increasingly prioritised. It is not, as Alkemeyer and Richartz (1993) claim, that, “long-term, identity-forming effectiveness of the Games’ symbolism has been given up” (p. 87). It is arguably the opposite. The host nation-state’s history, traditions, politics, technology, and culture, among other things, are all on display during the Opening Ceremony, which invites the citizens of the host nation-state to reaffirm their national identity through the mythical narrative presented. In addition, it also introduces the rest of the world to this preferred image. As the national is prioritised, there are more opportunities for individuals to identify with the nation(-state)—whether it is the host nation-state or another participating nation(-state).

**Closing Ceremony.**

The Closing Ceremony has a different function from the Opening Ceremony. MacAloon (1982) explains, “the Closing Ceremonies are rites of reaggregation with ordinary life” (p. 106). The Closing Ceremony marks the end of the Games and the period of celebration that accompanies it. He continues, saying, “here the role of the national symbols is altogether reduced” (MacAloon, 1982, p. 106). The reality of this claim is fragile as will be demonstrated in Chapter 8. The Closing Ceremony is still primarily used as a celebration of the host nation-state although there are greater instances of Olympism and the informal competition and one-upmanship is no longer a focus. Instead, the focus has shifted to a celebration and an end to the two and a half
weeks of competition. The host nation-state is provided with one final chance to leave an impression on the world and the next host has its first chance for self-promotion.

The primary distinctions that can be seen from the Opening Ceremony are in two particular rituals that take place. The first is the entry of the athletes into the stadium. Since 1956, it has been customary that the athletes enter the stadium in a large mob rather than as segmented national teams (MacAloon, 1982). Although teams still wear uniforms, they are not labelled as they enter. Unlike the Opening Ceremony, the name placards and national flags are carried in separately with one athlete designated as the flag bearer and national representative. This change from the Opening Ceremony, MacAloon (1982) argues, “is a symbolic expression of the ‘human kindness’ believed to be necessary to all men and women, a final display and emotional proof that patriotism and individual achievement are not incompatible with true internationalism but are indispensable to it” (p. 107). The contrast to the nationalism and the portrayal of divisions in the Opening Ceremony is striking.

The second event that is significantly different to the Opening Ceremony is the fact that another nation-state has a chance to address the audience. As a preview of what to expect in four years time, the next host nation-state is given the opportunity to present a short display of their own. In this instance, the focus may still be nationalism, however, it is not the typical nationalism of the host nation-state that has been promoted over the course of the Games.

What is achieved by using the Ceremonies in this way is the creation of a world distinct from the “real,” an alternate world, through a mythical narrative of history. The Olympics are promoted as something extraordinary and as an event that brings the world together. According to Huizinga (1955), “the participants in the rite are convinced that the action actualizes and effects a definite beautification, brings about an order of things higher than that in which they customarily live” (p. 14). If the audience is persuaded by what is seen and believe in this other world that is being constructed, then the organisers have achieved their goal and the messages being advanced—of nationalism, Olympism, and sportsmanship to name but a few—will be more easily accepted.

Durkheim (1915) writes:

social thought, owing to the imperative authority that is in it, has an efficacy that individual thought could never have; by the power which it has over our minds, it can make us see things in whatever light it pleases; it adds to reality
or deducts from it according to the circumstances. Thus there is one division of nature where the formula of idealism is applicable almost to the letter: this is the social kingdom. Here more than anywhere else, the idea is the reality. (p. 228)

These claims to a social realm can be applied to the Olympic Games, providing a further explanation of the power of the narratives presented to the audience and, indeed, the power of the Games to use the forces of nationalism and Olympism in tandem. Addo (2009) takes a similar approach, noting that certain environments are more conducive to the suggestions of social thought.

For utterances or actions to be ritually efficacious, they must set up the appropriate conditions for agents to receive them as such. I would argue that spectacle is one such condition of ritual. People are socialized to expect and respond to its arresting and captivating effects in order for societies’ tensions and hierarchies to be made, periodically at least, more bearable. (Addo, 2009, p. 229)

The reality in which we live can be presented to us in a neat package with a positive spin during the Ceremonies precisely because it is a spectacle. Of course, in order to fully understand these theories and readings of the Ceremonies, it is necessary to explore a specific example.

**Conclusion**

The importance of the history of the Olympic Games should not be underestimated. The gradual evolution of the Games has greatly impacted upon the current spectacle witnessed every four years and the origins of the Games are still strongly felt. The interplay between the nationalism that was embedded into the Games early on has only continued and has consistently worked with and against the values of Olympism that are so clearly enumerated in the Olympic Charter, if not always in practice.

The rituals of the Games from the Torch Relay to the Opening and Closing Ceremonies are vital to the understanding of the Games because they can be controlled and manipulated more easily than the sporting contests. How these are used to advance the position of the host nation-state as well as nationalism and Olympism will be discussed in further detail in Chapters 6 and 8. However, it is important to recognise the impact they can have through their use as a protest site (such as the
Beijing 2008 Torch Relay) or as a site for self-promotion (such as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies).

However, it is necessary to understand the conflicts the Games engender through the IOC’s contradictory policies and actions on the role of politics in the Games and the values that the IOC espouses and their willingness to overlook violations of these. Although the Games are highly popular with millions in attendance while billions more watch around the world, they are not without their critics who question the legacy that the Games leave behind and what value they truly hold in the modern world.

Before delving further into the Olympics by exploring London 2012, it is necessary to examine how this research was conducted. In the next chapter, the methodology and methods that informed this work will be explored, providing the paradigmatic context through which the discussion of the London Games can be viewed.
Chapter 5 – Methods and Methodology

Introduction

When setting out to explore such broad topics as proposed in this research, there is always the question of how to examine the subject at hand closely enough without sacrificing the broad picture that is desired. In narrowing the ways in which to study nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation in the Olympic Movement, the primary intention was to ensure that this was not a singular case study. With the Olympics being part of a continual process, it seemed necessary to ensure that the conclusions drawn in this work were as generalisable as possible to other iterations of the Games. While considering a case study of London 2012, it became clear that this was one way in which to draw general conclusions. Although each edition of the Games is unique and shaped by many individual factors, such as the culture of the host nation-state and the political atmosphere of the time, the Olympic Games are still part of a system operated in a semi-standardised manner under a guiding ideology. By looking in depth at a single edition of the Games, and using occasional comparisons with past Games as needed, it is possible to explore practices and behaviours that may recur at other Olympics and, therefore, gain an understanding of the wider Olympic Movement. It was on this basis that the choice of a case study of London 2012 developed.

In the following section, the methodological considerations that have influenced this research will be explored. From this, a brief exploration of the theoretical underpinnings of the various methods that have impacted upon this work will be undertaken. Lastly, I will outline and examine my chosen methods and explain how they were used in the collection of relevant data.

Methodology

There are a number of competing approaches within social scientific research, however, it is not necessary to gain an accurate count but, rather, to understand what the choice of one approach over another means. The most basic starting point to compare competing theories is the relationship between epistemology and ontology. Avis (2003) holds that “epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge and, in particular, what justifications can be offered in support of the beliefs that we hold to be true” (p. 997). In other words, epistemology is about what is known and how it is known—is truth a fact waiting to be discovered or is truth an abstract that we ourselves create? Ontology, on the other hand, is about the nature of reality—is there
one reality or multiple? Is it independent of us or dependent upon us (Clarke, 2009)?
The way in which all of these epistemological and ontological questions are answered
will inform the choice of an approach to research.

Koro-Ljungberg (2008) provides a basic outline of some of the common paradigms used in social scientific research explaining that positivism tends towards prediction, interpretivism tends towards description and understanding, and poststructuralism tends towards deconstruction. Although these are by no means the only paradigms used, they are some of the most commonly discussed in social scientific research. For this research, both positivism and interpretivism were weighed and have been compared below.

Positivism is typically associated with quantitative studies (Bryman, 1984) with the association largely attributed to the seeming compatibility of positivist beliefs and quantitative methods. The use of scientific principles, a desire to predict outcomes and generalise patterns, and a focus on objectivity and replication are of primary importance to both positivists and quantitative researchers (Avis, 2003; Bryman, 1984). Standing in contrast to this is the conflation of interpretivism and qualitative studies. Blaikie (1993) explains that interpretivism “accept[s] that knowledge of the social world must be achieved by immersion in some part of it in order to learn the ‘local’ language, meanings and rules” (p. 203). This view fits with the approach of ethnography, for instance, and supports the idea that qualitative research has a focus on subjectivity and insider viewpoints (Avis, 2003). Clarke (2009) also points out that interpretivism, perhaps obviously, has a focus on interpretation of the data and the world around us. Positivism, on the other hand, places an emphasis on testing and the use of the scientific method to find conclusive, objective answers (Avis, 2003). Of course, these associations of positivism and quantitative research and interpretivism and qualitative research are not inevitable. It is possible to use quantitative methods within an interpretivist paradigm just as it is possible to use qualitative methods within a positivist paradigm. The choice of paradigm is important, not exclusively because of the commonly attached methods, but because of how those paradigms inform the methods of data collection, analysis, and the eventual conclusions reached.

For the purposes of this research, an interpretivist paradigm has formed the basis of the work wherein subjectivity is not to be seen as a lesser form of scientific inquiry than in studies that claim complete objectivity. As will be argued throughout,
there is no objective reality to be discovered through this research; interpretations are necessary. Unlike with positivist research, however, the aim of this work is not to predict the future. Rather, this work seeks to understand and explain the present.

Contrary to quantitative research, many qualitative studies take a more interpretivist view. In an interpretivist paradigm, the construction of reality is a central element (Blaikie, 1993). One ontological assumption that can be made of interpretivism is that there are multiple realities that are inextricably bound up with and dependent upon us and our framing of the question and research at hand (Blaikie, 1993). Following from this, epistemologically, as Watt and Scott Jones (2010) imply, these realities are subjective and constructed by the individual(s) undertaking the inquiry. However, this is not to say that the reality being studied is entirely invented by the individual. Rather, it points to the idea that no matter how hard a person tries s/he is unable to entirely remove her/himself from the data or its collection and, therefore, from the results. The initial questions asked, the design of the research plan, and the analysis of the data are all influenced by the individual, even if only in very subtle ways. This leads to subjective, constructed realities for each individual.

Perhaps one of the strongest arguments for a subjective, interpretivist approach is found in the example of Clifford Geertz, who wrote on a variety of subjects through the use of ethnography and is thought of as one of the pioneering interpretivist theorists (White, 2007). One of his best-known works—“Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight”—is a prime example of the type of work interpretivism can produce. The interactive methods of living in the environment being studied and the use of thick description, 8 leads to a subjective work embedded in evidence and social theory. This approach of thick description as the basis of data is central to Geertz’s ideas. Geertz (1973) states,

‘if anthropological interpretation is constructing a reading of what happens, then to divorce it from what happens — from what, in this time or that place, specific people say, what they do, what is done to them, and from the whole

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8 Thick description, a term often associated with Geertz, is a concept relating to the collection and presentation of data. Thick description is a detailed explanation of what is taking place—everything from the scenery to the dialogue to the subtle behaviours being displayed. Through this in-depth context, the reader is given an idea of what was taking place and is able to use this data as a means to understand the conclusions reached by the author even though they may be based in subjective inferences.
business of the world — is to divorce it from its applications and render it vacant.’ (as cited in White, 2007, p. 1197)

The meanings of actions, as well as what happens, are central to the study of particular social circumstances.

Interpretivism is not free from critics however. Those who disagree with the interpretivist paradigm do so for a variety of reasons. One significant problem with interpretivism, even for some who subscribe to this paradigm, is the idea that the conclusions drawn cannot be generalised (Williams, 2000). However, this does not have to be the case. Indeed, Williams (2000) argues that generalisation seems to be inevitable. The difference with interpretivist generalisations and positivist generalisations is that interpretivist ones may be narrower. Using Geertz’s “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” Williams (2000) explains, “the micro-level detail of a small part of a society is used to paint a picture of that wider society” (p. 211). In this way, interpretivist research on particular events can be generalised to include the society under study at the event. It cannot be used to explain all similar events in all societies, but it can be generalised to a degree.

Lin (1998) asserts that interpretivist studies can produce detailed examinations of causal mechanisms in the specific case, explaining how particular variables interact. Without positivist work, however, one does not know how widespread the existence of similar cases might be—a question that is often of special interest to students of policy. (p. 163)

Lin’s (1998) point is valid; specific case studies, even if generalisable in terms of understanding a particular society, cannot be generalised in a wider sense. However, this is not always problematic. There are many studies that are unconcerned with finding other occurrences around the world. In many cases, studies are designed as a way to explore a particular concept or problem in a particular area and do not need to be applicable in a wider sense.

Perhaps the strongest criticism of interpretivism focuses on its subjective nature. As stated, interpretivists believe that reality(ies) is tied up with each and every one of us; reality cannot be divorced from those who exist within it. This is a point of contention because if reality is subjective then anything could be said to be true. How can one know if what is discovered through interpretivist research is really true or if it is just what one person chooses to see? This is where the work of Geertz and his use of thick description are particularly useful. Through the use of detailed observations
and (sometimes) a mixed methods approach, the detail and background can be provided for the reader so as to walk them through the theories informing the work as well as the reality they have encountered. The fact that two theorists could go into the same situation, use different theories, and come out with different interpretations is not a fault in the research. What it comes down to is a difference between the social and natural sciences.

Clarke (2009) puts forth Hay’s (2002) three distinctions between the natural and social sciences, one of which states that “social structures, unlike natural structures […] do not exist independently of an agent’s conception of their activity” (p. 29). Clarke (2009), concludes that this difference cannot be disregarded on these grounds [the desire for value-free analysis] alone because it may merely require a different form of ‘science’ for the social. In all, this distinction remains robust because social theory has the potential to alter its own object of analysis in a way that has ‘no parallel in the natural sciences’ (Collier, 1994, p. 247). (p. 30)

The researcher involved, and the theories chosen, will be able to change how the subject of study is viewed and that cannot be helped. Human researchers, while trying to maintain professionalism during data collection and analysis phases, cannot simply ignore “irrelevant” details or data as a machine in a lab could. Everything has the potential to impact upon the study. Two people cannot think entirely alike and draw the exact same conclusions.

Geertz concludes that a culture is an ‘ensemble of texts’ which we ‘strain to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong’ (1979:222). The implication being that if this is a text that we must strain to read, we might not get it right. His […] explanations may or may not be ‘right’ or ‘correct’, in part or in full, but that if they are made then one must presume that they are at least, as Guba and Lincoln (1982:238) maintain, ‘working hypotheses’, and hypotheses of this kind take the form of speculative generalisations. To research, to investigate, is to ask ‘why’ questions, to seek explanations, however speculatively or tentatively held. (Williams, 2000, p. 212)

This is one of the benefits of interpretivist research; the fluid nature of the conclusions do not limit future studies nor do they claim to offer the definitive understanding of a society or social situation. Interpretivist research is nevertheless able to offer an insight into the society or social situation under observation.
Methods

With these methodological and theoretical considerations established, the focus now shifts to the ways in which the research was undertaken. The type of investigation depends on the specific types of data to be collected and the goals of the research. Even then, there is no single way that can be held up as correct. For the purposes of this research, it was decided that ethnographic methods and methodology would best suit the goals of the research. However, in order to arrive at this decision, certain frequently used alternatives were first ruled out.

Rejected alternatives.

Although a quantitative approach has the potential to shed light on some important aspects of nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation in the Olympic Movement, those methods would not have addressed the types of information that I wished to uncover. For example, the frequency of the use of terms such as “London,” “England,” “United Kingdom,” “Great Britain,” or “Europe” may have demonstrated the interaction of the local, regional, and global as it concerned the London 2012 Olympic Games, but it would not take into account the context or meaning associated with the use of these specific terms. It was decided due to these sorts of limitations, a quantitative approach would have been too narrow to achieve the desired depth of information.

Other common qualitative approaches were also ruled out. At an early stage, the idea of using interviews (or questionnaires) was considered but these presented too many potential problems in accessing the appropriate types of data to be considered viable options. There are three broad categories of people that could be interviewed: those in the governance structure of the Olympic Movement (those in the IOC, NOCs, and so on), the athletes, and the general public. In each case, a specific set of problems arises. By questioning those in the governance structure, not only would there have been a difficulty in gaining access but also the data collected would almost certainly have been skewed toward policy issues that do not directly concern this research.

In questioning athletes, there was again a potential problem of access but there was also an issue of representation. Only those athletes who speak English would have been available to be included, limiting an already (relatively) small group from which to gather subjects. Though the athletes are an admittedly indispensible part of the Games, limiting the data collected to such a small percentage of those who
participate in the Olympic Movement would not have produced sound results. Lastly, questioning those in the general public posed a problem in that only those who speak English would be included. This would have left a large portion of the attending public unavailable. Furthermore, only individuals whom I was able to come into direct contact with would have been available for selection leaving large portions of Olympic spectators, including many who had contributed to my experience of the Games, outside the reach of this research.

A media analysis approach was another avenue to be considered in doing this type of research. With the wide coverage of the Olympics in the local, national, and international media, this type of approach could provide a wealth of data from which to explore the Games. Because of this, looking at the Olympic Games as a media event is common (see Bernstein, 2000; de Moragas, Rivenburgh, & Garcia, 1995; Roche, 2006; Tajima, 2004). Taking a different approach allowed for the possibility of discovering evidence that may be missed by media-focused analysis while also allowing for confirmation or contradiction of the conclusions of existing studies.

However, the data collected through a media studies approach, again, may not have been what was sought. While the media was a ubiquitous presence at the Games, they had a specific focus on the competition and official events taking place. This was understandable as this was the centrepiece of the Games. However, the behaviours and actions of the spectators were equally, if not more, important to gather the types of data this research aimed to uncover. Relying on the media to provide images under consideration would have limited the amount of data available. Also, there was the potential for uncontrolled bias as each media outlet may have been either pro- or anti-Olympics to some degree and that could have coloured the presentation of information.

These types of complications, combined with my own interest in the importance of the intent of actions and the perspectives of those viewing the actions, led to the decision to undertake a more solitary approach to the data collection. Again, this was not the only way to address this topic, but it seemed the most suited to my purposes. In the next sections, I will address the specific methods to be used within this study.

Case studies.
As mentioned previously, in order to gain a detailed look at the Olympic Movement, it was decided that a case study of the London 2012 Olympics would best
suit the needs of this research. Here, it is prudent to examine exactly what is meant by a case study. While no one definition is universally agreed upon, the basic idea is that a case study is an in-depth examination of a single example (or small group of examples) be this of a person, institution, policy, and so on (Gillham, 2000; Orum, Feagin, & Sjoberg, 1991; Simons, 2009).

What is made clear in the literature is the use for case studies. Orum, Feagin, and Sjoberg (1991) explain that case studies can be useful for the way they are conducted. The idea that a detailed examination takes place in a real setting—as opposed to an artificially created environment in a laboratory—and behaviours and practices can be seen in context and in a wealth of detail makes them a useful undertaking (Orum et al., 1991). Perhaps one of the greatest strengths of a case study is the ability to generalise within a bounded population. What this means is that when examining a case study, generalisations can be made to some extent within the category that case belongs to—medical schools, small rural towns in the United States, and so on (Orum et al., 1991). However, as with much qualitative research—and case studies need not be exclusively qualitative—there are weaknesses, the most prominent among them being subjectivity (Orum et al., 1991; Simons, 2009), a topic which has previously been addressed.

**Ethnography.**

When thinking about a sociocultural study, it is not uncommon to identify the value of ethnography. The image of a researcher travelling to a distant location to live with and study a remote group of people for an extended period of time is commonly associated with anthropological research. Historically, this perception is not untrue. However, it is also not the complete picture. Sociocultural research can take many forms, both qualitative and quantitative. In this section, the focus will be on ethnography and what this method entails.

What is ethnography? Fetterman (1989) succinctly explains that, “ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or culture” (p. 11). To this simple explanation, Spradley (1980) adds, “the essential core of ethnography is this concern with the meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand” (p. 5). Yet, depending on how it is used, ethnography can either be a research method or a research methodology. As a research method, ethnography has evolved over time. Sanday (1979) states that
paradigmatic ethnography begins when an observer, trained in or familiar with the anthropological approach, gets off the boat, train, plane, subway, or bus prepared for a lengthy stay with a suitcase full of blank notebooks, a tape recorder, and a camera. Paradigmatic ethnography ends when the masses of data have been recorded, filed, stored, checked, and rechecked are organized according to one of several interpretive styles and published for a scholarly or general audience. (p. 529)

This is a very specific view of ethnography and it harks back to the traditional, and stereotypical, version mentioned above as practiced by anthropologists such as Franz Boas and Margaret Mead. However, as the world has changed, ethnography has had to change with it. These changes can take many forms, including the loss of a traditional site for study.

Lecompte (2002) notes, “ethnographers traditionally located their groups for study in a physical site, whether it be naturally or artificially bounded. Today, however, the conventional meaning of the site is gone; sites no longer serve to anchor studies” (p. 288). She explains that this shift can be attributed to such factors as an increase in the ease of communication between geographically distant locations, the general globalising patterns across the world, migration, and even the rise of alternative communities such as those found on the Internet (Lecompte, 2002).

Therefore, if a site is not physically present, or if the members of the community are moving in and out of the site, ethnography cannot be done by living in a single location for an extended period of time. It must adjust to be something akin to a continuous engagement with the members of the community in question. Furthermore, this involvement can exist anywhere on the scale of participant observation.

Depending on the situation and the ethnographer, there can be different levels of participant observation during an ethnographic study. Spradley (1980) outlines five major points along a continuum of participant observation by the researcher: nonparticipation, passive participation, moderate participation, active participation, and complete participation. Watt and Scott Jones (2010) outline a similar continuum with four distinct levels: complete observer, observer-as-participant, participant-as-observer, and complete participant. What these types of distinctions indicate is not just what the researcher is actually doing in a community, but also their role and relationship to those being studied. Along this continuum, the distance between the
researcher and the subjects is being renegotiated and, in some cases, the availability of information changes. By this it is meant that depending on how the research is conducted, the researcher may or may not reveal their role as a researcher to those in the community of study for various reasons (Watt & Scott Jones, 2010). Another possibility is that those being studied may reveal different types of information depending on their relationship with the researcher. Therefore, if the subjects are convinced that the researcher has become a participant and a part of the community, they may offer more, or different, information.

Of course, ethnography is not an uncontested method. There are questions of representation that arise—who has the right to speak for a group and tell their story (Lecompte, 2002)? However, this is an issue that has yet to be, and might never be, resolved. It is another facet of ethnography that must be dealt with just as other methods must address their own corresponding issues. There is also always the suggestion that a person will “go native” when conducting ethnographic research. This is the idea that a researcher will spend so much time and energy in becoming a participant, or insider, in the group that this will eventually overpower the critical observer within them. Unlike issues of representation, going native is a part of ethnography that the researcher can make her/himself aware of and thereby aim to ensure that s/he maintains a critical view about what is being studied.

As a methodology, ethnography can take on differing characteristics. Scott Jones (2010) posits that an ethnographic methodology relies on an adherence to a specific set of principles. Scott Jones (2010) lists these principles as:

- A relativist stance.
- A desire to accurately provide a ‘thick description’ of a social world.
- An intention to seek ways to ‘understand’ a social world through immersion (long or short term) in that environment.
- The importance of historical and cultural contextualization.
- The intention to present the ‘native’s point of view’.
- The stress on ethics, representation, ‘voice’, power and inclusion.
- The importance of reflexivity.
- An awareness of subjectivity. (p. 26)

With these considerations laid out, it is possible to see how different paradigms might align themselves with ethnography. Positivism, and its emphasis on the ability to predict outcomes, does not align as easily with ethnographic
methodology as outlined above. Subjectivity, especially to the degree implied by Scott Jones (2010) is a hindrance to predictive methods and the desire for objectivity. Interpretivism and poststructuralism, however, leave room for subjectivity to be more easily accounted for. This can be seen in the ontological belief that a single, universal truth cannot be discovered (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008). This idea of multiple truths, or situational truths, is based in the notions of perspective, discourse, and subjectivity; the framing of reality will determine the truth that is found (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008).

From the vantage point of the new critique, then, ethnography is most usefully thought of as a created tale which describes reality more successfully if it does not attempt to fulfil the impossible and undesirable (for ethnography) standards of science. Ethnography should draw upon narrative; emphasizing the point of view, voice, and experience of author. (Harper, 1998, p. 31)

This view of ethnography as a researcher-driven enterprise fits with the interpretivist paradigm. By looking at ethnography and ethnographic research in this way, the blurred lines between researcher/observer and researcher/participant are shown not to be a problem, but rather a sign that the research is being undertaken with ethnographic theory as a consideration.

Application

To begin the application of theory to the research at hand, it is necessary to examine the reasons behind the choice of methodology. Whilst no methodology can be held up as absolute, and therefore, many can be applied to the same topic or research, this does not mean that the choice of one methodology over another should go overlooked.

In this work, I have chosen to follow an interpretivist paradigm. As noted earlier, this choice implies certain traits such as a focus on interpretation and subjectivity (Clarke, 2009), the ontological belief in the possibility of multiple constructed realities (Blaikie, 1993), and others. The choice of an interpretivist paradigm was made based on a combination of factors. The first was the acceptance of the idea that the researcher is unable to completely remove him/herself from the collection and interpretation of the data and, therefore, there is an element of subjectivity and the creation of reality. Additionally, the recurring question of the intent of the actors and the ability for others to view and interpret these actions in different ways led to the belief that a single reality, accepted by all, does not exist. With these considerations in mind, the choice of an interpretivist paradigm fit both
with my beliefs and with the theoretical understanding of the ethnographic methods that were employed.

Shifting to the methods employed, a broad picture must be painted in order to understand how nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation feature in the Olympic Movement. The Olympic Movement is a vast, far-reaching entity that can be difficult to simplify. For that reason, the primary focus was on the Olympic Games themselves (and their preparation and promotion to an extent) with references to the wider Movement only when relevant. Yet, this still left a considerable amount to cover. As a consequence, a case study approach was undertaken, examining the London 2012 Games as a representative of the semi-formulaic Olympics.

To ensure that a sufficient picture of the Games was captured, it was necessary to decide what would produce the data to give a representative portrayal. As has been mentioned, the notion of intent was something that this research continually faced and this was as important a factor in the choice of methods as it was in the consideration of the data.

One way that intent can be looked at is from the perspective of performance. While this research seeks to provide an understanding of the roles of nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation in the Olympics, the conclusions drawn are, of necessity, interpretations of the data. It is impossible to know the intent of any given person. Even if the researcher asks the question of the actor, the intent may still be unknown as the answer given could be what the actor thinks the researcher wants to hear, or the actor may not even consciously know why they act in the way that they do. One way to handle this question of intent versus interpretation was to look at the observed actions as a performance.

Carlson (2004) states:

The audience’s expected “role” changes from a passive hermeneutic activity of decoding the performer’s articulation, embodiment, or challenge of a particular cultural material, to become a much more active entering into a praxis, a context in which meanings are not so much communicated as created, questioned, or negotiated. The “audience” is invited and expected to operate as a co-creator of whatever meanings and experience the event generates. (p. 215)

This is a useful way to explore the intent versus interpretation debate this research had to contend with. From this perspective, those being observed (the spectators, tourists,
Londoners, athletes, presenters, and so on) were the performers and I, as a researcher, was the audience. While I was also participating in some aspects of the performance, I was observing it and, in this way, engaging with the material to construct meaning. The intent and meanings of actions were not communicated by the performers, they were presented and, as part of the audience, I was co-creating meaning and questioning intended meanings. My experience and created meaning was but one of millions yet it makes the claims no less valid, no less impactful.

Fetterman (1989) tells us “the ethnographer is interested in understanding and describing a social and cultural scene from the emic, or insider’s perspective” (p. 12). This goal is important, but is muddied when looking at a cultural scene such as the Olympic Games. Each individual has a different cultural background that they brought to this situation and their actions may have been interpreted differently in their native culture than at the Games. Was a specific flag or colour a symbol of support or resistance? To the individual it may have indicated resistance but to the wider community observing this individual, it may have implied support (for any number of issues depending on the viewer’s perspective). As the participants in the Olympic Movement are so varied, it was decided that an approach based on observation would provide the necessary panoramic picture.

For the purposes of this research, I engaged in an ethnographic study of London 2012. This was done primarily through observation with minimal direct interaction with other spectators. Prior to the Games, I engaged with them as many others would have including finding a place to stay and purchasing tickets through the lottery. However, once I began attending events, my focus shifted to an observation of what was taking place around me. Watching what was happening, hearing the reactions of the crowds, and documenting the scenes through photographs were all primary methods of data collection. However, on occasion I became more active in my participation through cheering at events with fellow spectators and engaging in short conversations. These actions, however, were infrequent as the focus was on observation.

By acting in such a manner, I was able to experience and observe many aspects of the Games and assemble a broad picture of London 2012. With this groundwork laid out, one can look to Bryman’s (1984) claim that the need to infer meanings, as was the case in this research, lends itself to the use of observation as a primary source of data collection.
In addition, I also explored some of the visual images produced by those involved in the staging of the Games—the IOC and the LOCOG in particular. These images included anything from the official mascots to merchandise for sale to highlight videos of events. By using these types of visuals as a resource, the way the Games were being portrayed by the organisers was explored. Comparing the messages sent out in the presentation of the “one year to go” celebration or the Opening Ceremony to the way fans interacted with the Games, for instance, helped to form a more complete picture of what was taking place. One must be aware of bias and the potential for multiple interpretations in prepared materials but, again, this does not have to be viewed as an insurmountable problem in the data. These are the types of images that are present years before the Games and, through collectors and similar individuals, are some of the images and messages that will last the longest. It is important not to overlook their significance.

What should also not be overlooked is my relationship to the material under study. As noted previously, I am a fan of the Olympic Games and this has the potential to influence my perspective on what is observed (perhaps being less critical than others may be). However, other aspects of myself have a similar potential. Whilst I aimed to be an impartial observer, my being American is something that cannot be overlooked or avoided. Despite my attempts to remain neutral, it is quite likely that my interpretations of London 2012 differ from those of a native of the United Kingdom. Although this, again, should not be seen as a flaw in the research, it is crucial to keep in mind the personal perspectives that I brought to my analysis (intentionally or unintentionally) in order to contextualize my observations and the interpretations of them. With the Games being an international event, one need not understand them from the point of view of a British person, but it is crucial to understand where and why differences may occur.

**Conclusion**

The methods outlined above were all aimed at achieving the goal of a critical analysis of the roles of nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation in the Olympic Movement. In order to look at this, a case study of London 2012 was appropriate due to the general, semi-formulaic nature of the Olympic Games. As the Olympics are governed by specific guidelines, a case study of any iteration of the Games can provide a solid foundation upon which to generalise outwards. As mentioned previously, this was not the only way to approach this topic but it was the most
appropriate for the purposes of this research. The visual and subjective interpretations of what takes place at the Olympics happens naturally and this was an opportunity to take those visuals and use the subjective nature of what was seen to make sense of some of the underlying phenomena of the Olympic Movement.

With these methodological considerations in mind, the focus now shifts to an analysis of the London 2012 Games. The next chapter deals with the lead-up to the Games looking at promotional materials, the “one year to go” celebration, and the Torch Relay. The ways in which nationalism, in particular, can be seen in each of these contexts drives the analysis forward as the Games themselves approach.
Chapter 6 – The Lead-up to London 2012

Introduction

The Olympic Games do not exist in a vacuum. They are a prominent feature of the sporting and cultural landscape every four years but they also require some fanfare to ensure success. For this reason, a number of promotional tactics are undertaken to promote the Games and excite the population of the host city and nation-state as well as the rest of the world. These promotions are important to consider alongside the Games as they set the tone and can potentially leave just as lasting a legacy as the Games themselves. With this in mind, this chapter will primarily explore the uses of nationalism in three areas of the promotion of the Games: promotional materials, the “one year to go” celebration, and the Torch Relay. Through these examples, it can be seen how there is an explicit focus on the national over Olympism prior to the Games.

Throughout this chapter, the promotional activities will provide insight into the three main research questions posed at the outset of this work. Although many answers were found based on the particular situation, trends began to emerge. As will be demonstrated, when looking at how nationalism is featured in the lead-up to London 2012, the use of national symbols and significant sites in the United Kingdom were the primary vehicles for national promotion. The reasons for these displays fell predominately into two broad categories: promoting the nation-state and engaging the primarily British audience. The outcomes of these actions are more varied, however, with results such as the establishment of links to the Games to a manipulation of the Games for the host’s own ends to a contribution to national rivalries.

What could be seen alongside the focus on the national was that the values of Olympism were largely forgotten. Lastly, globalisation was a background feature in the promotional activities through the role of sponsorship and branding.

Promotional Materials

One of the most prominent features of the Olympics before the Games begin is the vast amount of promotional materials. These can be anything from merchandise to logos to videos celebrating specific events or milestones. With seven years between winning the bid and hosting the Games, there is ample time to promote the Games in a variety of ways. While much of the promotional material may go unnoticed by large swathes of the public, there are some elements that cannot be missed as they become ubiquitous as the Games approach: the mascots, the merchandise, the large Olympic Rings hung within the city, and so on. What these materials demonstrate, however, is
not just a desire to make the Games known and profitable, but also the ways in which they are being promoted and how an ideology has been imposed upon them.

**Wenlock: the London 2012 Olympic mascot.**

Each Olympic Games is now marked by, among other things, a mascot. These have ranged from animals native to the region to unidentifiable characters and they feature on products as well as in promotional images and videos. The mascots are used as a way to engage a younger audience as well as a way to attach a constant image to the Games. For London 2012, the Olympic and Paralympic mascots were Wenlock and Mandeville respectively—small figures cast from drops of steel from the Olympic Stadium (London 2012, 2010).

Wenlock, along with his Paralympic partner Mandeville, was designed to embody symbolic connections to the Games. To begin, Wenlock’s single eye is a camera that is used to record what he sees and he also wears five friendship bands in the colours of the Olympic Rings (Farquhar, 2010). Even his head shape is significant in that it has three points, both to symbolise the triangular lights above the Olympic Stadium and also the three steps of the victory podium (Farquhar, 2010). However, what makes Wenlock special, and what shows that he is ideologically significant, is the way he has been tied to the United Kingdom and to British sporting history.

Physically, Wenlock has been connected to the United Kingdom through the yellow light on his head as it was designed to resemble the lights on London’s iconic black cabs. More tellingly, Wenlock was named after a town in England (Farquhar, 2010): Much Wenlock where Dr. William Penny Brookes founded the Much Wenlock Olympic Games that helped inspire de Coubertin to form the modern Olympics. Through the use of this name, the London 2012 Games are thus tied to the origins of the modern Olympics and the place of the United Kingdom in Olympic history.

It is not inconceivable that many in the general public were unaware of the symbolism inherent in the mascot design; however, it is possible that some would have recognised the reference to Much Wenlock in the naming. Yet, if the public is unaware of what is being presented to them, why is it important that it is included? The mascot is not only used as a tool to promote the nation-state. That can be done much more explicitly in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies as will be shown in Chapter 8. The mascot is also used to produce a lasting image that possesses these associations with the nation-state. Through Olympic historians, fans, and collectors,
the mascot’s image will continue long after the Games and it is for this reason that the messages embedded within it matter. A continuing link is established through this symbolism, rather than a fleeting moment derived from a grand performance, which draws on, and further contributes to, the collective pool of memories that individuals are able to use to further solidify their identity as members of the nation-state (see Renan, 1990/1996; Smith 2001).

**Merchandise.**

In the promotion of most events, merchandise plays a large role. Having items that consumers can buy is not only potentially lucrative but allows those products to circulate as ongoing advertising. With each edition of the Games costing billions of dollars, the need to sell merchandise is ever present. Each Games has products for sale ranging from t-shirts and pins to notebooks and teacups. These products are branded with the Olympic Rings, the Games’ logo, and the mascots, among other images. What makes them noteworthy is what they display.

For London 2012, the merchandise shop\(^9\) was a celebration of Britishness.\(^10\) The Union flag was a common design element on products, both in its original form and also in the stylised version used for the Games. The London skyline was also prominent on products along with a range of Team GB items. The practice of branding items with national symbols or the sale of a wide variety of items in support of the “home team” should come as no surprise to those who follow sport. Then again, what makes this case slightly different is not just the fact that this is a major international sporting event but also that the official London 2012 store served the overwhelming majority of the world—with the notable exception of the United States. This constant promotion of the host city and nation-state at the expense of a more inclusive approach supports the assertion of an institutionalised nationalism being imposed upon consumers.

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\(^9\) While there were many physical shops, here the focus is on the on-line shop as it was accessible to those outside of the United Kingdom.

\(^{10}\) It is important to note that this term (along with others such as British nationalism or British national identity) is not meant to imply a finite interpretation or depiction of these concepts as a reality for all Brits. Rather, what is meant is that the institutions are portraying certain qualities as British, whether or not all who are British see them that way. Similarly, “British nationalism” as displayed by spectators is understood as displaying characteristics that are indicative of nationalism through the use of British symbols or support for British athletes.
With this shop acting as the primary merchandising outlet for London 2012, it may have made sense for those from nations(-states) around the world to be able to buy London 2012 items branded with their national flags. Yet, there were only a handful of such items available—a few pins, t-shirts, and bags—that would allow for the option of displaying a flag other than that of the United Kingdom. This privileging of the host nation-state over the international or universal is a theme that would persist throughout the Games.

What is also telling is the promotion of items for sale. In signing up for my London2012.com account I was asked for basic information such as my name, address, and so on, but I was also asked which team I would be supporting during the Games. For this question I selected the United States, assuming that this information might qualify me to receive non-Team GB themed e-mail updates. However, this was not the case. The e-mails, which I expected might be generic messages promoting the Games and accompanying merchandise, turned out not only to promote the Games but also to heavily push the idea of supporting Team GB and its athletes.

Within these e-mails, and the merchandise they promoted, was the implicit assumption that the host nation-state had become a desirable commodity. This involves not simply the promotion of the nation-state, although that certainly should not be ignored, but also the packaging and selling of the nation-state to the rest of the world. One of the reasons to host the Games is to promote the nation-state and use it as a basis from which to attract future tourists by displaying what is available (Rivenburgh, 2004). By selling the nation-state through merchandise, the same approach is being taken and the Games are once again used as a promotional tool by the host.

Nationalism was not the only force at work in the London 2012 shop however. Whilst the national was privileged in the branding of products, globalisation was readily apparent as well. The ability to spread goods around the world and to bring Olympic sponsors (such as Adidas) further avenues to sell products in a variety of nations(-states), demonstrates the reach of the Games and how it can be used. With strict rules governing the use of Olympic symbols (and even combinations of words that can be seen as related to the Games), the use of a single outlet from which to sell Olympic merchandise is not a small matter. It enables the sponsors of the Games to have exclusive branding rights around the world, allowing them to penetrate markets that they may typically have high competition for. Of course, this is not an
uncontested area as some question the commoditisation of the Games. Maguire, Barnard, et al. (2008) and Maguire, Butler, et al. (2008) point out how the values of Olympism are largely pushed aside in favour of a focus on pure consumerism by the sponsors.

**Olympic Rings.**

During the lead-up to the London 2012 Games, a series of large Olympic Rings were placed in locations across the United Kingdom to herald in the Torch Relay, the Games, and each city’s particular involvement with the Games. These Rings were unveiled at different times leading up to the Opening Ceremony at some highly recognisable locations such as Tower Bridge, Tyne Bridge in Newcastle, George Square in Glasgow, and Cardiff and Belfast City Halls. These Rings allowed for the promotion of the nation-state and its well-known sites, as well as the involvement of the people of the United Kingdom (outside of London) in the Games more directly.

However, the Rings were not entirely without other political implications. There is an historic rivalry between the United Kingdom and France and sporting rivalry extends into friendly competition more generally. This was certainly apparent in the bidding process for the 2012 Games. Kennedy, Pussard, and Thornton (2006) recall how

the later stages of the bidding process witnessed a resurgence of anti-French ‘jokes’ in the British media, often with no direct reference to sport or the Olympic Games […] At this point, the contest became overtly between nations rather than cities. (p. 14)

The final choice was between London and Paris, each bidding not only for the 2012 Games but also for the chance to make history as the first city to host the Games three times. London won the right to host the Games and that fact was used on a few occasions as a way to poke fun at France and stoke the rivalry. One such example was during the unveiling of a set of Olympic Rings in London’s St. Pancras train station. After unveiling the Rings, London Mayor Boris Johnson quipped, with an impish smile, that “they are a gentle, tactful reminder to nos amis français [our French friends] when they arrive on the Eurostar, who won the rights to host the Games” (London 2012, 2011). The sentiments of rivalry expressed within a sporting context, such as the remarks from Johnson, help to reinforce and define a national identity. Bell (2003) notes, “representation and recognition – of us and them – act as the
mutually supporting scaffolds upon which national identity is constructed” (p. 67) and this is surely apparent in Johnson’s words. The delineation between the United Kingdom and France, of “us” and “them,” was reinforced through a sporting construct and added to the ways in which the two nation-states are different. Even before the Games had begun and the formal competitions commenced, there was rivalry and the process of excluding others.

The LOCOG chair, Lord Sebastian Coe, took a different approach in expressing his delight at the Rings. Rather than turning to rivalry, he continued to promote the values of Olympism saying, “to me, they [the Olympic Rings] represent friendship, respect, the world coming together, excellence in sport,” before reverting to some nationalist promotion when concluding with: “and a way of just showing the world that this is the best city on the planet” (London 2012, 2011).

What this shows is that even something as simple as this two-minute video to emphasise that a set of Olympic Rings had gone on display is not always straightforward. These comments are yet another way to highlight that the Games are used as a vehicle for promoting the nation-state and demonstrating superiority over others. The fact that London had been chosen to host the Olympics was being presented as proof that it is superior to all challengers. This mentality continued as it fed into the Opening Ceremony (and to a lesser extent the Closing Ceremony) which, as we shall see in Chapter 8, was used to show off to the world and attempt to out-do predecessors. Both national rivalry and claims of superiority are intrinsic to this video from St. Pancras station, and of the Games in a larger sense.

Toohey and Veal (2000) explain, “national rivalry is directed at a particular nation or nations, whereas claims of superiority need not necessarily have a particular government as its target” (p. 89). While they point to governments in this respect, the idea can be applied to societies more generally. Nations or states are often the focus of both national rivalries and claims of superiority and this is seen in the Olympics, where both are regularly utilised. National rivalries are primarily played out on the competition fields and in the medal standings while the narrative of superiority focuses on the organisation of the Games—outshining previous hosts gives one the opportunity to claim superiority.

The “One Year to Go” Celebration

On 27 July 2011, the LOCOG and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) hosted a celebration in Trafalgar Square to mark one year until the London
Games. Hours before the event was to start, Trafalgar Square was emptied of spectators in order to secure the area. Thousands of people queued outside the barriers waiting to be let in.

Once the barriers were opened and people were able to enter, most filed in and found good vantage points from which to watch the events unfold. Within the Square, however, there were already a variety of things to look at. The Olympic clock was a popular attraction; there was a booth to create origami boats from paper patterned as flags of the world, and a booth where one could get a flag painted on one’s cheek. Looking around, it was possible to see a few national flags being brought in and numerous phones and cameras ready to capture the moment.

When the programme started, the crowd was given a short introduction to the London Olympics. Our host explained that the Games are an important event around the world with a reach beyond sport. This point was highlighted with an explanation of the Cultural Olympiad and its progress over the past three years that would culminate in the London 2012 Festival beginning in June 2012. After this, the audience was introduced to the Olympic mascot, Wenlock, and told the story of the origins of his name.

As part of the celebration, a number of different performances also took place. There was a freerunning demonstration from Parkour Generations based in London, performances by the West End Kids and Hackney based singer Tinashé, multiple performances by London/Sussex-based band The Feeling, and others. In addition to the performances, there were some Team GB hopefuls in attendance to talk about the chance to compete in a home Olympics.

All of these performances and interviews were used as a warm-up prior to the BBC’s live coverage that started an hour later. When this coverage began, hosts Sophie Raworth and Jake Humphrey were introduced and began the lead-up to the Olympic clock officially marking 366 days to go. The half hour was a celebration of London 2012 and what to expect as well as a few elements of IOC protocol. To begin, the audience was reminded that the Games were returning to the United Kingdom for the first time in over 60 years accompanied by footage from the 1948 London Games. The announcement by IOC president Jacques Rogge in 2005 that the Games had been awarded to London was also shown to the accompaniment of huge cheers. Following this came a video montage of the construction in the Olympic Park on a time lapse...
with a number of clips, such as Team GB athletes in competition or celebrating, a 2008 gold medal, and the Union flag.

Part of the BBC coverage included the christening of the Olympic pool as construction of the Aquatics Centre had recently been finished and English diver Tom Daley was there to perform the first dive. After this, the ceremonial aspects of the programme began as the flags of other Olympic host nation-states (past and future) were brought out and Princess Anne unveiled the London 2012 medals. Also, Prime Minister David Cameron and London Mayor Boris Johnson both delivered speeches and the IOC president Jacques Rogge officially invited the athletes of the world to compete in London in 2012.

A few performances were also interspersed during this time as The Feeling performed David Bowie’s “Hero” and a group of children performed with ribbons to create the Olympic Rings and signal the raising of a large banner on the front of the National Portrait Gallery. Furthermore, Team GB athletes also made another appearance with those from earlier being joined by additional representatives on stage. Back at the Aquatics Centre, there was also a short race between former Team GB athletes from various sports. Lastly, another video montage was played, which celebrated past Olympic moments including athletes from a number of nation-states, although the majority were from either the United Kingdom or the United States.

**Celebration of the United Kingdom.**

As can be seen from the description of this event, there was a heavy emphasis on the United Kingdom, on the athletes of Team GB, and on showcasing local performers. This is not wholly surprising as the Games are typically used as a way to promote the host city and nation-state. This celebration of the local and the national was not exclusive, as will be explored, however, the nationalist overtones were difficult to miss. In addition to the overwhelming presence of representatives from the host nation-state as well as the celebration of the host through the videos shown of past achievements, there was also a celebration of the local and national in the speeches that were made.

Prime Minister David Cameron said:

This is a great night for London, a great night for Britain. I think this has the makings of a great British success story. With a year to go, it’s on time, it’s on budget, the great stadium is finished, the Aquatics Centre is finished, the Velodrome is finished, and I believe this can be a great advertisement for our
country. And we must remember what London 2012 is all about. It’s about great sport, with great British athletes like Tom Daley and Chris Hoy taking part. It’s about a great legacy, not just for sport for a few weeks, but a sporting legacy for all our country for many, many years, and it’s about Great Britain letting the whole world see all that is great about our country: our history, our present, our future, the brilliance of our arts, the depth of our culture, the fantastic success of our business. So we must offer the greatest ever Games in the world’s greatest country. (Russell, 2011)

What can be seen in this speech is a focus on the national. Indeed, there is a consistent sense of nationalism that is impossible to ignore. The continual repetition and play on words of the greatness of Britain and the insistence that these Games would be successful were a way of engaging a predominately British audience. Upon its conclusion, this speech received huge cheers from the crowd in Trafalgar Square. The speech from London Mayor Boris Johnson adopted much the same tone.

[Walks in to The Clash’s “London Calling.”] Ladies and gentlemen, we have a new monument in the city to the indomitability of London. […] that [Olympic] clock ticks on, to remind us, to remind us that nothing and no one is going to stop us in our work of preparing London for the greatest event that has taken place in this city in the last fifty years. Mr. President Rogge, the streets will be ready. Won’t they? The trains will be ready, the taxis will be ready, the theatres will be ready, the buses will be ready—complete with a new hop on-hop off feature—the hotels will be ready, the bicycles, the bicycles will be ready, the Olympic venues, the Olympic venues are already so ready that we might as well call a snap Olympics tomorrow and catch the rest of the world napping. And above all, the people of London will be ready to welcome the world’s finest athletes to the greatest Games that have ever been held in the greatest city on Earth. See you in London in three hundred and sixty-six days time! Thank you. (Russell, 2011)

As might be expected, the focus of Mayor Johnson’s speech was on London. He used this speech as a rallying point for the audience and for the residents of London.

It should not be surprising that these speeches put so much emphasis on the national and local levels. It would be severely detrimental if the political authorities were to express doubt as to the ability to host a successful Games. However, what makes all of this particularly interesting is that there was no focus on the Olympic
Games. The Games were only mentioned inasmuch as they provided the reason for London to be ready; they were mentioned only as the catalyst for London or the United Kingdom to show how great they are. This was not an attempt to get the citizens of the United Kingdom excited about the Olympics and what the Games would offer; rather, it was about showing off. It was about showing how great “we” are with the Olympics simply offering a way to do that.

This could be seen throughout the event as Sebastian Coe, himself a former British Olympian, praised the London 2012 medals because they were designed by a Londoner and produced with British metal in Wales. Interestingly, when Coe mentioned that the medals were being manufactured at the Royal Mint in Wales there was a faint booing from a part of the crowd. The people who did this remain unknown, as do their motives, but it speaks volumes about the political structure of the United Kingdom and how the four different nations/localities of the United Kingdom are not necessarily in harmony despite talk about being “British” and the Games being good for all of Britain.

The athletes also spoke along similar nationalist lines. Being interviewed after his dive into the new pool at the Aquatics Centre, Tom Daley said:

It’s going to be completely different to the last Olympics because you’re gonna have the home crowd support and I’m sure that everyone here’s going to get behind all of the athletes and all of the divers from Great Britain […] hopefully the whole country will be supporting all of the GB athletes into it.

(Russell, 2011)

When interviewed on stage, gymnast Beth Tweddle expressed similar sentiments about the opportunity to compete in a home Olympics. This automatic assumption that British citizens would be supporting British athletes is a common sentiment in each nation(-state) and it demonstrates the way in which citizenship is assumed to correspond to national identity and sporting loyalties. While this may be true in most cases, there is still the possibility that audiences will cheer for the best athlete regardless of nationality. This point will be discussed later in relation to the idea of “authentic” fans.

**Nationalism and internationalism through flags.**

As addressed earlier, banal nationalism can be exemplified by the mundane, unnoticed symbols in our daily lives: the flag hanging on a public building, the bumper stickers, and so on. The waving of flags or wearing of national colours at
sporting events can, in some cases, also be indicative of banal nationalism because they may not necessarily represent a statement about a nation(-state). Rather, it might be nothing more than support for the team for any number of reasons—a favourite player, localism, an historical or familial connection to the nation(-state) the team represents, and so on. Furthermore, these actions may be undertaken because they are what are expected at a sporting event. Billig (1995) would disagree with this use of banal nationalism explaining that “the metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building” (p. 8). However, the wearing of a shirt of the United States Olympic team can be just as commonplace and inconsequential as the unnoticed flag on a courthouse. One can expect to see flags of all sorts at the Olympics, not all standing out or being used in a deliberate way to support a nation(-state). Of course, this is not to say that all such actions should be looked at as banal nationalism. Other forms of nationalistic expression can be present and much depends on the circumstances.

Yet, as banal nationalism loses some of its intrinsic meaning and association with nationalist sentiments, it can potentially be co-opted for other purposes, further diluting the power of nationalist symbols to be consistently associated with certain political ideas. An example of this was seen during the celebrations in Trafalgar Square. Along with the activities and entertainment provided, there was (at least) one person walking through the crowd of thousands handing out small flags. The instructions were to choose one of the national flags (it did not matter which), and to be sure to wave them when cheering or when the cameras scanned the crowd. Whether this practice was organised by the LOCOG, the BBC, or somebody else (or perhaps nobody), it presented an interesting twist on the relationship between nationalism and internationalism. In this case, it was easy to look at the flags waving and think of this as another instance of nationalism but when the story is told of the distribution of the flags, one has to ask, can it be considered nationalism at this point? Some individuals were walking around with three or four different flags and others had one flag painted on their face and a different one to wave.

Standing behind me in the crowd were two young women who, from what I could tell from their comments and accents, were Australian. During David Cameron’s speech he said, “So we must offer the greatest ever Games in the world’s greatest country” (Russell, 2011) and while the crowd erupted in cheers, one of these
women said in a joking tone “Australia?” However, while this expression of national sentiment or nationalism was expressed, the flags they held told a different story: one had an Australian flag, the other a Union flag.

During the celebration, a booth was also set up where people could have a national flag painted on their faces. While some people had the Olympic Rings on their face instead, it was unclear if this was done at the face-painting booth that was set up or by individuals before arriving. What is clear is that this booth offered painted national flags to those who wished to express nationalism/national identity/local support, and so on. A myriad of interpretations could be made of these flags.

All of these instances of national flags being used as markers of identity or as tactics to make the event appear more international provide insight into the ways in which nationalism is put to use within the Olympic Movement. The desire for some individuals to distinguish themselves as members of a particular nation(-state) through the use of flags or clothing with national symbols is regularly seen at Olympic events. What this demonstrates is that national identification is still a strong link and a strong identity for people throughout the world. However, flags or national symbols can also be used as symbols of something else such as internationalism or a given aspect of the Games.

What creates the desire to use flags to make a statement? As a celebration of the countdown to the Games it might make as much, if not more, sense to encourage people to express their excitement through Olympic symbols rather than national ones. The deliberate attempt to let people express (what looked like) nationalism or national identity through face-painting and the deliberate attempt to appear internationally diverse through the handing out of random national flags seemed to work both with and against the tone of the speeches given during the presentation with regards to the Olympic value of internationalism. The use of flags worked with the tone of the speeches in order to provide a counter to the British nationalism and London pride being espoused, bringing the overall event closer to these Olympic values. However, the use of flags also worked against the speeches by expressly highlighting the fact that the national and the local were the primary focus of the event—so much so that it needed to be consciously compensated for.

There is a contrast between what is being said and what is being shown. Those who are involved locally prefer nationalism and local pride but there is also the
realisation that internationalism is a key facet of the Olympic Movement and as such it must be introduced even if it is forced through institutional means.

This type of forced institutional internationalism recalls the issue of authenticity. Is it possible to tell when an action is authentic? In some cases it could seem obvious but without knowing the motives and intentions of the actor, it is difficult to ever be sure. This idea of authenticity is not unique to expressions of national identification or support. It can be seen in many different areas, including other sporting experiences. The term “bandwagoner” is typically used as a derogatory way of describing a person with a newfound interest in a team (or player) for a given reason—usually because that team or person is performing well. The thinking behind this type of label is that these “bandwagon fans” are not authentic. They are not “true” fans like those who have suffered with the team through the hardships as well as sharing in the triumphs. Of course, the type of support for a nation(-state) at the Olympics is a different type of association but there are parallels in that there is the notion that only “authentic” support is worthy. How does this fit with the values of Olympism?

This is a difficult issue. “Authentic” national support is looked upon favourably by others expressing support, and yet the Games are an event where it is acceptable to cheer on other nations(-states) and cheer other athletes because this fosters a sense of goodwill and contributes to the weakening of divisions between individuals coming together to encourage superior feats of athleticism. Why is this something that is acceptable during the Olympics if it is something that is looked down upon during other sporting events? There are two possible explanations: the first may relate to the sports being contested while the second reason, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7, relates to the nations(-states) competing and the spectators at the events.

The sports being contested can be a factor because, in a majority of cases, it is likely that those watching a given event at the Games are not fans that follow that sport regularly. Therefore, the vast majority of these spectators would not be “authentic” fans according to customary definitions. Thus, it is much less of an issue when a person chooses to cheer on an athlete or team representing another nation(-state). Even in some of the more established sports, which fans do follow on a regular basis, the Olympics may be a special case.
For example, with reference to basketball, the National Basketball Association is typically considered the pinnacle of the sport and, as players from all over the world compete in this league, it would not be unusual for one’s favourite player to compete for another nation(-state). In football, the situation is arguably unique. Football is a popular sport around the world and allegiance to a team is not readily broken for any reason, however, in the Olympics, the situation changes. Many who do not follow the sport watch because they can do so, which means that it is not always about allegiance to a team (even a national team). However, with regards to men’s football, there is also the fact that the full senior national teams are not allowed to compete in order to keep the Olympic football tournament at a lower level than the FIFA World Cup. Thus, this is not the same as watching “our” team play regularly. Of course, this does not mean that rivalries disappear and everybody cheers for every nation(-state), but it does allow for support to cross national boundaries more easily than in other cases.

**Internationalism as a formality.**

In contrast to the overwhelming celebration of the United Kingdom, any sense that this was about the promotion of an international event was much less apparent than the national promotion. There were few international guests outside of the IOC and NOC members and no international performers. The role of the rest of the world was largely relegated to that of a formality.

Explicit reference was made to the rest of the world, and using London 2012 as a way to reach a worldwide audience, through the promotion of the International Inspiration programme—a sports legacy initiative set up by the LOCOG to reach out to young people around the world with sport and physical activity (British Council, n.d.). During the celebration, one of the young people who had been involved in this programme in Bangladesh was invited to share her story of how she was taught to swim and, therefore, was later able to save a man from drowning. This uplifting story, and the links to a foreign nation-state, was used to reinforce the good that Olympism does across the world.

The use of video was also a way of integrating the national and the international. As mentioned earlier, throughout the show, videos were played for the audience showing clips from past Games, the construction of the Olympic Park, and the announcement of London winning the bid. What was achieved in these videos was some incorporation of the international aspects of the Games. The clips shown were
primarily of British athletes but those from other nations(-states) featured as well. When looking back at past highlights of the Games, there were examples of sporting excellence from other nations(-states) including two of the most obvious recent examples: Michael Phelps and Usain Bolt. This was an acknowledgement not only of the participation of other nations(-states) in the Games but also of the sporting excellence that these nations(-states) possess and could be expected to bring to London.

However, the few remaining international links were much more formal in nature. The most explicit of these was the presenting of the flags of past and future Olympic hosts and the acceptance of the official invitation to compete in the London Games by NOC delegates from these nation-states. Jacques Rogge also spoke to the assembled crowd with a speech that attempted to incorporate both the national and the international. While his speech praised London and the history of sport in the United Kingdom, again favouring the local, there was also the necessary recognition of the international nature of the event. This was incorporated through the invitation to compete in the Games presented to the delegates on stage and the verbal invitation to the athletes of the world. Similar to what was seen in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, the international aspects of this event were largely relegated to a mere formality.

The “one year to go” celebration provides a useful example of the constant negotiation of the place of nationalism versus Olympism in all aspects of the Olympic Movement. Nationalism appears as a seemingly more organic force to the obligatory displays of Olympism. Olympism was something that had to be acknowledged in some way while the focus remained largely on the local, the host city, and the host nation-state.

**The London 2012 Olympic Torch Relay**

The Olympic Torch Relay is an event unlike any other in the sporting world. Beyond the hope of spreading Olympism, the Torch Relay also offers the host city a chance to promote itself, its nation-state, and its athletes. Furthermore, the culmination of the Relay—the lighting of the cauldron during the Opening Ceremony—provides the organising committee with yet another chance to promote the nation-state through innovation and, often, athletic achievement.

The London 2012 Torch Relay took the Olympic Flame on a 70-day journey, bringing the flame within one hour of 95 percent of the population of the United
Throughout the route there were large crowds sometimes five or six people deep cheering on the flame, taking pictures, and taking part in the Olympic Movement. Unlike the 2008 Relay ahead of the Beijing Olympics, the London 2012 Relay was primarily a national affair. This was at least in part due to the IOC prohibiting all future international Torch Relays in 2009 (“International torch relays,” 2009). However, only two Relays—Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008—had been truly international, thereby making national Relays the norm.

Part of the appeal of a national Relay is to excite those who live nearest, to get the locals involved, and give them a chance to take part even if they cannot attend the Games. As Sebastian Coe said on the first day of the Relay in the United Kingdom: “Everyone has played their part in giving thousands of inspirational people and hundreds of communities their moment to shine” (Pearce, 2012). This idea of communities having their time to shine was further evidenced at stops along the route. As the Relay wound through the United Kingdom, some of the most well known sites were on show: the white cliffs of Dover, Westminster Abbey, Stonehenge, Land’s End, and so on.

However, this was not a fully national Relay as the Torch took a detour outside the United Kingdom to pass through Dublin in the Republic of Ireland. This was a signal of goodwill between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. As Coe said,

“I wasn’t in any doubt that bringing the torch to Dublin was anything other than the right idea,” […] “This is a community that really gets Olympic sport. […] Everything pointed in the right direction. It speaks very eloquently for the power of sport to transcend cultural, political, faith-based boundaries.”

(British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2012)

In addition, Michael Ring TD, Minister of State for Tourism and Sport in the Republic of Ireland, declared: “‘This historic occasion recognises the friendship, peace and cooperation that now exists on the island of Ireland and demonstrates the unifying power of sport” (BBC, 2012). Just as with many aspects of political and sporting life, this is one more example of the complex nature of political relations in the United Kingdom. The changes that this brief stop outside the United Kingdom triggered will be discussed later.
The route that the Torch Relay followed, particularly when considering the sole detour outside of the United Kingdom into the Republic of Ireland, is important to consider. Not only was this a chance to engage the national population, as mentioned, it was also a way for the organisers to portray a particular image. Housel (2007) said of the Sydney 2000 Torch Relay that “like the opening ceremony, the torch relay theatrically staged social inclusiveness by traversing urban and rural Australian regions and most of the South Pacific island regions (Sinclair, 2000)” (p. 453). The same case could be made for the London 2012 Relay as a point was made of making it accessible to those in all four nations/localities of the United Kingdom and showed a gesture of goodwill between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

**The East Midlands.**

With each edition of the Torch Relay there are certain identifiable elements. It is not uncommon to see national flags, clothing, or other items—most of which represent the host nation-state. This behaviour is expected at an event such as this. However, there is insight to be gained from looking more closely at the Torch Relay and not taking this behaviour for granted. In late June/early July 2012, I experienced the Torch Relay first hand as the Olympic flame passed through the English East Midlands. I attended the celebrations in Nottingham, Derby, Leicester, and Loughborough taking in the experience and observing the atmosphere and behaviours of other spectators. However, I would have been in attendance in at least one of these locations regardless of my research, as my passion for the Olympics would not have allowed me to miss a chance to see the Olympic Torch Relay.

For each event, I arrived in town between one and two and a half hours before the Torch was due to arrive. This allowed me to see what took place before the arrival of the Torch including the arrival of spectators (with the exception of Derby as the town centre was already full by the time I arrived), the selling of items related to the Relay, the mood of the spectators, and, lastly, the diversity of the crowd with regards to demographic factors and style of dress. In this section, I will address the two

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11 While each event was different, there were trends and patterns that could be seen at all four locations. For this reason, I will take them as one in this section with particular references to specific locations when necessary.
Institutional nationalism.

As has been explored previously, institutional nationalism occurs when a group or organisation uses its position in order to foster nationalist behaviours or symbols. This could be seen at each of the stops in the East Midlands in a variety of ways, some more subtle than others. There were also notable instances of institutions promoting the local rather than the national.

The promotion of the local was something unexpected as I went to my first stop in Nottingham, although certain types of national affiliation and promotion were anticipated. However, in Nottingham, Derby, and Loughborough there were examples of institutional promotion of the local. In Nottingham, someone who (I believe) was a worker at the National Ice Centre, where I watched the Torch pass, was handing out flags. On the flags were the words “Game on Nottingham” with stripes in the colours of the Olympic Rings. A number of small Union flags with Nottingham BBC on the reverse side were also spotted. In Derby, the city council produced a programme of events that was being handed out and there were also small Union flags with a reverse image to match the programmes. Lastly, in Loughborough, on the University campus, there were small purple flags and purple thundersticks being handed out that simply read “Loughborough University.”

What can be seen here is the promotion of a local identity or ties to a place. Much as when one identifies oneself as English, British, or American, identifying oneself as from Nottingham or Derby was a way to show pride in where one is from. The attachment may be of a different nature—few might feel the same about town rivalries (outside of sport) as national rivalries—however, the effect is the same. This is something that was also seen during the Games as will be explored later. The connection to a particular place is important and it is arguably being used more often as a way to identify oneself.

Yet, it was not only the local that was being promoted. Alongside the local promotion, there were aspects of nationalism as seen through the double-sided flags in Nottingham and Derby. Different institutions were using the Torch Relay as a way to encourage people to show their affiliation to Britain and to generate a sense of pride in being British. The easiest way to do this was not to encourage people to bring flags, paint their faces, or wear Union flag themed clothing but rather to give away free
Just as in Nottingham and Derby, in Leicester flags were given out. The difference was that Leicester did not give away flags that were double-sided. The flags were unbranded Union flags and they were given to almost everybody along the route. Officials in Leicester in city warden jackets and other volunteers handed out thousands of flags in the city centre to those waiting for the Torch to arrive. While there were spectators who had brought their own flags or items to cheer with, these free flags were easy to spot in each town. In Leicester it would not be an exaggeration to estimate that those working for the event handed out 75 percent or more of the flags on show.

It was not only the towns that were engaging in this sort of institutional nationalism. These actions could be seen through the actions of sponsors of the Relay as well as the LOCOG. Concerning sponsors, this nation-state-promoting behaviour could most clearly be seen though Samsung. Amongst the free gift items that were handed out along the route by sponsors, Samsung offered small double-sided flags: a Union flag with a blue reverse showing both the Samsung and London 2012 logos.

What was interesting about the flags was what it meant that they were handed out in this way. Similar to the assorted flags distributed at the “one year to go” celebration, they were being given out to create an atmosphere. Was this to show that those along the route are all patriotic? Possibly. It certainly seemed that the intention was to create the appearance of a community that was backing the nation-state and its team. In Leicester, I took a Samsung flag and one of the unbranded ones when they were handed to me. However, the possibility that I was not supporting Team GB or the United Kingdom clearly was not a consideration. People were handing out the flags along the route to whoever would take them, regardless of why they wanted one. Some called out for a flag to be given to them while some were handed them as volunteers passed. There was also a small group of people of Asian descent who were offered flags and initially turned them down. However, the man persisted saying “they’re free” and then the flags were accepted. I only witnessed one person refuse a flag.

However, the sponsors of the Torch Relay were not only interested in aiding the LOCOG in promoting nationalism along the route. One of the constants in the Olympic Movement is sponsorship. A great deal of revenue for the Games and the Torch Relay come from these agreements. For instance, Coca-Cola, Samsung, and Lloyds TSB sponsored the 2012 Torch Relay and each had representatives in the
Relay convoy. The promotion of an American, South Korean, and British business through the Torch Relay highlights the process of globalisation. Not only are these companies able to advertise their products and services to a worldwide audience, they have invested money in being part of an international event and are aligning themselves with the promotion of British nationalism.

Perhaps the most obvious, and possibly the most overlooked, expressions of institutional nationalism come from the LOCOG itself. The entire Torch Relay is a way to promote the host nation-state. This could be seen through the stops of the Relay at nationally significant sites such as Buckingham Palace, Land’s End, Stonehenge, and so on. Other ways for this to be accomplished is through the use of Torchbearers. One feature of the Torch Relay was the 8,000 runners who carried the Torch on its journey.

These runners were a combination of people from local communities nominated to carry the Torch by friends or family to celebrities from the sports and entertainment worlds. The flame was carried on its trip around the United Kingdom by young people who had done good things for their community, respected elders, British actors, British Olympians, and even a few athletes from outside the United Kingdom, among many others. What the majority of these Torchbearers had in common was that they were British, or had significant ties to Britain. In choosing people of this type to carry the Torch and to represent the Olympic Movement in the journey around the United Kingdom, the LOCOG was able to promote the people of the United Kingdom to the world. In doing so, the LOCOG was also sharing inspiring stories and stories of excellence in a variety of disciplines in order to show the world, and those in the United Kingdom, what Britain has to be proud of.

Spectator nationalism.

Institutional forces were not the only factors in the demonstration of nationalism at the Torch Relay. It is true that some of the actions of the spectators are difficult to separate from those of the institutions, as many spectators would not have had flags to wave had they not been handed out. Although many of these patterns differed from what would be seen during the Games themselves, they were no less significant given that the Torch Relay has become more of a focal point with each Games.

The simplest place to begin is with the behavioural patterns of the spectators. The reactions of the crowd were something that I took notice of at each location. It
was expected that the crowd would wave flags or signs or other items (a common sight along the routes were inflatable Union flag-decorated torches) as the convoy and the flame passed. It was also expected that there would be loud cheers, whistles, clapping, and other audible expressions of support. To some extent, both of these were present. However, neither was at the level that had been anticipated. Whilst there was loud cheering, whistling, blowing of horns, clapping, and so on, there was less visible support than audible. Rather than waving the flags or the other items they held, many spectators, myself included, were more interested in taking pictures or video of the event. Rather than looking out into the crowd and seeing flags being waved overhead, it was much more common to see cameras or phones being held aloft in an attempt to secure an unobstructed view of the procession.

This does not indicate that the crowds along the Relay routes were not supportive of the Olympics, but it does signal a possibility that the Relay has itself become a show. With tickets to the Games being difficult to acquire, if one wanted to see an event other than football, the Torch Relay offered the chance to be part of something that was widely recognised as happening once in a lifetime. The desire to document the moment was a reflection of the current need to document life through social media. Indeed, this has now taken precedence over other behaviours typically associated with events of this nature. Another indication that there was more interest in seeing the event than actually using it as an avenue to express support for the nation-state or its endeavours was the number of specialty flags on display. Union flags branded by The Sun, celebrating the Diamond Jubilee, or bearing inscriptions such as “Team GB,” “I saw the flame,” or “England 2012” were all brandished along the route.

The most visible aspect of the event was the dress of the spectators. Although nationally affiliated clothing could be seen, only a minority of spectators engaged in this behaviour. Between the four locations, a variety of types of national clothing could be seen ranging from people in Union flag patterned shirts, trousers, leggings, hats, and so on to those in England football shirts. There were also a number of hats and other items such as whistles, noisemakers, and umbrellas marked with the Union flag. In part, this was the consequence of the presence at each location—except Leicester—of stationary carts selling a wide range of products or vendors walking the route selling flags, medals, inflatable torches, and so on.
One trend that was noticeable about the flags and attire along the route was the relative lack of reference to other nations(-states). The overwhelming majority of flags were the Union flag with a small number of England flags present as well. However, only five instances of national flags or attire from outside the United Kingdom were seen: a young child in a Brazil outfit; a young girl in an Italia jacket; a man with a Mexican flag, Mexican branded clothing, and a sombrero; a man with a United States flag; and a man with a sign styled as the Bahrain flag reading “I love Bahrain.” There were a few others who wore shirts or trousers with some reference to the United States—either a display of the flag or the acronym USA—although it was unclear if this had to do with national identification, as this has become a common fashion trend. What makes the lack of other national flags or apparel noteworthy is the ethnic diversity within the crowds. There were a substantial number of spectators of Asian descent and some of South Asian descent as well. While not all of these spectators would have had close ties to another nation(-state), it is not unlikely that many would. Another reason that the lack of other national flags is surprising is the fact that each of these towns has at least one large university. Therefore, it would be expected that there would be students from other nations(-states).

Why were there so few flags from other nations(-states)? It is possible that those who watched the Relay were all British, though the ethnic diversity of the crowds suggests that this is unlikely. What is more probable is that those who were not British either did not see a need to proclaim their loyalty to their home nation(-state) or that this was not seen as the appropriate space to do so. Whilst the Olympic Games are a place where people can support their nation(-state) (if they choose) in sporting contests, the 2012 Torch Relay had consistently been marketed as a way to show how great Britain is and to celebrate all that the nation-state has to offer. It is also possible that some had adopted a degree of loyalty to, or appreciation of, the United Kingdom and, therefore, chose not to display support for another nation(-state) or preferred to show support for Britain.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the Torch Relay that I observed in the East Midlands involved the children who were present. While there was a good mix of all ages at each location, there were always a lot of children. What is interesting though was not the number of children present but the fact that they were most likely to have flags, noisemakers, or other items and they were also most likely to be dressed in nationally branded clothing. The fact that this was the case is perhaps
unsurprising but the question is why? Children of such a young age (between three and twelve years old) will almost certainly have little, if any, idea of the politics of a nation-state to be making political national statements and the younger ones are typically dressed by their parents/guardians and given flags and items by them as well. This makes it all the more interesting to see children wearing nationally branded items when their parents/guardians are not.

Is it because the parents/guardians are making a statement through their children? Is it a form of indoctrination of children into a type of banal nationalist behaviour? If there is a statement behind it, why make it through the child rather than yourself? It is this last question that suggests the conclusion that it is not primarily, if at all, about making a political or nationalist statement. There may be a love of the nation-state for the parent and the intention may be to pass that on to the child, but when the actions are primarily displayed through the child at events such as this, it would appear as if this is a banal act conforming to the expected behaviour. This was anticipated to be an event with a significant performance of Britishness and this was one way in which to participate.

Republic of Ireland.

The Republic of Ireland was the only site outside of the United Kingdom that the Torch visited after its traditional journey through Greece. As mentioned previously, this was done to promote friendship and respect in the context of a complicated relationship between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. Through the visit to Dublin, the nationalism associated with the Relay was more clearly on display.12

One way in which institutional nationalism was made clear when compared to the rest of the Relay was the choice of the Torchbearers. Just as with the Relay in the United Kingdom, many of the runners were local to where they carried the Torch or were celebrities of some note (BBC, 2012), meaning those carrying the Flame in Ireland were all likely Irish citizens. The use of celebrities or sports personalities emphasises this point most clearly. The flame passed into the Republic of Ireland when it was transferred between two former boxing teammates, one from Belfast and one from Dublin (BBC, 2012). The intention was to show the power of sport in

12 I was not able to be in Dublin for the Torch Relay personally. These observations are based on the live video provided on BBC.com (BBC, 2012). This video was (primarily) taken from the back of one of the convoy vehicles.
uniting people. After this, there were many who carried the Torch including one of Ireland’s most famous hurlers, Henry Shefflin, and Irish pop stars Jedward (BBC, 2012). Despite the rest of the Relay being used primarily as a way to promote the United Kingdom, the stop in Dublin was used to promote Irish nationalism and the people, entertainers, athletes, and so on, that Ireland has to be proud of. This can also be seen through the choice of locations much as in the United Kingdom. One of the first stops of the Relay was Croke Park, the home of the Gaelic games and the Gaelic Athletic Association (BBC, 2012).

What is also interesting is that there were changes made to the Relay. While it could be expected that locals would carry the Torch and the Relay would visit locally significant sites—much like the 2008 Beijing Relay did—there were other noticeable adjustments as well. For example, the swathes of Union flags were missing from the crowd. Perhaps this should also be seen as unsurprising. Yet, they were not simply replaced by Irish flags. Irish flags were present along the route; however, large swathes of flags bore the Olympic Rings (BBC, 2012). It is unclear if a local group provided these or if they were handed out by a part of the convoy, but what is clear is that Union flags were not a feature. This is interesting because of the fact that a national flag did not replace them. Samsung, to my knowledge, did not attempt to hand out Irish flags branded with the Samsung logo. Why would this be the case? It could be an attempt not to promote another nation-state so as to keep the focus of the Relay on the United Kingdom but it seems more likely that this was a conscious decision to promote Olympism and the Olympic Movement. The stop in Dublin was in line with the ideals of the Olympics—promoting friendship, solidarity, and unity through sport—and using the Olympic flag was a way to further promote that message.

**Trafalgar Square.**

In addition to the four stops in the East Midlands, I also saw the Torch twice in London. The first time was near Southfields station and it was much the same experience as in the East Midlands. There were no free handouts that I saw, aside from the convoy, but there were crowds four or five deep in either direction with a few people in British or English related clothing and with Union flags. The only event that really stood apart was after the Torch had passed when two men with Uruguayan flags and football jerseys ran down the street. This stuck out not only because of its prominent display of nationalism but also because it was only one of a handful of
identifications with nation-states other than the United Kingdom experienced to that point.

However, on the penultimate day of the Torch Relay, the flame passed through Trafalgar Square. I arrived early in order to have a place at the barrier to see more of the crowd and I watched as the Square filled. There were thousands of people out to see the Torch. What made this stop different from the rest were the displays of spectator nationalism.

To begin, as the Torch passed through the heart of Trafalgar Square, there were thousands of people who were unable to be given branded Samsung Union flags. Therefore, at the outset, apart from the Torchbearers and location, institutionally directed nationalism had been greatly reduced for this small segment. There were no flags ready to be handed out to spectators but this did not mean that there were no flags or symbols of national affiliation. In the crowd there was an assortment of national flags: Mexico, United States, France, United Kingdom, Egypt, Brazil, and one person with an Olympic flag and an assortment of national flags.

There are two reasons why this shift in national identification at the Relay might have taken place. The first is that because London is a multi-cultural city, there are residents who associate with a number of different nations(-states) and this was a chance for them to express their connection with those nations(-states). Secondly, this was the day before the Opening Ceremony so it is possible that those with flags from outside the United Kingdom were visiting for the Games and were using this as another space to demonstrate their national pride. It seemed that whereas before the Relay had been seen as an inappropriate place to show non-British national identification, on this day, it was simply a part of a larger experience.

Lastly, there was one other dramatic departure from anything I had yet seen: a political protest. A small group of people were in the Square waving flags of Syrian independence that read “Freedom” in English and Arabic. There was no violence or outright disruption of events, although I did hear one of the police officers communicate the presence of the protest to others. It was a small, peaceful demonstration that was using the exposure the Olympics could provide to make a point to a larger audience. According to one of the participants in the demonstration, they remained quiet in order to comply with the rules of the Olympic Movement (Johnston & Seida, 2012). Their goal was not to disrupt the Relay or the Games; they were in attendance to use the platform of the Olympics to bring greater awareness to
their cause: a protest against Syrian President Bashar Assad’s regime (Johnston & Seida, 2012).

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we can begin to see answers emerging to the three questions that lie at the heart of this work. Of course, what can be seen in the lead-up to the Games is not the entire story, but it provides a platform from which to delve into the Games themselves. It is prudent, therefore, to consider the patterns that have emerged thus far.

As was demonstrated, the primary focus in the lead-up to London 2012 was the national. When looking at how nationalism was expressed, it is possible to see discernable trends take shape. To begin, there was a focus on symbolism in the design and naming of the Olympic mascot as well as the use of British iconography more overtly in the designs of merchandise for sale. This is especially noteworthy when it comes to the promotion of the Games through the Olympic shop, as citizens of other nations(-states) are unable to support both the London Games and their chosen nation(-state) through the items for sale (these patterns of using British symbolism and iconography will reappear in Chapter 8 when exploring the Opening and Closing Ceremonies). However, the remainder of the lead-up activities brought to light another set of patterns: the use of flags as a vehicle for expression and the use of significant sites around the United Kingdom, as well as British performers, athletes, and citizens. Again, these same patterns will be seen to recur in Chapters 7 and 8.

Yet, what are perhaps more noteworthy are the reasons why we see nationalism expressed in these ways. One of the most readily apparent was the desire to promote the host nation-state. As has been mentioned previously, part of the appeal of hosting the Games is the ability to use them to promote the nation-state in hopes of attracting investments, tourism, and so on. That this was, in fact, the case is not surprising. One example was the use of the promotional materials to endorse the nation-state for commercial purposes at the expense of giving people a chance to separate themselves from British nationalism. Additionally, the heavy focus on the United Kingdom and nationalism over the international is perhaps unsurprising. In the lead-up to the Games, the majority of those in attendance at events and affected by the preparation for the Games are citizens of the host nation-state. By focusing on the nation, the LOGOC was trying to engage the local audience/citizenry. In doing so, support can be gained and that is seen as a vital aspect of hosting the Games.
However, what could also be seen was the way in which there was an element of conscious realisation that the Olympics are an international event with a worldwide reach and that, therefore, there should be an element of the international. Whether the practice of having national flags present just for the sake of it can be seen as indicative of nationalism, internationalism, or a meaningless appropriation of either of these concepts is a valid question.

Of course, whilst these are the most prominent trends to emerge, there were certainly other examples, as noted throughout, of how and why nationalism was expressed in the lead-up to the London 2012 Games. All of these observations lead to a handful of distinct outcomes that can be seen. Firstly, one can see the ways in which the Games are used and manipulated to fit the hosts’ ends. The use of the Games for the potential financial gains is not new but bears repeating. Secondly, links between the host nation-state and the Games are repeatedly being established and reinforced, which can be added to the collective pool of memories from which a national identity can be drawn. As will be demonstrated further in Chapter 8, the ability to add to the British national character is something that was aided by the hosting of the Games. Thirdly, as demonstrated by the random flags at the “one year to go” event, there is a noticeable contrast between the desire to use nationalism and the realisation that internationalism is a part of the Games that should not be ignored. This led to a continuous struggle to incorporate both throughout the Games.

This struggle could be seen prior to the Games at the “one year to go” celebration and the Torch Relay. In each case, this internationalism, as an implicit ideal of Olympism, was made apparent in some way. At the “one year to go” celebration, internationalism could be seen in the formal elements of protocol while at the Torch Relay, internationalism was incorporated through the visit to the Republic of Ireland.

The reasons for these displays of internationalism are relatively straightforward. In each case, this was a way to reinforce the good that Olympism can do in teaching others and bringing people together. What this demonstrates is that there is a continuing focus on Olympism in the Games, even if it is secondary to nationalism.

Lastly, along the Torch Relay route, nationalism was fostered and even encouraged. The small Syrian protest was the only sign of national symbols being explicitly used for purposes other than national identification. Yet, even that event
was linked to problems with Syria—based on the use of the word freedom and the comments from demonstrators—rather than on any conflict with another nation-state, further demonstrating how national symbols need not be used to demonstrate out-group hostility. However, typical behaviours along the Torch Relay route—such as waving flags and attempting to photograph the Torch—indicated that not only is the Torch Relay more of a show than a chance to identify oneself as part of a nation-state, but also that even those actions that could be seen as displays of nationalism may have been different from what is typically associated with nationalism. There was nothing in these forms of behaviour that indicated an ethnocentric loyalty tied to the derogation of out-groups. Rather, even in large groups waving flags, nationalistic actions can be seen as banal or at least as a form of non-exclusive association.

In the following chapter, the focus shifts to the spectators involved in the Olympic Games. The style of dress as well as the behaviour of spectators will be examined as further connections are drawn between the Olympics, nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation.
Chapter 7 – The London 2012 Olympic Games: Notes on Spectators

Introduction

During the London 2012 Olympic Games, data continued to be collected through ethnographic methods and observation. The particular locations for these observations varied, however, with Victoria Park, Hyde Park, and competition venues being the main sites of data collection throughout the Games. By locating the research primarily in these areas, observation was made easy with the large numbers of fellow spectators consuming the Games, allowing for opportunities to share in collective effervescence, conversations, and observation at each location. As each person’s experience of the Games must differ depending on whether s/he had to work, if s/he secured tickets (and how many), and how easy or difficult it was for her/him to take part in activities such as the live sites, the lived experience used as the basis of this study represents one way in which to study the Games.

While consuming the London Olympics as a spectator, I engaged in typical acts of spectator behaviour. While my engagement as a fan was minimal in most cases—often not cheering when there was no direct, personal interest in the outcome—I did cheer for United States competitors, wore United States branded apparel, and at one event cheered while holding an American flag. These behaviours allowed me to experience the Games as other spectators would as well as to engage others in conversation on a few occasions as I could relate not only as a researcher but also as a fellow spectator.

In this chapter, the primary focus will be on the dress and behaviour of the spectators at the Games. As will be demonstrated, the national was overwhelmingly the stronger factor in the behaviours of spectators. Olympism, whilst expected in some form or another, was largely absent and left to the institutions as will be explored in Chapter 8.

The presence of nationalism, or what appeared as nationalism, could be seen primarily through the use and display of flags and clothing, cheers in support of a national team, or, very rarely, through outbursts of negativity against competitors. Nationalism was featured in these ways for two main reasons: 1) it allowed spectators to display or construct national identities and 2) because it was seen as expected behaviour at the Games. Yet, as detailed in the rest of this chapter, there are a variety of outcomes that stem from these behaviours. Some of the more common outcomes include observations that the national can still be seen as a priority and as a source for
identification, crossing of national support actually happens and does not necessarily have lasting consequences, and that there is no need to infer negative consequences from the use of nationalism.

The behaviour of spectators could be observed at any Olympic function. However, here the emphasis will be on those at the live site at Hyde Park as well as those at competition venues. During the 15 days of full competition, I split my time between Hyde Park and the Olympic venues spending nine days at each (some of those days were spent at both locations). This allowed me to observe spectators at ticketed events and at a free-to-enter site to watch the Games. The contrast between a formal competition setting, and an informal viewing area, provided further insight into the types of behaviour being observed.

**Spectator Dress**

The most obvious starting point for a consideration of nationalism and Olympism during the Olympics is the appearance of the spectators. With thousands of people in one location, it was impossible to ignore the large numbers who dressed for the occasion—despite the fact that the majority of spectators dressed in typical daily attire. From painted faces to clothing related to a nation(-state)—be it through colours, symbols, or flags—to the large number of flags, the style of dress was noticeable and worthy of consideration.

Marivoet (2006) states, “the common denominator throughout [Euro 2004] was the spectacular display of different national flags, affirming once more the theatricality involved in the affirmation of national identity in a multicultural Europe” (p. 137). While the London Games were an international event, the same pattern was seen. Visual displays of national symbols not only provided a way for the individual to reaffirm a national identity but also a way to display that identity to others. The variety of flags and national clothing, and the associations they conjure, help shed light on the ways in which spectators embraced universal, regional, national, submerged national, and local identities.

**Universal identification.**

As would be expected, there were relatively few items that could be considered universal. The two types of flags at the Games that belonged to this
category were Olympic flags\textsuperscript{13} and flags incorporating a variety of national flags. These can be considered as universal insofar as they have no attachment to any single location and aim to show a broader range of inclusivity. The Olympic flag represents all nations(-states) that participate in the Games while multi-national flags do not declare any specific affiliation.

During the course of the Games, only four Olympic flags (in addition to one during the Opening Ceremony and my own) and five multi-national flags were seen. That only 11 flags, out of thousands, could be considered universal is telling. The lack of Olympic flags arguably highlights the true nature of the Games. The Olympic Charter, in enumerating the values of Olympism, places a great deal of emphasis on the universal (IOC, 2011). There are repeated mentions of the universal, the world, and all of humankind as the focus of their efforts (IOC, 2011). Whilst these stated values may or may not be the true focus of the IOC, it is also evident that there is a heavy emphasis on internationalism as the national is often a much more central component of the regulations guiding the Olympic Movement. The Games have developed along the lines of internationalism, as that is the basis of the system despite other official ideals that are embedded in Olympism. As they are set up in this way, the Olympic Games have become a space for the expression of national identity with the lack of expressions of a universal identity helping to reinforce this.

The multi-national flags were also an interesting case. While they were clearly not among the most popular flags, they do appear to endorse the international aims of the Olympics. A version of these flags was on sale at the London 2012 stores on the Olympic Park—and possibly elsewhere—and included a large variety of national flags and the flags for the Chinese Taipei NOC and national Paralympic committee. By providing the option to buy these flags, there is an effort to make the renunciation of nationalism a viable option. At the same time, the spectators who brandished these flags, as opposed to national flags, may have been eschewing the national altogether or, alternatively, choosing to forego any particular national allegiances for that day/event—possibly due to the fact that their chosen nation(-state) was not competing. The appearance of these flags demonstrates the presence of Olympism in

\textsuperscript{13} An Olympic flag is here considered as a universal flag; however, Olympic flags with a national brand in addition to the Olympic Rings are not considered universal.
some form, yet the limited numbers indicate the prominence of nationalism over Olympism among spectators.

Similar to the lack of flags that could be considered as universal, there was also a shortage of universal clothing or accessories. On occasion, it was possible to see individuals wearing the Olympic Rings—on t-shirts, hats, headbands, and so on—however, these were very much in the minority. The same can be said for items referencing multiple nations(-states). Although there were some items for sale in the Olympic shop (both online and at physical locations) that had a collection of national flags incorporated into the design, these were seen infrequently. Clothing, even more than flags, tended to stay within the realm of the national, rarely even venturing into associations with submerged nations or local groupings.

Why was this the case? Why was it that foregoing identification with a group in favour of a universal symbol was so uncommon? One likely explanation is that there is no true universal identity. Links between nation(-states) and the interdependence of nations(-states) may be increasing but the majority of individuals still live in one nation(-state) and link their identity to the nation(-state) and more local groups. Hedetoft (1999) argues that despite the possibility of these links between nations(-states) or increasing regionalisation, an awareness of growing connections can lead to a rejection of the global and foster a turn toward nationalism. In addition Smith (2000) maintains that there are no common memories or history that can be shared to bring people together. If individuals do not identify as part of a wider human community, the likelihood that they will display universal symbols over national or local ones, with which they do identify, drops dramatically.

**Regional identification.**

Regional flags were only seen twice, both times in the form of the flag of the EU, and there was no evidence of any clothing or accessories associating an individual with the regional. This is not surprising as such flags and symbols are relatively uncommon in daily life more generally and Europe does not compete as a unit during the Games. While the EU flag may be a regular sight at the Ryder Cup when European golfers compete as a team against the Americans, at the Olympics, individual European nation-states are in direct competition with one another. When

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14 Regions in this sense are being used to describe groupings of nation-states following the definition of regionalisation advanced by Held et al. (2000).
this is compounded with issues of identity, it is understandable that flags such as this are not more common. As Hedetoft (1999) explains, the introduction of a European identity, for example, can encourage the retreat to nationalist identifications as the introduction of a new identity has produced another “other” with which to compare oneself. Although politics may force individuals to be classified as “European” in addition to their nationality, this is not always a welcome or accepted classification.

The United Kingdom is a prime example of this idea. Whereas the United Kingdom is a member of the EU—despite resistance to some of its policies such as monetary union—citizens of the United Kingdom are often reluctant to call themselves European or accept it when others do so. During the Olympics, rather than expressing an identity that has been politically created, there is a chance to express whichever identity an individual feels most connected to; it is a chance to define oneself. In order to come to a more rounded answer, however, it is necessary to look to the ways in which individuals did display their identity at the Games. As explored below, this most often took the form of a national identity.

**National identification.**

Edensor (2002) states, “in international sporting endeavour, national identity is *sine qua non*, the uppermost identity on display” (p. 81). This claim can be supported through a visual approach to the Olympics as the overwhelming majority of flags seen at the London Olympics were national flags and there was a dramatic increase in the presence of national symbols and representations on and through clothing as compared to daily life. One possible explanation for this trend is the opportunity provided by the scale of the event.

Collectively viewing and participating in mega events becomes an opportunity for displays (common or partial, temporary or ongoing) of national solidarity on the world stage; hosting global events and collectively ‘narrating the nation’ enables inhabitants to perform their identity and recall their social biography, and so ‘to construct’ what Bhabha (1990: 3) describes as ‘the field of meanings and symbols associated with national life’. (Baker & Rowe, 2012, pp. 4-5)

The ability of the citizens of the host nation-state to participate in the construction of their national identity on a world stage can be recognised as one reason to engage in the event by wearing national symbols.
The trend of national identification was expected based on the media coverage of previous Games and also on the fact that the Games are organised around national teams. However, the observation of these acts is still significant because it highlights the choice of identifying oneself with a nation(-state). The decision to brandish a flag or other national symbols not only associates an individual with the team but with the nation(-state) as well. Alternatives, such as proclaiming support for the team or for individual players, are able to circumvent this association and yet, the norm remains that of identifying as part of a nation(-state). Even those who are not sports fans can be connected through the use of national symbols which may be part of the appeal: to feel connected to the event and to fellow supporters even when the sport is unfamiliar.

The Games have become a site where differences can be established and national identities reproduced. At this point, it is worth asking, is this behaviour truly a form of nationalism or is it simply how one should behave at a sporting event? The answer is that this behaviour can be both. In some cases, these acts may be a way for the spectator to take part in the event in what is seen as an acceptable fashion. However, it can also be classed as nationalism. The type of nationalism it is defined as is determined either by how the acts are viewed or by the intentions of the actor. It is impossible to say that all such acts are banal or aggressive as each case will be different. Nevertheless, the overt displays of national symbols represent a visual assertion of an identity and a way to position oneself alongside or in contradistinction to others.

Nationalism is typically associated with, although not limited to, the political realm, as discussed earlier. The distinction between political and non-political nationalism can be related back to the concept of the “90-minute patriot.” Also, Bairner’s (2001) assertion that sports fans cloak themselves in national symbols without being interested in the politics of the nation-state reinforces the point that these behaviours can be classed as nationalism as sport provides a space to express a national identity. The sense of belonging and loyalty to a nation as Boas (1932) describes or the “self-sacrificing love” detailed by Anderson (2006, p. 141) can be expressed in a variety of ways in contexts ranging from politics to sport.

Identification with submerged nations.

Although they were not as prevalent as national symbols, symbols of submerged nations were seen at the London Games with some regularity. These symbols were primarily displayed through the use of the flags of submerged nations.
This is noteworthy as the Olympics are promoted as a time to bring people together rather than divide them. However, the promotion of an identity of a submerged nation has the potential to reinforce and exacerbate divisions that exist within a nation-state.

The sight of symbols of submerged nations can symbolise division and a political position. However, if this was the intention, it was not immediately apparent. Rather, flags of submerged nations could often be seen being waved in support of the national team. For example, at a women’s football match between Team GB and Brazil, Scottish flags were waved, likely in recognition of the two Scottish players. Furthermore, at a handball match featuring Spain, some of those enthusiastically supporting Spain waved Catalan flags and wore flamenco-style dresses, displaying associations with two distinct regions of Spain, one of which (Catalonia) is regularly considered a submerged nation. Whilst there may be movements within submerged nations showing a desire for either cultural or political autonomy, what could be seen during the Games is the way in which identities connecting an individual to both the nation-state and a submerged nation can be simultaneously held.

As Bairner (2001) notes, there need not be a direct correlation between sporting and political nationalisms. The decision to express a particular national identity—be it of a submerged nation or a different nation(-state)—may not be an outright rejection of the nation(-state) in which one resides.

Just as some spectators chose to display county flags, as will be discussed in the next section, the flag of Scotland can be used in a similar manner to display affiliation with a part of the United Kingdom. Moreover, when identifying in some way as part of a submerged nation such as Scotland or Catalonia, sport is a way to do so without necessarily being political. Although political displays are possible, the two need not be equivalent. Sport, and in this case the Olympics, has provided a venue for individuals to assert their identity, whichever identity they choose.

**Local identification.**

Other types of symbols that could be seen at the Games were local symbols. These included flags of states, provinces, and counties as well as national flags that had been adapted to reflect a location, and flags of sports clubs. In addition, jerseys from sports teams—primarily football clubs—could also be spotted in the crowds although they were less frequent and often coincided with the use of local flags. In any case, these symbols could be seen, like flags of submerged nations, being used to support the national team. The presence of such local symbols points to a facet of
nationalism and national identity considered previously in relation to the Torch Relay. So far, the different levels of identification have provided evidence of the choice to align oneself with a larger group that often differs from others in clearly identifiable ways. Through identification with the local, the national is not necessarily forgotten or written off; rather, individuals are aligning their identity with what is arguably a more tangible concept.

During the Games there were a variety of differing types of local flags that could be seen. There were state/county/province flags such as those from Northumberland and Yorkshire in the United Kingdom, New Mexico of the United States, and Pernambuco of Brazil. There were also national flags that had been embellished with names of towns. For example, Polish flags with “Kruszwica” and “Niemodlin” and Swedish flags with “Hudiskvall” and “Reftele.” In each of these cases, individuals were displaying an affiliation with a particular part of a nation(-state). Much like the use of flags of submerged nations, local flags at the Games reflect the complex nature of identity and the ways in which one chooses to associate with and express support for a nation(-state). However, it is also possible that in some cases the display of support may have been tailored to particular athletes.

For example, a small group was spotted in Hyde Park wearing shirts in support of Team GB’s triathlon hopes, the Brownlee brothers, linking support to these athletes rather than to the nation-state more generally. The same could be said of the individual at Hyde Park Corner on the triathlon route displaying a Yorkshire flag. The use of a Yorkshire flag suggests a personal association with Yorkshire, but also the desire to use a more exclusive symbol (the local over the national) in support of particular athletes, in this case, the Brownlee brothers who hail from Yorkshire.

The other form of local flags one was likely to see were flags of sports clubs. A number of individuals displayed flags of football clubs or other sports clubs and even a few from United States universities were seen. These associations, as with other forms of local identification, point to the expression of a different part of one’s identity. Just as flags of submerged nations were used in support of the national team or individual athletes, so too were the flags of sports clubs (provided that nation(-state) was competing). For example, at beach volleyball a Stanford University flag was seen being waved in support of Kerri Walsh, a Stanford alumna. Notably, the majority of these types of flags belonged to Brazilian groups.
 Whilst these same associations exist in many nations(-states)—and could be seen through flags for Stanford University and Chesham United Football Club for example—the fact that the national was still prioritised speaks to the way in which the nation(-state) provides a transcendent source for identification and social solidarity. One question could then be why national identification appeared to be tempered by more local forms of identification among Brazilian fans. Based on the use of flags, there was ample support for the Brazilian nation-state but local association also exercised a strong pull. However, as will be discussed later, flags are certainly not the only way in which to judge issues of nationalism and national identification. When looking to other aspects of spectator appearance and behaviour, even amongst those who chose to identify through local flags, Brazilian spectators were often some of the most vocal and supportive.

**Cultural representations in dress.**

One distinct feature of spectator apparel is its capacity to embody the nation(-state) in particular ways. During the Games, individuals from a variety of nations(-states) used their dress to portray the nation(-state). Rather than identifying with a nation(-state) through colours or flags, these individuals tapped into national culture, and even national stereotypes, to display their affiliation.

Examples of this sort of dress included: Japanese fans in kimonos or wearing traditional bandanas; Canadian fans in hockey helmets; fans of Demark, Sweden, and Iceland in Viking helmets; or Spanish fans in flamenco-style dresses. These were not the only examples but they provide sufficient evidence of the type of cultural associations being used. Whether it was traditional styles of dress, historical references, or sporting cultures that were utilised, in each case there was more on show than a mere expression that one belongs politically to a nation-state; the nature of belonging is also cultural.

Edensor (2002) states,

> the performances in stadia of fans, their use of song and music, the clothes they wear and the flags they wave, their response to sporting action, defeat and victory, and their propensity to fight all signify what are believed to be identifiable national characteristics. (p. 81)

While Edensor (2002) was probably not thinking that these characteristics would be displayed quite so literally, that was what happened during the Games. Manzenreiter (2006) observes that

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when worn in the football arena, these clothes [kimono, fundoshi, and so on] assumed a metonymic function of expressing national identity or identification with the national team. Similarly, chonmage hairstyle or donning a samurai costume expressed a metaphorical reading of national identity which is associated with a specific segment of Japanese history and tradition. (p. 154)

The example of the group of Canadian fans wearing hockey helmets also provides enough evidence to support the claim that such associations were not random. Bairner (2001) explains how hockey in Canada has contributed to the creation and reinforcement of national identity and, specifically, to forge a national identity to unite English-speaking and Francophone Canadians. Hockey is an integral part of Canadian culture and one of Canada’s most distinctive traits; hence hockey was a highly appropriate aspect of Canadian culture to use at the Olympics to reinforce a sense of Canadian national identity.

Support Displayed for Multiple Nations(-States)

It is no longer uncommon for individuals to feel connected to multiple nations(-states). They may have familial ties to a nation(-state) not of their birth, hold dual citizenship, or they may feel a particular affinity with another nation(-state) for personal reasons. At the Games, there was ample opportunity to express support for multiple nations(-states) and, in some cases, without conflict, as the two nations(-states) concerned might not have competed against one another. There were two specific instances that are worth examining that reflect the choice to outwardly support multiple nations(-states).

The first example was a pair of women who were supporting both Team GB and Jamaica. One of the women was wearing a Jamaica top while both had Team GB wristbands and they sat on a Union flag mat to watch the action at Hyde Park. When explaining which nation(-state) they were supporting, they provided interesting insights into the navigation and display of national identity. The woman in the Jamaica top explained that she was British but Jamaican by descent—she was born and raised in England but her parents are from Jamaica—and that she was supporting both Jamaica and Team GB. However, the accompanying reasoning and insight was not as simple. She explained that she identifies more now as ‘black British’ due to changes in racial acceptance in Britain and the fact that she has never been to Jamaica, but that she may have answered differently had this been 10-15 years ago. Explaining her shifting views of her own national identity she admitted that this was the first time
that she had outwardly displayed support for Jamaica and that she is a ‘fair-weather fan’ when it comes to choosing which team to cheer for. Her friend was not as talkative but she did make clear that she was also British and Jamaican—also born in England to Jamaican parents—and supporting both Team GB and Jamaica. She said that she would describe herself as British/English but also still Jamaican.

The second instance involved a woman who was wearing a Netherlands scarf and carrying a Netherlands flag, an orange flag, and a Union flag. She explained that she was supporting the Netherlands, particularly in their quest for men’s field hockey gold. However, as she continued, she confessed that she cheers for Team GB when the Netherlands are not competing and that her son can never choose for whom to cheer, implying that her son is also British.

In each of these cases, there is a negotiation of identity. There is an identification with more than one nation-state and that is expressed, even when maintaining a stronger attachment to one over the other. Here it is clear that national identity is more complex than simple loyalty to the place where one was born. Bell (2003) suggests that the concept of national identity is problematic claiming, “there is no singular, irreducible national narrative, no essentialist ‘national identity’” (p. 73). This is nowhere more evident than in cases such as these where multiple conceptions of one’s own identity converge.

However, despite situations such as these, of which there were many during the Games, not all displays of support for multiple nations(-states) imply a divided sense of national identity. In many cases, the association with a nation(-state) other than one’s own is a matter of convenience. There were numerous cases of people who held two different flags or had one flag in hand and another painted on their face. One example of this was a pair of girls who had their entire faces painted: half was the flag of Brazil, half was the Union flag.

The reasons for supporting multiple nations(-states) surely varied from person to person. It is possible that some were genuinely identifying with and supporting more than one nation(-state). However, it is just as likely that an outward display of support for multiple nations(-states) was not due to a genuine identification with each nation(-state) but, instead, was a gesture performed simply because it was possible. Horne and Manzenreiter (2004) refer to the tendency of Japanese fans at the 2002 FIFA World Cup to dress in the jerseys of a range of different teams “as if fan identity could be acquired by the purchase of the correct shirt” (p. 196). This practice of
“fashion nationalism,” as they refer to it (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2004, p. 196), is similar to the use of national symbols for reasons of convenience. Whether it is a jersey of the national team or a national flag, the association is not done to express an identity but as a way to take part in the event in a way that is seen as acceptable. The availability of items bearing the colours or symbols of a variety of nations(-states) throughout the Games, combined with the likelihood of watching many nations(-states) compete, facilitated displaying support for any number of nations(-states).

One example of a display of support for reasons of convenience occurred during the opening session of women’s basketball, which included a match between Russia and Canada. In the crowd was a small group of French Canadians—one adult woman and four children. During the session, they began interacting with a Russian woman sitting in front of them who gave the children a face paint stencil kit so they could show their support for Canada. With this, one of the children had a Canadian flag painted on one cheek and a French flag on the other and three of them used the stencil to paint a Union flag on each other. While these were children (10-14 years old) and therefore simply having fun with the face paint rather than trying to make statements about their identity, this experience highlighted a pervasive feature of the Games.

Similar to the children seen at the Torch Relay, when children were dressed in nationalist clothing or displaying national symbols it was common that they either matched those they were with or they were the only one in the group to be displaying such symbols. However, on occasion it could be seen that children had assorted flags painted on their faces or held a free Union flag while those they were with showed support for another nation(-state). While many may look around and assume that the holding of flags or what is painted on one’s face indicates support, this is not always the case. With children, it may be a matter of what happens to be nearest. When free flags are being handed out, children are likely to want them regardless of what they symbolise. The children at the basketball game were provided with a stencil of the Union flag and red, white, and blue face paint, and it should not be surprising that they used both.

In fact, adults could also be seen taking advantage of what was convenient. One day at Hyde Park, two American women were wearing USA jackets and shirts along with red, white, and blue hair bands. However, one of the Americans was wearing a Team GB wristband. She then stopped one of the British
Telecommunications workers handing out free flags. It turned out that she was supporting the United States and that the wristband and the flag were only items of convenience. The wristband was something to have because she was at the Olympic Games in London and she had asked for a flag because she wanted something to wave when everybody else did. It was clear, however, that her allegiance was to the United States not only from the clothes worn on that day but also through her proclamation that she and her friend would be at the women’s football final the next day (United States versus Japan) and that they were ‘going to get decked out for that…even more.’ What this shows is that what may seem like nationalistic forms of behaviour may actually be opportunistic behaviour: a souvenir from the Games and a way to take part in the experience.

Similarly, on another occasion, a man had a Jamaican flag painted on his cheek and was standing amongst numerous Union flags. He made it clear, however, that he was not supporting Jamaica saying, ‘no, not really, it’s just a funny flag.’ He then indicated his friend and said, ‘look, he’s got New Zealand.’ He then explained that they had decided to get random flags painted because they could.

What can be seen from these examples are the diverse ways in which symbols of national identity are approached and the variety of reasons for which they are used. In some cases, there is a consciously felt and considered attachment to multiple nations(-states) that is expressed in different and complex ways. In other cases, what could be mistaken as national identification is an act of participation or amusement. What this also shows is how national symbols need not always hold the same symbolic power for each individual. For some, it is clearly not seen as a threat to their own national identity to display the symbols of another nation(-state). The negotiation of national identity is complex and the expression of such must be examined in context to understand the uses, roles, and power of national symbols.

The displays of support for multiple nations(-states), and the various reasons for doing so are important when looking at an international event such as the Olympics. Although there is no single reason for this behaviour, the actions nevertheless provide insight into the Olympic Movement. Perhaps the most important observation is that these behaviours occur at all. Unlike other events, such as the FIFA World Cup, spectators cheer on other nations(-states) and it is not only accepted behaviour but it is unsurprising. It is expected that everybody will participate in cheering at events and, because of this, it is acceptable to cheer for other nations(-
Moreover, there are no adverse reactions to this behaviour. Whilst some individuals may feel inclined to support multiple nations (states) or to support a different nation (state) than their own at other sporting events, this is typically considered to be out of the ordinary. Again, this goes back to the idea of authentic fans. At London 2012, nobody was chastised or called inauthentic for choosing to support any nation (state).

**Spectator Behaviour**

One factor that cannot be overlooked at a sporting event is the behaviour of spectators. The cheering patterns, songs, and chants provide insights into how people engage with the event and, from that, relationships to nationalism and Olympism can be explored. During London 2012, there were numerous places to watch the Games from the comfort of one’s own home to a local pub to the venues themselves. In each of these locations, the behaviour of spectators could be expected to differ. In this section, the live site at Hyde Park and the competition venues are the focal points for the exploration of spectator behaviour, highlighting and identifying the ways in which nationalism and Olympism are expressed and what can be learned from these actions.

**Hyde Park.**

Over the course of London 2012, nine days were spent, in part or in total, at Hyde Park observing those in attendance, speaking to some, and watching the Games. As one of two live sites during the Games, and with free entry, Hyde Park tended to be busy with thousands of people coming each day to watch live sport on one of five screens. People from a variety of nations (states) came and took part in the activities and there was a lively atmosphere as people moved around and discussed the Games. However, the experience was different from what had been expected.

I had anticipated that watching the Games at a live site would be similar in some ways to watching sports in a bar in the United States—cheering for a team throughout, obvious engagement with the action on the screen, and competing voices of those supporting opposing sides, even if one was vastly outnumbered. However, this was only the case in certain circumstances that will be discussed in due course. The norm was a much more subdued viewing experience.

Baker and Rowe (2012) state, “the recent proliferating practice of broadcasting mega events from Live Sites in popular urban centres has increased the

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15 British Telecommunications ran the live sites at Victoria Park and Hyde Park under the name “BT London Live.”
capacity of sport to contribute to identity formation beyond the boundaries of the ‘live’ sporting arena” (p. 5). While this is valid, experiences in Hyde Park, as compared to those in the Olympic venues, demonstrate that the two do not work in the same ways. In Hyde Park, identity formation was possible through cheering and displays of national flags or clothing (or regional, local, and so on). However, this was done much differently than in the venues, suggesting that live sites, whilst serving as another vehicle for identity formation, still do not operate in the same way as event venues.

Although there was always sport on at least one screen, and people were constantly watching, talking, or taking part in the activities on site, there was a lack of overt enthusiasm during the majority of events. This could be attributed to a number of factors such as a lack of interest in the sport being shown or there may have been limited support in the audience for the competing teams. What was observed was a general pattern of individuals cheering only for their chosen team—and with the majority of spectators being British, this further explained the lack of cheering when Team GB was not competing. Bairner (2009) observes that “following one’s ‘proxy warriors’ (Hoberman, 1984) into international competition is one of the easiest and most passionate ways of underlining one’s sense of national identity, one’s nationality or both in the modern era” (p. 227). It is the norm in international sport to only support one’s own nation(-state) and this extended into the viewing patterns at Hyde Park. In addition to the clothes that were worn or the flags that were waved, the act of cheering for a particular team reinforced one’s national identity.

This pattern occasionally changed in unusual circumstances. A regular break in this pattern was when spectators would politely cheer for an impressive feat—such as a difficult routine or manoeuvre in gymnastics—or when an athlete showed they had recovered from an accident or injury. However, aside from these practices, cheering for a competitor from another nation(-state) was rare. One of the most prominent examples of this behaviour was witnessed during the men’s 200 metre semi-final featuring Usain Bolt.

The personality of Bolt, combined with his sporting ability, has made him a worldwide favourite and this could be seen at Hyde Park as the crowd erupted in large cheers in support of him. It almost certainly helped that Christian Malcolm, the British competitor, was not in the same heat as Bolt. However, to attribute the support for Bolt by the predominately British crowd to this fact would be to overlook
important factors. With the example of Bolt, there is little evidence of nationalism, as the majority of the crowd would have had no ties to Jamaica. Yet, Bolt has proven his dominance as the best sprinter in history, aiding in his profile and popularity with spectators from any number of nations (states). Furthermore, the recognition of Bolt as the best sprinter in the field and the crowd’s subsequent support of him, despite one’s typical national allegiance, is in line with Olympism as it demonstrates a support for excellence in competition. However, evidence of globalisation can certainly also be seen. With sports being broadcast around the world and Bolt being sponsored by a number of high-profile companies, which use him and his image in promotional materials in multiple nation-states, it is not surprising that he has been embraced as a fan favourite.

A further example of support for another nation (state) came during a semi-final men’s basketball game featuring Spain and Russia. Despite not witnessing the entire game, it was evident that there were differences in spectator behaviour during this game compared to most other viewing experiences at Hyde Park. There was a large gathering of Spanish fans watching the game, cheering, and chanting. The cheering generally followed normal sporting patterns such as responding to baskets and urging on the chosen team, but that there was cheering mixed with occasional chants of ‘Es-Pan-ya’ stuck out as unusual. Active cheering of this sort was a rarity even in many of the competitions featuring Team GB.

During this game there was also a small group of people dressed in Team GB items who were cheering along with the Spanish fans. After the game, one of the women explained their reasoning for having cheered for Spain. Although they were British—indicated through their accents and the use of the term ‘we’ when referencing Great Britain—she said that they ‘have to cheer for someone.’ She reasoned further that ‘if we’re not in it…’ and therefore cannot cheer for Team GB, that there were two specific reasons to have chosen to cheer for Spain: 1) ‘there are a lot of Spanish supporters around’ and 2) ‘we go there on holiday sometimes and it’s close to us.’ This revealed that cheering patterns could be adapted to specific situations.

In this case, the presence of others was an influential factor on how a person, or group of people, behaved as was the justification based on loose connections to a location. To most people, having been somewhere on holiday is perhaps not a reason to support a team. However, what is the difference between that link to a territory and
the link of having been born in or having lived in a particular place? The tie may not be as strong but a link to a territory is consistently a feature of nations and nationalism (Cobban, 1969; Hargreaves, 1992; Smith, 2001). The use of this type of link to choose whom to support for one game is not so outlandish. Each person has his/her own reasons for supporting another nation(-state) when doing so and none should be discounted. These types of explanations point to a feature of our interconnected world as it is increasingly possible to have ties to other nations(-states) as travel becomes easier, faster, and more readily available to larger segments of the world’s population.

Nevertheless, the most common occurrences of cheering took place when Team GB was competing in high-profile events—specifically high-profile events in which team GB had a good chance at winning a medal. This was apparent on three particular trips to Hyde Park.

The first such occasion was on 5 August when Andy Murray competed in the singles and mixed doubles tennis finals and Louis Smith participated in the pommel horse final. In each case, there was a high probability of not just a medal but of a gold medal and the British crowd was excited to cheer on their representatives. Andy Murray versus Roger Federer (Switzerland) was the first of these events and was shown on two of the four screens on the main quad. Each point for Murray was cheered loudly and accompanied by the waving of Union flags while points for Federer were greeted with virtual silence outside the few Swiss fans in the crowd. Once the match had finished and Murray had won, the crowd cheered and waved their flags constantly for the next five to ten minutes with an increase in intensity each time Murray appeared on screen. Similar behaviour was evident during the mixed doubles final where Murray and partner Laura Robson lost in a tiebreak final set. However, instead of cheers at the conclusion of the match, there was a disappointed silence.

Finally, the gymnastics pommel horse final also received considerable attention—although it was overshadowed to some extent because of the overlap with the men’s tennis final—as Louis Smith aimed for gold. There were loud cheers for both British athletes competing and a stunned silence when Smith lost the gold, also on a tiebreak procedure.

All of these actions on this day showed support for Team GB. The waving of flags, the cheering at the triumphs for the team, and the silence at the low points all indicate identification with the nation-state through the sporting team. Competitors were cheered on to win because they were British. In the case of Murray, there were
also some who chose to support him with displays of the Scottish flag. While there was only one instance of this witnessed in Hyde Park, the video panning the crowd at Wimbledon showed additional Scottish flags and faces painted with the Scottish flag. The use of the Scottish flag reflected not only identification with the individual but also the fact that the United Kingdom has divided national identities and that, for some, it may have been less about Murray being British than about him being Scottish.

The second day that stood out in this respect was 7 August when the Brownlee brothers captured triathlon medals for Team GB and Chris Hoy, Victoria Pendleton, and Laura Trott competed in cycling. Just as with the previous example, this was a day when Team GB could expect to do well and when some of the team’s most popular athletes would be competing. The first event was the triathlon, which finished just before I entered Hyde Park. Once inside, at least four of the five screens were playing coverage of the event and were about to show the medal ceremony. However, due to a delay, coverage was moved to one screen and, with that, there was a shift in the crowd as many of the people in the park moved to the screen still showing the triathlon coverage in anticipation of the medal ceremony. During the ceremony, there were loud cheers and numerous flags waved in support of both Brownlee brothers and even considerable applause for the silver medallist from Spain. Moreover, the crowd loudly sang the national anthem and a rousing cheer erupted when the commentator mentioned that triathlon represented Britain’s nineteenth gold medal. Similar reactions followed Trott’s and Hoy’s competitions in cycling. There were loud cheers for both when they won and each time they were shown on screen. The national anthem was sung during the medal ceremonies and people made sure to be at the correct screen if the event switched. All of these actions are, again, consistent with the forms of behaviour mentioned earlier and the way in which the athlete is being used as a way to identify with the nation-state.

Even more interesting were the events that took place in Hyde Park when Pendleton competed in her final race. There were the same cheering patterns and waving of flags, but there was also competition between fans. After the first of a potential three races, Pendleton was declared the winner until a review determined that she had violated a rule and the victory would be given to her Australian opponent. This elicited a negative reaction from the British crowd whilst two small groups of Australian fans began to stand, cheer, and wave Australian flags—acts
intended to support their own athlete and simultaneously taunt the British fans. At the start of the second race, there was a smattering of boos for the Australian athlete’s introduction—a rarity at the Games where there was little evidence of booing or negative reactions to opposing athletes—and supportive, yet disappointed, cheering for Pendleton when she was shown after the loss in the second and final race.

Upon conclusion of the race, a man stated that he had ‘gone off this sport now’ while another yelled at the screen ‘you were robbed!’ However, this comment did not go unnoticed as an Australian man nearby announced (softly) ‘she wasn’t robbed, she was smoked.’ Although some of these actions may have stemmed from a historical sporting rivalry between Great Britain and Australia, what this comment, along with the taunting and booing, tells us is that whilst the typical crowd behaviour was of a supportive, non-confrontational nature, there were exceptions. This sort of behaviour is what many think of when addressing nationalism. It is this behaviour that is identified as nationalistic when claims are made that nationalism inevitably leads to divisions and reactionary politics (see Cronin, 2003; Chatterjee, 1993). Whilst these comments and actions lean toward the negative and confrontational, two additional insights can be gained from them.

The first is that there was no reaction; there was no confrontation or serious conflict between the British fans and the much smaller groups of Australian fans. This is not to ignore what was said or done but it does lend credence to the idea that the Olympics are a different type of sporting event in which the values of Olympism and the goodwill that they are supposed to foster need not be overshadowed or undermined by displays of nationalism—even in some cases, confrontational displays of nationalism. The second is that the two most basic principles of nationalism and national identity can be clearly seen in these sorts of behaviour—for better or worse. Spectators have attached themselves to an identity that is an abstraction—e.g. American, Australian, or British—and they have constructed an “us versus them” dichotomy. In belonging to a nation(-state), performing nationalist behaviour, or expressing a national identity, it is widely recognised that boundaries to the community are integral (see Anderson, 2006; Bell, 2003; Duara, 1996; Eley & Suny, 1996; Hargreaves, 1992).

The final day that stood out in this regard was 11 August, the penultimate day of competition, when Mo Farah won the athletics 5,000 metre gold and Tom Daley won bronze in 10 metre platform diving. The 5,000 metre race went as expected with
the crowd enthusiastically supporting Farah: cheering, waving flags, and with occasional outbursts such as ‘go Mo!’ and ‘come on Mo!’ Fans were still cheering hours later with a small group chanting ‘Mo-mo-mo-mo. Mo-mo-mo-mo. Mo-mo-mo-mo. Mo Far-ah’ as they left Hyde Park. However, the diving offered a different experience. Much like the Pendleton race described above, there was a more confrontational atmosphere during the event.

There were high expectations for Daley in the lead-up to London 2012 and, having failed to medal in the synchronized event, the expectations had risen for his 10 metre performance. The crowd was solidly behind Daley, cheering, waving flags, and even occasionally chanting ‘Da-ley’ or shouting, ‘come on Tom!’ As the event progressed and the gap between results at the top narrowed, the crowd began to act differently. Starting in the fourth round (of six) the crowd began to make noises when other divers prepared to dive and becoming silent when it was Daley’s turn. In the fourth round, somebody in the crowd yelled ‘f*** off’ when one of the Chinese divers took to the platform. Lastly, fans booed the other three divers in the top four with Daley (two Chinese and one American) when it was their turn to dive in the final three rounds.

This was, by far, the event with the most negative reactions witnessed at Hyde Park. As mentioned above, there is the identification with the nation-state but there is also the out-group hostility that gives nationalism its negative connotations (see Cronin, 2003; Chatterjee, 1993; Gellner, 1997). The rejection of the “other,” even for incredible feats of skill—which, as mentioned earlier, provided one of the few exceptions to the norm of only cheering for your nation(-state)— was unmistakeable. However, it is worth mentioning again that none of this caused any issues to arise. It is unknown if there were any Chinese spectators or other Americans in attendance; however, the fact that even in this context there were no confrontations is worth noting. Had this been a viewing for a FIFA World Cup game, it is likely that there would have been some degree of conflict as a result of such behaviour even if there were only one or two opposing fans.

As it happened, I was watching the event wearing my United States Olympic hat and clapping for Boudia, the American diver, and at one point a man in front of me turned to his friend and not so subtly made him aware of my presence saying ‘USA fan behind us.’ I was certainly in the minority and was cheering, albeit not overly exuberantly, for a rival diver, an experience which brought to light two points:
firstly, even with behaviour that displays out-group hostility, there were no obvious lingering consequences for those in the minority and, secondly, acts such as cheering on an athlete and wearing national clothing signalled to others that I was an American.

This second point is worth focusing on for a moment because it highlights the connections made throughout this work. Simple acts that many individuals take for granted, signal larger meanings to others. If I had not been cheering—or had been cheering for Daley—and had not been wearing that hat, I could have gone relatively unnoticed, as I was not speaking to anybody. National identity is a complex issue and it is also very personal as there is no one way in which to express any national identity, and yet it is often seen as a simple concept when assigning a label to another individual.

**Olympic venues.**

The experience inside the Olympic venues differed considerably from that in Hyde Park. Whilst each sport had its own distinctive traits, overall it was a much more active and engaged atmosphere than at Hyde Park on a typical day. Spectators were constantly cheering—within the acceptable parameters of the specific sport—and there appeared to be a greater diversity, or at least a higher concentration, of nationalities in the crowd.

Some forms of behaviour could be looked at outside of a nationalist perspective; for example, the engagement with an event is likely to increase when watching live rather than on television, even when in a large crowd. Similarly, it was not surprising to see a wider diversity of nations(-states) being supported at the venues, as individuals from other nations(-states) were more likely to come to London if they had tickets to an event. However, the behaviours in the stadiums are still worthy of comparison with those of spectators in Hyde Park as the patterns had some dramatic differences.

The primary difference was the tendency of individuals to cheer for a nation(-state) other than their own. While cheering for one’s own nation(-state) was certainly the norm, as will be addressed later, the decision to cheer for another nation(-state), or nations(-states), as well, was not something that was widely seen in Hyde Park. The most likely reason that individuals chose to support another nation(-state) was that theirs was not competing. When purchasing Olympic tickets in early stages, it is not known which teams will be taking part in which session. Therefore it is highly likely
that an individual purchases tickets to see another nation(-state) compete. It is possible to look back to the discussion of authentic fans from the previous chapter to provide another angle from which to view these actions.

Whilst it is common in sports to look down upon those not seen as authentic fans—be it of the sport, team, or athlete—at the London Olympics this was not seen to be the case. There are two possible explanations for this. First of all, there is the likelihood that the majority of spectators at the Olympics may have no affiliation with the sport outside of the Games and, therefore, it is not controversial to support an athlete for whatever reason one may provide. However, the other possible explanation is that, due to the way tickets are applied for and allocated, it is probable that there are many in the audience who have no connection to, and therefore do not support, any of the nations(-states) competing in the session for which they have tickets. With this being the case, those in attendance typically choose a team or individual to cheer on in competition for a myriad of reasons and this is accepted Olympic practice.

When at a sporting event, there is often a desire to take part in what is happening, and that includes cheering on a team. One explanation for this behaviour is that spectators experience collective effervescence whereby spectators whose nations(-states) were not competing became caught up in the atmosphere due to the engagement of other fans. At the Olympics, who to cheer for then becomes a decision that individuals make based on a range of factors particular to him/herself as was discussed in relation to the British fans cheering for Spain in basketball. Without the common connections that create loyalty to a nation or a national identity (see Edensor, 2002; Eley & Suny, 1996; Renan, 1990/1996) individuals were able to draw on a wide variety of experiences and reasons in order to determine whom to cheer for, possibly outside the bounds of nationalism.

For example, at beach volleyball with my mother and an English friend, there was a constant renegotiation of which team to cheer for at the start of each match. Two of the matches featured a team representing the United States, leading to support of those pairs from my mother and me and a friendly, antagonistic support for their opponents from our English companion. However, during the other matches, the choice was made based on other factors. For instance, during the first match, the choice to cheer for Switzerland was based on the presence of a number of Swiss fans in the same section of the venue and, during the third match, the choice to cheer for Australia was based on a private joke as my English companion had accidentally been
gifted an Australian flag, which we used to show support for the Australian pair. While reasons such as these do not indicate strong links to other nation-states or to how we may feel or identify, when supporting another team, that need not always factor into the decision.

After the women’s football final at Wembley Stadium between the United States and Japan, a few British spectators explained their reasons for having supported a particular team. One man gave two different reasons for supporting Japan: first, the United States had won too many medals already and Japan had fewer, and, secondly, he had spent more time in Japan than in the United States. A woman used similar logic to justify her choice to support the United States, explaining that she had lived there. Furthermore, a woman in Team GB clothing chose to support the United States for a different set of reasons. She had selected the United States after having watched the United States versus Canada semi-final leading her to support the team from that match which had advanced. She also joked about how the same colour scheme made getting dressed quite easy and mentioned a flippant comment she had made to her sister about her knowledge of the United States’ national anthem as a reason to support them.

With these examples, it is possible to see the different ways in which spectators engage with the Games when cheering for one’s own nation(-state) is not an option. Much like the women cheering for the Spanish basketball team at Hyde Park, there is an indication of how a shrinking world and the ease of travel has, at least to some extent, impacted upon the sporting world. This type of globalisation, with the ability to spend time in other nations(-states) and to form even superficial or minimal attachments to them, has led to expressions of some international solidarity.

However, possibly the best example of support for other nations(-states) came from beach volleyball. There was a group of four people, two men with Swiss flags and two women with Polish flags, all with faces painted to match their flags. Throughout the course of the session, this group could be seen supporting multiple teams both through their dress and cheering. They cheered for Switzerland in the first match, Poland in the second, Australia in the third, and the Czech Republic in the fourth. At some point, they either retrieved flags they had brought, or borrowed them from others, as they were also seen with an Australian flag and a Czech flag.

What all of these examples show is the way in which behaviour or even dress do not necessarily indicate national identity or nationality. At the Olympics, it is not
uncommon for everybody to be audibly supportive during every game even if only in the form of polite clapping. At beach volleyball, people could often be seen waving national flags of non-competing nations(-states) when cheering the competitors on the court. It is part of the experience and reasons, no matter how inconsequential, can be found to cheer for other nations(-states).

The importance of this is two-fold. First, as mentioned above, neither behaviour nor dress can be seen as clear indications of nationalism or national identity. Second, while this is the case from an objective standpoint, the general public might not be able to distinguish between actions and dress that are expressive of one’s own identity and actions that are adopted to participate in the experience.

Returning to the example of my experience at beach volleyball, a man sitting behind us was confused as to our nationality—due to the presence of an American, Australian, and Union flag—and asked who we were supporting stating that he believed we were all American. The act of cheering for multiple nation-states and having multiple national flags caused confusion as it made it difficult to determine with which nation-state we actually identified. Supporting a team, and using national symbols related to a team, indicates to others, rightly or wrongly, that that individual belongs to, or affiliates with, that nation(-state).

Overall, of course, cheering on one’s “own” nation(-state) was still the most common sight. Whilst the cheering followed general sporting patterns, there were certain features that are worth noting. The first was the tendency to display national flags when shown on the in-venue cameras. While the cameras were perhaps searching for individuals or groups who were dressed up for the event in some way, it is interesting that one of the most common reactions was to present a flag or highlight for whom one was cheering. What made this desirable? One reason could be that this was the type of behaviour that was sought and, therefore, it made one more likely to get on camera. Another reason could be that this was a way for people to be able to display their national identity in a way that would be seen. The desire to display one’s national identity certainly correlates to the overwhelming presence of flags, national clothing, and face paint.

Another aspect to consider is the use of chants during the matches. Chanting is a common occurrence at sporting events of all kinds and London 2012 was no exception. Over nine events featuring a variety of nation-states, a number of chants could be heard including: GB; U-S-A; Rus-si-a; Chi-na; Pol-ska; Allez les bleus; Ni-
ppon; Bra-zil; Yea, yea, Hun-ga-ria. What these chants show is how the nation-state was being supported; none of these chants are specific to a team or its athletes. The exception to this could be heard at a fencing session when Italian and Hungarian fans chanted the name of the competing athlete. By using chants in support of the nation-state, it was once again being prioritised. The competition was shown to be not about the specific teams or athletes but about what they represented and how many medals the nation-state could have attributed to it.

There are two other points that should be addressed before moving on and examining how the institutions involved in staging the Games promoted nationalism. The first was a scene inside Earl’s Court where volleyball took place. Shortly after entering the venue, there was a group of approximately 40-50 Polish fans jumping, chanting (‘Pol-ska’), waving signs and flags, and all dressed in red and white, many with wigs and/or painted faces as well. This group was celebrating the win by the Polish men’s volleyball team in the previous game. What stood out was both the way in which this was a brazen display of Polish nationalism as well as the fact that this display did not cause any adverse reactions from opposing fans. In fact, many passing spectators stopped to watch, record video, or take photographs. Although the Polish fans were an exclusive group, other fans were interested in their actions. Furthermore, a Brazilian fan was seen posing for a picture with one of these Polish fans. The exuberance of the Polish fans was what drew other spectators to them.

The second was an example of chanting at the basketball arena where a Russian woman was encouraging a group of French Canadian children to cheer on Canada (in a game against Russia). She was continually trying to get the kids more excited about the game that was taking place and, in a move that is highly unusual in sport, even started chants of ‘Can-a-da’ hoping to get them to follow. Her own Russian national identity, displayed through a number of items of clothing, a flag, and a painted face, did not stand in the way of attempting to pass on a love of the game or the encouragement of the expression of the children’s own national identity. Both of these examples point to instances in which nationalism at the Games need not be the divisive force that is often identified as chauvinistic.

Conclusion

As the spectators at the London Games are explored and their behaviours and dress analyzed, another piece of the puzzle falls into place. Trends continue to emerge pointing towards a clearer understanding of the answers to the research questions.
asked in this work. Just as the national was the overwhelming focus in the lead-up to the Games, it could again be seen to take on the primary role in the actions of the spectators. This is not to say that Olympism was not seen through principles such as the valuing of excellence; evidence of this could be seen in the support for Usain Bolt and the cheers for difficult manoeuvres as a way to demonstrate an appreciation of what was witnessed. However, such instances were the exception, rather than the rule.

The most common experience was a crowd supporting their chosen nations(-states). National symbols appeared at every turn and the primary vehicle for identification was the nation(-state) as fans rallied around representatives and symbols of their nation(-state). The choice to cheer on one’s team, display a national flag, or wear a costume to associate oneself with the nation(-state), all stand as examples of ways in which nationalism was explicitly on show. These actions further corroborate Anderson’s (2006) assertions that “nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time” (p. 3). The overwhelming appearance of nationalism at London 2012 demonstrates the power the nation still holds and it’s continuing role in the world.

Although these patterns were readily apparent, the reasons behind them were less clear-cut. There were four explanations that could be identified. First, the Games, through their structure, are geared towards the idea of support for a nation(-state). Due to the organisation based on national teams, it is unsurprising that various forms of identification with nations(-states) was the norm. Second, choosing to demonstrate support for a nation(-state) provided a way for individuals to portray, or help construct, a national identity. Whilst this is possible in other contexts, the ability to do so in such an overt or lavish manner is not a common occurrence and that makes the Games a suitable venue to do so; it was expected and supported. Third, there was a sense of collective effervescence and that this was typical or expected behaviour. This leads to, as noted previously, choosing to support a nation(-state) for a variety of reasons. It may be the case that one decides to support a nation(-state) despite not having an interest in the outcome or, as seen through previous examples, one may choose to support a nation(-state) for any number of reasons from friendly antagonism to having spent time in that nation(-state). Lastly, related to the idea of collective effervescence, it was demonstrated that, at times, the choice to display national symbols was done because it could be done—a matter of convenience. It is important to understand the presence of each of these reasons as it provides not only context to
what was taking place but it further demonstrates that the same actions cannot always be interpreted in the same way; not all expressions that are, or appear to be, nationalist should be seen as indicative of similar values or motives.

No matter which of the above reasons was being employed in any given instance, it is still interesting to think of the actions on display in terms of an “us versus them” dichotomy as has been discussed previously. As mentioned, many theorists point to nations, nationalism, and national identity as ways to distinguish between “us” and “them” and create boundaries between groups (Anderson, 2006; Duara, 1996; Eley & Sunuy, 1996; Gellner, 1997; Triandafyllidou, 1998). Although this played out in the realm of sport during the Olympics, the distinction was still made—those who cheered for a national team and those who cheered for the opposition. Despite being done in a limited capacity, the substantiation of the creation of boundaries and dichotomies is worth noting.

The significance of this is not as well defined. Certainly, the Olympics are a popular event and significant resources are dedicated to them but they are, in essence, a sporting competition. The symbols that fans of a sports team choose to display, and their implied meanings, have become second nature to most and are readily accepted without question. However, a number of outcomes can be seen from these actions and explanations leading to an increased understanding of nationalism and its place at the Games and its use more generally.

There are three distinct outcomes that could be identified throughout this exploration of the role of the spectators. The first was that behaviours such as cheering for nations(-states) that are not “yours” or cheering for multiple national teams happened at all and was not a challenged action. As noted previously, this was not seen as an affront to “authentic” fans and its occurrence stands in contrast to other popular sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup. That these actions took place lends credence to the ideas of Olympism in a system so inundated with the national. The second outcome that could be seen was rather a lack of action. The lack of lasting consequences (such as fights breaking out and so on) to the few instances of negative behaviour or aggressive nationalism is worth considering. With nationalism so often being considered as a violent or divisive force, the relatively peaceful atmosphere surrounding the isolated incidents of aggression is notable. As seen from the few examples above of booing other athletes, out-group hostility has become part of the expression of nationalism and national identity at the Games only to a minor extent. It
is this form of nationalism that can be seen in other sporting contests when there are chants against other nations (states)—for example, the English chant “ten German bombers” which has even been used in games not featuring Germany. Aggressive nationalism of this sort is the type more typically associated with the relationship between nationalism and sporting events.

Yet, this brings up the question of what form nationalism at the Games did regularly take. Competing theories on nationalism are alternatively optimistic about its nature (see Billig, 1995; Edensor, 2002; Eley & Suny, 1996; Smith 1995) and deeply pessimistic (see Cronin, 2003; Chatterjee, 1993; Gellner, 1997). However, nationalism need not be defined as a singular concept, either good or bad; nationalism can be broken down into further categories. Whilst that can be debated, what has been argued is that regardless of how nationalism is termed or how the actor views the action, those observing the events will take these to be expressions of nationalism if they have no additional contextual knowledge.

Lastly, in certain cases, particularly with regards to the Polish fans discussed previously, there was the drawing in of opposing fans due to the exuberant nationalist displays. Contrary to the perhaps expected reaction, this excitement made other spectators want to engage with them through photographs, recording video, or simply watching the scene unfold. Again, the peaceful reactions to such overt nationalism comprise one outcome of the behaviours at the Games that should not be forgotten. Examples such as this reinforce the idea that nationalism can be beneficial. As Eley and Suny (1996) note, “nationalism and belonging to a nation may be the kind of ‘cultural recovery’ that could potentially lead—not to a politics of the blood—but to acceptance, even celebration, of difference (p. 32). The scene inside Earl’s Court points to the possibility of this. With no hostility on display, the Polish fans were expressing a sense of nationalism and/or national identity in a way that was relatable to passersby. Scenes such as this stand in direct contrast to “the havoc, suffering, cruelty and injustice often brought by nationalism” that Gellner (1997, p. 102) emphasises. The fact that it was an overwhelmingly non-aggressive brand of nationalism that was primarily present at London 2012 explains a lot about why the Games are able to continue to function as a peaceful international event despite nationalism being a central element.

From these, and other, examples it is also possible to gain additional insights and understandings on nationalism. The overwhelming presence of national symbols
as a way to identify oneself or support an athlete or team certainly indicates that the nation(-state) is still perceived as a primary source of identification and solidarity for many. Yet, as could be seen through the temporary adoption of other national symbols, these symbols need not hold the same power and meaning for all as Jones and Merriman (2009) indicate. Additionally, as demonstrated throughout, behaviour and dress need not be indicative of nationality, national identity, or nationalist attitudes. This point is especially important to consider as it once again raises the question of intent but also leads one to question how to judge nationalism on a scale of benign to aggressive if these sorts of cues can no longer be taken as indicative of a particular stance or intention.

Lastly, in the final chapter, the discussion shifts once again from the spectators at the Games to the institutions involved in staging the Games. From the live sites to the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, the nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation associated with the institutions is examined in order to complete the panoramic of London 2012.
Chapter 8 – The London 2012 Olympic Games: Notes on the Institutions

Introduction

The London 2012 Olympic Games did not solely involve the competitions and the spectators who witnessed them. The institutions that organised the Olympics drove the nationalism at the Games as much (if not more so) than the spectators did. The organisers also facilitated the role of Olympism, though not nearly to the extent of nationalism. Furthermore, globalisation was apparent through the regulations that have been imposed on the Games allowing for its impact to be seen and felt regularly. Lastly, as with all Olympic Games, London 2012 also featured the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, two lavish events shrouded in secrecy until the final moment. In this chapter, the focus will be on the institutional nationalism and Olympism, and to a lesser extent the presence of globalisation during the Games.

Similar to the previous two chapters, this chapter will establish nationalism as the dominant force to be seen at London 2012. Furthermore, similar observations could be found in how and why nationalism was featured. Again, the host nation-state was heavily promoted through language, performers, music, significant locations, and so on. The reasons for these behaviours can be explained through a desire to promote the host nation-state and the desire to engage the local population more broadly. However, unlike in the lead-up to the Games, there was occasionally an explicit attempt to promote other nationalisms through the use of language and song. What can be found as a result of these behaviours by the institutions was threefold: 1) a perpetuation of ideas of “us versus them,” 2) the simultaneous reinforcement and altering of a British identity and, 3) cries of objection from those who did not agree with the identity presented.

However, unlike the previous chapters, Olympism and globalisation were much more apparent, even if still overshadowed by nationalism. Olympism was featured through a variety of means such as the mingling of athletes at the Opening Ceremony and the recognition of volunteers and the use of John Lennon’s “Imagine” at the Closing Ceremony. Each of these acts displayed a message of inclusivity and was used in order to recognise that Olympism is a part of the Games. The primary result from these actions that can be seen is the formal inclusion of Olympism and the awareness that Olympism is often not a spontaneous part of the Games in the same way nationalism is.
Finally, globalisation was also more readily apparent when looking at the institutions as it could be seen through the constant presence of sponsors from across the world. Of course, as will be explored, this was a functional decision as this type of economic globalisation ensures the Games’ survival. Yet, what happened because of this was that spectators were forced to take part in this economic globalisation and support these companies (financially at least) just to take part in the Games.

The these observations were made at Hyde Park and the competition venues, as well as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies and the viewing area for them at Victoria Park.

Lastly, although it is worthwhile to keep this in mind throughout the discussion of London 2012, it seems particularly apt to once again mention my place in the research process. With my primary purpose being an observer at the Games, my background is necessary to reflect on. Unlike some ethnographic studies where informants may be used or data collected through a multitude of interviews (formal or informal) for instance, this was a solitary endeavour. Whilst this is not an indictment of the methodology or methods chosen, it is an important consideration. This is particularly important to mention here as the institutions staging the Games are considered.

Particularly with regards to the Ceremonies, my background as an American is important as it has the potential to colour my interpretation and understanding differently than those who are British. For instance, those who are British may understand the images displayed in particular ways or understand the use of phrases such as “British nationalism” and “British national character” quite differently. With that said, it is important to remember that this is but one interpretation based on what I observed and my understandings of the topics under consideration.

**Institutional Nationalism: Hyde Park and Olympic Venues**

As has been discussed, institutions as well as spectators can drive nationalism. In the case of the Olympics, it has been established that aspects of institutional nationalism could be found in merchandise, mascots, and the Torch Relay. However, there are other areas in which to find institutional nationalism. The first is in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, as will be discussed later, and the second is to explore the entertainment provided to the fans both at live sites and in venues. At Hyde Park, hosts came on stage and sought to excite the crowd or introduce bands and interview athletes. At the venues, there were also hosts whose job was to entertain
the crowd when the action stopped. Through their actions, nationalism could be promoted for the United Kingdom or as a general concept by encouraging spectators to align with a nation-state.

With the Olympics being held in London, there seemed to be an overwhelming desire to promote a British nationalism. While this was predominately focused on sport due to the central attraction being the Olympic Games, it was not solely a British sporting nationalism that was being promoted. Combined with the more general endorsement of British nationalism in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, there were select instances at Hyde Park that could be construed as a general British nationalism with entertainers proclaiming that they were ‘proud to be British’ to large applause and hosts inquiring as to who in the audience was ‘proud to be British.’

There were a number of examples of this throughout the course of the Games when, despite the international audience, the default was to try to rally the crowd around the accomplishments of British athletes or a sense of pride in being British. At Hyde Park, on a number of occasions, there were examples of this ranging from the hosts mentioning particular Team GB triumphs, such as Andy Murray’s and Bradley Wiggins’ gold medals, to direct calls for support of the United Kingdom and Team GB with exclamations such as ‘I say “Team” you say “GB.”’ Other examples were to be found in the form of streamers being shot from cannons after certain Team GB victories or in the public address system for those waiting in line playing “We Are the Champions” after Alistair Brownlee had won the triathlon. What all of these examples show is how British nationalism was being promoted.

Lastly, all Team GB medallists appeared on the Hyde Park main stage to celebrate their win with those in attendance. While the majority of those in Hyde Park were British, not all were and the blatant endorsement of one nation-state over all others—at a site intended to “give Londoners and visitors to the city the chance to join in the excitement of the biggest sporting event on the planet” (BT London Live, 2011)—shows how the host nation-state not only attempts to promote itself but also how the performances of representatives of the home nation-state are considered to be of primary importance.

Also in Hyde Park, Team GB was prominently featured in the live coverage. Whilst competitors from other nations-states were shown, representatives of Team GB were typically on at least one screen. Not only was Team GB featured but also, on
occasion, other competitions would be interrupted in order to show a Team GB performance. For example, during the quarter-final women’s tennis match between Serena Williams and Caroline Wozniaki, the match was interrupted for a judo semi-final featuring a British judoka. Furthermore, some of the marquee Team GB events were often shown on more than one screen; this was true of the triathlon, the final day of cycling featuring Chris Hoy and Victoria Pendleton, and Andy Murray’s gold medal match. A number of items were also being given away as promotions linked to identification with British nationalism. Similar to what was witnessed during the Torch Relay, British Telecommunications employees handed out free branded Union flags to spectators. Additionally, The Sun offered a number of promotions including a free branded Union flag with the purchase of each paper and, with the purchase of four papers one also received a Team GB official wristband. All copies of The Sun also came with free face painting of a national flag.

Similar to what could be seen in Hyde Park, the Olympic venues were also used as a site for the promotion of nationalism. On 4 August, a day when Team GB did very well in athletics, during a handball session in the Copper Box, an announcement was made to inform the crowd (the majority of whom, based on dress and languages spoken, appeared to be from the competing nation-states) of Jessica Ennis’ and Mo Farah’s gold medal performances. Of eight ticketed events that I attended, this was the only time that an announcement was made when a medal was won. Why was it assumed that those watching handball would be concerned with the results of British athletes? It is possible that a significant portion of the crowd was interested as large cheers erupted for both announcements. However, it is still notable that only for two of Britain’s most sought-after medals was an announcement made. Following this, as spectators were filing out of the Olympic Park as the final sessions were ending, a few Gamesmakers directing traffic were attempting to rally the crowd to cheer by yelling out ‘go GB!’ or mentioning the wins of Ennis and Farah and how well the day had gone for Team GB.

Prioritising British nationalism in this way speaks to the idea that these Games were more about Britain and Britain staging an international event than about the event itself. These examples show how British nationalism was held up as being paramount and the most worthy of celebration during the London Games. Although it may have been a way to engage the British public more generally, this approach had the potential to leave those from other nations(-states)—or even British citizens
supporting other nations(-states)—feeling marginalised in the celebration of the Games.

Yet, while British nationalism was prioritised, organisers also promoted nationalism more generally. As part of the in-venue entertainment, each venue had a host whose job was to keep the crowd excited during breaks in the action such as timeouts, halftime, and between matches. While each host had his/her own style—some could not even be heard due to the raucous cheering from the crowd—there was a general theme of promoting nationalism that ran through each venue. A typical refrain was something akin to ‘who’s supporting X?’ or ‘let’s hear it for Y!’

At Wembley Stadium for the women’s football semi-final, one of the on-field hosts attempted to rally the fans of each team with the use of the native language of that nation-state before telling neutral and undecided fans that now was the time to choose whom to support. An example such as this is interesting for two reasons. First, by using the native language of each nation-state, the assumption was that all fans of that team are citizens of the nation-state. In this case, there was also the implication that individuals will always support “their” nation-state in competition. Secondly, telling those who might not be supporting either side that they should choose before the match starts highlights the idea that to be engaged in the event means choosing a side. In this example, the wide appeal of sport and the way sport can bring people together is being pushed aside as spectators are being told to choose sides.

The only example of the promotion of a specific non-British nationalism that was witnessed was during the women’s football final at Wembley Stadium. The encouragement of nationalism more generally could be seen on occasion, as described above, however, the promotion of nationalist sentiment for another nation(-state) was exceedingly rare. After the medal ceremony, the United States team was still on the field taking pictures and celebrating their gold medal when Bruce Springsteen’s “Born in the USA” began playing over the sound system. Despite lyrics that express frustration with the state of the United States around the Vietnam War, “Born in the USA” is widely used as a nationalist anthem and as a song to convey pride in being American. This was clearly the intent in this choice of song leading to the American fans still in the crowd and the players on the field joining in and singing along to the recording.

The promotion of nationalism, be it British or otherwise, during the Games can be seen, in one sense, as antithetical to the values of Olympism. While the
competitions may be organised around nations(-states), which will inevitably lead to displays of nationalism from spectators, the institutions involved in staging and promoting the Games are actually perpetuating these ideas of “us versus them” in opposition to the values of solidarity and universalism advanced by Olympism. Of course, this is not a wholly unique observation as Dyreson (2003) notes how sports “have almost always been, in their modern form, an arena for the exhibition of tribal and especially national identities rather than an occasion for the celebration of universal human communities” (p. 92). He elaborates further asserting, “in fact, what the globalisation of modern sports has in large part accomplished, is to make the expression of national identity and the imagining of national community through sport a global phenomenon” (Dyreson, 2003, p. 93). Whilst there is no evidence that this has a directly negative impact upon the atmosphere during the Games, it is telling that nationalism is so deeply embedded in the event. On the other hand, Roudometof (2005) and Brown (2000) argue that a cosmopolitan outlook or a feeling of connection with the wider human population need not be undermined by the continuing presence and use of nationalism. One can feel a connection with the wider population and still have closer ties and a greater affinity to those at the national level. The promotion of nationalism need not be seen as negating the values of Olympism despite the inherent ideological contrast.

Globalisation

Hargreaves (1992) remarks that “one of the paradoxes of the modern world […] is that globalization […] has been shadowed by, and is now, perhaps, even being eclipsed by nationalism” (p. 123). Whilst this claim is valid in some respects, and certainly there is evidence in this work to support it, particularly with regards to Hargreaves’ (1992) claims of institutions transcending the nation-state, there are still signs of increasing globalisation that should not go overlooked.

In addition to the ever-present national symbols that could be seen at the Games, evidence of globalisation was difficult to miss. Although globalisation could be seen in advance of the Games during the Torch Relay and through the merchandise for sale, it was even more apparent during the Games.

The reason for this is because globalisation had to be constantly negotiated. As discussed in Chapter 4, the Olympics need sponsors in order to survive. They pay huge sums of money in order to have exclusive rights to marketing and service at the Games and, in exchange, the Olympic Movement is able to continue to operate in the
grand fashion that has become the norm. However, this means that globalisation has become an ever-present force in the Olympic landscape.

When one attends the Games, there are certain restrictions that need to be navigated due to the sponsorship deals that have been put in place. For example, Visa is the only credit or debit card accepted at any Olympic site and there is a list of food and drink providers that are able to sell their products at the Games and advertise with Olympic symbols, the two largest of these being Coca-Cola and McDonald’s. Spectators at the Games had to either pay the money for the approved products provided (many of which bore high price tags), bring small amounts of food, or avoid eating at the Games. Visa also did well with the Games as buying tickets online meant that all those applicants needed to either already own a Visa card or go out and purchase a pre-paid Visa card (as opposed to during the Games when one could opt to use cash).

These types of restrictions highlight the globalisation that happens when large sponsorship deals are put in place. With the Games comes a season of individuals around the world clamouring for Visa cards just to take part. Coca-Cola and McDonald’s, already enjoying a large presence in many places around the world, become ubiquitous sights at the Games and, often, on the television screens of those watching from home. When looked at from this perspective, globalisation at the Games is hard to ignore.

However, it is not simply the food and drink choices or the credit card one is forced to use that affect the experience of the spectators. When on the Olympic Park even the entertainment is sponsored. Coca-Cola was a particularly noticeable sponsor as they routinely had workers dancing around the Park, sponsored the pin-trading booth, and also had the “Beatbox”—an interactive centre in which spectators could help create the soundtrack of the Games. After walking up the structure, and interacting with the elements that controlled the sounds, spectators could then have their picture taken with the Olympic Torch before heading back down into a party room where workers would dance and have a bit of fun and everybody had a free Coca-Cola. There was also a Samsung site where spectators could try out new phones and a British Petroleum photo opportunity where one could have their picture taken with a reflection of the Olympic Stadium.

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16 Small portions of food could be brought in to Olympic venues but not into Hyde Park and Victoria Park.
Outside of the venues, the Park was designed to aid the sponsors in their own self-promotion. In order to realise the maximum value of their continued involvement in the Games, sponsors needed to make money, and the addition of their physical presence helped serve this purpose. For example, while Coca-Cola may not have made money directly with any of the above-mentioned activities, it was another source of advertising that could be used in addition to media advertisements.

One final point that should be noted is that whether or not one resists the influence of sponsorship on the Games and the ubiquitous presence sponsors hold, the choice in sponsors is often a cause for criticism. Discussing the sponsors of the 1984 Los Angeles Games, Gruneau (1984) takes a sarcastic tone remarking, “other products and companies, no doubt equally attuned to the nutritional demands of high-performance sport, are also remarkably visible this Olympic year” (p. 1). The companies he was referring to were Mars Inc., Coca-Cola, McDonald’s, and Anheuser Busch. These same complaints can be heard each Olympic year as Coca-Cola and McDonald’s continue their sponsorship of the Games and in 2012 they were joined not by Mars Inc. or Anheuser Busch but instead by Cadbury and Guinness.

**The Ceremonies**

**The London 2012 Opening Ceremony.**

John MacAloon (1982) states:

In the Opening Ceremonies, the juxtaposition of national symbols and the symbols of the transnational, Olympic, “human” community is stressed. […] In each of these ways, the symbols of the Olympic community are positioned hierarchically above those of the nation-states, but without contravening them.

(p. 106)

The ritual importance of such symbols as the Olympic flag and cauldron are evident given their prominent highlighting during the Opening Ceremony, however, the overwhelming focus on the national, coupled with the seeming marginalisation of Olympism, contradicts MacAloon’s (1982) claims.

The national was highlighted throughout, as the London 2012 Opening Ceremony was a celebration of Britishness and British culture, with elements chosen to show the best that Britain can offer. From the outset, it was apparent that the Opening Ceremony would show viewers different aspects of British culture and promote what the United Kingdom has to offer. The nationalism and promotion of the United Kingdom that was inherent in the Opening Ceremony was undeniable; it
started with a trip along the length of the River Thames and ended with Paul McCartney singing “Hey Jude” (IOC, 2012c).

Not having been allocated tickets to the Opening Ceremony, the next best choice was to view the event at the live site in Victoria Park, a stone’s throw from the Olympic Stadium. After waiting in line for about two and a half hours, and entering the site about 10-15 minutes into the Ceremony, I joined a group of people whom I had just met to watch the rest of the show. It was clear that there was excitement in the air, as everybody seemed eager to see what would unfold. A number of people had flags—from various nation-states—and the crowd of thousands watched the Ceremony unfold on four large screens.

During the three and a half hour presentation, viewers were exposed to a changing Britain. The journey started in an idyllic, pastoral countryside with green fields, pick-up games of football and cricket, and even small-scale versions of the Proms and the Glastonbury Festival. Following this was a transition to the industrial revolution. The entire stage was converted into a grey landscape with looming smoke stacks and workers toiling in factories (IOC, 2012c). During this time, there was also the chance to acknowledge other events in the history of the United Kingdom with appearances by the suffragettes, trade union members, a group dressed as The Beatles from their Sgt. Pepper’s album, immigrants, Jarrow hunger marchers, and even a shot of a red poppy with a soldier (IOC, 2012c; Lyall, 2012). This was one instance of the Ceremony reflecting a particular view of what makes Britain the nation-state that it is, as director Danny Boyle inserted selected images to match his leftist views (Lyall, 2012) along with those more recognisable images such as The Beatles and poppies. Such instances could be seen throughout the Opening Ceremony and caused a backlash among those who felt Boyle was attempting to politicise the Opening Ceremony to his own ends.

This was a trip not simply into the past, however, but into a specific past—an idealised time when things were simpler. However, there would be no other trips into the long pre-industrialised past of the United Kingdom; the focus would be on more modern times. This is significant because what is not shown is almost as important as what is. Just as Beijing chose not to acknowledge significant moments in China’s history by omitting the occupation of Tibet and the demonstration at Tiananmen Square, for example, so too did London edit the history of the United Kingdom by skipping a direct address of the history and legacy of colonisation and the creation of
the British Empire. In doing so, the Opening Ceremony has become a way to promote a specific history of the host nation-state: the mythical narrative. In this case, the mythical narrative was one of a multicultural society that has had a lasting impact on the world through technology, culture, and even politics through the recognition of the Queen (although the political history of the United Kingdom and British Empire was, as mentioned, absent).

At this point, the segments became less about journeys into pre-industrialised history and more about a celebration of enduring aspects of British culture. In a series of glimpses at British cultural legacies, the audience was treated to James Bond escorting the Queen to the Olympic Stadium, tributes to the National Health Service (NHS) and to children’s literature, a celebration of British fashion, and the largest segment which was a tribute to one of Britain’s largest popular cultural exports: music (IOC, 2012c). While some of these may be commonly associated with the United Kingdom for both Britons and people around the world, why would aspects of popular culture fall into the realm of national promotion? Edensor (2002) succinctly explains: “the international success of popular writers, film-makers, television stars and sporting heroes has ensured their place in the pantheon of nationally important achievers” (p. 15). The truth of this statement can be seen in the accolades given to Britons successful in these areas with many having been given recognition by the Queen through knighthoods or other honours.

Each of these segments was popular with the audience in Victoria Park and received loud cheers. The reaction to the Queen during the James Bond segment was one of the loudest responses of the night. In the build-up to showing the Queen’s face, whispers could be heard such as ‘is it really her?’ and throughout the night, each time the Queen was shown, either as a spectator or as a participant in the display, the audience cheered loudly. This is important to note because the response to the Queen demonstrates that she has a special place in the collective heart of a large portion of the British public. Despite republican opposition, the Queen can be viewed as one of the resources to be drawn on to bring the nation-state together. This was perhaps more useful as a tool to promote nationalism following so closely after the Diamond Jubilee when monarchist feelings were possibly higher than normal.

The segments on the NHS and British music were also popular. The tribute to the NHS stuck out as an odd choice to celebrate a government-run programme—and one under scrutiny at the moment—but it was well received. The decision to celebrate
the NHS was yet another example of Danny Boyle inserting his reading of the history of the nation-state into the Opening Ceremony (Toynbee, 2012). With current challenges to the NHS, Boyle chose the Opening Ceremony to support the institution and reaffirm its place in the life of the nation-state.

Much like the positive response to the Queen, the reaction to the celebration of the NHS points to a civic nationalism through the “idea of a common loyalty to the territorial homeland and its institutions” (Brown, 1999, p. 283, emphasis added). However, the tribute to British music allowed the audience to celebrate something that has been popularised around the world.

This fact was recognised with music from acts such as The Who and The Beatles who gained international popularity during the course of their careers. A worldwide audience would be able to connect with this element more than the others because whereas most would not have any affinity for the Queen or any dealings with the NHS, many have heard British music. Similarly, the worldwide audience was likely able to connect with the appearance of J. K. Rowling and Lord Voldemort from her popular series Harry Potter. The crowd in Victoria Park was able to enjoy and engage in this part of the celebration as the majority of people stood and danced or sang along to the music. While still focusing on a celebration of Britain, and a promotion of British triumphs, the musical segment allowed for the inclusion of the worldwide audience, even if only in a small way.

Links such as these recognise the role of the rest of the world in the Opening Ceremony, amongst the focus on the national, and support the claims that Olympism does, in fact, play a role in the Games. Despite the primarily nationalist focus of the organisers, there are commonalities that are able to bring the spectators (both in London and around the world) together.

Perhaps the biggest laughs of the night came from the playing of the Chariots of Fire theme music. A favourite sporting movie and tune (indeed a tune used throughout the Games), this was not a simple tribute. Rather, this performance was used as a way for Danny Boyle to inject humour into the show. With Rowan Atkinson taking up his role of Mr. Bean—playing the keyboard, tweeting about the experience, and dosing off to imagine himself in the classic beach scene from Chariots of Fire (IOC, 2012c)—the audience laughed and British humour was celebrated.

What was shown is important for a number of reasons. First, it allows for a critical look at how the nation-state has been presented. Throughout the Opening
Ceremony, there was a focus on London both as the host city and as the cultural centre of Britain. What can be inferred from what was on display is the way in which there was a desire to show the worldwide audience the contributions that Britain has made to the world. At a time when the power of the United Kingdom has waned, compared to the premier status held during the time of the British Empire, it was deemed important to showcase what Britain has contributed. Much like Beijing’s references to kites, printing blocks, and bamboo scrolls (IOC, 2010), the focus was on what Britain has added. This was most prominent at two points in the Ceremony. The first was at the beginning of the industrial revolution segment when actor Kenneth Branagh portrayed the industrial revolution pioneer Isambard Kingdom Brunel (IOC, 2012c)—a message that industrialisation has significant ties to Britain. Second was the introduction of Sir Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web (IOC, 2012c).

The introduction of Berners-Lee was noteworthy for two reasons. First, as mentioned, the LOCOG was showing the world what Britain has contributed. The creation of the Internet has revolutionised the modern world and a British citizen started it. At the same time, this segment provided a moment for the recognition of Olympism among a sea of nationalist images as Berners-Lee sent the message “this is for everyone” to project on the stadium seats (IOC, 2012c). This message can be read as an invitation for the people of the world to see the Opening Ceremony, and the London Olympics more generally, as an inclusive event and a show for the world, not just a party for those in the United Kingdom.

What LOCOG showed is also important because what was presented provided insight into what were determined to be significant aspects of British culture and, therefore, worthy of inclusion in the Opening Ceremony. This, again, indicates the type of civic nationalism that Brown (1999) highlights, but also reflects Renan’s (1990/1996) claim that nationalism is, in part, the “possession in common of a rich legacy of memories” (p. 52).

For those non-British individuals who were watching, there may have been many references that either went unnoticed or left the viewer without a clear idea of what they had witnessed. As an American watching this performance, there were moments where the narrative was lost and the commentary was the only way to begin

\[17\] The commentators on different broadcasts may have alleviated some confusion but it is difficult to know.
to understand what was being displayed. For example, it had to be explained who the cartoon characters punting on the Thames in the opening segment were and, had it not been for the commentary, it would not have been understood that the man heralding in the industrial revolution was meant to be Brunel. This was a Ceremony to show the world the best of Britain but it was also a display for the people of the United Kingdom to celebrate and revel in their own history.

Lastly, what was presented provided a deeper insight into the discrepancy between the nationalism of the LOCOG and the values of Olympism advanced by the IOC, as well as tensions within the United Kingdom. Tomlinson (2000) counters Atkin’s cosmopolitan ideas mentioned above when he states: “Despite the early Olympic message calling for peace and cooperation amongst the youth of the world, the local celebration of the games as expressed in ceremonies leads inevitably to forms of nationalism and nationalist self-aggrandizement” (p. 179). The Opening Ceremony in London, much like at each edition of the Games, focused almost exclusively on the national.

However, the United Kingdom is not a single nation. While much of the focus of the Opening Ceremony was on London and many of the actors and musicians featured were English, there are other nations/localities of the United Kingdom, namely Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. In an attempt to acknowledge this reality without making it too central, a short segment was incorporated early in the Ceremony that brought this reality into focus. A choir of children in the stands sang “Jerusalem” which segued to another children’s choir in Northern Ireland singing “Danny Boy” accompanied by a clip of the Irish rugby team. This was then followed by choirs in Scotland and Wales singing “Flower of Scotland” and “Bread of Heaven” respectively whilst clips of their national rugby teams were played before the transition back to “Jerusalem” and a clip of England’s rugby team (IOC, 2012c). As with the Torch Relay, the deliberate incorporation of the four nations/localities of the United Kingdom sought to reinforce the point that these Games were for all of the United Kingdom and that this is a united nation-state. The politics may say something different, as did the debate over the combined Team GB in football; however, this was again part of a mythical narrative where complications were brushed aside to present only a positive image.

The mythical narrative presented during the London 2012 Opening Ceremony was one version of any number of narratives that could be told about the United
Kingdom. This narrative was shaped by the current situation of the United Kingdom and the world (be it politically, economically, or culturally) and it was heavily influenced by the ideas of its creator, Danny Boyle.

It is important to note that while the Opening Ceremony was well received based on audience reactions in Victoria Park and other comments that were heard during the course of the Games and since, not everybody was happy with the narrative presented. Some were critical of the fact that the image presented omitted many aspects in order to create the vision (Toynbee, 2012). Others were overtly critical of the message itself. Aidan Burley, a member of the British Parliament, wrote on Twitter: “The most leftie opening ceremony I have ever seen - more than Beijing, the capital of a communist state! Welfare tribute next?” (Burley, 2012b) and “Thank God the athletes have arrived! Now we can move on from leftie multi-cultural crap. Bring back red arrows, Shakespeare and the Stones!” (Burley, 2012a). These were quickly followed by assurances that the objection was to the way the Ceremony was dealt with, not for the idea of multiculturalism (Burley, 2012c). These assertions of Boyle’s inclusion of leftist politics (see also Glover, 2012; Higgins, 2012; Lawson, 2012; Mulholland, 2012) demonstrate how the image of a nation-state can vary and the reactions that can come as a consequence. Perhaps the most telling point of this realisation is that the worldwide audience has been left with only one side of the story from which to draw conclusions. Higgins (2012) states that “it was bewildering enough, at times, to its domestic audience; abroad it must frequently have been plain incomprehensible.” Luo (2010) makes a similar argument about Beijing 2008 noting that without the background knowledge, the implied meanings and associations may only serve to muddle messages for a foreign audience. The Opening Ceremony is meant to communicate with a worldwide audience but London 2012 proved that there are aspects that are meant for a domestic audience as a way to heighten national pride and enhance the image of the nation-state at home.

The inclusion of Olympism was mostly left to the formal aspects of the Ceremony such as the parade of nations and the speeches. However, its use was limited. This was not peculiar to London 2012 but it is noteworthy nonetheless.

As with every Opening Ceremony, a large portion of time was dedicated to the athletes marching in nation(-state) by nation(-state). While the British majority in the audience had to wait until the end of the parade of nations to see Team GB, there was a lot of cheering for other nations(-states). Indeed, during the parade, there were a few
nation-states that received very vocal support from sections of the crowd. Due to the size of Victoria Park, it is impossible to know all that went on, however, there was substantial support for a number of nation-states including Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Jamaica, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain, the United States, and the United Kingdom. For these nation-states with the largest amount of support, it was possible to hear loud cheers and to see some people standing and others waving national flags. There was even a small chant of ‘U-S-A’ when the United States delegation entered. Of course, other nation-states received support as well. Audible support, as well as a few people standing and the occasional flag waving, could be observed for such disparate nation-states as Colombia, Brunei, Ireland, and Ghana.

What was noteworthy with these smaller groups is why there may have been cheering. The cheers for Brunei created one of the few moments that could be reasonably assumed to be an expression of the universal values of Olympism from the spectators taking part. Brunei was greeted with cheers when it was announced that its delegation included women for the first time, an expression of support for the continued march towards equal treatment of the sexes. Ghana was also supported by a small group of people who cheered so fervently and loudly, those around them joined in as well. However, most nations(-states) walked in to little or no response.

What makes this a significant portion of the Opening Ceremony is the symbolic representation of the Olympic ideals of universal harmony. The athletes march in as national teams and yet are able to mix in the centre of the stadium. While it did not appear that there was much movement, this was one of the most poignant recognitions of the wider human community in the Opening Ceremony and yet also the one that was perhaps easiest to overlook as the formal marching of the athletes by nations(-states) takes the primary focus. Allowing the athletes to interact with one another symbolically removed the barriers to international communication and understanding.

Interestingly, while the ability for athletes to interact without the presence of formal barriers between national teams is one of the aspects of the Opening Ceremony that most closely aligns with the values of Olympism, Alkemeyer and Richartz (1993) 18

The ability to mingle in the infield without the presence of formal barriers has been standard since Seoul 1988 first did so (Alkemeyer & Richartz, 1993, p. 84). However, in the Winter Games, as the athletes march in early, they are typically confined to seats and are seated by team as they march in.
claim that the change to this system from more formal, regimented boundaries “dissolved the very message of the ritual” (p. 84). This view is taken because Alkemeyer and Richartz (1993) view the parade of nations not as teams marching in as members of the Olympic Movement but as only representatives of the nation(-state); in breaking from the national formation, it is seen as expressing an individualism over submission to the nation(-state). However, the nation(-state) has not been rejected; athletes must still wear national uniforms and march in with their national teams. Nevertheless, the mixing of athletes in the infield provides an opportunity for members of different nations(-states) to come together. While they may come together as individuals in the Olympic Movement, they also do so as representatives of their nations(-states).

The other formal aspects were more notable for the absence of the recognition of the international as a counterpoint to the nationalism being espoused. There was one small inclusion of the international with the variety of people who played a part in carrying in the Olympic flag—from UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon to Muhammad Ali—while the only other minimal mentions of the wider human community came from Sebastian Coe and Jacques Rogge. Coe made explicit the ideals of the Games when he said, “the Olympics brings together the people of the world in harmony and friendship and peace to celebrate what is best about mankind” (IOC, 2012c). However, this was the only reference to the values of Olympism, aside from welcoming those around the world watching, in a speech filled with praise for London and the United Kingdom. With comments such as, “I have never been so proud to be British” and “we will show all that has made London one of the greatest cities in the world,” and a mention of how London is “the only city to have welcomed the Games three times,” Coe made it clear that this was a time to celebrate Britain (IOC, 2012c).

Even IOC president Rogge focused on the national by thanking those in London and the United Kingdom for helping to stage the Games and mentioning the achievements of London as part of the Olympic Movement and as a pioneer for sport throughout history (IOC, 2012c). The only mention Rogge made of other nations(-states) was when he acknowledged that London 2012 was the first Games to have female participation from every nation(-state) (IOC, 2012c). Not surprisingly, the national focus of these speeches proved popular with those watching in Victoria Park. There was significant cheering and clapping for every mention of London and/or
Britain, their achievements, their contributions to sport, and of being British. One way to interpret the national focus in the speeches, and the Opening Ceremony more generally, is to consider Durkheim’s (1915) claim that “for a society to become conscious of itself and maintain at the necessary degree of intensity the sentiments which it thus attains, it must assemble and concentrate itself” (p. 422). From this perspective, British society was able to revitalise its mythical narrative through a large-scale celebration.

The absence of Olympism in the speeches was not surprising but it was nevertheless puzzling. When even the IOC president fails to address the values of Olympism, it seems fair to assume that the national is the primary focus. Olympism is an ideology that was devised with certain principles in mind as a positive way to run sport, rather than stemming from the sport itself. This is on show when Olympism must be so carefully included.

Yet, there are occasions when Olympism does feature more prominently. After a tragedy there is typically an assurance that the world is united behind a nation(-state) in their time of need. This could be seen in 2002 and 2008 when Rogge assured the American and Chinese people that the world stood behind them after September 11th and the Sichuan province earthquake. While this may be seen as evidence of pandering to the host nation-state on the part of the IOC, the intention is not of primary importance. Just as the intention of a spectator waving a national flag may be interpreted in opposition to the intentions of the actor, so too may the actions of the IOC. The incorporation of a show of international concern, whether this is read as pandering or genuine concern, demonstrates one way in which Olympism is part of the Games, at least to the point where a symbolic gesture must be made after a catastrophic event. Examples such as these offer an opportunity for the IOC to attempt to show that it holds true to the universal values of Olympism that are laid out in the Olympic Charter.

The final aspect of the Opening Ceremony was the lighting of the cauldron. As with the rest of the performance, this was a display of British culture. In this case, however, the focus was on sporting culture. David Beckham began the journey as he brought the flame down the River Thames before it was passed to Sir Steve Redgrave, one of Britain’s most successful Olympians, who brought it into the Olympic Stadium (IOC, 2012c). At this point, the focus shifted temporarily from past sporting excellence to the promise of future sporting success. Redgrave passed the flame to a
young athlete whom he had nominated to carry the Torch. Along with six other young athletes, all nominated by former Olympians, this young man ran the final lap of the stadium (IOC, 2012c). Finally, after each of the seven young athletes was in possession of a Torch, they lit the cauldron while those who had nominated them, and an additional 260 former British Olympians, looked on (IOC, 2012c). This way of lighting the cauldron was not a display of innovation or one-upmanship over Beijing; rather, it was a way to highlight both past British Olympic success and the promise of future generations.

However, while the lighting of the cauldron was centred on displaying the past and future athletic prowess of Britain, the cauldron itself had a more inclusive message. It was formed of 204 copper petals, each carried into the stadium with a national team and inscribed with the name of the nation(-state) as well as the current Olympiad (IOC, 2012b, 2012c). These petals were then assembled and formed the cauldron, providing a single flame to burn throughout the Games. The values of Olympism can be seen in this design through the symbolism of the nations(-states) of the world (those recognised by the IOC) joining and working together for a common purpose.

What is telling is that this gesture, which recognised the human unity contained within the values of Olympism, also underscored the importance of the nation(-state) in the Olympic Movement. The 204 petals each represented one of the 204 competing nations(-states), yet 205 petals were brought into the stadium. The missing petal was that which represented the handful of athletes who were allowed to compete independently under the Olympic flag (Gibson, 2012a). When considered from this standpoint, the symbolic reference to Olympism is undermined by the reality of the actions.

The Games are seen as being about promoting the host nation-state and displaying a national identity (nationalism) as well as bringing nations(-states) together and establishing international connections and cooperation (internationalism) more than about promoting the ideals of humankind and a more peaceful world as identified in the Olympic Charter (Olympism). Furthermore, these themes of prioritising the national over Olympism and presenting a particular image of the United Kingdom to the world were not exclusive to the Opening Ceremony. In a different way, the same themes could also be seen in the Closing Ceremony.
The London 2012 Closing Ceremony.

As with the Opening Ceremony, the Closing Ceremony was shown at Victoria Park on four large screens. Taking in the action at Victoria Park with a small group of people, the crowd seemed excited for the event to begin though there was one perceptible difference from the Opening Ceremony: there appeared to be noticeably fewer national flags or apparel. The majority of national apparel that could be seen was either British or worn by a small number of Spanish fans—possibly as a consequence of the United States versus Spain basketball final having taken place a few hours earlier.

Just as with the Opening, the Closing Ceremony was a celebration of Britain from the start. The opening countdown featured numbers that could be found in and around London including a number from an iconic double-decker bus and the door for 10 Downing Street. This was not to be a trip through history however. Instead, this was a celebration of Britain primarily through music. Some aspects of the Opening Ceremony were revisited—such as the speech from The Tempest—and aspects of British culture that had not been included in the Opening Ceremony were represented at the close (IOC, 2012d).

The Closing Ceremony was much more like a concert with famous British musicians from the Pet Shop Boys, Ray Davies, and Annie Lennox to current stars including One Direction, Jessie J, and Taio Cruz (IOC, 2012d). During these musical performances, tribute was paid not just to the artists who were performing, or whose music was being performed, but also to Britain more generally. For example, during the first part of the musical festivities, a number of platform vehicles around the stage depicted street parties (IOC, 2012d), which have long been a part of British culture—and something that was, in fact, encouraged earlier in the summer during the Diamond Jubilee—and were prominently displayed as such. Although street parties are not a regularly seen feature in the United Kingdom, they are embedded in the mythical narrative of how life used to be. This is one reason they were drawn upon in promoting excitement for the Diamond Jubilee as well as featured in the Closing Ceremony. Alongside this presentation was the incorporation of different age groups, most notably children. Young boys could be seen in school uniforms and young girls wore classic straw hats (IOC, 2012d). The incorporation of these elements are ways to display the banal aspects of culture, in this case school uniforms, as a ubiquitous British sight.
Musical performances also set the scene for British iconography more generally. To begin, during Madness’s performance of “Our House,” 160 Royal Guards of the Household Division of the ceremonial state band provided the accompaniment (IOC, 2012d). Not only was this another British icon, it also brought the military into the show for more than just the raising of the flags. Most noticeably, however, the stage was designed to resemble a Union flag, a not-so-subtle reference to the nation-state that was present throughout the show. Indeed, the Union flag was also visible in other ways. A number of performers such as Geri Halliwell of the Spice Girls, the saxophone player from Madness, and the drummer from Muse all had a Union flag pattern on some item of clothing (IOC, 2012d). During one segment, a group dressed as nuns were on stage and a few of them flashed the audience to reveal Union flag underwear. Furthermore, all through the playing of the British national anthem and the raising of the flag, performers stood waving large Union flags (IOC, 2012d). These were deliberate reminders of the national element embedded within the show and they further reinforced the ways in which the Ceremonies are used as a way to both literally and metaphorically flag the nation-state.

In addition, for the first half hour of the performance, the London skyline was not only part of the set but was also used by the Stomp cast as well as by Timothy Spall who delivered the speech from The Tempest as Winston Churchill from the top of Big Ben (IOC, 2012d). The celebration of the city and its image is consistent with the nationalist branding of products mentioned in Chapter 6. Furthermore, the appearance of Spall as Churchill was comparable with what could be seen in the Opening Ceremony with the recognition of Brunel and Berners-Lee.

Another aspect of British culture on display was the iconic black cab—carrying Ray Davies and the Spice Girls (IOC, 2012d). The recurrence of these cabs indicates their association with London (for Britons) and with Britain more generally for many outside the United Kingdom. While the association of a particular vehicle with a national identity may not be the first response of many, there was a reason it had been included. It has become a part of the everyday; it is as associated with Britain—both within and outside the United Kingdom—as the royal family. Edensor (2002) states, “the everyday, […] is equally important in establishing a sense of national identity” (p. 19) and it was Britain’s everyday that was being celebrated in the Closing Ceremony.
Through music, the organisers also exposed the audience to British cultural exports and the diversity of Britain. Through the choice of the song “Pure Imagination” from Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory, there was a celebration of British literature via the popular American film version. Furthermore, the use of “Always Look on the Bright Side of Life” from Monty Python's Life of Brian (IOC, 2012d), allowed British film and British humour to be displayed as they had been in the Opening Ceremony through the Chariots of Fire scene. Additionally, during this segment, there were nods in the direction of diversity through different groups joining in the singing and dancing on stage. Highland bagpipers made an appearance as well as bhangra dancers who interrupted “Always Look on the Bright Side of Life” whilst Eric Idle attempted to dance with them. This insertion not only provided a humorous moment, as Idle was unable to follow the dance properly, it incorporated another aspect of British culture (IOC, 2012d). There is a large Indian population in Britain, and in London in particular, and through the immigrant population and their descendants, aspects of Indian culture such as music, dance, and food have become more and more a part of British culture as well. Earlier in the Ceremony another reference was made to the large Indian population in Britain as dhol drummers provided the accompaniment for Kate Bush singing “Running Up That Hill” (IOC, 2012d). As with the singing of national or local songs in the Opening Ceremony, this was another way to make reference to the diversity of the United Kingdom with regards to the different nations/localities as well as the various cultures that have become part of Britain.

It was not only music, however, that was on display during the Closing Ceremony. The show began with a depiction of the morning life of a Londoner with traffic jams, schoolchildren, and newspapers (IOC, 2012d). This portrayal of daily life, as with the street parties, was one way by which to unite the Britons in the audience as a part of the community being celebrated. These practices were shown as an embedded part of a national culture with which British citizens could identify. However, just as with the street parties depicted at the outset of the Ceremony, the portrayal of daily life in London can also be seen as mythical. Traffic, school children, and reading a physical newspaper may form part of daily life for some Londoners. However, it is just as possible that school children are not encountered on the way to work and that one checks the news or plays a game on an iPad rather than read a physical paper. Yet, this is not to suggest that the mythical should be ignored,
quite the contrary in fact. That these idealised situations are a part of the mythical narrative is telling. It demonstrates what is relatable and seen as characteristic of the nation-state, even if it has changed over time.

Looking closer, one aspect that was possible to overlook was the reference to newspapers. Travelling in London, it is a common sight to see people with newspapers especially because of the number of free publications that are available. That alone was reason enough for the overwhelming presence of newspapers in the early segments of the programme but there was more to it than that. Had it not been for the commentators and one of the lines that could be easily read—“to be or not to be”—it would have been difficult to pick up the text of the papers. The text was not a reproduction of just any paper; rather, the papers bore the lines of famous British authors from Chaucer to Shakespeare to Dickens (IOC, 2012d). This was a subtle celebration of another of Britain’s biggest popular culture exports: literature.

However, unlike the Opening Ceremony, references to the worldwide audience and the international nature of the event were extended beyond the formal aspects of the ceremony. There were two moments that stuck out for the inclusion of the internationalism and the values of Olympism: the recognition of Olympic volunteers and the singing of John Lennon’s “Imagine.”

With over 70,000 volunteers, the LOCOG decided to include six in the Closing Ceremony to be thanked directly by athletes for all that they had done during the Games (IOC, 2012d). The six athletes chosen were from various nation-states around the world including the United Kingdom, Ireland, South Africa, and New Zealand. This was a clear recognition of the international nature of the event and a chance to involve other nation-states directly in the Ceremony in some small way.

The second event was a mix of nationalism and Olympism as a children’s choir sang John Lennon’s “Imagine” accompanied by a recording of Lennon himself (IOC, 2012d). All of the children wore shirts bearing the word “IMAGINE” and during the performance an effigy of Lennon was constructed in the centre of the stage (IOC, 2012d). The nationalism inherent in this performance is the same as with the majority of the music chosen. John Lennon is a respected musician around the world but he is British. It was yet another reminder of the great musical talent to emerge from the United Kingdom. However, the song “Imagine” was not an insignificant choice. Whilst it is arguably one of Lennon’s most widely known and most popular songs, it is not his only.
The decision to use “Imagine” points to a further recognition of the universal nature of the Olympics. With lyrics such as “imagine there’s no countries, it isn’t hard to do. Nothing to kill or die for” and “imagine all the people, living life in peace” the message of Olympism and universalism was apparent. Although the Olympic Movement is unlikely to eschew the use of nations(-states) any time soon, the messages of peace and uniting humankind can be seen in the fundamental principles of Olympism (IOC, 2011). The use of this song supported the stated values of the IOC as well as continued to promote the contributions of the nation-state to popular culture.

The formal aspects of the Ceremony also added to the incorporation of Olympism through the use of the athletes as well as the speeches made. The first was the entry of the athletes. The Closing Ceremony is typically the time when the athletes walk in as a unit, not separated by nation(-state)—though still wearing national uniforms—and mix together for the duration of the performance. However, as the athletes walked in, it was obvious that there were large groups of athletes from the same nation(-state) entering together. Due to this, and the fact that athletes were then corralled into spaces around the stage, there was less of a chance for the athletes to mix. This was quite clear as the cameras zoomed out to show the entire stage or when they panned across certain sections, as it was easy to spot large groups of people wearing the same uniforms (IOC, 2012d). It is worth noting that the athletes appeared restricted in their ability to mix because the Closing Ceremony typically allows the athletes a final opportunity to meet and interact with those from other nations(-states).

The symbolism of the athletes coming together in goodwill after the competitions have ended was muted in the case of London, further diluting the claims of the IOC that the Olympics promote international goodwill and understanding.

The speeches by Coe and Rogge followed the same pattern as their opening comments with the overwhelming majority of the focus being put on London and the United Kingdom. Coe made no mention of the worldwide audience or the values of Olympism except to proclaim, “we lit the flame, and we lit up the world” and to mention the “world’s greatest sportsmen and women” (IOC, 2012d). However, when

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19 As with the Opening Ceremony, the athlete procedures during the Closing Ceremony differ between the Summer and Winter Games.
20 As the stage was designed to resemble the Union flag, athletes were kept in triangular segments, which would be the blue portions of the flag.
it came to the national, he was wholeheartedly congratulatory towards the British public. He thanked everyone involved including those who built the stadiums, those who volunteered as Gamesmakers, and the spectators. He exclaimed that “the British people got behind London’s bid and they got behind London’s Games” (IOC, 2012d). Whether or not this was entirely true is a story in itself, but there was certainly substantial support for the Games and excitement surrounding them in the city of London during the two and a half weeks of competition. Another noteworthy point that Coe made was the idea of this being about the nation, stating that “we know more now as individuals and as a nation-state just what we are capable of and that knowledge will drive us on” (IOC, 2012d). The implication is that the entire nation-state put on these Games and because of this, the national character had been altered to take this into account; being able to host an event of this size and to this level of success was now an ability that the British people possessed. In much the same way as existing characteristics of the national character were displayed in the Ceremonies, the ability to stage an event of this nature had been displayed and added to that list. The London Games had, therefore, not only been a way to reinforce and exhibit a British national identity, they had been a vehicle for altering the national identity, adding to it, and redefining what aspects of the national character are worth celebrating.

Jacques Rogge struck a rather more balanced note during his speech. He spent a good deal of time thanking all those involved and praising the ability of London to host the Games and proclaiming that these Games were “happy and glorious” and showed the “best of British hospitality” before acknowledging the extensive reach of the Games (IOC, 2012d). The recognition of the values of Olympism was brief but it touched on four distinct areas: the audience, the athletes, the legacy of London 2012, and the future of the Games. Rogge told the athletes that they had “earned the respect and admiration of a global audience” before declaring (in French) “the human legacy [of London 2012] will reach every region of the world” (IOC, 2012d). Lastly, as dictated by protocol, Rogge “call[ed] on the youth of the world to assemble four years from now in Rio de Janeiro to celebrate the Games of the 31st Olympiad” looking forward to the future of the Games as it expands into new territory (IOC, 2012d).

The focus on the national in the Closing Ceremony was not unexpected and it followed the patterns of the Opening Ceremony. Yet it is worthy of examination because of the prominence of the event. Just as in the Opening Ceremony, the
nationalism promoted in the Closing was intended to promote the positive aspects of British culture and British history while omitting more unfavourable features.

Yet, in contrast to the Opening Ceremony, the place of Olympism in the Games was highlighted alongside the promotion of the nation-state. Although still taking a secondary position, the role of Olympism is noteworthy as it demonstrates how both of these concepts can be used simultaneously.

However, during the Closing Ceremony, it is not only the host nation-state that has the opportunity to address the audience. One of the defining features of the Closing Ceremony is the handover of the Games to the next host city and their short presentation to the audience. This was Rio de Janeiro’s chance to make a statement.

**Preview of Rio de Janeiro 2016.**

One portion of the Closing Ceremony of each edition of the Olympic Games is the formal handover of the Games from the current host city to the next host city. While this is not the final part of the Ceremony, it is the chance for the next host to preview what the audience can expect in four year’s time. From this short segment, it is possible to see that the nationalism included in the London 2012 Opening and Closing Ceremonies was not an aberration. The performance staged by the Rio de Janeiro organising committee followed similar patterns.

This segment began with the handover of the Olympic flag. London mayor Boris Johnson handed the Olympic flag to IOC president Jacques Rogge who then passed it to the mayor of Rio de Janeiro, Eduardo Paes (IOC, 2012d). With this act, the Games were symbolically placed in the hands of Rio de Janeiro as they await the start of the next Olympiad. The playing of the Brazilian national anthem and the raising of the Brazilian flag then followed (IOC, 2012d). These formal elements next gave way to the presentation by the Rio de Janeiro organising committee; fireworks were set off and the Olympic Stadium was illuminated in green and yellow in celebration of Brazil’s hosting of the 2016 Games (IOC, 2012d).

In this short presentation, the national was the only priority with no reference being made to the international. This segment was packed with music and dancing and a Carnivâle-esque atmosphere as some of the better-known facets of Brazilian culture were put on display. As with the London 2012 portions of the Ceremony, music was a primary focus. Famous Brazilian singers made appearances while a number of dancers, including those performing capoeira, were on stage in various costumes (IOC, 2012d). Samba music was also prominent as a corps of 82 drummers
played while dressed as golden kings (IOC, 2012d). Interestingly, while Olympism was not a central element of this performance, international cooperation was represented as 72 of the samba drummers were chosen from London samba schools—although without the associated commentary this fact would have been unknown to the viewing audience (IOC, 2012d). One of the final moments of this portion of the Closing Ceremony was when all three featured singers—BNegão, Marisa Monte, and Seu Jorge—sang the informal anthem of Rio de Janeiro, “That Embrace” (IOC, 2012d). The segment concluded with a man walking onto the stage in a suit and hat. When he took off his hat and jacket it was revealed that it was Pelé, the famous Brazilian footballer, in his jersey. Lastly, the logo for the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Games rose from the stage (IOC, 2012d).

What all of the elements of this presentation display, is an attempt to communicate certain aspects of Brazilian culture. However, it is also important to note that for a majority of the worldwide audience, this segment would have been devoid of meaning. It is unlikely that many in the audience would have recognised the singers or styles of dance and music—even though many may have guessed there was samba. It was the commentators who were able to provide context for what was happening and who was performing. This was particularly noticeable with the mention of the drummers from London taking part and the explanation of the informal anthem of Rio de Janeiro. The role of the media, in this case, was highly influential in how this portion of the Ceremony was received. While the influence of the media should never be underestimated during the Closing Ceremony (or the Opening Ceremony), Brazilian culture, outside of football, may be more foreign to a large population as Brazil is only recently beginning to emerge as a force in modern politics, economics, and culture. London, and the United Kingdom more generally, are better known having been established players in politics, economics, and culture for many years.

**Conclusion**

The institutional focus in this chapter gives the best balance yet of nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation. Although they are by no means emphasised equally in practice, by focusing on the institutions, it is possible to see clear examples of each of these three concepts, which has not been the case when exploring the lead-up or the spectators.
Nationalism was a prevalent feature of the London 2012 Olympic Games. In addition to that displayed by the spectators, the institutions involved in staging the Games regularly used nationalism to their own ends.

A heavy emphasis was placed on Team GB and the United Kingdom through the distribution of Union flags, rallying cries for spectators to support Team GB, and the celebration of British medallists at Hyde Park. Furthermore, in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies there was the familiar sight of the promotion of significant sites in the United Kingdom as well as the promotion of people of note (both past and present) as was seen during the Torch Relay. The Ceremonies, however, took this further (as was allowed by the format) to also prioritize British pop culture and Olympic success. Also, in addition to the general British nationalism that was identified, other instances of non-British nationalism could be seen such as the rallying of fans at Wembley in the native languages of the teams competing and the playing of “Born in the USA” to celebrate the United States’ women’s football gold.

That these types of actions occurred with such regularity provides insight into the behaviour of spectators. The consistent encouragement of nationalist behaviour coupled with the similar encouragement from media outlets and images of similar behaviour from previous editions of the Games can help to explain why nationalism is so prominent among spectators. The desire to engage in the events taking place leads one to nationalist behaviours when those organising the Games promote these acts to such an extent.

Yet, the use of nationalism was not simply done because previous hosts have done so and staged successful Games. The use of nationalism allowed for the engagement of the spectators. As Eley and Suny (1996) assert, “for nationalism to do its work, ordinary people need to see themselves as the bearers of an identity centered elsewhere, imagine themselves as an abstract community” (p. 22). Part of this abstract community is an affinity for the sports teams competing under the national banner. Organising the athletic competitions based on national teams enabled spectators to know who to cheer for and, therefore, provided a reason to be interested in the event. Additionally, engaging spectators helped to ensure their continued involvement. This, in turn, protects the income that can be gained both from spectators and other parties such as the media and corporate sponsors. The institutions involved in staging and promoting the Games used this to their advantage by actively promoting nationalism.
so as to derive benefits, whether it was profits or the continued investment of time, money, or other resources into the Olympic Movement.

The primary difference between the nationalism displayed by the spectators at the Games and that displayed by the institutions supporting the Games was that the latter were not attempting to express a national identity. As discussed previously, spectators could be seen to use the Games as a means to express a national identity in a way that is not often available to them in other situations. The institutions, however, were attempting to shape and frame a particular national identity: a British identity.

As can be seen through the Opening and Closing Ceremony, the national identity of the United Kingdom was presented as one of multiculturalism and inclusion while Britain was positioned as a significant contributor to pop culture and politics. Through all of these avenues, the audience was being shown what is British or, more significantly, how Britain should be seen. This allowed for Britain to be on display as a tourism destination as well as a significant member of the international community. As Endensor (2002) notes, “the persistence of such common patterns over time underpins a common sense that this is how things are and this is how we do things” (p. 19) and the Ceremonies were used as a means of altering the perceptions of those patterns and adding to them.

Through all of these examples, those staging the Games used nationalism in different ways. Despite the Olympic Charter making clear that “the Olympic Games are competitions between athletes in individual or team events and not between countries” (IOC, 2011, p. 19), the reality is very different. The Games were infused with nationalism at every stage while managing to function as a peaceful international competition performed for a worldwide audience.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there were few observable instances of aggressive nationalism and no obvious lasting conflicts erupted. Nationalism was promoted by the institutions, as demonstrated above, and was used for a multitude of purposes and expressed in a variety of ways as explored previously. It is important to keep this in mind when considering the place of the national in the Olympics and also when exploring the concept of nationalism. The national is central to the Olympics as currently modelled and it has contributed to many successful Games. However, there is no singular definition of nationalism that can be applied to all instances seen at the Games. To attempt to do so would be to oversimplify a complex issue. Rather, what should be taken from this is how nationalism was expressed in the Olympic Games,
why it was expressed, and what that tells us. When looking to these questions, it is possible to discover examples of how the Games continue to be a peaceful international event.

Three things happen as a result of all of this. First, with the rallying cries and the instructions to choose a side to cheer for (the implications being that you always support your “home” nation(-state) and that you have to support somebody) there was a pushing aside of the wide appeal of sport as a possible unifier as ideas of “us versus them” are perpetuated. Second, there was a simultaneous reinforcing and altering of the British national identity. Through the Ceremonies in particular, but also through the general hosting of the Games, what it meant to be British was being subtly altered by the institutions. However, due to this, the third outcome that could be observed was a rejection of the national identity or national character put forth by the institutions as multiple conceptions of the mythical narrative of the United Kingdom converged.

Of course, as has been demonstrated, it was not only nationalism that was being displayed during the Games. The values of Olympism were on display during both the Opening and Closing Ceremonies despite seemingly taking a supporting position to that of nationalism. This could be seen through the symbolism of the Olympic cauldron as well as John Lennon’s song “Imagine” as well as select other examples.

Through all of the mentions or inclusions of those from other nations(-states) and the symbolic representations of harmony and goodwill, it was possible to see the values of Olympism on display particularly that of “mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship” (IOC, 2011, p. 10). It may seem obvious that in the Olympic Games the values of Olympism would be present but, with the overwhelming presence of nationalism, it is significant to explore both how and why these values were included. How these were included was mentioned above as well as in detail throughout this chapter, but it is the why that is more telling. Overall, there is one reason that could really be seen and it is that Olympism was incorporated by the institutions in order to support the stated values of the IOC and because it is recognised as a necessary aspect of the Games. Looking deeper into this, it is possible to see two distinct trends. The first is the recognition of the international nature of the event and its inclusion in the Ceremonies—for formally or informally. The second is the addressing of particular values of Olympism such as a Games for all and the harmony
of all nations(-states) of the world. Contrary to the reasons for expressing or using nationalism, Olympism was primarily used out of a sense of necessity.

Due to these observations, what occurred as a result was the positioning of Olympism as a formality. This was also seen in the lead-up to the Games at the “one year to go” celebration in particular. This is important to note because for all of the talk of Olympism in the Olympic Charter and its supposedly integral role in the Games, it was not used in these ways. Even one of the few moments in the Games that could be interpreted as holding true to the values of Olympism—the symbolism of the cauldron—fell short out of a focus on the national in what could have been one of the most potent symbols of Olympism during London 2012. This, again, highlights the importance of the national in the Olympic Games. Although the two should not be read as a zero sum game, there is use in comparing the relative frequency of nationalism and Olympism. The espoused ideology of a universalist competition with a spirit of goodwill is not absent from the Games but the more realistic interpretation is a nationalist competition with a spirit of goodwill.

Globalisation is the final piece of the puzzle that has been seen relatively scarcely so far, at least overtly. Although the lead-up to the Games did display elements of globalisation through the sponsors of the Torch Relay (as discussed in Chapter 6), it is through an exploration of the institutional forces of the Games that globalisation can be seen most clearly. This was done through the use of sponsors from various locations across the world and the presence they had through exclusive branding and selling rights and a visual presence at the Games (through products, entertainment, and so on). This trend of sponsorships and exclusive marketing rights in association with the Games has only continued the system put in place in 1984 (Barney et al., 2002). However, the overwhelming presence of sponsors at London 2012, while necessary in many respects, only helps confirm the scepticism of Maguire, Barnard, et al. (2008). The presence of sponsors and the lack of options for spectators highlights what Maguire, Barnard, et al. (2008) criticize about the IOC and its promotion of Olympism as spectators are forced to become consumers without options and are presented with corporate images more often than they are with examples of Olympism in practice.

The reason that this happened at the Games is fairly straightforward. As mentioned, the Games cost billions of dollars to put on and therefore sponsorships are needed to keep the Games running in their current grand fashion. Additionally,
sponsors take part in order to have exclusive access to potential new markets and millions of people (both who attend the Games or follow in the media). The simple outcome of this is that the Games are able to continue. Despite potential impacts of globalisation in other areas, the economic impacts are a useful tool for the IOC and the Olympic Movement.
Conclusion

Introduction

This work aimed to explore the topics of nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation at the London 2012 Olympic Games. As explained at the outset of this work, the Olympic Games are a worthy subject of inquiry for multiple reasons, not least of which are the impacts they have on the host nation-state economically, or the place they hold in sporting culture (for both spectators and participants) around the world. Furthermore, with the increasing connections economically, politically, and culturally in the modern world, nationalism and globalisation continue to be pressing topics of inquiry. Lastly, as the official value system of the Olympic Movement, Olympism should not be neglected in either its use in, or absence from, the Games.

Overall, the study of the Olympic Games, nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation is not new territory for scholars. What makes this work worthwhile and an expansion on the current wealth of literature is the methodological approach used and the insights into nationalism that can be gained.

Reconsideration of Methods

The methodological approach taken in this study is unique to explorations of these concepts in the Games. Although many works focus on a case study of only one edition of the Games (see Billings & Eastman, 2002; Housel, 2007; Lenskyj, 2000; Maguire, Butler, et al., 2008), the approach to the case is decidedly different. More common is the use of media analysis (see Billings & Angelini, 2007; Billings & Eastman, 2002; Maguire, Butler, et al., 2008) or the use of historical Olympic texts (see Chatziefstathiou & Henry, 2009; Loland, 1995). An ethnographic approach that focuses almost exclusively on observation is a distinctive method in studies of this type. However, it gives the advantage of being able to understand what is happening with less influence from the uncontrolled bias (positive or negative) that is possible from media outlets. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, it allows for the observation and subsequent analysis of aspects of the Olympic Games that the media may frequently overlook or use for only a singular purpose. The ability to be on the ground at the Games and experience the effects of nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation first hand adds another dimension to the understanding of the Games that is worthy of additional attention.

In order to achieve these ends, an interpretivist approach to the subject was taken. The choice of an interpretivist paradigm and the belief in subjectivity and
multiple realities that entails (as detailed in Chapter 5) is important to reflect on at the completion of this study. By necessity, the choice of one methodological paradigm over another will have an impact on the outcome of the study. In this case, the use of an interpretivist paradigm, combined with the methods used (as will be explored) led to conclusions based on observable trends and patterns, rather than definitive replicable results.

One aspect of this approach that must be taken into consideration is the subjective nature of the study. As only a single individual conducted this research, it is potentially more subjective than a content analysis of newspaper reporting, for instance. However, this should not be seen as a weakness in the methods employed. First of all, although the work is subjective in nature, the extensive research on theory prior to the Games (as discussed in Chapters 1-4), and its subsequent application to the data collected, ensured that this work does not solely consist of opinions but is a reasoned consideration of what had been observed.

Secondly, whilst a multitude of interpretations are possible—based on what was experienced and what background influences one’s perception—it is imperative to note that no one interpretation needs to be “correct.” This concept is important to note for a couple of reasons. At a general level, it is vital to be aware of the potential for influences on the research at hand. Additionally, it is particularly important to keep in mind the potential influences that I, as a researcher, have brought to this study. As has been mentioned previously, although I aimed to be an impartial observer during data collection, this is not always entirely possible. Whilst there are many potential biases that each of us carry, two in particular, are especially relevant to my role in this work.

Whilst I am not above criticizing the Olympic Movement or pointing out potential negatives that I see, my passion as a fan (rather than a critic) leads to the possibility of a more positive approach to what is seen. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly in a study of these particular Games, is my position as an American. This is a fact that I can neither change nor entirely ignore. My experiences as an American and growing up in the United States has the ability to influence my interpretation of the London 2012 Games in ways that would likely not be the case for a British researcher. Of course, a British researcher would similarly bring their own history and experiences to the table, which could also colour the interpretation of the data at hand.
It is enough to realise that individuals will make sense of what they see. Carlson (2004) argues that spectators engage in the performance and help create meanings and that is what can be seen in this work. What has been seen need not be the only interpretation; rather, the understanding of different ways of interpreting the Games demonstrates very well the complexity of the topics at hand. In a sense, the subjective nature of this work reinforces the common question throughout this study: does intent matter? The idea that what was seen can be understood in a variety of ways demonstrates the complexities in both employing and reading instances of nationalism and Olympism in particular.

The process coupled with this interpretive paradigm involved a prolonged period of observation using the London Games and selected events in the lead-up to the Games as a case study of the wider Olympic Movement. By engaging with the Games in this way and looking at them through the perspective of a spectator, data was gathered on a variety of different events as presented to all those taking part as spectators. Furthermore, the additional framing of the media was largely avoided unless actively sought out through daily papers and so on. This allowed for the observation of the Games as experienced rather than as it was packaged for personal or economic gain by media outlets. By eschewing the use of, for example, formal interviews, media analysis, and other alternatives that were determined not to suit the needs of the present work (see Chapter 5), I was able to explore how the Games were experienced by those in attendance and what messages were received and interpreted. Despite receiving these messages as a researcher, and therefore applying a critical analysis to them, I was subject to the same messages as any other spectator.

With the role of spectators a major concern in this work, it was important to be at the Games among them. The only way to understand what is taking place in real time with those at the Games is to walk among them, cheer in the stands next to them, and experience what they did. Whilst some choose to focus on the media’s portrayal of the Games, this leaves the spectators as a largely marginal element.

Nationalism was found to be a considerable factor in the Games, along with the more limited presence of Olympism and the constant background presence of globalisation. This is a common finding, and yet it is still important. The discovery of new information on the Games is not all that should be hoped for. Rather, taking the Games as a whole, instead of as segmented components, and realising the same trends appear demonstrates that nationalism especially, but also Olympism and globalisation
to an extent, need not be exclusive to historical studies of Berlin 1936 or Los Angeles 1984. The focus of these topics can also be drawn away from the frame of the national media outlets as it can be seen that these forces exist outside the media as well.

A final point to consider when examining whether or not the chosen methods were appropriate is the generalisability of the findings. Although this was a case study of a particular iteration of the Olympic Games, there are elements that can be generalised to the wider Olympic Movement. As the Olympic Games follow a semi-formulaic pattern, certain aspects will be likely to recur, including the presence of globalisation and its impacts (although these may continue to intensify) and the prioritisation of nationalism over Olympism. These recurrences can be seen particularly in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies as one can find similar discussions in previous works (see Housel, 2007; Luo, 2010). However, each organising committee has control over certain aspects which make direct comparisons more difficult in terms of the wider experience at the Games and, of course, the spectators change with each edition of the Games allowing for the possibility of vastly different behaviours.

**Tension at the Games**

In looking to explore nationalism, globalisation, and Olympism, one must consider the relationship between the three, not simply their individual existences. These concepts are able to coexist in the Olympic Movement despite some seemingly contradictory values. However, although they are able to coexist, this does not mean there was not observable tension between them. What is necessary to keep in mind is that although tension is a point of interest, it should not be read as an indictment of the use of nationalism, Olympism, or globalisation. Although many note the reliance of the Games on nationalism or globalisation at the expense of Olympism (see Hargreaves, 1992; Maguire, Barnard, et al., 2008; Maguire, Butler, et al. 2008), the use of each of these concepts should be viewed in context. The Games are a sporting event that needs to keep spectators and sponsors interested and this may involve sacrificing some of the focus on Olympism. As Hoberman (1986) notes, “Olympic internationalism has been charged with a salvational mission for which it is unsuited” (p. 6). This is further reinforced through Toohey and Veal’s (2000) assertion that “in publicly declaring adherence to a lofty set of ideals, the Olympic Movement lays itself open to criticism whenever it deviates from them” (p. 52). The truth in Toohey and Veal’s words can be seen in the analysis and critiques present in this work.
Throughout this work, the tensions between nationalism and Olympism and Olympism and globalisation have been discussed but it is worth focusing on these points further. The primary tension that could be observed was between nationalism and Olympism. There was a constant push and pull between these ideologies as the institutions, in particular, struggled to incorporate both adequately. As has been mentioned, Olympism was continually pushed aside as nationalism was made the primary ideology of the Games. This is not a new occurrence and Hargreaves (1992) notes that the dominance of nationalism in the Games is a reality that may be hard to adjust moving forward. Olympism was routinely used as an additional piece, there to symbolically reinforce the stated ideology of the IOC, rather than as an assertion of the value of Olympism itself. This tension impacted the entire experience of the Games in that the amount of attention paid to nationalism or Olympism in the planning and running of the Games will, of necessity, impact the way the Games are staged and, therefore, experienced by all those who attend or follow in the media. However, if one does not break the Games down into categories of nationalism and Olympism, it would certainly be possible to overlook how these two concepts have impacted upon each other. Although nationalism and Olympism should not be read as a zero-sum game, it should be noted how the appearance of one impacts the other. In the case of London 2012, it was most often the case that nationalism was prioritized at the expense of Olympism.

The other main source of tension that could be seen, to a much less extent than that described above, was the tension between Olympism and globalisation. As noted by Maguire, Butler, et al. (2008) and Maguire, Barnard, et al. (2008), the messages of Olympism are often overtaken or used for personal gain through commercialisation. This type of economic globalisation in the Games, in particular the large presence and influence of sponsors from various parts of the world, leads to a loss of control over the distribution and messages of Olympism. Whilst Olympism may or may not be diminished by the forces of economic globalisation within the Olympic Movement, some may argue that the use of Olympism for commercial gain is a tension that should be addressed. However, as noted previously, without a dramatic change to how the Games are organised, this commercialisation and reliance on sponsors is unlikely to change.

What these conclusions boil down to is that there is a marginalisation of Olympism in favour of nationalism and globalisation. Although likely not actively
conceived of in these terms by the institutions, in an analytical sense that is what could be seen. The IOC controls the Games in a broad sense but these forces, and the running and promotion of the Games, are in the hands of others. Due to this, forces other than Olympism are prioritised because those who have the largest stake in the Games (the sponsors and the host city/nation) are doing what they see fit in order to derive benefits from the Games. Of course, the IOC has a stake in the success of the Games as well, so it is not to say that if the IOC organised the Games nationalism would be abandoned in favour of a pure focus on Olympism, but it is worth noting the reality of why these forces hold the power they do. Olympism has laudable values but their place in a system such as this is limited.

Nationalism Revisited

Throughout this work, nationalism has been the dominant focus. The presence of nationalism far outweighed that of either Olympism or globalisation at London 2012 and is worthy of further consideration at this point. In Chapter 1, nationalism was described in a multitude of ways from an ideology (Kedourie, 1993) to a feeling of intense devotion (Boas, 1932). Furthermore, the nature of nationalism was debated with arguments for its place as a destructive force (Chatterjee, 1993; Gellner, 1997) and its potential positive or neutral effects (Billig, 1995; Eley & Suny, 1996).

The behaviours of both the spectators and the institutions at London 2012 allowed nationalism to be observed through a number of these perspectives. For instance, the priority of nationalism over all other values that Hroch (1996) uses to define nationalism could be seen through the marginalisation of Olympism. Additionally, as national symbols were used by both citizens supporting their nation(-state) and those choosing a team to support for a particular day or event, the different meanings of national symbols that Jones and Merriman (2009) address was on display. It was observed that symbols need not hold the same meaning for all who display them. Lastly, Edensor’s (2002) claims about daily habits being a part of “how things are and this is how we do things” (p. 19) could explicitly be seen during the Closing Ceremony as a segment was dedicated to depicting the daily life of a Londoner.

However, whilst instances such as these confirm many of the theories of nationalism that exist, there were other details discovered at London 2012 that should not go unnoticed. The first is that banal nationalism need not be as limited in scope as Billig (1995) implies. When he asserts that it is the unnoticed flag hanging on a public
building that represents banal nationalism (Billig, 1995), he eliminates other actions that can also be seen as daily habits. In the world of sport, many behaviours are taken for granted as how one behaves as a fan of the team. Part of this is displaying support for your chosen team through apparel. The wearing of national colours or jerseys at London 2012 can be seen as banal because it can be seen as habitual just as a hanging flag is. This is not to say that all such occurrences should be seen as banal but it is a mistake to assume that none should be. The second is the presence of nationalism as a non-aggressive force. Although some theorists, as noted above, are optimistic about the nature or uses of nationalism, London 2012 demonstrated one example of nationalism as a non-aggressive force. Conflicts were rarely seen and, when they were, dissipated without lasting negativity as witnessed in Hyde Park. Furthermore, as the display by the Polish fans at Earl’s Court demonstrated, in some instances, the overt nationalism and over-the-top exuberance of some fans could draw people in rather than create an exclusionary atmosphere. Thirdly, it is worth noting that what appears as nationalism is not always so. The use of national symbols or colours does not necessarily imply feelings of nationalism. This was most apparent when exploring examples such as the Team GB supporter with a Jamaican flag face paint or the American with a Union flag. At first glance, it would be simple to assume that this is a form of nationalism but it depends on how the symbol is used. As noted above, symbols can be used and interpreted in a variety of ways and it would be a mistake to believe that all instances of national symbols reflect a related nationalism.

Each of these points leads to a single conclusion that can be made about nationalism: singular theories on nationalism do not go far enough. This is not to say that theories pinning nationalism to a specific definition or putting conclusive limits on what a type of nationalism includes are wrong. Such parameters are often useful and may be highly accurate in some cases. However, from observing the myriad expressions of nationalism (or actions that look like nationalism) at London 2012, a clearer understanding of the concept can be gained. What can be seen from the range of examples provided throughout this work is that nationalism should not be defined in a single way. Much like a piece of wood can be used for a variety of purposes, so too can nationalism. This reinforces the claims of Smith (1995) that the good and bad of nationalism may simply be two sides of the same coin. With instances of aggressive and banal nationalism, alongside nationalism motivated by the desire to prove something (be it a national identity or the value of the nation(-state) to the
world), the concept of nationalism is too pliable to be narrowed down so severely to either “good” or “bad.” The same actions seen at London 2012 that were met with such acceptance have the potential to cause serious conflict in other situations.

**Considerations for Further Study**

This work has aimed to explore nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation in the Olympic Movement. This is not the first, and likely not the last, to address these issues. Other theorists have looked at these concepts in the Games using a variety of methods and choosing to focus on particular aspects of the Games, as noted above. What this work intended to do was create a more holistic picture.

One inevitable fact about research is that every study will have limitations of some sort. It is impossible to create a perfect study. With this in mind, this section will explore the limitations identified in the current work and suggest avenues for further research that work to not only expand upon the ideas presented in the preceding chapters but also work to compensate for the limitations of this study.

There are four primary limitations of this study that build on one another. The first is the use of only a single researcher. With such a vast amount of data available at the Games, a single researcher is only able to capture a small percentage of what can be seen and experienced. The more data that can be collected, the stronger the conclusions will be. Secondly, the focus of this work was on a single Olympic Games. Whilst any more than that was beyond the realm of possibility for this study, just as additional data collected by multiple researchers can strengthen the conclusions drawn, so too can expanding the data pool to multiple editions of the Games. The third limitation is the focus on only the Olympic Games. These topics of inquiry can be seen outside the boundaries of the Olympics (with the more general universal values replacing the specifics of Olympism) and looking at the connections to an event such as the FIFA World Cup could prove beneficial. Lastly, just as these concepts can be seen outside of the Olympic Games, they can also be seen outside of the world of sport. Looking at other mega-events or political institutions can broaden the understanding of these concepts. With these limitations in mind, the following suggestions for future research have been proposed.

The first avenue for further study is two-fold. The first step is to broaden the data collection, which could be done by using multiple researchers to collect data at a range of sites on each day of the Games. In addition, whilst interviews were deemed to be too cumbersome and ill fitting for this work, multi-lingual researchers who can
speak to a wider range of spectators may be able to gather rich data that this study was unable to explore. The second step is to continue this study across multiple Games. While a single Games can be a good source of information about the Olympic Movement, and the Games are run similarly from one Olympiad to the next, by looking across multiple Games it can be seen what changes take place and why. Moreover, the actions of spectators may be able to be better understood as larger patterns are observed. Lastly, expanding a study of this nature across multiple Games allows for greater generalisability as can shown how patterns repeat (or not) at the Games.

The second option for further study is to undertake a comparative study of other mega-events—sporting or non-sporting. In doing so, the roles of nationalism, universal values (Olympism), and globalisation can be better understood in context and how differing events feature these concepts and how spectators interact with them in various situations can be explored further. Finally, a theoretical examination of how and why nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation feature in the Olympic Games could be undertaken with the aim of determining whether or not similar approaches could be used within other institutions such as the UN or the EU.

Concluding Remarks

The aim of this study was to answer three related questions: 1) How do nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation feature at London 2012? 2) Why are nationalism and Olympism expressed at London 2012? And 3) what is the outcome of these actions? These questions were chosen because through discovering their answers, information could be gleaned about both the Olympic Movement and each of these individual topics.

As has been demonstrated throughout the preceding chapters, these questions do not have singular answers. They are too broad and involve too many different actors for a single answer to be found. However, this is not to say that there are not patterns that can be observed that demonstrate the most common actions, and reasons for those actions, at the Games.

Through the various forms of nationalism present at the Games, and the different motives behind them, nationalism was proven to be an integral part of the Games. As Bairner (2009) explains, to express nationalism and national identity through sport is a common occurrence. During London 2012 expressions of nationalism were most commonly seen through the use of national colours and
symbols by spectators, and through the use of citizens, significant sites across the United Kingdom, and recognisable popular culture by the institutions. What could be seen through these actions was a flagging of the nation(-state) by spectators and a flagging of what the nation-state has to be proud of by the institutions.

Although some may be using national symbols because it is perceived as what is done at the Olympics, the expression of national identity by some should not be in doubt. As mentioned previously, the Olympic Games provides an opportunity for spectators to express their national identity in a way that is not often available and the overwhelming presence of national symbols and excitement in cheering on one’s chosen team indicates that this opportunity was seized. Furthermore, the use of nationalism by organisers to promote the host nation-state has long been the case (Rivenburgh, 2004), and this was true of London 2012 as well. This was seen explicitly in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, as they were an unabashed celebration of the United Kingdom and its contributions to the world. As noted in Chapter 8, the organizers of the Games not only promoted the United Kingdom but also attempted to shape and frame a British national identity through the presentation of the Olympic Games.

In contrast to nationalism, Olympism was far less prevalent. The most significant displays of Olympism were relegated to a few short artistic segments in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies as well as some of the more formal aspects. Although the inclusion of Olympism was used as a way to seemingly uphold the stated values of the IOC and to make the international audience and participants feel as if they were not being left out of the Games, its inclusion goes beyond these observations and provides further insight into Olympism in practice. Once the Games began, the rhetoric of Olympism was primarily reduced to two factors: the universalism of the Games and the unity of humankind, and the support for excellence. The LOCOG focused on the first of these while the spectators (sporadically) embraced the latter. What makes this particularly noteworthy is the fact that these two values of Olympism stand in such direct contrast to the expressions of nationalism that could be seen throughout London 2012. Although Olympism was relegated to the sidelines for much of the Games in favour of a focus on nationalism, the small inclusions of these values are important as they keep an ideology at the centre of the Olympic Movement, at least symbolically.
The last of the three concepts at the heart of this study, globalisation, was an ever-present force at the Games from the sponsors to the ability of people from disparate regions around the world to attend or watch on television. These forces continue to grow alongside the Olympic Movement and support the claims that our world is becoming increasingly globalised. However, these forces are a backdrop to the Games, rather than a consciously manipulated ideology; they are largely out of the control of the IOC as they are necessary to continue to grow the Games. Globalisation has become a necessity for the Games to continue to be the spectacle that they are, however, unlike nationalism and Olympism, globalisation is not a part of the Games that the IOC has codified through the Olympic Charter. It is something that has attached itself to the Games as its influence continues to grow in other spheres. The lasting impacts of globalisation on the Games have yet to be seen but globalisation will continue to be a part of the Olympics unless the structure of the Olympic Movement changes.

The final question asked explores the outcomes of the actions observed at London 2012. As discussed throughout the preceding chapters, a number of outcomes can be seen from the variety of behaviours observed, however, when looked at in their totality, one can identify three primary results. The first is also the most obvious: a peaceful two and a half week sporting competition is held. It comes as no surprise that the Games were able to take place and yet this is not something that should go overlooked. With over 200 nations(-states) represented at the Games and nationalism as a dominant force the hosting of a peaceful event is a significant outcome. What makes this significant is the second result that can be seen: a new interpretation of nationalism. As discussed above, nationalism need not be seen in any single way and the Games proved this through contradicting the common-sense assumptions often made about nationalism as a negative force. Furthermore, the various displays of nationalism, or the appropriation of national symbols for non-nationalist purposes, demonstrate how complex a topic this truly is and why the staging of a peaceful Games is noteworthy. Lastly, the in-depth exploration of London 2012 demonstrates the discrepancy between nationalism and Olympism particularly in the Olympic Games. However, the conflicts or the tension that this discrepancy causes is primarily ideological as when critics such as Maguire, Barnard, et al. (2008) or Hargreaves (1992) call into question the role of Olympism. While these criticisms should certainly not be overlooked, and they continue to grow as new world events collide
with the Games, in practice, the hosting and attending of the Games was little affected.

This work has explored three related concepts within the London 2012 Games: nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation. Although these are popular topics within studies of the Olympic Movement, with each edition of the Games comes new information and new insights that can help us to understand them better. Throughout, I have attempted to shine new light on these topics primarily by undertaking an observation-based approach. The unique nature of this study, combining a broad perspective of the Games with an ethnographic, on the ground approach, has allowed this work to highlight important connections between nationalism, Olympism, and globalisation within both the institutions that staged the Games and the spectators who attended them.
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