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‘Sport for Yes’? The role of sporting issues in pro-independence political discourse during the Scottish independence referendum campaign

Abstract

This article critically considers the extent to which sporting issues were harnessed by pro-independence political campaigners during the Scottish independence referendum campaign. Developments such as the inclusion of sport within the Scottish Government’s White Paper on Scottish independence, the establishment of the ‘Working Group on Scottish Sport’ and the establishment of the ‘Sport for Yes’ campaign group demonstrate the harnessing of sporting issues as an additional, if somewhat peripheral, debate point in the referendum campaigns (Lafferty 2014, Scottish Government 2013, Working Group on Scottish Sport and Scottish Government 2013, 2014). The latter of these developments, the establishment of the ‘Sport for Yes’ campaign group, is of particular interest, offering evidence of the explicit political mobilisation of past and present athletes in support of the ‘Yes Scotland’ pro-independence campaign. The use of sport within pro-independence political discourse is therefore scrutinised, drawing upon the principles of critical discourse analysis. This article will also consider the impact of the ‘Sport for Yes’ campaign group in relation to other pro-independence cultural groups, whilst also discussing the potential pitfalls for athletes who publicly announce their political positions.

Key words: political discourse; Scottish nationalism; sport; cultural nationalism; political communication

Introduction

Smith (1991, p. 9) argues that a nation can be defined as ‘a definite social space [and] a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong’. Although Scotland has a clearly demarcated border, it is also a constituent nation of the United Kingdom (UK). This means that ideas about belonging and national identity in Scotland are strongly contested. Scottish nationalism is at its strongest in centuries, and the Scottish National Party (SNP) are the ruling party in the Scottish Parliament. At the 2015 UK general election, 56 out of 59 members returned to the UK Parliament at Westminster were SNP candidates (BBC 2015). Politically, advocates of independence are in a very strong position in Scotland.

This is the case despite the fact that a referendum on Scottish independence held on 18th September 2014 resulted in 55.3% of the Scottish electorate voting “No” to the idea of Scotland becoming an independent nation (BBC 2014). Both the “Yes” and “No” campaigns utilised ideas about nationalism and belonging, and broadly speaking, portrayed Scotland either in terms of its potential as a separate nation or in terms of its perceived position of strength within the UK. Competing identities were expressed on a whole gamut of different issues; many of these were political and legal, but cultural issues also played a key role within the two campaigns.

There are many different ways in which national identity can be expressed, and as Smith (2010, p. 81) argues:

Nationalism cannot be confined within the political, or any other domain, and to oppose “politics” to “culture” [...] does not help to advance understanding of complex phenomena such as nations and nationalism.

Culture and politics are closely related and the interplay between them plays a key part in producing the identity of any nation. Nationalism is not just a political ideology; in order to understand the politics of a nation, it is essential to also understand that nation's culture. The aim of this article is to examine how ideas about a particular form of culture, in this case sport, were expressed during the campaigning that preceded the referendum on Scottish independence which took place on 18th September 2014.

Theories of national identity and cultural nationalism in Scotland

One of the most significant theorists of nationalism, John Hutchinson (2001), discusses the existence of political and cultural forms of nationalism, and outlines the key differences between them. In support of his assertion that nationalism can be understood as a popular movement, Hutchinson (2001, p. 78) argues that while political nationalism consists of attempts to advance the claims of a nation to sovereignty from within the politico-legal system, cultural nationalism 'can create a counter-cultural centre against the state' by mobilising non-state movements in support of the nationalist project (Hutchinson, 2001, p.78).

In separating political and cultural nationalism into different spheres, Hutchinson does not argue that cultural nationalists are apolitical. Rather, it is the case that cultural nationalism is political in character, but is not solely restricted to politico-legal mechanisms. Broadly speaking, cultural nationalism is the expression of nationalist ideals outside the direct political sphere and the idea that cultural nationalism is politically significant, but not confined to the political arena, is significant. Hutchinson (2001, p.75) argues that some theorists (chiefly Gellner, and

also Breuille) tend to present national cultures as homogenous because they see them as being under the control of the state; this approach ‘neglects the persistence of cultural divisions within many nations whose recurring contestations offer rival directions as to how the community should develop’. Clearly, in the case of Scotland, such contestations are prominent and play an important part in the development of identity.

Similarly to Hutchinson, Smith (2010, p.37) argues that for nationalisms to succeed and take root within any given unit of population, ‘the cultural nation must become the political nation, with public culture the mould and measure of society and polity’. Smith (2010) also separates cultural nationalism from political nationalism and suggests that the initial concern of cultural nationalists is with moral and social rather than territorial issues. However, this changes over time, according to Smith (2010, p. 81), so that ‘political and cultural forms of nationalism often succeed one another’. In essence, cultural nationalists mould the character of the nation, and political nationalists use this material to build their claims to sovereignty. This article will assess the extent to which cultural nationalists in Scotland developed ideas about identity through sport during pre-referendum campaigning. It will also assess the ways that political nationalists attempted to utilise arguments about sport and the material developed by cultural nationalists, creating a detailed picture of both forms of nationalism in the process.

As Pittock (2008) suggests, there is a widely held idea that in the last four decades Scotland has become marginalised in the United Kingdom, and has become increasingly culturally different as a consequence. Nairn (1977) was in the vanguard of this idea, but it has been taken up by many others since. To give one example of many possible, Dixon (1996, p. 18) has argued that in the contemporary era Scotland

has a 'coherent [and] alternative vision of cultural production' to the rest of the United Kingdom. Similarly, writing about contemporary Scottish culture, Pittock (2008, p. 123) argues that 'one of the features of the creation of a Scottish cultural agenda after 1979 was a determination to rid the country of the historical clichés, inferiorism and misunderstandings which it was believed by some had held Scotland back from devolution' in 1979. The extent to which sport can be described as part of the separate Scottish cultural agenda identified by Pittock and Dixon will be examined in the sections that follow.

Sport, nationalism and political nationalism

Sport is frequently held to be an important domain for the expression of national identity in the contemporary era. However, Smith and Porter (2004, p. 4) argue that "[m]ost mainstream commentators on nationalism pay remarkably little attention to sport", highlighting the interventions of Hobsbawm (1991), Billig (1995) and Edensor (2002) as the exception to the norm in mainstream theses on the nature of contemporary nationalism. Taking exception to this neglect of sport, the work of Edensor argues that "[p]robably the most currently powerful form of popular national performance is that found in sport... these everyday and spectacular contexts provide one of the most popular ways in which national identity is grounded" (2002, p. 78). Furthermore, Kellas (1998) argues that sport has now become the most popular form of nationalist behaviour in many countries. He claims that nationalism has three main manifestations in sport: (1) as a demonstration of nationalist behaviour; (2) as a tool for developing a strong national consciousness; and (3) as a means of expressing an ideology of nationalism.

Although it is therefore often accepted that sport can play a central role in contemporary expressions of nationalist feelings, such feelings tend to be limited to the sporting domain and seldom correlate to expressions of political nationalism (Bairner 1996, 2001; Kellas 1998). Furthermore, an oft-cited argument regarding the necessity of avoiding the politicisation of sport has been continuously perpetuated by some in both the public and academic domains, despite continued academic critique of such an argument (Allison 1986, Maguire *et al.* 2002). To this end, Allison (1993, p. 5) argues ‘sport has a complex and important interaction with nationality and the phenomenon of nationalism’, emphasising the continued importance of ongoing academic scrutiny of the relationship between sport, nationalism and politics.

Given this, it is important to delineate the relationship between sport and politics more clearly. In his extensive study of the relationship between sport and international politics, Houlihan (1994) identifies a number of ways in which sport has been used by various nations and nation-states for political purposes. For Houlihan, ‘the most common use to which sport is put is as a vehicle for projecting an image of the state and its political and ideological priorities’ (1994, p. 13), citing illustrative examples such as the 1936 Berlin Olympics held under the Nazi regime in Germany (see also: Mandell 1971, Brohm 1978, Houlihan 1994, Guttmann 1998, Holt 1998, Beck 1999, Hargreaves 2000) and the contrasting ideologies of the 1980 and 1984 Olympic Games held in Moscow and Los Angeles (see also: Hill 1993, Riordan 1998, Hargreaves 2000). The second use of sport identified by Houlihan lies in its potential utility for establishing international leadership for emerging powers, with examples such as Indonesia’s role in the creation of the Games of the New Emerging Forces in 1962 and 1963 following their expulsion from the IOC. Furthermore, Houlihan identifies that sport can equally be used as a means of forging diplomatic ties between

existing international powers where alternative measures have failed, as exemplified in the ‘ping-pong diplomacy’ between China and the USA in the mid-1970s. Finally, and importantly for the current article, he argues that the proliferation of nation-state formation in the post-1945 era resulted in a growing role for sport as a tool of nation-building for new nation-states, with a growing number of post-imperial and post-colonial states imbuing sport with potential utility for achieving social, cultural and emotional attachment with the new state formation. Given the emphasis of this article, attention now turns to examining Houlihan’s final postulation regarding sport and nationalism by considering examples of ‘submerged nations’ such as Scotland.

Sport and political nationalism in ‘submerged nations’

Although most analyses of sport and political nationalism have concentrated on examples of political exploitation of sport by existing sovereign states (Maguire *et al.* 2002), a number of academics have also examined examples of ‘submerged nations’ within existing state formations, such as the case of Scotland. For example, analyses of the Catalan and Basque regions of Spain have highlighted the importance of FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao (respectively) for the expression of regional and ethnic identities for the population of these regions (Conversi 2000, Duke and Crolley 1996, Goig 2008, Guibernau 2000, Maguire *et al.* 2002, Shobe 2008a, 2008b). Both regions have witnessed the development of political nationalism which seeks to increase the democratic power of their respective regional parliaments, either in the form of increased autonomy within a federalised Spanish state or as an independent and sovereign nation-state (Duke and Crolley 1996, Hargreaves 2000).

For example, Hargreaves' (2000) extended analysis of the 1992 Olympic Games hosted in Barcelona argues that the event represented a political threat for political actors on different sides of the constitutional debate in Catalonia. This in turn resulted in contrasting movements supporting the 'Catalanisation' or 'Espanolisation' of the Games in terms of its symbolism, organisation and the use of the Catalan language throughout the event. This echoes the earlier arguments of Blain, Boyle and O'Donnell (1993), whose analysis identified a 'unitary discourse' which emphasised the "unity of the Spanish nation" (1993, p. 163), a 'disjunctive discourse' which emphasised the autonomy of Catalonia, and a middle-ground 'differential discourse' which possessed an ability to acknowledge the importance of peripheral regions such as Catalonia whilst still emphasising the role of central government.

Whilst the ongoing constitutional debate in Catalonia continues to this date, with these competing discourses remaining prevalent, the political ramifications of the 1992 Barcelona Games are partially analogous to the case of Scotland in 2014, given the hosting of the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014; attention will therefore be given now to the specific case of Scotland, and the relationship between sport and Scottish political nationalism.

Sport and political nationalism in Scotland

Bairner's (1996) arguments on the link between sport and Scottish national identity suggest that sport represents the most popular means for the expression of national identity in Scotland. However, in order to critically reflect upon the political exploitation of sport within Scottish political nationalist movements, it is firstly necessary to look outside of sports argued to have Scottish 'origins' (whether

legitimate or dubious), such as golf, shinty and the Highland Games, to consider this relationship. This lies in stark contrast to the partially analogous case of the Republic of Ireland, and the relationship between sport and Irish political nationalism. For example, the relative unpopularity of sports with distinct Scottish origins lies in contrast to the Irish context, for whom sports such as hurling and Gaelic football have continued to act as important leisure activities in their new setting (Darby 2009, Darby and Hassan 2008). This failure has been attributed to the lack of a Scottish equivalent to the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) ([name deleted to maintain the integrity of the review process], Bradley 1998, 2007, Holt 1989, Jarvie 1993, Jarvie and Walker 1994), with Jarvie and Walker arguing that during the period of the establishment of the GAA 'Scotland... did not want to break out of the Act of Union and in this fact alone, lies one of the many reasons why a similar organisation to the Gaelic Athletic Association did not develop in Scotland' (1994, p. 6). Harvie (1994) draws similar conclusions regarding the lack of a Scottish equivalent to the GAA, arguing that the lack of political organisation and support for Scottish sports such as shinty denied them the impetus required to gain in popularity and importance vis-à-vis other popular sports such as football or rugby union.

In this light, Bairner (1996) argues that team sports such as football and rugby constitute an additional form of distinct civil society in Scotland, acting in much the same way as the 'holy trinity' of independent civic institutions found in the Scottish educational, legal and Church systems (McCrone 1992, Pittock 2012). The existence of independent Scottish representative teams in international football and rugby competition, for example, reinforces the idea of a distinct Scottish nation (Allison, 2000, Bairner 1994, 1996, 2000, Blain *et al.* 1993, Brand 1978, Duke and Crolley 1996, Jarvie and Walker 1994, Moorhouse 1987, Polley 2004), all the more so given

the fact that no nations outside of the UK are afforded this opportunity where they are not recognised as sovereign states. Bairner (2001) later highlighted that this anomaly in the international sporting system means that notions of Scottish nationhood and a congruent distinct national identity are not in doubt for Scots, despite their acceptance that the Scottish nation does not possess a truly independent or sovereign status. Furthermore, the privileged existence of separate national teams from all four 'Home Nations' within the UK has led some academics to argue that comparative 'submerged nations', such as Catalonia and the Basque region, have sought to achieve a similar status for their own 'nations' in past attempts to establish independent sporting teams (Maguire *et al.* 2002).

Although individual sports tend to carry weaker associations with nationalist sentiment ([name deleted to maintain the integrity of the review process]), the case of Andy Murray exemplifies the potential for the intertwining of individual athletes and political controversy. Murray's victories at the 2012 London Olympics, 2012 US Open and 2013 Wimbledon competitions led to accusations of political exploitation of his successes by politicians such as Alex Salmond, who emphasised Murray's 'Scottishness' following his 2012 successes and controversially waved a Scottish saltire flag at the Wimbledon final, and David Cameron, who emphasised Murray's 'Britishness' following his 2012 Olympic gold medal (Channel 4 News 2012). Murray himself expressed his dissatisfaction at the political exploitation of his successes when questioned on his opinion on Alex Salmond, stating that Salmond 'seemed perfectly nice to me, but I didn't like it when he got the Scottish flag up at Wimbledon' (Shipman 2014).

Despite examples such as these where Scottish sport and politics have mixed, and the importance of sport for fostering and maintaining Scottish national identity,

most analyses of Scottish sport have argued that there is no direct correlation between sporting nationalism and political nationalism for the majority of Scots (Bairner 1994, 1996, 2001, Jarvie 1993, Jarvie and Walker 1994, Kelly 2007). These arguments have often highlighted the relative fallacy of claims regarding the impact of sporting victory and defeat on political events, such as the suggestion that the failed campaign of the Scottish football team in the 1978 FIFA World Cup in Argentina may have influenced the result of the 1979 referendum on Scottish devolution (Bairner 1994, Boyle and Haynes 2009, Jarvie 1993, Jarvie and Walker 1994, Kowalski 2004). The oft-quoted remark by the outgoing SNP MP for Govan Jim Sillars following his defeat in the 1992 general election in which he denounced his fellow Scots as '90-minute patriots' has been used to symbolise the lack of synergy between sportive and political nationalism in Scotland (Bairner 1996, Kowalski 2004).

However, in contrast to his predecessor, Alex Salmond argued that the Scotland's successful qualification for the 1998 World Cup in France helped to boost the 'Yes' vote in the 1999 referendum (Kowalski, 2004). For Jarvie and Walker (1994), the 'substitute thesis' adopted by Sillars which views sporting nationalism as a direct replacement for sporting nationalism is 'at once too static and too one-dimensional to help us explain the way sport has reflected Scottish life in its different political, social and cultural manifestations' (1994, p. 2). In contrast, Bairner (1994, 1996) lends some support to the '90-minute patriot' thesis, arguing that it may be safer for Scots to be display sporting nationalism rather than political nationalism given the internal divisions within Scotland caused by religious and regional identity. For Bairner, these fissures prevent the possibility of achieving any semblance of a singular Scottish identity, whether in a cultural, political or sporting sense, highlighting the complexity of the task of understanding Scottish national identity.

Sport, critical discourse analysis and political discourse analysis

Given the complexity of the historic relationship between sport and Scottish political nationalism, the case of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum provides an opportunity for a contemporary revisiting of this relationship. Attention will therefore now turn to an analysis of the use of sport within the official independence referendum campaign of pro-independence parties and organisations, namely the SNP and 'Yes Scotland' campaign group. In order to critically examine the nature of contemporary political rhetoric regarding sport and Scottish nationalism, this article draws upon the principles of critical discourse analysis (CDA), and, more specifically, the analytical framework proposed by Norman Fairclough and Isabela Fairclough (2012) for scrutinising political discourse.

CDA, as one of many forms of textual analysis, places a significant emphasis on understanding the wider social and political context within which a given text is located, scrutinising the influence of external factors on the character and form of the text (Titscher *et al.* 2000, Fairclough 2015). Fairclough and Wodak's (1997, p. 258) collaborative work demonstrates their shared understanding of CDA as viewing discourse as a form of 'social practice', implying 'a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it'. Although CDA as a methodological approach has been used in a vast array of contexts, its emphasis on scrutinising the power relations and social context within which a specific example of discourse is situated has led to its frequent use within the field of politics. Indeed, the work of Norman Fairclough has predominantly

focused on discourse within the domain of politics, noting the importance of discourse for political actors to gain support:

In politics, each opposing party or political force tries to win general acceptance for its own discourse type as the preferred and ultimately the 'natural' one for talking and writing about the state, government, forms of political action, and all aspects of politics. (Fairclough 2015, p. 112)

The current article draws upon one specific analytical framework for political discourse, namely that proposed by Isabela Fairclough and Norman Fairclough (2012). This framework represents the most recent substantive development of Norman Fairclough's previous work situated within the wider school of CDA. Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) analytical framework aims to build upon the authors' earlier work in the fields of CDA and political discourse analysis, with its specific emphasis on the integration of argumentation theory distinguishing the model from others in this analytical field. The authors contend that the proposed framework 'views political discourse as primarily a form of argumentation, and as involving more specifically *practical* argumentation, argumentation for or against particular ways of acting, argumentation that can ground decision' (2012, p. 1; original emphasis).

Furthermore, the framework distinguishes between different constitutive elements of practical arguments found within forms of political discourse. The authors identify 'narratives', 'mental conceptions' and 'imaginaries' as important aspects of the arguments found within political discourse:

...narratives of the [2008 global financial] crisis are incorporated within what we will call the 'circumstantial premises' of practical arguments (premises which

represent the context of action); 'imaginaries' for possible and desirable states of affairs are incorporated in our account within the 'goal premises'. (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012; p. 4)

Greater emphasis is placed on the role of the 'imaginary' within the analytical framework, with Fairclough and Fairclough stating that only 'imaginaries' are a form of practical argumentation for future action given that 'narratives' simply act as representations of past or present circumstances. The 'performative power' of the imaginary is argued to lie in its emphasis on the 'goal premise' of an argument, with Fairclough and Fairclough arguing that to successfully achieve consensus for political action an arguer "represents the 'imaginary' as 'actual' and he attempts to get it collectively recognized as a factual representation." (2012, p. 108).

As part of their analytical framework, Fairclough and Fairclough identify a number of structured features which commonly emerge as part of effective political argumentation:

Figure 1. Diagrammatic representation of the structure of practical reasoning (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012, p. 48)

Within this conceptualisation of practical argumentation, a claim for a specific course of political 'action' is primarily driven by the normative political and ideological 'values' of a political actor or group, with these 'values' in turn shaping the particular political 'goal' of the respective actor or group. These 'goal premises' are represented in discursive form as an 'imaginary' of a future state of affairs. The course of action argued is therefore viewed as a 'means-goal', with the specific action representing a

means to an end for achieving a political imaginary. Although secondary in terms of their importance within this framework, the 'circumstances' represented within a particular argument are still conceptualised as partially influential in justifying a course of action. The 'circumstantial' premises, however, are suggested to be non-argumentative in nature by Fairclough and Fairclough, with the narratives and other discursive genres used by a political actor to simply contextualise the current state of affairs.

It is these core analytical categories that will be applied in the forthcoming examination of political discourse relating to sport from groups, organisations and actors affiliated to the official pro-independence campaign in the Scottish independence referendum. Specifically, the forthcoming discussion will examine campaign manifesto documents, press releases and policy reports from the Scottish National Party (including publications from the SNP-led Scottish Government currently in power in the devolved Scottish Parliament) and the 'Yes Scotland' campaign group, given that these constituted two of the most influential pro-independence political organisations in the official referendum campaign.

The role of sport in pro-independence discourse in Scotland

The forthcoming discussion narrows its focus specifically to a purposive sample of documents and publications which explicitly discuss the relationship between Scottish independence and sporting issues, thus producing a manageable range of data sources given the relatively low priority of sporting issues within the pro-independence referendum campaign. Figure 2 provides a diagrammatic representation of Scottish pro-independence campaign political discourse regarding sporting issues,

applying the Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) framework's core analytical categories of 'values', 'goals', 'circumstances' and 'claim for action' in order to analyse the central themes which emerged from this data sample. The diagram can thus be viewed as an aggregation of a range of publications from various political actors from the pro-independence campaign. However, this does not necessarily indicate that these publications constitute a cohesive strategy regarding sporting policy and issues given the somewhat disparate nature of the sources in terms of their authorship and publication date, especially so given the presence of contrasting political parties, namely the SNP and the Scottish Green Party, with their varying political ideologies.

Figure 2. Diagrammatic representation of Scottish pro-independence campaign political discourse regarding sporting issues

Considering each of the core analytical categories in turn, an appropriate start-point is to examine the discursive construction of the past and present 'circumstances' of Scottish sport. The two quotes included in Figure 2 indicate the emphasis placed in pro-independence political discourse regarding the centrality and importance of sport in Scottish society. For example, the 'Scotland's Future' White Paper (Scottish Government 2013), the official 'blueprint' for Scottish independence, argues that 'Scots are passionate about sport and our country has a long and proud sporting tradition' (p. 176), and the final report of the Working Group on Scottish Sport (WGSS) (WGSS & Scottish Government 2014) stating that '[s]port is a part of the fabric of Scottish society' (p. 3). Juxtaposed against this construction of a sport-loving Scottish nation is a narrative of a constrained Scottish sporting system, with WGSS final report highlighting: (1) the lack of independent Scottish representation in certain sporting systems, particularly the Olympics and Paralympics; (2) the declining levels

of sports participation in Scotland; and (3) the varying existing levels of autonomy for Scottish sporting organisation within the UK sporting system (WGSS and Scottish Government 2014). These arguments regarding the constrained nature of Scottish sport are further underlined by the use of the 2014 Commonwealth Games and Ryder Cup as an argument for a ‘Yes’ vote by the SNP, given that this would avoid the current circumstances whereby the Scottish tourism industry’s attempts to use the Games are hampered by the ‘Tourism Tax’ of Air Passenger Duty if responsibility was transferred to an independent Scotland (SNP 2014a, 2014b).

Having considered the rhetoric of the constrained ‘circumstances’ of Scottish sport prevalent in pro-independence political discourse, the ‘values’ which underpin the pro-independence campaign discourse regarding sporting issues are unsurprisingly based on a fundamental belief in the benefits of gaining sovereign statehood for Scotland. The White Paper (Scottish Government 2013) best epitomises this foundational belief in the importance of political self-determination for Scotland, with the document’s preface attributed to ex-First Minister Alex Salmond stating:

At its heart independence is not about this Government or any political party. It is about a fundamental democratic choice for the people of Scotland. It is about the power to choose who we should be governed by and the power to build a country that reflects our priorities as a society and our values as a people. I believe in independence because I believe it will be better for all of us if decisions about Scotland are taken by the people who care most about Scotland – the people who live and work here. (Scottish Government 2013; p. viii-ix)

This core message regarding independence as a means to ensuring that ‘Scotland’s future is in Scotland’s hands’ is a consistent theme within the White Paper,

invoking language regarding the importance of political self-determination for nations as the central aim of the contemporary Scottish independence movement. This discursive strategy demonstrates clear synergies with adherents of ‘ideological’ modernist theorisations of nationalism (Smith 2010), with the work of Kedourie (1960) exemplifying this belief in the ideological power of nationalist doctrine which emphasises that the nation-state is the medium through which individuals can achieve sovereignty and self-determination for the social collective they align with emotionally, in this case Scotland.

Furthermore, the emphasis in this extract from the White Paper’s preface on the identification of “the people who live and work here” (Scottish Government 2013, p. ix) as the people of Scotland signposts the eminence of ‘civic nationalism’ (Kohn 1944) within the discourse of contemporary Scottish political discourse. The emphasis on ‘civic nationalism’ is particularly evident within the section of the White Paper which specifically discusses the Scottish Government’s proposals for Scottish citizenship rights in the event of a Yes vote:

Figure 3. Proposals for Scottish citizenship rights in an independent Scotland (Scottish Government 2013, p. 273)

Leith and Soule’s (2011) past analysis of discourse contained within manifestos of mainstream Scottish political parties offered a similar consideration of the emphasis placed on ‘civic’ and ‘non-civic’ (or ‘ethnic’ using Kohn’s (1944) terminology) nationalism, drawing similar conclusions regarding the afore-mentioned emphasis on the civic nature of Scottish nationalism and Scottish society. Furthermore, these manifestos often make explicit reference to Scotland’s diversity and its welcoming of

ethnic minorities to Scottish society within pro-independence, ‘large ‘N’’ nationalism (Leith and Soule 2011); these findings are clearly evident in the ‘values’ of current official political discourse considered in this article. This emphasis on ‘civic nationalism’ is unsurprising given the political ramifications of any associations with discriminatory or xenophobic feeling within the Scottish nationalist movement. Nonetheless, certain elements of ‘non-civic’ nationalism remain evident within Scottish political discourse, with emphasis often placed on the importance of landscape and language as a source of pride for the Scottish nation (Leith and Soule 2011, Mycock 2012).

The final aspect of the ‘values’ outlined in Figure 2 relates to the ideological beliefs regarding the political importance of sport within pro-independence political discourse. The most common theme emerging in relation to sport is an emphasis on the use of sport as a tool of economic and social development, evident in key publications such as the White Paper, the WGSS final report, and press releases from the official ‘Sport for Yes’ campaign group (Lafferty 2014; see also <https://twitter.com/SportforYes>). For example, the White Paper outlines the SNP-led Scottish Government’s vision for sport as follows:

We believe that by looking at physical activity and sport together will we harness that passion and tradition to make positive changes in our country – improving health, reducing anti-social behaviour and making our society fairer. (Scottish Government 2013, p. 176)

Similar comments are offered in the final report of the WGSS:

...we should not underestimate the positive role that grassroots sports and physical activity in general can play in the health and wellbeing of Scotland and the national psyche. (WGSS and Scottish Government 2014, p. 2)

These statements clearly prioritise the utility of sport as a vehicle for social development primarily with their emphasis on the improvement of health, wellbeing and the 'national psyche', as well as the tackling of anti-social behaviour. Furthermore, these goals can equally be viewed as an attempt to use sport for instrumental means regarding economic development, given that improving health and wellbeing has a knock-on effect on economic productivity levels and the reduction of long-term NHS funding costs (McCartney et al. 2010, McCartney et al. 2012).

These foundational 'values' regarding the use of sport as for economic and social development are thus reflected in the 'goal' of pro-independence political discourse regarding sport, which centres on the identification of the numerous opportunities to improve Scottish sport in the context of an independent Scotland. Indeed, the specific remit of the WGSS was identified to be the consideration of 'how sport can develop and take advantage of the opportunities presented by independence' (Scottish Government 2013, p.179) and 'to build upon the independence White Paper and further inform the referendum debate as it relates to sport; and to inform the policy and strategy for sport and physical activity of the current and future Scottish Governments and the sporting bodies' (WGSS and Scottish Government 2014, p. 8).

Both the White Paper and the WGSS final report reinforce this central 'goal' by outlining the opportunities for the improvement of health and well-being, the enhancement Scotland's sporting reputation, the reduction of anti-social behaviour, the creation of a fairer society and the creation of a more efficient sporting framework (Scottish Government 2013, WGSS & Scottish Government 2014). However, given

that the WGSS final report acknowledges the fact that sport is a fully-devolved policy area controlled by the Scottish Parliament, a coherent argument regarding exactly why independence is required to enact these specific goals is not explicitly forwarded in pro-independence political discourse. Whilst the White Paper clearly argues that in ‘an independent Scotland, we will build on this record [of SNP-led sports policy successes] to grow a world class sporting system at all levels, with real strength in schools, clubs and high performance sport’ (Scottish Government 2013, p. 179), the necessity for Scottish independence in order to realise this rhetoric is unclear.

In contrast, the arguments forwarded regarding the ‘goal’ of achieving independent Scottish representation in Olympic, Paralympic and international sporting federations are more coherent. The White Paper highlights that interim statement of the WGSS released in November 2013 (WGSS and Scottish Government 2013) which specifically considers the likelihood of Scotland achieving accreditation from the IOC and IPC in sufficient time for the Rio 2016 Olympics, with interim statement arguing:

At a very practical level, given the experience of other newly independent states, we see no reason why securing National Olympic and Paralympic Committee status should not be a relatively straightforward process for an independent Scotland. However, we recognise that the final decision making powers and the timescales involved are a matter for the relevant international bodies. (WGSS and Scottish Government 2013, p.2)

This caveated statement regarding the likelihood of smooth accreditation of a Scottish Olympic and Paralympic representative team, adding to the pre-existing Scottish representative teams found in other sporting competitions, thus allowed the White Paper to argue that:

Independence will mean that more Scottish sportswomen and sportsmen will have the opportunity to compete at the highest level of international competition. It will also mean that the key decisions on athlete development will be taken in Scotland with the needs of the athlete at the centre. This will help many more of our sports-people reach their full potential. (Scottish Government 2013, p. 179)

Scottish independence is therefore framed as a means to expanding the proportion and number of Scottish sportspeople who will be able to compete in sporting competitions where they have previously been part of a combined British representative team, thus potentially echoing the size of Scottish representatives at events such as the Commonwealth Games where Scotland has an independent squad; there is therefore a significant degree of validity to the White Paper's claims in this regard.

Indeed, it can be argued that establishment of the WGSS itself can be viewed as the SNP-led Scottish Government main drive towards using sport as means to supporting their drive for a 'Yes' vote in the referendum. Given that the 'means-goal' of pro-independence discourse highlighted in Figure 2 is to encourage the Scottish electorate to vote 'Yes', thus achieving the ultimate 'goal' of achieving Scottish independence, the establishment of the WGSS can be viewed as a pro-active step to both emphasise the potential benefits of independence for Scottish sport whilst simultaneously negating concerns regarding its potential risks. Therefore the ultimate 'claim for action' is for the electorate to take the action of voting 'Yes' to Scottish independence, thus allowing the proposals of the WGSS final report and the White Paper to be implemented.

The specific ‘claims for action’ with regard to future sports policy in an independent Scotland contained within the WGSS final report and the White Paper clearly seek to address the problems highlighted in pro-independence discourse regarding the past and present ‘circumstances’ of Scottish sport, with particular emphasis on a more holistic approach to sport and physical activity which will allow “a world class sporting system at all levels, with real strength in schools, clubs and high performance sport” (Scottish Government 2013, p. 179). Emphasis is also placed on a streamlining with regards to the governance of elite sporting organisations in an independent Scotland, with recommendations regarding the creation of a single body to act as the National Olympic, National Paralympic and Commonwealth Games Committees as part of reforms in time for Rio 2016 (WGSS and Scottish Government 2014). The proposed future use of sporting events as a catalyst for developing Scotland’s international image and reputation would also act as a continuation of the current ‘values’ of using sport as a tool for economic and social development, given the opportunities for economic, tourism, sporting and health legacies emphasised by the incumbent SNP-led Scottish Government (Scottish Government, 2015).

The ‘Sport for Yes’ group, and cultural movements in the referendum campaign

As briefly alluded to above, the establishment of the pro-independence ‘Sport for Yes’ campaign group demonstrate the harnessing of sporting issues as an additional debating point in the referendum campaigns (Lafferty 2014). Indeed, the argument that there is a separate Scottish cultural agenda and identity was supported by pre-referendum campaigning by cultural groups of a comparable nature to the ‘Sport for Yes’ group, and with arguably a significantly greater degree of

success. For example, the vast majority of Scottish cultural practitioners who expressed an opinion on the subject declared themselves to be in favour of Scotland leaving the United Kingdom. The size of the support for independence within the cultural sector was significant; by way of example, ‘National Collective’ (a pro-independence group of artists and cultural practitioners) campaigned throughout the build-up to the referendum, and two weeks before the referendum itself, produced a letter supporting independence which was signed by over 1300 cultural figures in Scotland (National Collective 2014).

As far as support for the Union went, there was an equivalent letter signed by over 200 figures within British culture requesting that the people of Scotland vote to stay within the United Kingdom. However, of the signatories to this brief missive, less than 5 per cent were Scottish, and only one of those (the artist Lachlan Goudie) could be considered a contemporary cultural practitioner (The Guardian, 2014). In addition to this letter, the most prominent cultural supporter of the “No” campaign was J.K. Rowling, who donated £1,000,000 to ‘Better Together’, the official pro-union campaign organisation (The Guardian 2014). However, despite this large sum, Rowling’s contribution was an outlier. In the Scottish cultural sector, support for independence was far more common than support for the retention of the Union.

During the debate about independence, two trends became clear:

- (1) Scottish cultural practitioners were willing to contribute to the debate and make arguments about significant political and cultural issues.
- (2) The vast majority of Scottish cultural practitioners were supportive of independence.

The difference between the cultural sector and Scotland’s sporting communities was stark. Very few sportspeople were willing to contribute to debates about independence

or express an opinion on Scotland's political and/or cultural future. Of those who did, few were supportive of independence.

It is important to note that within the cultural sector, those who supported independence tended to use channels that fell outside the official 'Yes Scotland' campaign organisation. The 'National Collective' and 'Bella Caledonia' websites utilised guest blogs and think-pieces by contributors from across the cultural sector and these were a popular method of engaging with the debate. Few in the cultural sector engaged directly with 'Yes Scotland', although the actor Brian Cox did speak at its launch event, accompanied by the actor Alan Cumming and poet Liz Lochhead. However, the lack of an 'unofficial' sports-led campaign may have hampered the extent to which sportspeople engaged with arguments for independence, thus necessitating the need for the centrally-organised 'Sport for Yes' campaign group but it also reinforces the fact that the level of engagement needed for such a movement to flourish was not present in Scotland's sporting communities.

This is exemplified in the relatively low status of the Scottish sportspeople who officially endorsed the 'Sport for Yes' group, with the group failing to initially draw high-profile athletes and players of a sufficient calibre to attract significant media attention for the group. Indeed, many of the endorsements for the group came from retired athletes or players, with the individuals such as Michael Stewart (football), Alex Arthur (boxing), Connie Ramsay (judo) and Samera Ashraf (kickboxing and karate) cited in the 'Sport for Yes' campaign launch event (Lafferty 2014) lacking the clout to provide the campaign with a meaningful impact. The lack of endorsements from higher-profile Scottish sportspersons for either side of the constitutional debate is perhaps unsurprising, given the potential risks of such public pronouncements for active athletes (Brentin 2016). Given the potential implications for the public image

and relations of these athletes, and the associated pressures placed upon these athletes with regards to sponsorship and funding agreements, any engagement in the polarising political debate surrounding the independence referendum campaign had the potential to backfire.

These risks were demonstrated during the closing weeks of the respective pro-independence and pro-union campaigns, when public endorsements from sporting personalities became more frequent on both sides of the debate. For the pro-independence campaign, the highest-profile endorsement came from tennis player Andy Murray, who announced his support for a ‘Yes’ vote in the closing hours of the campaign (Buchanan 2014, Yes Scotland 2014). However, the pro-union ‘Better Together’ campaign was able to attract a wider array of high-profile endorsements, including Scottish sporting personalities such as Sir Alex Ferguson, Lynsey Sharp, Archie Ferguson, as well as two squads of Scottish football and rugby ‘legends’ (Barnes 2014, Better Together 2014a, 2014b, Boyle 2014, Herald 2014). These interventions were quickly picked up on by the print media and deemed newsworthy, unlike the earlier campaigning attempts from the ‘Sport for Yes’ group. However, the media attention on these public pronouncements equally resulted in negative responses to these personalities’ intervention from members of the public on the opposite of the debate, culminating in abuse and ‘trolling’ via social media for the likes of Andy Murray, Lynsey Sharp and Sir Chris Hoy (Daily Record 2013a, 2013b, Robertson 2014, Roden 2013). It is therefore unsurprising that the degree of political involvement from professional sportspersons in Scotland in the referendum campaigns was limited in comparison to other sectors, reflecting the limited benefits and significant risks of such interventions.

Conclusion

Given the extended nature of the Scottish independence referendum campaign and the exhaustive list of issues which became politicised by both sides of the debate (ranging from central issues of economics, currency, defence, and social justice to relatively marginal issues such as broadcasting rights of BBC programming and the future of the 'Union Jack' flag), in one sense it is surprising that sporting issues remained on the margins of the referendum campaigns. However, on the other hand, perceptions regarding the marginal impact of sports-related campaign groups and sporting personality endorsements on the referendum campaigns are understandable, given the high levels of public engagement with the constitutional debate and the informed nature of the Scottish electorate who instead concerned themselves with weightier issues such as economic considerations, foreign affairs and defence. Given this, the impact of any campaigning from sporting figures is highly questionable.

Indeed, it appeared that sporting policy issues remained a low priority to the 'Yes Scotland' and 'Better Together' campaigns; nonetheless, the analysis of pro-independence political discourse provided above illustrates that the 'Yes' campaign did attempt to harness sporting issues and policies at certain junctures in their political communication strategy. However, the lack of traction of the 'Sport for Yes' campaign groups in comparison to the more successful cultural organisations such as the 'National Collective' illustrate that the forms of cultural nationalism which came to the fore during the campaign tended to be driven by writers, artists, actors and other members of the creative industries rather than sporting personalities. With the prospects of a second referendum on the horizon, the question of Scottish independence becoming increasingly likely following the 'Brexit' vote for the UK to

leave the European Union decision (BBC 2016), it will be interesting to assess whether this pattern is replicated if the debate on Scotland's constitutional status is reignited in the future.

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