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## **Department for Culture, Media and Sport Committee Call for Evidence – May 2021**

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## Summary of evidence:

Given the specific question in this DCMS 'Call for Evidence' on 'What needs to happen for major events to successfully bring people from all four nations of the UK together?', it is clear that the Department is explicitly acknowledging the political and symbolic importance of sport and sporting events - a position that we support as academics within the field of the sociology and politics of sport. To this end, we argue that such refutation of the 'sport and politics do not mix' fallacy is important to shed light on the political and ideological impact of sporting events, drawing upon our empirical evidence from past sporting events.

In considering whether the hosting of major events *can* successfully bring people from all four nations of the UK together, policymakers require a critical appreciation of the double-edged symbolism of international sporting events in relation to national identity in the UK. In this vein, we draw upon an extensive body of research that has investigated this element of national identity politics at the following sporting events: a) London 2012 Olympic Games; b) Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games; c) Gleneagles 2019 Solheim Cup; and, d) Portrush 2020 Open Championship.

In light of the above comments regarding the double-edged symbolism of international sporting events in relation to national identity in the UK, we set out below the ways in which past sporting events have offered potential for unifying symbolism which responds in the affirmative (in a caveated manner) to the Call for Evidence proposition of using '...major events to successfully bring people from all four nations of the UK together'.

Equally, we also contend that past sporting events simultaneously offered potential for the growth of distinctive national identities - and to a lesser degree, political nationalism - which suggests that the proposition of using '...major events to successfully bring people from all four nations of the UK together' can potentially be counter-productive. Our evidence argues that sport can act as an additional marker of difference between the 'home nations', underpinning a sense of distinctiveness within British identity politics.

Notwithstanding these comments, it is also important for politicians and policy-makers to avoid conflation between sporting nationalism and political nationalism in relation to sporting events, given the lack of evidence of such correlation. Therefore, the question of whether major events can successfully bring people from all four nations of the UK together needs to be considered in a measured and realistic degree - to this end, we specifically draw upon extensive evidence from the Scottish context.

In order for major sporting events to be successfully used to bring people from all four nations of the UK together, policymakers need to be wary of the dangers of the conflation between Britishness and Englishness at international sporting events which can become evident at international sporting events. Such conflation often leads to the alienation of the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish population.

Furthermore, there are risks entailed with regards to the recent increase in symbolism of the United Kingdom in political communication, such as the recent promotion of the Union Flag in public communication and government buildings, if this is replicated at international

sporting events. This would potentially undermine the potential to use such events to bring people from all four nations of the UK together.

Finally, we would like to stress that a sensitive and respectful approach to the use of sporting events to bring people from all four nations of the UK together, mindful of the arguments presented above, does indeed possess potential benefits which make the pursuit of sporting events worthwhile. Thus, we reiterate evidence of the potential for harnessing intangible 'legacies' of sporting events, such as image promotion, diplomatic goodwill, reconciliation, and 'feel-good factor', for achieving broader cultural, social and economic goals. However, to achieve these goals, acknowledging such negative images of 'Britishness' is crucial.

## **Evidence:**

The main focus of our evidence submission will be on the second question outlined in the call for evidence, as follows:

- *What needs to happen for major events to successfully bring people from all four nations of the UK together?*

To this end, we would like to emphasise the following 8 key arguments within our evidence, as outlined below:

- 1) A need to explicitly acknowledge the political importance of sport and sporting events in order to refute the 'sport and politics do not mix' fallacy**
- 2) Appreciation of the double-edged symbolism of international sporting events in relation to national identity in the United Kingdom**
- 3) Potential for unifying symbolism of sporting events which involve unified British sporting teams and competition between 'home nation' teams**
- 4) Potential for growth of distinctive national identities for 'home nations' within international sport given existence of independent representative teams**
- 5) Need to avoid conflation between sporting nationalism and political nationalism in relation to sporting events, given the lack of evidence of such correlations**
- 6) Dangers of conflation between Britishness and Englishness at international sporting events, leading to alienation of Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish population**
- 7) Risks entailed with regards to the recent increase in symbolism of United Kingdom in political communication, such as the recent promotion of the Union Flag in public communication and government buildings, if replicated at sporting events**
- 8) Potential for harnessing intangible 'legacies' of cultural and sporting events, such as image promotion, diplomatic goodwill, reconciliation, and 'feel-good factor'**

## **1) Need to explicitly acknowledge the political importance of sport and sporting events in order to refute the ‘sport and politics do not mix’ fallacy**

Given the specific question in this DCMS ‘Call for Evidence’ on ‘What needs to happen for major events to successfully bring people from all four nations of the UK together?’, it is clear that the Department is explicitly acknowledging the political and symbolic importance of sport and sporting events - a position that we support as academics within the field of the sociology and politics of sport. To this end, we argue that such refutation of the ‘sport and politics do not mix’ fallacy is important to shed light on the political and ideological impact of sporting events, drawing upon our empirical evidence from past sporting events.

### **Key points:**

- The continued perpetuation of the ‘myth of autonomy’<sup>1</sup> that ‘sport and politics should not mix’ in contemporary political discourse highlights the necessity of further analysis of these spurious claims. It is important to critique the impact of commonly held beliefs about the benefits of investing vast sums of public money in hosting sporting events or sport more generally. It is hoped therefore that challenges to the prevailing political perceptions on the nature of sport will allow for a more diverse array of ideological approaches to the politics of sport.<sup>2</sup>
- Academic analyses of the relationship between sport, politics and nationalism have continued to identify the importance of sport as both a medium for expressing nationalist sentiment and a vehicle for examining contemporary nationalism. These analyses endeavour to debunk the ‘myth of autonomy’ which perpetuates arguments that sport and politics should not mix, instead contending that the sporting domain constitutes a rich source of evidence to illustrate evolving trends relating to the expression of nationalist political ideologies, whether unifying or separatist in nature.
- In particular, sporting ‘mega-events’, such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup, ‘second-order’ major international sporting events (i.e. Commonwealth Games, IRB Rugby World Cup, ICC Cricket World Cup), and ‘third-order’ regional or continental events (i.e. Pan American Games, Asian Games, African Cup of Nations) offer individual nations the chance to showcase themselves on an international stage, in both a sporting and a wider political sense. An important lesson to consider is that relatively few people outside of Spain knew much about Catalonia, or even Barcelona, until the 1992 Olympics were held there and helped to give new found confidence to the separatist movement.<sup>3</sup>
- Despite the relatively negligible impact of sports-related political interventions, in the closing weeks of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum campaign a growing trend for endorsements for a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ vote from sporting personalities became apparent.<sup>4</sup> In particular, the pro-union ‘Better Together’ campaign was more successful in securing political endorsements, with the campaign able to cite coordinated support from a range of personalities from football, rugby, and other popular sports. Furthermore, there were instances where the event was used by the respective parties

to illustrate a particular ideological or political position within Scotland-wide or regional politics.<sup>5</sup>

## **2) Appreciation of the double-edged symbolism of international sporting events in relation to national identity in the United Kingdom**

In considering whether the hosting of major events *can* successfully bring people from all four nations of the UK together, policymakers require a critical appreciation of the double-edged symbolism of international sporting events in relation to national identity in the UK. In this vein, we draw upon an extensive body of research that has investigated this element of national identity politics at the following sporting events: a) London 2012 Olympic Games; b) Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games; c) Gleneagles 2019 Solheim Cup; and, d) Portrush 2020 Open Championship.

### **Key points:**

- Opportunities to discuss identity politics with regards to both the UK and its constituent home nations in international sporting events are evident in relation to both a 'unified' British state system, and the possibilities of enhanced political powers and/or independence for the four home nations.
- The media continue to play an important role in framing political agendas during sporting media events. The possibility to frame both London 2012 and Glasgow 2014 as an illustration of the mutually beneficial nature of Scotland's status was demonstrated in pro-union media reflections on the Games. However, such representations of the event were equally challenged by correspondents who were more sympathetic to the cause of Scottish independence. This dualistic political symbolism became clear in national sentiments that were often demonstrated through the valorisation of individual Scottish performances over other British successes in the Scottish media and general public.<sup>6</sup>
- Although the dualistic nature of the symbolism of London 2012 and Glasgow 2014 arguably rendered any politicisation of the events as a 'zero-sum game' offering neither side a specific opportunity to gain a political advantage, this did not necessarily entirely preclude any political interventions regarding the political implications of the Games.<sup>7</sup>
- At the 2019 Solheim Cup at Gleneagles, women in attendance talked about the victory of the women's European team, the support they had given it, and about being European to varying degrees. What came across very strongly, however, was a general awareness that the UK is a multinational state and the resultant divisions are reflected in the governance of women's golf as they are in most other sports, female and male. Furthermore, because the competition had taken place at Gleneagles, it was widely regarded as a Scottish event.<sup>8</sup>
- At the Portrush 2020 Open Championship, the overarching narrative was that the Open had finally come back to (Northern) Ireland. This was accompanied by sub-themes highlighting that the Northern Irish golf fans celebrated the triumph of Shane Lowry from the Republic of Ireland, and the somewhat disingenuous claim that golf had never experienced problems related to the sectarian divide in the north. There was little or no

reference made to the United Kingdom; if any sense of unity emerged, it was certainly more pan-Irish than it was pan-UK.

### **3) Potential for unifying symbolism of sporting events which involve unified British sporting teams and competition between 'home nation' teams**

In light of the above comments regarding the double-edged symbolism of international sporting events in relation to national identity in the UK, we set out below the ways in which past sporting events have offered potential for unifying symbolism which responds in the affirmative (in a caveated manner) to the Call for Evidence proposition of using '...major events to successfully bring people from all four nations of the UK together'.

#### **Key points:**

- Sport highlights the multiple and contextual nature of national identity, and for athletes - as patriots at play - this can increase the importance of a national dimension to their sense of identity. Representative sport provides a strong emotional attachment to the nation (in some cases, home nations, and in others, Great Britain).<sup>9</sup>
- The close relationship between the media and sport has helped develop sporting spectacles that, for the host nation of major sporting events, presents an opportunity for 'the nation' to appeal to its population. However, whereas studies on nationalism and the media have highlighted the 'collective' opportunities surrounding particular events, the potential for televised media events to promote a sense of unity and provide any lasting sense of collective identification is undermined by the fact that such events can only temporarily unite otherwise disparate individuals, given that these events are transient and fleeting.<sup>10</sup>
- During media coverage of London 2012 and Glasgow 2014, it became apparent that the expression of British nationalism was not deemed to be problematic within the pro-union press, seemingly ignoring contentions that British nationalism and Scottish nationalism acted as contrasting forces throughout the constitutional debate during the 2014 Scottish independence referendum campaign. For example, media representations of the political symbolism of Glasgow 2014 illustrated that pro-union campaigners could use the event to reinforce the interconnections between the Games and notions of contemporary Britishness. One such example was evident in the 'Red Arrows' fly-past at the Glasgow Games Opening Ceremony and its associated symbolism.<sup>11</sup>
- Given that most Scottish athletes receive their public funding and support networks from UK-wide sources, the impact of Scottish independence was argued to put this in jeopardy, despite the Scottish Government's assertions to the contrary. Such arguments reinforced the 'Best of Both Worlds' mantra of the pro-Union campaign.<sup>12</sup>
- Media coverage of the Solheim Cup highlighted the significance of both a team identity (in this case, Team Europe) as well as respective national identities (such as England) as part of a supra-national identity. These descriptors are also an important way to



legitimise women's sport as relevant to the nation, contributing to cultural shifts in perceptions of women's sport.<sup>13</sup>

#### **4) Potential for growth of distinctive national identities for 'home nations' within international sport given existence of independent representative teams**

Equally, we also contend that past sporting events simultaneously offered potential for the growth of distinctive national identities - and to a lesser degree, political nationalism - which suggests that the proposition of using '...major events to successfully bring people from all four nations of the UK together' can potentially be counter-productive. Our evidence argues that sport can act as an additional marker of difference between the 'home nations', underpinning a sense of distinctiveness within British identity politics.

##### **Key points:**

- In past academic literature, particular interest has been afforded to the unique status offered to the 'home nations', given that they represent rare examples of internationally-recognised representative teams in sports whilst failing to possess congruent independent statehood or political sovereignty. This privileged status therefore acts to reinforce the distinctiveness of national identity in the 'home nations', with sport replicating other elements of independent civic society such as educational, legal and/or church systems. This has been argued to have been of particular importance in the Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish contexts.<sup>14</sup>
- Individual sports also offer an opportunity to emphasise distinctive ideas of nationhood within the UK state, with additional media and public attention paid to the performance of sportspeople in individual sports such as tennis, golf, or Olympic sports. Furthermore, in the case of the Commonwealth Games, the fact that the 'home nations' of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland have separate representative teams competing in the event further illustrates the potential to portray - albeit questionably - the existing British state as a collection of 'internal colonies' as a legacy of Empire.<sup>15</sup>
- Whilst relatively under-explored, debate regarding identity politics in the English context can be argued to be reflective of a growing movement towards addressing the asymmetries within the post-devolution UK, with evidence of a distinctive English political nationalism becoming more evident. However, the relationship between English political nationalism and the sporting domain is undoubtedly complex and indicative of numerous contentious issues. For example, a major factor which has precluded the confident expression of English national identity or political nationalism in sport is the extent to which Englishness was historically stigmatized due to its negative connotations with hooliganism, xenophobia, racism and right-wing political groups. Although some have highlighted the presence of right-wing political factions within supporters of the English football team, it is an over-simplification to correlate the two domains directly.<sup>16</sup>

- In research involving elite sportswomen who have represented England, sport provides a space to embody the nation, and thus emphasising - both on the field of play and through banal reminders - their national identity<sup>17</sup>.

## **5) Need to avoid conflation between sporting nationalism and political nationalism in relation to sporting events, given the lack of evidence of such correlations**

Notwithstanding the comments made in the previous pages, it is also important for politicians and policy-makers to avoid conflation between sporting nationalism and political nationalism in relation to sporting events, given the lack of evidence of such correlation. Therefore, the question of whether major events can successfully bring people from all four nations of the UK together needs to be considered in a measured and realistic degree - to this end, we specifically draw upon extensive evidence from the Scottish context.

### **Key points:**

- Despite examples 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.<sup>18</sup>
- Past analyses have often highlighted the relative fallacy of claims regarding the impact of sporting victory or defeat on political events, such as the suggestion that the failed campaign of the Scottish football team in the 1978 FIFA World Cup may have influenced the result of the 1979 referendum on Scottish devolution. The existence of strong Scottish nationalist sentiment in both a sporting and wider cultural context has not necessarily led to a corollary with regards to political nationalism or support for Scottish independence.
- The political interconnections between the Glasgow 2014 Games and Scottish independence has been a topic of some academic reflection. In particular, the potential for political exploitation of the Games 'feel-good factor' by pro-independence and pro-union campaigners keen to advance their visions for the future constitutional status of Scotland has been explored by various commentators - however, there is broad academic agreement on the questionable and/or minor impact of any such politicisation on the eventual referendum outcome.<sup>19</sup>
- 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, the future of the 'Union Jack' flag and Scottish representation at the Olympic Games), it is striking that the Glasgow 2014 Games remained one of the few issues mutually declared as apolitical.
- Furthermore, sporting policy issues more broadly were deemed to be of only marginal importance to arguments regarding the benefits or risks of Scottish independence by parties on both sides of the constitutional debate. This therefore suggests that sporting matters, such as the hosting of major international sporting events, remain a low priority for politicians who wish to express a particular political or ideological position.<sup>20</sup>

## **6) Dangers of conflation between Britishness and Englishness at international sporting events, leading to alienation of Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish population**

In order for major sporting events to be successfully used to bring people from all four nations of the UK together, policymakers need to be wary of the dangers of the conflation between Britishness and Englishness at international sporting events which can become evident at international sporting events. Such conflation often leads to the alienation of the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish population, as outlined in the evidence below.

### **Key points:**

- In the sporting domain, the use of personal pronouns such as 'we' and 'us' in British media representations of English internationals and the co-option of British symbolism such as the 'God Save The Queen' national anthem at English internationals is evident of the afore-mentioned conflation between Britishness and Englishness.<sup>21</sup>
- In English newspaper coverage of London 2012, representations of 'Britain' would frequently reveal wider tensions in the political and cultural framing of Britain, most notably in the over-reliance of an English-centric depiction of Britain and its past. Furthermore, the potential for conflation between notions of Britishness and Englishness have been frequently identified in past analyses of English identity, with an inability to articulate a distinction between the symbolism of Britishness and Englishness often precluding the expression of a distinctive English identity.<sup>22</sup>
- The controversy surrounding the possible participation of Scottish and Northern Irish players in the football 'Team GB' at the 2012 London Olympic Games is instructive. The Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh FAs raised concerns that the participation of a unified British football team at London 2012 might inadvertently undermine, and risk FIFA revoking, the privileged status of the 'Home Nations' as independent footballing entities. Interestingly there were no comparable concerns about an all-inclusive selection of the British women's football team for the 2012 Olympic Games or for the Games to be held in Tokyo.
- Furthermore, the complex nature of national representative teams within the British context further muddies the waters, with some fully-unified British squads such as Olympic sports, some partially-unified squads such as the 'English' cricket team (which currently represents England and Wales, and has also feature Irish and Scottish cricketers), and some fully-independent teams such as in football, rugby and the Commonwealth Games.
- Unsurprisingly, in the sporting domain this had resulted in the conflation of Britishness and Englishness in international perceptions of English sporting identity, with other nationalities understandably confused about where these distinctions between the contrasting representative sports teams occur. Whilst this is arguably more of a bugbear for the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish than the English, it is also problematic for the coherent expression of English identity in the sense that it arguably reinforces the inability of English sporting fans to promote a distinctive identity.<sup>23</sup>

## **7) Risks entailed with regards to the recent increase in symbolism of United Kingdom in political communication, such as the recent promotion of the Union Flag in public communication and government buildings, if replicated at international sporting events**

Building on the previous section of the evidence regarding conflation, there are risks entailed with regards to the recent increase in symbolism of the United Kingdom in political communication, such as the recent promotion of the Union Flag in public communication and government buildings, if this is replicated at international sporting events. This would potentially undermine the potential to use such events to bring people from all four nations of the UK together.

### **Key points:**

- As noted above, the co-option of British symbolism such as the 'God Save The Queen' national anthem at English internationals is evident of the afore-mentioned conflation between Britishness and Englishness.<sup>24</sup>
- Lack of participation in the singing of 'God Save The Queen' has been framed by some as a deliberate symbolic act of anti-British defiance, despite numerous alternative explanations for such non-participation. Certainly, tensions regarding the British national anthem remain a contentious issue within sporting competitions where the British home nations compete as a united British team.
- It could equally be argued that non-participation could be attributed to the fact that some athletes had never sang the words of 'God Save The Queen' in the past, rather than as an act of symbolic defiance. For example, in the London 2012 Opening Ceremony, 'Flower of Scotland', 'Land of my Fathers', 'Londonderry Air' and 'Jerusalem' were all sung by choirs. Despite this complexity, some elements of the press endeavoured to portray the protests of particular Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish athletes, and their associated nationalisms, as antithetical to both a unified display of British nationalism, but, also, the Olympic spirit.
- The use of 'God Save The Queen' by Northern Irish sport governing bodies is also problematic with regular calls for this to be replaced by an alternative 'anthem' (such as 'Danny Boy'/the Londonderry Air' which is used for the purposes of the Commonwealth Games), thereby bringing Northern Ireland into line with Scotland and Wales with their anthems and offering something acceptable to both of the main communities in Northern Ireland. It is notable in this regard that Irish Rugby Football Union which draws upon players from both sides of the Irish border uses the anthem of the Republic of Ireland together with the specially commissioned Ireland's Call for home international matches but only the latter for away games.<sup>25</sup>
- These examples highlight how national anthems and flag displays can, in certain situations, can be perceived as a political act. While sporting contexts provide notable opportunities for the performance of political acts, such occasions reveal how appropriate and legitimate forms of national performance can be determined by established patterns and practices.

## **8) Potential for harnessing intangible ‘legacies’ of sporting events, such as image promotion, diplomatic goodwill, reconciliation, and ‘feel-good factor’**

Mindful of the arguments presented above, the potential benefits associated with sporting events remains worthwhile. Thus, we emphasise the harnessing of intangible ‘legacies’, such as image promotion, diplomatic goodwill, reconciliation, and ‘feel-good factors’, which aim to achieve broader cultural, social and economic objectives. More importantly, this requires a critical consideration of what Britishness can and does look like, with respect to race/ethnicity and the cultural legitimacy of women as athletes that challenge discourses on the incompatibility of sport and womanhood.<sup>26</sup>

### **Key points:**

- While symbolic expressions of nationalism have resulted in xenophobia, intolerance and violence towards sports fans and minority groups, UK sport remains a catalyst for conflicts regarding ideas of ‘nation’ and UK cultural diversity. Interlinked with the UK’s colonial and imperial history, as well as well-established migratory trails, the relative promotion of UK multiculturalism has proved a constitutive and ‘sellable’ feature of hosting bids (first seen in the 2005 London Olympic Games bid).<sup>27</sup> Yet, despite the UK’s promotion as a confident, multi-ethnic state, wider concerns regarding 1) negative media coverage of Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish/Irish athletes; and, 2) the inclusion of ‘foreign-born’ athletes, present ongoing points of contention in the print and digital coverage of UK sporting occasions. To this end, the UK’s numerous sporting events posit an important site of delimitation in UK national identity, including its ties to multiculturalism – both as a ‘resource’ (in the planning and promotion of UK sporting events) and as a possible ‘failure’ (in the implementation of past and present anti-racism initiatives, ‘Kick it Out’, etc.).
- Following the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, the touting of an ‘Empire 2.0’ strategy, steered towards developing stronger trading relationships with Commonwealth nations, must remain cognizant of contemporary narratives on the legacy of Empire and the status of the modern Commonwealth (which remains asymmetric, dysfunctional and hierarchical). Thus, any attempts to establish an ‘Empire 2.0’, which places Commonwealth nations on an equal footing within future political and economic relations, will require significant efforts to redress the continued perpetuation of whitewashed representations of the UK’s imperial legacy. This will prove important to maintaining positive cultural links through sporting events.<sup>28</sup>
- It is worth noting that, in accordance with the multi-national character of the United Kingdom, tourism is largely a devolved matter with each national tourist board using major events to profile its own nation rather than the United Kingdom as a whole. The 2019 Solheim Cup was primarily a Scottish event that welcomed visitors to Scotland. Similar observations can be made in relation to Wales and Northern Ireland respectively with reference to the 2010 Ryder Cup which took place at Celtic Manor course and the Open Championship at Portrush. Far from unifying the nation state, tourism can be a highly competitive industry both between and within the nations of the United Kingdom.<sup>29</sup>

## Evidence and sources cited:

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<sup>12</sup> See sources cited in Notes 4 & 5.

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### **Information on evidence contributors:**

We have decided to submit our contribution in response to the DCMS Committee's call for evidence as we have a shared academic and professional interest in the sociological and political study of sport and sporting events, with a specific emphasis on the role of sport and sporting events in relation to national identity within the United Kingdom and its 'home nations'. As a collective, we have published a number of single-authored and co-authored research publications relating to the topic at hand in world-leading, internationally-recognised academic journals, which adhere to the rigorous standards of peer review expected within such publications. With specific regard to the questions identified in the call for evidence, in total, we have published 53 journal articles, 4 monographs, 5 edited collections, 24 book chapters, and 6 other publications (including theses, blogs, media commentary, podcasts, amongst others).

**Professor Alan Bairner** is Professor of Sport and Social Theory at Loughborough University where he has worked since 2003 having previously been employed for twenty-five years at the University of Ulster. His main research interest is in the relationship between sport and politics with a particular focus on sport, nations, and nationalism identities. He has written about sport in China, Hong Kong, Ireland (north and south), Scotland, South Korea, and Sweden. While working in Northern Ireland, he advised the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, the Irish Football Association and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland on sport and community relations. He was also a regular visitor to HM Prison Maze as a facilitator engaged by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council. He serves on the editorial boards of the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *Leisure Studies*, *Soccer and Society*, and *Sport in Society*.

**Dr Ali Bowes** is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology of Sport at Nottingham Trent University. Ali's research interests centre primarily on elite women's sport, with particular interests in the following: gender inequality, mainstream media coverage, digital media, emergent professionalisation, and international representation. Ali completed her PhD at Loughborough University in 2013, focusing on the formation of gendered, national and sporting identities in England's elite international sportswomen.

**Dr Jack Black** is a Senior Lecturer in Sport Studies at Sheffield Hallam University. His research interests examine the interlinkages between culture and media studies, with particular attention given to cultural representation and ideology. Drawing upon 'traditional' media forms as well as television and film analyses, Jack's published research has appeared in a variety of international peer reviewed journals, providing an interdisciplinary approach to the study of politics and power in both the media and popular culture. His *Race, Racism and Political Correctness in Comedy – A Psychoanalytic Exploration* (Routledge, 2021) critically considered the importance of comedy in challenging and redefining our relations to race and racism.

**Dr Stuart Whigham** is a Senior Lecturer in Sport, Coaching and Physical Education at Oxford Brookes University. Stuart's research interests revolve around the sociology and politics of sport, with a particular interest in the study of: national identity, nationalism and sport; the politics of sport and sporting events; the politics of the Commonwealth Games; the

sociology and politics of Scottish sport; and, sport and the Scottish diaspora. Stuart completed his doctoral studies at Loughborough University in 2016, with his PhD thesis focusing on the political narratives associated with the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games and the Scottish independence referendum. The findings of his PhD thesis were based upon interviews with MSPs and party staff from across the Scottish political spectrum, combined with an extensive discourse analysis of approximately 1000 sources of data regarding the politics of the 2014 Commonwealth Games, such as parliamentary transcripts, manifests, policy documents, speech transcripts, and party websites.

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