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BLACK, Jack <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1595-5083>>

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**Reflexivity or Orientation? Collective memories in the Australian, Canadian and New Zealand national press**

Dr. Jack Black, Academy of Sport and Physical Activity, Faculty of Health and Wellbeing, Sheffield Hallam University, Collegiate Hall, Collegiate Crescent, Sheffield, S10 2BP

## **Reflexivity or Orientation? Collective memories in the Australian, Canadian and New Zealand national press**

**Jack Black, PhD**

Academy of Sport and Physical Activity, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK

### **Abstract**

With regard to the notion of ‘national reflexivity’, an important part of Beck’s cosmopolitan outlook, this article examines how, and, in what ways, collective memories of empire were reflexively used in Australian, Canadian and New Zealand national newspaper coverage of the 2012 Diamond Jubilee and London Olympic Games. In contrast to Beck, it is argued that examples of national reflexivity were closely tied to the history of the nation-state, with collective memories of the former British Empire used to debate, critique and appraise ‘the nation’. These memories were discursively used to ‘orientate’ each nation’s postcolonial emergence, suggesting that examples of national reflexivity, within the press’ coverage, remained closely tied to the ‘historical fetishes’ enveloped in each nations’ imperial past(s). This implies that the ‘national outlook’ does not objectively overlook, uncritically absorb or reflexively acknowledge differences with ‘the other’, but instead, negotiates a historically grounded

and selective appraisal of the past that reveals a contingent and, at times, ambivalent, interplay with ‘the global’.

## **Introduction**

This article examines how the Australian, Canadian and New Zealand national press reported on the 2012 Diamond Jubilee and London Olympic Games. As noted by Skey (2013), ‘the media are crucial in allowing people to access and engage with “otherness” across different contexts in the process providing “spaces” for new forms of imagination and, perhaps, solidarity to emerge’ (2013: 237). This is especially apparent during transnational and international events, such as, the Diamond Jubilee and London Olympic Games (Black, 2015). In fact, while ‘national’ events provide an important role in sustaining national identifiers, they can also carry great risk, as often there are multiple national histories to be told and numerous versions of the nation to be portrayed (Barnes and Aughey, 2006). When considered in relation to the 2012 Diamond Jubilee and London Olympic Games, it is apparent that for the former dominions of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, representations of the ‘past’ required delineating between a past indebted to the British Empire and a present that maintained, albeit in a far different arrangement, Commonwealth relations, sporting rivalries and political, economic and social interactions (Belich, 2001; McIntyre, 2004; Malcolm, 2012).<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, in this article, attention will be afforded to examining how collective memories of empire were used by the commonwealth press as a form of national ‘orientation’.<sup>2</sup> That is, with regard to Beck’s (2002; 2005) work on ‘cosmopolitanism’ as well as literature on ‘collective memory’ (Phillips and Reyes, 2011; Ryan, 2014; Zerubavel, 1985), the notion of ‘national reflexivity’ will be critically considered in order to explore how collective memories of empire were reflexively used within Commonwealth press coverage. In accordance with work that has highlighted how collective memories serve to demarcate ‘the nation’ amidst wider global processes (Bell, 2003; 2006; Levy and Sznader, 2002), how one makes sense of this demarcation for national groups – whose history is closely entwined with the history of former imperial empires – can help to elucidate upon the transmission, negotiation and reconstruction of collective memories (Bell, 2003).

### **Cosmopolitanism**

Studies of globalisation have frequently considered the ways in which global interactions go beyond the confines of the national context to include transnational processes of collaboration. Notably, Beck’s (1992; 2002; 2005; 2006; Beck et al., 2003) work demonstrates an intermediate position in global and national debates. For Beck (1992), modernity is marked by processes of reflexivity through which the nation is made aware

of global cultural and capital flows that distinguish it from earlier industrial forms.<sup>3</sup> Here, Beck (2005) directs attention to how processes of internal globalisation characterize national spaces, undermining the nation both as a conceptual and analytical tool. This, Bewes (1997) argues, forms part of Beck's (1992; Beck et al., 2003) 'reflexive modernization', a perspective that is extended in his work on cosmopolitanism, which explores how national cultures have become more 'open' to global diversity (Beck, 2006). Indeed, this cosmopolitan outlook prescribes a 'Global sense', that is, 'a sense of boundarylessness. An everyday, historically alert, reflexive awareness of ambivalences in a milieu of blurring differentiations and cultural contradictions. ... shaping one's life under conditions of cultural mixture' (Beck, 2006: 3). A similar perspective is presented by Sreberny-Mohammadi (1991) when she asserts that 'the post-modern "bricolage" of assorted cultural icons from different locations and time periods ... circulate inside the non-industrialized world, yet invites no simple reading of the effects of these encounters' (1991: 133).

There is, in both Beck (2006) and Sreberny-Mohammadi's (1991) remarks, a tendency to direct attention towards the impossibility of accounting for the 'effects' of 'post-modern' cultural ambivalences; an approach that circumvents the opportunity to explore how such assemblages, differentiations and contradictions are historically and ideologically defined. Certainly, such processes are not fixed to the 'non-industrialized world' and although the signification attributed to 'cultural icons' and memories of the

past can change (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1991), this may not happen in the fluid or ad-hock manner that is suggested by postmodern accounts (Urry, 2002). Neither is it implemented in light of Beck's (2006; Beck et al., 2003) present-centred doctrine, whereby examples of discord are simply subsumed under an inevitable rhetoric of global consensus (Bewes, 1997).

In fact, Skey (2013) argues that the cosmopolitan concept may risk becoming 'a conceptual dumping ground for an extremely wide variety of activities and features, not to mention collapsing the complex range of "others" that people engage with' (2013: 250). Specifically, Skey (2013) contests that there 'are different forms of engagement with particular "others", informed by vastly different social resources and constraints' (2013: 248). Despite this, however, 'much of the literature on cosmopolitanism doesn't provide us with a language necessary to make these sorts of distinctions and analyse the varying forms of "openness" in relation to the wider social contexts in which they emerge' (Skey, 2013: 248-249).

Following Skey's (2013) critique, it is apparent that 'the analytical dimensions of the concept [cosmopolitanism] remain much too broad, premised on the idea of "openness" and a willingness to engage with "others"' (2013: 249 see also Ryan, 2014). In conjunction with previous work (Harris, 2016; Weenink, 2008), it is evident that being 'open' is grounded in the capacity to 'position' oneself (Skey, 2013), so that engagements with 'the other' require constant management and negotiation (Black, 2016a; Skey,

2015). Consequently, it is not enough to propose that examples of ‘cosmopolitanism’ require a sense of reflexivity based on an acknowledgement of ‘the other’ (Beck et al., 2003), but instead, to explore how this reflexivity is contiguous with interpretations and representations of the nation’s ‘global’ past(s). This requires expanding the notion of ‘the other’ and complicating understandings of globalisation in order to explore how the global past can itself sit as an ‘other’ within accounts of the nation/nation-state.

### **Cosmopolitan Memory**

It was noted in the previous section that understandings of cosmopolitanism can overemphasise, and, in some instances, under-theorise, the extent to which interactions with ‘the other’ are performed (Skey, 2013). Indeed, Ryan (2014) highlights that:

Cosmopolitan memory as a concept, although excellently delineated, is fraught with the dangers of potential conceptual reductionism, for a lack of precision in defining the exact nature of its relationship with national memory cultures may culminate in its theoretical deployment as an all-encompassing term, which signifies that national memory cultures adopt universal ethical criteria, without an attendant scrutiny of the intricacies of their relationship (2014: 511).



Such scrutiny of the ways in which national cultures engage with global processes, has underscored work that has examined the application of the cosmopolitan perspective (Kennedy, 2013; Ryan, 2014; Skey, 2013; 2014; Weenink, 2008). Levy and Sznajder (2002) examined how, in accordance with cosmopolitanism, global concerns have come to form part of the local. Consequently, while Levy and Sznajder (2002) demonstrated the extent to which national collective memories revealed a degree of similarity, this was a process that was tempered by each nation's history and the extent to which global collective memories combined 'to form something new' (2002: 89).

When critically considered, Levy and Sznajder's (2002) 'cosmopolitan memory' stands in contrast to previous accounts of cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2006), in that, rather than being ignored or discounted, 'the nation' remains an important part of how groups 'remember'. Pei (2009) explains that:

No nation can survive and prosper without its own history and memory, which enable the transmission of national culture. Once a nation loses its own historical memory, it loses its independent national culture, as well as its foundation to stand out in the family of nations. (2009: 25-56)

Consequently, whereas 'different countries and nations with distinct historical thinking and understanding will make different historical value judgments' (Pei, 2009: 32),

assessing how each nation views the past can help to elaborate on the extent to which processes of cosmopolitanism are marked by a sense of national reflexivity. Here, former colonial states present a pertinent opportunity to examine the relationship between the nation, globalisation and the discursive employment of particular collective memories (Falcous and Newman, 2013; Levy and Sznajder, 2002). Although interpretations of Australia, Canada and New Zealand's 'imperial' past offers 'no simple reading' (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1991), it is a reading drawn from their location within a global history of (British) imperialism.

Therefore, in contrast to viewing national/global debates as signifying a definite shift in power from the 'national' to the 'global' and vice versa (Mann, 1999), a historically-centered perspective of how globalisation processes are engaged with (Lee and Maguire, 2009), and the tensions that this presents when framing the nation, can serve to highlight how shared cultural and political 'experiences' continue to form part of the legacy of empire (Pieterse, 1994).

### **Collective memory and the Commonwealth: Reflexivity or orientation?**

Garner (2014) highlights that:

New postcolonial states are often faced with the triple problems of conjuring a narrative of the past that leads inexorably to the creation of the nation-state fetishizing elements of national culture and heritage that distinguish the nation from others and socialising people into feeling they belong to the new nation. (2014: 407)

In the case of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, national traditions and cultures were predicated on a melange of multi-ethnic, bicultural and multi-cultural associations, marked by indigenous communities and a history of global imperialism. National identity and imperial loyalty were closely entwined, securing the spread of British culture, while also creating a context from which the dominions could develop symbols and narratives that exhibited their own emerging identities as ‘separate’ nation-states (Gare, 2000; Holt, 1989; Llewellyn, 2015; Maguire, 1999; McDougall, 2005; McGregor, 2006; Ward, 2007). As a consequence, over the course of the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries, ‘The partial but considerable self-government enjoyed by the white populations of the Dominions, ... deeply influenced their articulation of nationalism’ (Levine, 2007: 170).

Certainly, this is not to subject the imperial/national histories of Australia, Canada and New Zealand to a monolithic account. Codell (2003) highlights that ‘each colony had its own relationship to Britain, to imperial life and authority, to its own history and to its own unstable, struggling national identity’ (Codell, 2003: 21). Accordingly, although

‘empires could call on subject peoples for tribute and sometimes foster substantial interaction among diverse subjects, they posed few demands for cultural homogenization’ (Calhoun, 1994: 317). In Australia and New Zealand, ‘white settlers became numerically predominant, colonial rule made peoples out of new states’, and within Canada, ‘indigenous societies remained the basis of government [and] the state was fashioned from existing people’ (Hopkins, 1999: 215). In both instances, it was the interaction between people and states which resulted in the fragmentary basis of so many national identities (Burton, 2010).

Potter (2007) argues that ‘One of the great strengths of work on imperial networks, both by scholars of globalization and by historians, has been an insistence on the need to examine global as well as national identities’ (2007: 642). Indeed, if ‘[National] Identity, ... is not a free floating mosaic in which various aspects can be picked at random, but fundamentally rooted in historical interdependencies’ (Malcolm, 2012: 140), and if the relationship between collective memory and the ‘Global sense’ depicted in accounts of cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2006; Levy and Sznajder, 2002) reflects a transition from national to cosmopolitan memory cultures, then ‘Thinking about imperial connections encourages us to consider the other, transnational senses of community that the media could help encourage’ (Potter, 2007: 642). While agreeing with Potter’s (2007) assertion that the global should form a constitutive feature of examining national identities – a perspective that holds particular significance for the former dominions – this article

asserts that closer attention needs to be given to the ways in which the national media engage with ‘transnational senses of community’ (2007: 642). Whereas national newspapers provide a suitable sample from which the codes and narratives that discursively manage and reinforce national boundaries can be examined (Black, 2016a), it is a sense of ‘orientation’ that reflects ‘a willingness to engage with the other’ (Hannerz, 1996: 103) during international and transnational occasions.

In fact, elsewhere, Dunning et al. (2004) highlight that “‘Time”, “year” and “century” are symbols constructed by humans, means of orientation developed to aid their understanding and to control and coordinate their activities in the socio-physical universe in which they live’ (2004: 2). When considered in conjunction with the ‘reflexive awareness’ that characterizes cosmopolitanism, it is proposed that collective memories can offer a ‘means of orientation’ that, in the case of national newspapers, can serve an important function in positioning, managing and demarcating ‘the nation’. Accordingly, if cosmopolitanism prescribes a ‘reflexivity’ that is ‘historically alert’ (Beck, 2006: 3), then what impact does this have on national societies and how does this relate to those nations/nation-states whose ‘national’ pasts are closely entwined with a history of global imperialism?

To this end, the following sections will examine how collective memories form an important part of national media discourses. Specifically, this will be considered in relation to the Australian, Canadian and New Zealand national press. In view of each

nations' imperial past(s), and with the above critique of the cosmopolitan approach in mind, attention will be given to exploring how collective memories were reflexively used by the press to help 'orientate' each nation during the 2012 Diamond Jubilee and London Olympic Games.

## **Method**

This study selected the following national newspapers for analysis: *The Australian* and *The Age* (Australia); *The Globe and Mail* and the *Vancouver Sun* (Canada); and the *Dominion Post* and *New Zealand Herald* (New Zealand).<sup>4</sup> Newspapers were collected during the course of both the Diamond Jubilee weekend and London Olympic Games.<sup>5</sup> In total, 120 newspaper articles were analysed, following a method of qualitative textual analysis (Kuckartz, 2013). 'As an unobtrusive tool' textual analysis allows for 'dominant discourse as well as subtle meanings in the newspaper narratives' to be identified (Jiang, 2015: 893). This involved separately analysing each newspaper article via a process of open and axial coding (Black, 2016a; 2016b).

Following this coding process, each newspaper was inductively examined in order to identify themes that critically reflected upon each 'nation' as well as the 'Commonwealth' (open coding). This involved reading through each article and highlighting sections of the text that referred to each nation's imperial past as well as

contemporary Commonwealth relations. Highlighted sections, from across the sample, were then analyzed. Here, relevant similarities and differences across each nation's coverage (axial coding) were noted and organised into thematic categories. By opting to explore the similarities and differences between each nation's press coverage, broader comparisons across each text could be identified. This helped to examine the ways in which national newspapers served to locate 'the nation' in relation to wider 'global' entanglements, while at the same time, intertextually offering the opportunity to examine how similarities and differences between each nation were presented.

While there is the potential to undermine specific differences between each nation, the above process offered the opportunity to examine how examples of cosmopolitanism formed part of the press' discourse. That is, in view of cosmopolitan critiques, and with regard to the above discussion, it was important that attention was given to the ways in which the Commonwealth press reflexively used collective memories of empire. To this end, the analysis, and, by extension this article, was not concerned with the historical differences and particularities between each nation, but, instead, focused on how collective memories were used to discursively frame each nation. Therefore, were collective memories of the British Empire shared across the press' coverage (Levy and Sznajder, 2002), or, did the national press reflexively position, manage and 'orientate' (Skey, 2013) each nation's shared past in accordance with contemporary understandings of the transnational Commonwealth? These questions will now be explored.

### **‘We are part of a global Community’**

In certain instances, ‘national’ commemorations/celebrations can adopt transnational appearances by being appropriated by wider collective groups within the ‘global community’ (Hape, 2012). In commenting upon Queen Elizabeth’s jubilee, Hape (2012) stated that:

The Queen of New Zealand is also sovereign of 15 other independent countries, including Australia, Canada and Papua New Guinea. Sharing our head of state in this way is good for us. *We are part of a global community* and reliant on trade and international linkages for a prosperous future. (*Dominion Post*, 02/06/12 [italics added])

Such sentiments were echoed by Foster-Bell (2012), who argued that New Zealand ‘play[ed] an active and useful role in the Commonwealth, having furnished its immediate past secretary-general, Sir Don McKinnon, and lobbied for suspension of membership for states that violate democratic norms’ (*Dominion Post*, 04/06/12). Indeed, not only did the Commonwealth provide the opportunity to represent New Zealand interests, but, as an important intermediary in maintaining ‘democratic norms’ amongst its member states



(Foster-Bell, 2012), it was able to play ‘an active and useful role’ in its endeavors (Foster-Bell, *Dominion Post*, 04/06/12). These examples reflect a complex coalescence of national and Commonwealth affiliation (Foster-Bell, 2012; *The Globe and Mail*, 2012), through which the apparent ‘global’ benefits of the Commonwealth were covalent with national sovereignty/identity (Hape, 2012).

Indeed, during the British Empire, the symbolic rituals associated with the British crown provided the British Empire an outward symbol of superiority and legitimacy (Apter, 2002; Cannadine, 2001; Mangan, 1992; Stoddart, 1988). For the *Vancouver Sun* (2012) such symbolism was regarded as an important part of Canada’s history and its constitutional arrangement with the British monarch:

Whether fate or fortune thrust the orb and sceptre into her hands, she has proved one of the most durable, remarkable and beloved monarchs in British history – and, by extension, in Canada’s history as a fond, former, British colony over whose constitutional monarchy she still presides as symbolic head of state. (*Vancouver Sun*, 02/06/12)

With ‘the Crown’ symbolically ‘woven into the fabric of Canada’ (*The Globe and Mail*, 02/06/12), examples of shared governance and democratic values were emphasized as forming an important part of the Commonwealth’s remit. Foster-Bell (2012) noted that

‘The promotion of democratic good governance, the rule of law, individual liberty, prosperity through free and fair trade and peaceful international relations remain the key tenets of the Commonwealth. These are all values to which New Zealand readily subscribes’ (*Dominion Post*, 04/06/12). Berg (2012) added:

The Anglosphere ... is about a collection of values – individual liberty, the common law, parliamentary democracy, and open markets – we share with Britain, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and the US. It recognises that different nations are joined by a common political culture. (*The Sunday Age*, 12/08/12)

The ‘language of liberty’ has often been used in support of British unionism, both within the UK and the former empire, as well as being universally adopted by numerous Western states (Colley, 2014: 39). Equally, whereas liberty has played a significant part in constructions of Britishness and British identity it has also provided a locus for various resistance and revolutionary movements around the world, most notably, the American Revolution (Colley, 2014). In both Foster-Bell (2012) and Berg’s (2012) examples, however, a conviction in a ‘common political culture’ and the ‘collection of values’ endowed by the ‘Anglosphere’, provided an important motivation for maintaining Commonwealth relations and, in particular, relations with Britain.

### **‘Ashes clashes’ with the ‘colonial overlords’**

Historically, sport has provided an important site for distinguishing dominion independence from the British ‘motherland’ (West, 2008). Victories against the ‘mother country’ served to highlight the dominions’ character, support independence and promote dominion integrity (Llewellyn, 2015). This was continued in reports of the 2012 Olympic Games, whereby the rivalries between Australia and Britain were routinely drawn upon. In light of the Australian Hockey team’s 3-1 win over ‘Team GB’, Jeffery (2012) noted that ‘It was one of the few occasions in which the Australian team didn’t come off second best against the *old enemy*’ (*The Australian*, 13/08/12 [italics added]). Whereas the ‘Australians ... relish intense competitions in any stadium, swimming pool or arena – especially against our former *colonial overlords*’ (*The Weekend Australian*, 28/07/12 [italics added]), such competition had witnessed ‘Britain ... depriv[e] Australia of five consecutive gold medals in a horror stretch of four days’ (Jeffery, *The Australian*, 13/08/12).

What is apparent from these ‘Ashes clashes’ (Jeffery, 2012) is how the sporting encounters between Australia and Britain remained embedded in imperial discourses. In fact, references to the ‘old enemy’ (Jeffery, 2012) and the ‘former colonial overlords’ (*The Weekend Australian*, 2012), were matched by Cooper and Butt (2012) who debated: ‘WHICH is worse – Olympic defeat to Britain or New Zealand?’ (*The Age*, 14/08/12

[emphasis in original]). Despite Australia's 'underwhelming' performance, Cooper and Butt (2012) added, 'spare a thought for Canada, which despite having one of the bigger teams in London (279), won just one gold (in women's judo) in a haul of 18 medals' (*The Age*, 14/08/12).

Evidently, sporting ties between Britain and the former dominions as well as between the dominions themselves remained closely entwined with 'issues of national honour and identity' (Maguire, 1993: 296). To this extent, Australian reports were clear to point out that Britain's hosting and sporting success was attributable to the 'Sydneyproofing of the British team' (Smith, *The Australian*, 13/08/12b). In reference to a 2003 book written by AIS chief John Bloomfield, Smith (2012a) commented upon 'the trap that Britain would spring on the green-and-gold team in 2012' (*The Weekend Australian*, 11/08/12a). Referencing Bloomfield directly, Smith (2012a) noted that:

In the near future, there are two threats which an invigorated British sports system will pose for Australia, ... The first is that this country will lose even more of its capable and experienced personnel ... The second threat to Australian sports supremacy will be the large amounts of money the British are currently investing in their national sports organisations. (*The Weekend Australian*, 11/08/12a)

Similarly, Wilson (2012) stated:

Britain's openness to people, trade and ideas also helped London 2012 to do a better job than any other host city by using foreign talent to stage the Games, with the biggest source of that talent being Australia. Sydney veterans helped to design the main stadium, run the Olympic Development Authority, staff its organising committee, organise its torch relay and outdoor events, and manage nine of the Games venues. Even Mark Evers, the director of Olympic matters at the public transport agency, Transport for London, is an Aussie. (*The Australian*, 13/08/12)

Indeed, the purpose here is not to deny the involvement of Australians in both the organisation of the 2012 games and the success of 'Team GB', but instead, to draw attention to the ways in which the above examples were closely bound by rivalries that reflected former 'imperial' clashes (Maguire, 1993; Malcolm, 2012). Here, narratives of the past, in this instance, narratives of empire, were not endlessly borrowed and reproduced (Jameson, 1991), rather, they were selectively used to help frame the press' coverage of both events. This process of 'selection' will be considered further in the following sections.

### **‘English through and through’: A ‘foreign’ monarchy and the inversion of history**

In Commonwealth coverage of the Diamond Jubilee, references to the British monarchy as both ‘foreign’ and ‘remote’ were frequently highlighted within Commonwealth reports. Indeed, Kissane (2012) noted that ‘It is hard to understand, as a *foreigner*, the near-reverence with which the royal family is often reported on in England’ (*The Age*, 02/06/12 [italics added]). Similarly, one interviewee stated that ‘King Charles is about as un-Kiwi as they come. It’s not his fault, he’s a born-and-bred British aristocrat. It’s just plain daft expecting him to be a symbol of New Zealand’ (Dean Knight cited in Stone, *New Zealand Herald*, 02/06/12). This sense of dislocation was matched by reports that exhibited an irreverence towards the British monarchy. Holden (2012) stated that ‘in the latter half of the Queen’s reign New Zealand’s national identity ... developed to the point where *most New Zealanders* see the monarchy as irrelevant, the royals as a slick public relations machine’ (*Dominion Post*, 04/06/12 [italics added]).

As can be seen from the above examples, efforts to present the British monarchy as ‘English’ and, ultimately, ‘foreign’, allowed the New Zealand press to rearticulate a postcolonial New Zealand identity that was markedly different to the ‘English’. Here, references to ‘England’ were ideologically used to signify a distinct sense of New Zealand national identity and ‘English’ dissociation. Indeed, this was exemplified in Milne’s (2012) comments on the royal family’s sporting allegiances.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are lovely people, but they're *English* through and through. They don't understand Christmas on the beach, or pohutukawa. They can't cheer for the ALL BLACKS. And when we're desperate for the Black Sticks to win, Kate is 'jumping for joy' at seeing them miss out on a medal. They can never be loyal supporters of New Zealand – so how can they ever expect us to be their loyal subjects? (*New Zealand Herald*, 12/08/12 [italics added, emphasis in original])

However, although national codes are frequently used to construct the nation in newspaper coverage (Maguire, 1999; Maguire and Poulton, 1999; Vincent et al. 2010) and whereas cultural attributes can, particularly in the case of former colonial states, be 'deployed as a [neo] colonial technique' (Falcous and Newman, 2013: 66), such techniques could also highlight latent contradictions. In his study of promotional media for the 2005 'Lions Tour',<sup>6</sup> held in New Zealand, Falcous (2007) noted how advertisements presented a 'revision of the World War II service of New Zealanders to the then-fading British Empire' (2007: 385). This reflected a form of 'historical inversion', whereby, 'colonial narratives' were upended in order to 'allo[w] the settlers to claim a distinct identity originating in their new country rather than the distant motherland' (Falcous, 2007: 385).

In 2012, a similar process could be identified in the New Zealand press, via particular references to New Zealand culture ('Christmas on the beach'/'pohutukawa' (Milne, 2012)).<sup>7</sup> However, whereas such codes sought to 'invert' New Zealand's colonial past, paradoxically, these codes were ambivalently located alongside New Zealand's history of Anglo-European migration and the tendency for *Pakeha* attributes to hold salience in New Zealand's national mythology (Bell, 1996; Falcous, 2007).

Accordingly, New Zealand's colonial past was given a far more positive appraisal by Rothwell (2012), who noted that:

Emerging from World War II, it was the period of the happy family, where birth rates were rising, where 80 per cent of the population could trace their ancestry back to Britain, where people rarely left New Zealand except by arduous ship voyage. We were proud as a country – Edmund Hillary had just given the Queen his coronation 'gift', the first summit of Mt Everest. ... During her first welcome, she told crowds of adoring Kiwis that she was delighted to be 'not in a foreign land and amongst alien people, but at home with our kinsman'. When she gave her Christmas address from Government House in Auckland, she said, 'I want to show that the Crown is not merely an abstract symbol of our unity but a personal and living bond between you and me'. Many people in the 1950s, with memories of World War II and New Zealand's part in protecting Britain still an important part of our identity,



would have felt that. (Rothwell, *Dominion Post [Your Weekend]*, 02/06/12)

Commending the significance of New Zealand's imperial heritage, particularly with regards to its involvement in the scaling of Mount Everest and its part in aiding the British forces during the Second World War, Rothwell's (2012) comments reveal how 'liturgized' moments from New Zealand's imperial past were subsequently *repositioned* alongside New Zealand identity (Falcous and Newman, 2013: 68).

Certainly, Commonwealth relations would undergo diverging paths in the post-war period as new alliances were formed and the Commonwealth's utility as an effective 'global' force was overshadowed by the Cold War. As a result, despite Rothwell's (2012) account of the monarchy and its significance, 'by 1986, ... New Zealand's love affair with the Empire was waning' (*Dominion Post*, 02/06/12). This was echoed by Rudman (2012), who stated that:

Most of us have grown up with the Queen as head of state, safely in her place in Buckingham Palace, as permanent as the sun and the moon. It no doubt made some sense when New Zealand's role was the supplier of food and fighting men to the motherland. But at the end of her reign, in an era where our future is bound up with Asia, the concept of a new head of state, who must be Anglican, and preferably a male, oh yes, and comes from an *English* farming family called Windsor, is just

barking mad. (*New Zealand Herald*, 06/06/12 [italics added])

This is constitutive of British-dominion relations over the twentieth-century (Kohe, 2014) whereby ‘strategies of state minimilization, deregulation, and reorientation to global – particularly Asian-Pacific – markets were symptomatic of the reorientation from a colonial past’ (Falcous, 2007: 378). Equally, in recent decades, Commonwealth identifications and, indeed, Anglo and Celtic identifications, have overlapped with global migratory trends that, in the case of both Australia and New Zealand, have witnessed the emergence of a strong Asia-Pacific presence. However, as Rudman’s (2012) comments suggest, changes in the relationship between New Zealand and Britain – and the emerging interdependence of New Zealand with Asia – were framed through narratives that paradoxically emphasized the Queen’s ‘foreign’ characteristics (‘Buckingham Palace’/‘English farming family’) (Milne, 2012) while at the same time appraising New Zealand’s assistance in supporting the former ‘motherland’ (Rothwell, 2012). This reflected a pragmatic (re)orientation of the past that both resisted and acknowledged New Zealand’s role in the British Empire.

In other instances, both the Diamond Jubilee and Olympic Games provided the opportunity for the former dominions to subjugate their colonial pasts for narratives that emphasised their own national autonomy and identity. Here, Canadian reports promoted Canada’s emergence as a prominent nation in global political affairs. Unhindered by their

imperial past, Hyder (2012) reflected on Canada's recent successes by noting that:

If Britain has become modest by coming to terms with the fact that its days as a global empire are behind it, Canada has increasingly built on its recent successes to become emboldened by the emerging role we have assumed on the world stage.  
(*Vancouver Sun*, 11/08/12)

Consequently, whereas the decline of the British Empire had helped to create an emerging sense of modesty within Britain, renderings of postcolonial distinctiveness were used in Canadian reports in order to emphasise its emerging role in global politics.

### **An 'inevitable' Republic and Australian anxiety**

It is apparent that 'a consistent feature of contestation surrounding decolonizing White-settler nationalisms is the "resolution" of the critique and historical reassessment of colonialism and its legacy that challenges nationalist unity' (Falcous, 2007: 387). Within the Commonwealth coverage, such concerns were echoed in debates regarding the maintenance of a 'foreign' head of state and the possibility of a republican future. Conradi (2012) asked 'what will be the effect of the arrival of a new king on the republican movements, not just in Canada but also in Australia and New Zealand? Charles's

accession would be the perfect moment to sever what many see as an anachronistic link with the former mother country' (*Vancouver Sun*, 02/06/12). Within the Australian press, reference to Australia's failed republican referendum in 1999 were noted by Carney (2012):

only a little over 10 years ago, there appeared to be a genuine prospect that Australia would come to look upon these activities in the way that Americans do: fondly, but at a remove, the expression of a peculiar form of British nationalism that no longer had anything specifically to do with us. But it was not to be. (*The Age*, 06/06/12 [italics added])

As can be seen, Carney's (2012) reflections were laden by the failure for republican debates to gain any substantial support within the former dominions. Similarly, whereas, 'the task of shedding ourselves of the British monarchy' (Rudman, *New Zealand Herald*, 06/06/12) was, for New Zealand Prime Minister John Key, 'inevitable' (*Dominion Post*, 04/06/12), Stone (2012) noted that 'Efforts to crank up even the barest of these reforms – a home-grown head of state – have struggled in New Zealand' (*New Zealand Herald*, 02/06/12). Indeed, 'As *England* smothers itself in fluttering Union Jacks, bunting galore and adoration for its Queen of 60 years, talk of becoming a republic has never seemed further away' (Watkins, *Dominion Post*, 04/06/12 [italics added]).

Consequently, although *The Australian* (2012) was clear to point out that ‘Like many Australians, ... [it] has long believed that Australia’s ultimate destiny should be a republic’ (04/06/12), Carney (2012) noted that ‘public attitudes in Australia ... [had] been in steady retreat’ (*The Age*, 06/06/12). As a result, the ‘esteem’ that the Queen had ‘gained among Australians during her 16 visits to our [Australian] shores’ (*The Australian*, 04/06/12) was echoed in a visit by the Queen the previous year which was noted for attracting ‘enormous numbers’ (Carney, *The Age*, 06/06/12).

What is significant in this respect is the degree to which these narratives worked in contrasting ways for Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Here, Canada’s emergence ‘on the world stage’ (Hyder, *Vancouver Sun*, 11/08/12) and New Zealand’s ‘future ... bound ... with Asia’ (Rudman, 2012), worked in direct contrast with Australian reports, whereupon Australia’s ties with the former British Empire revealed ‘deep concerns about the status of its historical experience’ (Hughes-d’Aeth, 2003: 220). Writing in the *Sunday Age*, Berg (2012) argued ‘it’s bizarre to hear our Foreign Minister claim that Australia should downplay its historical relationship with the English-speaking world – not because that relationship doesn’t exist, but because simply stating it might offend our neighbours’ (12/08/12). He added: ‘You would think that was the opposite of what a confident nation should do’ (Berg, *The Sunday Age*, 12/08/12). Clearly, Australia’s ties to Britain, and the values that underpinned the ‘Anglosphere’ were presented as a prominent feature of Australia’s domestic politics, a relationship that should not be displaced because of

offended 'neighbours'. Instead, this was something which Australia should not be ashamed of:

It is obvious and important that we are part of the English-speaking world. Our heritage is not something to be ashamed of. It is not a coincidence the oldest surviving democracies are in the Anglosphere. Or that the Anglosphere harbours the wealthiest countries. Or that a tradition of liberty, stretching back to the Magna Carta, has given English-speaking nations a greater protection of human rights and private property than anywhere else. We ought to be proud, not bashful. ... for Australia, the Anglosphere will still shape our social, cultural and political views over the next 100 years. It's a shame only conservatives feel comfortable talking about it. (Berg, *The Sunday Age*, 12/08/12)

Indeed, whereas by the end of the nineteenth-century Australian nationalism was able to challenge the pro-British tenets of imperial identity, encouraging a distinct Australian national identity via a range of cultural attributes arising from art, literature and sporting prowess (Cashman, 1992; McGregor, 2006), 'such cultural fragments did not add up to the rich and complex heritage essential for a people to imagine itself as a community of destiny' (McGregor, 2006: 502).

In the second-half of the twentieth-century, these debates remained prominent.

Rupert Murdoch's *Australian* newspaper, launched in 1964, contained the following inaugural editorial:

We Australians have always been proud – and perhaps a little self-confident too – about describing our country as a ‘young country’ ... Yet something we all know in our hearts when we are very young is that sooner or later we will be grown up ... We have fought successfully against British control of our political affairs. We have made a lot of obey, speaking of us collectively. But have we really grown up? It seems we have not ... We are growing up. But we have manifestly not yet achieved maturity (*Australian*, 15/07/64 cited in Ward, 2007: 239)

In 2012, the ‘maturity’ of Australia was still being questioned. Instead of debating the possibility of a future republican referendum, however, reports within the Australian press took a far more critical approach. Carney (2012) noted that while:

The idea of a republic was appealing to many, ... once it became apparent that there were judgments to be made about the type of republic we should choose, the move for change collapsed. Republicanism can thus be stored in the cupboard with all the other issues that contemporary Australia has embraced before shrugging off (*The Age*, 06/06/12)

Instead, ‘the vexed question of which model of republic Australians may want’ was compounded by the fact that ‘Australians cannot even aspire to be the head of stat[e]’ (Southphommasane, *The Age*, 04/06/12).

Bell (2003) argues that accounts of the past are not just located in examples of national success and triumph but are also ‘concerned with past oppression and suffering’ (2003: 74).<sup>8</sup> The above examples reveal that discourses of oppression, can be continued into the present, albeit in more symbolic ways. Here, Van Duinen (2013) argues:

all too often ... proto-nationalist voices were found to be trumped or drowned out by various manifestations of Britishness: the perceived need for British military protection; a conservative and frustratingly prevalent ‘Anglo-Australianness’; and, associated with the latter, a nagging inferiority complex or ‘cultural cringe’ (2013: 345-346)

As a result, Australia’s inability to democratically elect its own head of state was intricately bound with Australia’s colonial past and its current constitutional arrangements (Carney, 2012; Southphommasane, 2012). Apart from providing an enduring legacy of British imperialism, the role of the monarchy continued throughout republican debates, revealing the importance that the monarchy continues to play in



discussions regarding identity and citizenship within the former dominions.

## **Summary and Conclusion**

Across the Commonwealth press, both Commonwealth and monarchical attachments were clearly evoked. Here, newspaper discourses served to contribute to the maintenance of former imperial links by collectivizing cross-national sentiment between the former dominions and Britain (Alldritt, 2012; *The Globe and Mail*, 2012; *Vancouver Sun*, 2012). In particular, ‘British’ values remained an important part of the former dominions’ post-colonial identity (Foster-Bell, 2012). Through shared family ties and common history, symbolic links with both Britain and the Commonwealth transcended national boundaries for a sense of tradition based upon transnational association (Berg, 2012; *Dominion Post*, 2012; Foster-Bell, 2012; *Vancouver Sun*, 2012). Elsewhere, Ho (2013) has viewed such attachments as a form of ‘Colonial (re)connectivity’, a process which reflects the ‘emotional imagination and reconnection between the coloniser and the colonised’ (2013: 2210).

Nevertheless, alongside examples of Commonwealth unity, were reports that openly highlighted a sense of (dis)attachment with the British monarchy (Carney, 2012; Holden, 2012; Rothwell, 2012; Southphommasane, 2012; Stone, 2012; Watkins, 2012). Notably, it was here that changes in the long-term, historical relationship between Britain

and the former dominions could be observed. This was echoed in accounts of the ‘British’, or, indeed, ‘English’ monarchy, who were seen as both foreign and unrepresentative of contemporary national interests (Kissane, 2012; Milne, 2012; *New Zealand Herald*, 2012; Rudman, 2012). Indeed, rather than critiquing the legitimacy of the ‘Commonwealth’, newspaper reports emphasized each nation’s distinct national identity, *contra* England/Britain. Although alternative ties of global interdependence were promoted (Rudman, 2012), critical appraisal remained directed at the ‘English/British’ monarchy.

Furthermore, whereas comparisons with Britain provided an opportunity for each nation to evaluate their own societies, examples of anxiety and ambivalence were frequently exhibited within the Australian press. Cole (2001) has argued that colonial memories often draw upon the ‘tensions and contradictions’ within former colonial territories (2001: 281). While attempts to disassociate Australia from its ‘British’ past were evidently pursued (Carney, 2012; Tate, 2012), the inability to freely choose its own head of state (Southphommasane, 2012) as well as concerns relating to the fact that Britain had bested Australia in the Olympic medals table (Cooper and Butt, 2012) and its hosting of the games (Hinds, 2012), all served to underline a sense of inadequacy and anxiety within the Australian press. This stood in contrast to the Canadian and New Zealand coverage.

Therefore, despite their ‘shared history’, opportunities for national differentiation, both positive and negative, were not undermined but actively pursued within the national

press. In conjunction with analyses of sport (Collins, 2011; Falcous, 2007; Maguire, 1993; 2011) and Commonwealth war commemorations (Winter, 2006), collective memories of empire were negotiated and debated through national narratives. Whereas former imperial ties were residually maintained as important moments in the history of each nation (Berg, 2012; Foster-Bell, 2012; Hape, 2012; Rothwell, 2012; *The Globe and Mail*, 2012; *Vancouver Sun*, 2012), this history could also serve as a benchmark from which future global relations could be compared to (Hyder, 2012; Rudman, 2012).

Subsequently, in accordance with the national reflexivity prescribed by Beck's (1992; 2006; Beck et al., 2003) cosmopolitan outlook, this article has considered how memories of empire were reflexively *used* by the Commonwealth press. Accordingly, globalisation and the 'cosmopolitan outlook' were not 'new' phenomena, bent on decentring the nation through the deterritorialization of national culture, but rather, were constitutive factors in the former dominions' imperial pasts, and, as a consequence, widely acknowledged in the press' framing of each nation.

While the notion of reflexivity assumes a monocentric process of 'looking back', and, in Beck's appropriation, a complicated, yet, universal acceptance of 'the other', under such an application it remains a process that is fixated in the 'present'. Moreover, it fails to elucidate upon those examples where the nation's past stands as 'the other' (Cole, 2001). This is particularly apparent in former dominion societies, where each nation's 'global' colonial past presents a platform to debate, critique and appraise 'the

nation'. Indeed, whereas Beck (2006) argues that cosmopolitanism 'is a politically ambivalent, *reflexive* outlook', it is asserted that such reflexivity will be based upon a moment 'when the historical fetishes of the state and the nation can no longer order and control the lives and interaction of human beings' (2006: 10 [italics in original]). What the findings from this article suggest, however, is that forms of national reflexivity remain closely tied to the state's 'historical fetishes', in this instance, to the collective memories enveloped in each nation's imperial past. In fact, such 'historical fetishes' were reflexively used to construct, represent and frame 'the nation'. As a malleable and discursively applicable trope, collective memories of 'empire' were temporally organised and used in national newspaper discourses as a form of 'national orientation' (Zerubavel, 1985). Consequently, whereas the national past can provide "'models of" and "models for" society' (West, 2008: 349), these 'models', in the form of collective memories, served as a valuable source of *national orientation* amidst 'the complex mechanisms at work in the disbandment of the Empire' (Levine, 2007: 203). In doing so, examples of 'national reflexivity' did not objectively overlook, uncritically absorb or acknowledge differences with 'the other' (Beck, 2006), but instead, were closely related to collective memories drawn from each nation's 'imperial history'.

Indeed, whether reflecting positively on the British Empire/Commonwealth or by evaluating its past injustices and contemporary relevance, such reflexivity was not predicated on an ad hoc basis of cosmopolitan, transnational acceptance. Instead,

newspaper discourses sought to draw upon each nation's shared imperial past as a way of orientating 'the nation' in both a transnational (Diamond Jubilee) and international (London Olympic Games) context. In this way, collective memories of the British Empire provided an interpretative matrix through which 'selective renditions' (Falcous and Newman, 2013) from each nation's imperial past were rendered through a process of 'memory conflict' (Ryan, 2014) that could both assert or undermine 'the nation' (Rothwell, 2012). Such conflict was brought to light in the Australian press, whereupon the legacies of empire revealed a 'disorientation' towards the British monarchy and the problems in electing their own 'national' head of state (Southphommasane, 2012).

In short, there was no 'decoupling of collective memory and national history' (Levy and Sznajder, 2002: 89). Rather, national discourses were embroiled within cultural sentiments that critically drew upon collective memories of empire and consequently used these memories as a way of orientating their role within the Commonwealth. These memories were not used to promote cosmopolitanism but were orientated towards making sense of the nation. In doing so, the British Empire/Commonwealth provided a wealth of past and present reflections that were reflexively used to 'orientate' each nation's postcolonial emergence.

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### **Author's Biography**

Jack Black's research interests span a number of topics including: identity politics, nationalism/national identity, media and communications and cultural studies. Recently, Jack has sought to examine these interests in relation to collective memory and its relation to history.

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### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> This was evident in Oettler's (2014) assessment of the 2012 Olympic opening ceremony, whereby the legacy of the former British Empire was brought to light during 'the parade of nations' (2014: 245). Here, 'the parade of athletes mirrored the extension of the British empire, with many former colonies, protectorates, and dominions (as well

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as Commonwealth realms such as Barbados, Belize, and Salomon Islands) waving their flags' (Oettler, 2014: 245).

<sup>2</sup> Today, Australia, Canada and New Zealand are independent nation-states, however, each nation is a former 'dominion' of the British Empire. Accordingly, when collectively referring to press coverage from each nation, the terms 'former dominions' and 'Commonwealth' will be used.

<sup>3</sup> In the context of sporting mega-events, such an 'inclusive' understanding of the nation can stand in contrast to national media institutions and sporting competitions that, while being aware of wider globalising forces, continue to reinforce the nation (Rowe, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> This sample included Sunday editions and supplementary material.

<sup>5</sup> For the Diamond Jubilee, newspapers were collected from 1 to 6 June 2012 and for the London Olympic Games, from 26 July to 14 August 2012. These ranges included coverage one day prior and one day after each event.

<sup>6</sup> The 'Lions Tour' refers to the British and Irish Lions Rugby Union team that tours Australia, New Zealand and South Africa every four years on a rotational basis.

<sup>7</sup> 'Pōhutukawa/Pohutukawa' is an evergreen tree that grows in New Zealand.

<sup>8</sup> This echoes Lee and Maguire (2009), who highlighted how South Korean media narratives of the 2004 Japan/Korea FIFA World Cup drew upon Korea's subjection (1910-1945) under Japanese imperialism.

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