The Olympics and Soft Power Diplomacy:

British Value Representation in the London 2012 Opening Ceremonies



Grace Hochstatter

Robert D. Clark Honors College

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*Image: SwipeLife

Intentions:

This paper focuses specifically on academic communities involved in diplomacy, international relations and media studies. Knowledge of the English language is the sole limitation for readers interested in this study. No background in the areas of media studies or world relations is necessary for full comprehension of the information below.

Abstract:

As the world grows "smaller" and people become more aware of its many regions with technological advancements, this thesis poses a single question: Do the Olympics in general and the London 2012 Olympic opening ceremony in particular serve as a forum for cultivation of British soft power? At the heart of this study is the notion of soft power, or the direct ability to attract other nations to a state's mission through value attraction. Because communication is the keystone to effective soft power diplomacy in the Information Age, media theory, including textual analysis and the notion of spectacle, will serve as a foundation for discovering soft power values produced by the British nation while in the international Olympic spotlight. Joseph Nye's neoliberal global value framework and the values presented in the London 2012 bid serve as a basic outline of modern British intentions at home and abroad. This thesis will identify London 2012's displayed national values, explore these values to better understand British identity and British perception of their nation's place in a global community, and finally conclude that these emitted values make the Olympic opening ceremony a tool of soft power generation.

Introduction

Winning the hearts and minds of people has long been the objective of those aspiring greater control and ascension in the international community's power hierarchy. National reputation has come to influence global standing in international settings more and more in place of victories and battlefield conquest. Legitimacy created through value-attraction, public diplomacy, and soft power discourse has become crucial to a nation's relations and influence in international settings. As diplomatic strategy moves away from the primacy of economic and militaristic methods of solidifying power, *soft power diplomacy* plays a growing role in global power politics.[1] Just as nations manage weaponry and troops, a country must now manage its credibility domestically and abroad as a tool for securing global influence.[2]

Power politics, the fight for the endorsement of both governments and publics, can take place outside traditional political realms. The spectacle of sport has often served as a method of gaining influence and garnering national support.[3] As "sites where power is frequently exercised by states and a variety of other international actors, where significant degrees of international cooperation are on display, and where political symbolism is routinely evoked,"[4] the Olympic Games become a forum for displays of power by participating countries and an opportunity for host countries to increase global awareness and better their diplomatic reputation. Modern Olympiads, technological spectacles with global audiences, have become a sort of "surrogate warfare,"[5] a site where nations can display their influence to watching audiences. While a site outside of traditional political realms, the Olympics serve as artifacts ripe for review of international political power displays, diplomatic discourse and national value transmission. The host nation, in an international spotlight for the duration of the Olympics, has the ability to shape global understanding through ceremonial displays of values and influence. How the host nation presents itself to the world may ultimately cultivate its international legitimacy and establish its diplomatic influence abroad.

Germany is generally recognized as the first nation that utilized global attention to propagandize the Olympic Games and define Germany's place in global power hierarchies.[6] Nazi leaders used the Olympic Games "to demonstrate their power and to take advantage of the diplomatic opportunities that [came] along with the hosting role."[7] Under Nazi leadership, the 1936 Berlin Olympics broke "the cultural isolation of the Reich's government by using propaganda abroad"[8] and "guarantee[d] the influence of the Nazi state."[9] Nazi Germany recognized Olympic potential for cultivating international influence. In its first actions after receiving the Olympic bid, German Olympic organizers hired a Minister for Valksaufklarung

und Propaganda (popular enlightenment and propaganda)[10] to secure Nazi ownership and influence over the Olympic global broadcast. Germany's Propaganda Committee "became most influential in the struggle for the soul of the German people at home and the image of Nazism abroad."[11] These efforts made Berlin the "first truly modern Games."[12]

The 1936 Olympics reached an unprecedented number of viewers, as the Berlin Games were "used as a test for the implementation of a full range of audio-visual propaganda."[13] While the 1932 Los Angeles Games "were the first to have more than one million spectators, Berlin attracted over 3.7 million."[14] Millions visited and tuned in to Germany and Nazi ideals infused the Games. Only German photographers were permitted inside Olympic venues and photos were thoroughly reviewed by the Berlin Organizing Committee before being submitted to international press publications.[15] Sport was used to "secure hegemony: it provided a sense of self-sacrifice, of courage, while displaying the elitism of a natural order according to physical traits. Sport in this way was a secular cult of physical strength and endurance"[16]—these ideals catered to German values of militant nationalism and white racial supremacy.[17] While German Olympic messaging is certainly an extreme, it is an example that illustrates the impact hosting an Olympiad can have at both a domestic and international level.[18]

The Berlin Games of 1936 serve as an example of the Olympics acting as a forum for national values and a platform for fostering international ties. "Hitler's Games,"[19] as the 1936 Olympiad is often referred to, reveal the power potential of the modern Olympic set-up. Many scholars have studied the Olympic Movement's global potency and have found the games so symbolically powerful as to deem them "surrogate warfare"[20]—a silent battleground where influence is won through symbols instead of weaponry. Where warfare emits the notion of hard power, "surrogate warfare", the use of symbols and values to win global support, may parallel

the notion of soft power diplomacy. As "an effective generator of visibility and political awareness,"[21] the Olympics "underscore the enduring primacy of state actors in an increasingly globalized international system."[22]

Diplomacy in the 21st Century

The 21st century, characterized by rapid globalization, advancements in technology, and the easy spread of information, has seen a drastic change in the way nations relate to one another.[23] National borders are no longer culturally impenetrable and have "become more and more porous in the age of electronic information."[24] Today "mass media images, popular entertainment, multinational corporations and world wide brands"[25] invade national boundaries and are accepted, incorporated or rejected by the home culture. Cultural permeation occurs through increased access to communication technologies such as the web, television, and radio—leading to increased exposure to foreign ideas and ways of life. In contemporary times, the "grand spectacular of military invasion culture"[26] has somewhat diminished in diplomatic realms and is starting to play a smaller role in international relations. According to author John Fraim, the fluidity of national borders and increase of international interaction has lead to a greater emphasis on "diplomacy, information, and technology."[27]

Diplomatic communication, in its many forms, has become crucial to the management of national reputation abroad and fostering ties with allies and non-allies alike. While national interests are still at the forefront of international alliance and action, national success in the areas of trade, security, and diplomacy rely more and more on global collaboration and a state's ability to align with other nations.[28] Countries often appeal to other states to resolve issues affecting

domestic and international communities. Global communication is increasing in frequency as nations work cooperatively to establish shared values through the creation of coalitions like the United Nations for international change and regulation.

The importance of diplomacy, both in terms of a country's role in international politics and its reputation, cannot be overemphasized in the 21st century setting. While traditional diplomacy, global interaction that characterized much of the 20th century, focuses more on government-to-government contact, today's interactions include a greater emphasis on the multifaceted nature of a country and its relations—a strategy known as *public diplomacy.*[29] Public diplomacy occurs when "the government of one nation seeks to employ the media and public opinion of a second to bring constituency or other political pressure on the second nation's government to act in its favor."[30] Scholars and peacekeepers alike argue for an understanding of diplomacy "beyond a narrow understanding of political diplomacy between nation-states to include the cultural identity projects of stateless nations…and intercultural diplomacy targeted at domestic publics of nation-states and stateless nations…as well as the diplomacy that takes place between political and economic actors and organizations."[31]

The interconnected nature of today's international community pushes public diplomacy efforts to "entail a range of promotional and persuasive strategies and techniques in addition to media relations."[32] As interaction increases in our globalized world, it is important to understand the messages and interpretations of international contact because "the way in which relationships with active publics are framed by both sides and interpreted in public debate and the media is […] paramount in the way negotiation, if entered into, proceeds."[33] The messaging of a nation's culture and diplomatic "dialogue, transparency, trust and commitment,"[34] its forging or destruction of relationships, helps to shape its degree of influence in the world. Much like a

public relations campaign,[35] public diplomacy takes into consideration the interplay of a nation's culture, its music, fashion, education, and media, and how these aspects shape international perspective and regard for a nation. As an international power strategy, public diplomacy falls under the umbrella of soft power diplomacy.[36] Soft power considers international reputation and sensitivity to the cultural, economic and political aspects of both state and non-state actors and uses value attraction as a means of gaining influence and allegiance from these agencies.[37]

Much has changed since the Olympics came to Berlin in 1936. The Information Age brought with it unprecedented levels of interconnectivity and a dramatic change in the way nations cooperate and relate to one another. London 2012, the most recent Olympiad, reached audiences spanning the globe—demographics and publics unavailable to German Olympic organizers. Have such global shifts altered or increased the power potential of the Olympic Games? As the world grows more connected and aware of its many regions with technological advancements, this thesis poses a single question: Do the Olympics in general and the London 2012 Olympic opening ceremony in particular serve as a forum for cultivation of British soft power? Soft power, the direct ability to attract other nations to a state's mission,[38] is at the heart of this study. Because communication is the keystone to effective soft power diplomacy in the Information Age, media theory, including textual analysis and the analytical construct of Spectacle, serve as a foundation for discovering soft power values broadcasted by the British nation while in the international Olympic spotlight. Spectacle, a media concept that recognizes the ability of productions to interpret culture and society and frame experiences of the present in differing ways[39], serves as a framework for more thorough analysis of the power dynamic of the Olympic ceremony. After thorough analysis, this thesis hopes to identify London 2012's displayed national values, explore these values to better understand British identities and British

perception of their nation's place in the international community, and, finally, concludes whether the selected values are conducive to soft power generation. For the purposes of this paper, I define a value as a principle or quality considered desirable or important. While soft power is intangible and difficult to quantify, the opening ceremony's value presentation will permit conclusions regarding the value of the opening ceremony as a tool for soft power production.

The Olympic purveys messages of cultural values to an international audience. Interpretation of broadcasted values determines a nation's ability to wield soft power. Understanding values portrayed in the Olympic setting are important, as a nation's reputation affects its ability to gain international influence and shape global solutions.[40] Global communication, such as Olympic value messaging, plays an increasing role in establishing shared values and creating coalitions for international change. In my attempts to reconcile British modern values and those values emitted during the 2012 Olympic opening ceremony, I have no wish to impose my viewpoints on any aspect of the United Kingdom. My analysis will thus base British value assumptions off frameworks established by Joseph Nye in his book *Soft Power* as well as the self-identified values highlighted in the British 2012 Olympic Bid. My discussion of the British people is limited to external research and a short three-month stay in the country during the summer of 2012.

Soft Power: Diplomacy and Power Relations

In order to understand fully the London 2012 Olympic opening ceremony as an instrument of British soft power, it is important to define soft power diplomacy in more concrete terms. Soft power is based on the notion that the values expressed by a country through

communication and interaction with the international community affects the potency of its diplomatic efforts and political influence.[41] Conversely, the formation of international influence through military might and display is known as hard power.[42] According to Joseph S. Nye, a leading scholar behind the neoliberal movement in international relations, soft power, contrary to hard power[43] and its shades of military influence in international action, is "an intangible attraction that persuades [a nation] to go along with others' purposes without any explicit threat or exchange taking place."[44] Soft power is the creation of "attraction and seduction"[45] by representing values other countries recognize and with which they want to align. A country wielding soft power employs neither force nor monetary compensation. Instead, soft power is "an attraction to shared values and the justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of those values."[46] Public diplomacy, previously mentioned, is the attention to cultural nuances conducive to soft power diplomacy. In an age of increasing global contact and multilateral exchange, a leader representing values others want to follow makes it "cost less to lead."[47] Value expression in international contact, attracting others to support your agenda, generates efficient leadership and a large spectrum of influence.

This paper particularly wishes to stress the role soft power plays in the multilateral action characteristic of modern world politics. Influence is gained through soft power techniques and this power can later sway international agendas. According to Nye, the soft power of a country lies in three resources: its culture, its political values and its foreign politics.[48] These specific sources are points of soft power cultivation revisited in later opening ceremony analysis.

Value attraction is at the heart of soft power's potency. Determining how and which values are expressed in international exchange require analysis of culture, value interpretation, and the deeper meaning of a nation's actions and agenda. Rephrased by Nye, "the resources that

produce soft power arise in large part from the values an organization or country expresses in its culture, in examples it sets by its international practices and policies, and in the way it handles its relations with others."[49] While both hard and soft power are relevant components to international power dynamics, Nye argues that soft power's strength rivals, if not supersedes, hard power's influence. A highly globalized world promotes the spread of national information and culture and with it, the values of a nation.[50] The presentation of these values on an international stage has the potential to attract other nations and win their support more efficiently than through the use of military means or force.

While hard power is easily made tangible with the presence of guns, aircraft, military compounds and economic sanctions, soft power's influence is more difficult to pin point. Nye claims that actions that are "determined by an observable but intangible attraction"[51] are a direct result of soft power motivations. Soft power's currency lies not in force or money but in attraction to shared values, justness and a sense of obligation to seeking out value realization.[52] Power in today's globalized and highly connected world "is less tangible and less coercive among the advanced democracies than it was in the past."[53] Democracy, however, is not the method of governance in every nation and a one-size-fits-all approach to value attraction limits the "global transformation of power."[54] A theory of neoliberal thought, soft power, rooted in liberal ideas, may be less applicable in some regions of the world—areas that do not endorse neoliberalism as a whole.

Power has become more intangible in the Information Age as a result of growing "virtual communities and networks that cut across national borders."[55] Organizations outside of national governments maintain levels of soft power as they create and maintain citizen "coalitions"[56] by investing in a shared attraction. The added number of agencies and organizations vying for the

support of peoples worldwide has diversified power allocation. Influence does not lie solely with governments and their agencies. Soft power then becomes an important element of modern diplomacy and power retention. Traditional acquisitions and displays of power are no longer as effective as new-aged communities participate in power spheres. "Transnational corporations and non-governmental actors (terrorists included) […] play larger roles."[57] Nations that are better able to garner support and wield soft power in a globalized and connected world are "those with multiple channels of communication that help to frame issues; whose dominant culture and ideas are closer to prevailing global norms (which now emphasize liberalism, pluralism, and autonomy); and whose credibility is enhanced by their domestic and international values and policies."[58] Liberalism, pluralism and autonomy, trending international values, will resurface as a later framework for value review of the 2012 Olympic opening ceremony.

Hegemony and Soft Power

A strong parallel to soft power is Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, or the notion that "man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas."[59] The media studies theory of hegemony specifically notes the role those in power have in shaping discourse and consent of the masses.[60] Gramsci recognized that dictatorship was not the "sole form of political rule."[61] Hegemony proved another way to garner political strength, as it is "based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the world view of the ruling class."[62] Just as value messaging characterizes soft power, ideas and consent building construct hegemony. Some consider hegemony a threat to the "viability of international

society,"[63] while others see it as a means to "the creation and maintenance of international order."[64]

The emergence of US primacy in the post-Cold War era have lead some scholars to believe "the United States will inevitably play a central role in providing world order, and world politics will center around how other powers relate to this global hegemon."[65] US soft power, its influence through value attraction, may equally be influence secured by ideas and consent-building amongst global publics. The United Kingdom also enjoyed an era of singular hegemony. Britain's primacy controlled its Empire—influence later to be recognized as "applying to the international order more generally."[66] As host to the 2012 Olympics, Britain's former title as world hegemon and its continued prevalence in international action is important to keep in mind throughout analysis of opening ceremony political values. The discourses of national identity in the performance that "mirror relations of dominance potentially legitimize and help sustain long-standing hierarchies of power in each nation."[67] Hegemonic undertones to national displays may add additional sway to national claims of influence and may contribute to the effectiveness or controversy of soft power discourse.

Credibility: A Fine Line between Soft Power and Propaganda

The creation of attraction, crucial to maximizing soft power, is evermore connected with legitimacy and reputation.[68] The rapid spread of information and the unprecedented levels of citizen awareness means that "political struggles occur over the creation and destruction of credibility."[69] A nation's government must now "compete for credibility not only with other governments, but with a broad range of alternatives including news media, corporations, nongovernmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and networks of scientific

communities."[70] Contrary to "traditional power politics,"[71] where the strength of a nation's economy or military dictates victors, Information Age politics "may ultimately be about whose story wins."[72] Credibility, the consistency of values and political action seen by an international audience, determines reputation and place in world politics. Because of the "paradox of plenty,"[73] "credibility becomes an even more important power resource."[74] While creating value attraction is beneficial for nations and other agencies with power, "information that appears to be propaganda may not only be scorned but also may turn out to be counterproductive if it undermines a country's reputation for credibility."[75] Communication is crucial to power relations. A nation's level of value attraction and sincerity with which those values are communicated determines the efficacy of soft power.

Soft power is the "idea of using information and culture for the purposes of diplomacy,"[76] but it is important to note the "thin line between information and propaganda"[77]—a line governments regularly toe when trying to win public approval. Soft power, unlike political propaganda, finds many of its important resources "outside the control of governments,"[78] making it more difficult to wield and its potency dependent on "acceptance by the receiving audiences."[79] Tools of propaganda, in sharp contrast, lie more often with government agencies and are of a biased or misleading nature. Since the Cold War, "publics have become more wary and sensitized about propaganda."[80] Simple propaganda "lacks credibility and thus is counterproductive as public diplomacy."[81] While informing publics and creating a positive image are elements of soft power, "public diplomacy also involves building long-term relationships that create an enabling environment for government politics."[82] The spread of information, at the core of soft power, "can quickly produce or prevent a desired outcome."[83] More often than not, soft-power resources "are slower, more diffuse, and more cumbersome to wield" than propaganda

campaigns.[84] Propaganda, playing off emotion and misinformation, may have more immediate effects, yet less-legitimate ends.

To illustrate more concretely the differences between soft power and propaganda, I look to Olympic examples. Despite gaining the Olympic bid and recognizing the Olympic ideals of "international friendship and the brotherhood of nations,"[85] the Berlin Games of 1936 embraced messages that were propagandist and hypocritical. While Jewish international visitors were allowed into Germany, Jews at home were called 'undesireables' and open intimidation of Jewish athletes characterized Hitler's Games.[86] The German domestic press was ordered to avoid mention of any Jewish Olympic victors and only German photographers were allowed into Olympic venues.[87] With sole rights to photographs, the German Organizing Committee selected which photos domestic and international news agencies had access to. German officials rounded up the Roma population of Berlin shortly before the Games began and forced the population to live in a camp outside Berlin boundaries.[88] In the Spring of 1943, the same Roma group was shipped to Auschwitz and killed in the infamous German Holocaust.[89] "Brutal and coercive elements of the regime"[90] were used to create a "culture of consent"[91] domestically and warp international perception of the Third Reich. Berlin Olympic organizers made a concerted and conscious effort to pave over human right injustices and propagandize the social state of the German nation.

While Germany used propaganda in an attempt to garner world attention and increased national standing, the United Kingdom set about similar objectives in a much different manner. The London 2012 Olympic motto "Join in London," proved a phrase Olympic organizers took to heart. With legacy and the "next generation" themes of the ceremonies and Games, London 2012 introduced the International Inspiration Program, a global sports legacy program that "enriched

the lives of 12 million children and young people in 20 countries around the world through high-quality and inclusive physical education, sport and play."[92] The program recognized different countries and cultures through sharing 22 traditional games to over five hundred schools worldwide.[93] International Inspiration Young Leaders from the United Kingdom and around the world shared these games with their local community and took part in an educational program centered on London 2012's milestones and venues.[94] Education, information, and compatibility with Olympic ideals characterized the International Inspiration Program. Through the program's outreach, knowledge, and empowerment, the United Kingdom increased national awareness abroad, involved new and diverse demographics in Olympic interest and shared its culture with participating nations—efforts conducive to cultivating soft power abroad.

Soft Power and the Olympics

The Olympic Games, occurring once every four years, focus international attention on a single nation. The modern Olympic Games are a hegemonic opportunity for the host nation to display its values to an international audience and garner viewer appreciation and amity. By presenting national ideas and world perspective in the Olympic setting, host countries create an ideal national image for international consumption. A global reputation is forged with Olympic attention and may serve as the foundation for value attraction between host nation and international audiences. These value connections equate to increased international awareness—connections and influence a country can capitalize on in future global interactions.

The Olympic opening ceremony serves as a forum for the expression of the host nation's political principles, culture, and approach to foreign relations—all considered tools of soft power

creation.[95] The Olympics, by their very nature encouraging international harmony and tolerance, broadcast national ideals to an audience spanning the globe. Olympic attention presents an opportunity for national "inducement and attraction"[96] in a global arena—crucial in long-term soft power cultivation. With an estimated four billion people tuning in to some portion of the London 2012 Olympics,[97] global audiences hone in on a host nation for a two-week period—a publicity event virtually unattainable in other circumstances. In a world affected by the "paradox of plenty," the Olympics are standout events where host nations can highlight their culture and influence as a world audience watches.

The Olympic ceremony caters to Nye's resources for soft power development: culture, political values and foreign politics. As the ceremony unfolds, revealing layers of history, music, choreography, symbols, and important characteristics of the host nation, those tuning in gain insight into the cultural and political makeup of the host country. The simple omission of a historical scar on a host nation's reputation may play up a nation's "changed ways," neutralize controversy or enrage affected parties. Highlighting values that parallel current global norms of liberalism, pluralism, and autonomy[98] may incur a positive reflection on the host nation in global politics.

While soft power rests on identifying shared values "exchanges are often more effective than mere broadcasting."[99] The artistic and technological spectacle of the opening ceremony provides an interactive media production that engages citizens from all participating countries. Olympic values, those of brotherhood, respect, equality, and world citizenship,[100] may strengthen national appeal to global spectators and the efficacy of Olympic soft power. The strong parallel between Olympic ideals and global norms may permit a host nation, in aligning itself and its actions with Olympic principles, to grow its diplomatic sympathies in the international

community. International spectators receive cultural and diplomatic messaging, woven into the Universalist opening ceremony setting.

The Olympics, the largest international sporting celebration in the world, have more participating nations than the United Nations.[101] With up to 90 percent[102] of the world's televisions tuned in to winter and summer game coverage, nearly 1 in 7 people watch the Games globally.[103] The diverse nature of the Olympic audience brings the concept of mass audience to a global scale—a unique phenomenon and an opportunity ripe for international communication exploration and the application of the concept of spectacle.

The Olympic Movement: An Overview

The first Olympic games were an invention of "classical" Greece, a time period that began in 480 BCE.[104] By 576, the popularity of the Games "conquered the entire Greek world."[105] Held in honor of Greek Gods, particularly Zeus, Olympic competition served as a display of athleticism and the perfection of the human body—Olympia "represented moral and physical development, the symbiosis of mind and body."[106] A year prior to the commencement of the ceremonies "dignitaries responsible for [the Games'] organization dispatched heralds to inform the Greek world of the date of opening."[107] The first day of competition coincided with an Olympic Truce; a time of peace that "denoted the inviolability of the land where the sanctuary was situated [but] did not entail the suspension of ongoing conflicts."[108] Upon Roman conquest of the Greeks, the Game's dedication to pure athleticism and the aesthetics of sport shifted.[109] For the Romans, "the spectacle became everything."[110] The Olympics came to include "special effects, which required sophisticated machinery. The crowd was sprayed with water perfumed

with saffron, and showered with coins and jewels. Occasionally, riots broke out. One overthrew the emperor and caused the death of 30,000 spectators."[111] In its Roman form, the Olympics "became an instrument of Government. They were "ruinous to organize, and were surrounded by embezzlement and corruption."[112]

For more than a millennium, the ancient Olympics survived, "expanding in their events, competitors, and importance as [the] world slowly expanded."[113] Even in its early form, the Olympics "were intended for all people, not just the elite."[114] The ancient Olympic goal was "to bring together in peace the world's best athletes in friendly competition in the pursuit of human excellence"[115]—a goal revived in the modern Olympic movement. As the Roman world met with challenges of both a religious and sovereign nature, Christian Emperor Theodosius ended the Olympic festival in 394 AD, "fearing that they were reverting to a pagan Bacchanalia."[116] While the Olympics of antiquity were silenced with the destruction of Olympic sites and venues by invasion and natural disaster,[117] the Olympic dream was reborn with the discovery of Olympic ruins by French and German archaeologists in 1829.[118] The realization of the Olympic legacy can be attributed to Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the mastermind behind the Olympic revival movement's success and international character. Through this French aristocrat's efforts, ancient Olympic ideals lived on.[119]

The Olympic Games, revived at the turn of the 20th century, "were intimately connected with the modernization process that was taking place in the Western world at the time."[120] The reinvented Olympic Games "contributed not only to a specific institutionalization of sports, but were also closely connected to the construction of nation-states and international relations."[121] Sporting and Olympic successes "were both a sign of, and contributors to, the rise of a general notion of "progress.""[122] The man behind the movement, Pierre de Coubertin, used his

connections to diplomatic and sport realms to create a Congress of parties interested in shaping the Olympic framework.[123] The Congress, like Coubertin, "believed that sport's social dimension had an important role to play in the pacification of national life, in which industrialization was wreaking social havoc, and in stabilizing relations between nations."[124] In the 1900s, "deep-seated enmities divided [European] countries which were arming themselves to the teeth."[125] As a result, Europe's governments found traditional diplomacy less effective than in previous eras. Europe's leaders saw a need for a diplomatic "counterweight,"[126] interactions in which "the fundamental requirement was respect between members and nations."[127] The Olympics came to be viewed as an outlet that could secure peace in the future.[128]

Pierre de Coubertin, while garnering support for his Olympic idea, proclaimed:

> It is clear that the telegraph, the railways, the telephone, passionate scientific research, the congresses and exhibitions have done more for peace than any diplomatic convention. Well, I hope that athleticism will do even more! Let us explore our rowers, runners and fencers: that is the free exchange of the future. And the day it is introduced into the values of old Europe, the cause for peace will have received a new and powerful support. That is enough to encourage your servant to now consider evoking the second part of the plan: to realize on a basis in line with the traditions of modern life this grandiose and virtuous work: the re-establishment of the Olympic Games.[129]

Coubertin viewed the Olympic movement as a way to cultivate and celebrate the unity of humankind.[130] In hoping to create an "alternative religion,"[131] Coubertin faced difficulty overcoming the strong ties of nationalism. These feelings, Coubertin believed, would move competitors and viewers away from a universalist Olympic approach and nullify his hope for

nationalism-free Olympic set up. Coubertin saw "cultural differences as a pre-condition for true internationalism."[132] Coubertin believed "love for one's country (patriotism) was positive, but combined with the hatred of others (nationalism) it was considered negative."[133] Coubertin's high expectations for his Olympic idea are perhaps best embodied in Rule 9 of the Olympic Charter, which states: "The Olympic Games are competitions between athletes in individual or team events and not between countries."[134] Athletes are meant to compete as citizens of the world. The relationship between the Olympics and nationalism remains rather ambiguous to this day. Many contradictions exist between Olympic regulation, meant to encourage Universalism, and the actual approach to the Games—competitors and viewers are divided by national allegiance.

The first modern Olympiad was held in 1896 in Athens, Greece upon ratification of the Olympic framework. Baron de Coubertin, after the reinstatement of the Olympic Games, claimed, "Greek Olympism has re-entered the world after lying eclipsed for several centuries. This bringer of joyous hope will light up the twentieth century."[135] While both controversy and conflict have characterized the Olympics since Coubertin's day, many would claim the Games have taken us steps closer to "establishing the new foundations of human fraternity."[136]

Just as the shift from Greek to Roman-run games changed the character and makeup of the Olympic games, communication technology and modern international relations have altered the impact and political influence of the Olympics. Three hundred and eleven athletes from thirteen nations participated in the first modern Olympics in 1896.[137] Today, more than ten thousand compete and billions of viewers tune in worldwide.[138] As the Olympics evolved, additional ceremonies and rituals came to be incorporated in the Olympic framework. The 1906 Athens Olympics "was the first time the athletes paraded around the stadium grouped by nation

in an opening ceremony; the first time that all athletes were sent by a national Olympic committee and officially represented their countries."[139] The Berlin 1936 Olympics first incorporated the torch relay that now symbolically brings together communities throughout the world.[140] These, along with other innovations and rituals, have come to characterize our modern Olympic period and serve as symbols of influence and unity. The scope and sheer size of the Olympics, rather than the spirit of the Olympics, have been most impacted in the last 100 years.[141] Despite "amateurism, world wars, cold war, political meddling, and boycotts,"[142] the Olympics have survived and continue to grow in the 21st century.

The Olympic Games as Political Mouthpiece and Economic Facilitator

Nazi Germany's use of the Olympic games as a forum to promote international awareness to garner support for the Reich, showed that the Olympics could be a powerful communicator of cultural values. The Olympics, sites for state cooperation and power displays of political and non-political actors, serve as "an effective generator of visibility and political awareness."[143] Many scholars suggest major sporting events such as the Olympic Games have broad significance at the international political level.[144] An Olympiad has "the potential to play a cathartic role in the political lives of nations"[145] and is a prism through which the outside world views the host nation and a "focal point for domestic political attention."[146]

Throughout history, numerous modern Olympic Games have "served a variety of political and national interests."[147] Athletic conquests of Olympic sport competition and patriotic expression by each participating country have led to claims that the Olympics constitute a form of "surrogate warfare."[148] As sites engaging symbols with political undertones and implications,

the Olympics have often played into the larger diplomatic setting. Germany's ban from the 1920 Antwerp Olympics post-World War I reveals the Olympics as a forum for global value expression and reproach.[149] The French and Spanish boycott of the 1936 'Nazi Olympics' is yet another way in which nations used the Olympic setting for expression of national principles and expectations.[150] Olympic contest was often an occasion of tension between the USSR and United States, as the nations faced off during the Cold War.[151] Moscow saw conquests at the Olympics as "irrefutable proof of the superiority of […] socialist culture over the dying culture of the capitalist state system."[152] The Soviet Union used prestige in sport "not simply [as] an asset for national pride" but as "an asset for the Soviet political system."[153] The Olympics can thus be viewed by host and guest nations alike as a place for peaceful victories and as an opportunity to foster domestic support and create an image of strength in the international political realm. Modern Olympic games serve as an opportunity to display international tensions and political censure—a conduit of international value expression with impact beyond the Olympic setting.

Apart from the occasion for political value expression, the Olympics have also been used as a means for host nations to generate state attention and global economic interest. The 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games are "generally regarded as the "coming out party" of the Japanese economy."[154] South Korea, upon receiving an Olympic bid in 1988, focused intensely on recreating the "experience of neighboring Japan, for which the Olympics marked a new legitimacy in world affairs."[155] Mexico City's 1968 Olympics were carefully planned by the host government to herald Mexico's arrival as a world-class political and economic player."[156] Germany in the 1930s and China in the 2000s "used the Games to demonstrate their power and to take advantage of the diplomatic opportunities that come along with the hosting role."[157] The sheer size, organization and grandeur of the Beijing 2008 Olympics served as "a pyrotechnic

symbol of China's aspiration to be viewed as a modern great power."[158] Since an Olympic site provides an occasion for international agencies to cooperate, interact, and evoke political symbols, "power is frequently exercised by states and a variety of other international actors."[159] The environment proves suitable for host nations to develop the "prestige and perceived economic benefit attached to hosting the Olympics."[160]

The United Kingdom: An Overview of British History, Identity, Diversity and Sport

To appreciate the grand display of British culture during London 2012's Olympic opening ceremony, it is necessary to delve first into major components and historical events that characterize the United Kingdom. Modern British identity is founded in the nation's roots of colonialism and conflict. This history is labeled "a kind of residue"[161] effecting modern identity, "the response to and the result of England's engagement with its imperial venture, and of its perception of its mission in the world."[162] Imperialism characterizes British identity and affects the way in which the nation's people view Britain's relationship with the rest of the world. "There was the British Empire, in the well-known sense of a state with far-flung colonies. There was also Great Britain or the United Kingdom, a political entity…[which] could also be regarded as an empire—an 'internal empire', the result of 'internal colonialism.'"[163] The importance of Britain's imperial nature, in two different ways, is crucial to the understanding of its national values, both past and present. Because "nations are formed by a combination of attractions and repulsions, by a fusion of what they wish to be with what the like aspirations of other nations allow them to be,"[164] the formerly divided British Isles and the glory and influence of the British Empire play heavily into modern British perceptions.

For nearly a century after the French Revolution, the English nation remained divided by class,[165] an estate-concept divided by wealth and region. A multitude of regional identities factored into the cultural makeup of Britain in the 1800s. English, Welsh, and Scottish peoples embraced their nuanced backgrounds, dividing the isle. Wide disparities between socioeconomic levels further divided Great Britain. But when the nation faced "the Jacobite threat, the struggles with France, [and] the conflict with the American colonies"[166] a collective response was required. Thus an early national consciousness began to develop in the 19th century as many citizens of the newly united Great Britain began to see themselves as Britons acting collectively to maintain strength and sovereignty.

Industrialization and the growth of a labour movement, "arguably linked the parts of the United Kingdom together more comprehensively than any other…movement and, as with the monarchy and [the movement's] continued strength depended on maintaining [its] appeal across ethnic and national lines."[167] Unification of the working class in trade unions and industrial movements made way for the political power of the "working man." Such movement towards equalization, "dampened not just English but, perhaps even more, Welsh and Scottish nationalism."[168] A more equal and united British society continued to foster British notions of Empire. In the early 20th century, the British Empire was "the largest the world had ever known. It ruled over a vast array of peoples of every conceivable ethnicity. Its identity had to be related to its imperial character. It could not afford to be too closely identified with any one ethnic group, however influential and powerful."[169]

By the mid-1900s, much of what had elevated Britain to "superpowerdom" was no more. In the 1960s, the British found their Empire dissolved and their position as an industrial power and international force challenged. Accordingly, "lacking the stimulus and the bracing

influence...of a world role, Britishness capitulated in the face of an assertion."[170] Regional nationalism began to characterize Britain's political culture as "other nations of the United Kingdom began to envisage a rosier future as separate members of the new European Community."[171] A formerly centralized government under the English Parliament gave way to federalist requests for regional parliaments. Regional identities, once muted for the 'British' cause have resurfaced in the wake of Britain's perceived weakness in the international community.[172]

The United Kingdom's international influence has dramatically fluctuated throughout past centuries. At its peak, Britain had amassed an economic and political Empire greater than the world had ever known. Post-World War conditions in Britain left many Britons wondering where their nation stood in the world order.[173] The 20th century brought with it a "significant and problematical decline in the self confidence and self image of the British people [....] a weakening of national affect."[174] A "crisis of historical continuity"[175] occurred in post-WWII Britain and British identity conceptualization "over the past centuries [seemed] no longer appropriate to today's world."[176] Notions of a "shared historical legacy"[177] formed from "the early grounding of British imagined community in anti-French sentiments...the associated historical importance of Protestantism (and anti-Catholic sentiments), [from] what was for long regarded by the many as the 'civilizing' project of empire; and of the symbolic ideal of 'limited, constitutional monarchy.'"[178] The erosion of unequivocal worldwide British influence in 20th century World Wars meant that "the vital narcissistic element in British culture [was] diminished."[179] The present era "is one in which Britons are consequently left with confused feelings about their national culture and values."[180]

British diversity and social cohesion is perhaps best exemplified in the variety of language, religion, and ethnicity concentrated in London. As the financial capital of the world, the nation's capitol, and landmark of many significant events and leaders, London is the apex of British cohesion and modernity. London is "the greatest provocation to the clarity and coherence of British national culture"[181] and is seen as "a tool for thinking in different ways about questions of cultural complexity, confrontation, interaction [and] negotiation."[182] Some critics see London as "a foreign place—and one that is out of synch with the English nation's temper"[183]—a place of "capitalist glee and cultural pride"[184] that sees itself as "an imperium receiving tribute from every subject race."[185] Such criticism is something Britons, specifically Londoners, must consider in constructing their national identity and affiliations.

A city of over eight million people with residents claiming over 270 ethnicities speaking 300 languages, London is the Babel of the modern world.[186] But the display and general acceptance of diversity in London is heralded by others as "a crucial intellectual framework for British people to rethink and redescribe their relation to culture and identity."[187] The size and religious, ethnic, and cultural mélange of London make the city "a vast space—bigger in some senses than the nation--in which cultures can be differently imagined and conceived by all who are engaged with its reality."[188] With London as the site of the 2012 British Olympic games, expression of diversity and attention to the challenges such diversity brings is a topic of great importance to the opening ceremonies. Because London's cultural makeup is a space "in which the relation between the diversity of cultures might be reimaged and reconceived on a more complex basis"[189] Olympic opening ceremony creative directors, in accurately representing the metropolis, must wrestle with the relationship between diversity and British identity.

Sport has long had a prominent place in British society.[190] Athletic competition in the United Kingdom is "a moral site for the making of national and sometimes regional identity."[191] The prominence of organized sport in Britain originates from early inclusion of athletic pursuits in public school curriculum in the nineteenth century.[192] This curriculum included an "ideology of athleticism"[193]—a "complex of ideas and feelings deliberately and carefully created through ritual and symbol."[194] This emphasis on sport was based on the belief "that physical education and sport would cultivate physical and moral courage, loyalty and co-operation, the capacity to act fairly and take defeat well, and the ability to command and obey."[195] Based in "wider theories of cultural reproduction which claimed competitive sport both ethical, and as morally transferable to the world beyond the playing field,"[196] Sport came to embody "the successful expansion and penetration of the universal market"[197] and reflect "negotiated forms of British and intra-British identity."[198] Despite initial protests from those who were the former "bastion of Olympic opposition,"[199] Great Britain hosted the 1908 Games in London. Combined with the successful Greek Olympics in 1906, the London Olympiad, "stabilize[d] the institution well enough that it was no longer moribund."[200] As the "inventors of modern sport,"[201] the British influenced the Olympic movement, emphasizing fair play and sportsmanship. The Games returned to London in 1948 and 2012.

A Look into Modern British Values

The day after the announcement that London would host the 2012 Games, a series of suicide bombings were detonated in London's underground system. These events gave rise "to ongoing reassessments of 'Britishness' and a quest for core national values."[202] Three of the four

bombers were young, middle-class British citizens. Once this news was released, discussions "surrounding security, national identity and multiculturalism"[203] increased. In the bid for the 2012 Olympics just weeks earlier, Olympic organizers had touted values of unity and diversity. When "juxtaposed with the bidding rhetoric, the response to the bombings revealed the ambiguities and limitations of the strident assertion of inclusive multicultural Britain that the bid had promulgated."[204] Hostility towards minorities, unemployment, and poverty, while a reality in Britain, do not characterize values Olympic organizers showcase to a watching world. The discrepancies between desired national values and the reality of those values are generally avoided in Olympic national "presentation of self."[205] British domestic audiences may see the Olympic British identity as simplified, a result of Olympic directors paving over nuanced complexities of their society. Thus it is important to note that values toted in an international spotlight simplify cultural conditions and present a limited view of social viewpoints.

As an American, I seek accuracy in defining British values. My conclusions are limited to the time I lived in London and the research I have conducted. My conceptualization of British values remains within the framework of Nye's global norms—liberalism, pluralism, and autonomy—and it will recognize the values presented in the distinctly British 2012 Olympic Games bid. As mentioned above, the values presented to the world may not be values embodied by all of the diverse populace. Values present in the ceremony and their similarity to Nye's three neoliberal values and British values presented in the Olympic bid will indicate whether the opening ceremony and the Olympics as a whole are a tool for soft power development.

This paper will first explore the values that the London Olympic organizers presented in their bid for the 2012 Olympics. While these principles are self-identified by British Olympic directors, aspects that a country chooses to emphasize certainly speak to a nation's international

priorities. In the final presentation of the official documents submitted to the International Olympic Committee by London 2012, the opening paragraphs "emphasized London's role as a beacon for world youth, diversity and cultural experience."[206] The London 2012 bid placed "a concerted focus on a vibrancy keyed on diversity, harmony and multiculturalism."[207] Organizations working in tandem with London 2012, primarily British tourism associations, selected aspects of London, and British society as a whole, to highlight, as they would approach international visitors and viewers. *Visit Britain*, one of London 2012's many partners, developed "an Olympic Games strategy keyed on an essence that defines Britain as 'Timeless, Dynamic and Genuine.'"[208] The value emphasis of the bid documents hoped to position "Britain as a positive and engaging nation, at home with its rich cultural heritage but embracing change and open to new ideas, with a welcoming and world class capital city."[209]The sponsoring organization underscoring these three values in its branding campaign, and through the use of powerful imagery:

> The brand proposition to be played out through the Games suggests that while strength lies in Britain's diversity, one aspect rings true for all: Britain inspires. It does so through being 'timeless' (places and history such as the Lake District, the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, castles, cathedrals, the Beatles and Harry Potter), having 'genuine' people (real stories from real people such as a friendly taxi driver or pub landlord), and through dynamism (culture, the energy of London fashion week, the Notting Hill carnival, an 'up for it attitude' that is the driving force behind the likes of Gordon Ramsey, Danny Boyle and Richard Branson).[210]

Additional London 2012 documents underscore the presentation of modern British values. In 2011, the United Kingdom presented its Truce Resolution to the United Nations

General Assembly, an Olympic tradition carried out prior to every Olympiad.[211] In it, the United Kingdom welcomed several initiatives for the 2012 Games, including "helping to promote more inclusive and peaceful communities, urban regeneration, changing attitudes to disability and inspiring young people."[212] The Truce highlighted five priority themes of the 2012 Olympics: climate change, waste reduction, inclusion, biodiversity, and healthy living.[213] These messages of inclusion, diversity, peace, sustainability, and inspiration were fundamental aspects to the London opening ceremony. These themes will be further explored in the discourse analysis of this thesis.

A second framework for understanding British values is the global values recognized by Joseph Nye: pluralism, liberalism, and autonomy. The brainchild of Western thought and ideals, the Olympics "hegemonically re-inscribe and represent neoliberal discourses on sport, culture, nation, and democracy throughout the ascendant global capitalist order."[214] The identity presented to the world's publics leads to "a reconstitution of collective identities along pluralistic and multicultural lines that reformulate regional and ethnic differences and diversity."[215] The Olympics, as a sport venue, serve as "a tool par excellence for negotiating ideas of nation, class and race 'after Empire,' and the apparent 'void' of Englishness given alienation and displacement following disruption to an accustomed place in the United Kingdom."[216] The formal opening ceremony presentation of Britain as a multifaceted nation ruled by a constitutional monarchy, if it were to emphasize Nye's global values and parallel the neoliberal Olympic construction, might serve as a conduit of British soft power diplomacy. London 2012 overtly intended to use narratives of "ceremonies and rituals of multicultural Britishness [to] play out in a civic multiculturalism"[217] and to emphasize "strong multicultural or minority identities that complement a framework of vibrant, dynamic, national narratives."[218] The textual analysis

that follows helps to determine how well the London opening ceremony served as a spectacle display of national and international values that would be conducive to a wider exertion of soft power influence.

Communication Theory and Olympic Values: Implications of London 2012 Ceremony Representations

Olympic ceremonies are directed toward global audiences and the Olympic broadcast must translate internationally.[219] While event organizers "may have explicit communicative intentions and provide a clear exegesis and guidance, the results are dependent upon the media personnel who communicate and interpret them for the millions of individual spectators."[220] Thus, the meaning of a media event like the Olympics is multi-layered[221] and interpreted differently due to culturally nuanced understandings. While a specific national culture may exist, a one- or two-hour show cannot begin to present its many facets. The production process "implies that the organizers have to choose certain elements"[222] that are typical of their nation and "then find acceptance for their choice."[223] The opening ceremony has evolved into a technological and artistic display watched by countless millions throughout the world. These Olympic ceremonies "are unequivocal—there are no public rituals that compete on this scale."[224] It is important, then, to understand both the diplomatic and political implications of these ritualistic spectacles. The following analysis serves that role: we explore how well messaging and values reinforced a British soft power cultivation agenda. Through the application of spectacle framing, British displays of such power within the ceremony can become clearly identified.

Scholar Douglas Kellner asserts that *spectacles* are "phenomena of media culture that embody contemporary society's basic values, serve to initiate individuals into its way of life, and dramatize its controversies and struggles."[225] Spectacle framework is rich in its ability to interpret "contemporary culture and society [as] major spectacles provid[ing] articulations of salient hopes and fears, fantasies and obsessions, and experiences of the present."[226] Applied to mega-events like the Super Bowl, Spectacle "demonstrate[s] who has power and who is powerless, who is allowed to exercise force and violence, and who is not" and serves to "dramatize and legitimate the power of the forces that be."[227]

Spectacle politics, as a display of power, can play a part in national diplomacy. Spectacles often provide hegemonic nations with capacity to achieve political ends. Soft power can be cultivated through the use of spectacle. Media spectacle "describes a media and consumer society organized around the production and consumption of images, commodities and staged events."[228] These events or *megaspectacles* "embody contemporary society's basic values, serve to initiate individuals into its way of life, and dramatize its controversies and struggles, as well as its modes of conflict resolution."[229] Sporting events, international conflicts, media events and entertainment, all forms of spectacle, are dramatized and legitimized by media culture.[230]

Kellner traces the roots of spectacle to Machiavelli's *The Prince* where the author encourages leaders to use spectacles as a means of maintaining state and social control.[231] As a result, many monarchs created rituals showcasing the strength of their state or empire as a tool to legitimize their continued position of power.[232] For millennia, "war, religion, sports and other domains of public life were fertile fields for the propagation of spectacle."[233] These traditions and rituals for expressing power often came in the form of entertainment for the masses.[234] Technological and informational advances that so characterize today's globalized world have

heralded in an era of *technospectacles*—spectacles with an unprecedented number of viewers that begin to shape "the contours and trajectories of contemporary societies and cultures."[235] The power of spectacle in shaping power discourse make spectacle displays tools of hegemony—a method for seeking out power and maintaining consent of watching audiences.

Spectacles "fascinate the denizens of the media and consumer society and involve them in the semiotics of a new world of entertainment, information, and consumption, which deeply influences thought and action."[236] This influential role of spectacle has helped culture industries multiply spectacles "in novel spaces and sites."[237] Spectacles become "the organizing principles of economy, polity, society, and everyday life."[238] Played out in media culture, spectacles "continue to arbitrate social and political issues, deciding what is real, important, and vital."[239] Media culture "proliferates ever more technologically sophisticated spectacles to seize audiences"[240] by providing, "ever more material for fantasy, dreaming, modeling thought and behavior, and identities."[241]

From Ancient Rome's chariot races to the Olympic games of antiquity, sport has served as a source of spectacle and entertainment.[242] Modern sports "celebrate and reproduce dominant societal values, products, and corporations in an unholy alliance between sports, commercialism and media spectacle."[243] American Super Bowls or World Cup soccer tournaments are prime examples of modern spectacle displays incorporating power, consumerism and statehood. According to Kellner, sports "articulate spectacles of race and nationalism, celebrity and star power, and transgression and scandal."[244] Communities of all sizes, actual or virtual, embody commonalities and shared values through these expressions. Consumers participating in global events "become experts and critics, and actively participate in sports communities"[245] thereby generating "nationalism and the intensification of global sports events through omnipresent

media."[246] Sports represent a pause from the everyday and provide "ritual, mystery, and spiritual aura"[247] to a spectacle. Additionally, sports incorporate "dominant social values such as individuality, winning, teamwork, and increasingly, commercialism."[248] Spectacle, harnessed by culture industries and world leaders alike, displays common themes that serve as a rallying point for media consumers. From sport to the pomp of national rituals, power is at the heart of spectacle. Combinations of hegemonic displays and soft power messaging, the Olympic opening ceremony spectacle draws consent from the masses as images presented are believed as truths. While Kellner may overstate the role and importance of spectacle to culture industries and watching audiences, spectacle is a useful analytic device employed later in this paper.

The London 2012 Opening Ceremony as Spectacle

Olympic opening ceremonies, with political messages, nationalistic images, technological grandeur and large entertainment value, fit the definitions of both mega and technospectacle. The "template for commercialization, and polarization, of the Games…unfolded at the Berlin Games in 1936."[249] Since 1936 the games "are steadily getting bigger and becoming more and more impressive both in quantitative and in experiential terms. The Olympics, as ever-growing spectacles, "represent a confluence of commercialism, professionalism, capitalism and nationalism"[250] and reflect "a commitment by each organizing committee to outperform its predecessor with an unforgettable extravaganza."[251]

The Olympic opening ceremony involves expression of cultural values and can lend itself to the display of national power, serving as "a showcase for leaders or advocates of causes who compete for world attention."[252] As the introduction to the largest sport competition in the world,

the Olympic opening ceremony "may simultaneously embrace billions of people, as unsuspecting audience whose absorption screen is exposed and vulnerable and whose mental defenses against propaganda are completely down. It is a means of…penetrating all defenses, engaging the audience emotionally, vocally, and physically."[253] While the opening ceremony can be viewed as a tool for "reproducing the state-centricity of the international system as a whole,"[254] its hegemonic value can also be interpreted as a means to educate and involve the world in a nation's culture—an impressive spectacle of public diplomacy.

The London Olympic opening ceremony, rich in imagery, symbols, music, culture and history provides fertile ground for spectacle theory application. The Olympic ceremony conveys messages and cultural values to an international audience. Interpretation of those emitted values determines a nation's ability to wield soft power. Understanding values portrayed in the Olympic setting are important because values are tied to a nation's reputation. Reputation affects a state's ability to gain international influence and shape global solutions. Perception of a nation, its soft power capacity, is important to study and will be the continued focus of this paper. Soft power, however, is not often generated through such a grand and technological spectacle as the Olympics and it is important to recognize the role spectacle may have in helping audiences better identify with values highlighted in the ceremony. The study of Olympic spectacle "offers a revealing basis for the comprehension of the complexities characteristic of the cultural expression of the persisting crises of modernity and globalization"[255]—key among these crises is the "so called crisis of national identity."[256] British identity is at the forefront of the opening ceremonies and serves as the foundation for British cultivation of soft power resources, as culture, political values and foreign policy emanate from values associated with national identity.

Keeping spectacle as a tool for presentation of national values in mind, the following discussion gets to the heart of those values displayed in a spectacular display.

A Textual Analysis of the 2012 Opening Ceremony

Textual analysis is "a methodology—a data-gathering process—for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and how they fit into the world in which they live."[257] Televised events like the Olympics can be read like a literary text. Textual analysis is employed to answer questions of "aesthetics, ideology, discourse, narrative, genre, representation, camerawork, music, casting, editing, the script, authorship and so on."[258] A strong point of textual analysis application is the ability to ascertain cultural implications and meaning nuances that escape content and data analysis.

While a communication tool used to "describe and interpret the characteristics of a recorded or visual message,"[259] textual analysis also comes with its limitations. Perceptions of events, such as the Olympic spectacle, are subjective and can be manipulated through differing production and broadcasting techniques.[260] It is important to note a textual analysts reading is but one interpretation of a media artifact—there are as many realities to a text as there are viewers, as each observer understands the world around him or herself differently.[261] Scholars employing discourse analysis can postulate "an almost endless number of different 'reading positions.'"[262] Definitiveness in textual analysis conclusions negates the variability and diversity of viewership and fails to recognize the notion of an "active audience" and the multiple realities created by a single event.[263] These varying interpretations, however, are viewed in a positive light by media

scholars as they "offer interesting explorations of the [artifact] and continue to inform and generate wider debate.[264]

Global sporting spectacles, specifically the Olympics, are "key sites in the discursive construction of nation."[265] Discourse and value representation of the Olympic spectacle "provide[s] fertile ground for articulations of national identity"[266] in their creation and maintenance of "the character, culture, and historical trajectory of a people."[267] The brilliance of an international sporting spectacle provides an effective platform for enlarged and engaged viewership of the narrative of the host nation—the "set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols and rituals which stand for or represent the shared experiences, sorrows, and triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation."[268] The performance of spectacle is the lens through which this thesis views the soft power potential of the Olympic opening ceremonies and the Games themselves, for without the mass appeal and drama of the Olympic spectacle, the Olympic setting would lose its effectiveness as a diplomatic tool.

While the Olympic opening ceremony "ostensibly celebrates all member nations, in practice, both compulsory and interpretive elements mirror the values and experiences of the host nation."[269] The narrative a host nation presents to the international community is an opportunity to promote economic interest, but also a time to develop political ideologies for the world to see—the very core of soft power.[270] The spectacle production and national value discourse interpreted by international viewers plays a role in both domestic and international understanding of the host nation's identity. While discourses of national identity prove malleable and ever changing, "widely circulating discourses of national identity may generally serve to reproduce relations of dominance, [and] they may also reflect and fuel social change."[271] This dynamic and

shifting national identity allows a nation to consciously consider the values it broadcasts internationally, to continue to support certain values or withhold others from endorsement. While general dramatization of national history and conflict may occur, national truths must lie at the heart of messaging to ensure strengthening of national reputation and the forging of soft power credibility.

In the three-hour duration of the opening ceremony, the host nation presents a picture of how it views itself, its history, culture, and how it wants to bee seen by viewers worldwide. The ideas recognized in the ceremony are included in hopes of educating global audiences and furthering national attention abroad—a method of international diplomatic strategy paralleling the basic tenets of soft power. Just as spectacle has revealed the potency, grandeur and appeal of the Olympic Games, textual analysis will unearth discourse and value emission of the opening ceremony in hopes of understanding the Olympic setting as a forum for the cultivation of British soft power.

What follows is a critical reading of the BBC broadcast of the London 2012 Olympic opening ceremony accessed through the London 2012 YouTube channel, applied and understood within the framework of soft power development. The ceremony will serve as opportunity to address the values of the British people and the representation of the British state while in the international spotlight. Textual analysis is employed to reveal value discourse within Nye's three resources of soft power framework: Britain's culture, political values and foreign politics. Reviewing ceremony representations and symbolic displays may reveal national culture, perspective and values emphasized earlier in earlier sections of this paper. Value judgments of discourse unearthed within the ceremony will be avoided to maintain direct focus on soft power in the Olympics. The following analysis is but one way to interpret the London 2012

megaspectacle. The soft power lens applied to ceremony analysis is grounded in respected diplomatic material and media studies approaches. The discourse analysis focuses on uncovering British ideologies and value systems represented in the high-tech and artistically abstract London 2012 opening ceremony in order to better conceptualize international awareness and global alliance fostered as a result of Olympic ceremony viewership.

The 2012 London Olympics began on July 27, 2012, and incorporated 204 countries and more than 10,000 athletes.[272] With an audience of over one billion people, London's opening ceremony had the second largest peak audience of the games, coming in just behind the closing ceremony.[273] Hailed as "both a pageant and a party,"[274] the London 2012 opening ceremony was described as a "festive viewing of television,"[275] a spectacle told from the perspective of ordinary people, and a "fair attempt at 'a vernacular and informal history.'"[276] The increased viewership of the opening ceremonies is a direct result of the appeal of the megaspectacle, seen as brilliant entertainment and an "opportunity for social interaction and solidarity with others in a confused world."[277] Danny Boyle, British mastermind behind both the opening and closing ceremonies, claimed to weave intentional messages of tolerance, inclusivity, cultural heritage, legacy and diversity into his £27 million production highlighting British achievement and transformation.[278] "This is for everyone" became the theme of the opening ceremony and the production's media guide labeled the ceremony "a celebration of the creativity, exuberance and, above all, the generosity of the British people."[279] Below I explore, through textual analysis, whether British intentions created value appeal and intensified British resources for soft power cultivation: culture, political values and foreign politics.

British Culture in the Opening Ceremony

Culture is a crucial element to exercising and maintaining soft power. As a "set of values and practices that create meaning for a society,"[280] culture acts as a unifying force that is transmitted through "personal contacts, visits, and exchanges."[281] Culture comes in two forms: "high culture such as literature, art, and education, which appeals to elites, and popular culture, which focuses on mass entertainment."[282] When a nation's culture "includes universal values and its policies promote values and interests that others share, it increases the probability of obtaining its desired outcomes because of the relationships of attraction and duty that it creates."[283]

A nation's culture is at the heart of Olympic transmissions and the production-entertainment value of the opening ceremonies allows a nation to artistically and selectively present an image of itself to a watching world. Olympic organizers recognize "ceremonies, culture and education are often under the same umbrella, but the Ceremonies occupy a distinctly prominent place within the national and international positioning of the Games and within their political staging."[284] In the earliest imagery presented during the London 2012 opening ceremony, the world is introduced at lightning speed to the prominence of British culture, following the river Thames, encountering *The Wind in the Willows* characters, hearing wisps of the elite Eton school's boating song, watching flashbacks of memorable British athletic victories, racing east across widely recognized landscapes of Parliament and the London Eye only to end at the Olympic Stadium itself.[285] Visually appealing and fast-paced, the introductory video sequence sets the stage for British culture for "an international audience in a digestible way."[286]

The spectacle of the ceremony, unfolding amidst technological glory and larger-than-life production techniques, illustrates a narrative that presents "a less predictable national story from commonly shared and widely recognized historical resources."[287] Instead of a nation "clinging to

the wreckage of their drifting historical identity,"[288] the ceremony highlights a Britain at peace with its place in the world and its diverse culture and colored history. The first aspect of culture to the Olympic ceremony is the concrete, yet multifaceted British identity presented to the world. The United Kingdom of the ceremony seems to understand the role it played in the world—recognizing its history of influence with storylines of Industrial Revolution havoc and reward, a brief nod to soldiers of the World Wars, and recognition of the British invention of the World Wide Web. Scenes dedicated to great British literature and an early glimpse of a game of cricket highlight the primary ways the global community experiences Britain—through its works of fiction and sport. Boyles answered questions of British identity with images of a nation that "was creative, tolerant, pluralist and at ease with itself."[289] These symbols "are not substitutes or palliatives for a nation whose relative power has declined. They are integral to Britain's place in history and the world."[290]

British music proved another key cultural element incorporated into London 2012's grand opening. While music is experienced at a national level, the ease to which it is transmitted and enjoyed allows music to "evade location."[291] Artists, albums and music movements emanating from the British Isle reverberated through much of the world in the 1960s and 70s.[292] British records and images were exported across oceans and incorporated into cultures outside British communities—the Beatles perhaps the most internationally recognizable British band. Britain ushered in eras of music nonconformity and sub-culture "a lineage of rock creativity which to them suggested 'alternative' forms of British identity, less conformist and complacent than those embodied in older, traditional forms."[293]

Divided into segments, the London 2012 ceremony distinctly recognized the prominence and influence of British music in *Frankie and June Say…Thanks Tim!* The past meets present as

ceremony audiences watch a young couple, Frankie and June, travel through nightclubs playing music of the 1960s, 70s, and 90s. "Bohemian Rhapsody" by Queen, "My Generation" by The Who, the Sex Pistols and Tinie Tempah's modern song "Pass Out" are just several songs in the background of the modern love story.[294] The segment culminates with Dizzee Rascal's "Bonkers," a song of hip-hop, electric fusion now interpreted as a "more appropriate representative of new British identities, as reflective and constitutive of a more hedonistic, less puritanical country, one connected to a network of global flows of culture."[295] By including music history, Olympic organizers were not only able to remind the world of Britain's lead role in popular music but also project Britain as "a less fusty, colonial nation than it once was."[296] Music, then, proves not only to be a discourse of influence but a display of British culture as well.

Diversity is yet another cultural aspect that was visible in discourse of the London 2012 opening ceremony in line with ideals espoused in the 2012 Olympic bid. Never explicitly mentioned, diversity stands as a foundation for which British history and identity is built. The opening ceremony "offers 'a range of *experience* within history and a complexity of consumption'; it can be an appealing combination of play, sociality, self-improvement and educational enrichment harnessed to entertainment, art or politics."[297] The "Isles of Wonder," Boyles' Shakespearian reference to the British Isles,[298] fit this re-enactment, performing cultural and political work "through a meshing of popular culture, historical reference and social commentary, and all via the wide-reaching, accessible medium of television."[299] The ceremony presented a "living historical patchwork [that] invoked a more dynamic and assertive interpretation of the past and its application to the present crisis."[300] A "'new myth' of social diversity"[301] was actively embraced by creative leads of the program in hopes of uniting "a

diverse community with joyfulness"[302] and prove to the world that an "ethnically variegated"[303] Britain is stronger economically and socially for its diversity.

A volunteer cast of 7,500 representing every continent created the "Isles of Wonder" spectacle.[304] The phrase references Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, a story set on a remote magical island in which the main character, Caliban, allegedly describes his natural home as ""full of noises, sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not."[305] Such framing encapsulates the creative director's hope of capturing "the rich heritage, diversity, energy, inventiveness, wit and creativity that truly defines the British Isles."[306] The great English nation once known for its internal colonialism[307] over Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland emerges as a nation more 'whole' than ever before—united in name and governance. While the nation remains fragmented by regional and cultural differences between regions, specifically the issue of Scottish sovereignty, the opening ceremony, with its inclusion of video footage of children singing in regions throughout the British and Irish isles, paid homage to the nation's many parts. The four unofficial anthems[308] of the United Kingdom's regions came together into one song—an English choir sang "Jerusalem," Northern Ireland singers performed "Londonderry Air," a Scottish choir sang "Flower of Scotland" and Welsh children sang "Bread of Heaven".[309] This unity amongst differing regions showed the British nation as aware, yet celebratory of its regional differences. A "natural bond between *all* members,"[310] characteristic of nationalism, was formed through the common thread of history and recognized cultural similarities in the ceremony.

Opening ceremony participants varied in race, age, religion, and ability—the performers accurately portrayed the many nations and backgrounds of British citizens. Rich mercantilists, factory workers, suffragettes and other roles were not typecast—individuals from Asian, Middle Eastern and African lineage played historical roles alongside White Europeans, seemingly

implying a general 'color blindness' of British society. Lacking the deep segregation of the United States, Britain cities possess both "rich cultural exchange and dialogue as well as of appropriation and exploitation."[311] These negatives were over come with wide endorsement of British cultural pluralism, serving as a "pleasurable and apolitical multicultural spectacle"[312] for the world to see. 'Boutique multiculturalism'[313] characterized the ceremony and British nationalism seemed to incorporate a variety of ethnicities and backgrounds, muting subtle 'othering' discourses.[314]

Intentional close-up shots of volunteers emphasized the mélange of people responsible for the event's production. With much of the world understanding Britain's cultural presentation through the 'close-up' medium of the television, certain cast members were specifically chosen for airtime abroad. Research indicates the "perception of people's social distance through televised images affects the understanding of those individuals as it creates a sense of intimacy and contributes to emotional factors such as self-disclosure."[315] Scrutiny is found to be more intense and detailed at close-range.[316] Ceremony close-up shots are distinctly multicultural and the focusing in on individuals of varied ethnicities enhances their importance as on-screen characters.[317]

The inclusion of British citizens of differing levels of ability also plays to diversity as a characteristic of British culture. Drumming played a crucial climactic and dramatizing role in the early pasture and *Pandemonium* sections of the Opening Ceremony. Audience members listened as the broadcaster noted the lead percussionist, Dame Evelyn Glennie, was severely deaf, playing barefoot in order to "feel the music more accurately."[318] An additional display of acceptance of diversity and ability comes with the singing of the British national anthem, an event that is "deeply infused with national symbolism."[319] While the presence of the host nation's anthem and

other rituals are dictated by International Olympic Committee requirement, "in practice, participating nations inflect these standard rituals with nationally specific meanings, thus domesticating these universalist moments,"[320] The Kaos Signing Choir for Deaf & Hearing Children, the only "integrated deaf and hearing children's choir in the UK,"[321] sang the National Anthem—more widely known as 'God save the Queen.' The recognition of varying ability levels and inclusion of the amazing artistic and musical contributions of impaired and disabled persons label British culture modern, open-minded, and pluralistic—strongly correlating with trending international values of liberalism and pluralism in diplomatic relations.[322]

Humor is the final British cultural value presented on the Olympic stage covered in this paper. Perhaps the most memorable and shocking element of the London ceremony occurred in the segment entitled *Happy and Glorious*. Viewers watched as the legendary and international figure James Bond, played by Daniel Craig, entered Buckingham Palace and the Queen's chambers. A figure resembling the Queen sits at a desk, and as she turns towards Bond, the audience recognizes the figure is indeed the true British monarch. James Bond and Queen Elizabeth descend to a helicopter pad, soar over London, taking in famous landmarks all the way. The scene returns to the Olympic stadium as a helicopter similar to the Queen's hovers in its center. Suddenly figures resembling the Queen and MI6 agent jump from the helicopter to the stadium floor as the James Bond theme song blares through the stadium. Stadium spectators noted the universal gasp as the 'monarch' dove from the plane. Viewers labeled the staged event "quirky and eccentrically British."[323] The British monarchy, while mostly symbolic in the 21st century, is closely connected to British history and traditions.[324] British culture has long been tied to the majesty and spectacle permitted by the royal family—the monarchy is an active and living "image and representation"[325] of the nation as a whole. The growing existence of media

and mass communication "has been essential for the dramatization and popularization of royal spectacle."[326] A sense of humor displayed by the head of government herself popularizes the notion of British wit as she, a world figure, is constantly made larger-than-life and a source of social acceptance. The Olympics, a spectacle of international proportions, combined with a comical display by a rather severe monarch shows that the nation is willing and able to laugh despite the culture's generally reserved nature and layers of historic tradition.

In recognizing Britain's contributions, (cricket, music, and literature) and social conditions (humor and diversity), the London 2012 ceremony directors presented cultural aspects that paralleled normalized values of pluralism and liberalism outlined by Nye. Cultural elements of the Olympic ceremony also reinforced values of the United Kingdom as dynamic, inclusive and timeless. London and the nation itself became a singular image from its many harmonic parts.

British Political Values in the Opening Ceremony

The next resource recognized by Nye as a means of developing soft power is the presentation of national political values. Political values are important to diplomatic influence because "government policies can reinforce or squander a country's soft power."[327] Domestic or foreign politics that appear to be hypocritical, arrogant, indifferent to the opinion of others, or based on a narrow approach to national interests can undermine soft power."[328] While consistency of political values is crucial to maximizing soft power potential, it is also important that these values often parallel international global norms, those previously mentioned as autonomy, pluralism, and liberalism.[329] Because the Olympic opening ceremonies and ritual are

imbued with universalist undertones, the Olympics may cater especially well to value norms of the international community.

Perhaps the most striking political value intertwined in the Olympic opening production is the repeated mention of, and reference to, legacy—the notion of leaving a mark on the world. While legacy discourse focused on both past and future generations, the discussion was not limited to British legacy alone and generally ignored the nation's dark legacy of colonialism. Recognition of 20th century World Wars and the legacy of military servicemen occurred in the *Pandemonium* section of the performance. The stadium's cacophony of noises hushed to the sound of a lone whistle and the camera zoomed to frame a man in uniform and a red poppy. The poppy serves as a symbol of remembering the dead after it was used in John McCrae's poem *In Flanders Fields; "*In Flanders fields the poppies blow/Between the crosses, row on row."[330]

Further remembrance of those generations who left an enduring legacy but are now gone occurred with the inclusion of a Memorial Wall in the section entitled *Abide With Me.* Spectators were invited to submit pictures of their loved ones in order to feel they were "digitally present"[331] at the ceremony. The section's title references a hymn penned by Henry Francis Lyte in 1847.[332] The "honest expression of the fear of approaching death has made [*Abide With Me*] popular with people of all religions and none."[333] "Abide With Me" has additional significance as Mahatma Gandhi's favorite hymn[334] and the song played by musicians as the Titanic sank.[335] The hymn has "an indelible association with sport"[336] as spectators of the FA Football Cup Final have sung it together since 1927.[337]

The London games endorsed the political value of sustainability along with legacy messaging. Upon entering bidding for the 2012 games, London committed itself to a 'green' Olympics, devoted to the title "most sustainable games ever."[338] Sport venues and Olympic-

related buildings were built with the principles of 'One Planet Living'[339] and legacy in mind—some were built for future functions while others were set up on a temporary basis.[340] Within the opening ceremony itself, 40,000 recycled plastic water bottles and 10,000 plastic bags adorned various costumes throughout the performance.[341] Some claimed the former "derelict East End"[342] reenergized by "new infrastructure for transport, energy, water and telecoms,"[343] becoming a "blueprint for a sustainable new community."[344] Attention on the infrastructure surrounding Olympic sites and venues presented the theme of legacy, which the opening ceremony developed further through artistic and symbolic display.

The "entrance of the Olympic torch and the lighting of the Olympic cauldron have been the climax of Olympic opening ceremonies"[345] and like the National Anthem, serve as an opportunity for the host nation to make ritual elements of the Olympics imbued with national, and sometimes political, statements.[346] Much speculation surrounded the individual selected to light the Olympic flame at the completion of the opening ceremony. London 2012 stunned the world when it selected seven unknown individuals for the honor. Seven young athletes of varying backgrounds and sports, labeled as the "next generation" of athletes, lit the flame simultaneously. Former British Olympians nominated the young athletes, and represented the legacy of the past generation as they passed a torch to each young athlete prior to the teens' combined ignition of the Olympic caldron. Both former athletes, those who paved the way for future athletes, and the next generation of athletes were recognized in the ceremony, issuing a global message of inclusivity and emphasizing the importance of legacy.

Of equal importance to those political values included in the framework of the Olympic Opening Ceremony are those values omitted. The most significant omission of the London 2012 spectacle was the complete lack of reference or acknowledgement of Britain's colonial past.

While some domestic viewers proved "grateful Boyle didn't try to celebrate Britain's conquest and exploitation of half the world,"[347] many came away from the opening spectacle recognizing Empire as the "elephant in the stadium."[348] In the creation of modern political ideology and shaping British cultural discourse, colonization did not make the cut. British international influence, widely recognized in the displays of British innovation and history in the first half of the ceremony, was never connected to colonial conquest. This omission is not surprising, however, as national and political discourses are "as much stories of what the nation *should be* as they are stories of what a nation was and is."[349] Textual analyses of other Olympic ceremonies have found that "historical realities such as slavery, genocide, and racially discriminatory immigration and labor practices are obscured in narratives of nation."[350] With no mention of the British Empire, Olympic organizers recognized the Olympic setting as not one for apologies, but rather a forum for expressing an end of political ideologies endorsing colonial subjugation and the beginning of celebrating Britain's rich cultural makeup.

There is no better dramatization of national experience and political values[351] than London 2012's discourse of innovation—Britain's role in global modernization. The British value of innovation emerges from the Olympic opening ceremony in early scenes with the reproduction of national history—the booming sounds and sights of the Industrial Revolution. Emphasis on British invention, such as the bicycle and World Wide Web also serve this discourse. The segment entitled *Pandemonium*, a term coined by the poet John Milton to represent the capital of Hell in his poem *Paradise Lost,*[352] depicts the rise of industrialism and the hardships and advancements that accompanied it. The Age of Industry is a startling segment of the show, as it is juxtaposed against earlier imagery of quaint British farmland and agrarian life. Chimneys rapidly rise from the formerly green land, indicating the swift and all-

encompassing nature of industrialization in the 19th and 20th centuries.[353] Fifty suited men representing Isambard Brunel, a British engineer responsible for revolutionizing public transportation through the use of rail,[354] appear on the industrial scene to represent "the technological genius of the Industrial Revolution."[355]

As costumed volunteers slave in the foundry at the center of the stadium, viewers recognize they are not viewing British history through rosy glasses, but are instead shown an image of hardship as a building block for modernization. Recognition of both the negatives and positives of this era of British history may build credibility for the opening ceremony's British narrative. The "Olympic spirit celebrates endeavor and struggle, not conquest"[356] and the United Kingdom's portrayal of innovation and hardship parallels these ideals. A second major innovation featured at the end of *Frankie and June Say…Thanks Tim!* is Tim Berners-Lee's World Wide Web—a "gift that would change things every bit as radically as the steam engine", a gift Berners-Lee claimed was 'for everyone.'[357] Britain had "the privilege of staging the games" and interpreting the Olympic spirit.[358] This interpretation included infusions of the British political values of insight and innovation—values emphasized seemingly touch all corners of the globe and reinforcing Olympic 2012 Bid notions of a dynamic, sustainable, inventive and forward-thinking nation.

British Foreign Politics in the Opening Ceremony

The third and final resource for the development of soft power is foreign politics—creating messages of your nation's international values and agenda. Those values that a nation's government supports, the international institutions it takes part in and the policy for peace and

human rights it endorses strongly influences "the preferences of others."[359] Governments can "attract or repel others by the influence of their example."[360] Perhaps Nye's global value norms are most important to international policy intention than in any other soft power resource. A nation's approach to the international community best attracts other nations when messaging is inclusive and recognizes powers large and small. The most apparent British value portrayed through the opening ceremony with great significance to soft power is that of inclusivity. The further recognition of women suffragettes in the opening scene, stadium construction workers during the torch ceremony, counter-cultures in the 'rock' segment of the presentation, and the inscription of 'This is for everyone' during the World Wide Web tribute emphasize the British value of inclusivity.

Woven through the entire ceremony is, in Boyle's words, "a golden thread of purpose – the idea of Jerusalem– of a better world that can be built through the prosperity of industry, through the caring nation that built the welfare state, through the joyous energy of popular culture, through the dream of universal communication. We can build Jerusalem. And it will be for everyone."[361] While such a message certainly parallels universalist undertones of the Games themselves, this discourse of a better world is also distinctly British, recalling and "valoriz[ing] the political impulses, principles and philosophy that had underpinned the pursuit of the 'New Jerusalem' under the British Labour government of 1945-51."[362] This government "initiated a radical project of social and economic reorganization that included the founding of 'cradle to grave' state care and the nationalization of industries and the Bank of England."[363] This 'golden thread' of Jerusalem is expressed through the praise of Britain's National Health Service, its role in global communication with the World Wide Web, and the mass influence of British Literature, music, and sport on international settings. Britain's history and influence, expressed as the idea

of Jerusalem serves as both a political value and an element of British foreign politics—symbolically endorsing a liberal agenda abroad, one pursuing a highly centralized and powerful government able to support economic growth and universal healthcare.

London's inclusive approach can be witnessed in the emblem of the 2012 Olympics, "Join in London," contrasting sharply with the 2008 Beijing Olympics' "Dancing Beijing":

> The Beijing emblem is a static image; "Join in London" is a dynamic image. Both emblems represent core cultural values of two civilizations. The former epitomizes the Eastern way of thinking and conveys the unique cultural quality [of the] Chinese civilization while the latter has been designed to inspire youth and reflects the multicultural nature of British society.[364]

"Join in London" became a phrase embodied by the 2012 Opening Ceremony, as the performance's creative directors made every effort to ensure there were "no spectators,"[365] that everyone in the Olympic stadium would be part of the "magic."[366] As a showcase for technology of the 21st century, the Opening Ceremony debuted 'audience pixels', pixel screens that extend "around the audience seating area…made up of 70,799 small panels mounted between the seats."[367] At times throughout the performance audience members were asked to hold up the panels, individual pixels of "amazingly complex images and beautiful effects [that flooded] the stadium."[368]

As 7 billion pieces of paper, one for each person on the planet, dropped from the sky during the *Athlete's Welcome*, viewers were meant to note that, while the athletes represented nations at the Olympics, it was important to remember "the whole family of humanity."[369] This profound symbol recognized Britain's commitment to the international community and the welfare of all people. An additional nod to humanity and those individuals responsible for its continuation

occurred as viewers saw women athletes enter the stadium. London 2012 was an Olympic year of reform, seeing an increased participation of women in Olympic sporting events. As the teams of the 205 participating countries walked into the Olympic stadium, viewers witnessed the inclusion of at least one woman representing every nation—a first in Olympic history.[370] With roughly 4,725[371] female participants, London 2012 welcomed the largest group of women athletes seen by any Olympics. Both the US and China sent more female athletes than male. All this is a result, claims IOC President Jacques Rogge, of British 'silent diplomacy' and the 2012 push for universal female Olympic participation.[372] The London 2012 games, heedless of gender or obscurity as a citizen in a far off nation, recognized the agency and importance of every world citizen. In staying true to its statements of "Join in London" and "This is for everyone," London 2012 may have gained additional international credibility as a nation that not only speaks for the inclusivity and human rights off all, but also endorses it symbolically as a British value in foreign politics.

Like the National Anthem, the design of the Olympic cauldron and the method by which it is lit is an excellent opportunity for incorporating domestic values into a ritual dictated by the International Olympic Committee.[373] The compulsory ritual of an Olympic cauldron is "domesticated by the host nations to some degree."[374] Regardless of host nation, the flame legitimizes and defines events as distinctly "Olympic" and the "structural position of the flame naturally makes the torch on which the flame is borne, into a central expressive element."[375] The flame, an ancient symbol used to remind people of the Olympic Truce, remains a "living, vulnerable reminder that the true ambition of the Olympics is not victory but peace."[376] The Olympic cauldron possesses immense symbolic potential, harboring the Olympic flame for the duration of the Games.

The construction of the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony torch, with its many petals symbolizing each participating country, brought with its resurrection a message of beauty in unity. A single copper petal of the Olympic torch accompanied each country's delegation as it entered the stadium during the Athletes' Parade.[377] Designed by "one of Britain's most creative thinkers,"[378] Thomas Heatherwick, the cauldron was eventually assembled from the more than 200 copper petals. As the torchbearers applied the Olympic flame, the "Cauldron's long, elegant stems gently [rose] towards each other and converge to form one great Flame of unity – a symbol of the peaceful coming together of nations that is the Olympic Games."[379] The sight of individual petals rising to the center as one flame is reminiscent of the unity of the International Community. This symbolic imagery displayed during the most important ritual and climax of the performance endorses Britain as supportive of the strength of a united world. At the end of the games, the torch was disassembled and each petal returned home with participating nations. Like a flower that "blooms for the duration of the competition,"[380] dissolution of the Olympic cauldron serves as a reminder of the temporary nature of the games and "the extraordinary transitory community that is the Olympic Games."[381] Unity, the "genuineness" of the British people, autonomy, and equality messaging characteristic of liberalism reinforced 2012 Bid and global norm values.

Making Connections: The Olympics as a Tool for Soft Power

This paper, while making an effort to put discourse and imagery to the notion of soft power, leaves much to be determined and explored. By its very nature intangible, abstract and multidimensional, soft power becomes a diplomatic tool widely recognized but hard to wield.

British identity is complex in make up and has evolved substantially throughout history. The presentation of that identity, both past and present, is equally complex and difficult to define. Danny Boyle's opening ceremony expanded on the values and discourse that characterize modern Britain. The world watched as an image of decisively British elements—culture, history, and political ideology—unfolded during the high-tech, dynamic opening spectacle. The interconnected nature of our economies, relations and spheres of influence have dramatically impacted the interest in and reach of the Olympic Games. The Information Age has additionally altered the role and implementation of diplomatic processes—now, more than ever, a nation must be conscious of its international reputation, the values it places national emphasis and the nuanced meanings behind global action. War and weaponry no longer serve as the primary method of winning and maintaining control or power. Ideas, similarity of ideas between nations, now prove fodder for positive global relationships. While hegemonic influence is certainly tied to the notion of protecting control and cultivating power, so too is the notion of soft power. Value attraction proves key to finding common ground in a diverse and nuanced international community. Tools for the creation and endurance of soft power must be thoughtfully approached, as their influence is certainly less tangible and less immediate than the deployment of hard power.

While a three-hour artistic display of identity, culture and political values can not cover the social and political complexities of a host nation, those elements included in and omitted from the opening ceremony speak volumes to a nation’s identity—or how the nation hopes to be perceived by the rest of the world. This presentation, perhaps an idealic image, is a/ mélange of identity and culture.

Upon exploring the 1936 Berlin Olympics, soft power, the role of diplomacy in modern international relations, the modern Olympic movement, British history and culture, current British values, spectacle and a textual review of the London 2012 opening ceremony, I now summarize this paper's findings, reveal its limitations and suggest topics for further study. A thorough examination of opening ceremony value discourse reveals narratives that parallel those values emphasized in the 2012 British bid: cultural confidence, diversity, sustainability, legacy, and inclusivity. Nye's global value trends (pluralism, autonomy, and liberalism) were woven into all three soft power resources for value expression. Viewers worldwide saw pluralism in the diversity highlighted as a key cultural aspect to British identity. The strength of the British populace, expressed through the ceremony's emphasis on British influence and innovation, portrayed Britain as a free and autonomous isle. Messages of equality and liberty, core tenets of liberalism, emanated throughout the ceremony spectacle—displayed thematically through imagery of cultural pluralism, unity, legacy, and inclusivity.

A thorough examination of the London 2012 opening ceremony as a textual artifact discovered congruence between British values and those woven into the ceremony. Additionally, these values seemed to reinforce Nye's global norms, the neoliberal structure of the Olympic Games and rituals and the ceremony's potential as a hegemonic tool. As a forum for value expression, the Olympic opening ceremony broadcasted values associated with the United Kingdom's culture, political values, and foreign politics—developing symbols and imagery associated with Nye's three resources of soft power. Because value-attraction is at the heart of soft power and because London Olympic themes closely corresponded with identified British values, this paper concludes the Olympic setting is indeed a tool for soft power development within Nye's constraints. The values "a government champions in its behavior at home (for

example, democracy), in international institutions (working with others), and in foreign policy (promoting peace and human rights) strongly affect the preferences of others."[382] London 2012 illuminated British culture, its world approach, and served as a beacon for international recognition of British foreign policy. The 2012 Games illuminated aspects of British society conducive to international attraction and domestic unification.[383]

In an international community where liberalism is highly valued and in a world made small by technology and globalization, public opinion and international sentiment is important to political leaders, governments and nations in international dealings. Public opinion and regard for another nation is forged through interactions like the Olympic Games. London 2012, as a value purveyor for the United Kingdom, forged global attraction for the nation. Attraction "often has a diffuse effect, creating general influence rather than producing an easily observable specific action"[384]—a notion emphasizing the intangible notion of soft power. Let it also be noted that "the indirect effects of attraction and a diffuse influence can make a significant difference in obtaining favorable outcomes in bargaining situations."[385] This subtle influence can be the difference between having input and direction in multilateral efforts in the international community or not. Soft power "has a crucial role to play in promoting democracy, human rights, and open markets."[386] In one of the largest international spotlights available to a single nation, the United Kingdom effectively used displays and resources for further development of British soft power. The effects of this intangible force may play a quite role in British global influence, its ability to promote its values abroad, in the years and decades to come.

Spectacle theorists find rich soil for analysis in the Olympic Games and Ceremonies. Commercialization, commodification, the general grandeur and excess of the Olympic Games, draws viewership as audiences feel a part of something larger, something "spectacular." Because

the ceremonies draw such a large and diverse audience, it is important for creative directors and Olympic organizers to ensure elements of the opening ceremonies translate internationally. The London 2012 opening ceremony, with themes of liberalism, autonomy, and pluralism emphasized values that resonate with global audiences. The lens of spectacle proves conduit to a better understanding of discourses, and values woven into the fabric of the opening ceremony and the Olympics themselves, an understanding of attraction and interest in the messaging of the Games. The spectacle of the Games can certainly distract viewers from inconsistencies but also reinforce values widely witnessed in the international community.

While we may never know the true impact of British soft power development during the 2012 Olympic games and opening ceremony, we can gain limited insight through opinion polling. In a follow-up to the London 2012 opening ceremony, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) asked 9,000 adults in eleven countries questions to determine the effect ceremony viewing had on their understanding of the British nation. Forty-four percent of participants polled said that the United Kingdom had a greater world influence as a result of the Games.[387] While limitations of polling and a small sample size must be considered, this single statistic indicates a change in perception from the single act of watching the London opening ceremonies. Soft power is certainly difficult to measure. In public opinion, we can see noticeable, quantifiable changes that may correlate to the value discourse of the London Olympic Games and the soft power elements it broadcasted globally.

Several limitations to this paper must be discussed for purposes of full disclosure. While this paper specifically focuses on Nye's construct of soft power, it did not explore criticism of soft power or the imperfections of neoliberal thought. Neoliberalism, a movement characteristic of the Western world, is not a phenomenon accepted universally as the best way to govern the

world's people. Additionally, soft power is highly criticized for its abstract components and vague definition. This paper avoided discussion of soft power's accuracy as a theory and instead worked within the framework of its definition as described by Nye in his book *Soft Power*.

Additional issue arises with this paper's omission of discussion centered on the United Kingdom's relations with the rest of the world. It did not review the congruency between British values and British global policy or any historical conflict that may yet taint British soft power in nations worldwide. Because the Olympics and opening ceremony reach active audiences, international viewers have the ability to interpret messaging and contest discourses of "national identity by critiquing, protesting, and working to construct alternative narratives of nation."[388] Because a text like the Olympic opening ceremony offers "multiple points of engagement,"[389] a better understanding of international pre-Olympic opinions of the United Kingdom would be beneficial to note in determining the net efficacy of the opening ceremony's soft power potential. A further look into the connection between hegemony and soft power may also be beneficial to a more critical view of this paper's findings. As an American, my understandings of British values is limited and based in neoliberal concepts. Such limitation may ultimately impact the accuracy of my findings. I am not abreast of the current political or diplomatic environment of the United Kingdom and thus cannot make assumptions regarding its relations and conceptualization of other nations that are part of the international community. My first person knowledge of British worldviews is limited to my short stay in the country from June to late August of 2012.

A final limitation of the findings associated with this paper is the general avoidance of the controversies associated with the Olympic setting and the London 2012 Olympics. The general opulence of the 2012 Olympics, on the heels of massive world economic hardship and recession, is a source of contention both in Britain and abroad. An effort was not made to review

arguments against core principles of the Olympic Games or the British approach to 2012's Olympiad. There certainly are critics and counterarguments to every self-proclaimed British value and this censure may come from domestic and international audiences alike—affecting interpretation of broadcasted values. Within the time and research constraints of this paper, I was unable to identify controversy surrounding the Olympic movement and London 2012's execution of the Games. This criticism may detract from the effectiveness of the opening ceremony as a tool for soft power development and is an opportunity for further research and reflection.

Soft power does not emanate from a single source. Its development requires value-attraction but can be inspired from a variety of platforms. More accurate conclusions about the Olympic tool of soft power would consider the environment, context, and external factors that enhance or detract from Olympic value messaging. A longer paper may look more in-depth into the power position of the United Kingdom in terms of its successes and failures in supranational settings as well as its domestic struggles and victories. Further studies might also increase the scope of this paper to Olympic opening ceremonies prior to London 2012 in order to see different national approaches to the Olympics. A comparison of Olympic national presentation and the international effects on post-Olympic nations may illuminate the approach best suited for soft power generation and growth in international influence.

Despite room for further development, this paper, as it stands, has several takeaways for those interested in media and diplomacy studies. Discourses woven into the core of the presentation reflect British values, the reality of the world and Britain's place in it, and cultural nuances of modern Britain. The London 2012 opening ceremony certainly had a preferred reading, one highlighted by its organizers and the London 2012 Media Guide often referenced throughout this paper. It is important for media scholars to recognize the power of active

audiences and the ability to extract values from media messaging. With the fusion of media and diplomacy realms, this paper established a clear link between the Olympic platform, media messaging, value-attraction and soft power. It is my hope that this paper presented the Olympic setting and the Olympic opening ceremony particularly, as a spectacle and media artifact for in-depth study and a tool for soft power in a world growing ever more reliant on communication-technology and soft power diplomacy.

Notes

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