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Chapter Nine

British Fair Play: Sport Across Diasporas at the BBC World Service

Kath Woodward, David Goldblatt and James Wyllie¹

Sport carries powerful links to identity, especially to national identities, which in the context of Britishness have frequently been expressed through the lens of empire. The BBC World Service (BBCWS), formerly known as the Empire Service, has played an important role in the contact zone of sports broadcasting, in which identifications are made and re-made. This chapter explores the construction of Britishness through sports broadcasting on the BBCWS, drawing upon material from the BBC Archive at Caversham, from the start of sports broadcasting at the BBC and the establishment of the Empire Service, in 1932, up to the late 1970s, in order to present an understanding of the legacy of Britishness in sport, especially as configured around ideas of impartiality and fair play. The BBCWS set up to broadcast to a British diaspora made strong claims to objectivity and impartiality which cohabit with the service's associations with colonialism.

Sport is a very significant, if sometimes elusive, aspect of BBCWS broadcasting. Sporting events have featured in schedules since the advent of the service, having already been a central aspect of the BBC output, but sport as a genre is more difficult to pin down in the literature on the BBC. This chapter draws out what is distinctive about sport on the BBCWS by exploring its development in the period up to the 1970s in order to explain some of the histories and meanings of sport, through pivotal sporting moments, scheduling regimes and production minutes and communications.² We focus on particular sports and sporting events, in particular the Olympic Games, cricket, although the project included tennis, boxing, men's football world cups and rugby.³ This focus has been chosen in order to create a picture of the way in which the

presentation of sport was cast and its relationship to the service's wider mission of broadcasting of the British way of life and, especially how notions of fair play in sport feed into the wider constitution of British World Service impartiality and the versions of Britishness communicated by the BBCWS.

The notion of fair play which has become associated with the identifications with Britishness that are translated by a broadcasting service that has both strong links to impartiality and to empire and particularly to the reiteration of Britishness as a national identity is a major concern. The diasporic audience of sports broadcasting has been primarily an expatriate one, and thus the service could be construed as concerned with a reinstatement of British colonial values rather than opening up the possibilities for a more diffuse diasporic audience, but the objectivity and impartiality claimed by the service are also in play in sport, leading to some more diverse and less predictable outcomes in the story of sport on the BBCWS.

Empire

In the discussion of setting up what was then called the Empire Service, the centrality of the ideological role of the service was explicitly identified as a primary objective. The language of empire was deployed and there is direct expression of an ideological purpose; the World Service was funded by the Foreign Office. For example, at the Imperial Conference of 1930, the service was supported in terms of its political powers of 'strengthening ties' between parts of the Empire'.⁴ This view is reflected in a speech by John Reith, the BBC's first Director General, which was broadcast when the Service opened. Broadcasting is identified as having come to involve, a 'connecting and coordinating link between the scattered parts of the British Empire.'⁵

Empire and nation are re-instated through the routine coverage of cyclical events, which Scannell and Cardiff describe as:

the noiseless manner in which the BBC became perhaps *the* central agent of national culture as its cyclical role; the cyclical production year in year out, of an orderly, regular progression of festivities, rituals and celebrations-major and minor, civic and sacred-that mark the unfolding of the broadcast year.⁶

Sport plays a big part in these 'noiseless' cycles, along with religion, which is another key element in the making of the nation. Sport marks out time for the listener, having 'developed its own calendar very quickly. The winter season had its weekly observances of football, rugby and steeple-chasing, climaxing in the Boat Race, the Grand National and the Cup Final. Summer brought in cricket and flat racing, the Test Matches, Derby Day, Royal Ascot and Wimbledon'.⁷

The BBC is 'noiseless' because the timetable is assumed and taken for granted as not only what *is* but what *should* be. Sport assumes the mantle of legitimacy which might also be sanctioned, by association with religion and the state as well as particularly gendered identities, especially masculinity.⁸ These events are, of course, the ones that feature in the archive and in the General files and demonstrate the importance of particular sports as included in the making of the nation and also, by setting one agenda, indicate silences and absences. The coverage of sport is predominantly of men's sport at this point, coding the legacy of empire, as well as the reconfiguration of nation, as masculine and suggesting associations between particular versions of embodied heroic achievement in an alliance with patriarchy, as 'an exclusive respect for the genealogy of sons and fathers and the competition between brothers'.⁹

Women, however, are not entirely absent; they can 'play the game' or at least some games.¹⁰ Empire like nation, operates as an 'imagined community', too big to be

grasped by individuals, as well as a material actuality.¹¹ Sport is very capable of creating a sense of what it means to be British through its powerful identifications, embodied heroic acts and competitions which resonate with conflict and combat as well as its more subtle injunctions. The routes of identification can be circuitous, however, and sport carries both positive and negative elements, for example in the extent to which it promotes or damages social inclusion.¹² At its most negative it might appear to present a pastiche of democratic processes of cohesion.¹³ However, the dynamics of identification are rarely linear and, as we aim to demonstrate, there are inconsistencies and disruptions even when the voice is officially that of empire. The associations of sport with empire and nation demonstrate some of the mechanisms of assumption and the processes through which the discursive field becomes regulated and regulates itself in the re-production of a Foucauldian regime of truth.¹⁴ Sport, at the outset was closely linked to empire and nation, but the experience of sport on the BBCWS is much more diverse and nuanced.

Sport on the BBCWS: an overview of the schedule

Sport is rarely classified as such in the literature of the BBCWS.¹⁵ The classificatory systems deployed partially demonstrate the status of sport in the schedules; for example, certain sporting events are included unquestioningly in the schedule and, although the rationale is un-stated, the interconnections between dominant discourses remain unacknowledged. Sport is still associated with play and national identifications are assumed, but it does not occupy the overtly moral high ground of drama and discussion programmes, which attract more explicit ethical direction, as evidenced by the production minutes.

The coverage of sport at the BBCWS, during the period up to the 1970s, while retaining its corporate stance of objectivity, consistency of voice, attention to detail and thoroughness of preparation, was also fluid, flexible and responsive to changes in technology and audience, reflecting changing public tastes. Although the aim remained to offer something for everybody, the documents chart the rise and fall of particular sports and their popularity.

The BBC's 1966 report on the coverage of sport noted that the Overseas Service was alone amongst the various global external services (such as Voice of America, Deustchewelle and Radio Moscow) in providing regular coverage of sporting events, because it alone, could utilize the coverage of a major domestic sports broadcaster for both expertise and live transmissions.¹⁶ By the mid 1960s, the domestic broadcasting of sport was spread across the BBC's three national networks; the Home service, the Light network and the Third network, with the bulk of output on the Third. However, sport amounted to only just over 3per cent of total broadcast hours of which three-quarters were live commentaries and the remainder predominantly results and round-up shows, though they were supplemented by the very occasional quiz or feature.¹⁷ Of the live broadcasts, the core was provided by football and cricket commentaries. These are two sports with strongly inflected ethnicised, racialised, gendered and classed associations with cricket having powerful links to empire.¹⁸ and British football representing a popular working class sport.¹⁹

The report notes that, by the mid 1960s, audiences were certainly down from the pre-television era. However Test Matches, League and FA Cup football, Wimbledon and the major horse races could still get ratings in the millions. The 1966 World Cup Finals had a domestic radio audience of over two and half million. For major events that were not covered on television, like the 1963 Cassius Clay-Henry Cooper fight,

the audience could balloon; 21 million tuned in to hear the fight. Even at home the idea of a monolithic or single British sports culture was subtly challenged by the coverage of sport on BBC regional radio. On BBC Wales, for example, local events and sporting preferences reshaped the content of the networks programming.

The BBC's External Services appear similar to the domestic services. In 1965 about 3per cent of total output was sports coverage, predominantly live commentaries, supplemented by news and results services and the very occasional feature. The core of the network's sports programming was *Sports News* a fifteen minute results and news digest broadcast three times a day, plus one half-hour sports magazine programme a week. On the English-language overseas service, Saturday afternoon was given over to the third network's *Saturday Sport* show.

In scheduling terms, sports coverage was developed to meet listeners' demands. In promoting 'fair play' the BBC aimed to provide what listeners were seen to want. There was considerable variation across the sporting season and across the different language services, with sport constituting over an eighth of broadcasts to Australia and less than half a percentage point of air time on the German service. On the English language overseas service, sport actually made up 7.5 per cent of output, but in the summer, when cricket dominated the schedules, this could climb to over 10per cent of air time. Two years later, an internal analysis by the BBC revealed that the audience for these English-language broadcasts was considerable. The African audience, especially in West Africa was the largest, followed by the Asian audience, though the report noted that there remained a significant contingent of British expatriate listeners.²⁰ Cricket's leading place in the schedules can be seen from the data for 1965 when live Cricket was aired for 133 hours, football for just 32 hours (although in 1966 this doubled with full coverage of the men's World Cup) and horse

racing for 12. Alongside these three mainstays of the scheduled External Service, coverage included the entire major World and Commonwealth boxing title bouts and live coverage from the leading tennis tournaments.

Across all of the language services, the report describes a unity of purpose and recognition of 'the season' in British sport:

...they all report major news and deal with sport in programmes reflecting the British way of life and events in this country. Accounts of major British sporting events such as Wimbledon, Henley or the Cup Final are featured in all the services; reports on international contests takes place in this country in which either the UK or teams from the target areas are broadcast regularly. When an international event of first class importance takes place in this country...the most recent example is the World Cup competition – this claims attention from all the External Services.²¹

One aspect of the British way of life which had spread and in which foreign audiences took a close interest was the pools, 'by taking advantage of the wide dissemination of British football pools coupons and relying on our reputation for accuracy, the World Service gains many listeners for its service for football results'.²²²³

Thus, even when attending to the core external service mission of representing the British "way of life, in this case through sport, there was also considerable sensitivity to the diversity of the audiences actually being addressed. Acknowledgement of local audience needs meant that, at major sporting events where a local athlete was performing, coverage on the language services could soar as high as 25per cent of a week's output. Over the previous decade, the Far Eastern service had made a point of covering badminton and the Asian games, the Persian and Bulgarian services had covered wrestling and winter sports were reported more assiduously on the Europe language services.

In the early 1960s the service had covered the East African Rally competitions; it was noted that this was at least in part designed to help give exposure to British car manufacturers in key African export markets. The External service would also provide ball-by-ball coverage of Test Matches in England for the visiting nations and even covered events not broadcast in the UK but of key importance elsewhere, for example the International Hockey Championship in Hamburg which was avidly listened to in Kenya, Pakistan and India. The External Service also continued to provide live coverage of major international sporting events, like the Olympics, for the many developing nations who had no independent coverage of their own.

In addition to taking live coverage, foreign radio stations had, for many years, been re-broadcasting External service output. Here sport was central to the network's success in promoting its cultural diplomacy. The fifteen minute Sports-Round Up broadcasting in the World Service three times a day was re-broadcast by twenty two different stations²⁴. These twenty-two stations included countries as diverse as Kenya, Guyana, Malawi and New Zealand, while much of South Africa's radio sports coverage on a Saturday afternoon through the 1960s was provided by the BBC.

Further research into specific events and sports reinforces the evidence of the 1966 report that the cosmopolitan model of Britishness, the sensitivity to diverse audiences and their needs revealed within it were in evidence twenty years prior to its publication; trends that are evident in other sporting coverage.

The Olympics

We focus upon two sets of Olympic files, from the massive coverage of this sporting event in the archive for purposes of comparison and to demonstrate some of the transformations of Britishness that can be seen as occurring over this period. Such big

moments make enormous demands on the organization of the system and demonstrate the massive scope of the service as well as the detailed work which went into providing coverage and the Olympics have the advantage of including clear classifications of the nation and a diverse range of sports, as well as explicitly, at this point, incorporating the amateur ideal.

Lord Aberdare, President of the British Olympic Committee used the External Service as an element of his campaign, broadcasting his appeal to the IOC to give London the Games in 1946. Aberdare was successful in his mission and alongside the Labour government of the day cast the Olympics in the same mould as the Festival of Britain as a pageant of creativity that would lighten the gloom of post-war austerity Britain, a public event that would capture something of the heroic spirit for the age, in building peace rather than making war. The 1948 Olympics presented the opportunity for a reconfiguration of Britishness, in which the BBC was strongly implicated.

The BBC External services were the centre of the media coverage of the games. The scale and the scope of coverage, given the economic and technological limits of the era, were immense. The BBC alone was broadcasting the games on its Latin American, Arabic, Turkish, and English to India, Eastern, Far Eastern, North American, Pacific, South African, Colonial, and European Services. The far Eastern service was broadcasting in seven languages – Korean, Kuyou, Chinese, Japanese, Siamese, Burmese, Malay, the European service in 21 languages. The Overseas service transmissions exceeded all other broadcasters combined and foreign radio stations were rebroadcasting BBC material, which was played daily on over 100 Latin American stations including many who had their own representatives at the Games as well.²⁵

In spite of its dominance in the post-war era, the BBC external service adopted a remarkably open minded attitude to its role. The traditional purposes of the service were emphasized in a Memo from the head of the European Service, who argued that the BBC should be able, 'to reflect in its output the great international sporting event taking place in Britain and to provide a service for European broadcasting organizations by enabling their reporters to cover the games'.²⁶ This was immediately counterbalanced by the note, 'our commentators should try to give a balanced picture of the whole games ... always bearing in mind that our reporting must not be on narrow nationalistic lines'.²⁷

John Arlott of the Eastern Service stressed that it was the intention to establish at the outset of the games to broadcasting specifically the views of the Games most interesting to India and Pakistan and to place himself above all Indian and Pakistan listeners, to identify himself with them, to make it clear that he was catering for them only.²⁸ Impartiality involves endeavouring to enable full access to a range of listeners as possible, or at least the acknowledgement that the listening constituency does not only comprise expatriate communities.

The 1948 Olympics were probably the high water mark of the BBC as a sports broadcaster. Comparison with later games suggests a diminished role, registering the impact of transformations in networks of power that occurred across the globe and especially the decline of empire. 1948 offered a unique historical moment: not only did the BBC have the best technical facilities, they also had the legitimacy conferred by their role in the defeat of Nazism, reflecting Britain's post-war position as a victor who fought for a culture that embodied fair-play, impartiality and civilized values,

(Germany and Japan had been excluded from the Games, while the USSR boycotted them). The dismantling of formal properties of empire, for example through the independence of India, did not of course diminish many of the political and cultural forces of imperialism and the BBC retained the authority to speak on behalf of and to the rest of the world.

Twenty years later in Mexico it was a different story. Britain's Imperial power had receded in the intervening years while the globalization of sport had continued at a rapid pace. The gulf between the BBC's perception of its mandate and the actuality of a post-colonial world widened. This, combined with the arrival of television, which accelerated the global appetite for sport and the spread of the technologies to disseminate it, gave rise to a much altered scenario in the preparations for 1968, where decisions about coverage were influenced by machinic technologies as well as political considerations.

The European Broadcast Commission, which had organized a consortium of European broadcasters to carry coverage of the 1964 games in Tokyo presented a rival service. The BBC refused to join, preferring to remain aloof of this organization and to differentiate itself from the European venture while stressing the singularity of the British project; a trend that was confirmed by the BBC's decision to form a separate Commonwealth Pool.²⁹

The heavily paternalistic tone appears in Max Muller's comments regarding their European rivals, 'If it is felt that BBC Radio must work through the EBU, I suggest that some safeguard should be made for other Commonwealth members not in such a strong position as ourselves'.³⁰

At an EBU meeting of the Sound Broadcasting Committee, an Expert Working Party on the Mexico City Olympics 1968, held in Geneva on the 22nd Sept 1965, including German, Belgian, French, Italian, Norwegian and Swiss representatives, Muller argued for and won special consideration from the Commonwealth. Assuming there would be another broadcasting pool, the minutes noted that 'bound by a common language, the Commonwealth Group would like its own representative in the EBU Operations Group, so that not only could facilities be negotiated for it but also...a steady flow of relevant information could be continually fed to its members.'³¹

Having chosen an Australian as Operations Manager, Arthur Povah of ABC, the BBC then opted out of the EBU in the early 1967 to run the Commonwealth Pool, still confident that the former colonies would rally round the flag. The initial feedback was encouraging if not a stampede of interest, as noted in a report by the Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference Secretariat, of the 19 Commonwealth Broadcasting organizations consulted four (Cyprus, Malawi, Sierra Leone and Tanzania) were unwilling to participate; two (Kenya and Pakistan) made no reply at all; five (Ceylon, India, Malta, Uganda and Zambia) were agreeable in principle but were considering the cost factor in relation to national participation and policy etc: and eight (Australia, Britain, Canada, Ghana, Jamaica, Malaysia, New Zealand and Nigeria) definitely supported the project. However, he was confident that the seven neutral states would comply.³²

The reality was somewhat different in a world of emergent nations shrugging off their colonial heritage, more complex and harder to predict. Muller conceded in a report written after the Games, 'the response from Commonwealth organizations in the end was disappointing'. Only four members joined with the BBC, the Australian Broadcasting Commission, New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, All India Radio,

Jamaica Broadcasting. This put pressure on resources and staffing leading to the minor humiliation of working very closely with the European Broadcasting Union. Although Muller admits that 'in many instances this was of considerable benefit', he is quick to remind us that it was also of 'considerable benefit' for the Pool members 'not to be tied to the much larger EBU operation'.³³ This was a turning point in the BBCWS's sports coverage.

Test Cricket: the Game of Empire?

The files on the BBC External Services' coverage of Test Match cricket, particularly the tours of overseas teams to the UK are amongst the richest and most complete in the archive reflecting the high level of coverage accorded these events and the high prestige in which they were held at home and abroad. Cricket also offers the closest links between colonialism and Britishness, largely encoded as Englishness. Despite the huge popularity of football in the post-war period, the Football League recording record levels of attendance for five years after the end of the war, its place as the national game was challenged by cricket. The scheduling dominance of cricket and its coverage suggest that the game more effectively embodied the national character than football. Writing in the 1930s, the Guardian's music and cricket correspondent, Neville Cardus, was able to write 'If everything else in this nation of ours was lost but cricket – her Constitution and the laws of England – it would be possible to reconstruct from the theory and the practice of cricket all the eternal Englishness which has gone to the establishment of that constitution and the laws aforesaid.'³⁴

However, in cricket there had been for some considerable time a sense that the game was part of the cultural fabric of the wider British Empire. Englishness and Britishness elide frequently in these sporting stories and it is not by chance that it is

English cricket with its histories of gentlemen and players and the English cricket team, rather than teams of any of the nations that make up the UK that carries the most powerful imbrications of empire. Australia had demonstrated the potency of colonial cricket over sixty years before when they won the first Test Match series against England. Since then South African, Indian, West Indian and New Zealand teams had all shown considerable prowess in the game, and had amongst the elite of commentators, demonstrated their own distinctive styles of playing the game.

Given cricket's central place in the construction of both national and imperial identities, it is hardly surprising that the 1946 tour by the All-India side attracted considerable interest and ideological baggage. At a point of political disruption wrought by the processes of decolonization and fragmentation along religious and ethnic lines, the all India team's tour was emblematic of both Indian unity (the ethnic maker of the team was remarkably balanced drawing on Hindus, Christian and Muslim) and the umbilical linkages between centre and periphery.³⁵

It was an event of sufficient importance and interest inside the BBC for a memo to be issued stating that for reasons of expense and time only a very limited number of people would actually be able to attend the Indian team's arrival. Coverage of the tour began on the team's arrival in London with a special broadcast of fifteen minutes consisting of personal messages. It would continue through the summer with daily reports, on-the-spot interviews and summaries being delivered, in three languages, from all the team's Test Matches as well as a considerable number of games against the MCC, Oxbridge varsity sides and county teams. The following year, the external service would broadcast the South African Tour at an even higher level of coverage including games against the combined services team and all three days of the Gentleman vs. Players game at Lords as well. Commentary and summaries were

broadcast alternately in Afrikaans and English on the African service, in three languages on the Eastern services as well as specially tailored reports in English for the Pacific and General Overseas networks. The appetite for cricket was so great that only the most minor of matches were deemed superfluous. The DCA noted that ‘the African service is approaching saturation point with cricket and suggests that unless you have strong feelings about it, we should tell Northern Ireland we have decided not to broadcast’.³⁶

A January 1946 memo from the Director of Eastern Services to the Director of Outside Broadcast noted ‘the tour of the all-India team this summer is going to be matter of outstanding interest for our broadcasts to India. We are already getting correspondence asking for maximum coverage in Eastern Services’.³⁷

India was not the only place calling for more cricket on the radio. The next decade saw a steady growth in the level of cricket coverage on the BBC’s domestic and external services. By 1951 the corporation had begun to experiment with ball-by-ball commentary of test Cricket. Parts of the 1951 South African tour received this treatment as did the 1953 Australian tour. By 1957 the format had been settled and *Test Match Special* was launched offering all-day, ball-by-ball coverage on both domestic and external services, while in 1959 the England tour to Australia was the first ‘overseas tour’ broadcast back to the UK and around the world.

Cricket carried diverse sets of meanings in different parts of the Commonwealth and what was left of the empire, but the External services were alert to the sensitivities of India. In the same memo the New Delhi office says, ‘Cricket commentaries, especially in English, creating greatest interest yet in Eastern Service programmes and

widely acclaimed and publicized. Will cable further reactions but already obvious Hindustani commentaries high prestige value'.³⁸

That value was in part political, recognizing 'that a very high proportion of the listeners to our Eastern Service in English are Indians; and that at the present time there are genuine and urgent reasons for fostering anything which promotes goodwill towards Britain amongst Indians, even in the modest realm of sport'.³⁹

The recognition of the political and cultural value of these cricket broadcasts to Britain suggests, at one level, a direct and instrumental imperialism. However, the most revealing document in the files suggests quite the contrary. An internal memo written in January 1946 raises the idea that the BBC Eastern Service could round off the tour of the Indian cricket team by holding a studio based discussion comparing and contrasting Indian and English cricket.⁴⁰ The proposed members of the panel were Prof D.B Deodhar, Abdul Hamid, John Arlott, Arthur Russell and as Chair of the conversation, black Caribbean cricketer Leary Constantine then playing professionally in the Lancashire cricket leagues. It is not clear from the files whether the programme was made, though notes in the margins suggest general approval. More significantly, it is hard to imagine anywhere else in the British public sphere in 1946, that a conversation could be held between Indians, Britons and a black West Indian within so equitable a framework of expertise.

The balance of power had shifted even further by 1952. Five years after Indian independence, Rex Alston, the Director of Outside Broadcasts sent a memo to commentators and announcers at the BBC covering the Indian cricket tour that summer: 'the Anglo-Indian fraternity is both irritable and vociferous and we shall cause much annoyance both at home and overseas if we do not adopt it'.⁴¹

A similar sensitivity can be detected in the discussion notes of the 1951 South African tour which made clear that the sound of Bow Bells was not to be broadcast on the Afrikaans service.⁴² In addition, while the desire not to antagonize the subcontinent's enormous cricket audience were expressed in a memo considering the first test tour to England by Pakistan in 1954.

A final coda in the files to this steady drift of opinion with the external services comes in an exchange of letters in 1959 over the employment of Indian commentators and summarizers on the English-language world service coverage of India's tour of England including the Maharajkumar of Vizianagaram and Pearson Surita.

Vizianagaram was successful but Surita, who, in a complete reversal of the older colonial expectations, was deemed too English for the role. A senior figure wrote that ;although he is by far the best commentator, I can see little point in your using him in GOS [General Overseas Service] as he sounds like 'a retired Indian colonel'.'⁴³

The archive reveals both perceptive awareness of the wider social and cultural context, as well as the assumed reiteration of very traditional British values, through the enormous attention to detail in the decision-making process to ensure what is stated as fair treatment in accordance with the principles of the service. Britishness and Englishness elide in cricket more than in many sports, for example rugby, which is not only played by Wales, Ireland and Scotland, but also has different meanings in relation to social class in these nations and between union and league. Cricket is implicated in a particular version of empire, but the earlier discussion of the need to accommodate different diasporic audiences prefigures more recent, twenty first century shifts in the power geometry of sport towards the Indian sub-Continent.

Coverage of sport demonstrates the ambiguities of fair play; the divisions of class, gender, race and ethnicity muddy the field and it is these tensions with which the World Service has to deal. These factors articulate together, but there are moments in which sport offers more opportunities for democratization and broadcasting space opens up possibilities for different voices to be heard. The impartiality that is pivotal to the version of Britishness promoted by the BBCWS opens up some possibility of disruption and transformation and is often played out through the inclusion of these new inflections.

Conclusion

Our timescale predates the transforming and often liberating technologies of the Internet, but sport is both typical and enduringly distinctive of the BBC World Service; something that is part of a wider picture but also an area of experience with a life of its own. The World Service has travelled in its engagement with sport through the legacy of empire and patriarchy and the multiplicities of change in the reconstruction of Britishness. Diasporic audiences have transformed the relationship between local and global and between the UK and its place in the world. In 1948 the world came to London for the Olympic Games; in 2012 the world is already in the UK. The heritage of Britishness on the BBC World Service gives particular emphases to fair play and to impartiality as well as, sometimes overtly, sometimes implicitly, representing a colonialist discourse of imperialist identifications.

The BBCWS has played a key role in framing and shaping diasporic contact zones, through the diversity of the diasporic audience and the reiteration of the need to engage with the dynamic of change, in sport and in social relations. The process is

dynamic because sports generate their own versions of fair play, ranging from the gentlemanly practices of cricket to the raw, polarized combat of boxing.

Coverage of big events was maintained through the 1930s and into the 1960s in the development of the BBCWS. However, it is not only the global dimensions of sporting events that are taken for granted, so too are national identifications, with Britishness or Englishness, all under the aegis of an assumed impartiality of ‘playing by the rules’ and the fair play of sport. The superiority of British/ English sport is naturalized through its dominance of the BBCWS airways, but the possibilities of re-interpretation and re-accommodation are also made possible. The major period covered in the paper demonstrates that the changing place of sport in the BBCWS can only be understood with reference to wider changes in the relationship between broadcasting and sport and demonstrates the powerful synchronies between social, political, technological, economic and cultural factors, even at historical moments, such as during the Second World War when the Empire Service played a particularly important and didactic role in communicating home to the military. However, the narrative of change is not linear and can be more usefully understood as manifesting multiplicities that encompass disruptions and accommodations and, most importantly, the BBCWS provides a space for the pursuit of sporting interests and engagement with the politics as well as the pleasures of sport. Diasporic audiences shape the schedule and so does what is broadcast. There is no single voice of the BBC in sport.

There are silences, notably in women’s sport; sport is a patriarchal field, but different strands interweave through the imperial genealogies of sport inextricably entwined with the social, political and cultural changes taking place in the wider world. There is no detectable linear narrative but rather a series of tensions and contradictions that are reflected up and re-configured in the texts in which deliberations are made. The

relationship of the BBCWS with its listeners is dialogic rather than presenting a univocal imperative expressing the voice of empire in a one way narrative.

Sport is played through the genealogy of colonialism, but there are disruptions that represent change and the emergence of more democratic versions of Britishness. The over pervading ethos of the archive material is detailed discussion and engagement with 'fair play' on all counts. Before equal opportunities or diversity policies had been put into discourse the BBCWS was nonetheless concerned with social inclusion, if only because the service has always been responsive to its listeners and also because sport has the potential to open up new, transnational, democratic sources of identification.

¹ This research is part of the AHRC *Diasporas, Migration and Identities Programme Project, Tuning In: Contact Zones at the BBC World Service*, which investigated the role of the BBCWS as an intra- and cross-diasporic contact zone and documented its activities of transnational cultural brokerage and diplomacy. (<http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/diasporas/>). It was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council Programme: 'Diasporas: Migration and Identities' (Award reference AH/ES58693/1).

² The first stage in this research has focused on textual and discourse analysis of data from the BBC Written Archive at Caversham Park, including the Empire Service, London Calling and General Files, which include programme records, schedules and production minutes. Radio Outside Broadcast Files included cricket Test Matches and series 1976-74 and the Olympic Games 1948-80. The ephemeral nature of the sporting event, albeit one that has resonance in the collective memory of the nation, may account for absences.

³ Football provides a particular case in which the BBC had no special privileges to cover the world cup, even when it is in the UK as was the case in 1966, when all memoranda were about hotel bookings and domestic arrangements, since nobody knew it was to be England's greatest ever moment. The BBC is just another provider, in awe of FIFA which distributes broadcasting rights.

⁴ 'Opening of the Empire Service', John Reith, 19 December 1932, in 'Empire Service Policy 1932-1933', E4/6.

⁵ Ibid .

⁶ P. Scannell and D. Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting 1922-1938* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 278. Italics in the original.

⁷ Ibid. 279

⁸ K. Woodward, *Boxing and Masculinity: The 'T' of the Tiger* (London: Routledge 2007); K. Woodward, *Embodied Sporting Practices, Regulating and Regulatory Bodies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

⁹ L. Irigaray, *Sexes et Parentes* (Paris: Minuit, 1987), 202.

¹⁰ Woodward, *Embodied Sporting Practices*.

¹¹ B. Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

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