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The Modern Olympic Games have occurred every four years (with some breaks because of World Wars) since 1896. These Games are a global event, with athletes from over 200 nations competing in over 25 sports. As a result, the Olympics are a fertile ground for nationalism.

Many scholars have approached the Olympic Games at the macro-level. This exploratory study begins to create a link between this macro-level approach of nationalism and sport with a micro-level investigation of Olympic Swimmers and their national identity: how they experience national identity and when it is salient in the context of their Olympic experience.

I used the theoretical concept of Benedict Anderson's notion of the nation as an Imagined Community paired with Stuart Hall's concepts of identity to explain how national identity is experienced. I collected data using two instruments. The first was a modified version of Kuhn and MacPartland's (1954) and Bochner's (1994) "Twenty Statement Test," allowing the swimmers to describe who they are in their own words. The primary research instrument was in-depth, semi-structured interviews of Olympic Swimmers.

I found that, for these athletes, national identity was "wearable," was separated "politically" and "athletically," and was a collective identity experienced differently by these athletes as they represented their nation. National identity is very context-

dependent for the Olympic swimmers: the athletes' national identity was salient while competing in the Olympics, but not their primary identity. Their primary identity was *athlete*. This exploratory study opens up a new approach to linking the macro-level and micro-level approaches to identity, national identity, and nationalism in sport.

REPRESENTATIVE ATHLETES: NATIONAL IDENTITY IN OLYMPIC SWIMMERS

by

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APPROVAL PAGE

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PREFACE

Sport is an important aspect of the social world. Athletes are held up as ideals in many ways-- morally, physically, and spiritually. They are role models for youth and adults. Olympians are represented as the quintessence of the nation that they are representing in the Olympics. Think back on the first time you watched the Olympic Games, really consciously watched them. What do you remember?

I remember televised "personal pieces" about a big Russian wrestler running through the snow with a log slung over his shoulders, an Austrian downhill skier swerving around a gate, barely holding on to the side of a European mountain while wearing his country's flag, a graceful ice-dancing couple performing as if they were the quintessential British couple. These media representations were how I first discovered "the world." The athletes were lauded and held up as the best that their country could offer. They were the first thing that I (and countless others) learned about their respective countries. These athletes may well have been their countries for all I knew. Olympians represent nations; they are nations. My research asks how this linkage is made by the Olympic athlete him/herself; in other words, how they experience their national identity.

Growing up, I competed in an Olympic sport: swimming. The most important event in swimming occurs every four years on a truly global stage. We did not compete for a city, or for a corporation. The goal for every swimmer was to make the Olympic team. In fact, each one of our clubs has a "national team" training group that includes the

top swimmers of that club. Swimmers, no matter the nation, are urged to represent their country at the Olympics; there is no higher goal.

As a swimmer, the Olympics first gained special significance for me in 1988, when I was eight years old. Matt Biondi dominated the Seoul Olympics, becoming only the second swimmer to earn seven medals at one Olympics. Prior to the next Olympics, in 1992, I had an older teammate who was competing to make the team and we went to the Olympic Trials to cheer him on. Training in the same pool and watching him compete against my (and the country's) heroes made the Olympics a tangible thing. These were real people who really lived and worked in these countries that they represented. My teammate did not make the 1992 United States Olympic team, but the experience still left an indelible mark on me.

In 1995, I found myself sharing a training schedule with a Greek national champion, who had already competed in the 1992 Olympics and moved to the United States to train for the 1996 Olympics. She was a wonderful teammate, person, and swimmer; however, I wondered, why was she in the United States? Was she not still a Greek national? Why were we training her-- the competition? A cogent idea of the Olympics as "us-versus-them" became muddied. My nation was training a foreign national. What did this mean?

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Sport and nationalism are arguably two of the most emotive issues in the modern world. Both inspire intense devotion and frequently inspire violence" (Bairner 2001: xi). One of the dominant fields for channeling this devotion and violence occurs each even year with the Winter Olympic Games and the Summer Olympic Games. The public is bombarded with nationalistic propaganda in the guise of marketing leading up to, during, and immediately after the Olympic Games. There is flag-waving by the media and corporations, who scramble to sign-on with the most successful Olympians from their country, hoping implicitly to be seen as the best their country can offer by association with great athletes.

The Olympic Games provide an abundance of nationalistic symbolism and expression for study: nations can be compared as to how they are represented by the media outlets, Opening Ceremonies can be reviewed to determine how the host's national narrative is portrayed, to name a few examples. I intend to demonstrate how fertile the Olympics are for studying nationalism and national identity by looking at the athletes themselves, specifically swimmers.

One reason I chose to study swimmers was my "insider status." Being a former collegiate swimmer, I have contacts with former Olympians. More importantly, I can

discuss swimming with these athletes as only an insider can. I know the language used by swimmers and I can translate it for outsiders. Swimming is also an interesting sport for examining national identity because of its very international character; it is focused on quadrennially, when the Summer Olympics gain media prominence. It is covered as an "Olympic Sport" in newspapers, magazines and sport stations. In the United States, calling a sport an "Olympic Sport" is often a euphemism for "global sport."

This very international-ness coupled with the United States' long-standing dominance in the Olympic swimming events makes for a unique environment for world-class swimmers. At some point in their careers, many swimmers from other countries spend time competing in the United States. As a result, several of these international swimmers compete, at both the collegiate and club level, in the United States. They are usually trained by United States coaches in United States pools. Just as many of the United States' best chefs go to France to perfect their technique, swimmers come to the United States to do the same. This means that even the smallest meets in the United States can be international events. Swimmers are at that boundary of nationalities every day when they come to the pool, whether it is for practice or for a meet. They face the "other" often. Therefore national identity is at the forefront, even though it is probably in a normative state i.e., it is "taken-for-granted." The normative and "taken-for-granted" is oftentimes the most interesting aspect of identity to study.

When we examine identity sociologically, we see it as layered. In post-modern societies, multiple and shifting identities are experienced by each individual. People have

several identities within the self: I am a man, I am a student, I am a brother or a husband. These identity layers shuffle from top to bottom and shift in salience depending on the circumstances in which we find ourselves. An important identity is *son*, but I rarely acknowledge this identity except when I am speaking to, or in a room with, one of my parents. In this study, I will explore the "taken-for-granted" aspect of national identity for a national team member in an international sport during the Olympics. The Olympics are the time in an athlete's life when his or her national identity should be most salient: the preeminent international event where the athlete represents the nation.

I intend to add to the body of knowledge on this important subject, by developing a new perspective on the intersection of identity and nation. Sport is a very important part of life for much of the world's population-- it acts as a diversion, it is recreation, and it is operates to create identity. My research examines how athletes experience their national identity and see themselves as representatives of a nation on, arguably, the biggest stage in the world: the Olympic Games. Few scholars have tackled the specific national identity of such athletes, and even fewer have looked at Olympic swimmers. How is national identity defined or conceptualized by Olympians? In this postmodern age of globalization and the rise of multinational organizations and corporations, how is national identity salient to Olympians? Do the Olympic Games provide a context that alters the salience level of national identity for the participants? The answers to these questions may lead us to greater understanding of the extent to which national identity itself remains a salient identity in the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of this thesis is to examine the convergence of the Olympics, nationalism, and identity in recent Olympic athletes, specifically United States' swimmers. There is a vast amount of literature on each of these three components of my research question. However, the intersection of sport, national identity, and the Olympics has been understudied. In this chapter, I review literature about these phenomena to create a framework for what national identity in Olympians might look like. This framework is a starting point for a theoretical lens in how national identity is salient in the Olympic swimmers that took part in this study.

Concepts and Terms

The nation-state is a modern concept, resulting from the intense industrialization and modernization that occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. A new model was necessary for supporting the developing economic system and, coupled with the positivistic ideas of the Enlightenment, the nation-state evolved over time. The ideas of nationalism and the nation-state have been thoroughly examined by scholars in many disciplines. Nationalism can be interpreted many different ways. Schnee, in a

review of theorists, stated that nationalism "is among the most ambiguous, yet fundamental characteristics of the modern world" (2001: 1). According to Schnee, the nation-state is the primary way that society is organized (2001). Thus, nationalism is both ambiguous and fundamental. This idea is evident in the literature.

Some terms that will be used in this research need to be distinguished at the outset. These terms are "nation-state," "nationalism," "national identity," and "nation." The term "nation-state" refers to a political and economic entity (Hedetoft 1999). The modern nation-state first came about in the mid to late 18th and early 19th centuries, developing along with the new industrial economy. A more efficient marketplace was needed with this new, more encompassing market. Shared political interests (allocation and protection of resources) led to a "nation-state" model of organization, politically and economically building on the cultural entity of the "nation," which we will further examine later.

"Nationalism" is a collective ideology that is often linked, correctly or incorrectly, with patriotism (Brubaker 2004). "Nationalism" is closely associated with the nation-state and, according to the Nationalism Project, is often connected with political and civic feelings of pride in one's nation-state (nationalismproject.org). There is also an "ethnic nationalism" (nationalismproject.org) that is connected more to the ethnic ideas of nationality, i.e. a nationality created via kinship rather than through political means.

"National identity" relates to an individual's sense of belonging to a collective (Calhoun 1997). It is a personal identity that is derived from a collective identity, the

nation. Put more simply, it is both an individual's personification of society or the institution and part of the societal and the institutional system. National identity is both reflexive and formative, it is an individual's embodiment of the institution of the nation, a perfect opportunity for us to use Mills' sociological imagination to "grasp history [institutions] and biography [individual] and the relations between the two within society" (Mills 1959: 6). National identity is a collective identity as Calhoun has said, but it is much more than that. It is the reflection and formation of the institution of the nation upon and through the individual in that nation. This reflection and formation occurs over time (Magdalinski 1999) and is achieved through "retelling, [and] telling" (Maguire 1999: 178) of the "national story" in the mode of shared history through a shared discourse and shared symbols. This "retelling, [and] telling" draws a distinct line between nations, creating an *Us* and *Them*. This identification of the individual as an *Us*, is the basis of national identity. National identity and nationalism, when related to national identity, are the conceptual foci of my research.

The notion of a "nation" is relatively modern and is distinct from the "nation-state;" it lacks the political connotations of the nation-state and is more of a cultural way to define a collective. Returning to the term "nationalism" may be helpful in unpacking the differences between "nation" and "nation-state." The "nation" is better linked to in terms of "ethnic nationalism" and feelings of kinship, while the "nation-state" is linked to "civic nationalism." A "nation" can exist without a "nation-state" (i.e., Kurdistan).

The nation is an important part of our everyday lived experience, but it is also ambiguous. "Nation" means many different things to people. The nation has been conceptualized as an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983), a cultural entity (Smith 1991), a congruence of political and social realms (Gellner 1983), a "collective identity" (Calhoun 1997), and as "exclusive and particular…not *global*" (Hobsbawm 1998). Anderson's notion of nation as an "imagined community" is the conceptualization utilized in this research. This notion fits best because of its description of the nation as a social construction.

In his book, *Imagined Communities,* Anderson examines the creation of nations. He also acknowledged the ambiguity of nationalism, pointing out three paradoxes of nationalism for theorists. The first paradox is the objective modernity of nations versus the subjective antiquity of the nations in the eyes of the nationals. An example of this paradox is the historical fact that the United States has only existed for 231 years, but everyday American nationals feel/act as if it has been here forever. The second paradox is the universality of *being* a national versus the uniqueness of each nationality. In other words, nationality is a fundamental part of everyone's identity, whether they claim it or not, but every nationality is "done" differently, is distinctive. The third paradox is described by Anderson as "the political power of nationalism" (1983: 14) versus the weak philosophical power of nationalism. Anderson argued that there are no great nationalism theorists/thinkers and he concludes that nationalism is a theoretically weak idea (1983).

In attempting to unravel these paradoxes, Anderson defined a nation as "an imagined political community-- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (1983: 15). It is limited by boundaries, clearly distinguished between an in group and an out group. The idea of the nation originates in Enlightenment ideals and coincided with the dismantling of the divinity, leading to the sovereignty of the nation. Nations are "imagined communities" because there is no way that a French national can know every single Frenchman (or Frenchwoman), but each feels a commonality with other French nationals, believing that they are in a shared community.

How does this community become imagined? Anderson argues that nation-building is a long process that ends in a "spontaneous distillation of a complex 'crossing' of discrete historical forces" (1983: 14). By this he means that, over time, different forces create components of an imagined community and then history brings them together to form an imagined community, or a nation. He also emphasizes that nationalism and the idea of a nation are exportable and operate in a variety of social and political areas.

The "crossing" aspect of Anderson's nations does not occur in a vacuum; they must be rooted culturally. Anderson pointed to two cultural systems that preceded the nation-state: the religious community and dynastic realism. The religious community was based on shared beliefs and a sacred language in a sacred text (Latin for Christendom, Arabic for the Muslim world, Chinese Mandarin for the Middle Kingdom, and so on). A common language was the only avenue for transmission of the beliefs.

Muslims from Northern Africa may have little materially in common with Muslims in Persia, but they could understand that they share a belief structure and a sacred language. This sacred language was known to all in the religious community because it could not be translated; the Truth could only be disseminated in the aforementioned sacred language. This monolinguism created a hierarchical community where the literati mediated the Truth for the uneducated and they spoke for God, creating an upper class (holy/sacred) and a lower class (the uneducated masses). Anderson gave two reasons for the declination of these communities. First, explorations widened the conceptions of human life and helped people to realize that there were others out there; second, the sacred languages were gradually dismantled and there was shift toward the vernacular. For example, over three-fourths (77%) of the books published before 1500 were in Latin; after 1575, a majority of the books published were in a local vernacular (Anderson 1983: 25).

Dynastic realism was the second system that preceded nation-states. Dynastic realism is synonymous with monarchical rule. Kings and princes ruled political entities. These kingships were expanded via sexual politics. By sexual politics Anderson means marriages arranged between royals from other political entities to ensure a wider power base. Dynastic realism, much like the religious community, created an extremely hierarchical community. The King was divine and all others were to be his subjects. The legitimacy of sacred monarchy began to decline in the 17th century, especially in Western Europe (Anderson 1983).

Along with these two systems, a certain feeling or "apprehension," as Anderson called it, permeated the two-three centuries preceding the emergence of the nation-state. Anderson called it an "apprehension of time" (1983: 31). This apprehension was a constant feeling that the Apocalypse was imminent. People in the Middle Ages had an idea of past and present that is different from modernity; they had a pre-modern notion of simultaneity where past and present were an instantaneous present. This was the idea of Messianic time, that the future was not something that people could control or determine for themselves and the end of the world was near.

Anderson argues that, congruent with the decline of the religious communities and the dynastic rulers, a new meaning of simultaneity developed. Simultaneity became "homogenous, empty time" (1983: 31). This new definition was a direct result of the invention of the printing press and the new availability of novels and newspapers. Novels are filled with people who are not always known to each other but are linked through the narrative; they act simultaneously throughout the narrative. This idea of simultaneous action and relationships between people helped individuals to relate to one another. Lynn Hunt made a similar argument when she chronicled the history of human rights (2007). Reading literature helped folks to become aware of others as like them in feeling and thought.

Newspapers helped to define the new concept of simultaneity by creating a calendarical coincidence, or a "steady…clicking of homogenous time" (Anderson 1983: 37). Newspapers achieved this calendarical coincidence by having datelines and

developing a shared scale of readership. Thus, readers know that others are reading the same information with the same interest and at the same time. This knowledge of other readers' experiencing the news at the same time put people on simultaneous time, thereby helping to establish a feeling of community within that readership and create a new definition of simultaneity, i.e. homogenous, empty time.

"Homogenous, empty time" meant that there was a present and all people were a part of it. Anderson argues that this was the beginning of the imagined community. People began to become aware of others and the fact that time was, for lack of a better word, all-encompassing. *I* may be feeding *my* livestock at this time, but that is not the only thing that is going on at this moment. This awareness gave people a new appreciation for continuity and the feeling that there would be a future. Anderson alleged that this new feeling of simultaneity had a direct influence on the Enlightenment ideas of positivism and determinism. He also argued that this new understanding of time was the beginning of the "secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning" (Anderson 1983: 19). Without Enlightenment ideas, there would be no nation-state as we know it and Anderson argues that without this new definition of simultaneity, there would have been no Enlightenment.

After describing the preceding systems, Anderson linked them to the origins of national consciousness, which is the most important aspect of his thesis. The idea of the importance of the vernacular was carried over to the growth of national consciousness. Anderson argued that "the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal

diversity of human languages created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation" (Anderson 1983: 49). According to Anderson, the market was both saturated with Latin books and saturated with folks who were literate in other print-languages. The nature of the new burgeoning capitalistic economy in Western Europe forced publishers to search for new market openings and the publishing of books in vernacular languages was one such opening (Anderson 1983).

Vernacular print-languages facilitated the move towards modern nations in three ways. First, the vernacular print-languages created "uniformed fields of exchange and communication" (Anderson 1983: 47). These fields were below Latin, but above the spoken vernacular. The print-languages also gave a new "fixity" to language, helping to develop a feeling of antiquity (Anderson 1983: 47). Thirdly, the print-languages developed a dominant language of power, or an "official" language of communication. An example would be the use of French instead Basque in the dominant fields of exchange. The connections in communication, feelings of antiquity and a falling in line to one, more or less, "official" vernacular language formed what Anderson called the "embryo of nationalism," i.e., the beginning of a national identity shared by members of a community.

New intellectuals (linguists) were "central to the shaping of 19th Century European nationalisms" through development of both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, both of which made a language "official" for an area/nation, but also showed

the equality of languages through definitions (Anderson 1983: 69). This reinforced differences between languages, and therefore, differences between those who used the other languages, i.e., people from other nations. The new intellectuals also gained great influence in the educational system. They were the ones who taught the new citizenry history, philosophy, and mathematics and they used the new vernacular languages. Anderson quoted Nairn to solidify this point, observing that "the new middle- class intelligentsia of nationalism had to invite the masses into history; and the invitation card had to be written in a language they understood" (1983: 77).

The nation as an imagined community is connected through commonality, both in language and in education (to name a few avenues for culture (re)production). You cannot have one without the other and they both helped to strengthen and create the imagined community that is the nation. A nation could not be created without commonality and language was how this commonality was created. According to Anderson, the "most important thing about language is its capacity for generating communities" (1983: 122). Simultaneity and a common language shared in the fields of exchange are the key components to developing a community. When a community in a vast geographical region is joined through a homogeneity of time and a shared language, it becomes a nation (Anderson 1983).

History of the Modern Olympics

As Schnee (2001) observed, nations are a fundamental and primary means of organization in the world. This organization is highly visible during international events such as the Olympic Games. The Summer Olympic Games are a very popular international sporting event that occurs every four years with over 200 nations competing in nearly 30 sports, ranging from archery to volleyball (olympic.org). This event's sheer exposure is mind boggling. Approximately four billion people watched the 2004 Athens Games on television. According to the International Olympic Committee's website, the participation numbers are staggering. Over 10,000 athletes from 201 nation-states competed in 301 events, managed by 45,000 volunteers and covered by 21,500 journalists/media members. The Olympics are truly a world event, involving nations and nationals representing these nations. In order to be allowed to compete and an individual must be selected by his or her recognized nation-state. Therefore, a member of a nation (i.e. a Kurd) must compete for the nation-state (Iraq) that encompasses his/her nation. An athlete also may not compete for the Olympics as "unaffiliated;" he/she must compete for a recognized nation-state.

In practice, the Olympic Movement has not always been such an international event. France's Baron Pierre de Coubertin founded the Modern Olympic Movement on the idea that it would develop into an international event (Guttman 2002). A history of the Modern Olympic Games must start with Coubertin; he is the heart and soul behind what is now called the Olympics. This history of the Olympic Games relies primarily

upon Allen Guttman's *The Olympics: a History of the Modern Games, 2nd Edition* (2002).

Coubertin was born in 1863, seven years before the Franco-Prussian War. Although he was a young boy during this war, he was, like many other Frenchmen, greatly affected by the defeat by the Prussians and the subsequent annexation of the French provinces Alsace and Lorraine; he wanted revenge (Guttman 2002). As a child of French aristocracy, Coubertin was afforded the opportunity for an education. He took advantage of this and finally found himself at the Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques. At the Ecole, he was introduced to the works of French social theorist Frederic LePlay (Guttman 2002). LePlay concerned himself with social and domestic peace and harmony.

While at the Ecole, Coubertin theorized that the reason that the French troops were defeated by the Germans was a physical one: the German soldiers were in better fighting shape (Guttman 2002). The Germans had developed an idea of regimented gymnastics, known as *Turnen*. The English had also developed a physical aspect to their education, but their idea of physical education was more sport oriented and less regimented. Coubertin found the English notion of physical activity much more to his liking. After a visit to the United States in the 1880s, Coubertin was convinced that physical activity, particularly sport, was the answer to improving the country and, thereby, gaining revenge on Germany (Guttman 2002). However, his desire for revenge was dissipating and he began to apply LePlay's ideas at an international level. According

to Guttman, his international travel and introduction to other travelers helped to ease his xenophobia, creating a "patriotic Frenchman…but no longer a chauvinist" (Guttman 2002: 11).

Throughout the nineteenth century, Europe had been home to frequent attempts to rejuvenate the ancient Olympic Games. Most of these attempts were regional and sporadic; however, they are important because they are emblematic of the growth of humanism and internationalism on the Continent. Through connections Coubertin had made in sporting organizations that he had helped to found, he began to sow the seeds of a new Olympic movement, founded on the ideal of international harmony (Guttman 2002). Coubertin successfully cobbled together enough support to start a new Olympic movement, with the first Games staged in 1896 in Athens, Greece, home of the Ancient Olympics. "In the eyes of Pierre de Coubertin and the men who succeeded him as president of the IOC, the political purpose of the Games --the reconciliation of warring nations-- was more important than the sports" (Guttman 2002: 1).

Clearly, there have been roadblocks and trials following the inception of the Modern Games, but it can be seen that, from the very beginning nationalism and national identity played a prominent role in sport and the Olympics. Yet the Olympic Games themselves are full of contradictions. They are at once individualistic and cosmopolitan, national and international, and participatory and competitive. Coubertin believed that individual liberty is paramount (Guttman 2002). Guttman writes that he "was torn between a belief in individualism and the conviction that nationality is the indispensible

core of individual identity" (2002: 2). The present-day dialectical struggle between international and national ideals can be seen from the inception of the Modern Games. The Games are contested between individual participants, who are awarded individually, but represent their nations. There is no official point competition between the nations and there are no team medals for the entire national team delegations. However, the individuals must be chosen by their nation, they compete in a national uniform under the national flag and are celebrated with their national anthem. No athlete can compete as an unattached non-national. This event is, inarguably, nationalistic. In fact, Guttman quotes a spectator saying to Coubertin at the 1896 Athens Games, "I see that your internationalism…does not kill national spirit-- it strengthens it" (2002: 19).

Concepts of Identity

In an international event such as the Olympics, individualism cannot be completely separated from the collectivism that is the nation. This individualism, in concert with the nation, is manifested in the individual through his or her national identity. Stuart Hall has written on this subject in a 1992 book titled *Modernity and its Futures.* To understand national identity, we must first look at the three stages or concepts of the subject (or identity) that evolved over time, according to Hall. These concepts are not necessarily sequential or dependent upon each other at the individual level: that is a person does not necessarily go through these stages as he or she ages. Rather, these subjects, or types of identities, are contextual and evolve over time within a

society or a community. They can overlap, depending on time and place. Hall's distinguishes (1) the Enlightenment subject, (2) the sociological subject, and (3) the post-modern subject. Hall's "subject" is synonymous with identity. When thinking of how he uses the term "subject," it is often helpful to think of the *subjective.* He is referring to a point of view or perspective, not universal or absolute subject. In other words, Hall's subject is a person's identity.

The "Enlightenment subject" is a static, "fully centered" identity (Hall 1992: 275). This is the identity that is continuous. You are who you are throughout your life; identity is constant "throughout an individual's existence" (Hall 1992: 275). This is a very individualistic concept of identity.

The "sociological subject" is the concept of a person achieving identity through interaction between the self (individual) and society. This concept of identity "stabilizes both subjects and the cultural worlds they inhabit, making both reciprocally more unified and predictable" (Hall 1992: 276). Much like the "looking-glass self" (Cooley 1902) and a symbolic-interactionism approach to identity (Mead 1964), this concept sees individual identity as interdependent with society. The context helps to determine the identity.

The third concept of identity that Hall wishes us to understand before he explains national identity is the "post-modern subject." This idea of self (or identity) is one with no continuity and no center. "Identity becomes a 'moveable feast': formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the

cultural systems which surround us" (Hall 1992: 277). A post-modern subject is anchorless with multiple identities in multiple contexts.

Hall argues that few people in the present day identify with the static "Enlightenment subject." The "sociological subject" and the "post-modern subject" have become the most common types of identities. Unfolding modernity has led to contextual changes which have altered the basic notions of identity. "Modern societies are…societies of constant, rapid, and permanent change" (1992: 277). This permanent change has led to discontinuity in society. Here, Hall borrows from Giddens, noting that discontinuity leads to a "disembedding of the social system" and the "lifting out of the social relations" (1992: 277). Fragmentation, disconnection, and rupture can lead to several identities for individuals. This can lead to less collectivism and more individualism, but it can also lead to more connections between individuals (just as when you break up a pill to dissolve in water it creates more surface area). This fragmentation and connection is partial and temporary.

Dealing with these fractious identities can be a high-stakes pursuit. Hall called this "playing the identity game" (Hall 1992: 280). This game can lead to contradictory identities, contradictory both in society and in the individual. A master identity is never completely created (i.e. I am never "man above all"). Lack of a master identity further fractures society because people (the building blocks of society) are fractured. The competing and fracturing identities lead to shifting identities. Since identity shifts according to how a subject is addressed or presented, identification is not automatic, but

can be won or lost. It has become politicized. This is sometimes described as a shift from a politics of (class) identity to a politics of *difference* (Hall 1992). Other scholars find this idea in their work as well (Fenton 2007; Bairner 2001).

Before focusing on the post-modern subject, it is helpful to better understand Hall's "modern subject." Hall pointed out that the Enlightenment was a precursor to modernity and modernity brought the birth and rise of individualism: a new way of living and experiencing life as an individual. The modern person began to reject the divine hierarchical order of things (pre-Enlightenment) and move toward a more rational and positivistic approach toward the world. This new self-centeredness coupled with the complexities of life helped the modern subject to see others as individuals and to foster a collective identity, throwing off the pre-modern idea of being subject to the divine order. As deference to the divine order continued to decrease, the subject became more and more de-centered or fractured by the middle of the twentieth century. This is consistent with previously discussed Andersonian ideas of nation-creating.

Hall maintains that national identities are not imprinted on genes, but are something we learn from cultural representation: "We only know what it is to be 'English' because of the way 'Englishness' has come to be represented, as a set of meanings, by English national culture" (1992: 292). A system of cultural representation is necessary for the creation or understanding of a national identity. Hall defines this system, noting that "people are not only legal citizens of a nation: they participate in the idea of the nation represented in its national culture. A nation is a symbolic

community…" (1992: 292). Hall relied heavily on Anderson in his definition of a nation. He expanded upon Anderson by using the idea that (continuous) creation of a nation involves interactions with the system of cultural representation, creating a national identity in the process. Anderson's conceptualization of the formation and definition of a nation illustrates how national identity, in all of its ambiguity, is interwoven with the nation: different national identities emerge based on the varied imaginations of the community.

Hall applies five components of Anderson's theory to show how national identity and the imagined community that is the nation are interwoven. The first component is the narrative of the nation. The narrative of the nation is a shared narrative told over and over again in histories, literature, popular culture and media. These narratives develop symbols and create meanings, scenarios and events that foster a feeling of a shared narrative among the citizens.

The second component is similar to Anderson's idea of the antiquity of the nation. Hall conveys an emphasis on origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness, even representing national identity "as primordial" (1992: 294). The invention of tradition is Hall's third component of interwoven-ness. National tradition is "a set of practices…of a ritual or symbolic nature which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviors by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with a suitable historical past" (Hall 1992: 294) and is invented while the nation is created.

A foundational myth is the fourth component. This is much like the second component, but more specific. It entails locating the foundation of the nation so far back in time that it is 'mythic,' and therefore inarguable—much like Anderson's notion of setting the nation in antiquity. An example would be that for many United States nationals, the Pilgrims' 1620 landing at Plymouth Rock is the founding of our nation. This story has achieved mythic status and it attaches another century and a half to our nation's history- making it all that much older and concrete. This myth ties nicely into the fifth and final component: symbolically grounding the nation in the idea of an "original people." We are all ancestors of the Puritans in philosophy and in striving to achieve the same freedoms that they sought when they came here. This generates the notion of a continuous line of people (at least philosophically, if not genetically) in the nation known as the United States of America.

Hall used Immanuel Wallerstein, the world-systems sociologist to further illustrate the point:

> the nationalisms of the modern world are the ambiguous expression [of a desire] for…assimilation into the universal…and simultaneously for…adhering to the particular, the reinvention of differences. Indeed it is a universalism through particularism and a particularism through universalism (Wallerstein, 1984, pp. 166-167) cited in (Hall 1992: 295).

This idea is a continuation of Anderson and Hall in that there are many nations and therefore many national identities. Nonetheless, we still recognize them as similar and this difference in similarity is what we should study. National identities are understood and experienced differently, but they are recognizable.

Sport and National Identity

Sport and national identity are tied to one another (Bairner 2001: Jarvie 2003; Hunter 2003; Lechner 2007). The attachment of the two is, however, far from simple. Alan Bairner is a leading scholar of the interaction between nationalism and sport. In *Sport, Nationalism, and Globalization*, he examines Irish, Scottish, Swedish, Canadian, English, and American national identities in terms of sport. In this comprehensive study of what he called "stable Western democracies" (2001: 177), he found that sport and national identity are closely linked, but in a very complex way. Much like Anderson's insistence that no two countries experience an imagined community the same way, no two countries' sport nationalism is exactly the same. Paralleling Anderson's universal idea of a nation, Bairner observes that there are commonalities between nations when it comes to national identity and sport: "if each nation in the world possessed its own unique sporting culture, the relationship between sport and national identity would be largely uncontentious" (2001: 166). Nonetheless, there is a "marked variation in the manner in which sport is used in such different contexts to promote the nationalist cause" (Bairner 2001: 164).

Bairner also found that sporting nationalism and political nationalism were not two sides of the same coin, but were "closely linked" (2001: 173). The idea of nationalism, whether it be in the political or sporting realm is never as homogeneous as might appear at first glance, but we can get a "clearer understanding" of national identity through the study of sport. Sport allows the nation to maintain some sort of difference, or identity, in the face of growing globalization (Bairner 2001). This difference can be achieved when countries use diverse sports to differentiate themselves from the rest of the world. Some examples are cross-country skiing for the Finnish (Laine 2006), baseball for the Japanese (Collins 2007), and the Celtic games for the Irish (Bairner 2001). These sports are examples of national sports and transcend other sports for the nation, or as Laine observes, "not all sports are considered equal in the process of nation-building, as some sports have a more important role in the national imagery than others" (2006: 73).

As Hall contends, modernity unfolds and leads to fractured identities. We have moved into a point in human history where global relations can sometimes affect the world more than national relations. Collins, Jarvie, and Lechner examined sport and national identity in terms of our shrinking world. Each found that national identity in sport remains very salient in this day and age (Collins 2007; Jarvie 2003; Lechner 2007).

Both Collins (2007) and Lechner (2007) found that the countries that they were exploring (Japan and the Netherlands, respectively) used sport as a mode to represent themselves on the world stage and to reinforce a sense of collective national identity.

Sport was used as a projection to the world for the Dutch and the Japanese. According to Collins, Japan used the Olympics and sport to "reveal to the world" its economic growth and success which is achieved without sacrificing its national identity (2007: 365). Lechner (2007) wrote that the Dutch idea of "total soccer" became representative of Dutch national identity to the rest of world, although he argued that Dutch culture is much too complex to be represented by soccer alone.

Grant Jarvie (2003), the noted specialist in the field of sports studies, argued for the importance of studying nationalism in terms of sport in his article "Internationalism and Sport in the Making of Nations." Jarvie focused on the idea of internationalism and its impact on both sport and nationalism. He found that the question of national identity achieved through sport is not an irrelevant one in this new era of globalization; nations and nation-states are still important in a real-world way in both politics and sport. Jarvie discusses the multifaceted ways in which sport has been used in internationalism and reconciliation, focusing on the rising number of scholarly works on sport, nationalism, and identity. He also compared and contrasted terms such as internationalism, cosmopolitanism, and globalization, in terms of sport, concluding that the nation is not soon to be redundant and that the identity achieved through the nation is still important, regardless of globalization and internationalism.

Sport can create differences, i.e. another way to define a nation in comparison to other nations. It is also used within the nation to define the identity of a nation itself. Sport is one of the many ways a national identity is created. Lechner wrote that sport, at

its best, “provides one answer among others to the ‘Who-are-we’ question” (2007: 218). This question is not always answered linearly. Sport is re-interpreted and used to create an identity for the nation (Laine 2006; Lechner 2007; Magdalinski 1999). Laine found that sport was used by the Finns “to construct an image of itself as a viable nation” (2006: 68). “Total soccer” was a post hoc re-interpretation of the soccer style played by the 1974 Dutch World Cup soccer team. Lechner (2007) found that this re-telling of the story of this team and re-interpretation (mostly through the mass media) fit a certain narrative, i.e. that it (“total soccer”) is representative of Holland.

Much like Lechner, Tara Magdalinski (1999) argued that sport was used as means to form a national narrative. However, unlike the Dutch case, she argues that the East German re-telling of the sporting record was institutional and governmentally performed (Magdalinski 1999). She found that East Germany utilized its long history, both in terms of sport and statehood, to achieve greater institutional control. As a result of World War II and a new government being put into place, officials sought to reframe history to make the socialist nation appear to be a logical result of the actions of past citizens and groups in Germany who were anti-fascist and socialist. The GDR (East German) government made a concerted effort to tell this history to create a new identity for the nation, and it used sport and sport figures as a way to re-enforce this national identity. "Public ceremonies [such as sporting events] were thus employed to raise the historical, social, political and socialist consciousness of the people and to inculcate political norms and accepted social values" (Magdalinski 1999: 541).

Steve Fenton observed a link between national identity in the United Kingdom and sport while watching the 2006 World Cup. This casual observation led him to examine the salience of national identity. He conducted a fascinating study: approaching British young adults to determine if they cared about national identity (Fenton 2007). Students of sociology know the importance of national identity and we wrestle with the implications of the modernity of nation-states and the emerging (some would say already arriving) post-modern world. Fenton examined some of the more recent literature on nationalism and national identity, as well as the classic theorists of nation-formation. He discussed the salience of the nation, nationalism and national identity, concluding that no one had really asked anyone about it in a while. After reviewing the literature, Fenton hypothesized that nations are stable and therefore, national identity is a stable identity, a 'taken-for-granted" identity (2007: 325). He further argued that this taken-for-granted-ness may make it more fundamental. "A stable identity may lack intensity because of its 'taken-for-granted' quality; equally, a threat to this taken-for-grantedness might make it highly salient" (Fenton 2007: 325). Fenton found that "dominant identities reflecting powerful states [England] or populations [majorities] are muted because they can be so much taken for granted" (2007: 337).

Swimming at the Olympic Games

Because this research focuses on Olympic swimmers, it is very important to understand the sport in the context of the Olympics. The Summer Olympic Games are

quadrennial. Since their inception in 1896 in Athens, the modern Olympic Games have become a world event that gathers athletes from all over the globe. Competitors from over 25 sports represent 205 nations at the Olympics. An athlete must be picked by his/her nation to compete and cannot compete without being selected by a National Olympic Committee (NOC). The Olympic Games last approximately two weeks (give or take a few days, depending on the year).

The sport of Aquatics (hereafter known as swimming) has been a part of the Modern Games since their inception. Like all sports in the Olympic Program, swimming is governed by an international federation, FINA (Federation International de Natation) in the case of swimming. FINA's responsibilities include standardizing the distances and strokes of the sport, cataloguing and certifying records, and creating forums for international events. The sport of swimming, like most Olympic sports, has evolved over the years. Nonetheless, it has maintained the basic idea that it is a competition to see how fast a man (or woman, starting in 1912) can move through the water at an agreed upon distance and in an agreed upon manner (stroke).

Swimming traditionally takes place in the first week of the Games and is a program of sixteen events for both the men and the women. At present, both men and women swim the 50-meter, 100-meter, 200-meter, and 400 meter freestyle, the 100-meter and 200-meter of the other three officially sanctioned strokes: backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly. Both genders compete in individual medleys (an event combining all four strokes) at the 200- and 400-meter distances. In addition, the men and the women have

three relays wherein four team members swim four legs of either the 100-meter or 200-meter freestyle or one 100-meter leg in each of the four strokes. The only gender difference occurs in the distance events: women swim the 800-meter freestyle while men compete in the 1500-meter freestyle.

Swimmers can compete in as many events as they qualify for, but no National Olympic Committee (NOC) can be represented by more than two swimmers per individual event or by more than one relay team. The events take place in an eight lane, 50-meter pool. Prior the 2004 Olympic Games, swimmers competed in the morning at preliminary (or qualifying) heats with the top eight from the morning competing at night in the Championship Finals. The 9^{th} through 16^{th} fastest qualifiers from the morning competed in the "B" Finals. In order to win a medal, a swimmer had to qualify for the Championship Final and finish in the top three of that race in the evening. The top finisher(s) earns a gold medal, the next finisher(s) wins silver and the third finisher(s) gains a bronze. Since the 2004 Athens Games, the fastest sixteen swimmers of individual events less than 400 meters in length from the qualifying heats swim in semifinal heats with the top eight finishers from those two heats continuing to compete in the Championship Final the next day.

Summary

More research on the confluence of national identity and sport has been called for by many researchers (Hunter 2003; Lechner 2007; Jarvie 2003; Magdalinski 1999). Methods like Fenton's can be utilized to better understand this confluence. This is still an issue that needs to be examined even in our global society. Sport is one response to globalization, "help[ing] to create a home in a homeless world' (Lechner 2007: 221). The scholars discussed above have helped to define a nation (Anderson 1983) and shown how national identity is developed within the imagined community (Hall 1992). Sport is seen as a way for national identity to be created, either to set one nation apart from another (Bairner 2001; Collins 2007; Lechner 2007; Jarvie 2003) or as to reify one nation's own identity (Lechner 2007; Magdalinski 1999; Laine 2006). Nonetheless, there are few, if any, studies focused on the national identity of the athletes themselves. Magdalinski (1999) and Collins (2007) looked at how the government used sport for creating an identity for a nation, while Laine (2006) and Lechner (2007) examined the media's use of sport in forming national identity. Bairner (2001) looked at fandom and general participation. These studies are informative and useful, but they do not focus on athletes as representatives of a nation and their national identity.

I intend to fill this gap by exploring the national identity of Olympic athletes. An examination of how these macro ideas from Lechner (2007) and Bairner (2001) filter down to the micro-level experiences of the Olympic athlete leads to many questions: is sport a home in a homeless world for the athletes? Is it a way for athletes to differentiate

themselves from others? The Olympics, as noted above, is a truly international event with a nationalistic flair. This event is a wonderful occurrence of many nations joining together in competition, where Anderson's imagined communities come together. Do the athletes even take national identity into consideration, or were Lechner (2007), Jarvie (2003), and Collins (2007) incorrect at the micro-level? Most importantly, is national identity salient to Olympic swimmers? These are some of the questions I explore and some of the gaps I begin to fill in this thesis.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Researchers and writers are often encouraged to start with what they know. Being a former Division I swimmer, sport is something I know. I have watched and participated in sports my entire life and the Olympics have been one of the formative events in my spectator-life. I still remember watching the 1984 Sarajevo and Los Angeles Games with my family. We had friends who were able to attend the 1988 Games in Seoul as spectators- I was captivated by their stories. As a swimmer, the Olympic Games were the ultimate goal. This goal is forefront for all young swimmers. Each club team is part of the organization known as United States Swimming, these club teams have different levels and ages of swimmers, with their best swimmers invariably being part of that club team's "National Team Training Group." There are national qualifying standards and most swimmers are very aware of where they rang against other swimmers from around their country via their times and these standards. In the United States, it is not uncommon for swimmers to wear the American flag cap during training and meets. This is all to give examples of how the structure of the sport points swimmers toward the goal of representing his or her nation. The best do this at the best meet: the Olympic Games.

As I got older, the Games became more tangible. I met, practiced, and competed with Olympians. I was able to watch teammates attempt to make the United States' Olympic team in 1992 and to watch a former teammate and friends compete for various countries (Greece, Thailand, Spain, France, and the United States) at the 1996 Atlanta Games. When contemplating possible research topics, I reflected upon the international aspect of the sport of swimming and how this converges with the extremely nationalistic aspect of its main event, the modern Olympic Games.

Swimming's internationalism affords many opportunities for a swimmer to compete as a member of a national team. There are several international events: global events like the Olympics and the World Championships; regional events like the Pan-American Games, the Pan-Pacific Games, the Oceanic Games, the European Championships, the Commonwealth Games; organizationally structured events like the Maccabiah Games or the World University Games; and even inter-country events like the "Cold War: East vs. West" meets during the 1970s and 1980s and this century's "Duel in the Pool," which pits the United States against Australia. In order to gain experience at the international level, many nations also have Junior National teams for younger elite swimmers.

Swimming is also a sport in which many of the elite coaches and athletes are approaching their athletic peak at the collegiate age. As a result of the competitiveness of collegiate swimming, there is a decidedly international flair to collegiate swimming that is not as pronounced as in many other sports. These three characteristics of the sport of

swimming (the international/national dialectic at the highest level, the multitude of opportunities to compete for one's nation, and the integrated-ness of the teams) make it an excellent case for studying national identity among competitors. This sport, at its highest levels, daily puts an *Us* with a *Them*, in competition or in practice. That swimmers are constantly in contact with an *Other* led me to hypothesize that national identity could be an important aspect of an elite swimmer's identity. This is where I began my research.

The ambiguity of national identity is reminiscent of Justice Potter Stewart's opinion of pornography in the 1964 *Jacobellis v. Ohio* court case, "I know it when I see it." Justice Stewart's expression has become a common phrase to describe ideas that lack concreteness, and national identity is one of these ideas. This ambiguity argues for a qualitative approach to the question. Like other ambiguous, deeply-rooted subject matters, national identity is best uncovered and explained in the subject's own words, through qualitative analysis (Fenton 2007; Klatch 1999; Johnson 2001).

My research is exploratory. I conducted research on an aspect of society that has been studied very little and have neither the time nor the resources to take a longitudinal ethnographic approach to these questions, so I conducted exploratory semi-structured, in-depth interviews with my subjects. This is the best way to approach this type of research (Schensul, et al. 1999; Johnson 2001). Following Fenton's lead, I asked Olympic swimmers about their national identity. My particular experiences enabled me to access

the deeper, more taken-for-granted information that other researchers may not be able to get to through interviews with these swimmers (Johnson 2001).

As stated in the previous paragraph, this research was exploratory. Also stated earlier, my interest was following Fenton's approach in his 2007 study. I concluded that the only method which would allow me to ask and answer the questions I was interested in asking and answering was interviews. My method was decided before my methodology was solidified.

At the beginning of my study, I wanted to take a grounded theory approach. I intended to follow the disciplined coding practices in that method to develop a coding technique using the words of my respondents. However, I was unable to get a large enough data set to follow a grounded theory approach properly. Over time, however, the necessary approach became clear. I took an interpretive approach to the data. "This approach involves trying to understand the experiences an individual has in life, how they made sense of them and what meanings those experiences hold (Smith 2004)" (www.onlineqda.hud.ac.uk). Because of my long experience with the sport of swimming as a participant and observer, my interpretive approach did have a hermeneutical bent to it. I was able to extract a bit of the meaning from the context, as any insider is able to do.

I developed two instruments. The first instrument was a ten question test modeled after Kuhn and McPartland (1954) and Bochner (1994). It was designed to determine the most salient identities of the subjects. The ten question test was sent to each respondent via electronic mail. It directed the subject to finish ten statements starting with "I am…,"

asking the respondent to complete the statement as if they were asking themselves "Who am I?" (See Appendix B).

This ten statement test (TST) was created to let a subject define "self" in his or her own words (Kuhn and McPartland 1954). Kuhn and McPartland (1954) initially developed the test as twenty statements and found that the "I am" statements came in two categories: consensual and subconsensual. Consensual categories are categories referring to definite group membership or relationships that are "common knowledge," while subconcensual categories of the 'I am" statements are those statements that "require interpretation by the respondent to be precise or to place him relative to other people." They also found that consensual categories would be "exhaust[ed]" before the subject began listing subconsensual categories.

Forty years later, Bochner (1994) modeled a comparative study on the TST. Bochner concluded that "twenty questions is about thirteen too many" and used ten questions (1994: 276). This is why I chose ten statements for my test instead of the original twenty statements. Bochner (1994) investigated collectivism and individualism in the cultures, Malaysia and Australia. Salience was also of interest to him. In his analysis, the "I am" statement's salience to self was weighted based on order, i.e. the first "I am" statement received more points than the second, and so on.

The TST in this study was only an initial stage and it had a binary purpose. First, it was used as a means to get the subjects to think about their identity a bit. The electronic-mail subject line was "Olympic Study" and this, at best, coaxed the subject to

reflect about his or her Olympic experience. Because this study was an attempt to measure salience of national identity for Olympians and I was asking Olympians to remember their experience, it was advantageous if they began to reflect on their experience before our interview[1].

The second purpose of the TST was for me to use the results as a probing apparatus in the interview process. During the interviews, I was able to note that a subject had stated that "I am" something. This enabled me to guide the respondent to disclose more about his or her identity very naturally, because it was based on information that was already given. It seemed to create trust between the subject and the researcher.

The second and primary research instrument was designed to explore the salience of national identity for Olympic swimmers and to further examine how the swimmers experienced national identity when they participated in the Olympics. The semi-structured interviews were conducted over the phone and the entire interview was digitally recorded. To borrow a nautical term, I used a "tacking" method during these interviews. A sailboat must tack though the wind, never going straight, but maneuvering towards the goal (in this instance, the subjects' conceptualization of national identity and the salience of this concept during their Olympic experience). "Tacking" must be done because one cannot explicitly ask someone "what is your national identity?" A

[1] This sample is not ideal in that there is anywhere from three months to sixteen years of a gap since their experience, so those feelings and memories from their experience(s) may need to be teased out a bit.

researcher must find proxy measurements and build off of those proxies, always maneuvering toward the end-goal, but not necessarily "sailing" directly towards it. The idea of representation, which is a very familiar notion for these athletes because of the swimmers' experiences in college, with club teams, and in numerous international meets, was a main proxy during these interviews.

The subjects of this study were found via a snowball sampling process. I relied upon two initial sources to start this process, both of whom were former teammates of mine: both were U.S. National Team training partners and former United States Swimming club coaches. One was also a collegiate All-American and finalist at the 2000 United States' Olympic Trials. Initially, nearly twenty participants were contacted via e-mail. Respondents had to meet three requirements: they must have (1) the capacity to speak English, (2) reached the age of eighteen by the time of the interview, and (3) competed as a swimmer in a Summer Olympics. After each participant agreed to be a part of the study, they were sent the first instrument, the Ten Statement Test.

The semi-structured interview protocol was developed to reflect the literature reviewed in the previous chapter and in consultation with John M. Johnson's "In-Depth Interviewing" (2001) and Schunsel, et al.'s "Semi-Structured Interviewing" (1999), as well as Graduate Seminar project that I took part in as a student researcher. Along with my "insider status," I followed Johnson in using "in-depth interviewing as a way to learn meaning of the participants' actions" and let "the informant…be a kind of teacher" (2001: 106). The fact that I am a former periphery participant in their world helped me to

gain some trust and understanding earlier than other researchers, allowing for better interpretation of their experiences.

Each interview was transcribed verbatim. I read and re-read each transcription, becoming "intimately familiar" with the data (Warren and Karner 2010: 218). After reading the transcripts once, I went through by hand and noted themes throughout the semi-structured interviews based on the questions. I allowed the participants to use their own words in describing their experiences while noting the similarities and differences through my coding scheme. These differences and similarities were interpreted in order to create a theoretical lens as to how an Olympic swimmer experienced the Olympics. I also used this lens to develop an idea of the salience of national identity in Olympic swimmers. My results fill in some of the gaps in the literature to try to connect the macro-level of national identity from the previous literature down to the micro-level to the athletes themselves. A comparison to an "ideal type" cannot accurately be attempted. As we have seen there is precious little literature on the national identity of athletes. If creating an ideal type was attempted through this literature, it would be insufficient and incomplete. This exploratory study ought to develop a starting point of how national identity is experienced by Olympic swimmers during the Olympic Games, and its salience to them.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The Respondents

Table 1: The Respondents[2]

Athlete	Sex	Olympic	Nation	Event	Result
Betty	F	2000	USA	Individual; Relay	6th; gold
Ian	M	1992	USA	Individual; Relay	gold; gold
Nick	M	2000 & 2004	USA	2000- Relay 2004- Relay	2000-silver 2004- bronze
Tom	M	2008	S. Africa	Individual	22nd
Amanda	F	2008	USA	Individual; Relay	semis; bronze
Don	M	1996	USA	Individual; Individual	B finals; B finals
Steve	M	2004	USA	Relay	gold

Table 1 introduces each of my respondents. The table indicates which Olympic Games each individual competed in and the results of their Olympic competition. Below is a brief description of each individual member of the study, in no particular order.

[2] Pseudonyms are used to maintain anonymity.

Betty

Betty described herself as someone who is "always reaching for something to entertain people;" she likes to be the center of attention. Betty began swimming at age 5 because her older brothers were swimming and she wanted to swim too. Betty swam at a southwestern university known for its swimming prowess. She swam in four Olympic Trials (1988, 1992, 1996, and 2000), finally making the US Olympic team in 2000 for the Sydney Games. Throughout the 1990s, she was ranked at or near the top of the world in her event and was "pretty much a member of every national team that you can be a member of," which led to several international swimming experiences. By her estimate, she visited between "15 and 18 different countries for free" as a member of one US national team or another. Betty was the second oldest person that I interviewed and was the oldest as a competitor, swimming at Sydney at the age of 27. She now works for a major swimming equipment manufacturer in a western state.

Ian

Ian is the most decorated of the respondents, winning a gold medal in both his individual event and the relay at the 1992 Barcelona Games. Ian began swimming at age 10 at the behest of his mom, but he "mostly skipped practice" and "broke into the gym to shoot baskets with a friend."

His formal swimming career started serendipitously while attempting to gain admission to a prestigious preparatory school; he was offered admission solely because he was a

swimmer. He started swimming seriously at the age of 15 or 16 and, incredibly, qualified for Olympic Trials only two years later. He did well enough to make a national team the next year, going to Japan as part of the US National team. Currently 38, Ian was the oldest person I interviewed. He was 21 years old when he competed at the Barcelona Games. He swam for and graduated from a prestigious New England university and now lives on the east coast, also working for a major swimming equipment manufacturer.

Nick

Nick was the only respondent who competed in two Olympic Games, medaling in relays at the 2000 and 2004 Olympic Games. Nick describes himself as "very humble." He started swimming at age five. He continued with swimming because "everybody's good at something…and for me it was swimming." When he reached his early teens, Nick quit his other sports, realizing that swimming was one of those sports where "the commitment level is a lot higher." According to Nick, he was very fortunate to have familial support because it takes a large "commitment from your parents to help" in getting you to practices and meets.

The two Olympics were "two very different experiences" for Nick. In 2000, he was still a student-athlete at a southwestern university and in 2004 he was a professional swimmer with sponsorship money allowing him to train without having to get a job. Nate was only one of two of the respondents who were able to attend the Olympic Games Opening Ceremonies. Nick was 22 years old when he competed as "a rookie" at the 2000 Games, he was 26 his second go around in Athens four years later.

Tom

Tom was the only non-US athlete in the study, competing for South Africa at the 2008 Beijing Games. Tom started swimming at the age of eight because his "mom thought it'd be a good idea." He qualified for the South African National team when he was 15 and travelled with the team to Brazil. Qualifying for the 2004 Short Course World Championships in Indiana made him realize that "America was definitely going to be an option" as far as swimming in college. At the 2005 World Championships, he was approached by the head coach of a southeastern university; he decided to swim there. After competing in the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, he moved from South Africa to the United Sates to be a student-athlete at the university because "the only way I was going to get faster would be if I went to the States." Tom swam for the same coach for his entire swimming career, except a three month stint at a training camp in Germany. Understandably, his coaches were reticent to let him go, remarking that it "would be a bad idea" for him to come to the United States.

Tom's training partner at the university was a French distance star. In fact, after both of them qualified for the 2008 Olympics, the French Federation paid his way to train with his training partner in the French Pyrenees Mountains prior to the Olympic Games. Tom was the second youngest athlete I interviewed and the least temporally removed from his experience. We spoke less than three months after the Beijing Games. Tom had to cut short his Olympics, leaving three days after his event to begin a new semester at college.

He is in his third year at the university and expects to graduate in the December of 2010. He plans to stay in the United States to train for the 2012 games in London.

Amanda

At 18 years of age, Amanda was the youngest of the participants. Our interview was in December of 2008, just four months after she competed in the 200-meter freestyle and the 4 by 200-meter freestyle relay at the Beijing Games. She qualified for semifinals in the individual event and won a bronze medal in the relay. Amanda started swimming when she was "almost ten," she started because her older sister was a swimmer. She made her first trip as a representative of the United States on the US Junior National team to Hawaii in 2006 to compete against national junior teams from countries from around the world. The following year she swam in Japan as part of a US national contingent. She had the least international swimming experience of my respondents. Amanda did not go to the Opening or the Closing Ceremonies. She is a freshman student-athlete at a southeastern university and had to return from the Games in order to begin her semester.

Don

Don competed at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. As the older brother of a former college roommate and teammate of mine, he was also the only person whom I knew prior to this study. Don started swimming on a neighborhood team when he was "five or six" and immediately enjoyed it. He "happened to be good at it" and "had fun doing it" from the start. Don won the first Junior National meet that he qualified for, which he

characterized as a "big surprise to me and to everyone else." After that, he realized that he "had some talent and that he could…travel places and go far" with the sport. He swam at a major Midwestern university, which was filled with "international swimming superstars" from the Netherlands, El Salvador, Canada, and the Philippines.

His first national team trip was to Rome for the 1994 World Championships. He then qualified for the 1995 national team at the Pan-Pacific Championship meet in Atlanta and for the US Olympic team the following year, in his second Olympic Trials. In the months prior to the 1996 Olympic Trials, "which is really what everything was directed towards," Don and a collegiate teammate (a future US Olympic teammate) moved off campus and focused on qualifying for the United States Olympic team. Don swam two individual events at the Olympics, qualifying for the "B" final in both. Inexplicably, he was left off the gold medal winning relay team at those same Games. He swam for two more years after the Olympics, traveling to Japan for Pan-Pacific Championships in 1997 and the 1998 World Championships in Australia. Don was 21 years old when he competed at the 1996 Olympics; he is now 33 and practicing medicine in a Midwestern city.

Steve

Steve won a gold medal as a member of one of the United States' relays at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games. Steve moved around a lot as kid and he started swimming at the age of seven while living in Florida because all of his friends would "go out and swim." His "first taste" of international swimming happened when he was living in Ireland with his family. Despite not having Irish citizenship, he competed for the Irish national junior

team in a "couple different countries." A few years later, after moving to the American Midwest, he qualified for the US national junior team and competed in Spain. Steve's swimming took him to a Midwestern university and he swam at the 2000 Olympic Trials before making the team at the 2004 Olympic Trials. Steve also swam at the Pan-Pacific Championships and the World University Games before making the US Olympic team.

Because of shoulder problems and because he wanted to have a better chance to make the US Olympic team, he began to focus on one of the two shorter freestyle events. It is easier to qualify for this event because the United States takes the top six swimmers at Trials for the relay. (This will be explained further in the section, "Making the Team"). A truly versatile swimmer, this was the "first time" in his career that he focused on one event. Like Nick, Steve was able to experience the Opening Ceremonies, which he characterized as "one of my fondest moments of the Olympics." Due to his shoulder problems, Dan knew that either the Olympic Trials or the Olympics would be his last swimming meet. He is currently 27 years old and was 22 when he competed at the 2004 Games. He now works as an engineer in a Midwestern city.

Ten Statement Test

As previously discussed, my initial instrument was the Ten Statement Test (TST) as a way to coerce the respondents into thinking about their Olympic experience and their identity, in part to help in probing during the interviews. The TST, modeled after the studies by Kuhn and McPartland (1954) and Bochner (1994) yielded some results that

were not entirely expected. According to Bochner (1994), the first seven responses have a higher level of salience/importance. Of the seven Olympians in my study, only one athlete mentioned his nation as an identifier of self. This respondent recorded that he is "proud to be an American" as his fifth statement. No one else mentioned nation at all. Four of the Olympians mentioned their athleticism in their responses: "I am a swimmer" or "I am an athlete" or "I am a Champion" and "I am a teammate".

Only two respondents wrote, "I am an Olympian," but in each case the responses were after the first seven responses. Betty, interestingly enough, was the only swimmer to mention her sponsorship/employer, describing herself as "I am a [name of company] girl." This was her second statement. Nearly half of the respondents mentioned their affiliation with their respective Universities, with the prominence of the order being directly correlates to the number of years they've been out of college.

The remainder of the responses dealt with familial relationships, e.g. "I am a wife" or "I am a brother," and personal characteristics ("I am energetic" or "I am loyal" or "I am humble"). Consistent with Kuhn and McPartland (1954), the consensual categories (definite categories and relationships) were reported first and were followed by the subconsensual categories (categories that require interpretation). Interestingly, two respondents' first answers were their names, e.g. "I am Ian." Only one of the respondents failed to mention athleticism, nation, or specific familial relationships in any of the ten statements; that person reported only subconsensual categories as his answers to "I am…".

Making the Team

The United States Olympic Trials have been called "the fastest meet in the world" by many international swimming authorities. The National Olympic Committees (NOCs) select the Olympic teams. In order to make the selection process more equitable, most NOCs have some sort of Trials meet in order to select their team. The United States version requires a swimmer to finish in the top two of his or her individual event or to finish in the top six of the 100-meter or 200-meter freestyle races to be on the relays at the Olympics. All but one of the respondents competed for the United States at the Olympics and therefore competed in the U.S. Olympic Trials.[3]

All of the participants spoke about how important the Olympic Trials were to their career. One respondent described the Trials as the event that "everything was directed towards." In summing up the importance of the meet, another Olympian affirmed that "everybody that's really fast tries to make the Olympic Trials…or tries to make the Olympic team."

[3] Tom, the only non-US swimmer in this study, had a somewhat different experience than the United States swimmers. Tom swam at the NCAA Championships in Seattle, Washington last March. He then flew back to South Africa immediately after that meet to compete in the South African Olympic Trials less than a week later. At his Trials, a swimmer not only had to finish first or second in your individual event, but also had to achieve "an international standard qualifying time" at the meet. As Tom said, "even if you had done the time ten times leading up to our [South Africa's] Olympic Trials, and you bomb out at Trials, they still weren't going to take you." From Tom's tone of speech, one could hear the added stress of having to worry about a time standard: "even if you were the world champion and you didn't make the time [at the Trials], you weren't going to go [to the Olympics]." As a result of the strength and depth of USA swimming, United States swimmers do not have to worry about the time standard.

The youngest two respondents were the only two to compete in only one Olympic Trials--the 2008 incarnation where they qualified for the Olympic team. Having competed in four Trials over three decades, Betty echoed many of her fellow US Olympians when she observed that "for me the more important obstacle was the Trials, rather than the Olympics because the Olympic Trials is such a difficult thing." When asked about what her Olympic experience was like in regards to the time between making the team at Trials and the Olympics, she talked about her ordeals at the Olympic Trials throughout her swimming career, admitting: "I pretty much paralyzed myself with fear of not making the team…you can be the greatest swimmer that never was" if you don't make the Olympic Team.

The intensity of the meet was not lost on the other respondents. One confirmed that it was "one of the most intense meets" she'd ever participated in. Another of the Olympians discussed strategy, saying that regardless of how fast he went at semi-finals, he "made finals, the goal for the day" in his event giving him "a shot at the Olympics." He later acknowledged that all he wanted was a chance at finals, "if I can make it to finals, I will be in the top six [making a relay berth], I'll make it. I'll find a way to beat two people. Just give me one chance." One respondent put the importance of the Olympic Trials plainly, reporting that the Trials are great preparation for the Olympics because it's about "place," which goes against the swimming mentality that is always about racing against the clock, improving your time. He confessed that "all that matters is where you place…if you suck ass and the other seven guys in the pool suck worse ass,

then you win. It doesn't matter if you are the 8th slowest guy that's ever swam the race and the seven other guys are slower than you- it's irrelevant."

One individual described the whole experience of swimming at Trials and making the team eloquently when asked what it was like to make the team:

> Going to Trials was great…to win my event and to-- which was amazing-- honestly, it still gives me goosebumps sitting here telling you about it. And then to see- at the Indianapolis pool they paint your name on the wall [when you make the US team]…you know that this is an important feat and this is a special meet and there are people's names on the walls permanently…

He was then asked what made this so special.

> …when you swim, a lot of times you swim for yourself...In the grand scheme of things it is a team sport…and it was pretty humbling that that meant I was going to be a part of 26 guys and 26 girls who were going to represent our country in the Olympics…it was 'good for me,' it was humbling at the same time to be a part of this United States team to represent our country.

Representing the nation was one thing, but all of the Olympians spoke about the fact that qualifying for the Olympics was the preeminent goal in the sport of swimming. The Olympic Games is where the "best of the best" compete in swimming, according to

the swimmers. They reiterated that the Olympic Games was on the world stage and noted the importance of making the Olympic team as recognition for "the years and years of hard work and achievement." It is "just the nature of the sport" of swimming that the Olympics are the place to make your mark as a swimmer. One respondent reported that he remembers thinking after he made the Olympic Team that it was "the peak" of swimming.

The Olympics as Competition

For athletes, the Olympic experience involves more than just sport. In addition to competing against other athletes, they live with athletes from all over the world in the Olympic Village. They take part in the pageantry of the Games (medal ceremonies, Opening or Closing Ceremonies). They also have the opportunity to be spectators of the Games and tourists in the host city. These experiences are other instances were national identity can play an important role in an athlete's Olympics, and it is important to understand this context.

"The swimming part was what we were there for," one respondent emphasized while recounting the Olympics. This was echoed by all of the swimmers in one way or another. One respondent ignored distractions at the Olympic Village and in Barcelona during the competition because he "knew what I was there for and I knew why I was there and that was an important thing." That "important thing" was swimming fast.

Most of the swimmers stated that "it was just like any other meet" once they got to the pool. Some reported that they had so much international experience prior to their Olympics that the meet felt very routine. Nick mentioned that he knew "a lot of the other swimmers" at the meet because of his international experience.

Wearing Nationality[4]

All but one of the swimmers recollected the first time they put on swim caps, warm-up suits, and swimsuits bearing their nation's flag or colors. Both in the pool and outside of the pool, this was an important part of their experience.

At the pool, the action was transformative for most of them. It re-enforced the idea that they were representing a nation. Don described himself as "overcome with pride" when he put on the USA flag cap and was introduced to the crowd for his race. Another remembers that "because you are wearing the United States cap…you represent everything that the flag means." Two other respondents compared the Olympic swimming meet to collegiate swimming. They were more cognizant of the fact that they were representing the US, but it was like wearing their school's cap and it added a little extra incentive to swim fast. Initially, the whole experience was pretty overwhelming for

[4] In this section Tom stated that he "definitely" felt like a representative of South Africa, but could not really expand on what that meant to him. He did not speak about wearing his South African National Team clothing in any meaningful way.

another respondent, who reported that it was "amazing" knowing that folks back in her home country were cheering for her.

Although most of these swimmers were aware that they were representing the USA, they had difficulty describing what it meant to be an American or how that representation worked. One Olympian acknowledged to having "a lot of trouble defining myself as an American." When the subject came up again later in the interview, he confessed that "generic ideas[5]" would flash through his head- things like "the American flag," "bald eagles," "images of our President giving speeches," but he "didn't want to use that as his definition of being American." A second respondent described the idea of national identity as representing both "those people who shed their blood to protect the United States" and "people just doing their everyday lives." A third went a step further in trying to figure out who it was that he represented, declaring that

> there was, like 400 to 700 US athletes and at the time there was like 250 million Americans. And I sort of said: 'Well, all right, here is my 475,000 people that I represent'…almost like I get everyone from Secaucus to the Chesapeake Bay.

[5] These "generic ideas" are examples of the symbols integral to Anderson's (1983) idea of nation as an imagined community.

Finally, another reported that representing the USA, which is "the dream country," means that "we have so many opportunities" and she viewed herself as representative of that.

Out of the pool, these athletes were very conscious of being representatives of their nations. Betty disclosed that after you make any national team, especially the Olympic Team, they "give you two boxes and tell you to fill it up with all of the stuff [clothes] you brought and then they fill the rest of your luggage with all of the stuff that says USA National Team on it. So, you are pretty much branded as you go…they pretty much give you an entirely new wardrobe, aside from underwear." This was a standard experience for the six US Olympians.

All of the athletes discussed the recognition that comes along with being an USA Olympians, especially because they had a large amount of national team clothing. As a result, "a piece of you knows that you are under the microscope and you need to act appropriately" and "you need to be a very good ambassador" at these times. A second respondent concurred, declaring "that you assume that somebody is watching" and that you "absolutely" consciously perceive yourself as a representative of the United States when wearing the USA gear. The other respondents concurred, with one verbalizing that he was "very cautious of what I said, how I acted" while wearing USA clothes.

Nonetheless, there was a distinct line drawn when not wearing their national team gear for most of them. One respondent proclaimed that because he was 21 and in a beautiful country, he was definitely going to celebrate his accomplishments; "there were nights that turned into morning before I was home….and I guarantee I made a complete

ass of myself, but I made a complete ass of myself wearing street clothes." While agreeing that he was a representative of the US, another also reported that he brought plenty of non-USA clothes to wear, admitting that "I could easily be, if I wasn't talking…Canadian or from many other countries" when he was wearing street clothes. When he wore "everyday clothes" he felt like he was there as "almost a tourist," explaining that tourists do not feel "patriotic" or as if they are representing their country when they travel overseas. These Olympic experiences (out in public without wearing their national team clothing) usually occurred after the competition aspect of their Olympic Games concluded.

Part of wearing nationality comes in the form of tattoos in the sport of swimming, as MacNeil, Donnelly and Knight (2001) found in their study of corporate sponsors, media and swimmers at the 2000 Canadian Olympic Swimming Trials. They observed that there were a significant proportion of athletes with the Maple Leaf tattoos on their bodies. Six of the eight respondents reported having tattoos that represented their Olympic experiences; each having the five interlocking Olympic rings. Only one respondent incorporated his nation in his tattoo. He had USA inscribed on top of the Rings right after he made the Olympic Team.

Athletic Patriotism versus Political Patriotism

As discussed earlier, the ideas of *nationalism* and *national identity* are very fluid and flexible; they are difficult for sociologists to accurately define. If we have difficulty reaching an exact definition of these words, it is not surprising that others use proxy terms to describe these phenomena. For all of these swimmers, *patriotic* or *patriotism* was such a proxy. As Bairner (2001) noted, sporting nationalism and political nationalism are similar, but not the same. In my study, one respondent referred to "athletic patriotism" and "political patriotism."

All six US swimmers spoke of the historical preeminence of USA swimming at the Olympics. The United States is historically a very dominant nation at the Olympics. According to Mallon's *The Olympic Record Book* (1988), a compilation of all medal results from every Olympic Games from 1896 until 1984, and the United States Swimming website (usswim.org), the US has won 33.3% of the total medals awarded at the Olympic Swimming competitions (men 34.6% , women 31.7%). The athletes were very cognizant of this fact; even to the point of differentiating between representing the United States and United States swimming. This is the crux of the distinction between athletic and patriotic patriotisms. The respondents were conscious of both representing their nation as a whole and their nation's sporting legacy.

One respondent connected her idea of the USA as a "dream country" with her idea of US swimming dominance, explaining that folks come to the USA from all over the world to gain citizenship. She immediately joined her experience of Trials and how

difficult that was: [during and after Trials], "knowing that you've already competed against the best…there's some events that the top five in the world are from the US." This gave her both confidence and incentive to "let everyone else know what the US can do" at the Olympic Games. As is evident from her responses, this person both distinguished herself as a US swimmer while combined that identity with that of *US national*. Another respondent talked about the "swagger" that comes from swimming for the US, a third felt as if she was "guaranteed" a gold medal because of the strength of the US relay team of which she was a member.

Steve described the separation between sport and politics in his mind when asked to explain the moments before his race:

> leading up to the race and thinking, 'I'm representing our country...This is the USA.' And even all of the times that I've warmed up and I was wearing the US suit, I'm thinking, 'people notice…this is the US. We are one of the most recognized nations…' just thinking that one, 'we had to represent ourselves well and two, you know, we're the badasses here. We're the USA.' Those were the thoughts that went through my head…

When prompted to clarify his comments, Steve responded,

> …for me, it wasn't necessarily after the competition. I felt the- what we're calling "political patriotism" both before and after. But, I think definitely during: while I was swimming, while I was in the warm-up pool, while I was at the pool, much more of the "athletic patriotism." Much more of "this is my team," like the mentality

> that you would have as a college athlete..you know, I am representing the Midwestern University, when I go to [the] NCAA [Championship Meet], I am thinking about Midwestern University swimming and their history and their dominance… I think it is something that athletes tend to do. I don't know if just goes with the athlete mentality that…you're in a competitive mindset while you're there and you are thinking about how your team or your event, how you competitively match up against all of the other teams or all the other competitors.

Overall Olympic Experience

The Olympics were, first and foremost, a swimming meet for these athletes. Nonetheless, the swimming portion does not encompass the entire fortnight, and the swimmers are allowed to stay in the Olympic Village for the remainder of the Games.

The Opening Ceremonies

Because swimming starts on the first day of the Olympics, most swimmers decide to forgo the Opening Ceremonies to "save their legs." The Opening Ceremonies is one of the most watched nights of the Games and typically has a theatrical nature that "explains" the host nation's history or points of pride. Greece, as the home of the Olympics, leads the parade of nations at the Opening Ceremonies. Other national teams march in alphabetical order through the stadium. The host nation is the last nation in the parade of nations. The parade of nations is followed by the Olympic Pledge and the Olympic

Hymn. The Ceremonies culminate with the lighting of the Olympic Torch. All of the athletes I interviewed watched the Ceremonies from their suites in the Olympic Village. Only two participated in the actual Ceremonies. This section summarizes these participants' responses to that experience.

One of the respondents reminisced about his Opening Ceremonies experience without being prompted, commenting that participating in them was a "realization of a lifetime goal." For him, the experience of the Opening Ceremonies was one of "those things that you don't forget." He described the staging area for the Opening Ceremonies: all of the Olympic athletes were in the gymnastics hall and the United States being near the end of the alphabet was down at the bottom of the hall and "you got to see the world spiral down" as the nations that started with *A* and *B* and so on left the arena. The atmosphere was loud and boisterous: "a lot of fun" with cheering and "play" taking place in the arena. "[W]atching the Flame get lit" and "being a part of the pomp and circumstance" of the Opening Ceremonies were an important and memorable part of his experience.

The other respondent also regarded the Opening Ceremonies as "probably one of my fondest memories of the Olympics, if not the fondest." He did not enjoy the staging part of the Ceremonies as much as the previous respondent did, calling it "a full day event" and "a lot of waiting, actually." He did get to speak with some athletes from other nations during the Ceremonies; he was especially excited to talk to a couple from Iraq.

> The conversation with the guys from Iraq was very eye-opening…[the United States had recently launched military action on the country and the conversation was] awkward… because you don't know what's okay to ask--what's not okay to ask…you don't want to cross any-- and again you're representing the US. They're not going to talk to a whole lot of people from the US and, you know, what you say and what you do-- and vice versa-- is what their impression is going to be of Americans.

He also revealed that the Opening Ceremonies were more of a television event than for the athletes themselves: "at one point, they pulled a sheet that filled the whole center of the field over our heads. And something was done above it and all we could see was the underneath of a sheet."

Those who did not attend the Opening Ceremonies recalled watching the Opening Ceremonies on television, with Don feeling as if he "was there in spirit." Ian opined about how great the Barcelona flame lighting event was. Every Olympic Games attempts to light the Flame in a new and exciting way; the Barcelona Opening Ceremonies has been one of the most memorable of the last three or four decades. A Spanish archer shot a flaming arrow across Barcelona's Olympic Stadium into the Flame to light it. Ian commented that the Opening Ceremonies were "becoming more grand and more showy" over the years. What made the Barcelona Opening Ceremonies so special, according to Ian, was because "the seminal moment in the '92 Opening Ceremonies was an athlete doing something extraordinary… [and] that's basically what it [the Olympics] is [all about]."

Olympic Village and Post-Competition Experience

All of the Olympians are invited to stay in an Olympic Village. The Olympic Village is a closed off part of the city, usually accessible only by official buses. It is only open to you "if you're an athlete, if you're a trainer, if you're a coach, if you're support staff, if you're national team staff, or Olympic Committee staff." My respondents described it as "kind of like apartment buildings," or "a very large closed university campus," and a big "neighborhood." One estimated that there were close to 10,000 people living there the year he was at the Olympics.

With all of these athletes in one place, there were some cultural exchanges within the Olympic Village. Each athlete had similar experiences of living with one to four national teammates in a building or floor with other athletes from their nation, usually also swimmers. All of the athletes talked about the "global experience" of the Olympic Village.

Each respondent reported multiple interactions with athletes from all over the world: one commented "there is so much to learn to be a part of a village where you have people from all over the world that are, essentially the same person. They're an athlete." Watching and experiencing how the other athletes "interacted," "how they train," "how they win and how they lose" was "really special to be a part of," but he neither felt nor saw any real differences at the national level. Seeing Iraqi weightlifters prompted one respondent to think, "there is someone that my government doesn't like," but he did not

personalize this feeling, reporting instead that he did not allow this to affect the way that he interacted with other athletes. For most respondents, the competitive aspect of the Games "lends itself to [only] surface level communication."

The dining hall was a central space for cultural interactions. The dining halls were big buildings that usually serviced several nations. The language differences were really felt here. One respondent reported that "we'd strike up conversations with English-speaking countries." Another respondent resorted to rudimentary sign language during these interactions: "you'd say 'I'm a swimmer' and [then] you'd make little swimming things [gestures with your hands]…like swimming freestyle and, you know, obviously you know where you're from because everybody's wearing their national stuff." He did go on to say that the environment at the dining halls "was very communal." He also took this as an opportunity to critique the limitations of American communication, telling a joke that actually explained all of the US swimmers' issues with meeting and interacting with folks from other nations:

> a lot more people speak English…it's one of those jokes, if you do a lot of international traveling you hear all of the time: what do you call somebody who speaks three languages? Tri-lingual. What do you call somebody who speaks two languages? Bi-lingual? What do you call someone who speaks one language? American.

This observation, albeit a joke, was re-enforced by the respondents' experiences. One respondent, when reasoning why he spent time with the Australians, stated that there was

"no language barrier between us and the Australians," so he found it easier to befriend many of their swimmers.

In addition to his conversation with the Iraqi athletes at the Opening Ceremonies, Steve also reported "hanging out with swimmers from Brazil, Canada, Australia, [and] Ireland," this was a result of his previous international swimming experiences either for the US, at the Midwestern university, or in Ireland so there was not really any language barrier. He did give an account of a "very interesting" conversation he had with a girl from China, the only conversation with someone from a "non-Western" nation that anybody reported in this study. The conversation between Steve and the Chinese athlete "was mainly around the freedoms that they have versus the freedoms that we have in the United States."

All of the respondents who stayed for the entire Olympics were able to go to other athletic events after they swam. According to one, "they do a good job of making it accessible for everyone to go out and cheer on the United States." He was the only athlete to frame his experience as Olympic spectator in a nationalistic manner. The other athletes simply stated which events they watched, across the sample claiming that they had fun watching other great athletes compete.

Affects of the Olympics on the Feeling of Their Nation

All of the athletes contended that their Olympic experience did not change their feelings about their nation. The international-ness of the sport of swimming was the chief reason for this response, according to the respondents. Nonetheless, throughout the interviews, subtle changes to this view surfaced in some of the respondents.

The Olympic Games "coincided with a period of time where I was discovering a sense of…personal responsibility," noted Ian. He also called the Olympics a "personal journey." Both of these were explanations of how he did not feel any change in personal feeling about the United States as a result of his Olympic experience. He did confess that he feels an "extra sort of defensiveness" when his patriotism is called into question (he considers himself a political contrarian.) He feels as if he now "can empathize a little bit more with people who have similar type experiences where they feel like they have represented their country with their actions."

Don felt a heightened physical reaction to the symbols of the nation as a result of his Olympic experience. Before the Olympics, he was "always…proud to be an American," but he now feels "a little bit more honored to be an American" and every time he hears the Star Spangled Banner, "it means something a little bit different [than it did pre-Olympics]."

Steve described himself as "proudly South African," however, his Olympic experience taught him to see his nation in a more critical manner. The two critiques that

he took back from the Games were both about the sporting infrastructure of South Africa. After being in Beijing and the United States, he found that the facilities in South Africa were "lacking." His other issue was with the coaching: "they didn't do a good job." According to Steve, both of these issues need to be remedied "for us to be competing with the US and some of the other European countries in London [2012 Olympic Games]."

Definition of the Olympic Games

As discussed previously, the Olympic Games are primarily about competition to these athletes. When the conversation turned to the Olympics in general, they discussed the intersection of sport and politics, the celebration of individual achievement, or getting the world together in one place. All agreed that politics had no place in the Olympics: "[sport] should be completely divorced from politics," the Olympics are "not about the differences in our cultures, the differences of our political views."

The Olympics, for the swimmers, are mostly about celebrating athletic individual achievement and bringing the world together every four years. They described the Olympics as "probably the greatest sporting achievement" an athlete can participate in, a collection of "the best athletes from around the world," a "special collection of events and people…that come around every four years and allows people to show off their talents and to come together as a group of individual athletes to be a part of: 1) a bigger

team, and 2) a representative body that is representing the United States of America." One respondent allowed that he certainly "goes back" to think about "how unique the Olympics really are, where you can get all of the countries together there, on friendly terms, and to everyone's getting along, everyone's getting there for one common goal and how powerful that can be."

All of the athletes were of this same main idea. Nick offered a story from his Olympic experience that to him best exemplified the Olympic ideal. The story is about Eric the Eel. Eric, a swimmer from Equatorial Guinea, struggled to finish his event, but he persevered. Nick stated that

> …15,000 people in that Olympic swimming venue were up cheering him…it took him almost two minutes to swim the race, which is god-awful slow…but people got up and they clapped and it was a huge honor for him just to compete in the Olympics and represent his country and everybody realizes that.

This story provides evidence that the Olympics can be a place for individual achievement in the name of a nation, but also in the name of humanity. Nick continued:

> …those moments embody what the Olympics is about, the Olympic Spirit…it's definitely the outside influences that don't understand that it's the honor of competing, because I know that, from my experience, whether you got there and, you know, you didn't make finals, or you swam on a relay in prelims…I think we

all [Olympians] got that we were there to compete and represent our country and do the best that we can- it wasn't about what medal you brought home or if we're winning in the medal count…and I think the people that even realize it even more come from the sports that we don't dominate…you meet kayakers or you meet people in team handball, sports that people have never heard of and that America's not very good at…and they're the ones who are the most excited about being there and they're the ones that are the happiest that they'll ever see because they know that that's the pinnacle of their sport- same as swimming- and they know that just competing is a great honor and they're the ones that get it…it's the outsiders and the media [who] are the kind of people who lose focus on that. Yeah, every once in a while you'll get those nice human interest pieces…But, everybody who is an Olympian and you see the Olympic Oath and you see all that stuff that goes with it- I think we all realize it, the people who lose sight of it are the ones are on the outside- the people counting the medals and things like that, at least from my experience.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

My research addressed the following questions:

•Is sport a home in a homeless world for the athletes?

•Is it (sport) a way for athletes to differentiate themselves from others?

•Do the athletes even take national identity into consideration, or were Lechner (2007), Jarvie (2003), and Collins (2007) incorrect at the micro-level?

•Is national identity salient to Olympic swimmers?

Is Sport a Home in a Homeless World?

Sport is a home for many of these swimmers. As noted earlier, four of the seven mentioned athletics in their TST responses; during the interview process the importance of sport in all of these Olympians' lives shined through. As Hall (1992) stated, post-modern subjects have multiple identities, several of which compete for primacy. The athletic identity was/is a primary or master identity for these Olympic swimmers. This identity was primary in the context of their competitive careers and during their Olympic experience and continues to be salient.

None of these athletes reported feeling "homeless," or "anchorless" to use Hall's terminology. Nonetheless, the fact that each of these athletes completed all ten

statements of the TST signifies that they had multi-layered identities. This, in itself, would seem to indicate some contention and some unsettlement in their ideas of self.

My data suggest that that athlete (or sport) is a primary identity for these Olympic swimmers, but they do not necessarily feel as if it is the only home for them. Nor do they feel as if they have no other "home" in this present day.

Is Sport a Way for Athletes to Differentiate Themselves from Others?

As noted above, these swimmers do define themselves as athletes. In this way, we can determine that sport is a way to define an *Us* and a *Them* for these athletes. Thus, sport is a way for athletes to differentiate themselves from others. However, the *Them* is not folks from other nations necessarily, it is folks who are not athletes. For these athletes, the world is divided into those who are athletes and those who are not athletes. Initially, this *Us* group appears to be self-declaratory: one declares that he/she is an athlete, therefore he/she is an athlete. When looking at these swimmers, however, we see a sharper difference. These athletes defined themselves as Olympic athletes or as champions, both during the TST and the interviews, further evidenced by the fact that many of them physically branded themselves as such with tattoos of the Olympic rings on their bodies. They differentiate themselves through sport and then further differentiate themselves within this group by being defined as Olympians.

There is also evidence that these athletes use sport as a way to differentiate themselves from other nationals. In the interviews, all of the athletes discussed wearing their nationality as part of the tools of swimming, i.e. wearing their nation's symbols on their swimming caps, their national team warm-ups, or their swimsuits. In this manner, the sport itself called for the athletes to wear certain items and these items were "nationalized" as a way to differentiate athletes from one another. Outside of the competition however, many of the swimmers talked about the unity of athletes. One respondent sensed this unity powerfully when he described feeling as if "we were all the same person" when he walked around the Olympic Village, meaning that all of the athletes were there to compete and were all just trying to do the best they could. In that unity of purpose, there was no difference at the national level (or even the sport level) between the athletes. The Olympics, as they described it, was a place for athletes to get together and participate and compete, while representing their nations.

Do the Athletes Even Take National Identity into Consideration, or Were Previous Scholars Incorrect at the Micro-Level?

My respondents did take national identity into consideration, primarily when they were in the pool. The fact that they were representing their nation "helped" them in their races, or gave them added incentive to perform well. Some compared it to competing for a club or school team, where an athlete has a little more to compete for: a group that you

do not want to let down by performing poorly, or a group that you want to make proud of you. This is a different kind of representation than I expected.

While swimming, these athletes saw themselves as representatives of the nation. They regarded themselves as competing for the nation, not as representing it in the same manner that elected officials do. This idea of representation did, however, change outside of the pool when they were "wearing" their nation. They were actively and consciously aware that they might be the only people from their respective nation that others might ever meet. Thus, they felt a need to act "appropriately." The athletes are not consciously an exemplar of the nation while competing, but they are representative of the nation. In other words, the nation's worth does not hinge on their performance, but others' perception is affected by their actions. Lechner (2007), Jarvie (2003), and Collins (2007) were not necessarily correct in this sense. Nevertheless, there was a link to the micro-level to the macro-level of sports nationalism.

This micro-macro link needs to be discussed a bit further. Anderson's idea of the nation as an imagined community is important to remember here. A nation is created over time, developing a "permanence" and collective identity among the people within its geographic and/or ethnic boundaries. Each individual within the nation is part of the collective, but interprets the collective differently; people play out the link between the macro and the micro levels differently. This is, in a sense, the central difficulty I confronted in my research. A collective identity is not necessarily universal, but it is collective. At the same time it is experienced or interpreted differently by those within

the collective. Like snowflakes, no two micro-macro level links are exactly the same. If we examine enough of these individual interpretations of the micro-macro level links between the individual and the nation, we can get a better sense as to how national identity occurs for athletes. We can then have a better sense of the nation itself by learning more about how the individual negotiates his or her place/relationship in it.

Is National Identity Salient to Olympic Swimmers?

National identity is salient to Olympic swimmers, but only to a point. These respondents have an idea of national identity, find it important and experience it. National identity is something that is very difficult to unpack. It is a fluid, subjective idea. As discussed earlier, national identity is a collective identity expressed at the individual level. This is a very broad definition. The athletes did recognize that they were part of a collective and this collective was one with which they each connected. As much as they connected with the collective (the nation), however, they expressed this connection differently. Some personified regional areas, others thought of the nation through symbols and the importance of those symbols to their connection, and some linked it to being part of a team more than part of a nation. All expressed the connection to the nation, but used different means of expressing that shared collective identity, of a national.

They used many proxies for national identity. *Patriotism* is one such proxy, as are *pride*, r*epresenting*, *citizenship*, or *back home*. These are all words used by the

swimmers as ways to link themselves back to the nation for which they were competing, but they were not necessarily the same, conceptually, as national identity. The swimmers' use of proxies for national identity is interesting. The use of terms in place of the real concept validates the notion that national identity is a fluid term. Proxies are the ways in which the swimmers interpret their national identity and their link to the collective.

Limitations

This study has some limitations. Conceptually, the subject terms are very difficult to pin down and therefore very difficult to study. A qualitative researcher's job is to try to interpret how the participants of his or her study make sense of the phenomenon being studied. When the terms are unclear or contested, it can be difficult to interpret how sense is made.

Most of the immediately apparent limitations are found in the way in which the study was carried out. First, the sample was small and it was achieved via a snowball technique. This technique can lead to an imperfect sample because if the participants have similar friends or are alike there is a possibility that a whole other group, not socially connected to the participants, was excluded from the study.

The time and space limitations cannot be ignored. Because of limited resources, I was forced to contact these participants via electronic mail and to use phone interviews.

It would have been nearly impossible to be able to sit down with each and every one of the participants and have a face-to-face interview. Phone interviews can lead to multiple problems. Some of these problems were technical: such as a bad connection or a dropped call, which occurred in two interviews. But, mostly these problems were in the interaction between the interviewer and the participant. We could not have a real conversation with body language and gestures or facial expressions. Verbal communication became the only way that we communicated. Over the phone, these communications can be misinterpreted, ignored, or never heard; tone of voice played a very important part of the interview process, but relying on tone can lead to a less than full conversation.

Along the same lines, the interviewees were in their own space for the interview. Not necessarily a terrible constraint, this spatial arrangement can lend itself to having the participants in a comfortable place-- their own space. However, not having control of the space for the interview can lead to a lack of focus from the participants: a few interviews were interrupted by spouses, children, or job-related interruptions. These interruptions can and did lead to momentary derailments of the conversation and some effort was needed to "get back to where we were." It is very difficult to retrace a conversation, especially over the phone, and some valuable insights may have been lost because of these natural interruptions.

Possible Further Studies

As one of the first studies to contact athletes about national identity, my research does launch a new area of the study of sport and national identity. This research can be used as ground work to study athletes from different sports, team sports or other individual sports. We can also use this case study as a comparative model to examine transnational athletes, those athletes who claim more than one home nation or citizenship. How would national identity affect them? Would their national identity be wearable like the swimmers in this study? We could also, as one respondent mentioned, compare this physical manifestation of the nation with that of soldiers. It could also be enlightening to conduct a longitudinal study of a group of promising athletes as they strive to make the Olympic team of their nation, monitoring if and how their ideas of national identity shifted or if the salience of this notion changed among them and between them based on their success, or lack of success, in this goal.

Conclusions

Anderson's "nation" is created over a long period of time through shared history, shared language, and shared culture. These swimmers are part of the nation through competition while wearing clothes and other symbols of the nation. As evidenced from the interview, they talk about "back home," while referring to folks they do not know and will probably never meet. They feel as if they are part of that nation together—even if it

is just during the moments that they are competing and wearing their nation's colors/symbols/outfits. The "nation" is different, yet similar to each of them, just as Anderson suggested in his discussion of the second paradox of nations: nations and nationalism are both universal and unique. The nation is socially (re-)constructed by the nation and the nationals. These athletes are only different from non-Olympians in that they do this on an international stage.

National identity is a very context-dependent notion. At moments of intense emotional or physical stimulus, national identity becomes salient. National identity, much like Anderson's idea of the nation as an imagined community, is both universal and unique. A national identifies with his/her nation, and across the board this is understood by the athletes, but it is achieved and performed differently.

National identity is a salient identity for Olympic swimmers; however, the identity of Olympian or athlete is more salient. This national identity is fluid in practice and is an objective idea expressed subjectively. We see that this identity is "wearable" and can be interpreted as both limiting and inspiring for the swimmers. The swimmers are inspired to perform better out of reasons of pride and connection to the nation, but they feel restricted in their actions as representatives of the nation. They must act appropriately and as if they are role models. This is not entirely expressed negatively, but it can be tiresome for the athletes. These athletes primarily see themselves as Olympians first and as nationals second.

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APPENDIX A: INITIAL E-MAIL

Dear _____,

I was given your name by _____ as someone who may be willing to participate in a Master's thesis research study. As this is a research study and research studies include only people who choose to take part, you are being asked to voluntarily take part in this study and to share information about your national identity and your experiences in competing in the Olympic Games. Please take your time to make your decision to participate.

If you do agree to participate, I would like you to open and fill out the informed consent attachment to your e-mail. After you sign it, you may scan it and e-mail it back to me (at mrhodler@uncg.edu) or you may fax it to (336) 334-5283.

After I receive the consent form, you will be sent a second e-mail asking you to respond to one question before our interview. This reply should take less than ten (10) minutes. I will also ask you to set up a time and a number for me to call you for the interview. The interview will last for about 30 to 45 minutes, answering questions about your national identity and your experiences in the Olympic Games. You will be interviewed once. Any data collected about you will not have your name attached to it; you will not be able to be identified from data collected from you. In the final report, you will have a pseudonym and that pseudonym may (or may not) be your name.

If you do not want to participate, please reply to this e-mail with "not interested" in the subject heading. Feel free to contact me at (919)452-5050 or mrhodler@uncg.edu or my advisor Dr. Julie Brown at (336)334-3765 or jvbrown@uncg.edu.

Thank you and have a great day.

Matt Hodler

APPENDIX B: TEN STATEMENT TEST

Dear_____,

There are ten (10) blanks on the e-mail below. Please write answers to the question "Who am I?" in the ten (10) blanks. Simply give ten (10) different answers to this question. Answer as if you were giving the answers to yourself, not to somebody else. Write the answers in the order that they occur to you. Do not worry about logic or "importance." **Go along fairly quickly**, try to complete the statements in less than twelve (12) minutes.

"Who am I?"

I am_____

I am_____

I am_____

I am_____

I am_____

I am_____

I am_____

I am_____

I am_____

I am_____

Upon completion of the blanks, simply return this e-mail to me and include a few optimal times for me to contact you as well as a contact number, for our 30 to 45 minute phone interview. I will reply back with a confirmation as to when I will call you based on your availability.

If you have any questions, comments, or complaints, please feel free to e-mail me at mrhodler@uncg.edu or call me at (919)452-5050.

Have a nice day.

Matt Hodler

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Project Title: Representative Athletes: National Identity in Olympic Swimmers

Project Director: Dr. Julie Brown

Participant's Name: _____

DESCRIPTION AND EXPLANATION OF PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES:

This is a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. You are being asked to voluntarily take part in this study and to share information about your national identity and your experiences in competing in the Olympic Games. Please take your time to make your decision to participate. Please ask questions about the study as you think of them.

If you do agree to participate, you will be interviewed (by phone) for about 30 to 45 minutes, answering questions about your national identity and your experiences in the Olympic Games. You will be interviewed once and this interview will be audio recorded. Any data collected about you will not have your name attached to it; you will not be able to be identified from data collected from you. In the final report, you will have a pseudonym and that pseudonym may, may not, be your name.

CONSENT:

Be sure to ask questions about anything you don't understand before agreeing to participate. Again, participation is completely voluntary. You may decide not to participate in the study at any time, including during the interview. You may choose not to answer any question you do not want to answer.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:

You may find some of the questions during the interview personal in nature. If at any point during the interview, you are not comfortable, the interview will be stopped until you are comfortable continuing. If you are not comfortable continuing, the interview will be stopped completely.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

There are no direct benefits to you from this research. There is no payment to you. You will enjoy a sense of contributing to society's understanding of national identity, which benefits society in general. Refusal to participate will not affect you in any way.

By signing this consent form, you agree:

- That you understand the research procedures.
- That you understand any risks and benefits involved in this research
- That you are free to ask questions about the study at any time.
- That you are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw your consent to participate in this research at any time without penalty or prejudice; your participation is entirely voluntary.
- That your privacy will be protected because you will be identified by a self chosen pseudonym as a participant in this project; any data collected about you will be identified this pseudonym. Neither recordings of the interviews nor notes taken by the interviewer will be identified by any other name other than the pseudonym that you chose at all during any point in the research.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research involving people follows federal regulations, has approved the research and this consent form.

Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this project can be answered by calling Mr. Eric Allen at (336) 256-1482.

Questions regarding the research itself will be answered by Julie Brown or Matt Hodler at (336) 334-3765 or via e-mail at jvbrown@uncg.edu or mrhodler@uncg.edu.

Any new information that develops during the project will be provided to you if the information might affect your willingness to continue participation in the project.

By signing this form, you are affirming that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate in the project described to you by Matt Hodler.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature* Date

_____

Signature of person obtaining consent

_____

Date