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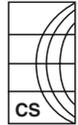
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What is This?

Emotional entrainment, national symbols, and identification: A naturalistic study around the men's football World Cup

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Abstract
Some theories suggest that collective emotions, in particular emotional entrainment as the feeling of affective attunement with others during rituals, can increase the identification with a social group. Furthermore, emotional entrainment is supposed to emotionally 'charge' group symbols that are part of ritual practices and influence group-related attitudes and solidarity even beyond the ritual context. This article tests these assumptions in a naturalistic study around the 2010 Football World Cup, which reliably generates emotional entrainment in a ritualized, nation-focused context. Results indicate that emotional entrainment during the tournament is a predictor of changes in national identification and the perceived emotional significance of national symbols after the tournament. Moreover, emotional entrainment partially mediates the relationship between pre- and post-World Cup national identification and the perception of national symbols.

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Introduction

A remarkable feature of groups, communities, and societies is that members identify with them, experience feelings of belonging and togetherness, and are often willing to forego individual benefits in favor of a group's overall welfare. The question of how solidarity and pro-social behavior emerge within societies has been at the heart of sociological research for over a century. Emile Durkheim (1912/1995) proposed an explanation to this puzzle in his treatise on the *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. He argued that rituals and the experience of collective effervescence – i.e., the 'emotional entrainment' (Collins, 2004: 47ff.) of individuals in crowds and gatherings – are crucial in establishing and reinforcing identification with the group and in maintaining solidarity beyond ritual gatherings and congregations.

On the one hand, this emotional entrainment is experienced as a feeling of belonging and togetherness and plays an important role in the development and maintenance of a 'collective conscience', collective identity, and the identification with one's group (Cerulo, 1997: 386; Durkheim, 1912/1995).[1] On the other hand, the rather diffuse emotional arousal and entrainment becomes associated with the symbols representing the group. These symbols are key ingredients, and become emotionally 'charged' during ritual gatherings. Importantly, they are supposed to contribute to the salience of a group's values, norms, and beliefs primarily outside ritual gatherings and thereby promote solidarity and cohesion. These two mechanisms – emotional entrainment as a basis for (a) group identification and (b) the affective charging of group symbols – are assumed to work not only in close-knit groups and communities, but also in societies, such as nations (Alexander, 1988). This view clearly differs from some social psychological accounts emphasizing the importance of social identity in generating emotional entrainment and other group-level emotions in the first place (e.g., Mackie et al., 2009).

Despite many theoretical elaborations of Durkheim's propositions (e.g., Collins, 2004; Shilling, 2005), the mechanisms underlying his model have rarely been tested empirically. This is probably due to challenges related to evoking and measuring emotional entrainment in laboratory settings. This study is intended to fill this gap by providing initial evidence on the influence of emotional entrainment on national identification and the affective charging of national symbols. We take the ritual events occurring during international mega-sports events – in this case the German perspective on the 2010 men's FIFA Football World Cup in South Africa – as a naturally occurring quasi-experimental situation that reliably generates emotional entrainment in a broader national context. Football tournaments are not merely arbitrary events suitable to investigate the links between emotional entrainment and national identification, but constitute a well-established field of research in terms of their effects on national identity and identification (e.g., Inthorn, 2006; King, 2006; Tomlinson and Young, 2006). In this vein, our study not only promises to shed light on the micro-social mechanisms proposed by Durkheim, but also to advance our understanding of 'football and nation as ritualized performance' more generally (Krauss, 2003: 199). In the remainder of this article, we first elaborate on the theoretical background and the hypotheses derived from Durkheim's theory. We then report on the methods used and the results obtained, and finally summarize and discuss our findings.

Rituals, symbols, and emotional entrainment

In his study on Australian Aborigines, Durkheim (1912/1995) investigated how religious beliefs and moral feelings emerge and are reproduced within communities. He observed that ritual congregations are important for reinforcing religious beliefs and feelings of belonging. A basic element of these rituals is the close physical proximity of large numbers of actors in social gatherings with clear borders demarcating non-participating outsiders. Successful rituals establish states of 'heightened intersubjectivity' (Collins, 2004: 35) and promote the experience of shared emotions and mutual 'emotional entrainment' (Collins, 2004: 47ff.). An important factor in this process is 'collective effervescence', which is 'a sort of electricity [that] is generated from their [the Aborigines'] closeness and quickly launches them to an extraordinary height of exaltation. Every emotion expressed resonates without interference in consciousnesses that are wide open to external impressions; each one echoing the others. The initial impulse is thereby amplified each time it is echoed' (Durkheim, 1912/1995: 217). Emotional entrainment thus also involves emotional contagion, which is defined as the 'tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, postures, and movements with those of another person and, consequently, to converge emotionally' (Hatfield et al., 1992: 153ff.).

This emotional entrainment in rituals and gatherings is expected to reinvigorate participants' identification with the group, strengthen feelings of belonging, and mutually reassure group members of shared values. Moreover, Durkheim argued that emotional entrainment and the experience of collective effervescence lead to the 'affective charging' of group-related symbols which are key components of ritual practices. In principle, these symbols can be all kinds of objects or signs, for example idealized ancestors, artworks, animals, plants, or landmarks (Collins, 2004: 85). They become imbued with affective meaning and significance as 'the emotions aroused are transferred to the symbol' (Durkheim, 1912/1995: 221). Group-related symbols thus tend to embody the emotions experienced during ritual gatherings. They preserve these feelings well beyond the actual ritual context and – importantly – promote solidarity in everyday, mundane contexts.

National symbols, nation-related attitudes, and emotions

Although these propositions mainly pertain to close-knit groups, such as clans and communities, Durkheim (1912/1995: 222) suggested that they can also be applied to nations and national symbols, which become sacred once they have been imbued with affective meaning – they are loved, feared, and worshipped. This conjecture is mirrored in contemporary approaches to nations and nationalism emphasizing the role of symbols, for instance flags and anthems. Hobsbawm (1990), for example, argues that symbols are important to nation building because of their capacity to represent feelings of belonging and to 'embody' the nation as an imagined community (Anderson, 1983). Likewise, Smith (1991) suggests that symbols visualize and emphasize citizens' basic concepts of national belonging and grant concreteness to the rather abstract concept of nation. National symbols are used to draw boundaries towards out-groups, to assure a positive

notion of national identity by emphasizing the uniqueness and the achievements of a nation (Finell and Liebkind, 2010), and to demonstrate allegiance to the nation (Satterfield and Godfrey, 2011).

A number of studies have shown that national symbols do in fact work outside the immediate ritual context in the ways proposed by Durkheim. Schatz and Lavine (2007) have shown that exposure to national symbols renders national identification salient. Butz (2009) demonstrated that national symbols strengthen national identification and promote group-unity. Kemmelmeier and Winter (2008) found that respondents scored higher on measures of nationalism when answering questions in the presence of a national flag. Hassin and colleagues (2007) demonstrated that even the subliminal exposure to national flags influences opinions towards national political issues. Becker and associates (2012) found differing effects of the exposure to national flags on national attitudes, depending on existing levels of nationalism. In sum, research on the effects of exposure to national symbols is, for the most part, in line with Durkheim's predictions, although the effects are presumably more heterogeneous in modern and more differentiated societies.

In contrast to these well-documented effects of national symbols on nation-related attitudes and identification, little is known about whether these effects are rooted in the emotional significance of symbols and whether this significance can be established in rituals (Ismer, 2011). However, the conjecture that one's identification with a nation has important emotional components is mirrored in research on belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006) and national sentiments as enduring emotional ties with a nation (Hertz, 1957). In contrast to collective effervescence and emotional entrainment, sentiments refer to longer-term and stable emotional dispositions, such as love, trust, or attachment. Nevertheless, national sentiments can be strong precursors of short-term emotions, for example when national or religious sentiments are implicated in political outrage or ethnic hatred.

Other insights on the links between identification and emotions stem from intergroup emotion theory (Mackie et al., 2009). Research in this tradition emphasizes the importance of self-categorization and social identity in generating 'group-based' emotions, i.e., emotions felt by individuals on behalf of a social group (Mackie et al., 2009). Social categorization refers to the tendency to perceive the self as a member of a socially defined group or category. Social identity is defined as the knowledge of belonging to certain social groups and the emotional significance that goes along with membership in a group (Tajfel, 1981). Although this research clearly acknowledges or even presupposes the emotional aspects of identity and identification, it is primarily concerned with how social identity instigates specific group-based emotions.

Taken together, neither research on national sentiments nor intergroup emotion theory have attended to the question of how the emotional components of national identification emerge and develop and whether emotional entrainment in rituals plays a role in these processes, as Durkheim (1912/1995) had suggested.

National rituals in contemporary societies

In most contemporary western societies, nation-wide rituals, as envisioned by Durkheim, are relatively rare. They do exist as commemoration, inauguration, or mourning rituals,

but are only in exceptional circumstances characterized by collective effervescence and notable emotional entrainment. Some examples include the mourning of the massacre committed by Anders Breivik in Norway in 2011, the inauguration of US President Barack Obama in 2009, and the Smolensk airliner crash in Poland in 2010.

As the sociology of sport has convincingly and repeatedly argued, major international sports events, and in particular football tournaments, constitute a regularly occurring class of events in contemporary societies that fit many of Durkheim's criteria. They clearly display several ritual features. Similar to religious congregations, matches are formally structured, beginning with the teams entering the stadium, and spectators are assembled in close physical proximity, share a common focus of attention, and become mutually entrained with one another's emotions (Bromberger, 2006; Cheska, 1979; Pornschlegel, 2002; Sterchele, 2007). Matches are also clearly embedded in national contexts, as seen, for example, in the prolonged display of national symbols and the singing of the national anthems at the beginning of a match (Ismer, 2011).

Furthermore, as 'social enclave(s) where excitement can be enjoyed' in otherwise affect-controlled societies (Elias and Dunning, 1986: 90), international tournaments reliably generate emotional entrainment, often in crowds and gatherings (Burstyn, 2005; Frey and Eitzen, 1991). In this sense, football arenas are some of the few places in western societies in which emotional entrainment is experienced on a regular basis. Importantly, at international tournaments, these emotions can be projected onto national symbols, which are omnipresent throughout stadiums and public places. Following Durkheim (1912/1995), the results of specific matches (i.e., winning vs. losing) should not affect the consequences of emotional entrainment for solidarity and identification. Negative emotions like anger or sadness are frequently found at the center of certain rituals (e.g., during funerals) and contribute to identity formation in much the same way as positive emotions.

An extensive body of literature within the sociology of sport has investigated the role of football in the construction of national identities and related policy issues (e.g., Duke and Crolley, 1996; Giulianotti, 1999; Lever, 1995). More specifically, and with respect to international tournaments and national teams (which are seen as a symbol of the national community; Gebauer, 2002), various studies have examined their role in nation building and nationalism and the construction of national identities (e.g., Bradley, 2003; Gibbons, 2011; Holmes, 1992; Tzanelli, 2006).

Another line of research has looked specifically at the effects of major tournaments on identity constructions in hosting countries, for example Dauncey and Hare (2000) for the 1998 World Cup in France, Horne and Manzenreiter (2004) for the 2002 tournament in South Korea and Japan, Marievoet (2006) for the 2004 games in Portugal, and Tagsold (2008) and Ismer (2011) for the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

Importantly, some of these consequences of international tournaments might arise because matches are made accessible to millions of viewers via mass media and are broadcast in real time through various channels (Ismer, 2009). The ritual practices of a tournament are not only experienced by those present at the stadium, but by millions of viewers simultaneously participating via broadcast media. Remote participants can take part in the ritual either at large public screening events, in bars and restaurants, or at home with friends and family. According to Lardellier (2005), 'mediated rituals' do not

differ from traditional rituals in kind, but rather in degree. Live coverage provides viewers with a sense of ritual participation and broadcasting increases the amount of potential participants. Crucially, remote viewers tend to gather in crowds of varying sizes, so that physical co-presence is given in many, if not most, cases. Mediated rituals thus offer a participatory role for the audience and most likely contribute to the emotional entrainment of viewers (Dayan and Katz, 1985).

Furthermore, mass media today are constitutive of many rituals (Becker, 1995). Sports events in particular are dramaturgically scripted in a way that is aimed at meeting the needs of broadcasters more than viewers in a stadium (Lardellier, 2005). Viewers integrate into media ritual space not only by the presentation of self towards TV cameras, but also by dressing up for an event, even when watching at home (Couldry, 2003; Dayan and Katz, 1985). Interestingly, this dramaturgical scripting is often precisely aimed at the elicitation of collective effervescence and entrainment and is supposed to result in shared (national) identities (Chaney, 1983). Moreover, broadcasters not only focus on the main event, i.e., the football match, but also report on the audiences and the general emotional atmosphere (Becker, 1995).

Aside from watching in a stadium or at home on TV, public screening events constitute an intermediate form of media ritual and have become increasingly popular throughout Europe. In fact, attending public screening events is considered one of the dominant modes of watching international football tournaments (Cybulska, 2007). Although people resort to a screen instead of watching the game directly, this form of viewing still includes many ritual features that are present in a stadium and contribute to emotional entrainment: viewers are assembled in a crowd, share a common focus of attention, and are mutually entrained.

Taken together, this research suggests that the ritual characteristics assumed by Durkheim can well be applied to the context of international football tournaments. Moreover, as the sociology of sport has demonstrated, football tournaments are closely intertwined with issues of national identification and identity construction, which renders our study important to further understand the micro-social mechanisms involved in this linkage.

The present study

Given the research outlined above, we aim to explore the influence of emotional entrainment on national identification and the emotional significance of national symbols. We take the 2010 FIFA Football World Cup (hereafter: World Cup) as a ritualized international tournament that reliably generates emotional entrainment among members of participating countries. We conceive of the World Cup as a naturally occurring quasi-experimental situation and measure national identification and the emotional significance of national symbols at two points in time: before and shortly after the World Cup. Since the study was conducted in Germany, we focus on German national symbols and identification with Germany. Our post-World Cup assessment also included a retrospective measure of the emotional entrainment experienced during the World Cup.

Germany constitutes a highly relevant and suitable case study because football is the most popular spectator sport in this country and the stage for some of the most far
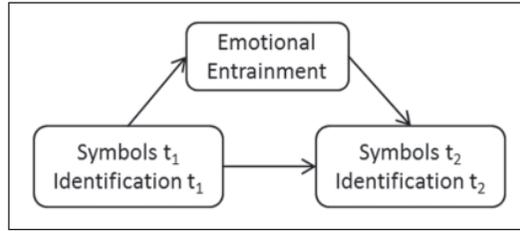
Figure 1. General mediation model for national identification and symbols (t_1 = pre-World Cup, t_2 = post-World Cup).

reaching ritualized societal events (Eisenberg, 1997). Games by the German team during the World Cup 2010 attracted an average of 26.5 million TV viewers (Media Control, 2010). In addition, up to an estimated 12 million viewers watched each game at public screening events in various public locations across Germany. Since the World Cup 2006, which had led to the first outburst of patriotism in Germany after the Second World War, the intermingling of football and national identity is a matter of constant political and public debate (Ismer, 2011).

Based on the theoretical background outlined above, we developed a number of general and more specific hypotheses. First, and in line with previous research (e.g., Becker et al., 2007; Kersting, 2007), we predicted that (H1) a nation-wide ritualized event like the World Cup should lead to a general overall increase in national identification and a more positive perception of national symbols after the World Cup. Second, we hypothesized that, as a general rule, pre-World Cup levels of national identification should predict changes in identification after the World Cup (H2a). The same should be true for the emotional significance of national symbols (H2b). The logic behind this assumption is that the more individuals already identify with the nation and the more positively they perceive national symbols, the more they are likely to be affected by the World Cup. More specifically, we also hypothesized that the experience of emotional entrainment during the World Cup should be a *predictor* of changes in national identification (H3a) and the perceived emotional significance of national symbols (H3b). Finally, we predicted that changes in national identification (H4a) and in the perceived emotional significance of symbols (H4b) should be (at least partially) *mediated* by the experience of emotional entrainment during the World Cup, as outlined in the general mediation model in Figure 1.

Methods

We used an online survey with two points of measurement to assess participants' identification with the nation, the emotional significance of national symbols, and the emotional entrainment during the World Cup. The first measure (t_1), taken two weeks before the start of the World Cup on 11 June 2010, assessed baseline levels of national identification and emotional significance of symbols. The second measure (t_2), taken between four and 16 days after the end of the World Cup on 11 July 2010, assessed identification

and the significance of symbols again to capture post-World Cup levels. Additionally, this survey retrospectively assessed the emotional entrainment experienced during the World Cup.

Participants

Because the study was conducted in Germany and focused on the mediated and ritualized events around the World Cup as they occurred in Germany, we restricted our sample to participants with German citizenship.[2] Participants were recruited by disseminating the survey's internet address using a snowballing system through a variety of email lists, press adverts, and internet forums.[3] To ensure that participant data were correctly matched for both measures, each participant was assigned a unique but anonymous identifier. Participants could win one of two vouchers of an online vendor, worth €40 each. Of 177 participants in total, 116 took part in both waves of the study. Of these, we excluded 18 participants due to non-German citizenship, which resulted in a total of 98 valid cases (36 female, 62 male; mean age = 28.36; SD = 11.38 years).

Measures

To measure national identification, we used a modified version of an established nationalism scale (Dekker et al., 2003). We opted for a nationalism scale instead of an identity scale to better capture the transient, boundary-generating, and at times even derogatory aspects of national identification. Dekker and colleagues' (2003) scale is a *Mokken* scale, i.e., assumes hierarchical clustering of items (from national feeling to liking, pride, preference, superiority, and nationalism). The scale was translated into German using a translation/back-translation procedure.

To measure the emotional significance of national symbols, we collected a pool of photographic images depicting German national symbols (e.g., German national flag, Brandenburg Gate) and symbols of other nations as control stimuli. In a separately conducted pre-test study, 34 German respondents (students at FU Berlin) rated 99 German symbols and 69 symbols of other nations for national representativeness. The 20 symbols with the highest ratings were included in the survey (see Appendices B and C for a list of symbols). The symbols' emotional significance was operationalized as the perceived *valence* of a symbol and assessed using a well-established measure for visual stimuli (Dan-Glauser and Scherer, 2011). Respondents were asked to indicate how positively or negatively they perceive the symbols on a nine-point Likert scale (1, very negative; 9, very positive).

To measure the experience of emotional entrainment during the World Cup, we constructed a four-point ordinal scale consisting of four items. The questions were: (1) During how many games you watched was viewing the game your main activity? (2) How emotionally interested have you been in the games of the German team? (3) How much have you been carried away by the moods of other fans? (4) How much have you been carried away by the excitement of the World Cup in general? In addition, we asked how many of the German team's games participants had watched. Although retrospective assessment of emotional experiences has been shown to exhibit certain biases, it is

still considered the most frequently used method of emotion assessment (Mauss and Robinson, 2009).

Results

Preliminary analyses

Initial analyses of the pre-World Cup data on national identification (using the *Mokken* package for *R*; Van der Ark, 2011) revealed that the scale does not exhibit the assumed unidimensional hierarchical clustering of items. We therefore ran exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to construct a modified version of the scale. Results suggested a two-factor solution explaining 52% of variance. We excluded 16 items from the original scale due to low eigenvalues or loadings on both factors. The resulting scale consisted of 14 items (eight for the first factor, six for the second factor) and showed good internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .83). Due to lack of variance within the second factor, we confined our analysis to the first factor (see Appendix A for a list of final items).

We also ran an exploratory factor analysis on the pre-World Cup ratings of the emotional significance of the German symbols and the symbols of other nations. Factor analysis for the German symbols suggested removal of two symbols. The ratings of the remaining 18 symbols loaded on a single factor and showed good internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .89). Out of the 20 symbols of other nations, four were excluded after an exploratory factor analysis. The remaining 16 symbols loaded on a single factor and showed good internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .87).

Finally, we tested the validity and reliability of the scale measuring emotional entrainment. Reliability of the resulting scale was high (Cronbach's α = .81) and item-scale correlations showed a good fit of the single items. An exploratory factor analysis revealed a single-factor solution explaining 65% of variance. A confirmatory factor analysis showed that the data indeed confirm the hypothesized one-factor model ($\chi^2 = .77$, df = 2, $p = .67$, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.02, RMSEA = .000, SRMR = .012).

Main analyses

Our main analysis proceeds as follows. We first report descriptive statistics for our variables (see Table 1). Second, we compare means of our dependent variables for pre- and post-World Cup measures to examine whether the World Cup has led to a general increase in national identification and a more positive perception of national symbols. Third, we use multiple regressions to test whether pre-World Cup measures of identification and the perception of symbols as well as emotional entrainment are predictors of changes in identification and symbol perception after the World Cup. Finally, we use mediation analyses to investigate whether changes in national identification and the valence of symbols are mediated by the experience of emotional entrainment during the World Cup.

Comparison of means between pre- and post-World Cup ratings of national identification reveal no significant differences ($M_{pre} = 2.63$; $M_{post} = 2.65$; T = −.50; df = 97;

Table 1. Range, means, and standard deviation of main variables at t_1 (pre-World Cup) and t_2 (post-World Cup) (N = 98).

Variable	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Valence of German symbols t_1[a]	2.44	7.72	5.77	1.11
Valence of German symbols t_2[a]	2.89	7.94	5.79	1.11
Valence of other nations' symbols t_1[a]	3.88	8.31	6.45	.87
Valence of other nations' symbols t_2[a]	4.38	8.44	6.36	.84
National identification t_1[b]	1.00	3.75	2.63	.53
National identification t_2[b]	1.00	4.00	2.65	.54

[a]Scale from 1 (very low) to 9 (very high).
[b]Scale from 1 (low) to 4 (high).

$p = .61$). Similarly, mean ratings of the valence of German symbols show no significant differences between pre- and post-World Cup measures ($M_{pre} = 5.77$; $M_{post} = 5.79$; T = −.039; df = 97; $p = .69$). We also find no significant differences in the emotional significance of other nations− symbols between t_1 and t_2 ($M_{pre} = 6.45$; $M_{post} = 6.36$; T = −1.43; df = 97; $p = .15$). Contrary to our expectations (H1), the World Cup leads neither to an overall increase in national identification nor to a generally more positive perception of national symbols. These results, of course, reflect changes for the entire sample. Analyses testing the hypothesized changes as a function of baseline national identification and emotional significance of symbols, as well as emotional entrainment, are presented below.

Predictors of changes in identification and symbol perception

To test whether pre-World Cup levels of national identification and the valence of symbols as well as emotional entrainment during the World Cup are predictors of post-World Cup levels in identification and symbol valence, we computed three multiple regressions.

In the first analysis, we take t_2 levels of identification as the dependent variable and use t_1 levels of identification and emotional entrainment as our main predictor variables (all mean-centered). We also accounted for age and gender as control variables. As expected, the results in Table 2 show that the strongest predictor of post-World Cup identification is the level of pre-World Cup identification. Moreover, emotional entrainment is also a significant, albeit weaker, predictor for post-World Cup identification. However, as shown in Model 3, this effect does not hold when controlling for age and gender. This suggests that participants who already strongly identified with Germany before the World Cup experienced the most pronounced increases in identification after the World Cup, clearly supporting hypothesis H2a. Similarly, it seems that individuals who were highly emotionally entrained in the World Cup also identify more strongly with Germany after the World Cup, lending support to hypothesis H3a. The negative coefficients for gender and age indicate, however, that these effects are more likely to be found among younger and male participants.

Table 2. Multiple linear regressions with β-coefficients and standard errors. Dependent variable: national identification at t_2 (post-World Cup).

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Nat'l identification t_1	.830***	.058	.827***	.059	.840***	.061
Emotional entrainment	.086*	.041	.085*	.041	.080	.042
Gender (ref: male)	–	–	–.023	.061	–.023	.062
Age	–	–	–	–	–.002	.003
Constant	2.651***	.029	2.665***	.049	2.722***	.091
R^2 (corrected)	.724	–	.722	–	.720	–

$N = 98$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. Multiple linear regressions with β-coefficients and standard errors. Dependent variable: valence of German national symbols at t_2 (post-World Cup).

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
German symbols t_1	.748***	.053	.745***	.053	.735***	.053
Emotional entrainment	.368***	.077	.366***	.078	.383***	.077
Gender (ref: male)	–	–	–.045	.113	–.042	.111
Age	–	–	–	–	.009	.005
Constant	5.795***	.053	5.824***	.089	5.558***	.162
R^2 (corrected)	.773	–	.771	–	.778	–

$N = 98$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

In the second analysis, the perceived valence of German national symbols at t_2 (post-World Cup) is taken as the dependent variable. The valence of German symbols at t_1 and emotional entrainment during the World Cup (all mean-centered) are the main predictor variables. Gender and age are included as control variables. As shown in Table 3, the perceived valence of German national symbols at time t_1 is the strongest predictor of changes in the perceived valence of symbols after the World Cup (at t_2). Likewise, the experience of emotional entrainment during the World Cup is an equally significant, although slightly weaker predictor of symbols' perceived valence after the World Cup. Neither gender nor age is significantly associated with changes in the perceived valence of symbols.

These results suggest that participants who perceived German symbols quite positively before the World Cup tend to perceive them even more positively after the World Cup, clearly supporting hypothesis H2b. Likewise, individuals who were highly emotionally entrained in the World Cup show an increasingly positive perception of German symbols after the World Cup, lending support to hypothesis H3b.

Table 4. Multiple linear regressions with β-coefficients and standard errors. Dependent variable: valence of other nations' symbols at t_2 (post-World Cup).

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Other symbols t_1	.699***	.068	.696***	.069	.702***	.068
Emotional entrainment	.109	.078	.113	.079	.121	.079
Gender (ref: male)	–	–	.048	.123	.052	.122
Age	–	–	–	–	.007	.005
Constant	6.362***	.058	6.332***	.097	6.116***	.178
R^2 (corrected)	.536	–	.532	–	.537	–

N = 98; * *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01; *** *p* < .001.

In order to exclude the possibility that these effects are brought about by the mere exposure to symbols during the World Cup and can be explained by recognition effects rather than increases in identification with specifically German symbols, we tested whether emotional entrainment is also a predictor for changes in the perceived valence of other nations' symbols. The results in Table 4 show that only the pre-World Cup levels of the emotional significance of other nations' symbols are a significant predictor of post-World Cup levels. Importantly, and in contrast to German symbols, emotional entrainment does not predict changes in the perceived valence of other nations' symbols after the World Cup.

Emotional entrainment as a mediator of changes

Finally, to examine the hypotheses that changes in national identification and the emotional significance of symbols between t_1 and t_2 are at least partially *mediated* by participants' emotional entrainment during the World Cup, we tested two separate mediation models for national identification and German symbols (using Mplus version 6.12).

The first model tested whether the emotional entrainment experienced during the World Cup mediated the relationship between national identification before and after the World Cup. Based on the theories outlined above, the rationale behind this analysis is that higher levels of identification before the World Cup should lead to increased emotional entrainment experienced during the World Cup, which in turn positively influences changes in identification after the World Cup. The mediation model in Figure 2 indicates that individuals with stronger national identification before the World Cup experienced higher levels of emotional entrainment than individuals with weaker identification. In turn, higher levels of emotional entrainment predicted stronger identification after the World Cup. Even though the effect between national identification at t_1 and t_2 diminished from .85 to .81 when emotional entrainment (the mediator) was partialled, this change is not significant using the Sobel test (Sobel's z = 1.846, p = .065). However, a bias-corrected bootstrap analysis (m = 1000) with a 95% confidence interval (CI), which is deemed the more superior and powerful test in mediation analysis (Shrout and Bolger, 2002), reveals an indirect mediation effect as zero is not included in the interval
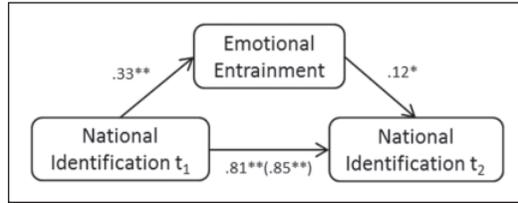
Figure 2. Mediation model for national identification (t_1 = pre-World Cup, t_2 = post-World Cup). The model shows the association between national identification at t_1 and t_2 as partially mediated by emotional entrainment during the World Cup. Reported values are standardized β-coefficients. The β in parentheses is the direct effect of t_1 identification on t_2 identification. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

(lower 95% CI = .006, upper 95% CI = .096). This result lends support to our hypothesis H4a.

The second model tested whether emotional entrainment mediated the relationship between the perceived valence of German national symbols before and after the World Cup. The rationale behind this analysis is that the more positively German symbols are perceived before the World Cup, the more salient they are during the ritual events of the World Cup and the more they contribute to the experience of emotional entrainment. In turn, emotional entrainment should promote the 'affective charging' of symbols and thus an increasingly positive perception after the World Cup.

As shown in Figure 3, individuals who perceived national symbols more positively at t_1 experienced significantly more emotional entrainment than individuals who perceived symbols less positively. In turn, higher levels of emotional entrainment predicted an increasingly positive perception of national symbols after the World Cup. When emotional entrainment (the mediator) was partialled, the effect between the perceived valence of symbols at t_1 and t_2 diminished significantly using the Sobel test (Sobel's $z = 3.221$, $p = .001$). Also, a bias-corrected bootstrap analysis (m = 1000) confirms this indirect effect (lower 95% CI = .059, upper 95% CI = .157). In other words, the mediation analysis shows that a more positive perception of national symbols after the World Cup is at least partly mediated by the impact of the perception of national symbols on emotional entrainment, supporting hypothesis H4a.

Discussion

The study reported in this article aimed at testing some of the propositions and mechanisms found in sociological theories on the social consequences of rituals and the emotional entrainment frequently experienced during ritual gatherings. More specifically, the study investigated the influence of emotional entrainment experienced during rituals on group identification and the emotional significance of group symbols. Using the 2010 Football World Cup as a ritualized event that reliably generated emotional entrainment in a national context, we tested whether emotional entrainment is a predictor of changes in German national identification and the emotional significance of German national symbols after the World Cup compared to pre-World Cup levels. Moreover, we asked
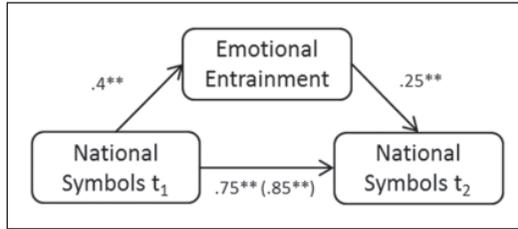
Figure 3. Mediation model for national symbols (t_1 = pre-World Cup, t_2 = post-World Cup). The model shows the association between the perceived valence of national symbols at t_1 and t_2 as partially mediated by emotional entrainment during the World Cup. Reported values are standardized β-coefficients. The β in parentheses is the direct effect of t_1 symbol perception on t_2 perceptions.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

whether emotional entrainment partially mediates the influence of pre-World Cup national identification and the emotional perception of national symbols on post-World Cup identification and symbol perception.

The study corresponded to a naturalistic and quasi-experimental design in that we took the World Cup as a naturally occurring 'treatment', but without any random assignment of participants. Instead, our retrospective assessment of emotional entrainment serves as an indicator of involvement in the World Cup (or exposure to the 'treatment'). We thus had a longitudinal study design with two points of measurement: shortly before and shortly after the World Cup.

Our main results are threefold. First, and in contrast to previous studies, we find neither a general increase in national identification after the World Cup nor a more positive perception of German national symbols. Although these results are based on a rather small sample, they still can inform the overall public debate surrounding international mega-sports events and their social and political consequences. However, we were primarily concerned with changes in national identification and the emotional significance of national symbols as a function of the emotional entrainment during the World Cup.

Second, our findings show that pre-World Cup levels of identification and the perceived valence of national symbols are significant predictors of post-World Cup levels. Given that our theoretical model suggests somewhat stronger consequences of rituals for individuals who highly identify with the social group and already perceive group symbols quite positively before the ritual, this result is not surprising, although it has seldom been tested. More importantly, and in line with our hypotheses, our results show that emotional entrainment experienced during the World Cup is a significant predictor of post-World Cup identification and symbol perception. This effect is robust even when controlling for the influence of pre-World Cup identification and symbol perception. However, emotional entrainment is a notably stronger predictor for changes in the perceived valence of symbols than for national identification, the latter becoming insignificant when controlling for age and gender. We also ruled out the possibility that an increasingly positive perception of German symbols is a result of their prevalence in the

mass media and public places during the World Cup rather than of emotional entrainment by adding symbols from other nations (e.g., France, Italy) as control variables to our analysis. These nations' symbols were on constant display as well, but emotional entrainment did not lead to a more positive perception of them.

Third, this effect is also mirrored in our mediation analyses showing that emotional entrainment partially mediates the influence of pre-World Cup on post-World Cup levels of national identification and the perceived valence of national symbols. Again, however, the effect of emotional entrainment is significantly stronger for national symbols than for national identification. These findings support claims that can be found in both sociological theories of emotions and rituals in a Durkheimian tradition as well as theories of group-based emotions. The analyses show that the more strongly individuals identify with their national group (Germany in our case), and the more positively they perceive national symbols before the ritualized event of the World Cup, the more strongly they tend to experience emotional entrainment during the World Cup. In turn, this emotional entrainment is positively associated with changes in post-World Cup identification and the perceived valence of national symbols.

In sum, our study supports some of the classical theoretical assumptions of sociological theories of rituals and emotions. The two mechanisms suggested in these theories – emotional entrainment as a basis for group identification and for the affective charging of group symbols – seem to work not only in close-knit groups and communities, but also in large-scale societies, such as nations. Still, our results indicate that the link between emotional entrainment and the emotional significance of national symbols is much stronger than for entrainment and national identification. This might be explained by the specific setting of the football World Cup, the various meanings of national symbols for different groups within a society, or simply the short time frame of our study. Moreover, our study adds to the literature in the sociology of sport that has repeatedly discussed various linkages between international football tournaments and national identification and constructions of national identity. It adds to this literature a micro-social perspective on how changes in identification and identity constructions may be brought about.

Aside from this, our study presents evidence for the validity of a scale measuring emotional entrainment during international mega-sports events. This scale might be a useful tool for researchers looking into the various effects that are attributed to international mega-sports events, such as football World Cups, European Championships or the Olympics. Finally, our study also holds implications for policy-makers who are interested in the effects of mega-sports events on national identification. For example, as a hosting nation, South African civil and political leaders had expressed great expectations in the identification enhancing and cohesion strengthening effects of the 2010 FIFA Football World Cup. Officials in strife-ridden South Africa had hoped that the emotional impact of the World Cup would support the unification of a country still torn apart by its Apartheid past. Similar statements had been issued before the 2006 World Cup in Germany in view of strengthening the bonds between former East and West Germany.

We also acknowledge certain limitations of our study, including the quasi-experimental design and the relatively small sample size, which was mostly due to attrition. Also, there

are potential confounding factors we did not control for, such as prior interest in football or relevant events that occurred between the two points of measurement. Despite these limitations, this study is the first that lends empirical support to the long-standing assumption that emotional entrainment leads to the affective charging of group symbols and is associated with group identification. Future research is clearly needed to replicate these findings, ideally with larger sample sizes. Examining the long-term stability of the effects would also provide important insights.

Notes

1. We prefer to use the term 'identification' over 'identity', unless we are specifically referring to one of the traditions related to 'identity', 'social identity', or 'collective identity' (see, e.g., Cramer, 2001, for a discussion). This is primarily due to our focus on the more transient and processual aspects of an individual's relation to and allegiances with a social group rather than on conceptualizations of the self vis-a-vis a group.
2. While we recognize that citizenship (holding a German passport) is neither a guarantee nor a requirement for identification with a country, the debate surrounding identification and citizenship is beyond the scope of this article.
3. Email lists mainly contained addresses of individuals who volunteered for participation in the study via the university's website. In addition, the survey's URL was widely distributed among friends and colleagues, via social networks and blogs related to football. Classifieds were placed in local daily newspapers.

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Résumé

Certaines théories suggèrent que les émotions collectives, en particulier les transports émotionnels comme le sentiment d'adhésion affective envers les autres lors d'un rituel, peuvent favoriser l'identification à un groupe social donné. Ce transport émotionnel est aussi censé transférer une charge émotionnelle aux symboles du groupe utilisés lors des pratiques rituelles et influencer les attitudes et la solidarité du groupe au-delà du con-

texte rituel. Nous avons testé certaines de ces hypothèses dans une étude naturaliste sur la Coupe du Monde de Football masculin, événement riche en transport émotionnel dans un contexte ritualisé et nationaliste. Les résultats de cette étude montrent que le transport émotionnel observé lors du tournoi annonce certains changements dans l'identification nationale et la signification émotionnelle des symboles nationaux après le tournoi. Par ailleurs, le transport émotionnel joue aussi un rôle de médiateur entre les identifications nationales et les perceptions des symboles nationaux avant et après la Coupe du Monde.

Mot-clés

Émotions collectives, transport émotionnel, identification nationale, rituels, football, symboles nationaux

Resumen

Algunas teorías sugieren que las emociones colectivas , en particular el arrastre emocional como el sentimiento de sintonía afectiva con los demás durante los rituales, pueden aumentar la identificación con un grupo social. Es más, el arrastre emocional supuestamente "carga" emocionalmente los símbolos del grupo que forman parte de las prácticas rituales e influencia las actitudes relacionadas al grupo y la solidaridad, incluso más allá del contexto ritual. Testamos estas premisas en un estudio naturalista sobre el Mundial de fútbol masculino, el cual confiablemente genera arrastre emocional en un contexto ritualizado y focalizado en la nación. Los resultados indican que el arrastre emocional durante el torneo es un predictor de cambios la identificación nacional y en la percepción del significado emocional de los símbolos nacionales después del torneo. Aún más, el arrastre emocional intermedia parcialmente la relación de la identificación nacional y la percepción de los símbolos nacionales entre el antes y el después del Mundial de fútbol.

Palabras clave

Emociones colectivas, arrastre emocional, Identificación Nacional, rituales, fútbol, símbolos nacionales

Appendix A

National identification scale.

English translation	German original
I like Germany.	Ich mag Deutschland.
I like to be German.	Ich bin gern Deutsche(r).
I feel Germany is my country.	Ich empfinde Deutschland als mein Land.
I feel German.	Ich empfinde mich als Deutsche(r).
I like the Germans in general.	Im Allgemeinen mag ich die Deutschen.
I prefer to be German than to belong to any other nation in the world.	Ich bevorzuge es, Deutscher zu sein, statt Angehöriger irgendeiner anderen Nation dieser Welt.
I prefer to live in Germany than any other country.	Ich lebe lieber in Deutschland als in irgendeinem anderen Land.
Germany can be proud of what it represents.	Deutschland kann stolz darauf sein, was es darstellt.

Appendix B: German national symbols

(a) a 1 Deutsche Mark coin (former German currency); (b) Berlin Wall; (c) BMW logo; (d) map showing borders of Germany; (e) map showing Germany's contours in national colors; (f) German soccer fans; (g) German flag including coat of arms; (h) German national soccer team; (i) former chancellor Helmut Kohl (who has become a symbol for German unification); (j) Mercedes-Benz logo; (k) Chancellor Angela Merkel; (l) Castle Neuschwanstein; (m) Oktoberfest; (n) assembly of German Parliament; (o) Reichstag building; (p) Checkpoint Charlie; (q) Siegessäule; (r) Volkswagen logo; (s) Brandenburg Gate; (t) protesters in former German Democratic Republic, 1989.

Appendix C: Other nations' symbols

(a) Gondolas, Venice; (b) aerial view of Rio de Janeiro; (c) Roman Colosseum; (d) map of Italy; (e) French flag; (f) map of Brazil; (g) Silvio Berlusconi; (h) Arc de Triomphe, Paris; (i) Brazilian flag; (j) map of France; (k) carnival, Rio de Janeiro; (l) Eiffel Tower; (m) Napoleon; (n) Ferrari logo; (o) Spanish flag; (p) torero hat; (q) Sagrada Família, Barcelona; (r) St. Peter's Square, Rome; (s) bullfight, Spain; (t) Italian flag.