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From Bern to Rio: Soccer and National Identity Discourses in Germany

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Abstract This article interprets German national identity discourses through the lens of soccer. Germany's four World Cup championships came in a roughly 20-year rhythm and happened at critical moments and turning points in its post-World War II history. Looking at the four World Cup wins in 1954, 1974, 1990, and 2014 allows one to trace changes in German national identity that were reflected in the winning teams themselves as well as in the relationship of the celebrating public to the team and the country. International soccer events offer an opportunity to discern continuities and discontinuities in German national identity discourses. This article contributes to the literature by providing a comparative interpretation across six decades of soccer/national identity discourses. In such a comparative perspective, it becomes easier to see the changes and continuities that have characterized these discourses.

Keywords Soccer · World Cup · Germany · National identity

Soccer and German national identity discourses are intensely intertwined. In particular, World Cup tournaments bring into focus the powerful connection between soccer and national identity in Germany. In this article, I interpret German national identity discourses through the lens of soccer. Germany's four World Cup championships came in a roughly 20-year rhythm and happened at critical moments and turning points in its post-World War II history. Looking at the four World Cup wins in 1954, 1974, 1990, and 2014 allows one to trace changes in German socio-political discourses that were reflected in the winning teams themselves as well as in the relationship of the celebrating public to the team and the country. International soccer events let fans weave success on the soccer field into the broader narrative of the nation. Thus, they offer an opportunity to discern continuities and discontinuities in German national identity discourses.

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My analytical approach in this article is an interpretative historical comparison of national identity discourses surrounding Germany's World Cup championships and the teams that represented Germany at those World Cups. I am interested in what these discourses reveal about German politics and society. What does soccer tell us about post-World War II Germany? Can we observe any changes or continuities in German socio-political discourses by looking through the lens of the soccer/national identity discourses? Thus, it is crucial not to overstate the range of the analysis presented here. Soccer cannot offer a complete picture of German national identity. National identity is too big a term to be covered in this article. All I seek to elucidate are links between soccer and some national identity discourses that have accompanied these World Cup tournaments. I do not make a causal argument about the relationship between these discourses. Overall, these discourses intersect in multiple and complex ways without unidirectional causality. Nor am I engaged in a historical fact-finding mission. For my purposes, it is much less important to know exactly how Germans felt about themselves on July 4, 1954 after the final in Bern—but rather how that World Cup triumph contributed to a narrative Germans continue to tell about themselves.

Much has been written about some of the individual World Cups—in particular Germany's first World Cup championship in 1954 or the 2006 World Cup that Germany hosted. This article contributes to the literature by providing a comparative interpretation across six decades of the relationship between soccer and broader societal discourses. In such a comparative perspective, it becomes easier to see the changes and continuities that have characterized these discourses. In the first part of the article, I will conceptualize the links between sport and collective identities, in particular those between the game of soccer and national identity. In parts 2 to 5, I will sequentially address Germany's four World Cup Championships and elaborate their relationship to various German national identity discourses. The sixth part will focus on some of the problematic aspects raised by the connections between soccer and identity—in particular, the exclusionary role of masculinity in Germany's soccer/identity discourses.

Soccer and National Identity

Sports, in particular (men's) soccer, have an intimate relationship to the construction of our collective identities. Fandom of a team creates a collective "we" that levels other social differences. In particular, identification with the *national* team negates other social status, regional, ethnic, religious, and political differences.[1] Members of the group feel a sense of unity across otherwise existing social divisions.[2] Most importantly, the FIFA World Cup and the UEFA European Championship provide opportunities for spectators to identify with their national team. Soccer allows for the construction of an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) in which the members of that group do not know each other personally but believe that they belong together. Sports can supply a unifying narrative to such an "imagined community."

[1] Club sports and collective identity constructions historically often follow certain regional, ethnic, social, or religious divisions within society. However, with the increase in media coverage and with globalization, the significance of preexisting social structures has declined.

[2] The reach across the social divisions is particularly important for a highly fragmented society such as Germany's. See Scheuble and Wehner (2006).

With its emphasis on competition, soccer in particular offers not only the ability to distinguish between "us" and "them" but invites a direct comparison between "us" and "them." This competitive element helps strengthen identification with one's own group. In addition, the relative simplicity of the game allows for an effortless construction of narratives that are easily comprehensible. With the exception of the offside law, outsiders and newcomers to the game are able to figure out the basic laws and purpose of the game without much difficulty and can easily join the community.

As a result, soccer could become a mass phenomenon that in particular during the big tournaments reaches people, who are otherwise not interested in soccer. Through this collective attention, soccer provides the material for a discourse about the group's identity. Soccer creates myths, heroes, and shared memories. These become part of the collective self-understanding of a nation. The term "Miracle of Bern"—which refers to Germany's first World Cup Championship in 1954—means something for most Germans—even for those who are not particularly interested in soccer. Narratives about soccer competition create a collective memory of the nation that future generations learn through socialization.

The big international tournaments facilitate the formation of these national narratives by tightly interweaving soccer and conceptions of nationalism. The FIFA World Cup and the UEFA European Championship are framed by national symbolism with the playing of the national anthem and the presence of national flags. This is in marked contrast to club competition. Unlike the constant presence of flags and the playing of the national anthem at almost any American domestic sports event, European club soccer rarely includes the use of national symbols.[3] That is true even for the supra-national UEFA Champions League competition, which seeks to emphasize club competition and not national competition. Tellingly, the pre-game arrangements for UEFA Champions League games do not include national anthems, and the colors and symbols represented among the fans in the stadium are those of the clubs and not of the nation. This is not to say that public discourses in the media, for example, may frame a Champions League game in national terms and that fans may cheer for the team from "their" country. The symbolism surrounding a Champions League game, however, is much less national than international competition between the national teams. In that sense, the World Cup and the European Championship allow for the symbolic affirmation of the nation in a way that club competition cannot.[4]

Modern soccer allows people to experience community with each other and to live through collective emotions. It lets the members of the community have the feeling of belonging together on an emotional level that is closer to one's deeply felt identities than such abstract concepts as citizenship or the country's constitution. Of particular significance are the *emotions* that people experience in cheering for one's own team. They make the nation more concrete in a socio-psychological sense.

Media are a critical mechanism in creating these national narratives. Very few people experience a sporting event directly by attending the competition live in the arena. For the most part, we participate in sporting events through media—in today's world mainly through live televised broadcast. But in the context of this paper, we also need to mention the powerful impact Herbert Zimmermann's radio broadcast of the 1954 World Cup final had on the German population, at a time when there existed only an estimated 40,000 television sets in the country

[3] Exceptions are the playing of the national anthem before season opening games and before the annual Cup final.

[4] In addition, European-level club soccer features a significant regional competition element.

(Pyta, 2006). Actually, the two separate occurrences of Zimmermann's radio commentary and the iconic television pictures of the World Cup final have merged in the public imagination and formed their own part of Germany's collective memory, as they are constantly replayed in today's media with Zimmermann's radio broadcast voiced over the TV images.

In any case, media create a hegemonic narrative at the expense of alternative storylines. Weekly club level games, of course, reinforce soccer as a constant ritual and, therefore, contribute to the daily conversations about soccer and media-driven national narrative as well. However, for the purposes of this article, the regularity of the international tournaments in particular is critical for the constant reinterpretation of the national narrative. This applies primarily to the FIFA World Cup and the UEFA European Championship—but since qualifying rounds start 2 years before the actual tournament, there is no true downtime in international soccer and national myths get told and revised on a fairly continuous basis.

The relationship between soccer and identity has developed in a context of changing identities over the past century. More traditional identity structures (e.g., religion or social class) and institutions (churches, unions, political parties) are losing some of their grip on individual identity formation.[5] In the process of post-modernization is particular, identities have become simultaneously both more individualized, complex, and fluid. In a world in which the significance of social structures and institutions for identity formation is declining, sports steps in to offer a realm of identifying with something bigger. Between 1998 and 2012 alone, membership in German unions declined by 26 %, in political parties by 30 %, and in churches by 12 %, whereas membership in the German Soccer Association (DFB) increased by 9.4 % (Schmidt and Bergmann, 2013). By the end of 2015, the Facebook page of the German national team had more than ten times as many "likes" than all the established parties together (CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, Greens, Left Party) with more than five million "likes" compared to about 500,000. The Facebook page of Germany's most popular player Mesut Özil had close to 29 million "likes," as opposed to Chancellor Angela Merkel's Facebook page with about 1.5 million.

However, it is important neither to overestimate nor underestimate the relationship between identity and soccer. Soccer fandom is only one among many ways that post-modern individuals form their identities. In addition, there are important differences in the intensity and time horizon of how soccer becomes relevant for identity discourses. On the one hand, it is a spurious relationship that we experience in the very moment during 90 min of cheering together for our team. In contemporary Germany, black–red–gold flags appear everywhere during the World Cup tournament, but then they vanish into the closets only to emerge again for the next big soccer event. On the other hand, there is also continuity in this relationship. Soccer tournaments provide the material for memories that are re-lived frequently and for a continuous national narrative.

1954: The Founding of the Post-World War II German Nation at the Wankdorf Stadium in Bern

Many Germans characterize July 4, 1954 as the birthday of the post-World War II nation—the day when the German national soccer team defeated Hungary to win the World Cup. Of course, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic had been

[5] For a broader conceptual treatment of the issues at stake, see, for example, Inglehart (1997).

founded as political entities 5 years prior to that. However, up to that moment, few Germans had any emotional relationship to the new states. The World Cup final presented Germans with the opportunity to enjoy something together for the first time since World War II and to forge a positive identification with the nation.

Prior to 1954, German identity was constructed largely in a negative fashion. Most importantly, the negative identity construction consisted of a rejection of its own history. Identity formation almost always includes a contrast between "us" and the "other." In the case of post-World War II Germany, however, the "other" of German national identity was its own history. A history of political fragmentation prior to the formation of the German Empire in 1871, a troubled experiment in democracy after the breakdown of the Empire during the Weimar Republic, and especially the Nazi period left no positive historical reference points.

Similarly, the historical and revolutionary "heroes," who in other nations often provide the material for the creation of national myths, were discredited through their affiliation with Germany's fraught history. Likewise, the exploitation of national symbols by the Nazis left Germans with a very ambiguous relationship to the public display of nationalism. Although post-World War II Germany went back to the black–red–gold colors of the 1848 revolution, which stood for the democratic side of Germany's history, the public display of the flag was largely limited to state buildings and official political events until the 2006 World Cup made flags ubiquitous in German cities during soccer tournaments. The playing of the national anthem was also limited to specific political events and international sports competitions and even when it was played most Germans refused to sing along.

During the early 1950s, many Germans viewed the new Federal Republic and its democratic political system with deep skepticism, if not entire rejection.[6] Surveys from that period show that many Germans still held strongly authoritarian beliefs. Similarly, many West Germans continued to favor the symbols of the monarchy or the Nazi period. Only small numbers of Germans, for example, accepted the republican black, red, and gold flag as a symbol of their country (Heinrich, 2003, p. 1498). Approval of democracy and pluralism was at rather modest levels and the future of democracy rested on fairly tenuous foundations. In this context, the seemingly apolitical event of the World Cup had significant political consequences. Pride in the national soccer team was an ostensibly innocent form of nationalism Germans felt they were permitted to have.

Part of the mythology that surrounds the 1954 World Cup has to do with Germany's underdog status during the tournament and in particular for the final.[7] The Federal Republic of Germany had been readmitted into international competition only 4 years earlier. Hungary, on the other hand, had not lost a game in 4 years and had dominated the German team in the group stage of the 1954 tournament in an 8:3 victory. The unexpected outcome of the final in part explains the "miracle" status of the game in the German historical myth. The low expectations only increased the intensity of the feelings after the game.

While this was strictly speaking *West* Germany's national team, there was an all-German element to this World Cup as well. A separate East German national team had not returned to international competition to participate in qualifying rounds for the 1954 World Cup.

[6] For the following, see Heinrich (2003).

[7] For the following, see Kasza (2004).

However, the symbolic importance of the World Cup championship encompassed both Germanys—as many East Germans felt it emotionally as "their" championship as well.[8]

This characterization of the West German soccer team as the all-German team never completely disappeared during the Cold War years. While East Germany was extremely successful in fostering athletic success in numerous, mainly Olympic sports, the East German national soccer team never achieved pronounced international success (with the exception of the surprising victory over West Germany during the 1974 World Cup and the occasional success of East German club teams in European club competitions). This made identification with the far more successful West German squad and West German club teams easier even on the Eastern side of the intra-German border. Linguistic practices also indicate the association of West German with All-German soccer. People using the term "Deutschland" or "Germany" without any qualifier always meant West Germany during the Cold War. The term "Bundesrepublik Deutschland" (or "Federal Republic of Germany") was used commonly as well, while the use of the abbreviation BRD (or FRG) was highly politicized in West German public discourse. The political right viewed the term BRD as degrading, putting West Germany on the same level as East Germany, which was most commonly referred to as DDR (or GDR) and not by its full name "Deutsche Demokratische Republik" (or German Democratic Republic).[9]

Essentially, this semantic distinction allowed West Germans to recognize the GDR as a separate state but its people as part of the broader German nation. Moreover, it allowed West Germans to hold on to the belief that West Germany was the only legitimate representative of the German nation. Essentially, this perspective is held up in FIFA statistics as well, where the 2014 World Cup triumph counts as Germany's fourth World Cup title. Strictly speaking, this would have been unified Germany's first World Cup title—but the post-2014 German jerseys adopted the fourth star symbolizing each World Cup title to underscore continuity between West Germany and unified Germany.

That the 1954 World Cup could take on such an important role in German identity construction also has to do with the fact that it was the first big World Cup media event in Germany (Pyta, 2006, p. 11). Before that, soccer reporting both in newspapers and radio had been rare. But on July 4, 1954 streets were deserted and half of the German population sat in front of their radios to listen.[10] While the 1954 World Cup was more a radio than a television event, the very fact that this was the first televised World Cup also left a mark on the collective German imagination. Private ownership of TV sets was still very rare, but there was a rush to watch the World Cup final in public spaces with television sets. Thousands of Germans watched the game in bars or at storefronts, turning the World Cup final into a communal event and national spectacle. In some sense, it was the first World Cup public viewing event in Germany—something that would return during the 2006 World Cup. In any case, the victory sent millions of Germans into the streets creating the first national celebration after the end of the war.

[8] On the enthusiasm of East Germans for West German soccer throughout the Cold War, see Braun and Wiese (2005).

[9] Between 1968 and 1980, the International Olympic Committee used the code GER to refer to West Germany. During the 1980s until the end of the Cold War, the Olympic code for West Germany switched to FRG until German reunification brought back the code GER for the German Olympic team. Between 1968—the first time two separate German teams competed at the Olympics—and 1989, the Olympic code for East Germany remained GDR.

[10] For the following description, see Heinrich (2003).

1974: Hosting the World Cup, Cold War, and New Youth

The 1974 World Cup triumph also came at a critical turning point in German history. The student rebellion of the 1960s was just subsiding and the Federal Republic of Germany had recently experienced a period of political reforms with the first left-wing government since World War II having implemented changes in such policy domains as education, abortion rights, and foreign affairs (with the adoption of détente). In retrospect, the year 1974 demarcates the end of reforms with the resignation of Chancellor Willy Brandt and the coming to power of the more status quo-oriented Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. Yet, the World Cup reflected in unique ways changes that had been under way in Germany.

In 1974, Germany hosted the World Cup for the first time. Together with the 1972 Munich Olympics, this symbolized recognition of the rest of the world for West Germany's post-World War II recovery and its transition to a stable democracy. Moreover, the World Cup of 1974 represents the only time the national teams of East and West Germany played each other. Symbolically, this acknowledged the de facto coexistence of two German states and confirmed the success of détente policy in easing Cold War tensions.

German teams of the early 1970s showed some new traits that were not associated with German soccer in the past in the eyes of many observers. Instead of the values of hard work, physical strength, and teamwork that characterized the 1954 team, they exhibited finesse, easy-going personalities, and individual brilliance. The 1954 team expressed a collective identity as 11 friends. Germans could easily identify with the stereotypical ordinary men of 1954 and project themselves into that collective "we" of the team and the nation. The student rebellion of the 1960s, however, had profoundly changed the self-understanding of Germans. Reflecting broader societal trends toward individualization, the team moved away from the collectivism of 11 friends toward a team that was made up of spirited individuals. As Wolfram Pyta (2006, p. 14) points out, "top German players started to emancipate themselves from the so far dominating regional-cultural monopolization of football until that point and were destined to become a personal projection space for the cultural upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s."

Many players during the 1974 World Cup reflected the change in values that had occurred during the 1960s in Germany and many other Western countries. Their hair was long, dress informal, and their behavior deliberately casual (Schiller 2014, pp. 152–200). The two players who most visibly represented these cultural upheavals and embodied individualism and virtuosity were Günter Netzer and Franz Beckenbauer.[11] Netzer cultivated the image of the "rebel with the ball." This, of course, was driven mainly by the media, which portrayed Netzer as the Ferrari-driving playboy with shoulder-long, blond hair. Netzer's stylishness and elegance helped popularize the game of soccer among German intellectuals—a social group that had for a long time distained the sport for its display of emotions, nationalism, and low culture in general.[12] Despite his favorite status with Germany's often left-leaning intellectuals, Netzer himself remained quite apolitical in terms of the public expression of his personal convictions.

[11] Netzer actually did not see much playing time during the 1974 World Cup due to conflicts with national team coach Helmut Schön. Nevertheless, together with Beckenbauer, Netzer was the dominant player personality in Germany during the early 1970s as a result of his play during the 1972 European Championship and the role he had played for his club team Borussia Mönchengladbach. His move to Real Madrid in 1973 added to Netzer's public prestige but also contributed to conflicts with coach Schön on the national team.

[12] The literary scholar Karl-Heinz Bohrer is probably the most visible representative of Netzer's appeal to intellectuals. Writing about soccer in the culture pages of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (unheard of as a suitable subject for the culture pages of this elite newspaper), Bohrer famously created the catchphrase of Netzer coming "from the depth of space" (*Netzer kam aus der Tiefe des Raumes*).

Franz Beckenbauer, on the other hand, stayed politically fairly conservative at the same time that he adopted many of the lifestyle choices of his generation. More than any other player, Beckenbauer symbolized the rise of German soccer from provincialism into national and international consciousness. He also stood for the increasing commercialization of soccer and soccer's rise into the center of the global consumer culture industry. His creativity and individual skills revolutionized the game through his invention of an entirely new position in soccer, that of the offensive-minded sweeper—a position that slowly disappeared from the game again after the end of Beckenbauer's playing career. Beckenbauer effectively combined soccer and show business and became a media star—including the endorsement of products in TV and print advertisements, the public attention to his fast cars and the women around him, his recording of songs as well as a constant media presence in interviews and talk shows. Beckenbauer became the first German mega-star of an increasingly globalizing soccer consumer culture industry. While these are normal side aspects of today's soccer, they were new at the time in Germany.[13]

Compared to 1954, the atmosphere surrounding the 1974 triumph was much more modest. Emotions over the new World Cup title were subdued. The country was solidly democratic and wealthy. Indeed, like the 1972 Olympics, the 1974 World Cup was meant as a showcase for the new wealthy, western, democratic West Germany. West Germany did not need to be overly patriotic to feel secure in its established identity or to reaffirm its existence through a World Cup triumph.[14] In addition, the student movement of the 1960s had further stigmatized any expressions of overt nationalism. Tellingly, during the playing of the national anthem before the 1974 World Cup final, none of the players (nor any of the soccer or governmental dignitaries) sang along (Ismer, 2011, pp. 558–559). Indeed, Ismer (2011, p. 558) points out that some of the players "even showed an expression of mild shame during the anthem (biting on their lips and looking at their toes)." The German players listened in silence to the playing of the national anthem as something they were required to do but wish they could avoid. This stands in marked contrast to the corresponding scenes at the 2006 and later World Cups. The expressions of patriotism after 2006 would have appeared entirely inappropriate in the 1970s.

Ironically, the World Cup final that West Germany won 2:1 against the Netherlands did not become the cornerstone of collective memory from the 1974 tournament. Instead, that status belongs to the game between East and West Germany in the early group stage of the tournament.[15] Part of the significance of this game for Germany's collective memory is the fact that it was the only game ever played between those two teams. The surprising outcome also contributed to the legendary status of the game. The underdog—East Germany—won the game 1:0. The fact that this game ever happened owed purely to the luck of the draw. The World Cup draw simply put the two German teams into the same group and thereby forced them to play each other during the group stage. Before and after 1974, the political climate made friendly international games between the two teams impossible. Also, the draw never again put them into the same groups during international tournaments,[16] and the lack of soccer

[13] Germany was a latecomer in this respect as well. Pelé and George Best, for example, had achieved global cult status during the 1960s.

[14] The terror attack against Israeli athletes during the Munich Olympics 2 years earlier also provided an environment in which overt German sporting patriotism appeared inappropriate.

[15] On the importance of the game, see Schiller (2014, pp. 108–151) and Blees (1999).

[16] East and West Germany were drawn into the same group of the qualifying rounds for the 1992 UEFA European Championship. They would have played each other if unification had not created a single entity out of the two Germanys before the start of qualifying play.

success on the part of East Germany meant that the two teams never met during the late stages of any international soccer tournament. Nevertheless, the very fact that the game took place without too much political controversy indicated that the two German states had finally settled into their coexistence. 1974 marked the highpoint of détente policy, and relations between the two had more or less normalized.

The game between East and West Germany exhibited fascinating commonalities and contrasts in the self-understanding of these two political entities. On the one hand, East and West Germany had clearly been on separate tracks toward developing their own identities in the almost 30 years that had passed since World War II. While East and West Germany both were confronted with their pre-1945 history as "the other" of their own identity, their collective identities had different reference points. Communists had been victims of the Nazis. Therefore, the Holocaust was less central to the GDR's engagement with the Nazi period. East German identity could, thus, be defined in opposition to the "western imperialism" and "neo-fascism" of West Germany.

On the other hand, just as for West Germany, sports provided an opportunity for East Germany to forge a positive identity. The largely negative orientation that came with anti-fascism and anti-imperialism did not provide solid and steadfast glue for East German identity. As Udo Merkel (2006, p. 21) points out with respect to East and West Germany, "for both, sport was an important means to demonstrate the superiority of their political system, to establish a positive image and reputation in the world, and to create a national identity."

Sports and politics were deeply connected in the GDR. East Germany was able to reach a top position and international recognition in sports that it could not get in politics or economics. In a sense, the GDR practiced sports patriotism to effect the identification of its population with its high-achieving athletes. At the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal, East German athletes won 40 gold medals, second behind the Soviet Union's 49 and ahead of the USA's 34 and West Germany's 10. And at the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, tiny East Germany won 102 medals overall compared to 94 for the USA and 40 for West Germany. For East Germany, it was important to be seen as equal—and with regard to Olympic sports, it clearly outcompeted its Western neighbor and even the USA.

Sports allowed East Germany to gain recognition and undermine West Germany's claim to sole representation of Germany. Thus, for East Germany to play West Germany at the World Cup represented a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it was a historic opportunity to underscore the separate statehood of East Germany. On the other hand, East German sports authorities were worried about losing the game, which would have contradicted the narrative of the superiority of the socialist system. For West Germany, playing East Germany was difficult as well since it could mean acknowledging the existence of East Germany. The result of the game—a 1:0 victory for East Germany—was shocking. It had a big emotional impact on both sides. The euphoria in East Germany over beating the class enemy was short-lived. The second part of the tournament ended in disappointment. For West Germany, the initial self-doubt and the considerable critique the team was exposed to in the German public quickly led to pride and happiness over West Germany's World Cup victory—a joy that was ultimately also shared among East Germans. Overall, the East German's ability to facilitate a national identity deliberately through sports was always limited by its lack of success on the soccer field. Medals won at Olympic games mainly in individual sports such as

track and field and swimming do not create the same passion as soccer games. From a national identity perspective, few other sports have the capacity to rival soccer in galvanizing a nation.[17]

1990: End of the Cold War: Ambiguity Between New and Old Germany

The World Cup in 1990 came again at an important turning point in German history. In 1989, the Berlin Wall had come down, and in the autumn of 1990 East and West Germany would unify. The World Cup was thus played 8 months after the fall of the Berlin Wall and 3 months before the political unification of Germany. The official team participating in the World Cup was West Germany. East Germany had failed to qualify, and no East German players were yet allowed to play on the (West) German team. Nevertheless, the 1990 World Cup win was celebrated as part of the reunification process and as a symbol for the new Germany.

The critical aspect here is that the narratives of two separate events—the World Cup and German unification—get interwoven in this period. In terms of national myth making, of course, both are stories of success that complement each other in the collective memory of the nation. In the minds of people, this was at least partially united Germany's World Cup triumph—even more so than 1954. In hindsight then, the 1974 World Cup victory appears the most clearly separable between East and West, in part, because it featured the historic match between the two Germanys and, also, because the political world had basically accepted the coexistence of the two states. Officially, 1990 was West Germany's last World Cup victory. However, it is precisely the narrative ambiguity between a West German and a united German team in 1990 that left the door open to another discourse on national identity culminating in the 2006 to 2014 World Cups. While the overall mood was celebratory in 1990, there existed also a deep uncertainty over German identity at the time. People knew that West Germany (and for that matter, East Germany) would cease to exist in a few months time. In that sense, the 1990 World Cup represented more the end of an era and less a defining moment for a new German identity. Only in the period after 2006 did the German soccer team get the opportunity again to play a critical role in contributing to the construction of a new German identity as a unified nation.

In addition to the still existing East–West-unified ambiguity, the 1990 team was missing another aspect of a national narrative that would be corrected in the World Cups after 2006. The 1990 team was still a culturally homogenous team with players like Andreas Brehme, Lothar Matthäus, and Jürgen Klinsmann representing the stereotypical ethnic German. The national team did not yet offer a compelling site for the construction of a unified German identity. German identity in the early 1990s was still attached to ethnicity and bloodlines and tied to the German partition. Integration of players with migration background and players from the East was not yet on the agenda.

[17] The most important exceptions to this are ice hockey in Canada, cricket in parts of South Asia as well as rugby in a few parts of the world. The USA with its inner-directed sports scene serves as a major exception to the general attachment of national identity with team sports (see Markovits and Rensmann 2010). The "Miracle on Ice" during the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid and the celebrations over the Women's World Cup victories in 1999 and 2015 come closest to the expressions of nationalism in conjunction with the success of a national team. However, none of these let to lasting national narratives about the US men's ice hockey team or the US women's soccer team.

Another reason for the lack of public exuberance for the 1990 World Cup team was the playing style of the German team. While its efficiency, precision, and discipline proved to be successful, the team lacked the flair, creativity, and brilliance of the 1974 team. The final of the 1990 World Cup against Argentina went down into the history books as one of the most boring finals, with 11 Germans playing 10 Argentines, who had lost a player because of a red card early in the game. Germany finally decided the game on a converted penalty kick 5 min before the end of regulation for a 1:0 victory.

Despite the less than thrilling play of the German team, the combined events of German unification and World Cup success created euphoria in Germany. The political and economic future of the unified Germany seemed to look very bright initially, and as national team manager Franz Beckenbauer expressed—speaking for many Germans at the time—unified Germany appeared unbeatable on the soccer field in the future with all the added players and the enlarged player pool. Reality, of course, looked quite different. Political unification turned out to be far more difficult and was associated with significant economic costs. The national mood quickly turned from euphoria to gloominess. Simultaneously, the national soccer team went through a tough period following the 1990 triumph.

2006–2014: Patriotism, Multiculturalism, and Hedonism on the Road from Host to Champion

Germany won its fourth World Cup title in 2014, but it is the 2006 tournament, hosted by Germany, that started a new era of Germany's national soccer/identity narrative. I will treat the period from 2006 to 2014 as a single era that culminated in Rio. The key identity characteristics I want to zero in on in this section stayed comparable throughout the period and many people consider the key players of this phase in German soccer, such as Phillip Lahm, Bastian Schweinsteiger, Miroslav Klose, and Lukas Podolski as its own special generation that was later supplemented with younger players such as Sami Khedira, Mesut Özil, and Thomas Müller. The 2006 World Cup was the first sign that Germany had come to terms with itself as a reunified country. And again, the national soccer team became a focal point for the expression of the newly found identity. The 2006 World Cup ushered in a period during which international soccer tournaments became occasions for the display of a largely benign form of patriotism, the showcasing of a modern, multicultural Germany and a month-long celebratory public party atmosphere gripping the whole country. As Udo Merkel (2014, p. 241) suggests, international soccer tournaments have "turned into widespread and colourful celebrations of a new, modern sense of Germanness underpinned by a non-threatening and playful patriotism. The creativity, diversity, youth, style and flair of both the German team and its supporters presented the country as a confident and more embracing place than ever before."

The World Cup in 2006 marks a turning point both for the German nation as well as its soccer team. The initial years after reunification were characterized by significant frustration politically and on the soccer field. The economic and political costs of unification turned out to be much higher than anticipated during the euphoria in 1990. Unemployment rose significantly, in particular in the East. For Germany overall, the unemployment rate was over 10 % between 1995 and 2005, while it was around 20 % in the East. Economic growth was dismal, and the divisions between East and West on numerous political dimensions were significant. Germany became the "sick man of Europe," troubled by self-doubt and an uncertain identity.

Alongside the socioeconomic problems, hostility toward asylum-seekers and other people with migration background increased—including very violent attacks on groups of foreigners living in Germany, for which the 1991 Hoyerswerda riots and the 1993 Solingen arson attacks were only the most visible instances. Increased hostility toward foreigners went together with renewed questions about Germany's relationship to its own history. As mentioned earlier, East Germans had experienced a very different form of dealing with German history—in particular, the Nazi past. In addition, the increasing numbers of people with migration background and Germany's natural generational change also raised the question whether the previous West German consciousness of collective guilt was indeed consensus within the new Germany. Germany saw a lively public self-examination in particular triggered by Daniel Goldhagen's book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* as well as the construction of the Holocaust Memorial in the center of Berlin.[18] While these debates about German history will undoubtedly never be fully settled, the opening of the Holocaust Memorial in 2005 established a fairly stable reference point for Germany's collective memory. Simultaneously, the economy started to improve around the mid-2000s creating a far more optimistic political climate in Germany when the country would host the World Cup in 2006.

Parallel with the political uncertainties and the economic problems of the 1990s and early 2000s, the German national soccer team went through a tough stretch. While the team won the 1996 European Championship and reached the 2002 World Cup final, the overall record during the first 15 years after German unification was fairly disappointing. The performance of the team was miserable during the 1994 World Cup (losing 1:2 against Bulgaria in the quarterfinals), the 1998 World Cup (losing 0:3 to Croatia in the quarterfinals), and the 2000 UEFA European Championship (when Germany could not advance out of the group stage). The ultimate low point of Germany's national team performance came during the 2004 UEFA European Championship when the team again could not advance past the group stage—with games that included a 0:0 tie against Latvia and a 1:2 loss against the Czech Republic.

The failure of the German team in the 1998 World Cup was particularly crucial for the further development of Germany's national team. The event led the DFB to invest in and fundamentally restructure its youth development system.[19] All first and second division clubs were from now on required to operate youth academies. If clubs refused to comply, they could lose their license to compete in professional soccer. These academies functioned like schools with a focus on professionalizing players and ended up producing such players as Philipp Lahm, Bastian Schweinsteiger, Thomas Müller, Mario Götze, and Manuel Neuer, all of them significant contributors for the 2014 champions.

Part of the enthusiasm that developed in Germany in 2006 reflected the low expectations associated with the team. Indeed, the German national team had fallen to 22nd in the FIFA rankings prior to the beginning of the 2006 World Cup—its worst ranking ever (Schmidt/Bergmann, 2013). After the 2004 UEFA European Championship, the DFB hired a new coaching team with Jürgen Klinsmann as the new head coach and Joachim Löw as the assistant coach. These two brought with them fresh thinking and an offensive-oriented mindset. For the 2006 World Cup team, they also included a number of young, dynamic players, such as Philipp Lahm, Bastian Schweinsteiger, and Lukas Podolski. Overall, these changes resulted in a much more attractive and creative playing style that was simultaneously also successful. Germans were genuinely surprised and as a result enthusiasm for the team and the event itself grew.

[18] On the relationship of these debates over German history to the 2006 World Cup, see Laetsch (2008).
[19] For the youth academy system, see Merkel (2014) and Honigstein (2015).

The changes in playing style and the enthusiasm that created among spectators paralleled broader social and cultural changes in Germany. First, the more joyful and dynamic style reflected the overall more positive outlook of Germans. The economic situation had significantly improved, the high costs of unification receded into the background, and East and West Germans were starting to grow together as a new community. Again as in 1954, the national soccer team could provide a focal point that belonged to all Germans. Many East Germans could join in really for the first time. They enjoyed the exciting playing style and felt the major contribution by two top players from the East, Bernd Schneider and Michael Ballack—the latter serving as the team captain. Joined by a number of Germans with migration background, the team served as a symbol that was unburdened by the separate historical paths of contemporary Germans and that was more characteristic and inclusive of Germany's increasingly multicultural society. The 2006 World Cup represents the first time Germans from all backgrounds could express their unified identification with the national team.

Overall, this led to the development of a more self-confident national identity that expressed itself in the form of a convivial, light-hearted, and festive patriotism. What distinguishes the 2006 World Cup most visibly from its predecessors is the unprecedented display of national pride and symbols. Normally, such an outbreak of German patriotism would have raised concerns abroad. The opposite actually happened: For the most part, foreign media embraced the new patriotism as a healthy form of national identity. As Richard Bernstein (2006), for example, observed about the British perception of the 2006 World Cup, "there has been a sense of delighted discovery of Germany by the English, who have expressed surprise that Germany is not a country of leather shorts and humorless people who work all the time and even approach their pleasures, like soccer, with grim determination."

Burdened by their own history, Germans generally believed that they could not afford national pride. Germans do not use national symbols in their daily lives. Flying of the flag and playing the national anthem were limited to official political acts with little public participation and to stadiums during big international sporting events. The overwhelming show of national colors and flags as well as the singing of the national anthem since the World Cup 2006 became the most visible expression of national pride. National colors are now a ubiquitous presence in the daily lives of Germans every 2 years during the month-long FIFA or UEFA tournaments. They include not only German flags flying from windows and balconies but also black–red–gold accessories like bumper stickers, tri-colored face paint, and wigs in German colors. Previous generations had seen these national symbols as embarrassments. Suddenly, they became fashion statements and symbols of belonging. National colors are no longer limited to the stadiums and official political buildings but have become part of normal life during international soccer tournaments. It looked like "Germans had finally figured out a way to express their love for their country without being scary or grimly nationalistic" (Majer-O'Sickey, 2006, p. 87).

Nevertheless, the public expression of German patriotism remains complicated and fraught with ambiguities.[20] The explicit display of patriotism continues to be a rare event. It is limited to soccer tournaments, and the flags that are ubiquitous in the streets during the competition quickly disappear after the event is over. Thus, even the 70-year distance from World War II has not dissolved the uneasy relationship Germans have to their national symbols. In other words, soccer is for now the most public bridge between the desire of many Germans to have a positive attachment to their country and the need to acknowledge the burden of the country's past. Thus, both a new nationalism in the form of flag waving and national anthem singing

[20] For a more critical assessment of the new soccer patriotism, see Schediwy (2012).

during international soccer tournaments and continued restraint in the use of national symbols outside of soccer reflect the willingness of young Germans to accept the burden of the past while simultaneously embracing a new, positive identity.

The other very visible change that occurred with the 2006 World Cup is the significantly greater ethnic inclusiveness of Germany's national soccer team. The team turned itself into a prominent component of German discourses on multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. Through soccer, Germany can present itself now as ethnically diverse and as connected to the world. Until the 1990s, the only multi-ethnic players to have started for the German national team were a few children of German mothers and American soldiers.[21] Starting with 2006, Germany's national team became more multicultural by including players with a migration background.[22] The 2006 team featured two Polish-Germans—Miroslav Klose and Lukas Podolski—as well as two players with African roots: Gerald Asamoah and David Odonkor. In 2010, three Polish-Germans were on the team (Klose and Podolski again, as well as Piotr Trochowski), joined for the first time by a third-generation and a second-generation German player with Turkish background—Mesut Özil and Serdar Tasci. The team also included two players with German mothers and African fathers—Jerome Boateng and Dennis Aogo, the Tunesian-German Sami Khedira, the Brazilian-German Cacau, Mario Gomez, who has a Spanish father, and Marko Marin, who has Bosnian heritage. The 2014 World Cup team included a slightly smaller number of Germans with migration background, but all six of them (Boateng, Khedira, Klose, Özil, Podolski, and the Albanian-German Shkodran Mustafi) played key roles on the team. Most important from the multicultural perspective is the star status that Özil, Khedira, and Boateng have acquired among German fans, as well as the fact that the starting 11 of the 2014 team featured three Muslim players.

Contemporary Germany no longer consists of a one-dimensional split between Germans and those with a foreign background. Rather, the past 70 years brought about quite a pluralistic society. It includes former East Germans, former West Germans, Germans, who grew up in post-unification Germany, Germans with migration background, and immigrants that do not want to become Germans.[23] Of those with migration backgrounds, some came for economic opportunities (e.g., labor immigration after World War II), others arrived as a result of multicultural marriages, and again others sought political asylum. And among those with migration background, there exists a large diversity along regional, political, religious, cultural, and other social divisions.

In this way, the greater ethnic inclusiveness of the German national soccer team reflects broader social and political changes within German society overall. About 20 % of Germany's residents now have a migration background. This growth in multi-ethnicity subsequently led to the recognition that Germany is de facto a country of immigration. Consequently, in 1999, the government adopted changes to the German citizenship law that made it somewhat easier for children born to foreign residents to acquire German citizenship. Mesut Özil is exactly the kind of case that would have been impossible before 1999.

One important key to this transformation in the national team was the pressure for Germany to emulate the 1998 French example. Germans saw with great envy how France had built a multicultural soccer team around the Algerian-French Zinedine Zidane that played creative and

[21] See Meyer and Leinwather (2013, p. 1204).

[22] Not coincidentally, the move toward giving the German team a more multicultural identity was initiated by the new head coach Jürgen Klinsmann, who had played during his professional career in Italy, France and England, who currently resides in the USA and who is fluent in four languages—German, English, French, and Italian.

[23] See Sark (2012, p. 257).

very successful soccer—winning the World Cup for France for the first time. The 1998 French team symbolized a new, more inclusive France.[24] The 1998 German team, in contrast, did not exhibit any ethnic and cultural diversity and on top of that played uninspiring and unsuccessful soccer.

Following the embarrassment of the French-German contrast, the German Football Association (DFB) hired its own integration officer to work on courting and attracting players with migration background. Obviously, this change in attitude and behavior was not solely driven by cultural change but also reflected the material interest of the DFB to exploit the untapped resources of 20 % of the population. In particular, after the 2006 World Cup, new head coach Joachim Löw became keen on recruiting the emerging stars Özil, Khedira, and Boateng to the German national team. In order to do so, he needed to make sure that they would not declare for the other national teams for which they were eligible to play. Previously, many Turkish-German players—still alienated in German society—had declared to play for Turkey, among them most prominently Hamid and Halil Altintop and Yildiray Basturk. This made the competition for Mesut Özil particularly intense. Özil had become a high profile target for the Turkish Soccer Association as well, and the fight to gain his services reached the level of involvement by elected politicians in both Germany and Turkey during the process. The contest became so passionate that Özil needed to shut down the guest book of his web page because of the strong pushback he received from Turkish fans after announcing his decision to play for Germany.

It took the DFB a long time to reduce the amount of racism associated with German soccer. Xenophobia was rampant in the German soccer scene all the way through the 1990s.[25] Erwin Kostedde and Jimmy Hartwig, who had African-American soldiers as their fathers and played selectively for the German national team during the 1970s, were subjected to racist treatment because of their dark skin color. Players with Turkish background were virtually absent from top-level league play until the twenty-first century, and the few that competed were exposed to abuse by fans. The turnaround over the past 15 years led to more players with Turkish background playing professional soccer in Germany and ultimately to them choosing to join the German national team. Expressions of anger and resistance to so-called un-German players are now mainly limited to the political fringe of the political right.[26]

The vast majority of Germans support the new multicultural look of the German team as an expression of contemporary German society. They convey a more inclusive concept of who can represent the nation and identify with a multicultural team. In a survey conducted around the time of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa (Zick, et al., 2014), less than 10 % of the respondents indicated that their problems identifying with the German team had grown because of the team's increasing multiculturalism. Similarly, a study on German TV sports watching habits detects a trend toward a "taste for diversity" and concludes, "German TV consumers seem to have come to accept the team's ethnic fabric that has coincided with the modernization of German citizenship law" (Meier and Leinwather, 2013, p. 1209). Most Germans now accept being represented on a symbolic level also by Germans with a migration background.[27]

[24] For an examination of the French multicultural team, see Dubois (2010).

[25] See Merkel (2014).

[26] One example is the public remark of the Vice Chair of the populist right-wing *Alternative for Germany Party*, Alexander Gauland, that people are fond of the (Afro-German) Jerome Boateng as a soccer player but would not enjoy having him as a neighbor. The comment produced outrage and wide condemnation across the political spectrum, including criticism within his own party.

[27] Fans of European club soccer have equally accepted the heavily internationalized background of their local clubs.

While the national soccer team became a better mirror of Germany's multi-ethnic society, for Germany's population with migration background, the 2006 World Cup and the multi-ethnic national team presented an opportunity to identify with Germany and to express their own form of German identity. Many families with Turkish background draped their balconies in German flags and flew black, red, and gold from their cars—sometimes alongside Turkish flags. They have also joined in the street celebrations and parades of honking cars ever since 2006. As Maria Stehle and Beverly Weber summarize, many "Germans with migration background identified with the team and, by extension, with Germany" (Stehle and Weber, 2013, p. 113).

Thus, the public discourse on patriotism and the discourse on German ethnic identity are interconnected with each other as part of the broader search for German identity. The two discourses can join in part because the new patriotism represents itself as a largely innocent and as a rather inclusive form of celebration.[28] Secondly, these discourses can intersect precisely because the national soccer team offers an easier way for various ethnic groups to identify with their new country of residence than the more burdened paths through German history, politics, and culture. According to surveys conducted by the Institute for Sports, Business and Society, people with migration background living in Germany showed higher levels of identification with the German national team than "ethnic" Germans (Schmidt/Bergmann, 2013). Again, soccer was able to step into the void that history had presented for German identity. Because fandom for the national soccer team can cut across social divisions, sports can provide social glue to a society that is divided along socioeconomic, religious, ethnic, and cultural lines.[29]

Of course, the multi-ethnic soccer festivities by themselves do not suggest that German society as a whole is genuinely changing. Waving the German flag does not mean that integration is working. That will depend on structural changes in the provision of political, economic, and social opportunities for migrants and whether Germans can ultimately support the migrants' choice for participation rather than assimilation. The changes to the German citizenship laws may well have been merely a practical necessity, with little impact on the structural asymmetries affecting the German population with migration background. Similarly, soccer may be the one area where Germans have accepted their existence as a multicultural society. While other societal spheres, such as television, popular culture, and even politics, are slowly catching up, real inequalities in the areas of education and socioeconomic integration have persisted and the debate over integration versus assimilation continues. Even the multi-cultural soccer discourse features its own internal contradictions.[30] Much of the representation of German soccer now uses remnants of essentialized identities by praising the more "southern style," the creativity, and the "new blood" that players with migration background have brought to the team. Interestingly, players like Khedira and Özil themselves often perpetuate these clichés by emphasizing cultural differences as their own unique contributions to the new playing style of the German national team.

[28] I am referring here specifically to the patriotism associated with international soccer tournaments. Obviously, the recent outburst of nationalist sentiments and violence against foreigners triggered by the Syrian (and others) refugee crisis are anything but innocent. It is, however, too early to present a conclusive assessment of these recent developments and their potential long-term impact on the expression of German nationalism.

[29] Identification with the national team correlates only with age. It is strongest among young people under 18 years old and declines with age—reaching its lowest levels among people over 50 years old. Other demographic attributes, such as gender, income, marital status, or region, have no influence on the level of identification with the national team. Interestingly, the intensity of a person's identification with a club team varies with income and is highest among the lowest income groups (Schmidt and Bergmann 2013).

[30] For the following, see Stehle and Weber (2013).

Also, the self-representation of Germany through soccer as a multicultural society coincided with a very successful performance of the national soccer team. Since 2006, Germany has not finished worse than third in any World Cup or European Championship tournament. However, the question remains whether the positive feelings on ethnic integration will backfire once the team performs badly.[31] Certainly, the troubles of the French team during the 2010 World Cup are a warning that progress on integration in the sporting arena may be reversible. Unlike 1998, when the diverse nature of the French team represented its strength, many observers blamed the same ethnic diversity for preventing France from forming a cohesive team in 2010.

Another aspect that strongly facilitated the discourse on German identity during World Cup competition since 2006 is the return of public viewing to the social conventions in Germany. As the World Cup host in 2006, Germany greeted international soccer fans with a display of openness and uncounted opportunities for joint public viewing through large screens set up in public spaces (most importantly, the fan mile between the Brandenburg Gate and the Victory Column in Berlin), cafes, bars, beer gardens, restaurants, and other settings. The ability to watch the games in large crowds and celebrate in public brought with it again the possibility for identification with the group, compared to the isolation of watching games at home on living room television sets. Public viewing thus contributes to the emotional feeling of belonging to a community, as the experience of watching the game with others is more intense than it is at home in front of the TV. Surveys show that identification with the national team is particularly high among those that attend public viewings (Zick, et al., 2014, p. 31).

Not only did public viewing help trigger identification with the national team, but it also allowed for the expression of a more cosmopolitan celebration of the game of soccer with the international visitors. Often, Germans and their guests wrapped themselves into the flags of two countries or displayed national symbols other than German ones. Public viewing, thus, facilitated the creation of hybridity and it allowed Germany to represent itself as a people of "fun-loving hedonists … and as a confident, creative and hospitable place where visiting fans, foreigners and minority groups were not segregated but encouraged to mix" (Merkel, 2014, p. 249).

Shortcomings in German Soccer/Identity Discourses

Obviously, narratives of soccer and national identity over the past decade have been rather lighthearted and joyful. This was not always the case. In particular, there were the 1936 Olympics in Berlin that were instrumentalized by the Nazis for their political purposes. There is no guarantee that the relationship between soccer and the politics of national identity could turn ugly again sometime in the future. In particular, a decline in the quality of Germany's soccer performance could potentially lead to a backlash against the multicultural make-up of the German team. While the multicultural character of the national team is widely accepted among the German population, multiculturalism as a generalized attribute of German society at this point has still fairly shallow roots and may shift when political and social circumstances change.

Another problematic feature of conceptualizing the relationship between soccer and national identity is the almost exclusively masculine character of the narrative. Women and gay men participate in the national drama only as spectators. So far, no active players in top division German soccer have come out as gay, and DFB officials react in stereotypical defensive fashion to any suggestions that there might be homosexual players on the national

[31] For the following, see Stehle and Weber (2013).

team.[32] Players have come out as gay only after the end of their playing career—most prominently in 2014 the former German international Thomas Hitzlsperger. In addition, the soccer association has been far more lenient in its punishment of the expression of homophobia and sexism in the stadiums than of openly racist acts.[33]

Arguably, female soccer fandom has increased significantly in recent years, in particular within any of the public viewing venues. Roughly half of the participants in public viewing are women (Zick et al., 2014, p. 31), and the atmosphere at public viewing events is much less hyper-masculine than in the soccer stadium environment. However, women soccer players as representatives of the nation remain marginal for the most part. On the one hand, public interest in the women's national team has grown noticeably during World Cup tournaments. Close to 74,000 spectators watched the group stage game between Germany and Canada during the 2011 Women's World Cup in the Olympic Stadium in Berlin. The main national TV channels carry World Cup and other important international women soccer games and the team and its players become the subject of "water cooler conversations" during these contests. On the other hand, these developments merely represent the "Olympianization" (Markovits and Rensmann, 2010) of women's soccer when the sport reaches the public awareness for brief periods of time. While men's soccer provides the material for a continuous 365 days-a-year narrative, women's soccer is not a phenomenon in people's everyday consciousness. Interest in female league play remains low, and in the end, it is only men's soccer that serves as a hegemonic sports culture in Germany. In other words, women may participate in the celebration of the nation but they cannot represent the nation (Dietze, 2012, p. 54).

The feminization of soccer fandom corresponds with a noticeable moderation of masculinity in the German national team. Athletes such as Philipp Lahm, Lukas Podolski, Miroslav Klose, Mesut Özil, or Mario Götze serve as representatives of a more measured form of masculinity than the hyper-masculinity that came with players like Oliver Kahn, Andreas Brehme, or Jürgen Kohler. The behavior of the team now also deliberately incorporates values that are typically not very strongly associated with masculinity, such as empathy, creativity, and humility. A visible example was the behavior of the team after the 7:1 semifinal victory over Brazil during the 2014 World Cup. The celebrations of the team after the game were very measured. German players were seen embracing their opponents and consoling them as much as possible. The team tried to downplay the victory and the players did not boast about their accomplishments. The German media and public also showed sympathy for the trauma experienced by the World Cup hosts.

Despite the moderation, however, soccer remains largely a sphere for the expression of masculinity. In other words, Turkish-Germans or Afro-Germans can now represent the German nation, but women and homosexuals cannot. Ethnic diversity may confront previous notions of citizenship and belonging, but it cannot challenge the hegemonic status of masculinity. Ethnic diversity and masculinity can be compatible with each other. Within the hegemonic sports culture, however, homosexuality and femininity still represent insults to the game. Women and gays, therefore, cannot represent the nation through sports. The prevailing notion of masculinity in soccer has consequently led to an internal contradiction in how soccer represents contemporary German society. Within the discourses on citizenship

[32] Famously, German Team Manager Oliver Bierhoff reacted angrily and personally offended when the German TV crime series *Tatort* featured a fictitious gay player on the national team in its 2011 episode *Mord in der ersten Liga*.

[33] See Degele (2013).

and ethnic identity, soccer is ahead of developments in society and could possibly serve as a vanguard for future socio-structural changes. With respect to the discourses on homosexuality and on the role of women, however, soccer has clearly been left behind by a changing society. Thus, while soccer represents many trends in German national identity and society, the picture it offers remains incomplete. Notwithstanding recent progress, German soccer as a social sphere has significant room left to grow toward greater levels of inclusiveness.

Conclusion

Soccer and national identity are strongly connected in the case of Germany. I explained this intense connection through the role the seemingly innocent game of soccer could play in filling the void in national identity left by Germany's fraught political history. Soccer offers an innocuous way for Germans to express their relationship to the country. Simultaneously, soccer also provides a mirror for the self-representation of the nation. Thus, the 1954 team reflected the emergence of Germany from the trauma of World War II and the Nazi period. The 1974 team echoed some of the social changes that the student rebellion of the 1960s precipitated, and it represents the beginning of the formation of a globalized soccer consumer culture industry. The 1990 team displayed the ambiguities between old and new identities in the transformation from divided Germany into unified Germany. The 2014 team signified the emergence of a more unified nation and an ethnically more inclusive German national identity.

Thus, looking at German national identity through the prism of the German national soccer team and its four World Cup victories offers an interesting way to discuss continuities and changes in post-World War II German national identity discourses as well as some of the internal contradictions. My goal here was not to present a complete picture of German identity but rather to use 60 years of World Cup history as a way to interpret some of the connections between soccer and national identity discourses. And while the reflection of national identity in the national soccer team is a very strong one, the most important limitation of the soccer/national identity discourses remains its almost exclusively masculine character. As soccer remains a major part of how Germans see themselves and express their own self-image to the rest of the world, making the soccer/identity discourses more inclusive continues to be an enduring task.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest I declare that I have no conflict of interest.

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