

The Social Consequences of Collective Emotions: National Identification,
Solidarity, and Out-Group Derogation

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Abstract

This chapter elaborates on various effects of collective emotions on larger social units with a special emphasis on nations and the imagined national community. Based on Durkheim's theoretical framework, we discuss empirical evidence regarding influence of collective emotions on national identification and emotional climate, on the perception of national symbols, and on the rejection and derogation of out-groups. Empirical evidence largely supports a positive association of collective emotions with national identification, emotional climate, and the perception of national symbols. Results on out-group derogation and rejection, however, are less conclusive.

Keywords: Collective emotions, rituals, national symbols, identity, solidarity, out-group derogation

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Ever since Emil Durkheim's treatise on the *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* ([1912] 1995), social scientists have been intrigued by the basic mechanisms and the social consequences of collective emotions (see von Scheve & Ismer, 2013; Salmela, 2013). According to Durkheim, rituals and the experience of collective emotions ('collective effervescence') are crucial in establishing, maintaining, and reinforcing solidarity, cohesion, and social identification in groups and communities. More recently, scholars have argued that the experience of collective emotions also significantly influences the longer-term emotional climate of social groups (de Rivera 1992; Rimé 2007; Rimé et al. 2010). According to this view, individuals' emotions are attuned to one another not only for the duration of a ritual gathering, but well beyond the momentary face-to-face interaction and episodes of collective effervescence in crowds and gatherings. Aside from these within-group effects, research has also shown that collective emotions, in particular group-based and intergroup emotions (Smith 1993, Mackie, Devos, and Smith 2000), influence intergroup relations, for example by emphasizing borders and demarcation lines between social groups (see Collins 2004a, 2004b; Mackie, Silver, and Smith 2004; Mackie, Maitner, and Smith 2009).

Although Durkheim ([1912] 1995:222) had already suggested that the consequences of collective emotions apply to smaller communities as well as to larger groups, for instance nations, much of the existing research has focused on small groups. Likewise, research on nations and nationalism is comparably mute on the role of affect and emotion in the emergence and maintenance of nation states. Until now,

nations are mostly discussed within cognitive-symbolist frameworks as ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1983) rooted in the cognitive structures of individuals that represent group membership and social categorization. Taking a closer look at the social consequences of collective emotions may thus offer new insights into the ‘affective grounding’ of nations (see also Ismer 2011).

In this chapter, we therefore seek to review and discuss the social consequences of collective emotions for members of larger social units – in particular nations and national groups – and to establish links between hitherto unconnected lines of research. Our primary emphasis is on collective emotions arising in ritual contexts, crowds, and gatherings, as proposed by Durkheim, and less so on collective emotions in the sense of group-based or intergroup emotions (see Mackie et al., 2004, 2009, for overviews of the latter approach).

We start by reviewing theory and research from a number of different disciplines concerned with both, nations and nationalism and collective emotions. After elaborating on Durkheim’s classical view on the links between collective emotions and group symbols, we will review studies on the perception of national symbols, the attitudinal effects of exposure to national symbols, and initial evidence on the influence of collective emotions on the perception of symbols. The second part of the chapter is devoted to the effects of collective emotions on national identification, solidarity, and longer-term emotional climates. Finally, we discuss theory and research on the effects of collective emotions on out-group rejection and conflict.

Collective Emotions, National Symbols and National Identification

In his study on Australian Aborigines, Durkheim ([1912] 1995) investigated how religious beliefs and moral feelings emerge and are reproduced within social groups. He found that clan rituals are central to reinforcing religious beliefs and feelings of belonging. A basic ingredient of these rituals is the close physical proximity of large numbers of community members in social gatherings with clear borders to non-participating outsiders. Importantly, rituals are set apart from mundane activities and form a 'sacred' space. Numerous taboos, for example regarding diet and conduct, as well as bodily synchronization via music, dancing, and singing guard participants from profane distractions and assure that the crowd shares and is mutually aware of a common focus of attention, which is usually seen in specific symbols representing the group and its values. This in turn leads to a state of "heightened intersubjectivity" (Collins, 2004a, p. 35) and the experience of shared emotions. Durkheim ([1912] 1995) has labeled this kind of affective experience emerging in physical proximity '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' (p. 217-218). Collective effervescence thus is supposed to reinvigorate group identity and to strengthen feelings of belonging to the community.

Durkheim ([1912] 1995: 303-405) further argued that these effects can be achieved by negative as well as by positive emotions. Crucially, the presence of group-related symbols in ritual practices leads to their "affective grounding" or 'charging', i.e. they become imbued with affective meaning and significance as 'the

emotions aroused are transferred to the symbol' (Durkheim [1912] 1995: 221). These 'affectively charged' symbols, which can be any kind of object, for example idealized ancestors, artworks, animals, plants, or landmarks (Collins, 2004a: 85), make salient a group's values, norms, and beliefs even outside ritual gatherings and prompt feelings of belonging and solidarity, reinforce identification with the group, and increase prosocial behavior. Group-related symbols thus develop to represent and even embody the emotions experienced during ritual gatherings.

From clans to nations: The role of national symbols

Although Durkheim's original arguments largely center on close-knit groups such as clans and communities, he explicitly assumes the validity of his arguments also in the context of nations and national symbols. He argues that national symbols become sacred once they have been emotionally charged – they are loved, feared, and worshipped. Durkheim ([1912] 1995) illustrates this by referring to national flags: 'The soldier who dies for his flag dies for his country, but the idea of the flag is actually in the foreground of his consciousness' (p. 222). Actions towards symbols are interpreted as actions towards the group, and members of national communities will thus be willing to have their symbols treated with respect and to protect them from harm. Perceived defilement, for example the burning of flags, often elicits feelings of 'righteous anger' (Collins 2004a: 104).

Contemporary theoretical approaches to nations and nationalism argue along similar lines and emphasize the role of symbols, mainly national flags and anthems, in the emergence of nations. For example, Hobsbawm (1990) argues that symbols are crucial to nation building and maintenance because of their capacity to represent and anchor feelings of belonging. Symbols "ground" an otherwise only imagined

community. Smith (1991:77) stresses that symbols make visible and render distinct the basic concepts of national belonging for the members of a nation. Hence, symbols grant concreteness to the otherwise often abstract concept of nation (see also Cerulo 1995). Similarly, Billig (1995) assumes that the constant ‘flagging’ observed in many nations acts as a reminder of nationhood in everyday life. The exposure to national symbols therefore is supposed to render national identity salient (Schatz and Lavine 2007), to update national identification, and to promote group-unity at an implicit and non-conscious level, in turn affecting intergroup relations in various ways (see Butz 2009).

Mirroring these theoretical arguments, many nation states’ laws and regulations explicitly aim at promoting “respectful” behavior towards their symbols, for example U.S. students’ repeating the Pledge of Allegiance as a school ritual or Russian citizens being required by law to stand at attention while the national anthem plays (Kolstø 2006).

Empirical evidence generally supports these views. For example, Kimmelmeier and Winter (2008) found that participants scored higher on nationalism scales when answering questions in the presence of a national flag compared to the absence of a flag. Hassin and colleagues (2007) showed that even subliminal exposure to national flags has significant effects on opinions towards national issues. Butz, Plant, and Doerr (2007) investigated the influence of subliminal exposure to the U.S. flag and found increased activation of egalitarian concepts associated with the U.S., although only for highly nationalistic participants. This supports the view that national symbols have distinct effects in different segments of society (Roselle and Barnett, 2009). Becker and associates (2012) also found distinct effects of flag exposure on national

attitudes depending on baseline nationalism. They assume that the effects of flag exposure are related to the different concepts a flag may represent, which varies among different nations. Moreover, qualitative studies have shown that national symbols also draw boundaries towards out-groups while at the same time assuring positive in-group identity by emphasizing the uniqueness and the achievements of the group (Finell and Liebkind 2010). As an indicator of group-bonding, this is particularly important in times of crisis, as became manifest in the increased display of U.S. flags after 9/11 (Abrams, Albright, and Panofsky 2004; Skitka 2005; Webster 2011).

In sum, research on the effects of exposure to national symbols is largely in line with Durkheim's account, although the effects are presumably more heterogeneous in modern and more differentiated societies. What is largely absent from the literature, however, are studies looking into the role of collective emotions in these processes. In one study though, von Scheve, Beyer, Ismer, and Kozłowska (2013) looked into the affective charging of symbols as a consequence of the experience of collective emotions during the football World Cup 2010. They assessed the perceived valence of German nation-related symbols before and shortly after the World Cup. In the second assessment, they also retrospectively measured the collective emotions experienced during the World Cup. The study shows that collective emotions had a significant positive effect on the perceived affective valence of nation-related symbols after the World Cup. This effect was not found for symbols of other nations used as control stimuli.

Even if it has been established that exposure to national symbols reinforces national identification and activates values associated with a national group, more

research is definitely needed that illuminates the role of collective emotions and the 'affective grounding' of symbols in these processes.

Collective emotions, identification, and solidarity

Durkheim had suggested that the idea of the community is born in the moments of collective effervescence in ritualized contexts. The collective emotions experienced in these contexts not only affectively charge the symbols representing the group, but also produce feelings of belonging and solidarity and reinforce social cohesion and identification with the group lasting well beyond the actual ritual practices.

In attending to these effects of collective emotions, research on the aftermath of September 11 has been insightful. As Collins (2004b) has argued, the 9/11 attacks have been perceived as national trauma and instigated a chain of rituals for their commemoration. He shows that 9/11 led to a series of rituals of various scales (from neighborhood gatherings to nationwide religious services) that included high degrees of collective emotional involvement. Large parts of the population shared a common focus of attention when the national catastrophe became the focus of regional and national broadcast media. U.S. citizens assembled in smaller groups in close physical proximity, enacted their grief and suffering, discussed the events, and synchronized bodily movements via singing collectively at sports events, concerts or other similarly ritualized events occurring in the period following the attacks. People often were mutually entrained with one another's emotions and experienced collective effervescence in a context primarily perceived as a national one (Collins 2004b).

Collins (2004b) goes on to argue that the increasing solidarity observed after 9/11 was due to a heightened density of ritualized social interaction amongst U.S.

citizens. He also emphasizes the emergence of new national symbols primarily through the experience of collective emotions within these ritual events, for example the emblems of the New York City Fire Department (NYFD). Importantly, in the aftermath of 9/11, national identity has been sustained and even propelled by ritualized interactions of smaller personalized groups or local communities, since an assembly of all members of a nation is hardly achievable. In line with Durkheim's account, Collins (2004b) hints at a decrease in solidarity after the appeal of commemoration rituals had declined and the normal state of affairs regained the upper hand. Another study on the 9/11 attacks by Moskalenko, McCaulay, and Rozin (2006) demonstrates increases in national identification directly after 9/11.

But Collins (2004b) urges to carefully distinguish effects of collective emotions on different sub-groups within an in-group. His observations also point to the fact that, after 9/11, African American neighborhoods had a much lower display of national flags as sign of solidarity than other areas. National survey data confirms this observation and reveals a significantly lower percentage of African Americans displaying flags after 9/11 compared to other ethnic groups (Skitka 2005). The aftermath of 9/11 seems to reveal that at least parts of the African American population did not experience feelings of belonging to the same degree as other ethnic groups. These kinds of differentiated effects in a segmented society need further investigation.

Paez and colleagues (2012) investigated a variety of collective gatherings to examine their effects on positive emotions, social integration and social beliefs. One of their studies focused on an annual religious celebration involving local residents accompanying religious processions over long distances. Paez and co-workers (2012)

compared participants of these rituals to a control group. They find that that participants showed significantly higher levels of social integration. Moreover, participants of the procession answered a scale assessing the extent to which they had experienced emotional communion during the ritual. Results show that those having experienced a high degree of emotional communion showed higher levels of social integration. Similar data referring to collective experiences in the course of a concert, a demonstration, and organized community activity seemed to confirm the results obtained from the study around religious ceremonies (Paez et al. 2012).

In another study, Paez and associates (2007) have shown that the ceremonies and rituals after the March-Eleven 2004 train bombings in Madrid increased social cohesion among the Spanish population. They show that the social sharing of emotions and the participation in politicized rituals assisted in coping with the effects of trauma and in reconstructing a positive emotional climate. Rimé (2007) argues that the experience of socially shared emotions yields long term effects not only on social identity and solidarity, but also on the more general emotional climate of a community. Taking a football World Cup victory as an example, he argues that the collective emotional experience is socially shared and collectively recalled in the media or in collective celebrations at subsequent events. He assumes that this kind of collective triumph largely affected the way the French appraised the general condition of their country in the following weeks, months, and even years (Rimé, 2007: 314f). These effects are not limited to positive emotional arousal, but also occur in the wake of national catastrophes. The social sharing of collective emotions after an event may increase fear, but likewise lead to higher social cohesion and solidarity, as the studies on effects after 9/11 or the Madrid bombings illustrate.

In another study on the football World Cup 2010, von Scheve and colleagues (2013) found a positive association between collective emotions experienced during the World Cup and national identification. In an online panel study, they measured national identification shortly before and after the World Cup and administered a scale retrospectively assessing collective emotional experiences. Although the study finds no general increase in identification across all participants, those who experienced strong collective emotions reported significantly higher levels of national identification after the event. In a similar study around the European Football Championship 2012, Mutz (2013) found that the experience of positive collective emotions during the tournament was associated to increases in patriotism after the event. In sum, international mega-sports events, such as football championships or the Olympics, provide good and predictable context for measuring collective emotions and their influence on national identification in future research.

Collective Emotions and Out-Group Derogation

Durkheim's works also pointed to the rather ambivalent effects of rituals and collective emotions by highlighting the strong antagonism between the 'sacred' and the 'profane' within ritual practices. 'When we think of sacred things, the idea of a profane object cannot present itself to the mind without meeting resistance, something within us that opposes its settlement there. The idea of the sacred does not tolerate such a neighbour. But this psychic antagonism, this mutual exclusion of ideas, must necessarily culminate in the exclusion of the things that correspond to them. If the ideas are not to coexist, the things must not touch one another or come into contact in any way' (Durkheim [1912] 1995: 321f).

Assuming that national communities represent the 'sacred' in the context of national rituals, objects and actors that are not part of this community are likely to be perceived as belonging to the 'profane' and be excluded from the community. Bergesen (1998) has elaborated this affective fabrication of moral antagonisms and argued that rituals produce different antagonisms depending on their context: political rituals tend to create an antagonism between loyal and subversive, legal rituals between innocent and guilty, etc. (p. 64). Collins (2004a: 109) also highlights the 'negative side' of 'feelings of moral solidarity', which manifests in 'righteous anger' towards 'heretics, scapegoats, and other outcasts'. He explains these feelings through the attachment of in-group members to the symbols of the group. Any display of disrespect for the symbols is likely to lead to 'shock and outrage' (ibid.). This is evident, for example, when looking at the emotions of anger or hate frequently arising in the home-team's stands of a football stadium towards supporters of a visiting team. These arguments suggest links between collective emotions experienced within community-related rituals and the exclusion of individuals not belonging to the community.

Similar arguments can be found in theories on ethnicity that underline the demarcating effects of collective identity. Barth (1969) argued that it is not the shared (cultural) properties but the negotiation and designation of boundaries that are central for the construction of ethnic identities. This designation of boundaries mainly works by identifying *the other* and *otherness*: For the very existence of a community, it is crucial that there is always at least one 'other' in relation to which the in-group is defined. Importantly, this dichotomous structure tends to result in discriminatory attitudes towards out-group members.

This is also reflected in Social Identity Theory (SIT), which assumes that individuals seek to positively evaluate their own group in comparison to relevant out-groups to maintain or create a positive social identity (Tajfel 1982). According to SIT, in-group salience can – but does not necessarily – lead to increased prejudice or hostility against out-groups (Brewer 1999). Prejudice towards and derogation of out-groups has been shown to depend on the intensity of identification with the in-group (Tajfel and Turner 1986). In view of national groups and communities, research in this tradition has consistently demonstrated strong links between nationalism and out-group derogation, in particular xenophobia (Becker, Enders-Comberg, Wagner, Christ, and Butz, 2012; Blank and Schmidt, 1997; Glasford, Dovidio, and Pratto, 2009; Mummendey, Klink, and Brown, 2001). A recent study has sought to identify differential effects of nationalism and patriotism on out-group derogation (Wagner et al., 2010). Using a cross-lagged panel design, the study shows that nationalistic attitudes clearly predict out-group derogation and that, in contrast, patriotism and in particular its components “appreciation of democracy” and “social welfare” are negatively associated with out-group derogation.

Related research on group-based and intergroup emotions has consistently shown that these types of emotion are closely related to intergroup-relations in conflict situations. For example, a study in the context of the Northern Ireland conflict showed that negative intergroup emotions such as anger and inhumanization constitute barriers to forgiveness in the conflict (Tam et al., 2007). Halperin and colleagues (2009) show that group-based hatred is the most important predictor of political intolerance and thus assumed to negatively influence intergroup-relations. Another study has shown that group-based anger directed at a conflicting outgroup,

which is elicited when when the ingroup assumes it has a majority opinion, leads to offensive action tendencies towards the outgroup (Mackie et al., 2000). Thus, emotions related to group-membership may influence intergroup-relations in various ways depending on the distinct emotion felt by group members. However, these studies analyze group-based emotions as rather long-term orientations whereas the influence of collective emotions experienced within a ritual context on intergroup relations is less clear.

Other studies have focused on emotional climates (Rivera 1992) and 'collective emotional orientations' (Bar-Tal 2001) in relation to intergroup relations. Emotional climate refers to longer-term collective emotional fields in contrast to rather short-lived emotions experienced in a ritualized context. Emotional climates, however, are supposed to be less persistent than emotional cultures (Rivera 1992). Emotional climate does not refer to subjective emotional experience, but rather to the perception of a general emotional tone within a given society. A collective emotional orientation refers to the tendency of a society or group to express a particular emotion, such as fear or hope (Bar-Tal 2001).

The particular shape of an emotional climate or orientation is supposed to influence intergroup-relations, especially with respect to conflict and conflict resolution. For example, Bar-Tal (2001) argued that a collective fear orientation of the Israeli Jewish population is an obstacle to peace in the Middle-East. In the context of the Madrid train bombings, Conejero and Etxebarria (2007) have shown how a negative emotional climate of fear leads to protective behavior and to avoiding members of supposed perpetrator groups.

Only very few studies have directly addressed the links between collective emotions in ritual contexts and out-group derogation or intergroup relations.

Kayangara and associates (2007) investigated the effects of participating in a truth and reconciliation tribunal for prisoners accused of genocide in Rwanda and survivors of the genocide. They found that participation in ritual tribunal reduced prejudicial reactions of survivors and prisoners toward each other. When both in and out-group members share the experience of a common ritual, this might positively influence intergroup-relations.

In a recent study around the football World Cup, Ismer, Beyer, and von Scheve (2013) investigated the effects of collective emotions on group-focused enmity (GFE), a well-established measure of out-group derogation including dimensions such as xenophobia, anti-semitism, islamophobia, racism, sexism, and the rejection of homosexuals, disabled, and homeless persons (see Zick, Küpper, and Hövermann, 2011). The two-wave online panel study assessed GFE shortly before and after the World Cup and retrospectively measured collective emotions in the second wave. Although the study shows an increase in GFE after the World Cup, this is not associated with the collective emotions experienced during the tournament. As an alternative explanation, the authors suggest that the increase in GFE is instead due to discourse effects of the media coverage on the World Cup which, during the time of the World Cup, is more 'nationalistic' than usual. This interpretation is roughly in line with a study by Becker, Wagner, and Christ (2007). Their study finds an increase in nationalistic attitudes after the World Cup 2006 and a stronger correlation between nationalism and out-group rejection compared to pre-World Cup measures.

Similar to ethnic differences in flag displays in the US after 9/11, these data on the one hand suggest how emotionally laden collective events are used to discursively draw boundaries between in- and outsiders of the national community. On the other hand, the results also suggest that it may not be the experience of collective emotions as such that draws the line between in-group and the 'other', but rather their effects on nationalism and/or the wider context of meanings and interpretations circulating with regard to the respective event.

This interpretation is also supported by Kersting's (2007) comment on national survey data around the Football World Cup 2006 in Germany. The data revealed a decrease in xenophobia during and after the World Cup. Kersting links these changes in xenophobic attitudes not just to the World Cup experience itself, but also to the influence of a nation-wide social marketing campaign that supported inclusiveness and hospitality towards non-Germans during the course of the World Cup. Thus, effects of the experience of collective emotions on out-group derogation seem to be embedded in more complex processes of discursive meaning making and the potential multi-causality including mediating or moderating effects of different variables still needs further attention.

CONCLUSION

This article aimed at reviewing various the consequences of collective emotions for larger social units, in particular nations and the imagined national community. Substantial parts of the existing research on this linkage are implicitly or explicitly related to Durkheim's theoretical framework that established connections between the experience of collective emotions and the emergence of solidarity and social cohesion in social groups. We have reviewed existing work along the lines of the effects of

collective emotions on national symbols, national identification and solidarity, and out-group derogation. In general, most works support Durkheim's assumptions and underline the influence of collective emotions on national identification and solidarity. Current research also shows that national identification and group cohesion are closely linked to national symbols. In theory, these symbols become affectively charged via the experience of collective emotions and promote a groups norms and values also outside immediate ritual contexts. Aside from one study, however, there is little empirical support for this "charging" of symbols. Further research is thus needed to clarify in more detail the influence of collective emotions on identification, group cohesion and symbolic attachment in various ritual contexts.

Aside from the effects of collective emotions on in-group solidarity and cohesion, we have reviewed theory and evidence on the influence of collective emotions on out-group derogation and conflict. Although there is notable evidence on the effects of group-based and intergroup emotions on outgroup-derogation, little is known about the consequences of collective emotions in Durkheim's understanding. Here, research on emotional climates and collective emotional orientation probably comes closer to Durkheim's perspective and has indeed established various effects of these emotional phenomena on conflict and attitudes towards outgroups.

In sum, current research on the consequences of collective emotions experienced in crowds and gatherings for groups and nations still lacks empirical substantiation. Although rich in theory, many existing studies seem to struggle with the operationalization and measurement of collective emotions in ritual practices. Furthermore, these kinds of emotions are difficult to induce under laboratory conditions and field studies seem more promising in this respect. One of the

challenges here clearly is the predictability of events. Collective emotions often arise most strongly in rather unexpected or uncontrollable events, as the developments around the Arab Spring have recently shown. However, there is a broad array of events that are predictable because they are recurring (e.g. certain rituals and sports events) or because they elapse for longer periods of time (e.g., the Occupy movement). Future research is thus well-advised to attend to such events, to improve measurement and operationalization of collective emotions, and to also account for the discursive embeddedness of events.

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