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Rituals, Emotional Entrainment and National Identification

A Cross-National Study around the European Football Championship

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Abstract

Although the effects of nationalized mega-events on national identification have been theorized and examined by a number of studies, little is known about the specific mechanisms that bring about changes in people's attitudes towards their country. The authors hypothesize that during nationwide rituals, in particular sports mega-events, participants experience collective emotional entrainment in the context of national symbols and practices that in turn increases their identification with their nation. The authors present results of a naturalistic quasi-experimental study around the 2012 UEFA European Football Championship with participants from Germany, the United Kingdom, and Poland. Using a multidimensional measurement of national identification, the authors show that the experience of emotional entrainment is associated with changes in symbolic, civic, and solidary facets of identification in ways specific to the different national contexts.

Keywords

emotional entrainment – national identification – rituals – football

Introduction

From *Independence Day* celebrations in the U.S. to the *Fête Nationale* in France, from national days of mourning to political elections and international sporting tournaments – regularly occurring nationwide events and celebrations are often staged as public rituals that serve to reproduce the national community and strengthen citizens' national identification. The idea that rituals contribute to cohesion and solidarity within groups dates back to Durkheim (1995[1912]) who argued that the mutual focus of attention and the experience of collective effervescence during rituals strengthen a group's beliefs and values. Although Durkheim primarily focused on ritual practices of close-knit groups, he had already asserted that his line of argument should in principle also pertain to other kinds of groups, in particular nations (Durkheim 1995[1912]: 222).

Durkheim's views have become a cornerstone of modern scholarship on the role of rituals in nation-building and the various practices of nationalism. In a recent review, Woods and Tsang (2013) highlight that the flourishing works on rituals and nations in the post World War II era had mainly focused on the tensions between the religious character of rituals on the one hand, and the secular nature of modern Western societies on the other hand. Later research then emphasized the limitations of Durkheim's approach for the analysis of contemporary societies, arguing that it fails to address issues of segmentation, differentiation, and stratification (*ibid.*). Whereas inquiries in the Durkheimian tradition were mainly interested in issues related to the "functions" of rituals, a great deal of historical and internationally comparative research that dominated towards the end of the twentieth century was concerned with nations and nationalism in the age of modernization (Woods & Tsang, 2013: 8).

One of the most influential works on nations then again highlighted the importance of rituals and everyday habits in bringing about *imagined communities* (Anderson, 1983). Since then, rituals have increasingly moved to the foreground of nations and nationalism research, with scholars looking at, for instance, commemorations (e.g., Papadakis, 2010; Nelson, 2003), national days (Lenz, 2013; Elgenius, 2011), and truth and reconciliation commissions (e.g., Bozzolli, 1998) (see Woods and Tsang, 2013: 9). In this respect, a particularly active field is constituted by studies on sporting events. In his book *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Hobsbawm (1992) underlined the important ways

in which sports events can contribute to the emergence of affective ties and social cohesion in nations. Sports events may integrate “the national components of multi-national states”, “express national struggle”, and inculcate “national feelings”, all of which aide in the process of nation-building (Hobsbawm, 1992: 143f). In this sense, events such as the Olympics or football World Cups serve as vehicles for redrawing and reinforcing boundaries around national groups and for symbolically expressing struggles among nation states.

Several scholars, recognizing the importance of international sports events – and in particular their rituals aspects – for national identification, have expanded upon this observation and investigated, for example, their links to national identity (Tomlinson & Young, 2006; Ismer, 2016), multiculturalism (Baker & Rowe, 2014), European integration (King, 2003), globalization (Bairner, 2001), state formation (Stevenson & Alaug, 2000), or collective belonging (Fox, 2006). Although these studies are vastly insightful regarding the historical, performative, and symbolic dimensions of the role of sports and rituals in issues regarding nations and nationalism, still little is known about the micro-level mechanisms through which sports, rituals, and nations interact. This is surprising because Durkheim’s theory proposes a number of mechanisms that translate ritual practices and performances into stances and attitudes towards one’s group (Durkheim 1995[1912]).

Drawing on this Durkheimian tradition, Collins (2012) has suggested a model of how national rituals can produce solidarity, belonging, and identification based on his account of interaction ritual chains and emotional involvement. With regard to this model, we ask how international sports events – understood as nationwide rituals – may affect individuals’ identification with the nation, hence producing effects on solidarity and cohesion within a nation. We are particularly interested in the questions of how (a) collective emotional involvement in the rituals surrounding international sports events interacts with different dimensions of national identification and (b) how this interaction differs across countries for the same event. We use the concept of identification instead of identity, first, to acknowledge the substantial criticism that has been voiced in view of the latter (e.g. Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Second, we seek to emphasize the relation between a subject that identifies and an entity in the world that is the object of identification rather than taking identity as a unitary quality of a person (Gerhards, 2000, p. 116).

To this end, and building on previous works, we have devised a naturalistic quasi-experimental study around the 2012 UEFA European Football Championship in three European countries that should substantially differ in their stance towards pan-European rituals, namely Germany, the United Kingdom, and Poland. More specifically, we assume that the consequences of

the European Championships for national identification differ cross-nationally because of notable differences in the history of football and its role in the contemporary societies of the respective countries, the relationship between football institutions and governmental institutions, and because of profound differences in the media discourses surrounding the tournament.

In the following, we first give an account of ritual theory in the Durkheimian tradition to carve out the potential mechanisms that might be in play in establishing links between ritual participation and national identification. We then discuss existing scholarship on the effects of sports mega-events on national identity, symbolic boundaries, and identification. Subsequently, we present the aims and goals of the study in more detail, outline the methods, present the results, and discuss our findings.

Rituals: Mechanisms and Consequences for Identification

The existing scholarship on rituals is vast and spans various disciplines within the humanities and the social sciences (see, e.g., Bell, 2009). Here, we focus on those approaches to ritual that emphasize micro-level processes and mechanisms deemed responsible for bringing about certain individual and social *consequences* of ritual participation and performance. One of the earliest theories in this sense is Durkheim's (1995[1912]) work on *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Durkheim argues that religious rites and rituals have important functions for social groups because they produce social cohesion, feelings of belonging, and solidarity. The crucial question, however, is how and under which conditions these functions are effective.

Durkheim suggested two mechanisms as solutions to this puzzle. First, he assumed that group members participating in a ritual (which includes a shared focus of attention, common activities, mutual entrainment, and bodily co-presence) experience *collective effervescence*: "Once the individuals are gathered together, a sort of electricity is generated from their 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" (Durkheim, 1995: 217). Second, he argued that the intense emotions experienced in close physical proximity during ritual gatherings are "projected" onto the symbols of the group that represent the group's beliefs and values and are crucial ritual ingredients. During rituals, these group symbols thus take on specific affective meanings and significance as "the emotions aroused are transferred to the symbol" (Durkheim, 1995: 221). This way, the group acquires not only a propositional,

but also an emotional meaning that fosters identification, belonging, and solidarity. Importantly, this affective meaning of group symbols transcends the actual ritual context and reminds participants of their allegiance to the collective and their commitment to group values in everyday behavior.

Although Durkheim was originally concerned with the mechanisms and consequences of rituals in close-knit communities, he asserted that the engendering of collective effervescence during ritual practices can also be observed in modern nation states (Durkheim, 1995: 222). Since then, various scholars have worked on nations and nationalism from a Durkheimian perspective and highlighted issues of rituals, collective memory, and collective conscience (Dingley, 2008; Marvin & Ingle, 1999). As Billig (1995) points out, these modern-day national rituals serve as opportunities in which the “state celebrates itself”, and participants are expected to experience “special feelings” in order to express patriotic sentiment.

Another key component of ritual, as identified by Durkheim, is the physical proximity of group members, although the size of the modern nation renders this ambition almost impossible.¹ Today, the broadcasting of national rituals in real-time, through TV, radio, online social media, or public screenings allows members to simultaneously and remotely participate in these rituals (Lardellier, 2005). Despite the spatial distance between remote viewers and the ritual, a subjective feeling of proximity is established in that all members continue to share a common focus of attention and are able to experience the reactions of fellow group members. By broadcasting the reactions of individuals who are present at the event in real-time, those who are participating from afar may experience the feeling of engaging in face-to-face interaction (Konijn & Ten Holt, 2011). Moreover, broadcast rituals are often scripted so that the affective atmosphere of an event is highlighted, allowing for the emotional attunement of participants and spectators (Chaney, 1983; Dayan & Katz, 1992).

Scholars have identified football and especially football mega-events, such as the FIFA World Cup, as rituals that play an important role in national identification. Spectators gather in the stadium, in a bar or elsewhere to support their national teams, share the game as a common focus of attention, and experience similar feelings of triumph or disappointment. Moreover, the competitive nature of international football tournaments frames the events, reflecting a “national struggle”, thereby rendering national identities increasingly salient.

1 While we are aware of the problematic nature of terminology related to nations, “nation” in the current study refers to the “imagined community” as conceived by Anderson (1983).

Sports Mega-Events and the Nation

The importance of national sports teams and international sports mega-events for national solidarity and pride have been examined and discussed in a number of studies. While many agree that international sports mega-events do strengthen positive identification with the nation (see Huschka et al., 2010; Kersting, 2007; Mutz, 2013; Black, 2007), other scholars have emphasized the differential effects across nations and individuals. For example, Kersting suggests that sports mega-events were most important for countries during the nation-building process (2007), and Huschka and colleagues (2010) illustrated this with the example of South Africa, whose hosting of the 1995 Rugby World Cup led to feelings of community within the deeply divided nation. Pope and colleagues (2016) in a study on the London Olympics 2012 found that in dialogue between informed individuals set against an emotionally charged background, both nationalist and cosmopolitan discourses emerge. However, the transmission of emotions is integral to nationalist rather than to cosmopolitan discourse.

Sports mega-events are also instrumental in maintaining existing notions of collective identity. As Maguire and Poulton (1999) assert in their study on the 1996 EURO, the media discourse surrounding these events “reinforced invented traditions” and “national habitus codes”; international team sports seem to “bind people to dominant I/we national identities”. This can be especially effective when the discourse around the event utilizes conflict-related language, points at historical rivalries, or emphasizes boundaries between national in-groups and out-groups (Inthorn, 2006; Bishop, 2003). Cultural and historical stereotypes are often invoked to emphasize intergroup distinctions (Vincent, 2010; Garland, 2004), and national “styles of play” have even been identified as if to underscore fundamental differences (Lechner, 2007). And at a domestic level, national sports competitions have been found to exert unifying effects across race and class amongst members of the nation (Chalip, 2006).²

There have also been a handful of empirical studies undertaken to measure the effects of football mega-events on national identification. One study found that positive emotions experienced during the EURO 2012 led to increases in patriotism and nationalism (Mutz, 2013). Another study indicates, however, that while participants may perceive the nation as more positive after hosting

2 We recognize that the integrative effects of sports and especially sports mega-events remain ambiguous. Some studies have even found evidence for disintegrative effects (See Mael, 2001; Butz, 2009; Ismer et al., 2017).

a mega-event, they do not necessarily identify more strongly with the nation (Heere et al., 2013). While these studies do provide initial empirical evidence for a relationship between sports mega-events and individuals' national identification, the specific mechanisms responsible for any changes remain unclear. In an attempt to shed light on these mechanisms, we previously investigated the effect of emotional entrainment experienced during the 2010 FIFA World Cup on changes in national identification and emotional significance of national symbols. The study found that emotional entrainment was a predictor for both changes in national identification and attitudes towards national symbols. Emotional entrainment was also found to be a partial mediator for the relationship between pre- and post-event attitudes towards the nation (von Scheve, Beyer et al., 2014). This study confirmed the crucial role collective emotion plays in maintaining and strengthening national identification, but did not uncover the aspects of national identification that are affected most by emotional entrainment during rituals.

All the abovementioned studies focus on effects within one country, making it difficult to determine what significance the results have for other nations. We argue that an international sports mega-event is perceived differently across countries according to, for example, the importance of the sport in the respective country or the national team's performance. Therefore, we expect that the mega-event will affect national identification in diverse ways cross-nationally. Our study seeks to shed light on these nuances by simultaneously collecting data in three European countries.

Identification with the Nation

In order to get a more holistic understanding of these changes, the current study seeks to examine national identification as a dynamic process of multidimensional identification. We understand identification as a fluid process, a relationship between the subject and the object of its identification (see Gerhards, 2000: 116). In our case, the object of identification is the nation, an admittedly complex construct exhibiting a multitude of aspects with which the subject may identify. Several scholars have developed scales that assess concepts related to national identification, however many of these tools focus on national identity as a unidimensional phenomenon or concentrate on distinguishing a desirable patriotism from a dangerous nationalism (Kosterman and Feshbach, 1989). In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how exactly participation in a collective ritual affects one's identification with

the nation, we employ a scale that assesses national identification along solidarity, civic, and symbolic dimensions (von Scheve, Ismer et al., 2014).

The solidarity dimension can be understood as an individual's attachment to other individuals as a result of shared membership in a group (Widegren, 1997). It is assumed that the more solidarity one feels with others, the more he/she would be willing to sacrifice for the good of the collective. This willingness to abandon self-interest is based upon the value that the group's achievements have for the individual. Some examples of the items that this subscale is composed of are: "I feel connected with other [country] people", "I feel good that my taxes support disempowered or disadvantaged [country] people" and "It upsets me when the [nationality] in general are being criticized".

The civic dimension refers to attachment to the norms and moral standards of the corresponding society, to its historical and cultural achievements, as well as its institutions. This dimension can encompass one's opinion regarding the state's stance on environmental and human rights issues, as well as pride felt when remembering sport victories or great thinkers associated with the nation. "I am proud of the leading role that [country] takes in environmental and nature conservation", "I identify personally with the constitutional democracy of [country]" and "It is important that we [nationality] citizens know our cultural traditions" are all example items from the civic scale.

Finally, the symbolic dimension assesses the individual's emotional attachment to symbols linked to the nation. By making the "imagined community" tangible, symbols play a central role in national identification. When the idea of the nation is threatened, or a more real threat, such as war, is present, the flag serves to remind individuals of their commitment to the group (see Butz, 2009; Schatz & Lavine, 2007; Skitka, 2005; Kemmelmeier & Winter, 2008). Items used to evaluate this dimension include: "I think it's great when a [country] flag can be seen in my neighborhood during special occasions", "I would like it if there were more memorials in [country] which commemorated [country] history" and "I think it's important that all children learn to sing the national anthem in school".

This scale is especially appropriate for our study because the nature of the ritual will affect which aspects of the nation are emphasized. For example, during a civic ritual, such as an inauguration of a new political leader, one might expect that participants' attention would be drawn towards civic ideals, and that the ritual would strengthen their commitments to such beliefs. This study is not only aimed at determining whether international sports mega-events affect feelings of national identification, but also at shedding light on which aspects of identification are affected.

The Present Study

The present study examines the 2012 EURO as a group ritual that produces collective emotions amongst citizens of participating (and potentially also other) countries. In contrast to Durkheim's collective effervescence, which is assumed to occur when participants interact in face-to-face encounters, we use the term "emotional entrainment" (adopted from Collins, 2004, examined by von Scheve, Beyer et al., 2014) to refer to a more diffuse occurrence of collective emotion that can be experienced in a broader, national context. In this sense, emotional entrainment refers to a phenomenon that can occur even when participants are interacting remotely through mediated rituals.

It has already been established that emotional entrainment experienced during football mega-events, which serves as an indicator for involvement in an event, is a predictor for changes in national identification (see von Scheve, Beyer et al., 2014). Therefore, we expect that emotional entrainment will serve as a main predictor of changes in national identification (H₁) during the 2012 EURO. However, we also assume that its predictive power will vary for changes along the three dimensions of national identification and across countries. More specifically, we expect (H₂) emotional entrainment to be a predictor for changes in the solidarity and symbolic dimensions, but not necessarily the civic dimension. This is because we assume that sports mega events are less associated with historical achievements and social institutions, but rather with feelings of togetherness and the symbolic universe of a nation.

While our second hypothesis provides a basis for our expectations, we expect cross-national differences to impact the predictive power of emotional entrainment along each dimension. First, we will outline our choice of countries for the study and highlight differences between these countries we expect to impact how the 2012 EURO is received in each nation. We will then present several exploratory hypotheses are specific to the different countries and dimensions of national identification.

Specifically, we opted for a comparative study investigating participants from Germany, the United Kingdom, and Poland. The decision to collect data from these countries was based upon the goal to gather information from nations that differ according to the criteria mentioned in the introduction, such as football's history in the nation and its role in contemporary society. In Germany, football is more than a popular national pastime; it has been anecdotely considered a "litmus test" of how well society and the economy are doing as a whole. As *The Economist* pointed out, the "miracle of Bern", marking Germany's first World Cup victory, coincided with the *Wirtschaftswunder*,

German football stagnated while the country was suffering from an economic downturn in the 1980's and 1990's, and during market reforms of the early 2000's, German football began to flourish again (The Economist, 2013). Beyond following economic peaks and downturns, football has played a crucial role in reflecting German identity and served for decades as the only socially accepted way to publicly express national pride (see Stehle & Weber, 2013; Gebauer, 2000, Ismer, 2011). Furthermore, football attracts the attention of a large part of the German population, especially in the case of mega-events. During the 2006 World Cup, for example, approximately 83% of Germans watched at least one game, and close to 13 million Germans watched at least ten of the matches (Geese et al., 2006). Again during the 2010 World Cup, approximately 62 million Germans watched at least one game and during the semifinal, in which Germany played against Spain, over 31 million tuned in, breaking the record for the most-viewed match (Gerhard et al., 2010).

As reported by Crolley and Hand (2006), Britain prides itself as the “home of football”, responsible for “exporting this great tradition” around the world (p. 17). In the following, we will refer to English rather than British participants, because the study was conducted in the context of the 2012 EURO that hosts English, Scottish, and Welsh teams rather than a single British team. While England did enjoy football “supremacy” for many years, by 1960, their dominance had been weakened (Crolley & Hand, 2006, p. 23). Therefore, similar to the German experience, football did play an important role in English society. While the national team may no longer enjoy the “supremacy” that they once did, today football is one of the few outlets in which “English identification” can be expressed as something separate from identification with Great Britain. The increased prevalence of the St. George flags during sports mega-events has been interpreted by some as an indication of growing English nationalism, but initial studies suggest that this claim might be misleading (Abell, 2007). Although scholars identify the essentializing role of media coverage around sports events (Garland, 2004; Vincent, 2010), the extent to which the reports actually reflect or shape attitudes of English spectators remains unclear. Our study should help expand upon research outlining the role that football events play in maintaining or altering English national identification.

Finally, the decision to collect data from the Polish population was based on Poland's role as the host country of the 2012 EURO. In the first place, we were interested in whether the close physical proximity to the stadiums, teams and fans would induce a more intense experience of emotional entrainment than one that arises from a nation of participants who were mainly participating remotely. During Germany's hosting of the 2006 World Cup, *The New York Times* pointed out that, “... once the World Cup began and all those people from other countries arrived with flags and T-shirts in their national colors, it

became almost mandatory, certainly desirable, to respond in kind" (Bernstein, 2006). We expected a similar phenomenon to occur in Poland, in that the presence of international fans would make national identification more salient, and therefore, stronger. (For further studies on host country effects, see Dauncey & Hare, 2000; Horne & Manzenreiter, 2004; Marivoet, 2006; Tagsold, 2008.) Although research into the role of football for Polish national identity is scarce, some patterns can be observed nonetheless. Necel (2009) points out that in Poland, football matches are frequently compared to historical battles and seen as retaliation for historical wrongs or recurrences of past victories. Matches against Germany, for example, are routinely compared to the 1410 Battle of Grunwald (Necel, 2009: 207). At the same time, media coverage of international championships stresses the unity of the Polish nation in supporting its national team, and turns fans into an incorporation of the nation itself (*ibid.*).

Regarding possible differences in the effects of emotional entrainment on national identification between these countries, Abell and colleagues (2007) suggest that individuals who consider football a legitimate way to express identification with England are largely associated with right-wing political groups. Others "claimed not to support the England national team precisely because of its associations with nationalism, or else bracketed the domain of football support from more general connotations of English patriotism" (p. 97). Based on these suggestions, changes in national identification might be least pronounced amongst English compared to German and Polish participants (H3). If there is any change at all, we expect to find it along the solidarity dimension based upon the assumption that solidarity may be the most easily accessible dimension when one is watching a match in a crowded bar or stadium.

Several studies have shown that hosting sports mega-events may lead to increased self-confidence and the strengthening of values (Dauncey & Hare, 2000), identity affirmation (Marivoet, 2006), and national pride (Kersting, 2007; Huschka et al., 2010). Given that the ability of Polish organizations and associations to successfully host the EURO was questioned by many in the months leading up to the tournament, Polish citizens might also very generally have experienced increased national identification or even pride when these doubts were proved wrong. We therefore expect changes in national identification on all three dimensions to be most pronounced for participants in the Polish sample (H4).

Methods

We conducted a naturalistic quasi-experimental study with German, English and Polish respondents. Because of missing random assignment, lack of a control group, and to better investigate actual within-person variance in national

identification in relation to emotional entrainment during the 2012 EURO (i.e., between June 8 and July 1, 2012), we opted for a pretest-posttest design with two points of measurement, one shortly before and a second shortly after the tournament. Data were collected using a web-based survey platform.

The pretest assessing baseline levels of national identification on the dimensions of solidarity, civic, and symbolic identification was available for all participants in the German and Polish samples from May 25 until June 5, 2012. The event culminated on July 1, 2012 and we sent reminders to participants on July 2 to complete the second wave that again included the measure of national identification as well as measures of participants' involvement in the events surrounding the 2012 EURO and the collective emotions experienced during this time. This second wave was open to participants until July 10.

The first wave of the English sample was administered on the first day of the EURO 2012, i.e. on June 8, 2012, and the second wave was open for participants from July 2 until July 5, 2012. The questionnaire for the English participants also included a small number of additional items from a related study. While we recognize that several sampling issues, such as self-selection, age and gender biases are associated with online questionnaires (Wright, 2005; Thompson et al., 2003), the anonymity of the online questionnaire allows participants to answer more freely, partially alleviating the effects of social desirability. Furthermore, because we employ a quasi-experimental design, our results do not claim to be representative for a specific population, although the random sampling of participants is desirable (see *Participants* section).

Participants

Participants in Germany were recruited via snowball sampling, i.e. by requesting participation in the study and disseminating the survey URL via leaflets, mailing lists, and advertisements in newspapers, social network sites, and online forums. Participants were incentivized with the drawing of vouchers from a large online vendor. To increase sample size and build a more diverse sample, additional participants were recruited using a commercial access panel provider (Survey Sampling International, SSI). Participants in Poland were recruited exclusively through snowball sampling using mailing lists, personal networks, and advertisements on social network sites and online forums. Participants in England were solely recruited through a commercial access panel provider (SSI). Participants were either paid directly through SSI or received a gift card for their participation. The German sample provided 302

cases (166 female; mean age = 37.22; SD = 13.89), the English sample provided 144 (70 female; mean age = 45.28; SD = 15.024), and the Polish sample provided 61 cases (36 female, 10 no gender given; mean age = 28.28; SD = 8.375).

Measures

National Identification

To measure national identification, we used a modified version of a previously developed scale (von Scheve, Ismer et al., 2014). Some items had to be omitted from the original scale because they were specific to one of the three countries only. Participants used a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1, “completely disagree”, to 7, “completely agree”. Each of the three subscales measuring solidarity, civic, and symbolic dimensions of national identification contained between 9 and 11 items. Cronbach’s alpha for the subscales and the overall national identification scale are very high for each country (ranging from .84 to .95) and item-scale correlations show a good fit for all but one items. The item-scale correlations for one reversed item in the Polish sample (“I don’t care if I see the Polish flag lying in the dirt”) were comparably low (.23 for the symbolic subscale and .28 for the entire scale), but the item was nevertheless retained for reasons of comparability.

Emotional Entrainment (EE)

In addition to the scale measuring national identification, the study required an instrument to measure emotional entrainment in order to serve as an indicator of participants’ involvement in the 2012 EURO. This scale was already developed and administered during a previous study (see von Scheve, Ismer et al., 2014). The scale includes three items determining how emotionally moved respondents felt when watching a game played by their national team, how strongly they were affected by the emotions of co-national spectators, and to what extent they felt “carried away” by the overall atmosphere of the tournament. In addition to these items, we included a question asking for how many of the matches of the [German/Polish/English] team, watching the match was the respondent’s main activity. We transformed answers into percentages of the number of total matches each of the teams played (Germany = 5; Poland = 3; England = 4) and converted scores into a 4-point ordinal scale. The overall EE score is the mean of the four items. Five outliers were removed from the dataset. We computed the reliability of the scale only using the three psychometric items that assessed emotional entrainment, leaving out the number of games

participants had watched. Reliability of this three-item scale was high ($\alpha = .86$), and an exploratory factor analysis showed a single-factor solution that explains 79.23 percent of variance. Factor loadings were between .85 and .89.

Results

First we report descriptive statistics and compare means of national identification pre- and post-event to determine if there was a general increase in identification. Second, we report the outcome of the main analyses to assess whether the experience of emotional entrainment is a predictor of changes in national identification and to examine cross-national differences in emotional entrainment and changes in identification. To investigate whether the 2012 EURO led to a general change in national identification, disregarding EE as a predictor of change, we compared pre- and post-event levels of national identification for the entire scale and the three subscales. As expected, we find no significant changes in national identification or any of its three dimensions (see Table 1).

Interesting to note, however, are the apparent cross-national differences. English ($M_{pre} = 4.97$; $M_{post} = 4.95$) and Polish ($M_{pre} = 4.67$; $M_{post} = 4.79$) participants reported higher levels of identification than German participants ($M_{pre} = 4.32$; $M_{post} = 4.33$). German participants reported the highest levels of identification on the civic subscale and lowest levels on the symbolic scale, indicating that civic ideals and institutions play a relatively important role for

TABLE 1 *Comparison of mean values of national identification and sub-dimensions at t_1 (pre-EURO) and at t_2 (post-EURO)*

	Germany			England			Poland		
	t_1	t_2	T	t_1	t_2	T	t_1	t_2	T
Nat ID	4.32	4.33	-0.41	4.97	4.95	0.39	4.67	4.79	-0.91
Symbolic	4.03	4.05	-0.46	4.92	4.79	2.00	4.95	4.98	-0.24
Civic	4.56	4.60	-0.83	5.32	5.27	0.69	4.32	4.52	-1.42
Solidary	4.27	4.28	-0.21	4.74	4.83	-1.31	4.71	4.85	-0.85

Note: N = Germany: 302, England: 144, Poland: 61; T values did not indicate any significant changes.

German national identification. English respondents also scored highest on the civic dimension ($M_{pre} = 5.32$; $M_{post} = 5.27$),³ showing almost equally high levels of symbolic identification ($M_{pre} = 4.92$; $M_{post} = 4.79$). Polish participants reported highest levels on the symbolic subscale ($M_{pre} = 4.95$; $M_{post} = 4.98$) and lowest values on the civic subdimension ($M_{pre} = 4.32$; $M_{post} = 4.52$).

To investigate whether emotional entrainment is associated with changes in national identification and to test whether this association differs between the three samples, we computed four multiple linear regressions. We used post-event levels of the entire national identification scale as well as the three subscales as dependent variables in four separate regressions. Our main independent variable is emotional entrainment. By including pre-event levels of national identification (the overall scale and the respective subscales) as additional independent variables, our models can be interpreted as explaining the direction and magnitude of change in national identification. We also included age and gender as control variables and country dummies to investigate differences in the effects across countries.

Table 2 shows the linear regression of post-event (t_2) national identification on pre-event (t_1) national identification and emotional entrainment. A significant regression equation was found ($F(6,503) = 738.858$, $p < .001$), with $R^2 = .745$. Participants' national identification at t_2 increased by 0.839 points for each point of national identification at t_1 and by 0.119 points for each point of EE. Both pre-event national identification and emotional entrainment are significant predictors of post-event national identification at t_2 , confirming hypothesis H1.

In the second model, we added gender and age as control variables, which are both significantly associated with national identification at t_2 ($p < .01$ for gender; $p < .05$ for age). Participants' national identification at t_2 was higher by 0.60 points for every year of age and women's national identification at t_2 was higher than men's by 0.059 points. Both, national identification at t_1 and EE not only remained significant at the $p < .000$ level, but also yielded increased β -coefficients.

In the third step, we controlled for between-group differences for respondents in the German, Polish and English samples. Models 3 to 4 present the same model with different country dummies included, since we are interested in differences for each pair of samples. Both age and gender remain significant

3 Importantly, because of the lack of genuinely English political institutions and a tendency to conflate "Englishness" with "Britishness", participants might thought of British institutions and values when responding to the scale (see Kumar, 2010).

TABLE 2 Summary of linear regression for variables predicting national identification at t_2 ($N = 570$)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3 (Germany as baseline)		Model 4 (Poland as baseline)		Model 5 (raw country effects, Poland as baseline)	
	B	SEB β	B	SEB β	B	SEB β	B	SEB β	B	SEB β
Solidary ID (t_1)	.839	.023 .841**	.822	.024 .824**	.808	.025 .810**	.808	.025 .810**	.838	.023 .840**
EE	.119	.037 .075**	.147	.038 .093**	.145	.040 .092**	.145	.040 .092**		
Poland (dummy)					.178	.082 .053*				
England (dummy)					.126	.059 .051*				
Germany (dummy)										
Female (ref: male)			.122	.046 .059**	.108	.047 .053*				
Age (in years)			.004	.002 .060*	.005	.002 .062*				
R_2		.745		.750		.754		.754		.748
F for change in R^2		738.858**		379.256**		257.224**		257.224**		298.727**

Note: OLS regression with standardized errors. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

TABLE 3 Summary of linear regression for variables predicting solidary identification at t_2 ($N = 510$)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3 (Germany as baseline)		Model 4 (Poland as baseline)		Model 5 (raw country effects, Poland as baseline)						
	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β			
Solidary ID (t_1)	.744	.029	.747**	.715	.029	.718**	.694	.029	.697**	.694	.029	.697**	.738	.028	.741**
EE	.160	.047	.098**	.217	.049	.133**	.222	.050	.136**	.222	.050	.136**			
Poland (dummy)							.261	.103	.076**						
England (dummy)							.257	.074	.102**	-.004	.118	-.002	-.146	.116	-.058
Germany (dummy)										-.261	.103	-.113**	-.350	.103	-.151**
Female (ref: male)				.121	.059	.057*	.106	.060	.050	.106	.060	.050	.082	.060	.039
Age (in years)				.009	.002	.113**	.008	.002	.108**	.008	.002	.108**	.006	.002	.080**
R_2		.609			.622			.634			.634			.620	
<i>F</i> for change in R^2		395.068**			207.649**			145.101**			145.101**			164.143**	

Note: OLS regression with standardized errors. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

in these models. Model 3 shows that changes in national identification at t_2 are significantly ($p < .05$) stronger for participants in the Polish (.053) and the English (.051) samples compared to the German reference category. Model 4 also shows that participants in the English sample show less (-.021) pronounced changes in national identification compared to respondents in the Polish sample, although the effect is statistically insignificant. This leads us to reject H3 that participants in the English sample show least pronounced changes in national identification and H4 that Polish participants show the most substantial changes due to the host country effect. These insignificant differences might be due to emotional entrainment differentially affecting changes in national identification in the different countries. To test for this possibility, we computed a further regression (Model 5), in which we removed emotional entrainment as a predictor variable to test for the “raw” country effect. Here, again, the difference between Poland and England remains insignificant.

To test whether emotional entrainment is also significantly associated with changes in the civic, solidarity, and symbolic subdimensions of national identification and how these changes differ between the three samples, we ran three additional regressions with solidary, civic, and symbolic identification as dependent variables. We find that pre-event (t_1) national identification and emotional entrainment are significant predictors of post-event (t_2) solidary, civic, and symbolic identification (see Table 3 and Tables A1 and A2 in the appendix). In line with hypothesis H2, emotional entrainment is also most strongly associated with the solidarity ($\beta = .098$) dimension compared to the civic ($\beta = .064$) and the symbolic ($\beta = .071$) dimensions (see Models 1 in Tables 3, A1, and A2). Looking at differences in changes in identification between the three countries, we find no significant differences for the symbolic and the civic dimensions (Tables A1, A2). Interestingly, and in line with the pronounced effect of EE, we find significant differences for the solidarity subscale. As shown in Table 3 (Model 3), changes in solidary identification at t_2 are significantly ($p < .01$) stronger for participants in the Polish (.076) and the English (.102) samples compared to the German reference category. As with the overall scale, we find no significant differences between the Polish and the English samples.

Discussion

The study reported in this article sought to examine how international sports mega-events impact individuals' identification with their nation. It reflects a naturalistic, quasi-experimental design, in which the 2012 EURO was the

treatment. While there was no random assignment of participants to control and experimental groups, a retrospective assessment of emotional entrainment served as the indicator for participation in the ritual aspects during the 2012 EURO. The design was longitudinal in that we measured attitudes towards the nation at two time points, shortly before and after the championship. Drawing upon Durkheim's theory as laid out in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* and our previous research conducted, we hypothesized that emotional entrainment experienced during the 2012 EURO would act as a predictor for post-EURO levels of national identification and its sub-dimensions. More specifically, we expected that emotional entrainment would be a stronger, more reliable predictor for changes along the solidarity and symbolic dimensions compared to the civic dimension. We also set forth two additional exploratory hypotheses: that emotional entrainment might only be a predictor for the solidarity subscale in the English sample and that it should be an especially strong predictor for changes among members of a host country. We found that emotional entrainment was a predictor for changes in the solidarity dimension among English participants, and that it was a stronger predictor for all subdimensions in Poland compared to changes in the other two samples. This is especially interesting with regard to the civic subscale that reflects the Polish participants' pride in the successful hosting of the EURO.

Our main results indicate that there is no general increase in identification with one's nation due to the staging of an international sports mega-event. Although, for example, studies examining media reports around sports mega-events suggest that such events help to reify and strengthen established national identities (Garland, 2004; Vincent, 2010; Maguire & Poulton, 1999), our data indicates that changes in national identification due to the 2012 EURO were contingent upon the extent to which collective emotions were experienced by the individuals. By watching the games with co-nationals at home or in public spaces, the 2012 EURO could be experienced as a collective ritual in which emotional entrainment was experienced, and identification with the nation was strengthened. The results of this study show that the extent to which sports mega-events foster increased identification with the nation varies across countries. Our findings seem to indicate that the effect of these international events depends on how the sport is perceived in the respective societies, however, in order to identify more concrete details, further studies would be required.

Our expectation that emotional entrainment would be a reliable and strong predictor for changes in the solidarity subscale was supported by our data. We expected feelings of solidarity to increase because individuals are gathered

together and united towards a common goal, namely, to defeat an opposing team. They watch the games, cheer, experience elation and disappointment together. Indeed, EE was a significant predictor for changes along the solidarity dimension in all three samples.

We expected the heightened presence of national symbols, including flags, national colors and the anthem, as well as the framing of intergroup conflict, due to the competitive nature of the tournament, to result in increases in symbolic identification. However, this assumption was only partially supported by our data. In Poland, EE was found to be a significant and strong predictor for changes along this dimension. In Germany, EE was a significant, but weak predictor. This could be explained by the reluctance of German participants to experience or indicate symbolic identification due to the country's uneasy relationship with national attitudes (Dragolov et al., 2013). On the whole, these results challenge the idea that exposure to group symbols results in increased feelings of national identification (Butz, 2009), and add important context to interpreting results of several related studies (Schatz & Lavine, 2007, Kemmelmeier & Winter, 2008).

Whereas Durkheim's theory on collective effervescence does postulate that group values should be strengthened during collective rituals, we hypothesized that EE would only be a predictor of changes along the civic dimension for the host country. This hypothesis was based on the limited role that civic ideals and institutions play in mega sports events.⁴ Indeed, EE was not a predictor for changes along the civic dimension in England or Germany. This was not the case, however, in Poland where EE was a significant and strong predictor for changes along this dimension. EE likely led to an increase in civic identification among Polish participants because of the successful hosting of such a large event, which requires extensive planning, careful organization and appropriate infrastructure for the tournament. This achievement is a testament to the competence and development of a country and helps bolsters the nation's reputation at the international level (see Huschka et al., 2010).

The data indicated a much stronger predictive power of EE in Poland than the other samples along all of the dimensions, indicating the existence of a "host country effect". This is not surprising, because as hosts, Polish participants were in closer proximity to the ritual and were immersed in the celebratory nature of the event, surrounded by international visitors and football fans.

4 We acknowledge that campaigns have been developed promoting civic values such as FIFA's "Say no to racism" campaign, however media coverage during football events traditionally emphasizes values related to strength and power (see Ismer et al., 2017).

This finding indicates that the experience of participating in a ritual in close proximity to group members may be a more powerful experience than participating in mediated rituals. Additionally, Polish participants may have experienced a sense of national duty and celebration that was evident, for example, during Portugal's hosting of the 2004 EURO. According to Marivoet, internally, there was an unprecedented cooperation among Portuguese in "promot[ing] a spirit of national cohesion and hospitality" (2006). This also provides an additional explanation regarding EE's strong predictive power for changes along the solidarity dimension.

Taken together, the results of this study show that the context of the group ritual significantly influences its integrative effects, including increased identification with members, values and symbols. Moreover, this study contributes to the literature on nationalism by utilizing a modified scale to measure national identification in a more nuanced way. Whereas various studies examine national attitudes along dimensions of nationalism and patriotism, we believe this approach is problematic for multiple reasons. There tends to be a conflation in the literature of positive forms of national identification with patriotism and negative, aggressive national identification with nationalism. Instead, we believe that individuals can identify with the nation in a myriad of ways, and along different dimensions (see Dekker, 2003; DeLamater et al., 1969; Schatz et al., 1999). While it would be impossible to develop a scale that is able to capture all aspects of national identification, our scale assesses the subjective identification with three main aspects of the nation: its symbols, its values and its people. Moreover, our results provide additional evidence that rituals are an effective way to strengthen group identification in large-scale societies, even if the ritual is experienced remotely. A modified version of the emotional entrainment scale could be used to measure the experience of collective emotion during alternative group rituals, such as political inaugurations or national holiday celebrations.

There were limitations to the study due to its quasi-experimental design. Our design did not control for certain variables, such as the performance of each national team during the 2012 EURO, which could have exerted an effect on national attitudes as poor performance may lead to the tendency to dissociate oneself from the collective (Gibbons, 2011). Furthermore, the use of online questionnaires does favor a certain demographic, and therefore our samples may not be wholly representative of the respective populations. The time-frame during which the data was collected varied slightly among the samples, which could also have a potential impact on the study. Collecting data from non-European countries would improve the generalizability of the results.

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TABLE A2 Summary of linear regression for variables predicting symbolic identification at t_2 ($N = 50$)

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3 (Germany as baseline)			Model 4 (Poland as baseline)			Model 5 (raw country effects, Poland as baseline)		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Solidary ID (t_1)	.857	.021	.867**	.855	.021	.865**	.849	.022	.859**	.849	.022	.859**	.871	.021	.881**
EE	.134	.040	.071**	.140	.042	.074**	.135	.043	.071**	.135	.043	.071**			
Poland (dummy)							.107	.091	.027						
England (dummy)							.037	.065	.013	-.069	.103	-.024	-.149	.101	-.051
Germany (dummy)										-.107	.091	-.040	-.153	.091	-.057
Female (ref: male)				.135	.051	.054**	.124	.052	.050**	.124	.052	.050**	.114	.052	.046*
Age (in years)				.001	.002	.015	.002	.002	.018	.002	.002	.018	.000	.002	.003
R_2		.789			.792			.793			.793			.789	
<i>F</i> for change in R^2		950.1578**			481.732**			321.103**			321.103**			376.969**	

Note: OLS regression with standardized errors. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.