Special Affects? Nationalist and Cosmopolitan Discourses Through the Transmission of Emotions: Empirical Evidence from London 2012

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Abstract

International sporting and mega-events such as London 2012 provide a pertinent case study through which to explore contemporary approaches to nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Using original focus group evidence from participants with expertise in the Olympics, this article provides an insight into how nationalist and cosmopolitan discourses emerge in dialogue between informed individuals set against an emotionally charged background. The evidence indicates that the transmission of emotions might be integral to the operation of nationalist but less so to cosmopolitan discourses, underscoring the conditional character of the latter discourses. Therefore, we suggest this takes previous work that associates nationalism with 'hot' emotions and cosmopolitanism with 'cool' emotions further. We found that most emotions appeared to be transmitted through challenges to, rather than in support of, a discourse. The opinions voiced in the focus groups are expected to be insightful for any investigation into the construction of nationalist and

cosmopolitan discourses or, indeed, broader research into how emotions are actually transmitted – all of which have obvious relevance for social scientists interested in nationalism, cosmopolitanism and the role of emotions.

Key words

Nationalism, cosmopolitanism, London 2012, transmission of emotions

Introduction

The Olympic Games, and London 2012 in particular, offer a unique opportunity to empirically assess contemporary approaches to nationalism and cosmopolitanism (Giulianotti and Brownell, 2012). The Olympic Charter, the codification of the Olympic ideal, is couched in cosmopolitan language, calling for adherence to "universal fundamental ethical principles" and the "harmonious development of humankind" (IOC, 2011). The Charter also provides that the "Olympic Games are competitions between athletes in individual or team events and not between countries" (IOC, 2011), yet, since the Stockholm Games of 1912, when athletes could no longer enter as individuals but had to be selected for a national team, there has been an explicit link between the Olympics and nationalism (Hargreaves, 1992). The intricate relationship between the Olympics, nationalism and cosmopolitanism was even more evident in the run-up to the Summer Olympics of 2012. From the outset, the London bid to host the 2012 Games aimed at strengthening British national identity (Jowell, 2006). At the same time, the bidding team promoted London as a cosmopolitan city within a nation that prides itself on its diversity and openness (Bulley and Lisle, 2012). As such, London 2012 offered an appropriate context for nationalist and cosmopolitan discourses.

Drawing on Emile Durkheim (1995) and more recent scholarship on the affective turn (Nussbaum, 2001; Barbalet, 2002; Ahmed, 2004; Bleiker and Hutchison, 2008; Wetherell, 2012), this article attaches importance to the transmission of emotions in the construction of these discourses.[i] We use the term 'transmission of emotions' instead of the widely used term 'sharing of emotions' (Smith *et al.*, 2007; Salmela, 2012, 2014) to indicate that we treat emotional experience not only as an internal

state of mind that people come to share with each other, that is, an aggregate of already existing feelings, but also as a social activity in the course of which these feelings are intensified, attenuated or transformed. As Sullivan (2014a, p. 3) notes, "sharing appears to be a metaphor for the degree of similarity of appraisals and felt group-level emotions experienced and expressed by others, rather than indicating how these emotions are expressed congruently in interactions, rituals, or affective practices." In contrast, the metaphor of transmission allows us to explore those interactive settings where emotionally driven discourses are prone to emerge, manifest and disseminate.[ii]

The authors conducted focus group research with government employees, media practitioners and international academics – all with an interest in the Olympics – on 25th July 2012, the first day of the 2012 Games, at a venue in London. By analysing the discursive interactions and guided conversations of this select group, this article seeks to answer the question of how nationalist and cosmopolitan discourses operate through the transmission of emotions. Overall, the focus group evidence indicates that the transmission of emotions is likely to be integral to the operation of nationalist but less so to cosmopolitan discourses. In both cases however, the transmission of emotions was most apparent when participants expressed opposition to certain aspects of the Games – be it Olympic symbols, media reports, the notion of contest and so on.

The article is structured as follows. The first section provides a sketch of contemporary theories of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. The second section

considers the role of emotions in the construction of nationalist and cosmopolitan discourses. The third section provides some insight into the background of the focus group participants and outlines the methods adopted for this research. The fourth section presents an analysis of original focus group discussions on London 2012. The fifth and final section concludes by suggesting that the transmission of emotions is more integral to the operation of nationalist than cosmopolitan discourses. It indicates that emotions are often transmitted through challenges to, rather than in support of, a discourse.

Nationalism and cosmopolitanism in contemporary political thought

In order to provide a framework for analysing the empirical evidence, this section briefly considers theoretical approaches to nationalism and then to cosmopolitanism. We recognise the importance of 20th century literature on nationalism in elucidating the political, economic and cultural factors integral to nationalism, particularly that written by authors such as Ernest Gellner (1983), Anthony Smith (1987) and Eric Hobsbawm (1990). However, for the purposes of this article these scholars (particularly Gellner and Hobsbawm) do not adequately consider the imaginations and perceptions of people – factors that are integral to our approach that prioritises discursive constructions. This may be indicative of their focus on modern and pre-modern eras but our article, with its original focus group evidence from 2012, is not dismissive of discursive constructions and focuses on the period of postmodernity. Accordingly, we draw more from the work of Benedict Anderson (1983), Michael Billig (1995), Ruth Wodak *et al.* (2009) and Sabina Mihelj (2011, p. 15) who emphasise the importance of communicative practices in shaping people's ways of thinking about nationalism.

Anderson (1983) considers nationalism to be a cultural artifact. He defines national communities as inherently limited due to their finite boundaries or territories, but at the same time "imagined". These communities are imagined because "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 1983, p. 6). Treating nations as imagined communities allows issues of nationalism and community to be conceived of as mental constructs and has thus been utilised widely by constructivists and those undertaking discursive analyses (Billig, 1995; Wodak *et al.,* 2009; Mihelj, 2011). Following such observations, nationalism can be expected to promote certain features. Specifically these are: (i) intra-national uniformity; (ii) inter-national heterogeneity; (iii) references to a common national past, present and future; and, (iv) a national identity fundamentally constructed in opposition to the perception of the Other (Wodak *et al*., 2009). Therefore, a discourse promoting nationalism is expected to include a focus on a unified national community (in the past, present and future), heightened by emphasis on the difference of the Other.

While nationalism focuses on limited imagined communities, cosmopolitanism treats the individual rather than the nation – or, in fact, any other unit of social aggregation – as the ultimate unit of moral concern (Nussbaum, 1997; Held, 2003; Cabrera, 2010). During Roman times, classical cosmopolitanism developed through Stoic thinkers such as Marcus Cicero who stressed the importance of human rationality, human fraternity and a natural universal law (Brown and Held, 2010, p. 5). Today, normative aspects persist in elements of 21st century cosmopolitanism, but steps

have been undertaken to come to a more conciliatory understanding of both nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Dissatisfied with its exclusive character, some writers on nationalism have advocated the promotion of liberal values (Tamir, 1993), and writers on cosmopolitanism have explored ways of making space for moderate forms of nationalism (Calhoun, 2002). In what has been termed the 'post-universalism' of the 'new cosmopolitanism' of the post-Cold War era, a 'both-and' rather than an 'either-or' outlook has been observed (Beck, 2006; Fine, 2007; Delanty, 2009). What particularly concerns Beck (2006) is what he views as the myopic tendencies towards a 'methodological nationalism'. According to Beck, methodological nationalism involves social scientific analysis that focuses predominantly on national frames, instead of considering the various levels of the social that can include, but is not limited to, the national.

In terms of cosmopolitanism, this article, like Beck, is interested in approaches that have proposed forms that clearly allow for recognition of a range of collectives, in addition to those constituted by the nation. Ulf Hannerz (1996) has argued that cosmopolitanism is about embracing diversity, where the self engages with different Others. For John Tomlinson (1999), writing in 1999, 'connectivity' was integral to cultural globalisation and engagement with the Other on a global level. Our case study is set in 2012 where new modes of communication have further increased the potential for various forms of connectivity – whether through news, social or other forms of communications media. This demands a more flexible approach to assessing engagement and the construction of community. Therefore we refer to Gerard Delanty's (2009, pp. 85-86) broader criteria for a new 'cosmopolitan imagination', comprising of: (i) self-reflexivity; (ii) a positive recognition of the Other;

(iii) a capacity for a mutual evaluation of communities through inter-cultural dialogue; and, (iv) the possibility of one normative global culture. This approach to cosmopolitanism allows for the consideration of multiple ways in which people can engage and connect with each other in the 21st century.

In summary, Table 1 highlights distinctions that can be made between the two discourses considered in this article. As stated above, the form of nationalism searched for in our data will be that which is encouraged by discussion that supports the national community and can be enhanced through emotions. Following a more cultural form of cosmopolitanism, a 'new cosmopolitanism' approach aims for engagement between self and Other on an individual or collective basis and its affective disposition is geared towards this.

Table 1 about here

The transmission of emotions

This article adds to the aforementioned approaches on nationalism and cosmopolitanism by considering the transmission of emotions in the operation of nationalist and cosmopolitan discourses. In his writings on nationalism, Gellner (1971, p. 149) suggested that any clash between liberalism and nationalism could be likened to a "tug of war between reason and passion".[iii] However, the notion of a strict demarcation and opposition between rationality and emotions has been challenged by a number of scholars (Nussbaum, 2001; Barbalet, 2002; Bleiker and Hutchison, 2008, von Scheve, 2012). Agreeing with Jack Barbelet (2002) that all

actions, even the act of reasoning, require appropriate emotions to facilitate their achievement, we therefore draw on Kate Nash (2003) who describes how the cosmopolitan ideal has been considered a 'cool', stoical emotion that promotes liberal rationality, whereas identification with a national community has been associated with 'hot' emotions such as anger and hatred.[iv] But even this dichotomy can be criticised for its tendency to idealise the former and reify the latter (Nash, 2003, p. 507). We therefore shy away from the absolute terms of 'cool' and 'hot' emotions, and suggest that by looking to the *transmission of emotions* – rather than the emotions themselves – one can differentiate between 'cooler', less transmitted and 'hotter', more transmitted emotions. What distinguishes the former from the latter, then, is: (i) a greater detachment, allowing for more reflective ways of thinking; and, (ii) a greater diffusion, preventing these emotions from building up.

In our attempt to identify emotions, we follow a number of scholars who have investigated the transmission and transferal of emotions (Ahmed, 2004; Closs Stephens, 2014) and studied the relational patterns that emerge (Wetherell, 2012; Jones *et al.*, 2014). In her work on emotions, Sara Ahmed (2004, p. 4) does not consider emotions to be 'in' any individual or 'in' any society, nor does she study emotions per se, but what emotions *do*. More specifically, Ahmed is interested in the impact of emotions and considers how emotions and consequently power structures circulate, accumulate and become intractable and enduring (Ahmed, 2004, pp.10-12). For example, the words 'paki' or 'nigger' have been repeated sufficiently over time to build a sticky meaning that allows them to contribute to 'hate speech' and this can stimulate affects in bodies (Ahmed, 2004, pp. 59-60). There is scope to employ Ahmed's approach in other cases and Suzanne Hall (2014) applies Ahmed's

conception of emotionality effectively in her work on the emotional development of stigmatisation of urban estates and subsequent calls for their regeneration. In turn, in her research on nationalism, Angharad Closs Stephens (2014, p. 62) outlines how her objective is to enable “us to talk about the tonalities and intensities of nationality” as it flows and passes between bodies. If the idea that emotions are contained by individuals or collectives is rejected, investigations surrounding the ebbs and flows of emotions are clearly an appropriate method to understand better affective dispositions. This article’s use of focus group interactions on the Olympics provides an opportunity for our own unique analysis of the social dynamics referred to by these scholars. We will be looking at statements made between individuals to help assess how emotions transmitted within the groups.

In addition to Ahmed (2004), who notes how emotions can ‘stick’ to bodies over time, we draw on both Durkheim and Hargreaves, who each stress the importance of rituals and symbols in this regard. For Durkheim (in Shilling 2002, p. 18), “collective effervescence” – a phrase he coined to describe the energy that emerges when people gather collectively – can change individuals’ emotional experience as it spreads “a sort of electricity” that is generated in the interaction between people. He argued that through social gatherings, and, particularly, rituals that create something “sacred”, “individuals imagine the society of which they are members and the obscure and yet intimate relations they have with it” (Durkheim, 1995, p. 227). Although Durkheim, writing in 1912, was concerned with religion and its use of rituals, his findings informed John Hargreaves authoritative study of the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. According to Hargreaves (2000, p. 15, p. 56), a Durkheimian assessment of sports appreciates the powerful impact that ritual symbols – symbols

that accrue meaning through their part in rituals – can have on emotions related to national or global cultures associated with the Games.[v] Hargreaves argues that these symbols can covertly convey a very large number of references to nationalism or internationalism. Since our focus groups took place at the beginning of the Games when Olympic paraphernalia and symbols were widespread and some of these symbols (including Olympic post cards and pictures of London 2012 mascots) were even given to the participants as prompts, the evidence should be particularly well suited to shed light on this issue.

In summary, we can outline a number of factors that we shall be 'searching for' in the focus group evidence. Firstly, in order to assess the transmission of emotions we follow Ahmed (2004) and those who have applied her conception of emotionality (see Hall, 2014). We therefore consider (i) circulation, (ii) accumulation and (iii) endurance – but we have added our own specific empirical indicators that we could expect to find in the predominantly linguistic discursive data derived from our focus groups. With regard to (i) circulation, we look for repetition and imitation of emotions, for (ii) accumulation, we focus on the building and development of emotions and, for (iii) the endurance of emotions, we consider the overcoming of challenges over time. Secondly, we have added a breakdown of the phenomena to which emotions might 'stick' to for our particular study on Olympics discourse. Influenced by Ahmed (2004), Durkheim (1995) and Hargreaves (2000) we have chosen to look for examples of emotions 'sticking' to (i) bodies, (ii) rituals and (iii) symbols. Accordingly, we shall look for examples of national and cosmopolitan emotions pertaining to (i) people (e.g. human achievement), (ii) practices (e.g. ceremonies) and (iii) objects (e.g. flags). Table 2 summarises these points.

Table 2 about here

Research methods

To explore these processes, we draw on three focus group discussions with government employees, media practitioners and international academics. The focus groups were moderated by the authors at an international conference, entitled 'Olympics and the 'Isms'', that took place in London on 25th July 2012, the first day of the 2012 Games. These discussions were conducted in order to draw attention to the Olympic discourses participants had been exposed to, including those in mainstream and social media.

The reasons for selecting focus groups are two-fold. First, focus groups are particularly well-suited for carrying out exploratory research in a sensitive field of study (Morgan, 1998, p. 11). We were interested in finding out emotive aspects of the Games – be they sports related or otherwise – that would not, normally, be the subject of everyday discussions. We also recognise the difficulty associated with distinguishing between different discourses related to grand ideologies such as cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Notwithstanding these issues, we propose that the interaction among participants can elucidate the shape of such discourses and what their dominant and marginal characteristics are likely to be. The recent turn in social sciences towards emotions (Ahmed, 2004; Stephens, 2014) has also created a new challenge for researchers, namely to explore how emotions diffuse in practice. Unlike interviews or surveys, focus groups include diverse views and different emotional

processes and they can be illustrative of how discourses manifest through the *transmission* of emotions (Flick, 2014). Second, the interaction, reasoning and forms of reflection present in the focus groups allow for a more in-depth analysis of the research topic (Morgan, 1998) and can elucidate how participants collectively make sense of the topic (Bryman, 2012, pp. 503-504). Since participants can go beyond a set of interview questions and probe one another for holding certain perspectives, the resulting interactions also emphasise the topics they consider most important. From these topics, this article notes the attention participants paid to cosmopolitan and nationalist themes. Since our primary objective is to shed light on the transmission of emotions, issues related to generalisability are expected to be outweighed by the original insight provided by the focus group evidence, especially the interaction between our participants and the dynamics within and across the three groups.

All together, the focus groups included 19 participants, seven females and twelve males.[vi] The majority of participants had British (8) or American nationality (4), and the others came from a number of countries, including Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary and Iraq. Due to their academic, professional and governmental involvement in the Olympics, participants' expertise in social, political and ideological issues surrounding the Games was expected to grant a somewhat elitist character to the discussions. There is already evidence to suggest that elite positions are often coupled with a (projected) preference for cosmopolitan discourses (Skey, 2011). Hence we assumed that the focus group context would provide ample opportunity for the transmission of emotions linked to cosmopolitan discourses. Peer-pressure – an inherent feature of focus groups – from fellow

participants and the authors – in their formal roles as conference co-organisers and moderators – were anticipated to further participants' preference for cosmopolitan discourses. These assumptions informed our original preparations for the focus groups. They were planned to last for about 45 minutes to an hour and were divided into three main parts. First, moderators asked participants open questions about which significant discourses they had come across in relation to the Games and then London 2012. After about 15 minutes, participants were asked about nationalist and cosmopolitan discourses in relation to London 2012, with moderators playing a minimal role. The last ten minutes were spent on discussing what the legacy of London 2012 might look like compared to previous Games. The resulting debates contradicted some of our assumptions; they drew attention to the integral role the transmission of emotions has in the operation of nationalist discourses, and to the fact that most emotions were transmitted through *challenges* to (rather than in support of) a discourse.[vii]

Empirical observations and discussion

Having discussed the research methods we adopted to undertake this research, the next two parts of this article present a thematic analysis of our focus group evidence, exploring how nationalist and cosmopolitan discourses (as summarised in Table 1) operate through the transmission of emotions (as summarised in Table 2).

Nationalist discourses

Every group recognised that some high profile London 2012 discourses had an almost exclusive focus on the city of London, challenging the promotion of nationalist

discourses through the Olympics. Depending on their country of origin however, participants evaluated differently the impact of these discourses. This disparity then created an interesting dynamism in each group, depending on the distribution of British and international participants. British participants seemed to be quite expressive when the focus groups discussed whether or not nationalist discourses were relevant to London 2012. Their original perceptions of the UK as a "small nation" and Team GB as a "dream" were developed into the "dream we've had *as* a nation". They then became more and more critical of the almost singular attention of the mainstream media on the city of London and did not find it appropriate that this event turned into "London's spotlight … instead of the UK's spotlight". They suggested that London 2012 should have been "very much about supporting Team GB", because it was made up of athletes who came from all over the country. Apparently affected by contagion, participants with personal ties to regions outside of London also picked up on this line of argument. They anticipated that their friends and family were "out of touch" from the 2012 event and were likely to "turn [the TV] off" because of its emphasis on "world to London and London to world".

A couple of foreign participants also built on the scepticism British participants expressed and recognised that London 2012 discourses in their home country usually neglected how regions outside of London contributed to the Olympic event. Nonetheless, they did not criticise this approach. Instead, they presumed references to London were about the UK as well. British participants reacted to this claim with some resentment; either by stopping the conversation so that the moderator had to take charge of the discussion – as in the example below – or by ignoring these comments in their entirety and turning to debate other issues – as in Groups 2 and 3.

British Male (1), Group 1:[viii] [There is] this tagline of bringing London to the world and the world to London, but I was almost flinching from the word London. I was thinking of my friends up North, they would have turned it off a long time ago.

British Male (2): There seems to [be] these two narratives. They let the Games be a national theme, like the Olympic torch was a national survey through all of the towns in the UK. Yet, all the things today, all the things [are] about London. And there is a real, I mean, I spent the last days of the week in my home in South Derbyshire, which is in the Midlands… They didn't even care about things [related to the Games]! It seems to be a London thing and it was *so* London centric when, really, the Games should be more, for a small nation like Britain, more inclusive. …

American Female: Yes, I was actually thinking about that because, as the token foreigner in this group, we don't notice that. We hear London and we think of the UK. Or, I might say England. While I know there is a difference between Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. [But] like when I'm talking about it back home, I would never make that distinction, unless I was talking to someone from the UK. For us, when we hear London or when people are talking to us about London, like, it's the UK. And for us it is comparable [to the country on the whole]… [Silence.]

Here the American participant recognised her tendency to ignore intra-national British differences in the context of the Olympics. According to Wodak *et al.*'s

(2009) criterion for the promotion of national identity, such a trait could assist in the development of national identity through discursive constructions of intra-national homogeneity. However, the American participant was challenging British participants with her suggestion that Britain could be represented globally via the capital, London. The impassioned support of British participants for a more inclusive British approach incorporating other cities and regions also called for an intra-national uniformity, but to an inclusive end, rather than an exclusionary one. Thus, while all participants promoted intra-national unity, the final silence hints that a challenge to inclusive intra-national unity had been rejected and 'endured' by British participants.

In the later stages of the focus groups, most participants, mainly younger ones, suggested social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook as the source of "counter-culture" and "counter-narrative", emphasising the nationalist discourse of the Games and individual pride to the public across the UK. Interestingly, the use of the word 'individual', traditionally associated with cosmopolitanism, also suggested that positive dispositions towards nationalism did not preclude a focus on individuals.

> *British Male, Group 2:* Media 2012 … is based around local reporters all over the country using Twitter … building the stories from individual representatives and turned it into this more… nationalised phenomenon rather than just the Olympics.

> *American Female, Group 3:* [H]ashtag London 2012 here's lots of *individual* pride too, [like] *[Reads out quote from Twitter]* 'One in seven Great Britain athletes competing in London, born in Sheffield, live in Sheffield, train in Sheffield.' So [it is] not just on the whole [about the UK], but bringing out all the little towns and recognising [their input].

Indeed, social media websites, including those facilitated by the Counter Olympics Network and Media 2012 criticised mainstream outlets for their failure to recognise the impact of London 2012 on the entirety of the British national community (Pope, 2014). The nationalist discourse of London 2012 has also been found to be relevant internationally. For example, in China, social media activism during London 2012 underscored a 'transcendental Chinese patriotism'. This patriotism was linked to individualism, transnationalism and universalism, rather than more traditional ideals linked to state authority, Confucian tradition or history (Du, 2014). Similarly, our participants claimed that the more traditional British nationalist discourses were, originally, marginally presenter at the Games. They then interpreted the rebranding of the Olympic Park to Queen Elizabeth Park as an attempt to 'make up' for the more pronounced London focus of the Games. "It was obviously trying to appeal to *'What do people understand about Britain?' Well, it's got a Queen!*' I've never heard it being called that [Queen Elizabeth Park] before! And lots of attention grabbing logos, lots of Union Jack posters and that kind of thing [has been put up]" (British-Chinese Female, Group 3).

There was a slight difference between how Groups 1 and 2, where British participants were in the majority, and Group 3, where only 2 out of 7 participants were British, perceived London 2012. Similarly to Groups 1 and 2, most participants seemed, at first, critical about the city-focus of the mainstream media in Group 3. However, contrary to the previous examples, a Canadian participant expected that on an individual level, “being able to attend [the 2012] events”, brought it “home” to the local people and united the British nation. Subsequently, the Canadian and Hungarian participants highlighted the accessibility of the London event, while British participants spoke of its exclusivity, referring to “VIP lanes” and expensive tickets. The exchange in Group 3 thus underlined the likely impact of factors such as nationality (host or other) and the experience of attending or being linked to the Games were likely to have.

> *British Male, Group 3*: Yes, [it is] a quite an interesting one actually, specifically for the question, ‘Does the London venue detract from the Olympics as a nation-building exercise?’ Coming back to this promotion of the city, are these other places [where athletes come from] excluded by the mainstream stuff?
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> *Hungarian Female*: And it touches on your [conference] paper, which [is where] I read about Manchester trying to get the Olympic bid. They actually helped London to be successful! ... It’s interesting to see that. However, the current media doesn’t seem to talk about any other city [apart from London].
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> *American Female:* It’s interesting that this individual city leaps out of the paper here *[in The Times article which was previously given as prompt to*

the group] and makes itself known, because, that's true, all these other cities tend to be forgotten ...

Canadian Female: I think, on an individual level, not necessarily the promotion of it, just, in terms of being able to attend events it has been very open to local people. In Vancouver it wasn't [open]. It was very-very difficult, nearly impossible to get tickets! There was a draw and you put your name into the draw and you could get tickets and that was early on and the rest were sold off at insane prices! Whereas here, I know so many people who are going to the events and I think that really brings it home. [It] brings it more to the local people and I know a lot of people from around England, specifically who are coming to London. So, in that way, I think it is kind of uniting the nation.

British Female: I have got the opposite [impression] of that. No one I know has tickets, except me. And I've been talking to people who live pretty much on the boundary [of the Olympic city] … they don't have tickets [either] and are completely dissociated with [the events].

The 'accessibility' of London 2012 was thus expected to have different consequences for how the British nationalist discourse manifested. Participants – a group of experts with access to different Olympic events – may have perceived London 2012 'more accessible' than previous events. However, they expected the inherently exclusivist character of *any* Olympics event to be a source of detachment among the public.

Nationalist discourses were also considered in relation to the Olympic torch relay (rituals) and the performance of national athletes (bodies). However, the torch relay was only mentioned once and this was in opposition to the increasingly mainstream focus on London – to challenge mainstream approaches to London 2012. In comparison, a couple of references were made to the individual achievements of athletes, which seemed to have led to a sense of excitement among our participants, highlighting patriotic feelings and national prowess.

> *American Female, Group 2:* I think since 1996 – that was the Olympics that I got to see [in person] – and I just remember the patriotism that I did feel. It was Kerri Strug went up and [what] she did, I don't know. But I remember because she was *American* [and] she scored [high on] the gymnastics [leading to team] victory. And I'm not even a patriot, but I was just *absolutely*, oh that feeling will never go away! And that was very connected to patriotism and I guess, personal identity – just having been there, being American, being, you know, a young girl and watching this gymnastics team. So that was a very personal thing and narrative that will never go away.

Shortly after, in the same group, British participants separately referred to British Olympians from past and present including Jessica Ennis and the ski jumper 'Eddie the Eagle'. These names appeared to have further accumulated the sense of enthusiasm among them, especially in their consideration of compatriots' participation in the Games. Actually, their resulting sense of enthusiasm seemed to be the only one to endure subsequent challenges when the discussions turned to

negative or critical topics linked to the Olympic Games, including issues related to ticket prices and security.

Therefore, the focus group evidence illustrates well the fruitfulness of considering how nationalist discourses emerged in relation to the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983) of the host country of the Games. Following Wodak *et al.*'s (2009) criteria for the construction of national identity, there was evidence of a desire for some forms of intra-national homogeneity and allegiance. According to the evidence, these discourses were mainly stimulated by the transmission of emotions and the sporting achievement of athletes at both past and imminent Olympics competitions, thereby meeting another of Wodak *et al.*'s criteria. However, there was less discourse referring to foreign nations' otherness or difference. Furthermore, the evidence indicates that symbols and rituals were less important to promoting the nationalist discourse. Indeed, participants discussed these issues in relation to the cosmopolitan discourse of the Games. The next part of the article explores the cosmopolitan discourse in more detail.

Cosmopolitan discourses

It was more difficult to identify when participants talked about cosmopolitan (rather than nationalist) discourses. These discourses were brought up incidentally and, mostly, in opposition to other discourses, such as the 'positive sporting vibe' that can prevail during the Games. Each focus group recognised that the cosmopolitan discourse was "very strongly" embodied in official International Olympic Committee and mainstream media discourses on the Olympics and London 2012., However,

they criticised the failure of the organisers to produce a sense of genuine cosmopolitanism during the Games. On the few occasions where compliments were made to the Games, the tone of discussions was noticeably more enthusiastic. This was apparent, for example, when participants spoke of the successful link between cosmopolitanism and the Games: “I don't want to be cynical [because] it’s just, everything is so much fun! It’s so cultural!” (American Female, Group 2). The following dialogues and exchanges illustrate well the general sense of excitement with which these groups were “looking at the bigger picture” during London 2012.

> *Hungarian Female, Group 3:* [T]he Olympics is supposed to be about a global, everyone getting together! When I look at the symbol, it’s all about bringing five different continents together. It’s not about the different nations coming together. It’s looking at the bigger picture already.
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> *American Female:* I think that it does promote this kind of global unity and bringing people together in that it gives people a window to the world that they might not otherwise have. Someone in the States may not ever have [the opportunity] to travel overseas and see London or see Beijing or see Rio. So I think that, by being able to see the Olympics and being able to partake, [it] really increases your global perspective and, I think, makes you feel a bit more united, because it just raises your awareness. So I think in that regard, it does kind of achieve that goal of global unity and bringing people together and making it about something larger.

There was thus a strong sense among the groups that a cosmopolitan outlook

towards the rest of the world was desired (Skey, 2011, 2014), and could be promoted as part of the Olympic discourse.

The above exchange was, however, the only one in which positive emotional repetition, imitation and further development of participants' ideas about a global community sustained the cosmopolitan discourse of London 2012. As the discussions progressed, participants became more and more critical about whether Olympic and, more specifically, London 2012 discourses promoted cosmopolitan discourses. Although the majority asserted that these discourses were generally important for the Olympics, quite a few claimed that producing this type of "elevating conversation" was *only* possible when the event went well, "because there's less to get distracted by" and "you can talk it out with great story lines". In this context, the tendency to emphasise the positive aspects of the Games was perceived as a concern, "because there's not really an avenue or a venue to talk about the negative" impacts. Contrary to its original objective then, framing the Games in a "positive" light, seemed to challenge the cosmopolitan discourse, simply because it "hijacked" *other* perspectives. Against this backdrop, our participants expressed a growing sense of cynicism about the endurance of the cosmopolitan discourse through the Olympics. For example, in a sharp contrast to her discussions of a "global unity" – cited above –, the American participant in Group 3 also wanted to talk about the "unfortunate stories" of the Games.

> *American Female, Group 3*: I think that's what our research is focused on, [Olympic discourses are] always too positive and there is a lot to celebrate and it can be a good thing. But there are some unfortunate stories, but obviously [these stories] don't get the spotlight. You want people

> overcoming obstacles to compete in the Olympics and get these medals, but then [on] the other side, there are people in communities in East London that may be displaced or their jobs are affected. So there's absolutely a lack of a story of the negative economic effects versus always the positive effects. Everyone's always talking about how it's going to be so great … but there's also a real cost in terms of the effect on the people and the environment, which isn't talked about.
>
> *British-Chinese Female*: Yes, and I think that the general idea that you get from the media is that if you, in any way, emphasise those alternative narratives about the underlying reality of the Olympics, you're considered to be unpatriotic or you're just some miserable communist.

Even when participants accepted that Olympic and cosmopolitan discourses had an underlying association, they identified further challenges to the extent to which this association was likely to materialise. Firstly, most participants assumed that promoting cosmopolitan discourses through Olympic discourses was "a new thing". Two out of three groups had a debate about previous Olympic events, which took place during the Cold War and where cosmopolitan discourses were subordinated to world politics. "[I]f you think back to Moscow in [19]80 and the politicisation of the Olympics, that completely ruined competition" (British Male, Group 2). These comments appeared to underline the novelty of the link between Olympic competition and cosmopolitanism, rather than their deep-rootedness. Secondly, all groups debated whether the focus of London 2012 was really on the cosmopolitan discourse. Participants suggested that, instead, commercialism was in the limelight at this event. Accordingly, they spoke of IOC rules limiting the reproduction of the

Olympic brand and “the [Olympic] branding police”, which had to guarantee that there is an “official hologram” on all authorised products, from mascots to tickets and post cards, thereby restricting the potential for cosmopolitan symbols such as the Olympic Rings to be circulated and shared.[ix] In this context, the cosmopolitan discourse was often seen as supporting the attempts of official partners to realise commercial success.

> *American Female, Group 1*: I think companies are trying to kind of seize the opportunity of the Olympics, I think they tend to choose … the kind of global human story that kind of makes you feel happy about being a citizen of the world and [be] inspired … [since] the greatest people from all across the world [come here to] do the best of whatever sport.

Hence the transmission of emotions had a primarily challenging tone when it came to the cosmopolitan discourse of London 2012. This finding seems to match well the emerging literature on cosmopolitanism as a “fragile” discourse that is unlikely to weaken the strength of the nationalist discourse (Skey, 2011). It also corresponds with the literature on the link between contemporary sporting events and cosmopolitanism, and the overly positive framing of London 2012 more specifically (Bulley and Lisle, 2012; Skey, 2014). Actually, the majority of the later literature identified security concerns (Graham, 2012) and commercialism (Girginov, 2013) as prominent discourses at this event, challenging its cosmopolitan legacy. The supposed novelty of the cosmopolitan discourse of the Games might also account for its limitation – more recently epitomised in the lead-up to the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi. In this case, the IOC (2013) did not embrace broader debates about Russia’s human rights laws but set up a specific protest zone for demonstrators –

isolating debates about human rights from the actual sporting events in order to guarantee commercial success. Since similar issues can be expected to emerge in the upcoming events in both Rio (2016) and Pyeongchang (2018), the cosmopolitanism is likely to remain a challenging aspect of (official) Olympic discourses.

Contrary to the sceptical tone of these developments however, our participants categorised Olympic symbols, including the Olympic rings, as fruitful to promoting the cosmopolitan discourse. One group lamented the lack of traditional symbols at London 2012 but another's exchange (outlined in a previous quote) concerning 'bringing five different continents together' and 'global unity' best illustrated this point. Nonetheless, across all groups the most cited symbol of 2012 was the city of London. Observed as an "international city" or "global city" in which "the different cultural backgrounds … came across very strongly" (British Male, Group 1), the Olympics appeared to have made "London look like the best city in the world". Of course, the excited tone of discussions about London as "the best city in the world" was far removed from the previous criticisms about how it diverted attention from British national community. Indeed, the celebration of diversity and British history and culture in the opening ceremony presented the city of London as a symbol of a cosmopolitan nation. However, a review of the ceremony's reception amongst international press (Pope, 2014) found cosmopolitan aspects that had been championed in UK news media to be reported very little elsewhere. Hence, enthusiasm surrounding this example of cosmopolitanism – the cosmopolitan symbol of London – was not repeated and did not 'circulate'.

Furthermore, when attached to bodies, Groups 2 and 3 spoke of the transformative potential of cosmopolitan discourses, considering previous perceptions of the Paralympics as the 'Other' to the Games. Thus "Meet the Superhumans" in Channel 4's headline for the Paralympics was identified as "one of the most remarkable pieces" of London 2012 and Olympics discourses, and was detected to have turned "pretty much *every* stereotype on its head".

> *British Male, Group 2*: And the whole line "Meet the Superhumans" shows these athletes performing amazing things and could really change peoples' perceptions! [It presents] a whole opportunity to rebrand things: whether through the Paralympics attitudes to disability, whether it be cities, culture [and] our relations with the world at large.

This enthusiastic approval for radically enhancing engagement with an 'Other' seems to accord with one of Delanty's (2009, p.86) criteria for cosmopolitanism, advocating positive recognition of the 'Other'. The success of the Paralympics could contribute to British national pride too, but it certainly does not preclude a cosmopolitan approach according to Delanty's criteria. Similarly, where Delanty suggested cosmopolitanism displayed universal normative values, focus groups touched on the "global family of the Olympics", which supported human achievement (bodies), regardless of the origins of the athletes. Participants claimed that during the Olympics "people are much more open to following the prowess of any athlete, regardless of which country they come from … [Thus] someone in England would cheer on Usain Bolt. So something really extraordinary happens, as people want to become part of the global family of the Olympics*"* (British Male, Group 2). These examples indicate the transformative potential of London 2012 discourses, which

may have revised previous perceptions of the (Olympic and national) Other. Previously, national pride may have limited such enthusiasm for the prowess of foreign nationals, but here admiration for human athletic achievement was clearly evident. Nonetheless, it is important to note that discussions related to the symbols and bodies of cosmopolitan discourses were diffuse within and across the focus groups. For example, there was no rhythmic discussion of these issues in Group 3 and Group 1 did not discuss the excitement associated with supporting athletes in order to promote human achievement or become part of the "Olympic family". Hence, in the case of London 2012, the actual significance of symbols and bodies to which cosmopolitan discourses were attached are likely to have been limited, especially compared to the 'transmission of emotions' which appeared to have challenged these discourses.

Therefore, the focus group evidence suggests that the transmission of emotions was mainly used when our participants challenged the cosmopolitan discourse in relation to London 2012. This finding may seem predictable, especially if we accept that cosmopolitan discourses are more prone to be linked to 'cooler' emotions and, as such, accept the prevalence of challenging discourses than 'hotter' emotions would do. Nonetheless, the evidence also indicates that symbols (especially London as a global city) and bodies (the revision of the Olympic Other) appeared constructive towards promoting the cosmopolitan discourse of London 2012. Nonetheless, discussions of these issues showed a low rate of interaction. While Katz and Liebz (2007) suggested that contemporary society is too accustomed to interruptions for media events to promote unity, the focus group evidence illustrates that collective effervescence – however disjointed and sporadic – might emerge periodically,

supporting the more recent observation that cosmopolitanism is likely to be 'conditional' and 'fragile' (Skey, 2011, 2014).

Conclusion

This article set out to investigate how nationalist and cosmopolitan discourses operate through the transmission of emotions. Using original focus group evidence, it illustrated that nationalist discourses are more likely to accumulate in interactive settings and that emotions are more effectively transmitted through challenges to, rather than in support of, a discourse. For instance, enthusiasm for national unity and national community was evident in participants' comments on the development of future "dreams" regarding "Team GB" and when they told stories of watching compatriots succeed in past Olympics. Further emotions related to nationalist discourses appeared to develop when participants criticised the exclusive character of the Games. In the case of 2012, this seems to have been most apparent in the "London centric" reporting of the mainstream media. In respect of Wodak *et al.*'s (2009) criteria for the construction of national identity, enduring support for intra-national British uniformity was quite evident across all groups, followed by a number of references to a shared past, present and future. In comparison, the development of nationalist discourse through the transmission of outward-looking emotional references to a foreign 'Other' was less apparent.

The evidence indicates that cosmopolitan discourses operated through the transmission of emotions somewhat differently. Suggestions that the Games and London 2012 were cosmopolitan were usually met with scepticism. The resulting discussions were more diffuse and led to less apparent (if any) transmission of

emotions. Nonetheless, when participants' attention turned to bodies, rituals and symbols – through athletes, practice and Olympics insignia, their discussions had a more positive tone and sometimes even led to a sense of excitement for human achievement, going beyond their own national background. Thereby, paying more attention to these issues appeared to promote a form of cosmopolitan discourse within the groups. However, these discussions led to considerably less repetition and interaction than nationalist discourses had done so hitherto. Hence it seems Gerard Delanty's (2009) criteria for a new 'cosmopolitan imagination' that comprises a positive recognition of the Other and the possibility of one normative global culture were met inconsistently and largely through short and negative criticisms. Even more, the stuttered expressions of cosmopolitanism did not seem to allow for the accumulation or circulation of enthusiasm.

Therefore, the evidence illustrates how nationalist and cosmopolitan discourses operated through 'hotter' and 'cooler' emotions, respectively. Nationalist discourses were charged emotionally and were often sustained, providing a frame for a number of ideas, suggestions and criticisms. In contrast, we have concluded that cosmopolitan discourses were more diffuse and detached. What we are witnessing could be related to Ulrich Beck's (2006) thesis on 'methodological nationalism'. Methodological nationalism does not necessarily imply advocacy of nationalism, but it involves analysis that applies a rigid national frame and as such precludes cosmopolitan perspectives (Beck, 2006, p. 26). However, we did not observe positive recognition of the Other being dismissed or completely ignored – rather it was discussed, but with less emotional fluency, thereby providing an addendum to Beck and Delanty's work.

Interestingly, the transmission of emotions in both nationalist and cosmopolitan discourses operated through participants' *challenges* to practices, symbols or routines that are inherent features of the Games – whether in relation to how the media was likely to focus on a city (in this case London) instead of a host nation (in this case the UK) or how the somewhat forced emphasis on 'positive vibes' surrounding the Games hijacked more critical reflections about its exclusiveness, economic and social costs. This finding may shed a different light on why the transmission of emotions operated more through nationalist than cosmopolitan discourses. In particular, there is a strong indication that the transmission of emotions may operate better in those particular situations where people feel the requirement to express their opposition *collectively*.

We recognise that our findings are not generalisable due to the small number of focus groups and the particular background of our participants, as well as the likely influence the group environment might have had on their answers (Bryman, 2012). Nonetheless, our inferences warrant further empirical investigation. For example, communication strategies recognise that certain target groups, notably "decision makers", "opinion formers – including academics and the intelligentsia" and the "young", are of particular significance in influencing broader publics (UK FCO, 2012; Pamment, 2013, p. 75). The participants were not representative of the general public but did meet these criteria – they included government employees, media practitioners and international academics from post-graduate to professorial level (all but one were in the 18-40 age bracket). As such, their discursive constructions could be expected to influence the perceptions of the general public. Future studies could

then scrutinise the extent to which the discursive constructions, which were apparent among our 'decision-makers' actually influence the perceptions of the general public. This issue is especially important when we consider the other main finding of this article – the way in which the transmission of emotions operates through challenges to, rather than in support of, existing discourses. Whether this finding is the result of our participants' background or is applicable more broadly to the public requires further empirical examination.

The focus group evidence also highlights the benefits of further marrying the rich theoretical literature surrounding affect with empirical research of the sort presented in this article. Our finding that emotions related to cosmopolitanism were diffuse and sporadic could be informative for academic analyses elsewhere. We are interested in whether such dispositions are evident not only at the Olympics but at other sports mega events, or even other global events related to politics, diplomacy and international relations. For instance, it is worth exploring whether a critical and challenging mode could be employed to generate greater transmission of emotions related to cosmopolitan discourses. According to the evidence, these modes implied to participants that the Olympics promoted cosmopolitan discourses. Whether this holds true in other situations could also be investigated. The transmission of emotions is prone to be different when cosmopolitan values are explicitly challenged – for example, through sustained discrimination such as racism, sexism or homophobia. This is just one potential area for future research and we encourage other researchers to analyse empirical situations to work through the ambiguity of social imagination and their corresponding emotions.

[i] This inside-out approach stands in contrast to the growing body of thought that draws attention to the various ways in which emotions are shaped by communicative practices. See, for example, the essays in Jacobs and Micciche (2003). In a reversal of Wetherell's (2014, p. 138) statement that "[s]ome of the most productive routes for analysing affect lie in applying lessons learnt from discourse studies", we suggest that some of the most productive routes for analysing (nationalist and cosmopolitan) discourses lie in applying concepts from emotion theory.

[ii] Accordingly, we are neither interested in the discrete analysis of staged events, such as the torch relay and the opening ceremony, nor in a detached study of prefabricated texts, such as those produced by the British government and the international media. In both cases dialogue was lacking because of the one-directional way in which nationalist and cosmopolitan messages were imposed on the audience (Pope, 2014).

[iii] On this point, see also Ismer (2014, p. 138).

[iv] This hot/cool dichotomy is different from Billig's (1995) distinction between the 'hot nationalism' that flashes up in times of social disruption and the 'banal nationalism' of ordinary life. In fact, the Olympic Games can be seen as an example of both 'banal nationalism' (Billig, 1995) and 'banal cosmopolitanism' (Beck, 2002) whereby the word 'banal' refers to the routine nature of the event and is not a devaluing of any felt emotional intensity (Wetherell, 2014, pp. 139-140).

[v] See also Ismer (2011, p. 553), who has shown how the 2006 World Cup allowed for a new representation of Germany through reference to various emotional rituals related to the tournament, and von Scheve *et al.* (2014), who tested whether

emotional entrainment during the 2010 World Cup had an effect on the emotional significance of German national symbols after the tournament. In addition, Sullivan (2013, 2014a, 2014b) has demonstrated how sports mega-events can lead to manifestations of 'collective pride' or 'collective shame'.

[vi] Participants were informed about our intention to write the findings of the focus group research up into a manuscript and provided oral consent for us to use their contribution – as long as our report of the evidence was anonymised.

[vii] The discussions had a tendency to start off slowly and answers to the moderators' questions were often given in the same order in which participants were seated. Even the content of the discussions had a descriptive and complementary character at the early stages. It was thus necessary for moderators to ask follow-up questions and be more interactive with the groups. As participants established rapport with one another and began to probe each other's comments, the debates had an increasingly dynamic tone, requiring less involvement from the moderators. It was also at this point, where the content of debates shifted to more critical and insightful proposals, including, for example, doubts about the extent to which the London Olympics had a nation-wide mark. The focus groups were audio recorded and each moderator transcribed the recording of his or her group. Subsequently, the moderators developed initial profiles for their groups, citing key dynamics, discourses and, most importantly, transmission of emotions. In the final stages of the data analysis, the moderators worked together to reduce and thematically analyse the transcripts, comparing group profiles and identifying broader group dynamics.

[viii] The number after participants denotes different speakers, e.g. British Male (1). It was necessary to include such numbers, as some groups included participants with

the same national and gender background. Unless stated otherwise, continuous passages from participants come from the same group and depict the dynamic and flow of the discussions (e.g. on page 16).

[ix] In order to explore participants' perceptions of 'ritual symbols' (Durkheim, 1912 [1955]; Hargreaves, 2000, pp. 15 and 56) post cards and pictures of London 2012 mascots were given to them as prompts at this point.

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