

## **Waving the Flag: National Symbolism, Social Identity, and Political Engagement\***

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*This research examined the psychological underpinnings of concern for national symbols and ritualistic-ceremonial activities or “symbolic involvement.” We propose and test a distinction between symbolic and “instrumental” involvement or concern for the functionality of national institutions and their capability to provide instrumental benefits to citizens. Items comprising the two constructs were found to be empirically distinct, evidenced by statistically reliable and orthogonal dimensions in exploratory factor analysis. Moreover, evidence based on divergent patterns of relations with various forms of national membership indicates that symbolic and instrumental involvement are rooted in distinct motivational concerns related to identity expression and object appraisal, respectively. These findings suggest that national symbolism evokes a psychological attachment to the nation as an abstracted social entity, but not as a concrete functional system.*

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**KEY WORDS:** national symbolism, involvement, identity, political engagement

“The soldier who dies for his flag dies for his country, but as a matter of fact, in his own consciousness, it is the flag that has the first place.”

—Durkeim (1915/1957, p. 220)

“We reverence not our country but the flag. We may criticize ever so severely our country, but we are disrespectful to the flag at our peril.”

—Bourne (1917/1977, p. 362).

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The power of national symbols to rouse impassioned emotion and behavior has been noted by scholars from a variety of disciplines, including sociologists (Mills, 1961), anthropologists (Firth, 1989), political scientists (Lasswell, 1935), historians (Curti, 1946), and psychologists (Kelman, 1969). Many of these accounts, such as those of Durkheim and Bourne quoted above, suggest that individuals' ties to national symbols often supersede their ties to the group that the symbols represent. The crux of these assertions is that expressions of national sentiment are directed toward national symbols rather than to the nation itself and that such symbolism is infused with unique psychological meaning and political import.

There is wide recognition that national symbols are a potent source of political power and influence, capable of rallying support for state interests by evoking emotional expressions of national identification, allegiance, and self-sacrifice. For example, both the Gulf War of 1991 and the terrorist attacks of 9/11 generated an extensive flourish of state sponsored symbolism, including the addition of flag insignia to the uniforms of professional athletes and prominent displays of flags and yellow ribbons by government officials. National symbols and ritualistic-ceremonial activities are also used routinely by political candidates and parties to garner popular support, as seen by the flags, banners, and patriotic songs that adorn political advertisements, campaign appearances, and party conventions. Finally, national symbols such as the flag have often been used to express political protest and dissent. Repeated attempts by Congress to pass a constitutional amendment outlawing desecration of the United States flag, spurred by the 1989 Supreme Court decision in *Texas v. Johnson* ruling the act a constitutionally protected form of free speech, underscore the potency of national symbols.

Despite their political prominence, few previous studies have attempted to identify expressions of national membership grounded in national symbols and ritualistic-ceremonial activities (henceforth, "national symbolism"). Extant work suggests that concern for national symbolism is associated with manifestations of "blind patriotism" (see Schatz, Staub, & Lavine, 1999), including intense emotional identification with the nation, stalwart national allegiance, and rejection of national criticism, as well as with a cluster of right-wing attitudes such as support for conservative leaders and policies, militarism, and anti-internationalism (DeLamater, Katz, & Kelman, 1969; Kelman & Hamilton, 1989; Müller-Peters, 1998; Sullivan, Fried, & Dietz, 1992). For example, in a study of different conceptualizations of patriotism (Sullivan et al., 1992), "symbolic patriotism" predicted anticommunism, support for Oliver North and Iran-Contra, and support for defense spending. In related work on national role orientations (DeLamater et al., 1969), a "symbolic" role orientation predicted an aggressive stance toward national outgroups (Russia and Cuba), heightened importance of military strength and military leaders, opposition to the UN and the International Court, and support for conservative organizations (e.g., the John Birch Society). Further, Kelman and Hamilton's (1989) measure of "sentimental national attachment" predicted staunch and uncritical support for government policies, ideological conservatism,

and support for traditional morals. Finally, in a cross-national study of 16 European countries (Müller-Peters, 1998), support for national currency was positively related to national pride, feelings of national superiority, and opposition to the euro.

In addition to examining a relatively narrow range of criterion variables (predominantly related to conservatism), these studies were not designed to investigate national symbolism specifically; as a result, scale items that assess a concern for national symbols are included in larger multi-item scales intended to measure another construct, typically a staunch, emotionally based, and uncritical attachment to country. For example, Sullivan et al.'s (1992) measure of symbolic patriotism—which they define as “a strong, emotional view of country. . . . positive resonance toward traditional patriotic symbols. . . . and rejection of the idea that civil disobedience is patriotic” (p. 212)—contains five items, two of which concern national symbolism. Similarly, the majority of items used to measure both DeLamater et al.'s (1969) symbolic role orientation and Kelman and Hamilton's (1989) sentimental attachment—defined respectively as “. . . a strong emotional investment in the nation, and a positive affective orientation to its symbols” (p. 322) and “. . . unswerving loyalty to the country, pride in its power, and respect for national symbols . . .” (p. 286)—emphasize unconditional loyalty and a rejection of national criticism and dissent more so than attachment to national symbolism per se (e.g., the flag, the Star Spangled Banner). Thus, any effects stemming exclusively from a concern for national symbolism can not be adequately discerned from these studies. An exception is Müller-Peters' (1998) study; however, this study focused exclusively on national currency rather than national symbolism more generally.

Our goals in the present study are twofold. First, we develop a measure of *symbolic national involvement* comprised of items that assess exclusively the perceived importance of national symbols and ritualistic-ceremonial behaviors, without explicit or implicit reference to the strength or emotionality of national attachment, attitude toward national criticism, or any non-symbolic national attitude objects. Second, we attempt to understand the psychological underpinnings of attachment to national symbolism. To do this, we examine relationships between our measure of symbolic national involvement and measures of various expressions of national membership, none of which include items that make reference to national symbolism. Further, to help identify expressions of national membership *distinctive* to a concern for national symbolism, we contrast our measure of symbolic national involvement with a utilitarian concern for the functionality of the nation's social, political, and economic institutions, and the perceived capability of those institutions to provide instrumental benefits to citizens, which we refer to as instrumental involvement. We contend that the two types of national involvement constitute conceptually and empirically distinct (i.e., statistically orthogonal) ways of relating to the nation, that they serve different psychological functions, and that they are associated with divergent patterns of affective, cognitive, and behavioral consequences.

In the next section, we elucidate the motivational origins of attachment to national symbolism within the conceptual framework of social identity theory. We then contrast symbolic and instrumental forms of national involvement, arguing that the former is motivated by personal needs related to identity expression and self-esteem, whereas the latter is motivated by object appraisal and utilitarian considerations. Using an undergraduate sample and a national probability sample, we then demonstrate that the two types of involvement are differentially linked to a variety of criteria, including national identification and nationalism, political knowledge and participation, and group-enhancing perceptions of national attributes.

### **National Symbolism and Ingroup Identification**

We believe that national symbols and ritualistic-ceremonial activities arouse powerful, emotional expressions of national sentiment primarily because they uniquely accentuate citizens' identification as national members. According to social identity theory (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel, 1981, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and self-categorization theory (Turner, 1987), individuals derive a portion of their identity from awareness of their membership in important social groups. Central to these theories is the claim that group identification typically occurs within an intergroup context and that group members are motivated to view their group, the "ingroup," as distinct from and more positive than other relevant groups ("outgroups"). Consequently, positive ingroup identification often generates ingroup-biased attitudes and behavior, particularly when the intergroup context is highly salient (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

National symbols promote national identification in several ways. First, by signifying the group, such symbols render the individual's identity as a national member highly salient. Second, because a symbol is a tangible representation of the group, it provides the individual with a manifest object of identification. Group symbols thus direct the identification process and accentuate reflexive awareness of group identity. For large and arguably "imagined" communities (Anderson, 1991) like a nation where group members can not possibly have direct experience with more than a nominal fraction of the group, the ability of national symbols to objectify the group is essential to arousing group identification (see Allport, 1927). Third, if group symbols facilitate ingroup identification and magnify social identity motives, they should also augment group members' attempts to positively distinguish ingroup from outgroup(s) in an effort to enhance self-esteem. Finally, key symbols such as a flag represent the group as a whole or in the abstract, thus communicating "groupness" itself, the shared ingroup categorization per se. Consequently, they should be particularly capable of rousing group identification and demarcating ingroup from outgroup(s).

Symbols also represent the group across time. Whether implicitly (e.g., a flag) or explicitly (e.g., a memorial), national symbols crystallize the group's past into an historical entity that can be glorified, romanticized, and mythologized (Kammen, 1991; Smith, 1981). National symbols thus essentialize the group as a transcendent psychological entity, one that connects the individual to larger meaning and purpose, superceding the individual's personal existence and inevitable mortality, thereby reducing anxiety (see Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt, & Schimel, 2004; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991). This aspect of national symbols may explain why they often are endowed with near mystical significance and why their desecration arouses such anxiety and outrage (Cos & Schatz, 1999; Goldstein, 1995; Greenberg, Porteus, Simon, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1995).

Ritualistic-ceremonial activities such as parades, celebrations, and songs serve similar psychological functions as national symbols (see Merriam's, 1934, discussion of "miranda"). However, whereas symbols provide tangible objects to direct group identification, symbolic activities enable people to behaviorally *communicate* this identification. For example, by waving a flag or marching in a parade (or watching others do so), citizens actively (or vicariously) *express* their national membership. Thus, involvement in symbolic activities provides unique opportunities for national identity expression. Importantly, these activities typically occur in the presence of other national members, which should further heighten the salience of ingroup membership and thereby intensify commitment to the nation (Cialdini, 2001).

In sum, by signifying and communicating membership in an important ingroup, national symbols and ritualistic-ceremonial behaviors provide individuals with social identity and vehicles for identity expression. Moreover, by positively distinguishing ingroup from outgroups, attachment to national symbolism provides a mechanism to enhance positive evaluation of the self. Finally, by representing the nation across time, national symbolism provides individuals with larger meaning and purpose.

### **Symbolic versus Instrumental National Involvement**

There is a longstanding distinction in social psychology between symbolic and instrumental attachments toward mental and physical objects, beginning with functional theories about the motivational origins of attitudes (Katz, 1960; Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956) and extending to the bases of public opinion and voting behavior (Edelman, 1964; Sears, 1993), the value of personal possessions (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Prentice, 1987), and types of attitudinal involvement (Johnson & Eagly, 1989). Although the distinction is cast somewhat differently in each research tradition, in its most general form it pertains to whether an attitude object—in the present case, the nation—is evaluated and cherished because of its direct tangible benefits or because it is broadly related to

issues of identity and the self (see Herek, 1986). According to functional theories (see especially Herek, 1986), attitudes serve an instrumental function if they are based on the object's intrinsic rewards and punishments. By contrast, attitudes serve a symbolic function if they are held to express important values and aspects of identity or if they facilitate social relations or the management of intrapsychic conflict. In essence, attitudes and involvement are instrumental in nature if the object itself provides the primary source of benefit, whereas they are symbolic if the benefit lies in the attitude's expression (for a recent review of the functional approach, see Maio & Olson, 2000).

We believe that national symbolism evokes a form of involvement in the country that is exclusively symbolic in nature, rooted in motives of identity acquisition and expression, and self-esteem enhancement. To test this contention we examine symbolic national involvement (henceforth, "symbolic involvement"), defined as the perceived importance to the individual of the physical symbols that represent the nation (e.g., the flag, national monuments) and ritualistic-ceremonial activities (e.g., songs, parades) that express national membership, devotion, and allegiance. We contrast symbolic involvement with a more utilitarian form of national involvement referred to as "instrumental national involvement," defined as the perceived importance to the individual of the functioning of the nation's social, political, and economic systems, and concern for the nation's capability to provide instrumental benefits to its citizens (henceforth, "instrumental involvement"). Unlike symbolic involvement, which we argue is rooted in *intrapsychic* needs related to the self-concept, instrumental involvement is rooted in a *utilitarian* concern for the functionality of national institutions.

As we noted earlier, our conceptualization of symbolic involvement differs from previous work on national identity in that we assess individuals' concern for symbols and ceremonial-ritualistic activities exclusively. We derive our conception of instrumental involvement from previous work by Kelman and colleagues (DeLamater et al., 1969; Kelman, 1969; Kelman & Hamilton, 1989) on "instrumental national attachment" and "functional national role orientation," both of which refer to a relationship to country rooted in the perceived direct tangible benefits of national membership. The most notable difference between these constructs and our own is that the former focus primarily on instrumental benefits to the self; by contrast, our usage of instrumental involvement is *sociotropic* in that it focuses on concern that national institutions provide instrumental benefits for all group members (including the self).

Our goal in this research is to understand the nature of *symbolic involvement*, not to advance and explicate a novel typology between two types of national involvement. We include instrumental involvement merely to aid in the identification of characteristics distinctive to symbolic involvement, that is, to examine how concern for national symbolism differs from concern for the nation as a functional social-political system. Our rationale is that by examining the relation

between symbolic and instrumental involvement, and by observing divergent patterns of relations between the two types of involvement with identical sets of criterion variables, the cognitive and behavioral consequences—and underlying psychological motives—unique to symbolic involvement will emerge.

### Hypotheses

We use two strategies to determine whether symbolic and instrumental involvement are conceptually distinct and rooted in different motivational concerns. First, we determine whether items comprising each construct are empirically distinct, evidenced by independent and orthogonal dimensions in exploratory factor analysis. Second, we determine whether the two forms of involvement are associated with divergent patterns of affective, cognitive, and behavioral criteria indicative of their different underlying motivations.

In particular, we test the following hypotheses. First, if symbolic involvement is especially likely to invoke and accentuate ingroup identification, levels of national identification should be more strongly linked to symbolic than instrumental involvement. That is, concern for national symbolism should predict higher levels of social identification with the country than should concern for the functionality of national institutions. This hypothesis provides a direct test of whether social identification is more closely bound up with symbolic than instrumental involvement. Second, as national symbolism should both demarcate ingroup from outgroup and motivate national members to positively distinguish ingroup from outgroup, symbolic more than instrumental involvement should be related to a belief in national superiority and support for national dominance (i.e., nationalism; see Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989).

Third, if national symbolism conveys positive social identity, symbolically involved individuals should be highly motivated to protect and bolster the positivity of their ingroup identification. In contrast, as instrumentally involved individuals are concerned primarily with national *functionality* rather than national *identity*, they should be highly motivated to think dispassionately about the country's attributes. Put differently, symbolic involvement should instigate defense-oriented information processing goals (ensuring positive social identity), whereas instrumental involvement should promote accuracy goals (enhancing the ability to improve national functionality). Therefore, symbolic but not instrumental involvement should be associated with the tendency to evaluate national attributes in a positive manner. To test this prediction, participants judged the positivity of and degree to which preselected desirable, undesirable, and neutral attributes characterized the United States. We expected that symbolic but not instrumental involvement would predict a tendency to rate desirable attributes (e.g., freedom) as highly characteristic of the United States, and undesirable attributes (e.g., corruption) as highly uncharacteristic of the United States. Moreover, among individuals high in symbolic involvement, we predicted that neutral

characteristics (e.g., competition) would be seen as characteristic of the United States to the extent that they are judged as being positive. That is, as symbolic involvement increases, we expected greater consistency between the desirability ratings of the neutral attributes and the extent to which those attributes are perceived as characteristic of the country.<sup>1</sup>

Fourth, individuals who are concerned about the quality and functioning of national institutions should be motivated to acquire nation-relevant information and to make behavioral attempts to induce positive national change. Therefore, instrumental involvement should be strongly associated with levels of institutional (e.g., political, economic) knowledge, and with political participation. In contrast, if attachment to national symbolism is motivated by the need for positive social identity but is unrelated to more utilitarian concerns, symbolic involvement should bear little relation to measures of cognitive and behavioral political engagement. To test these hypotheses, we assess knowledge about various aspects of national functioning, as well as several forms of political participation, from voting in primary and general presidential elections to attending political rallies and donating money to political candidates and parties.

In sum, we hypothesize that concern for national symbolism (i.e., symbolic involvement) is distinct from concern for national functionality (i.e., instrumental involvement) and that the two types of involvement have distinct affective, cognitive, and behavioral consequences reflecting different motivational concerns. To acquire and express social identity and to enhance self-esteem, symbolic involvement should predict heightened national identification and belief in national superiority and should be associated with group-enhancing beliefs regarding the nation's attributes. In contrast, to satisfy the need for object appraisal, instrumental involvement should be associated with knowledge about and behavioral engagement in national institutions. Thus, depending upon the individual's underlying motives, the nation is either an object to be venerated and defended, or one to be objectively gauged, valued, and modified according to utilitarian considerations.

*Control variables.* Isolating the unique effects of symbolic and instrumental involvement required the inclusion of several control variables, including political ideology, right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1988), and the valence and strength of attitudes toward the country. First, based on recent theorizing about the intergroup nature of authoritarianism, we expected that RWA would be positively related to symbolic involvement, especially to the extent that RWA provides a mechanism for citizens to identify with ingroups (Duckitt, 1989). Second, national symbols such as the flag and ceremonial-ritualistic activities are likely to animate conservatives more than liberals (DeLamater et al., 1969; Sullivan et al., 1992). Third, we wished to distinguish *qualitative* differences in type of national involvement from *quantitative* differences in the positivity and

<sup>1</sup> We made this prediction for the neutral attributes only, as we suspected there would be little variability in the desirability ratings for the positive and negative attributes.

strength of attitudes toward the country (Petty & Krosnick, 1995). That is, we wanted to ensure that any differences in the effects of symbolic and instrumental involvement could not be attributed to concomitant differences in the positivity of attitudes toward the nation or the strength of those attitudes. Therefore, in the analyses presented below, we controlled for RWA, political ideology, the valence (i.e., negative-positive) and strength (i.e., weak-strong) of attitudes toward the country, as well as for citizenship status, race and sex. Any effects of symbolic or instrumental involvement are thus net the influence of these potential covariates.

## Method

### *Participants*

Data were collected from undergraduates ( $N = 195$ ) at a large public university in the western United States, who participated in the study in the spring and summer of 2002. The sample consisted of 106 women, 88 men, and one person who did not indicate his or her sex. One hundred thirty-nine (71.3%) identified themselves as white, 25 (12.8%) as Hispanic, 13 (6.7%) as African-American, eight (4.1%) as Asian, and eight (4.1%) as "Other." The mean age was 24.62; approximately one-third of the participants were older than 25 years. We replicated our analyses pertaining to nationalism, political knowledge, and political participation using the 1988 National Election Study (NES), a nationally representative sample of the political attitudes and behavior of the American electorate. The study consists of two waves, a pre-election wave conducted in the fall, and a post-election wave conducted in the weeks after the election (from November 8 to January 30). The sample size of the study is 2,040 for the pre-election wave and 1,775 for the post-election wave; both surveys were face-to-face interviews. As each of our analyses required the inclusion of some variables assessed only in the post-election wave, the potential sample size for our analyses is 1,775. All analyses were based on unweighted data.

### *Measures*

Participants in the main undergraduate study completed measures of symbolic and instrumental involvement, national identification, nationalism, political knowledge and participation, RWA (Altemeyer, 1988; four RWA items that make explicit reference to patriotism, country, or the national flag were excluded), political ideology,<sup>2</sup> and the valence and strength of attitudes toward the United States, and rated the extent to which pre-selected positive (e.g., freedom, equality),

<sup>2</sup> We used feeling thermometer ratings of ideological groups rather than the standard 7-point self-identification measure based on the finding that the former are much more strongly linked to political preferences (see Levitin & Miller, 1979).

negative (e.g., racism, corruption), and neutral attributes (e.g., competition, capitalism) were desirable and characteristic of the United States. A complete set of items for the undergraduate study, including internal consistency coefficients, appears in Appendix A.<sup>3</sup>

Both the undergraduate and NES studies contained separate measures of political knowledge: specifically, knowledge about the government (e.g., for the NES study: What job does William Renquist hold? Which party controls the Senate?), the ideological divide in American politics (e.g., for the NES study: Is George Bush liberal or conservative? Is the Democratic Party liberal or conservative?), and economics (e.g., for the NES study: Have unemployment and inflation gotten better/worse from 1980 to 1988? Has the budget deficit increased or decreased from 1980 to 1988?); the NES study also included items sufficient to construct a measure of partisan knowledge (i.e., relative location of the Democratic and Republican parties on policy issues). Both studies also included measures of self-reported turnout in presidential elections, along with other forms of political participation (e.g., writing or calling a member of Congress, attending a political rally). Most important, the NES study contained two items pertaining to two prominent national symbols—the flag and the national anthem (“When you see the American flag flying, does it make you feel extremely good, very good, . . . not good at all?” “When you hear the national anthem, does it make you feel extremely emotional, . . . or not very emotional?”). These two items were used to construct a measure of symbolic involvement.<sup>4</sup> Although there is no direct measure of instrumental involvement in the NES, we constructed a proxy based on the number of concerns respondents expressed regarding the elections in the House of Representatives. Specifically, respondents were asked, “In the campaign in this district for the U.S. House of Representatives, what would you say was the single most important issue to you?” Respondents were invited to list up to three concerns. We simply took the number of concerns (0, 1, 2, or 3) expressed by each respondent as a measure of instrumental involvement. Theoretically, respondents who list a greater number of issues should be more interested in the functioning of the nation’s social, political, and economic systems than those respondents who list fewer (or no) concerns.<sup>5</sup> The NES also contained a single nationalism item (“The U.S. should remain the world’s most powerful nation even if it means risking war”), four moral traditionalism items that we used to construct a measure of authoritarianism (e.g., “Newer lifestyles are contributing to moral breakdown”), as well as measures of political ideology, race, and sex. However, the NES study did not include items to assess the valence or strength of attitudes toward the nation. Thus, we relied on a partially different set of control variables, including interest in politics and attention to the media, education, and party identification.

<sup>3</sup> Measures of all variables can be viewed at: <http://ws.cc.stonybrook.edu/polsci/hlavine/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> We would have preferred if these items asked about the personal importance or concern for the symbols, rather than how “good” or “emotional” they make one feel.

<sup>5</sup> We are grateful to Wendy Rahn for suggesting this proxy measure of instrumental involvement.

For the analyses of political participation, we relied on a model developed by Rosenstone and Hansen (1993), which included a variety of variables pertaining to voter resources (income, education, whether the respondent is unemployed, age, internal and external efficacy), the evaluation of parties and candidates (strength of party identification, degree of affect for parties and candidates, degree to which the respondent cares which party wins the presidential election), social involvement (years living in the community, church attendance, homeownership, whether the respondent is currently employed), and other demographics (race, sex, living in a southern or "border" state, Mexican-American or Puerto Rican identity), and mobilization by parties and campaigns (whether the respondent was contacted by a party and whether the respondent perceives the election to be close). Taken together, these variables provide a rigorous set of controls for estimating the effects of symbolic and instrumental involvement on nationalism, political knowledge, and political participation in the NES study.

All variables in both studies were constructed by averaging the items, then recoding to a 0–1 scale to allow for a comparison of coefficient size. Variable numbers for the NES study, including internal consistency coefficients, appear in Appendix B.

*Symbolic involvement.* Thirteen symbolic involvement items were constructed that express the importance to the individual of national symbols and ritualistic-ceremonial activities (e.g., "It is important that the United States flag be folded neatly and carefully when it is taken down," "Singing the Star Spangled Banner is one of the most important expressions of a person's love for his or her country"). In constructing these items, we avoided explicit reference to direct evaluative (good-bad) judgments of the nation, to feelings of patriotism per se, to any nonsymbolic national attitude objects such as the government, or to any national systems. Rather, each item assessed the personal *importance* of, or *concern* for, national symbolism, reflecting the extent to which such symbolism is ego-involving or of personal importance (see Krosnick, 1988; Sherif & Cantril, 1947; Thomsen, Borgida, & Lavine, 1995).

*Instrumental involvement.* Thirteen instrumental involvement items were constructed to express the importance to the individual that national systems function effectively and provide instrumental benefits to citizens. These items focused predominantly on the U.S. political system (e.g., "One of the first concerns of an American should be to make sure that our political system functions effectively"), democratic institutions (e.g., "I am very interested in the health of this country's democratic institutions"), and the economy (e.g., "The impact of national economic policies on U.S. citizens is really *not* all that important to me"). We also included items about the health care system, job opportunities, and infrastructure, each of which is a traditional instrumental function over which a nation state is presumed to preside. In constructing the instrumental involvement items, we avoided explicit reference to direct evaluative (good-bad) judgments of the nation, to feelings of patriotism per se, to national symbolism, or to interest in learning about the nation

or being behaviorally active in national institutions. As with symbolic involvement, these items did not assess the valence of respondents' attitudes toward national systems or beliefs about how well national systems currently function. Instead, each item assessed the personal importance of or concern for national systems.

## Results

### *Factor Analyses*

The symbolic and instrumental involvement items from the undergraduate study were first submitted to an unconstrained factor analysis using maximum likelihood (ML) estimation. Although four factors with eigen values greater than 1.00 emerged (5.72, 3.67, 1.32, 1.16), a scree-plot clearly suggested a two-factor model. We then performed a constrained two-factor (ML) exploratory factor analysis with oblimin rotation (varimax rotation yielded virtually identical results). As shown in Table 1, with few exceptions, the symbolic items loaded on the first factor and the instrumental items loaded on the second factor. We imposed the following item retention criteria: (1) a loading of at least .3 on the specified factor, and (2) a difference in factor loadings across the symbolic and instrumental involvement factors of at least .2. According to these criteria, all but one of the symbolic and nine of the 13 instrumental involvement items were retained.<sup>6</sup> The correlation between the two (observed) involvement variables was a paltry  $r = .08$ , ( $p > .20$ ). These findings support the contention that the two types of national involvement are empirically distinguishable and largely orthogonal constructs.

### *Relations between National Involvement and Criterion Variables*

Given the interest of national members in positive ingroup differentiation and the ability of national symbolism to demarcate ingroup from outgroup, we expected symbolic involvement to be more strongly related to both the strength of national identification (e.g., "The fact that I am an American is an important part of my identity") and nationalism (e.g., "The U.S. should not dominate other countries" [reverse scored]) than instrumental involvement. The first two numeric columns of Table 2 display the OLS regression estimates for both analyses. The model includes the two involvement variables, along with controls for RWA, political ideology, the valence and strength of attitudes toward the United States, race (white is the excluded category), sex, and citizenship. As can be seen in the first row of the table, the effects of symbolic involvement on both dependent variables are statistically significant and substantively large in magnitude. For both strength of national identification and nationalism, scores ranged across

<sup>6</sup> The involvement measures used in the analyses below included only those items retained from the factor analysis.

**Table 1.** Exploratory Factor Analysis of Symbolic and Instrumental Involvement Items (Undergraduate Study)

Item	Factor Loadings	
	1	2
<b>Symbolic Involvement Items</b> (Items 1–13)		
1. It is important that the United States flag be folded neatly and carefully when it is taken down	(.74)	.03
2. It would upset me to see the United States flag touching the ground	(.66)	–.17
3. Honoring and protecting our national symbols like the U.S. flag should be one of the first concerns of American citizens	(.65)	–.08
4. Symbolic expressions of patriotism like saluting the flag or singing the Star Spangled banner are <i>not</i> that important to me	(–.89)	.14
5. Singing the Star Spangled Banner is one of the most important expressions of a person's love for their country.	(.63)	.00
6. I do <i>not</i> get particularly excited or emotional when I hear patriotic music	(–.78)	.18
7. Sometimes my mind wanders during the National Anthem	(–.66)	.21
8. One thing that the government should continue to spend taxpayer money on is the protection and renovation of our national monuments and memorials	(.43)	–.12
9. Taxpayer money used to build and renovate national monuments and memorials could be better spent on other things	(–.46)	–.04
10. Patriotic celebrations like the Fourth of July are <i>not</i> really that important to me	(–.70)	.14
11. I would be happy to see taxpayer money spent to build a new statue of George Washington	(.36)	.05
12. Sometimes, people get overly concerned about symbolic displays of patriotism like saying the Pledge of Allegiance	(–.58)	–.06
13. Mount Rushmore is really just a tourist trap	–.30	.18
<b>Instrumental Involvement Items</b> (Items 14–26)		
14. I care a great deal about the quality of our social and political systems	.02	(.78)
15. One of the first concerns of an American should be to make sure that our political system functions effectively	–.20	(.50)
16. Sometimes, people get overly concerned about the health of our democracy	.06	(–.45)
17. I am <i>not</i> particularly concerned with how well U.S. social and political systems meet the needs of its citizens.	.00	(–.65)
18. The impact of national economic policies on U.S. citizens is really <i>not</i> all that important to me.	.08	(–.53)
19. I am very interested in the health of this country's democratic institutions	–.08	(.58)
20. I care a great deal about the fairness and effectiveness of the U.S. judicial system	.01	(.52)
21. People get overly concerned about the state of the U.S. economy	.01	(–.52)
22. I am very concerned about the quality of life for the average U.S. citizen	–.05	(.34)
23. I think a lot about how well this country serves the needs of its citizens	–.13	.28
24. I am <i>not</i> particularly concerned about the quality of health	.11	–.23
25. It is important that the government ensure job opportunities for U.S. citizens care in the United States	–.14	–.06
26. Taxpayer money used to maintain and improve our country's infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, is well spent	–.10	.11

*Note.* Parentheses indicate retention of the item on the specified factor.

**Table 2.** Effects of Symbolic and Instrumental Involvement and Control Variables on National Identification and Nationalism (Undergraduate and NES Studies)

	<i>Undergraduate Study</i>		<i>NES Study</i>
	National Identification	Nationalism	Nationalism
Symbolic Involvement	.34*** (.10)	.30*** (.09)	.26*** (.04)
Instrumental Involvement	.13 (.08)	.06 (.07)	.04 (.04)
Ideology	.08 (.10)	.10 (.09)	.16*** (.05)
Authoritarianism	.03 (.09)	.12 (.08)	-.03** (.01)
Attitude toward U.S.	.30*** (.11)	.08 (.10)	-
Attitude Strength	.07 (.10)	-.05 (.10)	-
Sex (Female = 0; Male = 1)	.03 (.03)	.08** (.03)	.11*** (.02)
Citizenship (0 = citizen; 1 = foreign)	-.32*** (.08)	-.18* (.07)	-
Constant	.13 (.07)	.19** (.07)	.34*** (.06)
<i>N</i>	191	191	1,502
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.35	.26	.13

*Note.* Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

\* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ . Dummy-coded race variables are included in the model for both studies, but not shown (the effect was significant in the NES study (non-white = 0; white = 1,  $B = .05$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The effects of education ( $B = -.18$ ,  $p < .001$ ), interest in politics (*ns.*), party identification ( $B = .06$ ,  $p < .05$ ), income (*ns.*), and media exposure (*ns.*) are also included in the NES model but not shown.

approximately a third of the 0–1 scale as a function of movement from the minimum to maximum value on symbolic involvement. For strength of national identification, only attitudes toward the United States and citizenship exerted comparably sized effects, and for nationalism, no variable approached the magnitude of the symbolic involvement effect. Most importantly, the effect of instrumental involvement did not reach significance for either dependent variable. Moreover, for both equations, the regression coefficient for symbolic involvement was statistically larger than that for instrumental involvement (for strength of national identification:  $B_s = .34$  and  $.13$ ;  $t = 1.76$ ,  $p < .05$ , 1-tailed,<sup>7</sup> for nationalism:  $B_s = .30$  and  $.06$ ;  $t = 2.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ).<sup>8</sup> Finally, the rightmost column in Table 2

<sup>7</sup> One-tailed tests are appropriate throughout as we advanced directional hypotheses about the relative size of the symbolic and instrumental coefficients.

<sup>8</sup> Following Cohen and Cohen's (1983) recommendation, we tested the difference between unstandardized regression coefficients from the same equation using the formula  $t = B_i - B_j / SE_{B_i - B_j}$ , where the standard error of the difference (i.e., the denominator) is calculated as:

**Table 3.** Effects of Symbolic and Instrumental Involvement and Control Variables on Ratings of the Degree to Which Attributes Characterize the United States (Undergraduate Study)

	Attribute Type		
	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Symbolic Involvement	.18* (.08)	-.13 (.09)	-.22** (.08)
Instrumental Involvement	.03 (.06)	.04 (.07)	.08 (.07)
Ideology	-.06 (.08)	-.05 (.09)	.04 (.08)
RWA	.14* (.07)	-.10 (.09)	-.04 (.08)
Attitude toward U.S.	.40*** (.09)	-.32*** (.11)	-.02 (.10)
Attitude Strength	-.04 (.09)	.00 (.10)	.13 (.09)
Desirability of Neutral Attributes (DNA)	-	-	.11* (.06)
Symbolic Inv. × DNA			.78** (.30)
Instrumental Inv. × DNA			.06 (.26)
Constant	.14* (.07)	.96*** (.08)	.76** (.09)
<i>N</i>	191	191	191
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.31	.22	.19

*Note.* Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. \* = *p* < .05, \*\* = *p* < .01, \*\*\* = *p* < .001. Sex, citizenship, and dummy-coded race variables are included in the model but not shown (only the effect of sex on the positive attributes reached significance, *B* = .05, *p* < .05).

displays the estimates for nationalism from the NES study. As can be seen, these replicate nicely the effects of the undergraduate study (i.e., symbolic but not instrumental involvement heightens nationalism). Thus, it would appear that symbolic but not instrumental involvement is associated with both national identification and a belief in national dominance and superiority.

Further evidence for this conclusion is provided in Table 3, which displays the OLS estimates for judgments about the extent to which the United States possesses

$$SE_{B_i-B_j} = \sqrt{SE_{B_i}^2 + SE_{B_j}^2 - 2SE_{B_i}SE_{B_j}\left(\frac{r^{ij}}{r^{ii}r^{jj}}\right)},$$

where  $r^{ij}$ ,  $r^{ii}$ , and  $r^{jj}$  represent inverted elements of the correlation matrix that includes all of the independent variables in the model, and  $df = N - k - 1$ , where  $k$  = the number of predictors in the model (see formula A2.9, p. 480).

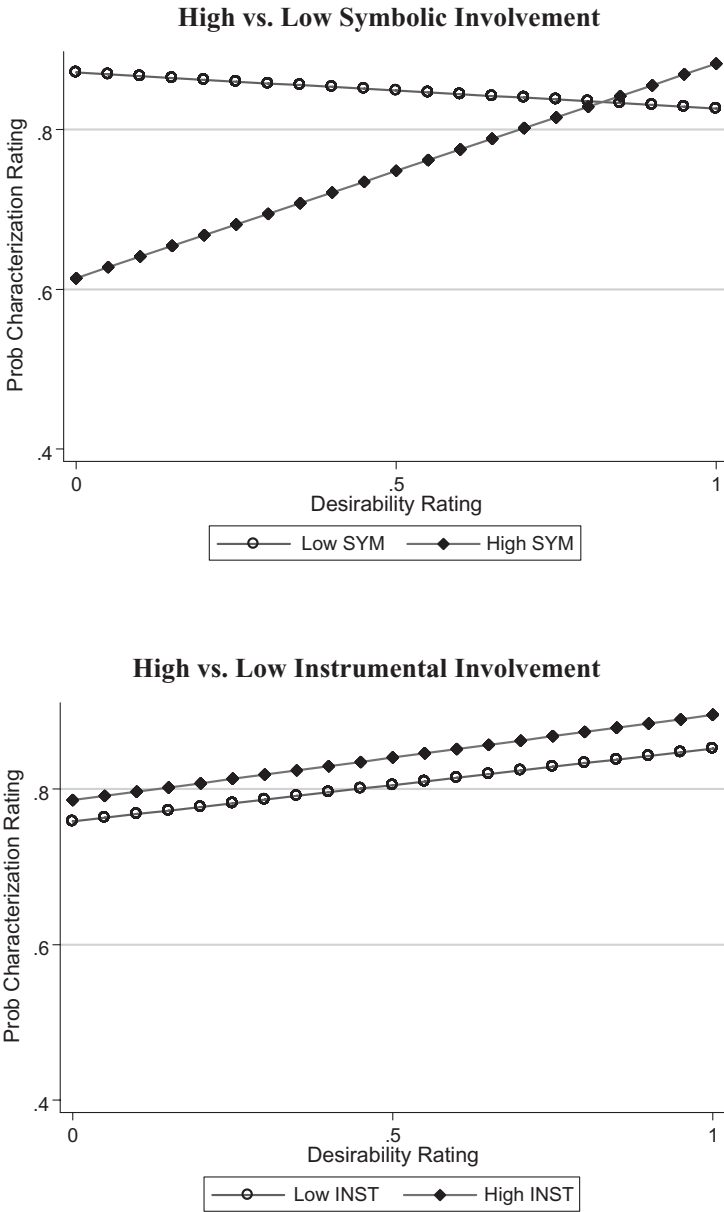
positive, negative, and neutral attributes.<sup>9</sup> As can be seen in the leftmost numeric column of Table 3, symbolic but not instrumental involvement is significantly associated with the belief that positive attributes characterize the nation. That is, as symbolic (but not instrumental) involvement increases, participants increasingly believe the United States to possess positive qualities such as freedom, equality, and democracy (the difference between the coefficients is marginally significant,  $B_s = .18$  and  $.03$ ;  $t = 1.45$ ,  $p < .10$ , 1-tailed). As can be seen in the second column, symbolic but not instrumental involvement is negatively associated with the belief that negative attributes characterize the nation, although the effect falls short of statistical significance. Nonetheless, the difference between the coefficients for symbolic and instrumental involvement is marginally significant ( $B_s = -.13$  and  $.04$ ;  $t = 1.40$ ,  $p < .10$ , 1-tailed), indicating that symbolic involvement is more *negatively* associated with belief that the United States possesses negative qualities than is instrumental involvement.

The coefficients for judgments of the neutral attributes are shown in the rightmost column of Table 3. As discussed earlier, we are interested here in whether symbolic but not instrumental involvement heightened the consistency between the desirability ratings of the neutral attributes and the extent to which the neutral attributes are perceived as characteristic of the country. We hypothesized that the two types of judgments would cohere—i.e., that the attributes would be seen as characteristic of the country to the extent that they were deemed positive—among participants high but not low in symbolic involvement, but that levels of instrumental involvement would not moderate judgment consistency. To test these hypotheses, three variables were added to the equation: judgments of the desirability of the neutral attributes and separate multiplicative terms of the desirability ratings with symbolic and instrumental involvement.<sup>10</sup> As can be seen in the table, the conditional effect of the desirability ratings of the neutral attributes (at mean levels of symbolic and instrumental involvement) is marginally significant, although not especially large in magnitude. However, the symbolic involvement  $\times$  desirability rating interaction term is significant, positively signed, and substantively large, indicating that, as expected, the effect of the desirability ratings on the characterization ratings varies significantly across levels of symbolic involvement.

The top panel of Figure 1 shows predicted attribute characterization ratings (based on the equation for neutral attributes in Table 3) as a function of attribute desirability ratings, separately at one standard deviation below and above the mean of the symbolic involvement distribution (holding the other variables at their means). As the figure makes clear, the desirability ratings have no effect on

<sup>9</sup> Presentation order for the desirability and characterization ratings was counterbalanced. Mean desirability scores (on the 1–7 scale) were 6.25 for the positive attributes, 4.51 for the neutral attributes, and 1.64 for the negative attributes (all pairwise  $ps < .001$ ).

<sup>10</sup> To ease interpretation of the interaction terms, and to reduce multicollinearity between first-order and interaction terms, the desirability ratings and involvement variables were centered about their means (Aiken & West, 1991).



**Figure 1.** The Impact of Desirability Ratings on Characterization Ratings For Neutral Attributes, By Symbolic or Instrumental Involvement.

characterization ratings when symbolic involvement is low. That is, among participants low in symbolic involvement, there is no consistency in beliefs about how positive the neutral attributes are and how strongly those attributes characterize the United States. This nonsignificant result ( $B = -.04$ ,  $p > .60$ ) is based on the conditional effect of the desirability ratings in the regression analysis when the symbolic involvement variable is recoded such that a score of 0 corresponds to 1 SD below the symbolic involvement mean (see Aiken & West, 1991; Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

By contrast, the desirability ratings are strongly predictive of the characterization ratings when symbolic involvement is high. Among these respondents, the neutral attributes are perceived as characteristic of the country to the extent that they are seen as positive. The conditional effect of the desirability ratings at 1 SD above the symbolic involvement mean is  $B = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ . Finally, as can be seen in Table 3, the desirability rating  $\times$  instrumental involvement interaction does not approach significance. The bottom panel in Figure 1 shows that the effect of the desirability ratings is highly similar across low and high levels ( $+/-1$  SD) of instrumental involvement.

In sum, Tables 2 and 3 (and Figure 1) indicate that symbolic but not instrumental involvement is linked to social identity, nationalism, and biased—or at least *motivated*—beliefs about the nation's attributes. We take these findings as evidence that symbolic involvement serves psychological needs related to the acquisition and expression of positive social identity. By contrast, instrumental involvement failed to predict any of these variables. We now examine whether symbolic involvement is limited to such “psychological” linkages or whether it extends to more concrete aspects of national life such as political knowledge and participation.

Table 4 presents OLS estimates for three types of knowledge about the country—governmental, ideological, economic—from the undergraduate study.<sup>11</sup> As the table shows, the effects of instrumental involvement are statistically significant and of substantive magnitude throughout. Participants professing a concern for the functionality of national systems are more knowledgeable about the workings of the government, the nature of the ideological divide in American politics, and basic aspects of the economy than those who attach less importance to national functionality. This isn't a terribly surprising result. Our purpose in demonstrating it is to highlight the distinctiveness of symbolic involvement, which utterly fails to heighten any of these three forms of knowledge about the country (the differences between the instrumental and symbolic involvement coefficients are all statistically significant,  $t_s > 2.47$ ,  $p_s < .05$ ). Table 5 displays the effects from the NES study for symbolic and instrumental involvement on each of four

<sup>11</sup> Each knowledge variable is distributed normally, thus we used OLS regression. In contrast, the “other political participation” count measures (see Tables 6 and 7) have a strong positive skew; we therefore used negative binomial regression in these instances.

**Table 4.** Effects of Symbolic and Instrumental Involvement and Control Variables on Political Knowledge (Undergraduate Study)

	<i>Knowledge Type</i>		
	Government	Ideological	Economic
Symbolic Involvement	-.14 (.10)	-.03 (.12)	-.11 (.12)
Instrumental Involvement	.23** (.07)	.42*** (.10)	.27** (.09)
Ideology	.28** (.10)	.11 (.12)	.00 (.12)
RWA	-.19* (.09)	-.31** (.11)	-.02 (.11)
Attitude toward U.S.	-.10 (.11)	.00 (.14)	.07 (.13)
Attitude Strength	.16 (.11)	.25* (.13)	.06 (.13)
Sex	.17*** (.03)	.07* (.035)	.08* (.04)
Citizenship	-.07 (.08)	-.21* (.10)	-.13 (.10)
Constant	.19* (.08)	.29** (.09)	.36*** (.09)
<i>N</i>	191	191	191
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.28	.30	.12

*Note.* Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

\* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ . Dummy-coded race variables are included in the model but not shown.

types of political knowledge. These estimates produce the same result as the undergraduate study: Those who are high in instrumental involvement possess more knowledge (save for economic) than those who are low in instrumental involvement. Moreover, those who attach a great deal of personal importance to national symbols and rituals are no more knowledgeable about diverse aspects of the country than those who evince little concern for such symbolism.

Table 6 presents logistic and negative binominal regression estimates for turnout in the 2000 presidential election and for other forms of political participation for the undergraduate study. These data amplify our argument that symbolic involvement serves purely psychological motives, as it fails to predict either form of political activity. The coefficients indicate that unlike instrumental involvement, which exerts a significant effect on both voter turnout and on other forms of political participation (see row 2 of Table 6), high levels of symbolic involvement heighten neither voter turnout nor other political behaviors such as attending a rally, writing to or calling an elected official, or signing a petition. For instrumental involvement, the predicted probability of turnout in the 2000 presidential election (derived from the logistic equation in Table 6) is .71 at 1 SD above the mean on the

**Table 5.** Effects of Symbolic and Instrumental Involvement and Control Variables on Political Knowledge (NES Study)

	<i>Knowledge Type</i>			
	Government	Ideological	Economic	Partisan
Symbolic Involvement	.00 (.02)	-.12** (.04)	.04 (.03)	-.10** (.03)
Instrumental Involvement	.07** (.02)	.18*** (.04)	.01 (.03)	.13*** (.03)
Interest in Politics	.12*** (.02)	.19*** (.03)	.01 (.03)	.19*** (.02)
Media Attention	.31*** (.03)	.32*** (.05)	.18*** (.05)	.27*** (.04)
Education	.23 (.02)	.26*** (.03)	.19*** (.03)	.24*** (.02)
Authoritarianism	-.11*** (.03)	-.04 (.01)	-.06 (.04)	-.03 (.01)
Party Identification	-.01 (.02)	.19*** (.03)	.20*** (.02)	-.01 (.02)
Ideology	-.01 (.03)	-.11* (.05)	.08* (.04)	-.05 (.04)
Income	.11*** (.02)	.15*** (.04)	.15*** (.03)	.06* (.03)
Race (white = 0; non-white = 1)	-.11*** (.02)	-.07** (.03)	-.10*** (.02)	.01 (.02)
Sex (female = 0, male = 1)	.12*** (.01)	.07*** (.02)	.13*** (.02)	.10*** (.01)
Constant	.16** (.03)	.18* (.05)	.16*** (.04)	.15*** (.04)
<i>N</i>	1,509	1,514	1,514	1,505
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.44	.33	.30	.32

*Note.* Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

\* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ .

instrumental involvement distribution (holding all other variables at their means), and falls to .44 at 1 SD below the mean, a substantial change of 27 percentage points. For symbolic involvement, in contrast, the change in turnout probability from 1 SD below to 1 SD above the mean is only .03, from .57 to .60.

Finally, Table 7 presents the corresponding logistic and negative binomial regression estimates for political participation for the NES study, which tell the same story: Concern for national symbols and rituals has no behavioral effect. For example, the predicted probability of turnout in the 1988 presidential primary elections is .36 at both 1 SD below and 1 SD above the symbolic involvement mean, and rises only from .76 to .79 from 1 SD below to 1 SD above the mean in the general election analysis (a nonsignificant change). By contrast, instrumental involvement significantly heightens turnout in both the primary and general elections (the coefficient for “other” political behavior is nearly significant). In sum,

**Table 6.** Effects of Symbolic and Instrumental Involvement and Control Variables on Political Participation (Undergraduate Study)

	Turnout in 2000 Presidential Election	Other Political Participation
Symbolic Involvement	.29 (1.25)	-.11 (.34)
Instrumental Involvement	2.57** (1.01)	1.05*** (.30)
Ideology	.99 (1.21)	-.21 (.35)
RWA	.87 (1.16)	-.70 (.33)
Attitude toward U.S.	.18 (1.33)	-.16 (.37)
Attitude Strength	.67 (1.24)	1.01** (.36)
Sex (Female = 0; Male = 1)	.16 (.37)	-.11** (.11)
Constant	-2.51** (.96)	.23 (.27)
<i>N</i>	149	191
<i>Percent Correct/Pseudo-R</i> <sup>2</sup>	65.8	.09

*Note.* Entries are logistic regression coefficients for the turnout analysis and negative binomial regression coefficients for the analysis of other political participation, with standard errors in parentheses. \* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ . Dummy-coded race variables are included in the model but not shown (Asians were less likely than whites to vote in the 2000 election and less likely to engage in other forms of political participation,  $B_s = -2.36$  and  $-1.02$ ,  $ps < .05$ ; no other race effects were significant for either DV).

Tables 4–7 suggest that whereas attachment to national symbols is strongly linked to identity- and esteem-related concerns, it is unrelated to more concrete forms of political engagement, including the acquisition of information about and participation in diverse aspects of national political life.<sup>12,13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> We also conducted analyses of the data in Tables 2–7 in which the dependent variables were regressed on symbolic and instrumental involvement separately. The results were virtually identical.

<sup>13</sup> We also replicated our results for nationalism, political knowledge, and political participation using the 1992 NES. The measure of instrumental involvement was identical to the measure used in the 1988 NES; however, in 1992, only one item—“When you see the American flag flying does it make you feel extremely good, very good, somewhat good, or not very good?”—was available to assess symbolic involvement. The results for nationalism, and for knowledge about the government and the ideological and partisan divides were highly similar to 1988 (we did not construct a measure of economic knowledge in 1992 as there were not sufficient variables to do so). Specifically, symbolic but not instrumental involvement predicted nationalism, and instrumental but not symbolic involvement predicted each of the three types of knowledge. However, instrumental involvement failed to predict (significantly) turnout in either the 1992 primary or general election, although it did predict other forms of political behavior (e.g., as attending a rally, writing to or calling an elected official). As in 1988, symbolic involvement did not predict any form of political participation.

**Table 7.** Effects of Symbolic and Instrumental Involvement and Control Variables on Political Participation (NES Study)

	Turnout in 1988 Presidential Primaries	Turnout in 1988 General Election	Other Political Participation
Symbolic Involvement	-.37 (.27)	.30 (.32)	.11 (.37)
Instrumental Involvement	.55* (.27)	.80* (.37)	.48 (.32)
Education	.64** (.25)	1.24*** (.29)	.40 (.30)
Strength of Party Identification	1.13*** (.21)	1.26*** (.25)	.42 (.29)
Age	1.66*** (.38)	1.53*** (.45)	.31 (.53)
Internal Efficacy	.67* (.33)	1.64*** (.42)	1.35*** (.45)
External Efficacy	-.17 (.23)	.59* (.28)	.18 (.32)
Years in Community	.34 (.19)	.44* (.22)	-.09 (.28)
Church Attendance	.67*** (.18)	1.60*** (.24)	.16 (.24)
Homeowner (no = 0; yes = 1)	.50*** (.15)	.46** (.18)	.00 (.21)
Contact with Party (no = 0; yes = 1)	.37** (.14)	.68** (.21)	.36* (.17)
Southern State	.37** (.14)	-1.03*** (.17)	-.03 (.20)
Border State	.56* (.27)	-.76* (.34)	-.04 (.37)
Income	.63* (.30)	1.33*** (.36)	.74 (.40)
Female	.24 (.14)	.32 (.17)	.03 (.18)
Black	.47* (.21)	.31 (.25)	.20 (.30)
Constant	-4.71*** (.45)	-5.36*** (.54)	-4.78*** (.54)
<i>N</i>	1,429	1,440	1,356
<i>Percent Correct/Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup></i>	61.6	70.8	.10

*Note.* Entries are logistic regression coefficients for the turnout analyses and negative binomial regression coefficients for the analysis of other political participation, with standard errors in parentheses. \* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ . The models also included caring which party wins the election, perceiving that the election will be close, unemployment status, total affect toward the candidates and parties, and Mexican-American /Puerto Rican identity.

## Conclusion

Early social scientific accounts of the origins and meaning of national sentiment often highlighted the importance of national symbols and ceremonial-ritualistic activities (e.g., Bourne, 1917/1977; Durkheim, 1915/1957; Lasswell, 1935). Among the most interesting claims in these accounts is that attachment to such symbols supersedes individuals' ties to the group that the symbols represent. Our aim in this research was to better understand the psychological significance of national symbolism. Specifically, we asked the following two questions: Is concern for national symbolism qualitatively distinct from utilitarian concern for the functionality of national institutions? If so, do the two forms of national involvement serve different underlying motivations? To answer these questions, we constructed new measures of symbolic and instrumental involvement, including a measure of the former that gauged concern for national symbols and ritualistic-ceremonial activities exclusively.

Our results provide rather clear affirmative answers to these two research questions. Exploratory factor analyses of the symbolic and instrumental items yielded two distinct and virtually orthogonal factors. Most importantly, the two forms of national involvement were associated with an entirely different set of affective, cognitive, and behavioral expressions of national membership. Symbolic but not instrumental involvement was linked to national identification and nationalism, indicating that symbolic involvement is distinguished by concerns for ingroup identification and positive intergroup differentiation. Further, symbolic involvement alone predicted a tendency to rate desirable attributes as characteristic of the United States and to rate neutral attributes as characteristic of the United States only if such attributes were viewed as desirable. We construe these judgments as serving to bolster and protect the positivity of the individual's identification with the nation. Although instrumental involvement did not predict variables related to group identification, none of the items in the instrumental involvement scale assessed a concern for national security. Surely, this is a primary instrumental function over which governments preside. Even though we controlled for political ideology and authoritarianism, it seems possible that an instrumental involvement scale that included items pertaining to the importance of national security would show a stronger connection to such criteria as nationalism and national identification. Future research on instrumental involvement should incorporate concerns about national security.

Given these powerful effects of symbolic involvement on identity-related aspects of national membership, it is striking that symbolic involvement utterly failed to instigate any form of concrete political engagement. Symbolic involvement was simply independent of individuals' knowledge about the country, and unrelated to participation in national political life. Thus, a personal concern for national symbols and rituals seems to have little to do with behavior intended to monitor or improve the functioning of the nation. It appears then that concern for

national symbolism invokes self-categorization (Turner, 1987) in “pure” form; in essence, it is identification with a psychological abstraction, one that is relatively devoid of concern about group functionality. At the very least, the present results strongly suggest that symbolic involvement does not guarantee involvement with the nation as a social-political system.

This is not to say, however, that symbolic involvement is bound to be unrelated to *all* forms of political engagement. At the intragroup level, symbolic involvement should predict activity designed to establish, maintain, or accentuate group unity, homogeneity, and cohesiveness. For example, in addition to overtly symbolic initiatives such as flag veneration and protection movements (see Goldstein, 1995), individuals high in symbolic involvement would be expected to actively support a common national language (see Schatz, Sullivan, Flanigan, & Black, 2002, for evidence linking symbolic involvement with support for the English-only movement in the United States). And, especially when intergroup concerns are salient, symbolic involvement should predict activity designed to establish, maintain, or accentuate national sovereignty, distinctiveness, and superiority. For example, those high in symbolic involvement would be expected to actively support efforts to defend the nation (e.g., by joining or supporting the armed forces). There may also be additional forms of political engagement that we failed to measure—e.g., visiting national historic sites, donating time or money to national causes like 9/11 or Katrina relief—that may lead to a different conclusion about the behavioral relevance of symbolic involvement.

The foregoing discussion suggests a number of testable hypotheses about the effects of situational factors on levels of symbolic involvement. First, symbolic involvement should rise as a function of the salience of prototypical features that define or unify the nation (e.g., national history, culture, language, or celebrated leaders). Second, it should rise as a function of the salience of the ingroup/outgroup context (e.g., the 9/11 attacks). Both of these processes are likely to be accentuated by increases in perceived national threat (see Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In contrast, instrumental involvement should be affected by these factors to the extent that they are perceived to impact the ability of the nation to provide instrumental benefits to its members, not because they increase the salience of group identity and distinctiveness *per se*.

As we noted at the outset, national symbols are a potent source of political power. Curiously, they have aroused little empirical research. The present study suggests that national symbolism evokes powerful expressions of national membership directed primarily toward a self-enhancing psychological ingroup for purposes of identity acquisition and expression, and self-esteem. But concern for such symbolism does not appear to motivate concrete forms of political engagement. Our results provide empirical support for the claim of Durkheim (1915/1957), Lasswell (1935), and others that the nation—at least for some people—is essentially a *psychological abstraction*: a transcendent, identity-constructing social category to be defended and revered.

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