

THE 2013 WORLD SERIES: A TROJAN HORSE FOR CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES

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As a longstanding follower of consciousness research, I continue to be disappointed that the exciting research generated in this field has penetrated so marginally into mainstream awareness. Of course most Americans do not keep abreast of the research literature or subscribe to *Explore* (if only!), so how would they know? Absent regular coverage by the corporate media of this paradigm-shifting work, this would require the occurrence of a major event, covered front and center by the mainstream media, that illustrated in a graphic and exciting way the key principles of this admittedly esoteric discipline—principles like nonlocal influence, heart coherence, distant intentionality, human electromagnetic fields, and paranormal abilities—all highlighted in such a way that novices to the field would be engaged rather than put off. Such an event, I believe, occurred in October 2013, in the unlikely form of baseball's World Series.

The rationale for this belief will become clear as we seek answers to several compelling questions: Why was New England in such a state of euphoria after the Red Sox's recent World Series victory? Why did 700,000 people line the streets of downtown Boston for a victory parade? What emotions could bring together victims of a terrorist bombing, professional athletes, first responders, and a legion of fans and non-fans alike? Here is my impressionistic (and admittedly biased) look at how this sporting event can be reconceptualized as a transformational moment for our culture, one that clearly embodied and illustrated many of the key principles of cutting-edge consciousness research.

Usually the happiness in celebrating a sports triumph comes from the pride of vanquishing an opponent, the narcissistic proof that you are better than your adversary—basically, a less primal version of "I'm alive, you're dead," played out at the level of ego. But for Boston in October, victory was more than that. The Saint Louis Cardinals were noble adversaries, worthy of respect rather than the disdain Bostonians used to muster when facing their traditional nemesis, the "Evil Empire" New York Yankees and their "Curse of the Bambino." I think this year's victory felt so good because it revolved around teamwork and shared excellence, group energies rather than individual egos, transcendence rather than pride.

In essence, the 2013 Red Sox enabled the team, and their fans, to feel part of something bigger than themselves.

More information on sports as a vehicle for social and personal transformation can be found at <http://www.sportsenergygroup.com>. All quotes are from "The Joy of Sox: Weird Science and the Power of Intention" unless otherwise noted. Go to <http://www.TheJoyOfSox-Movie.com> for information about this film, to download Leskowitz (2009) and Leskowitz (2011), and to order DVDs.
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According to one definition of a spiritual experience—moving beyond the ego to become part of a greater whole—this baseball season was in a very real sense a spiritual experience for thousands. Since the Higher Power at work this year took the form of a stronger-than-usual degree of group bonding and coherence, let us consider the various components of this phenomenon—which I will call group energetic resonance—to find out just how tangible the so-called "intangibles" in sports really are.

TEAM CHEMISTRY

The ingredients were all there from Day One: 25 quirky and loveable guys who bonded with each other from the start of Spring Training. They felt something special in February, even as outside observers were wondering how the team could ever recover from a dreadful 2012 season of discord and despair that ended with their worst record in 50 years. But an improved team chemistry was the express goal of their new General Manager during his offseason of personnel moves and team reconfiguration. Newcomer Jonny Gomes started the season sporting a longish beard, and his outgoing personality helped to spread this style throughout the locker room until full beards were worn by most of the lineup by the end of the season. The beards became the symbol of the players' mutual admiration and affection—according to a leading sports magazine, the players were engaged in "the hirsute of happiness."¹ Simply speaking, the players came to love one another, and we fans could not help but notice how that helped them bond and perform. Manager John Farrell even admitted that some World Series roster moves, like adding Gomes to the starting lineup, were made purely because of intangibles—his "energy" and "personality" were often mentioned—even though the statistics did not support the move. We clearly saw that numbers did not tell the whole story, in contrast to the arcane SABRmetric statistical programs so beloved of prior GM, Theo Epstein. Intangible forces like love really did matter.

FAN ENERGY

The home-field advantage (HFA) is acknowledged by sports experts to be an important factor in predicting who will win or lose any given contest. The statisticians with the most on the line—Las Vegas bookies—are experts in determining exactly how strong the HFA is for each sport and venue. And the HFA is built on more than just cheering crowds and a lack of jet lag. This key intangible, analogous to the benefits of eating locally grown foods, may be based on electromagnetic fields (EMFs) and heart rhythms. Psychophysiological studies show that the emotion of appreciation creates a coherent heart rhythm that enhances mind/body performance by putting you into the

Zone of peak performance.² And these positive emotions are contagious, as EMFs spread directly from one person to the next.³ Like vibrating tuning forks, supportive fans can actually entrain their team to enter into the Zone of peak performance by appreciating their own team rather than by booing the opponents (a step that requires a certain level of emotional maturity, to be sure).

Sox fans came to love these players as their beards, and winning streaks, grew longer during the six-month, 162-game regular season. The noise at Fenway was deafening during the playoffs, but it was an energy of appreciation rather than of gloating or mocking. Fenway fans became masters of appreciation, having built up an unprecedented love for the team, and especially its star player, David Ortiz. In a Public Broadcasting Service documentary on fan energy called “The Joy of Sox,”⁴ he acknowledged how important the fans’ love is to his performance, noting that opponents coming up to bat at Fenway “go out there solo, but I have all of this (fan energy) behind me.”

What’s more, the crowd can become even more coherent through the magic of music—the popular eighth inning “Sweet Caroline” sing-along has been shown to generate the highest fan coherence of any moment during one Red Sox game⁵ that was analyzed with a Random Number Generator (RNG) of the sort pioneered by the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research Lab.^{6,7} Indeed, as Neil Diamond’s song avers, “Good times never seemed so good, so good.” And this year, Fenway’s public address system added Bob Marley’s “Every little thing gonna be all right” for extra measure each time the ever-upbeat Shane Victorino batted. This was another musical stimulus that added to the collective field of coherence among the fans every day.

THE CHARISMATIC LEADER

David Ortiz was the face of the Red Sox, the only remaining member of the curse-breaking 2004 Championship team. He was so good at riding the wave of fan appreciation and coherent EMFs that he batted .688 during the Series (three times more than the Cardinals’ team average) and he had only four swing and misses out of the 274 pitches he faced. This level of performance was so far beyond what other World Series participants had previously accomplished that it surely qualifies as a “siddhi,” a paranormal psychic ability known only to yogic adepts. Esalen founder Michael Murphy,⁸ was describing sport’s potential to foster physical and spiritual transcendence when he said that “sport is the yoga of the West.” Ortiz’s teammates responded to his leadership, especially during an impromptu dugout session during Game 4 when he reminded his teammates to relax and simply appreciate the moment: “It was like 24 kindergartners looking up at their teacher. He got everyone’s attention and we looked him right in the eyes,” said Jonny Gomes. It was darshan with the guru, baseball’s version of Ram Dass’ mantra “Be here now.”

REGIONAL BONDING AND NATIONAL SUPPORT

Apart from the tribal identification that links fans to their teams around the world, the hidden secret to this team’s success might have been, paradoxically and tragically, April’s

shocking Marathon bombings. This event affected everyone in the region, sports fan and non-fan, when the city was shut down and residents were “sheltered in place,” left to helplessly watch the aftermath unfold on TV. By sharing the emotions of grief about the tragedy, fear and anger against a common enemy, and admiration for the courage and resilience of the first responders, health care teams and survivors, New England bonded resiliently after the April tragedy. Sports helped to heal our regional Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and many Sox players clearly stated that this healing work was part of their civic duty—that commitment was evident during the many post-Marathon events the Sox (and other pro sports teams) hosted and participated in, as they made hospital visits and charitable donations, and invited survivors and first responders into the dugout and onto the field to sing the pre-game National Anthem. This communal bond was permanently sealed during their victory parade when two players placed the team’s World Series trophy on the Marathon finish line, symbolically dedicating their win to Boston and to the memory of the bombing victims—“Boston Strong.”

The Red Sox became America’s team after the bombings, as cities and teams everywhere opened their heart to us, most touchingly when the Yankees played our own “Sweet Caroline” at Yankee Stadium in their first home game after the event. Much as the distant prayers of millions went out to the New Orleans Saints when they won the 2006 Super Bowl while still recovering from Hurricane Katrina, the Boston region and its teams were also recipients of this healing intention. And if the research on intercessory prayer is to be believed, then this was yet another intangible factor at work.

FORGIVENESS AND REDEMPTION

Can a broken heart ever find fulfillment and be able to love again? Can scoundrels atone for their misdeeds and be redeemed by the power of forgiveness? These are the eternal topics of country music, romantic poetry and world religion, yet they were also at the forefront of this year’s World Series. While most of the malcontents from last year’s team of egotists had been traded away before the season started, one prominent troublemaker remained. John Lackey had been at the center of 2011’s beer-and-fried-chicken-in-the-clubhouse scandal, and after an abysmal pitching performance that year, sat out 2012 recovering from shoulder surgery. How would he be treated when he returned to the team, and how would he handle being on the biggest stage in all of baseball? In a script that would have been rejected by Hollywood as too improbable, he proved to be the team’s most reliable starter all year and ended up pitching masterfully in the clinching game of the World Series. He left that game to a standing ovation, and when he tipped his cap to the crowd (the first time he’d done so all year), it was a moment of grace: the former scapegoat was accepting the fans’ forgiveness and love at the same time that he was forgiving them for their harsh treatment of him during his year of troubles. Only later did we learn of the marital and health issues that plagued him all year, so it was a massive healing on all sides.

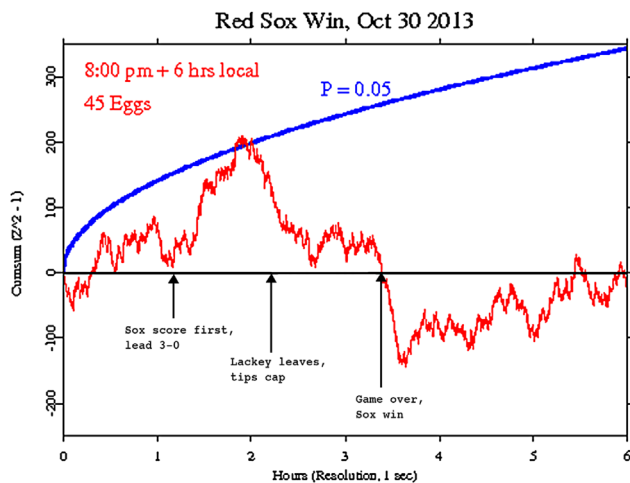


Figure 1. RNG analysis of World Series Game 6.

The Princeton RNGs may even have detected this moment of forgiveness. Figure 1 shows a rise in coherence that began with the dramatic bases-loaded double that put the Sox up 3-0 (first arrow), and which peaked at a level above the arc of statistical significance just before the Lackey moment (second arrow). To be fair, the Global Consciousness Project's director,⁹ cautions against over-analyzing specific RNG ebbs and flows, but this inflection point may have mirrored a shift in fan emotions, as the mood changed from uncertainty and anticipation about the game's outcome to assurance and satisfaction that victory was at hand. Or perhaps "the crowd was feeling the future."

METAPHYSICAL ASPECTS

Some interesting anecdotal tidbits hint at even more esoteric, if not occult, forces that may have been at work here. I informally consulted three psychics and one astrologer part way through the Series, and they were unanimous in thinking that the Sox would win. Their comments are interesting, whether taken metaphorically or literally. For example, one perceived a strong grid of intention among the players, and saw a "mock-up" or rough draft of the victory existing as a probable reality timeline, empowered to crystallize into physical manifestation by the groundswell of group energy generated by the fans and players.

Another said that David Ortiz's third eye (the mystic energy center that mediates the extrasensory skill of clairvoyance) was wide open. In effect, Ortiz had the huge advantage of being able to see what was going to happen even before it happened (i.e., the type of pitch and its location). Also, Ortiz had a very strong mental focus on his tan tien, the navel center that is the cornerstone of martial arts training because it governs physicality. As a result, he did not need to think in order to perform; it was automatic. Another psychic directly perceived a unified energy field that linked the Sox players among themselves, at the same time that it was embedded into the larger field of love energy that enveloped New England. That vortex was like a magnifying lens that focused

and brought down onto the physical level all of the high frequency energies that are now arising as part of Earth's entry into the New Age. Or so they said!

So what does it all mean? Sports participation (as a fan and as an athlete) feels so good because it can be a vehicle for higher awareness, for transcending the ego, for learning about selflessness and entering the Zone—not just a high performance state, but a state of non-dual spiritual awareness.¹⁰ Many professional athletes are turning to techniques of energy balancing and consciousness expansion to enhance their performance, even in the National Football League (NFL).¹¹ Similarly, fans can become more energetically savvy in their rooting techniques by being more heartfelt in their appreciation. Of course, not every sports fan is receptive yet to this new paradigm, as illustrated by one recent contentious foray into the world of sports radio talk shows,¹² but the tide of cultural transformation can turn even more rapidly by utilizing the insight and wisdom that flow from the Trojan Horse of competitive sports. The Beatles were surely correct when they said "All you need is love"—they just left out the bit about good pitching and clutch hitting.

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