

To appear in I. Nyklicek, A. J. J. M. Vingerhoets, & M Zeelenberg (Eds.)
Emotion Regulation: Conceptual and Clinical Issues. New-York: Springer

The Social Sharing of Emotions in Interpersonal and in Collective Situations:
Common Psychosocial Consequences.

Bernard Rimé

University of Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

Dario Paez

University of the Basque Country, Spain

Patrick Kanyangara

National University of Rwanda, Butare, Rwanda

and

University of Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium,

Vincent Yzerbyt

University of Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

Running head : Psychosocial consequences of sharing emotions

The Social Sharing of Emotions in Interpersonal and in Collective Situations:
Common Psychosocial Consequences.

Research on "the social sharing of emotion" documented the fact that following an emotional episode, the person who experienced it talks with others about this episode in 80 to 95% of the cases (for reviews, see Rimé, 2009; Rimé, Philippot, Mesquita, & Boca, 1992; Rimé, Finkenauer, Luminet, Zech, & Philippot, 1998). This propensity is not dependent on the subject's level of education. It was observed at comparable importance in countries as diverse as Asian, North American and European ones (Mesquita, 1993; Rimé, Yogo, & Pennebaker, 1996; Singh-Manoux, 1998; Singh-Manoux & Finkenauer, 2001; Yogo & Onoe, 1998). Episodes which involved fear, or anger, or sadness were shared as often as episodes of happiness or of love. However, emotional episodes involving shame and guilt were shared at a somewhat lesser degree (Finkenauer & Rimé, 1998). Laboratory studies confirmed that exposure to an emotion-eliciting condition provokes sharing (Luminet, Bouts, Delie, Manstead, & Rimé, 2000). Progressive extinction is the normal fate of social sharing. More intense episodes are shared more repetitively and for a longer period (Rimé, Finkenauer, Luminet, Zech, & Philippot, 1998).

The Cathartic View of Emotional Expression

A widespread belief holds that *merely talking* about an emotional experience would dissolve the emotional impact of this experience and would thus grant emotional recovery. Various studies examined how far the mere fact of sharing a given emotional experience had such an effect. The impact of the emotional experience was assessed using indices such as felt emotions when reaccessing the specific episode, or frequency of intrusive thoughts and mental rumination about this episode. Two types of research methods were involved: (1)

monitoring extent of sharing of specified emotional episodes, and (2) experimentally inducing social sharing specified emotional episodes.

In studies of the first type, the research design generally involved assessing (1) the initial intensity of emotions elicited by the episode, (2) the extent of sharing that developed after, and (3) the intensity of emotions elicited when the memory of the episode was activated later. It was tested whether a positive correlation occurred between the amount of social sharing after the emotional event and the degree of emotional recovery--or the difference between (1) and (3). Surprisingly, these studies failed to yield such a correlation and thus failed to support the prediction that sharing an emotion would reduce the emotional load (Rimé et al., 1998). In studies of the second type, experiments involving various types of sharing were conducted (Zech, 2000; Zech & Rimé, 2005). In some studies, psychology students interviewed relatives about a negative emotional event of their recent past. In other studies, participants extensively shared with an experimenter the most upsetting event of their life. In each of these studies, sharing conditions were created by instructing participants to emphasize either the factual aspects of the episode, or the feelings. Control conditions involved talking about a nonemotional topic. Consistently across studies and whatever the condition, sharing emotional experiences failed to alleviate the load of the emotional memory. Yet, in a paradoxical manner, compared to the controls, participants who shared their emotions reported that the experience was ultimately beneficial, both from a cognitive standpoint (e.g., it helped in putting order in themselves) and from a social standpoint (e.g., they experienced comforting behaviors from the part of the recipient).

To sum up, both correlative and experimental studies failed to support the belief that sharing an emotion brings emotional relief. Recent clinical research conducted on the effects of psychological debriefing techniques provided data in the same direction. Psychological debriefing is a very popular group technique implemented among exposed individuals

immediately after catastrophes with the purpose (PTSD) (see Dyregrov, 1997; Mitchell & Everly, 1995, for overviews). Participants describe in detail their experience. The technique clearly involves "putting emotions into words" and its purpose is to prevent post-traumatic stress disorder. It is thus perfectly suited to test how far talking about an emotional experience is conducive to emotional recovery. Meta-analytic reviews of controlled trials consistently concluded that debriefings have no efficacy in reducing trauma-related symptoms (Arendt & Elklit, 2001; Rose & Bisson, 1998; Van Emmerik, Kamphuis, Hulsbosch, & Emmelkamp, 2002). Adverse effects were even found in some studies. Nevertheless, victims or professionals who had been exposed to a traumatic situation generally reported that taking part in a psychological debriefing was useful and beneficial to them. Thus, in line with the findings of social sharing studies, debriefing participants failed to manifest a significant alleviation of the emotional impact that the eliciting event had, but they generally reported feelings of relief or other benefits that they attributed to the debriefing situation.

What Sharing Emotions Brings and What Sharing Emotions Does not Bring

There are thus consistent observations according to which the social sharing of an emotion fails to bring a sizeable emotional recovery for the shared emotional experience. We proposed that a sharing situation fails to bring this effect because the cognitive ingredients requested to achieve emotional recovery are generally absent from sharing interactions (Rimé, 2009). Early after an emotion--which is precisely when most sharing takes place--people do not engage yet in the cognitive processing of their recent emotional experience. They generally refuse to abandon their frustrated goals (Klinger, 1975; Martin & Tesser, 1989). They do not consider modifying their hierarchy of motives. They stick to their existing schemas. They do not want to change their representations. They stand by their initial appraisal of the emotional situation. They do not feel ready to reframe it nor to change their perspective. Yet, completion of these various cognitive needs is critical to emotional

recovery. Thus, except when they intentionally target the cognitive processing of the emotional experience (Nils & Rimé, 2009), social sharing situations are not bound to open upon emotional recovery. Writing methods, in which participants write about traumas of their distant past (e. g., Pennebaker, 1997) are probably much more likely to stimulate a cognitive processing of these experiences and thus to favor such a recovery.

What are the benefits people find in sharing emotion? The investigation of listeners' responses in social sharing situations suggested that an interesting interpersonal dynamic develops in such situations (Christophe & Rimé, 1997). First, when they rated the intensity of their primary emotions while listening, sharing listeners manifested a remarkable salience of the emotion of interest. This finding is consistent with observations showing that emotional materials fascinate human beings (Rimé, Delfosse, & Corsini, 2005). Second, a positive linear relation occurred between the emotional intensity of the episode heard and the intensity of the listeners' emotion. Thus, listening to an emotional story is emotion eliciting. Third, responses displayed by sharing listeners varied dramatically as a function of the intensity of the shared episode. For low intensity episodes, listeners' responses mostly consisted of verbal manifestations. Conversely, the higher the intensity of the episode heard was, the more listeners displayed nonverbal behaviors (e.g., touching, hugging, kissing...). In sum, at increasing levels of emotional intensity, sharing interactions became decreasingly verbal and increasingly nonverbal.

The interpersonal dynamic which develops in the sharing of emotions can thus be sketched as follows. A Person A who experienced an emotion feels the need to share this experience and shares it effectively with a person B. The latter manifests a strong interest for the narrative. This stimulates sharing and Person A consequently expresses emotions more and more. The enhanced expression arouses emotions in person B. A reciprocal stimulation of emotion develops in this manner in the dyad which leads to enhanced empathy and to

emotional communion. The empathetic feelings experienced by person B stimulate a willingness to help and support person A. If the emotional intensity of the episode shared is high, person B is likely to reduce his or her verbal communication and to switch to a nonverbal mode, with body contact or touching. In sum, emotion sharing has the potential to bring the sender and the receiver closer to one another. Both empirical and theoretical arguments support such a view. Studies of self-disclosure interactions led to views exactly in the same direction (e.g., Reis & Patrick, 1996). Laurenceau et al. (1998) concluded from their studies that self-disclosure of emotion emerged as a more important predictor of intimacy than did self-disclosure of facts and information. A meta-analytic review of 94 studies about self-disclosure and liking led Collins & Miller (1994) to consider that (a) people who engage in intimate disclosures tend to be liked more than people who disclose at lower levels and (b) people like others as a result of having disclosed to them. The developmental background of the human species supports this sharing-intimacy model. The infants' capacity to regulate one's emotion originated in the context of attachment-- a resource that infants activate when under stress (Bowlby, 1969). Thus, in stressful situations, attachment figures provided the child with presence, appeasement, contact, comfort, support, and meaning. It may then not come as a surprise that when later in life, individuals confront an emotional experience, their typical response is to turn to the social milieu in order to find among intimates ingredients such as appeasement, contact, comfort, support, and meaning.

Thus social sharing interactions favor manifestations of empathy, emotional fusion, feelings of unity, prosocial behavior, social recognition and validation, consolidation of social ties, and social integration. In this manner, such interactions meet the ingredients requested to buffer the temporary destabilization of the person-- insecurity, anxiety and helplessness-- which any negative emotional experience generally entails. This sheds a light on the question of the marked subjective benefits people report after having shared an emotion. They reflect

the improvement in subjective well-being which results from the alleviation of the insecurity, anxiety and helplessness elicited by the negative emotional episode.

Collective Consequences of Dyadic Sharing

Psychosocial consequences of sharing of an emotional experience extend far beyond the social integration of the initial interactants. As the social sharing of emotion arouses emotion in the target and as emotion elicits social sharing, targets of social sharing then incline to share what they heard with third persons. In other words, a process of *secondary social sharing* develops. This was first documented by Christophe and Rimé (1997) and then abundantly replicated and extended by Curci and Bellelli (2004). The latter authors' data led to conclude that some three-quarters of episodes personally confided to someone were then shared by the latter with new targets. Psychosocial consequences of sharing an emotion extend even further. As targets of secondary sharing also experience emotion, they incline to tertiary sharing. Episodes heard in a secondary sharing were shared again with several new listeners for one third of participants and with one new listener for another third (Rimé & Christophe, 1997). Emotional episodes thus open upon a process of spreading of emotional information across social networks. When an intense emotional event affects a given individual, innumerable members of this person's community are informed of it within the next hours by virtue of this sharing propagation. That such a process actually develops in real life was nicely confirmed in a field study wherein 33 college students visited a hospital morgue (Harber & Cohen, 2005). Students' emotional reactions to this experience predicted how many people they told (primary sharing), how many people their friends told (secondary sharing), and how many people their friends' friends told (tertiary sharing). Within 10 days, nearly 900 people had heard about the morgue visit through the cascade of social sharing.

To sum up, through the spreading of emotional information, most people in a community will know what happened to one of them. This propagation of emotional

information has many implications. It means that emotion elicits intragroup communication. It means that members of a community keep track of the emotional experiences affecting their peers. It means that every emotional episode of some importance happening in their community open upon a sharing process likely to strengthen members' social ties. It also means that in a group, the shared social knowledge about emotional events and emotional reactions is continuously updated as a function of new individual experiences.

Effects of Reviving Emotions in Collective Rituals

Human beings also share emotions in collective contexts. Collective emotional events such as a victory, a defeat, a loss, or a disaster, indeed elicit collective rituals under the form of celebrations or commemorations. As was the case for interpersonal sharing situations, it is commonly considered that collective rituals involving emotional reexposure have the power to "liquidate" the emotional impact. Paralleling what we did earlier, we will now examine the validity of this cathartic explanation of collective rituals.

A prototypical case emotional expression in a collective context is found in truth and reconciliation (T & R) commissions. Such commissions were developed in countries where major violations of human rights happened—e.g., Northern Ireland, South Africa, Israël-Palestine, Guatemala, Argentine, Chile, Bosnia, Serbia-Kosovo, Haiti, East Timor, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, and El Salvador. In T & R commissions, victims express publicly facts from which they or their relatives suffered. Similarly, perpetrators are expected to express publicly facts as they occurred. Experience with T & R revealed that participation to such tribunals may end up in a re-traumatization of victims (Bronéus, 2008; Byrne, 2004; Kaminer et al., 2001). These conclusions are thus at odd with a cathartic view of social rituals, and are perfectly consistent with the findings from social sharing studies. Yet, at the same time, positive effects have also been mentioned among outcomes of T & R. Survivors reported pride, relief, and a feeling of completion from public expression of their sufferings in a

solemn setting. Thus, in the collective context too, sharing an emotional experience failed to reduce the emotional upset, but participants who did so manifested important cognitive and social benefits. A theory proposed a century ago by a founding father of sociology can make sense from these contrasted findings (Paez, Rimé, & Basabe, 2005).

Emile Durkheim (1912) argued in favor of the socially functional nature of shared activities of recall of emotional events, especially when they regard events which affected the social group or community. Though primarily focussed on religious cults, his analysis addressed as well any collective manifestations gathering members of a given society in a ceremony proper to recreate the moral community to which they belong. Collective events such as commemorations, celebrations, feasts, demonstrations, all fit such a definition. They generally involve the presence of the group's symbols (flags, emblems...) and collective expressions (singing, yelling, telling words or sentences, shared movements, music and dance) which aptly awaken the latent social dimension of every human being. Particularly central to Durkheim's view was that in such a context, individuals' consciousnesses echo one another. Any expression of emotions among participants vividly elicits analogous feelings in people around them so that a reciprocal stimulation of emotion follows. Such a circular process is particularly propitious to install a collective state of emotional communion in which participants' salience of their self is lowered and their collective identity is enhanced. They thus end up experiencing unity and similarity. This is how, according to Durkheim, social rituals have the capacity to boost participants' feelings of group belonging and of social integration. By the same token, shared beliefs and collective representations are set at the foreground, thus consolidating participants' faith in their cultural beliefs and confidence in collective action. As a consequence, participants will be able to return to their individual life endowed with feelings of self-confidence, strength, and enhanced trust in life.

Durkheim's model of the psychosocial consequences of expressing emotions in a collective context parallels our model of the effects of emotional expression in dyadic situations. In both models, social integration of participants is achieved via a process of emotional reactivation, emotional contagion, and emotional communion. Despite the fact that it is now about a century old, no study to date tested Durkheim's reasoning. And yet, it involves a number of quite testable predictions. The model first leads to expect that taking part in a ritual would end up in reactivating emotional upset among all participants. A second set of consequences resulting from participation into collective rituals regards social variables. After participation in a ritual, participants' perceived societal cohesion and feelings of group belonging should be enhanced. Third, those individuals who participated in a ritual should manifest enhanced positive affects, openness to experience, self-esteem, self-confidence, and trust. Hereafter, we will studies we conducted with the purpose to assess aspects of these predictions.

Collective Rituals and Assimilation of Terrorist Acts

Paez, Basabe, Ubbillos and Gonzalez-Castro (2007) examined effects of participating in political demonstrations and protests held in reaction to the March 11, 2004 train bombings in Madrid, Spain. On that day, bomb attacks on several commuter trains had a death toll of nearly 200 people. These events triggered scenes of protest and socio-political turmoil in the country. Some 25% of the Spanish population participated in repeated massive protest demonstrations. College students (63% of sample) and their relatives (37%) (N=661) from five Spanish regions and eight universities completed questionnaires respectively one week, three weeks and eight weeks after the bombing. One week after the events, respondents first rated their extent of participation in demonstrations of the previous days. They then completed scales assessing negative emotional arousal and emotional climate. Three weeks after the events, they rated scales assessing Subjective Social Support, Loneliness,

posttraumatic growth and positive affects. Finally, eight weeks after the events, they rated again all the previous psychological scales. Twenty-two percent of the respondents reported not participating in demonstrations, 11% reported attending sometimes, 14.8% a lot of times, and 52.5% replied that they attended all demonstrations. Participants were dichotomized into non demonstrators (score 1 “not at all participating in demonstrations”), and demonstrators (scores 2, 3 and 4). Mean comparisons were carried out in order to test if differences in outcomes discriminated these two groups.

The findings supported the positive interpersonal and social effects of taking part in demonstrations. Participation in demonstrations was associated with (1) enhanced perception of social integration (perceived social support and positive affect) three weeks later, (2) enhanced beliefs regarding positive life changes in response to trauma, and (3) enhanced perception of a positive emotional climate (perceived hope, solidarity and trust) two months later. Results also evidenced direct effects of communal coping on posttraumatic growth and social support. Taking part in demonstrations was associated with a higher social support and a lower loneliness in later weeks, thus suggesting that it reinforced people's social resources. In addition, participating in demonstrations enhanced the belief that there can be both personal and social benefits from dealing with the trauma (posttraumatic growth), thus suggesting that it broadened cognitive resources. A structural equation analysis confirmed that the latter effect was the primary mediator of the perception of a positive emotional climate. These results fit well within a social functionalist framework of understanding participation in ceremonies and rituals. In the aftermath of a collective trauma, demonstrations reinforced feelings of collective solidarity as was proposed by Durkheim.

We reasoned that sharing emotions after a collective trauma would fulfil exactly the same function as participation in ceremonies and rituals. Social sharing would be functional because it contributes to the enhancement of interpersonal integration and social cohesion and

to the strengthening of positive shared beliefs about society. These processes would compensate the increase in negative affect elicited by the traumatic event and maintained by the reactivation involved in social sharing. In order to test these propositions, Rimé, Paez, Martinez & Basabe (2009) investigated effects of the social sharing of emotions on psychosocial responses of Spanish respondents to the terrorist attacks of March 11, 2004. The predictions were twofold. On the one hand, we hypothesized that repeated verbal emotional expression about Madrid's events sustained the intensity of the events-related emotional arousal and mental rumination. On the other hand, we expected more extended verbal emotional expression about these events to be associated with (1) enhanced social integration (i.e. e., lower perceived loneliness and higher perceived social support), (2) higher positive affect, (3) higher positive view of life changes or benefits from the trauma, particularly posttraumatic growth of the collective type, (4) higher similarity with others, higher social cohesion and more positive perception of emotional climate, and (4) better knowledge of the collective traumatic event.

Data were collected from a large sample of respondents first one week after Madrid's events, then 3 weeks after the events, and finally 8 weeks after the events. These events had a very high emotional impact on participants. As we expected (Rimé et al., 1998), their initial emotional responses measured one week after these events involved overabundant mental rumination and social sharing of emotions. An analysis of correlations between measures of social sharing and of emotional impact of March 11th events made immediately apparent that sharing emotions was associated with a higher initial emotional impact and was also predictive of a higher emotional impact at later measurement times, as predicted by our first side hypothesis. Moreover, concurrent correlations indicated that people who were still sharing emotions two months after the events were also higher on variables reflecting the emotional impact these events still had. These observations are in line with previous studies

showing that sharing emotions has reactivating effects with regard to the shared emotional experience (Rimé et al., 1998) and that it fails to yield positive effects for emotional recovery. All in all thus, the findings totally contradicted the cathartic or discharge view of emotional expression. They were fully consistent with views that *merely* sharing an emotion yields emotional arousal and emotional reactivation (Rimé et al., 1998; Zech & Rimé, 2005) and that sharing an emotion cannot lead to emotional resolution unless it involves a *systematic cognitive processing* of the shared emotional experience (Rimé, 2009).

Paradoxically, however, as was predicted by the second side of Durkheim's model, socially sharing emotions in the first week after March 11 events was also found associated with a good number of markers of social integration and well-being assessed in later weeks. Thus, the initial sharing of emotions was related with (1) enhanced perception of social support, reduced feelings of loneliness and enhanced positive affect at 3 and 8 weeks, (2) enhanced perception of positive changes in reaction to trauma (i.e., posttraumatic growth) and (3) enhanced perception of contentment, hope, solidarity and confidence in the emotional climate. Multivariate analysis by means of structural equation modelling showed that social sharing effects at time 1 on post-traumatic growth were indirect and mediated by social sharing at time 2 and by emotional arousal or intensity at time 2. Positive effect of social sharing at time 2 on positive emotional climate were mediated by post-traumatic growth. Thus, direct and indirect effects of social sharing on positive outcomes were observed. These results support theoretical views according to which the social sharing of emotions fulfils important functions to the enhancement of social cohesion and to the reconstruction of positive beliefs about the group (Rimé et al., 1998; Rimé, 2009). They also fit findings from experimental studies showing that even though sharing emotions was not conducive to emotional recovery, participants in sharing sessions reported a good number of positive benefits from such sessions (Zech & Rimé, 2005).

The above results thus supported the predictions from Durkheim's model. On the one hand, initial social sharing of emotions was found predictive of enhanced emotional arousal and the perception of a negative emotional climate. On the other hand, the same indicator of initial sharing of emotion also predicted effects in the other direction, with enhanced social integration, positive affect, and posttraumatic growth.

Collective Rituals and Assimilation of a Genocide

We wondered whether collective rituals instigated at a socio-political level could affect in a significant manner emotions and the emotional climate installed in a population as a result of past conflicts, violations of human rights, or massacres. In Rwanda, it is estimated that some 1.000.000 Tutsis were killed in a genocide occurred between April and July 1994. Some 130,000 persons were then accused of participation in the genocide. To deal with this past, a traditional community-based conflict resolution system called *Gacaca* was adapted as a Rwandan version of T & R commissions. We examined whether the Gacaca tribunals exerted an impact on emotions, emotional climate and social variables. Based upon Durkheim's (1912) theory, it was predicted that participation to the Gacaca would involve a reactivation of negative emotions in both groups and would also impact negatively on perceived emotional climate. However, positive consequences were expected for social integration. We thus predicted that participation would impact upon intergroup perception under the form of a reduction of (1) the prejudicial reactions of survivors and prisoners toward each other and (2) the perceived homogeneity of outgroup members. In a first study, fifty survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and 50 prisoners accused of being responsible of genocidal acts completed four scales 45 days before and 45 days after their participation to a Gacaca trial (Kanyangara, Rimé, Philippot, & Yzerbyt, 2007). The scales assessed (1) negative emotions presently felt with regard to the genocide, (2) perceived emotional climate,

(3) negative stereotypes of the outgroup, and (4) perceived similarity among outgroup members.

As regarded individual emotions, it was found that negative emotions (sadness, fear, disgust, anxiety, and shame) were significantly enhanced after participation to the Gacaca, especially among survivors. Regarding emotional climate, given the reactivation of the negative memories of extreme inter-groups conflicts entailed by the Gacaca, we predicted that negative emotion would prevail. This was indeed the case. Emotional climate worsened after the Gacaca and the decline was more marked among the survivors than among the prisoners. Thus, all the variables indexing negative emotion reflected the emotional reactivation effects predicted by Durkheim's model. As for social variables, before Gacaca, survivors were more stereotyped against prisoners than the other way round. However, in line with the predicted effects of enhanced social integration, the negative stereotype toward the other group markedly decreased after the Gacaca, both among survivors and among prisoners. This effect was particularly pronounced for the stereotypes held by survivors toward the prisoners. As regarded outgroup homogeneity, research on stereotyping and intergroup relations has demonstrated that one signature of intergroup prejudice is to consider members of the outgroup as being similar to each other (Yzerbyt, Judd & Corneille, 2004). Building on Durkheim's insights, our hypothesis was that outgroup similarity should decrease after the Gacaca. This is indeed what our results revealed, both in the survivors and the prisoners samples. Results for both indices of social cohesion were thus totally in line with Durkheim's hypothesis. The emotionally intense social ritual of Gacaca increased social cohesion at least in two ways: by lessening the negative stereotypes attributed to the outgroup and by reducing the perceived similarity attached to outgroup members.

To sum up, the results of this first study suggested that Durkheim's theory of social rituals can integrate positive and negative consequences of T & R situations in a reconciling

theoretical framework. However, a major weakness of our first study was the absence of control groups of participants not yet exposed to Gacaca. This limitation did not allow to ascertain that the effects observed in the before and after comparisons were attributable to participation to Gacaca. Therefore, we conducted a new study including such controls, both for victims and for prisoners as well as much larger number of participants (Rimé, Kanyangara, Paez, & Yzerbyt, 2009). The data were collected between February and April 2006 in four of the five Rwandan Provinces. Victims and perpetrators belonged either to the experimental or to the control conditions. In contrast to experimental participants, control participants came from a neighborhood where no Gacaca trial had yet taken place and where no such trial was being planned within the next year. Also, control participants had not taken part in any other Gacaca trial outside of their neighborhood. Both experimental and control participants responded twice, once before and once after the Gacaca trial that took place for the experimental participants. The two sets of ratings were collected within a period of 10 weeks. In total, 755 persons took part in the study. The experimental group comprised 384 participants of whom 200 were victims and 184 were perpetrators. The control group involved 371 participants of whom 195 were victims and 176 were perpetrators.

The collected results again fully supported Durkheim's view that participation in a ritual entails a reactivation of negative emotions. Whereas victims in the control condition did not evidence changes, victims who participated in the Gacaca subsequently manifested an increase of virtually all the assessed negative emotions. Specifically, marked significant increases were observed for anger, for disgust, for fear, for anxiety, and for sadness. At the same time, however, participation in the Gacaca led to an important decrease in self-reported shame among victims. This suggests that social rituals contribute to restore the victims' dignity. As for perpetrators, the pattern of results for negative emotions closely resembled the one observed on victims. Consistent with the prediction, perpetrators who participated in

Gacaca manifested an increase of the negative emotions of fear, sadness, and anxiety. Also, participation in Gacaca ended up in augmenting shame among perpetrators. Their profile was thus opposite to the profile of the victims in one important respect. In sum, participation in a transitional justice ritual such as Gacaca clearly has a marked affective cost both for victims and for perpetrators. Such findings are consistent with the frequent clinical observations according to which participation in a truth and reconciliation procedure involves a risk of retraumatization (Daley, 1997; Hamber, 2001, 2006; Hayner, 2001). They fully support Durkheim's (1912) view that the emotional reactivation resulting from participants' reciprocal stimulation are at the core of social rituals.

Psychosocial effects were indexed by means of four dependent variables: (1) ingroup identification, (2) positive stereotypes about the outgroup, (3) negative stereotypes about the outgroup, and (4) perceived outgroup homogeneity. In line with the model derived from Durkheim (1912), we expected that each of these variables would reveal that participation in Gacaca improved social cohesion. The data supported this prediction in three out of the four tests. First, whereas ingroup identification decreased among both victims and perpetrators after the trial, their respective control groups showed a trend in the opposite direction. The only participants who reported being moderately attached to their group were the victims in the control group. This suggests that rituals involving collective emotional expressions and the recognition of collective past misdeeds contributed to weaken Hutu and Tutsi's "ethnic" identification and to construct an integrative superordinate identity. Second, an important ingredient of intergroup reconciliation is a change in stereotypes. The pattern obtained for positive stereotypes was remarkable in that both victims and perpetrators in the experimental groups started off being less positive but ended up being more positive than those in the control groups. This suggests that, at least as far as stereotypic representations of the other group are concerned, the Gacaca process had a beneficial impact on the parties involved.

Negative stereotypes decreased considerably after the Gacaca but this effect was not found in the experimental groups alone. The general decrease in negative stereotypes may partly result from the fact that the norms toward reconciliation gained in popularity in the country as time passed by. Third, we found a considerable decrement in the perceived homogeneity of the outgroup after participation to Gacaca, both among victims and prisoners in the experimental groups. In contrast, we observed no such change for victims and perpetrators in the control groups. Thus, in line with Durkheim's insights, these results provide yet another piece of evidence in support of the social integrative impact of participation in these social rituals. A perception of the outgroup as being homogeneous denies individual and personal characteristics to outgroup members and reduces them to a mere instantiation of their category, thus sustaining prejudice and hostile social relations.

In sum, the various results recorded for our psychosocial variables strongly support the view that participation in the Gacaca ritual enhances the social cohesion of groups which, in the past, were opposed to each other in the most dramatic way.

The Validity of Durkheim's Model of Social Rituals

We can now formulate conclusions about the theoretical model upon which the described studies relied. Durkheim's (1912) model of the effects of participation into a collective ritual predicts two consequences. On the one hand, rituals are expected to trigger strong reactivation of the emotions associated with the commemorated event. On the other, rituals are predicted to contribute to the reconstruction of participants' collective identity by boosting group cohesion and participants' feelings of social integration.

With respect to emotional reactivation, our findings fully supported the prediction of the model. Both victims and perpetrators who participated in the Gacaca manifested a considerable increase in their negative emotions in the period which followed participation and their perception of the emotional climate in the society was more negative after compared

to before their participation. These findings are in perfect agreement with both the clinical observations (Daley, 1997; Hamber, 2001; Hayner, 2001) and the rare pieces of empirical evidence concerning the consequences of truth and reconciliation situations (Brounéus, 2008; Byrne, 2004; Kaminer et al., 2001). The unanimous view thus runs against a "cathartic" or discharge perspective of the expression of emotion in social context. This conclusion is consistent with the findings emerging from the research on the emotional expression between individuals (Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999; Rimé, 2009). At the same time, the reactivation of negative emotions resulting from Gacaca involved a series of constructive consequences. The findings supported the positive psychosocial effects anticipated by Durkheim (1912). Participation into Gacaca enhanced participants' ingroup identification, increased their positive view of the other group, and favored a more individualized perception of members of the outgroup. We interpret these effects as reflecting the improvement of social cohesion which was predicted by Durkheim. To conclude, a clear understanding of a procedure such as the Gacaca requires taking into account not only the various emotions experienced before and after participation, but also the emotional climate as well as a series of psychosocial variables.

General conclusion: Sharing Emotions in Interpersonal and in Collective Situations

It could be argued for long whether the social sharing of emotion represents a person to person version of collective rituals or whether collective rituals constitute a collective version of the interpersonal sharing of emotion. Our preliminary data testing hypotheses according to which social sharing of emotion and collective rituals encompass essentially the same psychosocial ingredients seemed promising. Both processes result from a similar compulsion to share emotional experiences with one's peers. Neither social sharing nor collective rituals have the capacity to terminate the related emotional experience and to bring emotional recovery. Both processes necessarily induce the reactivation of the emotional

episode upon which they focus and in the case of negative emotions at least, this will inevitably elicit a temporary rise of negative emotions. When shared with others, however, the temporary reactivation of emotions is instrumental in eliciting emotional contagion and emotional fusion among those who are involved, whether they are an intimate social sharing partner, or members of a large crowd. Theory and facts converged in showing that the empathic process thus elicited is instrumental in bringing interactants closer together. The resulting social integration has a good number of emotional, social and cognitive consequences, for the group as well as for involved individuals. These consequences seem well appropriate to buffer the destabilizing effects that emotional events, whether private or collective, have for those who experience them. It can be concluded that after emotional expression in a social context, *agony is relieved but not put to rest* (Daley, 1997). In this framework, social processes are thus evidencing their most fundamental function: rendering individual life possible.

References

- Arendt, M., & Elklit, A. (2001). Effectiveness of psychological debriefing. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, *104*, 423-437.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss. Vol. 1: Attachment*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Brounéus, K. (2008). Truth-Telling as Talking Cure? Insecurity and retraumatization in the Rwandan Gacaca courts. *Security Dialogue*, *39*, 55-76.
- Byrne, C. C. (2004). Benefit or burden: Victims' reflections on TRC participation. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, *10*, 237-256.
- Christophe, V. & Rimé, B. (1997). Exposure to the social sharing of emotion: Emotional impact, listener responses and the secondary social sharing. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *27*, 37-54.

Collins, N. L., & Miller, L. C. (1994). Self-Disclosure and liking: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, *116*, 457-475.

Curci, A., & Bellelli, G. (2004). Cognitive and social consequences of exposure to emotional narratives: Two studies on secondary social sharing of emotions. *Cognition and Emotion*, *18*, 881-900 .

Daley, S. (1997, July 17). In apartheid inquiry, agony is relieved but not put to rest. *New York Times*, p. A1.

Durkheim, E. (1912). *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse [The Elementary Forms of Religious Life]*. Paris: Alcan.

Dyregrov, A. (1997). The process in psychological debriefings. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, *10*, 589-605.

Finkenauer, C. & Rimé, B. (1998). Socially shared emotional experiences vs. emotional experiences kept secret: Differential characteristics and consequences. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *17*, 295-318.

Hamber, B. (2001). Does the truth heal: a psychological perspective on the political strategies for dealing with the legacy of political violence. In N. Biggar (Ed.), *Burying the past: making peace and doing justice after civil conflict* (pp. 131-148). Washington: Georgetown University Press.

Hamber, B. (2006). *'Nunca mass' and the politics of person: Can truth telling prevent the recurrence of violence?* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Harber, K. D. & Cohen, D. J. (2005). The emotional broadcaster theory of social sharing. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *24*, 382-400.

Hayner, P. B. (2001). *Unspeakable truths: Confronting state terror and atrocity*. New York and London: Routledge.

Kaminer, D., Stein, D. J., Mbanga, I., & Zungu-Dirwayi, N. (2001). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa: relation to psychiatric status and forgiveness among survivors of human rights abuses. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, *178*, 373-377.

Kanyangara, P., Rimé, B., Philippot, P. & Yzerbyt, V. (2007). Collective Rituals, Intergroup Perception and Emotional Climate: Participation in “Gacaca” Tribunals and Assimilation of the Rwandan Genocide. *Journal of Social Issues*, *63*, 387-403.

Kennedy-Moore, E. & Watson, J. C. (1999). *Expressing emotion: Myths, realities, and therapeutic strategies*. New York: Guilford Press.

Klinger, E. (1975). Consequences of commitment to and disengagement from incentives. *Psychological Review*, *82*, 1-25.

Laurenceau, J. P., Feldman-Barrett, L., & Pietromonaco, P. R. (1998). Intimacy as an interpersonal process: The importance of self-disclosure, partner disclosure, and perceived partner responsiveness in interpersonal exchanges. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *74*, 1238-1251.

Luminet, O., Bouts, P., Delie, F., Manstead, A. S. R., & Rimé, B. (2000). Social sharing of emotion following exposure to a negatively valenced situation. *Cognition and Emotion*, *14*, 661-688.

Martin, L. L., & Tesser A., (1989). Toward a motivational and structural theory of ruminative thought. In J. S. Uleman & J. A. Bargh (Eds.), *Unintended Thought* (pp. 306-326). New York: Guilford.

Mesquita, B. (1993). *Cultural variations in emotion: A comparative study of Dutch, Surinamese and Turkish people in the Netherlands*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Mitchell, J. T., & Everly, G. S. (1995). Critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) and the prevention of work-related traumatic stress among high risk occupational groups. In G. S. Everly & J. M. Lating (Eds.), *Psychotraumatology. Key papers and core concepts in post-traumatic stress* (pp. 267-280). New York: Plenum Press.

Nils, F., & Rimé, B. (2009). *Social sharing of emotion, listeners' responses and emotion regulation*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Paez, D., Basabe, N., Ubillos, S., and Gonzalez-Castro, J. L. (2007). Social sharing, participation in demonstrations, emotional climate, and coping with collective violence after the March 11th Madrid bombings. *Journal of Social Issues, 63*, 323-338.

Paez, D., Rimé, B., & Basabe, N. (2005). Un modelo socio-cultural de los rituales: efectos y procesos psico-sociales de la participación en manifestaciones después del atentado del 11 de Marzo. *Revista de Psicología Social, 17*, 369-375.

Pennebaker, J. W. (1997). Writing about emotional experiences as a therapeutic process. *Psychological Science, 8*, 162-166.

Reis, H. T., & Patrick, B. C. (1996). Attachment and intimacy: Component processes. In E. T. Higgins & A. W. Kruglanski (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (pp. 523-563). New York: Guilford Press.

Rimé, B. (2009). Emotion elicits the social sharing of emotion: Theory and empirical review. *Emotion Review, 1*, 60-85.

Rimé, B. & Christophe, V. (1997). How individual emotional episodes feed collective memory. In J. W. Pennebaker, D. Paez & B. Rimé (Eds.). *Collective memory of political events: Social and psychological perspectives* (pp. 131-146). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Rimé, B., Delfosse, C., & Corsini, S. (2005). Emotional fascination. Responses Elicited by Viewing Pictures of September 11 Attack. *Cognition and Emotion*, *19*, 923-932.

Rimé, B., Finkenauer, C., Luminet, O., Zech, E., & Philippot, P. (1998). Social sharing of emotion: New evidence and new questions. In W. Stroebe & M. Hewstone (Eds.), *European review of social psychology* (Vol. 9, pp. 145-189). Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Rimé, B., Paez, D., Martinez, F & Basabe, N. (2006). *Social Sharing of Emotion, Posttraumatic Growth and Emotional Climate: Follow-up of 644 Spanish citizen's response to the collective trauma of March 11th terrorist attacks in Madrid*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Rimé, B., Philippot, P., Boca, S., & Mesquita, B. (1992). Long lasting cognitive and social consequences of emotion: Social sharing and rumination. In W. Stroebe & M. Hewstone (Eds.), *European Review of Social Psychology* (Vol. 3, pp. 225-258). Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Rimé, B., Yogo, M., & Pennebaker, J. W. (1996). [Social sharing of emotion across cultures]. Unpublished raw data.

Rose, S., & Bisson, J. (1998). Brief early psychological interventions following trauma: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, *11*, 697-710.

Singh-Manoux, A. & Finkenauer, C. (2001). Cultural Variations in social sharing of emotions: An intercultural perspective on a universal phenomenon. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *32*, 647-661.

- Singh-Manoux, A. (1998). *Les variations culturelles dans le partage social des émotions* [Cultural variations in social sharing of emotions]. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Université de Paris X-Nanterre, France.
- Van Emmerik, A. A., Kamphuis, J. H., Hulsbosch, A. M., & Emmelkamp, P. M. (2002). Single session debriefing after psychological trauma: A meta-analysis. *The Lancet*, 360, 766-771.
- Yogo, M. & Onoe, K. (1998). *The social sharing of emotion among Japanese students*. Poster session presented at ISRE '98, The Biannual conference of the International Society for Research on Emotion, held in Wuerzburg, Germany, August 4-8, 1998.
- Yzerbyt, V. Y., Judd, C. M., & Corneille, O. (2004). *The psychology of group perception: Perceived variability, entitativity, and essentialism*. London: Psychology Press.
- Zech, E. & Rimé, B. (2005) Is it talking about an emotional experience helpful? Effects on emotional recovery and perceived benefits. *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 12, 270-287.
- Zech, E. (2000). *The effects of the communication of emotional experiences*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium: University of Louvain.