



12th International LAB Meeting - Summer Session 2008  
14th International Summer School



European Ph.D. on  
Social Representations and Communication  
At the Multimedia LAB & Research Center, Rome-Italy

Social Representations in Action and Construction  
in Media and Society

"Social Representations, Collective Memory and Socially  
Shared Emotions: narrative and experimental approaches"

From 26th July to 3rd August 2008  
[http://www.europhd.eu/html/\\_onda02/07/14.00.00.00.shtml](http://www.europhd.eu/html/_onda02/07/14.00.00.00.shtml)

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## On the importance of self-conscious emotions and social identity to the evaluation of in-group or out-group's negative events of the past

- 14th International S. S on SR&C
  - Rome, 2008
  - Valencia, J. F.
  - University of the Basque Country

## The collective side of Guilt and Shame

- Members of a group sometimes experience moral distress over deeds committed by other in-group members to other out-group's members
- Historically, some groups have been blamed for many atrocities as for example Spain, Britain, Portugal and France in brutal colonial wars (Restall, 2004; Thomas, 2004) or past collective violence (Spanish Civil War)
- They experience guilt and shame "by association"  
Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, (1998)

## The collective side of Guilt and Shame

### • Guilt

- People experience guilt when their personal behaviour is inconsistent with their moral attitude and this emotion involves negative evaluation related to specific behaviours.
- Lazarus (1999) posits that the core relational theme for guilt is having transgressed moral rules or norms.
- Action tendencies related to guilt are reparative actions.
- Guilt also prevents from acting destructively against others.

## The collective side of Guilt and Shame

### • Shame

- Shame is related to the failure of self or when the exposed self is found inadequate and is felt when a negative evaluation of the global self is involved.
- For shame the core relational theme is failing to live up to an ideal-ego or not reaching goals (Lazarus, 1999).
- The action tendency related to shame is wanting to hide or conceal actions. Shame leads to self-improvement and to restore identity (Izard, 1993; Lewis,

## The collective side of Guilt and Shame

- Guilt and shame have intra-group social functions:
  - strength the bonds between members of a group.
- Shame encourages pro-social behaviour, conformity and responsibility.
- Guilt increases compliance and reinforces social bonds, with a sense of interpersonal obligation and empathy (Echeberría, 2000).

## The collective side of Guilt and Shame

- These self-conscious emotions may be felt at group level, i.e. felt not as a consequence of personal experience, but as a consequence of social categories like nation, ethnic group and so on.
- In guilt, attention is focused on collective behaviour: We (X people) **made** this awful thing (Genocide). Guilt's main adaptive social function is to prevent interpersonal and inter-group exploitation.
- In shame, attention is focused on the collective identity: **We** (X people) made this awful thing (Genocide). Shame's main social function is to restore collective positive identity.

## The collective side of Guilt and Shame

- However, at the group level little difference is perceived between characterological (We X people...) and behavioural ( We X people made...) attribution of negative collective events.
- Moreover, usually in front of negative in-group past collective behaviour subjects perceive lower level of control – and lower level of control of behaviours is associated with shame, as high control is related to guilt (Branscombe, Slugoski & Kappen, 2004).
- This is why a negative past experience usually elicits both shame and guilt (Dresler-Hawke & Liu, 2006)

## The collective side of Guilt and Shame

- People feel collective guilt when they categorise themselves in the group of perpetrators,
- But identification is negatively related to CG (Paez et al, 2006)
- perceive the group as responsible for controlled negative actions,
- Distance (i.e. Third generation Germans reported higher CG than generation involved in WWII, Dresler-Hawke & Liu, 2006)
- actions are perceived as illegitimate and morally unjustifiable,
- harm done remains uncorrected and reparative actions are possible (Branscombe, 2004)

## The collective side of Guilt and Shame

- Guilt and, particularly, Shame are usually felt by victims, because shame is related to negative outcomes that can not be controlled and, in public, portrays an image as weak, inferior or “tainted” by stigma – guilt and shame related to massive women’s rapes in war by loser nations’ soldiers are the prototype of this situation.
- Victims of human right violations, more than perpetrators, feel a lack of ability to control and lower responsibility for negative events.
- This explains why feeling shame is strongly related to being victimized and usually associated with anger towards the perpetrator and retaliation tendencies, whereas anger is usually unrelated to guilt experience and aggression (Branscombe, Slugoski & Kappen, 2004)

## Problems

- How identification and distance affords collective guilt and shame by respect to recent past collective violence (WWII, Civil War, terrorism and dirty war?)
- How rituals help group’s victims to accept to co-exist with perpetrators’ group, stop inter-group conflict and overcome shame?
- What are the effects of salience of collective violence carried out by in-group perpetrators on empathy, agreement with reparative actions, repentance and punishment behaviors?



## The collective side of Guilt and Shame and identity

- Attributions of collective guilt are also a weapon in ideological and identity struggle. Social representations of past that feed violent conflicts focus on the rumination of in-group suffering usually:
  - a) represent or define national in-group as a victim (We, Serbians, excluded, discriminated and attacked from the Middle Ages to World Wars);
  - b) national outgroups are defined as aggressors or perpetrators and the responsibility and guilt of real or symbolic current and past injuries are attributed to these social categories (They, Croats Nazis and Muslims fascists collaborators, killed our people in the W.W.II);

## The collective side of Guilt and Shame and identity

- c) Retaliation appears as legitimate, and social representations reinforce inter-group aggressive action tendencies, war and collective violence being only a rational and justified response to past aggression of the out-groups and in-group suffering (Rosoux, 2001 b).
- What type of information on collective violence frequency, attributions of behavior and out-group suffering helps to change social representations of past that feed violent conflicts ?

## The collective side of Guilt and Shame and identity

- Following social identity theory (SIT) people's self-concept derives in part from the social groups to which they belong.
- National identity is a source of collective self-concept, self-esteem and collective emotions.
- Collective feelings are socio-centric affects, this means emotions felt in relation to in-group behaviour evaluated in an inter-group context.

## The collective side of Guilt and Shame and identity

- When individuals find themselves in a group with a negative collective past, a relative inferiority status constitutes a threat to social identity (self-concept or self-esteem based on group membership) and they need to deal with shame and guilt associated to these historical events.
- Facing negative past should induce strong need to reconstruct a positive evaluation of social identity.
- Because belonging to national groups is ascribed and the past can not be altered, they should cope with the historical challenge by other means different to social change.
  - Minimization of frequency
  - Psychological distancing from in-group: low typicality
  - Reframing (understandable in the context) and blaming the victims
  - Positive inter-group social comparison
  - Reconstruction/symbolic social competition, conventionalisation/ global justification



## Studies and hypothesis

- In Study 1, we provided Portuguese participants with information about a (fictitious) historical massacre, according to a 2 (Target: In-group vs. Out-group) x 2 (Source: In-group vs. Out-group) between-participants design. In the in-group target condition, participants learned that the massacre's perpetrators had been Portuguese mercenaries
- Participants listened to the message and then evaluated its relevance, credibility, and reported positive-negative feelings as well as guilt/shame triggered by the event
- then, we asked participants to write the message so that it could be transmitted to other participants. 2 (measure omission sharpening and assimilation (Allport & Postman, 1947),
- In Study 2 (Basque) 3 (Port and Spanish) 4 (Hun Ba)

## hypothesis

- We expected that the In-group negative event would induce more guilt and shame than the negative Out-group event (Hypothesis 1).
- Second, participants would assign more credibility and more relevance, and to be more accurate when the information source was the in-group instead of the out-group (Hypothesis 2).

## hypothesis

- We also predicted a Target x Source interaction: participants would evaluate less negatively and assign less credibility to the message and reconstruct or assimilate it more in the Out-group Source/In-group Target condition than in all other conditions. Participants would also make more omissions and show worse recall in the In-group Source/In-group Target condition than in all other conditions (Hypothesis 3).
- Lower credibility, relevance, omission, recall and higher assimilation of the message, because they help to deal with a collective negative past event, should be related to lower guilt and shame, when this event concerned the in-group (Hypothesis 4).
- Finally, high identifiers of national in-group should show higher level of coping answers (Hypothesis 5).

## The message

- “When the Portuguese (vs. the Spanish) recall the historical achievements of their ancestors, are they by any chance aware that many of their grandparents were common murderers? One should not conceal the sad memory of the Delta Legion: a group of three hundred Portuguese (vs. Spanish) mercenaries from the various regions of Portugal (vs. Spain), who spread terror and infamy throughout Brazil (vs. Uruguay). They banned the natives from the fertile lands in exchange for a few pieces of gold, and from every slaughtered Indian; they cut off an ear as proof of a completed mission. At daybreak of an Easter Sunday, those Portuguese (vs. Spanish) besieged a village of the Guarani tribe and, with torches, set it alight. The weakness of the elderly Indians was fatal: they were burnt to death. Running away in panic, some Indians found themselves unarmed and confined to the cliffs, while trying to escape. The slaughter began. The tribe’s greatest warriors died defenceless at the mercy of firearms they had never seen before. Screaming in terror, the children were dragged from the women’s arms and thrown into the flames. Some women thought they had escaped, but it was pure illusion: the murders were also attracted to their beauty”

## Results Study 1

- Source Effects. In support of Hypothesis 2, participants assigned higher credibility to the in-group ( $M = 4.95$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ), than the out-group source ( $M = 4.39$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ;  $F_{1, 269} = 20.82$ ,  $p < .001$ ).
- Negative emotional reactions were also higher in the In-group than in the Out-group source condition,  $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ , and  $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ;  $F_{1, 269} = 7.66$ ,  $p < .01$ . Source did't affect relevance, and guilt and shame (both  $F_{1, 269} < 1$ ).
- Target x Source Effects (Hypothesis 3). A significant Target x Source interactions for credibility and guilt and shame, respectively,  $F_{1, 269} = 6.23$ ,  $p < .02$ , and  $F_{1, 269} = 5.84$ ,  $p < .02$ .

## Results Study 2

- Procedure: similar to study 1 but with ethnic and national identification (Basque, Spanish and European identifications) as moderator variables
- Target (Ethnic In-group Basque vs. National In-group Spanish vs. National Out-group or Portuguese) x Source (In-group vs. Out-group) between-participants design. We found significant multivariate effects of Target ( $F_{4, 146} = 3.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Source ( $F_{4, 145} = 6.18$ ,  $p < .001$ ).
- Target Effects. Univariate effects supported Hypothesis 1. Participants assigned less credibility to the message about the in-group than the out-group target. Credibility was lower for the Basque In-group target ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ), than for the Spanish target ( $M = 4.63$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ ) and the Portuguese Out-group target ( $M = 4.97$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ;  $F_{1, 153} = 5.68$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

## Results Study 2

- Framing was higher for Basque in-group target ( $M = 1.37$ ,  $SD = 2.95$ ) than for the Spanish target ( $M = 2.45$ ,  $SD = 2.03$ ) and the Portuguese out-group ( $M = 2.39$ ,  $SD = 2.00$ );  $F(2, 153) = 3.5$ ,  $p < .04$ .
- Minimization was relatively higher for Basque in-group target ( $M = 5.50$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ) than for Spanish target ( $M = 5.62$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) and Portuguese out-group ( $M = 6.00$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ );  $F(2, 153) = 2.3$ ,  $p < .10$ .
- Typicality was lower for Basque in-group ( $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 1.80$ ) than Portuguese ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 1.80$ ) than Spanish target ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ );  $F(2, 153) = 13.9$ ,  $p < .001$ .

## Results Study 2

- Correlational Analysis (Hypothesis 4 and 5).
- the relationship of guilt and shame with credibility and relevance assigned to the message in the ethnic In-group Target condition (respectively,  $r = -.18$ ,  $p < .10$ , and  $r = n.s.$ ).
- Higher credibility of the negative event is associated with higher guilt and shame particularly when the event concerned the national in-group, similar to Study 1 and 2. However, when the target was the more central ethnic group subjects minimise self-conscious emotions dealing with more credible information.

### Results Study 3

- Participants showed the lowest credibility to the message in the In-group Target/Out-group Source condition than in all the others. Concomitantly, participants reported higher guilt and shame in the in-group Target/In-group Source condition than in all the other conditions.
- Correlational Analysis (Hypothesis 4). We checked for the relationship of guilt and shame with relevance and credibility in the In-group Target condition (respectively,  $r = .19$ ,  $p < .04$ , and  $r = .22$ ,  $p < .02$ ). In the Out-group Target condition, these correlations were respectively,  $r = .21$ ,  $p < .02$ , and  $r = .08$ . These correlations suggest that higher credibility of the negative event is associated with higher guilt and shame particularly when the event concerned the in-group.

### Results Study 4

- Participants showed the lower credibility to the message in the In-group Target than Out-group condition even Hungarians' were not significant.
- Correlational Analysis (Hypothesis 4). correlations between relevance and guilt and shame were significant for the in-group target ( $r = .38$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $r = .27$ ,  $p < .05$ , respectively for the Basque Country and Hungary) in both countries. For the out-group target condition the significant correlations between credibility and relevance and guilt and shame only appeared in the case of the basque country ( $r = .55$ ,  $p < .00$ ,  $r = .45$ ,  $p < .02$ , respectively) and not in the case of Hungary ( $r = .07$ ,  $p < .ns$ ,  $r = .15$ ,  $p < .ns$ , respectively).
- But reversal identifications
- Implication of the sample with the event!

## Discussion

- The present studies support the idea that group members could feel guilt and shame related to past behaviour of national in-group members.
- However, the level of self conscious collective emotions (guilt and shame) was relatively low and the reported level of negative emotions was higher, particularly in the case of out-group targets.
- As Branscombe (2004): collective guilt is a fragile emotion. Moreover, internal criticism is needed to induce relatively higher levels of collective guilt.
- Finally, surveys suggest that more distant generations, involved with the national identity, but not committed directly to collective crimes, could feel guilt as a dominant social emotion and be implicated in reparation actions. In relation to antecedents of collective guilt, our results confirm that some degree of categorisation in the group of perpetrators is needed.

## Discussion

- In relation to identification with the in-group, studies shows that subjects display higher level of cognitive coping responses, like minimization of the frequency of murder behaviours, in the case of strong identification with the in-group, as in the case of the Basque ethnic in-group. These coping mechanisms however, are not displayed when subjects show medium size level of identification, like in the case of the Basque people in relation to Spain.
- Our results are convergent with other empirical studies i.e. Rensman (2004): subjects with lower identification with the national in-group, feel lower level of pride and collective self-esteem, are less defensive, more alike to accept confrontation with the negative past and to assume reparative actions

## Prospective Problems

- How it is possible to change collective guilt and selective victimization's representations? Effects of public apologies (i.e. German, Czech, Chirac's apologies for past ingroup collective violence or participation in Holocaust, etc)
- How repentance rituals (i.e W. Brandt in front of Warsaw Insurrection Memorial) helps victims to accept to co-exist with perpetrators's group, stop inter-group conflict?
- What are the effects of punishment to in-group perpetrators on collective guilt?