



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
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Key Lectures

European Ph.D

on Social Representations and Communication

International Lab Meeting Series 2005-2008

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*the role of socially shared emotions
 in building the memory of events:
 experimental approaches*

Bernard Rimé
 University of Louvain (UCL),
 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

"social sharing of emotion"...
in current life, after an emotion...

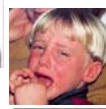
- *people talk about it*
- *recurrently*
- *to people around them (intimates)*
- *in the next hours, days, weeks...*
- *in 80 to 100% of episodes*
- *irrespective of*
 - *emotional valence,*
 - *gender,*
 - *education,*
 - *culture...*
- ***the more intense the emotion
 the more it will be shared***



for a review, see Rimé, Finkenauer, Luminet, Zech, & Philippot, (1998, Eur Rev Soc Psychol.)

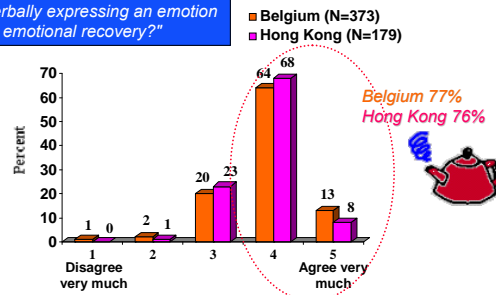
**effects of merely expressing
 emotion...?**

- *nonverbal expression of emotion,
 verbalization of emotion...*
- *common views...*
 - *catharsis*
 - *liberation*
 - *evacuation*
- *metaphor of the "boiling reservoir"*



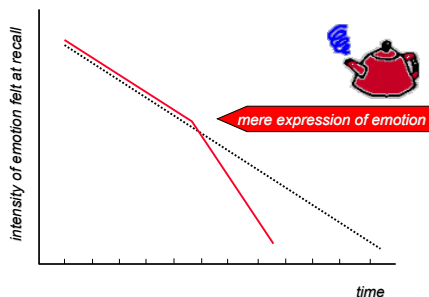
**effects of merely expressing
 emotion...? → laypersons view**

**"would verbally expressing an emotion
 bring you emotional recovery?"**



(source: Zech, 2001)

**prediction... "merely expressing an emotion
 brings emotional recovery"...**



**effects of mere
 emotional expression?**

*data from the study
 of the social sharing of emotion*

effects of sharing an emotion:
data from naturalistic studies

- **immediately after the emotional event...**
 - sharing is very general
 - sharing reactivates the emotions
 - sharing is **unrelated** to later recovery
- **in the long run...**
 - normal case = extinction
 - some people keep sharing
 - this is **associated with poor recovery**
 - and is also **predictive of poor recovery**

Rimé, Finkenauer, Luminet, Zech, & Philippot (Eur. Rev. Soc. Psycho., 1998)

effects of sharing an emotion:
data from experimental studies

experimentally-induced sharing of a personal episode

- **no impact on emotional recovery**
- **yet, important social benefits... :**
 - felt supported
 - felt understood
 - felt close to the listener
 - felt enhanced subjective well-being

Zech & Rimé (Clin. Psychol. & Psychother., 2005)

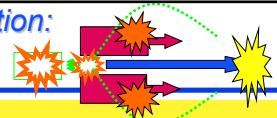
effects of sharing an emotion:
to sum up...

- **sharing an emotion does not bring emotional recovery...**



- **where do the social benefits come from...?**

**impact of an emotion:
 double...**



- **impact 1...**
 - **emotional experience**
 - sadness, fear, anger, joy, shame, etc...
- **impact 2...**
 - **disconfirmation of models...**
 - cognitive dissonance
 - **emotional distress...**
 - anxiety, uncertainty, helplessness

2 types of needs after an emotion ...

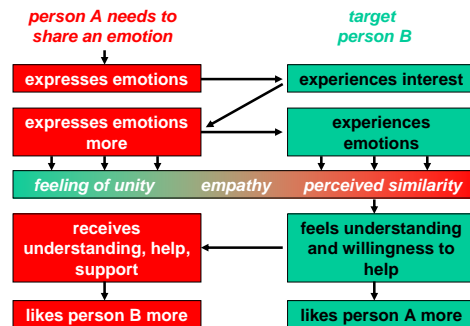
disconfirmation of models → cognitive needs

- reorganisation of motives
- modification of models and world views
- re-creation of meaning
- reframing, reappraisal of experience

emotional distress → socio-affective needs

- comfort, support, love
- validation, recognition
- social integration...

**what happens in
 the social sharing of emotion**



*individual's needs after an emotion...
are they fulfilled in mere social sharing?*

→ **cognitive needs**

- reorganisation of motives
- modification of models and world views
- re-creation of meaning
- reframing, reappraisal of experience

not fulfilled

→ **socio-affective needs**

- comfort, support, love
- validation, recognition
- social integration...

fulfilled

*effects of mere
emotional expression?*

*data from the study
of post-traumatic debriefings*

*psychological debriefings of victims
after traumatic events...*

■ **in recent years,**

- widespread practice

■ **origin?**

- recent societal concern
- for victims and for trauma

■ **expected effects**

- prevention of PTSD
- fits common sense
- expression → recovery



*psychological debriefings:
assessment of effects*

■ **urge to assessments in 1995...**

■ **meta-analytic reviews are now conducted**

■ **findings regarding PTSD prevention**

- predominantly null effects
- some "a contrario effects" are recorded



■ **contrasts with important benefits, predominantly social, which participants find in a debriefing**

benefits from debriefings...

■ **leaders → symbolic social functions**

- society is represented
- leaders show listening, understanding, support
- validation of an "unbelievable" experience
- social integration of victims

■ **peers → initiation of a social process**

- mutual listening
- mutual support
- reciprocal empathy
- "we feel the same"
- honey moon

conclusion so far...

■ **mere emotional expression...**

- no effect on recovery
- but, marked impact on social variables



hypothetic explanation...

- cognitive needs ≠ fulfilled
- socio-affective needs = fulfilled

effects of emotional expression in the social sharing of emotion

experimental test of the hypothetical explanation

if targets of a social sharing interaction adopt...

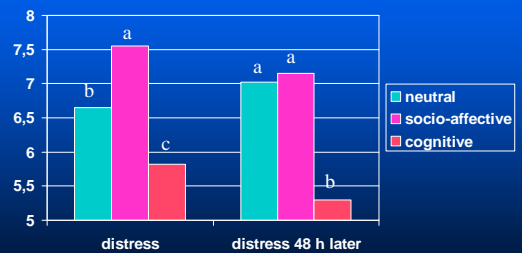
	socio-affective responding	cognitive responding
reduction of emotion?	no	yes
change in cognitions and motives?	no	yes
social support & social integration?	yes	no

empirical test...

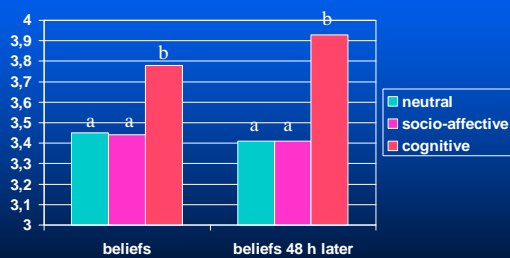
Nils & Rimé (in preparation)

- induction of emotion using a movie clip
- immediately after, social sharing with an "intimate" partner
- 3 conditions of instruction given to the partner
 - neutral sharing
 - empathetic → socio-affective responding
 - positive reframing → cognitive responding
- measures
 - immediately after sharing
 - 48h later, after reexposure to movie
- dependent variables
 - emotional: *distress* (emotional impact)
 - cognitive: *beliefs-world views*
 - social: *loneliness scale*

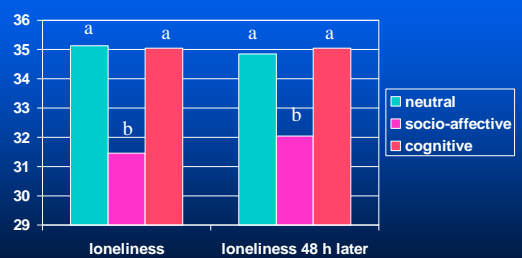
effects on distress...



effects on beliefs – world views...



effects on loneliness...



conclusion...

- *the model is supported*
- ➔ *2 different modes of responding can take place in social sharing situations*
 - *each mode ➔ proper effect*
 - *socio-affective mode ➔ social integration*
 - *cognitive mode ➔ cognitive integration*

effects of emotional expression in collective situations?

empirical studies of social rituals

social rituals...

- *celebration of important collective emotional events*
 - *victory, defeat, loss, disaster...*
- *some characteristics of collective rituals*
 - *remembering together*
 - *symbols*
 - *solemnity*
 - *reviving emotions*





effect of reviving emotions in collective rituals...?

- **most common assumption:**

- emotional healing
- catharsis
- emotional recovery



- **does it hold...?**

- empirical observation was scarce
- yet, a variety of data = available

effects of reviving emotion in rituals?

data from the study of participation in mourning rituals

participation in mourning rituals...

- data from Weiss & Richards (JPSP, 1997) on *bereaved partners of men with AIDS*

- data from Martin-Beristain, Paez, & Gonzalez (Psicothema, 2000) on *relatives of victims of the Guatemalan genocide*



data from Weiss & Richards (JPSP, 1997) on bereaved partners of men with AIDS


- **assessment of**
 - (1) participation, or not, in mourning rituals
 - (2) psychological condition 12 months later
- **observations**
 - no relation with indicators of emotional recovery (e.g. depression, rumination...)
 - but... compared to non participants, participants evidenced a superior quality of social functioning

data from Martin-Beristain, Paez, & Gonzalez (2000) on relatives of victims of the Guatemalan genocide (n = 3424)


- **assessment of**
 - (1) participation, or not, in mourning rituals
 - (2) current psychological condition
- **observations: participation**
 - correlated with higher level of negative emotions
 - uncorrelated with emotional recovery from trauma
- **but... participants scored higher on a number of indicators of good social functioning**
 - high on reconstruction of social support
 - high on altruistic behavior
 - low on helplessness and disengagement

effects of mere emotional expression?

clinical observations from Truth and Reconciliation Commissions



truth and reconciliation in countries where major violations of human rights happened...



truth and reconciliation... how it works...

- **victims**
 - express publicly, under oath, facts from which themselves or their relatives suffered
 - generally involves strong reactivation of emotions
- **perpetrators**
 - express publicly, under oath, facts as they occurred
 - answer to questions addressed to them
- **T & R situation, ideally...**
 - favors expression of **repentance** by perpetrators
 - favors expression of **forgiveness** by victims

truth & reconciliation → effects mere emotional expression... a quote from Brandon Hamber, (center of violence and reconciliation)...

- "... as long as there is crying, there's an assumption that healing's taking place..."
- "... but there are a lot of people that feel devastated afterwards..."
- "... victims and witnesses can in effect be re-traumatized by giving testimony to a commission, which may be so severe as to result in a multitude of debilitating physical symptoms, such as confusion, nightmares, exhaustion, loss of appetite, and sleeplessness."

source: P. B. Hayner (2001)
Unspeakable truths: Confronting state terror and atrocity

truth and reconciliation... conclusion

- 
- **here again,**
 - the mere expression of emotions fails to bring emotional recovery
 - the cathartic prediction is not supported by current observation of T&R commissions
 - to the contrary, intense emotional expression may often end up in re-traumatization
 - **and yet,**
 - people report important social benefits from participation to such courts...
- public expression of suffering
→ societal recognition and validation
→ societal support


effects of mere emotional expression in social rituals

a theoretical model

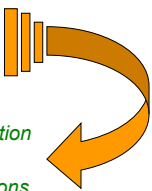
Paez, Rimé, & Basabe (2005), *Revista de Psicología Social*
Rimé & Paez (2007), *Psicología Sociale*
Rimé (2007), In JJ Gross, *Handbook of Emotion Regulation*

what happens in collective rituals


→ Emile Durkheim (1912)



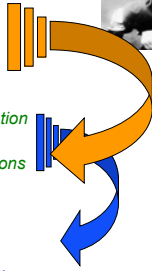
- **collective rituals**
 - e.g. religious rituals, commemorations, celebrations, collective mourning, feasts...
- ⇒ **emotional effects**
 - sharing of emotions and empathy
 - reciprocal stimulation of emotions
 - emotional communion, feeling of unity
- ⇒ **social effects**
 - feelings of belonging and social integration
 - enhancement of group cohesion
 - reinforcement of collective representations



Emile Durkheim (1912): emotional and social effects of collective rituals...



- ⇒ **emotional effects**
 - sharing of emotions and empathy
 - reciprocal stimulation of emotions
 - emotional communion, feeling of unity
- ⇒ **social effects**
 - feelings of belonging and social integration
 - enhancement of group cohesion
 - reinforcement of collective representations
- ⇒ **effects for individuals**
 - consolidation of cultural beliefs
 - enhanced trust in life
 - feelings of strength, of self-confidence...



in sum...



- **emotional expression in social rituals...**
 - no effect on emotional recovery
 - but, impact on social variables
- **consistent with anthropologists' views**
 - Haviland (1996): rituals reinforce social cohesion and control
 - Howard (1989): funeral rites reaffirm the values of the society and promote group solidarity
 - Metcalf & Huntington (1999): rituals strengthen social links
 - Pradelles (1996) mourning rituals are not relevant for the individual process of bereavement; they serve social cohesion
 - Bodly (1997): rites of passage increase pride of membership and contribute to social solidarity

2 types of needs after an emotion: are they fulfilled in a collective ritual?

- ⇒ **cognitive needs**
 - reorganisation of motives
 - modification of models and world views
 - re-creation of meaning
 - reframing, reappraisal of experience




not fulfilled
- ⇒ **socio-affective needs**
 - comfort, support, love
 - validation, recognition
 - social integration...

fulfilled

testing the model...

survey of participants (victims and prisoners) in Gacaca tribunals in Rwanda

1994 - genocide in Rwanda

- killing of nearly 1 million
- 120.000 prisoners accused of participation
- solution?
- in every community, "Gacaca" tribunals
 - 2 sources
 - South Africa "Truth & Reconciliation"
 - traditional Rwandese community system for conflict resolution

predictions following Durkheim...



for both victims and prisoners:

- as regards emotions
 - enhancement of negative emotions
- as regards social variables
 - evolution of social cognitions in line with an enhanced social integration



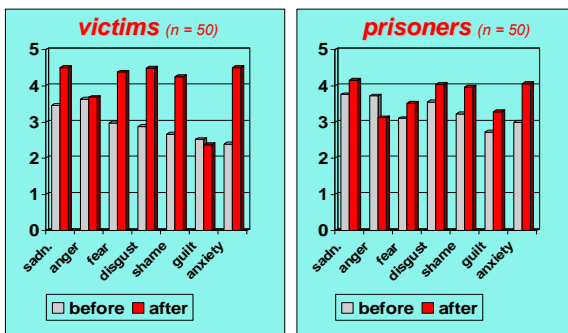
study 1 victims (N = 50) and prisoners (N = 50) of the Rwandan genocide were contacted...

- first, one week before their participation in a Gacaca tribunal in their area
 - then, one week after participation
- on both occasions, they rated (a. o)
- emotional impact of the memory of the genocide
 - stereotypes about the other group
 - their perception of the other group

Kanyangara, Rimé, Philippot, & Yzerbyt, (Journal of Social Issues, 2007)

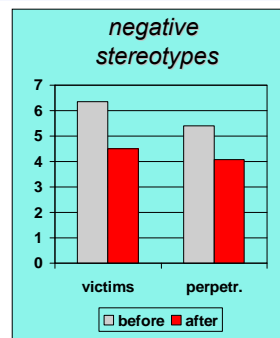
victims' and prisoners' emotions before and after Gacaca confrontation

Kanyangara, Rimé, Philippot, & Yzerbyt, (Journal of Social Issues, 2007)



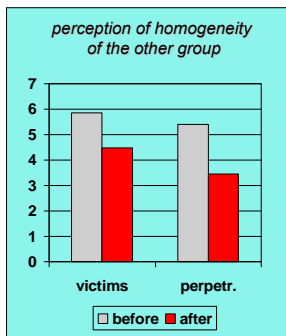
victims' and prisoners' social integration before and after Gacaca confrontation

Kanyangara, Rimé, Philippot, & Yzerbyt, (Journal of Social Issues, 2007)



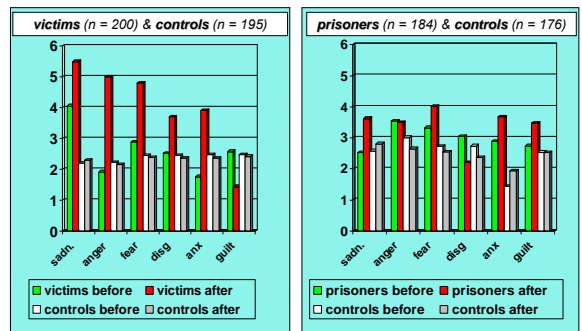
victims' and prisoners' social integration before and after Gacaca confrontation

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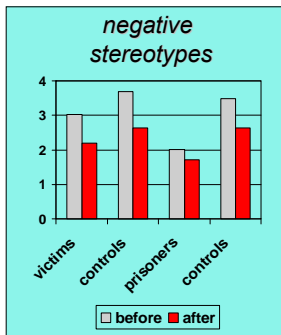


study 2 - victims' and prisoners' emotions before and after Gacaca confrontation

Kanyangara, Rimé, Yzerbyt & Paez, (in preparation)



study 2 - victims' and prisoners' before and after Gacaca confrontation



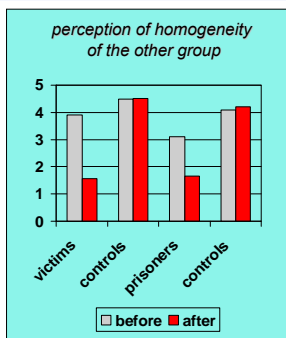
victims (200)
controls (195)
prisoners (184)
controls (176)

study 2 - victims' and prisoners' before and after Gacaca confrontation



victims (200)
controls (195)
prisoners (184)
controls (176)

study 2 - victims' and prisoners' social integration before and after Gacaca confrontation



victims (200)
controls (195)
prisoners (184)
controls (176)

to sum up, effects of participation in Gacaca...

for both victims and prisoners

- as regarded emotions
 - enhancement of negative emotions
- as regarded social variables
 - evolution of social cognitions in line with enhanced social integration



general conclusion...



- social sharing of emotion in a collective context...
 - no effect on emotional recovery
 - but, impact on social variables



- social sharing of emotion in an interpersonal context...
 - no effect on emotional recovery
 - but, impact on social variables

"take home message"... emotional expression in a social context...

- generally covers socio-affective needs
 - emotional communion, feeling of unity
 - refreshes social bonds and social cohesion
 - consolidates shared views and shared beliefs
 - enhances social tonus



reduction of insecurity, anxiety, helplessness...

- generally fail to involve in-depth cognitive work
 - reorganisation of motives
 - modification of models and world views
 - re-creation of meaning
 - reframing, reappraisal of experience



no impact on emotional recovery