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Dealing with Collective Shame and Guilt: Effects of Group Membership on the Transmission of Negative Historical Events

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Running head: Transmission of Negative Events

Abstract

In four studies we analyzed oral transmission of historical events in the context of intergroup relations. In Study 1 ($\underline{N}$ = 167), Target (in-group <u>vs.</u> out-group) and Source (in-group <u>vs.</u> out-group) affected the evaluation and recall of a negative collective historical event that was transmitted from person to person. In Study 2 ($\underline{N}$ = 324) and Study 3($\underline{N}$ =155) , Target and Source affected the evaluation of the same event as transmitted across triads. Fourth Study integrate similar conditions of Study 2 and 3. In all studies, participants assigned more credibility to information when it arose from an in-group source and when the traumatic collective event was related to an out-group. Higher guilt and shame were reported when target was the national in-group. Credibility was associated to shame and guilt when the traumatic event was related to the in-group. Higher identification with the in-group (particularly ethnic identity) was related to higher cognitive coping (particularly minimization) with collective negative past events. Effects were more significant in the triadic transmission setting. Content analysis of last narrative show that subjects recall better negative features of events when target was the out-group and reconstruct more positively events when target was in-group. However, narrative also reflect factual national stereotypes (Portuguese as navigators and explorers). We discuss the results in light of the functions of informal communication in protecting social identity and dealing with collective guilt and shame, of the association between referent information influence and rumor credibility, and of the ecological validity of the triadic as opposed to the person-to-person transmission by respect to social process of memory. Serial reproduction is conceived of as a paradigm to study the social representations of past or collective memory.

*Dealing with Collective Shame and Guilt: Effects of Group Membership on the Transmission of Negative Historical Events*

Queens, New York, is known to most people, even outside the United States. What less people know, is that Queens is associated with the name of Catarina of Bragança, the sister of a XVII century Portuguese king. Recently, the New York Portuguese community arranged for a statue of Catarina to be erected in Queens, in celebration of her ruling there. What less Portuguese people did know is that Catarina was associated to slave trading. The Queens' African-American community was aware of it, however, and the statue is now waiting for a new plan. Undoubtedly, the African-American and the Portuguese communities in Queens agree that slavery is one of the most immoral endeavours in human history. However, it is likely that, from the standpoint of their historical identities, the two groups stand on quite different grounds. The negative feelings of contemporary African-Americans towards slave traders who brought African people to the 17th and 18th century America is more than legitimate. But, contemporary Portuguese are not proud to remember their slave trader ancestors who clearly threaten their image as a group.

Collective guilt and shame

The same may apply to other former colonial countries, such as Spain. In fact, Spain has a more negative historical stereotype than Portugal: so called Black Legend attributes to spaniards an image of brutal and arrogant conquerors, by comparison to a more lenient historical stereotype of explorers and more open minded settlers of Brazil. Spaniards have been blamed for many atrocities and these were real but it is only fair to remind that Britain, Portugal and France also was involved in brutal colonial war (Restall, 2004; Thomas, 2004). In any case, spaniards and portuguese as members of national group probably experience negative emotions, like shame and guilt, as a consequence of the negative group's history. People experience guilt when their personal behaviour is inconsistent with their moral and involves negative evaluation related to specific behaviours. Lazarus (1991) posits that core relational theme for guilt is having transgressed moral rules or norms. Actions tendencies related to guilt are reparative actions. Guilt also prevents from acting destructively against others. 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 core relational theme is failing to live up to and ego-ideal or not reaching goals (Lazarus, 1991). Shame leads

to self-improvement and to restore identity (Izard, 1993; Lewis, 1993; De Rivera, 1984). These self-conscious emotions may be felt at the group level, this means felt not by respect to personal experience, but by respect of the experience and behavior of social categories like nation, ethnic group and so on. In guilt attention is focused in the collective behaviour: We (Germans) **made** this awful thing (Hollocaust). Guilt main adaptive social function is to prevent interpersonal and inter-group exploitation. In shame attention is focused in the collective identity: **We** (Germans) made this awful thing (Hollocaust). Shame main social function is to restore positive identity. Guilt and shame are social emotions motivating against aggressive and anti-social collective behaviour and reinforces compliance with norms and pro-social behaviour. Motivated by feelings of collective shame and  guilt people is inclined to restore a positive collective identity or make up amends for their behaviour. Reparatory and compensatory actions could serve to repair damaged inter-group and interpersonal relations and to restore in-group self-image (Hoffman, 1982). Wallbot and Scherer (1995) large cross-cultural study found that guilt is elicited by immoral behavior and atributed to the self (internal factors) and that shame is elicited by "inappropiate" behaviour and more often by other people (external factors). In individualistic and low power distance cultures shame experiences are very similar to guilt experiences.   Doojse, Branscombe, Spears & Manstead (1998) demonstrate that people may experience sociocentric or collective guilt related to the behaviour of fellow in-groups members (Dutch confronted with their group's colonial unfavourable past behaviour in Indonesia) even when they personally actually played no role in harming other national groups.  Moreover, collective guilt and shame are more probable for new generations unconnected to historical crimes. At the opposite of common sense, people directly involved in collective traumatic events as perpetrators or passive bystanders, usually did not report guilt and shame and feel positive towards institutions involved in such human right violations. For instance, observers of immediate post-war years in Germany write about self-pity, fear and sadness felt by the population, but also states that guilty was not a dominant feeling (Grosser, 1989). Only 5% of  80 Germans psychiatrist, psychologist and priest report confessions of WW II crimes of war and in fact they report that a colleague share the experience (Bar-On, 1989). These observations of lower feeling of guilt were confirmed by representative samples of public opinion: only 32% of a German survey in 1951 answered that Germany carried the guilt for the war. In 1967 it was 62 %. Discussion around the role of the German Army and of "normal Germans" in the genocide and human right violations arise in the sixties and particularly after the seventies and eighties: it was sons asking to parents and to grandparents what they do or no not do in the WW II, in very critical manner. In the

eighties and nineties most of 60% of the German population was born after WW II. A recent survey (1995) shows that Germans reports lowest historical proud and highest national shame of 23 European, American and Asian nation. Such collective condemnation was possible because the younger generation viewed itself as different from the older generation and as unconnected to the Nazi regime and II World War and at the same feel involved, but not committed, to collective in-group violence. Austrian and Japanese samples show a medium high level of historical proud and lower national shame, suggesting that in these cases collective guilt and shame related to WW II and genocides in Europe and Asia did not exist. One explanation of lower historical shame is lower levels of institutional self-criticism in both nations facilitated by Allied political decisions : Hirohito Emperor was never judged as criminal of war in despite of his involvement in Japanese Army commandment. Austria was designed as a victim of Nazi Germany in despite of high support of population to nazi's regime and Holocaust. Another related explanation are lower  assumptions of responsibilities: both nations reject responsibility of war crimes in Asia and Europe and reject  to paid in the case of Japan  or paid lower reparation than Germany in the case of Austria, to their victims. These nations cope with a negative collective past by means of successful silence and denial, inducing a social representation of past that actively forgets national crimes (Olick & Levy, 1997).

The present studies aim to analyze how do group members deal with such threatening memories, from a social identity perspective. There is evidence that group members normatively construct recollections of relevant past events through informal communication (e.g. Halbwachs, 1992; Vansina, 1985). Informal communication may thus help structuring individual memories about the historical and actual patterns of intergroup relations (e.g. Halbwachs, 1992; Kaplan, 1982; Kimmel & Keefer, 1991; cf. also Billig, 1990; Tajfel, 1978) and we will explore first this issue.

Social Identity, Rumor and Collective Memory.

How does informal communication help people establishing a positive social identity? Research on rumors, which we see as an instance of informal communication, may help answering this question, because cross-generational oral transmission of informal history is one the most important processes related to how cultures and collective memory emerges, persist and change. Serial reproduction of rumors and information, like  in classic Barttlet or Allport and Postman studies, is a paradigmatic contribution to the study of social

representations of history or collective memory (Schaller & Crandall, 2004; McIntyre, Lyons, Clark and Kashima,2004).). Traditionally, rumors research focused on the processes through which rumors distort facts (Allport & Postman, 1947a; Difonzo, Bordia & Rosnow, 1994; Kapferer, 1987; Knapp, 1944; Ohja, 1973; Peterson & Gist, 1951; Rosnow, Esposito & Gibney, 1988). More interesting than establishing the extent to which rumors are true or false, however, is to analyze their functions as an instance of informal social communication (cf. McCann & Higgins, 1990; Ng, 1990).

Based on Bartlett's (1932) analysis of memory processes, Allport and Postman (1945) argued that rumors operate through three distinct processes: (1) leveling or forgetting, i.e., the omission of information units in the course of serial transmission; (2) sharpening or selective recall, i.e. the accentuation of some details and change in the structure of relationships among them as compared to the source materials; and (3) assimilation or reconstruction, i.e., the modification of details, in order to increase coherence between the message and the person's beliefs.  A review of studies on serial reproduction concluded that as information is passed along chains details tend to be lost, descriptions of events and groups tend to become abstract, information tend to become stereotyped and conventionalized, following expectations, values and dominant attitudes (McIntyire et al, 2004).

Omitting unfavourable details, accentuating favourable, to the detriment of unfavourable details, and reconstructing negative events under a more positive light, has been observed both in rumor transmission and in recollections of historical events (cf. Baumesteir & Hastings, 1997; Marques, Páez & Serra, 1997; Páez, Basabe & Gonzales, 1997). [1] As a case in point, the findings by Allport and Postman (1945, 1947a, 1947b) indirectly support the idea that these processes help protecting social identity. In describing an event involving, among other things, a White's aggression to a Black, White participants discarded most secondary details, and reversed the roles of the central characters in the course of serial transmission. In the end of the rumor-chain, the White character was portrayed as the victim, whereas the Black character was given the role of aggressor. In addition, in a survey of one thousand different rumors, Knapp (1944) found that 66% were negative rumors about out-groups.

Allport and Postman processes could be associated to specific forms of coping with negative past events. a) Repression or leveling is related to omission, denial and silence about traumatic collective events, b) selective recall or sharpening is related to reframing, psychological distancing and similar forms of coping with past negative events; c) assimilation is related to positivistic reconstruction of negative past events. These processes

related to information transmission, operate well as an individual or repeated reproduction (intra-personal or personal memory) level (Herman, 1997) as well on a social level, at a collective and inter-personal social dynamics, like serial reproduction or cross generational rumors about past events or collective memory. We will discuss these forms of coping in the framework of Social Identity Theory (SIT) and contemporary developments.

Social Identity and coping with a negative past

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 sociocentric affects, this means emotions felt by respect to in-group behaviour in an intergroup context. For instance, social or fraternal relative deprivation is a feeling of injustice related to perception that the In-group receives less than they merit by respect to other groups. On the basis of self-categorization identity, people may experience guilt or shame as a result of group membership. People confronted with their national in-group negative past behaviour (e.g. raping and murdering Indians), if they categorize themselves at the group level, because of depersonalization, should feel guilt and shame by respect to these threatening evidence. Unable to perform compensatory behaviours related to guilt and shame action tendencies, because the past is difficult to change, subjects should show compensatory cognitive responses or cognitive coping behaviour (Doojse et al, 1998). When people belief that lower social status is just or at least stable, and inter-group boundaries are rigid, facing threatening past events, occultation of negative identity is a reasonable strategy (as Nazis did in the forties in Germany and Austria). When social situation is similar to previous one, but boundaries are perceived as permeable, individual strategies of social mobility are possible. When lower status is perceived as just and stable, but group boundaries are rigid or because of high in-group identification, individual mobility is not possible, social creativity coping responses are common, including positive intra and inter-group comparison, partial re-evaluation of the negative event or dimension, construction of new dimensions. Finally, when social evolution question the stability and justification of lower in group status, forms of social competition and global symbolic reconstruction appears as possible (Hogg & Vaughan, 2001). In the following table we put coping responses to a negative in-group past in the framework of social beliefs and identification with the in-group:

Member of a group with a negative past

| Socio-psychological context | Coping response |
|---|---|
| Negative evaluation perceived as legitimate, stable, lower identification and not possible social mobility (historical situation: Germany and Italy in forties) | **Dissociation**: dissociation of group and collective past by means of forgetting, denial and silence |
| Negative evaluation perceived as legitimate, stable, lower identification and social mobility is possible (historical situation: Japan and Germany in fifties, during the cold war) | **Distancing from in-group**: psychological distancing and actual or symbolical social mobility, recategorization in another high status group or in a supra-category (we europeans or free nations) |
| Negative evaluation perceived as legitimate, stable but because of high identification or rigid groups boundaries social mobility is not an alternative | **Social creativity by means of intra and inter-group comparison, redefinition of events and construction of new dimensions of evaluation**<br><br>c) Psychological distancing by means of:1) agentic state or rejecting personal responsabilty "we follow orders" (most of nazi's in Nuremberg and postwar trials); 2) making in-group social comparison, specifically cutting of reflected failure and symbolic exclusion of extreme in-groups perpetrators of human rights violations (historical situation: conservatives like Adenauer in Germany fifties; French repression of collaborationist and the myth of massive French Resistance)<br><br>d) Positive social comparison with an out-group doing worse (historical situation: conservatives Germans comparing Stalinist and Nazi's crimes)<br><br>e) Defence of identity by means of social creativity: redefining value of existing dimensions or re-evaluation of the negative collective past event by means of minimization and selective memory (historical situation: Japanese nationalist in fifties and sixties)<br><br>f) Social creativity by means of reconstruction of new dimension of social comparison, on which the group may be evaluated more favourably, by means of reframing, selective attribution of causes and blaming the victims (historical situation: Francoist in the forties and fifties, Pinochetist in eighties; nationalist Germans in eighties) |
| Negative evaluation perceived as only partial legitimate, unstable and the group have some status and power to use for social competition at least at symbolic level alternative (historical situation: Italy, Austria and France in forties and fifties, as "losers" winners nations; Anglo-Saxons nations by respect to II World War mass destruction in Japan and Germany) | **Symbolic social competition, by means of a global positivistic reconstruction of the negative past events** (political lobbying for reconstructing the past like Japanese politicians and historians reconstructing positively japanese past) |

Dealing with traumatic collective events

When individuals find themselves in a group with a negative collective past, relative status inferiority constitutes a threat to social identity (self-concept or self-image and self-esteem based on group membership) and they need to deal with shame and guilt associated to these historical events. Facing negative historical past should induce a strong need to reconstruct a positive evaluation of social identity. Because belonging to national groups is ascribed and because the past can not be altered, individuals should manage the historical challenge by means different to social change.

Dissociation, Forgetting, denial and silence

From the point of view of SIT, when a subject belongs to a group with a negative or stigmatized status (e.g. a negative historical past) a first response is to dissociate from the group by means of occultation of group appartenance, for instance concealing group membership to the Nazi's regime, as former Austrian first minister K. Waldheim did.

Active forgetting, denial and silence of negative traumatic events could be conceived of as instances of dissociation of group that implies concealment of group's past. Studies on political traumatic events show that "dirty" wars and victims are historical facts that collectivities want to forget. In order to escape accountability for his crimes, usually perpetrators first promote denial, silence and forgetting. An example of forgetting and denial is the official position of the Turkey state on the Armenian genocide: no mention or acceptance that the event was a real fact. In Germany, Japan, Italy, France, Spain, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, just to mention a few of the countries were collective catastrophes and repression have taken place, the institutional response has been to forget and silences what happened (Becker & Lira, 1994). Avoid reminders, specifically the absence of commemorations and monuments, is another form of coping by forgetting and silence with collective negative events. It is also quite unusual for the collectivities to commemorate negative events. Normally historical episodes considered to be negative, painful, humiliating, etc. are not remembered by a collectivity or institution. Brossart (1992) mentions various examples of this. In France the "bloody week" of 1871, the 1940 surrender, Dien Bien Fu, are not commemorated. In Germany, May 8th is a normal labour day. As Robert Frank once said: "what is sadly memorable is commemorated with difficulty" (Brossart, 1992, 60).

Germans used as a collective defence mechanism that of an affective dis-inversion of the past. They forgot about the support they had given Hitler, although we should remember that in the last elections before the war nearly 90% of the population supported Hitler, even in areas were the Nazis did not have total control. After the war not talking about it or not accepting the possibility of being judged for their past was the predominant attitude (Mistcherlicht, 1972).

Official memories in some cases acknowledge responsibility of negative past events, but this institutional remembering not necessarily implies that collective or informal memory reproduces collective guilt assumptions. For instance, in spite of the official recognition of German responsibility by respect to the II World War and concentration camps, less than 5% of Germans respondents mention Holocaust as an important historical event in the XX century (Schuman, Akiyama & Knaüper, 1998).

Psychological distancing and social mobility

When a subject  belongs to a group with a negative or stigmatized status (e.g. a negative historical past) and group boundaries are perceived as permeable, to leave the group to join a more positively valued group, actually or symbolically, is another form of coping posit by SIT. For instance disidentification with the past national group and identification with a supra-category (Europeans) or a category of winners is common. One example of des-identification was the attitude in post WV II Germany of denying defeat and identifying with those who "won". This is the most predominant attitude in present days as we can see by the fact that in interviews conducted on the topic of D-Day, 69% of the population thinks that the end of World War Two and having defeated Nazism was liberation for the German people. Only 13% see it as a defeat and 14% have an ambiguous stance towards it (Comas, 1994).

Psychological distancing from a negative past could also be achieved by means of remembering collective trauma as "natural catastrophes "that occurs to others and not assuming personal or collective agency and responsibility. For instance, this was the case for Poles, Hungarians or Baltic nations by respect to Jews genocide and political repression or for subjects that lives starvation periods in Austria: persons talks about riots and food robbery's but never assume that themselves were involved (Laszlo, 2002).

Identification and making the most of intra-group comparison: cutting of reflected in-group failure

Making the most intra-group comparison is another form of coping: with a negative social identity, when actual social mobility looks difficult or subjects share a high identification with the national group, following SIT. One form is to consider responsible of collective past traumatic events to extreme negative individuals, not typical from the in-group. In other terms, subjects construct a sub-type of in-groups "black sheep" that are devaluated and symbolically excluded. In the fifties Adenauer's policy in Germany is a instance of this form of coping: only the SS were supposed to be  responsible of Human rights violations, while German Army and German majority were conceived as normal and moral people not committed to Nazi's crimes. In fact the Werhmacht was implicated in mass murder from the beginning of the war in Poland and more than 15% of the German and Austrian population was involved in Nazi organizations (von Plato, 1998). A 1995 German survey shows that 63% of people older than 65 years (cohort that experience the II WV) believe that the Wehrmacht was not involved in genocide and mass murders. However, 71% of younger generations believe in the Wehrmacht participation in mass murders during the II WV (Pätzold, 1995).

Identification and positive inter-group social comparison

Another form of coping is to compare "our" negative events with selected out-groups that are more negative that our past. For instance, dictatorships Chileans officials usually compare the number of deaths and disappearances in their country (only 3.000 for 10 millions) with the number of missing people and death in Argentina (30.000 for around 25 million) (Paez, 2002). It was also usual in the fifties and sixties to compare the toll of death of Hitler with the supposed higher quantity of people killed or death by the Stalinist regime (Husson, 2003).

Defence of group identity by means of Minimization and selective retention and omission

When individuals faced a negative event related to national identity, perceives that it is difficult to leaves the group, identify strongly with the group and they try to alter the valuation

of the group past – they could use cognitive alternatives or social creativity responses as SIT posits.

First, if they cannot silence the crimes, perpetrators attack the credibility of his victim. Assignation of lower credibility to sources of negative events is very common or they suggest that victims exaggerate. Negationist literature about the Holocaust is a clear case in point. Second, minimization of crimes is also very common. For instance, in Japan is common to minimize the number of victims of the expansionist war in Asia 1930-1945. The official name of the WW II in Japan "Pacific War", highlights the War against USA (1941-1945) and minimize the long period of fighting on the Asian mainland with its estimated toll of over 20 millions Chinese victims (Conrad, 2003). In 1944, a spokesman for Franco's Ministry of Justice admitted that over 190.000 people were executed or died in prison – for a thirty million population. Historian posits that 30.000 people were disappeared in the first period of Francoist regime. The repression, if not denied, was always dismissed by Franco's regime as legitimate police operation (Preston, 2001).

Third, omission of some events and selective retention of others is very common. For instance, in the post war years in Austria and Germany it was very common to remember human rights violations (rapes, robbery, murders) provoked by the Red Army, but, at the same time it was usual to forget and not mention German Army rapes and human rights violations in Eastern Europe. 20 millions of URSS citizen were killed, 57% of 3,3 millions of Russians prisoners of war dies, 500.000 Jews were killed in the URSS and hundreds of thousands of    civilians, communist militants and soviet officials were murdered (Kerschaumer, 1998).

Defence of group identity by means of more complex cognitive alternatives: reconstruction, reframing and blaming the victims

Another more complex social creativity coping response or cognitive alternative is to reframe the trauma: "it was the war" or "It was understandable because of the characteristics of this era". Criminal of war Klaus Barbie final declaration in his trial is a good example of reframing human rights violations:" I never was involved in mass arrestations in Izieu (village in which he was involved in mass murders). I fight hardly the "Resistance". I respect the "Resistance". But it was the War and the War has finished"(Finkielkraut,, 1989). Emphasising one cause over others and blaming the victims are instances of this form of coping. German historian Nolte proposes in the seventies that Nazi's concentration camps should be

understood in the context of a "European civil war". Stalinist destruction of Russian bourgeois and kulaks and Gulag "cause" as a response Nazi concentration camps. The fact that a lot of Gulag victims were Jews and Bolsheviks or that Stalin try to have stable relationships with Hitler's regime were neglected. Another good example is the version of Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombing as a response to Pearl Harbour (Baumesteir & Hastings, 1997).

Attribution of cause and responsibilities to the victims (victims brought it upon herself) is another form of cognitive coping and a way of maintaining a belief in a just and meaningful world. In an 80's survey, a third of the Germans, and most of these who are over 40 years old, are in total or partial agreement with the idea that "it is the Jews´ own fault if they have been persecuted for centuries" (Martí-Font, 1992). The wife of a Russian civil servant who worked in concentration camps states, even in 1989, this belief in a just world in relation to the gulag: "There were innocents who were unjustly jailed, that is true, but the rest, the majority, those were bandits" (Potel, 1992, 402).

Reconstruction or symbolic social competition, conventionalization and global justification

Finally, when the critical view of the group past lacks legitimization, are perceived as unstable, and the group obtain some resources, a global positivistic reconstruction of the national past is another alternative. Reconstructing the meaning of the traumatic event is to re-evaluate it under the light of some positive aspect, likes as a sacrifice or as a way of learning more about life (the "real" priorities) and about oneself (see what you really can do) (Janoff-Bulman, 1992) is very common. A research which compared Second World War veterans with and without PTSD showed that those who had less symptoms used as their main coping device that of stressing the positive aspects of the situations they had lived during the war. They also thought that the memories were less stressful and more controllable than those veterans who did suffer from PTSD. (Fairbank, Hansen & Fitterling, 1991). Similar processes was found in the case of former political prisoners in Latin-America (Paez, 2001) and in the case of Wehrmacht: remembering prison and war experiences, subjects talk about an experiential travel, emphasize moments of solidarity and positive events (jokes, amazing events, etc). Only a few person talks about traumatic and dangerous event when recalling their past experience (Kehrschbaumer, 1998). A good example of global positivistic reconstruction is the "resistance myth" shared by Gaullist and communist in post Second World War in France, asserting that France's

republican spirit has not been broken and that Resistance enjoyed the support of the majority of French. In fact, historian shows that is was Vichy that which received important mass support. Vichy regime's was neither an accident nor an alternative strategy of resistance and was committed to collaboration with Germany, including active repression against resistant and Jews, and a conservative nationalist cultural revolution within France (Fishman et al,2001).

### In-group membership, Identification, Stereoypes and recall

Experimental research also confirms selective memory and recall reconstruction. At least two previous studies found that subjects recall better in-group positive behaviour and out-group negative behaviour (Alper and Korchin, 1952; Howard and  Rothbart, 1980). This selective recall could be comprise as a normative mechanism that reinforces a positive social identity. In the same vein, and congruent with the SIT perspective, high identifiers with the national in-group should be more defensive in recalling past group behaviours. Subjects with a high in-group identification in front of negative national past should display more forms of coping and collective self defences than low identifiers, as Doojse et al (1998) study partially shows.

On the other hand, subject could reject and show higher defences in front of an out-group critical source, that send a negative message about the historical past. Studies on the inter-group sensitivity show that people reject more critics from out-group than in group sources, because they attribute out-group critics to envious motifs and inter-group hostility. At the opposite, a critical message from an in-group source induces lower reactance, is agreed more and could have higher impact in collective behavior, because critics from in group sources are attributed more constructive motives(Horney & Imani, 2004 ).

Finally, assimilation to expectancies, themes, values and stereotypes is common in the informal transmission of information. Stereotypes are related both to inter-group conflicts and to defense of collective self-image, but also to a kernel of historical truth. As an example of the first processes, pakistanies students during the Indo-Pakistan war read a passage about the Indian army and reproduces it serially: a person retell it to another, who in turn repeated it to another, and so on in a eight persons chain. At the end, final version reproduces the stereotype of the Indian Army as lazy and unprofessional (McIntyre, Lyons, Clark and Kashima,2004). Students from different countries asked about most prominent world historical events and leaders  converge to mention  a majority of eurocentric socio-political events and "White

European Males", particularly Second World War and Hitler. These results suggests that people reproduces stereotyped knowledge about what is important in history, including some kernel of truth – IIWW and Hitler are prototypical instances of wars and negative leaders (Liu et al, 2003).

*Hypotheses and Overview of Studies*

With the present studies, we attempted to observe how group members deal with an in-group (as compared to an out-group) derogating event. This event had been pre-tested to induce collective guilt and shame. Participants learned the event either from an in-group or an out-group source, and communicated it to other in-group members. 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. In the out-group target condition, the mercenaries were Spanish. We further divided the participants according to whether the information source was the in-group (Portuguese) or the out-group (Spanish). Participants listened to the message and then evaluated its relevance, credibility, and reported positive-negative feelings and guilt/shame triggered by the event. Only then, we asked participants to write down the message so that it could be transmitted to another participant. [2] This allowed us to measure omission, assimilation and sharpening (Allport & Postman, 1947), according to several indicators. In Study 2, 3 and 4 we replicated the procedure employed in Study 1, except that participants transmitted information in triads, rather than in a serial transmission chain.

In study 2 we had Portuguese participants, in Study 3 Spanish participants and in Study 4 we put together both Portuguese and Spanish participants listening to information provided either by a Portuguese or a Spanish source, about a negative historical event that involved either Portuguese or Spanish actors.

We expect that the In-group negative event induce more guilt and shame than the negative Out-group event and made five general hypotheses by respect how people deal with collective guilt and shame. First, we expected participants to transmit the event less accurately, to reconstruct more positively and to assign it with less relevance and less credibility when the target was the in-group than the out-group (Hypothesis 1). Second, we expected participants to assign more credibility and more relevance, and to be more accurate when the information source was the in-group than the out-group (Hypothesis 2). However, we may expect that,

when the message concerns the in-group target, a more credible source generate higher threat than a less credible source. Hence, as a corollary to hypotheses 1 and 2, we predicted a Target x Source interaction: participants would evaluate less negatively and assign less credibility to the message and reconstruct or assimilate more it 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 the others (Hypothesis 3). Lower credibility, relevance, omission, recall and higher assimilation of the message, because of they help to deal with a collective negative past event, should be related to lower guilt and shame, particularly when this event concerned the in-group (Hypothesis 4). Finally, high identifiers with national in-group should show higher level of coping responses (Hypothesis 5).

Study 1

Method

Participants. Participants were 59 male and 108 female undergraduates (N = 167), aged 17 to 28 years old (mean age = 21). Participants by condition were 41 or 42. In each condition, we divided participants in three sets of 14 according to whether they occupied the first, second, or third position in the rumor-chain. Participants' sex and age were randomly distributed across conditions and chain positions.

Procedure. Upon entering the experimental room, participants learned that the study was "part of an investigation about the Discoveries". Participants in the first chain position were asked to listen carefully to the sound track of a television documentary. The stimulus-message went as follows: "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". In the In-group Source condition, participants were told that the excerpt was taken from a broadcast by the Portuguese Television International Network (RTPI). In the Out-group Source condition, they were informed that the excerpt was taken from the Spanish Television International Network (TVEI). In this latter condition, the speaker spoke in Portuguese but with a Spanish accent. This is a common feature on the Portuguese cable network. After listening to the message, participants evaluated its content according to relevance and credibility. Participants then received a blank sheet and reported that content as accurately as possible. This report was forwarded to another participant in the second chain-position. To control for handwriting differences, we typed participants' reports and corrected occasional misspellings. Each participant in the second chain-position received the version of a participant in the first position: "You are about to read one text that was written by another participant in our study. It corresponds to this participant's recollection from a RTPI (vs. TVEI) documentary". Participants in the second chain-position could read, at the bottom of the page, that the original message-source was either a Portuguese (in-group source) or a Spanish (out-group source) television broadcast. Participants then evaluated the message for relevance and credulity, following which they wrote their own account onto a blank sheet. Again, we typed and forwarded these accounts to participants in the third position of the respective chain. These latter participants went exactly through the same treatment as participants in the second chain-position. All participants were interviewed and fully debriefed about the deceptions involved in the study. [3]

Dependent Measures. We employed two sets of measures. The first set dealt with participants' evaluation of the message. The second set dealt with the process of rumor transmission proper.

Message Credibility and Relevance. Four items assessed credibility: (1) "In your opinion, the message you heard (read) ...". Each question was answered by means of four seven-point scales ranging from "1"( = "stems from an unreliable source", "is biased", "is deceitful", and "does not stand for a true fact", respectively) to "7"( = "stems from a reliable source", "is unbiased", "is trustworthy", and "stands for a true fact", respectively). Answers to these items were collapsed to a credibility score (Cronbach's alpha = 0.79). Four items assessed the relevance ascribed to the message: "In your opinion, the excerpt that you just heard (read) is...". Response-scales ranged from "1" ( = "not very surprising", "unimportant", "not very

disturbing", and "irrelevant", respectively) to "7" = ("extremely surprising", "important", "very disturbing", and "striking", respectively). These items were collapsed to a relevance score (Cronbach's alpha = 0.60).

Emotional Reactions. To check for emotional reactions, we asked participants to indicate, on a 7 point scale (1 = low intensity; 7 = high intensity) the extent to which the story triggered each of nine emotions. Following previous research (e.g. Frijda, 1986; Izard, 1993; Lewis, 1993), we averaged these emotions to two scores: positive-negative emotional reaction was composed by so-called basic emotions (joy, anger, fear, disgust, contempt, sadness, and anguish); self-conscious evaluative emotions were composed by shame and guilt. Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.82$ and $\alpha = 0.64$, respectively for positive-negative emotional reaction and self-conscious evaluative emotions.

Omission, Recall, and Assimilation. To obtain an omission score, we provided six independent judges with 24 categories. [4] The judges had been previously trained to evaluate material identical to that generated by the participants, and were blind to the experimental factors. Also, we omitted all references to geographic locations from the messages, and replaced references to real groups by letters "X", "Y", "Z", and "W". The judges' task was to identify whether each category was present in the account made by each participant. Whenever at least five out of the six judges considered a unit to be absent from a participant's account, we encoded it as an omission. Omission thus stands for the total number of categories absent from each participant's account divided by the total number of categories. It corresponds to Allport and Postman's (1945) notion of leveling.

For convenience, instead of measuring sharpening, we decided to assess accuracy of recall. We had the six judges evaluating whether each participant (a) identified the actors involved, (b) described the main actions of the massacre, and (c) explicitly related the aggressors to the depicted massacre. We encoded each item as a recall unit, whenever at least five judges considered that a participant's account included it. Recall amounts to the sum of the categories that participants recalled, and ranged from 0 (= no item was marked by the judge) to 3 (= all items were marked by the judges). Hence, recall is the reverse of sharpening. Judges also encoded assimilation, according to five categories: (a) rambles on about the topic instead of recalling it; b) clearly expresses a personal point of view; c) tries to explain the event; d) adds new facts of historical nature; (e) justifies the event applying to positive historical aspects. Assimilation scored from 0 (= no item was marked) to 5 (= all items marked).

Results and Discussion

We analyzed the data according to a Target (In-group vs. Out-group) x Source (In-group vs. Out-group) full between-participants design. We found significant multivariate effects of Target ($F$7, 153 = 9.34, p < .001), Source ($F$7, 153 = 3.64, p < .002), and Target x Source ($F$7, 153 = 4.04, p < .001).[5]

Target Effects (Hypothesis 1). The univariate ANOVAs run on separate dependent measures supported our predictions. The significant main effect of Target on credibility (F 1, 159 = 3.96, p < .05) showed that participants considered the information about the in-group target (M = 4.32, SD = 1.14) as less credible than information about the out-group target (M = 4.66, SD = 1.14). In addition, as predicted, participants reported higher shame and guilt in the in-group target than in the out-group target condition, respectively, M = 2.75, SD = 1.62, and M = 2.13, SD = 1.37; F 1, 159 = 7.87, p < .01). Participants also depicted lower recall in the in-group than in the out-group target condition, respectively, M = 1.92, SD = 1.13, and M = 2.48, SD = 0.87; F1, 159 = 11.54, p < .002). Concomitantly, participants showed stronger assimilation in the in-group than in the out-group target condition, respectively, M = 1.88, SD = 1.08, and M = 1.18, SD = 0.76; F1, 159 = 23.79, p < .001). Target did not affect positive-negative emotional reactions, relevance and omission (all F1, 159 < 1.58). Last chains reports were categorized by blind judges.

Two blind judges content analyzed the 56 last chain versions, coding the presence absence of a) massacres; b) rapes; c) critics to perpetrators, d) mentions of America's discovery. Because of clarity of codes more than 90% agreement was possible. Massacres appears in 11% of in-group narratives (targets were Portuguese) and 39% out-group narratives (targets were Spanish, Chi square (1,55)=4,67,p<.05. Rapes was mention in 14% of in-group narratives and in 43% of out-group narratives, Chi square (1,55)=4,3,p<.05. Critics to perpetrators appears in 7% of in-group narratives and 39% of out-group narratives, Chi square (1,55)=8,2,p<.05.

Source Effects (Hypothesis 2). The results partially supported Hypothesis 2. Participants assigned more credibility to the in-group than the out-group source, respectively, M = 4.71, SD = 1.11, and M = 4.27, SD = 1.15; F1, 159 = 7.47, p < .01. Concomitantly, participants showed weaker assimilation in the in-group source than in the out-group source condition, respectively, M = 1.38, SD = 0.86, and M = 1.67, SD = 1.09; F1, 159 = 3.75, p = .055. Source did not affect positive-negative emotional reactions, guilt and shame, relevance, recall, and omission (all F1, 159 < 2.00).

Target x Source Interaction (Hypothesis 3). We expected participants to make more omissions, and to show lower recall and stronger assimilation in the In-group Source/In-group

Target condition than in all the others. As can be seen in Table 1, the results showed the predicted interaction on recall ($F1$, $159 = 6.35$, $p < .02$) and assimilation ($F1$, $160 = 3.75$, $p = .055$). For recall, post-hoc comparisons using Duncan's multiple range test indicated that recall was lower in the In-group Target/In-group Source condition than in all the others ($p = .05$). For assimilation, post-hoc comparisons between means showed that assimilation was significantly higher in the In-group Target/Out-group Source condition than in all the others ($p = .05$), and significantly lower in the Out-group Target conditions than in all the others ($p = .05$).

Correlational Analysis (Hypothesis 4). To check for the relationship of guilt and shame with memory processes, we correlated this measure with recall ($r = .48$, $p < .01$), omission ($r = -.36$, $p < .01$, and assimilation ($r = -.23$, $p < .04$), in the In-group target condition. In the Out-group condition, there were no significant relationships between guilt and shame and the memory measures (all $r < .10$). In addition, guilt and shame were positively correlated to the relevance and credibility assigned to the message in the In-group Target condition (respectively, $r = .30$, $p < .01$, and $r = .34$, $p < .01$). In the Out-group Target condition, these correlations were generally lower (respectively, $r = .10$, and $r = .24$). These correlations indicate, as expected, that higher relevance, credibility, and recall, as well as lower assimilation of the negative event are associated with higher guilt and shame particularly when the event concerned the in-group.

In the whole, the present results indicate that participants assigned less credibility to the message, more actively engaged in assimilation, and recalled the message less well when it concerned the in-group than the out-group target. In addition, participants reported higher guilt and shame when the message concerned the in-group than the out-group. As regards the source membership, participants believed the message more, and engaged less in assimilation when the source was the in-group than the out-group. However, the interaction between message target and message source shows that participants less accurately transmitted the message (as measured by recall) when it dealt with the in-group and was conveyed by an in-group source, than in all other conditions. Moreover, participants reconstructed the message more (as measured by assimilation), when it dealt with the in-group and was conveyed by the out-group source, than in every other case. Finally, when the event concerned the in-group, lower credibility and relevance assigned to the message, as well as higher reconstruction and forgetting were associated with a lower level of negativity of self-conscious emotions.

Study 2

Results obtained in the previous study show that the source of an historical "rumor" as well as whether it involves in-group or out-group events may be a powerful determinant of the way individuals deal with the transmitted information. We attempted to increase the external validity of results obtained in Study 1 by having participants to receive the message from three "independent" sources instead of a single one. Indeed, Allport and Postman (1947b) claimed that the typical procedure of studies of rumor imply that one person transmits a message to a new one. However, this is perhaps the less frequently occurring situation in daily life. In fact, most information arises from different sources and in different versions. Receivers may select and weight this information by appraising their common and distinctive components and their different sources. Moreover, multiple transmission is probably akin to social processes of memory, like cross-generational transmission of traumatic collective events .We thus attempted to generate these conditions in the present study.

Method

Participants. Participants were 178 male and 146 female Portuguese first- and second-year undergraduate students (N=324), aged 16 to 28 (average age was 21). Participants were randomly assigned to the four conditions. Within each condition, participants were randomly assigned to three positions on the transmission chain. Finally, in each condition, we randomly assigned the participants in each chain position to triads, who listened to the original message, or triads who read the messages from the first triads, or triads who read the messages from the second triads.

Procedure. The procedure was similar to that of Study 1, with some exceptions. After being typed and corrected for misspellings, the written reports produced by the participants in the first position were randomly divided in sets of three. Each participant in the second position received three reports written by three participants in the first position. Participants in this second position then wrote their own reports that were, again, corrected, typed, and passed on in groups of three to participants in the third position. To control for order effects, we presented the three versions of each triad in a different sequence to each member of the next triad. The instructions given to the participants in position 2 and 3 were: "You will read three accounts. A different participant in the study wrote each account. The accounts correspond to their recollections of a RTP (vs. TVE) documentary. Because different persons wrote the accounts, these accounts may differ in some details, but they refer to the same documentary. You should come to a personal conclusion based on the three accounts". Participants then

evaluated the accounts for relevance and credibility. Next, we requested participants to "write down the content of the documentary as accurately as possible. Please try to write down a text as consistent as possible with what would have been the content of the documentary. In other words, you should try to transmit the content of the documentary according to the versions you read, rather than to simply summarizing them separately". As in Study 1, participants were fully debriefed at the end of each session.

Dependent Measures. As in Study 1, we collapsed the questionnaire items measuring relevance (Cronbach's alpha = 0.62), credibility (Cronbach's alpha = 0.73), positive-negative emotional reaction (Cronbach's alpha = 0.81), and guilt and shame(Cronbach's alpha = 0.55).


Results and Discussion

We analyzed the data according to a Target (In-group vs. Out-group) x Source (In-group vs. Out-group) between-participants design. We found significant multivariate effects of Target ($F_{4, 266} = 8.85$, $p < .001$), Source ($F_{4, 266} = 6.26$, $p < .001$), and Target x Source ($F_{4, 266} = 2.89$, $p < .03$).The remaining multivariate effects were non-significant (highest $F_{4, 266} < 2.00$, ns).

Target Effects. Univariate effects supported Hypothesis 1. Participants assigned less relevance to the message about the in-group than the out-group target, respectively, ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.20$, and $M = 5.02$, $SD = 1.05$; $F_{1, 320} = 6.19$, $p < .02$). Credibility was lower for the In-group ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.02$), than the Out-group target, ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 0.87$; $F_{1, 320} = 4.09$, $p < .05$). Participants also reported more intense guilt and shame in the In-group than in the Out-group condition, ( $M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.70$, and $M = 2.4$, $SD = 1.40$; $F_{1, 320} = 3.5$, $p < .05$). In turn, positive-negative emotional reactions were lower in the In-group than in the Out-group target condition ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.51$, and $M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.17$; $F_{1, 320} = 21.08$, $p < .002$).

Omission, recall and assimilation, also supported Hypothesis 1. Omission was higher in the in-group ($M = 17.25$, $SD = 5.07$) than in the out-group target condition ($M = 13.96$, $SD = 4.44$; $F_{1, 320} = 38.89$, $p < .001$).Participants also depicted lower recall in the in-group than in the out-group target condition ($M = 1.83$, $SD = 1.15$, and $M = 2.71$, $SD = 0.64$; $F_{1, 320} = 75.77$, $p < .001$). Concomitantly, participants showed stronger assimilation in the in-group than in the out-group target condition ($M = 2.02$, $SD = 1.34$, and $M = 1.28$, $SD = 1.06$; $F_{1, 320} = 30.81$, $p < .001$).

Two blind judges content analyzes the 34 last chain versions, coding the presence absence of a) massacres; b) rapes; c) critics to perpetrators, d) mentions of America's discovery. More

than 90% agreement was possible. Massacres appears in 4% of in-group narratives (targets were Portuguese) and 28% out-group narratives (targets were Spanish, Chi square (1,33)=10,05,p<.05. Rapes was mention in 13% of in-group narratives and in 54% of out-group narratives, Chi square (1,33)=18,4,p<.05. Critics to perpetrators appears in 30% of in-group narratives and 56% of out-group narratives, Chi square (1,33)=30,1,p<.05. 46% mention America's Discovery in the in-group narratives and only 26% in the out-group version.

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; $F1, 269$ = 20.82, $p$ < .001). Negative emotional reactions were also higher in the In-group than in the Out-group source condition, respectively, M = 4.28, SD = 1.27, and M = 3.98, $SD$ = 1.12; $F 1, 269$ = 7.66, $p$ < .01. Source did not affect relevance, and guilt and shame (both $F1, 269$ < 1).

Target x Source Effects (Hypothesis 3). We found significant univariate 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. As can be seen in Table 2, 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 assigned to the message in the In-group Target condition ($r$ = .19, $p$ < .04, and $r$ = .22, $p$ < .02). In the Out-group Target condition, these correlations were ($r$ = .21, $p$ < .02, and $r$ = .08). Although these correlations are less clear than those found in Study 1, they indicate that higher credibility of the negative event is associated with higher guilt and shame particularly when the event concerned the in-group.

Our results suggest that one way people protect their social identity when faced to a negative past collective in-group event is by minimizing it: they assign lower credibility to the event and they evaluate it less negatively than when the event involves the out-group. The results also show that an in-group source has more informational influence than an out-group source. The former source induces more credibility and higher negative emotional reaction than does the latter. Participants reported more intense collective shame and guilt when both source and target belonged to the in-group. The strongest minimization occurred when the event was related to the in-group and when the source was the out-group. Finally, consistent with results obtained in Study 1, lower credibility was related to lower level of guilt and shame. This was

particularly the case when the event involved the in-group. This suggests that minimization helps dealing with collective negative self-conscious emotions (e.g. Baumeister & Hastings, 1997).

In the whole, the present studies support the idea that group members build consensus about issues relevant to their social identity through informal social communication. Participants assigned less relevance to, and attempted to reconstruct a negative historical event more when it involved the in-group than the out-group. Studies in traumatic events suggest that secrecy, silence and denial are the perpetrator's first mechanism of defence. If denial is not possible or fails, the perpetrators attack the credibility of source, events or victims, as our experimental studies confirms. Traditional research shows that the progression of rumors decreases the relevance assigned to it as well as the accuracy of its transmission (cf. Allport & Postman, 1945).Our data are consistent with this general effect. However, the data also show that such decrease is goal-directed (cf. Higgins, McCann & Fondocaro, 1982). Participants distorted the original message in order to match a favourable in-group image.

In Study 1, Target did not significantly affect relevance. However, taken together both studies show that participants assigned higher relevance to the information in the out-group than in the in-group target condition (mean effect size: $r = 0.12$; effect sizes of Study 1, $r = 0.08$, and Study 2, $r = 0.14$).Participants also showed better recall in the out-group target condition (mean effect size: $r = 0.38$), and more assimilation in the in-group target condition (mean effect size: $r = 0.32$). In the same vein, omission was associated with the in-group target ($r = 0.12$ in Study 1 and $r = 0.33$ in Study 2, mean effect size $r = 0.26$). Participants omitted more information, redefined the rumor, and expressed their personal opinion more when the rumor regarded the in-group. We found fair support to the predicted effects of Source. Participants assigned more credibility to the in-group than the out-group source ($r = 0.12$; effect sizes of Study 1, $r = 0.09$, and Study 2, $r = 0.13$). Finally, both studies showed that participants were the less accurate in transmitting the message (as measured by recall) when the in-group source communicated about the in-group than in remaining conditions. In the whole, our findings support the idea that informal communication is an important channel of social differentiation and through which group members attenuate the potential damage of negative historical events to their social identity.


Study 3

Results obtained in the previous study show that the source of an historical "rumor" as well as whether it involves in-group or out-group events may be a powerful determinant of the way individuals deal with the transmitted information. However, the results may be due to the differential beliefs or stereotypes that Portuguese individuals share about the colonial practices of Portuguese as explorers and navigators and of Spanish as conquerors. In other terms, stereotypes based on factual historical experience can explain part of responses. Studies on the social representations of America's discovery show that portuguese mention more features related to "explorers" and "navigators" than Brazilian subjects when asked to associate ideas to Brazil Discovery 1992.  Results suggest that the navigator and explorer belief cluster is related  to historical experience and anchored in defence of social identity  (de Sa and de Olivera, 2002). In order increase the external validity of results obtained in Study 1 and 2 Spanish participants in Study 3 receive the message about three targets instead of two. Spanish living in the Basque Country participants judged either Portuguese or Spanish targets or Basque targets. Identification with the national or ethnic group is an important moderator variables, as Doojse et al (1998) found. People reporting higher national identification shows higher coping mechanism when facing threatening historical events. In the predominantly nationalist Basque Country, even if most of people feel at the same time Spanish and Basque, an important minority (33% in surveys) self-categorize as only Basque and levels of identification as Basque are higher than levels of identification as Spanish (Paez et al,2002). Moreover, using different targets we were able to differentiate the effects of national and ethnic identification. On the other hand, we have found that lower credibility and higher reconstruction are used as ways of coping with a negative past event of the in-group. However, psychological distancing of the perpetrators excluding them of the in-group as black sheep and atypical persons, identification with a supra-category,  framing the event as understandable in this era and minimization of the frequency of negative behaviours are also important cognitive alternatives to cope with a threatening past event, inducing guilt and shame. For instance, Liu et al(2003) found that Germans in front of Jews identified more with Europe, probably as a way of coping with the collective guilt related to Holocaust. We thus attempted to integrate these conditions and variables in the present study.


Method

Participants. Participants were 155 Spanish first- and second-year undergraduate students, aged 18 to 37 (average age was 22), from which 23% were male. Participants of each nationality were randomly assigned to the six conditions. Within each condition, participants

were randomly assigned to three positions on the transmission chain. Finally, in each condition, we randomly assigned the participants in each chain position to triads, who listened to the original message, or triads who read the messages from the first triads, or triads who read the messages from the second triads

Procedure. The procedure was similar to that of Study 2, with some exceptions. After being typed and corrected for misspellings, the written reports produced by the participants in the first position were randomly divided in sets of three. Each participant in the second position received three reports written by three participants in the first position. Participants in this second position then wrote their own reports that were, again, corrected, typed, and passed on in groups of three to participants in the third position.  In Out-group target condition, participants hear or read about Portuguese target, in an intermediate condition they hear or read about Spanish target and in the last condition they receive information about the ethnic in-group or Basque target. Participants in the first chain position were asked to listen carefully to the sound track of a television documentary. The stimulus-message went as follows: "When the Portuguese (vs. the Spanish vs. the Basques) 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 vs. the Basques) 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 vs. the Basques) besieged a village of the Guarani tribe and, with torches, set it in panic...". As in Study 1 and 2, participants were fully debriefed at the end of each session.

Moderator Measures.  Ethnic and national identification was measured by two items. Participants were asked to report how intensely they feel identified with Europe, the Basque Country and with Spain (1=Not at all; 7=A Lot). Identification with Europe was an index of Identification with a supra-category.

Dependent Measures. As in Study 1 and 2, we collapsed the questionnaire items measuring relevance (Cronbach's alpha = 0.72), credibility (Cronbach's alpha = 0.84), positive-negative emotional reaction (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87), and guilt and shame(Cronbach's alpha = 0.61). Minimization was measured with one item asking "How frequent was these type of behaviours? Low = 1, High frequency = 7. Disidentification or cutting of reflected failure by means of downwards in-group comparison, was measured by one item asking "consider the

mercenaries to be an exception rather than a typical member group member: How typical are... by respect to their national group: 1 =Not at all; Very Typical = 7. <u>Reframe</u> or social creativity by framing and explaining because of the context the negative behaviour was measured by a question: "Legion Delta behavior was Understandable in the Context(=-4); Not understandable even in the context(=+4)".

<u>Results and Discussion</u>

We analyzed the data according to a Target (Ethnic In-group or Basque <u>vs.</u> National In-group Spanish <u>vs.</u> National Out-group or Portuguese) x Source (In-group <u>vs.</u> Out-group) between-participants design. We found significant multivariate effects of Target ($\underline{F}4, 146 = 3.69$, $\underline{p} < .001$) and Source ($\underline{F}4, 145 = 6.18$, $\underline{p} < .001$).  The remaining multivariate effects were non-significant (highest $\underline{F}\ 4, 266 < 2.00$, <u>ns</u>).

<u>Target Effects</u>. Univariate effects supported Hypothesis 1. Participants assigned less <u>credibility</u> to the message about the in-group than the out-group target. <u>Credibility</u> was lower for the Basque In-group target ($\underline{M} = 4.25$, $\underline{SD} = 1.22$), than for the Spanish target ($\underline{M} = 4.63$, $\underline{SD} = 1.70$) and the Portuguese Out-group target ($\underline{M} = 4.97$, $\underline{SD} = 0.93$; $\underline{F}1,153 = 5.68$, $\underline{p} < .01$). <u>Framing</u> was relatively higher for Basque in-group target ($\underline{M} = 1.37$ $\underline{SD} = 2.95$) than for the Spanish target ($\underline{M} = 2.45$, $\underline{SD} = 2.03$) and the Portuguese out-group ($\underline{M} = 2.39$, $\underline{SD} = 2.00$); $\underline{F}2, 153 = 3,5$ $\underline{p} < .04$). <u>Minimization</u> was relatively lower (this means higher or appraisal of lower frequencies) for Basque in-group target ($\underline{M} = 5.50$, $\underline{SD} = 1.33$) than for Spanish target ($\underline{M} = 5.62$, $\underline{SD} = 1.38$) and Portuguese out-group ($\underline{M} = 6.00$, $\underline{SD} = 0.99$); $\underline{F}2, 153 = 2,3$ $\underline{p} < .10$). <u>Disidentification</u> was lower for Basque in-group ($\underline{M} = 3.09$, $\underline{SD} = 1.80$) than Portuguese ($\underline{M} = 4.10$, $\underline{SD} = 1.80$) than Spanish target ($\underline{M} = 4.50$, $\underline{SD} = 1.55$); $\underline{F}2, 153 = 13,9$ $\underline{p} < .001$). Two blind judges content analyzes the last chain versions, coding the presence absence of a) massacres; b) rapes; c) colonization, d) mentions of America's discovery. More than 90% agreement was possible. Massacres and rape appears in most narratives with no differences by targets. Discovery was mention in 56% of Portuguese out-group narratives, in 33% Spanish narratives and in 17% of Basque in-group narratives, Chi square $(1,53)=3,2,p<.05$.  This suggests that subjects use a stereotype related to factual historical past.

<u>Source Effects</u>. In support of Hypothesis 2, participants assigned higher <u>credibility</u> to the in-group ($\underline{M} = 4.89$, $\underline{SD} = 1.11$), than the out-group source ($\underline{M} = 4.30$, $\underline{SD} = 1.16$; $\underline{F}1, 148 = 11,28$, $\underline{p} < .001$). <u>Relevance</u> was also higher in the In-group ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 0.80$) than in the Out-group ($M = 4.86$, $\underline{SD} = 0.95$; $\underline{F}\ 1, 148 = 9,62$, $\underline{p} < .002$) source condition. to the in-group than the out-group. Effect size similar to previous studies: for <u>relevance</u>   r=.21,p<.004 and

for credibility , $r$ =.26,p<.001. Participants also reported more intense <u>negative emotions</u> in the In-group ($\underline{M}$ = 4.30, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.40) than in the Out-group Source condition ($\underline{M}$ = 3.70, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.20; $\underline{F}$1, 148 = 11,4, $\underline{p}$ < .001.). Source did not affect <u>guilt and shame, minimization, reframe and disidentification</u> (all $\underline{F}$'s 1, 153 < 1).

<u>Target x Source Effects (Hypothesis 3)</u>. We found marginal significant univariate Target x Source interactions for guilt and shame,  F 1,153 = 2.54, p < .09. As can be seen in Table 2, participants reported higher guilt and shame in the in-group National Target or Spanish /In-group  Source condition than in all the other conditions.

<u>Correlational Analysis (Hypothesis 4 and 5)</u>.

We checked for the relationship of guilt and shame with credibility and relevance assigned to the message in the ethnic In-group Target condition (respectively, $\underline{r}$ = -.18, $\underline{p}$ < .10, and $\underline{r}$ = n.s.). In the Spanish national in-group and Portuguese Out-group Target condition, the correlations between guilt and shame and credibility were respectively, $\underline{r}$ = .45, $\underline{p}$ < .02, and $\underline{r}$ = .24, $\underline{p}$ < .05). Correlations between relevance and guilt and shame were not significant in both cases. Correlations indicate that 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 minimize self-conscious emotions dealing with more credible information. As expected identification with the Basque Country was higher than identification with Spain (respectively M = 5.51, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.48 and M = 3.93, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.76; $\underline{t}$ 1, 154 = 8,97, $\underline{p}$ < .001. In the Ethnic In-group condition, identification with this group (Basque Country) was related but not significantly to <u>guilt and shame</u>, $\underline{r}$ (54) = .09,  n.s.,  to disidentification, $\underline{r}$ (54) = -.13, n.s., and unrelated to <u>framing</u> behaviour as understandable in the context, $\underline{r}$ (54) = -.01, n.s.. However identification with the ethnic in-group was related to higher minimization $\underline{r}$ (54) = -.22 $\underline{p}$ < .05. In the National In-group condition, identification with the group (Spain) was unrelated to <u>minimization, framing and disidentification.</u>

As in previous studies, lower credibility was assigned to in-group (both national and ethnic) than to out-group. Higher shame and guilt was found in the case of national in-group target and source. Lower credibility related to lower level of guilt, particularly the case when the event involved the national in-group. This suggests that minimization helps dealing with collective negative self-conscious emotions. However, this study also shows that strong identification with a group, in this case the Basque ethnic in-group, provokes a different patterns of responses: higher credibility is compensated by a minimization of guilt and shame reactions. This can be explained, because in the case of ethnic in-group, participants show

higher level of cognitive coping with collective negative past event. Minimization of behaviours frequency, rejecting the more murderers as typical members of the group and frame the murders and rape behaviours as more understandable in the context, was more frequent in the ethnic in-group condition than in the case of national in-group and national out-group. Identification with the ethnic in-group was specifically related to higher level of minimization. However, identification with the national in-group was unrelated to coping responses and higher identification with Europe was absent in this study as a way of coping with collective guilt and shame.

Study 4

Results obtained in the previous study show that the source of an historical "rumor" as well as whether it involves in-group or out-group events may be a powerful determinant of the way individuals deal with the transmitted information. However, the results may be due to the differential beliefs or stereotypes that Portuguese individuals share about the colonial practices of Portuguese and Spanish "conquerors", as our previous study suggest: remember that subjects use mention more Discovery of America talking about Portuguese, suggesting that they use a stereotype related to factual historical past.  In order to check for this possibility, in Study 4, we employed a cross-group design in which Portuguese and Spanish participants judged either Portuguese or Spanish targets. With this aim we collapse some subjects from the second and third study. This study also allows us to did a sort of meta-analytical integration of studies 2 and 3. Finally, in this study we will analyze specifically the role of the position in the chain of serial reproduction. We expect to check that second hand information allows people to use more cognitive coping and that people in the second and third position would show lower levels of relevance, credibility and emotions, particularly in the case of the In-Group message.

Method

Participants. Participants were 202 Portuguese and 75 Spanish first- and second-year undergraduate students, aged 16 to 29 (average age was 21), from which 43% were male. Participants of each nationality were randomly assigned to the four conditions. Within each condition, participants were randomly assigned to three positions on the transmission chain. Finally, in each condition, we randomly assigned the participants in each chain position to triads, who listened to the original message, or triads who read the messages from the first triads, or triads who read the messages from the second triads. Spanish subjects were participants in study 3 reporting a relatively higher identification with Spain and only Spanish

and Portuguese targets conditions of study 3 were included. 122 Portuguese participants were deleted randomly in order to limit the weight of this nationality in the whole sample.

Procedure. The procedure was that of Study 2 and 3.

Dependent Measures. As in Study 1, 2 and 3, we collapsed the questionnaire items measuring relevance (Cronbach's alpha = 0.62), credibility (Cronbach's alpha = 0.73), positive-negative emotional reaction (Cronbach's alpha = 0.81), and guilt and shame(Cronbach's alpha = 0.55).

Results and Discussion

We analyzed the data according to a Nationality (Portuguese vs. Spanish participants) x Target (In-group vs. Out-group) x Source (In-group vs. Out-group) between-participants design. We found significant multivariate effects of Target ($F_{4, 266} = 8.85$, p < .001), Source ($F_{4, 266} = 6.26$, p < .001), and Target x Source ($F_{4, 266} = 2.89$, p < .03). Nationality also had a significant multivariate effect ($F_{4, 266} = 2.94$, p < .03).[6] The remaining multivariate effects were non-significant (highest $F_{4, 266} < 2.00$, ns).

Target Effects. Univariate effects supported Hypothesis 1. Participants assigned marginally less relevance to the message about the in-group than the out-group target, respectively, M = 4.72, SD = 1.17, and M = 5.09, SD = 0.95; $F_{1, 269} = 3.27$, p < .08). Credibility was lower for the In-group (M = 4.46, SD = 1.21), than the Out-group target (M = 4.91, SD = 0.92; $F_{1, 269} = 9.89$, p < .01). Participants also reported more intense guilt and shame in the In-group than in the Out-group condition, respectively, M = 2.76, SD = 1.60, and M = 2.34, SD = 1.37; $F_{1, 269} = 5.69$, p < .02. In turn, positive-negative emotional reactions were lower in the In-group than in the Out-group target condition, respectively, M = 3.92, SD = 1.26, and M = 4.36, SD = 1.11; $F_{1, 269} = 6.07$, p < .02.

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, respectively, M = 4.28, SD = 1.27, and M = 3.98, SD = 1.12; $F_{1, 269} = 7.66$, p < .01. Source did not affect relevance, and guilt and shame (both $F_{1, 269} < 1$).

Target x Source Effects (Hypothesis 3). We found significant univariate 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. As can be seen in Table 2, 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 assigned to the message in the In-group Target condition (respectively, $\underline{r}$ = .19, $\underline{p}$ < .04, and $\underline{r}$ = .22, $\underline{p}$ < .02). In the Out-group Target condition, these correlations were respectively, $\underline{r}$ = .21, $\underline{p}$ < .02, and $\underline{r}$ = .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.

Position Effects. Participants assigned higher <u>relevance</u> to message in the first position ($\underline{M}$ = 5.2, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.03), than in the second and third position ($\underline{M}$ = 4.8, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.09; $\underline{F}$2, 423 = 6.08, $\underline{p}$ < .003). <u>Negative emotional reactions</u> were also higher in the first position than in the second and third position, respectively, M = 4.28, SD = 1.27, and M = 3.98, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.12; $\underline{F}$ 2, 423 = 6.9, $\underline{p}$ < .001. Source did not affect <u>credibility, and guilt and shame</u> (both $\underline{F}$2, 423 < 1).

Target x Position Effects. We found significant univariate Target x Source interactions for relevance and negative emotions, respectively, F 2,423 = 3.79, p < .03, and F 2, 423 = 5.84, p < .02. As can be seen in Table 3, participants decreases from the first to the second and third position appraisal of relevance and feeling of negative emotions  in the In-group Target condition. In the Out-group target condition evaluations of relevance and reported negative feelings remain stable.

Our results suggest that one way people protect their social identity when faced to a negative past collective in-group event is by minimizing it: they assign lower credibility to the event and they evaluate it less negatively than when the event involves the out-group. The results also show that an in-group source has more informational influence than an out-group source. The former source induces more credibility and higher negative emotional reaction than does the latter. Participants reported more intense collective shame and guilt when both source and target belonged to the in-group. The strongest minimization occurred when the event was related to the in-group and when the source was the out-group. Finally, consistent with results obtained in Study 1 and 2, lower credibility was related to lower level of guilt and shame. This was particularly the case when the event involved the in-group. This suggests that minimization helps dealing with collective negative self-conscious emotions (e.g. Baumeister & Hastings, 1997).

General Discussion

In the whole, the present studies support the idea that group members could feel guilt and shame related to past behaviour of national in-group members. However, level of social or conscious was relatively low and the reported level of negative emotions was higher, particularly in the case of out-group targets. Studies also support the idea that national group

members build consensus about issues relevant to their social identity through informal social communication. Participants assigned less relevance to, and attempted to reconstruct a negative historical event more when it involved the in-group than the out-group. Studies in traumatic events suggest that secrecy, silence and denial are the perpetrator's first mechanism of defence. If denial is not possible or fails, the perpetrators attack the credibility of source, events or victims, as our experimental studies confirms. Previous research shows worse recall for in-group negative behaviour (Howard and Rothbarth, 1980) and that the progression of rumors decreases the relevance assigned to it as well as the accuracy of its transmission (cf. Allport & Postman, 1945).Our data are consistent with these general trends. However, the data also show that such decrease is goal-directed (cf. Higgins, McCann & Fondocaro, 1982). Participants distorted the original message in order to match a favourable in-group image.

Taken together theses studies shows that participants assigned lower credibility to the information in the out-group than in the in-group target condition. Participants also showed better <u>recall</u> in the out-group target condition and more <u>assimilation</u> in the in-group target condition. These results are congruent with the general trend towards better recall of out-group negative behaviours and worse recall of in-group negative behaviour (Howard and Rothbarth, 1980). In the same vein, <u>omission</u> was associated with the in-group target. Participants omitted more information, redefined the rumor, and expressed their personal opinion more when the rumor regarded the in-group. Moreover, analysis of the last chain narratives show that subjects "forget" more negative features in the case of national in-group. We found fair support to the predicted effects of Source. Participants assigned more <u>credibility</u> to the in-group than the out-group source. Finally, Study 1 and 2 showed that participants were the less accurate in transmitting the message (as measured by <u>recall</u>) when the in-group source communicated about the in-group than in remaining conditions. Study 3 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 mechanism are not displayed when subjects show medium size level of identification, like in the case of the Basques by respect to Spain. In the whole, our findings support the idea that informal communication is an important channel of social differentiation and through which group members attenuate the potential damage of negative historical events to their social identity.


*Conclusions*

As Middleton and Edwards (1990, p.3) pointed out, "oral accounts [are] a resource for revealing the relationships between what people remember and the ideological dilemmas of their past and present socio-economic and political circumstances". Our studies illustrate this idea. With these studies, we attempted to describe how such accounts might shield social identity from vicissitudes associated with historical and everyday intergroup relations. We shall conclude by raising three issues which, in our view, could help clarify this process. The first issue bears to whether rumors are "true" or "false" and social representations of past as reflecting real events and conflicts or as reconstructions. The second issue concerns the role of social influence on the acceptance and transmission of rumors in intergroup contexts. The third, more general issue regards the methodological adequacy of the person-to-person, as opposed to the triadic, transmission procedure, as a paradigm to study social representations of past.

Accuracy vs. Trust.

A question for classical research on rumors is whether rumors convey "true" or "false" information. Rumors have often been conceived of as erroneous, degenerating information that evades institutional control (Allport & Postman, 1947a; Difonzo, Bordia & Rosnow, 1994; cf. Kapferer, 1987). However, some evidence suggests that rumors may accurately reflect the events they depict (e.g. Caplow, 1947; Schachter & Burdick, 1955). Third study confirms that spaniards (and not only portuguese) subjects reflect stereotypical dominant information – black legend of Spaniards conquerors and "white legend" of Portuguese navigators and explorers was reproduced in last position of chain, in the case of Spanish subjects. Alternatively, we may view rumors as a process that helps people dealing with intergroup events that are inconsistent with group "ideals". In this vein, trust, rather than accuracy, is the issue at stake in rumors. In other words, people will believe in, or assign relevance to, accounts that match their beliefs and motivations. Concomitantly, people's reports will match the received accounts to the extent that the accounts match their beliefs and motivations. An important belief of group members is in-group supremacy, and a correlated motivation is to hold a positive social identity (e.g. Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel, 1978). Therefore, we may propose that "historical rumors" will be as accurate as the original stimulus upholds such positive social identity. Memory of out-group negative behaviors are more accurate, credible, relevant and induces higher level of negative emotion, because they induce lower collective guilt and shame and allows groups members to positive social comparison.

However, group-events do not always support in-group supremacy and satisfactory social identity. Often, such events are anxiety, shame and guilt generating, because they undermine group members' social identity motivations. Evidence shows that uncertainty and ensuing anxiety is an important trigger of informal communication (e.g. Anthony, 1973; Esposito, 1987; Walker & Beckerle, 1987). The same evidence suggests that reliance on rumors depend on credulity (Kapferer, 1987; cf. also Rosnow, 1980, 1991; Rosnow, Yost & Esposito, 1986). Rumors and cross-generational transmission of historical information may thus be viewed as the outcome of social influence.

Collective Memory, Referent Information Influence, and Forgetfulness.

Research on referent information influence shows that in-group sources are more effective than out-group sources in generating the private acceptance of information (e.g. Abrams, Cochrane, Wetherell, Hogg & Turner, 1990; Turner, 1991). According to Hogg and Turner (1987), people learn or infer the stereotypic norms of their category, and assign these norms to themselves. Consequently, their beliefs become in-group normative. Referent information influence thus leads people to conform to the in-group and to express counter-conformity to out-groups, from which they actively attempt to differentiate (e.g. Abrams et al, 1990; cf. also Hogg & Abrams, 1988). This idea applies to the present context. As Kapferer (1987, p.16) pointed out, "social life is based on trust and the delegation of the verification task (...). The idea of verification is therefore inseparable from the person who presumably did the verification". Whether information is to be accepted or not, depends on a subjective assessment of its source. We might thus expect participants to agree more and to distort the message less in the in-group source condition. Why then was recall worse in the in-group source/in-group target than in all other conditions? Agreement or relevance was higher in the case of in-group source, as research on the inter-group sensitivity effect has shown (Hornsey & Imani, 2004). Research on collective memory shows that, through the process of informal cross-generation communication, people tend, either to "forget", to "deny", or to reconstruct unpleasant social events. This arises from these events' emotional impact and anxiety-generating strength (e.g. Bartlett, 1932; Halbwachs, 1992; Marques et al, 1997; Vansina, 1985). We may assume that a negative message about the in-group generates more anxiety, shame and guilt when it is conveyed by a (more credible) in-group than by a (less credible) out-group source. Hence, the former source may induce a stronger threat to social identity, than does the latter. The in-group source would therefore generate higher anxiety and negative emotional affect activation (higher guilt and shame). Therefore, negative collective affect,

could be a mediator between the in-group source and participants' worse recall. Although this is speculative, our studies may thus illustrate how informal social communication operates to generate such forgetfulness and help people dealing with those events.

Person-to-Person vs. Triadic Transmission of Rumors: Serial Reproduction as a paradigm for study the social representations of past.

Another goal of the present studies was to shed some light upon problems relative to the methodological adequacy of the person-to-person transmission procedure that has been traditionally employed in laboratory studies of rumors. We compared this procedure to another in which each person received different accounts of the same rumor. We found similar results with both procedures, but the latter yielded more clear results. This may be due to the particular communicational structure utilized in Study 2 and 3. The fact that, in this study, participants received information from three concomitant sources instead of one, probably provided then with larger latitude of materials upon which to reconstruct the original message. This procedure is closer to the real-life social process of memory, and seems to have allowed participants to more freely build on the received information. Unfortunately, our data did not allow checking for this phenomenon. A related problem is that, in real life, people may choose not to convey a rumor (Kapferer, 1987; Rosnow, 1991), whereas we did not provide this choice to participants. Triadic serial reproduction show that subjects decrease evaluations of credibility and negative emotions from the first position (hearing first hand information) to second and third position, but only in the case of the in-group target. Moreover, stereotypical topics and salience of positive reconstructed emerge in the last position. These processes are similar, in our opinions, to processes of selective retention and reconstruction of shared beliefs about past events. In this sense, serial reproduction of information of negative group behaviours appears as a paradigm to the study of cultural dynamics and collective memory: how people remembers collective past, particularly how specific groups construct and reconstruct shared images of past. In other words, how groups reproduce, maintain and modifies social representations of past, feeding culture with a normative image of group past.  As Van Dijk states Bartlett's use of serial reproduction "is the first contribution to the theory of discursively based reproduction of social cognitions" (1990 quoted in McIntyre et al, 2004).

Collective memory can be conceived of as social representations of past: a) they are widely shared beliefs about collective past; b) they are products of informal communication;

c) "scientific" or formal history feeds these images of past; d) images of past are normative (moral lessons about our martyrs, heroes and positive aspects of past), are related to groups needs, attitudes and defence of social identity; e) shared beliefs about the past constitutes the nucleus of social representations, in the sense of the specific image that a group has about their past, continuity and change; f) different groups share relatively different social representations of past; g) however, some collective representations, shared in general by a society or culture, exist and social representations of past reproduce past real group and inter-group events (De Rosa, 2003; Liu et al, 2003); g) social representations of past are anchored on groups collective knowledge, values and attitudes and follows processes of selective retention, abstraction and concretization or objectification – conventionalization in the terms of Bartlett; h) social representations of past are related to collective emotions, in particular conscious or social emotions of proud, guilt and shame. Groups tend to feel historical proud, but also should deal with negative past behaviours and threats to positive social identity. We was able to show that, as in sociocultural dynamics, by means of retransmission of information, subjects feel more guilt and shame, but lower negative emotions (and this is a form of coping), when hearing, reading and retelling massacres perpetrated by national members. They believe more to in-groups critics, but at the same time, reconstruct more in general information related to in-group. They attribute lower credibility to messages related to in-group collective negative behaviour and display more cognitive coping. At the end of three generations, relevance and negative emotions related to in-group past collective behavior decreases, content of narrative reproduces cultural stereotypes, forgetting and reconstruction are higher, and in general subjects concerned, but not committed, display a repertoire of coping like disidentification with perpetrators, relative justification in a context of their behaviours and minimization of frequency. All these phenomena are frequent, as surveys and historical data reviewed in the introduction show. This text would be a collaboration to the understanding of collective cultural dynamics, in particular, to the study of group's processes related to social representations of past.

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Footnotes

[1] For instance, Rosenthal (1971, cited by Rosnow, 1991) analyzed a rumor in the United States, about a male child who was kidnapped by teenagers and, later, found castrated. The rumor that circulated in the White community stated that the kidnappers were Black teenagers and the child was White. Yet, another rumor that circulated in the Black community stated that the child was Black and its kidnappers were White teenagers. Clearly, this mirroring between rumors fits a social identity framework. In both cases, the rumor protected the group membership of those who spread it while derogating the out-group.

[2] Rumors may be transmitted otherwise than by serial chains. In this vein, we compared, in studies 1 and 2, two different procedures of rumor transmission. In Study 1, we employed the traditional person-to-person serial transmission. In Study 2, we employed transmission from triad to triad. In our opinion, the latter procedure is more realistic, because the participants may contrast three different versions of the same event.

[3] After thanking the participants, the Experimenter interviewed them about the "real purpose of the study". All participants considered it plausible that a television channel broadcast the original information. However, many participants who participated in the second and third positions anticipated that they would be asked to transmit information to others (the transmission model of information in chains is normally used in social games).

[4] These 24 categories had been previously collected in a pilot study in which we asked 8 judges to decompose the stimulus-message in as many meaningful units as necessary. Categories reaching a 75% inter-judge agreement were preserved for the present analysis.

[5] To check for the classical effects of the position in the rumor chain, we conducted a Target x Source x Position MANOVA on omission, recall, and assimilation. This analysis showed a significant multivariate effect of Position ($F_{6, 328} = 17.81$, $p < .001$). Univariate analyses showed that Position affected all three measures (lowest $F_{2, 165} = 4.63$, $p < .02$). The results were in line with previous evidence by Allport and Postman (e.g. 1945). Recall decreased from the first ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 0.35$) to the second position ($M = 2.02$, $SD = 1.07$), and from this one to the third position ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 1.15$). Omission increased from the first ($M = 0.54$, $SD = .0.17$) to the second position ($M = 0.76$, $SD = 0.11$) and from this one to the third position ($M = 0.82$, $SD = 0.01$). Assimilation increased from the first ($M = 1.21$, $SD = 0.98$) to the second ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 1.00$) and third ($M = 1.70$, $SD = 0.97$) positions.

[6] The single significant univariate effect associated with Nationality was on positive-negative emotional reaction. Portuguese participants reported less intense negative emotional reactions

than did Spanish participants, respectively, M = 4.00, SD = 1.23, and M = 4.51, SD = 1.07; F 1, 269 = 2.94, p < .03. Although not central to purposes of the present research, this result suggests that the Portuguese sample de-emphasized emotional reactions to the event. This is consistent with the idea that this sample belonged to a higher Power-Distance culture than the Spanish sample (cf. Basabe, Páez, Valencia, Rimé, Pennebaker, Diener & González, 2000).

Author Notes

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Tables


Table 1.

Effects of Target and Source on Recall, Assimilation, and Omission (Study 1)

|  | In-group Target | | Out-group Target | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | M | SD | M | SD |
| Recall | | | | |
| In-group Source | 1.69 | 1.20 | 2.61 | 0.74 |
| Out-group Source | 2.18 | 0.98 | 2.34 | 0.99 |
| Assimilation | | | | |
| In-group Source | 1.60 | 1.06 | 1.17 | 0.54 |
| Out-group Source | 2.20 | 1.07 | 1.17 | 0.95 |

Table 2.

Effects of Target and Source on Credibility and Guilt and Shame(Study 4).

|  | In-group Target | | Out-group Target | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | M | SD | M | SD |
| Credibility | | | | |
| In-group Source | 4.93 | 1.09 | 4.98 | 0.98 |
| Out-group Source | 3.95 | 1.12 | 4.84 | 0.88 |
| Guilt and Shame | | | | |
| In-group Source | 3.00 | 1.68 | 2.23 | 1.28 |
| Out-group Source | 2.51 | 1.48 | 2.45 | 1.47 |

Table 3.

### Effects of Target and Position on Credibility and Negative Emotions(Study 4).

| | In-group Target | | Out-group Target | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | SD | M | SD |
| Relevance | | | | |
| First Position | 5.26 | 1.01 | 5.1 | 0.99 |
| Second Position | 4.64 | 1.21 | 4.96 | 1.08 |
| Third Position | 4.55 | 1.17 | 5.1 | .99 |
| Negative Emotions | | | | |
| First Position | 4.04 | 1.47 | 4.0 | 1.33 |
| Second Position | 3.25 | 1.44 | 3.7 | 1.30 |
| Third Position | 3.0 | 1.47 | 4.0 | 1.37 |