social sharing of emotion and emotional regulation

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

For a review, see: Rimé (2009, in "Emotion Review")

Social sharing of emotion after emotional life events

Movie induction of emotion in the lab. ➔
Extent of social sharing in the next 2 days

F(2,59) = 13.67, p < .001

(Luminet, Boets, Delie, Manstead, & Rimé, Cognition & Emotion, 2000)

Why do people want to share their emotions? ...

- Positive emotions?
  - Langston (1994)
    - "capitalization"
    - Enhances the sender's level of positive affects
  - Gable et al. (2004)
    - Confirmed "capitalization"
    - Demonstrated that when partners are responsive, the quality of the relationship is enhanced (intimacy, satisfaction...)

- Negative emotions...?
Why do people share negative emotions?

Stereotypical answer:
"Talking about an emotion would bring emotional recovery..."
- catharsis
- discharge
- relief

Prediction: "Once it is shared, the emotion vanishes..."

Effects of merely sharing a negative emotion:
- Episodes which were kept secret
  - Same emotional impact as shared episodes
- Naturally developed sharing
  - No relation with emotional recovery
- Laboratory-induced sharing
  (Zech & Rime, J Clin Psychol Psychother, 2005)
  - No impact upon emotional recovery
  - But...

Effects of sharing an emotion:
Data from experimental studies:
...but, participants reported important social benefits...:
- They felt supported
- They felt understood
- They felt close to the listener
- Their well-being was enhanced...


Effects of sharing an emotion:
To sum up...
- Sharing an emotion does not bring emotional recovery...
- But it brings important social benefits...

Psychological debriefings of victims after traumatic events:
- In recent years,
  - Widespread practice
- Expected effects
  - Prevention of PTSD
  - Fits common sense
  - Expression ➔ Recovery
- Meta-analytic reviews of studies
  - PTSD prevention ➔ Null effects
  - Even some "a contrario effects"
  - But...
benefits of psychological debriefings:
- but, participants reported important social benefits
- managers → symbolic social functions
  - society is represented
  - listening, understanding, support
  - validation of an "unbelievable" experience
  - social integration of victims
- peers → initiation of a social process
  - mutual listening
  - mutual support
  - reciprocal empathy
  - "we feel the same" → "honey moon" effect

in sum, quite consistently...
- mere emotional expression in interpersonal context...
  - no emotional recovery
  - but, benefits for social variables
  - ...where do the benefits come from?
  - ...how to achieve emotional recovery?

what we do in current life...

...where do the benefits come from?  
...how to achieve emotional recovery?

→ a closer look at  
the impact of an emotion...

negative emotional episode ...  
→ impact 1

negative emotional experience ...  
→ impact 2
impact of current life emotional experiences... (Corsini & Rimé, in preparation)

- loss of meaning
- loss of self-esteem
- loss of confidence in others
- loss of confidence in the world

(all p's < .0001)

impact of an emotion: summing up...

- impact 1...
  - a goal cannot be reached
  - emotional experience (sadness, fear, anger, shame,...)

- impact 2...
  - cognitive models are disconfirmed
  - self-confidence is shattered
  - emotional distress (anxiety, uncertainty, helplessness...)

2 types of tasks after a negative emotional episode

- cognitive tasks
  - revision of goals
  - modification of theories, models
  - reframing the experience

- socio-affective tasks
  - receiving comfort, support
  - validation, recognition
  - social integration, esteem...

emotions felt by 121 listeners of negative emotional episodes

exposure to the sharing of an emotion elicits emotion

listeners...  
- heard either  
  * a low or  
  * a moderate  
  * or a high intensity emotional episode  
- rated (0 to 10) the intensity of the emotion they felt while listening

listener's responses as a function of the intensity of the shared emotion

interpersonal dynamic of the social sharing of emotion

person A needs to share an emotion
- expresses emotions
- expresses emotions more
- feeling of unity, empathy
- perceived similarity
- receives understanding, help, support
- likes person B more

target person B
- experiences interest
- experiences emotions
- feels understanding and willingness to help
- feels understanding
- and willingness to help
- likes person A more

“secondary social sharing”...

- if emotions are socially shared,
- and if targets experience emotions when listening,
- then, targets should share what they heard with third persons...

secondary social sharing

is there evidence of tertiary social sharing?
person C heard about A from B... did person C tell it to a D?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>28</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>32</th>
<th>34</th>
<th>36</th>
<th>38</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C shared with several persons</td>
<td>30,67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C shared with 1 person</td>
<td>33,33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C did not share</td>
<td>33,33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(source: Christophe, 1997)

collective dynamic resulting from the sharing of emotion...

benefits of the social sharing and its diffusion...

- for the initiator...
  - social recognition, validation, support
  - people around know what happened
- for the community...
  - the emotional information is distributed
  - the social knowledge is extended
  - social representations & models are updated
  - preventive actions can be undertaken
- in sum, enhancement of...
  - of contacts and exchanges
  - of closeness and social integration
  - of knowledge and models

tasks after an emotion... completed in mere social sharing?

- cognitive tasks (emotional experience)
  - reorganisation of motives
  - modification of models and world views
  - reframing, reappraisal of experience
- socio-affective tasks (emotional distress)
  - receiving comfort, support, love
  - validation, recognition
  - social integration...

how to achieve emotional recovery after an emotion?

- an other social sharing mode...?


- participants viewed an emotional movie
- then, assigned to
  - (1) a challenging confederate (reframing, reappraisal)
  - (2) a validating (supportive) confederate
  - (3) a talk alone condition
  - (4) a no talk condition
- compared to the no talk group, participants in the challenging condition alone evidenced a clear superior recovery
- "challenging" = a "cognitive work" condition
**If targets (listeners) of a social sharing interaction adopt...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Socio-affective Responding</th>
<th>Cognitive Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of emotion?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in cognitions and motives?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support &amp; social integration?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Experimental test...**

Nils & Rimé (submitted)

- Induction of emotion using a movie clip
- Then, social sharing with an "intimate" partner
- This partner was instructed to develop either
  - Neutral sharing
  - Empathetic sharing ➔ Socio-affective mode
  - Positive reframing ➔ Cognitive mode
- Measures
  - Emotional impact of the movie
    - Cognitive: beliefs-world views
    - Social: loneliness scale
- Measurement times
  - Immediately after sharing
  - 48h later, after reexposure to movie

**Emotional impact of the movie...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sharing Modes</th>
<th>After Sharing</th>
<th>48h Later</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-affective</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cognitive effects: beliefs - world views...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Socio-affective</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Sharing Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After Sharing</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48h Later</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Social effects: loneliness scale...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sharing Mode</th>
<th>Loneliness</th>
<th>Loneliness 48h Later</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-affective</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
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**Conclusion...**

- 2 distinct social sharing modes

  - Each mode ➔ Specific effect
    - Socio-affective mode ➔ Social integration ➔ Buffer the emotional distress (Impact 2)
    - Cognitive mode ➔ Cognitive integration ➔ Buffer the emotional experience (Impact 1)
...thanks for your attention!

for powerpoint presentation
and/or related papers...

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