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The relation between social sharing and the duration of emotional experience

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People often socially share their emotions to regulate them. Two-mode theory of social sharing states that cognitive sharing will contribute to emotional recovery, whereas socio-affective sharing will only temporarily alleviate emotional distress. Previous studies supporting this theory, measured emotional recovery in terms of residual emotional intensity. Until now, another important time-dynamic aspect of emotions, emotion duration, has been largely ignored. In two experience sampling studies we addressed this gap. In Study 1, participants reported on the duration of anger, fear, and sadness episodes; additionally time-varying information on the occurrence and mode of sharing was collected. This study revealed that sharing led to a shortening in emotion duration, in particular when it was socio-affective in nature. In Study 2 we investigated whether this result could be interpreted in terms of our measure of duration primarily reflecting emotional relief rather than recovery. In this study, the same method as in Study 1 was used; additionally, residual emotional intensity was measured three days after emotion onset. Study 2 largely replicated the findings from Study 1. Furthermore, duration appeared to be empirically distinct from residual intensity. Finally, no relation between sharing and residual intensity was found, even when considering the sharing mode.

Keywords: Social sharing; Two-mode theory; Emotion duration; Emotional relief; Emotional recovery.

A frequently observed emotion-driven behaviour is social sharing, which has been defined as a conversation in which a person, faced with an emotion-eliciting event, openly talks with somebody else about the circumstances of that event, his or her feelings and his or her emotional reactions. Previous research has shown that emotional episodes are shared in 80 to 95% of all cases and that up to 60% of the emotions are already shared on the day of occurrence (Rimé, Finkenauer, Luminet, Zech, & Philippot, 1998).

Especially in the case of negative emotions, a widespread commonsense belief holds that merely talking about them dissolves their emotional impact (Zech, 2000). Laypersons thus assume that talking is an effective strategy for emotion regulation. From a theoretical point of view, this belief is called the "expression-discharge"

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hypothesis (Rimé, 2009). However, empirical studies on social sharing of emotions in general failed to support the commonsense expression-discharge hypothesis. For an extensive review of this issue, see Rimé (2009).

In order to account for these findings it was proposed that the way people share their emotions should be taken into account (Rimé, 2007, 2009). At this point, a distinction was drawn between two modes of sharing: a socio-affective and a cognitive one. Socio-affective sharing implies that the listener provides responses of support, comfort, validation, empathy and the like, whereas cognitive sharing is characterised by a listener who stimulates cognitive work in terms of reframing or re-appraising the emotional event.

According to two-mode theory, socio-affective sharing is beneficial in the early stages following an emotional event because it leads to a state of temporary alleviation; yet, it is not sufficient to attain emotional recovery. To achieve such recovery, cognitive sharing is essential. A few recent studies have provided support for this hypothesis (Lepore, Fernandez-Berrocal, Ragan, & Ramos, 2004; Nils & Rimé, 2012). For example, in two experiments, Lepore and colleagues (2004) compared distressed persons who had talked to a confederate that challenged their experiences to persons who had not talked, had talked alone, or had talked to a validating confederate when re-exposed to the emotion-inducing film clip. It appeared that the former showed the greatest adjustment to stress. Further, two-mode theory proposes that in naturally occurring sharing situations, the majority of the conversations is socio-affective in nature; in its turn, this may account for the lack of emotional recovery that is observed in most studies on social sharing.

Until now, however, social sharing research has focused on a single marker of emotional recovery only that is, decrease in emotional intensity over time. Obviously, as emotional recovery is an inherently time-bound phenomenon, indicators that link up more closely with the dynamic unfolding of emotions over time should be studied too. In this regard, an obvious candidate is the duration of the emotional experience (Van Mechelen, Verduyn, & Brans, 2013). Moreover, as the duration of negative emotion episodes is one of the major criteria for the diagnosis of various mental health disorders such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), and as it plays a role in the development of various types of somatic disease such as cardiovascular illness (Brosschot, Gerin, & Thayer, 2006), it is important to investigate whether and how frequently used emotion-regulation strategies such as social sharing relate to it. However, this does not imply that a long duration of negative emotions is inherently maladaptive: In some situations, it may be more functional or desirable to maintain a negative emotion (Tamir, 2009). For example, in an interpersonal conflict, in order to stand one's ground, it may be more functional to prolong one's feelings of anger (Tamir & Ford, 2012).

Up to now, apart from a single exception, no studies have addressed the relation between social sharing and the duration of emotional experiences. The exception is a study by Verduyn, Van Mechelen, and Tuerlinckx (2011), and even in this study the relation between sharing and duration was a side topic only. Moreover, with regard to the measurement of social sharing, the study suffered from some methodological limitations (see below).

In sum, to date no studies have satisfactorily addressed the relation between social sharing and the duration of emotional episodes. As a consequence, it remains unclear whether the results on the impact of social sharing on decrease in emotional intensity extend to emotion duration. The goal of the present research was to address this gap. When doing so we took into account the way in which people share their feelings; in particular, at this point we drew a distinction between a socio-affective and a cognitive mode of social sharing.

STUDY 1

We started from two studies on the duration of emotional episodes in daily life (Verduyn,

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Delvaux, Van Coillie, Tuerlinckx, & Van Mechelen, 2009; Verduyn et al., 2011) in which a modified version of the day reconstruction method (Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004) was used. The goal of these studies was to identify a number of determinants of the duration of emotional episodes. The definition of duration used in these studies was based on the assumption that emotions, unlike moods, are elicited by a certain event or situation and thus have a clear onset point (Beedie, Terry, & Lane, 2005; Russell & Barrett, 1999). Consequently, the duration of an emotional experience was defined as the time between the onset point and the moment the emotion is no longer felt for the first time (Verduyn et al., 2009).[1] Regarding the determinants of duration, the authors included potential determinants at three levels: (1) determinants that are constant at the level of the experiencing person (e.g., personality traits); (2) determinants that are constant at the level of the emotional episode (e.g., importance of the emotion-eliciting event); and (3) determinants that fluctuate within an emotional episode (e.g., whether or not the emotion-eliciting stimulus reappears at different segments of the episode).

In the second study, social sharing was included as a possible determinant of duration (Verduyn et al., 2011). A positive relation with duration of the emotional episode was found: Episodes that were shared, lasted longer. The authors suggest that sharing keeps the emotion alive, and therefore leads to a prolongation of the emotional episode. However, a difficulty with this interpretation arises due to the level at which social sharing was measured. In particular, sharing was included as a determinant that is constant at the level of the episode: Participants were asked to indicate for the episode as a whole whether the emotion was shared yes or no. This procedure may have caused a methodological confound: Episodes that last longer, provide more opportunities to share and, hence, to a higher probability of sharing at the episode level. Therefore, it remains unclear whether the found positive relation between sharing and duration reflects a reactivation of the emotion due to the occurrence of social sharing or whether it merely results from this confound.

The major goal of the present study was to address this problem and to unconfound the effect of sharing on emotion duration. For this purpose, social sharing was measured on a more fine-grained level, that is, as a determinant that fluctuates within an emotional episode. Based on social sharing theory, which states that under some conditions sharing can bring emotional alleviation, we hypothesised that on average sharing would no longer be associated with longer duration but rather with a shorter one.

In addition, beyond the mere occurrence of social sharing, we also explored whether the content of sharing moderates this effect. In particular, the two-mode theory predicts that if sharing develops around a cognitive route, it will contribute to the extinction of the emotional memory and thus will lead to emotional recovery, whereas, if it develops around a socio-affective route, it will not (Rimé, 2009). In addition, the theory states that in daily life, spontaneous social sharing will mainly develop around a socio-affective route. Consequently, if one assumes that duration taps emotional recovery, one would expect sharing, when cognitive in nature, to be strongly negatively related to duration whereas when the sharing is of the socio-affective type, no relationship between the two variables would be expected.

To test these predictions, we set up a study on the duration of anger, fear and sadness episodes in daily life, using a variant of the day reconstruction method. We limited our research to negative emotions because the expression-discharge hypothesis and social sharing theory have mainly been specified for them. We included in our study two types of possible determinants of emotion duration.

[1] Note that our definition of emotions is a fairly broad one that encompasses emotions elicited by minor daily hassles as well as major life events. In addition, it also captures emotions arising from an accumulation of events with a final event being the drop that makes the cup run over. Only emotions arising from an accumulation of events without a final trigger may have been excluded by this definition.

A first type pertains to determinants that in previous studies have consistently been shown to be positively related to duration and that we wished to control for in the present study (Verduyn et al., 2009, 2011). In particular, we included in our study intensity at onset and importance of the emotion-eliciting event. Second, we included social sharing as possible key determinant of duration. Linking up with our main goal, we measured social sharing at a fine-grained level by allowing it to vary within an episode. For this purpose, we segmented emotional episodes into a number of equal intervals; subsequently, for each interval, participants had to indicate whether or not they had shared their emotion. Moreover, participants were further asked to indicate for each interval in which they had shared their emotion the mode of sharing.

Method

Participants

Participants were 282 students of the University of Leuven. As will be explained below, the study lasted for five consecutive days. Twenty-eight students participated for three days or less and were therefore removed from the sample. The final sample consisted of 254 students, 35 men and 219 women. Their mean age was 18 years ($SD = 1.5$). Participation was in partial fulfilment of a course requirement.

Materials and procedure

Participants were invited to come to the psychology department in groups of 30 students. There they were informed that they were taking part in a study on emotional experience that would last for five consecutive days, starting on the evening of the day they received the instructions. Next, it was explained to them that each evening, right before going to bed, they would have to fill out a web-based questionnaire on the emotions they had experienced during that day. The items from this questionnaire then were briefly glanced through. At this point, two important clarifications were given: (1) To make sure that participants would supply information regarding emotions and not mood episodes, it was explained that an emotion is always elicited by a certain internal or external event; (2) to avoid different interpretations of the concept of duration of an emotional episode, participants were told that an emotional episode ends as soon as the emotion is no longer felt for the first time (so that if the emotion is re-experienced later on this is to be considered a new episode).

In order not to overload participants, the daily questionnaire was designed in such a way that questions were presented until information was obtained on three emotional episodes. For this purpose, the following strategy was used: First, one of the target emotions (i.e., anger, fear, or sadness) was presented to the participants, who then had to indicate how many episodes of this emotion they had experienced over the day. If they indicated that they had experienced more than two episodes, they were asked to select the two most recent ones. Subsequently, for each episode, a set of questions was presented (see below). Next, the same procedure was repeated for the two remaining target emotions until the participant had provided information with regard to three emotional episodes. The order in which the target emotions were presented, was randomised over participants and over days. In cases where the participant had experienced less than three episodes of the target emotions, filler questions were asked about other emotions.

The set of questions that was asked for each emotional episode comprised three types of item, which for all participants were presented in the same order as listed below. The first type referred to potential determinants of duration that had been identified in previous studies. More specifically, participants were asked to rate: (1) the importance of the event or situation that elicited the emotional episode (0 = *Not important at all* to 7 = *Very important*), and (2) the intensity of the emotion at the beginning of the emotional episode (0 = *Not intense at all* to 7 = *Very intense*).

The second type of item referred to the dependent variable, emotion duration. For this purpose, participants were first asked to indicate with yes/no whether the emotional episode was already

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over at the moment of the questioning. Subsequently, they had to rate the duration of the emotional episode (in cases where participants had indicated on the previous question that the episode was not yet over, they were asked to indicate how long the emotion had already lasted up to then). For this purpose, a bar was presented, which was divided into eight equal intervals; the total length of the bar denoted 120 minutes, each interval representing 15 minutes. Participants had to indicate in which of the eight intervals their emotional episode had ended. If the episode had lasted for longer than two hours, they had to mark a checkbox, labelled "The emotion took longer than two hours". The choice for a bar of 120 minutes was based on previous studies on emotion duration from which it appeared that the duration of the majority of emotional episodes falls within this time window (e.g., Verduyn et al., 2009).

The third type of item pertained to the concept of social sharing. First, participants were questioned about the mere occurrence of sharing. For this purpose, they were asked to indicate with yes/no for each interval in which their emotional experience was still ongoing whether they had talked with someone about the emotion-eliciting event and/or their feelings and emotional reactions. Subsequently, for each interval in which sharing had occurred, participants were asked to report on the content of the conversation by rating two items, one on the extent to which the sharing partner had tried to support them (socio-affective sharing) and one on the extent to which the sharing partner had stimulated them to look at the event from a different perspective (cognitive sharing). For both items, a pseudo-dichotomous response scale had to be used (0 = *Not at all*, 1 = *Rather not*, 2 = *Rather yes*, 3 = *Completely*). The choice of a pseudo-dichotomous response scale was based on previous research which showed that participants find it easier to respond to this type of scale compared to its strictly dichotomous counterpart (Preston & Colman, 2000).

Data analysis

To analyse how the criterion variable, emotion duration, can be predicted by a number of potential determinants, standard statistical techniques such as regression analysis cannot be applied because the exact duration of some emotional episodes is not known (namely for episodes that lasted longer than two hours and for episodes that were not yet finished at the moment of the questioning) and because the value of some predictors may change within emotional episodes (e.g., social sharing). Therefore, we used discrete-time survival analysis, which is well suited to model this type of durational data (Singer & Willett, 2003). Two important statistics resulting from this analysis are the hazard rate, and the median lifetime.

The hazard rate reflects the conditional probability that an emotional episode that has not yet ended at the beginning of a certain interval, will end during that interval. It is calculated by dividing the number of episodes that ended in the interval under study by the number of episodes that were still ongoing at the beginning of that interval. The median lifetime pertains to the point in time at which half of the emotional episodes under study have ended. These statistics were calculated for each emotion separately on the basis of all episodes of the emotion in question from all individuals.

Subsequently, the logit of the hazard was modelled in terms of a random intercept and a weighted sum of predictors. The random intercept was included to capture possible dependencies due to each participant reporting on multiple emotional episodes. The weighted sum of predictors further consisted of two types of predictors. The first type comprised indicator variables for each interval under study; together they yield a representation of the baseline hazard function. The second type of predictors was substantive in nature and comprised the predictors we wished to control for, intensity at onset and importance of the emotion-eliciting event, as well as the predictors related to social sharing. To construct the latter, first the two items assessing the content of sharing were dichotomised (by merging the response categories "not at all" and "rather not" on the one hand and "rather yes" and "completely" on the other hand), the dichotomised items thus pertaining to presence/absence of support (resp. cognitive

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restructuring). From a substantive point of view, five types of sharing can then be distinguished: (1) no sharing; (2) sharing that is neither of a supportive nor of a cognitive restructuring type; (3) sharing that is of a cognitive restructuring but not of a supportive type; (4) sharing that is of a supportive but not of a cognitive restructuring type; and (5) sharing that is of both a supportive and a cognitive restructuring type. These five different types of sharing were included in the regression model by means of four dummy variables which were coded such that the no sharing category acted as a reference category. Accordingly, the weight of each dummy variable captured the difference in duration between a specific type of sharing and no sharing.

Depending on the sign of the weight of a substantive predictor, a higher score on it shifts the baseline hazard function upwards or downwards. In the results section, to ease interpretation, all predictor weights will be reflected such that a positive weight always means that a higher score on the predictor is associated with a longer duration.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Duration. The hazard functions of anger, fear and sadness are presented in Figure 1. In general, for all three emotions the hazard rates are rather high during the first intervals and decline over time. This means that, on the one hand, a relatively high number of emotional episodes end during the first intervals, and that, on the other hand, emotional episodes that survive the first intervals are often more long-lasting ones. One may note that the hazard rates increase again in the last interval. Yet, given that only a few episodes are still alive in the last interval, this increase means that only in relative terms a large number of episodes end in this interval; in absolute terms this number is very small in all cases.

In addition to these common trends, there are also some differences between the three emotions. First, the hazard rates for fear and anger are higher

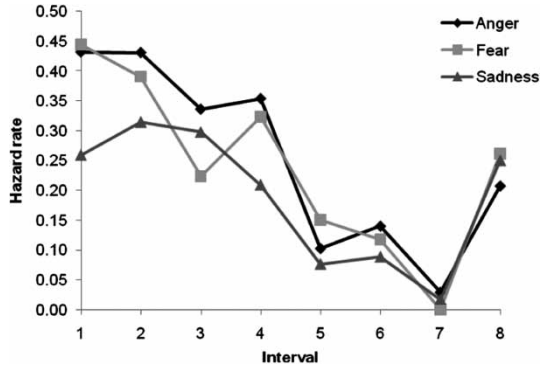

Figure 1. *Hazard functions of anger, fear, and sadness (Study 1).*

in the first intervals compared to that of sadness. This means that short episodes are more common for fear and anger than for sadness. A second difference concerns the shape of the hazard functions: In the case of sadness, the hazard first displays a small increase, to start dropping after the third interval only; in contrast, the hazard functions of fear and anger drop more or less linearly over time. Taken together, the differences in the hazard functions imply that sadness episodes last in general longer than fear and anger episodes. Additional evidence is provided by the median lifetime, which is 19 minutes for both fear and anger and 31 minutes for sadness.

Predictors of duration. The means and standard deviation for initial intensity and importance of the emotion-eliciting event are presented in Table 1. (As the values of these predictors were constant within an episode, these statistics were calculated across episodes.) Episodes are on aveage elicited by a stimulus of moderate importance and have a moderate initial intensity. Mean importance of the emotion-eliciting event and intensity at onset are higher for sadness than for fear, with the latter in their turn being higher than those for anger.

With regard to the occurrence of social sharing we looked at: (1) the proportion of shared episodes; and (2) the proportion of shared intervals. It appears that people often talk about their emotion with others: During on average 50% of the episodes and 33% of the intervals sharing occurred. There

Table 1. *Means and standard deviations of the predictors of the duration of anger, fear, and sadness (Study 1)*

	Anger	*Fear*	*Sadness*
Predictor	*Mean (SD)*	*Mean (SD)*	*Mean (SD)*
Importance of the eliciting event	3.78 (1.84)	3.98 (1.97)	4.58 (1.97)
Intensity of the emotion at onset	4.03 (1.86)	4.18 (1.86)	4.23 (1.90)

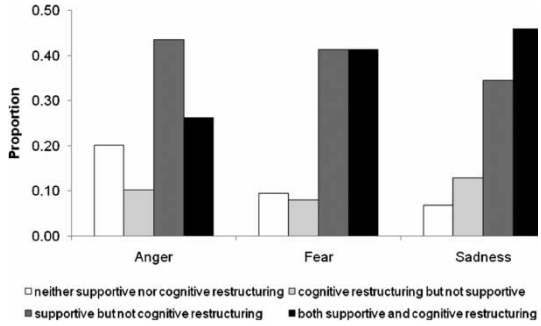

Figure 2. *Conditional distribution of the different types of sharing, given that there was sharing, for anger, fear, and sadness (Study 1).*

further appear to be some differences between emotions, with anger episodes ($M = 0.56$) being more often shared than fear ($M = 0.46$); Wald $\chi^2_{(1)} = 6.39$; $p < .05$, and sadness episodes ($M = 0.48$); Wald $\chi^2_{(1)} = 5.24$; $p < .05$; similarly, the proportion of shared intervals is higher for anger ($M = 0.37$) than for fear ($M = 0.27$); Wald $\chi^2_{(1)} = 16.33$; $p < .001$, and sadness ($M = 0.28$); Wald $\chi^2_{(1)} = 19.36$; $p < .001$.

For the intervals in which sharing had taken place, we further looked at the contents of the sharing. For each emotion under study, the conditional distribution of the different types of social sharing is shown in Figure 2. It appears that social sharing is usually supportive in nature. Interestingly, when the sharing includes cognitive restructuring, it almost always does so in combination with support.

Relation between predictors and emotion duration

The major aim of the present study was to examine the relation between occurrence of social sharing and emotion duration. To investigate this relation, we subjected our data to a discrete-time survival analysis, with a model that included intensity at onset, importance of the eliciting event and mere social sharing as predictors of duration (see Table 2). Regarding the importance of the emotion-eliciting event and intensity at onset, a consistent pattern emerges across emotions, in that emotions that are elicited by more important stimuli, and that are more intense at onset, have a longer duration. Most importantly, in line with our predictions, for all three emotions social sharing is negatively associated with duration, reflecting that talking about emotions leads to shorter emotional episodes. Moreover, in all cases, this effect remains highly significant after controlling for initial intensity and importance of the emotion-eliciting event.

Additionally, we wanted to look at whether the effect of the occurrence of social sharing is moderated by the content of the sharing. For this purpose, we ran a discrete-time survival analysis with a model that included intensity at onset, importance of the emotion-eliciting event, and four dummy variables to compare the different specific types of sharing with no sharing (see Table 3). From this table it can be seen that the shortening in duration is not significant for all types of social sharing. In particular, across emotions, the shortening in duration is only consistently significant for sharing with support but without cognitive restructuring, and for sharing with both support and cognitive restructuring. In addition, for anger it appeared that sharing without support and without cognitive restructuring also significantly shortens emotion duration.

Discussion

The major aim of the present study was to investigate the relation between social sharing and the duration of emotional episodes. In this regard, we found that social sharing is negatively related to duration, meaning that social sharing is associated with a shortening of the duration of emotional episodes.

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Table 2. *Weights of substantive predictors of duration of anger, fear, and sadness in discrete-time survival analyses (Study 1)*

	Anger		*Fear*		*Sadness*	
Predictor	*β*	*SE*	*β*	*SE*	*β*	*SE*
Importance of the eliciting event	0.28***	0.06	0.28***	0.08	0.33***	0.06
Intensity of the emotion at onset	0.17**	0.05	0.11	0.08	0.26***	0.06
Social sharing	−0.60***	0.15	−0.93***	0.24	−0.68***	0.18

Note: $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.

Table 3. *Weights of substantive predictors of the duration of anger, fear, and sadness in discrete-time survival analyses taking into account the contents of the social sharing (Study 1)*

	Anger		*Fear*		*Sadness*	
Predictor	*β*	*SE*	*β*	*SE*	*β*	*SE*
Importance of the eliciting event	0.28***	0.06	0.29***	0.08	0.33***	0.07
Intensity of the emotion at onset	0.17**	0.05	0.11	0.08	0.26***	0.07
Social sharing						
Neither supportive nor cognitive restructuring sharing	−0.66*	0.28	−1.02	0.64	−0.46	0.60
Cognitive restructuring but not supportive sharing	−0.22	0.39	−0.22	0.75	−0.01	0.45
Supportive but not cognitive restructuring sharing	−0.61***	0.21	−1.14***	0.33	−0.90***	0.26
Both supportive and cognitive restructuring sharing	−0.68*	0.25	−0.83*	0.34	−0.70***	0.22

Note: $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.

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The above result is in contradiction with the findings of Verduyn et al. (2011), who found that social sharing was positively related to the duration of emotional episodes. Yet, this contradiction can be explained by the fact that in our study and the study of Verduyn et al. (2011) social sharing was assessed at different levels: Verduyn et al. measured whether social sharing did or did not occur within an episode as a whole, whereas in the present study, the occurrence of social sharing was measured for each interval within each emotion episode. As already mentioned in the introduction, the coarse level of measurement in the study of Verduyn et al. may have caused a confound between their measure of social sharing and duration. To investigate whether this, indeed, accounts for the difference in results between the present study and the study of Verduyn et al. (2011), we calculated for the data of the present study a new social sharing measure by aggregating within each episode the values of the social sharing ratings for all intervals within that episode. In particular, this new measure was given a value of one in case a person had socially shared his or her feelings during at least one of the intervals within that episode, and zero otherwise. Subsequently, we ran a new discrete survival analysis with a model that included the new social sharing variable along with importance of the emotion-eliciting event and initial intensity as predictors of duration (see Table 4). From Table 4 it appears that, for all emotions under study, social sharing is now positively associated with duration, thereby replicating the findings from Verduyn et al. (2011).

Taken together, the results from the present study and that of Verduyn and colleagues suggest that episodes that last longer provide more opportunities for sharing and, hence, have a higher probability of being shared. Yet, most importantly, social sharing in itself appears to be associated with a decrease in emotion duration.

An additional goal of the present study was to take into account the content of the social

Table 4. *Weights of substantive predictors of the duration of anger, fear, and sadness in discrete-time survival analyses with the occurrence of social sharing in the episode as a whole as a predictor of duration (Study 1)*

	Anger		*Fear*		*Sadness*	
Predictor	*β*	*SE*	*β*	*SE*	*β*	*SE*
Importance of the eliciting event	0.26***	0.06	0.21*	0.08	0.29***	0.06
Intensity of the emotion at onset	0.16**	0.05	0.11	0.09	0.26***	0.06
Episode-level social sharing	0.54***	0.16	0.41†	0.25	0.27	0.17

Note: †$p < .1$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

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sharing. Based on two-mode theory (Rimé, 2007, 2009), we looked at two modes of sharing: socio-affective and cognitive sharing. The two-mode theory hypothesises that in natural social sharing instances there is a preponderance of socio-affective over cognitive sharing. In line with this hypothesis, the results from the present study show that for all three emotions, sharing that is merely supportive occurs more often than sharing that is only of a cognitive restructuring type. Beyond that, it appears that instances of social sharing can have both features, and that sharing that is both supportive and cognitive restructuring is not uncommon. Interestingly, when social sharing included cognitive restructuring, it was almost always supportive too. An explanation for this result may be borrowed from research on supportive communication, which showed that messages merely criticising and challenging a distressed person's feelings without validation are perceived as less appropriate and sensitive, compared to messages that validate that person's feelings and that stimulate him or her to see how these feelings fit in a broader context (Burleson et al., 2005). Consequently, people communicating cognitive restructuring without support run the risk of being perceived as incompetent in offering comfort.

We further investigated whether content moderates the negative relation between social sharing and duration. At this point, the results are not in line with the hypothesis derived from two-mode theory that emotional recovery will only be achieved after cognitive sharing: For all of the three emotions under study we found that only those types of sharing that comprised support were significantly negatively associated with duration.

However, our tests of the predictions derived from two-mode theory rested upon the assumption that our measure of duration reflects emotional recovery. Was this assumption correct? This question immediately relates to the fact that when studying the duration of emotional episodes, an important decision has to be taken regarding how the endpoint of the episodes is to be defined (Van Mechelen et al., 2013). In the present study, this was the moment at which the emotion was no longer felt for the first time, or, stated in other words, the first moment at which intensity returned to baseline again. Yet, the endpoint of an emotional episode could also have been defined in quite a different way: Frijda (2007), for example, takes the moment at which the event has been fully processed and the person has emotionally come to rest as the endpoint of an emotional episode. It should be clear that, at least conceptually, this implies a definition that is different from one that is based on a first return to baseline. Indeed, such a return may be temporary only, and afterwards intensity could rise again. In line with this perspective, one may then wonder whether our findings on duration do not pertain to a temporary emotional relief rather than to more permanent emotional recovery. Otherwise, if our measure of duration indeed indexes temporary relief, then the findings from the present study would support two-mode theory, which predicts that spontaneous sharing conversations are most often socio-affective in nature and bring narrators an important sense of relief without having an effect on emotional recovery.

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Unfortunately, based on the present data it is not possible to draw final conclusions at this point. For this purpose, a study would be needed that includes both our measure of duration and an unambiguous measure of emotional recovery. Otherwise, as regards the latter, in previous research on social sharing emotional recovery has often been captured through a measure of so-called residual emotional intensity, with the latter pertaining to the intensity of the emotion that is experienced at some moment when instructed to think back to the emotional event (Zech & Rimé, 2005). Full emotional recovery in the sense of Frijda (2007) could then be reflected in zero residual emotional intensity. In Study 2 we will pursue this issue in greater depth.

STUDY 2

The aim of this second study was threefold. First, we wanted to replicate the finding from Study 1 that social sharing, when measured as a determinant that can fluctuate within an emotional episode, is associated with shorter duration. Besides, if this replication were to be successful, we would investigate again whether or not this relation was moderated by the type of social sharing.

Second, and more importantly, we wished to investigate how the findings from Study 1 should be interpreted in terms of the distinction between emotional relief and emotional recovery. As mentioned above, the findings in Study 1 are based on a concept of duration that includes the first return to baseline as a definition of the episode's endpoint. Such a concept might primarily reflect emotional relief. In contrast, a definition of the endpoint like the one of Frijda (2007) that refers to a full processing of the emotion-eliciting event, could be argued rather to reflect emotional recovery. Anyhow, it should be clear that the two definitions are conceptually different. Whether this conceptual difference is empirically relevant as well, is still to be demonstrated. For this purpose, it has to be shown that episodes that are over in terms of first return to a baseline criterion may still be incompletely processed, as reflected in a non-zero residual intensity.

Third, if there appears to be a difference between being over in terms of a first return to baseline (emotional relief) and in terms of non-zero residual emotional intensity (emotional recovery), one may also wish to investigate the relation between social sharing and residual emotional intensity. At this point, we would first want to know whether the occurrence of social sharing predicts residual emotional intensity, and, second, whether this relation is moderated by the mode of sharing.

To realise the three goals as mentioned above, we again conducted a study on the duration of anger, sadness and fear episodes in daily life, using a variant of the day reconstruction method. The set-up of this study was largely similar to the one of Study 1, with the important addition that, three days after the day reconstruction part of the study, we also collected a measure of residual emotional intensity, which would allow us to address our second and third research question. In this regard, we relied on a theoretical work by Rachman (1980, 2001) who stated that, "After an emotional disturbance has subsided, the extent of emotional recovery can be established by presenting relevant stimulus material in an attempt to re-evoke the emotional reaction. The degree to which test probes are successful in provoking the reaction provides a measure of emotional processing" (2001, p. 167). In the present study, test probes were created by asking participants to label their emotional episodes on the day they were initially reported by assigning a few keywords to them (see below). This approach is also consistent with experimental research on emotional recovery in which the degree of recovery is assessed by re-exposing the participants to the stimulus that was initially used to induce the emotion (Lepore, Ragan, & Jones, 2000; Lepore et al., 2004).

Method

Participants

Participants were 190 students of the University of Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve. As will be explained below, the study lasted for ten days.

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Fifteen participants completed the questionnaire seven nights or less only and were therefore omitted from the final sample. The final sample consisted of 175 students, 23 men and 152 women. Their mean age was 20 years ($SD = 2.15$). Participation was in partial fulfilment of a course requirement.

Materials and procedure

The materials and procedure were the same as in Study 1, with two groups of differences: The first group pertains to the day reconstruction part of the study: In the current study, this part lasted seven days compared to five in Study 1. Moreover, the daily questionnaire was now designed in such a way that questions were presented until participants reported on a single emotion episode, whereas in Study 1 questions were presented until participants reported on three episodes. These two changes were motivated by a concern, on the one hand, to collect a sufficient number of emotion episodes and, on the other hand, not to overload participants. Moreover, in cases where participants indicated that they had experienced several episodes of an emotion, they were now asked to answer the subsequent questions with regard to the most salient of them, whereas in the previous study they were asked to report on the most recent episode. The reason for this is that we wanted to avoid as much as possible participants reporting on emotion episodes elicited by minor hassles, because these might not be powerful enough to detect a difference between emotional relief and emotional recovery. Finally, participants were asked to label the emotional episode selected by them. For this purpose a box was presented in which they could type one or more keywords. This labelling was necessary for the follow-up part of the study (see below).

A second group of differences related to a follow-up part that was added in the present study to measure residual emotional intensity. In particular, from the fourth through the tenth day of the study, after the day reconstruction part, questions were added to measure the residual intensity of the emotional episode on which the participants had reported three days before.[2] In line with the theoretical work by Rachman (2001), the keywords, provided by the participants on the day the event happened to label the episode, were used as test probes in the present study. First, participants were presented with these keywords, after which they were given some time to bring this episode back into their mind. Subsequently, to asses residual emotional intensity, they were asked to indicate on an 8-point Likert scale: (1) how intense the emotion was that they re-experienced when thinking back at the emotion-eliciting event in question (0 = *Not intense* to 7 = *Very intense*); (2) how vivid the mental images were that came to their mind (0 = *No mental images* to 7 = *Very vivid mental images*); (3) how strong the bodily sensations were that they experienced (0 = *Not at all* 7 = *Very strong*); (4) to which extent they still felt the need to talk about the emotional event (0 = *Not at all* to 7 = *Very strongly*).

Results

Descriptive statistics

As the descriptive statistics for the predictors (initial intensity, importance of the emotion-eliciting event, and occurrence and modes of social sharing), and the dependent variable duration were similar to the ones obtained in Study 1, we will not discuss them in detail.

The means and standard deviations for the four residual emotional intensity items are presented in Table 5. From this table it appears that, for all four items, the means are positive, reflecting that after three days, on average, the reported emotional episodes still had an impact. Moreover, it appeared that all four items were highest for sadness: Compared to anger episodes, sadness episodes were higher on emotional intensity ($t = 4.90$; $p < .001$), mental images ($t = 2.06$; $p < .05$), bodily sensations ($t = 4.78$; $p < .001$) and need for sharing ($t = 3.32$; $p < .01$). Similarly, compared to fear, sadness was higher on intensity

[2] Note that from the eight to the tenth day of the study only follow-up questions were asked.

Table 5. *Means and standard deviations of the residual emotional intensity items (Study 2)*

	Anger	*Fear*	*Sadness*
Predictor	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
Emotional intensity	2.63 (1.88)	2.32 (1.92)	3.48 (1.94)
Mental images	3.79 (2.20)	3.75 (2.03)	4.17 (2.07)
Bodily sensations	1.69 (1.76)	1.95 (1.88)	2.50 (2.13)
Need for sharing	1.68 (1.91)	1.57 (1.94)	2.28 (2.24)

($t = 5.64$; $p < .001$), mental images ($t = 1.92$; $p < .10$), bodily sensations ($t = 2.77$; $p < .01$), and need for sharing ($t = 3.31$; $p < .01$).

Research question 1: Does social sharing predict duration?

To examine this relation the same models of discrete survival analysis as in Study 1 were tested (see Table 6). First, most importantly, as in Study 1, the mere occurrence of social sharing appears to be negatively associated with duration. This effect is highly significant for both anger and sadness, and marginally significant for fear.

Next, we investigated again whether the effect of sharing is moderated by the sharing's content (see Table 7). Similar to Study 1, not all four types of social sharing are associated with a significant shortening in duration. It appeared that for the three emotions, this shortening is at least marginally significant when sharing comprised both support and cognitive restructuring. In addition, for anger the two types of sharing that do not include support are also associated with a significant shorter duration. For sadness, sharing that is supportive (irrespective of the presence or absence of cognitive restructuring) significantly reduces duration.

Research question 2: Can return to baseline intensity go with non-zero residual intensity?

From the four items, used to asses residual emotion intensity, we calculated a mean absolute residual emotional intensity for all emotional episodes for which participants had indicated that the episode was over at the moment of completing the questionnaire. For all emotions under study, the resulting mean residual emotional intensity values appear to be positive and significantly different from zero, Anger: $M = 2.37$, $t(223) = 24.06$, $p < .001$; Fear: $M = 2.35$, $t(119) = 16.25$, $p < .001$; Sadness: $M = 2.90$, $t(164) = 22.19$, $p < .001$. This implies that emotion episodes, that are over in terms of a return to baseline are, on average, not yet completely processed.[3]

Research question 3: Does social sharing predict residual emotional intensity?

Finally, we wanted to investigate the relation between social sharing and residual emotional intensity. For this purpose, we first had to calculate measures of the occurrence and mode of social sharing on the level of the episodes as a whole, because measures of residual emotional intensity are available on this level only. In particular, we created a measure of episode-level occurrence of social sharing that was given a value of one in cases where a person had socially shared his or her feelings during at least one of the intervals within the episode in question, and zero otherwise. Regarding the sharing mode, we calculated a measure of episode-level socio-affective sharing that was given a value of one if a person had indicated that he or she had received support during at least one of the intervals within the episode in which he or she had shared his or her feeling, and zero otherwise. In a similar way,

[3] Although a return to baseline went with a non-zero residual intensity, this does not exclude the possibility that duration and residual intensity may be correlated. Therefore, we investigated whether duration correlated with the different indices of residual intensity. These analyses revealed that, across emotions, duration did not correlate strongly and consistently with the different indices. In particular: (1) Duration did not correlate significantly with the intensity of mental images, and the intensity of subjective feelings (except with the case of anger, $r = .14$, $p < .05$); (2) Duration correlated with the intensity of bodily sensations for anger ($r = .15$, $p < .05$) and fear ($r = .18$, $p < .05$) but not for sadness; (3) For all emotions, duration correlated significantly with need for sharing ($r = .20$ for anger, $r = .24$ for fear, and $r = .23$ for sadness, with all ps $< .01$).

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Table 6. *Weights of substantive predictors of the duration of anger, fear, and sadness in discrete-time survival analyses (Study 2)*

	Anger		*Fear*		*Sadness*	
Predictor	*β*	*SE*	*β*	*SE*	*β*	*SE*
Importance of the eliciting event	0.57***	0.08	0.68***	0.12	0.23**	0.08
Intensity of the emotion at onset	−0.11	0.08	−0.16	0.11	0.24**	0.09
Social sharing	−0.85***	0.19	−0.53†	0.28	−0.89***	0.21

Note: †$p < .1$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Table 7. *Weights of substantive predictors of the duration of anger, fear, and sadness in discrete-time survival analyses taking into account the contents of the social sharing (Study 2)*

	Anger		*Fear*		*Sadness*	
Predictor	*β*	*SE*	*β*	*SE*	*β*	*SE*
Importance of the eliciting event	0.59***	0.09	0.69***	0.12	0.25**	0.08
Intensity of the emotion at onset	−0.12	0.08	−0.16	0.12	0.24**	0.09
Social sharing						
Neither supportive nor cognitive restructuring sharing	−1.12***	0.32	−0.22	0.47	−0.24	0.40
Cognitive restructuring but not supportive sharing	−1.69***	0.45	−0.88	0.83	−0.71	0.55
Supportive but not cognitive restructuring sharing	−0.32	0.29	−0.53	0.42	−1.06***	0.31
Both supportive and cognitive restructuring sharing	−0.95***	0.27	−0.67†	0.37	−1.12***	0.27

Note: †$p < .1$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

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a measure of episode-level cognitive sharing was calculated.

Through regression analyses, we first examined whether the occurrence of social sharing predicted the four different aspects of residual emotional intensity, while controlling for the same predictors as in the discrete time survival analyses (initial intensity and importance of the emotion-eliciting event). The resulting regression weights of the predictors are presented in Table 8. From this table it appears that all aspects of residual emotional intensity, apart from residual need for sharing, were predicted by importance of the emotion-eliciting event or initial intensity, whereas episode-level social sharing had no additional predictive value. Conversely, in cases of anger and sadness, episode-level social sharing positively predicts residual need for sharing, with importance of the emotion-eliciting event and initial intensity almost never having a distinctive predictive value for this criterion.[4]

Second, we investigated whether the relation between social sharing and residual emotional intensity was moderated by the mode of social sharing. For this purpose, the two measures that captured the sharing mode were included in the model along with occurrence of social sharing, initial intensity and importance of the emotion-eliciting event. On the basis of two-mode theory, one may hypothesise that cognitive sharing would reduce residual emotional intensity. In general, results did not support this hypothesis as cognitive sharing did not contribute to the prediction of any of the four different aspects of residual emotional intensity.

[4] Regarding the possibility that longer episodes provide more opportunities for sharing, we also investigated whether the proportion of intervals in which sharing occurred (as a measure of sharing that is unconfounded with duration) predicted indices of residual intensity, over and above importance and initial intensity. These analyses revealed highly similar results to the ones reported in the paper.

Table 8. *Regression weights of residual emotional intensity of anger, fear, and sadness*

		Emotion					
		Anger		*Fear*		*Sadness*	
Aspect of residual emotional intensity	*Predictors*	*β*	*SE*	*β*	*SE*	*β*	*SE*
Emotional intensity	Importance of the eliciting event	0.33***	0.07	0.26*	0.11	0.55***	0.09
	Intensity of the emotion at onset	0.17*	0.07	0.20†	0.11	0.00	0.09
	Episode-level social sharing	0.30	0.23	−0.19	0.32	0.22	0.25
Bodily sensations	Importance of the eliciting event	0.17*	0.07	0.20†	0.11	0.38***	0.09
	Intensity of the emotion at onset	0.09	0.07	0.19†	0.11	0.14	0.10
	Episode-level social sharing	0.37†	0.23	0.18	0.32	0.22	0.27
Mental images	Importance of the eliciting event	0.24**	0.09	0.18	0.11	0.36***	0.09
	Intensity of the emotion at onset	0.18†	0.09	0.28*	0.11	0.25**	0.09
	Episode-level social sharing	0.39	0.28	0.40	0.33	0.30	0.25
Need for sharing	Importance of the eliciting event	0.12	0.08	0.14	0.12	0.31**	0.10
	Intensity of the emotion at onset	0.10	0.08	0.12	0.11	0.16	0.10
	Episode-level social sharing	0.94***	0.24	0.35	0.34	0.73*	0.29

Note: †$p < .1$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

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GENERAL DISCUSSION

Emotions are not mere intra-individual processes, if anything they colour and shape our social lives (Parkinson, 1996). This is exemplified by the fact that over the past two decades a large number of studies have documented that emotions elicit social sharing of emotions (Rimé, 2009; Rimé et al., 1998). The results from the present studies are in line with this finding as on average in 57% of the emotional episode social sharing took place.

A first major aim of the present two studies was to systematically investigate the relation between social sharing and an important time-dynamic characteristic of emotional episodes, emotion duration. For this purpose, social sharing was measured on a fine-grained level, as a determinant of duration that fluctuates within an emotional episode. A key finding at this point was that, for all of the three emotions under study, social sharing was significantly negatively related to emotion duration, even after controlling for intensity at onset and the importance of the emotion-eliciting event. This means that talking about emotions is associated with a shortening in emotion duration.

An additional aim of the present studies was to investigate whether the relation between social sharing and emotion duration was moderated by the type of social sharing. At this point, it appeared that not all four types of sharing were associated with a shorter duration. Across studies and emotions, the shortening effect was significant for sharing that comprised both support and cognitive restructuring. The latter result means that social sharing is associated with a decrease in emotion duration only if the sharing partner reacts with a combination of support and cognitive restructuring. However, some caution is needed in this regard: First, some results did not replicate across our two studies (e.g., in case of anger and fear, the type of sharing that comprised support without cognitive restructuring was associated with a significant decrease in emotion duration in Study 1 but not in Study 2). Second, there were sizeable differences in the incidences of the four different sharing types, with some of them being rather rare (e.g., pure cognitive sharing), which may have hampered some of our analyses.

The result that social sharing is associated with a shorter emotion duration is not at odds, on the one hand, with the laypersons' belief that social sharing is a beneficial strategy to regulate emotions and, on the other hand, with two-mode theory, which hypothesises that social sharing can

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bring emotional recovery under certain circumstances. Yet, two-mode theory predicted that recovery would show up in case of cognitive sharing only; this latter prediction was not supported by our data since we found rather weak evidence for moderation of the relation between social sharing and emotion duration by the type of social sharing as predicted by the two-mode theory. The latter result made us wonder whether our measure of duration captured emotional relief rather than emotional recovery.

The distinction between emotional relief and emotional recovery was investigated in greater depth in Study 2. From this study it appeared that emotional episodes that are over in terms of a first return to baseline, are still cursed with non-zero residual intensity, reflecting incomplete processing. This result supports the hypothesis that our measure of emotion duration captures emotional relief rather than full-blown emotional recovery. Otherwise, it also supports the idea that there is no single way of defining the endpoint of an emotion episode, with different definitions of endpoints leading to different specifications of the concept of emotion duration (Van Mechelen et al., 2013). Moreover, our results also imply that the distinction between emotional relief and emotional recovery is not a mere conceptual one, but that these two concepts can actually be distinguished empirically.

Finally, we investigated the relation between social sharing and residual emotional intensity (as a measure of emotional recovery). Previous research on social sharing consistently found that mere sharing does not contribute to emotional recovery (Rimé, 2009; Zech & Rimé, 2005). In line with this, in Study 2, apart from one exception, social sharing did not predict the different aspects of residual emotional intensity while controlling for initial intensity and importance of the emotion-eliciting event. The exception was that, in the case of anger and sadness, episode-level of sharing did prospectively predict residual need for sharing. The latter finding suggests that, at follow-up, people experienced a higher need to share emotion episodes that had already been shared three days before (compared to emotion episodes that had not been shared at that time). Apparently, if emotions elicit a need to share them with others, this need is usually not fulfilled by a single or a few sharing instances. This finding is consistent with research that showed that social sharing is a repetitive process, with emotions often being shared several times, with several persons (Curci & Rimé, 2012).

Furthermore, from the two-mode theory a decrease in residual emotional intensity would be predicted after cognitive sharing; yet no support for this prediction was found in Study 2. An explanation for this result may come from the so-called timing hypothesis as suggested by Rimé (2009). This hypothesis reads that an optimal timing exists for the respective onset of the socio-affective and the cognitive sharing mode. In particular, Rimé hypothesised that soon after the emotion-eliciting event, people experience a high level of distress and may be in need of socio-affective support, whereas they may be less open to cognitive change. As time goes by and distress wanes, people may be more open to cognitive restructuring. Consequently, it is predicted that cognitive sharing will be most effective if received some time after the emotional event has occurred. To investigate the timing hypothesis, we calculated a new episode-level variable to capture instances of cognitive sharing following instances of socio-affective sharing. In particular this new variable was given a value of 1 if within an episode, the provision of support at some point preceded cognitive reframing, and a value of 0 otherwise. This new variable was then used as a predictor of residual emotional intensity, besides initial intensity, event importance, and the sharing modes. From the analyses it appeared that the new predictor did not consistently add to the prediction of the residual intensity measures. However, we would like to note that these analyses only deal with the timing hypothesis insofar as this pertains to episodes that are demarcated by the first return to baseline intensity. More in general, in the present studies, we only measured cognitive sharing responses that occurred rather soon after the emotion-eliciting event. This may have hampered their effectiveness from the point of view of the

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two-mode theory, which states that "In this period, individuals are generally not ready for the changes implied by the cognitive work" because of their "enhanced concentration on the unattained goal, with invigoration and repetitive efforts" (Rimé, 2009, p. 76).

Taken together, we found somewhat mixed evidence for the two-mode theory: In line with the theory, it appeared that everyday instances of social sharing are often socio-affective in nature. More importantly, instances of social sharing were strongly associated with emotional relief as indexed by our measure of emotion duration (defined as the first return to baseline intensity). Furthermore, our findings also suggest that the latter result was mainly due to the usually socio-affective nature of the sharing. On the other hand, no evidence was found for the hypothesis that emotional recovery is facilitated by cognitive sharing.

As mentioned before, although the duration of negative emotions is characteristic of certain psychopathologic diseases, a long duration of negative emotion is not automatically maladaptive. One may then wonder when emotion duration may become problematic and when not. On the one hand, a prolonged duration of a negative emotion may not be considered problematic provided that it promotes the attainment of a long-term goal (Tamir, 2009). On the other hand, emotion duration may be considered problematic when, for example, there is no longer a connection between the emotion-eliciting event and the ensuing emotional response. For example, in research on depression it is well-documented that although a first sadness episode may have a distinct trigger, depression often recurs and these recurrent episodes seem to be increasingly resistant to treatment. Similarly, in research on anxiety is has been shown that anxious people display a tendency to infer danger on the basis of their subjectively experienced anxiety, a strategy called "ex-consequentia reasoning" (Arntz, Rauner, & van den Hout, 1995). This tendency may set off a vicious circle in which subjective anxiety responses are used to erroneously validate thoughts of impending danger, which in their turn intensify and prolong distress (Engelhard & Arntz, 2005).

Although the present studies yielded some valuable insights, they also had a number of limitations. First, although we relied on a widely used definition of social sharing to sample instances of sharing (Rimé, 2009; Sander & Scherer, 2005), our measure of social sharing may have been confounded with level of social contact. The present data do not allow disentangling of the effects of these two variables. To our credit, however, it may also be noted that previous research on social support cast doubt on the possibility of a strong relation between mere social contact and emotional processing in that it has been found that active types of social support (comprising active verbal comments or gestures) are more effective than passive ones (e.g., the mere presence of a friend; Lepore, 1998; Thorsteinsson & James, 1999). In addition, one of the strong points of the present studies is that they were among the very first in which different modes of social sharing have been investigated in relation to emotional processing. Nevertheless, investigating an even more fine-grained set of distinctions might be an interesting avenue for future research. Of course, experimental as well as non-experimental studies are inherently limited with regard to the number of factors that can be studied simultaneously and the amount of detail that can be included in the questioning of participants. In the present studies, keeping in mind that participants were asked to provide information on social sharing for each interval in which the emotion was still ongoing, questioning them about additional dimensions might have been too high a burden for them and might have tarnished the accuracy of the reported information.

Second, although a positive association between social sharing and emotional relief was found even while controlling for two important variables (initial intensity and event importance), one may wonder whether a third variable (such as changing circumstances) may have produced this association. In general we cannot discount this possibility (although, for the particular case of

changing circumstances, one may wonder whether this is a suitable candidate as circumstances may change for better or worse, and thus its effect most probably depends on the valence of the change).

Third, the samples mainly consisted of female participants. This may be troublesome as it has been shown that women more often use a number of coping strategies that involve verbal expression (such as seeking social support for emotional reasons and positive self-talk) (Tamres, Janicki, & Helgeson, 2002). However, previous research also found no evidence for sex differences in social sharing (Rimé, 2009).

Fourth, our data relied on end-of-the-day reports, which require some retrospection and which, consequently, may be subject to memory biases. However, it has been shown that memory biases only start to substantively influence people's judgements with delays that exceed one day (Dockray et al., 2010). Moreover, a recent study has shown that retrospective estimations of the duration of emotional events are largely accurate (Verduyn, Tuerlinckx, & Van Gorp, 2012).

Fifth, in the present studies we focused on the relation between social sharing and the duration of negative emotions only. It remains therefore unclear whether talking about positive emotions would be associated with emotion duration. To be sure, previous research on sharing of positive emotions showed that telling others about positive events is associated with higher positive affect and greater life satisfaction (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004). Hence, one may hypothesise that social sharing of positive emotions may contribute to a prolonged emotion duration. Yet, future research to directly test this hypothesis is needed.

Emotions unfold over time and a thorough understanding of them therefore requires an investigation of their time-dynamic aspects. The present studies were the first to systematically investigate the relation between social sharing and a central time-dynamic characteristic: emotion duration. From these studies there appears not to be an easy answer to the question of whether social sharing influences the duration of an emotional episodes, as such an answer appears to depend on the definition of the end point of the emotional episode. Major challenges for future research include charting how emotions unfold between different types of endpoints and the role of social sharing therein.

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