

## Research article

# The impact of Gacaca tribunals in Rwanda: Psychosocial effects of participation in a truth and reconciliation process after a genocide

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### Abstract

*Victims (N = 200) of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and prisoners (N = 184) accused of genocidal acts reported their genocide-related emotions and outgroup perceptions before and after their participation to Truth and Reconciliation Gacaca trials. So did control groups of victims (N = 195) and prisoners (N = 176) not yet exposed to Gacaca. The data supported Durkheim's model of social rituals as cultural tools for transforming emotions, reasserting norms, and enhancing cohesion. Specifically, participation entailed the general reactivation of resignation negative emotions, the enhancement of shame among prisoners, and the decrease of shame among victims, whereas the opposite pattern occurred for antagonist emotions. Participation also enhanced social integration by reducing perceived outgroup homogeneity, decreasing ingroup self-categorization, and increasing positive stereotypes among both victim and prisoner participants. Moreover, the increase in genocide-related emotions resulting from participation was associated to positive changes outcomes, suggesting that the increase of negative emotions is an important mechanism at work in collective events of this type. Enhancement of the perception of a positive emotional climate (solidarity and trust) was limited to perpetrator participants. Together, these findings show that Durkheim's model can be extended to restorative justice trials involving both victims and perpetrators. Copyright © 2011 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

After a civil war or after the downfall of an oppressive regime, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is a popular tool in the transition to peace. It has already been used in more than 30 countries around the world. TRCs are temporary non-judicial institutions empowered by the state. They provide a forum in which victims, offenders, and other community members can express themselves. Conflicting parties are expected to hear each other's grievance and suffering with the hope to promote understanding and empathy (Bloomfield, 2003; Martin Beristain, 2005). Truth telling and confronting the past is believed to contribute to reconciliation. As TRC participants are essentially expected to convey their experience and related feelings, TRCs evoke the common stereotype linking emotional expression and healing. They are seen as a place for catharsis to occur, that is, a decrease of pre-existing negative affects resulting from their paroxysmic expression and experience (Scheff, 1979). In post-apartheid South Africa, the famous TRC relied heavily upon such an association of expression, truth telling, healing, and reconciliation. Nelson Mandela explicitly wanted the TRC "to heal" the South African Nation's wounds: "Only by knowing the truth can we hope to heal the terrible open wounds that are the legacy of apartheid" (Frost, 1998, p. 140). The present research critically examines this assumption by investigating the extent to which the expression of

emotions in a collective setting such as TRC improves participants' well-being and leads to a better emotional climate and social integration of the group.

### A Theoretical Background: Durkheim's (1912) model

Current psychological wisdom tells little about collective situations (for exceptions, see Drury & Reicher, 2000; Reicher, 2001) and even less about collective emotional expression. However, a century ago, Durkheim (1912) introduced a model of collective rituals likely to guide empirical research (Collins, 2004; Páez, Rimé, & Basabe, 2005). This model proposes that collective rituals essentially involve both at a time group symbols (flags, emblems, mottos, slogans) and collective expression (singing, yelling, pronouncing words or sentences, shared gestures, music, dance). The simultaneous activation of shared beliefs and emotions enhances perceived similarity among participants. Emotions are particularly critical in the model because they facilitate intense affiliation: The more an event provokes an emotion, the more it elicits social sharing (for a review, see Rimé, 2009). The public expression of participants' emotions thus contributes to propagating them in the audience. Coordinated interaction and reciprocal stimulation further enhance empathy and emotional contagion. By

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boosting reciprocal attraction, a climate of emotional communion takes place. Participants' shared beliefs are set at the foreground of their representations and, whereas their self becomes less salient, their feelings of group belonging are enhanced. Consequently, individuals would leave the collective situation with an enhanced self-confidence and a renewed faith in life.

The purpose of the study developed in this article was to extend Durkheim's collective rituals model to TRC situations and to test its prediction in this specific context. This model is unique in that it teases apart emotional and social effects of collective expression. On the one hand, radically at odds with a cathartic view, collective rituals would increase emotions among participants rather than bringing them an emotional discharge. In particular, in TRC situations, participants are expected to experience enhanced negative emotions because of their attentional focus on past violence, because of their verbal and nonverbal interactions with persons who lived through similar dramatic experiences, and because of their coordinated collective emotional expression. On the other hand, the model predicts rituals to have major positive effects upon collective identity and social integration. Indeed, by activating shared beliefs and by stimulating shared emotions, rituals enhance perceived similarity among participants and thus end up reinforcing their social identification with the salient group. In sum, under the lens of Durkheim's model, TRC situations are not expected to heal participants, but they would nevertheless provide the community with important social integrative effects. Thus according to this perspective, healing individuals and healing a nation cannot be considered as one and the same thing.

However, extending this model of collective rituals to TRCs raises a number of questions. First, is there evidence in support of the model's paradoxical prediction that a TRC would fuel emotions rather than heal them? Second, how do the predicted social integrative effects fare when confronted to recent models of collective situations? Third, Durkheim's model addressing primarily intragroup settings, is it applicable to TRCs involving two clearly distinct groups, namely victims and prisoners? We now address each of these questions.

### Emotional Effects of Collective Rituals

As regards the Collective Rituals Model's prediction that collective expression would enhance rather than reduce felt emotions among TRC participants, empirical documentation is lacking. However, this hypothesis is consistent with a number of observations from TRCs. Numerous authors stressed the lack of data proving that testifying before a TRC leads to improved psychological health (e.g. Byrne, 2004; De Laet, 2006; Kagee, Naidoo, & Van Wyk, 2003; Kaminer, Stein, Mbang, & Zungu-Dirwayi, 2001; Kotzé, 2002). Hamber (2001, 2006), a clinical psychologist and observer of the South African TRC, mentioned repeatedly that, contrary to common expectations, many TRC participants felt devastated afterwards and that victims and witnesses could in effect be re-traumatized by testifying in front of the TRC. In support of these observations, Brounéus (2008) recently found that, compared to those who did not, survivors who testified in the Rwandan Gacaca were significantly higher for depression and

post-traumatic stress disorder. In sum, observations available so far may well lead to conclude that at odds with the claims that surrounded the South African TRC, a TRC simply fails to "heal". Obviously, there is a need for more empirical data on this issue.

### Social Integrative Effects of Collective Rituals

According to Durkheim's Collective Rituals Model, the intensification of negative affect could in fact entail positive social and individual consequences. Participants' social cohesion would be enhanced, with positive influence upon affect and self-confidence. This prediction is consistent with empirical evidence that the mere presence of others decreases reactions to stress (e.g., Kissel, 1965), that social support has positive effects on health and well-being (e.g., Stroebe & Stroebe, 1996), and that affect is more positive when interacting with others than when being alone (e.g., Fredrickson, 2006). In addition, participation in mourning rituals was found positively related to positive affect and to indicators of positive social functioning (Gasparre, Bosco, & Bellelli, 2010; Martin Beristain, Páez, & González, 2000; Weiss & Richards, 1997). In a similar vein, though it did not decrease level of negative affect, participation in protest demonstrations was predictive of positive affect, of received social support as well as of post-traumatic growth (Páez, Basabe, Ubillós, & Gonzalez, 2007; Rimé, Páez, Basabe, & Martínez, 2010). Thus, data support Durkheim's view that participation in social rituals boosts positive affects, group cohesion, and feelings of social integration.

Such implications of the Collective Rituals Model dovetail nicely with those of the self-categorization theory (SCT) approach to collective behavior (Reicher, 2004). In SCT studies, participation to collective rituals (e.g., demonstrations) was indeed related to increased identification to the social group, polarization of beliefs, reconstruction of social beliefs, commitment to social values, and empowerment (Drury & Reicher, 2005; Reicher, 2004). In SCT, social identification results from a cognitive self-categorization process due to the particular salience of social categories in the collective situation. In the Collective Rituals Model, social integration results not only from intensive exposure to the group's symbols and shared beliefs but also from the activation of collective emotions. Putting aside Durkheim's insistence upon shared emotions, there is thus a striking agreement between the century-old model and a rare case of contemporary model of collective behavior.

### Is Durkheim's Model Applicable to Collective Situations Involving Distinct Groups?

Durkheim's model addressed situations in which individuals belong to one and the same social category. A key question is thus whether this model is applicable to TRCs, in which two clearly distinct groups, namely victims and prisoners, interact. In other words, is a collective situation such as a TRC likely to entail the emotional communion and social integration effects predicted by Durkheim's model? To answer to this question, it should be stressed that even if a TRC necessarily confronts groups who were opposed in past conflicts, such a procedure

primarily aims at the restoration of social links within a community. The purpose of the TRC is precisely to favor a series of steps that change an intergroup conflict into an intragroup situation. Such a perspective can foster a number of consequences, which are precisely in line with Durkheim's model expectations.

First, a TRC can stimulate empathy and emotional contagion, a process which is at the center of Durkheim's model. For instance, by perceiving other victims' sadness and anger, victims can experience empathy and positive sympathy. Similarly, perceiving perpetrators' guilt, shame, sadness together with their lowered hostile emotions could help victims to augment their empathy towards out-group members (De Rivera & Paez, 2007). In addition, recent studies demonstrated that if anger leads to aggressive behavior at the escalation stage of conflict, the same emotional feeling can also bring about constructive political attitudes and support for non-violent policies in the context of systematic efforts to de-escalate a protracted conflict (Tagar, Federico, & Halperin, 2010). Increases in negative antagonist emotions were observed to be strongly related to empowerment effects from participation in TRC for victims (Martin Beristain et al., 2000).

Second, in a TRC, direct intergroup contact and personalization are encouraged. This is in line with the decategorization model on intergroup contact (Brewer & Miller, 1996; Pettigrew, 1998; for a recent review, see Yzerbyt & Demoulin, 2010). As such, this should favor a more individuated perception of others as well as a reduction of prejudice and stereotypes about the other group.

Third, TRC rituals intend to reinforce the sense of belonging to an imagined community, transforming representations from two opposites groups (e.g., white and black) into a single, more inclusive, one (e.g., the South African idea of Rainbow nation). Such a perspective fits the Common Ingroup Identity Model which stresses the role of re-categorization processes, whereby groups forsake subordinate group identities in favor of a supra-ordinate category (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). However, the Dual Categorization Model posits that groups are not always able to give up their identity (Riek et al., 2008). This suggests that TRCs should probably reinforce dual identities, such as South-African White and South-African Black for instance. When a recent protracted conflict as well as a limited level of cooperation prevents forming a super-ordinate category, TRCs would seem to fall under the umbrella of the Mutual Differentiation Model. This model posits that people should maintain their respective social identities and that the two groups should be perceived as distinct but complementary (Brown & Hewstone, 2005). Stereotypes are maintained, but out-groups qualities and ingroup shortcomings are acknowledged, which helps avoiding negative intergroup comparison and fuels reconciliation (Dovidio et al., 2008).

A fourth argument in favor of the applicability of Durkheim's model to TRC can be found in the Formal Apology Model of intergroup reconciliation (e.g., Marrus, 2006; Tavuchis, 1991). As a matter of fact, Tavuchis (1991) conceived formal apology as an intergroup form of ritual whose function is to reintegrate a norm violating group into the society whose norms has been violated. Apologizing is a

way to acknowledge the norm that was violated. By admitting that its past behavior is inexcusable, the perpetrators' group regains membership in the community. In this perspective, TRCs can be seen as expiatory rituals that aim at restoring harmony and social cohesion by reasserting a community's norms and values (Tavuchis, 1991).

Durkheim's collective rituals model is thus able to encompass the predictions of a large number of contemporary models addressing collective behavior and intergroup reconciliation. The latter all rely upon an intrapsychic cognitive approach to social behavior and do not take into account collective processes, which are largely absent from mainstream social psychology (but see Reicher, 2001). By considering the interaction of psychological, social and collective processes, Durkheim's model of collective rituals is able to embrace all current explanatory models. However, there is at least one aspect in which this classic model is in need of some qualification if one wishes to extend it to the study of TRCs. As Nadler and Shnabel (2008) rightly stressed, even if two groups who had been opposed can benefit from a TRC, victims and perpetrators of collective violence are likely to have different but complementary needs. Any procedure of restorative justice ought to take these needs into account.

### Victims and Perpetrators Complementary Needs

Nadler and Shnabel (2008) argued that victims, that is, people who have been helpless targets of violence, suffer a threat to their identity as powerful actors in the community: They need to recover some level of control and power. Perpetrators, who used to be powerful actors, suffer a threat to their moral identity: They need to regain a positive image. Reconciliation attitudes will be reinforced if victims receive a message of empowerment and if perpetrators receive a message of social acceptance (Nadler & Shnabel, 2008). A TRC procedure is likely to fulfill these complementary needs. Reparative measures towards victims and the "gift" of remorse, excuses, and regrets from offenders can restore equity in their relationship (Philpot & Hornsey, 2008) and empower victims. Several lines of research confirm that for victims, participation in a justice procedure was associated to higher levels of citizenship and political self-efficacy (Gibson, 2004) and to higher feelings of collective efficacy (Lykes, Martin Beristain, & Cabrera, 2007). At the same time, the formulation of apologies and acceptance of punishment allow perpetrators to acknowledge wrongdoings that otherwise might have been glorified, ignored or justified. Doing so allows them to save face and helps restore their moral identity.

Still, in contrast to the model proposed by Nadler and Shnabel (2008), we think that victims too need to repair their moral image. Such a need has been found central to victims of genocides whose dignity was dramatically threatened ("they killed us as animals") (Hayner, 2001; Martin Beristain et al., 2000) entailing consequences in term of survivors' guilt and shame. Restorative justice rituals as TRCs can help restore victims' and perpetrators' self-esteem through complementary actions. Victims will be empowered by receiving information, apologies, and reparation and having the possibility to accept or reject it. Perpetrators will be able to erase past negative facets of their self by manifesting pro-social behaviors,

apologizing, and accepting punishment (Nadler & Liviatan, 2006). Through such complementary actions, an exchange of shame and power can occur. An exchange in level of anger and disgust is also likely because such antagonist emotions are strongly felt and expressed among high status persons (Keltner & Lerner, 2010). Lazare (2004) pointed out that shame exchange is particularly critical in this context: "By apologizing, you take the shame of your offense and redirect it to yourself. You admit of hurting or diminishing someone, and, in effect say that you are the one who is diminished – I'm the one who was wrong" (p. 52). At odds with Nadler and Shnabel (2008) model thus, we think that the offender group should be ashamed and symbolically punished before being reintegrated as "moral member" in the society. In parallel, the victim group is revalorized and symbolically rewarded in such a manner that both groups can eventually feel pride and experience a positive emotional climate.

In sum, with the provision that one should take into account the transformation of emotions just described, and the central role of shame exchange, the needs-based models of reconciliation seem compatible with Durkheim's model.

## OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study tested whether the predictions from Durkheim's theory held for TRCs: Do collective rituals that are being instigated at the socio-political level significantly modify the social attitudes that prevail in a given population as a result of past conflicts, violations of human rights, or massacres. The study was conducted in the framework of Gacaca (pronounced gachatcha), the Rwandan version of TRC. In Rwanda, it is estimated that nearly 1,000,000 were killed during the 1994 genocide. A decade later, some 130,000 persons accused of participation in the genocide were still imprisoned. A traditional Rwandan community-based conflict resolution system called Gacaca was adapted for judging them (Honeyman et al., 2004; Staub, Pearlman, & Miller, 2003; Uvin, 2003).

The procedure of Gacaca is more akin to restorative justice than was the South Africa TRC. As 15% of the population was killed in the genocide and as usually victims, and perpetrators live together in the same hamlet, the procedure was clearly aimed at the reintegration and coexistence in the same community of victims and perpetrators, a central feature of restorative justice (Martin Beristain, Paez, Rimé, & Kanyangara, 2010). Therefore, punishments were limited to social works.

Gacaca tribunals were set up in every community of the country. They comprised persons of integrity elected by the inhabitants of cells, sectors, districts, and provinces. In a typical Gacaca, prisoners are brought before the tribunal in the community where they allegedly committed a crime. In their presence, survivors and the entire community discuss the alleged acts, providing testimony and counter-testimony. Prisoners who confess before the proceedings and ask for forgiveness can take advantage of important reductions in sentence. Participation and acceptance of punishment were mandatory.

Our hypotheses were as follows:

*Hypothesis 1:* Durkheim's model predicts that the public expression of participants' emotions contributes to their propagation in the audience. In line with this view, participation in a Gacaca was expected to increase negative emotions among victims as well as among prisoners rather than to provoke an emotional discharge.

*Hypothesis 2:* A consideration for the different needs of victims and perpetrators (Nadler & Shnabel, 2008) together with Lazare's (2004) view that an exchange of power and shame is essential in restorative justice rituals led us to qualify somewhat the first hypothesis regarding changes in negative emotions resulting from participation in Gacaca. Following Scherer and Tran (2001) characterization of modal emotions, we distinguished resignation or avoidance emotions (i.e., sadness, fear, and anxiety), antagonist or hostile approach emotions (i.e., anger and disgust) and moral self-conscious emotions (e.g., shame).

Whereas participation in Gacaca would increase resignation emotions both among victims and perpetrators, the exchange of power resulting from participation was expected to boost antagonist emotions (i.e., anger, disgust) among victims and to reduce them among perpetrators. Similarly, we predicted that participation in Gacaca would reduce shame among victims and increase it among perpetrators.

*Hypothesis 3:* In line with Durkheim's model and with the self-categorization and de-individuation models of collective behavior, we predicted that victims' as well as perpetrators' ingroup identification would be lower after than before their participation in Gacaca.

*Hypothesis 4:* In line with Durkheim's model and with contemporary views according to which participation in restorative justice ritual would alter intergroup perception and enhance intergroup trust, we predicted that the stereotypes about the outgroup would become more positive after Gacaca both among victims and perpetrators.

*Hypothesis 5:* Building upon Durkheim's model as well as upon theories of intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 1998), we predicted that after participation in Gacaca, a more heterogeneous perception of the other group would be manifested both among victims and among perpetrators compared with their perception before Gacaca.

*Hypothesis 6:* In line with Durkheim's model, with the common ingroup identity model, which stresses the role of recategorization processes in favor of a superordinate category and with the formal apology model, which stresses that rituals involving apologies and expiation should improve harmony and social cohesion (Marrus, 2006; Tavuchis, 1991), we predicted that participation in a TRC would enhance perceived social integration. More specifically, we expected indicators of positive emotional climate and social cohesion to be evaluated more positively both among victims and prisoners (Páez, Ruiz, Gailly, Kornblit, & Wiesenfeld, 1996).

*Hypothesis 7:* A central assumption of Durkheim's model concerns the mediational role emotional changes play with regard to the social integration effects the model expects from a

participation in a collective ritual. The social integration effects, which will be observed in the present study (hypotheses 3 to 6), are thus hypothesized to be mediated by emotional changes elicited by participation in Gacaca (hypothesis 1).

*Hypothesis 8:* Because TRCs were largely regarded as a place for catharsis to occur in line with the common stereotype linking emotional expression and healing, we wanted to examine how much the expression of emotions in a Gacaca improved participants' well-being. With this goal in mind, we assessed the degree to which participants exhibited symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder both before and after their participation.

In a preliminary study, which was undertaken right after the initiation of the Gacaca process in Rwanda, Kanyangara, Rimé, Philippot, and Yzerbyt (2007) examined the impact of the mere participation in these tribunals on emotions and on social variables. Forty-five days before and 45 days after participation to a Gacaca, survivors ( $N=50$ ) and prisoners ( $N=50$ ) completed scales assessing negative emotions and attitudes toward outgroup members. Results supported Durkheim's (1912) theory. In support of Durkheim's model, participation involved a reactivation of negative emotions in both groups but also entailed positive consequences for intergroup perception. However, this exploratory study suffered a number of limitations, the major one being the absence of control groups of participants not exposed to a Gacaca. The present study was designed to overcome various other shortcomings of this early investigation. First, much larger groups of participants were recruited both for victims and for prisoners. Second, control groups of victims and prisoners with comparable characteristics and size were gathered in parts of Rwanda where Gacaca courts had not yet taken place. Third, social integrative effects of participation in Gacaca were assessed through four different indexes. Fourth, the differences in needs of victims and of prisoners were considered among the tested hypotheses. Fifth, Durkheim's critical assertion that emotional arousal is the mediator of the social integrative effects resulting from participation in a collective ritual was tested. Finally, a direct test of the alleged well-being effects of participation in a TRC was conducted by assessing participants' symptoms of post-traumatic disorder before and after their participation.

## METHOD

### Participants

In total, 755 volunteers who were able to read and write Kinyarwanda and were at least 18 years old at the time of the genocide took part in the study. Among them, 395 were victims (238 women, or 60.25%) and 360 were accused of being perpetrators (162 women, or 45%). The experimental group comprised 384 participants of whom 200 were victims (mean age = 30.60,  $SD=7.70$ ) and 184 were perpetrators (mean age = 42.70,  $SD=7.83$ ). The control group involved 371 participants of whom 195 were victims (mean age = 28.89,  $SD=6.54$ ) and 176 were perpetrators (mean age = 44.31,  $SD=7.78$ ).

### Procedure

The study was conducted between February and April 2006 in four of the five Rwandese provinces on citizens who had been involved in the 1994 genocide, either as a victim or as a perpetrator. Victims and perpetrators were matched for their residence in the same neighborhoods during the genocide. They participated either in the experimental or in the control condition. In contrast to experimental participants, control participants came from a neighborhood where no Gacaca trial had yet taken place and where no such trial was being planned for another year. Also, control participants had not taken part in any other Gacaca trial outside of their neighborhood. Both experimental and control participants responded twice, once before and once after the Gacaca trial that took place for the experimental participants. The two sets of judgments were collected within a period of 10 weeks. Participants lived in hamlets based on agricultural economy. No relevant differences exist in socioeconomic indexes between regions. No gender differences were found in data analyses.

In order to recruit the victims, we first selected specific neighborhoods and then contacted the local authorities to ask permission to conduct the study within their district. In the presence of the authorities, the surveyor identified each victim and explained the purpose of the study. It was stressed that they could refuse to participate or, if they accepted, that they could terminate their participation at any time during the study without any consequence for themselves or their family. The selection procedure for the perpetrators was identical with the exception that a written permission was secured from the Minister of Interior and from the head of the penitentiary in order to meet with the perpetrator in prison.

### Surveyors

An initial group of 40 senior students of the clinical division of the psychology department of the National University of Rwanda were familiarized with techniques and rules of survey research. A final set of 24 surveyors were retained in the team on the basis of skills and motivation. They were paid €15 per data collection day.

### Questionnaires

#### *Individual Negative Emotion*

Participants rated on a scale ranging from 0 (=not at all) to 6 (=a great deal), the extent to which they felt each of five negative emotions. Following Scherer and Tran (2001) characterization of modal emotions, these ratings involved three resignation or avoidance emotions (i.e., sadness, fear, and anxiety), two antagonist or hostile approach emotions (i.e., anger and disgust) and one moral self-conscious emotion (i.e., shame).

#### *Ingroup Identification*

Participants identification to the ingroup was measured by means of 14 items adapted from the intergroup relations

literature (for a review, see Crisp & Hewstone, 2005) and to be rated on a scale ranging from 1 (=not at all) to 9 (=absolutely). Examples of items are as follows: "If I had to describe who I am, I would refer to the group of (ingroup).", "I feel emotionally attached to the group of (ingroup)." Averaged ratings secured one index of ingroup identification before the Gacaca and another after the Gacaca ( $\alpha = .84$  and  $.92$ , respectively).

#### Positive Stereotypes

In a questionnaire assessing the extent to which participants endorsed a series of stereotypic traits of the outgroup, 11 positive adjectives ("intelligent", "hospitable", "generous", "ambitious", "sincere", etc.) had to be rated on a scale ranging from 1 (=not at all characteristic of outgroup members) to 9 (=very characteristic of outgroup members). The specific set of traits was chosen on the basis of a preliminary investigation in which we collected consensual stereotypes circulating among victims and perpetrators. Participants' answers were averaged to form two positive stereotyping scores ( $\alpha = 0.81$  and  $0.68$ , before and after the Gacaca, respectively).

#### Perceived Outgroup Homogeneity

Participants rated five items on a scale ranging from 1 (=very different) to 9 (=very similar) to what extent they did see large differences among outgroup members (1) in general, (2) for intelligence, (3) for behaviors, (4) for physical traits, (5) for their views of the ingroup members. An item analysis revealed that the reliability of the five items was good. As a consequence, participants' answers were averaged to form a homogeneity index ( $\alpha = .71$  before the Gacaca and  $\alpha = .90$  after the Gacaca).

#### Positive Emotional Climate and Social Cohesion

Participants rated (1 = not at all; 5 = very much) five items extracted from the emotional climate scale (Páez et al., 1996) and assessed positive emotional climate and social cohesion (e.g., "In general, I have the feeling that people in Rwanda manifest mutual trust."). Ratings were averaged into one index of positive emotional climate before the Gacaca and another after the Gacaca ( $\alpha = .82$  and  $.71$ , respectively).

#### Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Participants rated the extent to which (1 = not at all; 5 = very much) they currently experienced 10 symptoms listed from the clinical description of the post-traumatic stress disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (APA, 1994). The following symptoms were included in the scale: trauma-related recurrent automatic thoughts, dreams, flashbacks, pain; and bodily reactions; sleeplessness, irritability/anger burst, difficulties in concentrating, awareness of danger, exaggerated startle reflex. A high internal consistency was observed for this scale, both before ( $\alpha = .82$ ) and after Gacaca ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

## RESULTS

### Hypothesis 1—Enhanced Individual Negative Emotions

According to the first hypothesis derived from Durkheim's (1912) theory of social rituals, participation in a transitional ritual such as Gacaca trials should reactivate negative emotions in both victims and perpetrators. Our results fully supported this prediction (see Table 1). Whereas victims in the

Table 1. Emotions as a function of condition, time, and group

Time	Experimental		Control		Condition	Time	$C \times T$
	Before	After	Before	After			
<i>Victims</i>							
Sadness	4.06 (0.79)	5.49 (1.71)	2.20 (0.59)	2.31 (0.96)	948.39***	106.71***	78.91***
Fear	2.89 (1.34)	4.81 (0.79)	2.46 (1.12)	2.39 (1.05)	214.18***	314.96***	365.95***
Anxiety	1.77 (1.24)	3.91 (0.83)	2.49 (1.35)	2.37 (1.18)	15.67***	351.08***	441.76***
Anger	1.93 (1.00)	5.00 (0.87)	2.23 (1.34)	2.15 (1.25)	147.82***	1111.74***	1228.76***
Disgust	2.53 (1.37)	3.71 (0.79)	2.45 (1.09)	2.37 (0.99)	59.00***	92.04***	121.61***
<i>Perpetrators</i>							
Sadness	2.53 (0.82)	3.63 (0.67)	2.59 (0.70)	2.82 (0.80)	42.72***	150.90***	63.45***
Fear	3.34 (1.03)	4.03 (0.99)	2.74 (0.93)	2.74 (1.00)	125.92***	38.51***	7.60**
Anxiety	2.90 (1.21)	3.68 (0.85)	1.45 (1.15)	1.48 (0.70)	466.29***	40.66***	36.23***
Anger	3.54 (0.63)	3.49 (0.86)	3.02 (1.21)	2.66 (1.07)	61.00***	15.10***	8.71**
Disgust	3.05 (1.19)	2.21 (0.71)	2.74 (1.33)	2.89 (1.14)	3.14 <sup>o</sup>	42.39***	86.12***

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; <sup>o</sup> $p < .10$ .

control condition did not evidence changes, victims who participated in the Gacaca subsequently manifested an increase of virtually all the negative emotions that were assessed in this study. Specifically, marked increases were observed for fear, anxiety, and sadness. These results show that for victims, being reminded the past events and being confronted with perpetrators was associated with an important affective cost.

As for perpetrators, the pattern of results for negative emotions closely resembled the one observed on victims. Consistent with our prediction, perpetrators who participated in Gacaca manifested an increase of the negative emotions for fear, sadness, and anxiety.

### Hypothesis 2—Exchange of Power and of Shame

In line with the view that a restorative justice ritual should result in an exchange of power, marked increases were observed among victims for the antagonist emotions of disgust and anger with a particularly spectacular enhancement in the latter case. Conversely, these antagonist emotions both decreased among perpetrators. The decrease was significant for disgust manifested in perpetrators self-reports after the Gacaca compared with before,  $F(1,175)=16.74$ ,  $p<.001$ , with their level of disgust being markedly inferior to the level of disgust evidenced after the Gacaca in the control group,  $F(1,358)=46.59$ ,  $p<.001$ . Similarly, rather than augmenting, the level of anger of perpetrators after the Gacaca manifested a trend in the opposite direction.

Turning to shame, we tested the answers on shame by means of a 2 (group: victims versus perpetrators)  $\times$  2 (condition: experimental versus control)  $\times$  2 (time: before versus after Gacaca) mixed-model ANOVA (see Figure 1). All effects came out highly significant (all  $ps<.01$ ) with the exception of the time  $\times$  group interaction. In marked contrast to the general increase in negative affect resulting from participation in the Gacaca, an important decrease in self-reported shame was observed among victims,  $F(1, 199)=116.70$ ,  $p<.001$ . Whereas victims reported equal levels of shame in the experimental group and in the control group before the Gacaca,  $F(1,393)=0.63$ ,  $ns.$ , they reported much less shame in

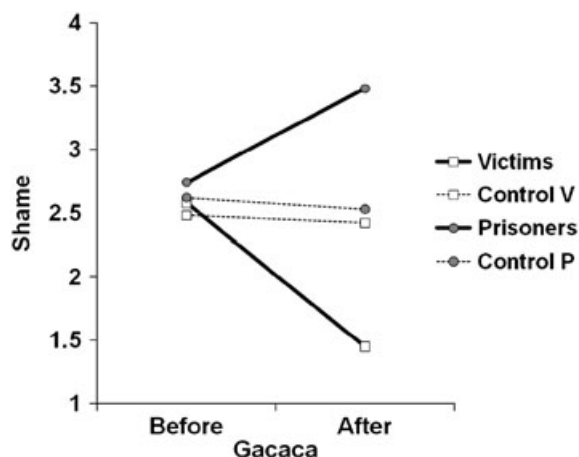


Figure 1. Mean level of shame as rated before and after Gacaca among victims who participated in the trial, control victims, prisoners who participated in the trial, and control prisoners

the experimental group than in the control group after the Gacaca,  $F(1,393)=84.13$ ,  $p<.001$ . It is also remarkable that participation in Gacaca ended up augmenting the level of shame among perpetrators,  $F(1,183)=38.57$ ,  $p<.001$ . Whereas perpetrators who took part to the Gacaca reported a similar level of shame than perpetrators in the control group before the Gacaca,  $F(1,358)<1.0$ , they reported much more shame than the latter after the Gacaca,  $F(1,358)=114.49$ ,  $p<.001$ .

### Hypothesis 3—Reduction of Ethnic Ingroup Identification

Supporting the positive effect of Gacaca as restorative and apologetic ritual, ingroup identification—the negative side of recategorization into a supra-ordinate national category—decreased among both victims and perpetrators after the trial,  $F(1,199)=134.45$ ,  $p<.001$  and  $F(1,183)=13.91$ ,  $p<.001$ , respectively, whereas their respective control groups showed a trend in the opposite direction,  $F(1,194)=13.62$ ,  $p<.001$  and  $F(1,183)=12.76$ ,  $p<.001$ , respectively (see Table 2). Perhaps resulting from the anticipation of participation, victims' identification was also lower in the experimental group than in the control group before the Gacaca,  $F(1,393)=101.85$ ,  $p<.001$ . Interestingly, this difference increased dramatically after the Gacaca,  $F(1,393)=1587.51$ ,  $p<.001$ .

### Hypothesis 4—Improvement of Positive Stereotypes

The pattern obtained for positive stereotypes was remarkable in that they ended up much more positive after than before the Gacaca among participants in the experimental groups,  $F(1,199)=804.00$ ,  $p<.001$  and  $F(1,194)=27.49$ ,  $p<.001$ , for victims and perpetrators, respectively. In contrast, a decrease occurred among control participants,  $F(1,194)=27.49$ ,  $p<.001$  and  $F(1,194)=31.71$ ,  $p<.001$ , for victims and perpetrators, respectively. Interestingly, before the Gacaca, positive stereotypes were lower in the experimental group than in the control group both among victims and prisoners,  $F(1,393)=20.36$ ,  $p<.001$  and  $F(1,393)=120.78$ ,  $p<.001$ , respectively. There was an impressive reversal of this pattern once the Gacaca was over,  $F(1,393)=287.21$ ,  $p<.001$  and  $F(1,393)=4.90$ ,  $p<.03$ , for the victims and prisoners, respectively.

### Hypothesis 5—Decrease in the Perceived Homogeneity of the Outgroup

As can be seen in Table 2, there was a spectacular decrease in the perceived homogeneity of the outgroup after participation to Gacaca, both among victims,  $F(1,199)=775.29$ ,  $p<.001$  and prisoners,  $F(1, 199)=168.61$ ,  $p<.001$ . In contrast, in the control groups, we observed no such change for victims,  $F(1,194)<1.0$ , whereas for perpetrators the data showed a slight increase,  $F(1,194)=5.05$ ,  $p<.03$ . Whereas victims' perception of homogeneity of perpetrators was somewhat lower in the experimental group than in the control group before the Gacaca,  $F(1,393)=27.09$ ,  $p<.001$ , this difference increased substantially after the Gacaca,  $F(1,393)=1116.90$ ,  $p<.001$ . A similar observation was made for perpetrators before and after the Gacaca,  $F(1,393)=40.22$ ,  $p<.001$  and  $F(1,393)=750.04$ ,  $p<.001$ , respectively.

Table 2. Identification (Ident.), homogeneity (Homog.), positive stereotypes (Pos. Ster.), positive emotional climate and social cohesion (Soc. Coh.) as a function of condition, time, and group

Time	Experimental		Control		Condition	Time	$C \times T$
	Before	After	Before	After			
<i>Victims</i>							
Ident.	2.42 (1.18)	1.41 (0.51)	3.56 (1.07)	3.84 (0.69)	643.08***	40.49***	124.78***
Homog.	3.91 (1.09)	1.56 (0.60)	4.49 (1.11)	4.52 (1.10)	394.62***	626.17***	659.44***
Pos. Ster.	2.17 (0.77)	3.99 (0.66)	2.64 (1.25)	2.41 (1.14)	37.13***	422.46***	694.50***
Soc. Coh.	2.11 (0.63)	1.98 (0.54)	1.43 (0.68)	1.70 (0.60)	82.29***	5.25*	40.24***
<i>Perpetrators</i>							
Ident.	1.76 (1.00)	1.61 (0.68)	1.79 (0.78)	2.09 (0.85)	10.97***	2.96°	23.72***
Homog.	3.11 (1.58)	1.65 (0.56)	4.09 (1.32)	4.21 (1.13)	256.25***	110.03***	155.23***
Pos. Ster.	1.72 (0.58)	2.85 (0.63)	2.98 (1.44)	2.62 (1.25)	25.96***	90.09***	334.44***
Soc. Coh.	1.03 (0.56)	1.66 (0.52)	1.91 (0.67)	2.14 (0.51)	164.65***	232.77***	51.43***

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; ° $p < .10$ .

### Hypothesis 6—More Positive Perception of Emotional Climate and Social Cohesion

Durkheim's model led us to expect that the emotional climate would be perceived as more positive and involving more cohesion after the Gacaca than before. As shown in Table 2, this hypothesis was supported for perpetrators but not for victims. Among victims, positive climate was rated as higher among the experimental participants than among their controls before Gacaca,  $F(1,393) = 107.37, p < .001$ , supposedly because of the presence of positive expectations. Although there was a significant decrease, this difference remained significant after the Gacaca,  $F(1,393) = 23.21, p < .001$ . However, victims in the experimental group expressed slightly lower ratings after compared with before the Gacaca,  $F(1,199) = 5.87, p < .02$ , whereas there was a significant increase among victims in the control group,  $F(1,194) = 64.40, p < .001$ . Among perpetrators, we observed that before Gacaca, those who participated to the Gacaca perceived the climate to be less positive than their controls,  $F(1,358) = 182.23, p < .001$ . Next, as can be seen in Table 2, the emotional climate was perceived to be much more positive after than before the Gacaca, but this increase was more marked in the experimental group,  $F(1,183) = 200.13, p < .001$ , than in the control group,  $F(1,183) = 45.57, p < .001$ .

### Hypothesis 7—Mediation of Emotions

In line with Durkheim's model, the emotions elicited by the collective ritual were expected to mediate the social integration effects resulting from participation in this ritual. Earlier in this result section, it was observed that resignation emotions (sadness, fear, anxiety) augmented with participation both among victims and among prisoners. We therefore tested our mediational hypothesis using a single index of emotional change based upon these three emotions: (sadness + fear + anxiety after Gacaca) minus (sadness + fear + anxiety before

Gacaca). As regards the dependent variable, a single index of social integration was obtained using a factor score. Specifically, the three social integration variables for which significant effects of participation in Gacaca had been found—(1) enhancement of positive stereotypes, (2) decrease of perceived homogeneity of the outgroup and (3) reduction of in group identification—were submitted to a principal component analysis. This analysis yielded one single component that explained 61% of the variance, with a loading of 0.82 for the enhancement of positive stereotypes, 0.83 for the decrease in perceived homogeneity, and 0.68 for the decrease in ingroup identification and allowed computing a factor score for each respondent on this composite variable.

A series of regression analyses confirmed the presence of a significant effect of participation/nonparticipation in Gacaca on the social integration change factor scores,  $\beta = .78, t(753) = 24.28, p < .001$ , as well as on emotional change,  $\beta = .65, t(753) = 23.76, p < .001$ . Also, there was a significant effect of emotional change on factor score changes,  $\beta = .60, t(753) = 20.75, p < .001$ . The Sobel test conducted on these interrelationships was found highly significant,  $z = 21.39, p < .001$ . Next, we conducted a regression analysis of the impact of participation to Gacaca on change in social integration, but controlling for its impact on emotional change. Regression coefficients decreased, though remained significant for participation/nonparticipation,  $\beta = .67, t(753) = 22.84, p < .001$ , and for emotional change,  $\beta = .16, t(753) = 5.44, p < .001$ . We also performed the complementary regression analysis using change in social integration as our criterion and controlling for the impact of participation to Gacaca on emotional change. Here too, regression coefficients decreased, though remained significant with for participation/non participation,  $\beta = .47, t(753) = 10.87, p < .001$ , and for change in social integration,  $\beta = .24, t(753) = 5.45, p < .001$ .

On the basis of these findings, it is safe to conclude that participation in Gacaca both increased negative resignation



emotions and improved social integration (i.e., an increase in positive stereotypes, a more differentiated perception of outgroup, and a decrease in identification of participants with their ingroup). Clearly, thus the current data seem to suggest that both dependent variables ought to be seen as significant consequences of participation to Gacaca consequences that feed into and affect each other.

### Hypothesis 8—Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

A  $2(\text{Gacaca/control}) \times 2(\text{victims/prisoners}) \times 2(\text{before/after})$  mixed model ANOVA conducted on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) indicators yielded highly significant main effects and interactions (all  $ps < .001$ ). Results underlying the triple interaction,  $F(1,751) = 35.87$ ,  $p < .001$ , are depicted on Figure 2. It can be seen that whereas PTSD indices remained stable from the first to the second measurement time in the two control groups, they decreased among prisoners ( $M = 2.4$ ,  $SD = 0.56$  and  $M = 2.1$ ,  $SD = 0.38$ , respectively), and they increased in a spectacular manner among victims ( $M = 2.4$ ,  $SD = 0.47$  and  $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ). Thus, if some well-being benefits resulted for prisoners from participating in Gacaca, this was certainly not the case for victims. Such a finding contradicts the cathartic view of TRCs.

## DISCUSSION

Durkheim's (1912) model predicted two major consequences of participation to a collective ritual. On the one hand, rituals are expected to trigger a strong reactivation of the emotions associated with the commemorated event. On the other hand, rituals are predicted to contribute to the reconstruction of participants' collective identity by boosting group cohesion and social integration.

With respect to emotional reactivation, our findings fully supported the prediction of the model. Both victims and perpetrators who participated in the Gacaca manifested a considerable increase in fear, sadness, and anxiety in the period, which followed their participation. In addition, for victims, participation was also followed by a sharp increase in

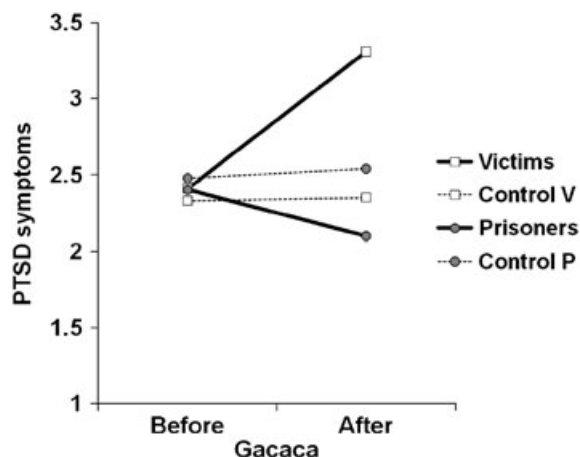


Figure 2. Mean level of post-traumatic stress symptoms as rated before and after Gacaca among victims who participated in the trial, control victims, prisoners who participated in the trial, and control prisoners

the extent to which they reported symptoms related to post-traumatic stress. These findings are in perfect agreement with clinical observations (Daley, 1997; Hamber, 2001; Hayner, 2001) as well as with the rare pieces of empirical evidence about consequences of TRCs (Brounéus, 2008; Byrne, 2004; Kaminer et al., 2001). Scarce as it is, the available research points to a surge of negative emotions among victims and/or witnesses after participation. The unanimous view thus runs against a "cathartic" or discharge perspective of the expression of emotion in social context. One thing is definitely untrue, and it is that the mere expression of emotions in a collective situation has healing effects. The present message is totally consistent with the findings emerging from the research on the emotional expression between individuals (Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999; Rimé, 2009).

At the same time, the emotional reactivation resulting from Gacaca nicely supported predictions from the complementary needs models of reconciliation (Lazare, 2004; Nadler & Liviatan, 2006; Nadler & Shnabel, 2008) and opened upon a number of constructive changes both among victims and among perpetrators. The empowerment of victims by Gacaca rituals was clearly suggested by their heightened level of antagonist emotions (disgust, anger), with a particularly dramatic increase in anger. The contrasting emotional manifestations of perpetrators suggested them to have moved symbolically in the opposite direction. Moreover, in congruency with a view of Gacaca as an expiatory, apologetic, and restorative justice ritual, self-reported shame was decreased among victims who participated thus suggesting that participation contributed to restore their self-esteem and dignity. Turning to perpetrators, the ritual resulted in an increase of shame, an effect likely to favor the internalization of social control among them.

The various results from our psychosocial variables strongly support the view that participation in the Gacaca ritual enhanced the social cohesion of these two groups which, in the past, had been opposed to one another in the most dramatic manner. After participation, the improvement in the intergroup relations was manifested for both groups in a reliable manner across three of the four indicators of the study, with a decreased ingroup self-categorization, a reduced perception of the outgroup homogeneity and an enhancement of positive stereotypes about the outgroup. In addition, for perpetrators significant change in the direction of social integration were also found on the fourth indicator, that is, positive emotional climate or social cohesion. We will briefly comment these various results hereafter.

First, participation in a Gacaca was found to strengthen participants' self-definition in "non-ethnic" terms. These results suggest that rituals involving collective emotional expressions and the recognition of collective past misdeeds contribute to construct an integrative super-ordinate identity. Building an inclusive national identity is precisely a major objective of TRCs (Gibson, 2004). A limitation of the study in this regard lies in the lack of a direct measure of national identification. Admittedly however, a reduction in ethnic identification should favor the construction of a national supra-category.

Second, participation in Gacaca increased outgroup perceived heterogeneity. Research on stereotyping and

intergroup relations demonstrated that one signature of intergroup prejudice is to consider members of the outgroup as being similar to each other (Yzerbyt, Judd, & Corneille, 2004). This type of perception is also a characteristic of groups having a past history of mutual destruction (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005; Staub, 1989). Perceiving the outgroup as being homogeneous amounts to denying individual and personal characteristics to outgroup members and reduces them to a mere instantiation of their category, thus sustaining prejudice and hostile social relations. In line with Durkheim's insights and congruent with the decategorization and direct contact model of prejudice reduction (Pettigrew, 1998), participation in Gacaca favored a personalization or individualized perception of members of the outgroup.

Third, both among victims and prisoners, participants generally expressed more positive stereotypes of outgroup members during the second wave of data collection. This confirmed that an important ingredient of intergroup reconciliation and a supposed effect of restorative and expiation rituals is a change in stereotypes. The observed pattern of results is coherent with the mutual intergroup differentiation model. Thus, groups shared outgroup stereotypes, sustaining intergroup differentiation, which is in favor of a potential trusting cooperation (Riek et al., 2008).

Finally, Durkheim's model led us to expect that the emotional climate would be perceived as more positive and involving more cohesion after the Gacaca than before. This hypothesis was supported for perpetrators but not for victims. It is likely that by the end of the trial, the cost of participation appeared much lighter for perpetrators than for victims. In sum, the fairness of the procedure and the outcomes of the ritual justice proved more satisfactory for the former than for the latter. For perpetrators, these trials meant the end of a long state of uncertainty about their fate as well as their possible reintegration in the community (Kanyangara et al., 2007; Mullet, Nann, Kadiangandu, Neto, & Pinto, 2010; Staub et al., 2003).

Among victims, positive climate was rated as higher among the participants than among their controls before Gacaca, supposedly because of their positive expectations. After Gacaca, there was a significant decrease, but the difference remained nevertheless significant. Confrontation with perpetrators very likely triggered reliving past traumas and victims' expectations might have exceeded what the experience actually provided (Staub et al., 2003). At the same time, despite the decrease, the emotional climate continued to be seen as more positive among victims than among their controls. Thus, the positive perception still dominated the picture once the trial was over, suggesting that the hopes instigated among victims before the Gacacas did not entirely vanish with the trial—but opinion about popular trials became less positive and neutral.

Central to Durkheim's model is the idea that social rituals entail collective psychosocial consequences *because* of the particular emotional dynamic they generate. Through emotion elicitation, through reciprocal emotional stimulation, and through the building up of mutual empathy, social rituals bring participants to a stage of emotional fusion or communion. According to the model, feelings such as "we are one" are at the heart of any improvement in feelings of

group belonging and social integration. It was thus critical to test this central assumption of the model in the present study. The before and after design which was used as well as the large number of observations per condition allowed us to conduct a test of the mediational role of emotional enhancement in the positive effects that participating in a Gacaca had upon the various indicators of social integration. Although the test confirmed that emotional enhancement at least partially mediated the observed effects, a similar message emerged when we conducted the reverse mediation. In other words, even though it is realistic to posit the presence of a mediational impact of emotions on aspects of social integration, our analyses stress the fact that emotional changes and changes in social integration also went hand in hand. This state of affairs suggests that more work ought to be conducted to tackle Durkheim's mediational hypothesis, possibly using more than two waves of measurement relied upon in the present work.

Should these results lead to conclude that Gacacas were successful in bringing their participants together? The complexities of the effects associated with Gacaca have been noted by several researchers. Staub and colleagues (2003) concluded that Gacaca transitional justice has the potential to contribute to heal the wounds and to bring about reconciliation. At the same time, these authors conjectured that participation in Gacaca can also provoke and renew feelings of sadness, anger, and fear. According to Bloomfield (2003), truth and reconciliation procedures are not expected to provide reconciliation as such. Rather, they provide a series of ingredients that pave the way to reconciliation. In this author's view, a crucial element lies in whether participants to the procedure question the attitudes and negative stereotypes that were developed about "the enemy" during the conflict. Such preconditions to a successful reconciliation seemingly explain the positive effects resulting from participation to Gacaca as they were found in the present study.

The question arises as to whether the positive effects affecting the Gacaca participants are likely to extend to the Rwandese society as a whole. Data from a survey of 3700 South Africans conducted in 2001 by Gibson (2004) suggest a positive answer. The survey provided empirical evidence that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's "truth" was fairly and widely accepted by South Africans of all races, that some degree of reconciliation characterizes South Africa today and that the collective memory produced by the TRC process did indeed contribute to reconciliation (see Paez & Liu, 2010 for a discussion of the role of collective memory in overcoming conflicts). Thus, in spite of the cost transitional justice rituals involve in terms of negative emotions and perceived social climate for participants, they do seem to pave the way to social integration and to intergroup reconciliation. The findings of Gibson's (2004) large attitude survey conducted in South Africa are totally consistent with the results obtained from the present quasi-experimental research design conducted in Rwanda.

The present research entails a number of limitations and strengths that are worth mentioning. Starting with the limitation, some of the measures used here may be thought of as relatively transparent, thereby favoring the intrusion of experimental, social, or even political demands. Future studies should try and rely on dependent measures that go beyond the

level of self-reporting. Also, the content of measures was limited to intergroup emotions and cognitions (i.e., emotional climate, stereotypes, and outgroup homogeneity). We did not include variables tapping the evolution of respondents' values of tolerance, of their attitudes toward human rights, and of their trust in social institutions. In other terms, our approach was limited to the intergroup facet of social reconciliation and did take into consideration other possible facets of social reconciliation (Gibson, 2004).

In spite of these limitations, the study is characterized by a respectable number of strengths. First, it is one of the rare studies approaching psychosocial effects of collective rituals, and further, among the very rare ones—only a handful—using empirical methods in order to assess the effects of truth and reconciliation procedures. As such, the present work enables us to go beyond the innumerable articles, books, and discussions of all kinds debating and speculating about these effects. Our empirical approach entirely relied upon a strong, classic, theory proposing original and clear insights in this regard. We showed that these insights do embrace mainstream current social psychology approaches to collective behavior (Reicher, 2004) and intergroup reconciliation processes (Nadler, Malloy, & Fisher, 2008). Our study relied on a longitudinal design—a feature that currently remains unique in this research domain—with a considerable number of respondents, in a part of the world in which an investigation of this kind is nothing but exceptional. Our measures are characterized by good levels of reliability and were adapted and co-constructed in collaboration with investigators who belong to the culture that is being investigated. The time frame that was adopted by the government of Rwanda in its implementation of the Gacaca ritual across the country allowed us to develop a classic quasi-experimental design with effective control groups. In addition, the study was also unique in that both victims and prisoners were equally taken into consideration in the data set. Finally, it should be stressed that the findings of the present study consistently replicated the results of our prior exploratory study (Kanyangara et al., 2007), which had been conducted with a smaller number of participants and in the absence of suitable control groups. It is our firm conviction that these various features plead in favor of the reliability of the present findings. We see the coherence and significance of the message emanating from our data as clear encouragements to conduct further work on these issues.

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