Whether you tell your best friend what feelings you experienced when your terrifying roommate revealed he has a crush on you, check the affective responses of your colleagues when your boss introduces the new secretary, or notice that you have been emotionally contaminated by the negativity of your mother-in-law, the sharing of affect (i.e., moods and emotions) occurs almost everyday, and therefore seems an inevitable aspect of social and organizational life. The main goal of this dissertation was to increase our understanding of the effects of positive and negative affective sharing on individual and group outcomes in social settings. More specifically, by examining interactive effects of valence of affect and affective sharing in combination with several other intra-individual processes, intragroup processes and contextual factors (affective certainty, conflict, and future interaction expectation), we hope to come to a more refined account on the role of affective sharing in groups.

In the present dissertation we employed a wide variety of methods; computer-mediated laboratory studies, a scenario study, cross-sectional field studies, and experimental (three-person) group studies, to test our hypotheses. The results of these studies showed that: (1) interactive sharing of affect (the dynamic path to group affect) yields stronger effects on task performance and group dynamics than non-interactive sharing of affect (the static path to group affect), (2) shared positive (vs. shared negative) affect enhances creative task performance, whereas shared negative (vs. shared positive) affect especially increases analytical task performance, (3) shared negative affect strengthens feelings of belongingness and leads to a higher level of information sharing in groups, (4) positive affect increases creativity, especially when people interactively share their feelings and when they are affectively uncertain, which may partially be explained by an increased tendency to cooperate, (5) the sharing of positive affect may expose the potential beneficial effects of task conflict, whereas the sharing of negative affect may mitigate the detrimental effects of relationship conflict, and (6) the sharing of negative affect may be deemed particularly influential when group members expect prolonged group longevity.

The findings of the present dissertation show that affective sharing has profound consequences for both individual and work group functioning and therefore may have important implications for applied settings.