Can Emotion Regulation Change Political Attitudes in Intractable and Religious Conflict? From the Laboratory to the Field

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Reducing Religious Conflict
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Religious Conflict??

- Religious issues? Less than 33% of Jews in Israel and of Palestinians are willing to make compromises regarding the Holly Places (Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011)
Religious Conflict??

- Creative Solutions…
  1. Sovereignty of God
  2. Bellow and above the ground
Religious Conflict??

- **Religious people?** Only 21.3% of the Jews in Israel and 46.5% of the Palestinians define themselves as “Religious” or “very religious” (Canetti et al., 2010).
November 20th 1977 Sadat Speech in Jerusalem
"Yet there remains another wall. This wall constitutes a psychological barrier between us, a barrier of suspicion, a barrier of rejection, a barrier of fear, of deception.... This psychological barrier [constitutes] 70 percent of the whole problem."
Psychological Barriers

- Psychological barriers govern the way that human beings interpret information, evaluate risks, set priorities, and experience feelings of gain and loss (Ross & Ward, 1995).

- These barriers are not the disagreements themselves, but they are psychological factors that inhibit progress towards peace by freezing the disagreements (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2008).
The Arab Peace Initiative
Psychological Barriers

Emotional Barriers

“The sheer passion expended in pursuing ethnic conflict calls out for an explanation that does justice to the realm of feelings … A bloody phenomenon cannot be explained by a bloodless theory”

(Horowitz, 1985, p. 140)
“Emotional feelings are stories we tell ourselves in order to guide and account for our own behavior” (Averill 1994, 385).

Differentiating components of distinct emotional stories:
2. Emotional goals/tendencies.
Two Main Challenges

- Identifying the **specific influence** of emotions on attitudes towards peace.
- Identifying strategies **to overcome** these discrete emotional barriers.
Challenge 1: Emotions in Violent Conflicts

- **Fear and Anger** (e.g., Cheung-Blunden & Blunden, 2008a, 2008b; Huddy et al., 2007; Lerner et al., 2003; Small et al., 2006).
- **Hate, Anger and Fear** (e.g., Halperin, 2008, 2011; Halperin, Russell, Dweck & Gross, 2011; Reifen, Federico & Halperin, 2011).
- **Fear and Hope** (e.g., Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006; Halperin, Bar-Tal et al., 2008)
- **Hope and Empathy** (Halperin, Rosler & Gross, 2011 unpublished)
- **Angst** (Halperin, Wohl & Porat, 2011 unpublished)
- **Moral Emotions** (e.g., Brown et al., 2008a, 2008b; Cehajic et al., 2008, 2011; Iyer et al., 2003; Tam et al., 2007; Wohl et al., 2005, 2006)
Second Challenge

Emotion regulation strategies as a new avenue for conflict resolution
Emotion Regulation in Intergroup Conflict
(Halperin, Sharvit & Gross, 2011)

- **Basic Assumption**: Strategies of emotion regulation, previously used on the individual level, can help overcome emotional barriers to conflict resolution on the intergroup level.

- **Emotion Regulation**: Processes that take place when individuals try to influence the type or amount of emotion they (or others) experience, when they (or others) have them, and how they (or others) experience and express these emotions (Gross, 1998).

Direct Vs. Indirect Emotion Regulation
Indirect ER in Conflict – Changing Emotions through Change in Core Appraisals

- Identify core appraisal themes.
- Identify simple interventions that can tackle these core themes.
- Extrapolate from these small interventions to large scale programs.
Indirect ER in Conflict – The Case of Hate

- Identify core appraisal themes ("Outgroup is Evil by Nature").
- Identify simple interventions that can tackle these core themes ("All Groups Can Change" – GIT).
- Extrapolate from these small interventions to large scale programs.
Indirect Regulation of Hatred (Science, 2011)

- Research Goal: To down-regulate intergroup hatred by experimentally inducing incremental instead of entity theory about groups.
- No mention of the outgroup.
- No mention of the conflict.

GIT Manipulation: Violent Groups can Change their Ways

Patterns of violence in groups can vary over time because of changes:

- in the character of the dominant leaders
- in the environment of the group

Manipulation wording: The main finding of this research is that patterns of violence in groups changed dramatically over the years as a result of both changes in the character of the dominant leaders and changes in the environment of the group.

Overcoming Religious Barriers: Support for Compromise in Jerusalem

Effect of Incremental Manipulation on Support for Compromise, through its Effect on Hatred toward Palestinians

\[ b = -0.50^* \]

\[ b = -0.48^{**} \]

Indirect effect = .24**, 95% CI = 0.06 to 0.54

Replication and Extensions among...

- Palestinian Citizens of Israel
- Palestinians in the West Bank
- Turkish Cypriots
- Educational workshops
Indirect Regulation of Guilt (JPSP, 2011)

- **Research Goal**: To upregulate group-based guilt in order to promote support for compensation, gestures and compromises.

- **Once again…

- **No** mention of the outgroup.

- **No** mention of the conflict.

Group-Based Guilt: Core Appraisal Theme

- **Acknowledgment of Ingroup Responsibility**
- “Problem” = activation of defense mechanisms leading to low levels of acknowledgment, consequent guilt feelings and endorsement of reparation policies
- **Question = How to increase levels of acknowledgment?**
Self-affirmation (Steele, 1988)

- Making people feel secure enough in their positive self image in order to "confess" to their group's improper behavior.
- The bolstering of one’s sense of self-worth in one domain increases one’s tolerance for self-threats in another domain.
Study 2 – Experimental Manipulation

- **Self Affirmation** – participants were asked to recall a meaningful event in their lives that made them feel proud and successful. Then, they were asked to describe the feelings and thoughts they had following the event.

- **Control condition** - participants were asked to write a list of things they would take for/on a long trip to an isolated island.
Group-Based Guilt

Study 2 – Mediation Model

\[ X^2 (2) = 1.83, \ p = .40; \ CFI = .99; \ RMSEA = .01 \]

Mediation analyses – Sobel tests \( p < .05 \)

Alternative models – poor fit!

“If I could know that my daughters were the last sacrifice on the road to peace between Palestinians and Israelis, then I would accept their loss.”

DR. IZZELDIN ABUELAISH

I SHALL NOT HATE

A GAZA DOCTOR’S JOURNEY
Replication and Extension among...

Study 3: From self-affirmation to support for reparation (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
Indirect ER in Conflict – The Case of Guilt

- Identify core appraisal themes ("Acknowledgment of Responsibility").
- Identify simple interventions that can tackle these core themes ("Self Affirmation").
- Extrapolate from these small interventions to large scale programs (Any Ideas???).
Direct Emotion Regulation

Reappraisal

- Reappraisal - Changing a situation’s meaning in a way that alters its emotional impact (Gross, 2002).
- Leads to lower levels of negative emotional experience, higher levels of positive emotional experience and better interpersonal functioning.
- Reappraisal can draw attention to the broader meaning or consequences of events leading to a more balanced perspective.

James Gross
**Correlative Evidence for the Effects of Emotion Regulation During War**

- **Research Hypothesis**: Individuals who effectively regulate their negative emotions during war will favor providing humanitarian aid to the outgroup for the sake of ending the war and improving intergroup relations.

- **Research Design**: Nationwide survey (N=200) conducted in the midst of the War in Gaza between Israelis and Palestinians.

Measurements

- **Reappraisal** – 3-item abbreviated version of the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire reappraisal scale (Gross & John, 2003) (s.i., *When faced with a stressful situation, I’ve made myself think about it in a way that helped me stay calm*) ($\alpha = .64$).

- **Emotions** – Participants then were asked to rate the extent to which (1-not at all to 6-very much) the recent events made them feel each of the following emotions towards the Palestinians (*fear, anger and empathy*) and in regard to the future of the conflict (*hope*).

- **Humanitarian Aid** – The scale measured support for providing humanitarian aid to innocent Palestinian citizens during the war (s.i., *Support for allowing the transfer of food and medicine to innocent Palestinians*) ($\alpha = .79$).

- **Control Variables** – political position, socio-demographics.
Hope Mediates the Effect of Reappraisal on Support for Humanitarian Aid

Fit Measures: $\chi^2 (27) = 28.2, p = .40; NFI = .93, IFI = .99, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .01$

Reappraisal

Hope

Support for Humanitarian Aid
$(R^2 = .38)$

Reappraisal $\rightarrow$ Hope $\rightarrow$ Support for Humanitarian Aid

$R^2 = .38$  
Hope $= .37^*$  
Reappraisal $= .30^*$  
Support for Humanitarian Aid $= .26^* (.16^*)$

Emotion Regulation in Real World Situation
(Halperin, Porat, Tamir & Gross, Psy-Science).

- **Research Goal**: To examine whether people who undergo a cognitive reappraisal training session be **more** supportive of conciliatory actions.
- A **real world conflict** situation.
- A **predictable** event
- Testing the **longitudinal effects** of reappraisal training.
Procedure

**Experience Sampling - During the Week**

- Remind subjects to reappraise + Measures
- Remind subjects to reappraise + Measures
- Remind subjects to reappraise + Measures

**Measurement of Emotional and Political Reactions**

- 10 days later
- 5 Months later
Reappraisal Training

- Different perspectives
- Like an outsider
- Like a scientists
- In an analytic way
Emotions Felt During the Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Reappraisal</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rage</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion Scale</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Constructive Policies – 10 Days Post Manipulation

$T(57) = -2.30, p = .02$
Destructive Policies – 10 Days Post Manipulation

$T(57)=2.16, \ p=.03$
Mediation Analysis
(Constructive Policies)

CI using bootstrapping with 5000 iterations estimated to lie between .05 and .50, with 95% confidence
Mediation Analysis
(Destructive Policies)

CI using bootstrapping with 5000 iterations estimated to lie between -.54 and -.06, with 95% confidence
Anger towards Palestinians - 5 Months Post Manipulation

$T(48)=2.54, p=.01$
Constructive Policies - 5 Months Post Manipulation

\[ T(49) = -2.03, p = .04 \]
Mediation Analysis
(5 Months Later)

Cognitive Reappraisal/control → Anger

- .28 *

Anger → Constructive Policies

- .56 **

CI using bootstrapping with 5000 iterations estimated to lie between .01 and .57, with 95% confidence

.28* (.13)
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