

# Emotions and Emotion Regulation in Intractable Conflict and Their Relation to the Ethos of Conflict in Israeli Society

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Life under the conditions of intractable conflict and the challenges posed by it are known to lead to the emergence of a multifaceted sociopsychological infrastructure, comprising various societal beliefs about the past and the present and collective emotional orientations (Bar-Tal, 2013, chapters 4–6). A central element within this infrastructure is the Ethos of Conflict (EOC), a concept brought forth by Daniel Bar-Tal to describe “the configuration of central societal shared beliefs that provide a particular dominant orientation to a society” (Bar-Tal, 2000, 2013; see also Oren, Chap. 8). In an intractable conflict, the EOC is formed to provide individuals with the ability to deal with the challenges of life under such difficult circumstances, but as it becomes more entrenched, the conflict-supporting societal beliefs comprising it may begin to serve as barriers to the conflict’s transformation and resolution.

Because of the omnipresence of the conflict in societal life, individuals carry the beliefs of the EOC with them throughout their daily routines. Indeed, multiple studies have demonstrated that the long-term societal beliefs of the EOC influence not only people’s attitudes but also their behaviors (e.g., Bar-Tal, Raviv, Raviv, & Dgani-Hirsch, 2009; Bar-Tal, Sharvit, Zafran, & Halperin, 2012; Porat, Halperin, & Bar-Tal, 2013; and see Bar-Tal, 2013 for a review). What remains to be explored, however, is the process by which this long-standing psychological construct influences intermittent political reactions and even behavior. How are people’s long-term societal beliefs about the conflict, the ingroup, and the adversary *translated* into

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concrete policy support and personal action? *Through what process* do these beliefs act to shape individuals' interpretation of new information and the way they react to it? And what processes might be at play in times in which individuals strive to act contrary to the mandate of these societal beliefs? In the present chapter, we would like to propose that an examination of emotional processes may serve to answer these important questions. In other words, we propose that in the context of intractable conflict, the influence of the EOC on actual decisions and behavior is at least partially mediated through emotional processes.

This view of the central role played by emotions in this process has received some initial support in the literature (e.g., Halperin, 2011; Halperin, Sharvit, & Gross, 2011), highlighting the importance of understanding how emotional processes shape attitudes and behaviors. More importantly, however, when studying the influence that emotional processes have on attitudes and behaviors in a context as unique and difficult as intractable conflict, it is important to understand how the long-term features of that context, and chiefly the EOC, shape this influence. Indeed, the EOC may influence these emotional processes in several important ways, such as shaping the emotional experience itself, shaping the outcomes of that experience, and shaping the efforts people make to modify their emotional experience.

Below, we will discuss each of these possible influences. First, however, we will review the existing knowledge on emotions and their regulation in the context of intractable conflict, drawing on evidence from Bar-Tal's native context: Israeli society and its experience as an actor in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Next, we will briefly describe the EOC and its function as a conflict-supporting ideology. Subsequently, we will discuss the existing knowledge on the EOC-emotion relationship and the various features of EOC as an ideology that may affect emotional processes. Finally, we will examine each of the possible influences EOC may have on emotional processes, mentioned above: its influence on the levels of emotion experienced, its influence on the outcomes of experienced emotions, and its influence on processes involved in the regulation of emotions. Throughout the chapter, we will draw on examples from Israeli society.

## **Emotions and Emotion Regulation in the Context of Intractable Conflict in Israel**

### ***From Emotion to Group-Based Emotion***

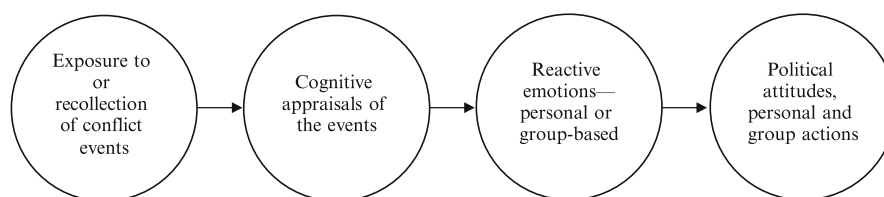
Even though the study of emotions has grown rapidly (Lewis, Haviland-Jones, & Barrett, 2010), scholars do not yet agree on a single definition, with differences pertaining mostly to the boundaries of the concept and its phenomena (e.g., emotional words, emotional experience, emotional expressions, or emotional behavior; see Frijda, 2004). The number of scientific definitions proposed has grown so rapidly that counting seems rather hopeless (Kleinginna and Kleinginna already reviewed more than 100 in 1981). In our work, we adopt William James's (1884)

classical perspective on emotions as flexible response sequences (Frijda, 1986) that are called forth whenever an individual evaluates a situation as offering important challenges or opportunities (Tooby & Cosmides, 1990). According to this definition, emotions transform a stimulus into a motivation to respond to it in a particular manner (Zajonc, 1998).

But emotional experiences and their motivational, attitudinal, and behavioral implications go far beyond the intra- and even the interpersonal context (see Halperin, Sharvit, et al., 2011 for a discussion of these). There is wide consensus today that emotions are driven by intra- and intergroup dynamics, are often expressed within social contexts, and in themselves influence the nature of intra- and intergroup relations. Most relevant to the present discussion is the concept of group-based emotions (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000). Empirical research has demonstrated that individuals may experience emotions not only in response to personally relevant developments but also in response to developments that affect other members of their group (e.g., Mackie et al., 2000; Yzerbyt, Dumont, Wigboldus, & Gordin, 2003). Although the emotion-provoking event is not personally experienced, group-based emotions are personally experienced emotions with various possible targets, including events, individuals, or other social groups. In this final case, they are termed intergroup emotions: emotions one experiences as a result of identification with a certain social group and targeted at another social group (Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007).

### *Group-Based Emotions in Intractable Conflict in Israel*

As we have stated earlier, emotions have the ability to influence individuals' opinions and even actions in the context of intractable conflict. Halperin, Sharvit, et al. (2011) presented a comprehensive appraisal-based framework for understanding the influence of emotions over conflict-related beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. The most basic element in this proposed framework (see Fig. 1) describes a sequence of psychological processes beginning with exposure to the emotion-provoking stimulus, which may be real or remembered information pertaining to the intergroup context. As an illustration, an Israeli may hear on the news that a member of her group has been hurt by a rocket launched by Palestinian militants. This exposure results in individual cognitive appraisal of the stimulus, and depending on the specific ways



**Fig. 1** The process model of reactive emotions and their influence in the context of intractable conflict

in which the information or events are appraised, the appraisal results in the experience of a discrete emotional reaction. For example, if the Israeli appraises the launching of the rocket as unprovoked, she may respond with anger; if she believes the action stemmed from the perceived fundamental evil nature of the Palestinian group, she may react with hatred; and if she believes she is also at risk of being hurt by similar actions, her reaction might be one of fear.

Each emotion, in turn, is associated with specific emotional goals, and to address these goals, individuals may adopt or strengthen certain political attitudes, or, alternatively, take or support certain lines of political action. In other words, discrete emotions influence people's political reactions to specific events by simple translation of the core emotional goals and action tendencies of the emotion into support for (or opposition to) practical policies that are seen as relevant reactions to the emotion-eliciting event. Accordingly, the same event would lead to support for different policies among different individuals who experienced different emotions in its wake. For example, if an Israeli's dominant emotion in response to aggression by Israelis would be group-based guilt, it could lead to support for policies aiming to correct the wrongdoings and/or compensate the Palestinians (see Čehajić, Effron, Halperin, Liberman, & Ross, 2011; Čehajić-Clancy, Chap. 8, volume 1 of this series). If he is instead dominated by hope for a better future, he may be motivated to search for new avenues to change reality in the long run, probably by seriously considering new political information and creative political solutions to the conflict (see Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp, & Gross, 2014; Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Porat, & Bar-Tal, 2014; Cohen-Chen, van Zomeren & Halperin, Chap. 7, volume 1 of this series, Jarymowicz, Chap. 9, volume 1 of this series). Conversely, if the Israeli is dominated by fear of retaliation by the Palestinians, most of his efforts would be devoted to support of policies that would increase his feeling of security (see Jarymowicz, Chap. 9, volume 1 of this series, Dupuis, Porat, & Wohl, Chap. 10, volume 1 of this series; Spanovic, Lickel, Denson, & Petrovic, 2010).

The above differences in the outcomes of different emotions stem from the fact that each emotion has its own unique "story" and thus its own unique ramifications. Whereas anger is a highly motivating emotion (Mackie et al., 2000) that may lead to either destructive (Berkowitz, 1993; Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994) or constructive (Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Halperin, Russel, Dweck, & Gross, 2011) action tendencies, hatred unequivocally results in destructive attitudes or goals (Halperin, 2008, 2011; Sternberg, 2003). Fear, contrary to both of these emotions, is an inhibiting emotion, leading to closure and risk avoidance (Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989; Gray, 1987; Halperin, 2011)—which may be indirectly achieved through either aggression (e.g., Duckitt & Fisher, 2003) or compromise (e.g., Gayer, Tal, Halperin, & Bar-Tal, 2009; Halperin, Porat, & Wohl, 2013; Spanovic et al., 2010). Hope, a positive emotion, leads to greater openness to new information and ideas (Snyder, 2000) and therefore to greater support for compromises and changes required for ending an intergroup conflict (Bar-Tal, 2001; Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp, et al., 2014). Empathy, on the other hand, is directed at the outgroup rather than the (political or social) situation and therefore leads to action tendencies serving a goal of helping the group (Čehajić, Brown, & González, 2009; Cikara, Bruneau, & Saxe, 2011), not necessarily affecting attitudes toward the ingroup or

the situation itself (Rosler, Cohen-Chen, & Halperin, in press). Understanding that each group-based emotion has a unique profile and a unique set of ramifications is highly important for understanding emotional dynamics in conflict but also for understanding how these various ramifications can be changed by tackling the emotions associated with them. The study of emotion regulation, described below, can make use of these understandings for the purpose of overcoming barriers to conflict resolution.

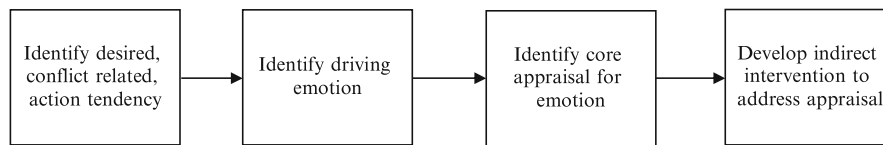
### ***Emotion Regulation in Intractable Conflict in Israel***

As demonstrated in the previous section, it is now well established that group-based emotions play a central role in shaping people's attitudes and behavior in conflict situations, with the Israeli context as no exception. Following this understanding, our research in recent years (e.g., Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp, et al., 2014; Halperin, 2014; Halperin, Pliskin, Saguy, Liberman, & Gross, 2014; Halperin, Porat, Tamir, & Gross, 2013) attempts to employ strategies of emotion regulation, previously used in basic psychology, in the context of intergroup conflicts as a tool for promoting conflict resolution.

We first focused on cognitive reappraisal, one of the most widely-researched emotion regulation strategies, finding that its use was associated with Israelis' increased support for humanitarian aid to the Palestinians during wartime (Halperin & Gross, 2011). Subsequent experimental studies, conducted in Israel, demonstrated that reappraisal instructions increase political tolerance toward disliked groups (Halperin, Pliskin, et al., 2014) and increase support for conciliatory policies immediately after an anger-evoking event and even following several months (Halperin, Porat, Tamir, et al., 2013).

However successful, the use of direct emotion regulation may have limited applied potential, due to both practical difficulty in administering wide-scale training and the personal motivation required for people to employ such strategies (Tamir, 2009). Furthermore, recent findings indicate that beyond a dearth of motivation to regulate emotions in a manner congruent with conciliatory attitudes, individuals involved in conflict are often motivated to regulate their emotions in the opposite direction (Sharvit, Brambilla, Babush, & Colucci, 2015). In order to overcome these obstacles, we have begun developing methods designed to *indirectly* regulate emotions (For a review, see: Halperin, Cohen-Chen, & Goldenberg, 2014). This approach involves a process of (1) identifying a potentially destructive action tendency, (2) connecting the action tendency to a discrete emotion associated with it (following Frijda, 1986), (3) identifying the emotion's core appraisal theme (e.g., Roseman, 1984; Scherer, 1984), and (4) finding a way to directly change this core appraisal theme so as to transform the emotion and its consequent action tendency (see Fig. 2).

Several studies have demonstrated the great promise contained in this approach. For example, in a series of studies, Halperin and colleagues (Halperin, Russell, Trzesniewski, Gross, & Dweck, 2011) hypothesized that a core appraisal of hatred, that the outgroup's negative character is inherent and unchanging, is based on a



**Fig. 2** The steps to developing indirect emotion regulation interventions in intractable conflict

more fundamental belief that social groups hold stable characteristics, known as an “entity” (or fixed) implicit theory about the malleability of groups (e.g., Rydell, Hugenberg, Ray, & Mackie, 2007). Indeed, we found that promoting an incremental view of the malleability of groups reduced intergroup hatred, thereby increasing support for compromises, among both Israelis and Palestinians (Halperin, Russell, et al., 2011). We have since conducted several other studies along these lines, targeting various discrete emotions. In all cases the process was the same, be it to transform levels of hope (Cohen-Chen, Crisp, & Halperin, 2013; Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp, et al., 2014; Saguy & Halperin, 2014) and guilt (Čehajić et al., 2011), and always resulted in more constructive intergroup attitudes.

As demonstrated, research has provided much empirical support for the effectiveness of both direct and indirect approaches to emotion regulation in intergroup conflict in general and in Israeli society in particular. Nevertheless, much work is still needed for these approaches to materialize into implementable interventions to improve intergroup relations or promote conflict resolution. One key to such materialization may be in the examination of the unique characteristics of the context at hand, such as the EOC in societies that, like Israel, are involved in intractable conflict.

## The Interrelations of the Ethos of Conflict and Emotional Processes in Israel

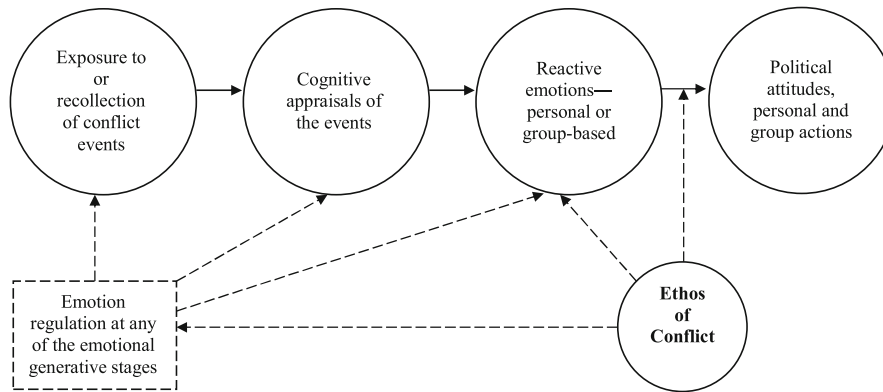
The findings presented thus far are promising in that they demonstrate how the adoption of previously accumulated knowledge about affective processes on the individual and group-based levels can further our understanding of the psychology of emotions in intergroup conflict and reconciliation. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that these emotional processes never exist in a vacuum. Every stage of the emotional process responds to the context in which the emotion arises and to the unique sociopsychological features of this context, with the EOC one such prominent and omnipresent feature in the extreme situation of intractable intergroup conflict—one that is intimately related to the emotions that arise in such realities.

As the EOC is an ideology, it is important to first understand the function of ideology more generally. Ideology can be defined as an organized construct of beliefs, attitudes, and values that provide a general worldview about a present and

future reality (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009; McClosky & Zaller, 1984). Various examinations into ideological belief systems have provided evidence for a connection between the set of long-standing beliefs contained within an ideology and a variety of interpersonal and intergroup attitudes and outcomes (see Jost et al., 2009 for a review). But beyond ideological content, researchers have also identified the importance of the cognitive as well as underlying psychological and motivational properties of ideology (Jost et al., 2009), which are universal to ideological belief systems around the world (Thorisdottir, Jost, Liviatan, & Shrout, 2007). According to this view, all ideologies can be described in terms of two dimensions that form their “discursive superstructure,” and these determine whether someone belongs to the political right (high acceptance of *inequality* and low openness to *change*) or political left (low acceptance of *inequality* and high openness to *change*) (Jost et al., 2009). Moreover, this approach claims that each end of the ideological spectrum fulfills different relational, epistemic, and existential needs, with people high in needs such as the need for cognitive closure (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003), the need for security, and the need for certainty (Jost et al., 2009) more likely to adopt rightist ideologies. Thus, it is important to take into account both the specific contents of the ideology (the societal beliefs contained in it) and the motivational basis for its adoption in understanding how ideology may shape other psychological processes.

But ideology takes on specific contents in the context of intractable conflict—namely, in the form of the EOC. As described in other chapters in this series (see Oren, Chap. 8, Shaked, Chap. 9, Cohrs, Uluğ, Stahel, & Kışlioğlu, Chap. 3, volume 1 of this series, Jost, Stern & Sterling, Chap. 4, volume 1 of this series), the EOC plays a central role in intractable conflicts in general and within Israeli society in particular. This conflict-supporting ideology denotes a strong adherence to a set of societal beliefs, including beliefs about the justness of the group’s goals, about security, of a positive collective self-image, of the group’s victimization, of delegitimizing the opponent, of patriotism, of unity, and of peace (Bar-Tal, 2000, 2007). Because of the centrality of the conflict in such societies, self-identification of individuals in conflict as rightists versus leftists is highly related to their level of adherence to the EOC. Indeed, empirical examinations have shown that the EOC serves as the dominant ideology influencing the attitudes and political reactions of individual members of societies involved in intractable intergroup conflict (e.g., Bar-Tal et al., 2009, 2012; Lavi, Canetti, Sharvit, Bar-Tal, & Hobfoll, 2014; Sharvit, 2014).

With the above in mind, we already know that group-based emotions play a key role in intractable conflicts, and Bar-Tal’s theory stresses the importance of the EOC within these contexts. What we do not yet know, however, is how these two important constructs may act together to influence the psychological processes of individuals involved in intractable conflicts. The integrated model of psychological barriers to conflict resolution (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011, 2014) has already initially proposed that emotions are intimately related to the EOC. First, the model suggests that certain emotions function to freeze the sociopsychological beliefs contained in the EOC and stabilize their rigidity. The emotions prevalent in intractable conflicts, which are characterized by high stability and resistance to change (Abelson &



**Fig. 3** The influence of Ethos of Conflict on emotions, the results of emotion, and emotion regulation processes

Prentice, 1989), serve as glue, holding the conflict-supporting beliefs together. In this regard, Sharvit (2014) has recently demonstrated that the EOC is activated in times of emotional distress—indicating that emotions can serve to increase the accessibility of these beliefs.

Furthermore, according to appraisal theories of emotions, each and every emotion is related to a unique configuration of comprehensive (conscious or unconscious) evaluations of the emotional stimulus (Roseman, 1984). Hence, emotions and beliefs are closely related and reinforce each other steadily. More than a decade ago, Lerner and Keltner (2000) argued that each emotion activates a cognitive predisposition to appraise future events in line with the central-appraisal dimensions that triggered the emotion (Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003). This appraisal tendency approach is of great importance in our context, mainly because it signals that long-standing beliefs and intermittent emotions that arise in the context of conflict constantly feed into one another, creating a vicious cycle of entrenchment in these beliefs and increased emotional reactivity. Indeed, the literature on emotions in conflict designates ideology—namely, EOC—as an important factor influencing individuals' cognitive appraisals of conflict-related events and stimuli, thus influencing emotional reactions to such events and stimuli (see Fig. 3 as well as Halperin, Sharvit, et al., 2011).

For example, the belief in the justness of the group's goals, which is embodied in the EOC, should theoretically be associated with higher levels of anger in response to any action or attitude undermining or criticizing efforts to achieve these goals, because a core appraisal of intergroup anger is a perceived unjust wrongdoing by the outgroup (Halperin, 2011; Mackie et al., 2000). Similarly, the belief that the outgroup's character is negative and subhuman (the EOC theme of the adversary's delegitimization) should be associated with higher levels of intergroup hatred, because a core appraisal of hatred is that wrongdoing by the outgroup is intentional and related to the outgroup's fundamental nature (Halperin, 2008). An additional connection may be drawn between the EOC belief in security, its absence, and the constant need

to achieve it and intergroup fear, which stems from a perception of threat to the group and relates to a desire to reduce this threat (Gray, 1987). As a final example, the belief in the ingroup's positive collective self-image should be associated with chronically high levels of pride, a group-based emotion associated with the evaluation of the group as meeting or exceeding desired standards (Lewis, 1999).

While the relationship between the contents of the beliefs of the EOC and emotions has received some attention in the literature, the way that emotion may be shaped by the needs and motivations underlying the adoption of this rightist, conflict-supporting ideology has not. The findings brought forth by the recent view of ideology as “motivated social cognition” (Jost et al., 2009) and especially those related to the differing epistemic needs that characterize people of different ideologies indicate that ideological differences are related to differences in fundamental cognitive processes, even with regard to stimuli unrelated to one's held ideology. For example, Amodio, Jost, Master, and Yee (2007) found that leftist individuals outperformed rightist individuals in a go-no-go task requiring the management of cognitive conflict, explaining that rightists' higher need for certainty made them less equipped to manage the task. This focus is relevant to the present discussion, because, as the ever-growing literature on the relationship between emotion and cognition has demonstrated, the neural circuitry of emotion and cognition interacts from early perception to decision making and reasoning (Phelps, 2006). Thus, cognitive processes and the factors affecting them likely play a decisive role in shaping emotional processes and determining emotional outcomes. In other words, it may be the case that beyond the influence of ideological content—namely, EOC—on emotion, the differing epistemic needs related to the adoption of such ideologies, such as needs for certainty, security, and cognitive closure (see Jost et al., 2009), influence emotional processes and outcomes by influencing the process through which new events and information are appraised.

We argue that these attributes of the EOC may influence the emotional process and its outcomes in several important ways. First, it may influence the emotion experienced—its type or its intensity. Second, the EOC may influence the outcomes of the emotional process, leading people to greater or lesser likelihoods to act in the face of emotion or to different modes of behavior. Finally, it may have an impact on processes related to emotion regulation, influencing individuals' ability to regulate their emotion, their motivation to do so, and the way in which they chose to do so (see Fig. 3 for a full conceptual model of these influences).

### ***The Effect of the Ethos of Conflict on Experienced Emotions***

The EOC may exert an influence on the emotional process in several different ways. First, in line with appraisal theories of emotions, ideological content should influence emotional reactions to new conflict-related occurrences by guiding people's appraisals of these occurrences. Accordingly, two individuals holding different ideologies will respond differently to an emotion-eliciting event because they

differently appraise that event. Empirical findings support this approach, with ideology leading to differences in emotional reactions, through the mediation of appraisal processes (Halperin, 2011; Halperin, Pliskin et al., 2014; Kahn, Liberman, Halperin, & Ross, *in press*). As discussed above, the EOC has been conceptualized as a long-term factor influencing the appraisal of new events and stimuli (see Halperin, Sharvit, et al., 2011), with its beliefs potentially feeding into emotion-relevant appraisals.

Indeed, adherence to beliefs of the EOC has been found to lead to varying levels of discrete emotions, such that higher adherence to the EOC leads to stronger fear, anger, and hatred experiences in response to information about Palestinian intentions (e.g., Halperin, 2011). Likewise, high EOC adherence leads to lower levels of guilt and shame among Jewish Israelis in response to information on Israeli mistreatment of Palestinians at checkpoints (Sharvit & Zerachovich, 2014). A recent reanalysis of two large data files collected in Israel in recent years,<sup>1</sup> published here for the first time, provides further support for these relationships between ideology, measured either on a right to left scale or using the EOC scale, and discrete emotions. More specifically, rightist ideology and adherence to EOC showed significant negative correlations with compassion and empathy and positive correlations with intergroup's hatred, anger, and fear. Furthermore, when regressing either ideology or EOC on all of these emotions, almost all remained significant predictors, indicating that each emotion is uniquely related to ideology, above and beyond the relationship between ideology and the other emotions. While these results are highly intuitive, they provide empirical support for the existing theoretical intuitions.

In addition to the beliefs of the EOC, it is possible to conceptualize ideology in the context of intractable conflict by examining its intensity or structure rather than its content. To this end, the literatures on moral conviction and sacred values are particularly useful. Moral conviction reflects the extent to which a person experiences subjective evaluation of an attitude target in terms of fundamental right and wrong (Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005). Such fervor in adherence to ideology also characterized strong adherents to the EOC in conflict situations, and thus it is a relevant construct to examine in the present chapter. Moral conviction has also been tied theoretically and empirically to differences in the experience of emotion. Skitka and her colleagues (Mullen & Skitka, 2006; Skitka & Wisneski, 2011) posited that people might have stronger emotional associations with policy outcomes when they hold positions with strong rather than weak moral conviction, proposing that these emotional associations may help explain how morally convicted attitudes motivate individuals toward various political behaviors. Indeed, empirical

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<sup>1</sup>Data file 1 consisted of a representative sample of 501 Jewish Israelis (253 females and 248 males) who voluntarily participated in a telephone survey conducted in Israel in October 2007, 3 weeks prior to the Annapolis Conference to relaunch peace negotiations. Data file 2 included a representative sample of Jewish Israelis who completed an online questionnaire distributed by the research firm Midgam Project (MP) in two waves: 808 participants responded in February 2012 (during a period of relative calm) and 402 (203 females and 199 males, ages ranging from 18 to 81,  $M=45.65$ ,  $SD=15.4$ ) responded again in November 2012 (during Israel's 1-week military operation in Gaza, a time of war).

work has demonstrated ties between moral conviction and anger (Mullen & Skitka, 2006) and also ties between morally convicted policy preferences and positive as well as negative emotions (Skitka & Wisneski, 2011), with emotions partially mediating the relationship between moral conviction and political behavioral intentions.

Research addressing moral conviction and emotions in the specific context of intractable conflict (Reifen Tagar, Morgan, Skitka, & Halperin, 2014) examined how both ideology and moral conviction were related to the experience of group-based emotions, namely, anger and guilt. Jewish Israelis' anger immediately after a war between Israelis and Palestinians was predicted by political ideology, such that rightists were angrier at the Palestinians than leftists. Guilt, however, was predicted by ideology only for those high on moral conviction, namely, Israelis on the left and right differed in their levels of guilt substantially only when moral conviction was high. With these results in mind, it may be important, in the future, to also consider the effect of moral conviction on the emotions of strong rejecters of the EOC.

### *The Effect of the Ethos of Conflict on the Outcomes of Emotion*

A second key aspect of the potential relationship between the EOC and emotions in conflict relates to possible differences between people high or low in adherence to the EOC in how they respond politically further to experiencing similar emotions. When considering how levels of EOC may moderate the relationship between discrete emotions and their outcomes, two emerging hypotheses emerge. Intuitively, it may be argued that, in a conflict, the conflict-supporting rightist ideology is more "hot emotional" than "cold cognitive" (see arguments in "How to Create a Leftist," 2012; Kroeger, 2005), and therefore the positions of rightists should be most guided by emotion. However, there is little evidence in the literature to support this prediction. Conversely, research indicates that rightists' positions change less than others' positions under different circumstances: ideological rightists such as high adherents to the EOC are consistently found to be more rigid in their beliefs (Jost et al., 2009; Stone & Smith, 1993). As stated earlier, the EOC provides a clear ideological orientation to its adherents, providing certainty and security in the face of the uncertain reality of life under conflict. This certainty may make individuals high in EOC less susceptible to the effects of emotion. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that individuals relatively low in adherence to the EOC would be guided by their emotions more than high-EOC adherents.

We recently tested this interesting question and found consistent support for the latter hypothesis across six studies (Pliskin, Bar-Tal, Sheppes, & Halperin, 2014), all conducted in Israel. In two initial experimental studies, induced empathy raised Jewish-Israeli leftists', but not rightists', support for conciliatory and humanitarian policies toward an adversarial outgroup (Palestinians) and even a non-adversarial outgroup (asylum seekers), even though the manipulation affected people's empathy regardless of their ideology. In a third experimental study, induced despair similarly led to reduced support for gestures to the Palestinians only among leftists, despite

similarly affecting levels of despair for rightists and leftists alike. Then, a series of correlational field studies provided further support for our hypothesis, this time showing that both positive (empathy) and negative (anger and fear) emotional processes were related to support for policies only among low-EOC (leftist) participants (both among Jewish Israelis and Palestinian citizens of Israel, PCIs), in positive (peace negotiations) as well as highly negative (wartime or threat by governmental policies) conflict-related contexts (Pliskin et al., 2014). Similar trends were found when examining the effects of induced fear (Pliskin, Sheppes, & Halperin, 2015) in the context of intractable conflict.

We also have initial evidence that moral conviction moderates the relationship between emotions and support for policies (Glik, Halperin, & Tamir, [in preparation](#)). In two correlational studies conducted among Jewish ideological rightists in Israel (i.e., Jewish Israelis particularly high in adherence to the EOC), participants responded to measures of moral conviction, read an anger (Study 1) or empathy (Study 2) inducing text, and then reported their levels of anger or empathy and their support for conflict-related policies. Results revealed that the more morally convicted the participants were, the more their willingness to support aggressive action was related to their anger. Interestingly, this pattern also held true for empathy—in this case an emotion somewhat at odds with these participants' moral convictions. Among participants who were morally convicted, there was a stronger relationship between empathy and support for conciliatory policies toward the Palestinians. Thus, it appears that there may be more nuanced variations among high-EOC individuals in their susceptibility to the effects of emotion, beyond the differences between them and low-EOC individuals.

### ***The Effect of the Ethos of Conflict on Processes of Emotion Regulation***

Finally, it is important to examine the influence that the EOC may have on processes related to emotion regulation. No studies have been published specifically addressing the various facets of this relationship, but it is possible to hypothesize as to its nature, and there are a few initial unpublished empirical indications regarding it. First, it is possible to view the EOC as a potent motivator to experience—and therefore regulate—emotions. Rightist ideology, more generally, is associated with resistance to change, and therefore rightists may be motivated to feel anger in the face of attempts to change the status quo and therefore choose to upregulate anger in reaction to such attempts. This is especially true in the context of intractable conflict, in which the EOC functions to sustain the conflict and guides the interpretation of new information. This ideology may thus motivate people adhering to it to upregulate pride or downregulate empathy toward the outgroup, in accordance with the societal beliefs in a positive collective self-image and the outgroup's delegitimization, respectively. Initial findings from an experimental study examining ideology as a possible motivation to up- or downregulate emotions provide support for this hypothesis.

When Jewish Israelis were given a distraction-based emotion regulation strategy before viewing an empathy-eliciting presentation regarding an injured Palestinian, they either up- or downregulated empathy (compared to a control condition), depending on their ideology: rightists' empathy decreased, but leftists' empathy increased (Porat et al., [in preparation](#)). Interestingly, a similar manipulation of cognitive resources, used by Sharvit and her colleagues (2015), also decreased the negative association between guilt and rightist ideology, with findings indicating that rightist ideology is associated with decreased levels of guilt only when cognitive resources are sufficient to allow for conscious downregulation of this emotion.

EOC may also serve to influence the effectiveness of various emotion regulation strategies—both due to the motivation factor described above and because people of different ideologies have differing cognitive and epistemic needs. Therefore, cognitive change-based strategies of emotion regulation may prove more appealing and effective for people low on the EOC, as leftists in general tend to be higher on need for cognition (Sargent, 2004). An alternative, opposite hypothesis might be that because leftists are higher on the need for cognition, low-EOC individuals tend to employ strategies for cognitive change automatically (for evidence that leftists automatically “correct” their initial response, see Skitka, Mullen, Griffin, Hutchinson, & Chamberlin, 2002) and therefore will be largely unaffected by an intervention designed to promote the use of this strategy, compared to high-EOC individuals. One study, referenced above, has examined these possibilities, finding moderate support for the second hypothesis. When Jewish Israeli leftists read reappraisal (versus neutral) instructions before reading a text about PCIs, it had no effect on their levels of negative emotion. When their rightist counterparts underwent the same procedure, those in the reappraisal condition reported lower levels of negative emotion toward the Palestinians than those in the control condition (Halperin, Pliskin et al., 2014). Nonetheless, no other studies have tackled this question directly, and these hypotheses remain to be thoroughly examined.

## Summary and Thoughts for the Future

As we have seen above, the central and potent role played by emotions in intractable conflict is growing clearer and clearer over the past few years (for a full review, see Halperin, 2014). Indeed, emotions may serve to explain the process by which the EOC—Daniel Bar-Tal's conceptualization of the specific societal beliefs that serve as the dominant ideology in societies in conflict—exerts its influence over individuals' attitudes and behaviors. But beyond understanding the importance of emotions and their study in this context, it is important to understand that emotional processes and their regulation are also a product of the specific context. Therefore, the study of emotions should not be implanted “as is” from other disciplines into political psychology, as if the emotions exist in a vacuum. When examining emotions in the context of intractable conflict, the EOC is a uniquely important feature of the context, as it is prevalent, strong, and constantly promoted by individuals and societal

institutions (see Bar-Tal, 2013). While we believe this is true in the context of any intractable conflict, this statement is all the more relevant in the Israeli-Palestinian context, within which Bar-Tal initially developed the concept of an EOC. In this chapter, we examined how the EOC shapes emotional processes in this context by influencing the extent to which individuals experience various emotions, their susceptibility to the downstream effects of these emotions, and their willingness and ability to regulate their emotional experiences.

Throughout the chapter, we examined existing findings and hypothesized as to the possible effects of the EOC wherever findings were lacking. An important next step would be to identify these and other gaps in our understanding of the influence the EOC may have on various stages in the emotional process and develop studies to bridge these gaps. Such studies should both examine how these influences may be manifested in societies involved in intractable conflict, such as Israeli society, and include innovative experimental methods to explore the causality and inner workings of these processes. Of all the issues examined above, the clearest gap exists in our understanding of how the EOC might shape emotion regulation processes in the context of intractable conflicts. Because processes of emotion regulation may provide an important key to overcoming barriers to conflict resolution, this may be the most urgent gap to fill in our empirical knowledge with regard to the EOC-emotion relationship.

Another important avenue for future examination would be to understand the other side of the reciprocal EOC-emotion relationship: namely, how repeated emotional experiences shape adherence to the EOC. A central assumption in the theory on psychological barriers to conflict resolution is that such effects occur (see Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011), but there is little empirical data to illustrate and illuminate the process by which emotions exert their influence on the EOC. One recent empirical examination (Sharvit, 2014) begins to shed light on this process. Its findings indicate that inducing anxiety and negative emotions in individuals leads to the greater automatic activation of EOC beliefs, even when such an induction is unrelated to the conflict. Furthermore, it appears that this activation occurs outside direct awareness, as the resulting distress is unrelated to explicit self-reported adherence to the EOC (Sharvit, 2014). This initial demonstration of a way in which emotional experience shapes and reinforces the EOC (see also Canetti, Elad-Strenger, Lavi, Guy, & Bar-Tal, *in press*) proves that while an examination of the causal influence of emotions on the EOC may be challenging and may require a complex longitudinal design, its findings and their significance would be exceptionally rewarding.

Finally, the present discussion focused on the Israeli context, Bar-Tal's native context, and one of international importance due to the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the global agenda. Accordingly, the findings brought here are mostly those collected in this context. While findings on the EOC from other societies involved in conflict exist, they are few, and even fewer have tackled its relationship with emotional processes. Therefore, it is important that future research expand our understanding of these interrelations to other societies, illuminating similarities across specific contexts, but also differences stemming from specific contextual differences.

Findings from a multitude of societies would enrich the literatures in political psychology and conflict resolution, but, more importantly, they could help guide attempts to promote effective conflict resolution, in which both general psychological processes and unique contextual differences are taken into account.

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