

Empathising with the enemy: emotion regulation and support for humanitarian aid in violent conflicts

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ABSTRACT

Considering that negative intergroup emotions can hinder conflict resolution, we proposed integrative emotion regulation (IER) as possibly predicting conciliatory policies towards outgroups in violent conflict. Two studies examined Jewish Israelis' self-reported IER, empathy, liberal attitudes, and support for humanitarian aid to Palestinians in Gaza. Study 1 ($N = 298$) found that unlike reappraisal Jewish Israelis' ability to explore emotions (e.g. IER) promoted concern for others' emotions (empathy), which in turn predicted support for humanitarian aid (while controlling for education level, and religiosity). Study 2 ($N = 291$) replicated this mediation model, additionally confirming that liberal attitudes (upholding equal, fair treatment for minorities) moderated the relation between IER and support for humanitarian aid. Thus, IER linked more strongly with humanitarian support when the commitment for liberal egalitarian beliefs was high. Preliminary results hold important theoretical and practical implications regarding the potential to empathise with outgroup members in intractable conflicts.

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Long-term intergroup conflicts involve intensified negative intergroup emotions that affect attitudes and behaviours (Bar-Tal, Halperin, & de-Rivera, 2007; Petersen, 2002). Studies have shown that negative intergroup emotions such as fear, hatred, despair, or anger (Bar-Tal et al., 2007) can lead people to support extreme aggressive actions and can mobilise public support for policies that escalate intergroup conflicts (Cheung-Blunden & Blunden, 2008), thereby hindering progress towards conflict resolution (Halperin, 2011; Maoz & McCauley, 2008). Therefore, recent research has examined types of negative-emotion regulation that may promote support for conciliatory policies (Gross, Halperin, & Porat, 2013). Specifically, recent studies found that *cognitive reappraisal* (i.e. construing potentially emotion-eliciting situations in non-emotional terms; Gross, 2002) predicted support for humanitarian aid towards outgroup members even during wartime (Halperin & Gross, 2011). Focusing on the intractable Middle East conflict, Halperin and Gross (2011), Halperin, Porat, Tamir, and Gross (2013) found that cognitive reappraisal among Jewish Israelis

predicted their support for humanitarian aid provision to innocent Palestinian citizens in Gaza who are not active participants in violence against Israel. Three factors were hypothesised to mediate this relation: (a) lower negative emotions (Halperin et al., 2013), (b) stronger hope with regard to the future of the conflict, and (c) greater empathy (Halperin & Gross, 2011). Yet, only the first two factors received empirical support; empathy did not mediate cognitive reappraisal's link with support for humanitarian aid. Given that past research identified the affective response of empathy (emotional response that very closely resembles what another person is or might be feeling that includes feelings of sorrow or concern) as a factor that reduces negative attitudes towards stigmatised people and groups (Batson, Chang, Orr, & Rowland, 2002; Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997), and in line with research (see reviews in Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006; Eisenberg, Eggum, & Di Giunta, 2010) supporting the important role of empathy in facilitating prosocial behaviour, it seems important to continue exploring emotion regulation capacities that may predict the affective response

of empathy and as a result may predict support for conciliatory policies (like support for the provision of humanitarian aid) towards outgroup members in violent conflicts. To further elucidate this question, the present research proposal expands investigation of the possible association among emotion regulation, empathy, and support for conciliatory policies towards outgroup members in intergroup conflict.

The present two studies aimed to extend the aforementioned line of research by investigating *integrative emotion regulation* (IER; Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, & La Guardia, 2006) as a possible predictor of empathy and support for conciliatory policy towards outgroup members in Israel's intractable conflict. Self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2008) posits that IER is an adaptive form of emotion regulation that involves an interested attention towards one's emotional states based on valuing negative emotions as an important resource for personal growth (Roth, Assor, Niemiec, Ryan, & Deci, 2009; Roth et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2006). Hence, the two studies tested the hypothesis that contrary to emotional modulation (i.e. cognitive reappraisal), Jewish Israelis' tendency to take interest in and explore their own emotions (IER) may be extended to an ability to develop interest and concern for others' emotions (empathy), which in turn may predict support for the provision of humanitarian aid to the Gazan Palestinians in need – thereby hypothesising a mediating role for empathy. In addition we tested whether or not the relation between IER, empathy and support for humanitarian aid is moderated by liberal (non-conservative) attitudes.

The second hypothesis was undertaken in light of well-established findings in the field of conflict resolution regarding liberal attitudes' links with support for compromises and pacifying policy towards outgroup members (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). Ideological mental models regarding politics and values like equality help individuals to interpret their environment and how it should be structured (Jost et al., 2009; Parsons, 1951). Hence, we aimed to test the moderating role of Jewish Israelis' liberal attitudes (upholding equal, fair treatment for minorities) in the relationship between their IER and their support for conciliatory humanitarian policy towards innocent Palestinians in Gaza. As elaborated below, we hypothesised a stronger relation between IER and support for humanitarian aid when liberal, egalitarian attitudes are high rather than low. Moreover, we hypothesised that this relation would be mediated by empathy. That is, the relation between IER and empathy will be stronger when

liberal attitude is high, and empathy, in turn, would predict support for humanitarian aid.

Thus, grounded in the SDT conception of IER and in the well-studied construct of empathy in intergroup relations, we first examined empathetic ability as a possible mediator through which IER may predict support for conciliatory policy, and we then examined whether or not Liberal attitude will moderate the relation between IER to empathy and humanitarian aid. The hypotheses were tested in two studies in order to allow replication of research findings.

The SDT conceptualisation of adaptive emotion regulation

The SDT perspective of healthy emotional regulation espouses a eudaemonic view of wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2001), where emotions are neither good nor bad (Deci & Ryan, 2000) but rather comprise informational inputs that guide action and growth (Ryan et al., 2006; Vansteenkiste, Niemiec, & Soenens, 2010). Emotions are seen as a built-in feedback system providing physiological, cognitive, and motivational signals that inform behaviours and goals to satisfy basic psychological needs (Ryan et al., 2006). Healthy emotion regulation implies valuing emotions as an important source for personal growth (i.e. an important source for understanding oneself, others, and social situations one encounters), together with interested (intentional) attention and exploration of one's emotional experiences. Within the SDT perspective, such eudemonically oriented regulation of affect is labelled "emotional integration" (Roth et al., 2009, 2014; Ryan et al., 2006). In this sense IER is different from other constructs like emotional clarity (Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Palfai, 1995) and emotional attention (Mayer, Marnberg, & Volanth, 1988). The latter involves paying attention to one's emotions and the former involves knowing what one feels in a specific situation. However, these concepts do not involve valuing negative emotional experiences as an important source for personal growth as described earlier, and they do not involve interested (intentional) exploration of emotions.

A survey of the literature revealed no published empirical research identifying a mode for regulating negative emotions that clearly corresponds to SDT's conception of integrative regulation. Other constructs that are strongly linked with the concept of IER are mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Chambers, Gullone, & Allen, 2009) and acceptance (Hayes,

Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999), which are defined as non-judgmental awareness about the present moment's experience. IER shares an important aspect of mindfulness and acceptance – receptive awareness of the emotional experience (Deci, Ryan, Schultz, & Niemiec, 2015). However, IER also involves an additional aspect of interested stance towards emotions (an intentional exploration of emotions; Roth et al., 2014). Importantly, in the extant research on ER, none of the concepts examined to date appeared to fully capture the notion of IER as conceptualised in SDT. In particular, only a few studies to date addressed the importance of allowing oneself to feel negative emotions or of attempting to understand the reasons and personal meanings behind those emotions. The present research is anchored in several recent correlational and experimental studies that explored socialising antecedents and consequences of IER (Roth & Assor, 2010, 2012; Roth et al., 2009, 2014). Moreover, this is the first study that explores the relation between IER, empathy and the supports for conciliatory policies towards outgroup members in violent conflicts.

IER encompasses a tolerant, accepting, and interested stance towards one's own negative emotions (Roth et al., 2009). Individuals engaging in IER view negative feelings as important sources of information, attempt to understand these feelings' sources, and utilise these understandings to guide their intentional regulation of action. Consequently, IER of negative emotions is posited as enabling fairly effective functioning in many domains, for instance in close relationships, which may often activate intense negative feelings (Roth & Assor, 2012). Specifically, Roth and Assor (2012) found that, unlike emotional suppression and emotional dysregulation, IER allows people to disclose personal difficulties with an intimate partner, to listen empathetically when the partner discloses negative emotions, and to negotiate interpersonal conflicts. Building on this work, we hypothesised that the relation between IER and empathetic ability may involve support for conciliatory policy towards outgroup members suffering adversity, even during violent intergroup conflict.

Conceptual distinctions among dimensions of empathy: sympathy, emotional distress, and perspective-taking

According to Eisenberg et al. (2006, 2010), Eisenberg, Shea, Carlo, and Knight (1991), empathy comprises

an emotional response that very closely resembles (or is identical to) what another person is or might be feeling in a given context. Thus, an affective response is central to empathy, but not as mere contagion of affect. Rather, empathy entails the ability to cognitively understand that one's own emotional reaction has been induced by another's experience. Therefore, empathy results from a cognitive ability to take another person's perspective (Eisenberg et al., 1991; Feshbach, 1979; Hoffman, 1984).

Eisenberg et al. (2006, 2010) argued that empathetic feelings often evoke two other emotional responses: *sympathy* and *emotional distress*. Like empathy, *sympathy* encompasses an affective response, but it goes beyond merely feeling the same or similar emotion as the other person to also include feelings of sorrow or concern directed at the distressed person. Although sympathy frequently has roots in empathy, it can emerge directly from perspective taking and was also found to predict prosocial behaviour (Eisenberg et al., 2006). Personal or *emotional distress*, on the other hand, refers to a self-targeted aversive affective reaction, such as unease or anxiety, in response to the vicarious experiencing of the other person's feelings (Eisenberg et al., 1991). Batson (1987) argued that personal distress involves an egoistic motivation to alleviate one's own distress and not necessarily the distress of the person in need. Hence, individuals who experience emotional distress would be expected to help others only if that help offers the easiest way to alleviate their own distress (Batson, 1991).

Research demonstrated relatively consistent relations between sympathy and prosocial behaviour; yet, personal distress revealed inconsistent relations with prosocial behaviour (see reviews in Eisenberg et al., 2006, 2010). It is important to note that researchers have used different terms equivalent to Eisenberg's conception of "sympathy", such as "personal concern" (Davis, 1983), Batson's (1987, 1991) concept of "empathy", and Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thomas's (2010) concept of compassion. For the sake of consistency and clarity, we will use the term "sympathy" henceforth in this article, as defined by Eisenberg et al. (2006): an identical/similar affective response that includes feelings of sorrow or concern.¹

Focusing on intergroup relations, researchers identified sympathy as a factor that reduces negative attitudes towards stigmatised people and groups (Batson et al., 1997, 2002). These studies hypothesised

that taking the stigmatised person's perspective enhanced sympathy, which in turn enhanced the value of the stigmatised person's well-being. For example, in Batson et al. (2002), undergraduate students who were asked to imagine a (stigmatised) drug addict's emotions and to identify with them reported more positive attitudes towards drug users and a greater inclination to help them, compared to participants who were asked to remain objective. Similarly, Shih, Wang, Bucher, and Stotzer (2009) found that sympathy mediated the positive relation between taking an outgroup member's perspective and helping behaviour towards another outgroup member. Studies that measured dispositional sympathy (using self-reports) have corroborated the research focusing on situational sympathy. Phelan and Basow (2007) reported that undergraduates' dispositional sympathy correlates positively with social tolerance of stigmatised others.

In line with research (see reviews in Eisenberg et al., 2006, 2010) supporting the theoretical claim that the affective response of sympathy consistently predicts prosocial behaviour, the present two studies explore IER as possible antecedent of sympathy and support for conciliatory policy towards outgroup members in violent conflict. In addition the studies test the hypothesis that liberal attitudes may moderate the effect of IER on sympathy and support for conciliatory policy.

To further elucidate regulation of negative intergroup emotions as a predictor of attitudes and behaviours in intractable conflicts, the present studies, like Halperin and Gross (2011), examined Jewish Israeli adults' emotion regulation as related to their support for humanitarian aid towards innocent Palestinians in Gaza. In our studies, we surveyed Jewish Israelis during the de-escalation period nine months after the Gaza War of 8 July–26 August 2014 (also known as *Operation Protective Edge*), an extremely violent wave of escalation in the intractable Israel-Palestinian conflict (Halperin, 2016). As a result of this violent fighting, extensive damage to Gazan infrastructure had not yet been restored nine months later, and the fire of rockets from Gaza into Israel continued on a small scale.

The present studies

We hypothesised that IER, the tendency to explore and take interest in one's own negative emotions, would predict the Jewish Israelis' tendency to take

interest in and concern for others' emotions (i.e. sympathy), which in turn would predict support for humanitarian aid for Gazan Palestinians – outgroup members in need. The hypothesis is based on the specific definitions of sympathy and IER. Sympathy comprises an emotional response that very closely resembles (or is identical to) what another person is or might be feeling in a given context (Eisenberg et al., 2010). IER, in turn, is a form of emotion regulation that involves intentional awareness of one's emotional states. Thus, we hypothesised that the tolerant, accepting, and interested stance towards one's own negative emotions, encompassed by IER, may allow empathy (i.e. identification with other's negative emotional experiences). On the other hand, a consistent attempt to avoid one's own emotional experiences (suppressive regulation; Roth et al., 2014) may involve low empathic ability because of the unwillingness to risk experiencing the particular negative emotions one tries to avoid. As mentioned earlier recent evidence indicated that reappraisal is related to support for conciliatory policy, but this relation was not mediated by empathy (Halperin & Gross, 2011). Therefore, in the present studies we tested the predictions of IER while controlling for reappraisal. In addition, alongside sympathy, we measured the cognitive component of taking the other's perspective.

In addition we tested the hypothesis that the relation between IER to sympathy and humanitarian aid will be stronger when the respondents are committed to liberal ideology. The unidimensional distinction along a liberal-conservative continuum was found to have predictive validity for intergroup attitudes (Jost, 2006). Well-established findings revealed that, in comparison to liberals, conservatives' express less favourable attitudes towards outgroup members, including higher levels of hostility, stereotyping, intolerance, and prejudice (Federico & Sidanius, 2002; Jost et al., 2009; Napier & Jost, 2008). Moreover, research demonstrated that a liberal attitude is positively related to support for conciliatory attitudes towards outgroup members, even during violent conflict (Pliskin, Bar-Tal, Sheppes, & Halperin, 2014). Thus, the second hypothesis integrates the emotional aspect with the ideological aspect. Given the well-established evidence for relation between liberal attitudes and conciliatory policies towards outgroups, we explored a possible interaction between the emotional capacity of IER and liberal attitudes. Namely, we hypothesised that Jewish Israelis'

commitment to liberal values of equality and fair treatment for Israel's minority of Arab citizens would moderate the relation between IER and support for humanitarian aid provision to innocent Palestinians in Gaza. Thus, we hypothesised that the relation between IER to humanitarian aid will be stronger when the respondents are committed to liberal ideology. We hypothesised further that this relation would be mediated by sympathy (a hypothesis that was defined as *moderated mediation* by Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). Hence, our second hypothesis involved an interaction between a liberal attitudes and emotion regulation capacities, which according to our knowledge is a novel approach. The hypotheses were tested in two studies to allow for replication of findings. In both studies we report how we determined our sample size, all manipulations, and all measures in the study.

Study 1's method

Participants and procedure

Participants comprised 298 Jewish Israelis (46% female; age: $M = 36.1$; $SD = 12.1$) representing the voting patterns of this population in the recent national elections in 2015. Participants completed an online survey and received monetary compensation equivalent to US\$3. Power analysis (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003) revealed a power level of .97

Measures

Study 1 included five main variables and two controlled sociopolitical variables.

IER

This 6-item scale developed by Roth et al. (2014) is an elaboration of the 4-item scale used by Roth et al. (2009). The scale measures the extent to which participants try to understand what they feel and why, in situations that may elicit negative emotions, together with the extent to which they believe that exploration of negative emotions can help one understand oneself. Participants rated items such as "I examine my fears in order to understand their sources" or "Exploring my fears can help me understand important things about myself" along a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Not true at all* (1) to *Very true* (5). Cronbach alpha was .82.

Reappraisal

This 6-item scale from the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003) assesses participants' reappraisal style of emotional regulation. The scale focuses on the extent to which participants try to change the way they think about an emotion-eliciting situation to change their emotional experience. Participants rated items such as "I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I'm in" or "When I want to feel less negative emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation", on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Not true at all* (1) to *Very true* (5). Cronbach alpha was .73.

Sympathy and perspective taking

Two subscales from Davis's (1983) measure which assesses Empathic Concern (the tendency to experience feelings of sympathy and compassion for unfortunate others) and Taking Perspective (the cognitive component of empathy), were administered after back-and-forth translation to Hebrew: the 7-item *sympathy* subscale and the 7-item *perspective-taking* subscale, each including two reversed items (e.g. "If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments"). Participants responded along a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Not true at all* (1) to *Very true* (5). Factor analysis for the Hebrew version yielded three factors: (1) five positive perspective-taking items (e.g. "When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to 'put myself in his shoes' for a while"), (2) five positive sympathy items (e.g. "When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them"), and (3) the four reversed items (two sympathy and two perspective-taking items). We used only the first two factors, which showed adequate reliability: Cronbach alpha of .83 for perspective taking and .76 for sympathy.

Support for providing humanitarian aid to innocent Palestinians in Gaza

This 3-item scale is an elaboration of Halperin and Gross's (2011) 2-item scale. Using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Totally opposed* to (1) to *Totally support* (5), participants were asked to rank their level of support for: 1. *Allowing the transfer of food to innocent Palestinians*; 2. *Allowing the transfer of medicine to innocent Palestinians*; and 3. *Providing medical care to injured Palestinian women and children in Israeli hospitals*. Cronbach alpha was .86.

Liberal attitudes

This 1-item measure was based on the participants' report of their *political orientation* [extremely hawkish (1) to extremely dovish (5)].

Controlled sociopolitical variables

In addition to the main variables, we also collected participants' self-reports regarding two variables to be controlled in analyses: *educational attainment* [elementary (1) to PhD (13)]; *religiosity* [secular (1) to ultraorthodox (5)].

Results and brief discussion

Descriptive statistics and preliminary analyses

Table 1 presents all means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations. Both types of emotion regulation (IER, reappraisal) correlated positively with Sympathy and perspective taking. However, IER was significantly correlated to support for humanitarian aid, whereas reappraisal was only marginally correlated. To test for unique effects, we conducted three multiple regression analyses – for sympathy, perspective taking, and humanitarian aid – with the two emotion regulation capacities (IER and reappraisal) as the predictors. Each emotional regulation type revealed a unique effect for sympathy (IER: $\beta = .23$, $t = 3.61$, $p < .00$; for reappraisal: $\beta = .14$, $t = 2.33$, $p < .05$) and for perspective taking (for IER: $\beta = .30$, $t = 4.97$, $p < .00$; for reappraisal: $\beta = .17$, $t = 2.76$, $p < .01$). However, integrative regulation was the only predictor of support for humanitarian aid for Palestinians in Gaza (for IER: $\beta = .16$, $t = 2.33$, $p < .05$; for reappraisal: $\beta = .04$, $t = .53$, $p = .60$). Interestingly, liberal attitude was not related to the emotion regulation styles, but only to the support for humanitarian aid. Regression analysis in which humanitarian aid was regressed simultaneously on liberal attitudes and IER resulted in significant

unique effects for the two predictors: liberal attitudes ($\beta = .48$, $t = 9.31$, $p < .01$) and IER ($\beta = .16$, $t = 2.32$, $p < .05$).

Correlations between the control variables (religiosity and education level) and the two emotion regulation types were not significant. One weak ($d = .28$) but significant correlation emerged between religiosity and sympathy, $r = .14$, $p < .05$. Finally, the two control variables significantly correlated with the dependent variable (support for humanitarian aid towards innocent Palestinians in Gaza), with positive correlations for education level, $r = .18$, $p < .01$, and a negative correlation with religiosity, $r = -.24$, $p < .05$.

Primary analysis

Our main hypothesis focused on sympathy as a possible mediator of the relation between IER and support for humanitarian aid. Figure 1 presents the results of structural equation modeling with latent variables using AMOS 21.0 (Arbuckle, 2012) with maximum likelihood estimation. As seen in the figure, while controlling for education level, political orientation, and religiosity, the associations between IER, sympathy, and support for humanitarian aid were in the expected direction. Model fit to the data was assessed using the ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom (χ^2/df), incremental fit index (IFI; Bollen, 1989), comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Browne & Cudeck, 1993). The fit indices were adequate: $\chi^2_{(82)} = 139.72$, $p < .01$; $\chi^2/df = 1.70$; CFI = .96; IFI = .96; RMSEA = .05.

To test for mediation, the bootstrap confidence interval was calculated with 1000 resampling. The 95% confidence interval was [.01; .17]. Because these intervals did not contain 0, the indirect effect significantly differed from 0, at $\alpha = .05$.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and zero order correlations among Study 1 variables.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Reappraisal emotion regulation	–					
2. IER	.46**	–				
3. Perspective taking	.30**	.38**	–			
4. Sympathy	.25**	.29**	.56**	–		
5. Support for humanitarian aid	.11 ⁺	.18**	.17**	.20**	–	
6. Liberal Att.: Political ideology	–.07	.09	.07	.07	.50**	–
<i>M</i>	3.59	3.57	3.58	3.72	3.63	2.42
<i>SD</i>	.76	.84	.71	.75	1.43	1.27

⁺ $p < .1$.

** $p < .01$.

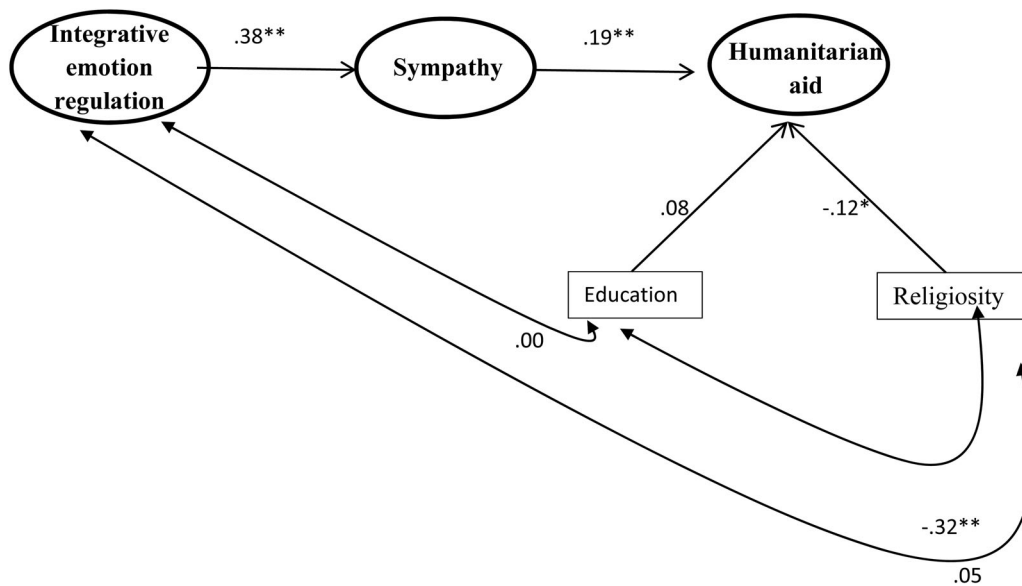


Figure 1. Study 1: Sympathy as mediator of the relation between IER and humanitarian aid.

Note: Indicators and error term were omitted for clarity. $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$.

Next, we tested the hypothesis in which liberal attitudes may moderate the effect of IER on sympathy and humanitarian aid. Before testing the moderated mediation hypothesis (Preacher et al., 2007), we tested whether or not the effect of IER on humanitarian aid is moderated by liberal attitudes. Following Aiken, West, and Reno (1991), we centred the independent variables and regressed humanitarian aid simultaneously on IER, liberal attitudes and their interaction. The results did not support this hypothesis. The interaction term of IER and liberal attitude did not predict humanitarian aid ($\beta = .04$; $t = .68$; $p = .50$).

Next, we regressed sympathy (the hypothesised mediator) on the same three predictors with the assumption that the interaction term would predict sympathy. The results did not support this hypothesis ($\beta = .08$, $t = 1.47$, $p = .14$). The only significant unique effect was found for IER ($\beta = .29$, $t = 4.94$, $p < .01$). Thus, a moderated mediation analysis was not justified.

In sum, Study 1's results supported the hypothesis that taking interest in one's own emotions predicted support for humanitarian aid provision to innocent outgroup members during violent conflict, through the mediation of sympathy. However, the effects of IER on sympathy and humanitarian aid were not moderated by liberal attitude. The aim of study 2 was to test the same hypotheses in an attempt to replicate study 1's findings.

Study 2' method

Participants and procedure

Like in Study 1, participants completed an online survey nine months after the Gaza war of 8 July–26 August 2014, receiving monetary compensation equivalent to US\$3. This sample comprised 291 Jewish Israelis adults (53.6% female; age: $M = 36.29$, $SD = 12.63$) representing the voting patterns of this population in the recent national elections in 2015. Power analysis (Cohen et al., 2003) revealed a power level of .97

Measures

Study 2 included the same variables as in study 1 with one addition. Alongside political orientation, we used an additional measure for liberal attitudes that will be described below. Cronbach alpha coefficients in the present sample were adequate: .78 for IER, .73 for reappraisal, .85 for perspective taking, .76 for sympathy, and .85 for humanitarian aid.

Liberal attitudes

In addition to the *political ideology* scale (Hawkish-Dovish continuum) we used a 3-item liberal attitudes scale (Ben-Porat & Feniger, 2014) which assesses commitment to liberal values of equality for, and fair treatment of, Arab citizens in Israel. Note that the scale

does not tap attitudes towards Palestinians in Gaza but rather towards Israel's large minority of Arab citizens (about 20% of the population; Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Although viewed by Jewish Israelis as an outgroup, Arab citizens are not the same outgroup with whom Israel has been engaged in intractable conflict since its establishment in 1948. In the liberal attitudes scale, items such as "The state of Israel has to invest resources in Arab schools in order to reduce existing inequalities between Jews and Arabs" and "Jews should receive priority in government jobs" (reversed) were rated by participants on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly disagree* (1) to *Strongly agree* (5). Cronbach alpha for the scale was .75.

Results

Descriptive statistics and preliminary analyses

Table 2 presents all means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations. The correlation findings mostly corroborated Study 1's results. Both types of emotion regulation (IER, reappraisal) correlated positively with perspective taking and sympathy. Yet, in Study 1 reappraisal correlated only marginally with support for humanitarian aid, whereas in Study 2 a significant albeit weak correlation ($d = .26$) emerged, $r = .13$, $p < .05$. Like in study 1 IER is positively correlated with humanitarian aid ($r = .22$, $p < .01$). Finally, the correlations of the two measures of liberal attitudes were not significant except for the positive correlation with support for humanitarian aid, $r = .54$, $p < .01$. The correlation between the two measures was moderate ($r = .44$, $p < .01$).

As in the previous study, to test for unique effects of the two emotion regulation types, we conducted three multiple regression analyses – for perspective taking, sympathy, and humanitarian aid – with IER

and reappraisal as the predictors. Like in Study 1, each emotional regulation type revealed a unique effect for perspective taking (IER: $\beta = .29$, $t = 4.78$, $p < .00$; for reappraisal: $\beta = .21$, $t = 3.46$, $p < .01$). Unlike Study 1, in the second study only IER had a unique effect on sympathy (for IER: $\beta = .30$, $t = 4.75$, $p < .00$; for reappraisal: $\beta = .02$, $t = .30$, $p = .76$). Finally, in line with Study 1's results, IER was the only predictor of support for humanitarian aid for Palestinians in Gaza (for IER $\beta = .20$, $t = 3.02$, $p < .01$; for reappraisal: $\beta = .05$, $t = .77$, $p = .44$). In sum, in both studies, IER was the only predictor of support for humanitarian aid when controlling each emotion regulation style for the other.

Given the positive relation between liberal attitudes and humanitarian aid, we next conducted a regression simultaneously with the two measures of liberal attitudes and integration as predictors of humanitarian aid. The analysis resulted in three significant unique effects (for IER: $\beta = .19$, $t = 3.85$, $p < .01$; for liberal attitudes based on equality for minorities: $\beta = .42$, $t = 7.17$, $p < .01$; for liberal attitudes based on political ideology: $\beta = .24$, $t = 4.13$, $p < .01$).

Correlations between the control variables (religiosity, education level) and the two emotion regulation types were not significant. Replicating Study 1, one weak ($d = .26$) but significant correlation emerged between religiosity and sympathy, $r = .13$, $p < .05$, and both sociopolitical control variables significantly correlated with the dependent variable (support for humanitarian aid towards innocent Palestinians in Gaza), positively for education level, $r = .14$, $p < .05$, and negatively with religiosity, $r = -.22$, $p < .01$. Finally, liberal attitudes also correlated positively with education level, $r = .22$, $p < .01$ for equality for minorities and $r = .17$, $p < .01$, for political ideology, and negatively with religiosity, $r = -.36$, $p < .01$ for equality for minorities and $r = -.35$, $p < .01$ for political ideology.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and zero order correlations among Study 2 variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Reappraisal emotion regulation	–						
2. IER	.43**	–					
3. Perspective taking	.33**	.38**	–				
4. Sympathy	.15*	.31**	.62**	–			
5. Support for humanitarian aid	.13*	.22**	.21**	.19**	–		
6. Liberal Att.: Political ideology	.02	.05	.11	.03	.48**	–	
7. Liberal Att.: Equality for minorities	–.05	.01	–.01	–.06	.54**	.44**	–
<i>M</i>	3.58	3.80	3.65	3.80	3.52	2.36	3.14
<i>SD</i>	.70	.71	.78	.76	1.46	1.30	1.04

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Primary analyses

Given the significant unique effect of IER on sympathy, we conducted structural equation modeling analyses in an attempt to replicate Study 1's results. Thus, we tested sympathy as mediating the relation between IER and humanitarian aid, while controlling for religiosity, educational level, and liberal attitudes. As seen in Figure 2, the associations between IER, sympathy, and support for humanitarian aid were in the expected direction. The fit indices were adequate: $\chi^2_{(82)} = 136.17$, $p < .01$; $\chi^2/df = 1.66$; CFI = .96; IFI = .96; RMSEA = .05.

To test for mediation, the bootstrap confidence interval was calculated with 1000 resampling. The 95% confidence interval was [.02; .20]. Because these intervals did not contain 0, the indirect effect significantly differed from 0, at $\alpha = .05$.

Next, we tested the hypothesis that the relation between Jewish Israelis' IER and their support for humanitarian aid provision to innocent Palestinians in Gaza would be stronger when Jewish Israelis' liberal attitudes towards the Arab minority is high rather than low. Moreover, we hypothesised that this relation would be mediated by sympathy. This hypothesis was tested twice using the two measures for liberal attitudes separately. Before testing the moderated mediation hypothesis (Hayes, 2013; Preacher et al., 2007), we tested the direct effect of IER on

humanitarian aid moderated by liberal attitudes. Following Aiken et al. (1991), we centred the independent variables and regressed humanitarian aid simultaneously on IER, liberal attitudes and their interaction. Replicating study 1's outcomes with the analysis based on political ideology as a measure for liberal attitudes, resulted in non-significant interaction effect on support for humanitarian aid ($\beta = .05$, $t = .86$, $p = .39$). However, the analyses based on equality for minorities as the measure for liberal attitude supported the hypothesis. In this analysis the three predictors had a unique and significant association with humanitarian aid (for the interaction term: $\beta = .13$, $t = 2.44$, $p < .05$; for IER: $\beta = .22$, $t = 4.35$, $p < .01$; for liberal attitudes: $\beta = .52$, $t = 0.30$, $p < .01$). Simple slope analysis reveals that the relation between IER and humanitarian aid was larger for participants who were high on liberal attitudes. Thus, the relation between IER and support for humanitarian aid was significant: $\beta = .33$, $t = 4.70$, $p < .01$; when commitment to liberal attitudes was 1 SD above the mean. However, this relation was only nearly significant when liberal attitudes were low (1 SD below the mean): $\beta = .11$, $t = 2.01$, $p = .09$.

Next, we regressed sympathy (the hypothesised mediator) on the same three predictors with the assumption that the interaction term would predict sympathy. The results did not support this hypothesis

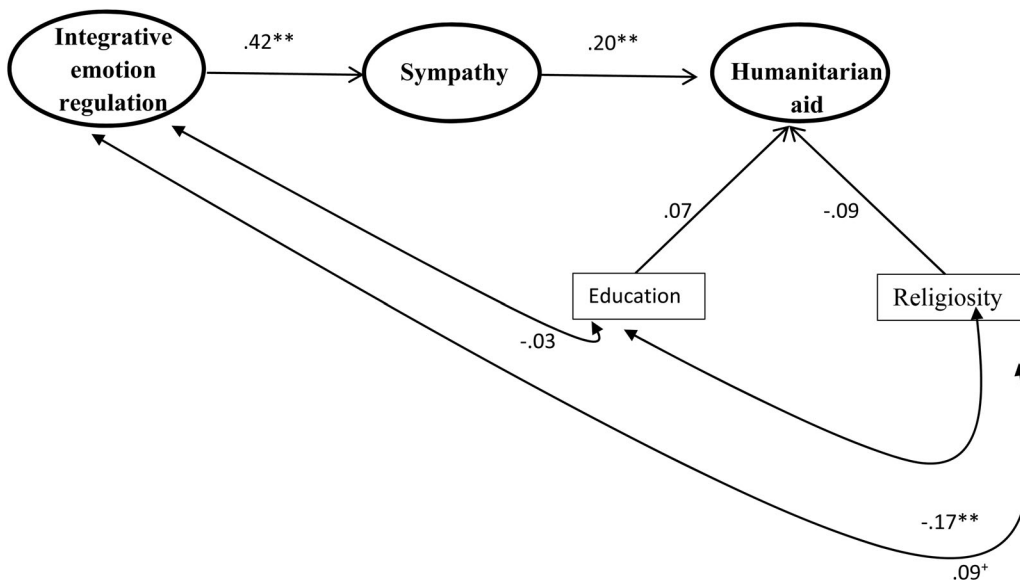


Figure 2. Study 2: Sympathy as mediator of the relation between IER and humanitarian aid.

Note: Indicators and error terms were omitted for clarity. $^+p < .1$. $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$.

based on either measure for liberalism. The only significant unique effect was found for IER ($\beta = .31, t = 5.41, p < .01$). Although the results based on equality for minorities as the measure for liberal attitude provide support for the hypothesis that the relation between IER and humanitarian aid is stronger when liberal attitude is high, this relation was not mediated by sympathy. Therefore we used PROCESS to test model number 5 (Hayes, 2013) which simultaneously examines the indirect effect of the IV (IER) on the DV (humanitarian aid) through the mediator (sympathy) together with the conditional direct effect of the IV on the DV in different levels of the moderator (liberal attitudes). The results of this analysis support the hypothesised model. To test the indirect effect the bootstrap confidence interval was calculated with 1000 resampling. The 95% confidence interval was $\{.03; .19\}$. Because these intervals did not contain zero, the indirect effect significantly differed from 0, at $\alpha = .05$. In addition, the effect of the interaction term on humanitarian aid (the DV) was significant ($\beta = .23, t = 2.41, p < .05$). Simple slopes analyses reveal that the relation between IER and support for humanitarian aid was significant when commitment to liberal attitudes was high (1 SD above the mean; $\beta = .60, t = 4.00, p < .01$) and when liberal attitudes were equal to the mean ($\beta = .36, t = 3.29, p < .01$). However, this relation was not significant when liberal attitudes were low (1 SD below the mean; $\beta = .11, t = .80, p = .43$).

In sum, Study 2's results replicated study 1 by demonstrating that taking interest in one's own emotions (i.e. IER) predicts support for humanitarian aid towards innocent outgroup members during violent conflict, through sympathy. Further, like in study 1, the moderation hypothesis was not supported when using political ideology as a measure for liberal attitudes. However, measuring liberal attitudes as equality for and fair treatment of minorities supported the moderation hypothesis in which the relation between IER and humanitarian aid is stronger when liberalism is high rather than low. Nevertheless, the results did not support the hypothesis that this relation would be mediated by sympathy.

Discussion

The present research extended recent attempts to explore emotion regulation as a possible determinant of people's behaviour towards outgroups in intractable conflicts. We proposed a specific type of

emotion regulation, IER, as a potential antecedent of Jewish Israelis' sympathetic ability and support for conciliatory attitudes towards Palestinians in Gaza. The current findings of both studies corroborated the consistent relations found previously between sympathy and prosocial behaviour (Eisenberg et al., 2006), including humanitarian aid towards outgroup members (Phelan & Basow, 2007), but the consistent relations we found among IER, sympathy, and humanitarian aid are novel. To the best of our knowledge, these are the first studies to test these relations.

Roth and Assor (2012) examined IER as a possible predictor of intimacy capacity and found that contrary to emotional avoidance an IER style allows people to disclose personal difficulties with an intimate partner, to listen empathetically when the partner discloses negative emotions, and to negotiate interpersonal conflicts. Expanding empirical investigation to groups rather than individuals, the present findings supported the assumption that one's ability to take interest in one's own negative emotions may be extended to one's ability to take interest in the negative emotions of others in need. Namely, the findings of our two studies suggested that an IER style predicts sympathy, which in turn predicts support for humanitarian aids towards innocent outgroup members in the violent Middle East conflict. Importantly, in our studies, only an IER style of openness to one's own negative emotions showed a unique effect on Jewish Israelis' greater support for humanitarian aid towards Palestinians in Gaza, whereas the reappraisal style of modulating negative emotions did not.

Considering the intractable nature of the Middle East conflict, our studies also examined Jewish Israelis' ideological mental models – an important topic of inquiry among social and political psychologists, with implications for attitudes towards outgroups (Jost et al., 2009). The present research corroborated past research (Federico & Sidanius, 2002; Halperin, Pliskin, Saguy, Liberman, & Gross, 2014) by demonstrating a positive link between liberal attitude and support for conciliatory policy towards outgroup. We further hypothesised that liberal attitudes will moderate the effect of IER on sympathy and humanitarian aid. Interestingly, when measuring liberal attitudes by political ideology (hawkish versus dovish) the moderation hypothesis was not supported. However, when liberal attitudes were measured as upholding equal, fair treatment for minorities the moderation hypothesis was supported with regard to the relation between IER and humanitarian aid. Hence, study 2

showed that ideology (i.e. liberal attitude based on equality for minorities) and the emotional capacity of IER interact, thus, the relationship between IER and conciliatory policy is stronger when liberal attitudes are high rather than low. Hence, when Jewish Israelis are committed to liberal egalitarian beliefs, the relationship between their ability to explore their own negative emotions and their support for humanitarian aid is stronger. In other words, ideological mental models of the environment (i.e. ideology) were found to influence the degree to which emotional processing was linked with willingness to aid outgroup members. Future research would do well to explore possible explanations for this moderation effect. One possible explanation draws on previous finding that in comparison to in-group members, empathy/sympathy towards outgroup members is much harder to achieve (Cikara, Bruneau, & Saxe, 2011). This suggests that for people who are committed to liberal egalitarian beliefs, the ability to take an interest in their own negative experiences (IER) may be a prerequisite for identification with others' adversities (sympathy), whereas in people who are low on liberalism, IER is likely to only predict sympathy in relation to in-group members (i.e. people who are perceived as similar to me).

In an attempt to provide a possible explanation for the different results obtained for the two different measures of liberalism, it may be valuable to discuss the meaning of "hawkish" versus "dovish" in the Israeli context. The main difference between the two ideological attitudes in the Israeli context, involves the perceived relations of Israel towards Arab countries and terror organisations (e.g. Hezbollah, Hamas). Left-wing ideology involves willingness to accept compromises that allow for peace agreements whereas right-wing ideology involves reluctance to compromise, rather placing emphasis on solutions based on military operations (Arian, Krouwel, Pol, & Ventura, 2011; Arian & Shamir, 1983). This distinction is different than valuing equality for minorities within Israel as a definition for liberalism (Ben-Porat & Feniger, 2014). The correlation of .44 between the two measures obtained in study 2 supports the distinction between these two conceptions of liberalism and suggests that, despite the expected modest correlation, they are not interchangeable. Thus, the correlation's size between the two measures of liberalism suggests that one may support right-wing ideology in relation to Arab countries and terror organisations and at the same

time support equality for Arab citizens in Israel. There are groups or parties in the Israeli political scene who have a hawkish stance towards Arab countries or organisations deemed as enemies, who, as liberals, concurrently strongly defend the civil rights to which Arab Israeli citizens are entitled (Arian et al., 2011). Therefore, given the specific meaning of right- and left-wing ideology in the Israeli context, equality for minorities within the country may be a better measure for liberalism in this specific context. However, in other cultures the differences between the measures may be less crucial.

Contrary to the hypothesis, sympathy did not mediate the simple effects of IER in the different levels of liberal attitude, on humanitarian aid. One possible explanation is technical. Analysis of interaction effects based on continuous variables is generally low in power due to lack of sufficient observations along the variables' continuum. Given that the only predictor of sympathy in this analysis was IER, a second explanation may suggest that sympathy towards one's adversary is based on one's emotional regulation capacity more than on one's ideological orientations.

In addition to exploration of interactions between emotion regulation and ideological orientation, future research will do well to explore relations among emotion regulation capacities and intergroup contact. A growing body of research demonstrated that in some conditions intergroup contact is related to support for compromises with outgroups in intractable conflicts (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). For example, Pickett, Baker, Metcalfe, Gertz, and Bellandi (2014) found that quality, but not quantity of contact, is associated with lower levels of Jewish Israelis' perceived Palestinian threat and, in turn, with increased support for compromise. Thus, future research may test the hypothesis that IER may moderate the relation between intergroup contact and support for conciliatory policies. In line with Pickett et al.'s (2014) distinction between quantity and quality of groups' contact, additional hypothesis may suggest that intergroup interaction that allows emotional identification with outgroup adversities may be more effective in promoting support for compromises than interactions that do not involve this emotional aspect. Interestingly, alongside the interaction between ideology and emotion regulation, Study 2 revealed no significant relation between liberal attitudes and emotion regulation (either IER or reappraisal). Thus, neither

political ideology nor liberal, egalitarian, non-conservative values were found to predict a specific emotion regulation type.

Past research applications have focused on the importance of changing attitudes, societal beliefs, and narratives of the two conflictual groups – Israelis and Palestinians (Bar-Tal, 2000; Halperin, Bar-Tal, Sharvit, Rosler, & Raviv, 2010). In contrast, the present research emphasises the important role of emotion regulation as a possible focus for intervention. This emphasis on regulatory style is of special importance given past research on the collective emotions that are developed by societal conditions and common experiences such as intractable conflicts (Bar-Tal et al., 2007; Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006; Kitayama & Markus, 1994). Namely, a prolonged violent conflict may elicit negative emotions like fear and hatred and may minimise sense of hope (Bar-Tal et al., 2007). The present findings suggest that group members' style of regulating their emotions may affect how they perceive outgroup members' feelings and adversities. Unlike emotional avoidance, the ability to take interest in one's own negative emotions may be extended to the ability to empathise with outgroup members' fear and misery in intractable conflict. Moreover, cultures may have specific norms regarding the legitimisation of specific emotions. For example, if males perceive expressions of fear or vulnerability as non-masculine within their cultural norms, they may try to avoid these emotions. Consistent attempts to avoid such feelings may impede those men's ability to empathise with vulnerable, fearful individuals. To further tease apart the factors at play in intergroup emotions in intractable conflict, future research would do well to test the role of cultural perceptions in emotion regulation tendencies.

The present study has some limitations that should be addressed. Despite the rigorous data analyses, the research is based on two cross-sectional studies and participants' self-reports. Thus, the design does not allow for causal inferences. Given recent successful attempts to manipulate IER in the laboratory (e.g. Roth et al., 2014); it is worthwhile to use experimental designs in future research to overcome these shortcomings. A second limitation of the present studies is the specific focus of the IER measure on regulation of fear. Indeed, violent conflict may elicit fear and exploring its regulation seems valuable. However, future research will do well to explore other specific emotions that may be elicited in this context. Of special importance is the exploration of anger

regulation given the possible challenge of integrating this experience in the context of violent conflict.

In sum, the present studies elaborate on the very recent line of research linking emotion regulation to conflict resolution. Our findings reveal that IER predicts support for conciliatory policy towards outgroup members in violent conflicts by predicting the ability to emphasise with others in need. These findings expand our knowledge about antecedents of support for pacifying policies in intractable conflicts and provide some new directions for intervention by policy makers and educators.

Note

1. As mentioned, earlier past research by Halperin and colleagues tested, alongside empathy, group-based emotions such as hope and negative emotions as possible mediating processes of the relation between emotion regulation capacities and support for conciliatory policies. It is important to note that empathy/sympathy is distinct from these other processes because unlike group-based emotions, empathy is defined as an ability that involves cognitive and emotional aspects.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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