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When Ideology Meets Conflict-Related Content: Influences on Emotion Generation and Regulation

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Do rightists and leftists experience information about suffering and harm with differing emotional intensities, depending on the identity of target depicted? Do they consequently choose differently how to regulate or cope with these emotions? Research has identified ideological differences in emotional processes, but it has yet to identify what types of content lead to ideological differences in emotional intensity or whether these content-dependent differences relate to differing preferences for engaging versus disengaging emotion-regulation strategies. We posited that right–left differences in experienced emotional intensity would be context-dependent, emerging mostly in response to depictions of harm to the outgroup, in accordance with the centrality of intergroup attitudes to ideological self-placement in conflict. Study 1 ($N = 83$) supported this hypothesis, with leftists (vs. rightists) experiencing outgroup harm (but not ingroup harm or conflict-irrelevant harm) with greater emotional intensity. Study 2 ($N = 101$), which replicated this finding, additionally examined whether behavioral differences in regulatory choice consequently emerge mostly regarding outgroup harm. We tested 2 competing hypotheses as to the nature of these differences: (a) the *intensity hypothesis,* positing that leftists (more than rightists) would regulate their intensified reactions to outgroup harm through disengagement–distraction (vs. engagement–reappraisal) due to a documented greater preference for disengaging coping strategies as intensity increases, and (b) the *motivation hypothesis,* positing that leftists (more than rightists) would prefer engagement–reappraisal (vs. disengagement–distraction), consistent with leftists' documented greater preference for intergroup empathy. Results exclusively supported the intensity hypothesis, and the significance of both studies is discussed.

Keywords: emotion regulation, choice, intensity, ideology, intergroup conflict

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In September 2015, photos of Alan Kurdi's washed-up body spread virally through the media, after the 3-year-old Syrian drowned while attempting to flee Syria with his family to seek refuge in Europe. This viral iconic image aroused a range of emotional experiences and reactions among Europeans (and others) across the political spectrum toward the Syrian refugee outgroup. Specifically, whereas some individuals remained aloof, others were strongly swayed by the graphic nature of this image. Opinions also diverged regarding the potential motivational influence of such depictions. Whereas some views suggested that images like this one motivate people to engage, believing "the reality of death must be seen by everyone who shares responsibility in stopping it" (Mackey, 2015), other views suggested an opposite motivation to disengage from the "snuff photo for progressives" (O'Neill, 2015).

Images like those of Alan Kurdi give rise to fundamental questions regarding the ability of different types of emotion-laden information to provoke emotional experiences and motivated reactions among individuals with different ideologies. Specifically, in the present study we set out to provide answers to two central, interrelated questions: First, do depictions of suffering and harm provoke different intensities of emotion among people from opposing sides of the ideological spectrum, depending on the identity of the target depicted? Second, would this differential emotional

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impact lead to divergent selection of motivated regulation or coping strategies?

It is useful in investigating these aims to first understand underlying psychological differences in the long-term attitudes, values, and beliefs that are coherently encompassed in individuals' political ideologies (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). Ideological belief systems are highly important in intergroup contexts and specifically in the context of major intergroup conflicts, because they influence the way individuals interpret and experience conflict-related events (Bar-Tal, Raviv, Raviv, & Dgani-Hirsh, 2009; Jost et al., 2009). Central to the present focus, the psychological literature on ideology contains several indications that people on the right and left edges of the ideological spectrum may differ in emotion generation (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Jost & Amodio, 2012; Jost et al., 2009; Tomkins, 1963) as well as emotion regulation (Halperin, Pliskin, Saguy, Liberman, & Gross, 2014; Porat, Halperin, & Tamir, 2016). Specifically, it has been shown that rightists and leftists differ in the experience of some discrete intergroup emotions (e.g., Jost et al., 2009), in actual execution or implementation of specific emotion-regulation strategies (Halperin et al., 2014), and in their motivation to experience discrete emotions (Porat et al., 2016).

Although clearly important, these prior investigations did not examine whether ideological differences in emotion generation and regulation are moderated by different types of content or whether previously identified ideological differences in emotion regulation go beyond the actual execution or implementation of regulatory strategies. Interactive influences on emotion generation are important to examine, because emotions play a key role in intergroup conflicts, motivating different people to react to ingroup- and outgroup-related content in certain, often diverging ways (e.g., Halperin, 2011; Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000; Yzerbyt, Dumont, Wigboldus, & Gordijn, 2003).

In the present study, we focus on two types of conflict-related content, comparing the intensities of leftists' and rightists' emotional reactions to harm caused to either ingroup or outgroup members, as well as their emotion-regulatory preferences. The existing literature contains many indications that the emotional impact of negative experiences or harm caused to outgroup members may be moderated by ideology due to documented right–left differences in intergroup attitudes toward outgroups in conflict (Brandt, Reyna, Chambers, Crawford, & Wetherell, 2014; Duckitt, 2001; Lindner & Nosek, 2009). Specifically, rightists show higher delegitimization of the adversary as a justification system (Bar-Tal, 2013: Bar-Tal & Hammack, 2012), with initial indications emerging that this is manifested in experiencing less intergroup empathy and group-based guilt in such contexts (e.g., Pliskin & Halperin, 2016). Accordingly, leftists are likely to experience more intense emotions than are rightists in light of depictions of harm to the outgroup, because this specific type of content relates directly to documented right–left differences in attitudes and discrete emotions.

On the other hand, right–left differences in the intensity of emotional reactions to harm to members of their own group may not be so pronounced. Researchers have documented high levels of ingroup attachment (e.g., Roccas, Klar, & Liviatan, 2006) and high adherence to societal beliefs about patriotism (Bar-Tal, 2013) in the context of intense intergroup conflict and have also found that right–left differences in patriotic attachment are eliminated in situations involving high levels of system dependence (van der Toorn, Nail, Liviatan, & Jost, 2014), characteristic of intractable intergroup conflict. Therefore, we expected little or no substantial difference between rightists and leftists in the intensity of their emotional reactions to harm caused to ingroup members. In other words, we expected right–left differences in the intensity of emotional reactions to be content-dependent, with the direction and magnitude determined by the specific content at hand. Despite a clear conceptual logic, empirical evidence of the interactive effect of ideology and content on the intensity of emotion generation has been lacking.

Furthermore, and despite the lack of direct evidence, right–left differences in the intensity of emotional responses to the suffering of others are likely influenced by the magnitude of the *intergroup empathy bias*, which refers to the tendency to display ingroup favoritism by experiencing greater empathy for ingroup members (e.g., Avenanti, Sirigu, & Aglioti, 2010; Cikara, Bruneau, Van Bavel, & Saxe, 2014; Ellemers, 2012). Of interest, it seems that the magnitude of this intergroup empathy gap is related to one's ideology, with leftists extending empathy across social categories and rightists limiting their empathic concern to members of more proximal social categories (e.g., Waytz, Iyer, Young, & Graham, 2016). Although some have found that these right–left differences are context-dependent (e.g., Brandt et al., 2014; Hasson, Tamir, Brahms, Cohrs, & Halperin, 2017), even these accounts would predict a greater gap among rightists (compared to leftists) in the context of ethnic intergroup conflict. For these reasons, one would expect the gap between the intensity of reactions to ingroup and outgroup harm to be larger among rightists than among leftists.

Regardless of their known potent influence, emotions do not always create automatic changes in individual responses. In fact, affective events often lead individuals to engage in motivated processes that facilitate the *regulation* of emotional responses (Gross, 2014). Over the past several years, growing evidence has convincingly shown the influential role played by emotion regulation in the context of intergroup conflict (for a review, see Halperin, 2014). Supporting studies have focused on the consequences of effectively employing emotion-regulation strategies to influence the intense group-based emotions that arise in intergroup conflict contexts (e.g., Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp, & Gross, 2014; Halperin, 2014; Halperin et al., 2014; Halperin, Porat, Tamir, & Gross, 2013).

Although the outcomes of emotion regulation are clearly important, recent conceptual models highlight that, beyond an understanding of the consequences of employing regulatory strategies, it is also crucial to look at other central regulatory stages, including how people choose between available regulatory strategies in different contexts (for reviews, see Aldao, 2013; Bonanno & Burton, 2013; Gross, 2014; Sheppes & Levin, 2013; Sheppes, Suri, & Gross, 2015; Webb, Schweiger Gallo, Miles, Gollwitzer, & Sheeran, 2012). Our recent emotion-regulation choice model (Sheppes & Levin, 2013) focuses on the influence of a central characteristic of emotional events on the selection between two widely used cognitive regulatory strategies that represent two ends of a central engagement–-disengagement dimension (Parkinson & Totterdell, 1999). Specifically, our model focuses on how the *intensity* of emotional events influences the selection between (a) *disengaging* attention from emotional information by producing

neutral thoughts via *distraction* and (b) *engagement* with emotional information while reinterpreting its negative meaning via *reappraisal*.

Because emotional intensity is the strongest identified determinant of emotion-regulation choice to date, and because we assumed that ideological differences in intensity should mainly emerge in response to harm to the outgroup, we also expected that right–left differences in emotion-regulation choice would emerge mostly in response to this type of content. In addition, we expected that, congruent with right–left differences in the intergroup empathy gap, the ingroup–outgroup gap in emotion-regulation choice would be larger among rightists than among leftists. Nonetheless, the literature on emotion regulation may lead to two competing hypotheses regarding the expected direction of this difference. The first of these, the *intensity hypothesis,* stems directly from our emotion-regulation choice model, which suggests that regulatory choices between engaging and disengaging strategies are congruent with the costs and benefits of employing these strategies in response to stimuli of different intensities (Sheppes, 2014; Sheppes & Levin, 2013). Specifically, consistent with findings showing that for increased intensity, disengaging strategies like distraction provide stronger modulation of affect (e.g., Shafir, Schwartz, Blechert, & Sheppes, 2015; Shafir, Thiruchselvam, Suri, Gross, & Sheppes, 2016), studies (with nonpolitical emotional stimuli) have shown a strong preference to choose disengagement–distraction over engagement–reappraisal for high-intensity stimuli (e.g., Hay, Sheppes, Gross, & Gruber, 2015; Sheppes, Scheibe, Suri, & Gross, 2011; Sheppes et al., 2014). Therefore, according to this approach, because leftists are likely to experience harm to the outgroup with greater emotional intensity than do rightists, they should also be more likely than rightists to prefer disengaging from outgroup harm via strategies like distraction.

According to a competing *motivation hypothesis,* regulatory choice differences between rightists and leftists concerning harm to the outgroup may be related to differential instrumental motives and specifically social motives related to group relations (Tamir, 2016). Particularly relevant are recent findings in the domain of intergroup conflict (Porat et al., 2016). Although the goals of this research were not to examine choice between different modes of emotion regulation, its findings indicate that leftists (relative to rightists) have a higher emotional preference for intergroup empathy in conflict situations. Furthermore, its findings indicate that such ideology-congruent emotional preferences lead leftists to engage with content that could arouse in them their desired emotion. This is because group-based emotional preferences stem from the relationship that an individual desires between the ingroup and a particular outgroup (Porat et al., 2016), and different ideologies reflect different intergroup goals. Specifically, leftist ideology reflects goals for change and equality (Jost et al., 2009), associated in conflict with a greater willingness to act to resolve intergroup relations (Bar-Tal, 2013). This approach would lead one to expect that leftists would have a greater tendency than rightists to employ engagement–reappraisal when faced with stimuli depicting harm to the outgroup, because engagement with these stimuli could serve their emotional goals.

With these insights in mind, we set out to examine the interactive influence of political ideology and conflict-related content on emotion generation and emotion regulation. In the present investigation, we concentrated on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, recognized as a prototypical and potent intractable conflict (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2013) and therefore an appropriately sensitive context in which to examine emotion generation and emotion-regulation differences. This context has served psychologists well in the examination of right–left differences in emotional processes in the past (Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Porat, & Bar-Tal, 2014; Halperin et al., 2014; Pliskin, Bar-Tal, Sheppes, & Halperin, 2014; Porat et al., 2016).

To meet our two main goals, we conducted two studies. Study 1 was designed to test differences in emotion generation, and Study 2 was designed to replicate and extend the findings of Study 1 by adding a behavioral examination of differences in emotion-regulation choice. Regarding emotion generation, we hypothesized that right–left differences would emerge mostly in response to depictions of harm to the outgroup, with leftists experiencing these depictions more intensely, in accordance of the centrality of differing outgroup attitudes for ideologies in intergroup conflict. We also hypothesized there would be ideological differences in the intensity gap between the two conflict-related categories, with rightists displaying greater ingroup favoritism in intensity. Regarding emotion regulation, we hypothesized that right–left differences in regulatory choice would emerge mostly in response to harm to the outgroup, but we had two competing predictions as to the nature of these differences: (a) According to the intensity hypothesis, leftists would show a greater preference than would rightists for a disengaging strategy (i.e., distraction) when confronted with harm to the outgroup, because disengaging regulatory options are more effective and thus preferred for coping with increasing intensity (Sheppes et al., 2011, 2014), whereas (b) according to the motivation hypothesis, leftists would show a greater preference than would rightists for an engaging emotion-regulation strategy (i.e., reappraisal) when confronted with harm to the outgroup, consistent with their social motives relating to group relations, expressed in a greater preference for intergroup empathy (Porat et al., 2016; Tamir, 2016).

Study 1: Right–Left Differences in the Intensity of Emotional Reactions to Conflict-Related Content

Study 1 examined the interactive influence of political ideology and conflict-related content on emotion generation.

Method

Participants. A total of 83 Jewish Israelis (44 female; ages 18–40, $M = 24.72$, $SD = 3.74$), drawn from the student body at Tel Aviv University, participated in a 1-hr laboratory study and received either monetary compensation (40 ILS [~US$11]) or course credit for their participation. Anticipating a range of self-reported ideological positions, we determined the sample size based on our wish to reach a diverse sample consisting of a minimum of 25 participants identifying themselves as on the left and 25 as on the right, as well as 25 as at the center of the ideological spectrum, by the end of the semester. This number was based on a power analysis specifying moderate effect size (.25), .9 power, and a moderate minimal correlation (.3) among the repeated measurements, which yielded a recommended sample size of 75 (25 per "cell" when roughly breaking down ideology to

ensure diversity). Eventually we obtained an ideologically balanced sample consisting of 27 participants identified as rightists or extreme rightists, 27 as centrists, and 29 as leftists or extreme leftists.

Stimuli. One hundred emotional images from various sources were divided into three categories: conflict-irrelevant (used as control stimuli), harm to the ingroup, and harm to the outgroup. The 20 conflict-irrelevant images were selected from an array of images from the validated International Affective Picture System (IAPS; Bradley & Lang, 2007), used in prior studies on emotion-regulation choice (Sheppes et al., 2011). Here we made sure to select only images with content that could not be interpreted as related to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, so that these images could serve as a true control. Forty images pertaining to harm to the ingroup (i.e., harm to Israelis) and 40 images pertaining to harm to the outgroup (i.e., harm to Palestinians) were selected from multiple resources documenting the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.[1] There was no precedence for the use of stimuli related to ingroups and outgroups in intergroup conflict using this paradigm, leading us to assemble two sets of stimuli ourselves. These images varied in how graphic they were, in an effort to allow considerable variance in emotion-generated intensity reports (see *SE*s in the Results and Discussion section below). Although for most conflict-related stimuli, the target group of harm could easily be identified by participants (due to the presence of group-specific religious or cultural symbols, the presence of writing in either Arabic or Hebrew, or the use of national symbols such as flags), to avoid ambiguity-related noise, we included short descriptions under each image identifying the location (an international, Israeli, or Palestinian location, depending on the type of content) and year of each depicted event.

Procedure and measures. After giving informed consent, participants were trained by the experimenter on an image-rating task, using procedures by Bradley and Lang (2007) to practice rating valence and arousal. The practice session consisted of four trials, and the task itself consisted of 100 trials. Trials consisted of a fixation point, followed by a 5,000-ms presentation of an image, followed by two scales: Valence (anchored at 1 = *highly pleasant* and 9 = *very unpleasant;* note that this scale was reverse-coded from Bradley & Lang, 2007) and Arousal (anchored at 1 = *low* and 9 = *high*). The 100 images were presented sequentially (barring two-min-long breaks) in a partially randomized order (using stratified randomization by type of image), and the order of the two scales was counterbalanced between participants. Scores were averaged for each scale for each of the three types of image content (Valence Cronbach's αs = .79 for conflict-irrelevant, .95 for harm to the ingroup, and .96 for harm to the outgroup; Arousal Cronbach's αs = .94 for conflict-irrelevant, .99 for harm to the ingroup, and .98 for harm to the outgroup). We also used these scores to compute within-subject differences between the experiences of ingroup and outgroup harm, as a proxy for ingroup favoritism in emotion generation. The task was followed by a short questionnaire with several demographic questions, prompting participants to report their sex, age, and self-placement in terms of political ideology (anchored at 1 = *extreme right* and 5 = *extreme left*), as well as religiosity, relative income, and several ideology-related items included for exploratory purposes.[2] No additional measures were collected.

Results and Discussion

The interactive influence of ideology and content on emotion generation. To examine our hypothesis that rightists and leftists would differ in their subjective emotional intensity mostly in response to depictions of harm to the outgroup, we ran two mixed-effects regression models, specifying stimulus content (conflict-irrelevant, harm to the ingroup, or harm to the outgroup, dummy-coded and nested within participant), ideology (mean-centered), and their interaction as predictors, with either valence or arousal as the dependent variable in separate analyses and adjusting for all demographic variables measured (i.e., age, sex, religiosity, and relative income).[3]

Using valence ratings as an outcome, $\chi^2(9) = 116.33$, $p < .0001$ (see Figure 1), we found a significant Content × Ideology interaction, such that when harm to the outgroup was used as a reference category, ideology's influence on valence in response to it was significantly different from its influence on valence in response to both conflict-irrelevant stimuli ($b = -.53$, $SE = .1$, $z = -5.27$, $p < .0001$, 95% confidence interval [CI: −.73, −.33]) and harm to the ingroup ($b = -.66$, $SE = .1$, $z = -6.51$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.85, −.46]). Using harm to the ingroup as the reference category indicated no significant difference between ideology's simple slope for this category and the one for conflict-irrelevant images ($b = .13$, $SE = .1$, $z = 1.25$, $p = .21$, 95% CI [−.07, .32]).

Further decomposition of the interaction revealed a significant simple effect for ideology on valence in response to harm to the outgroup: As we hypothesized, leftists experienced more negative valence than did rightists in response to harm to the outgroup ($b = .48$, $SE = .1$, $z = 4.63$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.28, .68]). Somewhat unexpectedly, the right–left difference regarding harm to the ingroup reached marginal significance, with rightists experiencing this content as slightly more negative than did leftists ($b = -.18$, $SE = .1$, $z = -1.69$, $p = .09$, 95% CI [−.38, .03]). The simple effect for conflict-irrelevant images was nonsignificant ($b = -.05$, $SE = .1$, $z = -.48$, $p = .63$, 95% CI [−.25, .15]).[4]

The same analysis with arousal as an outcome, $\chi^2(9) = 98.01$, $p < .0001$, revealed the expected significant Content × Ideology

[1] To this end, we collected images from the archives of photojournalists Ziv Koren and Mati Milstein, who kindly provided us with access to many uncensored images, and from online resources on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Descriptions of these images and those taken from the IAPS can be found in the online supplemental materials.

[2] Details on all items can be found in the online supplemental materials.

[3] These variables were held constant in all analyses reported in the article, but almost all results (with the exception of a marginally significant result in the mediation analysis in Study 2) are essentially unchanged when excluding them from our regression models (see the online supplemental materials for analyses not adjusting for these demographic variables).

[4] To demonstrate the robustness of our findings, we examined ideology's influence on valence in response to each of the conflict-relevant categories while holding reactions to the other category constant. To this end, we ran simple regression analyses in which each of the two valence scores was regressed on ideology and the other valence score. This approach did not adversely affect the previously reported effect ($b = .56$, $SE = .13$), $t(76) = 4.48$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.31, .81], whereas regressing the ratings for ingroup harm on ideology while adjusting for the outgroup harm ratings turned this effect significant ($b = -.33$, $SE = .1$), $t(76) = -3.18$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [−.54, −.12]. The latter finding indicates that ideological differences in valence in response to outgroup harm may be masking additional ideological differences in response to ingroup harm.

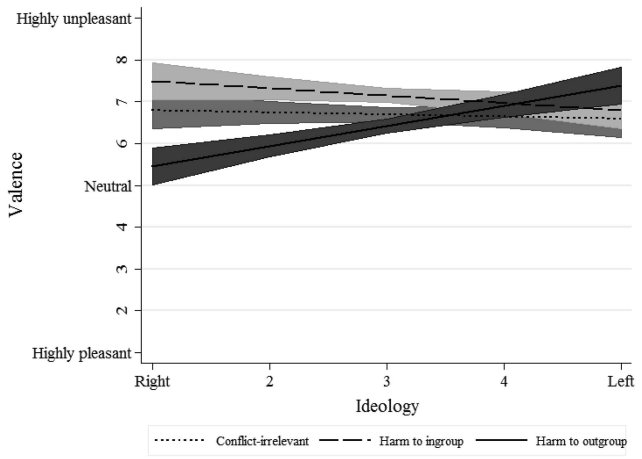

Figure 1. The interactive influence of ideology and type of content on valence ratings in Study 1. The significant slope for harm to the outgroup indicates that leftists (compared to rightists) experienced this content as more negative, whereas the marginally significant slope for harm to the ingroup means that rightists (compared to leftists) experienced this content as somewhat more negative.

interaction, with ideology's influence on arousal ratings in response to harm to the outgroup significantly different from its influence on both conflict-irrelevant images ($b = -.31$, $SE = .11$, $z = -2.76$, $p = .006$, 95% CI [−.53, −.09]) and harm to the ingroup ($b = -.67$, $SE = .11$, $z = -5.93$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.89, −.45]; see Figure 2). Contrary to the case for valence ratings, specifying harm to the ingroup as the reference category this time indicated a significant difference between ideology's influence on ratings for this category and for conflict-irrelevant images ($b = .36$, $SE = .11$, $z = 3.18$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [.14, .58]). Because the latter finding could indicate trends that are not congruent with our hypothesis, we turned to assess the simple slopes. These provided support for our hypothesis: The trend in simple slopes obtained with valence emerged for arousal as well, but the outgroup harm slope this time reached only marginal significance ($b = .39$, $SE = .23$, $z = 1.7$, $p = .09$, 95% CI [−.06, .84]), and neither of the other two slopes reached significance (conflict-irrelevant $b = .08$, $SE = .23$, $z = .35$, $p = .73$, 95% CI [−.37, .53]; ingroup harm $b = -.28$, $SE = .23$, $z = -1.21$, $p = .23$, 95% CI [−.73, .17]).[5]

Ideology's influence on the intensity gap in responses to ingroup versus outgroup harm. Next, we wanted to examine ideological differences in the intensity gap when confronted with harm to the ingroup versus the outgroup, because these indicate the magnitude of ingroup favoritism in emotion generation—a gap that might help us predict for whom such gaps would emerge in emotion-regulation choice in Study 2. To this end, we examined ideological differences in the ingroup–outgroup gap in intensity for both valence and arousal. Regressing the Valence difference score on ideology (alongside the demographics variables listed above) revealed ideology as a strong and significant predictor ($b = -.64$, $SE = .13$), $t(77) = -4.88$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.9, −.38] (see Figure 3a), indicating that the gap was smaller for leftists than for rightists, in accordance with previous findings (e.g., Waytz et al., 2016). The same analysis for the Arousal difference score yielded similar results, with leftist ideology predicting a significantly smaller arousal gap between the two types of conflict-related stimuli ($b = -.76$, $SE = .14$), $t(77) = -5.59$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−1.03, −.49] (see Figure 3b). The larger intensity gaps among rightists is in line with previous work on the ingroup–outgroup empathy gap, indicating that in the context of intractable conflict, rightists are more likely than leftists to demonstrate ingroup favoritism in emotional intensity.

Study 1 thus provided initial support for our first hypothesis, that right–left differences in emotional intensity in intergroup conflict are content-dependent, emerging most clearly in reactions to depictions of harm to the outgroup. Our results were clearly evident for valence ratings and only tentative for arousal rating, perhaps because political differences manifest less clearly in differential arousal or because in general arousal ratings are less intuitive for participants. Results also indicated a greater intensity gap among rightists (compared to leftists) in emotional reactions to ingroup versus outgroup harms, as demonstrated in both Valence and Arousal difference scores.

Given that these results were tentative, we wished to replicate them in Study 2. Nonetheless, because of the unexpected finding regarding valence in response to harm to the ingroup, we wanted to simplify the intensity measure by incorporating a one-dimensional intensity scale (e.g., Shafir et al., 2015). It is important to note that Study 2 was also designed in accordance with our second goal of examining the interactive influence of political ideology and conflict-related content on emotion-regulation choice.

Study 2: Right–Left Differences in Emotion-Regulation Choice When Facing Conflict-Related Content

The main goal of Study 2, beyond replicating the main findings obtained in Study 1, was to examine our second hypothesis that ideological differences in emotion-regulation choice patterns would emerge most clearly for harm to the outgroup, congruent with differences in intensity. We specifically pitted this hypothesis's two competing subhypotheses against each other: Does the greater subjective intensity of leftists' (compared to rightists') emotional response to harm to the outgroup manifest in leftists' preference to disengage via distraction so as to maximize emotional modulation, as per the intensity hypothesis (Sheppes et al., 2011), or would it instead manifest in leftists' greater desire to satisfy group-related social motives of engagement with empathy-inducing content, as per the motivation hypothesis (Tamir, 2016)?

Additionally, we designed Study 2 with an eye to addressing possible shortcomings in Study 1 and improve on them in two ways: (a) include a simplified intensity measure (taken from Shafir et al., 2015) in an effort to provide convergent support for our previously tentative (and partially surprising) findings and (b)

[5] To further examine the robustness of these findings, we again used linear regression to regress arousal ratings for harm to the outgroup on ideology while adjusting for arousal ratings for harm to the ingroup and vice versa, with similar results: Ideology's relationship to arousal ratings for both categories was significant: ingroup harm ($b = -.64$, $SE = .13$), $t(76) = -5.13$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.89, −.39]; outgroup harm ($b = .59$, $SE = .12$), $t(76) = 5.03$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.36, .82]. These findings, like the findings for valence, indicate a potential masking effect for responses to outgroup harm on responses to ingroup harm.

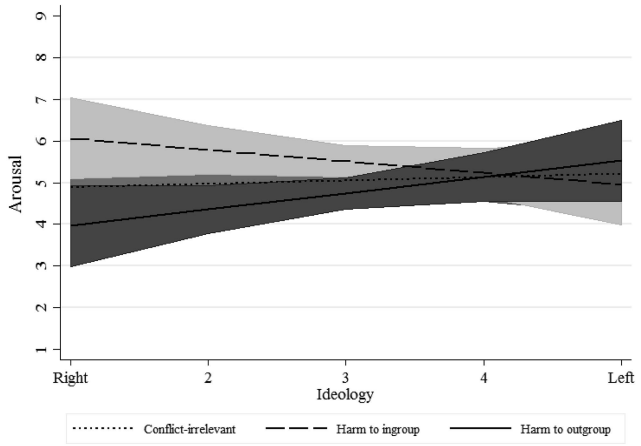

Figure 2. The interactive influence of ideology and type of content on levels of self-reported arousal in Study 1. The marginally significant slope for harm to the outgroup indicates that leftists experienced this content as somewhat more negative than did rightists.

separate the measurement of ideology from the measures of emotional intensity (and emotion-regulation choice) so as to prevent the influence of demand characteristics related to ideological self-placement.

Method

Participants. A total of 101 Jewish Israelis (71 female; ages 17–37, $M = 23.95$, $SD = 2.71$), drawn from the student bodies at Tel Aviv University and the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya participated in a 90-min laboratory study and received course credit or a combination of course credit and monetary compensation (30 ILS [~US$7.9]) for their participation. We determined the sample size as in Study 1 and eventually hit this target, albeit with a right-leaning sample: 44 participants identified as moderate to extreme rightists, 28 identified as centrists, and 29 identified as moderate to extreme leftists. Of these, two provided highly unlikely responses in the behavioral task (choosing only one option throughout the task), indicating a failure to follow instructions, and were thus excluded from the analysis.[6]

Procedure and measures. At least 24 hr before their arrival at the lab, but after scheduling their lab participation, participants completed a short background questionnaire online, including demographic information as collected in Study 1, albeit with a 7-point Ideology scale (ranging from 1 = *extreme right* to 7 = *extreme left*), and measures of depression (using the nine-item Patient Health Questionnaire [PHQ-9]; Kroenke & Spitzer, 2002) and anxiety (using the Trait Anxiety subscale of the State–Trait Anxiety Inventory [STAI]; Spielberger, 1983) for exploratory purposes. The lab session consisted of two computerized tasks: an image-rating task, followed by an emotion-regulation choice task (adapted from Sheppes et al., 2011). The order of the tasks was fixed, because emotion regulation using reappraisal, which changes the representation of affective stimuli due to its engagement profile, may substantially affect intensity ratings upon second exposure (see Blechert, Sheppes, Di Tella, Williams, & Gross, 2012; Thiruchselvam, Blechert, Sheppes, Rydstrom, & Gross, 2011). The rating task was a modified version of the task from Study 1, presenting each image for only 1,500 ms and prompting participants to rate the intensity of their negative experience on a single scale (anchored at 1 = *not negative at all* and 9 = *extremely negative*). Intensity scores were obtained by averaging scores for each type of content (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$ for conflict-irrelevant, .98 for harm to the ingroup, and .98 for harm to the outgroup). As in Study 1, we also computed a difference score between the intensity of responses to ingroup and outgroup harm for each participant. This was designed to assess right–left differences in the intensity gap for ingroup versus outgroup harm, indicating ingroup favoritism in intensity.

The regulatory choice task was based on the classic emotion-regulation choice paradigm (Sheppes et al., 2011). It first included a four-trial training phase, in which participants observed negative images and were instructed either to think about something unrelated and emotionally neutral (distraction) or to think about the target image in a way that reduced its negative meaning (reappraisal). The training phase consisted of two distraction trials and two reappraisal trials, in counterbalanced order. Participants were then trained on the choice task and given three practice choice trials, in which they described their chosen strategy out loud and were corrected by the experimenter as needed. The practice trials were followed by 100 experimental trials, with each trial consisting of a 1,500- to 2,000-ms fixation point, followed by a 500-ms appearance of the target image, followed by a prompt to choose between reappraisal and distraction (onscreen position counterbalanced between participants), followed by a 2,000-ms prompt to prepare to employ the chosen strategy, followed by a second 5,000-ms presentation of the emotional image in which to employ the chosen strategy, finally followed by the Intensity scale used in the rating task.[7] Participants were also given three-min-long breaks during the task. Consistent with prior findings, the proportion of distraction choice was used as the main outcome, and we also once again computed a difference score between the proportions of distraction choice when regulating harm to the ingroup versus outgroup.

Results and Discussion

The interactive influence of ideology and content on emotion generation. Consistent with our first hypothesis and replicating Study 1, a mixed-effects regression model defined as in Study 1 but with emotional intensity as the dependent variable, $\chi^2(9) = 223.03$, $p < .0001$ (see Figure 4), yielded a significant Content × Ideology interaction. More specifically, ideology's influence on intensity ratings for outgroup harm was significantly different from its influence on both conflict-irrelevant stimuli ($b = -.55$, $SE = .09$, $z = -6.38$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.72, −.38]) and ingroup harm ($b = -.88$, $SE = .09$, $z = -10.22$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−1.05, −.71]), and its influence on the intensity of responses

[6] Almost all results (with the exception of a marginally significant result in the mediation analysis, in which $p = .06$) remain unchanged when including these participants, and they are reported in the online supplemental materials.

[7] Intensity scores following the implementation of chosen strategies in the emotion-regulation choice task were not analyzed, because these ratings are uninterpretable (see Scheibe, Sheppes, & Staudinger, 2015, for a thorough discussion).

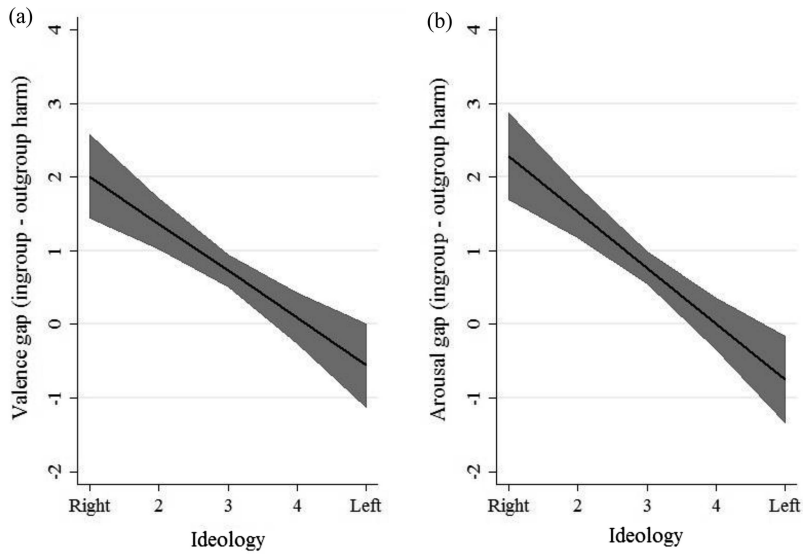

Figure 3. Ideology's relation to ingroup favoritism (responses to ingroup harm minus responses to outgroup harm) in valence (Panel a) and arousal (Panel b), with rightists (compared to leftists) exhibiting a larger intensity gap on both measures, indicating ingroup favoritism in emotional intensity.

to ingroup harm also significantly differed from its influence on the intensity of responses to conflict-irrelevant images ($b = .33$, $SE = .09$, $z = 3.84$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.15, .5]).

As in Study 1, decomposition of the interaction revealed that leftists experienced harm to the outgroup with significantly higher intensity than did rightists ($b = .58$, $SE = .12$, $z = 5.03$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.36, .81]). To our surprise, they also experienced harm to the ingroup with significantly lower intensity than did rightists ($b = -.3$, $SE = .12$, $z = -2.56$, $p = .01$, 95% CI [−.52, −.07]), potentially indicating we might find differences in emotion-regulation choice for this content as well as for harm to the outgroup. As in Study 1, the simple effect for conflict-irrelevant images was nonsignificant ($b = .03$, $SE = .12$, $z = .29$, $p = .77$, 95% CI [−.19, .26]).[8]

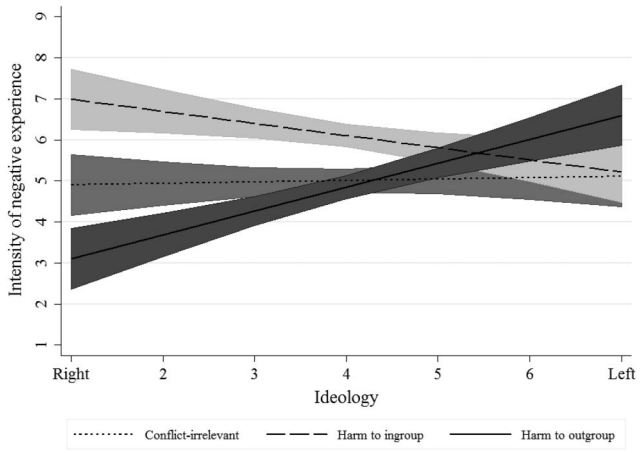

Figure 4. The interactive influence of ideology and type of content on the subjective intensity of participants' negative experience in Study 2. The significant slope for harm to the outgroup indicates that leftists (compared to rightists) experienced this content more intensely, whereas the significant slope for harm to the ingroup means that rightists (compared to leftists) experienced this content more intensely.

The interactive influence of ideology and content on emotion-regulation choice. To examine the intensity and motivation hypotheses for the direction of right–left differences in regulatory choice, we employed the same mixed-effects regression procedure with proportion of distraction choice as the dependent variable, $\chi^2(9) = 33.86$, $p = .0001$ (see Figure 5). As hypothesized, the analysis revealed a significant Content × Ideology interaction, with ideology's influence on the proportion of distraction choice when confronted with harm to the outgroup significantly different from its influence on distraction choice for conflict-irrelevant images ($b = -.04$, $SE = .01$, $z = -3.37$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [−.07, −.02]) as well as ingroup harm ($b = -.03$, $SE = .01$, $z = -2.63$, $p = .01$, 95% CI [−.06, −.01]). No such difference emerged in ideology's influence on choice when comparing these last two categories ($b = -.01$, $SE = .01$, $z = -.74$, $p = .46$, 95% CI [−.03, .02]).

Congruent with the intensity hypothesis, but not the motivation hypothesis, when confronted with depictions of harm to the outgroup, leftists displayed a significantly *greater* tendency to disengage via distraction relative to rightists ($b = .04$, $SE = .01$, $z = 3.23$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [.02, .06]). There were no emotion-regulation choice differences between rightists and leftists for the other two types of content (conflict-irrelevant $b = -.003$, $SE = .01$,

[8] To further probe the robustness of these findings, we regressed intensity ratings for harm to the outgroup on ideology while adjusting for intensity ratings for harm to the ingroup, and vice versa. We once again found significant relationships between ideology and intensity scores for both ingroup harm ($b = -.74$, $SE = .11$), $t(92) = -6.98$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.95, −.53], and outgroup harm ($b = .77$, $SE = .09$), $t(92) = 8.5$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.59, .95], meaning that these findings for each category are not explained by differences in reactions to the other category.

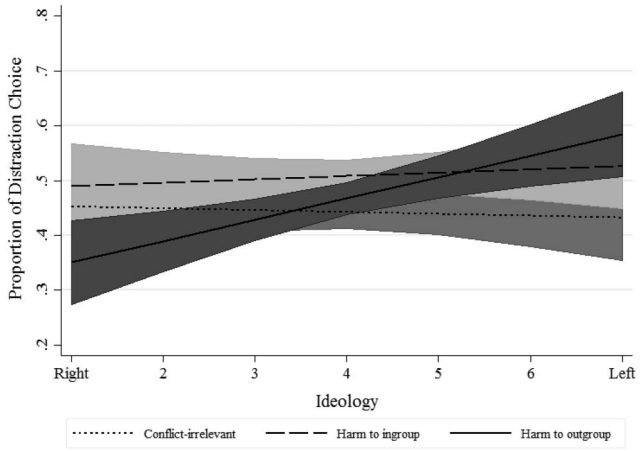

Figure 5. The interactive influence of ideology and type of content on the proportion of participants' choice of distraction over reappraisal in Study 2. The significant slope for harm to the outgroup indicates that leftists (compared to rightists) displayed a greater tendency to regulate their emotions in response to this content through disengagement–distraction.

$z = -0.28$, $p = .78$, 95% CI [−.03, .02]; ingroup harm $b = .006$, $SE = .01$, $z = .49$, $p = .62$, 95% CI [−.02, .03]), despite the above findings indicating some right–left differences in intensity in response to this category.[9]

Ideology's influence on the ingroup versus outgroup harm choice gap, as mediated by intensity. As in Study 1, we also wanted to examine right–left differences in the gap between the intensity of emotion generation in response to ingroup and outgroup harm, as well as differences in the same gap for emotion-regulation choice. Regressing the intensity difference scores on ideology, adjusting for our four demographic indicators, revealed a significant association ($b = -.87$, $SE = .1$), $t(93) = -8.76$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−1.07, −.67] (see Figure 6a), with the gap smaller for leftists than for rightists. In other words, we found a smaller intensity gap for ingroup versus outgroup harm among leftists than among rightists, indicating that the latter displayed greater ingroup favoritism in intensity than did the former. The same analysis to probe ingroup favoritism in emotion-regulation choice, employing the difference score for proportion of distraction choice as the dependent variable, also yielded a significant association with ideology ($b = -.04$, $SE = .01$), $t(91) = -3.89$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.06, −.02] (see Figure 6b). More specifically, the difference in the tendency to choose distraction for ingroup versus outgroup harm was bigger for rightists than for leftists, congruent with the greater magnitude of the intensity gap identified among rightists.

Next, we wanted to examine whether right–left differences in the intensity gap in emotion generation in response to ingroup versus outgroup harm may account for the similar differences found in emotion-regulation choice, as per our hypothesis that differences in intensity would translate to differences in choice. An added benefit of the above approach is that it allowed us to use the difference scores as a proxy for the conflict-related elements in our above interaction analyses, in order to examine such a mediated effect. This approach is especially useful because examining mediated moderation for the full effects above would be theoretically problematic (see Hayes, 2013, pp. 387–389). We thus ran a simple mediation analyses, employing Model 4 of the PROCESS command (Hayes, 2013) with 5,000 iterations, with ideology as the independent variable, the intensity difference score as a mediating variable, and the emotion-regulation choice proportion difference score as our dependent variable, adjusting for the demographic indicators above.[10] This analysis yielded a significant indirect effect ($a \times b = -.02$, $SE = .01$, 95% CI [−.04, −.0002]; Sobel $a \times b = -.02$, $SE = .01$, $z = -2.04$, $p = .04$; see Figure 7), with ideology's total effect on the difference in choice scores significant ($b = -.04$, $SE = .01$), $t(91) = -3.89$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.06, −.02], but its direct effect no longer significant ($b = -.02$, $SE = .01$), $t(90) = -1.52$, $p = .13$, 95% CI [−.05, .007]. In other words, ideological differences in ingroup favoritism in emotion generation fully mediated ideology's influence on ingroup favoritism in emotion-regulation choice patterns, with rightists' ideology predicting a greater gap in the proportion of distraction choice through a greater gap in subjective intensity between ingroup and outgroup harm.

Taken together, the findings of Study 2 both replicate the findings of Study 1 and provide support for the intensity hypothesis over the motivation hypothesis: Leftists are actually more likely than rightists to disengage from depictions of this content, because they experience it more intensely. This was found despite leftists' supposed greater motivation to engage with the suffering of the outgroup, in accordance with the contents of leftist ideology in conflict. Furthermore, our data indicate that right–left differences in emotion-regulation choice for different types of conflict-related content are mediated by differences in intensity for these stimuli, indicating that ideological differences in intensity explain ideological differences in choice.

General Discussion

The present study provided important insights into the interactive influence of political ideology and conflict-related content on emotion generation and emotion regulation. In Study 1, we showed that right–left differences in the subjective intensity of emotional experience do not occur across the board, with their direction and magnitude dependent on the type of content at hand. Such differences are mainly limited to conflict-related content, with our findings indicating that in the context of intergroup conflict, leftists experience harm to the outgroup more negatively in both valence and arousal than do rightists. Surprisingly, we also found that

[9] Nonetheless, follow-up analyses to probe the robustness of these findings employed linear regression to examine ideology's influence on the proportion of choice for each of the conflict-relevant categories while adjusting for the other category. These once again revealed that ideology significantly predicts choice for both categories: ingroup harm ($b = -.03$, $SE = .01$), $t(90) = -2.68$, $p = .009$, 95% CI [−.05, −.007]; outgroup harm ($b = .04$, $SE = .01$), $t(90) = 4.33$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.02, .06]. These findings indicate that the differences found for outgroup harm cannot be fully explained by differences for ingroup harm but that controlling for outgroup harm reveals ideological differences in emotion regulation in response to ingroup harm as well, congruent with our findings for intensity.

[10] It is important to note that the mediation analysis was only marginally significant when including all problematic participants and when demographic variables were not included as covariates in the model (see the online supplemental materials). For these reasons, and due to the theoretical constraints on examining mediated moderation, we suggest these findings be interpreted with caution.

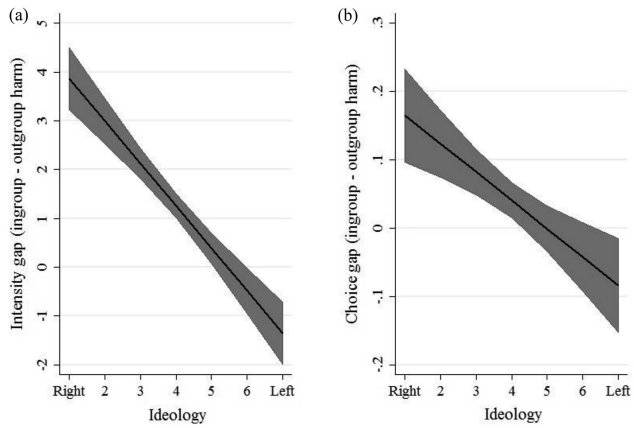

Figure 6. Ideology's relation to ingroup favoritism (responses to ingroup harm minus responses to outgroup harm) in intensity (Panel a) and proportion of distraction choice (Panel b), with rightists (compared to leftists) exhibiting a larger intensity gap as well as a larger gap in preference for disengagement–distraction over engagement–reappraisal. These findings indicate greater ingroup favoritism among rightists in both emotional intensity and emotion-regulation choice.

rightists experience harm to the ingroup as slightly more negative than do leftists. We also found that the intensity gap between responses to ingroup and outgroup harm was larger among rightists than among leftists, indicating greater ingroup favoritism among the former. In Study 2, we replicated these findings and also demonstrated that in accordance with the greater difference found in subjective intensity in response to harm to the outgroup, right–left differences in emotion-regulation choice are limited to the harm to the outgroup category of stimuli.

Of the two competing hypotheses stemming from the literatures on emotion-regulation choice and emotion-regulation motivation, our data supported the former, intensity hypothesis: In accordance with prior findings that higher intensity of stimuli is the central determinant of disengagement choice, leftists were more likely than rightists to cope with their intensified negative emotions to outgroup harm through disengagement-distraction. Furthermore, the gap in the tendency to favor disengaging modes of emotion regulation for ingroup versus outgroup harm was greater among rightists than among leftists, and this difference was mediated by the ingroup–outgroup gap in intensity scores.

The present findings contribute to the understanding of emotion generation. Stimuli are often thought of in terms of the emotional intensity associated with them, but this intensity is dependent not only on objective factors relating to its content but also on that content's relation to one's social position or identity and on additional interpersonal differences, such as ideology. Each of these factors may dampen or magnify the impact a stimulus has on a given individual, and it is important to better understand which factors lead to differing intensities, how, and under what circumstances.

As we have previously noted in reviewing the literature, knowledge on emotional processes cannot simply be implanted as is into the unique domain of intergroup conflict (Halperin & Pliskin, 2015). Nonclinical social and individual factors such as those examined here are rarely taken into account in stimuli caches such as the IAPS, with each stimulus labeled with averaged values of valence and arousal, despite the possible existence of potent social factors moderating the relationship between its content and the intensity it actually provokes. Future attempts to create a taxonomy of such factors, coupled with a better system of valence and arousal ratings taking such differences into account, could pave the way for a more nuanced understanding of emotion-generation processes.

Additionally, our findings regarding the intensity gap and its ramifications for emotion generation offer a contribution to the literature on the intergroup empathy bias (Cikara et al., 2014) by further illuminating right–left differences in emotional responses to ingroup versus outgroup harm. We found that whereas leftists experience similar levels of emotional intensity in response to both kinds of harm, rightists display a greater gap in intensity, experiencing greater intensity in response to ingroup harm compared to outgroup harm. Beyond offering support for previous findings about ideological differences in the empathy gap (e.g., Waytz et al., 2016), we found that this gap in intensity also predicts a gap in the tendency to prefer one emotion-regulation strategy over another (i.e., distraction over reappraisal). More specifically, where greater intensity is present for ingroup versus outgroup harm, we also found a greater tendency to employ distraction over reappraisal when regulating one's emotions. No research has thus far examined whether and in what way the intergroup empathy gap influences how people choose to regulate their emotions, and the present investigation thus offers the first indication as to the nature of this influence. It is important to note that in accordance with the emotion-regulation choice literature and its assertion that greater intensity leads to an increased preference for disengaging emotion-regulation strategies (Sheppes, 2014), a greater empathy gap means that individuals are more likely to disengage when confronted with harm to their own group than when confronted with harm to an outgroup, and future research on the empathy gap may benefit from this understanding.

Another theoretical contribution of our findings relates to the understanding of emotion-regulation processes in general and regulatory selection in particular. Although previous research using the paradigm we developed has repeatedly and successfully shown a clear within-subject tendency to prefer distraction as intensity increases (Sheppes, 2014; Sheppes et al., 2011, 2014), the present research is the first to show that interpersonal differences in subjective intensity manifest in between-subjects differences in disengagement–distraction choice. Furthermore, the unique regulatory selection context employed facilitated the examination of two competing hypotheses that stem from the literature. Specifically, the regulatory selection context offered clear, documented

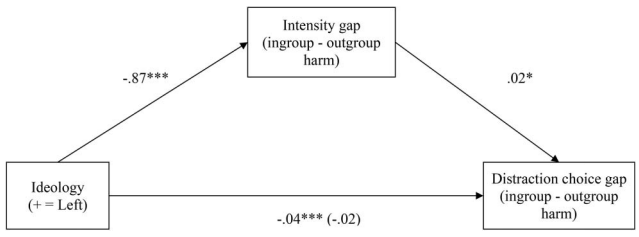

Figure 7. Mediation model for leftist ideology's influence on difference scores in proportion of distraction choice when regulating ingroup harm versus outgroup harm, as mediated by difference scores in emotional intensity in response to ingroup harm versus outgroup harm in Study 2. All coefficients are unstandardized. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

right–left differences in motivation to engage with stimuli that provoke ideology-congruent emotions (Porat et al., 2016), which are simultaneously likely related to right–left differences in the subjective experience of harm to the outgroup (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2013; Brandt et al., 2014; Duckitt, 2001; Lindner & Nosek, 2009).

The present findings offer an additional important theoretical contribution to the political ideology literature: They help illuminate the nature of right–left differences in intergroup affective processes, which have been debated by political psychologists for years (e.g., Brandt et al., 2014; Jost et al., 2009). More specifically, our findings provide evidence for more intense emotional reactions among leftists—but only to the suffering of outgroup members, at least in the context of direct intergroup conflict. Understanding that right–left differences in basic psychological reactions are content-dependent is important, because this understanding clarifies the nature of ideological differences and speaks to the dangers of generalizing conclusions from studies employing only one type of stimuli (see Kessler & Proch, 2016; Pliskin, Sheppes, & Halperin, 2015). Furthermore, our findings illuminate the complexity of right–left differences in emotional processes beyond previously documented differences in self-reported emotional experience (e.g., Halperin et al., 2014), documenting behavioral differences in higher level regulatory behaviors as well—affording them greater external validity.

Although our hypotheses were not directly related to existing knowledge in the psychology of morality and justice, its findings—if elaborated upon—may also be valuable to the field of moral psychology. Specifically, our findings may inform the ongoing debate on the nature of ideological differences in moral cognition. One approach, known as moral foundations theory (e.g., Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009), proposes that ideological differences in the type of content moralized—or experienced with great moral intensity—stem from qualitatively different moral foundations, with liberals moralizing issues such as loyalty or purity less than do conservatives but moralizing issues of harm to similar extents. Our findings, however, may provide tentative support to the competing approach, championed by Gray and his colleagues (e.g., Schein & Gray, 2015), according to which ideological differences in moralization more broadly derive from differences in the perception of harm. The present data indicate that harm to the ingroup versus outgroup is indeed perceived differentially between ideological rightists and leftists, laying foundations for future work that may examine how such differential perceptions relate to differences in moral judgments, in addition to the differences we identified in emotion-regulation choice.

The findings may also hold applied significance, because they constitute a first step toward a nuanced understanding of the impact emotions may have on individuals in political contexts. Politicians and media outlets often opt for emotion-laden appeals or reports, and extreme political situations are inherently emotion-laden. For these experiences to have an effect on attitudes or action tendencies, beyond their emotional impact, individuals must be willing to engage with their contents. Engagement in the form of cognitive reappraisal is not in itself a *sufficient* condition that guarantees empathy or constructive action for change, because individuals may reappraise harm in ways that legitimize or excuse it. However, engagement is nonetheless a *necessary* condition for such outcomes, because without engagement one cannot partake in any kind of helpful behavior or meaningfully support helpful policies. Future research may illuminate to what extent the greater tendency of leftists to disengage from depictions of harm to the outgroup—information that should be of special interest to this ideological group—could also explain low levels of action to help the outgroup in extreme times such as direct violent confrontations (e.g., van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009).

Methodologically, the present research is unique in its employment of highly relevant stimuli from real-life developments in a controlled lab setting. Furthermore, the research design includes behavioral as well as self-report measures. Together, these two features increase the external validity of our findings, but future research may increase this validity further by taking the examination outside the lab. Examining the impact of real-life developments in real time would further the present examination, allowing one to also investigate the consequent differences in outcomes such as policy support or collective action intentions—two phenomena that may be severely altered by a tendency to disengage from emotion-provoking developments. Such an examination may thus further illuminate the complexity of the ideology–content–emotional intensity relationship and its impact on emotion-regulation choice, while shedding light on what may be the most important outcome of these: the actual effects of emotional information on behavior and action intentions.

There are several important limitations to the present investigation, which may lay the groundwork for future research. First, although we confirmed our hypothesis that right–left differences in emotional intensity would be most pronounced regarding harm to the outgroup, both studies indicated that (opposite) differences also exist in response to depictions of harm to the ingroup, albeit to a smaller extent. This may be an outcome of right–left differences in a specific form of ingroup attachment—glorification (Roccas et al., 2006). Although ingroup attachment is known to be strong across the ideological spectrum, it may be that rightists' greater tendency to unconditionally glorify their own group over others leads them to experience harm to the ingroup somewhat more intensely than do leftists. Furthermore, it may be that system dependence concerns, known to eliminate right–left differences in patriotic attachment (van der Toorn et al., 2014), were not salient enough for our participants, despite the unique context of intense intergroup conflict employed, in which case differences in such attachment would have been present.

Another question arising from this unexpected finding is why, despite these right–left differences in emotional intensity in response to harm to the ingroup, we found no right–left difference in regulatory choice to cope with this type of content. It may be that the competing forms of attachment blur possible differences in regulatory choice or that greater differences in intensity are required for downstream differences in regulatory choice to emerge. Our finding that such differences emerge in response to outgroup harm when controlling for responses to outgroup harm provide some indication for this, but further research would be needed to clarify these matters.

A second limitation, referenced above in the discussion of our findings' applied significance, relates to the different tactics people may use to regulate their emotions through engagement. Reappraisal, although an engaging strategy, does not denote a specific direction or set of values guiding the reframing of emotion-laden content (McRae, Ciesielski, & Gross, 2012). Previous research on reappraisal in general (see Gross, 2014, for a full review) and in the context of intergroup relations (e.g., Halperin et al., 2013) has indicated that this strategy can have constructive outcomes across domains. Nonetheless, although individuals may reappraise harm to a person or group by focusing on modes through which the

target may be helped, they may also reappraise this harm by dehumanizing the victim, downplaying or justifying the person's suffering, or by applying any number of other nonconstructive meanings to the emotion-provoking information (see Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2001; McRae et al., 2012). Therefore, the mere act of regulating one's emotion through an engaging strategy does not mandate a constructive outcome to this engagement, even if engagement is a necessary condition for such outcomes. Future research focusing on ideological differences in the content of reappraisal would be necessary to fully understand the different possible consequences of choosing among different modes of regulation.

Additional limitations relate to the generalizability of our present findings to different contexts and different types of strategies. For one, we conducted both studies in only one context—that of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Although this conflict is a prototypical intractable conflict that offers an opportunity to examine intergroup dynamics in an ongoing, violent conflict rife with major real-world developments, evidence from other intergroup contexts, and using other types of emotion-provoking content, would provide greater external validity to the present findings. Additionally, in Study 2 we examined only two emotion-regulation strategies out of many different strategies available to individuals in their daily lives. This examination rests on prior research employing these strategies, on the strategies' high prevalence in individuals' lives, and on their clear engagement–disengagement profile, but it would nonetheless be important to examine other regulatory strategies and how they relate to ideological differences and different types of content. The present research makes initial steps in all of these directions, but further research is needed to fully illuminate the phenomena at its heart.

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