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Motivated emotion and the rally around the flag effect: liberals are motivated to feel collective angst (like conservatives) when faced with existential threat

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ABSTRACT

A careful look at societies facing threat reveals a unique phenomenon in which liberals and conservatives react emotionally and attitudinally in a similar manner, rallying around the conservative flag. Previous research suggests that this rally effect is the result of liberals shifting in their attitudes and emotional responses toward the conservative end. Whereas theories of motivated social cognition provide a motivation-based account of cognitive processes (i.e. attitude shift), it remains unclear whether emotional shifts are, in fact, also a motivation-based process. Herein, we propose that under threat, liberals are motivated to feel existential concern about their group's future vitality (i.e. collective angst) to the same extent as conservatives, because this group-based emotion elicits support for ingroup protective action. Within the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, we tested and found support for this hypothesis both inside (Study 1) and outside (Study 2) the laboratory. We did so using a behavioural index of motivation to experience collective angst. We discuss the implications of our findings for understanding motivated emotion regulation in the context of intergroup threat.

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On this matter, the opposition and the coalition are in agreement. We are justly fighting for the Israeli people.

Liberal opposition Labour Party leader, MK Issac Herzog.

It is well documented that individuals and societies at large tend to shift to the conservative right when faced with collective threats, diminishing (even if just for a limited time) the rigid ideological differences between liberals and conservatives (see Bonanno & Jost, 2006; Brody & Shapiro, 1989; Landau et al., 2004; Lian & Oneal, 1993; McGregor, Nail, Marigold, & Kang, 2005; Parker, 1995). Recent work suggests that this sudden consensus between liberals and conservatives is the result of a conservative shift that occurs among liberals when they face collective threat (Nail, McGregor, Drinkwater, Steele, & Thompson, 2009; Van de Vyver, Houston, Abrams, & Vasiljevic, 2016; Van der Toorn, Nail, Liviatan, & Jost, 2014).

Herzog, the liberal leader of Israel's Labour Party, exemplified this tendency for liberals to rally around traditional conservative ideas in the face of intergroup threat. Explicitly, he urged fellow Labour Party members to back the ruling conservative Likud Party's 2014 decision to initiate a military incursion into the Hamas-led Gaza Strip.

Conservative shifts, akin to the Herzog example, involve both cognitive (i.e. attitudinal) and emotional elements. That is, liberals under threat tend to adjust their attitudes and their emotions to those of conservatives, thus closing the ideological gap that typically exists. The motivated social cognition literature has provided a motivational-based account for the cognitive component of this shift among liberals. Specifically, liberals actively change their attitudes to satisfy psychological needs (e.g. reduce uncertainty) that arise under collective threats (see Jost, Glaser,

Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003a; Nail et al., 2009). However, to date, no research has examined whether the emotional component of this conservative shift is motivated as well. Herein, we ask whether liberals are motivated to alter their emotions when facing collective threats, so that they align with conservatives.

In the current research, we propose that much like attitude shifts, emotional shifts may be the result of a motivated process that occurs among liberals. Emotions help the individual to adaptively respond to meaningful challenges (Averill, 1990) such as threat. Thus, under threat, group members should seek out emotions that may be instrumental for achieving their relevant group-based goal. For instance, liberals who perceive their group is under existential threat may be motivated to experience collective angst (i.e. concern for the ingroup's future vitality; see Wohl, Squires & Caouette, 2012). This aversive group-based emotion functions to increase group members' support for collective action against perceived existential threat (see Halperin, Porat, & Wohl, 2013; Jetten & Wohl, 2012; Wohl, King, & Taylor, 2014), particularly when such action is perceived as required to protect the ingroup's future vitality (see Dupuis, Wohl, Packer, & Tabri, 2016). However, under such conditions, liberals may recognise that their normative emotional responses are not sufficient to motivate ingroup protective action. We contend that liberals in such a predicament will seek to experience a group-based emotion (i.e. collective angst) that is instrumental in achieving the goal of ingroup protection.

The politics of thought: the liberal-conservative divide and liberal shifts under threat

Despite some fundamental differences between liberals and conservatives, there is a body of research demonstrating that when nations or collectives perceive their group to be under threat, people tend to shift their attitudes and emotions toward the conservative end of the ideological spectrum. With regards to emotional shifts, research on group-based emotions demonstrates that under threat, liberals and conservatives alike tend to experience emotions such as anger, anxiety and collective angst. For instance, Americans tended to experience heightened group-based anger following the 9/11 attacks, which in turn, mediated the relations

between threat and support for conservative policies that are traditionally attributed to the right (Huddy & Feldman, 2011; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003; Sadler, Lineberger, Correll, & Park, 2005; Skitka, Bauman, Aramovich, & Morgan, 2006). In regards to cognitive shifts, numerous studies found that people tend to support conservative policies when facing collective threats. For example, a number of studies found strong (though relatively short lived) support for leaders' approval ratings following sudden, high profile events (Brody, 1991; Brody & Shapiro, 1989; Jordan & Page, 1992; Lian & Oneal, 1993; Oneal, Lian, & Joyner, 1996; Parker, 1995). Similarly, US participants who were reminded of the 9/11 attacks were more supportive of President George W. Bush counterterrorism policies than participants who were reminded of an upcoming exam (Landau et al., 2004).

However, people on the left of the political spectrum shift right politically more so than people who already have right political leanings (see *reactive-liberal hypothesis*; Nail et al., 2009). Thus, intergroup threat has a disproportionate influence on the attitudes of liberals. *Motivated Social Cognition Theory* (Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b) provides some insight as to why this shift may occur among liberals in particular. According to this theory, conservative shifts occur under threat to fulfil psychological needs, and to reduce the uncertainty inherent in threatening context (Jost et al., 2003a). Providing empirical support to the tendency of liberals to shift under threat, Van de Vyver et al. (2016) showed that, in the week following the 2005 London bombings (compared to the weeks preceding the bombings), British liberals reported increased endorsement of moral foundations (ingroup-loyalty and fairness-reciprocity) that are typically prioritised by conservatives. Similarly, across three distinct studies, Nail et al. (2009) demonstrated that following experimentally-induced threat, liberals reported as much conviction in their attitudes about capital punishment and abortion as conservatives. Likewise, Van der Toorn et al. (2014) demonstrated that under threat, liberals exhibit strong national attachment, thereby eliminating the ideological gap with conservatives. They concluded that under threat liberals undergo a clear escalation of patriotic sentiments, which brings them closer to the political attitudes of conservatives. Taken together, it is clear that liberals became more politically conservative after being exposed threat.

A motivation-based understanding of the liberal-shift

We offer a motivational account of the emotional component of the rally around the flag effect, arguing that emotional shifts under threat are also a motivation-based process. Emotional experiences often result from motivated emotion regulation (Tamir, 2016). According to the instrumental approach to emotion regulation (e.g. Tamir, 2009), people pursue emotions that they believe to be instrumental for achieving their goals, even when these emotions are unpleasant (e.g. Tamir & Ford, 2012; Tamir, Mitchell, & Gross, 2008). For example, at the intrapersonal level, people are motivated to experience anger when they prepare for a task they think will require aggression (Tamir et al., 2008). Additionally, people are motivated to experience fear when they prepare for a task that they think will require avoidance (e.g. Tamir & Ford, 2009). People actively seek to experience emotions they believe would facilitate desired actions (Tamir, 2016).

Motivated emotion regulation also occurs at the group level (Porat, Halperin, & Tamir, 2016; Porat, Halperin, Mannheim, & Tamir, 2016). Specifically, people are motivated to experience group-based emotions that they believe will help attain a group-relevant goal, even when the experience of the group-based emotion is aversive. For example, people who wanted to connect to their group on the Israeli National Memorial Day were motivated to experience group-based sadness (Porat, Halperin, Mannheim, et al., 2016). Moreover, within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, research has shown that Jewish-Israeli conservatives are more motivated to experience anger toward Palestinians, whereas liberals are more motivated to experience empathy toward Palestinians than conservatives are (Porat, Halperin, & Tamir, 2016). Liberals and conservatives, therefore, may pursue different emotions because they are driven by different group-based goals. Conservatives have a tendency to see the world as a dangerous place (Altemeyer, 1998; Duckitt, 2001). Therefore, conservatives should support ingroup protective action against outgroups (e.g. anti-immigration policies), regardless of whether they face an immediate threat. Liberals, on the other hand, tend to have a more optimistic view of the world, and therefore are less motivated than conservatives to support ingroup protective action against outgroups. However, as motivated social cognition theory posits, under threat, liberals'

group-based goals should shift toward those typically held by conservatives. In particular, when under threat, liberals are likely to endorse the conservative goal of protecting and securing the ingroup. In order to facilitate such a shift, we contend that liberals who perceive a threat to the ingroup should be more motivated to experience group-based emotions that serve an ingroup protective function.

One emotion that drives group members to support actions that are aimed at protecting the ingroup against perceived threat is collective angst (for a review, see Wohl et al., 2012). Collective angst is a group-based emotion that is elicited when people believe that the ingroup's future is in jeopardy. When group members appraise that a negative event may befall the group, or at the extreme, the group is in threat of extinction, they experience collective angst (Wohl & Branscombe, 2008, 2009). This emotion is distinct from related group-based emotions such as group-based fear, which stems from perceiving an immediate and present danger to the ingroup (see Wohl & Branscombe, 2009; Wohl, Branscombe, & Reysen, 2010). A growing body of literature has shown that collective angst motivates a specific group-based goal – protection of the ingroup's future (for a review, see Wohl et al., 2012). For example, collective angst among Americans increases support for policies that restrict the work opportunities of immigrants (Lucas, Rudolph, Zhdanova, Barkho, & Weidner, 2014). It can also lead group members to support violence against members of an outgroup that threatens the ingroup's future vitality. Wohl et al. (2014), for instance, found that Tamils expressed greater support for the violent protest in Sri Lanka to the extent they felt that the Sinhalese government was undermining the future vitality of the Tamil people. Taken together, collective angst motivates group members to reduce or eliminate the perceived threat to the ingroup in order to secure a vibrant future for their group (Wohl et al., 2012).

Therefore, bringing together theories on motivated emotion regulation and theories of collective angst, we propose that liberals will be motivated to experience group-based emotions that help them justify political positions that are more in line with conservatives. Specifically, liberals should show heightened motivation to experience collective angst when an existential intergroup threat is made salient. Conservatives, however, are chronically concerned with the ingroup future vitality, and as such should demonstrate motivation to experience collective angst regardless of whether an existential threat is made salient.

Overview

This paper attempts to bridge the gap between two lines of work: theories and empirical work concerning the rally around the flag effect, and theories and studies on emotion and motivation. While previous work about the rally around the flag effect suggest that liberals shift emotionally to the right, the mechanism driving this shift has yet to be studied. At the same time, work on emotion and motivation shows that emotional shifts can often result from a motivated process. The current paper integrates these two distinct literatures, offering a mechanism that may explain emotional shifts that occur when rallying around the flag. We propose that under threat, liberals are motivated to feel existential concern about their group's future vitality (i.e. collective angst) to the same extent as conservatives, because this group-based emotion can facilitate ingroup protective action.

To test our ideas, two studies were conducted within the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with Jewish Israelis as participants. In Study 1, we tested whether liberals wanted to experience more collective angst under intergroup (vs. personal) threat. We predicted that liberals would want to experience collective angst less than conservatives do in the personal threat condition. However, liberals would close this gap in the intergroup threat condition, and would want to experience as much collective angst as conservatives do. In Study 2, we tested our general hypothesis outside the laboratory in response to a real-world intergroup threatening situation. We approached half of our participants at the height of a violent confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians, and the other half a month following this confrontation. We predicted that under threat, liberals would want to experience collective angst to the same extent as conservatives, whereas the typical liberal-conservative gap would reappear once the intergroup threat was removed (i.e. after the confrontation subsided).

Study 1

Study 1 was designed to test whether liberals are motivated to experience collective angst under intergroup threat more than liberals under personal threat. To test this, we manipulated threat type (i.e. intergroup vs. personal). We chose to contrast intergroup threat with personal threat to demonstrate that preferences for collective angst should emerge

among liberals in situations where collective angst is perceived to be instrumental rather than in threatening situations at large. To elicit collective threat in the experimental condition, participants were told that they would be making a decision concerning the recent increase in violent attacks by Palestinians against Israeli civilians. To elicit personal threat in the control condition, participants were told that they would be making a decision concerning the recent increase in deadly traffic accidents.

We then assessed participant's emotional preferences using a behavioural index. Researchers often use behavioural indices to measure what people want to feel (i.e. emotional preferences), by assessing what type of emotion-inducing activities people choose to expose themselves to (e.g. Erber, Wegner, & Therriault, 1996; Tamir et al., 2008, 2015; Tamir & Ford, 2012; Wood, Heimpel, Manwell, & Whittington, 2009). These behavioural indices correspond to self-report indices, but are less sensitive to social demands (e.g. Tamir & Ford, 2012; Tamir, Ford, & Ryan, 2013). Thus, we adopted a behavioural index previously used to assess emotional preferences in group contexts (Porat, Halperin, & Tamir, 2016). Specifically, participants were told that it may be useful to focus on unrelated topics before making important decisions, and were invited to select emotion-inducing activities to engage in before making a political decision. They were then presented with a number of bogus newspaper headlines, and were asked to select an article they wanted to read before making a decision regarding the threatening situation. Each headline was piloted to confirm that participants expected each article to elicit a unique emotion. To ensure participants' article selection was not driven by content-related considerations (e.g. they may find the content of the headline relevant to the decision-making context), the headlines were unrelated to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Doing so allowed for a more precise determination of whether participants were motivated to experience an emotion by virtue of the emotional tone of the article implied by its headline.

To rule out the possibility that the selection of activities reflect participants' current emotional state rather than their desired emotional state, we also measured participant's self-reported levels of current collective angst at the beginning of the study. We expected liberals in the collective threat condition to have stronger preferences for collective angst than

liberals in the individual threat condition. We did not expect conservatives to differ in their preferences for collective angst across conditions.

Method

Participants

Participants were 118 Jewish Israelis¹ ($M_{\text{age}} = 43.49$ years, $SD = 15.03$, 59 females) who were recruited via a survey company (Panel4All) to participate in an online study in exchange for monetary compensation (approximately 2\$).² In terms of political ideology, self-identified as conservatives (27 in the collective threat condition and 15 in the personal threat condition), 38.1% self-identified as centrists (19 in the collective threat condition and 26 in the personal threat condition), and 26.2% self-identified as liberals (15 in the collective threat condition and 16 in the personal condition).

Procedure

Participants were told the survey examined social and political attitudes and were randomly assigned to a collective threat or an individual threat condition. In both conditions participants first reported on their current levels of collective angst, and were then informed that they would be asked to answer a series of questions on how the Israeli government should respond in light of a rising threat. We adopted the manipulation used in other studies conducted in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (e.g. Pliskin, Sheppes & Halperin, 2015), and made necessary changes so that it fits the current events, and made salient participants social identity (i.e. the self as an Israeli). Participants in the collective threat condition were told that the threat they were responding to was the recent increase in violent attacks by Palestinians against Israeli civilians. Participants in the personal threat condition were told that the threat they were responding to was the recent increase in deadly traffic accidents. Whereas both contexts should induce considerable levels of threat to the individual, the threat in the group condition was unique to the group context, and was framed to induce a sense of immediate threat to the state of Israel, whereas the threat in the personal context was not.

To introduce the behavioural measure of emotional preferences, participants were told that studies suggest that it may be useful to focus on unrelated topics before making important decisions. Therefore,

before making their upcoming decision, they could read a newspaper article of their choosing. At this point, participants were told that due to time constraints, they would not be able to read the article they had selected and were asked to proceed to the last set of questions. Participants then provided socio-demographic information. To disguise the goal of the study, participants also answered a series of questions pertaining to their position on the relevant issues introduced at the beginning of the study (i.e. violent attacks by Palestinians and traffic accidents). Finally, participants were debriefed, and were told what the goal of the study was and why they were asked to rate the headlines.

Measures

Behavioural index of emotional preferences

Participants read six bogus newspaper headlines, describing events unrelated to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or traffic accidents, and were asked to select one headline they most wanted to read before proceeding to the decision-making phase of the study. Two headlines described content that is likely to induce collective angst (e.g. "Researchers warn: An earthquake will destroy Israel within the next 50 years"), two headlines described content that is likely to induce individual angst (e.g. "A new study predicts that over 75% of Israelis over the age of 25 will have cancer by 2045"), and two additional headlines described content that is likely to be anger-inducing (e.g. "A new study: Ultra-Orthodox Jews do not serve in the Israeli military, yet get more state funding").

The expected emotional impact of the headlines was confirmed in a pilot test, in which participants ($N = 26$) rated the extent to which they expected to feel collective angst, individual angst, and anger upon reading the respective newspaper articles (1 = not at all; 9 = to a large extent). We ran a repeated-measures ANOVA, with participants' emotional expectations as the predicted variable. Participants expected the collective angst-inducing headlines to induce more collective angst than anger or individual angst ($M_s = 6.19, 4.21$ and 5.13 respectively), $F(1, 25) = 13.42, p = .001$. Participants expected the anger-inducing headlines to induce more anger than individual angst or collective angst ($M_s = 6.42, 3.70$ and 4.35 , respectively), $F(1, 25) = 4.72, p = .039$. Finally, participants expected the individual angst-inducing articles to induce

more angst than anger or collective angst ($M_s = 4.86, 3.01$ and 3.07 , respectively), $F(1, 25) = 14.33, p = .001$. (r 's = $.52, .54$, and $.74$ for collective angst, anger and individual angst respectively).

Political ideology

Participants indicated their political ideology by placing themselves on a 1 (= *extreme conservative*) to 7 (= *extreme liberal*) scale. To rule out the possibility of order or priming effects, half of the participants reported on their political ideology at the beginning of the study, and the other half did so at the end. Using a continuous variable allowed the inclusion of all participants throughout our analyses.

Collective angst

To control for participants' current levels of collective angst, they were asked to rate four items adapted from Wohl and Branscombe (2009) on a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*to a large extent*). For example: "I feel secure about the future of Israel" (reversed); "I feel concerned that the future vitality of Israel is in jeopardy" ($\alpha = 0.70$).

Results and discussion

Collective angst

We did not find a main effect for preferences for collective angst as a function of condition ($t(116) = -1.48, p = .142$). To test whether liberals in the collective threat condition selected collective angst-inducing articles more than liberals in the personal threat condition did, we performed a logistic regression, with condition defined as the independent variable, and political ideology as the moderator. Our dependent variable was dichotomous, predicting whether participants chose to read an article that is likely to induce collective angst (coded as 1) or not (coded as 0). The analysis revealed a significant condition X political ideology interaction, $b = 1.19$, Wald $\chi^2 = 7.38, p = .007$, odds ratio (OR) = 3.06. Hayes (2013) PROCESS bootstrapping command (model 1: 5000 iterations), confirmed that liberals in the collective threat condition were more likely to select one of the collective angst headlines than liberals in the personal threat condition ($B = 2.13, SE = .76, z = 2.80, p < .01$; see Figure 1). We did not find this pattern for conservatives ($B = -.65, SE = .62, z = -1.05, p = .29$). Moreover, in the collective threat condition liberals and conservatives did not differ in their preferences to experience collective angst ($B = .31, SE = .21, z = 1.45, p = .14$), whereas in

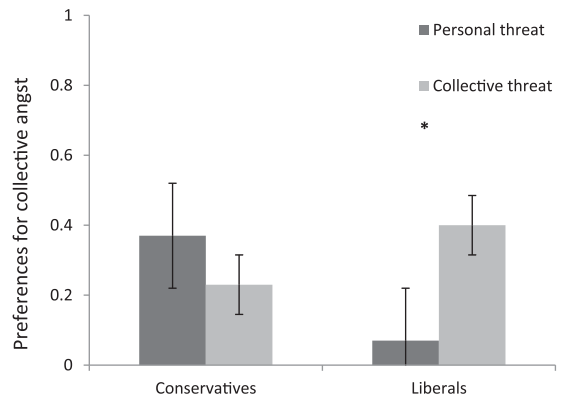


Figure 1. The probability of selecting a stimulus that is likely to induce collective angst, as a function of threat condition (i.e. individual vs. collective) and political ideology (Study 1).

the personal threat condition they did ($B = -.80, SE = .35, z = -2.29, p < .05$). Conservatives in the personal threat condition wanted to experience more collective angst than liberals. These results remained unchanged when we controlled for participants' self-reported current levels of collective angst.

Anger & individual angst

We found a significant main effect of condition for preferences for individual angst ($t(116) = 2.43, p = .017$), but not for preferences for anger ($t(116) = -1.92, p = .058$). The condition X political ideology interaction was not significant in predicting preferences for individual angst ($b = -.10$, Wald $\chi^2 = .06, p = .80$, odds ratio (OR) = .90) or for anger ($b = -.58$, Wald $\chi^2 = .60, p = .438$, odds ratio (OR) = .55). These results remained unchanged when we controlled for participants' self-reported current levels of collective angst, as well as the time in which political ideology was measured (i.e. the beginning or the end of the study).

The findings of Study 1 indicate that liberals are motivated to shift their emotions when faced with collective threat. Although collective angst is unpleasant to experience, it appears that under collective threat liberals actively select activities that are likely to increase collective angst. Conservative on the other hand, were likely to select the collective angst inducing activities regardless of the type of threat they were responding to. That is, whereas liberals' preferences changed as a function of the situation (i.e. a personal threat vs. collective threat), conservatives' preferences remained consistent. This effect was unique for collective angst and did not emerge for other related unpleasant emotions, such as individual angst or anger.

Study 2

The goal of Study 2 was to replicate the findings from Study 1 outside of the laboratory, in response to a real-world threat. To do so, in Study 2 we employed a unique design in which we approached half of our participants during a real-world threatening situation (i.e. Operation Pillar of Defense, that was an eight-day violent confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip), and the other half a month after the operation ended. In addition, to provide a broader comparison of emotional preferences that moves beyond unpleasant emotions, we also measured preferences for positive emotions (e.g. hope) that lack instrumental benefits in this context. Finally, another important feature of Study 2 is that we moved from a dichotomous behavioural index of emotional preferences to a continuous measure. Whereas a dichotomous measure tells us whether people wanted to feel collective angst or not, a continuous measure allows us to assess the degree to which people wanted to feel collective angst. We hypothesized that liberals under collective threat would have stronger preferences to experience collective angst than liberals who are not threatened. We did not expect to observe such differences among conservatives.

Method

Participants

Participants were 138 Jewish Israelis³ ($M_{\text{age}} = 30.37$ years, $SD = 12.33$) who were recruited using snowball techniques. Seventy-two participants were sampled during the operation, and 66 different participants were sampled a month later using similar sampling methods. In terms of political ideology, 41.3% self-identified as conservatives (28 in experimental condition and 31 in the control condition), 22.5% self-identified as centrists (11 in the experimental condition and 20 in the control condition), and 36.2% self-identified as liberals (33 in the experimental condition and 18 in the control condition).

Procedure

The study was conducted in two waves. The first wave took place during a military confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians of Hamas controlled Gaza Strip (i.e. Operation Pillar of Defense). During the confrontation, more than 1500 rockets were fired at Israel. The second wave took place a month after the

confrontation had ended. Participants were told that the study dealt with political issues and decision-making. We assessed emotional preferences using a similar method to the one used in Study 1. Participants rated the extent to which they wanted to read various newspaper articles. In addition, participants in the second wave also rated the headlines' expected emotional impact. As in Study 1, participants were then told that due to time constraints they would not be able to read the articles they had ranked and were asked to proceed to the last set of questions. Participants reported their current levels of collective angst, provided demographic information, and answered a series of questions pertaining to the political situation. Finally, as in Study 1, participants were debriefed and were told about the real goal of the study.

Measures

Behavioural index of emotional preferences

Similar to Study 1, participants rated the extent to which they wanted to read six articles before making decisions related to Israel's policy toward the Palestinians on a scale of 1 (*not interested in reading this article*) to 6 (*very interested in reading this article*). As in Study 1, we presented participants with two headlines for each emotion (i.e. collective angst, hope and anger). We adjusted the headlines used in Study 1 so they fit the events happening at the time, and tested their expected emotional impact during the second round of sampling (e.g. among the 72 participants who were sampled a month after the confrontation). Thus, to assess preferences for collective angst, we used one of the headlines from Study 1, and an additional headline that read "*New research suggests that assimilation will bring to the end of the Jewish people*". To assess preferences for anger, we used the same headlines used in Study 1. Finally, to assess preferences for hope, we used two headlines that described content that is likely to induce hope (e.g. "*A world free of AIDS? Researchers claim that the disease will disappear in the coming ten years*"). Importantly, the headlines described events that were unrelated to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We averaged across ratings of headlines that targeted the same emotion, to create behavioural indices of preferences for collective angst, anger and hope (r 's = .340, .332, and .607, for collective angst, anger and hope, respectively).

Political ideology

Same as in Study 1.

Collective angst

Same as in Study 1 ($\alpha = .80$).

Results and discussion

Preliminary analyses

To test whether the samples were comparable with regards to socio-economic characteristics, we conducted independent sample *t*-tests. We found no differences across samples concerning income and religiosity (t 's(136) = -1.64 and $-.96$, p 's = $.102$ and $.335$, respectively). We did find differences with respect to age and education level, such that participants recruited during the military confrontation were older ($M = 34.21$, $SD = 13.68$) and more educated ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.20$) than those who participated a month later ($M = 26.18$, $SD = 9.06$; $M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.07$, respectively), t 's(136) = 4.02 and 2.86 , p 's = $.000$ and $.005$, respectively. Thus, we controlled for age and education levels throughout the analyses.⁴ In addition, we did not find any main effects on our dependent variables (i.e. preferences for collective angst, hope and anger).

Manipulation check

To test the expected emotional impact of the headlines we ran a repeated-measures ANOVA, with participants' emotional expectations as the predicted variable. Participants expected the articles associated with collective angst headlines to induce more collective angst than anger or hope (M s = 4.87 , 2.92 and 2.73 , respectively), $F(1, 65) = 38.97$, $p = .000$. Participants expected the articles associated with the anger-inducing headlines to induce more anger than collective angst or hope (M s = 7.27 , 5.61 , and 1.65 , respectively) $F(1, 65) = 151.11$, $p < .001$. Finally, participants expected the articles associated with the hope-inducing headlines to induce more hope than collective angst or anger (M s = 7.82 , 1.46 , and 1.36 , respectively), $F(1, 65) = 929.88$, $p = .000$.

Collective angst

To test whether liberals under collective threat were more motivated to experience collective angst than liberals who participated a month later, we tested for an interaction, with condition as the independent variable, political ideology as the mediator, and

motivation for collective angst as the dependent variable. For this analysis, we used Hayes (2013) PROCESS bootstrapping command (model 1: 5000 iterations), $F(3, 134) = 4.89$, $p = .002$, $R^2 = .09$. We found a significant political ideology X condition interaction ($B = -.49$, $SE = .16$, $t = -3.03$, $p = .002$). As shown in Figure 2, tests of simple effects revealed that liberals were more motivated to experience collective angst during the confrontation compared to liberals a month later ($B = -.84$, $SE = .34$, $t = -2.46$, $p = .014$). We did not find this pattern for conservatives ($B = .60$, $SE = .32$, $t = 1.88$, $p = .062$). That is, conservatives wanted to experience similar levels of collective angst during the confrontation and a month later. Moreover, while liberals and conservatives wanted to experience similar levels of collective angst during the confrontation ($B = .00$, $SE = .09$, $t = .02$, $p = .978$), liberals were significantly less motivated to experience collective angst than conservatives a month after the confrontation ($B = -.48$, $SE = .12$, $t = -3.82$, $p = .000$). These results remained unchanged when we controlled for age, education levels, and participants' self-reported current levels of collective angst.

Anger and hope

We did not find main effects of condition for preferences for anger and hope. We conducted the same interaction analyses for anger and hope preferences, and found no effects ($B = .00$, $SE = .17$, $t = .04$, $p = .964$; $B = -.05$, $SE = .16$, $t = -.29$, $p = .766$, for anger and hope, respectively).

The findings of Study 2 replicate those obtained in Study 1, demonstrating that liberals are motivated to shift their emotions when faced with collective threat. Importantly, we found these patterns in

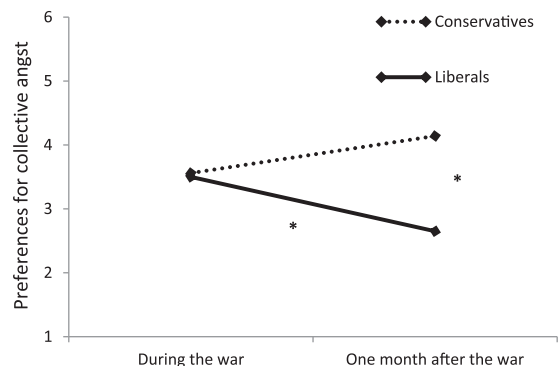


Figure 2. Preferences for collective angst as a function of political ideology and condition (Study 2).

response to a real-world collective threat. During a military confrontation, liberals actively selected activities that were likely to increase their experience of collective angst, compared with liberals a month later. Conservatives, once again, were likely to select the collective angst inducing activities regardless of the time they were approached (i.e. during the confrontation or a month later). This effect was unique for collective angst and did not emerge for other related emotions, both pleasant (i.e. hope) and unpleasant (i.e. anger).

General discussion

Throughout history, when facing collective threat, society members and liberals in particular tended to rally around the flag shifting towards the conservative end of the ideological spectrum. Literature on conservative shifts traditionally focused on the cognitive element, suggesting that under threat, liberals and conservatives endorse similar attitudes regarding leaders and political policies. However, conservative shifts contain an emotional element as well, as liberals and conservatives tend to react similarly to threat in terms of their emotional experiences. Yet no research to-date (to our knowledge) examined whether these emotional shifts are also the result of a motivated process.

In this investigation, we demonstrated that under collective threat, liberals show stronger motivation to experience collective angst (compared to when they are not under collective threat). In Study 1, we found that liberals facing collective threat were more motivated to select an activity that induces collective angst than liberals who were facing individual threat. Moreover, whereas liberals and conservatives significantly differed in their motivation to experience collective angst in the individual threat condition (i.e. liberals showed significantly less motivation to experience collective angst than conservatives), under collective threat we found no such differences. That is, under collective threat liberals closed the ideological gap showing similar levels of motivation for collective angst as conservatives did.

We replicated these findings in Study 2, in response to a real-world threatening event. During a violent confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians, Israeli liberals were more motivated to engage in activities that induce collective angst before making political decisions, compared with Israeli liberals who were approached a month later, after the confrontation had ended. We again

confirmed that under threat, the liberal-conservative gap diminished for participants' motivation to experience collective angst.

Our findings provide a novel perspective on the nature of conservative shifts. They demonstrate that conservative shift observed among liberals who are experiencing collective threat is the result of a dual process in which liberals actively recruit both their thoughts and emotions. While previous research has largely focused on motivated cognitive processes, we demonstrate that there are also motivated emotional elements behind conservative shifts. In this sense, our data points to an unexplored component that sheds light on the underlying mechanisms behind conservative shifts. When faced with collective threat, liberals don't just experience emotions similar to those of conservatives, as previously shown, but they actually want to experience similar emotions as conservatives do. Although collective angst is considered to be an aversive emotion that is unpleasant to experience, we find that liberals actively chose to engage in activities that will induce it. This may be because they believe these emotions will be instrumental in protecting their ingroup.

Moreover, these findings may contribute to a better understanding of the nature of group-based emotions and how they may affect the political processes at large. Indeed, our research provides further support to the claim recently made by Porat, Halperin, and Tamir (2016) that group-based emotional processes may at times be the result of a motivated process. That is, group members may actively seek to experience emotions when they believe these will be instrumental in pursuing their group-based goals. This motivated account is perhaps the reason why group-based emotional experiences are so powerful on the one hand driving political attitudes and behaviours, and so difficult to change on the other. The current investigation extends this line of thought to other complex intergroup contexts such as collective threats. By that, our findings may help shed new lights on major political phenomena such as rally around the flag. In this vein, these findings have important applied implications as well, suggesting that in order to regulate group-based emotions, in the context of collective threat, group-based motives must be taken into account.

One limitation of the current research is that our participants did not engage in collective angst inducing activities, and therefore did not have the opportunity to up-regulate their collective angst

experience accordingly. Thus, our investigation did not test whether stronger motivation of liberals to experience collective angst actually translates into emotional experience of increased collective angst. Future research should explore the downstream effects of emotional preferences under threat looking at collective angst experience as well as support for leaders and their policies. This could be achieved by allowing participants to engage in collective angst inducing activities (such as reading articles that induce angst, or listening to angst inducing music) after being exposed to a threatening event.

Another limitation of the current investigation is that it did not examine the motives behind liberals' motivation to experience collective angst. One hypothesis that was outlined in the current paper is that liberals want to feel more collective angst in order to prepare themselves and their society to engage in ingroup protection measures. However, we did not test empirically that potential mechanism or other possible motives that may explain heightened motivation to experience collective angst among liberals. As previous findings highlight the role of motives in shaping emotional preferences (see Tamir, 2016), future research should test which motives might underlie emotional shifts under threat. It may be particularly interesting to test whether under threat, different group-based motives will lead people to desire different emotional experiences. For example, would people motivated by the desire to protect their ingroup show different emotional motivations than people who are motivated by the desire to connect to their ingroup? Other motives that may be particularly relevant for liberals in threatening situations may be "demonstrating" their loyalty to other ingroup members, or justifying support for aggressive policies toward outgroup members.

Another possible direction for future research could examine the conditions in which conservatives may be motivated to shift their emotions in a liberal direction. For example, liberals are more motivated than conservatives to experience empathy toward outgroup members (e.g. Porat, Halperin, Mannheim, et al., 2016). It would be informative to examine whether and when there might be context in which conservatives might be motivated to increase empathy toward outgroup members. One such situation, for instance, could arise when an ingroup inflicts harm on outgroup members, that is perceived as violating moral foundations.

The current research has important applied implications for practitioners interested in regulating group-based emotional experiences. Particularly, in order for conflict resolution practitioners to affectively develop strategies to down-regulate group-based emotions such as collective angst, they need to better understand the motivations behind these emotional experiences and target them in their interventions. Indeed, what people want to feel can influence how they regulate their emotions and how they behave, as a consequence and even in response to political events. Scholars have demonstrated that group-based emotional experiences and political reactions can be altered dramatically simply by changing what people are motivated to feel (see Porat, Halperin, & Tamir, 2016). This implies that changes in the motivation to experience collective angst could underlie subsequent changes in emotional experiences and related behaviours under threat. By better understanding the motives behind liberals' preferences to experience collective angst, we may be able to develop effective interventions for emotion regulation in threatening situation.

Across the globe, threatening events appear to lead to a unique phenomenon, where society members rally around the conservative flag, showing extreme support for the conservative leadership and its policies. For societies engaged in conflicts, these rally effects may have particularly devastating results as they may lead to increased support for aggressive actions towards outgroup members. While previous research has largely focused on motivated cognitions, the current investigation attempted to provide some light on the far less explored emotional component. As emotions play a crucial role in guiding people's attitudes and behaviours, it is crucial to better understand the motivated emotion regulation processes that occur under threat.

Notes

1. One participant was omitted from the analysis as he was not Jewish.
2. To determine sample size we used an online calculator (see: danielsooper.com). We assumed a small effect size due to our interaction prediction, and opted for standard power level.
3. Ten participants were omitted from the analyses either because they were not Jewish ($n = 3$), or because they did not finish the experiment ($n = 7$).
4. Gender was accidentally omitted in this Study, and thus not reported.

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