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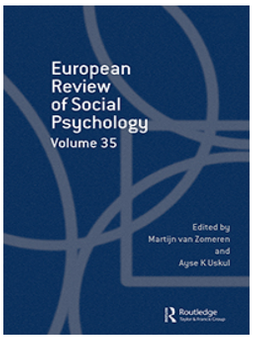

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Hope: The experience and functions of a seemingly-positive group-based emotion

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ABSTRACT

Hope has intrigued and attracted humans for centuries, with views on this emotion ranging from extremely positive to extremely negative. To deepen and nuance our understanding of hope – a seemingly positive emotion – we apply to it a valence/function framework of emotion in group-based contexts. This framework facilitates the examination and categorisation of emotions as positive or negative along two orthogonal dimensions: the pleasantness of the emotional experience and their social outcomes. According to this framework, emotions can "move" on both dimensions (i.e. be experienced as pleasant or unpleasant and lead to functional versus dysfunctional outcomes), based on various factors. Applying this framework to group-based hope may seem surprising, as the emotion is often considered universally good. Yet a more nuanced approach reveals situations in which group-based hope can be a "do bad" emotion, and, at times, can even "*feel* bad." We discuss the implications of these understandings for research on hope and its applications across different group contexts.

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KEYWORDS Group-based hope; emotions; valence/function; group-based processes

Introduction

Hope has intrigued and attracted humans for centuries, perhaps because it is perceived by some as a singularly positive emotion – a perception echoed in scholarship as well as popular culture. Demonstrating this, Andy Dufresne, the protagonist in the Shawshank Redemption (Darabont, 1994), views hope not only as a "good thing," but as "maybe the best of things" – resonating with scholarly claims that hope is a vital resource for life itself (Stotland, 1969). This positive view, however, is not universally shared. Speaking to Andy, his fellow inmate Red argues that "hope is a dangerous thing,"

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possessing the ability to "drive a man insane" (Darabont, 1994) – giving voice to a view also reflected in a growing body of literature describing hope as a falsehood, an enemy of reality and even a prolonger of suffering.

On a group-based level, the year 1993 and the Oslo Accords marked a turning-point for Israeli-Palestinian violent conflict, with a surge of hope (Rosler, 2016) propelling widespread support for concessions and mutual recognition (Zartman, 1997). On the other hand, there is abundant criticism on the inherent hope of the American Dream (Whippman, 2016), which claims that dreams and hard work are all one needs to succeed in the United States, when in fact American social mobility is extremely low and inter-group disparities persist. Here, hope instils an idea that people get what they deserve, as they work tirelessly to achieve unachievable goals.

In this way, hope seems to be a unique phenomenon, and one that calls for a different approach that can resolve the tension between competing-but-untested assumptions that engender unclarity and complexity both in lay wisdom and scholarly thought. In this paper, we propose a nuanced and dynamic perspective to facilitate a broader and fuller understanding of group-based hope. Throughout this review, we maintain a broad definitional review of hope, but our application is focused specifically on group-based hope. We begin by presenting the valence/function framework of emotion (Cohen-Chen, Pliskin, et al., 2020), followed by an application to the discrete group-based emotion of hope. After presenting our definition and conceptual assumptions regarding group-based hope, we review empirical and theoretical literature and consider when hope *does* good and bad, followed by when hope *feels* good and bad. Lastly, we discuss the benefits and implications of examining hope within this framework. Overall, we deepen and extend insights regarding group-based hope by considering it within a valence/function framework of emotion in group-based contexts.

Valence/Function framework of emotions

Recently, we (Cohen-Chen, Pliskin, et al., 2020) suggested a new framework to examine and categorise emotions, particularly in group-based contexts, conducive to clashes between goals, attitudes, and identities. The first dimension focuses on the pleasantness of the emotion as experienced by the individual (valence; Barrett, 2006; Bradley & Lang, 1994; Reisenzein, 1994). This means the emotion is self-focused and individually-based, and manifests the human aim of experiencing pleasure and avoiding pain (Becker et al., 2019). The second dimension is function, centring on the social and behavioural outcomes of the emotional experience, in line with the constructivist view of emotions (Averill, 1980; Barrett, 2012). This dimension is thus focused away from the individual's experience and is targeted at the social consequences of the emotion.

Classic theories of emotions have largely categorised emotions based on how they are experienced by the individual. One such established taxonomy is the circumplex model (J. A. Russell, 1980), which categorises emotions in terms of valence (the extent to which they are experienced as pleasant) and arousal (degree of physiological activation). While many of these approaches (e.g., Frijda, 1986; I. J. Roseman, 1984) address the individual's emotivational goals or behaviour intentions associated with each emotion, thus addressing one element of the function of emotions, they commonly neglect the social outcomes of these and their valence, particularly in contexts in which the interests of the experiencing individual are misaligned with those of other individuals, the group, or other groups. In other words, theories such as appraisal theories of emotion (Frijda, 1986) recognise that each emotion motivates individuals to act in certain ways, but they do not consider whether acting on these motivations would lead to constructive or destructive social outcomes. Past frameworks have thus overlooked the extent to which emotions shape social behaviour in social contexts, despite the great value placed on the social function of emotions in relevant theorising (e.g., Fischer et al., 2008; Frijda & Mesquita, 1994; Keltner & Haidt, 1999).

The second dimension draws upon constructivist views of emotions (Averill, 1980; Barrett, 2012), stemming from the functionalist approach to emotions (P. Ekman, 1992; Johnson-Laird & Oatley, 1992; Lazarus, 1991), which view emotions as necessary for human adaptation and survival. Constructivism focuses on the *social* function of emotions, and thus categorises emotions in terms of their behavioural outcomes in relation to others, including on interpersonal and intergroup levels. As such, they complement experience-focused taxonomies of emotion, setting the stage for more nuanced approaches such as ours. Nonetheless, because these theories focus on how emotions are *construed* through their behavioural outcomes in understanding people's emotional roles, they are also limited in their ability to illuminate whether the function of emotions is beneficial or destructive for the individual, their interaction partners, or their (out)groups. Additionally, these theories also disregard the role that emotional preferences (Tamir, 2016) play in motivating the experience of emotions and consequently also their social outcomes, despite evidence that both an emotion's expected valence and its expected function can shape the individual's motivation to experience emotions in different contexts. To understand what motivates people to experience a given emotion, we need an examination and categorisation of emotions based *simultaneously* on how they are experienced (with hedonic motivations relating to the *valence* of a given emotion making that emotion less or more desirable in certain social contexts) and what outcomes they induce (with instrumental motivations making that emotion desirable in other social contexts, independently of hedonic motivations to experience it).

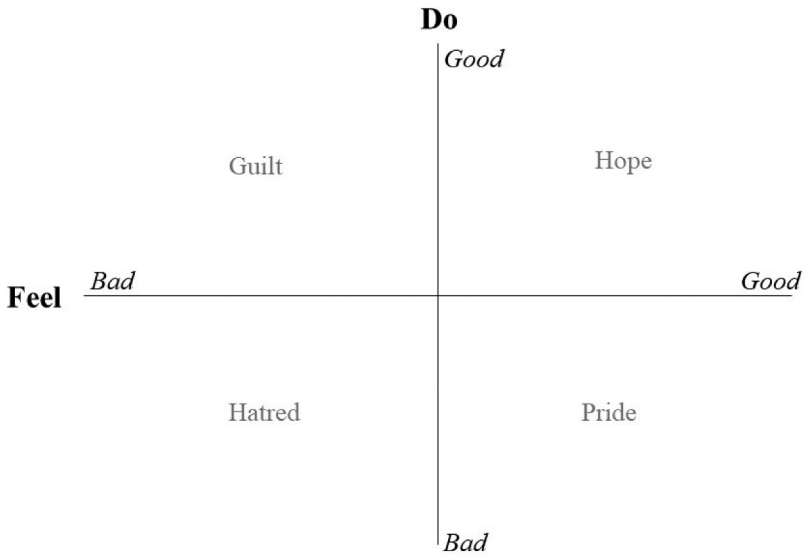

Figure 1. Visual depiction of the Valence/Function framework of emotion.

Our valence/function taxonomy (Cohen-Chen, Pliskin, et al., 2020; Figure 1) combines and intersects two complementing perspectives on emotion, thus offering a much-needed multifaceted and nuanced approach to the factors that bring them about, shape them, and determine their outcomes. As such, our approach may be uniquely suited to disentangling the factors that have led to the wildly diverging views on emotion present in scholarship and popular culture. In our original conceptualisation, we categorised hope as both *feeling* and *doing* good (see Figure 1), but we also suggested that emotions can shift between quadrants. Unlike conceptualisations of emotions which suggest the dimensions characterising emotions are stable (including valence and arousal), while action tendencies are context-dependent, we see both the experience of the emotion *and* the action tendency as dynamic (i.e., moving between quadrants). In line with the discrete emotion approach (P. E. Ekman & Davidson, 1994), as well as work that shows that arousal is stable (Lim, 2016), we consider the experience of emotions to the individual as ranging from pleasant to unpleasant rather than the extent of physiological activation, which is often independent of its valence. Below we delve more deeply into how this movement applies to the unique case of group-based hope.

Hope

Definition

Hope has interested scholars since the 1960s (Stotland, 1969), but has interested humans for centuries, starting with one of the most famous tales from ancient Greek mythology: the story of Pandora's box (Harrison, 1900). Here, Pandora, a woman created by the gods, is bestowed a box filled of evil gifts to punish mankind. Pandora opens the forbidden box and releases the hardships and evils into the world, leaving only "beautiful evil," i.e., hope (also translated as "deceptive expectation"). Is hope a source of power, a way to cope with the evils of the world? Or is it in fact the worst of those evils, treacherous and misleading to humans? This mercurial perception of hope has persisted throughout the years.

We define hope as an emotion, per appraisal theories: a series of flexible responses to an interpretation of an event seen as relevant to the self, triggering action tendencies (Frijda, 1986; I. J. Roseman, 1984). This is in line with Lazarus (1999) definition of hope as an emotion, as it involves a change in mental state (affect) derived from a cognitive appraisal of imagining the attainment of a desired goal in the future. The process begins with a stimulus, which can be either an event (Nesse, 1999) or a mental representation of a desired future goal (I. J. Roseman et al., 1990) that constitutes a positive change from the existing situation. Interestingly, the triggering event can be either positive or negative (I. J. Roseman et al., 1990), as long as it generates imagery of an alternative reality to which the person attaches importance (S. R. Staats & Stassen, 1985). Averill and colleagues (1990) suggest that the imagined future is appraised as having low-to-intermediate probability of attainment (see Bury et al., 2016, for elaboration). Bruininks and Malle (2005) demonstrated that hope is characterised by a low perception of control and an intermediate level of subjective likelihood, compared to other positive states such as joy, optimism and wishing. In particular, hope was distinct from optimism because the future goal is more important (see also Gasper et al., 2020) and less likely. Relatedly, Lazarus (1999) suggested that optimism is a confident perception or belief that things will generally turn out positively. Indeed, Bryant and Cvengros (2004) found that while optimism focuses broadly on future outcomes in general, hope concentrates on a specific goal in the future, making it a discrete emotion rather than a mood or trait.

Past literature has engaged with the question of whether hope is an emotion or a cognition (see Cheavens et al., 2014). Proponents of the cognition approach treat hope as a series of goal-directed cognitions or as a perceived probability that an important goal or outcome will be realised (Breznitz, 1986; Stotland, 1969). Hope Theory too emphasises cognitive aspects, namely pathways thinking (imagining different ways to achieve

a desired goal) and agency (the motivational aspect of hope that generates the mental energy to act upon the pathway thinking; Snyder et al., 1991). Nonetheless, defining hope as a cognition fails to account for some important features of this psychological phenomenon. More specifically, this approach limits our ability to examine the different motivations to (a) experience hope because it may feel pleasant; and (b) act upon it because its experience energises us further and based on potential emotivational goals inherent in this experience.

The use of appraisal theories (Frijda, 1986) helps to resolve the question of hope as a cognition versus an emotion, integrating these elements within a single construct. This also resonates with the similarities in definitions offered by the different approaches, which we believe create a false dichotomy. Hope Theory states that the cognitions of hope drive affect (Snyder et al., 2005), Staats and Stassen describe hope as an "affective cognition" (1985, p. 235), while Averill (1994) and colleagues (Averill et al., 1990) define it as an emotion rooted in cognitions (in the form of appraisals). Indeed, I. Roseman and Evdokas (2004) provided causal evidence that hope emerges from specific and contextualised cognitive appraisals, leading to a change in affect and subsequently specific behavioural goals and outcomes.

In terms of the action tendencies associated with hope, research suggests hope leads to cognitive planning of ways to achieve the desired future (Stotland, 1969) rather than a physical action tendency (Lazarus, 1999). The planning and development of pathways energises and directs behaviour (S. R. Staats & Stassen, 1985) and, when combined with a sense of agency regarding those paths, becomes action to achieve those goals (Cohen-Chen & Van Zomeren, 2018). Snyder (1995) includes agency (the perceived ability to achieve the desired aim) and pathways to attainment to the affective element (Snyder et al., 1991) in his definition of hope, which may be more relevant to the individual domain. Specifically, this does not explain situations such as wider social and political contexts, in which there is little or no control over the outcome (Bruininks & Malle, 2005).

Interestingly, despite some disputes among hope scholars, common across approaches is an implication that the action tendencies associated with hope can expediate the attainment of *positive* outcomes, and the idea that hope involves strictly *positive* affect. In this review we apply the valence/function framework of emotion to group-based hope by considering social conditions under which hope *does* good, as these theories imply, as well as when hope *feels* good, as all they all assume. However, each of these dimensions is contrasted with and examination of whether and under what circumstances hope can actually *do bad* or *feel bad*. Throughout this paper, we mainly concentrate on hope experienced on the group level, within contexts of intragroup and intergroup relations. In line with group-based emotions, group-based hope is experienced on

behalf of the group (Lindner, 2006) as a result of perceived belongingness to said group (Smith et al., 2007), when imagining a desired future for the group.

Our focus on the group level, and emotions in intergroup relations in particular – and our view of conflict-perpetuating outcomes as negative and conflict resolution-supporting outcomes as positive – no doubt stem from our shared identity as Jewish-Israeli women who view the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict and occupation of Palestinian land as destructive. Growing up in a deeply divided and internally-conflicted society that is simultaneously the sovereign power in an intractable intergroup conflict may well explain the way we define hope, our perspective, and our desire to understand hope and its role in promoting conflict resolution.

Function: When hope does good

"Everything that is done in the world is done by hope"
Martin Luther

Most existing empirical literature on hope focuses on its function as inducing (desired) attitudinal and behavioural outcomes. Interest in the psychology of hope first emerged in individual-based realms, where trait (and, later on, state) hope was found to predict a number of (functional) individual outcomes. By motivating behaviour to achieve a better situation in the future, hope can predict coping and wellbeing (Beck et al., 1974; Breznitz, 1986; Fredrickson, 2001; Herth, 1989; Ong et al., 2006; Udelman & Udelman, 1985) and both physical and psychological health (Cheavens et al., 2005; Cooper et al., 2003; Nolen-Hoeksema & Davis, 2002; Tennen & Affleck, 2002). In terms of personal success outcomes, dispositional hope has been found to predict perseverance and grit (Ekinci & Koç, 2023; Munoz, 2023; Okur et al., 2023; Polivy & Herman, 2002), creativity (Rego et al., 2012), problem-solving abilities (Chang, 1998), and achievements (Curry et al., 1997; for a review see; Snyder et al., 2002). In terms of interpersonal effects, previous work has shown that hope is associated with relationship satisfaction in adult friendships (Welch & Houser, 2010) and relationship-maintenance (Merolla et al., 2021), and negatively associated with interpersonal conflict. A systematic review (Schornick et al., 2023) found that hope was positively associated with other-oriented outcomes.

Next, interest in hope began to grow in the social-psychological domain, and particularly in intragroup collective action and intergroup relations. In both domains, experiencing hope relates not only to envisioning a better future for the individual, but also desired change for the group with which one identifies (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

A central domain in which group-based hope has emerged as relevant is collective action, defined as action undertaken by people on behalf of their ingroup to achieve group goals (Van Zomeren et al., 2008; S. C. Wright et al., 1990). Correlational work has shown that state hope (Snyder et al., 1996) correlates with individual engagement in activism and volunteering (Klar & Kasser, 2009; Zanbar & Itzhaky, 2018). More recently, we (P. S. Russell et al., 2023) collected longitudinal data over a year (September 2020 to September 2021 and a six-month follow-up) in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic and found that group-based hope motivated the implementation of preventative measures. At times when people felt more hope, they reported greater willingness to engage in COVID-19 preventative behaviours aimed at benefitting the collective such as using a track-and-trace app, socially distancing, and wearing a mask. Lee and colleagues (2017) found that environmental appeals using hope (vs. fear) enhanced "green" behavioural intentions, but only when the issue was framed as local (vs. global).

We (Shuman et al., 2016) conducted research within the context of the 2011 social protests in Israel, and found that hope for change and anger towards the government led to higher intentions to engage in normative collective action for social change (while hatred towards the government led to non-normative action against the government). Relatedly, Wlodarczyk and colleagues (2017) examined the social protests of the 15-M in Spain, and they too found that both hope and anger were associated with collective action intentions. Greenaway and colleagues (2016) first measures and then experimentally induced unrelated (i.e., incidental) hopefulness in the United States. Those in the hope (vs. happiness) condition were more supportive of social change in the context of relations between native and non-native Americans in the U.S.

Taking a different perspective on hope in collective action, we (Cohen-Chen & Van Zomeren, 2018) examined the role of hope as a pre-condition for the ability of group efficacy to spark collective action. We conducted three experimental studies in different contexts: the low hope context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Study 1); NHS privatisation in the UK (Study 2); and Gun Control Reform in the US (Study 3). In Study 1 we manipulated group-efficacy beliefs and found no effect on collective action intentions. In Studies 2 and 3 we manipulated hope and group efficacy beliefs together in one design, finding that group efficacy beliefs only predicted collective action when hope was high. When hope was low, however, group efficacy had no effect on collective action intentions. This led us to conclude that without hope, there can be no agentic basis for efficacy to mobilise collective action.

In intergroup contexts, hope for change may apply to (one, two, or all of the following) three targets (Cohen-Chen et al., 2017b): the context as an entity in itself, the outgroup, and the ingroup. A growing body of work has specifically focused on the role of hope in intergroup conflict. Conceptual

and correlational work has suggested a relationship between hope and both cognitive processes (Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Porat, et al., 2014; Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006) and attitudes (Chernyak-Hai & Cohen-Chen, 2023; Halperin & Gross, 2011; Halperin et al., 2008; Moeschberger et al., 2005; Rosler et al., 2017) that are conducive to conflict resolution. Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal (2006) suggested that the conciliatory role of hope as a cognitive and energising emotion in conflict is often overridden by fear, a primary and instinctive emotion that leads to avoidance and opportunity rejection. We later demonstrated this comparison empirically (Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Porat, et al., 2014) in a correlational study conducted within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that linked political orientation, emotional sentiments, and information processing. Here, we found that Dovish political orientation was associated with long-term hope for peace, which predicted a bias towards peace-supporting information. On the other hand, Hawkish political orientation was associated with long-term fear, which in turn predicted a bias towards peace-rejecting information.

This research joined previous correlational work evidencing hope as being associated with conciliatory outcomes in conflict. For example, in Northern Ireland, trait hope (Snyder et al., 1991) was found to positively predict a higher inclination to forgive the outgroup through lower levels of trait rumination (Moeschberger et al., 2005). In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, state hope for peace mediated the relationship between cognitive reappraisal and support for humanitarian aid (Halperin & Gross, 2011). Moreover, hope was the strongest predictor of conciliatory attitudes (operationalised as willingness to make concessions) during times of conflict resolution, and predicted support for humanitarian aid during conflict escalation, although it was a weaker predictor than empathy (Rosler et al., 2017).

Based on these findings, we began to develop ways to experimentally induce group-based hope in contexts of violent and extreme conflict. The first line of work utilised an indirect approach to emotion regulation (Halperin et al., 2014). In this approach, interventions are created to change an emotion's core appraisal in order to regulate the emotion and thus change the action tendency. In this line of work, the core appraisal underlying hope (rather than hopelessness) was identified as the belief that a different, better future is possible (rather than impossible), since conflicts are inherently malleable (rather than fixed) in nature. Our rationale was that if conflicts are generally stable and unchanging, a given particular conflict cannot be resolved, leading to low levels of hope for peace. However, if conflicts in general are malleable and able to change, then the conflict in question is also able to change, leading to hope for peace and subsequent support for conciliatory policies. In order to change individuals' general belief that conflicts are stable, we (Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Porat, et al., 2014) employed research on implicit theories (Dweck et al., 1995), a well-established and previously

documented belief people hold regarding different entities, such as personality (Chiu et al., 1997), individuals (Levy et al., 1998), and groups (Halperin et al., 2011, 2012).

In the first line of work we (Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp, et al., 2014) hypothesised that instilling the belief that conflicts are malleable (using a contrived-but-seemingly-reliable news article) would open up the future possibility of peace, eliciting hope. Indeed, results showed that the conflict malleability condition increased hope for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and led to support for concession-making. A field intervention testing a five-hour malleability workshop about groups (vs. an empty control condition vs. a perspective-taking workshop) showed that participants who were taught that groups can change were significantly more hopeful even six months post-workshop, supported concession-making, and were more conciliatory and trusting towards Palestinians (Goldenberg et al., 2018).

The next line of work (Cohen-Chen et al., 2015) created an intervention which instilled a perception of the world as dynamic and changing (compared to static and stable). Here, we sought to address a number of previous limitations. First, while implicit beliefs about conflicts refer to conflicts in general, participants (and especially those involved in a conflict themselves) may automatically reference their conflict. Thus, we aimed to expand the scope of change to be truly general, not focusing on any specific target. Relatedly, referring to change in an extremely negative situation may in fact imply that it is necessarily a positive change. Therefore, we used a neutral concept of change, without inferring the direction of change. The last development entailed denoting constant and ongoing change, to make it more realistic. Across two correlational and three experimental studies (Cohen-Chen et al., 2015), we showed that instilling a dynamic mindset about the world in general led Jewish Israelis to experience more hope for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and subsequently to support concrete concessions (borders and Jerusalem) to resolve the conflict and end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

In addition to work that shows hope inducing support for concession-making, researchers have found that hope can induce a range of peacebuilding actions and attitudes. For example, Saguy and Halperin (2014) found that criticism voiced by an outgroup member of their own group induced hope, which in turn increased openness towards the outgroup narrative and willingness to engage with that narrative. Relatedly, our work on the relationship between hope and age in intractable conflict (Hasler et al., 2023) revealed associations between participant hope and peacebuilding actions, including *"voting in the next elections for a candidate or party willing to make concessions in order to achieve a peace agreement"* and *"taking part in joint [Israeli and Palestinian] demonstrations demanding peace."* Here, reducing the negativity bias associated with young age with a virtual reality ageing

simulation that enabled participants to experience and embody themselves as an 80-year-old (vs. their own young age), increased hope for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, further increasing conciliatory steps of different kinds.

In another line of work, we considered the effect of hope expressions on *observers'* intergroup attitudes. This was based on EASI theory (Van Kleef, 2009), which views emotions (and their expressions) as a way to convey information, indicate intentions, and regulate others' emotions. Work on leader-follower relations has suggested that leaders' expressions of hope can increase the resilience of their employees and the entire organisation in stressful times (Norman et al., 2005). Previous research in the intergroup conflict domain found that a specific outgroup member (in this case, a Palestinian) expressing the view that a conflict is solvable led Israeli-Jews to experience more hope for peace (Leshem et al., 2016). Further to that, we (Cohen-Chen et al., 2017a; see Figure 2) presented Jewish-Israeli participants with an opportunity for conflict resolution in the form of an outline of a peace agreement with the Palestinians. Next, we simultaneously manipulated outgroup expressions of hope and outgroup expressions of support for the agreement using bogus statistics (expressed by a majority vs. a minority of Palestinians) and tested their interactive effect of participants' own group-based hope, positive perceptions of the agreement, and willingness to accept this agreement for conflict resolution. Results showed that hope expressions counteracted the negative effect of messages of low out-group support. More specifically, when Palestinian support for the agreement was low, Palestinian hope expressions served as a counterweight to this low support, leading participants to experience more hope for peace themselves, perceive the (same) agreement more positively, and endorse the proposed agreement.

In a follow-up set of studies, we (Cohen-Chen et al., 2019) probed how leaders may use hope expressions to promote conciliatory agendas in

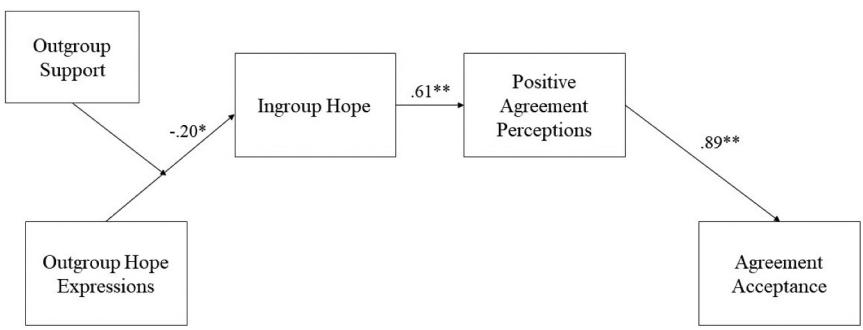

Figure 2. Serial moderated mediation of outgroup hope expressions X outgroup agreement support on agreement acceptance. Data taken from (Cohen-Chen et al. 2017b).

intergroup conflicts. To this end, we conducted three studies in different conflict contexts: a student-government conflict over tuition fees in the UK, a fictitious scenario regarding a conflict with an invading alien nation, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In all studies, participants were presented with a proposal for resolving the conflict, put forth by the outgroup leader to the ingroup leader. They then read that the ingroup leader had read the agreement and expressed hope in light of it. In the low-intensity and fictitious conflicts, these expressions of hope by the ingroup leader induced participants' own experience of hope for conflict resolution, and subsequently led to agreement endorsement, including voting for the proposal in a referendum. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (see above), the effect of hope expressions on the experience of hope was moderated by participant political ideology, such that it only induced hope among Leftists. However, in line with previous research, hope was still associated with conciliatory attitudes.

Function: When hope does bad

"Hope, in reality, is the worst of all evils because it prolongs the torment of man"
Friedrich Nietzsche

Indications of the negative effects of hopefulness exist in the individual domain. The planning fallacy (Buehler et al., 1994) – a cognitive bias that leads people to consistently underestimate the time they need to complete a task – demonstrates the potential downsides of judgement biased by hopeful reasoning. Seminal research on this fallacy has found that people often disregard actual past experiences when estimating how long completing a task would take them, instead giving an overly-hopeful estimate that may leave them less time than they actually need (Newby-Clark et al., 2000). These findings reflect a clear and common instance in which people's hope clouds their evidence-based judgement, leading to suboptimal planning that may directly undermine their goals. Similarly, optimistic bias refers to the tendency to overestimate the likelihood of being personally affected by positive events and underestimating the same likelihood for negative events (Weinstein, 1980). This phenomenon is also associated with higher self-risk (Harris et al., 2008), demonstrating again how hope can lead people to improper calculations when deciding on their best courses of action. In economic decision making, hope for "breaking even" (Duxbury et al., 2020; Gärling et al., 2017) is seen as a potential mechanism underlying the disposition effect (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Shefrin & Statman, 2000), a phenomenon in which people are averse to losing significantly more than they enjoy winning. Recently, Luo et al. (2023) used an experimental

manipulation aimed at *reducing* hope, which led participants to let go of losing stocks. Anderson and Galinsky (2006) showed that experiencing hope increased risk-taking behaviour in the form of higher intentions to engage in unprotected sex.

When applying hope in group-based contexts however, the negative outcomes of hope become even more pronounced. Work on collective action – despite generating some evidence for a positive role for hope – has also recently demonstrated that hope may be less functional and may even backfire, making its role in motivating collective action more nuanced. This emerges clearly from work on hope in the domain of climate change action, perhaps because of the complexity and scale of the issue itself. For example, a recent meta-analysis (Geiger et al., 2023) with 46 quantitative studies examining the relationship between hope and climate engagement found hope to be correlationally associated with climate action, indicating perhaps that engaged people feel more hopeful. However, the causal effect of hope on climate engagement was non-significant and inconclusive.

Relatedly, Ettinger and colleagues (2021) showed participants videos evoking either hope or fear regarding the effects of climate change, but found no differences in risk perceptions, behavioural change intentions, or activism intentions. Van Zomeren and colleagues (Van Zomeren et al., 2019) found similar results, with hope (manipulated by changing the perceived possibility of change) failing to induce climate action motivation. Rather, hope seemed to fill an emotional coping function, enabling people to feel better about the looming disaster, without doing anything themselves. Notably, hope in these cases did not inherently involve agency (Ojala, 2022), which corresponds to our aforementioned conceptualisation of hope, and previous work (Cohen-Chen & Van Zomeren, 2018), suggesting that both hope and efficacy are necessary to induce collective action, and particularly in the domain of climate change. Going further, Hornsey and Fielding (2016) cautioned against messages of hope when attempting to promote climate action. They found that hope reduced perceptions of the risk associated with climate change and subsequently *demotivated* climate action intentions. Thus, it appears that hope may not only be ineffective in motivating action, but can even backfire. A moderation analysis conducted by Geiger and colleagues (Geiger et al., 2023) suggested when the *target* of hope was denial of climate change, the association between hope and action was negative (Geiger et al., 2023). As further support for this, Shani and colleagues (2024) demonstrated that while hope for peace led to conciliatory attitudes, hope for victory led to aggressive attitudes.

Negative findings were also observed when examining intergroup attitudes and the antecedents of action for social justice. While the purpose of prejudice reduction is to reduce intergroup tension and increase positive intergroup perceptions and attitudes, these outcomes – including a more hopeful view of the outgroup – may actually demotivate collective action to

achieve social justice. The goal of collective action is to change social orders and disrupt the existing power dynamic. In such contexts, therefore, the functional/desired outcome is actually one driven by negative intergroup perceptions and emotions (S. Wright & Lubensky, 2009). In such cases, previous work shows that positive perceptions and expectations of outgroup members in contexts of power imbalance can actually reduce collective action motivation. Saguy et al. (2009, 2016) examined a phenomenon called "the irony of harmony." Here, an intervention stressing commonalities between disadvantaged and advantaged group members improved the former's perceptions of the latter, and also increased their appraisals of hope for fair treatment by advantaged group members. This decreased their intentions to engage in action for social change, but, ironically, the same intervention did not in fact motivate the advantaged group members to act more fairly. Thus, hope appraisals hindered social justice efforts by decreasing the intergroup tension needed to motivate collective action for social justice.

Moving beyond specific intergroup attitudes to perceptions of broader social orders and intergroup hierarchies, hope has the potential to facilitate and legitimise inequality by improving perceptions of and attitudes towards exploitative systems. On an individual level, Breznitz (1999) showed that hope (induced by credible information regarding the amount of time left to endure pain in a cold-presser test) allowed people to tolerate pain for significantly longer times. Research on Social Dominance Orientation (SDO, Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) highlights the role of legitimising myths in contributing to people's support for inequality. Notions such as "the American dream" that imply all individuals have opportunities to succeed if they put their minds to it allow those espousing them to maintain hope for themselves and others in unequal realities, with hope even seen as a vehicle that allows myths included in "the American dream" to endure (Wyatt-Nichol, 2011). At the same time, however, these beliefs also make them accept such inequalities more, making them less likely to work for structural changes that would actually make it more likely that people from disadvantaged background could achieve success. For example, in the research we cited above, disadvantaged group members' ability to actualise their desire to experience hope, and subsequently their collective action intentions, were dependent on group efficacy, with the desire for hope on its own not associated with action (Hasan-Aslih et al., 2020). Other recent work found that hope for future gender equity led women who were strong identifiers to support the American economic system, which favours men over women (Owuamalam et al., 2021). In another study, hope for harmonious relations with advantaged outgroup members (i.e., Jewish Israelis and White Americans) – contrasted with hope for more equal relations with these groups – actually *undermined* the motivation of samples of both Palestinian citizens of Israel and Black Americans to engage in collective action for equality (Hasan-Aslih et al., 2019). Hope for equality was not associated

with this outcome. Beyond the evidence that hope does not always lead to constructive outcomes, these findings also mean that the targets of hope also matter for whether or not its outcomes are constructive or destructive.

Valence: When hope feels good

> *"Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul*
>
> *and sings the tune without the words and never stops at all"*
>
> *Emily Dickinson*

The psychological literature has widely taken it for granted that hope is experienced as positive. General theories of emotion categorise hope as pleasant (Ellsworth & Smith, 1988; I. J. Roseman et al., 1990), and, in theorising specifically on hope, Snyder and colleagues (2002) describe it as a member of the positive psychology family, because it is triggered while envisioning a (subjectively) improved reality in the future. There is also some (limited) empirical evidence for this notion: hope has been found to be positively associated with happiness (S. Staats, 1987), with general positive affect (Rego et al., 2012), and with subjective (Magaletta & Oliver, 1999; Pleeging et al., 2021) and social (Klar & Kasser, 2009) wellbeing, which is arguably a pleasant feeling (and at least not an *unpleasant* one).

Interestingly, hope has been identified as the only positively-valenced emotion that can result from negative contexts or events (I. J. Roseman et al., 1990), which have otherwise been studied only for their effects on negatively-valenced emotions. Hope is often defined in opposition to such negatively-valenced emotions, including fear (a primary, negatively-valenced and threat-focused emotion; Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006) and despair (a secondary, future-focused, negatively-valenced emotion; Lazarus, 1999; Nesse, 1999). In both cases, the differentiation of hope from these emotional experiences is based at least in part on the assumption that the positive appraisal of an uncertain future event means that hope constitutes a pleasant experience. In line with this view, we (Hasler et al., 2023) found that young people were less inclined to experience group-based hope for peace in conflict, due to a negativity bias associated with young age (Vaish et al., 2008), which was found to shift more positively in goals, attention, and memory (Carstensen & DeLiema, 2018) as people get older, due to their perception of limited remaining time (Carstensen et al., 1999).

If hope is positively-valenced, it means not only that people find its experience pleasant; it also means they may be hedonically motivated to experience it. Indeed, extant research had demonstrated that people hold

preferences to experience certain emotions, based on both hedonic and instrumental considerations, as well as contextual factors (Tamir, 2016). Per Tamir's theory on emotion regulation motivations, people can choose to up- or down-regulate certain emotions (see Gross, 2013) in accordance with these preferences. Accordingly, people are generally hedonically motivated to experience pleasant emotions and avoid unpleasant ones, and they choose to experience unpleasant emotions only if they believe these can serve important instrumental functions (Tamir, 2009).

The view of hope as a positively-valenced emotion means people should generally be motivated to experience it. Indeed, we find evidence for this, with motivations for group-based hope generally higher than motivations for emotions that are classically seen as negatively-valenced, such as fear, anger and guilt (Pliskin et al., 2023). The motivation for hope is so strong, that we observe it enduring even when objective reality – such as a violent escalation in an intergroup conflict – should undermine the appraisals associated with it, diminishing its experience. This finding resonates with the literature on false hope, focusing on people's tendency to experience hope based on unrealistic expectations (see Snyder et al., 2002, for a review and response). Along these lines, we find that people living under long-term oppression, such as Palestinians under Israeli occupation, are also highly-motivated to experience group-based hope – even in times of setback in their struggles for justice and even when they are not actually able to realise this motivation (Hasan-Aslih et al., 2020). More specifically, when we examined Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank, we found that in the face of setbacks in their struggle for social change – i.e., their wish to end the Israeli occupation – members of these group were generally highly motivated to experience hope. That motivation, however, did not necessarily translate to the *experience* of hope. In fact, in our sample, only Palestinians with a sense of efficacy to enact social change experienced hope as a function of their desire for it, whereas for others this desire remained unfulfilled. In other words, the motivation to experience hope is so strong, that even individuals who – due to oppressive life circumstances – cannot envision the attainment of their desired goal (i.e., the central appraisal of hope) still report a desire to experience it – likely because they see it as *feeling* good even if they cannot envision it *doing* good.

Such motivations have unique import in the context of intergroup conflict, as within these people often have preferences to *avoid* emotions that motivate support for conflict resolution – support seen as both weak and costly considering pervasive conflict supporting ideologies (Bar-Tal et al., 2012; Pliskin & Halperin, 2016). While these instrumental considerations likely explain negative preferences for conciliatory emotions at least in part (Bar-Tal, 2001), they are confounded with the negative valence associated with many of these

emotions (e.g., guilt, sadness). The pleasantness associated with hope thus provides a unique opportunity for emotion-based interventions in intergroup-contexts, as its hedonic value – if in fact universally positive – provides inherent motivation to experience it (see Hasan-Aslih et al., 2020), potentially countering instrumental considerations demotivating its experience.

Valence: When hope feels bad

"Fear cannot be without hope nor hope without fear"
Baruch Spinoza

As indicated above, hope is widely assumed to be experienced as pleasant, making its' classification as an *unpleasant* emotion extremely counter-intuitive. Nonetheless, there are some reasons to expect that group-based hope may also be experienced as unpleasant under certain circumstances. While empirical evidence for this counter-intuitive idea is lacking, the assumption that hope is positive has itself been subjected to surprisingly little direct scientific inquiry. In fact, our work contrasting group-level hope and fear (Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Porat, et al., 2014) showed that although these two emotional sentiments had opposite attitudinal *outcomes* (support vs. rejection of opportunities for peace), they were not in fact negatively associated with one another ($r = -.02$, $p = \text{ns}$). Similarly, Gasper et al. (2020) demonstrated that focused inductions of hope also increase fear, echoing the Spinoza quote in the Epigraph. Both of these offer evidence that hope often (or potentially always) co-occurs with negative affect, rather than conclusively demonstrating that hope may in itself be experienced as unpleasant. Below we review several indications from the literature for the latter possibility, and suggest directions for direct examination of the experience of hope as ambivalent or even negative.

First, the central appraisals of hope – imagining the attainment of a desired outcome alongside the anxiety that this outcome will not be achieved – are by definition ambivalent (Lazarus, 2003), with the imagining of a positive outcome indicating some positive affect, but the appraisal that the likelihood of this out is low-to-moderate engendering high levels of uncertainty (Averill et al., 1990; Bruininks & Malle, 2005). These definitional assumptions are supported by both self-reported and data-mined evidence that hope entails a greater experience of uncertainty than optimism, as well as more effort and less pleasantness (Gasper et al., 2020). Accordingly, it may be that hope involves more ambivalence than other positive emotions such as happiness or enthusiasm (Bruininks & Malle, 2005). Indeed, hope has been identified as an ambivalent emotion (Lazarus, 2003; Lomas, 2017; Moss & Wilson, 2015) that may simultaneously encompass joy and dejection, or

a sense of optimism and anxiety, precisely because of the relatively low certainty associated with the desired goals that stimulate its experience. Per the literature on ambivalence, an emotion may result from simultaneous positive and negative evaluations (Schneider & Schwarz, 2017), meaning that some emotions may not fall neatly into the pleasant vs. unpleasant dichotomy and enabling the idea that hope can indeed feel bad, even if it also feels good, as reviewed above.

Second, the assumption that hope is experienced as pleasant may be considered contextual and culturally-specific rather than universal (J. A. Russell, 1991). Historical perspectives on emotions show that in ancient societies and civilisations, such as ancient Greece, hope was considered a sign of great weakness (Bosworth, 1993), an inner blindfold ignoring reality described as "danger's comforter" (Schlosser, 2013). Similarly, philosophers throughout the ages have viewed hope as negative, with Plato associating it with deep ignorance (Gravlee, 2020) and Spinoza viewing low control and doubt as inherently intwined with feeling hopeful (Blöser, 2020). This provides an interesting perspective on hope, and particularly on its integral appraisal of low certainty. Since cultural norms and orientations towards emotions are often broadly shared, such negative perceptions of hope as weakness or doubt can undermine its' pleasantness. Other cross-cultural differences may also shape to what extent hope is experienced as pleasant. Specifically, a cultural dimension that may be meaningful when considering hope is orientations towards uncertainty (Hofstede, 2001). In societies that value risk taking (Hsee & Weber, 1999), such as the United States, uncertainty – a central appraisal of hope – may be interpreted as opportunity, and change as progress, making the experience of hope more coherently positive. But for countries such as Greece or Guatemala, which are high in uncertainty avoidance-one of Hofstede's (2001) core dimensions for cross-cultural variation – the higher negative valence of the uncertainty appraisal (Berenbaum et al., 2008) of hope may mean this negativity outweighs the potential positivity of imagining the attainment of a desired outcome, rendering the experience of hope itself unpleasant. Furthermore, emotions that are associated with high uncertainty are generally considered negative by laypeople (Noordewier and Goclowska, 2023) and researchers (Bar-Tal, 2001; I. J. Roseman, 1984), indicating that appraisals of uncertainty may more broadly engender negative affect.

Applying this view across cultures, cultures that value stability, certainty and structure may well not experience hope as exclusively positive. Similarly, individual differences within the same culture could determine to what extent they experience hope as pleasant. Research on how emotions are shaped by political ideology (see Pliskin et al., 2020), defined as a shared framework of values, attitudes and beliefs that provides an interpretation of the environment (Jost et al., 2009; Parsons, 1951), provides further support

for this notion. More specifically, individuals with a rightist political orientation (i.e., conservative ideology) are thought to be more averse to uncertainty than those with a leftist orientation (i.e., progressive or liberal ideology; see Jost et al., 2009). This assumption has been supported by abundant research (e.g., Hibbing et al., 2014; Jost et al., 2017; Kanai et al., 2011, Ornaet et al., 2013; but see; Choma & Hodson, 2017; Crawford, 2017 for qualifications of this relationship), and more recent efforts to examine its impact on hope support it further. For example, our research has linked leftist ideology with the experience of hope (Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Porat, et al., 2014), while direct messages of hope exerted no influence on rightists (Cohen-Chen, Lang, et al., 2020). Other work (Cohen-Chen et al., 2019) showed that rightists' support for an ingroup (neutral) leader was reduced when he expressed hope. Altogether, there are indications that hope may "speak" more to ideological leftists and is possibly aversive to rightists.

Beyond this, we have also found rightists to be less motivated than leftists to experience group-based hope for both highly-politicised outcomes and less-politicised outcomes (Pliskin et al., 2023) – potentially because the negative valence of uncertainty weighs more heavily for them, reducing hedonic motivations for hope even for the most desirable outcomes. More specifically, based on existing methods to measure motivation to experience discrete emotions (Tamir, 2016), we pretested several (contrived) news headlines to ensure that they were seen as signalling article content that could induce one of several emotions (i.e., hope, fear, pride, and guilt). When we then gave Dutch and British samples of participants the option of ranking these headlines to specify which articles they would like to read, rightist participants ranked the hope-signalling headlines lower than did leftist participants, both when the content made hope incongruent with their ideology (e.g., improving access to public healthcare), and when the content was relatively independent of their ideology (e.g., advances towards curing cancer; Pliskin et al., 2023).

The desire to avoid unpleasant emotions such as disappointment, driven by hope when stakes are high, can also result in an aversion from hope, a precursor to disappointment. One example in popular culture for this very idea is that "it's the hope that kills you," a common saying in (English) football to convey the idea that allowing oneself to experience group-based hope increases the disappointment and pain one experiences when these dreams are dashed. In clinical contexts, Gallagher et al. (2023) review empirical literature demonstrating the importance of *hope-aversion* when past experiences have been linked with negative consequences, particularly in clinically-depressed individuals (see Frischen et al., 2012). On a personal level, previous work (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2002; Norem & Cantor, 1986) show how violation of anticipatory expectations in personal goals produces "defensive pessimism" meant to reduce high hopes, while engaging with

pessimistic thoughts about said outcome is supposed to "cushion" the potential blow of failure and the disappointment that hope can inflict. This may further be exacerbated in extreme and broader contexts of hardship. For example, Stotland (1969) stated that people involved in situations of long suffering (such as the holocaust or intractable conflicts) become *afraid* of experiencing hope itself. Thus, hope is sometimes something aversive that people protect themselves from, rather than aspire to.

All of these indications lead us to believe that the experience of group-based hope itself may not only be linked to other, negative experiences, but may in itself be ambivalent or – at times – even unpleasant, rather than exclusively pleasant. Nonetheless, none of these approaches have directly measured the ambivalence or unpleasantness associated with group-based hope, rendering the possible "feel bad" properties of this emotion an open (and in our view, important) empirical question. This large gap in the literature is a significant one, as the ubiquitous view of hope as positive may hide potential downsides to its experience and lead to unanticipated negative outcomes of interventions aiming to increase it. Accordingly, we propose that hope researchers in general, and those examining it in intra- and intergroup contexts in particular, test the assumption of hope as a positively-valenced emotion rather than take it for granted.

Implications and limitations of our approach

In this review we used the do good/bad and feel good/bad framework of emotion (Cohen-Chen, Pliskin, et al., 2020) to explore a nuanced perspective on group-based hope as shifting across dimensions of valence and function. In exploring hope in each of the four quadrants of this bi-dimensional space, we can better understand this emotion and its meaning for social contexts, such as collective action and intergroup conflict.

Theoretical significance

This review holds theoretical implications as it signifies a move from a monolithic to a more nuanced, context-dependent view (Cohen-Chen, Pliskin, et al., 2020) of hope in group-based contexts. Changing the way group-based hope is conceptualised and holds implications for multiple literatures and fields which build upon previous assumptions. First, by categorising group-based hope as pleasant *and* unpleasant, functional *and* dysfunctional, we overcome the (false) dichotomy of viewing this emotion as either positive or negative, Instead, we approach it as a dynamic and context-dependent emotion, which contributes to understandings on group-based emotions (Lindner, 2006; Smith et al., 2007). While hope is depicted as almost ideal in one realm of research (e.g., emotions in conflict resolution;

Cohen-Chen et al., 2017b), an entirely different picture emerges in other disciplines (e.g., historical views on emotions; Boddice, 2019) and other intergroup contexts (e.g., S. Wright & Lubensky, 2009). Beyond the shift in the understanding of group-based emotions, our bidimensional view on group-based hope has implications in the field of group-based emotion regulation (Halperin & Pliskin, 2015; Porat et al., 2020). Our review illuminates circumstances conducive to hope being experienced as (un)pleasant and (dys)functional, which influences when it should and can be regulated, as well as the relevant regulation strategy one chooses to employ (Halperin et al., 2014; Pliskin et al., 2018; Sheppes et al., 2011).

More specifically, the section on hope as *doing good* establishes hope as being particularly instrumental in intergroup conflict situations, contributing to the literature on emotions in intergroup conflicts (Mackie et al., 2008) and their resolution (Halperin, 2015; Halperin & Pliskin, 2015). Here, hope has been established as a catalyst for promoting intergroup conciliatory policies and actions (for a review see Cohen-Chen et al., 2017b). The section of group-based hope as *doing bad* reveals that intergroup hope may not be as effective, and indeed even detrimental, in contexts such as collective action or social protest (Van Zomeren et al., 2008), where harmonious intergroup relations and attitudes *undermine* action to change systems or power relations (S. C. Wright et al., 1990), or where hope in itself may substitute action as a coping mechanism (Van Zomeren et al., 2019).

Overall, applying the function dimension to group-based hope uncovers the importance of both context and the specific outcome that is sought, rather than assuming that hope is functional. Moreover, this section emphasises the importance of the content of cognitive appraisals (I. J. Roseman et al., 1990) underlying hope (beyond the mere affective response) in predicting whether its outcomes are constructive or destructive (e.g., Hasan-Aslih et al., 2019). Furthermore, the literature on Emotional expressions (EASI; Van Kleef, 2009) suggests that emotions convey, and induce in observers, certain attitudes and intentions. Questioning the assumption that hope is perceived as functional contributes to an explanation of why some people do not necessarily respond favourably to expressions of hope, as evidenced in previous work (Cohen-Chen et al., 2019).

Next, in the section on hope as *feeling good*, this review presented work suggesting that hope is experienced as pleasant, perhaps because it is associated with imagining a future perceived as improved compared to the present. The pleasantness associated with hope contributes to work examining emotion-based interventions, which often work to induce emotions that may feel unpleasant because the intergroup attitudes associated with them may be constructive (Halperin et al., 2014). The hedonic value of hope thus provides internal motivation to experience it (see Hasan-Aslih et al., 2020), making it potentially easier to induce than other functional (but negatively-

valenced) emotions such as guilt (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011). On the other hand, the section suggesting hope may also *feel bad* presented indications that hope may be experienced as simultaneously positive and negative, contributing to literature on hope as an ambivalent emotion (Lomas, 2017; Moss & Wilson, 2015; Schneider & Schwarz, 2017). In particular, we focused on the appraisal of low control associated with group-based hope (Lazarus, 2003), which may lead people of particular a) cultures, b) ideologies, c) traits, and d) group-based contexts to experience hope as unpleasant or ambivalent. For example, if hope is seen culturally as weakness, people may experience it more negatively. Likewise, certain individual differences associated with aversion to uncertainty (Jost et al., 2009; Pliskin et al., 2020) may affect how hope is experienced.

Overall, the valence dimension has implications for emotional preferences in intergroup relations (Porat et al., 2016), which suggests that people consider the pleasantness of emotions (hedonic preferences) and the function (instrumental preferences) when guiding preferences to experience and regulate emotions (Tamir, 2009). As group-based hope is mostly categorised as pleasant and instrumental within this realm (Porat et al., 2019), this guides assumptions about the motivation to experience hope. However, as we suggest in this review, there may be contextual circumstances, as well as individual differences which cause hope to be perceived as dysfunctional or unpleasant, undermining the preference to experience hope.

Applied significance

The valence/function prism through which we examine previous work on group-based hope highlights the potential strengths of hope as a basis for interventions promoting intergroup relations. Combined, these two elements – valence and function – may be crucial for policy makers and other practitioners, particularly if they aim to develop applicable and successful interventions to induce hope for intergroup harmony in order to achieve "do good" outcomes, as the "feel good" element of hope makes it to some extent desirable, and thus easier to induce.

On the other hand, our examination of the circumstances under which hope may lead to dysfunctional outcomes and/r be experienced as unpleasant emphasises the importance of a more cautious approach to the emotion and its use in real-world interventions. Practitioners, and the scholars informing their efforts, would be wise to first determine whether hope is the most appropriate path within a certain context, which involves understanding when hope can and cannot be induced and when it can or cannot serve as an effective intervention. For instance, if the goal of an intervention is fostering more positive intergroup attitudes conducive to prejudice

reduction, hope is a functional, even ideal option. However, if the situation calls for inspiring action to oppose social inequalities, then the choice of hope may be sub-optimal, as it may even counteract these efforts. Our framework can serve to guide the determination of the appropriateness of inducing hope in a given context, given its strengths and the risks involved in its experience and application. Once determined, our framework can also be used to better understand *how* to induce hope and *when* doing so may be constructive. We illustrate and map the different ways in which hope can be regulated under different circumstances, using different messages and strategies, which can be used as a basis for real-world interventions.

Limitations, challenges, and future directions

Despite our efforts, this work has some limitations. One important limitation is that much of this work has been conducted in different fields and subfields, with few integrative efforts to consolidate findings and conclusions about the experience and function of hope. To truly understand when hope is (dys) functional, we need a more organised approach, that allows for the examination of multiple manifestations of valence (i.e., self-report, physiological, neural and expressive) as well as multiple relevant outcomes on multiple levels (individual, group, collective). Our focus on social situations and particular emphasis on outcomes related to intergroup conflict is important to acknowledge as well, as this may entail constraints of generality (Simons et al., 2017). The work examined in the context of intractable conflict is confined to adults who have been living for all or most of their lives in a state of extreme intergroup conflict. More importantly, much of the work mentioned here was undertaken on a population taken from the high-power group in an asymmetrical conflict, often at times of conflict escalation. Lastly, we examine attitudes within intergroup contexts and cultures that have adopted a societal narrative of outgroup delegitimization. Some of the attitudes, statements, and political outcomes used in these studies (such as support for collateral damage or refusal to provide humanitarian aid) would be unacceptable in less-extreme contexts (or cultures of societies not involved in conflict) and would need to be adjusted significantly. We have no reason to believe that the results depend on other characteristics of the participants, materials, or context beyond those mentioned here.

Although we refer to research on the individual level, this is not the focus of the paper. Indeed, less work has been done on interventions to induce hope in this domain, perhaps because on the individual level the experience and function of hope align much more. This is, however, a direction worth examining in future work, as the reviewed literature indicates that such interventions may have important positive outcomes in some domains, but may actually undermine

individual wellbeing or accomplishments in others. Relatedly, an additional level we did not address in terms of hope, due to a lack of empirical and conceptual research, is the collective emotions level (Goldenberg et al., 2016). Here, it is not the individual experiencing emotions based on their group identity, but the entire (or majority) group experiencing the same emotion, which may lead to different manifestations of hope. Another possible line of future research stemming from these limitations involves the exploration of hope, using the valence/function framework, at multiple levels simultaneously, including the individual, group-based, and collective levels. For example, it is possible that hope can be constructive to wellbeing at the individual level *because* it involves positive valence, while at the same time being destructive for social change efforts on the group-level (e.g., The American Dream; Wyatt-Nichol, 2011, and the Ethos of Conflict; Bar-Tal et al., 2012).

Another important limitation is that we could not locate ample cross-cultural research on hope. While we alluded to this issue above, our assumptions themselves may be culturally biased, and the findings we review may not generalise to non-WEIRD (Henrich et al., 2010) contexts. The cognitive complexity of hope may mean that its core appraisals are different across cultures, ideologies, and even individuals. As we mentioned, there are also indications that motivations to experience hope vary across cultures, and it is thus reasonable to expect that also the outcomes of hope at different levels of examination (i.e., from the intrapersonal to the intergroup level) would be culturally determined. This makes comparisons more difficult, and raises the question of whether we are in fact comparing the same emotion to itself, further complicating the task of generalising existing findings. More work is therefore needed to test how hope is perceived, experienced, and expressed differently in different cultures, perhaps leading to changes in our framework and its' conclusions.

Lastly, we (as well as many other scholars investigating hope) exclusively focus on hope in this review, rather than embedding it in the experience of other emotions. However, we recognise that emotions seldom arise on their own and never in an emotional vacuum. Indeed, work on mixed emotions (Kreibig & Gross, 2017) examines the simultaneous experience of negative and positive emotions. Other emotions, such as anxiety, fear, curiosity, and confusion, share with hope the core appraisal of uncertainty. Regret and nostalgia, on the other hand, share with hope a focus on an alternative reality to the existing one. Future work should both compare hope to other emotions that share its core appraisal themes, and explore the role of hope in the context of other (simultaneously experienced) emotions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this review used the valence/function framework of emotion to examine the group-based emotion of hope. We used previous theoretical and empirical work to consider group-based hope along two dimensions: the extent to which the outcomes of hope are functional and/or dysfunctional and the extent to which it is experienced as pleasant and/or unpleasant. This nuanced and even paradoxical examination of group-based hope illuminates contexts and conditions under which hope may be experienced very differently, and result in contradictory outcomes – sometimes simultaneously. As such, we identify several important gaps in the extant literature on group-based hope and suggest how this approach can be utilised by researchers and practitioners to fill these gaps and foster a fuller, more comprehensive understanding of this seemingly-positive emotion.

Disclosure statement

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