Instilling Hope for Peace During Intractable Conflicts

Oded Adomi Leshem¹, Yecheil Klar², and Thomas Edward Flores¹

Abstract
A set of studies explored the possibility to instill hope for peace in the context of intractable conflicts. The first study examined Jewish-Israelis' hopes for peace following a message from an out-group communicator. Results show that participants' hopes increased after viewing a Palestinian conclude that the conflict was solvable. This held true regardless of whether the Palestinian communicator identified as a militant or a peace activist. However, Jewish-Israelis' hopes for peace were not altered when an article, ostensibly written by conflict experts, concluded that the Palestinian–Israeli conflict was resolvable. In order to explore whether these trends are unique to group members involved in intergroup conflict, we replicated the study on uninvolved third-party participants. The article offers a comparison of belief malleability between those who experience conflict first hand and those who observe it from afar and presents strategies that may instill hope for peace in group members immersed in protracted violent conflicts.

Keywords
hope, Israel, Palestine, intractable conflict, attitude change

Many of the most detrimental international conflicts can be defined as intractable: They are violent, demand extensive investment from the belligerent parties, and persist over a long period of time (Bar-Tal, 2013; Kriesberg, 1998; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). Intractable conflicts also share a more subjective quality: The parties involved (and often third parties) perceive the conflict to be irresolvable.

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is an example of such an intractable conflict. Regarded as one of the most complex contemporary violent disputes, the conflict has been defined as both a competition over scarce resources and a conflict over group identity, security, and sacred values (Ginges, Atran, Medin, & Shikaki, 2007; Kelman, 1998). The grave consequences of the conflict are expressed not only in the toll of dead but also in the salience of the destructive sociopsychological structures the parties have developed in order to cope with the conflict and validate their own understanding of its nature (Bar-Tal, 2007; Bar-Tal, Halperin, & Oren, 2010). A key element in the sociopsychological infrastructure sustaining the conflict is its perceived irreconcilability (Bar-Tal, 1998). As an example, according to an extensive survey done in late 2013, 47% of Palestinians and 48% of Israelis don’t believe that a peace agreement will ever be reached, not even in the distant future (Telhami & Kull, 2013). This pessimistic stance is also supported by more recent polls (e.g., Maoz & Shikaki, 2014).

The perceived irreconcilability of intractable conflicts is conceptually tied to the lack of hope for resolution. As a psychological construct, hope is comprised of a wish to attain some goal (in our case, “peace”) and the positive but not certain expectations to attain it (Downie, 1963; Staats, 1989; Stotland, 1969). Hope requires complex cognitive activity such as creativity and flexibility and, in the context of violent conflicts, is commonly overshadowed by the omnipresence of fear which is activated automatically and requires little cognitive effort (Bar-Tal, 2001; Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006). Hope also has an affective component manifested in heightened pleasant emotion (Lazarus, 1999) and has been defined as a “creative emotional response” (Averill & Sundararajan, 2005, p. 134).

Some recent studies were successful in inducing hope for peace by manipulating participants’ belief in the malleability of groups, conflicts, and the world in general (Cohen-Chen, Crisp, & Halperin, 2015; Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp, & Gross, 2014; Halperin, Russell, Trzesniewski, Gross, & Dweck, 2011). Yet, the treatments in these studies did not refer to the specific conflict or to the relevant out-group in order to circumvent prejudice and prevent potential defensive reactions.
newspaper articles in which an ostensibly renowned team of Jewish-Israelis were randomly assigned to read one of two using stimuli endogenous to the conflict. In this study, Preliminary Study: The “Renowned Experts”

In a preliminary study, we attempted to instill hope for peace using stimuli endogenous to the conflict. In this study, Jewish-Israelis were randomly assigned to read one of two newspaper articles in which an ostensibly renowned team of international experts argue that the Israeli–Palestinian conflict fits the profile of international conflicts that were eventually resolved/unresolved. The stimuli included direct reference to the conflict and to issues in dispute. Results reveal that there was no significant difference in participants’ assessment of the likelihood of resolution across the two conditions. In light of these findings, we devised new treatments in which an out-group member, and not an expert, served as the communicator.

Main Studies—General Method

Our new treatments were short “home-made” movies, supposedly created by a Palestinian activist named Suleiman, that were made to look like self-shot monologues frequently found on YouTube. The participants in both samples were randomly assigned to watch one of four versions of the video. This was a 2 (Suleiman’s perception of the future: peace is possible, peace is impossible) × 2 (Suleiman’s identity: former Palestinian militia member, former peace activist) between-subjects design.

Experimental Manipulation

Each of the four 3-min videos was filmed to look like a home video made by a 30-year-old, Arabic speaking man named Suleiman. Similar to many home-made videos found on the web, Suleiman was sitting at home, talking directly to his webcam. The same Palestinian actor performed all four videos that differed only in the content of the monologues.1

At the beginning of the clip, Suleiman introduced himself as a Palestinian resident of the West Bank. He then tells of his experience as a young fighter in a Palestinian militia/youngster participating in peace summer camps with Israelis. He elaborates about his participation in attacks on Israeli military targets and his subsequent arrest/friendships with Israelis and of his continuing work for peace with Israeli peacemakers. He reveals that his experiences in the Israeli jail/while working for peace made him understand the conflict at a deeper level and gave him insights about the possible future outcomes of the conflict. Suleiman then talks about his current belief that future peace is hard but possible/impossible and that an agreed upon solution is feasible/unfeasible because the disagreements can/cannot be bridged. He adds arguments to support his belief, stating the two peoples will eventually/will never share the land because the conflict is inherently resolvable/irresolvable.

Samples

Our studies included two samples. One consisted of Jewish-Israeli respondents who are, by nature, experiencing the Israeli–Palestinian conflict firsthand. The other sample consisted of American participants who, living in the United States, observe the conflict from afar. Both samples were exposed to the same conditions and were probed for their levels of hope for peace in Israel–Palestine using the same dependent variables.

Dependent Variables

In both studies, we measured hope for peace on both affective (Averill & Sundararajan, 2005; Neuman, Marcus, Crigler, & Mackuen, 2007) and cognitive dimensions (Downie, 1963; Staats, 1989; Stotland, 1969). The affective dimension refers to the pleasant emotion of hopefulness as a subjective affect accompanied by excitement toward the prospects of the future (Lazarus, 1999), while the cognitive dimension of hope for
peace refers to the belief in the likelihood of resolution (BLR) and involves one’s assessment of the feasibility for future peace.

**Study 1: Involved Sample**

**Method**

**Sample and Procedure**

The sample consisted of 356 Jewish-Israeli respondents (172 female, 7 did not indicate gender, \(M_{\text{age}} = 34.6, SD = 12.1, \text{age range 18–74 years} \)) recruited in a time frame of 2 weeks by six research assistants who posted an invitation in various social media outlets to take part in a short online study. Those who expressed their willingness to participate received the experimental link. We determined the sample size based on a two-way interaction design striving to have approximately 90 participants in each of the four cells. A sample of 360 enabled us to detect an effect size \(f\) of .17 with .8 power.

After watching one of the four randomly assigned videos, the participants reported their level of affective hopefulness and were then asked about their belief in the likelihood of resolution (BLR) to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Age, gender, and political orientation were also collected.2

**Measures**

**Dependent variables.** Hope for peace was measured on both its affective dimension (feeling of hopefulness) and its cognitive dimension (BLR).

**Hopefulness.** Respondents were asked to what extent they felt hopeful when watching the movie (When I saw the clip, I felt hopeful). Higher scores meant greater levels of hopefulness \((M = -0.42, SD = 2.18)\).

**BLR.** Four items measured participants’ belief that the Israeli–Palestinian conflict can be resolved (e.g., both sides of the conflict can peacefully share the same land; neither side will be able to compromise in the future [Reverse Coded]) later collapsed into a single variable \((\alpha = .78, M = 0.89, SD = 1.32)\). Higher scores indicate greater beliefs in the likelihood of resolution.

**Control variables.** Gender, age, and political orientation were collected. Political orientation was gauged using an item that tracked participants’ agreement with the dovish left bloc in Israeli politics and another that tracked agreement with the hawkish right bloc. The 2 items were latter collapsed into a single dimension, right-wing orientation, with higher values indicating a stronger identification with Israel’s political hawkish right \((\alpha = .83, M = -1.06, SD = 1.66)\). The negative mean indicates that the sample tended to be left of center.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Correlation Between Variables, Involved Sample.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Hopefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Belief in likelihood of resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Right-wing orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gender (female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Age</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (two-tailed significance).

**Results**

Correlational analysis (Table 1) reveals that affective hopefulness and the BLR are positively and strongly correlated \((r = .43)\). Right-wing political orientation was negatively correlated with participants’ hopefulness \((r = -0.23)\) and with their BLR \((r = -0.6)\) while age was positively, although weakly, correlated with these measures \((r = .11\) and \(r = .16\), respectively).

Two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized to explore the effects of our treatments on the dependent variables. As a second, cautionary step, we incorporated the control variables into the models to account for potential, albeit unlikely, influences of the control variables. Except for one finding reported below, similar trends were revealed with and without the control variables. Thus, we report here only the results of the analysis without the control variables.

**Hopefulness.** A two-way ANOVA yielded a significant and large effect for Suleiman’s perception of the future on participants’ hopeful emotions, \(F(1, 352) = 286.93, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .44\). As expected, hopefulness was higher among those exposed to Suleiman who believed peace was possible \((M = 1.01, SD = 1.72)\) compared to those exposed to Suleiman the peace skeptic \((M = -1.91, SD = 1.51)\). The ANOVA yielded a very small effect for Suleiman’s identity (i.e., whether he was a militant or peace activist) on participants’ hopefulness, \(F(1, 352) = 5.34, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .01\). However, this small effect became not significant when the accidental effects of the control variables (age, gender, and political orientation) were accounted for, \(F(1, 342) = 3.55, p = .06, \eta_p^2 = .01\). Finally, there was no significant interaction effect (Suleiman’s Perception of the Future × Suleiman’s Identity) on participants’ hopefulness, \(F(1, 352) = 0.02, p = .9, \eta_p^2 < .0001\).

**BLR.** A similar pattern was observed for participants’ BLR. A two-way ANOVA yielded a significant effect for Suleiman’s perception of the future, \(F(1, 352) = 16.87, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .046\), such that participants’ BLR was higher among those exposed to Suleiman who believed peace was possible \((M = 1.17, SD = 1.19)\) than those who were exposed to Suleiman the peace skeptic \((M = 0.6, SD = 1.4)\). However, the effect of Suleiman’s identity was not significant, \(F(1, 352) = 0.32, p = .57, \eta_p^2 = .0009\). No significant effect of interaction...
between the two independent variables was found, $F(1, 352) = 1.66, p = .2$, $\eta^2_p = .005$.

The finding that the communicator’s identity did not have a significant effect on both the affective and cognitive variables led us to conduct post hoc explorations. First, we investigated whether Suleiman’s identity had a different effect on right-wing- versus left-wing-leaning participants. However, no interaction effect (Suleiman’s Identity $\times$ Right-Wing Orientation) was found on either dependent variable, Hopefulness: $F(1, 348) = 0.09, p = .76$, $\eta^2_p = .0003$; BLR: $F(1, 348) = 1.01, p = .31$, $\eta^2_p = .003$. Furthermore, no interaction effect on either the affective or cognitive dimensions of hope for peace was found between Suleiman’s identity and gender, Hopefulness: $F(1, 345) = 1.4, p = .24$, $\eta^2_p = .004$; BLR: $F(1, 345) = 2.64, p = .1, \eta^2_p = .008$, or Suleiman’s identity and age, Hopefulness: $F(1, 348) = 0.51, p = .48$, $\eta^2_p = .001$; BLR: $F(1, 348) = 0.92, p = .34$, $\eta^2_p = .003$.

**Mediation.** A mediation model using Hayes’ (2013) bootstrapping process (with 5,000 sampling replications) examined whether the affective dimension of hope (hopefulness) mediated participants’ BLR (the more cognitive dimension of hope for peace). Results (Figure 1) revealed that the effect of Suleiman’s perceptions of the future on participants’ BLR ($b = 0.57, \ SE = 0.14, t = 4.14, p < .001$) was reduced when hopefulness was included in the model ($b = -0.34, \ SE = 0.17, t = -1.98, p = .05$) and that the indirect effect through hopefulness was significant ($a \times b = 0.905; 95\%$ confidence interval [CI] = [0.658, 1.169]). Thus, it seems that affective hopefulness evoked during the communication served as a mediator between the communicator’s perceptions about the possibility of resolution and participants’ BLR.

**Discussion**

As exemplified in the preliminary experiment, Jewish-Israelis’ belief that the decadelong Israeli–Palestinian conflict cannot be resolved was not altered by “proof” presented by purported academic experts. However, an out-group member’s perception that peace is possible had a significant effect on Jewish-Israelis’ hope for peace manifested in heightened feelings of hopefulness and greater BLR. Affective hopefulness, which was greatly impacted by the out-group member’s convictions, seems to serve as a mediator to the more cognitive dimension of hope.

Interestingly, Suleiman’s identity (as a militant or as a peace activist) did not play a significant role in predicting participants’ hope for peace. Although the literature points out that processing of arguments is often biased by heuristics and peripheral cues (Chaiken, Duckworth, & Darke, 1999; Petty, Wheeler, & Bizer, 1999) as well as by forming favorable versus unfavorable first impressions (see Bohner & Dickel, 2011), this was not the case here. Further, the lack of interaction effect suggests that participants’ hope for peace was not influenced by Suleiman’s “narrative of change” (McAdams, 2001; Pennington & Hastie, 1991). The “militant turned peace believer” did not evoke higher levels of hope than the consistent “peace activist who believes peace is possible,” and the “peace activist turned peace skeptic” did not evoke lower levels of hope than the consistent “militant who believes peace is impossible.” Lastly, the lack of effect of Suleiman’s identity on participants’ hope for peace did not depend on their political orientation, gender, or age. Further studies might be needed to investigate the role of the communicator’s identity in conveying messages of hope.

Were these findings unique to the population being studied, a population that “lives and breathes” the conflict? Pertaining to the power of rigid societal beliefs held by group members involved in intractable conflicts (Bar-Tal, 2007), it can be postulated that uninvolved participants, who are not living in the midst of conflict, will be influenced by Suleiman’s conviction to a larger extent than involved participants. On the other hand, participants who are remote from the conflict might be indifferent to the stimuli and subsequently exhibit a small change in hope for peace compared to the conflict-immersed participants who might be intrigued or surprised by messages from their perceived enemy.

**Study 2: Uninvolved Sample**

To delineate differences between involved and uninvolved groups as to the possibility to instill hope for peace, we replicated the study on an American sample recruited via Amazon’s Mechanical Turk platform (Mturk).
Table 2. Correlations Between Variables, Uninvolved Sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Hopefulness</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Belief in likelihood of resolution</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>.65***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Social conservatism</td>
<td>-1.22</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.17**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Economic conservatism</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-1.8**</td>
<td>.6***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Prior knowledge about the conflict</td>
<td>-0.77</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Gender (+female)</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.15**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Age</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.15***</td>
<td>.25***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001 (two-tailed significance).

Method

Sample and Procedure

The sample consisted of 376 Mturk workers living in the United States (237 male, M_age = 31.7, SD = 10.3) who were assigned to one of the four Suleiman movies. Mturk, an online labor system run by Amazon.com, has become a popular recruiting tool among social scientists. Goodman, Cryder, and Cheema (2013) found that Mturk samples share many similarities with traditional community and student samples, and thus can be as equally representative, but that it was important to conduct attention checks in order to improve the reliability of the results (see also Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012).

Before being randomly assigned to one of the four treatments, respondents were asked to assess their knowledge about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. This measure was important to obtain in the uninvolved sample to account for the potentially high variance in participants’ proficiency on the topic. After watching the video, participants reported their levels of hopefulness and their BLR in Israel–Palestine. Respondents were then checked for their attention to the treatments and reported their gender, age, and political orientation that, following Feldman and Johnston (2014), separately assessed economic conservatism and social conservatism.

Measures

Dependent variables

Hopefulness. Hopefulness was gauged using the same item from Study 1. Higher scores meant higher levels of affective hopefulness (M = -0.17, SD = 2.18).

BLR. BLR was measured using the same 4 items used in Study 1, later collapsed into a single variable. Higher scores indicate higher BLR (a = .89, M = 0.36, SD = 1.63).

Control variables. Age and gender were collected as well as self-reported knowledge about the Palestinian–Israeli conflict (I am knowledgeable about the topic of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict; M = -0.77, SD = 1.65). Higher scores indicate higher levels of self-assessed knowledge about the conflict. Participants also rated their political orientation, from very liberal to very conservative, on social and on economic issues. Higher scores indicate higher inclination toward conservatism. The sample seems to be relatively liberal on social issues (M = -1.22, SD = 1.55) and moderate on economic issues (M = -0.39, SD = 1.73).

Attention and manipulation checks. Following recommendations to conduct attention checks in Mturk samples (Goodman, Cryder, & Cheema, 2013), two multiple choice questions about the movie’s contents were designed. One question asking about the communicator’s past (i.e., his identity) and one question asking about the communicator’s perceptions about the conflict’s future. Forty-nine participants failed either one of these basic question and were left out of our analysis. A third question was probing whether respondents thought that Suleiman was expressing his own views. Only one participant thought that Suleiman was not expressing his own views, demonstrating that the videos looked authentic to most participants. After excluding the 50 invalid responses, our final sample consisted of 326 participants (203 male, M_age = 31.9, SD = 10.2). The exclusion resulted in a minor decline of statistical power (from .8 to .76).

Results

Table 2 presents correlations between the variables. As anticipated, we found a strong correlation between participants’ hopefulness and their BLR (r = .65). A negative (although weak) correlation was observed between Americans’ social and economic conservatism and their BLR (r = -.17 and r = -.18, respectively). None of the other control variables, including prior knowledge about the conflict, correlated to participants’ hopefulness or their BLR.

As for the effects of the treatments, a two-way ANOVA yielded a significant and large effect for Suleiman’s perception of the future on participants’ hopefulness, F(1, 322) = 430.17, p < .001, η^2_p = .57, such that hopefulness was much higher among those exposed to Suleiman who believed peace was possible (M = 1.49, SD = 1.5) compared to those exposed to Suleiman the peace skeptic (M = -1.77, SD = 1.4). Unlike our findings in the Israeli sample, ANOVA yielded a main effect for Suleiman’s identity on hopefulness, F(1, 322) = 14.85, p < .001, η^2_p = .04. Greater feelings of hopefulness were reported by participants exposed to Suleiman the peace activist (M = 0.13, SD = 2.2) compared to those exposed to Suleiman the militia member (M = -0.45, SD = 2.1). The interaction
effect (Suleiman’s Perception × Suleiman’s Identity) was not significant, $F(1, 322) = 0.01, p = .9, \eta^2_p < .0001$.

Similar patterns emerged when analyzing the effects of the treatments on participants’ BLR. A two-way ANOVA yielded a significant and large effect for Suleiman’s perception of the future on participants’ BLR, $F(1, 322) = 186, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .37$, such that respondents’ BLR was much higher among those exposed to Suleiman who believed peace was possible ($M = 1.35, SD = 1.26$) than those who watched Suleiman the skeptic ($M = -0.6, SD = 1.38$). Again, the main effect for the out-group communicator’s identity was significant, $F(1, 322) = 6.48, p = .01, \eta^2_p = .02$. BLR was greater among participants exposed to Suleiman the peace activist ($M = 0.54, SD = 1.6$) compared to those who were exposed to Suleiman the militant ($M = 0.19, SD = 1.6$). No significant effect of interaction (Suleiman’s Perception × Suleiman’s Identity) was found, $F(1, 322) = 1.02, p = .31, \eta^2_p = .003$. 

**Mediation.** The same bootstrapping procedure used in Study 1 was used in this study. Results revealed that the effect of Suleiman’s perceptions on participants’ BLR ($b = 1.95, SE = 0.14, t = 13.49, p < .001$) was reduced when hopefulness was included in the model ($b = 0.86, SE = 0.2, t = 4.23, p < .001$) and that the indirect effect through hopefulness was significant ($a \times b = 1.1; 95\% CI = [0.73, 1.47]$). Figure 2 presents the role of hopefulness as a mediator. 

**Discussion**

Uninvolved respondents’ hopefulness and BLR were substantially influenced by Suleiman’s perceptions of the future. In contrast to the Israeli participants, American participants were also affected by Suleiman’s identity. Our predicted direction of the effect, however, was wrong. We anticipated that the militant who became a peace believer (redemption story) will elicit the largest increase in respondents’ hope for peace (on both dimensions), while the peace activist turned peace skeptic (disenchantment story) will elicit the largest decrease in hope for peace. As shown, Americans exposed to Suleiman the peace activist showed higher levels of affective hopefulness and greater BLR than those exposed to Suleiman the militant.

**General Discussion**

The participants in both studies relate to the Palestinian–Israeli conflict in distinct ways. One group experiences the conflict firsthand while the other observes it from a distance. To enable a robust comparison between the samples, we conducted a meta-analysis of the two data sets. As shown in Figure 3, the effect of the treatments on participants’ BLR is larger in the American sample; the difference is statistically significant for Suleiman’s perception of the future ($p < .001$) but not for his identity ($p = .16$). Jewish-Israelis’ strong prior convictions and their familiarity with the conflict at hand might be some of the reasons they were less receptive than Americans to new information communicated by a Palestinian. In addition, adopting a potentially misguided belief is more costly to involved group members than for uninvolved group members. Indeed, results suggest that group members involved in the conflict were more entrenched in their beliefs about the (un)likelihood of peace, even when their perceived enemy expressed his belief that peace is possible. This finding lends empirical support to literature on intractable conflicts (Bar-Tal, 2007, 2013) that stresses the rigidity of conflict-related sociopsychological constructs, one of them being the conflict’s perceived irreconcilability.

Still, even the relatively entrenched Israeli respondents increased their hopes for peace after watching an out-group member claim that peace is hard but possible. Interestingly, unlike the American sample, this effect was observed regardless of whether the communicator identified as a militant or a peace activist. Although not directly tested in the study, it is possible that for Jewish-Israelis, the communicator’s Palestinian identity overrode the more nuanced aspects of his identity we experimentally manipulated. The findings presented here complement recent work that demonstrated the power of hope for peace in the midst of intractable conflicts (Cohen-Chen et al., 2015; Cohen-Chen et al., 2014; Halperin et al., 2011), though further research into the specific mechanisms of this effect is surely needed.

**Conclusion**

As the preliminary experiment revealed, scientific proof that the conflict is resolvable did not alter group members’ hope for...
peace. However, when the stimulus was changed to a video message conveyed by an out-group member, the findings were different. An out-group member’s perceptions about the way the conflict will unfold had a significant effect on in-group members’ hope for peace on both cognitive and emotional dimensions. The effect was significant over and above in-groups’ political orientation and, in the Israeli case, regardless of the communicator’s favorable/unfavorable identity. When it comes to instilling hope for peace, overriding peripheral cues (in this case, the communicator’s identity) seems to be unique to group members who are enmeshed in intractable conflicts maybe because they are already replete with cues regarding the dispute. Here again, additional investigations are needed to explore this tentative argument.

**Contribution**

Jewish-Israelis and Palestinians are absorbed in an intractable conflict where hostility and violence are present on a daily basis. Pessimism about the likelihood of resolution, commonly observed in prolonged intergroup conflicts, might be one reason that adversaries are reluctant to support a compromise (Halperin et al., 2011). Identifying strategies that enable parties to escape the psychological structures that frame the conflict as irresolvable can offer a pathway out of intractable conflicts and consequently contribute to conflict de-escalation. For example, findings from such studies can help devise media campaigns that instill hope for peace in the setting of violent protracted conflicts where hope for peace is a scarce resource.

**Limitations and Further Directions**

Increasing the accuracy of measuring hope, specifically on its affective dimension, is a crucial step for future studies as the single item used in our studies might not be sufficient to capture the full dimension of affective hope. Another element that needs further exploration is the behavioral outcomes of hope for peace, manifested, for example, in greater support for concessions in peace talks. Comparing the effect of the same message when conveyed by an out-group communicator vis-à-vis an in-group member and measuring the sustainability of the effect across time and political turmoil are other important steps of inquiry. Lastly, it would be interesting to explore the role of hope in laboratory experiments in which participants are directly involved in a simulated conflict. Findings from future studies might help us understand the role of hope for peace in protracted intergroup conflict and assist in creating effective interventions that promote peace.

**Acknowledgments**

The authors wish to thank the editor and the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments. The authors also wish to thank Eden King and Deborah Ann-Kermer from George Mason University; Thomas Obrien from University of Massachusetts; and Moria Tarshis, Michal Reinhadrt, Keren Perry, Tal Hadar, Ori Vollpper, and Gily Racah from the Tel-Aviv University for their valuable contributions.
Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. The treatments had the same number of words (443 ± 5) and were subtitled to Hebrew. Snapshots from the treatments can be found in the supplemental appendix (available online).
2. Unless stated otherwise, all items were measured on a 1–7 point Likert-type scale rating the extent the participant agreed or disagreed with the presented sentence (1 = totally disagree to 7 = totally agree). The results were later rescaled to a −3 to +3 scale.
3. No significant three-way effect (Suleiman’s Perception × Suleiman’s Identity × Right-Wing Orientation) was found, see supplemental material for complete results.
4. When controlling for age, gender, and right-wing political orientation, the mediation effect remained.
5. Using a stronger medium (video) in the main study, in comparison with written text used in the preliminary study might be another plausible cause of the difference in results.
6. Study 2 was conducted in early June 2014, before the massive violent confrontations in the West Bank, Gaza, and the south of Israel. In this sense, both the study in Israel (June 2013) and the one in the United States were done in relatively calm periods.
7. When the data are analyzed with the excluded questionnaires, the impacts of our treatments stay the same and in some cases are even stronger.
8. Hopefulness’ role as a mediator was maintained when controlling for age, gender, prior knowledge of the conflict, economic conservatism, and social conservatism.
9. We thank an anonymous reviewer for this insightful suggestion. Additional results from the meta-analysis are presented in the supplemental material.
10. For an excellent review of conflict games, see Dechenaux, Kovenock, and Sheremeta (2014).

Supplemental Material

The online supplements are available at http://spps.sagepub.com/supplemental.

References


**Author Biographies**

Oded Adomi Leshem is a PhD student at the School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, Virginia, USA.

Yechiel Klar an associate professor at the School of Psychological Sciences, Tel-Aviv University, Israel.

Thomas Edward Flores is an assistant professor at the School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, Virginia, USA.

Handling Editor: Kate Ratliff