



Moral elevation increases support for humanitarian policies, but not political concessions, in intractable conflict

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ABSTRACT

Moral elevation is an emotional experience elicited after witnessing acts of exceptional moral goodness and involves feeling moved and inspired. Previous research has demonstrated that experiences of moral elevation can lead to increased altruism. We examined whether the benefits of moral elevation on prosocial intentions extend to the context of intractable intergroup conflict, by testing whether moral elevation increases support for outgroup-favorable policies. We hypothesized that moral elevation would increase support for humanitarian policies, but not political concessions, as only the former are considered to be within the moral domain. To test this, we ran three studies in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including a preregistered replication, and found overall support for our hypothesis. This research is the first to demonstrate that moral elevation can play an important role in the context of intractable conflict by increasing support for alleviating outgroup suffering, but it also suggests that the effect of elevation is limited in that it does not extend to increasing support for political compromises.

1. Introduction

Intractable conflicts, such as those between Israelis and Palestinians, Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, or Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir, are characterized by their long-lasting, violent, and seemingly irresolvable nature (Bar-Tal, 2013). In the context of intractable conflict, ingroup members tend to have reduced sensitivity to the suffering of outgroup members (Levy et al., 2016), and intergroup relations are characterized by intense negative emotions (Bar-Tal, Halperin, & de Rivera 2007) and hostility (Cohen, Montoyo & Insko, 2006). One characteristic of modern conflicts, in particular, is the large numbers of civilian victims (Kaldor, 1999). Innocent civilians often bear the brunt of intergroup violence and are frequently and tragically, killed, injured, or denied access to basic necessities. One central question, therefore, is how to increase support among the ingroup for alleviating the suffering of outgroup civilians in the context of intractable conflict. A second distinct and important question is how to increase support for political concessions that address the core issues of the conflict and can ultimately help resolve it? Parties embroiled in intractable conflict are generally very reluctant to compromise (Coleman, 2003; Kelman, 2007). They tend to view their goals as completely opposed to those of the

outgroup and perceive concessions to the outgroup as necessarily detrimental to the ingroup (Bar-Tal, 1998).

There is an existing body of work demonstrating that emotions play a central role in the management and resolution of intergroup conflict (for a review see Halperin & Reifen Tagar, 2017). Experiencing specific emotions can impact distinct policy preferences, hindering or helping intergroup relations. For example, work by Rossler, Cohen-Chen, and Halperin (2017), in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, showed that while empathy is associated with increased support for humanitarian policies, it is unrelated to conciliatory attitudes, and that conversely, hope is related to conciliatory attitudes, but not support for humanitarian policies. The goal of the current research is to examine the distinct effects of the relatively understudied emotional experience of moral elevation in the context of intractable conflict. We examine the influence of elevation on support for two distinct and important types of outgroup-favorable policies - support for humanitarian policies and support for political concessions.

Moral elevation was first introduced into psychological research relatively recently by Jonathan Haidt (Haidt, 2000). The emotional experience of elevation is elicited by witnessing acts of exceptional goodness, such as altruism, generosity, and compassion. Moral elevation

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is characterized by feelings of being moved and inspired, and having sensations of warmth (Haidt, 2003). Witnessing acts of kindness sparks admiration for the individual carrying out the good deeds and motivates those who witness these deeds to emulate the moral agent and engage in acts of kindness, as well (Oliver, Hartman & Woolley, 2012). According to Haidt (2003) moral elevation can act as a “moral reset button,” (p. 286), increasing one’s desire to help others. Existing research has found that moral elevation increases prosocial behavior in the interpersonal domain (for a review see Thomson & Siegel, 2017). Existing studies have demonstrated that experiencing moral elevation leads to a number of altruistic outcomes, such as volunteering (Cox, 2010; Schnall, Roper, & Fessler, 2010) and donating to charity (Van de Vyver & Abrams, 2015).

A small body of recent work suggests that moral elevation may also have a positive impact in the intergroup domain, although findings are mixed. For example, studies conducted in the United States, have shown that moral elevation increases Caucasian American participants’ donations to charities that support African Americans (Freeman, Aquino, & McFerran, 2009), and increases feelings of connection with outgroups, thereby reducing prejudice towards them (Oliver et al., 2015). Work by Van de Vyver and Abrahams (2015), however, found that although elevation led Americans to donate more to a charity of their choice, it did not increase their willingness to take action in order to try to pressure the US to fund development work abroad to reduce global inequality. Another series of studies found that moral elevation reduced prejudice towards gay men, but that it did not impact racial prejudice (Lai, Haidt, & Nosek, 2014). These somewhat inconsistent findings may be partly due to the different outcomes that were measured in each study and suggest that additional research is required to gain a deeper understanding of the specific effects of moral elevation on intergroup relations. Moreover, whether moral elevation can impact outgroup-favorable policies in intractable conflict where outgroup members are often perceived as not just different from the ingroup, but as enemies, has yet to be tested.

We propose examining whether moral elevation can increase support for outgroup-favorable policies in the context of intergroup protracted conflict, and specifically in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We hypothesized that support for humanitarian policies and support for concessions would be differentially impacted by moral elevation. Our expectations are derived from an appraisal tendency approach that maintains that emotions amplify the importance of unique sociomoral concerns (Horberg, Oveis, & Keltner, 2011). For example, disgust amplifies purity concerns and anger amplifies concern about injustice (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009). Research suggests that moral elevation amplifies concern with moral virtue – when experiencing moral elevation, individuals view morally good actions as being even more morally good (Klebel, Dziobek & Diessner, 2019). Considering this, we expect that moral elevation would lead to increased support for government policies that are considered to be related to moral goodness.

Humanitarian policies refer to the treatment of civilians in conflict and involve alleviating the suffering and maintaining the dignity of innocent people. They are largely viewed as a universal obligation and a moral good (EUPRHA Report, 2013). As such, we expected that moral elevation would lead to increased support for humanitarian policies towards outgroup members, in this case, Palestinians. At the same time, we did not expect moral elevation to have an effect on all constructive policies in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Unlike humanitarian policies that are typically perceived as morally good, political concessions are often viewed in pragmatic, non-moral terms (Downs, 1957). Research in the context of intractable conflict suggests that support for concessions is driven by beliefs about the costs concessions entail for the ingroup (Hirschberger, Ein-Dor, Leidner, & Saguy, 2016). We therefore expected that the effects of elevation would not extend to support for concessions.

1.1. The current research

The goal of this work was to examine the effects of moral elevation on support for distinct outgroup-favorable policies in the challenging context of the Israeli-Palestinian intractable conflict, with Jewish-Israeli participants. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been ongoing for over a century. Civilians are the primary victims of the conflict, and in the last two decades, they constitute the majority of those who have been killed (B’Tselem, n.d.). Palestinian civilians, especially those in Gaza, also suffer from restrictions on freedom of movement, shortages of basic medication, and an electricity crisis, with power only being provided for a few hours each day (ReliefWeb, 2018). Despite multiple peace talks and wide acknowledgment of what the contours of an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal would ultimately look like, there is substantial objection to compromise (Bar-Tal, Halperin, & Oren, 2010; Maoz & McCauley, 2005). Understanding what may increase support for humanitarian policies (e.g. medical aid, supplying electricity) and support for concession (e.g. withdrawing from land) are thus both important domains of inquiry.

In Study 1, we tested whether moral elevation (vs. amusement) affects support for humanitarian policies and support for political concessions towards Palestinians. We also tested increased positive attitudes towards the Palestinians as a potential mediator for the effect of elevation on humanitarian policies. Following this, we ran a pilot study to explicitly test our underlying assumption that humanitarian policies, but not political concessions, are perceived as moral obligations. In Study 2, we tested our hypothesis again, and added in a neutral control condition to establish that effects are due to the positive effects of elevation. We also tested whether increased moral concern towards others plays a mediating role in the relationship between elevation and humanitarian policy support. Study 3 was a higher-powered preregistered replication of Study 2. In these studies, we report all measures, manipulations and exclusions. Power analyses were used to determine the sample size for each study and all data collection occurred prior to data analysis. Data for all studies is available at: https://osf.io/puydw/?view_only=7d605173381c49e5a49a78e021f28ecf

2. Study 1

2.1. Method

Our goal of Study 1 was to test our expectation that elevation (vs. amusement) would lead to increased support for humanitarian policies, but not political concessions. We also aimed to test whether positive attitudes towards Palestinians may mediate the relationship between elevation and support for humanitarian policies.

2.1.1. Participants and procedure

We conducted a power analysis using G*Power 3.1 (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009), and found that obtaining a small/medium effect size ($d = 0.40$), with an alpha of 0.05 and power of 0.8 would require 200 participants. We recruited 264 Jewish-Israeli participants on online platforms, primarily in student groups on social media. After dropping 1 participant who identified as Christian, 5 participants who reported not having watched the video clip, and another 19 whose responses indicated a lack of attention (18 based on failed memory check questions about the video clip and 1 based on comments), 239 participants remained: Age: $M = 27.20$, $SD = 7.27$; Gender: 54 men and 184 women (1 missing); Political ideology: leftists = 77, centrists = 70, rightists = 87 (5 missing). This sample had a disproportionately high number of leftists compared to the general Jewish-Israeli population in which self-identified leftists constitute only around 8% (Pew, 2016).

As a cover story, participants were told that they would be taking part in a study about language and emotional memory. Participants were asked to rate their level of proficiency in several foreign languages and throughout the study were asked memory questions about the

respective videos that they watched, which we then used as attention checks for screening. As in previous research studying the effects of moral elevation, participants were randomly assigned to either a moral elevation condition or an amusement condition, which served as a positive emotion control condition (Ellithorpe, Ewoldsen, & Oliver, 2015; Schnall et al., 2010; Silvers & Haidt, 2008). Those in the moral elevation condition watched a morally elevating video clip (https://youtu.be/RKyDL_rAYfo) outside the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, depicting a man doing a series of kind actions, such as giving charity to a woman and child on the street and leaving food for an elderly neighbor. Participants in the amusement condition watched a funny music video (https://youtu.be/yQHW5jNR_kg) of a man dancing and singing, which was meant to elicit the positive, yet non-moral emotional, experience of amusement. To avoid introducing confounding factors, the main characters in both videos were Southeast Asian men. Of note, these videos had no political content. After watching the video clip, participants answered a short survey in Hebrew. Finally, participants were debriefed and informed of the true goals of the study.

2.2. Measures

In all studies, participants responded to items on a 1 (*not at all*) – 7 (*very much*) scale unless otherwise stated. Participants reported their gender (1 = *man*, 2 = *woman*), age, religion, religiosity, and level of education. Political ideology was measured using one item (*How would you define your political stance?*) with answers ranging from 1 (*extreme left*) – 7 (*extreme right*).

2.2.1. Manipulation check

To measure the level of moral elevation elicited by the respective video clips, participants responded to nine items capturing the experience of moral elevation, rating the extent to which they felt spiritually uplifted, moved, inspired, touched, expansion in the chest, positive sensations, tears in the eyes, a lump in the throat, and compassion towards others, $\alpha = 0.95$). Two items assessed the extent of amusement experienced while watching the video clips (entertained, humored $\alpha = 0.94$).

2.2.2. Positive attitudes towards Palestinians

This measure comprised 16 items from several existing scales to capture positive attitudes towards Palestinians ($\alpha = 0.93$).¹ This measure had high internal consistency, and therefore, we employed it, rather than analyzing each scale separately, to reduce the number of tests and therefore decrease the likelihood of Type I error.²

2.2.3. Support for humanitarian policies

Participants reported the extent to which they supported the following humanitarian policies towards Palestinians (providing treatment for Palestinian children in Israeli hospitals, restricting electricity to Palestinians in times of conflict (reversed), and using maximal force to break up all Palestinian protests (reversed), $\alpha = 0.80$).

2.2.4. Support for political concessions

Participants reported the extent to which they supported Israel making the following concessions (dividing Jerusalem, withdrawing to

¹ Positive attitudes towards Palestinians included four humanization items (Haslam, 2006), one explicit dehumanization item, five prejudice items (Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1993; Kteily, Bruneau, Waytz, & Cotterill, 2015), and six items measuring emotions towards Palestinians. Before constructing the scale, items were reverse coded appropriately and two items that were measured on a 0 to 100 scale were transformed to a 1–7 scale. Items are presented in the supplementary materials.

² Additional variables that were included for exploratory purposes in both studies are presented in supplementary materials.

the 1967 borders, and recognizing Israel's responsibility for compensating Palestinian refugees, $\alpha = 0.80$). These three items refer to core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and were previously used by Kudish, Cohen-Chen, and Halperin (2015).

2.3. Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables are presented in Table 1.

2.3.1. Initial analysis

2.3.1.1. Manipulation check. In order to test whether the video clips watched in each condition elicited moral elevation and amusement as expected, we ran two separate *t*-tests. We found that participants in the moral elevation condition experienced higher levels of moral elevation ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 1.17$) compared with those in the amusement condition ($M = 1.87$, $SD = 0.69$; $t(237) = 22.92$, $p < .001$, *Cohen's d* = 2.98). Participants in the amusement condition experienced more amusement ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 2.00$) compared with those in the elevation condition ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.32$; $t(237) = 7.18$, $p < .001$, *Cohen's d* = 0.92), thus indicating these emotional experiences were successfully manipulated.

We also sought to further rule out the possibility that our results were driven by positive affect unrelated to elevation. For this, we performed an exploratory factor analysis (using varimax rotation) on all the positive-affect manipulation-check items. The factor analysis revealed two factors, with the elevation items loading on one factor (above 0.72) and amusement items loading on the other factor (above 0.93), indicating that the amusement items represent positive affect that is unrelated to elevation. We therefore controlled for the amusement measure in our main analysis.

2.3.1.2. Confirmatory factor analysis of policy items. We proposed that humanitarian policies and political concessions are two distinct categories of policy preferences. In order to verify the two-factor model and compare it to a one-factor model, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on policy items, to examine the model fit. We assigned items to a grouping descriptively labeled as "humanitarian policies" or a grouping labeled as "political concessions." We found that the two-factor model ($\chi^2(8) = 35.61$, $p < .001$, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.12, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.92, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.95, Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = 0.06) achieved a significantly better fit than a single-factor model ($\chi^2(9) = 135.06$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = 0.24, TLI = 0.65, CFI = 0.79, SRMR = 0.09).

2.3.2. Main analysis

Across our main analysis, in addition to controlling for amusement, we controlled for political ideology given its centrality in predicting policy preferences in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Bartol, 2013). We also controlled for the demographic variables of age and education because they were also significantly correlated with policy preferences. We controlled for these variables across all studies.

2.3.2.1. The effect of moral elevation on positive attitudes towards Palestinians. We found a significant main effect of moral elevation (vs. amusement) on positive attitudes towards Palestinians, $F(1, 218) = 5.97$, $p = .015$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.027$, with those in the elevation condition reporting higher levels of positive attitudes towards Palestinians ($M = 4.09$, $SE = 0.088$, 95% CI [3.91, 4.26]) than those in the amusement condition ($M = 3.77$, $SE = 0.087$ [3.59, 3.94]).

2.3.2.2. The effect of moral elevation on policy preferences. Our analysis revealed that the effect of condition on support for humanitarian policies, although in the expected direction, was below the threshold for

Table 1
Means, standard deviations, and correlations.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Support for humanitarian policies	4.95	1.59						
2. Support for concessions	3.08	1.69	0.58**					
3. Positive attitudes towards Palestinians	3.91	1.18	0.74**	0.60**				
4. Political ideology	4.10	1.26	-0.60**	-0.65**	-0.65**			
5. Age	27.20	7.27	0.22**	0.18**	0.22**	-0.14*		
6. Gender	1.77	0.42	0.05	0.09	-0.01	-0.13*	-0.14*	
7. Education	4.25	1.02	0.11	0.13*	0.15*	-0.08	0.31**	-0.04

M and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively.

* Indicates $p < .05$.

** Indicates $p < .01$.

significance, $F(1, 217) = 2.76$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.013$, elevation: $M = 5.14$, $SE = 0.13$ *CI* [4.89, 5.38], amusement: $M = 4.82$, $SE = 0.13$, *CI* [4.58, 5.07], $p = .098$. There was no main effect of condition on support for political concessions $F(1, 216) = 0.15$, $p = .704$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$. No demographic variables measured nor political ideology, moderated the effects of moral elevation on either of the types of policy support. We did not test the mediating role of attitudes in this study, as there was no significant main effect of elevation on humanitarian policy support.

2.4. Study 1: Discussion

We found that moral elevation did not significantly affect support for humanitarian policies ($p = .098$), nor support for political concessions ($p = .704$). However, we chose to explore our hypothesis further for the following reasons: 1. the effect of elevation on support for humanitarian policies was in the expected direction, even though the p -value was of low evidential value; 2. experiencing moral elevation did significantly increase positive attitudes towards Palestinians, suggesting this emotional state may be influential in this domain; and 3. the sample comprised students and was not representative of the Israeli population, including in terms of political orientation. We therefore decided to test again whether moral elevation increases support for humanitarian policies, but not political concessions on a representative sample.

Results of the CFA in which humanitarian policies and political concessions were two separate factors fit the data better than when they were loaded together on a single factor. Although it was therefore best to treat them as two separate constructs as hypothesized, it should be noted that the two-factor model was not a very good fit to the data. We thus aimed to better affirm the distinctiveness of these scales.

3. Test of the policy measure

Our hypothesis was built on the premise that experiencing moral elevation would lead to increased support for policies that are considered to be imbued with moral imperative, but not for policies that are considered outside of the moral domain. Before continuing to examine this, we wanted to test our underlying assumption that humanitarian policies are perceived to be a moral obligation, whereas political concessions are not.

We recruited 50 participants on social media. We excluded one participant who reported not being Jewish as well as two participants who did not complete the study ($N = 47$, Age: $M = 31.87$, $SD = 12.08$; Gender: Men = 17, Women = 30; Political ideology: leftists = 21,

centrists = 4, rightists = 22).

To test whether humanitarian policies and political concessions differed on the dimension of perceived morality, participants were asked to imagine a person who cared about being moral and rate the extent to which they thought that this person would believe that Israel has a moral obligation to implement each of the policies on a scale of 1 (no moral obligation) to 7 (strong moral obligation). Participants were presented with the list of policy items, in a randomized order.³

We added three policy items to the humanitarian policy measure from Study 1 to improve the two-factor model, which we planned to use as our measure in Study 2. These items were: allowing travel between the West Bank and Gaza so that Palestinians could visit sick relatives and attend funerals, allowing farmers to export goods, and facilitating food and medical aid to citizens in times of conflict. We excluded the item measuring support for using maximal force to break up all Palestinian protests so that the policies included strictly focused on helping civilians. For the purposes of this test, we unreversed the only reversed-scored item in the humanitarian policy measure, so that all items were examples of humanitarian policies (and not harm). The humanitarian policy items were diverse and represented current issues of concern in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict including medical treatment, food aid, access to electricity during war, livelihood, and freedom of movement. We did not adjust the measure of support for political concessions as the items addressed the core issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from an Israeli perspective (e.g. Kudish et al., 2015; Reifen Tagar, Morgan, Halperin, & Skitka, 2014).

To test whether humanitarian policies were perceived to be more of a moral obligation than concessions, we created a measure of perceived moral obligation for humanitarian policies ($\alpha = 0.86$) and perceived moral obligation for political concessions ($\alpha = 0.82$). We then conducted a paired sample t -test and found that participants perceived there to be a significantly higher moral obligation for humanitarian policies ($M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.36$) compared with concessions ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.65$), $t(46) = 12.44$, $p < .001$. A significant difference in mean scores was observed among both leftists and rightists. Moreover, when examining the items individually, we found that the mean of each humanitarian policy item was higher than the mean of each concession item. This test confirmed our assumption that humanitarian policies, but not concessions, are perceived to be imbued with moral imperative.

4. Study 2

The goal of Study 2 was to test again the differential effects of moral

³ We also measured the extent to which the items were perceived as threatening to ingroup interests in order to test whether the two groups of policies were perceived as distinct in their moral imperative above and beyond the extent to which they were perceived as threatening. We find that even once controlling for threat perceptions of humanitarian policies and political concessions, humanitarian policies were perceived as significantly higher in moral imperative than concessions. See details in supplementary materials.

elevation on humanitarian policies and political concessions using a more representative sample of the Israeli population, rather than mainly students. We also added a neutral control condition in order to assess baseline policy preferences, to confirm that moral elevation increases support for humanitarian policies, rather than amusement reducing such support. Furthermore, we tested an additional mediator, alongside increased positive attitudes towards Palestinians. In line with findings showing that moral elevation amplifies concern about moral virtue (Klebl et al., 2019) and leads individuals to care more about others and want to be a better person (e.g. Aquino, McFerran, & Laven, 2011), we hypothesized that increased moral concern for others, would mediate the effect of elevation on support for humanitarian policies towards Palestinians.

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Participants and procedure

As in Study 1, we conducted a power analysis and found that obtaining a small/medium effect size ($d = 0.40$), with an alpha of 0.05 and power of 0.8 for three groups, would require 246 participants. We aimed to recruit 250 participants via an online survey company and were given data for 259 participants (Age: $M = 42.55$, $SD = 15.77$; Gender: 133 men, 122 women (4 missing); Political ideology: leftists = 52, centrists = 66, and rightists = 137 rightists, (4 missing)). This sample was more representative of the Jewish-Israeli population, in terms of political ideology, compared with the primarily student sample in Study 1 (Pew, 2016). Participants were randomly assigned to an elevation, amusement, or control condition. Those in the elevation and amusement conditions watched the same video clips as in Study 1. In the neutral control condition, participants watched a video about hairstyles also featuring a South-East Asian man (<http://y2u.be/8MdbRekZjWw>). In this study, we introduced stricter screening criteria at the outset. Participants could not begin the survey before the video had finished and they had to answer two questions about the video clip correctly, otherwise they were automatically dropped by the survey company. We had an additional memory check question in the middle of the survey that was part of the cover story and also aimed to serve as a manipulation prime, asking participants to identify an image from the video clip that they watched. No participants answered this question incorrectly and therefore no further participants were excluded.

4.2. Measures

We included a *manipulation check*, measuring the level of elevation ($\alpha = 0.96$) and amusement ($\alpha = 0.94$) experienced. We measured *positive attitudes towards Palestinians* ($\alpha = 0.94$), *support for humanitarian policies* ($\alpha = 0.85$) and *support for political concessions* ($\alpha = 0.77$). Measures were similar to Study 1, but slight modifications were made and as mentioned above, we adapted the support for humanitarian policies measure. We also measured the level of happiness elicited by the video clips, as some work suggest that happiness is a positive affect item distinct from elevation (e.g. Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Schnall et al., 2010) (all items are presented in supplementary materials). The order in which participants were presented with humanitarian policies and support for concessions was randomized.

4.2.1. Moral concern for others

This measure comprised 9 items ($\alpha = 0.83$) that encapsulated how much participants cared about other people in the world, generally, and doing good for humanity. Included in this measure were self-transcendence values of benevolence (*taking care of the well-being of people with whom one is in touch. Being responsible, loyal, honest and forgiving*) and universalism (*understanding and accepting the other, while caring for the well-being of all human beings and equality. Being intellectually and emotionally open to the environment and taking care of the environment*) (Sekerdej & Roccas, 2016, based on Schwartz (1992); the five items from

the moral identity centrality internalization scale, capturing the degree to which morality is central to the self-concept (e.g. *To what extent do you aspire to be like someone who is caring, compassionate, fair, generous, helpful, moral, sincere, and kind-hearted?* Aquino & Reed, 2002), and two items that were adapted from the identification with all humanity scale (e.g. *How much would you say you care (feel upset, want to help) when bad things happen to people anywhere in the world?* McFarland, Webb, & Brown, 2012) (the full measure is presented in supplementary materials). We combined these items to create this measure rather than analyzing each scale separately as these items conceptually related to moral concern for others and the measure had high internal consistency, thus allowing us to reduce the number of tests on similar scales and decrease the likelihood of Type I error.

4.3. Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables are presented in Table 2.

4.3.1. Initial analysis

4.3.1.1. Manipulation check. We first conducted an ANOVA in order to check whether the video clips watched in each condition elicited the expected emotional response. We found a significant difference between conditions in the extent of moral elevation experienced $F(2,256) = 254.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.67$. Participants in the elevation condition experienced higher levels of moral elevation ($M = 5.44$, $SD = 1.34$) compared with those in the amusement condition ($M = 1.81$, $SD = 1.08$, $p < .001$) and those in the control condition ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 1.16$, $p < .001$). There was no significant difference in elevation experienced between those in the amusement and control conditions ($p = .089$). We also found that the extent of amusement experienced differed significantly between conditions $F(2,256) = 7.07$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.05$. Those in the amusement condition experienced significantly more amusement ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.96$) than those in the elevation condition ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.35$, $p < .001$) and those in the control condition ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.75$, $p = .001$). There was no difference in the amount of amusement experienced between the elevation and control condition ($p = .433$). As in Study 1, as expected, our moral elevation manipulation aroused more moral elevation and the amusement manipulation aroused more amusement.

We then conducted EFA (using varimax rotation) on the manipulation check items. Two factors were extracted, with the elevation items loading on to the first factor (above 0.86) and the amusement items loading on the second factor (above 0.91). Surprisingly, happiness had a high loading on the first factor (0.73). Although happiness factored with elevation we did not include it in the elevation manipulation check measure, as it is conceptually distinct (Algoe & Haidt, 2009), and we therefore did not include the item in our analysis. However, when included in the elevation manipulation check measure, results remained significant. As in Study 1, we controlled for positive affect that did not factor with elevation, namely, the amusement measure.

4.3.1.2. Confirmatory factor analysis of policy items. We conducted CFA to ensure that humanitarian policies and political concessions were distinct and the model suggested satisfactory model fit ($\chi^2(19) = 63.09$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = 0.10, TLI = 0.94, CFI = 0.96, SRMR = 0.07). The two factor model achieved a significantly better fit than a single-factor model ($\chi^2(20) = 169.03$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = 0.17, TLI = 0.79, CFI = 0.85, SRMR = 0.08). The data thus provided support for our assumption that these two policy types are distinct.

Table 2
Means, standard deviations, and correlations.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Support for humanitarian policies	4.11	1.60							
2. Support for concessions	2.72	1.66	0.63**						
3. Moral concern for others	5.51	0.71	0.42**	0.22**					
4. Positive attitudes towards Palestinians	3.38	1.24	0.68**	0.58**	0.33**				
5. Political ideology	4.65	1.35	-0.64**	-0.69**	-0.26**	-0.64**			
6. Age	42.55	15.77	0.36**	0.31**	0.15*	0.33**	-0.32**		
7. Gender	1.48	0.50	0.09	-0.04	0.17**	0.04	-0.03	-0.01	
8. Education	3.55	1.52	0.08	0.08	-0.11	0.10	-0.12	0.17**	0.02

M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively.

* Indicates $p < .05$.

** Indicates $p < .01$.

4.3.2. Main analysis

4.3.2.1. The effect of moral elevation on positive attitudes towards Palestinians and moral concern for others. We tested the effects of moral elevation on the hypothesized mediators. There was a significant difference between condition on positive attitudes towards Palestinians $F(2, 247) = 3.70, p = .026, \eta_p^2 = 0.03$. Those in the elevation condition ($M = 3.48, SE = 0.10, 95\% CI [3.29, 3.67]$) and those in the amusement condition ($M = 3.51, SE = 0.10, 95\% CI [3.30, 3.70]$) had more positive attitudes towards Palestinians than those in the control condition ($M = 3.13, SE = 0.11, 95\% CI [2.91, 3.35], p = .020$ and $p = .015$ respectively). There was, however, no significant difference between those in the elevation and amusement conditions in positive attitudes towards Palestinians ($p = .860$), thus not replicating results of Study 1.

We then tested the effects of elevation on moral concern for others. There was a significant difference between condition on moral concern for others, $F(2, 247) = 5.58, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = 0.04$, as expected. Those in the moral elevation condition had more moral concern for human beings ($M = 5.70, SE = 0.06, 95\% CI [5.58, 5.83]$) than those in the amusement condition ($M = 5.44, SE = 0.07, 95\% CI [5.31, 5.57], p = .006$) and control condition ($M = 5.42, SE = 0.07, 95\% CI [5.27, 5.56], p = .004$). There was no difference in moral concern between the control and amusement conditions ($p = .807$).

4.3.2.2. The effect of elevation on policy preferences. We next tested the effect of moral elevation on support for humanitarian policies and found a significant effect of condition $F(2, 247) = 3.18, p = .044, \eta_p^2 = 0.025$. Those in the moral elevation condition had significantly more support for humanitarian policies ($M = 4.37, SE = 0.13, 95\% CI [4.12, 4.61]$) than those in the amusement condition ($M = 4.00, SE = 0.13, 95\% CI [3.74, 4.25], p = .042$) and the control condition ($M = 3.94, SE = 0.14, 95\% CI [3.66, 4.22], p = .026$). There was no difference between amusement and control conditions in support for humanitarian policies. We next tested the effect of elevation on support for political concessions and found no differences between any conditions $F(2, 247) = 0.455, p = .635, \eta_p^2 = 0.00$. Neither political ideology nor any other demographic variables measured, moderated the relationship between condition and policy support measures.

4.3.2.3. The mediating role of moral concern for others. We next examined whether the association between moral elevation and support for humanitarian policies could be explained by increased moral concern using Hayes' PROCESS (2013) bootstrapping command with 5000 iterations (model 4), controlling for political ideology, age, and education, and amusement, as in previous analyses. We conducted the mediation analysis using indicator coding: the moral elevation condition was coded as the reference condition and was compared to the amusement condition and control separately. The analysis revealed that the relative indirect effect of moral elevation (vs. amusement) on support for humanitarian policies through moral concern was significant, effect = 0.16, $SE = 0.07, 95\% CI = [0.04, 0.31]$. Similarly, the relative indirect

effect of moral elevation (vs. control) on support for humanitarian policies through moral concern was significant, effect = 0.18, $SE = 0.07, 95\% CI = [0.05, 0.32]$. These results provide evidence in support of the proposed model (see Fig. 1).⁴

4.4. Study 2 Discussion

Results of Study 2 showed that moral elevation increased support for humanitarian policies towards outgroup members, but did not alter support for political concessions, in the context of intergroup conflict. Moral elevation did not lead participants to have more positive attitudes towards Palestinians compared with experiencing amusement, as it did in Study 1. However, this study provided support for a different mechanism by demonstrating that moral concern for others mediated the effect of moral elevation on support for humanitarian policies. The addition of a neutral emotion control condition in this study, revealed that moral elevation was driving the observed effects, as there were no differences on support for humanitarian policies and moral concern between the amusement and control condition, but the elevation condition differed from both.

5. Study 3

Our goal was to conduct a preregistered replication to strengthen confidence in our finding that elevation (vs. amusement) increases support for humanitarian policies, but not concessions, and that this effect is mediated through moral concern for others. We preregistered the study on AsPredicted (<https://aspredicted.org/34tv3.pdf>). (We used

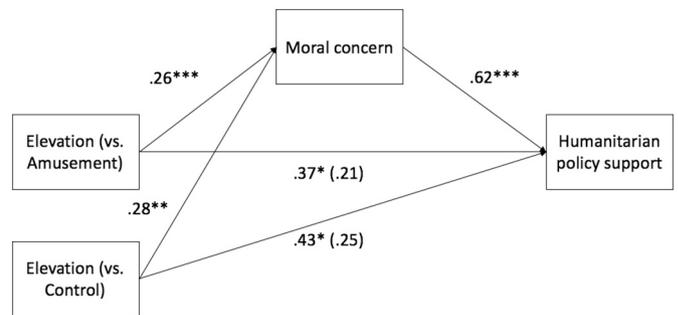


Fig. 1. Moral concern for others as a mediator of the effect of moral elevation on support for humanitarian policies, while controlling for political ideology, age, education, and amusement (Study 2). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

⁴ We note that the mediational analyses presented in this paper cannot rule out confounding factors or the possibility of other valid models (Fiedler, Harris, & Schott, 2018). We do, however, believe that the model we propose has a solid theoretical basis.

the same experimental design and materials as in Study 2, except that we did not include a neutral control condition as our previous results clearly indicated that elevation was driving the effect.

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Participants and procedure

We recruited 305 participants from an online survey company (we requested 300 as per our preregistration, but five extra participated in the study). A power analysis using a smaller effect size than in our previous calculations, ($d = 0.35$), with an alpha of 0.05 and power of 0.8, indicated that 260 participants were required. We included one additional attention check to further ensure that our sample comprised participants who were paying full attention. After screening out 8 participants who failed to answer the attentions check questions correctly, 297 participants remained (Age: $M = 43.67$, $SD = 16.86$; Gender: 159 men (3 missing), 135 women (3 missing); Political ideology: leftists = 54, centrists = 91, and rightists = 157 rightists (3 missing). Participants were representative of the Jewish-Israeli public, including on the important dimension of political ideology. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: moral elevation or amusement, and watched the respective video clip and answered the survey.

5.2. Measures

We included a *manipulation check*, to measure elevation ($\alpha = 0.97$) and amusement ($\alpha = 0.94$), and we measured happiness with one item. We measured *positive attitudes towards Palestinians* ($\alpha = 0.92$), *moral concern for others* ($\alpha = 0.87$), *support for humanitarian policies* ($\alpha = 0.84$) and *support for political concessions* ($\alpha = 0.74$), and demographics.

5.3. Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables are presented in [Table 3](#).

5.3.1. Initial results

5.3.1.1. Manipulation check. A *t*-test showed that participants in the moral elevation condition experienced higher levels of moral elevation ($M = 5.55$, $SD = 1.25$) compared with those in the amusement condition ($M = 1.81$, $SD = 1.03$; $t(295) = 28.22$, *Cohen's* $d = 3.27$, $p < .001$). Participants in the amusement condition experienced more amusement ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.81$) compared with those in the elevation condition ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.36$; $t(295) = 3.79$, *Cohen's* $d = 0.44$, $p < .001$), thus, again, showing that the desired emotional experiences were successfully manipulated by each video clip.⁵

5.3.2. Main analysis

5.3.2.1. The effect of moral elevation on positive attitudes towards Palestinians and moral concern for others. There was no significant difference in positive attitudes towards Palestinians between those in the elevation and amusement conditions $F(1, 288) = 0.98$, $p = .324$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.00$.

There was a significant difference between condition in moral concern for others $F(1, 288) = 17.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.06$, with those in the elevation condition expressing more concern for others ($M = 5.81$,

$SE = 0.08$, $CI [5.65, 5.96]$) than those in the amusement condition ($M = 5.33$, $SE = 0.08$ $CI[5.18, 5.49]$), replicating Study 2 findings.

5.3.2.2. The effect of elevation on policy preferences. We found that those in the elevation condition ($M = 4.53$, $SE = 0.11$, 95% $CI [4.31, 4.74]$) had stronger support for humanitarian policies than those in the amusement condition ($M = 4.16$, $SE = 0.11$, 95% $CI [3.95, 4.38]$), $F(1, 288) = 5.46$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$, as hypothesized. As in previous studies, there was no effect of condition on political concessions ($F(1, 288) = 0.398$, $p = .529$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.00$). Neither political ideology nor any demographic variables measured, moderated the relationship between condition and policy support measures.⁶

5.3.2.3. The mediating role of moral concern for others. Mediation analysis revealed that the indirect effect of moral elevation (vs. amusement) on support for humanitarian policies through moral concern was significant, effect = 0.14, $SE = 0.05$, 95% $CI [0.05, 0.25]$, again providing evidence in support of the proposed model (see [Fig. 2](#))

5.4. Study 3 Discussion

The results of this study were fully consistent with those of Study 2 and with our preregistered hypotheses. We found that that the moral elevation (vs. amusement) condition increased Jewish-Israelis' support for humanitarian policies towards Palestinian and that moral concern for others played a mediating role. We again found no relationship between moral elevation and support for political concessions.

6. Mini meta-analysis

We analyzed the three studies to determine the overall main effect of elevation on policy support ([Goh, Hall, & Rosenthal, 2016](#)). We used fixed effects in which the mean effect sizes (converted to *Cohen's* d) were weighted by sample size.⁷ Overall, those in the elevation condition had significantly higher support for humanitarian policies compared with those in the control conditions (*M Cohen's* $d = 0.28$, $Z = 3.79$, 95% $CI [0.13, 0.42]$, $p < .001$, two-tailed). There was no difference between the moral elevation and control conditions in support for political concessions (*M Cohen's* $d = 0.06$, $Z = 0.84$, 95% $CI [-0.08, 0.20]$, $p = .401$,

⁶ Although not preregistered, we conducted a CFA on policy items to examine model fit, as in the previous studies. The model suggested a good model fit ($\chi^2(19) = 48.40$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = 0.07, TLI = 0.96, CFI = 0.97, SRMR = 0.06) and again, provided support for the distinctiveness of humanitarian policies and concessions.

⁷ When conducting the mini meta-analysis, we collapsed the positive emotion (amusement) control condition and the neutral control condition in Study 2 and compared this with the elevation condition.

⁵ As in Study 2, EFA (using varimax rotation) extracted two factors, with the elevation items loading on the first factor (above 0.88) and the amusement items loading on the second factor (above 0.92). As the happiness item, again, loaded on to the elevation factor (0.84), we excluded it from the analysis and we controlled for the amusement measure. As in Study 2, with happiness included in the elevation measure, the results of the manipulation check remained significant.

Table 3
Means, standard deviations, and correlations.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Support for humanitarian policies	4.34	1.57							
2. Support for concessions	2.67	1.60	0.56**						
3. Moral concern for others	5.57	0.95	0.23**	0.07					
4. Positive attitudes towards Palestinians	3.84	1.27	0.67**	0.46**	0.16**				
5. Political ideology	4.56	1.23	-0.55**	-0.67**	-0.08	-0.51**			
6. Age	43.67	16.86	0.21**	0.20**	-0.02	0.13*	-0.22**		
7. Gender	1.46	0.50	0.09	-0.04	0.16**	0.17**	-0.07	-0.02	
8. Education	3.88	1.47	0.16**	0.16**	-0.02	0.13*	-0.14*	0.24**	0.05

M and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively.

* Indicates $p < .05$.

** Indicates $p < .01$.

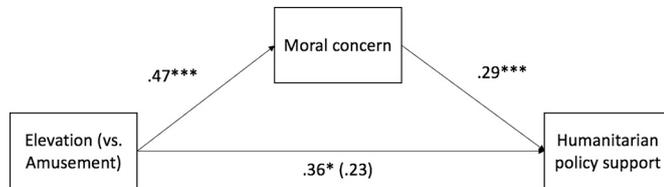


Fig. 2. Moral concern for others as a mediator of the effect of moral elevation on support for humanitarian policies, while controlling for political ideology, age, education and amusement (Study 3). * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$.

two-tailed).⁸

7. General discussion

In this work, we sought to examine the effect of moral elevation on policy preferences in the context of intractable conflict. Focusing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we found that moral elevation vs. amusement and vs. a neutral control condition, led Jewish-Israeli participants to express significantly higher support for humanitarian policies towards Palestinians civilians, but it did not alter support for political concessions. We found that elevation significantly increased support for humanitarian policies in Studies 2 and 3, but in Study 1 this effect, although in the expected direction, was not significant. However, a mini meta-analysis confirmed the significance of the overall effect of elevation on support for humanitarian policies. As the overall effect was relatively small, it may be that there was simply not enough power in

⁸ In the context of this study, the elevation measure was included as a manipulation check. However, for exploratory purposes, we also examined the mediating role of the experience of elevation, as existing work suggests that the emotional experience itself may play a role in the effectiveness of moral-elevation inductions (e.g. Oliver et al., 2015). To this end, we tested whether the experience of elevation played a mediating role between the elevation (vs. control) condition and support for humanitarian policies. When using the elevation measure comprising the items that were included in all three studies, and the same controls as in previous analysis, the path from elevation induction to the experience of elevation was significant ($\beta = 3.75$, $SE = 0.08$, $t = 46.73$, $p < .001$). The path from the experience of elevation to support for humanitarian policies, fell short of significance ($\beta = 0.08$, $SE = 0.43$, $t = 1.84$, $p = .066$). and the relative indirect effect through the experience of elevation was marginally significant, effect = 0.30, $SE = 0.16$, 95% CI [-0.02, 0.61]. When including the positive sensation/happiness item in the elevation measure, the path from elevation induction to the experience of elevation remained significant ($\beta = 3.62$, $SE = 0.08$, $t = 47.09$, $p < .001$) and the path from the experience of elevation to support for humanitarian policies was significant ($\beta = 0.10$, $SE = 0.04$, $t = 2.35$, $p = .019$). The relative indirect effect through the experience of elevation was also significant, effect = 0.38, $SE = 0.17$, 95% CI [0.06, 0.71]. This patterns of results provides support for a model in which the emotional experience of elevation is part of the psychological mechanism for the effect of exposure to elevating materials on support for humanitarian policies.

Study 1 to detect a significant effect.

Our research builds on previous work showing that elevation predicts helping primarily in the interpersonal domain (e.g. Schnall et al., 2010). We extend this by showing that even in the context of violent intractable conflict, elevation can increase support for humanitarian action to alleviate the suffering of outgroup members. Though our findings highlight the promise of eliciting this emotional experience in the context of intergroup conflict, they also show that it is not a magical elixir for conflict resolution as its effects do not extend to increased support for political concessions that are generally seen as a necessary condition for the promotion of peace. We suggest that support for political concessions remains unaffected by elevation because supporting concessions is not considered to be a moral good, unlike humanitarian policies, as we demonstrated above.

We identified moral concern for others as a mechanism that may explain why moral elevation increases support for humanitarian action. We also tested whether positive attitudes towards the outgroup mediated the observed effect, but found that only in Study 1 were positive attitudes towards Palestinians significantly strengthened by moral elevation, and that in Studies 2 and 3 they were not significantly affected. Our mixed results regarding positive attitudes are consistent with the overall mixed support in the literature regarding the effects of elevation on attitudes towards outgroup members (Lai et al., 2014; Oliver, Hartmann, & Woolley, 2012) and suggests that the effect of moral elevation on attitudes towards outgroup members is less robust or may be subject to additional factors (Lai et al., 2014). On the other hand, our finding that moral concern for others played a mediating role on the effect of elevation on humanitarian policy support, is in line with previous work showing that elevation leads to an increased desire to be moral (e.g. Aquino et al., 2011; Haidt, 2000). These results show that the effect of elevation on support for humanitarian policies is not contingent on positive attitudes towards the outgroup. General moral concern for others may, therefore, better explains the effect of elevation on support for policies that protect the basic needs of outgroup members and aim to reduce their suffering. It should be noted that the mediation models tested can only be suggestive about the causal inference of variables as we did not experimentally manipulate the mediator. Furthermore, we do not argue that moral concern for others is the sole mechanism underlying the relationship between elevation and support for humanitarian policies, but our results suggest it plays an important role.

As well as contributing to the literature on moral elevation, our work highlights the potential of moral elevation as an emotion-based intervention for increasing support for humanitarian action. In the context of intergroup conflict, people's conflict related attitudes are often extremely rigid (Halperin & Bar Tal, 2011) and individuals are often resistant to caring about, and feeling empathy towards, outgroup members (Brown, Bradley, & Lang, 2006; Čehajić-Clancy, 2011; Cikara, Bruneau, Van Bavel, & Saxe, 2014). Even though empathy is associated with support for humanitarian aid towards outgroup members, attempts to elicit empathy towards outgroup members are often unsuccessful and have even been found to backfire under certain circumstances

(Graziano, Habashi, Sheese, & Tobin, 2007; Vorauer & Sasaki, 2009). An elevation-based intervention may be less threatening than an empathy-based intervention as it need not contain any mention of the conflict or the outgroup whatsoever. The effect of elevation on increasing support for humanitarian action towards outgroup members is not contingent on ingroup members feeling specific emotions or having specific attitudes towards the outgroup. Another advantage of elevation-based interventions is that elevation is generally experienced as a positive emotion (Haidt, 2003), in contrast to other emotions that encourage prosocial behavior, such as empathy, which may be distressing, or shame and guilt, which may be aversive (Wohl et al., 2006). For these reasons it may be more conducive, even if less intuitive, to expose people to elevating acts of moral goodness rather than exposing them to the suffering of outgroup members, in order to increase support for humanitarian action towards those outgroup members.

It is possible that a moral elevation intervention would be more effective for some groups than others. According to the needs based model of conflict resolution, perpetrator groups are more concerned with maintaining their moral image, which is put into question by their transgressions, compared with victim groups, who are instead more concerned with restoring their agency (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Previous work shows that those who care more about being moral, have a greater desire to be a better person after being exposed to morally elevating materials, compared with those who care less about being moral (Aquino et al., 2011). To the extent that specific groups care about being moral, they may be more or less affected by an elevation intervention. We note that the studies in this paper were conducted in only one sociopolitical context and participants were all Jewish-Israeli. Future work is therefore merited to test the impact of moral elevation on support for humanitarian and other policy preferences in other contexts and on different groups, to confirm the generalizability of the findings and explore whether group status may impact the effectiveness of the intervention.

Finally, it would be interesting to test the duration of the effects of moral elevation on support for policy preferences. While one study found that the effects of elevation on volunteering can persist across time (Cox, 2010), the majority of work does not test longitudinal effects of moral elevation, which is an important question, especially for applied purposes.

8. Conclusion

In the context of intractable conflict, people tend to overlook the suffering of civilians who belong to the opposing group, with detrimental consequences for innocent lives. We reveal that simply exposing people to the morally elevating behavior of another may increase support for policies that aid and protect outgroup members in this challenging context. Our work is the first to examine the effects of moral elevation on distinct outgroup-favorable policy support in the context of conflict. We hope that future work can continue to contribute not only to our theoretical understanding of the role of elevation in the context of intractable conflict, but also inform policy makers and campaigners aiming to increase moral concern towards outgroup civilians in conflict and promote humanitarian action.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2021.104113>.

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