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## Group-level emotions

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Emotions can be experienced not only at the individual level, but also on behalf of social groups by people who belong to and identify with those groups. As outlined in Intergroup Emotions Theory, these emotions are driven by appraisals of objects or events in terms of their relevance for the group (rather than the individual). They shift depending on currently salient group memberships, and are moderated by the degree of identification with the group. Consequences of group-based emotions include treatment of outgroups (including bias and discrimination) as well as attitudes and behavior toward the ingroup (including ingroup affiliation and support). A particularly important new direction is the study of emotion regulation processes as they operate with group-based emotions, with some recent research suggesting that emotion regulation interventions may be helpful in ameliorating intractable intergroup conflicts.

### Addresses

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Emotions have traditionally been seen as an individual-level phenomenon. For example, pioneering appraisal theorist Arnold [1, p. 171] wrote ‘to arouse an emotion, the object must be appraised as affecting me in some way, affecting me personally as an individual.’ Now a range of research and theory has converged to overturn this assumption, introducing the concept of group-based emotions. Drawing on the social identity perspective [2], we now understand that when people identify with a group, the group identity becomes an aspect of the self through self-categorization. Like any aspect of the self, the group then becomes imbued with affective significance. One important consequence is that people will appraise objects and events in terms of their implications (positive or negative) for the group as a whole, rather than simply for the individual. Such group-based appraisals lead to the experience of group-based emotions, such as anxiety if the

group is perceived to be threatened, anger if the group is treated unfairly by others, or hope if the group is seen as potentially making gains [3,4]. We developed Intergroup Emotion Theory [5<sup>••</sup>] to explain these emotions as well as their causes and effects, and many other researchers now assume essentially compatible perspectives [6,7<sup>•</sup>,8–10]. Niedenthal and Brauer [11<sup>•</sup>] broadly define group-based emotion as an emotion experienced by individuals on behalf of a group to which they belong and with which they identify, a definition that captures what is common among all these perspectives.

Research establishes several key facts about group-based emotions. First, because they depend on self-categorization, the specific emotions that a person will experience depend on the currently salient group membership. For example, someone might experience more pride and less disgust when thinking of the self as a student of their university, compared to thinking of the self as a citizen of their country, if the individual perceives the university as outstanding but strongly disagrees with the country’s national policies [9,12–14]. It further follows that group-based emotions will also differ from those experienced when self-categorizing at the individual (rather than group) level [15].

Second, because members of a group often perceive and appraise group-related events similarly, empirically they often tend to share common profiles of group-based emotions [12]. In effect, a group’s typical emotion pattern becomes a group norm, so group members naturally tend to converge toward that pattern [16<sup>•</sup>,17]. However, it is important to note that this sharing is not part of the definition of group-based emotions, and may not always occur, for example if group members disagree on their interpretations of group-relevant events.

Third, group-based emotions are based on group-level rather than individual-level appraisals. For example, people who have not personally committed wrongdoing may still experience guilt when reminded of the misdeeds of other ingroup members [18,19].

Fourth, because group identification (e.g., the importance and centrality of a group membership to the individual) can vary across individuals and over time, identification moderates the effect of self-categorization on emotion. Thus, highly identified group members converge toward group emotion norms more readily than do less identified members, so they experience the emotion (and its downstream consequences) more strongly [17]. However, this pattern changes in

the case of negative group-based emotions, where highly identified group members may experience strong motivation to avoid feeling guilt, disappointment, or fear with regard to their groups, resulting in motivated reappraisals [18,20].

In summary, self-categorization as a group member sets the stage for group-based appraisals of social groups or other objects or events, but this relationship is modified by the extent of group identification. These appraisals generate group-level emotions, whose consequences then include group-related action tendencies and ultimately behavior.

The remainder of this review covers three areas of current research activity. First, we describe how group-based emotions regulate and influence people's judgments and behaviors toward outgroups, including prejudice and discrimination. Second, group-based emotions also affect people's feelings about and treatment of their ingroup. Finally, we discuss the role of emotion regulation processes with regard to group-based emotions, and their implications for potential interventions.

### Relations to prejudice and treatment of outgroups

The emotions felt toward outgroups — often negative but sometimes positive such as admiration or sympathy — have long been a central focus of work on group-based emotions, largely because they can provide a highly differentiated account of different types of intergroup behavior such as discrimination [3,21]. Indeed, group-based emotions toward other groups or events can better predict collective action, compared to more cognitive perceptions of those groups or events [22]. These actions can be highly differentiated: groups that are viewed with anger, fear, disgust, or contempt (for example) may be treated very differently [8].

Anger has been the most-studied emotion in this context, because it predicts aggression toward outgroups [4,12,23]. Part of the reason may be that anger tends to increase risk-taking behavior in general [17,24].

Other negative emotions are also relevant. Relations of fear to direct intergroup aggression are mixed [25,26]. Contempt, however, appears to be related to aggression as strongly as anger is. More worrisome, contempt is sometimes found to predict extreme and violent intergroup behavior, whereas anger predicts more 'normative' behaviors such as protest or advocating for exclusionary policies [27,28]. This makes sense because more broadly, contempt has been linked to moral exclusion (the removal of moral constraints), which can be a precursor to extreme harm against outgroups such as pogroms, enslavement, or even genocide. Recent work has examined dehumanization as a driver of extreme aggression in a

similar context [29] but further research is needed to identify the emotional correlates or precursors of dehumanization (see Haslam and Stratemeyer, this issue).

Positive emotions toward outgroups as well as negative, threat-related ones, are also relevant to people's treatment of those outgroups. Miller *et al.* [30] showed that a composite of positive emotions was a stronger mediator of the effect of intergroup contact on prejudice than was a composite of negative emotions. Seger *et al.* [31], using a representative sample of the U.S. population, analyzed several discrete emotions separately and found that feelings of admiration and respect were a strong mediator (stronger than anger) of contact effects on prejudice between major ethnic groups. The role of positive emotions (especially based on intergroup contact) makes sense in light of theories holding that experiencing cross-group friendships, rather than merely learning about an outgroup, is crucial for prejudice reduction [32].

Finally, a small but growing number of studies have examined the role of group-based emotions in the process of intergroup reconciliation. Leonard *et al.* [16\*] found that the effect of apology on forgiveness of an outgroup was mediated by changes in group-based emotions, especially anger and respect/admiration. Again, increases in positive emotions as well as decreases in negative ones are important.

### Relations to ingroup attachment and treatment of ingroup

Emotions toward the ingroup may powerfully drive actions relevant to the group (e.g., affiliation, support, or sacrifice for the group; pressuring group leaders for change). Positive ingroup-directed emotions ('ingroup love') may even play a more important role than outgroup-directed negativity ('outgroup hate') in causing intergroup bias and discrimination [33\*]. Maitner *et al.*, [19,34] found that group members experience emotions including anger, fear, or guilt when they disagree with the group's action. The role of these emotions in regulating the relationship to the ingroup is shown by the fact that they dissipate when the group actually performs the desired action. Similarly, the combination of anger and guilt at the ingroup predicts political action aimed at changing group policies [35].

Ingroup-directed emotions may often be biased by people's commitment to and identification with the group. The role of identification in biasing appraisals and therefore changing emotions has been examined by Maitner *et al.* [19], who found that highly identified group members appraised the ingroup's aggressive acts as more justified, thereby reducing their feelings of guilt. Other work has similarly found that group identification can bias appraisals and emotions [18,36].

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