Can Emotion Regulation Change Political Attitudes in Intractable and Religious Conflict? From the Laboratory to the Field

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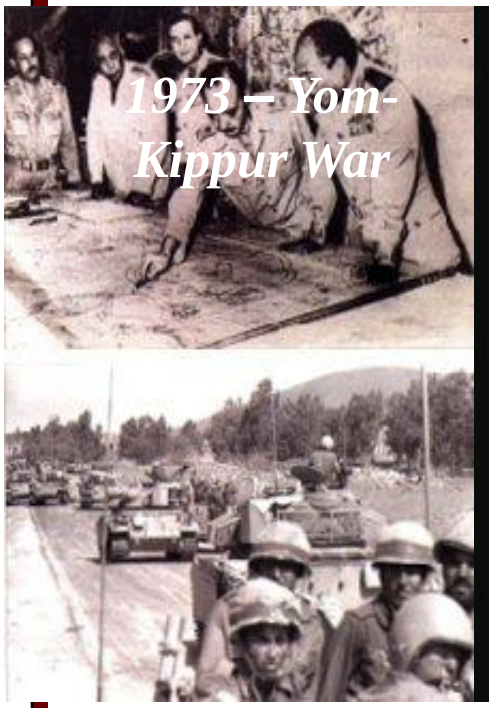
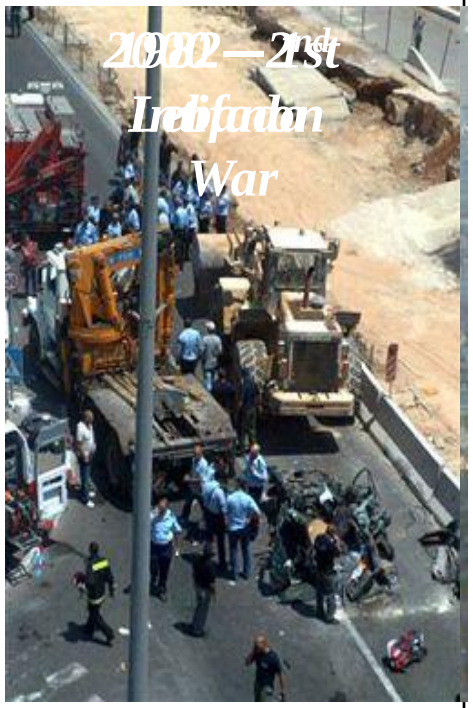
Reducing Religious Conflict
University of Oxford, 18-19 June 2012


1973 – Yom-Kippur War

1975 – I was Born


2000 – 2nd Intifada

Religious Conflict??

- Religious issues? Less than 33% of Jews in Israel and of Palestinians are willing to make compromises regarding the Holly Places (Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011)

Religious Conflict??

- Creative Solutions…

1. Sovereignty of God
2. Bellow and above the ground

Religious Conflict??

- **Religious people?** Only **21.3%** of the Jews in Israel and **46.5%** of the Palestinians define themselves as “Religious” or “very religious” (Canetti et al., 2010).

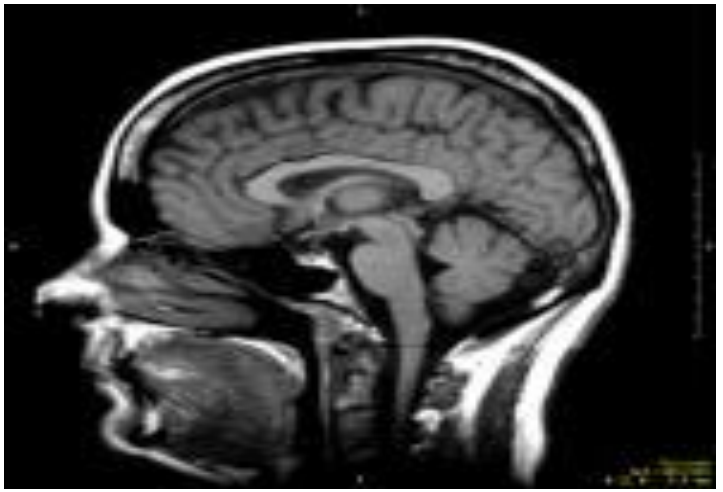
November 20th 1977 Sadat Speech in Jerusalem

Psychological Barriers - Anwar Sadat, 1977

"Yet there remains another wall. This wall constitutes a <u>psychological barrier</u> between us, a barrier of suspicion, a barrier of rejection, a barrier of fear, of deception.... This psychological barrier [constitutes] <u>70 percent</u> of the whole problem."

Psychological Barriers

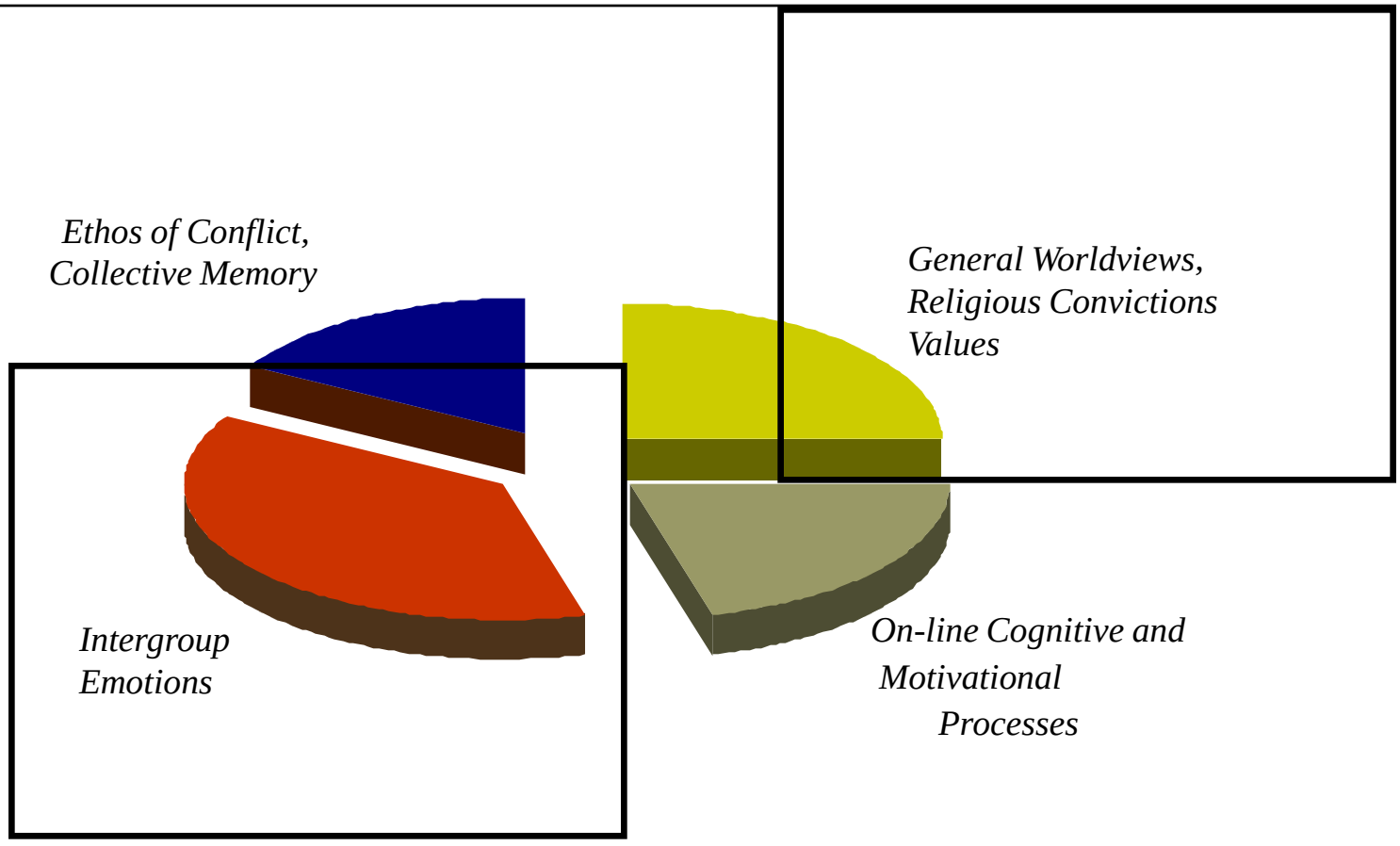
- Psychological barriers govern the way that human beings interpret information, evaluate risks, set priorities, and experience feelings of gain and loss (Ross & Ward, 1995).



- These barriers are not the disagreements themselves, but they are psychological factors that inhibit progress towards peace by freezing the disagreements (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2008).

The Arab Peace Initiative

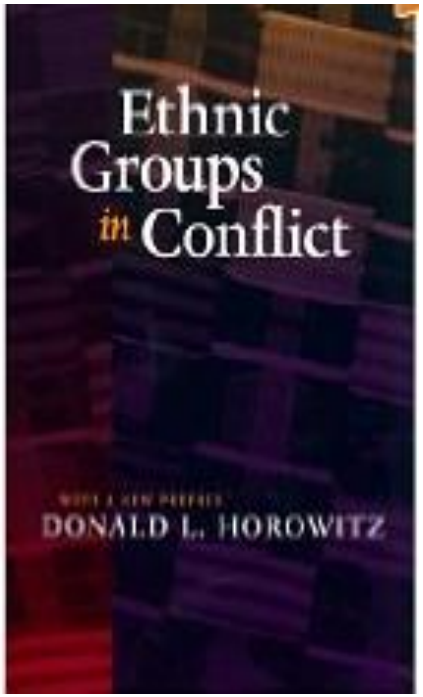
Psychological Barriers



Bar-Tal, D., & Halperin, E. (2011). Socio-psychological barriers to conflict resolution. In D. Bar-Tal (Ed.), *Intergroup conflicts and their resolution: Social psychological perspective* (pp. 217–240). New York: Psychology Press.

Emotional Barriers

- ***"The sheer passion expended in pursuing ethnic conflict calls out for an explanation that does justice to the realm of feelings … A bloody phenomenon cannot be explained by a bloodless theory"***
  (Horowitz, 1985, p. 140)



Emotional Stories

- “Emotional feelings are stories we tell ourselves in order to guide and account for our own behavior" (Averill 1994, 385).
- Differentiating components of distinct emotional stories:

1. Cognitive appraisal.
2. Emotional goals/tendencies.

Two Main Challenges

- Identifying the **specific influence** of emotions on attitudes towards peace.
- Identifying strategies **to overcome** these discrete emotional barriers.

Challenge 1: Emotions in Violent Conflicts

- ***Fear and Anger*** (e.g., Cheung-Blunden & Blunden, 2008a, 2008b; Huddy et al., 2007; Lerner et al., 2003; Small et al., 2006).
- ***Hate, Anger and Fear*** (e.g., Halperin, 2008, 2011; Halperin, Russell, Dweck & Gross, 2011; Reifen, Federico & Halperin, 2011).
- ***Fear and Hope*** (e.g., Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006; Halperin, Bar-Tal et al., 2008)
- ***Hope and Empathy*** (Halperin, Rosler & Gross, 2011 unpublished)
- ***Angst*** (Halperin, Wohl & Porat, 2011 unpublished)
- ***Moral Emotions*** (e.g., Brown et al., 2008a, 2008b; Cehajic et al., 2008, 2011; Iyer et al., 2003; Tam et al., 2007; Wohl et al., 2005, 2006)

Second Challenge

Emotion regulation strategies as a new avenue for **conflict resolution**

Solutions
NEXT EXIT

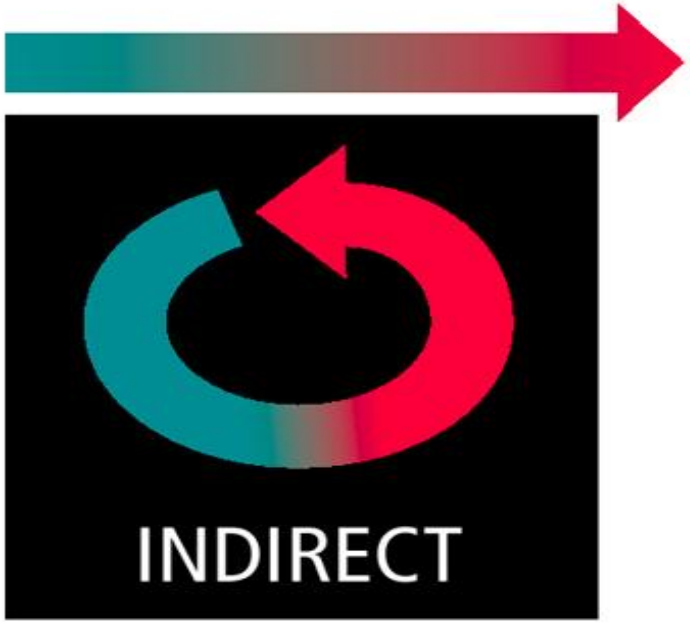
Emotion Regulation in Intergroup Conflict

(Halperin, Sharvit & Gross, 2011)

- **Basic Assumption**: Strategies of emotion regulation, previously used on the individual level, can help overcome emotional barriers to conflict resolution on the intergroup level.
- **Emotion Regulation**: Processes that take place when individuals try to influence the type or amount of emotion they (or others) experience, when they (or others) have them, and how they (or others) experience and express these emotions (Gross, 1998).

Halperin, E., Sharvit, K., & Gross, J. J. (2011). Emotions and emotion regulation in conflicts. In D. Bar-Tal (Ed) *Intergroup conflicts and their resolution: Social psychological perspective* (pp. 83-103). New York: Psychology Press.

Direct Vs. Indirect Emotion Regulation



Indirect ER in Conflict – Changing Emotions through Change in Core Appraisals

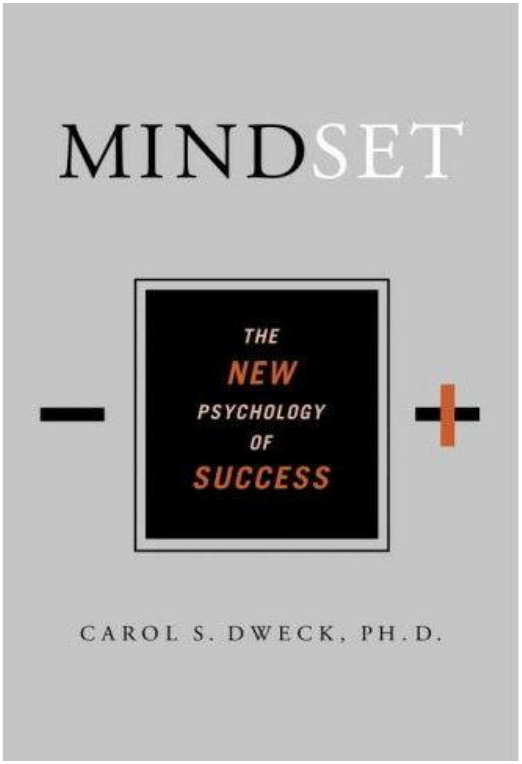
- Identify core appraisal themes.
- Identify simple interventions that can tackle these core themes.
- Extrapolate from these small interventions to large scale programs.

Indirect ER in Conflict – The Case of Hate

- Identify core appraisal themes ("Outgroup is Evil by Nature").
- Identify simple interventions that can tackle these core themes ("All Groups Can Change" – GIT).
- Extrapolate from these small interventions to large scale programs.

Indirect Regulation of Hatred (Science, 2011)

- **Research Goal**: To down-regulate intergroup hatred by experimentally inducing incremental instead of entity theory about groups.
- **No** mention of the outgroup.
- **No** mention of the conflict.



Halperin, E., Russell, G. A., Trzesniewski, H. K., Gross, J. J., & Dweck, S. C. (2011). Promoting the peace process by changing beliefs about group malleability. *Science. 333* (1767).

GIT Manipulation: Violent Groups can Change their Ways

Patterns of violence in groups can

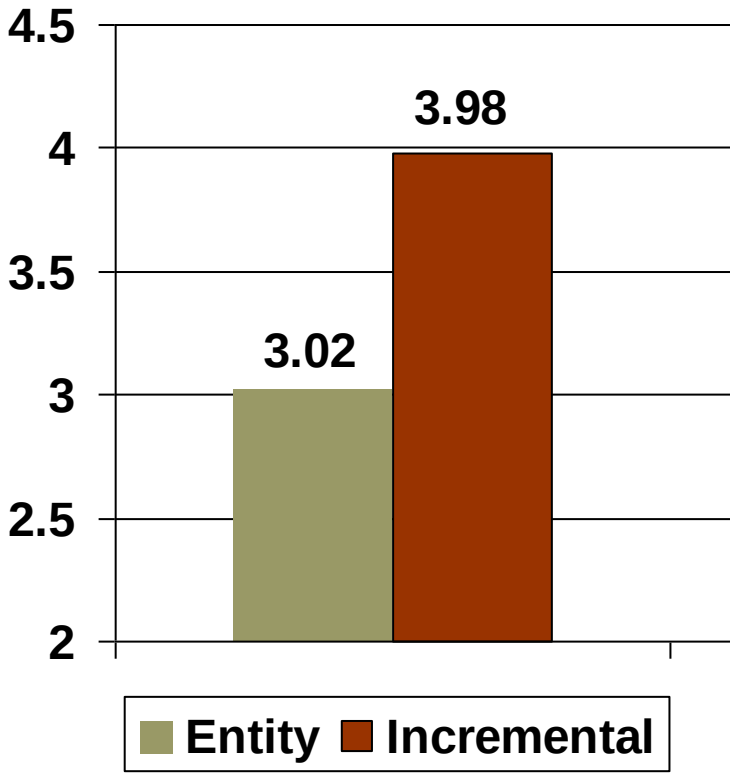
vary over time because of changes:

- in the character of the dominant leaders
- in the environment of the group

❖**Manipulation wording:** ***The main finding of this research is that patterns of violence in groups changed dramatically over the years as a result of both changes in the character of the dominant leaders and changes in the environment of the group.***

Halperin, E., Russell, G. A., Trzesniewski, H. K., Gross, J. J., & Dweck, S. C. (2011). Promoting the peace process by changing beliefs about group malleability. *Science. 333* (1767).

Overcoming Religious Barriers: Support for Compromise in Jerusalem



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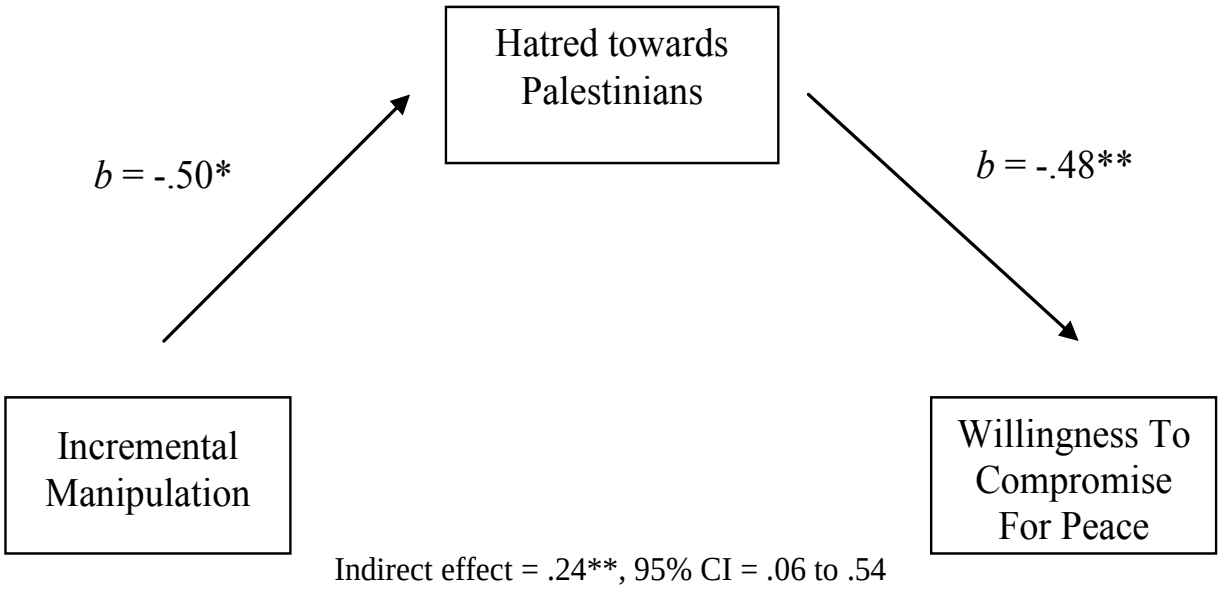
Effect of Incremental Manipulation on Support for Compromise, through its Effect on Hatred toward Palestinians



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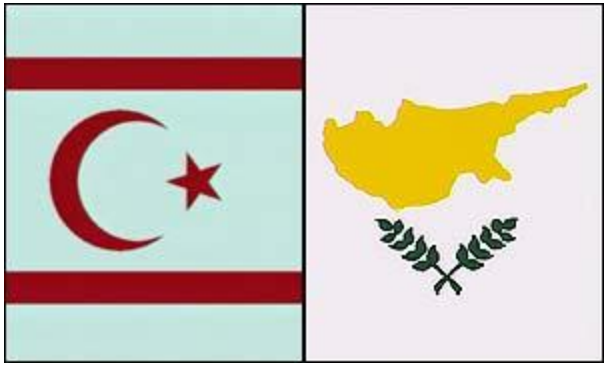
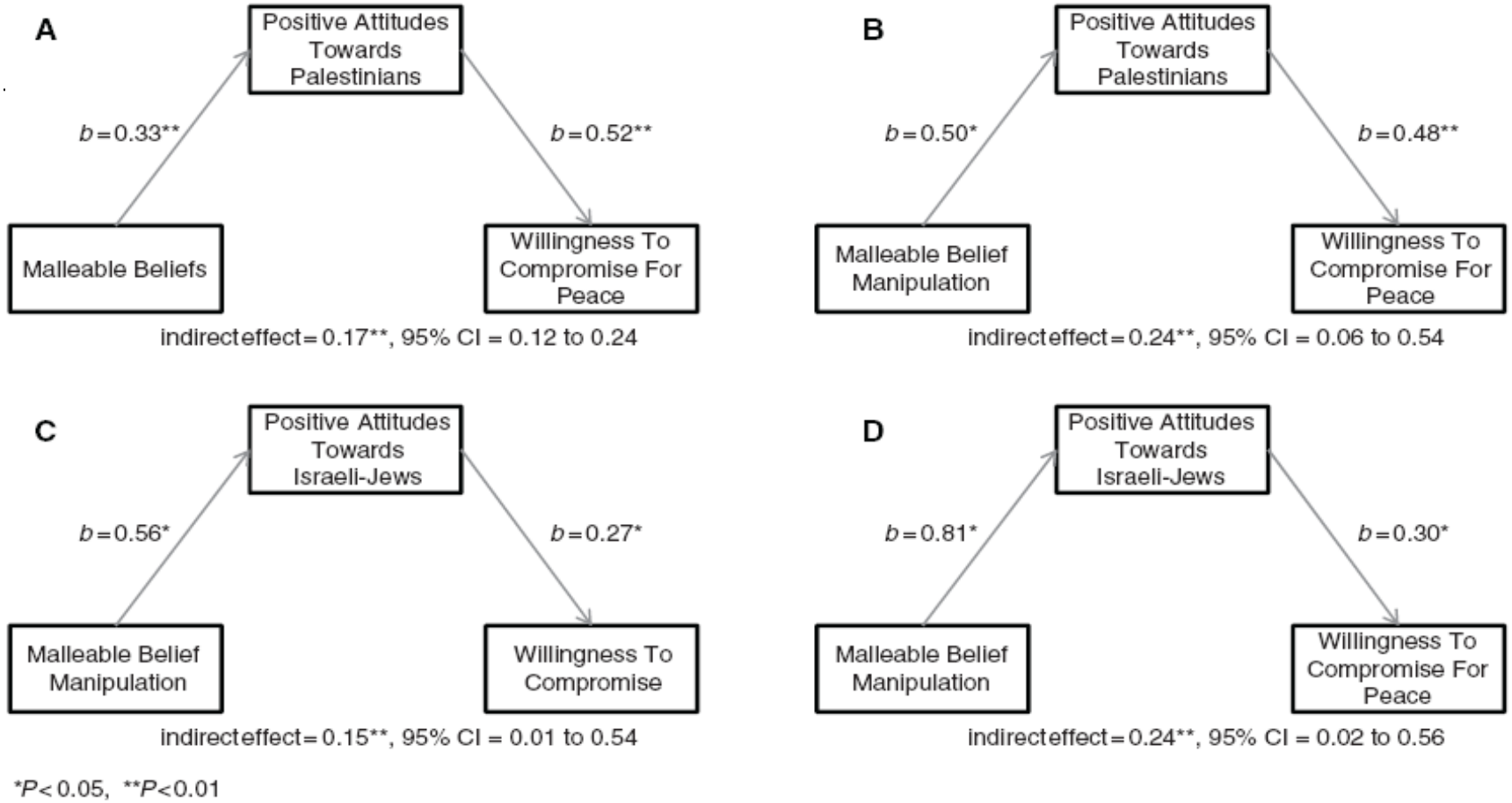
Replication and Extensions among…

- Palestinian Citizens of Israel
- Palestinians in the West Bank
- Turkish Cypriots
- Educational workshops





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Indirect Regulation of Guilt (JPSP, 2011)

- **Research Goal**: To up regulate group-based guilt in order to promote support for compensation, gestures and compromises.
- **Once again…**
- **No** mention of the outgroup.
- **No** mention of the conflict.

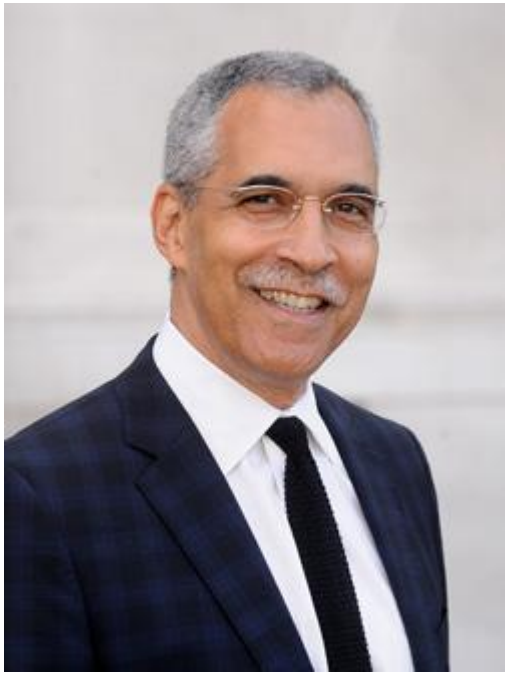
Čehajić. S., Effron, D., Halperin, E., Liberman, V & Ross, L., (2011). Affirmation, acknowledgment of ingroup responsibility, group-based guilt, and support for reparative measures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 101(2), 256-270*

Group-Based Guilt: Core Appraisal Theme

- *Acknowledgment of Ingroup Responsibility*
- "Problem" = activation of defense mechanisms leading to low levels of acknowledgment, consequent guilt feelings and endorsement of reparation policies
- Question = How to increase levels of acknowledgment?

Self-affirmation (Steele, 1988)

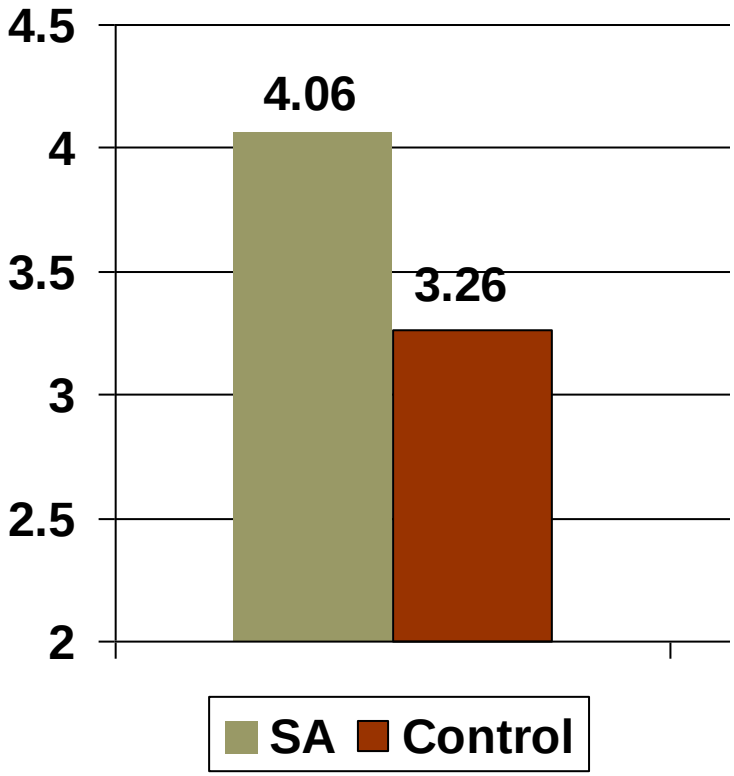
- Making people feel secure enough in their positive self image in order to "confess" to their group's improper behavior.
- The bolstering of one's sense of self-worth in one domain increases one's tolerance for self-threats in another domain.



Study 2 – Experimental Manipulation

- **Self Affirmation** – participants were asked to recall a meaningful event in their lives that made them feel proud and successful. Then, they were asked to describe the feelings and thoughts they had following the event.
- **Control condition -** participants were asked to write a list of things they would take for/on a long trip to an isolated island.

Group-Based Guilt



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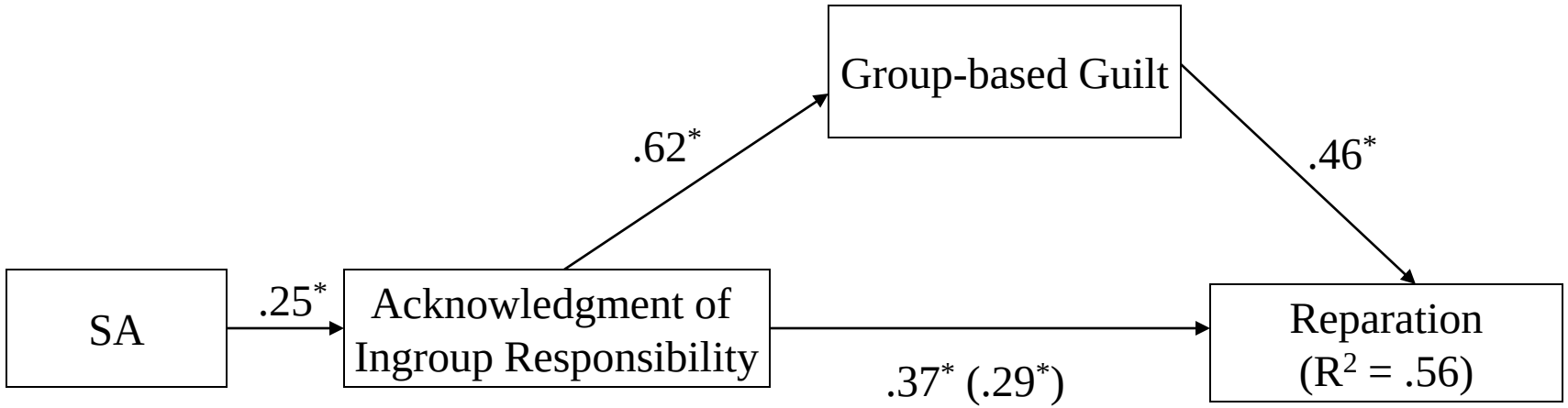
Study 2 – Mediation Model



X^2 (2) = 1.83, p = .40; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .01
Mediation analyses – Sobel tests $p < .05$
Alternative models – poor fit!

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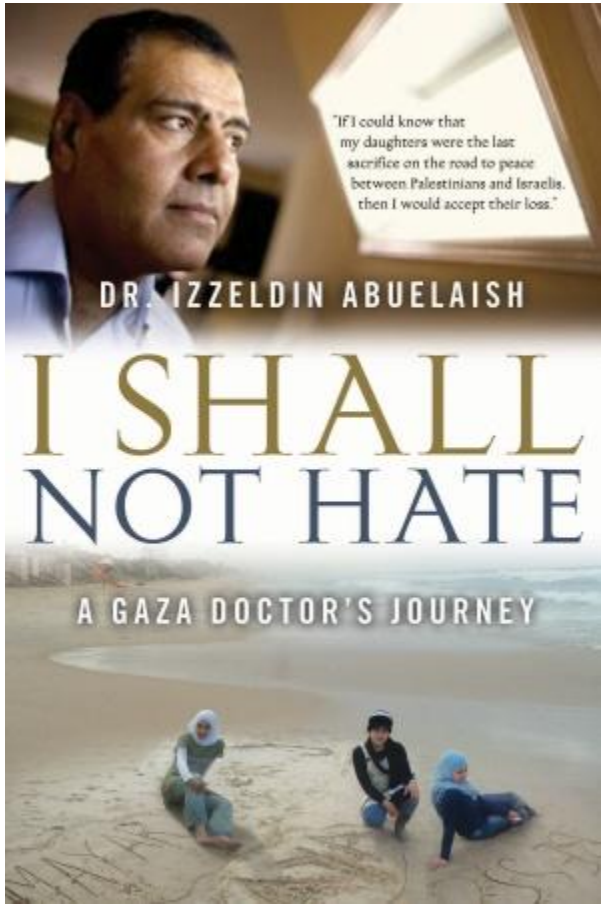
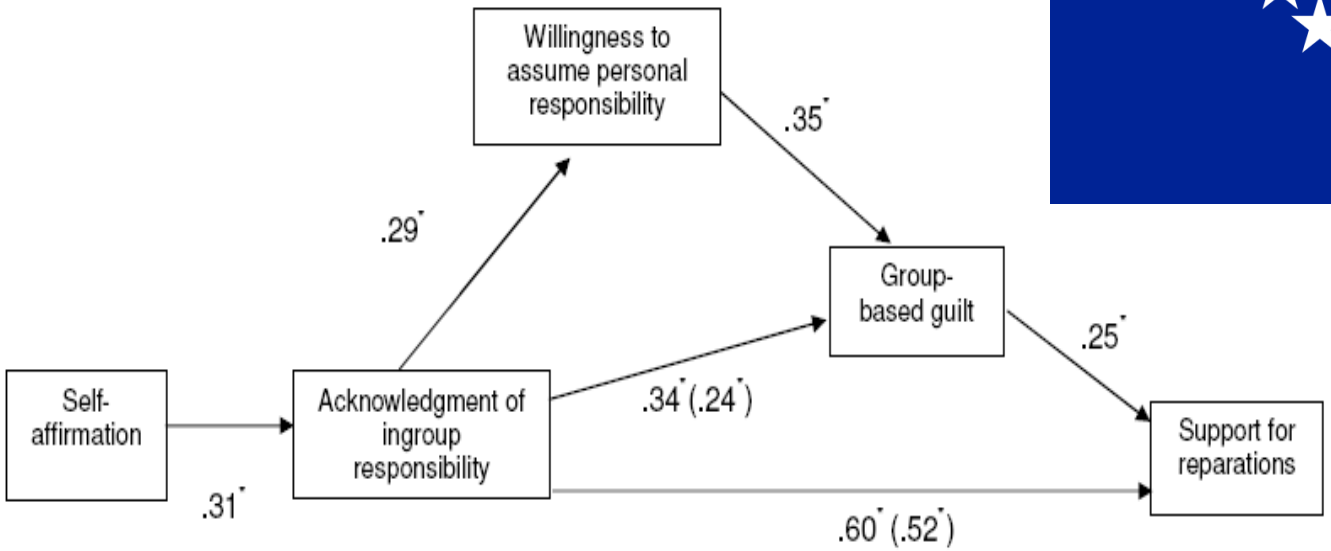

"If I could know that
my daughters were the last
sacrifice on the road to peace
between Palestinians and Israelis,
then I would accept their loss."
DR. IZZELDIN ABUELAISH
I SHALL
NOT HATE
A GAZA DOCTOR'S JOURNEY

Replication and Extension among…

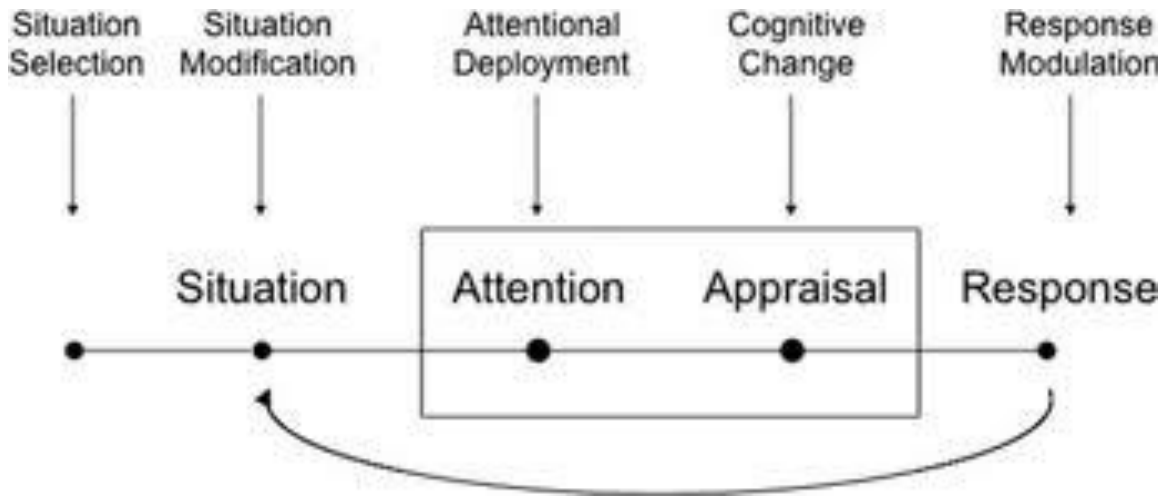
Study 3: From self-affirmation to support for reparation (Bosnia and Herzegovina)



Indirect ER in Conflict – The Case of Guilt

- Identify core appraisal themes ("Acknowledgment of Responsibility").
- Identify simple interventions that can tackle these core themes ("Self Affirmation).
- Extrapolate from these small interventions to large scale programs (Any Ideas???).

Direct Emotion Regulation



Gross, 1998, 2008

Reappraisal

- Reappraisal - Changing a situation's meaning in a way that alters its emotional impact (Gross, 2002).
- Leads to lower levels of negative emotional experience, higher levels of positive emotional experience and better interpersonal functioning.
- Reappraisal can draw attention to the broader meaning or consequences of events leading to a more balanced perspective.

James Gross

Correlative Evidence for the Effects of Emotion Regulation During War

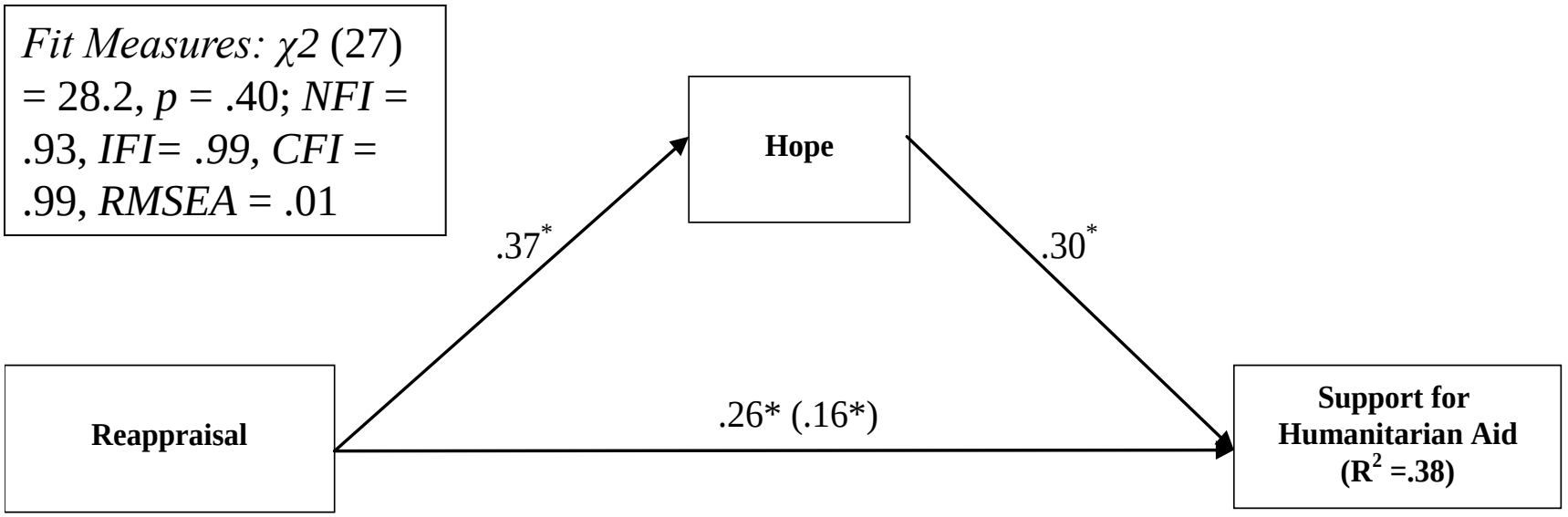
- **Research Hypothesis**: Individuals who **effectively regulate** their negative emotions during war will favor **providing humanitarian aid** to the outgroup for the sake of ending the war and improving intergroup relations.
- **Research Design**: Nationwide survey (N=200) conducted in the midst of the War in Gaza between Israelis and Palestinians.

Halperin, E., & Gross, J. J. (2011). Emotion regulation in violent conflict: Reappraisal, hope, and support for humanitarian aid to the opponent in wartime. *Cognition & Emotion* 25(7):1228-36

Measurements

- **Reappraisal** – 3-item abbreviated version of the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire reappraisal scale (Gross & John, 2003) (s.i., *When faced with a stressful situation, I've made myself think about it in a way that helped me stay calm)* (α = .64).
- **Emotions** – Participants then were asked to rate the extent to which (1-not at all to 6-very much) the recent events made them feel each of the following emotions towards the Palestinians (*fear*, *anger* and *empathy*) and in regard to the future of the conflict (*hope*).
- **Humanitarian Aid –** The scale measured support for providing humanitarian aid to innocent Palestinian citizens during the war (s.i., Support for *allowing the transfer of food and medicine to innocent Palestinians)* (α = .79).
- **Control Variables –** political position, socio-demographics.

Hope Mediates the Effect of Reappraisal on Support for Humanitarian Aid



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Emotion Regulation in Real World Situation

(Halperin, Porat, Tamir & Gross, Psy-Science).

- **Research Goal**: To examine whether people who undergo a cognitive reappraisal training session be more supportive of conciliatory actions.
- A **real world conflict** situation.
- A **predictable** event
- Testing the **longitudinal effects** of reappraisal training.

Palestinian UN Declaration

Procedure

Cognitive Reappraisal Training Session (or control)

Experience Sampling - During the Week

Remind subjects to reappraise + Measures

Remind subjects to reappraise + Measures

Remind subjects to reappraise + Measures

Measurement of Emotional and Political Reactions

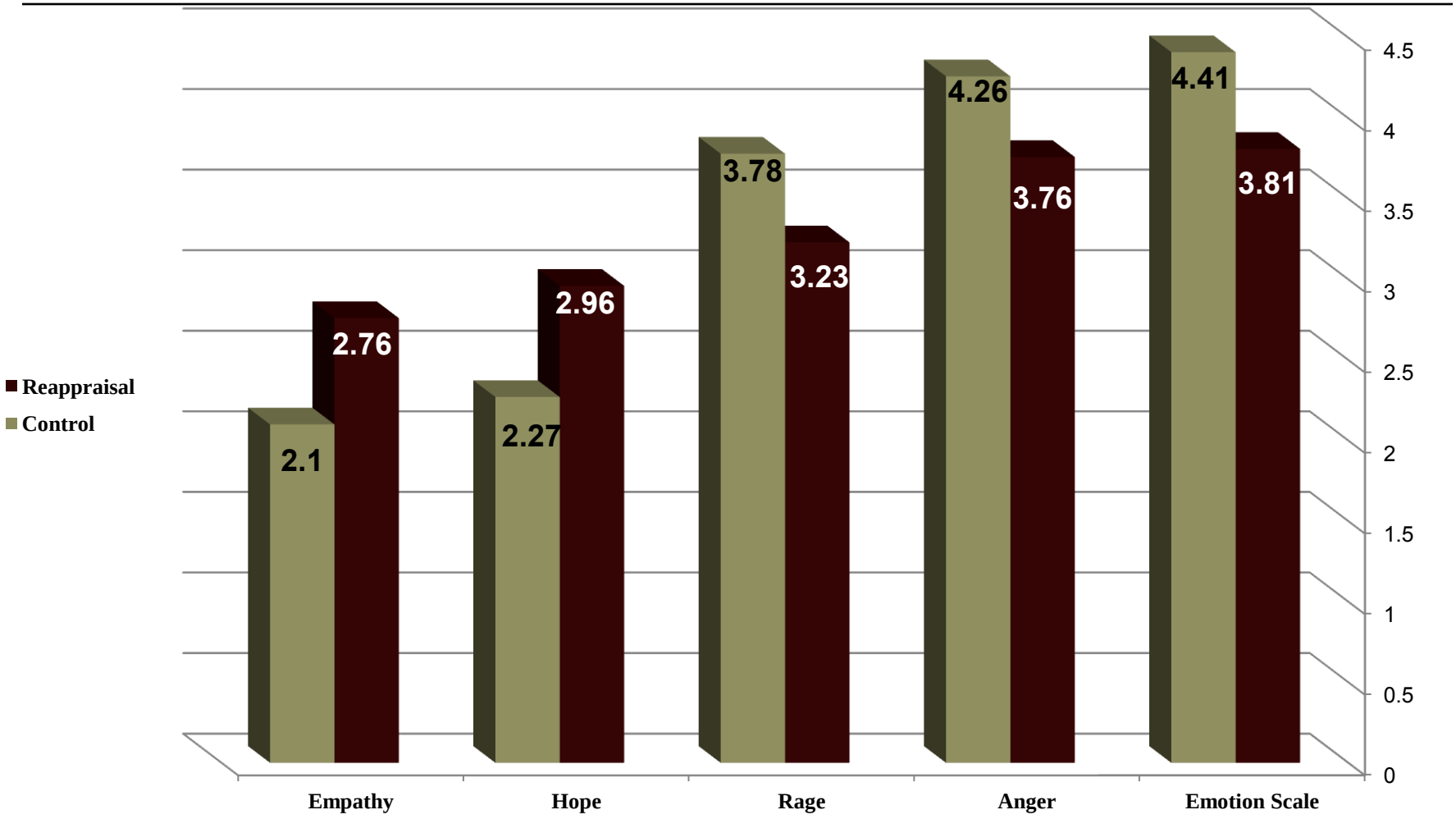
10 days later

5 Months later

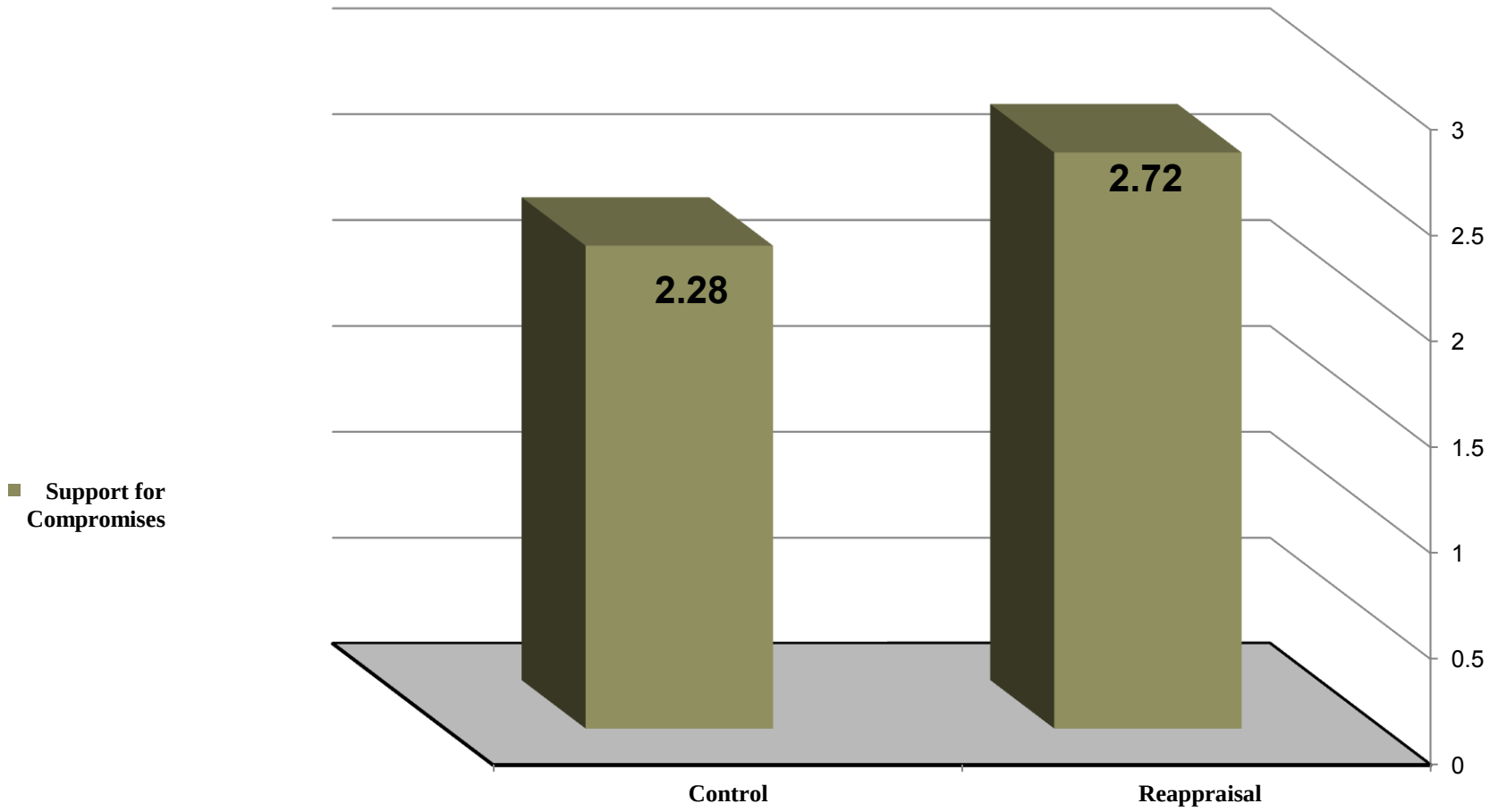
Reappraisal Training

- Different perspectives
- Like an outsider
- Like a scientists
- In an analytic way

Emotions Felt During the Week

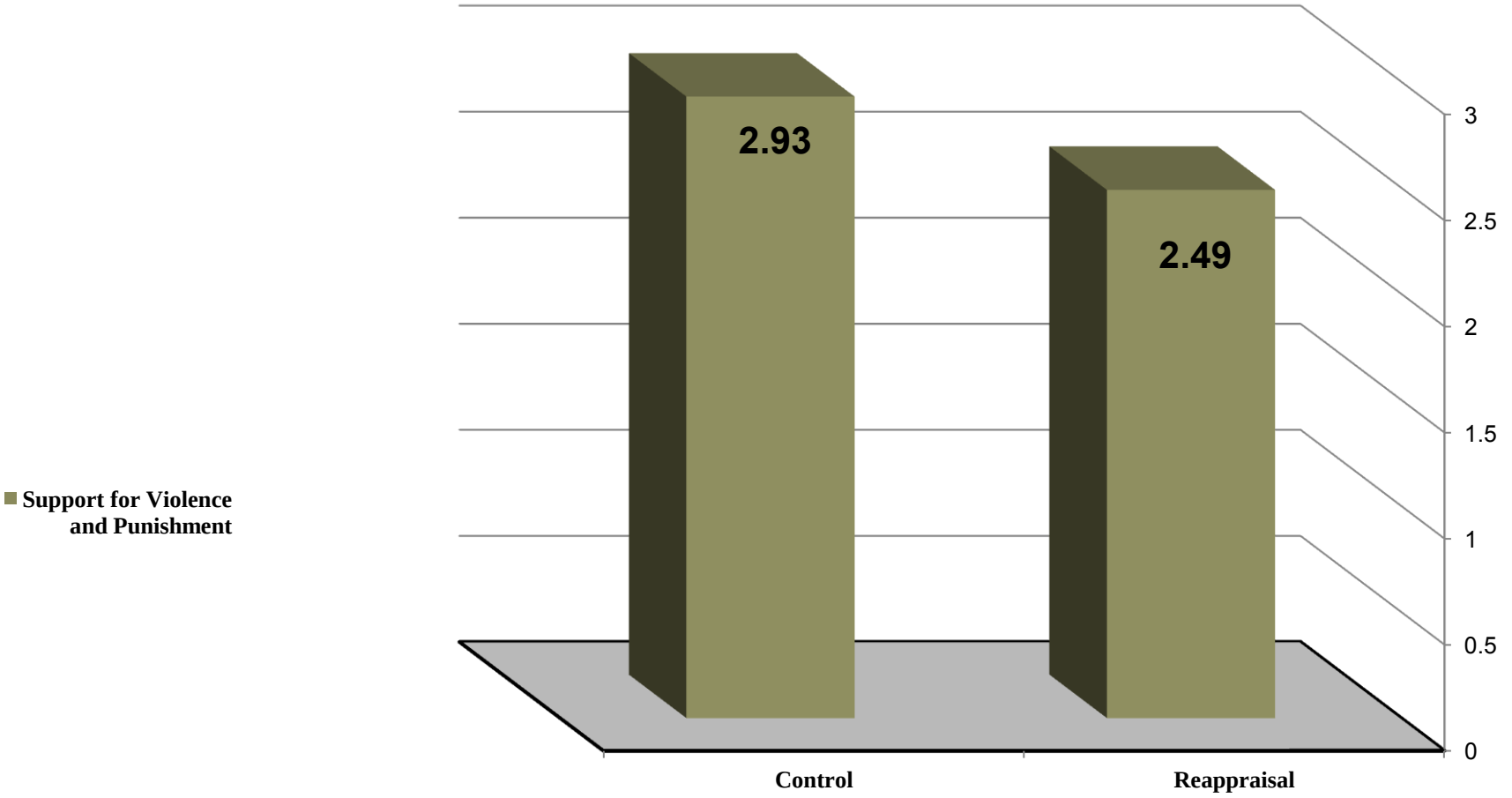


Constructive Policies – 10 Days Post Manipulation



$T(57)=-2.30$, $p=.02$

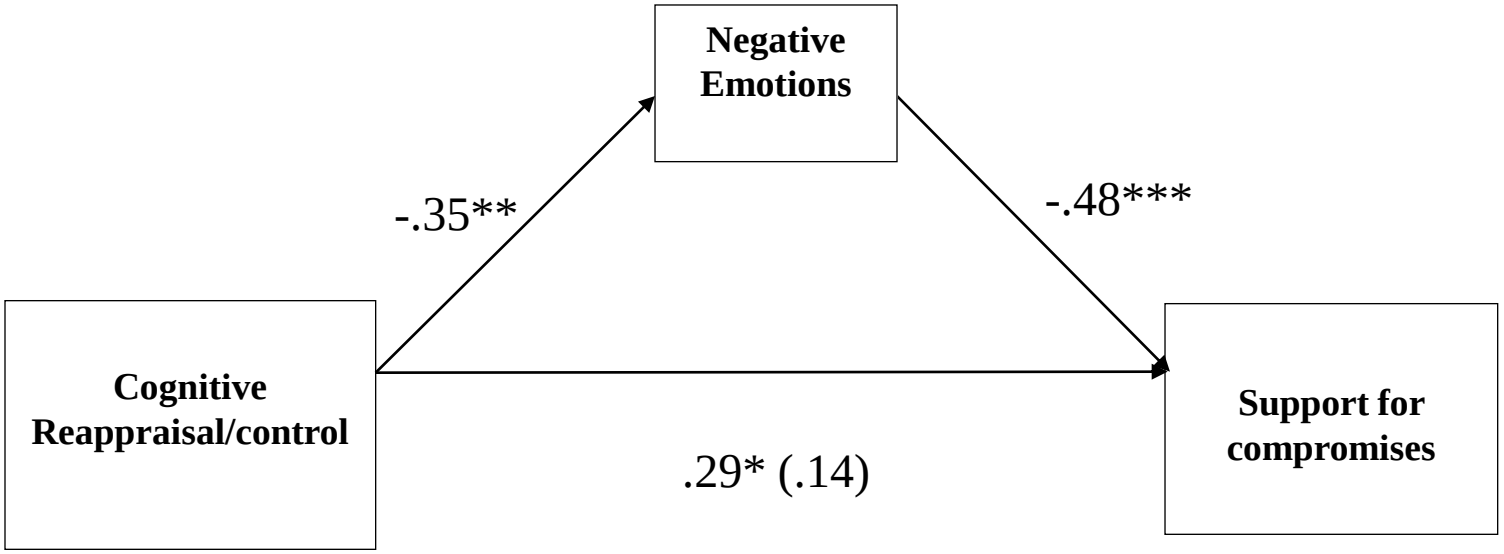
Destructive Policies –
10 Days Post Manipulation



$T(57)=2.16$, $p=.03$

Mediation Analysis

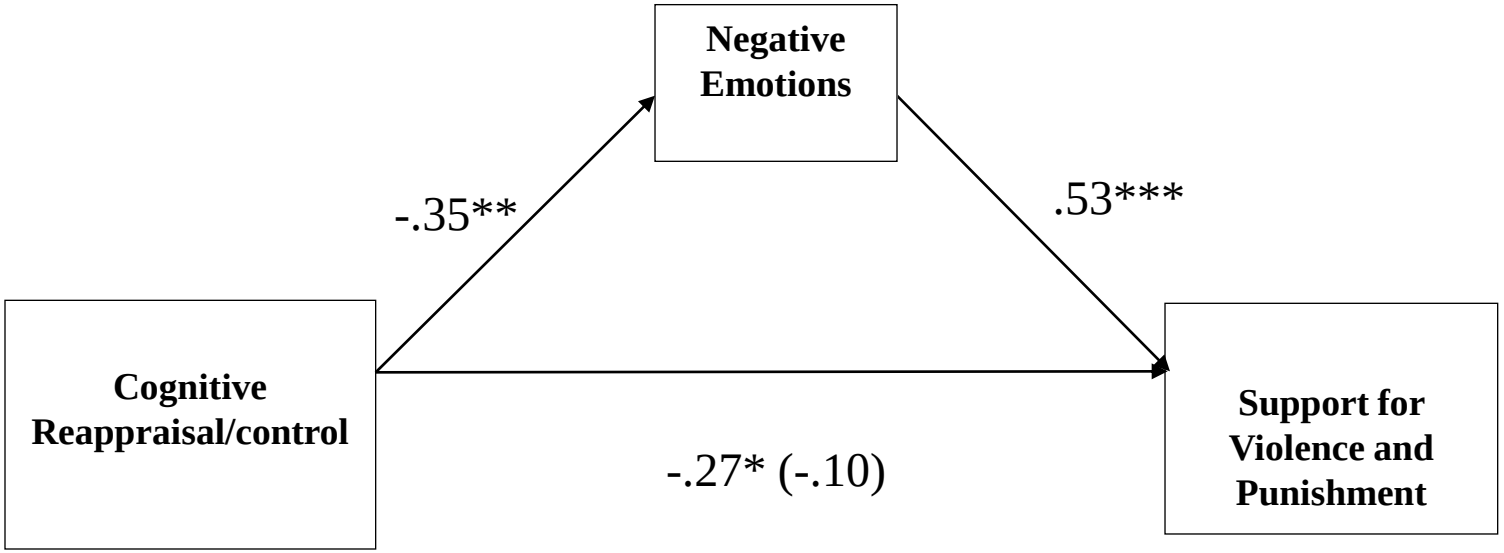
(Constructive Policies)



CI using bootstrapping with 5000 iterations estimated to lie between .05 and .50, with 95% confidence

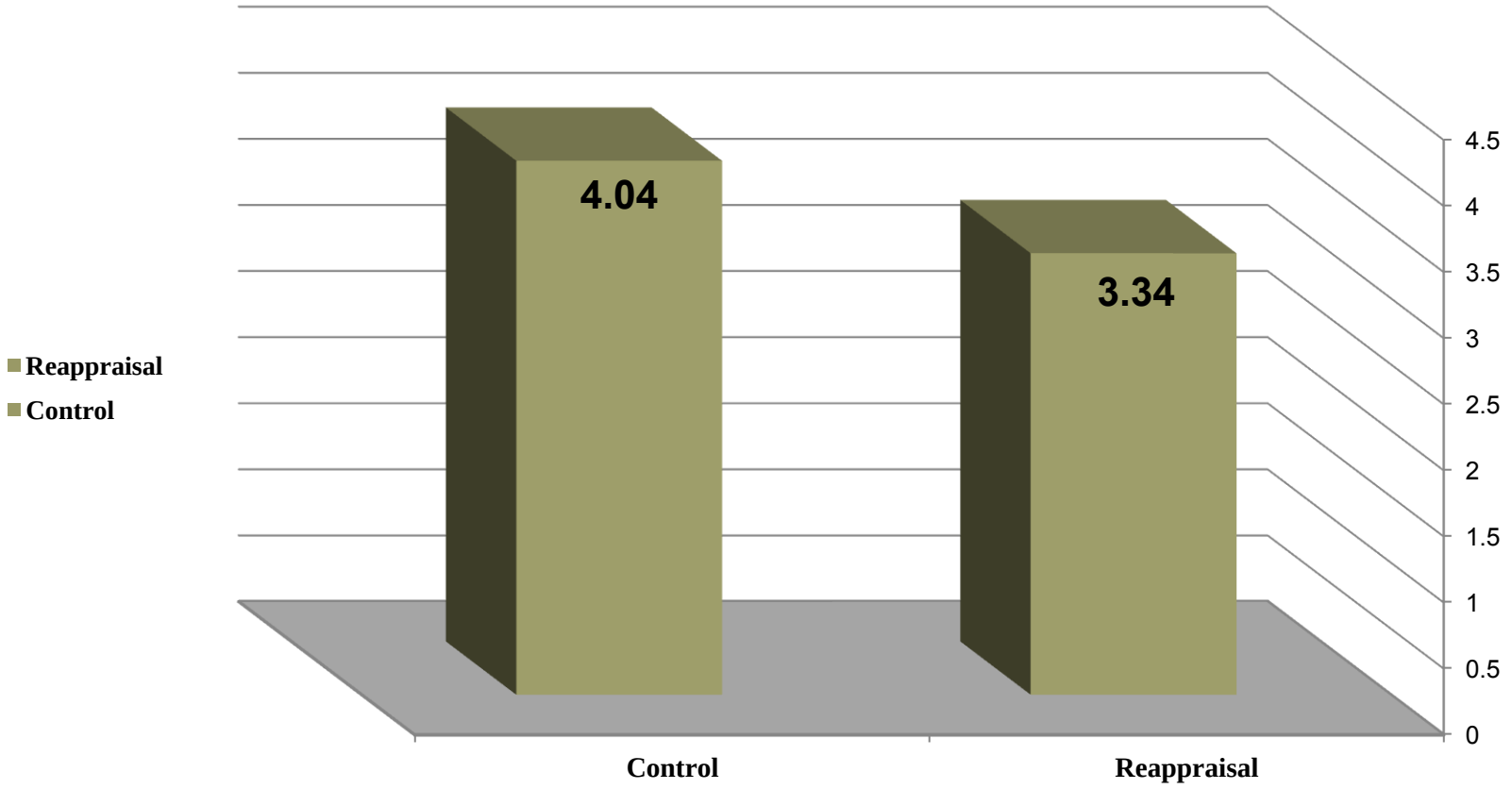
Mediation Analysis

(Destructive Policies)



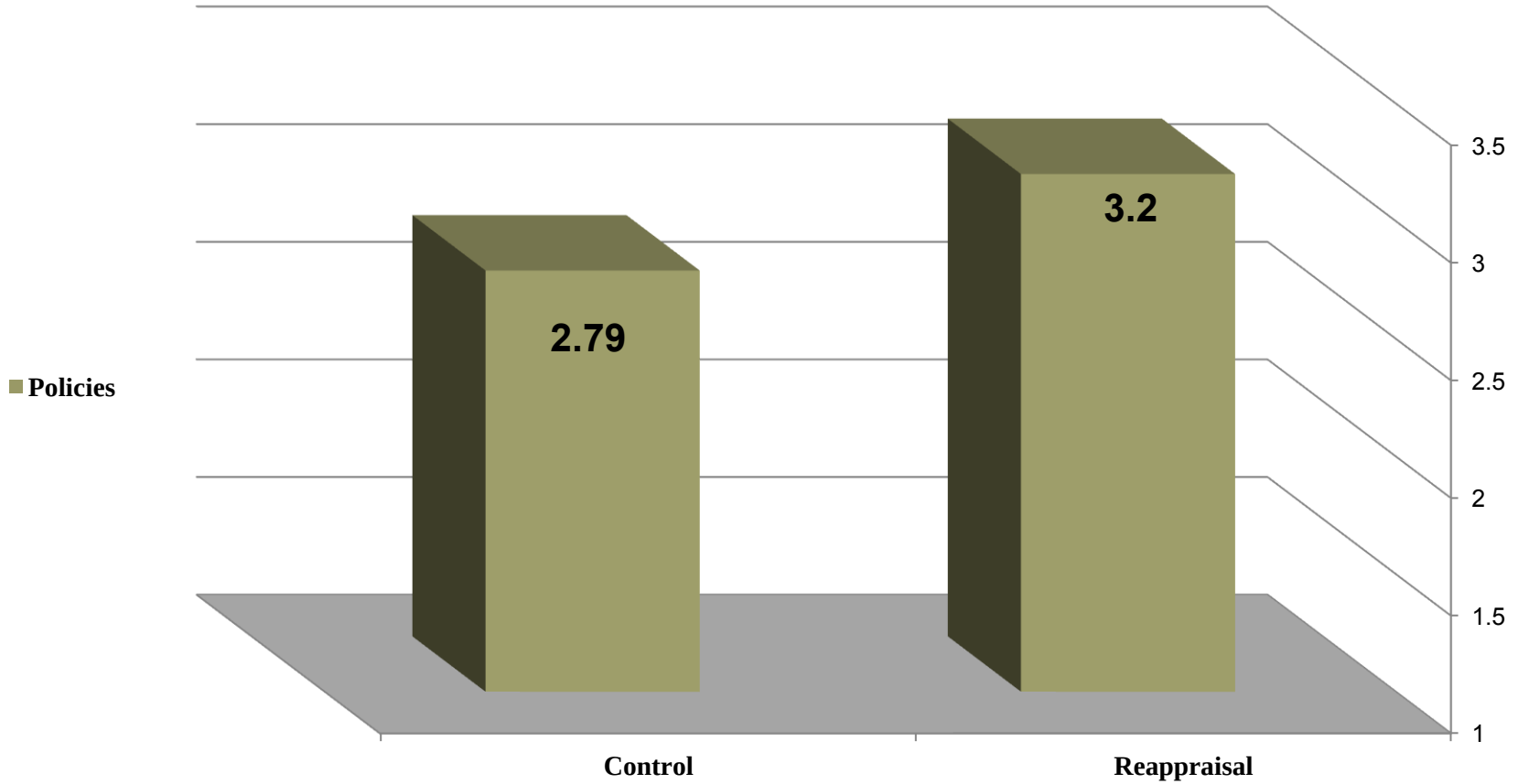
CI using bootstrapping with 5000 iterations estimated to lie between -.54 and -.06, with 95% confidence

Anger towards Palestinians - 5 Months Post Manipulation



$T(48)=2.54$, $p=.01$

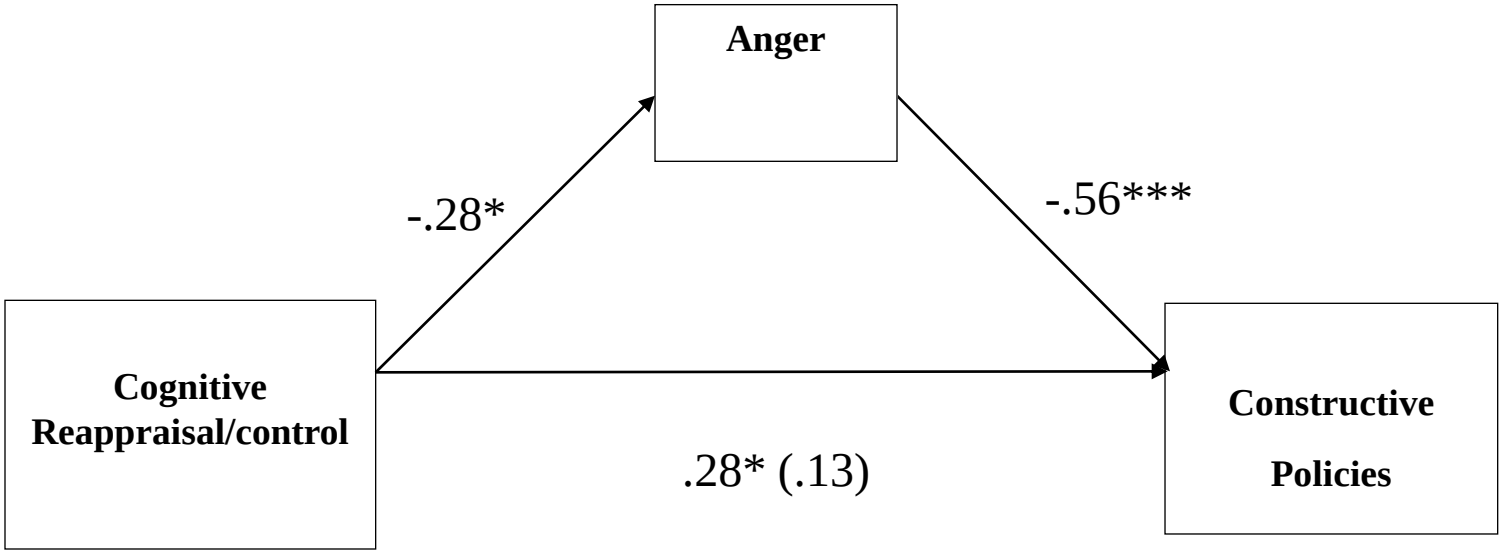
Constructive Policies - 5 Months Post Manipulation



$T(49)=-2.03$, $p=.04$

Mediation Analysis

(5 Months Later)



CI using bootstrapping with 5000 iterations estimated to lie between .01 and .57, with 95% confidence

Acknowledgments

- James Gross
- Daniel Bar-Tal
- Maya Tamir
- Lee Ross
- Carol Dweck
- Richard Crisp
- Christopher Federico
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- Alexandra Russell
- Shenel Husnu
- Varda Liberman
- Roni Porat
- Ruthie Pliskin
- Smadar Cohen-Chen
- Noa Schori