

The Role of Group-Based Emotions in Intergroup Relations and Political Behavior

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I'm going to show you a little more data than Chick did, but like him, this is really more kind of an idea talk highlighting some areas in which I've been working recently, and which I think have a lot of relevance for political behavior and the kinds of things that we're thinking about here.

It all grows out of two concepts. I'm going to be talking basically about emotions and about groups. I'll just give you a quick review of some of the ways that those concepts have been used in political psychology before, and the way that I think about them. Emotions, of course, have a big history of being regarded as important in political psychology. Mostly, it is old history: at mid-century the authoritarian personality researchers and a bunch of other perspectives that viewed emotionally driven political attitudes as quite irrational, and probably mostly as the property of people who were hateful and we disagreed with — bigots, Nazis and Ku Klux Klan members and so on. Even Allport talked about racial prejudices in that kind of way. So attention was focused not on normal people like you and me, but on potentially extreme bigots.

This was not directly expressed so much, but there is clearly a sense in that work of that era that emotions are irrational and that emotions should not be a basis for politics, because look at what you get if people base their politics on emotion. Of course, that approach fell from favor — there was a cognitive revolution. People shifted in focus as a result to prejudice that arose from more normal processes. Again, processes that are recognizable even in you and me, stereotyping, social categorization and so on, but emotions had been resurrected.

It's now clear that emotions are normal. Even you and I have emotions. Emotion theory advanced a lot over the past half century. It's now clear that emotions are generally regarded as adaptive and as part of a very functional kind of self-regulation process. Research started to find that emotion was implicated even in sort of normal prejudices that our undergraduates might show, or that we might show. People in conflict in everyday observation get emotional in many cases.

Starting in the 80s there were models of inter-group anxiety and related ideas that became important as partial or, in some cases, regarded as fairly complete explanations for inter-group prejudices. Turning aside from inter-group relations, work that's been cited several times already today, Abelson and colleagues, brought to our attention the really crucial role of people's emotional responses to candidates. People's emotional affective reactions to candidates — whether the candidate made us feel happy, hopeful, proud, afraid or anxious — really have a big effect. And the way that these researchers interpreted their results, I think, really resonates with me and captures a lot of this — that emotion is part of our basic equipment as humans for interpreting and dealing with the world around us. It's not something that's irrational and

sometimes distracts us from doing the clever and rational and logical things. It's really an important part of the way that we make sense of the world. So that's emotions.

I want to talk about groups, which is the second big concept that we're going to be putting together. Politics is pretty much all about groups. It's not 100 percent, but quite a lot. We know that in a number of ways, a number of different types of groups have great political relevance and party identification may be number one, but you also find that people strongly identify with their racial or ethnic groups, with social class — thinking of themselves as a working man or a small businessman or whatever, gender, regional, religious groups and whatever it might be. And in psychology, political psychology, over the past half a century there have been a number of cases where concepts have been differentiated or moved from the individual level to the group level.

Examples that are very familiar, I think, are from the 60s, Runciman's differentiation of individual versus fraternal relative deprivation. So you can feel like you personally aren't doing as well as some comparison person. Or fraternal relative deprivation where you feel like your group is not doing as well as some comparison group, and of these two it's the group-based or fraternal deprivation that has more powerful political consequences. We know that.

Individual self-interest, which Sears and a bunch of other people argued didn't make much difference in politics, but group interests as Bobo and a whole bunch of other people argued, do make a lot of difference in politics. So you can define self-interest as well as relative deprivation at both an individual and group level, and one has a bigger political kick than the other.

All we're doing is the same thing, okay? We're trying to make a distinction between individual emotions and group level emotions, and we're going to be expecting on the basis of this analogy that group level emotions might be the ones that will have more political kick. So this is what you get when you put together these two ideas — emotions and groups.

We've been developing a model of group-based emotions over the past decade or more. I introduced some of these ideas first in a chapter in 1993, and then with my collaborator, Diane Mackie, we've done a number of studies, and a bunch of other people have done related work — some explicitly under our theoretical framework and some not, but very consistent in terms of the ideas. I'm not going to review a lot of empirical work. I'm going to show you three or four studies maybe to illustrate some of the main points, but I guess all I want to say right now is that this seems simple, to put together emotions and groups, but it's proven to be a very rich area and given rise to a pretty wide range of research questions.

Here is the specific way that we have put together emotions and groups, our model of what group-based emotions are, where they come from and kind of how they work. We built it on top of a very standard kind of emotion theory developed by individual level emotion theorists. That's kind of a strange way to call them, but anyway, this fairly mainstream set of ideas is that people's appraisals of the implications of an object or event for the self are what generate emotions and emotion-based action tendencies. There are a number of theorists who have written about this general idea. They disagree in details, but nothing we're going to do depends on the details on which they disagree, actually.

Appraisals are generally regarded as pretty automatic, implicit, not necessarily conscious, just to forestall one occasional misinterpretation of what this means. And note that the emphasis is on the idea of appraisals and not beliefs. The difference is an appraisal is about, "*What does this thing mean for me? What's it going to do to me? Is it good for me? Is it bad for me?*" and not, "*What is this thing like?*" It's not the characteristics of the object. It's its implication for me.

Emotion theory, like the appraisal theories that I've just mentioned, has always been formulated at the individual level. And I like this quotation from Magda Arnold who was the pioneer of appraisal theories writing way back in 1960. She wrote, "To arouse an emotion, the object must be appraised as affecting me in some way, affecting me personally as an individual." I mean, she's really emphasizing three different times in that phrase that it's an individual level thing, but we don't have to believe that. We don't have to believe that what people care about stops with their skin, okay? Because we now know, we now believe (if we are social identity or self-categorization people), that an in-group with which people identify becomes part of the self. And so if that's true, objects or events that are appraised as affecting my group, might become emotionally salient.

Tajfel actually said that in his original writings about social identity theory. He said that group identification made a group take on emotional significance, and then that emphasis was totally lost in 20 years of work on social identity theory, but we're trying to bring it back.

Group-based emotions then, like any emotion, may motivate people to action. We've developed this basic idea in two slightly different ways, again, paralleling different ways that researchers have over time looked at individual level emotion. One is that you can say people have general emotional states, and that they can have as a member of a group the same kinds of general emotional states that they may be able to have as an individual. So you can say, "As a member of my group, I generally feel angry, or I generally feel proud. I feel guilty. I feel disappointed. I feel satisfied," or whatever it might be. So these are just general emotional feeling states, and emotion researchers have often asked that kind of question — emotion checklists, for example. The PANAS widely used emotion checklist is exactly like this. "*How often have you felt angry, proud, happy, guilty and so on lately, just generally?*"

The other direction that you can take it -- and this is how we've done probably more of our research on in this topic, because of our interest in inter-group behavior -- is that you can ask more specific questions about negative emotion — probably negative, but it could be positive — but emotions directed towards an out-group. So you can say, *“Think about that out-group of Republicans or black people or Iraqis. How do you feel about them? Do you feel angry? Do you feel afraid? Do you feel disgusted? Contemptuous?”* Our thinking is that these are highly differentiated forms of prejudice. It's not just all negativity, but whether you feel one or another of these different kinds of negative emotions will make a difference; for example, in the way that you would want to deal with members of that group — whether you would want to avoid them, or attack them or whatever it might be.

So as a member of a group you can have general emotional feeling states. You might characterize yourself as generally feeling angry, proud, guilty, whatever. Or as a member of a group you might have specific emotions — probably often negative, but not necessarily -- towards a particular out-group, and both of those are within the general compass of this theory.

I'm going to show you a few snippets of evidence that we've gathered and that other people have gathered. We'll talk about some others' research as well as our own. I'll probably spend the most time on this particular set of studies, because we've done these studies that address a fundamental question. *“How do we know that these are group level emotions? Are they really distinct from the same person's individual level emotions?”* That's obviously a fundamental question that would arise under this model. Our strategy was to take the same set of data and address several questions with the same set of data.

We wanted to show, first of all, and perhaps most basic, that the emotions that people report as members of a particular group are distinct from the same person's individual level emotions. If they just give us the same ratings of emotions as an individual and as a Democrat or an American or an Indiana University student — we wouldn't be able to say that group level emotions are different.

It should be the case that group emotions should, to some extent, be socially shared within a group — that different members of the same group should, to some extent, report similar patterns of emotions and we'll look at that. And if emotions are functional, what group emotions should do is to motivate and regulate behaviors that have to do with that group, so the functionality of group-based emotions should be in terms of more collective behaviors, group-related behaviors and the way that we treat fellow in-group members, or out-group members.

This paper by myself, my graduate student Charlie Seger, and Diane Mackie, has two studies in which we ask people to report their emotions. First of all, we asked them their emotions as individuals. *“As an*

individual, how often have you felt happy, sad, angry, proud, etc., recently?" and they gave us those ratings. Then we asked them with pretty much the same question their emotions as members of several different groups. We asked about American emotions, emotions as IU students, and Democrats and Republicans. In the overview of the findings, there is some correlation between people's individual level and group-level emotions, a .35-ish correlation. That's just the average of the correlation of individual happiness and American happiness, individual anger and American anger and so on. There is some overlap between the individual and group level, and that's not surprising. Personality exists. Some people are just angrier than others, some people are just happier than others and it shows up in the way that they feel about their groups too.

But despite that correlation, the profiles of emotions on behalf of different groups were statistically distinct from the profiles of emotions that the same people reported as individuals, so that was the first criterion that we wanted to look at. We also performed an analysis that would take five minutes to explain, and I'm not going to even show you anything about it here, but found that individual members of the group tended to converge towards the group's emotion profile.

Group emotions then are shared. People may have widely different profiles of emotions as individuals, because if I ask you how you're feeling as an individual, you think about, "Oh, well. My girlfriend broke up with me last week, and I'm failing my course." So it's all of these individual things. But if I ask you, "How do you feel as an American?" there's some tendency for all of us to think about the same set of events and to converge more towards a common set of emotions. It's also the case that people who identify more strongly with the group converge more, which is very nice, because group identification should be a key in getting people to feel as members of a group.

This is just an example of the emotion profiles — individual and group emotions. This is group emotions as Americans. You can see that there is some general consistency. I've laid it out so that the negative emotions are here and the positive emotions here, and there are more positive than negative emotions across the board, but there are differences. People are angrier as Americans than they are as individuals. They're also prouder as Americans than as individuals, and you can see that. We don't have a particular interpretation of why people show the patterns that they do. We don't have a well-developed theory of the bases of group emotions. All that we can say based on this study is that people converge to the profile of group emotions; although, in relation to Jack's talk, I think that emotional portrayals — either nonverbal or verbal by political leaders, by in-group leaders I should say — are very important as a cue to what is the correct emotion for members of a group to feel at this particular time.

The final thing that we were able to show in this study is that people's group level, group relevant attitudes and behaviors were predicted by the reports of group level emotions and not by their individual level

emotions. So we would say group level emotions are functional — they motivate and they regulate people's behaviors towards in-groups and out-groups above and beyond what limited predictive power we got from asking about their individual level emotions, which of course, should be conceptually less relevant. Anger at the out-group we found was the most robust predictor of the behaviors that we looked at, so group emotions we think are functional.

I want to show you a little bit of a different study that suggests that group-based emotions have a key role in inter-group behavior. This is a paper that was published in 2004 looking at prejudice. Again, two studies looking at white students' reactions to African Americans. We used in this study two independent variables that we know to be strong influences on prejudice — people's history of contact with the out-group, and an aspect of personality, a fairly stable measure of social dominance orientation.

We asked to what extent are emotions towards the out-group mediators of these two well-known and quite robust effects on prejudice. So we asked about positive and negative emotions towards that group. This is an instance of the second general research strategy I mentioned at the beginning, so now we're not asking how do people feel generally. We're asking how they feel about a particular group. The question wording was, "*When you think about or encounter African Americans, to what extent do you feel happy, sad, angry, proud and so on?*"

We also measured our subjects' positive and negative stereotypes of African Americans as a comparison, because we wanted to see whether emotions or stereotypes carried the greater weight in mediating these effects. To cut right to the results, emotions mediated the effects of past contact on prejudice. Past contact with African Americans, particularly close contact as in friendship rather than just acquaintanceship, reduced prejudice in our sample as it always does. Emotions are the mediator of that effect, especially positive emotions, and so past contact increases your positive emotions more than it decreases your negative emotions. That's an interesting thing.

Emotions also mediated the effects of social dominance orientation on prejudice. People who are high in social dominance orientation are more prejudiced in our sample, as they always are. That is both because they had less positive emotion and because they had more negative emotion about African Americans.

Stereotypes played little or no role. There was one case out of eight across the two studies where stereotypes were a significant mediator, but the story is not that contact with an out-group decreases prejudice by breaking down inaccurate negative stereotypes. Stereotypes don't get changed much actually, but what happens is, though, you feel more positive about the group and that's what reduces prejudice.

I want to tell you about a couple of other studies very, very briefly that are also consistent with and illustrate, I think, our thinking about these things. This is one study in a program of research by Vincent Yzerbyt and some of his colleagues that demonstrates similar effects in a variety of ways. The key idea here is that, another argument for the idea that these are group-based emotions rather than just individual emotions would be to show that people experience emotions when something happens to a member of their group that has no conceivable personal relevance to themselves and so that's what Gordijn and Yzerbyt did.

They had participants read about students at another university who were being unfairly treated by the authorities at that other university. So this is not something that's going to affect you at all in any way. It's something that's happening 80 miles away at some other university, okay? It has no personal relevance to the participants, but the participants by subtle manipulation — a change of a few words in the instruction — were encouraged to categorize themselves either as psychology students, which made them part of the same category as these other students, or as students of their own university, which made them a different category from these other students. When they then measured the emotional reactions to reading that story, the participants were more angry and less happy if their common group membership had been mentioned. Those presumably are group-based emotions, because it doesn't affect you at all. But when this group membership is made salient, you feel emotions appropriate to those that you would feel if you, yourself, were the victim of this unfair treatment, which you are because your group is an extension of yourself.

One other study again, very quickly, Linda Skitka and her colleagues collected data shortly after the September 11th attacks, and they asked about people's emotional reactions. They asked about anger and fear. The questions didn't make reference to group-based emotions. I am interpreting these as largely group-based emotions, because people probably didn't have a lot of personal relevance from the September 11th attacks — maybe if they lived in New York and so on. But if you feel angry or fearful about those attacks, it's probably because you're thinking of yourself as an American. That's debatable and we can talk about it, if you want. They also asked about people's support for various policies extending the war to Iraq, which as you know happened, deporting all Arab-Americans, deporting Muslims and so on.

When they analyzed the results, these two distinct emotions — though they're both negative — predicted different things. So people who felt more angry were more likely to want to essentially attack. That is that they were more in favor of extending the war to Iraq. Whereas, people who reported being more fearful after the September 11th attacks wanted to do things that smacked more of avoidance of the out-group, and that is to deport Arab-Americans and Muslims. So the theoretically predicted differentiation between anger, which is supposed to motivate attack tendencies, and fear which is supposed to motivate avoidance tendencies was found here with — as I say, I would argue though it's not clear from the wording of the question — a group-based measure of emotion and measures of support for these collective types of action.

I'm done showing you evidence. I want to spend the rest of the time on a few implications of this way of thinking that might be of interest. This I've kind of already touched on, but if we think of people's emotional reactions in this way, reactions to out-groups aren't just all negative. Prejudice isn't just a negative attitude. Prejudice, in fact, or people's feelings about out-groups more generally are differentiated. Some out-groups are hated, and some out-groups are approached with anger, others with fear and others with perhaps disgust and so on. And those different emotions matter in terms of the actions that people might want to take towards those out-groups.

"It's about us. It's not about them." A quick thought experiment. Suppose you learn that some group is lazy, hostile and dirty? Do you hate them? Do you dislike them? I think that the answer is, "No. Why do we care?" Okay. We don't care if some group out there in some other part of the world has negative characteristics. That doesn't make us dislike them. We dislike them if their negative characteristics affect us. So if a group in our society has these characteristics of being lazy, hostile, dirty or whatever — that's when we dislike them, because now it matters for us. If they're lazy, then they're on welfare. Our taxes go up and all this kind of thing. Emotions arise from relational appraisals. It's not what they're like — it's what they mean for us.

A very big set of issues, and let me just scratch the surface here. One of the big differences between thinking about these issues in terms of emotions and the traditional way of thinking about it in terms of stereotypes is that one of the things we know about stereotypes is that they are very hard to change. Stereotypes about groups are notoriously stable. There is a lot of research literature sort of bemoaning the facts that they're very hard to change and trying to find manipulations that actually have any effect on changing them. But if you think about emotions, one of the things about emotions is that they are very time-dependent. They rise and fall. People enter into emotional states and change the way that they feel, and sometimes within minutes. And the same should be true of emotional reactions to out-groups. So that leads us to ask questions like this: *"Might people display different inter-group behaviors when they're in an emotional state than at other times?"* I think that the answer has to be predicted to be yes.

This is something that I think is interesting, but I can't prove it. We know that people are often reluctant to admit that they hold stereotypes about out-groups or that they dislike those out-groups and that they're prejudiced against them, but one of the things that the naïve theory of emotion says is that emotions happen to us. Emotions are uncontrollable. They're things that just occur without our encouragement. That might mean that people are able to think of their negative reactions to out-groups as being externally caused, as something that they're not responsible for. So we hear people say things like, "They make me mad," or "they are disgusting."

And so the fact that people might be able to avoid sort of mentally taking responsibility for their emotions might mean — I can't prove this — that they are more willing to admit to holding negative emotions about out-groups. In fact, in our studies we have asked these kinds of questions. "How often have African Americans or other groups made you feel..." a long list of emotions, and people have never objected to answering those questions for us.

Finally, I think that this is the last thing that I have. If prejudice were driven as the traditional picture has it by our negative stereotypes of out-groups or by our need for positive differentiation of our in-group from out-groups, then to change prejudice requires either changing or suppressing stereotypes — we know that's hard — or learning to re-categorize groups in society, and we know that's hard.

If, instead, prejudice has more to do with emotions that we feel towards other groups, it suggests a whole different range of strategies that might be tried for reducing prejudice. We have research evidence on only a limited subset of these things so far, but a whole set of ideas, at least, become candidates for trying. We know that there is research on emotion suppression. There are reappraisal strategies that James Gross and his colleagues have looked at in the context of emotional self-regulation. There are misattribution approaches. We have preliminary evidence that this actually works in the domain of group-based emotions and so on. There is literature on emotional self-regulation that could be drawn on to design prejudice reduction programs, which you wouldn't think of without conceptualizing emotion as having something to do with prejudice.

In the last 60 seconds I just want to suggest some ways in which this line of thinking might be relevant for political behavior. There are a number of different groups that people might very well have emotions in regards to, and might be relevant for voting or the decision to vote and for candidate choice. The most obvious, perhaps, is the emotions that people feel as a member of their political party. We've asked this question in student samples. People get it. They're able to say, "As a Democrat I feel angry, I feel dissatisfied, I feel proud," or I feel whatever. People can answer these questions for their political party. We might also ask, "How do you feel about Republicans?" or about the opposite party with emotional questions, and not just kind of rating scale questions. I'm not sure that that's been done. Anger, as in our own results is likely to be a key driver of collective action, including voting. I think that political consultants know that, because political messages are usually aimed at getting anger.

American emotions might also be relevant, perhaps especially for the decision to vote at all. If you feel proud or whatever as an American, then your configuration or profile of emotions as an American might have a lot to do with your decision to vote. I don't know. We have no evidence, although I'm encouraged to put vote intention questions in our future studies. And then sort of the more classic groups that political psychology researchers have assumed that people identify with and care about are ethnic group memberships, gender,

class and so on. Emotional attachments and emotions felt on behalf of these kinds of groups might also be important determinants of voting, so these are the things I think.

Emotions that people experience with regard to a socially extended self as a group member seem to play an important role in prejudice and inter-group behavior. That's where the bulk of our research is focused so far — to illustrate that emotions are adaptive and functional and perhaps have important implications for political behavior, as well as for the kinds of policy attitudes that we've studied so far. So thanks. (*End of Smith_1 file*)