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Perception of Threat in Argentinian Immigrants to Israel: Personality, Out-Group Exposure, Social Dominance Orientation and Right-Wing Authoritarianism

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the links between exposure to the out-group, personality traits, social dominance theory (SDO), right wing authoritarianism (RWA) and threat perception among Argentinian immigrants in Israel. The sample was composed of 207 Latin American immigrants living in Israel, with ages ranging from 20 to 81 years old ($M = 52.06$; $S.D. = 14.6$) across both sexes (Men = 34.8%; Women = 65.2%). The findings reveal a negative correlation between Agreeableness and threat perception, a positive correlation between both RWA, SDO and threat perception while, contrary to expectation, they provided no evidence for a correlation with exposure to the out-group as measured by the time spent in Israel. In future studies, we suggest taking other variables into account when measuring the exposure to the out-group such as the place of residence in Israel since different areas gave different demographic composition, thus affecting the rate and intensity of out-group interactions.

KEYWORDS: Argentinian immigrants, SDO, RWA, personality, threat perception.

INTRODUCTION

The study of threat has been growing rapidly in the past few decades. Especially following the rate at which globalization has been happening in the world, which created more diverse and divided communities. These differences soon led to the emergence of social groups and social identities which are characterized by membership criteria and boundaries ? they include some people and exclude others (Stephan & Stephan, 2017).

According to Walter Stephan, an intergroup threat is experienced when members of one group perceive that another group is in a position to cause them harm. It could be a concern about physical harm or a loss

of resources, as a realistic threat, or a concern about the integrity or validity of the group's meaning system, as a symbolic threat (Stephan & Stephan, 2017).

Immigration is one of the phenomena that greatly contribute to the creation of social groups. Because immigrants are usually seen as both an economical and cultural threat (Raijman, 2008) which presents a realistic threat on the one hand, since the local population fear having less working opportunities and therefore being affected financially. On the other hand, it proposes a symbolic threat; the immigrants usually have different cultural views than the host country.

It is worth noting that such perceptions may have great consequences on the livelihood of both in-group and out-group members. A study on inter-group anxiety pointed out that threat perception could lead to cognitions creating hostile attitudes that are then used to legitimize and justify those same behaviors. These cognitions can have permanent emotional affects and can induce emotions such as fear, anger, threat, dread, embarrassment, humiliation, frustration, guilt, or hatred (Stephan & Stephan, 1985).

A study conducted in 2008 in four different countries, the USA, Israel, Germany and France, found out that amongst a variety of variables, perception of threat was found to have the highest effect on attitudes toward out-group members (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). Perception of threat is a variable related to two other constructs, Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) and Social Dominance Orientation (SDO).

The concept of RWA was developed by Altemeyer (1981). RWA is defined as the belief in conventionalism and authoritarian submission and aggression; for example, an individual with a high level of RWA will express values that defend societal order and stability and respect for authorities (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). SDO refers to an attitudinal inclination toward a hierarchical order of society, in opposition to an equal social structure, thus a person with high SDO will bolster and uphold values that maintain the hierarchical order of society (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). Both constructs have been found to correlate positively with out-group prejudice based on different motivational levels of threat. The threat perceived by individuals with high levels of RWA stems from the idea that the out-group will threaten the order traditions of the in-group, while the threat perceived by individuals with high levels of SDO is that the out-group might endanger the in-group's societal status (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). Furthermore SDO and RWA both correlate with certain personality traits. Both SDO and RWA correlate negatively with openness to experience and SDO also correlates negatively to agreeableness (Ekehammar, Akrami, Gylje, & Zakrisson, 2004).

Personality and attitudes toward out-groups

As stated, personality characteristics play a crucial part in shaping our perspective towards the people that surrounds us. A study conducted by Suejung Han and Carole Pistole (2017) examined the relation between personality traits, using the big five scales; a scale that measures the Big Five personality (i.e., Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Conscientiousness), and openness to diversity using Universal-Diverse Orientation (UDO). Their research identified a relationship between all five personality traits and UDO; Openness to Experience predicted appreciation of cultural diversity and values on diverse perspectives while Agreeableness predicted trust and care for culturally diverse individuals; the Extraversion showed general positivity toward diversity; the Neuroticism correlated with feeling threatened by diversity, as a negative contribution; and the Conscientiousness served as an ethical motivation for openness to diversity (Han & Pistole, 2017). These findings strengthen previous research that found that Openness to Experience consistently serves as a strong predictor of UDO and also lower prejudice (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008).

Exposure to the out-group

In addition to personality traits, in literature regarding prejudice towards out-group individuals it has been found that exposure to out-group members can in fact reduce feelings of threat. Many psychological approaches believe that if you can expose people to positive perceptions it will reduce prejudice (Birtel & Crisp, 2012). In the same way psychologists teach people to deal with different fears. It seems that if you expose in an honest way the positive and negative of each minority, the main group will be humbler towards the out-group; this gives a small initial "approval" to their fears when revealing not only the good of people, which provides a more comfortable atmosphere.

In addition, it has been found that anxiety is one of the main reasons of strong prejudice towards a minority; this causes a basic fear of meeting up, getting to know each other and in total, creates a bigger gap between the different groups. A reasonable thought is to believe that the feel of threat can grow from anxiety feelings. The best way to decrease fear will be to show that there's not much to be afraid of, therefore to expose the various groups to as many out-groups possible (Birtel & Crisp, 2012). Some evidence suggests that a mere exposure to the out-group might increase the likeliness of a person to express positive associations with members of said out-group (Zebrowitz, White, & Wieneke, 2008), yet it is not clear if such an effect is likely to happen in the specific context of Argentinian immigrants living in Israel towards people of Palestinian communities.

Although understanding the complexity of life in Israel, the many variables involved in the inter-group conflict, and why exposure is difficult in such context (Dugas et al., 2017), it involves looking at the history of both of the groups, the politics and life experiences and losses that become an obstacle in many people's mind. We seek to understand if exposure in a broader, more general way has any relation to the perception of threat of Palestinians for Argentinian Jewish immigrants.

Argentinian Jews migration to Israel

A study conducted by Siebzehner (2011) estimated that approximately 64% of Latin American born immigrants living in Israel were originally from Argentina. That same study indicates that Israeli society perceives the Latin American immigrants in general, and Argentinian immigrants in particular, as motivated to immigrate to Israel based on expressive motivation over economical or social motivation (Siebzehner, 2011). This perception is countered by investigations that indicate that the motivation of Argentinian immigrants to move to Israel were often based on a variety of factors, more commonly related to their own economic situation and the political climate of their country of origin, as well as the factor of chain migrations (Klor, 2017).

A research conducted by Maoz and McCauley (2009) in the Hebrew university showed that feeling of threat amongst Israelis correlated negatively with being supportive of making concessions to Palestinians. They also showed that feelings of sympathy towards Palestinians correlated positively with willingness to compromise (Maoz & McCauley, 2009) and that readiness to apologize and make reparations exist on both sides (Klar & Schori-Eyal, 2014). This further shows the intertwined relation between perception of threat and psychological traits. Unfortunately, there has not been enough research to examine the perception of threat amongst Argentinian immigrants specifically. A research that was conducted to study the reception and integration of Argentinian immigrants in Israel, found out that most Argentinian immigrants to Israel in the 70s and 80s were not associated with Israel or Zionism and a minority were not Jews, as defined by religious criteria or even by broader criteria (Sznajder & Roniger, 2005). This finding provides a basis to believe that most Argentinians would have less perception of threat toward Palestinians due to lack of association with the Zionist movement. Drawing on that, a research that explores the effect of

exposure and psychological traits would offer better understanding of the relationship between Palestinians and Argentinian immigrants in Israel. Finally, studying the variables related to inter-group conflicts of Argentinian immigrants to Israel might be of relevance to further understand phenomena such as subjective well-being, acculturation, and centrality of migratory events in Argentinian and Latin American immigrants living in Israel (Simkin, 2020).

This article proposes to evaluate the relationship between threat perception towards the out-group and intrinsic traits such as SDO, RWA and personality and to observe the general impact of extrinsic variable (time spent living in Israel) and threat perception towards the out-group.

METHODS

Sample

The sample of this study is composed of 207 Argentinians who migrated to Israel and are currently living there. Of those 207, 108 are women and 99 are men (Men = 34.8%; Women = 65.2%). The ages of the individuals of the sample ranges from 20 to 81 years old ($M = 52.06$; $S.D = 14.6$).

Measures

The International Personality Item Pool-Five-Factor Model Measure

The Mini IPIP is a self-administered questionnaire of 20 items, which account for the five dimensions of personality in adolescent and adult population: extraversion (reserved vs. animated), Agreeableness (hostile vs. empathic), conscientiousness (well organized vs. impulsive), neuroticism (unstable vs. emotionally stable) and openness (imaginative vs. concrete); The adaptation used in this article was formulated by Simkin, Borchardt Duter, and Azzollini (2020) whose reliability has proven to be acceptable for the present analysis (Extraversion $\alpha = 0.72$; Agreeableness $\alpha = 0.69$; conscientiousness $\alpha = 0.76$; Openness $\alpha = 0.61$; Neuroticism $\alpha = 0.56$).

Social Dominance Orientation scale

The SDO Scale is a self-administered scale originally composed of 16 items. The answer format is of a 5-choice likert scale ranging from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (5). The scale is composed of two subscales, Group Dominance (SDO-GD) and Opposition to Equality (SDO-OE). The scale has been found to have high degrees of reliability and construct validity (Pratto et al., 1994). This study utilizes the adaptation of the SDO scale made by Etchezahar, Prado-Gascó, Jaume, and Brussino (2014). The reliability proved to be acceptable for this sample ($\alpha = 0.70$).

The Right-Wing Authoritarianism

The Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale used in this study is an adaptation of the short version of the RWA scale validated by Zakrisson (2005). The scale is self-administered and consists of 6 items such as 'There are many radical, immoral people trying to ruin things; the society ought to stop them?' and 'Our ancestors ought to be honored more for the way they have built our society, at the same time we ought to put an end

to those forces destroying it?. The adaptation of the Zakrisson version was done by Etchezahar, Cervone, Biglieri, Quattrocchi, & Prado-Gascó (2011). The reliability analysis conducted on the scale items in this study's sample proved to be adequate ($\alpha = 0.81$)

The perception of threat was evaluated through an ad hoc 6-item self-administered scale since no validated instrument assessing the perception of threat for the Jewish Argentinian migrant population was available. A confirmatory factor analysis conducted showed that the construct validity was adequate (Figure 1) and so were the fit index (Table 3). The items of the scale are the following: (1) 'Palestinians and Israelis will never be truly comfortable with one another's presence, even though they are close to one another?', (2) 'It is possible to think of a future where both Israelis and Palestinians benefit from mutual cooperation?', (3) 'I fear my family or myself might suffer from a terrorist attack perpetrated by a Palestinian?', (4) 'In my opinion, most Palestinians would destroy the state of Israel if they could?'. (5) 'It is possible to trust Palestinians?' and (6) 'I feel empathy towards Palestinians?'. The reliability of the scale assessed through Chronbach's Alpha proved to be adequate ($\alpha = 0.81$)

Perception of Threat

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Procedure

A non-probabilistic sample was gathered through voluntary collaboration. The participants gave an informed consent, having been advised that participation would be anonymous and that the data gathered would be used strictly for scientific purposes

Data Analysis

In order to carry out the statistical procedures EQS 6.4 and SPSS 25 or windows were used.

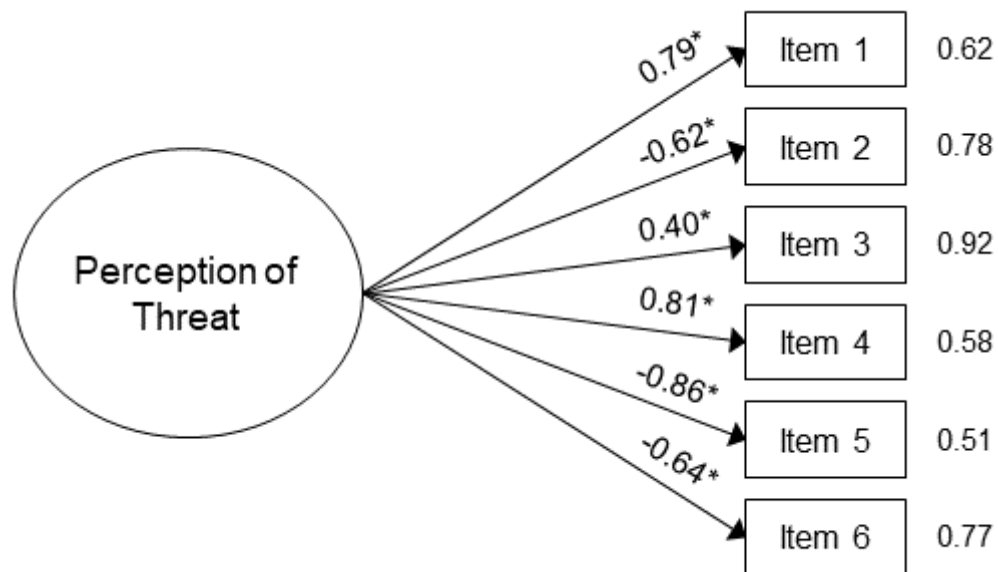
RESULTS

First of all a confirmatory factor analysis and fit index were conducted in order to evaluate the threat perception scale validity (Table 1). Results show adequate fit of the data to the model (NFI= .983; NNFI= .991; CFI= .994; IFI= .994; RMSEA= .047).

TABLE 1
Fit Indices

	χ^2	NFI	NNFI	CFI	IFI	RMSEA
TP	767.539	0.983	0.991	0.994	0.994	0.047

The structural model of the Perception of Threat scale developed within this study is shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1.
CFA. Perception of Treath

Then, correlational analyses were conducted between the variables of threat perception, SDO, RWA, the five personality traits and year of migration. Threat perception has proved to correlate significantly and positively with both sub-scales of the SDO scale, SDO-GD ($r = .348$; $p = .000$) and SDO-OE ($r = .298$; $p = .000$). The correlation of the total score of the SDO scale was ($r = .376$; $p = .000$) as seen in Table 2.

TABLE 2.
Correlations.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.THREAT	-										
2.SDO	,376**	-									
3.SDO-GD	,348**	,813**	-								
4.SDO-OE	,298**	,881**	,440**	-							
5.RWA	,456**	,280**	,347**	,150*	-						
6.OP	-.132	-,183**	-,194**	-.124	-,251**	-					
7.CS	.051	-.001	-.008	.005	,155*	-.006	-				
8.EX	-.008	-.040	.010	-.069	-.037	.112	.105	-			
9.AG	-,192**	-,307**	-,236**	-,282**	-.108	,200**	,237**	,345**	-		
10.NC	.042	.042	,140*	-.049	.114	-,208**	-,156*	-,174*	-,175*	-	
11.YOM	.112	.022	.074	-.025	-.108	-.078	-,165*	.118	.060	,148*	-

Notes: SDO = social dominance; SDO-GD= group dominance; SDO- EO=opposition to equality , RWA== right wing authoritarianism ; OP=Openness; CS= Conscientiousness; EX= Extroversion; AG= Agreeableness; NC= Neuroticism; YOM= Year Of Migration.**Correlation is significative at 0,01 level (bilateral); * Correlation is significative at 0,05 level (bilateral).

With regard to the relation between personality traits and threat perception, a downhill correlation was found between threat perception and agreeableness ($r = .298$; $p = .000$). No significant correlation was found between threat perception and Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion or Neuroticism.

Finally, the correlation conducted between threat perception and amount of time spent living in Israel has proven to be not significant (Table 2).

Regarding the effects of the independent variables, when conducting a regression analysis (Table 2), the results show that threat perception acts as a dependent variable for both RWA and SDO significantly.

TABLE 3.
Regression analysis

	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	6,507	1,179	-	5,520	,000
RWA	,350	,057	,380	6,134	,000
SDO	,219	,050	,270	4,358	,000

Notes: RWA= right wing authoritarianism ; SDO=social dominance theory

DISCUSSION

The present work focuses on the perception of threat of Jewish Argentinian immigrants living in Israel towards the specific group or community of Palestinians. It has been made clear through our analysis that perception of threat relates to values of social dominance and authoritarianism as well as to intrinsic personality traits such as agreeableness. Although they do not seem to be strictly related to variables indicating the exposure to the out-group, such as the time spent living in Israel.

Social Dominance Orientation, Right-wing Authoritarianism and perceived threat by the out-group

When assessing threat perception in relation to SDO and RWA, the results obtained show that individuals who uphold beliefs and attitudes based on social hierarchy and social dominance, respect towards authority, submission to the authorities and conventionalism, show a heightened perception regarding individuals outside of their social group. Both SDO and RWA seem to affect the perception of threat specifically because it targets the existential and epistemological motivations underlying those beliefs of social superiority and appreciation of the status quo (Jost, Glaser, Kruglansky & Sulloway, 2003). These attitudes might also be influenced by contextual contingencies such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and by stereotypes associated to the Palestinian community by the Israeli society. Further studies that focus on those variables are required in order to better comprehend the motivational and ideological basis related to the perception of threat toward Palestinians by the individuals and communities of Jewish Argentinian migrants living in Israel.

Threat perception and personality traits

The results revealed a significant negative correlation between Agreeableness and threat perception as measured by the scale; that is, people who scored higher on the agreeableness scale were significantly less likely to have high threat perception. This finding is supported by previous research that showed that Agreeableness

predicted trust and care towards individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds (Han & Pistole, 2017). This would explain the link between agreeableness and lower threat perception.

It was expected that the remaining of the Big Five personality traits, Extraversion, Openness, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism would have a correlation with threat perception; Neuroticism was expected to correlate positively with the dependent variable while with the remaining, a negative correlation was expected. Contrary to the hypothesis and the literature in the field, there were no such significant correlations. This could indicate that the Argentinian immigrants in Israel, as a population, differ in their perception of threat and how they interpret it. It is possible that there are factors that play a part in determining whether a person or a group is perceived to impose a threat; those factors can be social and not precisely individual characteristics. Perhaps examining broader factors such as political views and drive to migration in the first place, would provide us with better understanding of threat perception among Argentinian immigrants in Israel.

Threat perception and out-group exposure

The results show that there is no defined correlation between the perception of threat and the amount of years spent in Israel for Argentinian immigrants. This might indicate that threat perception is affected by more specific, context-sensitive variables related to exposure than by the amount of years an immigrant has spent living as part of the Israeli society. We recommend that further research evaluate other criteria such as day to day interactions (e.g working side by side), ethnic composition in the area that the immigrants live in, etc. We assume that analyzing the interaction of threat perception with these variables will help build a better understanding of the relationship between specific types of exposure to minorities and the assumption of threat towards Palestinians in Israel for Argentinian immigrants.

In regards to this study's limitations, it should be mentioned that the results obtained are representative of the sample, but not applicable to the whole population since the sampling method used is not probabilistic and no measures to assure randomization of the sample were carried out. Furthermore the variable used to measure exposure is indicative of exposure in a very broad and general manner (year of migration/time spent living in Israel). Although it evaluates certain aspects of exposure, it doesn't necessarily imply direct contact with the out-group or include other aspects regarding exposure to the out-group.

CONCLUSION

Threat perception is a feeling that is affected by multiple factors and variables. In this research we tried to outline some of the factors that contribute to threat perception among Argentinian immigrants in Israel. As it has been discussed earlier, SDO and RWA showed a positive correlation with threat perception, agreeableness correlated negatively with the latter variable, whereas the time spent in Israel did not correlate. A future, more comprehensive research should firstly take other variables in defining the exposure to the out-group, since spending time in Israel may not directly imply interaction with the out-group. Some places in Israel are more diverse than others and we believe that such differences may shape threat perception among immigrants. Secondly, we suggest including more variables that relate to the social context and beliefs of the immigrants in their host country, rather than individual characteristics, which would offer results specific and relevant to Argentinian immigrants in Israel.

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