Summary
The Role of City Identity and Values in Perceived Threat from Syrian Refugees: Internal Migrant Perspective

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In the aftermath of the civil war in Syria, the world has witnessed an overwhelming flow of Syrians who sought refuge in neighbouring countries and beyond. In the face of popular resentment and anti-refugee sentiments in host countries, researchers began to examine the factors contributing to prejudice and discrimination against Syrian refugees (e.g., Esses, Medianu, & Lawson, 2013, Üsten, 2018; Yitmen &Verkuyten, 2018a), with a special focus on the role of perceived threat (e.g., Taşdemir, 2018; Yitmen & Verkuyten, 2018a, 2018b). Despite the initial open-door policy and ongoing humanitarian concerns in Turkey where more than 3.5 million Syrians now live (Syria Regional Refugee Response, 2020), perceived threat from Syrian refugees in the form of economic, cultural, and security concerns is high in the majority population (Girgin & Cebeci, 2017; Taşdemir, 2018). However, most studies are descriptive, and what fuels threat perception and how is still unclear. How host society members perceive refugees influences pro- or anti-refugee actions and policy implementations. In particular, people who perceive refugees as a threat to the welfare and culture of the host country tend to show discrimination (e.g., not to employ refugees or not to rent a house) and endorse exclusionary social policies (e.g., denying health services) (Walsh & Tartakovskly, 2020). Perceived discrimination by the receiving society, in turn, leads to social and cultural closure within immigrant and refugee communities, which further complicates intergroup relations and peace even over generations (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000). Understanding the antecedents of threat perception can inform evidence-based strategies toward equality-based conflict resolution interventions and discourses in the refugee-receiving societies.

The present study aims to test a mediation model based on three theoretical frameworks that explain the sources or antecedents of prejudice toward outgroups: *Integrated Threat Theory* identifies various sources of threat as precursors of outgroup prejudice (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) and *Social Identity Theory* explains the role of group-based identities in intergroup perceptions and relations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Finally, Schwartz's (1992) *Human Values Theory* depicts a system of personal values that correspond to basic psychological needs, such as belonging, and determines interpersonal attitudes, political orientations, and lifestyle choices based on these needs (Bardi & Goodwin, 2011). The proposed model asserts that a high level of social identification with one's city of residence (i.e., city identity) where threat perception is a norm increases the likelihood of perceived threat in individuals from refugees. We further suggest that this link is mediated by two types of collectivist values, namely conservation values and self-transcendence values, but in opposite directions. This model covers relations that were investigated in the literature separately, e.g., relations from social identity or value orientations to perceived threat. Our model also treats values as dynamic and context-dependent motivations that are affected by social and emotive bonds that individuals begin to establish with the local place and residents (see Sagiv & Roccas, 2017). This approach may shed light onto multiple and dynamic roles that social identity play in perceived threat from outgroups.

We tested this model in a sample of internal immigrants, that is, the citizens of the Turkish Republic who relocated within Turkey to settle in Izmir, a metropolitan port city. The perception of "nativity" is in constant flux

in Turkey due to ever-increasing geographical mobility (Umuroğlu, Göregenli, & Karakuş, 2015). As internal migrants themselves need to adapt economically and culturally and their level of identification with the destination city varies through acculturation (Göregenli & Karakuş, 2014), they are a suitable group to investigate the role social identification with city plays in intergroup perceptions. Izmir is the third largest city of Turkey with its majority-internal migrant population and a key destination place for Syrians (147.284 Syrians live in İzmir as of November 2020; Republic of Turkey, Directorate General of Migration Management). Izmir is also one of the transit cities for Syrians who aim to reach West or South Europe and beyond. Below, we describe the rationale behind the conceptual links proposed by our threat model and provide empirical evidence supporting these links.

Theoretical Model: City Identity, Values, and Perceived Threat from Syrian Refugees

The Integrated Threat Theory identifies, among others, two kinds of threats that underlie prejudice against outgroups: *realistic threat* rooted in competition for tangible resources such as employment, security, education, and health services and *symbolic threat* referring to a sense of incompatibility of cultural values and traditions. In Social Identity Theory, perceiving self as belonging to a valued group increases identifications with the norms and behavioural patterns shared in this group, which in turn, reinforces ingroup-outgroup distinction to boost and protect self-esteem. Migration brings about changes in immigrants' social identities, e.g., they may increasingly see themselves as locals. In internal migration, a key social identity is city identity, which implies identification with locals and a sense of shared future with them (Göregenli, Karakuş, & Gökten, 2016; Gui, Berry, & Zhang, 2012, Güngör, 2020). City identity is also "a place of identity," referring to "a nest" that symbolizes one's private sphere (Bilgin, 2011).

From a social identity perspective, a higher city identitification does not only motivate individuals to protect territorial rights and privileges, it also increases the likelihood of adopting local norms (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). Social identity construction also includes the internalization of the reference group's representations of outgroups. In Turkey, both perceived realistic and symbolic threat from Syrian refugees is consistently and alarmingly high among the local populations of many cities, including Ankara, İstanbul and Izmir (Genç & Özdemirkıran, 2015; Taşdemir, 2018; Yıldız & Uzgören, 2016). Hence, identification with a city where the dominant perception of refugees is conflict-laden can sharpen the sense of we-versus-them and increase prejudice toward them.

However, a stigmatized outgroup is rarely seen in a negative light only. In Turkey, the level of negative attitudes toward refugees varies depending on whether a super-order social identity, such as national identity, is conceived based on ethnic or citizenship ties, with the latter being more inclusive and predicting less threat (Taşdemir, 2018). There are also positive attitudes toward Syrians based on humanitarian concerns or a shared religious identity in Izmir (Yıldız & Uzgören, 2016). We argue that values may mediate the relation between social identity and perceived outgroup threat. On the one hand, identification with locals through social interactions may reinforce values that are salient in these interactions. According to Lewicka (2008), as individuals begin to establish social ties and take roots in a place, they increasingly identify with the shared beliefs and normative values in this place. Consistently, some studies reported that increased identification with the host members was related to increased value similarity with them (e.g., Russian immigrants in Israel; Roccas, Schwartz, & Amit, 2010). On the other hand, values, as abstract motivational goals, shape specific attitudes toward outgroups. Using Schwartz' (1992) classification of 4 higher-order human values, researchers found that two types of collectivist values are particularly decisive in perceived threat from immigrants and refugees. Namely, values that highlight conservation of traditions, social order and hierarchy and those concerned with personal and societal security (i.e., conservation values) foster perceived threat from immigrants; however, values concerned with the welfare and wellbeing of close others as well as of all humanity (i.e., self-transcendence values) lead to more welcoming intergroup attitudes (e.g., Davidov, Meuleman, Billiet ve Schmidt, 2008; Walsh & Tartakovsky, 2020). According to Schwartz (1994), conservation values highlight a need to dominate and control outgroups that are seen as a threat to the welfare and safety of an ingroup and a tendency to support a hierarchical social order and authoritarian policies to maintain status quo. However, people high on self-transcendence see such policies and attempts as contradicting the importance they assign to equality-based intergroup relations (see also Walsh & Tartakovsky, 2020).

In Turkey, where rapid urbanization and globalization have diversified the social and cultural landscape of large cities, it is increasingly common to find individuals and groups with seemingly opposite value orientations (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2007). Among urban residents, traditional collectivist values such as attachment to traditions, conformity to authority, social order, hospitality, benevolence as well as modern collectivist values such as social equality, solidarity, and a fair distribution of resources are endorsed in high degrees (Güngör, Bornstein, &
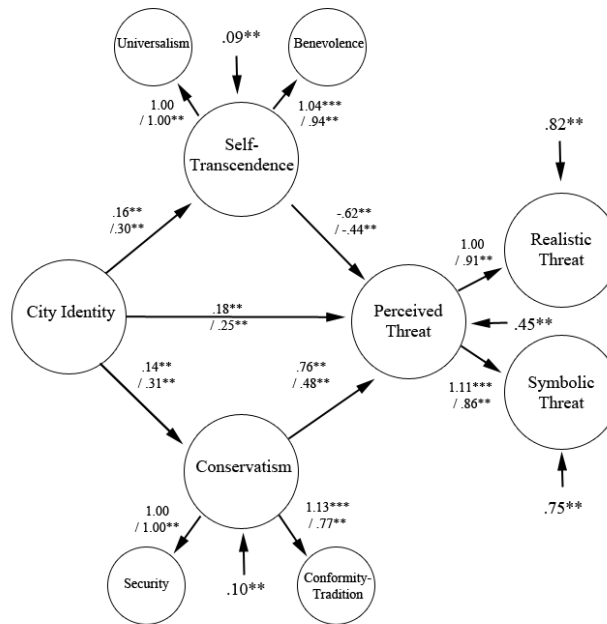
Notes. Values given in the figure are unstandardized and standardized regression weights, respectively. **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Figure 1. Regression Coefficients for the Mediator Role of Values in City Identity and Perceived Threat

Phalet, 2012; İmamoğlu & Karakitapoğlu-Aygün, 1999; Şahin-Fırat, 2010). Furthermore, these traditional and modern collectivist values are mutually supportive, underlining the importance attached to social harmony and security in Turkey (İmamoğlu & Karakitapoğlu-Aygün, 1999). An Izmirian identity is represented by the locals as a multicultural and liberal identity that integrates traditions with a modern lifestyle harmoniously (Karadağ & Turut, 2013). Hence, we predicted both a direct link between city identity and threat perception and indirect links that mediate this relation through ingroup-protective conservation values (conformity, traditionalism, and security) and outgroup-inclusive self-transcendence values (universalism and benevolence).

Method

Participants

Internal migrants who have settled in İzmir after 15 years of age (N = 219, Mean age = 21-53 years, 50% men) participated. Most participants migrated voluntarily (71%), and the rest migrated involuntarily. One-quarter of the participants had primary or some primary education while half of the participants had a university or higher degree. On average, participants spent more than

one-third of their lives in Izmir. Most frequently reported reasons for migration were job opportunities, marriage, education, and lifestyle choices.

Measures

Perceived threat was measured by items translated to Turkish from Stephan, Ybarra, and Bachman's (1999) scale. Three items for realistic threat (e.g., refugees as tax burden on citizens of Turkey) and 4 items for symbolic threat (e.g., religious and moral values of Syrians as incompatible with Turks') were used. City identity items were adapted from ethnic identity scale used by Güngör, Bornstein and Phalet, 2010 (5 items, e.g., perceived similarity to a typical Izmirian, *1 = Totally disagree, 5 = Totally agree*). Conservation (Conformity, Security, Tradition) and Self-transcendence values (Universalism, Benevolence) were measured using subscales proposed by Schwartz (2003) for European Social Value Survey. The scale, adapted to Turkish by Demirutku and Sümer (2010), asks participants the degree to which they think they are similar to a hypothetical person who, for example, "thinks it is important that every person in the world should be treated equally and believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life." (Universalism value; *1 = Not like me at all, 5 = Very much like me*).

Table 1. Correlations among Demographics and Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Realistic Threat	-														
2. Symbolic Threat	.46**	-													
3. City Identity	.15*	.17*	-												
4. Universalism	-.14*	-.11	.21**	-											
5. Benevolence	-.11	-.14*	.16*	.58**	-										
6. Security	.24**	.18**	.20**	.30**	.32**	-									
7. Conformity	.11	.17*	.14*	.32**	.36**	.47**	-								
8. Tradition	.09	.07	.06	.12	.26**	.34**	.53**	-							
9. Gender	.01	.14*	.20**	.18**	.04	.18**	.04	-.01	-						
10. Age	.12	.16*	.05	.15*	-.01	.25**	.39**	.29**	.09	-					
11. Marital Status	.10	.14*	.04	.13	-.01	.31**	.36**	.36**	.11	.71**	-				
12. Education	-.03	-.16*	.11	.00	-.06	-.24**	-.35**	-.44**	-.0	-.41**	-.36**	-			
13. Monthly Income	-.04	-.16*	.12	.04	-.09	-.08	-.29**	-.35**	-.11	-.14*	-.09	.47**	-		
14. Migration Type	.08	-.04	.04	-.02	.02	-.12	.00	-.12	-.08	-.03	-.09	.21**	.04	-	
15. YSI	.07	-.00	-.12	.12	-.02	.13	.28**	.13	.09	.42**	.25**	-.22**	-.11	.12	-
16. YSI/Age	-.06	-.15*	-.15*	-.04	-.02	-.15*	-.15*	-.17*	-.01	-.65**	-.51**	.22**	.04	.14*	.40**

Notes. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Education: No Literacy = 1, No certificate = 2, Primary School = 3, Middle School = 4, High School = 5, University = 6, Postgraduate = 7; Monthly Income: Less than 350TL = 1, 351TL − 600TL = 2, 601TL − 900TL = 3, 901TL − 1500TL = 4, 1501TL − 2000TL = 5, 2001TL − 3000TL = 6, 3001TL − 4000TL = 7, 4001TL − 6000TL = 8, More than 6000TL = 9. YSI = Years spent in İzmir; YSI /Age = The ratio of how much of whole life they spent in İzmir (%).

Procedure

Data were collected by the students of a Level 300 "Psychology of Migration" course (Yaşar University, 2016-2017 academic year) under the supervision and guidance by the third author, the course instructor. Participants were reached through snowball technique, ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses, and informed about the general aim of the study. Voluntary participants signed informed consents and responded to the questionnaires in their homes, workplaces, or other public locations (about 1 hour).

Results

Descriptive statistics

Both realistic and perceived threats were high (above the midpoint of the scales). Participants were also high on city identity, conservation, and self-transcendence values.

The test of the moderation model

We followed a two-step analysis in model testing: Measurement model and structural model. We referred to Kline (2005) in evaluating the model fit: χ^2/df ratio ($\leq$ 5), RMSEA ($\leq$ .10), SRMR ($<$ .10), CFI ($>$ .90) indicate an acceptable fit. We used AIC value to assess the most parsimonious factor structure; the lower the AIC, the more parsimonious the model.

Measurement model. Table 1 shows Pearson correlations between the study variables. We fit a measurement model with realistic and symbolic threat, city identity, conservation (conformity, tradition, security), and self-transcendence (universalism, benevolence). Based on theoretical explanations and previous research (e.g., Güngör et al., 2012; Taşdemir, 2018), we then combined realistic and symbolic threat under a latent variable "perceived threat" and conformity and tradition under a "conformity-tradition" latent variable. The final model fit the data well, $\chi^2(218) = 367.07$, $\chi^2/df = 1.68$, *RMSEA* = .06, *SRMR* = .07, *CFI* = .89, *AIC* = 483.07. All factor loadings were significantly high.

Structural model. The proposed model was tested by controlling the sex, age, marital status, education level, income level, migration type (voluntary/involuntary), and the proportion of time spent in Izmir as its resident. The model provided acceptable fit with the data, $\chi^2(219)$ = 403.58, p < .001, χ^2/df = 1.84, *RMSEA* = .06, *SRMR* = .09, *CFI* = .87, *AIC* = 563.58 (see Figure 1 for the regression coefficients). City identity explained 9 percent of the variance in self-transcendence and 10 percent of the variance in conservation. City identity and values, together, explained 45 percent of the variance in perceived threat.

As seen in Figure 1, there was a positive relation between city identity and perceived threat. City identity predicted perceived threat also indirectly, as revealed by a 1000 sample bootstrapping with 95% confidence interval. A high city identity was related to low perceived threat through self-transcendence (ß = -.10, SE = .05, GA [-.23, -.03]) but it was related to high perceived threat through conservation (ß =. 11, SE = .05, GA [.03, .22]). These relations confirmed the hypothesis that city identity predicted perceived threat from Syrians in different directions through self-transcendence and conservation values.

Alternative models. We compared the fit of three alternative models to our proposed model. Among all, one model (values → perceived threat → city identity) showed a better fit with the data than our model, $\chi^2(220)$ = 367,62, p < .001, χ^2/df = 1.67, *RMSEA* = .06, *SRMR* = .07, *CFI* = .90, *AIC* = 525.62, but it explained only 19 percent of the variance in city identity. The only significant relation was from self-transcendence to city identity. Overall, our model seemed to be the most meaningful and parsimonious model.

Discussion

In the wake of unprecedented immigrant and refugee flow, the social, economic, and cultural integration of the newcomers with the destination country are further complicated by concerns in the host society such as "Will we citizens have to shoulder economic burden due to immigrants?" or "Is my child going to be safe in a school with a large number of refugee kids?". Such concerns inform intergroup relations and policies, even when they are not based on facts. The present study examined the antecedents of perceived realistic and symbolic threat from Syrian refugees in Turkey based on a process model combining insights from three theoretical frameworks. Increased city identification among internal immigrants in Izmir where perceived threat was high fostered prejudice against Syrians depending on whether the values related to this identity emphasized ingroup-protection (conservation) or outgroup-inclusion (self-transcendence). Our study replicated previous studies linking social identification with locals to outgroup threat on the one hand (see Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006, for a meta-analysis), and values to perceived threat on the other (Walsh & Tartakovsky, 2020; Vecchione et al., 2011). Moreover, we showed that the nature of the relation between social identity and threat perception is not necessarily linear but varies through different motivational goals.

Our findings suggest that in the process of construction of a common social identity, such as city identi-

ty, social and education programs and urban policies can contribute to a positive intergroup climate by highlighting the inclusive and benevolent aspect of this identity. A caveat is however, such implementations promoting self-transcendence can foster conservation values due to positive correlation between conservation and self-transcendence values, hence may exacerbate prejudice. It is, therefore, important to understand the main concern underlying conservation values. Perceived threat had the highest correlation with security concerns (Table 1). These findings, together, suggest that policies to mitigate prejudice should not only emphasize the inclusive and humanitarian aspects of a social identity, they should also address the safety and security concerns of the locals in ways that respect universal human rights.

Our data were cross-sectional, a major limitation of the present study. Longitudinal and experimental studies can illuminate the nature of relations between the major constructs. The model should be tested in other intergroup and cultural contexts to establish safer conclusions regarding its generalizability. Future studies should also focus on positive perceptions, which are qualitatively different from low or lack of perceived threat (Walsh & Tartakovsky, 2020). A focus on positive aspects of outgroups and outgroup perceptions would be a valuable contribution from social psychologists to open-minded public discourse on stigmatized groups.

In sum, the present study provides some insight on why a salient shared identity, such as a city identity, is related to stronger negative attitudes toward refugees in some locals while it is related to less negative attitudes in others. This insight can be used in applied research and policy interventions to highlight the inclusive and humanitarian aspects of a common social identity and help smooth intergroup relations.

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