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Yossi David

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, davidyossi4@gmail.com

Nimrod Rosler

Donald Ellis

Ifat Maoz

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Gendering Human Rights: Threat and Gender Perceptions as Predictors of Attitudes towards Violating Human Rights in Asymmetric Conflict

Abstract

We introduce, in this study, a gendering human rights model in which perceiving outgroups as having stereotypical feminine traits predicts decreased support for violating their human rights through the mediation of threat perception. This model is tested in the context of the asymmetrical protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict using Jewish-Israeli public opinion polling data (N=517). In line with our expectations, the findings indicate that Jewish-Israeli perceptions of Palestinians as having stereotypical feminine traits predict lower levels of threat perception from Palestinians and consequently less support for violating their human rights. We discuss the implications of our findings for understanding factors that attenuate support for violation of human rights of an outgroup in other situations of violent asymmetric conflict.

Keywords: *Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Gender, Gender perception, Public Opinion, Threat perception, Human rights, Asymmetric conflict*

Author Bio(s)

Yossi David, bio

Yossi David is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research interest includes political communication, public opinion, conflict resolution, gender studies, and queer theory. His work has been supported by the Harry and Sylvia Hoffmann Leadership Fellowship Program and by the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace.

Nimrod Rosler, bio

Dr. Nimrod Rosler is a lecturer (tenure-track) at the Program in Conflict Resolution and Mediation, Department of Public Policy, Tel Aviv University. Previously a Lady Davis post-doctoral fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a Visiting Israel Professor at the Center for Global and International Studies, the University of Kansas, he has published in *Journal of Conflict Resolution* and *Journal of Peace Research*. His research interests include conflict-related diaspora communities, political and psychological dynamics of intractable conflicts and their resolution, and leadership in conflict and peacemaking.

Donald Ellis, bio

Donald Ellis is a Professor in the School of Communication at the University of Hartford. Professor Ellis is the past editor of the journal *Communication Theory*, an ICA fellow, and the author of numerous books and articles pertaining to communication issues and ethno-political conflict. He has been a Fulbright scholar, a recipient of the Lady Davis Fellowship at Hebrew University, and the winner of the Tonkin award for scholarship. His primary research interests include communication issues around managing political conflict, deliberative democracy, intergroup conflict, and the role of new media and political conflict.

Ifat Maoz, bio

Ifat Maoz is a Full Professor, Head of the Department of Communication, Director of the Swiss Center and Graduate and Masters Program of Conflict Research, Management and Resolution, and holds the Danny

Arnold Chair in Communication. Prof. Maoz is a social psychologist researching psychology and media in conflict and intergroup relations. She has been a visiting scholar at the Psychology Department of Stanford University (1996, 2013-14) and a senior research fellow at the Asch Center for the Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict at the University of Pennsylvania and Bryn Mawr College (2002-3, 2006-8). Her current main interests include psychological, moral and media-related aspects in conflict and peace-making, cognitive processing of social and political information, dynamics of intergroup communication and discussions in conflict, models of intergroup dialogues and encounters, public opinion in conflict and peace making, social media in conflict and group and intergroup dialogues through social media in conflict.

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Gendering Human Rights: Threat and Gender Perceptions as Predictors of Attitudes Toward Violating Human Rights in Asymmetric Conflict

Yossi David, Nimrod Rosler, Donald Ellis, and Ifat Maoz

Conflicts can change in scope, escalating from smaller communal disputes to intergroup intractable conflicts. During this period of change and development, an intractable conflict can become the prism by which a society views the world. As Bar-Tal and Teichman (2005) explain, groups evolving towards intractable conflicts increasingly accept the justness of their own cause, intensify their patriotism, justify security needs, and develop negative outgroup images—all of which form a collective ethos that is perceived as characterizing the society, and then used to justify the society's policies, decisions, and actions (Yaniv, 1993). This *ethos of conflict* is maintained by social institutions such as the educational system and permeates the entire society (Bar-Tal, 1998). Such an ethos of conflict prevails in Israel, according to Bar-Tal and Teichman (2005), and informs the Israeli narrative.

Societies that are ensnared in an ethos of conflict sometimes enable or even encourage the state to take extralegal means in order to justify human rights violations. This is particularly true in asymmetric conflicts when the stronger party can retaliate against the weaker more vulnerable outgroup (Bar-On, 1998; Bar-On & Kassem, 2004). Noelle-Neumann (1993) suggested that in such cases the minority may remain silent and not voice its opposition for fear of isolation or retaliation, therefore perpetuating “the spiral of silence” in public opinion. Thus, the fear of isolation may produce compliance with perceived majority support for coercive acts toward minorities that are considered violations of human rights, while silencing objection and dissent. In order to further understand the psychological predictors of support for the violation of human rights of members of the outgroup during conflict, our study investigates the role of gender perceptions in this context. This latter line of research has received growing theoretical attention in the last two decades (Maoz, 2009; Tessler, Nachtwey, & Grant, 1999; Tessler & Warriner, 1997).

Hence, this study is designed to explore factors that underlie public support for violating human rights of opponents in protracted asymmetrical conflict. It builds on previous research (Hafner-Burton, 2012; Leidner, Castano, Zaiser, & Giner-Sorolla, 2010; Maoz & McCauley, 2008, 2011; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009) by exploring the role of gender perceptions on attitudes toward violating human rights. We introduce here a gendering human rights model, in which,

consistent with previous studies (Maoz & McCauley, 2008, 2011), threat perceptions predict support for violating human rights of an outgroup. However, our model also presents *Perceiving Outgroups* as having *Stereotypical Feminine Traits* (POSFT), as an important predictor of (decreased) willingness to violate human rights of opponents in conflict. This model was tested in the context of the asymmetrical conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. We used public opinion polling data to examine the extent to which Jewish-Israeli perceptions of Palestinians as threatening, and as possessing stereotypical feminine traits, predict attitudes toward violating human rights of Palestinians.

Threat Perception and Support for Violating Human Rights

Clearly, the perception of outgroup threat is a major factor explaining support for more extreme, aggressive, and belligerent policies toward outgroups (Gordon & Arian, 2001; Maoz & McCauley, 2008, 2011). Considerable research has focused on threat perception as a factor that explains the tendency to become more politically intolerant (Gibson, 1992; Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse & Wood, 1995; Shamir & Sagiv-Schifter, 2006). Support for more moderate and compromising policies has been found to be decreased by threat perception (Bar-Tal, 2001; Gordon & Arian, 2001), and support for punitive and aggressive actions against the outgroup in conflict has been found to be increased by perception of threat (Al-Krenawi, 2013; Arian, 1989; Fein, 2007; Huddy, Feldman, Taber & Lahav, 2005; Leidner et al., 2010). Perception of threat from Palestinians is a major predictor explaining higher support for violating human rights of Palestinians in the specific context of Jewish-Israeli public opinion (Maoz & McCauley, 2008, 2011). The above review leads us to expect that *perception of threat from Palestinians will be significantly associated with Jewish-Israeli support for Concrete Coercive Acts (CCA) toward Palestinians that violate their basic human rights, with higher perception of threat predicting increased support for CCA toward Palestinians that violate their basic human rights.*

Perceiving Outgroups as Possessing Stereotypical Feminine Traits and Support for CCA

Categorizing groups according to gender qualities reflects the role of power in social affairs, and legitimizes the status and authority granted to men. A masculine-feminine dualism (instrumental versus expressive qualities) is an archetype in the politics and psychology of cultures, even though they are arbitrary labels that are attached to qualities equally shared by males and females. Masculine-instrumental and feminine-expressive categorizations reflect the view of the dominant class (Schoenfeld & Mestrovic, 1991), though also reflecting functional

needs of every social system. In other words, although all groups have instrumental needs—relating to adaptation, goal attainment, and representing the polity and rational-legal aspect of society—these needs are considered masculine in nature. In the same manner, expressive needs, relating to integration and latency, are universal despite being perceived as feminine (Parsons, 1962).

The designation of masculinity or femininity is based less on actual gender performance than on responses to conditions of oppression and the assignment of gender attributes by dominant groups. There is increased attention to gender as a constructed social category, and the effects of gender construction on social structures and interactions are extensively discussed (Butler, 1990, 2015; Nacos, 2005; Puar, 2007; Rosenberg & Maoz, 2012; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Zotto, 2002). Recent studies also describe situations of conflict, warfare, and terrorism as constructed in line with normative gender dichotomies, whereby power, aggression and warfare are associated with males, and submissiveness, passivity, the need to be protected, and the tendency toward peace are associated with females (Dowler, 2002; Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007; Talbot, 2001). Furthermore, and specifically in the context of asymmetrical relations between majority and minority groups, critical work discusses the tendency to feminize minority outgroup members, constructing them as weak, submissive, effeminate, and emotional (Boyarin, 1995; Chen, 1996; Wong, 1993). This simply means that gender categories (masculine or feminine) influence the perception and arrays of meaning for members of the other group. In this study we examined the relationship between perceiving members of the other group as possessing either masculine or feminine traits and the extent to which these perceptions predict support for concrete coercive acts that violate human rights (Allen, 2013; Gavriely-Nuri, 2008; Puar, 2007). We have not been concerned with identifying specific gendered behaviors but with the perception of a pattern of behaviors consistent with typically defined feminine stereotypes and the consequences of these perceptions for human rights violations.

This study uniquely extends previous work on psychological predictors of support for violating human rights in conflict by contributing to a line of research that examines the role of gendered stereotype categories in conflict (Conover & Sapiro, 1993; David & Maoz, 2015; Fite, Genest, & Wilcox, 1990; Maoz, 2009; Tessler et al., 1999; Tessler & Warriner, 1997; Togeby, 1994; Wilcox, Hewitt, & Allsop, 1996). Gendered cognitive representations are an important category in conflict. Research on social-perceptual mechanisms typically considers opponents in

conflict as single categories (e.g., ethnic group, race, power position, religion, political orientation, etc.) without analyzing important sub-categories and their possible impact on perceptions, cognitions, and judgments (Maoz, 2009). The data reported here presents a gendering human rights approach that explores the political and moral implications of such perceptions and constructions of opponents in conflict. More specifically, informed by previous scholarly work on gender stereotypes (Conway, Pizzamiglio, & Mount, 1996; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002), and gender constructions in situations of conflict and warfare (Aharoni, 2014; Dowler, 2002; Nacos, 2005; Rosenberg & Maoz, 2012; Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007; Talbot, 2001; Zotto, 2002), we investigate the extent to which gender-related stereotypes, and gender-patterned descriptions of opponents in conflict are associated with attitudes toward CCA, which are human rights violations.

The research on perceptions of masculinity, femininity, and moral obligations continues to grow (Nelson, Brunel, Supphellen, & Manchanda, 2006), and it informs the gendering theory proposed here. Nelson et al. (2006) reported data consistent with the perception of gender and its cultural variability as independent from actual gender assignment. They found, for example, that males in masculine cultures were more individually oriented with respect to their feelings of moral obligations, and did not resonate with “caring” messages. When cultures were perceived as feminine, however, men were allowed to be weak and more nurturing. Therefore, our study has implications for conflict resolution and the quality of intergroup relations. This is because peace initiatives or activities designed to improve attitude convergence can be moderated by gender-informed stereotypes, for example: stereotypic perceptions of women as more communal and empathic than men.

Attitude convergence refers to the hypothesized impact of contact on conflicting attitudes such that the competing parties, as a result of social influences, move toward uniformity or commonality (Maoz, 2011). Gender perception—just like ethnicity, race, power, religion, or political orientation—is one more social category that influences cognitive representations of the other group and thereby influences the likelihood of attitude convergence or divergence. The goal is not to create or reinforce gender stereotypes in an attempt to diminish their effects; rather, it is to examine the pattern of relationships between asymmetrical conflicts, gender perceptions, threat, and willingness to violate human rights in an effort to potentially intervene in the process. The relationship between perceiving the other group as feminine and variables such as

cooperativeness, trust, and greater support for fair policy actions (e.g., compromise) has already been established (David & Maoz, 2015). This study takes a next step, which is to examine the relationship between gender perceptions of the other group and even more extreme correlations: willingness to violate human rights.

Indeed, a previous study conducted in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict found that feminizing the opponents affected the ways in which these opponents are perceived as well as the willingness to compromise with them (David & Maoz, 2015). More specifically, this study has found that perceptions of opponents (Palestinians) as having stereotypically feminine traits were associated with increased Jewish-Israeli support for compromise with Palestinians and with a decrease in Jewish-Israeli perception of Palestinians as threatening. These previous findings demonstrate that perceiving opponents as possessing stereotypical feminine traits, regardless of their biological gender, can induce higher tendencies for cooperation and concession-making with these opponents. More broadly, these findings can be seen as reflecting processes of re-humanization of the opponents through seeing them as having more feminine, vulnerable, and cooperative characteristics (David & Maoz, 2015).

The relationship between perceiving an outgroup as characteristic of feminized gender perceptions and the humanization process is pertinent here. Haslam and Loughnan's (2014) thorough review of dehumanization theory, recognizes that what we have termed feminized qualities such as warmth, empathy, or sympathy are also part of the subjective definition of what it means to be "human." So the process of perceiving an outgroup as feminized is associated with humanizing the outgroup and consequently finding more commonality and sympathetic identification. This is facilitative of conflict resolution. On the other hand, defining a group as characterized by feminine qualities (gendering the group) can also be associated with perceptions of weakness, vulnerability, and diminished strength. These "feminine" qualities are historically part of the explanation for discrimination against women. Thus, feminizing an outgroup can, on the one hand, facilitate relationships and conflict resolution, but on the other hand, weaken the group and subject them to discrimination and dehumanization. It is important to note here that believing a group to lack human qualities is not the same as dehumanizing them because being "human" is not the same as being "good" (Haslam & Stratemeyer, 2016). It is possible to perceive a group on the basis of feminine gender characteristics and not dehumanize them. Moreover, there are many factors contributing to dehumanization (e.g. ethnic group identity,

power asymmetries, language, social dominance orientation, etc.) that are not based on gender perceptions. As Haslam and Stratemeyer (2016) observed, “dehumanization is not only the product of diverse contributing factors, but also a mediator of several important relationships” (p. 27). Hence, it is not necessarily the case that feminization leads to re-humanization, but the two can be related.

Research on gender perceptions in the context of asymmetric conflicts has found that *perceiving* opponents as possessing stereotypical feminine traits is associated with *expressing* more cooperativeness, higher trust, reduced threat perception and higher support of fair policies (such as compromise) toward the opponent (Maoz, 2009; David & Maoz, 2015). In this study, we took the approach of gendering asymmetric conflicts a few steps further, by moving from examining the effect of gender perceptions on support for compromise, to examining the effect of gender perceptions on another crucial attitude for constructing the course of the conflict—support for CCA toward the outgroup. Based on the above theoretical and empirical review we hypothesized that *Perceiving Outgroups (Palestinians) as having Stereotypical Feminine Traits (POSFT) will be associated with decreased Jewish-Israeli support for CCA toward Palestinians that violate their basic human rights.*

The CCA and POSFT Scales

The data reported here extend the literature on the relationship between feminized perceptions (conceptualized here as POSFT) and support for violating opponents' human rights (conceptualized here as CCA). In order to define and measure willingness to violate human rights, we used the CCA toward Palestinians scale (Maoz & McCauley, 2008). This scale is based on identification of several rights that are consistent with the focus of human rights monitoring agencies, including the right to life, liberty, and security of person, as well as the right to freedom of movement (Hafner-Burton, 2012; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009). Violations of these rights have been cited frequently in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The seven items included in the scale are based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and refer to the level of support for the following human rights violations: *torturing Palestinians, restrictive curfews, enforcing curfews by shooting, the use of plastic and rubber bullets to*

disperse demonstrations, holding Palestinians under closure¹, detaining Palestinians at checkpoints, demolishing houses, and administrative detention.

In order to measure the feminization of the opponents, we constructed the POSFT scale. The scale used in this study is based on a previous four items scale (David & Maoz, 2015) that has been extended to include seven items from the Bem Femininity Scale, so to increase internal consistency and validity. The seven items derived from the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) Femininity Scale (Bem, 1976) are: *compassionate, sensitive, sympathetic, gentle, tender, understanding, and warm*. The BSRI provides independent assessments of masculinity and femininity in terms of the respondent's self-reported possession of socially desirable, stereotypically masculine and feminine personality characteristics (Bem, 1976, 1981). To select the seven items included in our measure, the following criteria were employed: (a) items were selected from Bem's (1981) own shortened version; (b) we selected items with the highest loadings and communality value in previous exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, conducted in various contexts and in different countries with the complete BSRI (e.g. Fernández, Quiroga, & Del Olmo, 2006; Kopper & Epperson, 1991; Ozkan & Lajunen, 2005; Vafaei et al., 2014). The original BSRI (Bem, 1976, 1981) assesses *individual* self perception as feminine or masculine but our goal in the current study was to assess the extent to which *another group* is perceived as feminine. Consequently, we used the following adaptation of the original BSRI phrasing: "Some attributes can be sometimes described as characterizing ethnic or national groups. To what extent do you view each of the following attributes as generally characterizing Palestinians?" (David & Maoz, 2015, p. 296).

Threat Perception as a Mediator

Previous findings suggest that the perception of outgroup members as less dominant, more trustworthy, warmer, and more submissive may *decrease threat perception*, and *increase readiness to cooperate* and reallocate resources in a more egalitarian fashion with outgroup members (Livingstone & Pearce, 2009; Maoz, 2009; Oosterhof & Todorov, 2008; for an alternative view, see Dovidio et al., 2010; Ginges & Atran, 2009). Additionally, aggression and warfare are perceived as being associated with males and masculinity while submissiveness, passiveness, and the tendency toward peace are perceived as being associated with females and

¹ Closure is a mechanism by which the movement of Palestinians is restricted to specific areas in the West Bank, by using checkpoints and physical barriers.

femininity (Dowler, 2002; Nacos, 2005; Rosenberg & Maoz, 2012; Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007; Talbot, 2001; Zotto, 2002). By the same token, we suggest that viewing the opponent as possessing stereotypical feminine traits such as compassionate, sympathetic, tender, gentle, sensitive, understanding, and warm may also lead to threat reduction—and as a result, to a decreased support for CCA toward Palestinians that violate their basic human rights. Thus, we hypothesized that *perception of threat from Palestinians will significantly mediate the association of POSFT with (decreased) support for CCA toward Palestinians.*

Hawkishness, Socioeconomic Status, and Level of Education

Perceptions and attitudes are influenced by political positions and socio-demographic factors. Jewish-Israelis who hold more hawkish or right-wing ideologies in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict perceive greater threat from Palestinians, report more negative attitudes and higher intolerance toward them, and are less willing to compromise with Palestinians (Bar-Tal, 2001; Bar-Tal, Raviv, & Freund, 1994; Maoz & McCauley, 2005, 2009, 2008; Shamir & Shamir, 2000; Shamir & Shikaki, 2010). Lower levels of education and socio-economic status of Jewish-Israelis are also associated with less tolerance and willingness to compromise (Gordon & Arian, 2001; Yuchtman-Yaar & Herman, 1997). Consequently, another goal of the study was to present a comprehensive model in which measures of hawkishness, socioeconomic status (SES), and education level are added to POSFT and threat perception, as predictors of support for CCA toward Palestinians. Our model also tests threat perception as a potential mediator variable for the relationship between POSFT and CCA. We pose the following three hypotheses:

H1: Perception of threat from Palestinians and perceiving them as having stereotypical feminine traits (POSFT) will be significantly associated with Jewish-Israeli support for CCA toward Palestinians, with higher perception of threat and lower POSFT predicting increased support for CCA toward Palestinians.

H2: Perception of threat from Palestinians and POSFT will still be significantly associated with Jewish-Israeli support for CCA toward Palestinians even when the degree of hawkishness, as well as demographic characteristics of the respondents such as gender, education level, and SES, are added to the predictive model.

H3: Perception of threat from Palestinians will significantly mediate the association of POSFT with decreased Jewish-Israeli support for CCA toward Palestinians.

Methods

Survey Design and Participants

The study is based on a nationally representative, random interview survey of 517 Jewish-Israeli adults (age 18 and older) conducted by a professional polling agency in Israel during 2014. The response rate in surveys of the Jewish-Israeli population, including this one, is estimated at between 20-30 percent. The survey was conducted in Hebrew, but items are reproduced here in English translation. The demographics of this sample were comparable to those of the general Jewish-Israeli population.

Measures

Table 1 reports the means and standard deviations of the measures, and the inter-correlations among them.

Perceiving Outgroups as having Stereotypical Feminine Traits (POSFT) scale (David & Maoz, 2015): respondents were presented with the following seven items derived and adapted from The BSRI (Bem, 1976, 1981): *compassionate, sensitive, sympathetic, gentle, tender, understanding, and warm*. For each of the items described, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which, in their opinion, it characterizes Palestinians on a seven-point scale ranging from one (1)-*never*, to seven (7)-*always*. Ratings on these seven items were averaged for each respondent to create one scale, where higher scores meant a higher rate of perceiving opponents as possessing stereotypical feminine traits. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for these items was .92 (see Table 1).

The *Support for CCA toward Palestinians* scale (Maoz & McCauley, 2008) was based on seven items describing CCA toward Palestinians that are considered violations of their human rights, rated on a four-point scale ranging from one (1)-*always forbidden*, to four (4)-*allowed in very many cases*. Responses to these items were averaged for each respondent to create one scale. The seven items were: "*Torturing Palestinians in interrogations of the Israeli security forces;*" "*Enforcing curfew of Palestinians by shooting;*" "*Shooting Plastic and Rubber bullets at Palestinians to disperse demonstrations;*" "*Holding Palestinians under curfew or closure;*" "*Detaining Palestinians by Israeli army check points as they move between different locations in the territories;*" "*Demolishing houses of Palestinians in the territories;*" and "*Putting*

Palestinians in administrative detention.” Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for these items was .91 (see Table 1).

The Threat Perception scale (Maoz & McCauley, 2008; 2011) was based on three items rated on a six-point scale ranging from one (1)-*not at all*, to six (6)-*to a very high extent*. Responses to these items were averaged for each respondent to create one scale, where higher scores meant a higher perception of threat from Palestinians. The three items were: “*In my opinion, the majority of Palestinians would have destroyed the State of Israel if they could;*” “*It is possible to trust Palestinians*” (reversed); and “*one can think of a future in which both Israelis and Palestinians will gain from cooperation between them*” (reversed). Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for these items was .68 (see Table 1).

Table 1

Means (SDs) and Inter-correlations of Perceiving Outgroups as having Stereotypical Feminine Traits (POSFT), Support for Concrete Coercive Acts (CCA), Threat Perception Scale, Hawkishness and Demographic Items

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean(SD)
1. POSFT (7)	.92						2.3(1.2)
2. CCA (7)	-.52***	.91					2.6(0.8)
3. Threat perception (3)	-.60***	.60****	.68				4.1(1.2)
4. Hawkishness	-.50***	.54***	.61***				6.0(2.2)
5. Gender	-.06	-.04	-.01	-.04			1.6(0.5)
6. Education	.09	-.14**	-.14***	-.11*	-.04		14.6(3.3)
7. SES	-.01	-.01	-.10*	-.09	.02	0.16***	2.7(1.3)

NOTE: $N = 517$. Correlations on the diagonal are Cronbach’s alphas of the corresponding scales. Threat perception was based on a 1 to 6 scale, POSFT on a 1 to 7 scale, CCA on a 1 to 4 scale, hawkishness on a 1 to 9 scale and SES on a 1 to 5 scale. Gender was a binary scale and Education is measured in number of years of formal education.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

To measure *hawkishness*, respondents were asked to place themselves on a 9-point bipolar “Hawk-Dove” scale as follows: “*In the scale presented to you, one (1) represents full identification with left-wing (dovish) attitudes, nine (9) represents full identification with right-wing (hawkish) attitudes, and five (5) represents middle/center attitudes. Where would you place yourself on this scale?*”

Gender was a binary scale in which one (1) is a Male and two (2) is a Female.

Level of Education was measured by asking respondents to indicate their number of years of formal schooling.

SES was measured by asking respondents to rate their household average monthly expenditure relative to the average household monthly expenditure in Israel on a five (5) point scale ranging from one (1)-*a lot below the average*, to five (5)-*a lot above the average*, with three (3) representing *the average*.

Descriptive Analyses

Table 1 presents means and standard deviations for our measures as well as the zero-order correlations among them. These data indicate that Jewish-Israelis expressed high perception of threat from Palestinians ($M = 4.1, SD = 1.2$), where 72 percent of our respondents indicated that they are threatened by Palestinians (ratings of 4, 5 or 6 on the 1 to 6 scale). Additionally, the data indicated that Jewish-Israelis expressed low POSFT ($M= 2.3, SD = 1.2$), with 13 percent of the Jewish-Israeli respondents perceiving Palestinians as having higher level of stereotypical feminine traits (ratings of 5, 6 or 7 on the 1 to 7 scale), and with 76 percent of the Jewish-Israeli respondents perceiving Palestinians as having lower level of stereotypical feminine traits (ratings of 1, 2 or 3 on the 1 to 7 scale). Respondents also expressed a medium level of CCA ($M= 2.6, SD= 0.8$), with 50 percent expressing support for CCA toward Palestinians (ratings of 3 or 4 on the 1 to 4 scale).

Table 2

Predictors of Support for Concrete Coercive Acts (CCA) Scale, Standardized Coefficient Values (and Significance of p Values)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
POSFT	-.24 (.000)	-.20 (.001)	-.18 (.006)
Threat perception	.44 (.000)	.35 (.000)	.36 (.000)
Hawkishness	---	.21 (.000)	.19 (.003)
Gender	---	---	-.07 (.153)
Education	---	---	-.05 (.323)
SES	---	---	-.03 (.476)
Adjusted R ²	.38	.43	.40

Hypotheses Testing Using Regression Models

Our predictor scales showed strong zero-order correlations with CCA (Table 1): ($r= .60; p < .001$) for perception of threat from Palestinians, and ($r= -.52 p < .001$) for POSFT. To test our hypotheses, we conducted a series of regression analyses.

Threat Perception and POSFT as Predictors of CCA

Our first hypothesis was that perception of threat from Palestinians and POSFT would be significantly associated with attitudes toward CCA, with higher perception of threat and lower perception of outgroups as having stereotypical feminine traits—predicting increased support for concrete coercive acts toward Palestinians.

To test this hypothesis, we conducted a regression model using the Threat Perception and the POSFT scales to predict respondents' scores on the support for CCA toward Palestinians scale. The regression model produced a statistically significant (adjusted) $R^2 = .38$ [$F(2, 300) = 95.2, p < .001$]. As hypothesized, both of our scales made significant contributions to the overall explanatory power of the model. Respondents with higher scores on the Threat Perception scale ($\beta = .44, p < .001$) and respondents with lower scores on POSFT ($\beta = -.24, p < .001$) showed increased support for CCA (see Table 2, Model 1).

Threat Perception and POSFT Predicting Beyond Hawkishness and Demographics

Our second hypothesis stated that perception of threat from Palestinians and POSFT would still be significantly associated with attitudes toward support for CCA, even when the degree of hawkishness as well as the demographic variables of gender, education level, and SES of respondents were added to the predictive model. To test this hypothesis, we added to our regression Model 1 the hawkishness measure as well as the demographic items of gender, education level, and SES as predictors alongside the threat perception scale and the POSFT (see Table 2, Model 3). The resulting regression coefficients indicate that, as hypothesized, threat perception from Palestinians ($\beta = .36, p < .001$) and POSFT ($\beta = -.18, p < .01$) still has a significant effect on support for CCA, when hawkishness (hawkish-dovish scale) and demographic items are added to the model.

In order to better understand the role of hawkishness and of the demographic items, we next conducted a stepwise regression model, in which we added hawkishness to our two-predictor model (POSFT and threat perception) in the second step. In the third step, we added the demographic items to the resulting three-predictor model (POSFT, threat perception, and hawkishness).

Hawkishness and CCA

When adding to our regression model only the hawkishness item as a predictor alongside the Threat Perception scale and POSFT scale (see Table 2, Model 2), the resulting regression

coefficients indicate that, consistent with findings of previous studies (Bar-Tal et al., 1994; Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011; Maoz & McCauley, 2005, 2009, 2008, 2011; Shamir & Shamir, 2000; Shamir & Shikaki, 2002, 2010; Yuchtman-Yaar & Herman, 1997), hawkishness is significantly associated with more negative attitudes toward opponents in conflict, with higher hawkishness predicting increased support for CCA toward Palestinians ($\beta = .21, p < .001$). Threat perception ($\beta = .35, p < .001$) and POSFT ($\beta = -.20, p < .001$) are still significantly associated with attitudes toward concrete coercive acts even when hawkishness is added to the model.

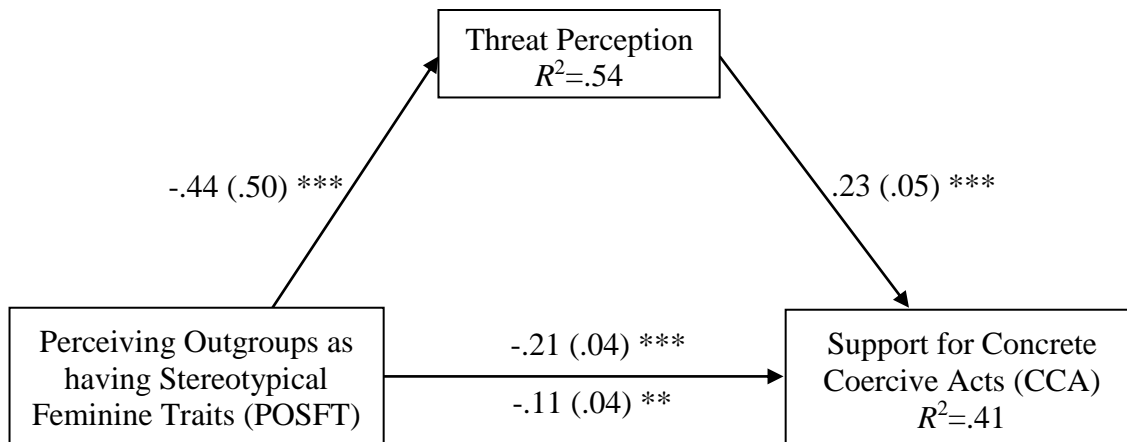
Demographic Items and Support for CCA

Adding the demographic variables of gender, education level, and SES to our above three-predictor Model 2 (see Table 2, Model 3) in the third step of our regression did not significantly affect the (adjusted) $R^2 = .40$ (F change (6,256) = 30.2, $p < .001$). The added demographic items of gender ($\beta = -.07, p > .05$), education ($\beta = -.05, p > .05$) and SES ($\beta = -.03, p > .05$) did not have a significant effect on the prediction of support for CCA toward Palestinians.

Mediation analysis

Hypothesis 3 predicted that threat perception will significantly mediate the association of POSFT with decreased support for CCA toward Palestinians. To test this hypothesis, we used PROCESS (Hayes, 2013), an SPSS macro that utilizes an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to probe interactive effects and test for the significance of the mediation effect. Hayes's Model 4 was used with support for CCA toward Palestinians as the dependent variable, the POSFT scale as the independent variable, and the Threat Perception scale as a mediator. The mediation of the effect of independent variable X on outcome dependent variable Y by mediator M, as diagrammed in **Figure 1**, illustrates the hypothesized mechanism through which X exerts its effect on Y. The model used to test these hypotheses is described in Figure 1.

Figure 1



Mediation Model of Threat Perception, Perceiving Outgroups as having Stereotypical Feminine Traits (POSFT), and Support for Concrete Coercive Acts (CCA) toward Palestinians (Unstandardized OLS coefficients), N = 263
p < 0.01; *p < 0.001

To establish mediation, three conditions must be fulfilled (Baron & Kenny, 1986). First, the independent variable POSFT scale must be significantly associated with the mediator (in our case threat perception). As Figure 1 indicates, POSFT significantly correlates with decreased perception of threat from Palestinians ($B = -.44$, [SE = .05], $p < .001$). The second condition for mediation is that the mediator (in our case threat perception) must be significantly associated with the dependent variable (CCA). As Figure 1 indicates, threat perception significantly correlates with support for CCA toward Palestinians ($B = .23$, [SE = .05], $p < .001$). The third condition for mediation is that the mediator must affect the association between the independent variable (in our case POSFT) and the dependent variable (in our case support for CCA), when controlling for the predictors. As Figure 1 also indicates, the total effect of independent variable (POSFT) on the dependent variable (support for CCA) is significantly reduced when controlling for the predictors. The direct effect of the POSFT on support for CCA toward Palestinians is significantly reduced when controlling for the predictors ($B = -.11$, [SE = .04], $p < .01$).

Our model was tested using the PROCESS (Hayes, 2013), an SPSS macro that utilizes an OLS regression to probe interactive effects. This macro uses linear regression analysis to test individual paths as well as indirect and moderated paths and produces bootstrap² confidence intervals for testing the indirect effect. As such, a mediation analysis was conducted to examine

² A statistical method recommended by Hayes (2013) to test for the significance of the mediation effect.

the indirect effect of threat perception on the association between POSFT and support for CCA toward Palestinians. The macro PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) was employed to examine the indirect effect of threat perception on the association between POSFT and support for CCA toward Palestinians. A significant indirect effect was detected, point estimate = $-.10$, $SE = .02$, 95 percent CI $[-.15, -.06]$ (95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals based on 10,000 resamples). All analyses controlled for hawkishness and the demographic variables of gender, education, and SES.

Discussion

Punitive and aggressive behaviors characterize many interactions between rival parties in protracted conflicts. When carried out by the stronger party, especially in the context of an asymmetrical conflict, these aggressive behaviors can constitute major human rights violations of members of the weaker group. One line of research designed to understand the conditions that encourage human rights violations pointed to the effect of threat perception (Al-Krenawi, 2013; Arian, 1989; Fein, 2007; Gordon & Arian, 2001; Huddy et al., 2005; Leidner et al., 2010; Maoz & McCauley, 2008, 2011). As the perception of threat by an outgroup increases, so does the willingness to violate human rights. Still another line of research examined the relations between threat and perceiving the outgroup on the basis of gender categories (David & Maoz, 2015; Gavriely-Nuri, 2008; Puar, 2007). That is, we make sense of other groups on the basis of social classifications such as ethnicity, religion, and gender. The matter of gendering another group and the consequences of defining them according to gender characteristics (human rights consequences in this study) has been the subject of less research attention.

We investigated this question in the context of the asymmetrical Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has been at the focus of attention for international human rights organizations for several decades. We tested our hypotheses using a randomized nationally representative survey of Jewish-Israelis. The regression model strongly supports our expectations that perception of threat from Palestinians and POSFT predict Jewish-Israeli support for CCA toward Palestinians. Importantly, perception of threat from Palestinians and feminizing Palestinians were found to be still strongly associated with Jewish-Israeli attitudes toward violating Palestinian human rights, even when the degree of hawkishness, gender, level of education, and SES of respondents were added to the model as predictors. In addition, and also in line with our hypotheses, our

mediation analysis indicates that the association of POSFT with decreased support for CCA by Jewish-Israelis is mediated by a decrease in their perception of threat from Palestinians.

There are four key contributions to the conflict and intergroup literature in this study. The first is the developing literature on gendering or using gender qualities such as masculine or feminine as a classification category for groups. It is increasingly the case that we categorize groups—and consequently establish meanings and perceptions of these groups—on the basis of gender attributes, as well as typical categories such as ethnicity, religion, or nationality. Ingroups essentially “gender” outgroups by assigning typically masculine or feminine qualities to that group. Gendering refers to defining groups on the basis of characteristic gender categories such as masculinity or femininity. This study contributes to the research on contextual and psychological consequences of the gendering process. Secondly, the gendering process was theorized as particularly related to the less powerful party in an asymmetrical conflict. The less powerful are often described in more feminized terms as weak, vulnerable, and less aggressive and threatening. The data indicate that perceiving the outgroup as consistent with feminized traits makes them more sympathetic and less threatening. This is conducive to conflict resolution. Third, the data are consistent with established theoretical relationships between perception of threat and likelihood of violent responses. We predicted and demonstrated empirically that threat is a moderating variable such that feminized outgroups are perceived as less threatening and thereby less likely to stimulate aggressive responses. Finally, this is one of the few studies that systematically conceptualizes human rights violations as responsive to both political conditions as well as group and gender perceptions. Thereby, this study can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of when and why rights are likely to be violated.

Previous findings suggest that perception of outgroup members as less dominant, more trustworthy and as warmer and more submissive may increase—through the mechanism of threat reduction—readiness to cooperate with these outgroup members and reallocate resources in a more egalitarian manner (see Livingstone & Pearce, 2009; Maoz, 2009; Oosterhof & Todorov, 2008). Other findings suggest the tendency to express more cooperation, higher trust, reduced threat perception and higher support of fair policies (such as compromise) toward opponents that are perceived as possessing stereotypical feminine traits (David & Maoz, 2015). The data reported here extends these findings by examining directly and systematically threat reduction as

an underlying mechanism mediating the association between feminized stereotypes of opponents and Jewish-Israeli support for aggressive measures that violate the basic human rights of Palestinians.

Feminized Stereotypes and Violating Human Rights

In recent years, scholars devoted growing attention to the role of gender in conflict (Conover & Sapiro, 1993; Fite et al., 1990; Maoz, 2009; Tessler et al., 1999; Tessler & Warriner, 1997; Togeby, 1994; Wilcox et al., 1996), as well as in cases of asymmetrical majority-minority intergroup relations (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Sidanius & Veniegas, 2000). Contemporary studies describe situations of conflict, warfare, and terrorism as following normative gender dichotomies in which masculinity is associated with power, aggression, and warfare, while femininity is associated with submissiveness, passivity, the need to be protected, and lower support for militant policies (Aharoni, 2014; Dowler, 2002; Nacos, 2005; Rosenberg & Maoz, 2012; Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007; Talbot, 2001; Zotto, 2002). Critical works discuss feminization as part of a derogatory construction of ethnic, national or religious minority groups, which serves both to legitimize social and moral exclusion and to allow for physical and structural violence against these minorities, violating their human rights (Boyarin, 1995; Chen, 1996; Wong, 1993).

Therefore, it is important to explore how the stronger party in an asymmetric conflict constructs the gendered image of the weaker party in order to understand the effect of feminization on both physical and structural violence in this context. Such investigation can further clarify the nature of relations between gender perceptions and human rights. Based on a nationwide poll of Jewish-Israelis, our study relates to this question and suggests that perceiving an opponent as possessing stereotypical feminine traits significantly predicts a decrease in one's willingness to violate the opponent's human rights.

Interestingly, these data point to another more optimistic aspect of feminizing the outgroup which is the *increase* in generalized positive perception toward the opponent. The results support our third hypothesis, demonstrating that the association of feminization of opponents with decreased support for violating their basic human rights is mediated by a decrease in the perception of opponents as threatening. In other words, when Jewish-Israelis perceive Palestinians according to gender categories, the positive perception associated with feminizing the outgroup reduces the perception of threat. Threat reduction, in turn, decreases

Jewish-Israeli readiness to support CCA and violate human rights. Threat reduction is a moderating variable.

Threat Perception and Violating Human Rights

In line with previous research, we found that perception of threat from Palestinians is positively associated with Jewish-Israeli support for CCA violating the Palestinians' basic human rights. Scholarly work has devoted increased attention to the role of threat perception in conflict (Bar-Tal, 2001; Gibson, 1992; Gordon & Arian, 2001; Marcus et al., 1995) and in predicting support for punitive and aggressive actions against the threatening outgroup (Al-Krenawi, 2013; Arian, 1989; Fein, 2007; Huddy et al., 2005; Leidner et al., 2010). In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, research has demonstrated that Jewish-Israeli perception of threat from Palestinians is a major predictor explaining higher support for violating human rights of Palestinians (Maoz & McCauley, 2008, 2011). However, interestingly, our study indicates that feminizing Palestinians, in the context of this harsh protracted asymmetrical conflict, is associated with threat reduction, which leads to a decreased readiness of Jewish Israelis to support violating human rights of Palestinians. Consequently, the perception of threat might be reduced by formulating contact experiences and cultural associations for Palestinians that are consistent with Bem's (1976, 1981) Sex Role Inventory and our POSFT scale. Qualities such as being compassionate, sympathetic or understanding are facilitative of threat reduction which moderates CCA and the likelihood of human rights violations. Finally, our study demonstrates a new methodological contribution to the operationalization of feminized perceptions in conflict situations. We introduce an innovative measure—POSFT—that enables researchers to assess the extent to which outgroups are perceived as having stereotypical feminine traits. POSFT's good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .92), and its association with other measures such as threat perception, support for CCA, and hawkishness, is an initial evidence of its construct validity. This measure should be useful for measurement purposes in a variety of studies dealing with stereotypes based on gender.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There are some limitations to this study that should be recognized. First, because our findings are correlational, they do not enable us to make a clear cause and effect determination. The causal relationship between characteristic gender categories such as femininity and willingness to engage in concrete acts of aggression that violate human rights cannot be clearly

established on the basis of the present research design. Still, the theory that feminized characteristics lower threat levels and these lower threat levels thereby reduce the need and intensity of aggressive responses is suggestive. The research literature pertaining to the relationship between threat and violence is clear. Threat, especially existential threat, is the single most established predictor of violent or nonviolent responses. In this study, we demonstrated empirically how to moderate the threat by associating the outgroup with certain qualities typical of gender identity. Future experimental studies that manipulate the extent to which opponents are perceived as feminine and examine the resulting effects on support for violating their human rights, could serve to clarify the nature of the association between the two.

Another interesting direction for future research is to examine further possible affective mechanisms that underlay the relationship between gendered perceptions of the opponent and support for aggressive policies and violation of human rights during an intractable conflict. Studies from the last decade provide empirical evidence that emotions have significant effects on public opinion concerning militant policy towards the opponent that may violate human rights (e.g., Halperin, 2011; Huddy et al., 2005; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small & Fischhoff, 2003; Maoz & McCauley, 2008), and that these effects hold even when controlling for prominent predictors of support for policies, such as political ideology and SES. Thus for example, a recent study has found that empathy predicts lower support for militant policies against the other side during escalation in an intractable conflict (Rosler, Cohen-Chen & Halperin, in press). Furthermore, in another recent study David and his colleagues (David, Rosler & Maoz, 2016) examined empathy as a mechanism underlying the relations between collective gender perceptions and conflict-related attitudes. They found that empathy toward the opponent mediated the surprising association between perceptions of one's own group as having feminine traits, and decreased support for political compromise with the opponents.

A further question that emerges from our study and merits investigation is whether or not males who are stereotyped as having feminine behaviors will elicit more or less empathy and cooperation, and whether this effect will be reversed when associated with a specific male opponent that might defy normative gender expectations. In fact, could it be that such a specific feminine male opponent will evoke hostility? Clearly, further study on responses to concrete opponents or outgroup members that present stereotypical feminine or masculine traits is needed in order to address these questions and to determine more systematically under which conditions

the devaluing inherent in feminization might also result in increased willingness to violate human rights. Nevertheless, the current research along with our previous study (David & Maoz, 2015) have established a foundation for a clearer and more systematic understanding of the role of gender constructions of femininity and masculinity in asymmetric conflicts.

Conclusion

There exists an impressive body of research on perceptions and emotions as predicting readiness for conflict resolution (Bar-Tal, 2001; Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011; Halperin, Porat, Tamir, & Gross, 2013; Halperin, Russell, Trzesniewski, Gross, & Dweck, 2011; Maoz, 2009; Maoz & McCauley, 2005, 2009) and about human rights in asymmetrical conflict (Hafner-Burton, 2012; Maoz & McCauley, 2008, 2011; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009). This study contributes to broadening the scope of understanding of psycho-social predictors of attitudes toward human rights in asymmetrical conflict by including gender construction of the opponent as a predictor.

Taken together with results of previous studies regarding gender, femininity, and masculinity in conflict (Aharoni, 2014; Conover & Sapiro, 1993; David & Maoz, 2015; Dowler, 2002; Fite, Genest, & Wilcox, 1990; Maoz, 2009; Nacos, 2005; Rosenberg & Maoz, 2012; Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007; Talbot, 2001; Tessler et al., 1999; Tessler & Warriner, 1997; Togeby, 1994; Wilcox, Hewitt, & Allsop, 1996; Zotto, 2002), the findings reported here can be potentially seen as reflecting a process in which perceiving opponents as possessing characteristic feminine traits leads to increased readiness for conflict resolution and reconciliation with these opponents. More specifically, our findings indicate that encountering female opponents (Maoz, 2009; Rosenberg & Maoz, 2012), as well as perceiving opponents as possessing feminine traits, reduces threat perceptions and decreases the likelihood of aggression towards these opponents while increasing the readiness for conflict resolution based on compromise (David & Maoz, 2015; Maoz, 2009).

Consequently, while threat is a major instigator of belligerent perceptions in conflict (Arian, 1989; Bar-Tal, 2000; Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011; Maoz & McCauley, 2005, 2008, 2009), this study indicates that perceiving outgroups as having stereotypical feminine traits reduces the almost automatic perception of the opponent as threatening, and thus decreases support for specific militant policies toward Palestinians that violate their basic human rights. Especially in settings of asymmetrical conflicts, our findings have both theoretical and practical implications

for understanding the role of gender constructions and gender stereotypes of disadvantaged opponents, in increasing the propensity for social justice and peace building. Increasing the diversity of gender constructions of self and other in conflict, and accepting both masculine and feminine aspects of the ingroup and the outgroup can help encourage compassion and moral inclusion (Opatow, 1990), and thus promote conflict resolution and peace building.

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