INTERGROUP RELATIONS AND FUNDAMENTAL DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL JUDGMENT.

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to review the literature on the fundamental dimensions of social judgment and reflect on how these can help to boost our understanding of attitudes towards immigrants. We start by reviewing the work on the "fundamental dimensions" along which these judgments are organized, describing the different conceptions that have been put forward, identifying the regularities found in the content of these dimensions and the distinctions between them. Next, we propose a new way of looking at these fundamental dimensions by situating them within the specific field of intergroup relations in an immigration context, and explain how all the different examples of dimensions map onto this "new perspective". We conclude by discussing how these two dimensions mirror the two fundamental topics that organize the discourse and the opinions about immigrants and immigration in society, and how attitudes towards immigrants can be differentially shaped by these two fundamental dimensions.

Keywords: fundamental dimensions, immigrants, intergroup relations

Social judgment is structured along fundamental dimensions. Are these fundamental dimensions pivotal to the way we develop attitudes towards other groups? This paper is based on the idea that underlying attitudes towards other groups (outgroups) like immigrant groups are basic dimensions of evaluation of people, in the same way that any social judgment is structured along fundamental dimensions. The goal of this work is to theoretically review the literature on these fundamental dimensions of social judgment and reflect on how these can help to boost our understanding of attitudes towards immigrants. Thus, the paper starts by reviewing the work on the "fundamental dimensions" along which these judgments are organized, describing the different conceptions that have been put forward – focusing mostly on social psychology literature, but also being attentive to other social sciences, such as sociology and anthropology –, identifying the regularities in the content of these dimensions and the distinctions between them. Next, we intend to propose a new way of looking at these fundamental dimensions by situating these within the specific field of intergroup relations in an immigration context, and explain how all the different examples of dimensions map onto this "new perspective". We conclude by discussing how these two dimensions seem to mirror the two fundamental topics that organize the discourse and the opinions about immigrants and immigration in our society.

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Fundamental Dimensions of Social Judgment

After an initial interest in the content of social judgments (e.g., Katz & Braly, 1933), social psychologists started to focus mostly on the processes that are involved in these social judgments (for a review see Fiske & Taylor, 2013), and this has been the main focus for the last five or six decades. Only more recently has the focus turned again to the content of these judgments, now with a more structural perspective that considers content (and not just the processes) to be marked by structures (retaking a tradition initiated by Bruner & Tagiuri, 1954). On this matter, the main question that emerges revolves around the dimensions that underlie these judgments and how those dimensions are organized.

At this level, the literature seems to suggest that, though using different labels, two fundamental dimensions emerge consistently whether we are referring to a more individual level or a more group level of social judgment (Abele, Cuddy, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2008). We start by reviewing the work on social judgment at the individual level (both in the person-perception and personality domains), and then we focus on the group level of social judgment.

Theories in Person-Perception and Personality

It was within the person-perception domain that emerged the first insight about the idea of two fundamental dimensions underlying social judgment. The classic work of Asch (1946) revealed that the effects of presenting a person as "intelligent, skilful, industrious, practical and determined" depended on whether the other trait added was "cold" or "warm". Asch's (1946) work pointed to the potential centrality of two dimensions, but it was the work of Rosenberg, Nelson, and Vivekananthan (1968) that lent more consistent support to this tenet[4].

Assuming that traits tend to separate into clusters, Rosenberg and colleagues (1968) conducted a study to determine the multidimensional structure of personality impressions. Using *Multidimensional Scaling* techniques, the authors analyzed the descriptions that undergraduates made of ten different persons selecting from a pool of 64 personality traits. These analyses provided data on the psychological relatedness of the traits, resulting in a spatial configuration in which distances between traits in that space map on to their (lack of) relatedness and where the dimensions underlying that space reveal the fundamental dimensions that differentiate trait terms.

The obtained results suggested that a two dimensional space could reproduce the trait-relatedness data with satisfactory fit. Thus, the results of this study suggested that personality traits are best spatially depicted when structured along two dimensions: intellectual (good/bad) and social (good/bad). Some of the traits in the intellectual dimension were *intelligent*, *industrious*, and *determined* for the positive pole and *foolish*, *clumsy*, and *unintelligent* for the negative pole. In the social dimension, the positive side included traits like *warm*, *tolerant*, and *sincere*, and on the negative side we could find traits like *cold*, *dishonest*, and *unsociable*.

At about the same time that Rosenberg and colleagues (1968) empirically came across the two fundamental dimensions of social judgment as applied to personality, Bakan (1966),

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[4] Though this initial research by Asch focuses more on how these two central dimensions seem to interact, the subsequent research initiated by Rosenberg argues more in favour of two central and independent dimensions.

in an essay on the duality of human existence as seen from a viewpoint combining psychology and religion, theoretically defined two fundamental modalities of human existence: *agency* and *communion*[5]. Agency refers to an individual's striving to experience competence, achievement, and power, involving such qualities as "*instrumentality, ambition, domination, competence and efficiency in goal attainment*" (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007, p. 751). Communion refers to a person's desire to closely relate to and merge with others and depends on qualities like "*warmth, cooperativeness and emotional expressivity*" (p. 751). Concepts of agency and communion are frequently used to describe two basic styles of how individuals relate to the world, and people can be differentiated in terms of the salience of agency and communion orientations.

Trying to account for the positive-negative asymmetry in person evaluations, Peeters (1983) posited that traits can be distinguished in terms of *self* or *other-profitability* dimensions. That is, traits can be self-profitable, pertaining to *competence*, in the sense that involve adaptive consequences more important for the self, or other-profitable, pertaining to *warmth*, in the sense that involve consequences more important for the others. Examples of self-profitable traits are *confident* and *intelligent* (and *slow* and *unintelligent* on the negative side) and examples of other-profitable traits are *trustworthy* and *tolerant* (and *selfish* and *intolerant* on the negative side).[6]

In an attempt to put together these two lines of research, Abele and Wojciszke (2007) showed, on the one hand, that a large number of traits can in fact be reduced to the dimensions of *agency* and *communion* and, on the other hand, that *agentic* traits are rated as serving more the interests of the self (self-profitability) and *communal* traits are rated as more focused on serving the interests of others (other-profitability, Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Study 1).[7] Additionally, two subsequent studies showed that agency is more relevant and more desired for the self and communion is more desired for others (Studies 2 and 3). Thus, this line of work seems to show support for the idea that the distinction between agency vs. communion and the distinction between self vs. other-profitability carry similar content and can be thought of using the same reasoning.

As it was mentioned, under the agency and communion labels, we can find qualities like instrumentality and expressiveness respectively. *Instrumentality vs. expressiveness* were terms used by the sociologist Robert Bales in his study of small groups. Bales (1950) conducted a series of experiments in which his students were divided into two self-analytic groups that explored their own interactions as a basis for learning about the problems faced in groups. Additionally, the group members had to make observations of the other group and then had to give feedback on their interaction. By studying many such groups, Bales (1950) came up with a method to study small groups named *Interaction Process Analysis*. Underlying this method was the idea that people always perceive the others in the context of a group

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[5] In a different line of research, in a study on the perception of political leaders, Kinder and Sears (1985) argued that, similarly to the impression formation of any other person, competence and moral integrity constitute the two most important dimensions in overall evaluations of politicians.

[6] These terms were widely used on gender literature since individuals seem to associate more the agency and communion dimensions respectively with masculinity and femininity (e.g., Bem, 1974, see also Amâncio, 1994).

[7] This distinction between aspects pertaining more to the self and aspects pertaining more to others can also be found in the work of Vala (1978). Analyzing elementary school handbooks in order to access social representations of children, Vala distinguished between introversive values (related to the individual's affirmation) and extraversive values (more associated with the relationships with others).

according to two distinct dimensions: the task-related and socio-emotional dimensions that mirror respectively instrumental or expressive functions. And while instrumental functions pertain to the attainment of a goal in a group, expressiveness functions concern the actions that tend to manage the tensions that may arise from the seeking of the goal.

While the work mentioned above can be seen as mixing both personality and person-perception research, when we focus more concretely on the personality psychology literature we also find support for a two-dimensional structure. Freedman, Leary, Ossorio, and Coffey (1951) looked for a comprehensive schema for the organization of personality data. They came up with an interpersonal circumplex, which is a graphical representation in which personality traits are characterized by their angular positions in a two-dimensional factor space: *dominance* (vs. submission) and *friendliness* (vs. hostility). The dominance axis distinguishes between *ambitious/dominant* and *lazy/submissive* and the friendliness axis distinguishes between *warm/agreeable* and *cold/quarrelsome* (Leary, 1957; see also Wiggins, 1979; 1991).

Nonetheless, the most prominent conception of personality structure – the *Big Five* approach (Cattel, 1933; Goldberg, 1990; Tupes & Christal, 1961) – points to the existence of five dimensions. Although with some variation in terms, Factor I has been interpreted as *Extraversion*; Factor II, *Agreeableness*; Factor III, *Conscientiousness*; Factor IV, *Emotional Stability*; and Factor V as *Intellect*. The authors supporting this approach argued that, even though more dimensions can be identified, these five constitute essential and invariable dimensions of personality (Tupes & Christal, 1961). However, Digman (1997) factor-analyzed the estimated factor correlations from 14 studies supporting the five factor structure, and found two higher-order factors (or meta-traits) emerging in all studies. The first higher-order factor, named *Socialization*, included Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Emotional Stability, and the second one, named *Personal Growth*, included Extraversion and Intellect and, according to the author, these two factors map onto the concepts advanced by Bakan (1966) and others. The first factor corresponds to *communion* and the second factor corresponds to *agency*.

Research in cultural psychology has also given some support to the idea that personality constructs can be distinguished along a more individual-oriented or a more collective-oriented dimension. Analyzing self-descriptions of both North-American and Japanese students, Markus and Kitayama (1991, 1998) distinguished between two types of self-construals: the independent and the interdependent – and while independent means defining the self in terms of unique qualities that allow them to stand out by achieving goals, interdependent means defining the self in terms of relationships with others.

Finally, even in the field of anthropology there are studies supporting the idea of two dimensions on personality structure. In a study that tried to identify the commonalities in the cultural organization of concepts of personality in different societies, the anthropologist Geoffrey White (1980) compared certain lexical aspects in the languages in India, United States, and Melanesia. What he found was the emergence of two universal conceptual themes in the language of personality description that resemble the type of two-dimensional structure described so far. White (1980) labelled those dimensions *dominance* (vs. submission) and *solidarity* (vs. conflict). The author further posited that this common cross-cultural structure of personality descriptions reflects universal conditions of human social life.

Theories at the Intergroup Level: Fundamental Dimensions in Stereotype Research

Research on social judgment at the group level has developed in parallel with the concept of group stereotypes. Study of group stereotypes has focused more on processes than on the actual content (for a review, see Fiske, 1998). Moreover, the small portion of research that focused on stereotype content was merely descriptive and atheoretical (e.g., Katz & Braly, 1933). However, more recently, some authors have tried to identify content dimensions of stereotypes (e.g., Phalet & Poppe, 1997) and identify the systematic regularities within them (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002).

Phalet and Poppe (1997) conducted cross-national research on stereotypes in six eastern-European countries. More than 800 young students rated the desirability of certain stereotypes as applied to the ingroup and to the outgroups. Across all countries, a component analysis revealed a two-dimensional structure for both the ingroup and the outgroup conditions. One of the components was labeled *morality* and included traits like *honest*, *tolerant*, and *modest* on the positive side, and *aggressive*, *selfish*, and *rude* on the negative dimension, and the other component was labelled *competence* and included traits like *efficient*, *competitive*, and *intelligent* on the positive side and *slow* and *clumsy* on the negative side. The authors also showed that the outgroups/countries with greater economic and political power were viewed as highly "competent" and the outgroups/countries that were perceived as being in conflict with the participants' in-group were viewed as less "moral".

The most extensive and consistent work giving support to the two-dimensional structure of group stereotypes was developed by Susan Fiske and her colleagues (Fiske *et al.*, 2002). These authors intended to identify systematic regularities in the content of group stereotypes. Convinced that stereotype content, similarly to stereotype processes, responds to stable principles, Fiske argued that one of these principles should be related to the common and fundamental dimensions of content. With this in mind, and based on the work on interpersonal perception that suggested the relevance of two dimensions, Fiske wondered if group stereotypes were not also organized along the two dimensions of *competence* and *warmth*. In fact, much earlier, Allport (1954/1979) had already noticed the existence of one group seen as competent but not warm (Jews) and another one seen as warm but not competent ("Negroes").

The authors (Fiske et al., 2002) then developed the Stereotype Content Model where the two dimensions (competence and warmth) combine to form four quadrants mirroring four types of stereotypes. Hence, according to this model, we have groups that are targeted with a paternalistic stereotype (high warmth, low competence; e.g., elderly people), groups targeted with an envious stereotype (low warmth, high competence; e.g., Asians), groups that collect a contemptuous stereotype (low warmth, low competence; e.g., welfare recipients) and groups that are regarded with admiration (high warmth, high competence; e.g., ingroup). The first two types of stereotypes are ambivalent stereotypes combining a positive evaluation in one dimension with a negative evaluation in the other dimension. This conception of stereotypes challenged the traditional view on stereotypes as mere antipathy and characterized solely by negative evaluations (Allport, 1954/1979).

Extensive research provided cogent support to the tenets of the model, with several studies consistently yielding differentiated clusters of high vs. low warmth and competence stereotypes across a variety of target groups, using a variety of samples (for a review, see Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick, 2008).

One of the most interesting aspects of this line of research is that it proposes that differentiated consequences are elicited by these differentiated combinations of competence and warmth in group stereotypes. In fact, the model predicts (and studies have shown) that those groups perceived as low in competence but high in warmth are targeted with pity or sympathy; the groups perceived as high in competence but low in warmth are the target of envy and jealousy and the groups that are low in both competence and warmth are seen with contempt and disgust. Amy Cuddy (Cuddy et al., 2008) provided an extension of the Stereotype Content Model with the BIAS Map that predicts differentiated discriminatory behavioral tendencies following those emotions determined by the combinations of competence and warmth in group stereotypes (see also Durante et al., 2013).

This conception of group stereotypes as organized along two dimensions had already provided an interesting insight into the studies on sexism (Glick, Fiske, & Mladinic, 2000; see also Amâncio, 1994). Convinced that the conception of prejudice as antipathy had been impeding the true understanding of prejudice, Glick and colleagues (2000) characterized gender beliefs as ambivalent in which traditional women like "housewives" are seen as warm but not really competent, the less traditional women like feminists or "career women" are seen as competent but cold. While the former are targeted with "benevolent sexism" (seen as vulnerable creatures in need of protection), the latter are treated with "hostile sexism" (seen as insensitive people who just want to out-power men). Moreover, this two-dimension structure of stereotypes has also been shown in research regarding migrant groups (Lee & Fiske, 2006).

Finally, in a recent review on the evaluation of groups, Leach (2006) also argued for the existence of two fundamental dimensions. The author suggested an integrative framework where the concepts of competence, strength, prestige, and activity are grouped under the more general dimension of power, and the concepts of warmth/sociability, morality, and cooperation are grouped under the more inclusive dimension of benevolence. However, even though the author considered morality and warmth/sociability to be under one same category, in a recent study, Leach and colleagues did show how morality constitutes a more important dimension than the dimension of warmth/sociability for the evaluation of a group (Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2007) and for the individuals' decision to work for the group status' improvement (Ellemers, Pagliaro, Barreto, & Leach, 2008).

Another View on the Fundamental Dimensions
Thus, this review of the literature on the fundamental dimensions organizing social judgment showed the existence of a large consensus around the idea of a two-dimensional structure for both individual and group social judgment. Though using different labels, there seems to be one fundamental dimension that includes concepts like competence, agency, dominance, and instrumentality and another fundamental dimension that includes concepts like warmth, morality, communion, and expressiveness (Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt, & Kashima, 2005)[8]. One aspect seems to fundamentally distinguish the two dimensions: the idea that the first dimension includes aspects that are more profitable for the self

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[8] Indeed, Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick (2006) argue that this different usage of labels has obscured the pervasiveness of these two dimensions (p. 78).

or the group that possesses those traits and the second dimension pertains more for the relationship with others (Peeters, 1983).

This distinction allows us to suggest yet another meaning associated to the distinction between these two dimensions. The first dimension seems to include aspects that grant those highly characterized by that dimension the tools to achieve material resources while the second dimension seems to include aspects that can be *a priori* seen as less useful from this point of view. Though we should not draw an exact connection between the competence and agentic aspects with this "instrumental" function and the warmth and communal aspects with a more simply "symbolic" dimension, we do argue that there is a tendency for this correspondence to occur. Using this axis to set apart the dimensions, we call the first dimension, the *instrumental* dimension, and we label the second dimension, the *symbolic* dimension[9].

The first dimension is called instrumental because according to this perspective we see the aspects included in this dimension as potentially serving a goal or a purpose (in our view: achieving material resources). In this sense, a group that is characterized as more instrumental than another group is a group that is more prepared and better equipped to achieve material resources than the other group. On the contrary, we use the term symbolic to refer to all non-material aspects of social life, aspects that are not seen as relevant to achieve material resources. This may include traits pertaining to harmonious human relations, but also religious beliefs, moral traits or political positions regarding ethical dilemmas for instance.

This symbolic dimension includes a wide variety of aspects that in many other situations may be seen as standing at different poles. In fact, according to this "new" distinction, we unequivocally deal with only two dimensions. And even the recent discussion of whether warmth/sociability and morality should be seen as two separate dimensions has no sense here, because according to this distinction, these two aspects are both seen as symbolic *a priori*.

Thus, content-wise, two dimensions unequivocally exist: the one making reference to aspects like competence and agency, and the other one making reference to aspects like warmth, morality, and communion. This distinction comprises in itself different meanings. What we argue is that when we think of the relationship between host society members (in our case, Portuguese) and immigrants, one specific meaning becomes more salient. That meaning is a meaning that distinguishes between instrumental and symbolic aspects. We further argue that there is clearly a greater tendency for the first dimension (and aspects like competence and agency, intelligence, etc.) to be considered instrumental, and for the second dimension (and aspects like warmth, communion, sociability, etc.) to be considered symbolic. However, this does not always have to be the case. And this points to one very important characteristic of the instrumental-symbolic distinction: its context-dependency.

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[9] The « social utility » dimension identified by Beauvois (2003) is the closest term of reference for «our» instrumental dimension, since it is about the group's « market value ». Indeed, Cambon (2000) showed that personality traits most characteristic of the social utility domain are more used to describe individuals with the attributes of economic success and in a position to produce economic value. However, the symbolic dimension is further apart from the «social desirability» dimension to the extent that the impact of perceiving intergroup similarity at this symbolic level does not pertain to ascertain whether this group may "fulfil the personal needs of people in their social lives" (Dubois & Beauvois, 2005, p. 125) but it is instead appraised in terms of its impact in the definition of group boundaries and the establishment of a positive identity of the ingroup.

What defines an aspect as instrumental or symbolic is the context: If in a given context, being more sociable or more honest puts that person or that group in a better position to achieve material resources, then those aspects, on that context, should be defined as instrumental. Imagine for example an immigrant group that "uses" their sociable traits to convince members of the host society to prefer this group in the attribution of social benefits. In this case, an aspect *a priori* seen as symbolic would become instrumental (in the achievement of resources) in this specific context. It should be noted also that the resources considered here are the *material* resources and not those more abstractly defined, where symbolic aspects would also certainly often play a role.

Symbolic-Instrumental Distinction and Intergroup Relations

So far, this paper sought to identify and describe examples of the fundamental dimensions along which social judgment seems to be organized. The interest in these dimensions of social judgment was due to the fact that attitudes toward outgroups are largely determined by the ways these are perceived. As Yzerbyt, Kervyn, and Judd (2008) argue "The ubiquity of these two dimensions in social judgment suggests that not only is human judgmental language oriented around these two dimensions, but also these dimensions may provide important information for the regulation of social interactions" (p. 1111).

In fact, when we think about the folk discourse on immigrants and immigration, we notice that it is also structured along these two fundamental topics, referring, *on the one hand*, to identity aspects like their different culture or how they resemble us in so many personality characteristics and how we feel about the way they "rear they children", and, *on the other hand*, how the fact that these immigrants are coming to this country is "affecting the economy" and the individual's personal financial situation, how they are "taking jobs away" from people born in the country or how they "contribute to the development of the economy" (Costa-Lopes, Vala, Pereira, & Aguiar, 2008; Vala, Pereira, Costa-Lopes, & Deschamps, 2010). Thus, if the folk discourse about immigrants and immigration is organized along these two dimensions, then it is quite plausible to think that attitudes towards immigrants will be differentially affected by these two types of aspects, by these two *dimensions* (Costa-Lopes, Vala, & Judd, 2012).

A fundamental line of work that indirectly approaches attitudes towards immigrants includes the theoretical models on immigrants' integration. These acculturation models however seem to be more focused on the symbolic dimensions. One of the first models addressing the issue of immigrants' integration was put forward by John Berry and colleagues (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989). In their *Acculturation Model*, the authors considered that immigrants coming to the country deal with two fundamental questions: one of the questions refers to the way in which immigrants wish to maintain or relinquish their culture of origin and the other question concerns the way they wish to relate to the other groups in the host society. These two fundamental questions constitute two orthogonal axes that give origin to four possible strategies of acculturation (*Assimilation*, *Integration*, *Separation*, and *Marginalization*). The fact is that all these strategies are simply grounded in cultural/symbolic concerns. And this model has been the most widely used in social psychology of immigration (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2003; Neto, 2002; Piontkowski, Florack, Hoelker, & Obdrzálek, 2000; Van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998; Van de Vijver, Helms-Lorenz, & Feltzer, 1999).

Bourhis and colleagues (Bourhis, Moise, Perrault, & Senécal, 1997) added two refinements to Berry and colleagues (1989)'s model. They proposed the *Interactive Acculturation Model* where, on the one hand, it was suggested that one should consider not only the immigrants' point of view but also what the host society members think about the same issues. On the other hand, considering that the two dimensions considered by Berry and colleagues (1989) measured different concepts (attitudes vs. behavioural intentions), Bourhis and colleagues (1997) suggested a reformulation for the "contact" dimension. The second dimension now dealt with the issue of whether immigrants wish/should adopt the host society's culture. Nonetheless, these refinements did not respond to the lack of attention given to instrumental aspects. Rudmin (2003) was very critical of these approaches to integration, but his critiques were fundamentally about psychometric issues and did not add anything theoretically substantial.

One distinct exception in this field is embodied in the *Relative Acculturation Extended Model* (Navas et al., 2005) where it is stressed the importance of considering various domains of immigrants' reality. Accordingly, the authors consider that one should adjoin to the cultural aspects (already considered in the previous models), the domain of material aspects (including labor, economic, and political domains).

Aside from these models of acculturation, it is also very important to consider one of the most important theories regarding intergroup attitudes – Integrated Threat Theory – and which has provided several empirical examples regarding attitudes towards immigrants. In doing so, we intend to show how also in this theory we can find a distinction that maps onto the symbolic-instrumental distinction that we advance in this paper.

In their Integrated Threat Theory, Stephan and colleagues (Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999) argue that negative intergroup attitudes derive from the perception that the other group is a source of threat. The authors distinguish between realistic and symbolic threats and whereas realistic threats consist of threats to the very existence of the ingroup or its economic and physical well-being, symbolic threats emerge from the perception of group differences in values, beliefs, attitudes, etc. (Stephan, Diaz-Loving, & Duran, 2000). This distinction between realistic and symbolic dimensions of threat constitutes another example of how intergroup attitudes are shaped by concerns with material resources (e.g., economic resources) that pertain to an instrumental dimension and concerns with symbolic aspects (e.g., religious beliefs) that pertain to a symbolic dimension. The fact that these threat appraisals are structured along these two types of dimensions (see Kervyn, Fiske, & Yzerbyt, 2015) constitutes another argument to the idea that intergroup attitudes are structured and shaped by these two fundamental dimensions.

The Importance of the Symbolic-Instrumental Distinction in the Understanding of Attitudes towards Immigrants

We began this paper by stating that attitudes towards other groups, namely attitudes towards immigrants may depend on how we perceive those groups regarding these fundamental dimensions. After a thorough description of how the perception and evaluation of (individuals and) social groups are fundamentally structured by two basic dimensions, we advanced a new way of looking at this distinction by identifying on the one hand a dimension that includes more instrumental features (i.e., features that facilitate the attainment of

material resources) and on the other hand a dimension that includes more symbolic features (i.e., social aspects that are irrelevant to the attainment of material resources). Moreover, we argued that this different way of looking at these two basic dimensions becomes more relevant when we are approaching attitudes towards immigrants. By that, we mean that the psychological processes that determine the nature of our attitudes towards immigrants are significantly dependent on how we perceive the immigrant groups in terms of these dimensions. A specific example clarifies what we mean by that: the relationship between perceptions of intergroup similarity/dissimilarity and intergroup attitudes. Do we have more positive attitudes towards similar or dissimilar immigrant groups? Research inspired by the literature reviewed in this paper tried to address these questions and attests for the importance of this distinction. Costa-Lopes et al. (2012) reviewed the literature about the impact of intergroup similarity and dissimilarity and concluded that there is no fixed preference for one or the other as it is highly dependent on the dimension to which this intergroup similarity/dissimilarity refers to. Costa-Lopes (2010) describes a series of studies detailing how the impact of intergroup similarity/dissimilarity on attitudes towards immigrant groups depends on whether this similarity/dissimilarity refers to an instrumental or a symbolic dimension. The author hypothesized and empirically demonstrated two processes: 1) when intergroup similarity/dissimilarity is perceived along a symbolic dimension, the relationship between intergroup similarity/dissimilarity and intergroup attitudes is moderated by ingroup identification, i.e., for individuals who are highly identified with their country, a similar immigrant group is targeted with more negative attitudes than a dissimilar outgroup because a similar group poses a greater threat to the uniqueness of that group identity that is so essential for the highly identified individuals; 2) when intergroup similarity/dissimilarity is defined in terms of an instrumental dimension, the relationship between intergroup similarity/dissimilarity and attitudes towards immigrants is moderated by goal interdependence, i.e., in a competitive context, a similar immigrant group is seen more negatively (because it is in a better position to achieve and thus "steal" material resources); in a cooperative context, a similar immigrant group is seen more positively (as it may help the host society group in achieving better resources).

The example described here constitutes just one example of how the understanding of intergroup relations and intergroup attitudes may benefit from considering the existence of this fundamental distinction between symbolic and instrumental dimensions of social judgment. Future research should address if and how this distinction may impact on other fields of intergroup relations.

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