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Assessing Effects of National Trauma on Adaptive Functioning of Mentally Healthy Adults: An Exploratory Rorschach Study

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ABSTRACT

The study evaluates deviations in Rorschach indices, usually related to effects of exposure to trauma, in three samples of Israeli adult non-patients. Data collected from 41 Israeli undergraduates in 1996-1997, during a period of increased rate of terror attacks in central cities of the country (Tibon, 2007), are compared to those of two similar samples of 49 and 30 undergraduates collected in 2005-2007, before and after the Second Lebanon War respectively. During this period, the rate and severity of terror attacks were lower. The results point out the 1996-1997 sample (High Terror Exposure) as showing prominent difficulties in the capacity to minimize felt distress, in comparison to the other two samples, collected between January 2005 and January 2006 (Low Terror Exposure) and between October 2006 and January 2007 (Lebanon War Exposure) respectively. Nonetheless, the Lebanon War Exposure sample showed a tendency towards being alert and suspicious in interpersonal relationships. The data are interpreted as demonstrating the utility of the Rorschach as an assessment tool that is more responsive than previously thought to non-personality contextual factors such as national trauma.

KEYWORDS

National Trauma, Terror, Mental Functioning, Distress Measures, Rorschach

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