Nationalist Narratives and Anti-Immigrant Attitudes: Exceptionalism and Collective Victimhood in Contemporary Israel

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Abstract

While scholars have long studied the relationship between nationalist beliefs and anti-immigrant attitudes, such work has proceeded largely independently from research on collective memory, which explores how nationalist narratives are created, maintained, and contested. In this paper, we bring these literatures together by asking how, at the individual level, receptivity to salient narratives about the nation's past is associated with dispositions toward immigrants and immigration policy. Specifically, we focus on two narratives common in a number of contemporary democracies that frame the nation as having been perpetually victimised over its history (i.e., the victimhood narrative) and as having been chosen to carry out a special mission in the world (i.e., the exceptionalism narrative). Using original data from Israel, we demonstrate that stronger agreement with these narratives, and particularly with exceptionalism, is associated with greater propensity to hold anti-immigrant views. Our analyses reveal that this relationship is mediated by ethnic conceptions of the nation's symbolic boundaries and, to a lesser degree, by perceived symbolic and material threats to the nation-state. Building on recent comparative work, we argue that in nations with a history of precarious sovereignty, victimhood and exceptionalism narratives provide a fertile basis for the exclusionary appeals of radical-right political actors.

Keywords: nationalism, national identity, anti-immigrant attitudes, collective memory, Israel

Introduction

Research on nationalism and social exclusion has proceeded along two distinct tracks. One

tradition, typically relying on survey or experimental data, has examined the relationship

between meanings attached to the nation and hostility toward specific out-groups, including

immigrants, religious minorities, and racial groups (e.g., Bail 2008; Ceobanu and Escandell

2008; Kunovich 2009; Schildkraut 2011). The second approach, often relying on hermeneutic

methods or field research has examined how public narratives about the nation and its symbolic

boundaries are created and maintained, or contested and transformed (e.g., Bodnar 1992; Olick

and Levy 1997; Spillman 1997; Zubrzycki 2006). Few scholars, however, have brought these lines of work together to ask how receptiveness to specific nationalist narratives, particularly those that draw on a collective memory of the nation's past, shapes people's attitudes toward stigmatised groups. This is the primary objective of our paper.

Building on recent cross-national research on the association between a country's past losses of sovereignty and the contemporary prevalence of xenophobia (Hiers, Soehl, and Wimmer 2017), we examine whether individual-level receptivity to narratives of victimhood and exceptionalism is associated with anti-immigrant attitudes.[1] To do so, we rely on unique survey data from Israel, a country where such tropes are widespread and seen as widely legitimate (in the case of the victimhood narrative, understandably so, given the Jewish people's history of collective suffering) and where right-wing political discourse has explicitly used such beliefs to mobilise support for anti-immigrant policies targeting asylum seekers and labour migrants. Consistent with our expectations, we find that strength of belief in the chosenness of the Jewish nation (i.e., exceptionalism) and in its collective victimhood are both associated with stronger antipathy toward non-Jewish immigrants. A structural equation model demonstrates that this association is mediated by ascriptive conceptions of the nation's symbolic boundaries. That is, respondents for whom narratives of exceptionalism and suffering have the highest resonance are also more likely to perceive the nation in ethno-nationalist terms and therefore to hold more negative views of non-Jewish immigrants.[2]

These findings suggest that social exclusion is shaped in important ways by receptivity to prominent public narratives about the nation's collective past and its unique purpose in the

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[1] As with many studies of immigration, we focus on attitudes toward those immigrant populations that do not share membership in the dominant ethnic group.
[2] We subsequently use the terms "anti-immigrant attitudes" as shorthand for negative dispositions toward non-Jewish immigrants.

world, and that this helps explain not only cross-national heterogeneity in anti-immigrant beliefs (as in Hiers, Soehl, and Wimmer 2017), but also within-country, individual-level variation. Given the prominence of exceptionalism and victimhood narratives across contemporary democracies (for instance, the former is particularly prominent in the United States and France, while both are central to Eastern European nationalisms), our paper should stimulate further research on the topic, both in individual country cases and in a comparative perspective.

Nationalist narratives and anti-immigrant attitudes

Scholars of nationalism have long been interested in how popular conceptions of nationhood—that is, beliefs about the nation's symbolic boundaries, domain-specific pride, and a sense of national superiority—shape peoples' dispositions toward perceived out-groups (Bonikowski 2016; Feinstein 2016). This research suggests that individuals are more likely to be suspicious of and hostile toward immigrants (and members of national minority groups) if they subscribe to ethnoculturally exclusionary understandings of the national political community (Bonikowski and DiMaggio 2016; Hjerm 1998; Lewin-Epstein and Levanon 2005) and hold the nation-state in particularly high esteem (Ariely 2012; De Figueiredo and Elkins 2003; Knudsen 1997). This is the case because both sets of beliefs are likely to reduce openness toward outsiders, who are perceived as unfit for inclusion in an idealised cultural and political community.

What most survey research on this topic misses, however, is that conceptions of nationhood embedded in individual-level cognitive schemas are themselves reflected in and shaped by widely accessible national narratives. Particularly salient are narratives that describe and frame the nation's past. Such accounts are not solely backward-looking; they also enable specific interpretations of present-day events and shape preferences regarding the nation's future. A large body of research on collective memory has examined, among other topics, public

struggles over how national historical figures (Fine 1996), controversial wars (Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991), and national scandals (Schudson 1993) are to be remembered and commemorated, how narratives of national culpability and victimhood are filtered through the prism of religious identity (Zubrzycki 2006), what role educational curricula play in conveying specific national and cosmopolitan identities (Bromley, Meyer, and Ramirez 2011), and how ostensibly agreed-upon national myths, including those concerning the nation's exceptional role in the world, obfuscate long-standing conflicts over the nation's core principles (R. Smith 1997). While this work has developed a systematic understanding of how public narratives are created, maintained, and occasionally transformed, it has not directly investigated how people's receptiveness to such narratives shapes their social and political attitudes.

How might attitudes toward immigrants be linked to salient narratives about the nation's past? One starting point for answering this question is to consider collective memory related to tragic historical events, because these are likely to engender a sense of collective vulnerability that for some may be associated with a narrowed sense of national identity and a concern over perceived threats to the nation. Evidence for this type of relationship was recently found by Hiers, Soehl, and Wimmer (2017). Using country-level data from 33 European countries, the authors show that negative attitudes toward immigrants are more prevalent in countries where an ethnic definition of the nation has become prevalent due to traumatic memories of military defeats that led to the loss of, or significant threats to, national sovereignty.

Memories of the nation's past fragility may inform current attitudes toward immigrants through two types of perceived threats: to the content of national identity and to the nation's political dominance over "its" state (Wimmer 1997). Hiers, Sohel and Wimmer (2017) show that in societies that are haunted by traumatic memories of defeats and crises of sovereignty, ethnic

nationalism (i.e., endorsing ascriptive criteria of national membership) is more prevalent than in societies whose memories are less traumatic. This is so because in light of past struggles for national survival, the state comes to be seen as a protector of the nation's material and symbolic wellbeing. Therefore, xenophobia, according to this line of reasoning, stems, at least in part, from efforts to secure and maintain the nation's control over the state. Our study posits a similar link at the individual level: it shows that Jewish Israelis who most strongly believe that persecution characterises their nation's history (that is, those for whom a victimhood narrative resonates most deeply) are likely to embrace ethnic criteria of Israeli identity, which are in turn associated with negative attitudes toward non-Jewish immigrants.

Hostility toward immigrants, however, may be motivated not only by the shadows of the past, but also by perceptions of national glory. The need to maintain hegemonic control over the national state—vis-à-vis ethnic minorities—may be motivated by symbolic claims to the nation's exceptional qualities that are often intimately tied to its territory. As Anthony Smith (1986:148) argued, for over two centuries nationalist movements have striven to generate in national populations a sense of rootedness in a homeland by employing ethnic and religious myths, including those that describe the nation's unique origin, its exceptional qualities, and its special purpose in the world. In the process of framing a nation as the "rightful" possessor of its territory and its state, such exceptionalist myths can be used to support narrow and ultimately exclusionary conceptions of national identity.[3]

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[3] All nationalist beliefs--including ethnic conceptions of national boundaries and chauvinism—are shaped by and expressed through public narratives; not all such narratives, however, are inherently rooted in collective memory. Contemporary ethnic exclusion, for instance, is as likely to be justified by essentialised accounts of the nation's primordial origins as by narratives concerning the ostensible dangers posed by diversity for social cohesion or the tension between the cultural values of newcomers and the native-born.

Importantly, exceptionalism is not synonymous with chauvinism, though the two phenomena bear some similarity to one another. Chauvinism—the belief that one's nation is superior to other nations—is present to varying degrees in all nation-states, because nationhood in general is predicated on a sense of uniqueness, which easily slips into hubris (Kohn 1944:5). Exceptionalism, on the other hand, suggests not only superiority but also chosenness, that is, a special mission among nations, typically of divine origin but often secularised over time. Many nations, but not all, base their uniqueness on such exceptionalist myths (A. Smith 2003).

Following these insights, our study highlights as important causes of anti-immigrant attitudes in contemporary Israel two core elements of national self-understanding: the belief that Jews have always been a persecuted people (corresponding to a victimhood narrative) and the ethnocentric belief that Jews are a special "chosen" people with supreme culture and mission in the world (corresponding to an exceptionalism narrative). Both of these elements beliefs occupy a central position in Jewish collective memory and in some versions of Zionism (Abulof 2015; Ben-Amos 2003:182), and the literature on nationalism in Israel suggests that the victimhood narrative may drive xenophobic attitudes (Ariely 2018; Pedahzur and Yishai 1999) (we are not aware of prior research on exceptionalism and xenophobia).

Immigration to Israel

Israel's immigration policies are designed to encourage and assist Jews to immigrate to the country and discourage non-Jews from doing so (Amit, Achdut, and Achdut 2015:517). Non-Jewish migrants to Israel can be sorted into three categories (Hochman 2015): individuals who overstayed tourist visas (about 34 percent), labour migrants (50 percent), and asylum seekers (17 percent) (Population and Immigration Authority 2018).

Prior to the 1990s, most migrants to Israel were Jewish, and following the 1967 war much of the demand for manual labour was supplied by Palestinians. Following the first Intifada, movement of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza to Israel was banned and labour migrants from overseas displaced Palestinians in the Israeli labour market. These workers hold the least desirable jobs and are afforded fewer protections by labour unions and welfare state institutions compared to Israeli citizens (Amit, Achdut, and Achdut 2015:517).

Since 1995, and especially 2006, migrants from Africa (mostly Eritrea and Sudan) began arriving in Israel through the southern border with Egypt and claiming refugee status. The majority of asylum seekers are permitted to stay in Israel until a time when deportation to their home countries will no longer pose a threat to their lives (Hercowitz-Amir, Raijman, and Davidov 2017:418). They are denied welfare services and their access to the labour market is limited. Moreover, the Israeli government has repeatedly sought to deport asylum seekers to "third" countries in Africa and such policies have become central to the discourse of right-wing parties, which commonly scapegoat asylum seekers as sources of demographic, economic, and security threats (Duman 2015).

Past research has demonstrated the prevalence of exclusionary attitudes toward labour immigrants and asylum seekers among the Israeli public (Amit, Achdut, and Achdut 2015; Canetti-Nisim and Pedahzur 2003; Hercowitz-Amir, Raijman, and Davidov 2017). Consistent with findings from other countries, xenophobia has been associated with exclusionary conceptions of the nation's symbolic boundaries and with chauvinism (e.g., Raijman and Hochman 2011). Beyond this general conclusion, much of the research on anti-immigrant attitudes in Israel has sought to identify how distinct types of perceived threats associated with non-Jewish immigrants shape these beliefs. Among these, most prominent have been economic

threats to labour security and welfare rights, threats to wellbeing and safety, and symbolic threats to national identity and the Jewish character of the state (Raijman, Semyonov, and Schmidt 2003; Raijman and Semyonov 2004). The impact of such threats has been partly mediated by the negative stereotyping of foreigners and a desire to maintain social and cultural distance from them (Gorodzeisky 2013).

Studies have also mapped the heterogeneity in threat perceptions across the Israeli population. Economic threat is most pronounced among vulnerable segments of the labour market, where immigrants compete over jobs with Israeli citizens, especially Arabs (Raijman and Semyonov 2004; Raijman 2013) and Jews from disadvantaged groups (Amit, Achdut, and Achdut 2015; Gorodzeisky 2012). Public opposition to immigrants' political rights, however, is best predicted not by socioeconomic status, but by identification with the political right, which considers non-Jewish immigrants a threat to the Jewish character of Israel (Gorodzeisky 2012).

Despite the rich field of research on anti-immigrant attitudes in Israel, few scholars have considered how susceptibility to narratives about the nation's past affects perceptions of asylum seekers and labour migrants (but see Ariely 2018). Yet, given the pervasiveness of such narratives, their public legitimacy, and their implications for group relations, there is good reason to expect that they play an important role in the process.

Collective victimhood and exceptionalism in Israel

How can beliefs about a nation's history of persecution lead to hostility toward immigrants, including those who may have themselves suffered from persecution in their homelands? The answer lays in the meaning attached to the memories of persecution in contemporary national politics. In Israeli public discourse, a common justification for having a Jewish state is the need to prevent additional persecution, specifically a second Holocaust (Auron 2010:155; Ram

2011:24), and this has always guided Israel's foreign policy (Del Sarto 2017). Within this interpretative framework, the arrival of non-Jewish immigrants is seen as contributing to demographic threat—i.e., the concern that Jews may become a minority in Israel—and thus it contrasts with the vision of a state for Jews. Therefore, the hypothesised link between beliefs about a history of national persecution and anti-immigrant attitudes is likely to involve a mediating variable: an ethnic definition of legitimate membership in the political community of Israel should be associated with beliefs about national persecution that make Israel a shelter state for the Jews; in turn, Jewish Israelis who endorse an ethnic definition of Israeliness should hold more negative attitudes toward non-Jewish migrants. In addition, we may expect the two types of threats highlighted by Wimmer (1997)—to national identity and political dominance over the state—to serve as mediators as well: individuals who believe in a history of national persecution are likely to be concerned by perceived current threats to the nation, which in turn makes them more likely to hold negative views about immigrants.

While a history of persecution is certainly pivotal to the national self-understanding of most Jews, another core myth of Judaism is the exceptionalist belief that Jews have supreme culture and a special moral mission in the world. This stems from the biblical myths of a divine selection of *Bnei Yisrael* ("Sons of Israel") to be God's favourite people and agents of God's plan for the world (A. Smith 2003:49). Though such beliefs are sometimes rooted in theology, they are held by many non-believers as well: in this study, no less than a third of respondents who said that they never visit a synagogue supported the idea that Jews have a special role in the world (while only about a third of non-practicing Jews objected). In the United States too, "Manifest Destiny" initially emerged as a religious belief, but later its secular variants became influential in U.S. foreign policy and public discourse (Fousek 2000; Lieven 2004).

In Israel, exceptionalism, that is, the sense of belonging to a "chosen people," may influence attitudes toward immigrants via two paths. First, individuals who subscribe to an exceptionalist view of cultural superiority may hold demeaning views of immigrants because they view the latter as belonging to inferior nations that lack a uniquely divine purpose in the world. Second, the "chosen people" myth may serve as powerful justification for a sense of exclusive possession and ownership over the territory (and thus the state) of Israel that is believed to be the "promised land" of Jews (Abulof 2014); for some, such beliefs may lead to a perception of non-Jewish immigrants to Israel as unwelcomed intruders. This again places ethnic understanding of Israeliness as a mediator: this time between Jewish exceptionalism and negative attitudes toward immigrants. Further, the two types of threats discussed above—symbolic identity threats and threats to the nation's control over the state—are likely to be linked with exceptionalism as well, because exceptionalism stresses the nation's cultural distinctiveness and the intimate relationship between the nation and its homeland. Figure 1 summarises the hypothesised relationships between beliefs about national victimhood, exceptionalism, ethnic definition of state membership, threats to national identity and to the nation's political dominance in the state, and anti-immigrant attitudes.

[Figure 1 about here]

It is important to note that beliefs about exceptionalism and victimhood need not lead to xenophobia. Within Judaism, there is a profound disagreement about what moral imperatives emerge from the nation's history of persecution and from the notion of being a chosen people: particularistic and isolationist strands of Jewish philosophy compete against more universalist and open conceptions (Yadgar 2002). Further, this intra-religious debate has developed into a controversy within Zionism, which has found expression is in the debate in Israel about the

arrival and presence of non-Jewish immigrants. For example, Ariely (2018) demonstrated that in Israel, Jews who perceive the Holocaust's legacy in particularistic, nationalist terms tend to hold more exclusionary attitudes toward asylum seekers, while those who draw more universalist lessons from the Holocaust are more likely to espouse inclusive attitudes.

Rather than being endemic, anti-immigrant attitudes in contemporary Israeli society are the result of the fairly recent rise of extreme nationalism to dominance in public discourse. In the past two decades, since the failure of the peace process and the intense violence that followed this failure, ethnocentric, xenophobic nationalism, which in some parts of the Israeli society is tied to religious fundamentalism, has become the dominant ideology among Jewish Israelis (see Feinstein and Ben-Eliezer 2018). As part of this process, populist politicians from the ultranationalist right have sought to mobilise public support by defining refugees and asylum seekers as a major national problem, and by provoking hatred toward such "infiltrators."

Bringing these arguments together, the resonance of victimhood and exceptionalism narratives is particularly likely to drive anti-immigrant sentiments when such associations are primed in radical political discourse, thereby heightening the mediating role of ethnic definitions of the nation's boundaries and of political and symbolic threats to the nation. Indeed, given the widespread acceptance of both narratives in Israel, it is possible that some Jewish Israelis' lack of vigorous endorsement of these narratives (manifested, for instance, by only weak rather than strong agreement with them) may itself be a reaction to these narratives' appropriation by anti-immigrant activists and politicians. This feedback effect could further strengthen the hypothesised associations in our data.

Data

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The data for this study come from a nationally representative survey of Jewish Israelis conducted in October 2016. In addition to common measures of nationalism, demographic questions, and questions about respondents' views on political issues, including immigrants and immigration, the survey featured a series of novel measures of nationalism related to our central research question. These were formulated based on an extensive review of the academic literature on Jewish nationalism, Israeli nationalism, and Zionism, and 45 in-depth interviews with a diverse sample of Jewish Israelis, which focused on the respondents' ethnic and national self-understanding and their political attitudes.

The survey was administered to 1,020 respondents by Panel4All, an Israeli polling firm. The sampling frame was calibrated to the population distribution of core demographic variables, including gender, age, religiosity, and district (see Appendix A for sample descriptive statistics). The order of batteries of attitudinal questions and the order of questions within each battery were randomised.

Dependent variable

The outcome variable is an additive scale measuring individuals' negative attitudes toward immigrants. This scale is composed of twenty survey questions (Chronbach's alpha = 0.95) that asked respondents to evaluate a variety of ostensible threats posed by immigrants to Israel's economy, culture, security, welfare state institutions, and public health (see Appendix B for item wording). To create the scale, we averaged respondents' standardised scores on the items.

In the survey we asked respondents separately about their attitudes toward asylum seekers and foreign workers (i.e., labour migrants). However, because we are concerned with attitudes toward non-Jewish immigrants in general, our outcome variable combines these items

into a single scale. As a robustness check, we also ran additional analyses that separated the two dependent variables (see Appendix C), but these yielded substantively similar conclusions.

Explanatory variables

Our analyses focus on six aspects of collective self-understanding among members of the Jewish majority in Israel. The first two—definitions of the nation's symbolic boundaries and beliefs about the superiority of Israel to other countries (i.e., chauvinism)—were the focal variables in previous survey-based research on nationalism and anti-immigrant attitudes. The next two—endorsement of the exceptionalism and victimhood narratives—represent the primary contribution of our paper. Finally, measures of perceived threat to national identity and to the ethno-national character of the state are included as possible mediators.

Similar to previous research, we used factor analysis to distinguish latent dimensions underlying multiple measures of national symbolic boundaries, which were then aggregated into standardised additive scales (see Table 1 for the results).[4] Importantly, factor analysis provided only one source of information in this process. We were also guided by theoretical motivations and by scale goodness-of-fit measures, namely Chronbach's alpha. In situations where factor loadings for particular variable were ambiguous or contrary to our theoretical priors, we examined whether the inclusion of the variable in the corresponding scale improved the latter's fit. If it did not, the variable was omitted from the scale but retained in the analysis.

The first scale informed by the factor analysis results in Table 1 represents elective (i.e., civic-republican) criteria of membership in the Israeli community, while the second scale represents ascriptive (i.e., ethnic) criteria of membership, and specifically being born and having

[4] Because the response categories are ordinal, we employ factor analysis of a polychoric correlation matrix (conventional factor analysis yields substantively similar results). We selected the optimal number of factors using Horn's parallel analysis (Dinno 2009) and confirmatory factor analysis via SEM.

family roots in Israel (we refer to the latter symbolic boundary configuration as "territorial"). In addition to the two scales, the analysis included one survey question as an independent variable: whether being Jewish is important for being a true Israeli. Despite loading on the second factor, this measure did not improve the fit of the territorial boundary scale. Moreover, there are theoretical reasons to distinguish native birth and ancestry from religious identity as criteria of national belonging. We interpret this item as an indicator of ethno-religious nationalism.

[Table 1 about here]

Similar to other studies, our measurement of chauvinism is composed of two items measuring agreement with the following statements (Kosterman and Feschbach 1989): "The world would be a better place if people in other countries were more similar to Israelis" and "In general, Israel is a better county than most countries." However, we also sought to distinguish a shallow sense of superiority (Feinstein 2016, 2017), from a deeper belief in the cultural uniqueness, moral superiority, and predestined (for some, divine) mission of the nation (i.e., exceptionalism). The exceptionalism scale was composed of three items with the following prompts: "The world would be a better place if other peoples adopted Jewish values;" "The Jewish people have a cultural heritage that is more glorious than the cultural heritage of other peoples;" and "The Jewish people have a special mission in the world." Table 2 presents factor analysis results distinguishing chauvinism from exceptionalism.[5]

[Table 2 about here]

One important difference between the chauvinism and exceptionalism measures is which collective identity they mobilise, Jewish or Israeli. Our choice to use Israel in the chauvinism questions follows the convention from the nationalism literature of using country labels in

[5] The second item ("Israel is a better country than most countries") loaded only marginally higher on factor 2, but its inclusion in the chauvinism scale considerably improved Chronbach's alpha. For this reason, along with theoretical considerations, we combined the first two items.

eliciting feelings of present-day national superiority. In the case of historical exceptionalism narratives, however, "Jewish people" is a more meaningful category, because the perceptions of cultural uniqueness and chosenness that constitute this phenomenon are seen as essential to the nation's core character, dating back over its entirely history. Necessarily, this includes historical periods when Israel as a country did not exist (indeed, much of the persecution experienced by the Jewish people that informs this narrative took place within the borders of other states).

While the relationship between Jewishness and Israeliness is a complex one, it is not unique to this case. In other nations, particularly those with a history of precarious statehood, narratives of exceptionalism and victimhood also depend on assumptions of a historical continuity of "the people" that spans periods of statelessness. Moreover, in the interest of such continuity, the definition of "the people" is frequently essentialised based on particular ethnic cultural, and religious boundaries, even if the contemporary states where such groups are dominant are themselves multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious.[6]

Three remaining elements of national self-understanding were captured with discrete survey questions. First, we measured the resonance of victimhood narratives based on agreement with the prompt "throughout history the Jewish people have suffered from persecution." The response distribution demonstrates the centrality of this theme for Jewish Israeli identity: 56 per cent strongly agreed with this statement, 36 per cent agreed, 5 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed, 2 per cent disagreed, and 0.4 per cent strongly disagreed. The two types of perceived threats to the nation were measured with questions that asked whether the Jewish people are at risk of losing their unique identity (51 per cent strongly agreed, 34 agreed, 9 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed, 4 per cent disagreed, and 1 per cent strongly disagreed), and whether the

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[6] Jewishness functions here not solely as a religious identity but also as a broader ethno-national identity, as evidenced by the fact that exceptionalist beliefs are held by both religious and secular Jewish Israelis.

Jewish character of Israel is at risk (16 per cent strongly agreed, 28 per cent agreed, 24 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed, 24 per cent disagreed, and 7 per cent strongly disagreed). Table 3 provides descriptive statistics for the focal variables (we treat ordinal variables as continuous, a choice we substantiate with robustness checks; results available upon request).[7]

[Table 3 about here]

To what degree are the six aspects of national self-understanding—definitions of the nation's symbolic boundaries, chauvinism, exceptionalism, beliefs about a history of persecution, and perceived threats to national identity and the nation's control over the state—associated with anti-immigrant attitudes among Jewish Israelis? To answer this question, our analysis proceeds in two steps. We first use regression analysis to examine the direct associations between anti-immigrant attitudes and national self-understanding. Second, we estimate a structural equation model that includes both direct and indirect paths, which allows us to test for mediation effects.[8]

Results

Analysis 1. Direct associations between national self-understanding and anti-immigrant attitudes

We use OLS regression to estimate the extent to which conceptions of national symbolic boundaries, chauvinism, exceptionalism, perceptions of collective victimhood, and perceived symbolic and political threats affect the attitudes of Jewish Israelis toward non-Jewish immigrants. Table 4 presents the findings. For all focal variables, we present both raw and fully

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[7] The moderate correlation between exceptionalism and victimhood beliefs in Table 2 is to be expected, given that these two ideas are mutually reinforcing in nationalist myth-making: the nation is unwavering in the face of persistent persecution precisely because it has been endowed with a special moral mission that sets it apart from all other nations. In Appendix D, we show the association between respondents' sociodemographic characteristics and adherence to one or both of these narratives.

[8] Our theoretical model assumes that adherence to nationalist narratives—along with other aspects of people's nationalist beliefs—represent deeply held dispositions that, on average, should be causally prior to attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy. Our cross-sectional data, however, do not allow us to directly test this assumption. As a result, we interpret our results in terms of associations rather than causal effects.

standardised coefficients (the latter are expressed in standard deviations of the dependent variable and measure the response in the dependent variable to a one-standard-deviation change in a given independent variable). For simplicity, we treat two ordinal variables—ethno-religious definition of Israeliness and adherence to the victimhood narrative—as continuous (the original ordinal scale produced the same substantive conclusions but fit the data less well). All models control for respondents' gender, age, level of education, religiosity, and region of residence.

[Table 4 about here]

Model 1 examines associations commonly found in past survey research on nationalism and anti-immigrant attitudes. This includes conceptions of the nation's symbolic boundaries ("who is a true Israeli?") and chauvinism. All but one of the coefficients are in the expected direction and are statistically significant: more exclusionary conceptions of national membership and greater levels of chauvinism are associated with greater antipathy toward immigrants. The one exception is the civic republican definition of Israel's symbolic boundaries, for which the coefficient is positive (i.e., individuals who embrace this definition of Israeliness are more hostile toward immigrants) rather than negative. When interpreting this result, it is useful to keep in mind that Israel is an ethnic democracy (Smooha 1997), in which civic republican values are closely tied to ethno-nationalism. Indeed, the items that constitute the civic republicanism scale can all be understood in ascriptive terms. The county's flag—to which one component of the scale refers—is a Jewish national symbol that prominently features the Star of David and a colour scheme from a tallit, a Jewish prayer shawl. Military service—to which another component of the scale refers—is considered the highest civic virtue in Israel (Ben-Eliezer 1998), but Arab citizens are not required to join the military. Thus, military service functions as a strong marker of the ethno-national divide and the symbolic dominance of the Jewish majority in

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the county. The close association between civic virtues and ethno-religious national membership makes the positive association between civic-republican criteria for state membership and hostility toward immigrants less surprising.

Model 2 adds the two elements of national self-understanding focal to our study, adherence to the exceptionalism and victimhood narratives. The findings are in line with our expectations: both exceptionalism and beliefs about national persecution have a strong positive association with anti-immigrant attitudes. Once these variables are included in the model, the coefficients for ethno-religious and civic-republican definitions of national symbolic boundaries decrease in magnitude, with the latter ceasing to be significant. A similar pattern is observed for chauvinism: the coefficient in Model 2 is two-thirds smaller than the one in Model 1 and it fails to reach significance at the $p < 0.05$ level. This is likely due to a confounding effect of exceptionalism on chauvinism. Many exceptionalist respondents tend to score high both on chauvinism and on anti-immigrant attitudes, which generates a spurious relationship between the latter two variables when exceptionalism is not included in the analysis.

Model 3 introduces perceived threats to national identity and the political dominance of the majority group over the state. Both variables have large positive associations with anti-immigrant attitudes. This model represents the best fit to the data and thus it serves as the basis for our subsequent analysis, which focuses directly on the mediating role of the threat variables in the relationship between collective memory beliefs and anti-immigrant attitudes.

To summarise, the findings from the regression analysis lead to two conclusions. First, receptiveness to nationalist narratives among Jewish Israelis is highly predictive of anti-immigrant attitudes, and the inclusion of these measures increases the explanatory power of the regression models. Second, the standardised coefficients suggest that of the two focal variables

in this study—exceptionalism and adherence to the victimhood narrative—the former has a stronger association with anti-immigrant attitudes.

Analysis 2. Indirect associations between national self-understanding and anti-immigrant attitudes (structural equation models)

In the theoretical discussion, we proposed that the relationships between receptivity toward exceptionalism and victimhood narratives on one hand and attitudes toward immigrants one the other are mediated by an ethnic definition of national membership and by perceived threats to the nation. In this section we estimate a structural equation model that includes both direct and indirect (mediated) paths between these variables. The results are presented in Figure 2 (demographic control variables are omitted from the figure in the interest of clarity). The model includes the theoretically motivated direct path between exceptionalism and attitudes toward immigrants, a direct path between victimhood beliefs and anti-immigrant attitudes (about which we do not have strong theoretical expectations), and covariance between the three moderators. Three independent variables from the OLS regressions are excluded here: territorial and civic-republican definitions of Israeliness were found to have relatively weak associations with anti-immigrant attitudes (in contrast to the ethno-religious definition of Israeliness) and chauvinism was largely confounded by exceptionalism.[9] All coefficients in Figure 2 are standardised.

[Figure 2 about here]

The results indicate a very good fit of the tested model to the data. To check the statistical significance of indirect effects, we used a bootstrapping procedure recommended by Hayes (2009) with 5,000 repetitions, which produced a bias-corrected confidence interval for each

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[9] As a robustness check, we included chauvinism in the model; the magnitude of its direct effect on anti-immigrant attitudes was small and the results for the other predictors in the model were substantively unchanged.

mediation path. All mediation paths shown in Figure 2 successfully passed this strict test. Table 5 summarises the estimated direct, indirect, and total effects of the five independent variables in Figure 2 on the anti-immigrant attitude scale.

[Table 5 about here]

The estimated direct effects are substantively similar to the beta coefficients in the full OLS model (Model 3) shown in Table 4. They suggest that the two strongest predictors of anti-immigrant attitudes among members of the Jewish Israeli majority are exceptionalism and the belief that only Jews can truly be Israeli. While the direct effects of those variables are similar in magnitude, the total effect of exceptionalism is stronger due to the additional indirect path.[10] Importantly, less than half (about 44 per cent) of the effect of exceptionalism on anti-immigrant attitudes is mediated, and the strongest mediator is an ethno-religious definition of Israeliness (whereas the two threats to the nation are relatively weak mediators). In addition, both the direct and indirect effects of beliefs in a history of national persecution are considerably weaker than the direct and indirect effects of exceptionalism. Taken together, these results lead to the conclusion that in contemporary Israel, anti-immigrant attitudes are driven primarily by high levels of exceptionalism, and to a lesser extent by concerns about perceived threats to the nation that are rooted in traumatic memories of national persecution.

Discussion

Studies of anti-immigrant attitudes have suggested that the absolute size of and relative increase in the immigrant share of the population influences the level of anti-immigrant animosity observed among the native-born, because the salience of threats attributed to immigrants increases with their visibility (e.g., Quillian 1995). The Israeli case challenges this notion,

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[10] We model ethnic nationalism as a moderator of the effect of chauvinism and not vice versa in line with our theoretical expectations, but the two designs are statistically equivalent.

because it demonstrates that even a relatively small and stable number of immigrants can become focal in public discourse and generate significant political turmoil (for related evidence, see Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders 2002; Schneider 2008; Sides and Citrin 2007). Indeed, negative attitudes toward immigrants appear not to emerge in response to the objective number of immigrants or their level of visibility *per se*, but rather from the interpretive framework that assigns meaning to the presence of immigrants in the country.[11] National narratives that are selectively composed of culturally resonant material to make sense of the present and set the goals for the collective future of the nation (Coakley 2004; Hodgkin and Radstone 2003; Zerubavel 1995:chap 1) can become powerful tools in directing the public's attitudes toward immigrants. Our paper demonstrates that competing conceptions of the nation, reflected in and shaped by salient nationalist myths, inform individual-level beliefs about immigration.

Over a century ago, Ernest Renan (1996[1882]) asserted that the legacies of nations are composed of both grief and triumphs. This study shows that attitudes toward immigrants are associated not only with anxieties rooted in traumatic collective memories, but also with adherence to prideful national myths. Endorsement of the exceptionalist myth of national chosenness is a particularly strong predictor of antipathy toward asylum seekers and labour migrants; the link is both direct (exceptionalism is associated with antipathy toward "non-nationals") and indirect (exceptionalist Jewish Israelis claim exclusive ownership over the state of Israel as their "promised land"). The belief in such myths need not be xenophobic. Jewish political history provides myriad examples of inclusion justified by claims to a uniquely Jewish morality (e.g., Prime Minister Menachem Begin's 1977 decision to provide refuge for Vietnamese boat people, after he comparing their situation to that of Jewish refugees fleeing

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[11] Further, the causal relationship may have the opposite direction: individuals who see immigrants as a threat may overestimate the number of immigrants in their country or region, a widespread tendency in immigrant-receiving countries (Citrin and Sides 2008).

Europe in 1939). Indeed, the turning of nationalist narratives against perceived out-groups

requires an active mobilisation by political actors, who exploit cultural tropes contained in a

nation's collective memory for exclusionary ends. In nations that have experienced recurrent

challenges to their sovereignty, collective victimhood (often based in undisputable historical

facts) and exceptionalism (in some cases born out of past triumphs and in others amplified for

purposes of national survival in conditions of acute adversity) provide particularly salient

cultural material for such purposes.

The tendency to view immigration through the prism of an idealised past, and public

debates over which moral imperatives derive from such narratives are evident in other

immigrant-receiving countries. For example, in Italy during the 1990s and 2000s, a heated debate

about the status and rights of undocumented immigrants prompted actors on both sides of the

political spectrum to draw on collective memories of antiquity (Antonsich 2016). Politicians on

the right claimed profound cultural differences between civilised Italians and uncivilised

immigrants, which could only be alleviated by a civilizational process akin to that employed by

the Roman Empire in its conquered territories. On the left, speakers drew on a contrasting

interpretation of the past to emphasise the moral obligation that Italians as a civic nation have

toward immigrants, based on liberal principles of social justice and equality. In recent years, the

exclusionary narrative has become dominant, mobilised by radical-right parties like the Lega

Nord, likely contributing to a further coupling of exceptionalism and xenophobia.

Traumatic memories are also often associated with anti-immigrant beliefs, but this need

not be the case. As Ariely (2018) shows, in Israel, memories of persecution can also produce

empathy toward and benevolent treatment of immigrants. Similarly, in response to the flow of

migrants from Latin America and North Africa to the Basque Country since the early 2000s, the

Basque Nationalist Party framed the issue in inclusive terms and justified it in Basques' own difficult experience of migration from their homeland (Jeram 2016).

In sum, we should view nations not as homogenous cultural entities, but as sites of symbolic struggle between multiple conceptions of nationhood (Bonikowski 2016). Attitudes toward immigrants form and change in close association with competing narratives about the nation's history and moral essence. Furthermore, immigration discourse often includes competing opinions about which parts of the nation's history ought to inform policy-making. This is the case in France, for instance, where supporters of multiculturalism argue that assimilationism is a remnant of France shameful colonial history, while their antagonists believe that civic republicanism is at the heart of French exceptionalism rooted in the most glorious chapters in French history (May 2016).

This framework allows us to answer two major questions about anti-immigrant attitudes. First, why are some people's attitudes toward immigrants more negative than others' (i.e., cross-sectional variation)? And second, why do such sentiments rise or decline over time (i.e., temporal variation)? The former is explained by the propensity of some people to respond particularly strongly to narratives of exceptionalism and victimhood and to associate them with exclusionary definitions of the nation's symbolic boundaries, while the latter depends on the skilful coupling of such narratives with anti-immigrant discourse by political entrepreneurs, which itself waxes and wanes over time.

With respect to cross-national variation in anti-immigrant attitudes, our findings suggest that high levels of xenophobia need not stem from the arrival and presence of immigrants *per se* (given that migration rates are low and stable in Israel), nor solely from the threats attributed to immigrants (as our structural equation model reveals), but rather from the prevalence of

exceptionalism and victimhood narratives in a given country. For example, after the collapse of the Communist Bloc in Central and Eastern Europe, right-wing parties and movements sought to exploit widespread economic and political uncertainty by using nationalist tropes about past collective suffering to scapegoat immigrant and domestic ethnic minorities, a strategy that has become increasingly popular with contemporary populist parties in the region as well (Bowman 1994:146-7; Tismăneanu 1998:8). Exceptionalism narratives (but not victimhood narratives) have also been central to anti-Muslim politics in Northwestern Europe, where Muslim immigrants have been portrayed as possessing values incompatible with civic republicanism—as in the French headscarf debates (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2014)—or with progressive gay and women's rights regimes—as in the electoral campaigns of Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders in the Netherlands (Duyvendak, Geschiere, and Tonkens 2016)—with both seen as unique attributes of French and Dutch national identity, respectively.

This study has three limitations that could serve as points of departure for subsequent investigations. First, our analysis did not examine potential variation in attitudes toward different categories of immigrants that might be considered more or less welcome and deserving (Ford 2011; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Lewin-Epstein and Levanon 2005; Turper et al. 2015). Second, like most studies in this field, we did not consider contextual effects on anti-immigrant attitudes (Legewie 2013). Research has shown that political, economic, and security shocks can alter aggregate levels of national attachment and support for state institutions (Feinstein 2016); similarly how such events are interpreted in the public sphere can alter the content and salience of shared understandings of the nation's meaning (Bonikowski and DiMaggio 2016; Bonikowski 2017). These changes in turn may affect the relationship between collective self-understanding and views of immigrants and immigration policy. Third, this study focused on how aspects of

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national self-understanding might affect individuals' attitudes toward immigrants; the relationship, however, might operate in the other direction as well: the arrival and presence of immigrants may lead to changes in public discourse concerning national identity, and with it, alter popular attitudes (Bail 2008; Triandafyllidou 1998). Subsequent studies could develop a processual model in which each aspect of national self-understanding not only influences attitudes toward immigrants (the direction examined in this article), but also responds to the actual or perceived increase in migration levels.

Despite these limitations, this study breaks new ground in understanding the relationship between conceptions of nationhood and anti-immigrant attitudes. Unlike past research that focused primarily on national symbolic boundaries or chauvinism, our approach demonstrates that common and widely legitimised narratives concerning the nation's past and its unique role in the world can themselves generate powerful antipathies toward populations excluded from the national community. In countries with a history of major threats to national sovereignty, such narratives represent fertile ground for the exclusionary appeals of radical political actors, whose discourse couples exceptionalism and victimhood with ethnic nationalism and anti-immigrant sentiment. In systematically examining the individual-level consequences of such mobilisation efforts, our study represents a promising first step toward the integration of insights from the rich literature on collective memory into survey-based research on social and political attitudes.

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Figure 1. Hypothesized model of nationalism, threat perceptions, and anti-immigrant attitudes.
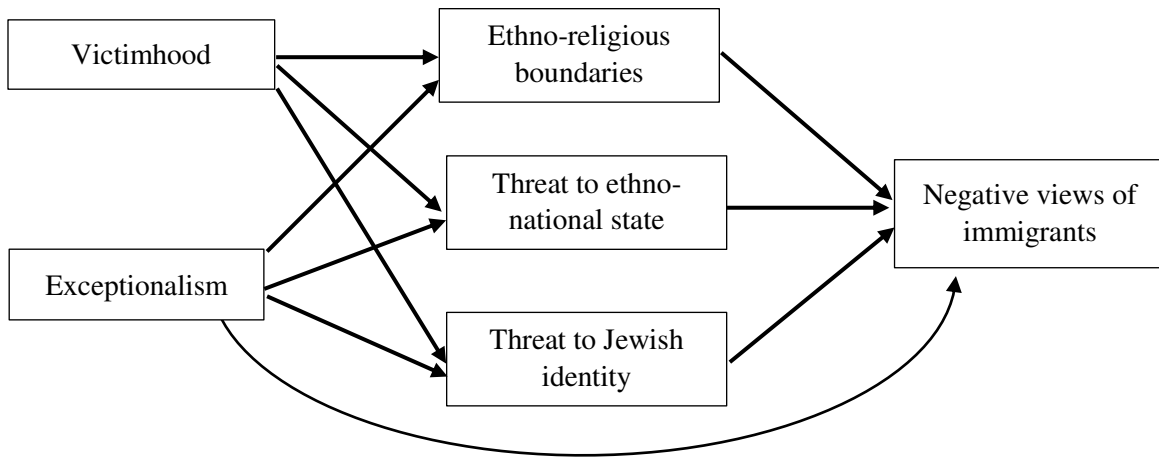
Table 1. Results of factor analysis of national membership criteria, varimax rotation.

Important to being a true Israeli	F1	F2
Feel Israeli	**.71**	.11
Serve in the IDF	**.75**	.21
Feel pride when seeing the Israeli flag	**.82**	.23
Be born in Israel	.16	**.75**
Be part of a family with roots in Israel	.26	**.75**
Be Jewish	.20	.59

Table 2. Results of factor analysis of chauvinism and exceptionalism, varimax rotation.

	F1	F2
The world would be a better place if people in other countries were more similar to Israelis	.49	**.63**
In general, Israel is a better county than most countries	.53	**.58**
The world would be a better place if other peoples adopted Jewish values	**.61**	.56
The Jewish people has a cultural heritage that is more glorious than the cultural heritage of other peoples	**.70**	.45
The Jewish people has a special mission in the world	**.69**	.44

Table 3. Correlations, means, and standard deviations of focal variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Mean	SD
1. Anti-immigrant attitudes (0-1 scale)									.54	.23
2. Symbolic boundaries: ethno-religious (4-point Likert)	.44								3.10	.97
3. Symbolic boundaries: territorial (0-1 scale)	.30	.47							.50	.29
4. Symbolic boundaries: civic-republican (0-1 scale)	.09	.22	.30						.82	.21
5. Chauvinism (0-1 scale)	.38	.49	.40	.23					.56	.26
6. Exceptionalism (0-1 scale)	.47	.57	.35	.17	.73				.67	.25
7. Victimhood (5-point Likert)	.29	.27	.10	.17	.21	.36			4.45	.73
8. Threat to Jewish identity (5-point Likert)	.35	.18	.15	-.01	.15	.25	.17		3.03	1.15
9. Threat to ethno-national state (5-point Likert)	.37	.22	.12	-.07	.16	.28	.22	.61	3.23	1.19

Table 4. Regression results predicting anti-immigrant attitudes.

	Model 1 b	Model 1 beta	Model 2 b	Model 2 beta	Model 3 b	Model 3 beta
Focal variables						
Symbolic boundaries: ethno-religious	.056***	.233	.044***	.185	.041***	.172
	(.008)		(.008)		(.008)	
Symbolic boundaries: territorial	.070**	.088	.073**	.092	.056*	.071
	(.025)		(.025)		(.024)	
Symbolic boundaries: civic-republican	.077*	.071	.031	.029	.054	.050
	(.036)		(.036)		(.035)	
Chauvinism	.114***	.132	.036	.041	.052	.059
	(.029)		(.035)		(.034)	
Exceptionalism			.162***	.180	.120**	.133
			(.041)		(.040)	
Victimhood			.033***	.106	.024**	.076
			(.009)		(.009)	
Threat to Jewish identity					.031***	.153
					(.006)	
Threat to ethno-national state					.023***	.118
					(.006)	
Control variables						
Male	.016		.011		.009	
	(.012)		(.012)		(.012)	
Age	-.002***		-.002**		-.001**	
	(.000)		(.000)		(.000)	
Education (no high school diploma)						
High school diploma	-.016		-.036		-.022	
	(.037)		(.037)		(.036)	
Some college education or more	-.036		-.052		-.039	
	(.036)		(.035)		(.034)	
Married	.019		.018		.019	
	(.014)		(.014)		(.013)	
Religiosity (secular)						
Traditional/moderate-religious	.055***		.041**		.028	
`	(.016)		(.016)		(.015)	
Religious	.062**		.028		.026	
	(.021)		(.022)		(.021)	
Orthodox	.182***		.121***		.098***	
	(.026)		(.027)		(.027)	
Region (Tel-Aviv)						
North	.000		-.002		-.003	
	(.024)		(.024)		(.023)	
Center	.011		.011		.013	
	(.018)		(.018)		(.017)	

Jerusalem	-.008	-.004	.001
	(.022)	(.021)	(.021)
West Bank	.030	.025	.025
	(.031)	(.030)	(.029)
Haifa	.034	.034	.032
	(.023)	(.023)	(.022)
South	.019	.021	.011
	(.021)	(.021)	(.020)
Constant	.237***	.124*	.006
	(.050)	(.057)	(.057)
Observations	1,014	1,014	1,014
R-squared	.298	.323	.373
Adjusted R-squared	.286	.31	.359
BIC	-235	-256	-322

*** p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05

Figure 2. SEM of nationalism, threat perceptions, and anti-immigrant attitudes.
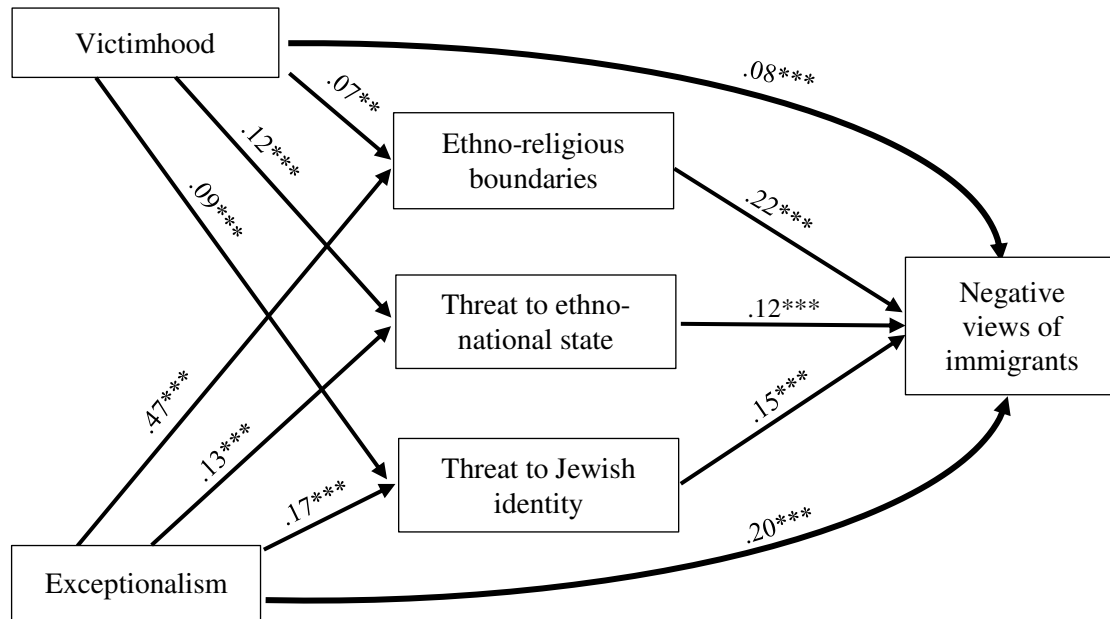
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
Fit indices: Chi2 (modes vs. saturated)=35.8(29):p=.180; CFI=0.995; RMSEA=0.015; SRMR=0.011

Table 5. Direct, indirect, and total effects from SEM predicting anti-immigrant attitudes.

	Direct	Indirect	Total
Ethno-religious symbolic boundaries	.22		.22
Exceptionalism	.20	.15	.34
Victimhood	.08	.04	.12
Threat to Jewish identity	.15		.15
Threat to ethno-national state	.12		.12

Appendix A. Distributions of demographic variables in the sample

Variable	Category	Percent / Mean
Gender	Female	52.12
	Male	47.88
Religiosity	Secular	50.54
	Moderate religious or traditional	25.42
	Religious	12.81
	Haredi (Ultraorthodox)	11.23
Political views	Right wing	26.76
	Moderate right wing	29.31
	Center	26.67
	Moderate left wing	13.82
	Left wing	3.43
	Don't know	4.07
Education	Less than high school	0.79
	High school, no diploma	2.36
	High school diploma	23.55
	More than high school but non-	23.06
	academic	34.25
	Undergraduate degree	15.51
	Graduate degree	0.49
Marital status	Married	58.97
	Separated	0.30
	Divorced	7.30
	Widower	0.89
	Single	32.54
Region	Jerusalem	12.81
	North	8.97
	Haifa	10.05
	Center	27.19
	Tel-Aviv	21.77
	South	14.09
	West Bank	5.12
Age (mean; SD)		39.74; 14.32

Appendix B. Wording of anti-immigrant scale items

Foreign workers/asylum-seekers take jobs from people who were born in Israel

Foreign workers/asylum-seekers increase crime rates

The government spends too much money on helping foreign workers/asylum-seekers

Foreign workers/asylum-seekers pose a security threat to me or my family

Foreign workers/asylum-seekers pose an economic threat to me or my family

The presence of foreign workers/asylum-seekers is a threat to public health

The presence of foreign workers/asylum-seekers is a burden on the welfare system in Israel

In the future, foreign workers/asylum-seekers will threaten the ability of Jews to be a majority in the country

Foreign workers/asylum-seekers threaten the Jewish character of the country

The religious and cultural customs of foreign workers/asylum-seekers threaten the Israeli way of life

Appendix C. Regression results comparing the anti-immigrant scale with disaggregated measures of attitudes toward labor immigrants and asylum seekers

	Guest workers and asylum seekers	Guest workers	Asylum seekers
Israeli boundaries: ethno-religious	.041***	0.036***	0.046***
	(.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Israeli boundaries: territorial	.056*	0.068**	0.045
	(.024)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Israeli boundaries: civic-republican	.054	0.039	0.069
	(.035)	(0.038)	(0.038)
Chauvinism	.052	0.036	0.067
	(.034)	(0.036)	(0.036)
Exceptionalism	.120**	0.138**	0.101*
	(.040)	(0.043)	(0.043)
Victimhood	.024**	0.014	0.033***
	(.009)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Threat to Jewish identity	.031***	0.029***	0.033***
	(.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Threat to ethno-national state	.023***	0.023***	0.022**
	(.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Male (ref: female)	.009	0.000	0.018
	(.012)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Age	-.001**	-0.002**	-0.001**
	(.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Education (ref: no higher education)			
High school diploma	-.022	-0.024	-0.020
	(.036)	(0.038)	(0.038)
Some college education	-.039	-0.043	-0.035
	(.034)	(0.037)	(0.037)
Married (ref: not married)	.019	0.025	0.013
	(.013)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Religiosity (ref: secular)			
Traditional/moderate-religious	.028	0.043**	0.014
	(.015)	(0.016)	(0.016)

Religious	.026	0.034	0.018
	(.021)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Orthodox	.098***	0.095***	0.101***
	(.027)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Region (ref: Tel-Aviv)			
North	-.003	-0.005	-0.002
	(.023)	(0.025)	(0.025)
Center	.013	0.018	0.009
	(.017)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Jerusalem	.001	-0.022	0.023
	(.021)	(0.022)	(0.022)
West Bank	.025	0.025	0.025
	(.029)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Haifa	.032	0.034	0.030
	(.022)	(0.024)	(0.024)
South	.011	0.012	0.010
	(.020)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Constant	.006	0.056	-0.044
	(.057)	(0.061)	(0.061)
Observations	1,014	1,014	1,014
R-squared	.373	0.329	0.353
Adjusted R-squared	.359	.314	.338

*** p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05

Appendix D. Predictors of adherence to exceptionalism and victimization.

Our survey data point to a few characteristics that make Jewish Israelis more likely to identify with the victimhood and exceptionalism narratives. First, exceptionalism and victimhood are positively associated with religiosity, which is not surprising given that both themes are central in Jewish religious texts and tradition. Second, net of their religiosity, respondents' scores on both outcome variables are a function of their position on a left-right scale of political ideology. This finding reflects the deep divide between the Israeli left (which has a secular, liberal, and progressive orientation) and right (which is more ethno-nationalist, particularistic, and linked to fundamentalist religious movements) (Del Sarto 2017; Feinstein and Ben-Eliezer 2018). Third, exceptionalist beliefs were also stronger among respondents who identified as Mizrahim (Jews of North African or Middle Easter decent), net of religiosity and right-wing identification. This reflects Mizrahi Israelis' tendency to reject the liberal secularist ideological framework of the predominately Ashkenazi left (Mizrachi 2016), and instead foster an ethno-religious communitarian core identity (see also Fischer 2016).[1]

Because exceptionalism and victimhood beliefs are positively correlated (r =0.36), we also sought to examine which demographic characteristics distinguish respondents who hold both beliefs from respondents who hold only one belief (exceptionalism but not victimhood and vice versa). For this purpose, we created two new variables. The first sums respondents' scores on both standardized scales, so that those who score high on resulting measure embrace both the exceptionalism and victimhood narratives, those who score low reject both narratives, and those at the

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[1] Core demographic variables such as gender, education, and income did not have statistically significant associations with the victimhood and exceptionalism variables.

center of the distribution embrace only one narrative. The second variable subtract respondents' score on the victimhood scale from their scores on the exceptionalism scale, so that individuals who score high on the resulting measure embrace the exceptionalism narrative but not the victimhood narrative, individuals who score low endorse the victimhood narrative but not exceptionalism, and individual who score in the middle either accept both narratives or reject them. We then regress both variables on respondents' sociodemographic attributes.

Holding both exceptionalism beliefs and victimhood beliefs is predicted by high levels of religiosity (more religious respondents are likelier to hold both beliefs), political orientation (identification with the political right increases the likelihood of holding both beliefs), and identification as Mizrahi Jew. Religiosity and political orientation—but not Mizrahi identification—have similar but weaker associations with exceptionalism in the absence of victimhood beliefs.

Table D1. Regression predicting exceptionalism and victimhood beliefs

	Exceptionalism	Victimhood	Exceptionalism + victimhood	Exceptionalism - victimhood
Religiosity (secular)				
Traditional / moderate	.116***	.0237	.140***	.0928***
	(.017)	(.015)	(.025)	(.020)
Religious	.233***	.0738***	.306***	.159***
	(.021)	(.019)	(.031)	(.025)
Orthodox	.331***	.114***	.444***	.217***
	(.024)	(.021)	(.034)	(.028)
Political orientation (right)				
Moderate right	-.072***	-.021	-.093***	-.050*
	(.017)	(.0149)	(.0248)	(.0200)
Center				
	-.119***	-.054***	-.173***	-.064**
Moderate left	(.018)	(.016)	(.027)	(.022)
				`
Left	-.211***	-.070***	-.281***	-.141***
	(.022)	(.020)	(.033)	(.027)

Ethnic identity (Ashkenazi)				
Mizrahi	.041*	.013	.054*	.028
	(.016)	(.015)	(.024)	(.020)
Russian				
	-.051	-.021	-.072	-.030
Mixed	(.036)	(.032)	(.054)	(.043)
Other	-.002	.005	.003	-.007
	(.019)	(.017)	(.028)	(.023)
Male	.039**	.014	.053**	.026
	(.013)	(.011)	(.018)	(.015)
Age	.002***	.0003	.002**	.002**
	(.0005)	(.0004)	(.001)	(.001)
Education (no high school diploma)				
R has high school diploma	.066	.055	.121*	.011
	(.0384)	(.034)	(.056)	(.045)
R has at least some college education	.064	.036	.101	.028
	(.036)	(.032)	(.053)	(.043)
Married	-.010	.016	.006	-.026
	(.014)	(.012)	(.021)	(.017)
Region (Tel-Aviv)				
North	.073**	-.001	.072*	.074*
	(.025)	(.022)	(.036)	(.029)
Center	.027	-.010	.0164	.037
	(.018)	(.016)	(.027)	(.021)
Jerusalem	-.0223	-.017	-.040	-.005
	(.022)	(.020)	(.033)	(.026)
West Bank	-.014	.021	.007	-.035
	(.031)	(.028)	(.046)	(.037)
Haifa	.019	-.008	.011	.028
	(.024)	(.021)	(.035)	(.028)
South	.019	-.005	.014	.0244
	(.021)	(.019)	(.032)	(.025)
Constant	.486***	.803***	1.289***	-.318***
	(.048)	(.042)	(.070)	(.057)
Observations	1014	1014	1014	1014
R-squared	.414	.115	.378	.178
Adjusted R-squared	.401	.095	.364	.160

*** p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05