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# Authoritarianism, perceived threat and exclusionism on the eve of the Disengagement: Evidence from Gaza

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## ABSTRACT

Major political events such as terrorist attacks and forced relocation of citizens may have an immediate effect on attitudes towards ethnic minorities associated with these events. The psychological process that leads to political exclusionism of minority groups was examined using a field study among Israeli settlers in Gaza days prior to the Disengagement Plan adopted by the Israeli government on June 6, 2004 and enacted in August 2005. Lending credence to integrated threat theory and to theory on authoritarianism, our analyses show that the positive effect of religiosity on political exclusionism results from the two-staged mediation of authoritarianism and perceived threat. We conclude that religiosity fosters authoritarianism, which in turn tends to move people towards exclusionism both directly and through the mediation of perceived threat.

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## 1. Introduction

The study of ethnic exclusionism has been an important focus of social science investigation for much of the twentieth century. In recent decades exclusionism has become even more relevant to life in Western democratic societies, being a salient reaction to the changing structure of European societies and to the spread of terrorism (Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2004). Exclusionist political attitudes toward resident minority groups challenge fundamental principles of citizenship in democratic regimes. Nonetheless, empirical evidence shows that support for exclusionist attitudes is rather common in Western democracies such as the US (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 2002), European societies (Scheepers, Gijsberts, & Coenders, 2002), and Australia (Pedersen, Clarke, Dudgeon, & Griffiths, 2005). Likewise, in Israel given the dynamic of majority (Jews)–minority (Arabs) relationship, democratic values are often put to the test (Smootha, 2004; Tilly & Tarrow, 2006).

Although scholars from different disciplines have offered numerous explanations for exclusionist attitudes, their antecedents remain somewhat unclear. Nevertheless, few efforts have been made to integrate two pertinent bodies of literature: social-psychological studies on negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities and political scholarship on ethnic conflicts (Green & Seher, 2003). Heeding Green and Seher's (2003) argument, this study takes a political-psychological

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analytical look at the mechanisms underlying the formation of exclusionist attitudes in the context of real collective political threats—terrorism and violence and evacuation of Jewish Israeli Gaza settlers. In that unique “real-life” context we investigate how religiosity, threat perceptions, and authoritarianism bring about inter-group exclusionism.

Exclusionist political attitudes are among the most common examples of the non-democratic practices that can be so insidious. In its broader interpretation exclusionist attitudes reflect social phenomena indicating that a majority group members perceive minority groups as nonentities or undeserving (Opatow, 1990) and wish to limit their basic rights or public goods (Coenders & Scheepers, 2003). Coenders (2001, 67) distinguished between different types of ethnic exclusionism, “referring to different target out-groups, such as exclusionism of resident ethnic out-group members, exclusionism of immigrants, and exclusionism of political refugees.” Yet numerous studies have found parallels between social-psychological mechanisms underlying negative attitudes towards diverse out-groups (Canetti-Nisim, Ariely, & Halperin, 2008; Opatow, 1990; Shamir & Sagiv-Schifter, 2006). In this study, we specifically focus on attitudes towards granting equal civil and political rights to a resident minority group (Rajman & Semyonov, 2004; Scheepers et al., 2002; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004).

Democratic societies are challenged in times of collective traumatic events, particularly politically based ones (e.g., assassinations of political leaders; ceding of territories; major terror attacks; internal violent conflicts) (Hobfoll, Canetti-Nisim, & Johnson, 2006; Shamir & Sagiv-Schifter, 2006; Skitka et al., 2004). We opt to discover personal and group based mechanisms underlying the political attitudes of Israeli Jews living in Gaza towards Arabs—a resident ethnic minority, in such a traumatic context. The context was provided by the evacuation of Jewish Israelis from Gaza in the summer of 2005. From their perspective, this event, accompanied by ongoing terror attacks, had probably been experienced both as a personal and a collective trauma. From a social sciences scholarly perspective, this societal threat provided an opportunity to explore the psychological mechanisms underlying the formation and exacerbation of exclusionist attitudes in general and particularly in the context of politically based traumatic events.

### 1.1. Authoritarianism, perceived threat, and political exclusionism

The most common individual difference factor that has been identified as an antecedent of exclusionism is *authoritarianism*. Even before the end of WWII, social scientists had begun to identify and quantitatively measure the Fascist personality (see Maslow, 1943; Stagner, 1936). Research in this area was substantially advanced by Adorno and colleagues' theory on authoritarianism (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950, 1), which was rooted in Freudian ideas. They concluded that the authoritarian construct relates to a “potentially fascistic individual, one whose psychological structure is such as to render him particularly susceptible to anti-democratic propaganda.” As Altemeyer (1988) conceptualizes it, authoritarianism is a product of social learning that is comprised of several complementary traits—submission, aggression, and conventionalism.

*Perceived threat* is considered to be the single best group-level predictor of exclusionism and intolerance (Stephan & Stephan, 2001; Quillian, 1995). It gives expression to individuals' cognitive evaluation regarding the ways by which the out-group members interfere with the desires of the in-group to achieve the goals of their group (Fiske & Ruscher, 1993; Huddy, Feldman, Taber, & Lahav, 2005), and may bring about exclusionism as well as violent, destructive outcomes (Pettigrew, 2003; Staub, 1990). In other words, when the goals of the out-group are seen as negating fundamental in-group goals, in-group members feel threatened and therefore may harm the threatening group (Bar-Tal, 1990). Contemporary social-psychological theories such as integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 1996, 2001) have combined a variety of threat sources that prompt bigotry (Corenblum & Stephan, 2001). Among others, this theory distinguishes between realistic and symbolic threats. While realistic threat refers to potential harm to tangible or concrete objects (e.g., money, land, human life), symbolic threat includes various potential threats to relatively abstract aspects of the state, such as threats to the in-group's identity, value system, belief system, or worldview (e.g., language, religion, morality).

Studies carried out in America (Lambert & Chasteen, 1997; Quinton, Cowan, & Watson, 1996), Canada (Altemeyer, 1996, 1998), South Africa (Duckitt, 1993), and Israel (Canetti-Nisim & Pedahzur, 2003; Rubinstein, 1996) show that authoritarians tend to be highly exclusionist. Other studies have referred to the pivotal part threat perceptions play in creating negative attitudes and intolerance (Scheepers et al., 2002; Shamir & Sullivan, 1985; Stephan & Stephan, 2001; Sullivan et al., 1981). Acknowledging the pivotal role of both authoritarianism and threat perception in enhancing exclusionism, it is critical to understand how these two work together (Duckitt, 2006).

Three competing potential models can be portrayed based on the extant literature. According to the first, authoritarianism is a mediator between threat perception and exclusionism. This model is based on the crucial role that threat plays in the development of authoritarian views (Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1996; Fromm, 1941; Reich, 1946/1970). Empirical support for this model comes from archival studies showing that citizens exhibit heightened authoritarian attitudes and behavior during periods of social unrest (Doty, Peterson, & Winter, 1991; McCann, 1999; Sales, 1972, 1973), and from some individual-level experiments (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Sales & Friend, 1973). However, we find this model challenging, mainly because there is evidence that individual differences will affect temporary perceptions and not vice versa (Duckitt, 2001; McFarland, 2005).

According to the second model, perceived threat moderates the relationship between authoritarianism and exclusionism (Feldman, 2003; Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Lavine, Lodge, & Freitas, 2005). Several empirical studies support this activation-moderation model (Feldman, 2003; Feldman & Stenner 1997; Greenberg et al., 1990; Rickert, 1998). However, close

associations between threat perception and both authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1996, 1998) and exclusionism (Scheepers et al., 2002) violate Baron and Kenny's (1986) presumption that a moderation model is most appropriate when the moderator is uncorrelated with both the predictor and the outcome variable. It seems that this pattern of triangular correlations is more characteristic of a mediation model.

This leads to a third model where threat perception mediates the relationship between authoritarianism and exclusionism. Our preference for this model rests on several pillars. First is the claim made by integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2001) that perceived threat is a proximal junction that mediates the impact of some individual characteristics, among which is psychological authoritarianism, on ethnic exclusionism. Second is Duckitt's (2001, 2006) dual process model for the development of prejudice (see also Esses, Haddock, & Zanna, 1993). This model suggests that authoritarianism expresses threat-driven motivation to establish and maintain social or group security in the form of social control, order, cohesion, and stability. Consequently, individuals high in authoritarianism should dislike groups that seem to threaten societal or group security. Duckitt's findings support this model by demonstrating that threat perception fully mediates the relationship between authoritarianism and attitudes toward several threatening groups—rock stars, drug dealers, and feminists (Duckitt, 2006). In further support for this model in a context more similar to our study's, McFarland (2005) found that a week before the American attack on Iraq in 2003, the perception that Iraq threatened America fully mediated the relationship between authoritarianism and American students' support for the American attack on Iraq. However, the model has not been directly applied to the investigation of exclusionism in areas wracked with ongoing political conflict characterized by extreme violence.

### 1.2. *Religiosity, authoritarianism, and political exclusionism*

Religious intensity is often linked to exclusionism of ethnic minorities as well as to other non-democratic practices (e.g., Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Marquand & Nettle, 2001; Sachedina, 2001). Historically, the perceived inherent incompatibility between democratic political ideals and religious beliefs rested on the idea that religion is about absolutes and liberal-democratic politics was about compromise and tolerance; hence, expressing religious belief implied intolerance toward dissimilar beliefs. Beginning with Stouffer's (1955) seminal study, research has added further support to the link between religion and intolerance, extremism, and exclusionism. Interestingly, the extant literature shows that the specifics of the linkage have not been borne out (for a comprehensive review, see Eisenstein, 2006).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that controlling for authoritarianism while testing for the effects of religiosity on exclusionism tends to make this otherwise positive relationship either non-significant (e.g., Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Wylie & Forest, 1992) or negative (Laythe, Finkel, Bringle, & Kirkpatrick, 2002). Such findings lend support to the claims that authoritarianism should be introduced when testing relationships between religiosity and political exclusionism (Eisenstein, 2006). We submit that there may be three possible ways religiosity and authoritarianism jointly affect exclusionism, although there is a lack of studies *simultaneously* and structurally putting these to test.

According to the first model, authoritarianism fosters religiosity (Wylie & Forest, 1992), while religiosity increases exclusionism. Since authoritarianism stresses convention and obedience to authority, authoritarians may channel these qualities into their religious world, searching for ways to get closer to their authority figure or deity, as recognized in an early Israeli study (Weller, Levinbok, Maimon, & Shaham, 1975). In turn, these increased religious ties may result in increased exclusionism. However, for this model to hold true we would expect strong and consistent evidence – which does not exist – that religiosity directly fosters higher levels of exclusionism.

A second option is that authoritarianism moderates the relationship between religiosity and exclusionism. However, the evidence reviewed above for bivariate relationships between religiosity (the potential moderator) and both authoritarianism (the explanatory variable) and exclusionism (the outcome) makes a moderation model not highly plausible (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Nevertheless, due to the fog surrounding the religiosity–exclusionism link, and as we know of no structural study that has tested for the specified *interaction* effect, we explore this possibility in our study.

The above argument lead to a third model, which we prefer, following Altemeyer's (1996) contention that certain kinds of religious beliefs create authoritarian worldviews, which in turn induce exclusionist attitudes. Notwithstanding the numerous studies that show strong associations between religiosity and authoritarianism – whether in Christianity (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Gregory, 1957; Leak & Randall, 1995) or in Judaism (Rubinstein, 1996, 1997) – and a strong relationship between authoritarianism and political intolerance or exclusionism (Altemeyer, 1998; Duckitt & Farre, 1994; Feldman, 2003; McFarland et al., 1992), the direct impact of religiosity on exclusionist political attitudes is *still* unresolved (Eisenstein, 2006). These relationships have not been structurally tested, yet this model gained some support in a recent Israeli study (Canetti-Nisim, 2004).

### 1.3. *The integrative model and hypotheses*

The integration of the two separate mediating models leads us to a more comprehensive model of political exclusionism, presented in Fig. 1. Similar models have been tested by Sullivan et al. (1981) and Eisenstein (2006). However, we believe that both these studies have underestimated the mediating role of perceived threat in the formation of exclusionism. Sullivan et al. (1981) failed to find perceived threat as a mediator between psychological security (a combined factor which included a measure of authoritarianism) and political intolerance, even though they expected such a relationship. Eisenstein (2006) did

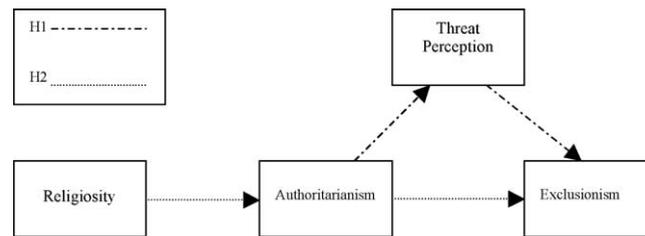


Fig. 1. The hypothesized relationships.

not even test such a mediation effect, even though she included perceived threat in her model. Yet, based on the assumptions made by [Stephan and Stephan \(2001\)](#) and evidence presented by [Duckitt \(2006\)](#) in support of his dual process model, we believe this mediation effect does exist and constitutes an important link in the causal chain leading to exclusionism.

Thus, we hypothesize first (*H1*) that authoritarianism is positively related to threat perception, which is in turn positively related to exclusionism. Second, we hypothesize (*H2*) that religiosity is positively related to authoritarianism, which is in turn positively related to exclusionism.

#### 1.4. The context of the study: political evacuation and exclusionism

The 1967 6-Day War resulted in complete Israeli control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and over a large Arab–Palestinian population ([Frisch & Sandler, 2004](#)). After 36 years of Israeli occupation, former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon first announced the Disengagement Plan on December 18, 2003. The camp of the religious right undertook acts of rigorous resistance ([Newman, 2005](#)). Despite massive controversy, the 2005 Disengagement Plan Implementation Act (‘the Disengagement Act’) was approved by Parliament on February 16, 2005. To reduce friction with the Palestinian population, it called for evacuation of the Gaza Strip and an area in the Northern West Bank including all existing Israeli towns and villages.

Residents of the evacuated settlements were of a rather diverse nature; ideological-religious and secular families seeking a better quality of life had jointly settled in the Gaza Strip ([Sheleg, 2003](#)). They shared concerns about security (e.g., terrorist attacks and rockets) and about the imminent evacuation. However, their attitudes, feelings, and perceptions regarding the evacuation varied ([Tsfati & Cohen, 2005](#)). For the religious people, concerns about security and family future were augmented by religious ones, due to their belief that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had betrayed the biblical commandment of settlement. These concerns were less relevant for the secular settlers. This difference translated into different behavioral responses to the Disengagement: while most secular residents willingly evacuated their homes without confrontation, many religious ones were forcibly dragged out by the security forces. Our representative sample of the Gaza settlers facilitated a field study of the roots of political exclusionism towards Arabs, who in the face of the political turmoil have been perceived to be a primary and an immediate source of political threat.

Perceptions of political threat and contention are part and parcel of the Israeli–Arab conflict. Under the unique circumstances of the ongoing conflict, Arabs – who constitute one-fifth of the Israeli population ([Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006](#)), are perceived as a hostile minority with national, religious, and cultural ties to the “enemy” – the Arab world. They are often believed to be supportive of subversive activity ([Smootha, 2004](#)). They are perceived to be a threat to the Jewish and democratic values of Israel, and the potential growth of their population is a constant source of political dispute ([Schueftan, 2007](#)). They are not assimilated into Israeli culture and, in the minds of many non-Arab Israelis, are a remote out-group ([Smootha, 2004](#)). With the nature of their inclusion in Israeli society a matter of perpetual debate, they are formally and informally discriminated against (see [Shafir & Peled, 2002](#)). Israel’s ethno-national character as a Jewish state, the ongoing Arab–Israeli conflict and the complex relations between Jews (particularly settlers) and Arabs have turned Israel into a laboratory conducive to the study of the exclusionist attitudes towards minorities ([Rajiman & Semyonov, 2004](#)).

## 2. The current study: the Disengagement survey

During August 2005 we used a random sampling of land lines to obtain a representative sample of our target group. Interviews were conducted by an experienced, computerized survey institute in Israel using trained telephone-survey interviewers. Our study design called for a target population of adult (18+) Jewish settlers prior to the Disengagement. This sampling procedure led to a total sample which represents these Jewish Israeli settlers. The overall response rate was 41 percent and the cooperation rate was 50 percent. A total of 190 interviews were completed and analysed.<sup>1</sup>

The sample consisted of 44.44 percent men and 55.56 percent women with mean age of 37 ( $SD = 13.33$ ). Three-quarters were married with children while 42.9 percent had more than five children. The Gaza Strip settlers differed from general

<sup>1</sup> This means that we interviewed 1.8 out of 10 adult settlers who were eligible for this survey, as compared to a common ratio of less than 0.3 out of 10. This rate compared favorably with studies in the US, especially since the dialing methods in Israel, unlike in the US, include business phones that must then be treated as failed attempts ([Galea et al., 2002](#)).

**Table 1**  
Descriptive statistics, reliabilities and intercorrelations.

	Mean (SD)	Religiosity	Authoritarianism	Threat perception	Exclusionist political attitudes (EPA)
Religiosity	2.63 (.66)				
Authoritarianism	3.93 (.81)	.42*	(.60)		
Threat perception	4.98 (1.38)	.20*	.34*	(.88)	
Exclusionist political attitudes (EPA)	4.71 (1.23)	.28*	.43*	.64*	(.71)
Political standing (Dovish)					

\*  $p < .001$ .

Israeli society, in which there is a certain correspondence between education, income, religiosity, and political ideology (Swirski, 1995). Compared to the general Israeli population, the Gaza Strip population was, on the one hand, highly educated – 68.4 percent of the participants reported post-secondary education – along with income levels that are similar to a general cross-section of the Israeli public: 38.4 percent reported a monthly income below the average; 25 percent, average income; and 36.6 percent, above average. Yet, 85.1 percent defined themselves as “right wing,” or “extreme right wing,” and 68.5 percent defined themselves as religious.

We used a structured questionnaire drawn from several measures that was completed by most participants in approximately 20 min. Scales items were answered on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). For the analysis, reversed items were reversed and scales were computed by calculation of the average of all items (see Appendix A). Cronbach's alphas for the various measured in the current study are presented in Table 1.

### 2.1. Exclusionist attitudes

Four items were adapted from Scheepers et al.'s (2002) scale, which integrated an ensemble of socio-political domains, altogether tapping beliefs regarding the required public policy directed at specific minority groups (see also Canetti-Nisim et al., 2008). The scale has been found to have broad, cross-cultural applicability across 22 European countries (with a pooled Cronbach's alpha of .70 across countries). We used an adjusted version of that scale to examine exclusionism toward Arabs.

### 2.2. Authoritarianism

The abbreviated 10-item McFarland (2001) scale was adapted from Altemeyer (1996). It has been found to have good reliability and validity (McFarland, 2001, 2005)<sup>2</sup>, with a correlation of above .90 with the full, 30-item scale and alphas of .78–.79. In addition, two separate factor analyses confirmed that the scale was empirically distinct from the other scales in our study. Even though Altemeyer (1988) has conceptualized authoritarianism as three-dimensional (the three dimensions being authoritarian submission, conventionalism and authoritarian aggression), he failed to clearly ascribe different items in his scale to different dimensions (Altemeyer, 1996). Relying on his work, we measured authoritarianism in the current study as one dimension.

### 2.3. Threat perception

We used a three-item scale that is often used in Israel (e.g., Sullivan et al., 1985) and taps three dimensions of threat perception toward Arabs: security, democracy, and nationality. Following the rationale presented in the integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2001) the scale combines realistic (e.g., security threat) and symbolic (e.g., threat to the Jewish character of the state) aspects of perceived threat. This scale has been found to be substantially related to theoretically relevant variables, such as political intolerance and actual terrorism levels (Sagiv-Shifter & Shamir, 2002; Shamir & Sagiv-Shifter, 2006). As in this study, this scale has demonstrated good reliability in previous studies ( $\alpha = .86$ –.90 in Hirsch-Hoefler & Halperin, 2006;  $\alpha = .74$ –.88 in Halperin, Canetti-Nisim, & Hirsch-Hoefler, 2009).<sup>3</sup>

### 2.4. Religiosity

This item, which was asserted to be the best single measure of personal piety (Stark & Glock, 1968), taps the extent to which people rate their depth of religiosity (1 = secular, 2 = traditional, 3 = religious, 4 = very religious). It is often used as an outstanding measure of religious devoutness in the US (Cohen et al., 2003), and in Israel, and has been found to be highly

<sup>2</sup> Although above the cut-off point (Krosnick & Fabrigar, 2001), internal reliability in the current study ( $\alpha = .60$ ) was modest. Following the removal of various items, internal consistency scores were largely unchanged. While keeping in mind the sensitive nature of the items and the group under study, and consistent with McFarland's (2001) work, we have decided to retain the scale. We used item-rest correlations and none of them obtained item-rest-of-test values lower than accepted. Moreover, preliminary analyses showed adequate external validity.

<sup>3</sup> Given (common) close association of threat perception and exclusionism ( $r = .64$ ,  $p < .001$ ), we confirmed that the two scales represent two separate constructs in two ways: (1) using a factor analysis; (2) we examined the path between threat perception and exclusionism first without constraint, then with a constraint set to one, which resulted in a significant change ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 97.84$ ,  $\Delta d.f. = 1$ ).

related ( $r = .56$ ) to Jewish religiosity indices (Canetti-Nisim, 2004). The remaining variables, education, age, income, and political orientation, are standard demographic variables (exact wording is available upon request from the authors).

In a two-step process, our hypotheses were assessed via path analysis with AMOS V (Arbuckle, 2003).<sup>4</sup> The first step was designed to *independently* test the hypotheses: we constructed three models for each hypothesis (see Appendix B). Based on the hypotheses and the analyses in step one, in the second step we tested an integrated model (Model 1) which allows simultaneous testing of both hypotheses while controlling for all factors (Fig. 1). We also allowed for correlations among exogenous variables. To assess the net effect of the constructs of our model, equations were controlled for educational attainment, income, age, and political orientation. Based on Model 1 and following Baron and Kenny's (1986) propositions on mediation, and Kline's (1999) on nested models, we constructed three additional models, each includes additional direct paths: the effect of religiosity on threat perception (Model 2); the effect of religiosity on exclusionism (Model 3); and the effects of religion on threat perception and exclusionism (Model 4).

### 3. Testing the hypotheses

Mean scores and standard deviations of the variables are presented in Table 1. A comparison of exclusionism and perceived threat levels with those measured among Gaza settlers in a survey we conducted on May 2005 reveals somewhat higher levels in the current sample (exclusionism:  $M = 4.71$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ; perceived threat:  $M = 4.98$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) than in the previous survey (exclusionism:  $M = 4.58$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ; perceived threat:  $M = 4.43$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ); for more information about the survey, see Hirsch-Hoefler & Halperin, 2006). In addition, authoritarianism levels in the current survey ( $M = 3.93$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ) were somewhat higher than those recently found in a survey among Jewish adults in Israel ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ); for more information about the survey see Hobfoll et al., 2006). Further scrutiny of responses for the perceived threat items shows that numerous respondents believed that Arabs are a threat to the Jewish character of Israel ( $M = 5.25$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ), its security ( $M = 4.99$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ), and its democracy ( $M = 4.71$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ ). Correlations between main research variables were highly significant and in the expected direction. Analysis of variance showed significant differences between high and low exclusionists; highs were more threatened by Arabs ( $t = 8.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and were more authoritarian ( $t = 4.91$ ,  $p < .001$ ), younger ( $t = -3.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ), more religious ( $t = 2.74$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and generally hawkish ( $t = -2.61$ ,  $p < .05$ ) respondents.

#### 3.1. Step one

Testing of H1 by means of Model 1a resulted in the following figures:  $\chi^2 = 15.71$ , d.f. = 1; NFI = .88; RMSEA = .27. Authoritarianism had a significant effect on threat perception ( $\beta = .35$ ), which in turn had a strong effect on exclusionism ( $\beta = .64$ ), and  $R^2 = .41$ . Testing of the alternative mediation model – Model 1b – showed that:  $\chi^2 = 76.41$ , d.f. = 1; NFI = .44; RMSEA = .63; threat perception had a significant effect on authoritarianism ( $\beta = .34$ ), which in turn had a strong effect on exclusionism ( $\beta = .43$ ), and  $R^2 = .18$ . Model 1c showed *completely unacceptable* fit and misfit measures.

Testing of H2 by means of Model 2a resulted in the following figures:  $\chi^2 = 2.45$ , d.f. = 1; NFI = .96; RMSEA = .08; religiosity had a significant effect on authoritarianism ( $\beta = .43$ ), which in turn had a strong effect on exclusionism ( $\beta = .43$ ), and  $R^2 = .18$ . Testing of Model 2b showed that:  $\chi^2 = 25.23$ , d.f. = 1; NFI = .67; RMSEA = .35; authoritarianism had a significant effect on religiosity ( $\beta = .43$ ), which in turn had an effect on exclusionism ( $\beta = .28$ ), and  $R^2 = .08$ . The testing of an alternative moderation model – Model 2c – showed that the fit and misfit measures were *completely unacceptable*. To summarize, as predicted by H1 and H2, evaluation criteria have led to the selection of Model 1a and 2a as preferred models.

Despite the unique circumstances of our case study, our model has merit outside this specific context. We tested whether these findings would still hold when controlling for the possible threat of Disengagement implementation. To this end we used two items, answered on a 4-point scale ranging from “not at all” (0) to “extremely” (3): “When something reminds you of the Disengagement, to what extent do you feel anxious and tense?” and “During the last month, to what extent have you felt as if your future somehow will be cut-short?” We used Baron and Kenny's (1986) recommendations for testing mediation and moderation via regression analyses. We added the “Disengagement threat” variable as a predictor in all equations, and compared the plausibility of the models pertaining to each hypothesis (H1, H2). Consistent with our expectations, results were essentially unchanged; model 1a still gained more support than models 1b and 1c, and model 2a still gained more support than models 2b and 2c. Put differently, our findings provide evidence that Arab-related threat perceptions and exclusionism were not biased by the introduction of a “competing” threat of imminent Disengagement.

To assess the generalizability of the findings beyond the designated sample, we used two independent nationwide samples of Jewish adults surveyed in April ( $N = 792$ ) and October 2006 ( $N = 509$ ). Based on Baron and Kenny's (1986) recommendations, we compared the plausibility of the models pertaining to each hypothesis (H1, H2). In both cases, despite

<sup>4</sup> The usual approach is to estimate structural relationships among latent variables that are free of measurement errors. In our study, the multi-item scales were treated as single indicators of each construct because of the large number (22 observed variables) relative to the size of the sample and to the structural theoretical parameters (2–4). In accordance with standard representation, we depicted the observed variables as rectangles. For simplification, error terms and covariance between exogenous variables were omitted from the figure. The fit of the models was assessed by means of four criteria: (1) fit measures (in addition to the traditional  $\chi^2$ , based on Hu and Bentler (1999), we prefer to report the NFI in combination with RMSEA); (2) comparisons of nested models (Bollen, 1989) based on the difference in  $\chi^2$ ; (3) the magnitude and direction of the path coefficients including Sobel tests for indirect effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2004); and (4) explained variance. Finally, a covariance matrix among the research variables formed the input for the path analysis.

**Table 2**  
A comparison of the theoretical model to three alternative models.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
$\chi^2$	1.34	1.32	.02	.00
d.f.	2	1	1	0
<i>p</i>	.51	.25	.88	
NFI	.99	.99	1.00	1.00
RMSEA	.00	.04	.00	.00
AIC	85.34	87.32	86.02	88
Comparison of Model 1 to Models 2–4		$\Delta\chi^2 = .02, \Delta d.f. = 1, p = .87$	$\Delta\chi^2 = 1.65, \Delta d.f. = 1, p = .19$	$\Delta\chi^2 = 1.67, \Delta d.f. = 2, p = .43$

Note: NFI, normed fit index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation; AIC, Akaike Information Criteria.

dissimilar contexts, our findings were essentially replicated; model 1a gained more support than models 1b and 1c, and model 2a gained more support than models 2b and 2c. Israelis are constantly exposed to competing sources of threat, primarily since the outbreak of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*. Although the Disengagement process has apparently sharpened the relationships within the model and slightly increased their magnitude, these evidence leads us to believe that the examined model is applicable to explaining negative attitudes in a wide range of societies living under moderate or extreme threat.

3.2. Step two

This stage was designed to select the befitted model while *simultaneously* testing for H1 and H2. While fit indices for all models were almost identical and well within the cutoff criteria, the chi-square scores were compared across nested models, using the chi-square difference test (Kline, 1999) (see Table 2). Comparison of our model with the alternative models showed that *none* resulted in significant improvements. Additionally, a comparison of the AIC suggested that the preferred model is Model 1. Model 1 is thus preferable because of its partially superior fit measures but mainly because none of the more cumbersome alternatives demonstrate an improvement to this parsimonious model.

Fig. 2 presents maximum likelihood standardized estimates and explained variances – with controls and without them – for the paths between the main constructs of Model 1. Table 3 presents the effects of the control variables. The overall results were unchanged by the inclusion of socio-demographic indicators.

In line with the first hypothesis comparing the absolute values of the standardized coefficients, above and beyond all other effects, threat perception was the primary positive predictor of exclusionism ( $\beta = .51, p \leq .001$ ). The strongest effect on threat perception was that of authoritarianism ( $\beta = .29, p \leq .001$ ). Further calculation using the Sobel test (1982) for mediation shows that the indirect effect of authoritarianism on exclusionism via threat perception was powerful ( $.15 = .29 \times .51$ ) and highly significant (4.43;  $p \leq .000$ ).

In line with the second hypothesis, comparing the absolute values of the standardized coefficients, above and beyond all other effects, authoritarianism was among the best predictors of exclusionism ( $\beta = .22, p \leq .001$ ), second only to threat perception. Of the factors affecting authoritarianism, religiosity was undoubtedly the strongest ( $\beta = .43, p \leq .001$ ). Further calculation shows that religiosity had an indirect effect on exclusionism via authoritarianism ( $.09 = .22 \times .43$ ) which was highly significant (3.97,  $p \leq .000$ ).

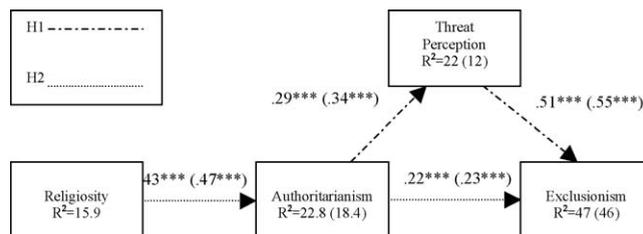


Fig. 2. Maximum likelihood standardized coefficients and explained variances—controlled (and uncontrolled) model 1.

**Table 3**  
Maximum likelihood estimates for control variables (model 1).

	Religiosity	Authoritarianism	Threat perception	Exclusionist political attitudes (EPA)
Education	.21**	-.19**	-.05	-.05
Income	.01	-.09	-.09	-.02
Age	-.02	-.01	-.17*	-.04
Political standing (Dovish)	-.34***	.00	-.21**	-.10

\*  $p < .05$ .  
\*\*  $p < .01$ .  
\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Looking at the integrative model, it is evident that authoritarianism plays a focal role in predicting exclusionism, with a total effect of .37. Yet it does so both directly and indirectly via perceived political threat. Also, threat is a highly valuable predictor of exclusionism (.51). Religiosity is neither directly related to threat perception nor to exclusionism; nonetheless, it is a notable predictor of authoritarianism (.43) and an indirect (.12 = .29 × .43) and significant predictor of threat (3.40,  $p \leq .000$ ). High levels of religiosity make people more likely to be authoritarian, which in turn facilitate high levels of exclusionist attitudes – with and without the mediation of threat perception.

#### 4. General discussion and conclusion

Advocates of democracy agree that exclusionism may be a two-edged sword, as it entails injustice in both the moral values of the exclusionist and in the daily life of the excluded group. We have examined the impact of individual (e.g., religiosity, authoritarianism) and group-based (perceived threat) mechanisms underlying exclusionist attitudes toward Arabs in Israel, as reported by a representative sample of Gaza settlers during their evacuation. From the analysis reported herein, we conclude the following.

Perceived threat has a key direct impact on individuals' support for political exclusionism. In line with our expectations, the effect of authoritarianism on exclusionism was mediated through perceptions of threat. Our findings lend support to plentiful psychological and political studies. The finding that authoritarianism leads to high levels of perceived threat is consistent with evidence that authoritarianism is linked to greater sensitivity to threat (Lavine, Lodge, Polichak, & Taber, 2002). Perceived threat leads to high levels of exclusionism as in studies demonstrating the centrality of perceived threat in explaining exclusionism (Bar-Tal, 1990; Halperin et al., 2007; Sullivan et al., 1981). Looking at the triangular relationship in question, our findings bare likeness to the results reported by Huddy et al. (2005) on the joint role played by authoritarianism and perceived threat in predicting negative attitudes towards Muslims in the US following 9/11. By and large, Huddy et al.'s (2005) complex findings indicate both direct and indirect affects of authoritarianism on political exclusionism. Authoritarians are consistently supportive of restrictive immigration policies and hold more negative stereotypes of Arabs than nonauthoritarians.

Our findings also grant particular support to the proposed hypotheses of Sullivan et al. (1981) on the effect of psychological insecurity on political threat, which they posited would, in turn, facilitate intolerance. The confirmation of this mediation effect also adds an important link to Eisenstein's (2006) model of the relationship between religiosity and tolerance. Moreover, our results are quite consistent with Duckitt's rarely tested dual-process model of the mechanisms underlying the impact of authoritarianism on bigotry toward minority groups via perceived threat (Duckitt, 2006). Finally, they add weight to the theoretical arguments proposed in Integrated Threat Theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2001), according to which threat perception mediates the impact of various individual variables (including authoritarianism) on negative attitudes towards out-groups. Nevertheless, the effect of authoritarianism on exclusionism is only partially mediated by perception of threat; hence some of the effect is either direct or perhaps mediated by other factors beyond the scope of this study (see below).

As predicted, authoritarianism mediated the impact of religiosity on exclusionism. Religiosity had no affect on exclusionism whatsoever, other than via authoritarianism. This finding lends credence to evidence of the pivotal role played by authoritarianism as a predictor of exclusionism (e.g. Adorno et al., 1950; Duckitt & Farre, 1994). As is often the case, when authoritarianism is taken into account, the effect of religiosity is nullified or reversed (e.g., Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Canetti-Nisim, 2004; Laythe et al., 2002). This findings also lend credence to William James' (1902/1958) observation that tolerance is best predicted not by religiosity itself, but by how resolutely people hold to their religious beliefs.

The proposed model accounts for three important factors, not often considered jointly and structurally in the study of exclusionism. Our model suggests that when facing a politically based traumatic event, individuals' religiosity is related to increasing levels of authoritarianism. This authoritarianism, in turn, tends to result in their perceiving these events and the immediate out-groups as highly threatening. Threat, in the next step, increases the expression of willingness to curtail the civil and political rights of minorities immediately associated with the sources of threat.

Perception of an existential threat can provide the ultimate catalyst for societies to withdraw from basic norms of democracy and support anti-minority policy (Bar-Tal, 1990; Pettigrew, 2003). To establish this argument, however, we need to broaden our perspective to other divided societies with intergroup conflicts (e.g., India, Iraq) where religion plays an important role (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005). Indeed, that claim is supported by recent findings from the Iraqi arena, in which a highly existential threat promotes hostility not only toward rival groups but also toward out-groups such as women and homosexuals (Inglehart, Mansoor, & Tessler, 2006).

We believe that this study contributes to the small body of research, which is mostly based on intergroup conflict theories. The research uses these contributory explanations to exclusionism to further our understanding of real-world socio-political threats. Moreover, our study helps explain the processes underlying religion-based conflict and violence that springs up around the globe. Notable examples are the reactions of Muslims in Pakistan (*International Herald Tribune*, 2006a) and Christians as well as Muslims in Nigeria (*International Herald Tribune*, 2006b) who slaughtered fellow citizens following the Danish cartoon affair. Arguing that religion simply facilitates political exclusionism is often a superficial simplification of a complex story. The more nuanced, integrative model presented in this study sheds light on the destructive mechanism that bridges religiosity and exclusionism.

Future studies may extend our model by examining additional related factors. For example, social dominance orientation (SDO; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) may be of relevance, as out-groups perceived to be threatening are often also subordinated groups which may challenge the domestic or international power hierarchy (see McFarland, 2005). In addition, a more

nuanced understanding of religiosity's role in the processes leading to exclusionism may be advanced by distinguishing between different religious orientations (e.g., intrinsic vs. extrinsic; Allport & Ross, 1967; committed vs. consensual, Allen & Spilka, 1967; fundamentalism vs. quest, Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992). For example, as religious quest orientation has been found to be *negatively* related to authoritarianism and prejudice (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992), we would expect it to have the opposite role to the one found in this study. Finally, a more nuanced understanding of the role of authoritarianism in these processes may be achieved by testing the model using a three-dimensional measure of authoritarianism. This has been recently done by Passini (2008), who found that only authoritarian aggression (but not authoritarian submission and conventionalism) was related to moral exclusion of out-group members.

Our correlative design and the focused sample have clear limitations. Yet, they also present an important opportunity. On the one hand, this is not a representative sample of Israeli adults, so the specific results presented here may not be generalized to a broader population and context. This concern did not go unheard however; we report additional analyses indicating that the threat of Disengagement was clearly an *insignificant* factor in facilitating exclusionist political attitudes towards Arabs. Also, the results are in line with those among the general Jewish population. We thus assert that the suggested dynamics are rather stable across different samples and contexts in Israel. Yet the historical and cultural specificity of the threats under examination should be taken into account and further cross-cultural replication attempts are called for. Our measure of authoritarianism also had borderline internal homogeneity. This may in part be due to our studying a sample that has marked variability in education levels. It also reflects that some items are tied to religiosity and do not demarcate an authoritarian personality per se. As we control for religiosity in analyses this should not however be a problem.

On the other hand, our sample is an adequate one with which to explore the central dynamics of exclusionism. The Disengagement evacuation and ongoing terrorism generated a threatening context for the settlers (Hobfoll et al., 2006; Newman, 2005) that would be hard to replicate in an experiment. Hence, such a sample in such a “laboratory” facilitates comparison with other cases of political conflict in segmented societies.

In contemporary society, where actual terror and the threat of terror as well as the relocation of ethnic groups in the Western (and non-Western) world are not uncommon, the need for this type of multifaceted research becomes all the more imperative. The current study highlights an important societal and political problem plaguing many contemporary societies: mass endorsement of the curtailment of the political rights of resident minorities. It adds another layer to the wide-ranging field of ethnic conflict and intergroup conflict. This issue is not specific to time and location. In an era wracked with violence and discord, the study of both individual and group-based antecedents of political exclusionist attitudes is essential for scholars and public officials seeking to understand and reduce intra-societal conflict.

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## Appendix A

### *Political exclusionist attitudes*

Arabs should not be allowed equal social rights as Jews.

Arabs should not be permitted to bring their families to Israel.

All Arabs should leave the state of Israel.

Arabs that are disloyal to the state of Israel must be deprived of their citizenship.

### *Authoritarianism*

There is no “one right way” to live life; everybody has to create their own way.\*

Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children can learn.

Israel needs free thinkers who will have the courage to defy traditional ways, even if this upsets many people.\*

The only way our country can get through the crisis ahead is to get back to our traditional values, put some tough leaders in power, and silence the troublemakers spreading bad ideas.

There are many radical, immoral people in our country, who are trying to ruin it for their own godless purpose, whom the authorities should put out of action.

Our country will be destroyed if we do not smash the perversions eating away at our moral fiber and traditional beliefs.

Everyone should have their own lifestyle, religious beliefs, and sexual preferences, even if it makes them different from everyone else.\*

Homosexuals and feminists should be praised for being brave enough to defy “traditional family values.”\*\*

There is nothing wrong with premarital sexual intercourse.\*  
 What our country really needs, instead of more “civil rights,” is a good stiff dose of law and order.

*Threat Perception*

Arabs are dangerous to the security of Israel.  
 Arabs are dangerous to democracy in Israel.  
 Arabs are dangerous to the Jewish character of Israel.

\*Reversed items

**Appendix B**

See Appendix Figs. A.1 and A.2.

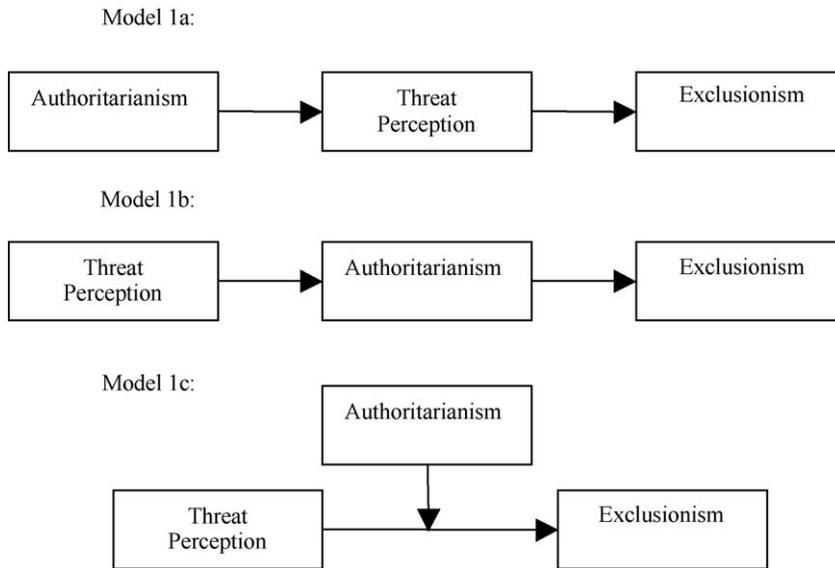


Fig. 3. Models for authoritarianism, threat perception and exclusionism.

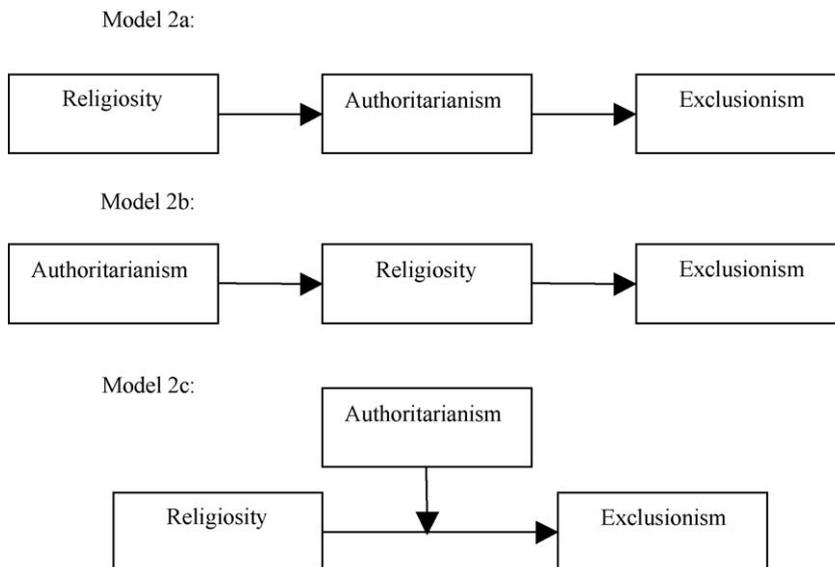


Fig. 4. Model for religiosity, authoritarianism and exclusionism.

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