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Infiltrators or Asylum Seekers? Framing and Attitudes Toward Asylum Seekers in Israel

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This study asks whether framing asylum seekers in Israel as “infiltrators” posing threats to the country amplifies exclusion toward them. The term “infiltrators” associates asylum seekers with the antiinfiltration law passed in the 1950s to fight terrorists and dissociates asylum seekers from their unique position as holders of special rights. The term “infiltrators” may thus influence the attitudes of the Israeli public regarding the treatment of asylum seekers. Findings demonstrate that respondents presented with the “infiltrators” frame were more likely to show exclusionary attitudes. Findings additionally show that the framing effect mediates the relation between perceived socioeconomic threat and exclusion.

KEYWORDS Asylum-seekers, Israel, framing, socioeconomic threat, exclusion

In the past two decades, researchers have made considerable progress toward understanding the underlying processes that form attitudes toward foreigners. We now know of sociocultural, national, socioeconomic, and psychological mechanisms that successfully account for attitudinal differences among in-group members regarding out-group members (e.g., Davidov & Meuleman, 2012; Nickerson & Louis, 2008). One of the fundamental questions that remains undecided regarding processes of attitude formation is the extent to which attitudes are inherent to individuals or shaped by a collective definition of intergroup relations that is defined by elites (e.g, Blumer, 1958; Zaller, 1992).

In recent years, interest has grown in this collective definition of the intergroup setting and its consequences for attitude formation. Accordingly, some studies show evidence for an association between the rise of ex-

treme right-wing political parties, or normative acceptance of exclusionary views, and negative attitudes toward immigrants (Oyamot, Fisher, Deason, & Borgida, 2012). Other studies associate the emergence of negative attitudes toward foreigners with the framing of immigration-related issues (e.g., Augoustinos & Quinn, 2003; Knoll, Redlawsk, & Sanborn, 2010; Louis, Duck, Terry, Schuller, & Lalonde, 2007). These accounts rely on the concept of framing effects (Gamson, 1992; Gitlin, 1980, Goffman, 1974) and propose that the formulation of the message delivered to the public on the issue of immigration shapes the way the public thinks about this issue.

The association between framing and attitudes is based on the assertion that the majority of individuals lack information about most issues surrounding their lives. Thus in order to develop opinions on such issues, they rely on frames provided by people they perceive to be knowledgeable (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2001). The effect of framing on attitudes may thus serve as a reliable indicator for the association between the collective definition of the intergroup context and attitude formation. If framing effects account for differences in attitudes toward foreigners, we can assume that the values and meanings embedded in the collective definition of the intergroup setting influence the formation of individual attitudes.

In the absence of such a framing effect, we cannot assume such an association and should resort to an instrumental explanation for the formation of negative sentiments toward foreigners. The instrumental explanations are accounted for in this study using indicators for perceived symbolic and socioeconomic threats. The model therefore allows for both direct and indirect effects of the framing on exclusionary attitudes.

The setting selected for this study is the State of Israel. On one hand, the case of Israel is unique, due to the dominant ethnonational component of Israel's self-definition and its geopolitical realities. On the other hand, Israel's position regarding the challenge of asylum seekers is similar to that of other developed societies that face this challenge. The motivations for Israel's exclusionist policy toward asylum seekers and some of the practices used to pursue this policy may appear to be somewhat different from other countries. However, exclusionist policies toward asylum seekers and the use of negative framing to legitimize these policies is not unique to Israel (e.g., Innes, 2010; McKay, Thomas, & Kneebone, 2011). The theoretical question of the relationship between a hostile public atmosphere and public attitudes, therefore, has consequences beyond the Israeli case.

THE ISRAELI SETTING

Israel has served and still serves as a destination country for Jewish immigrants, based on an ethnonational membership principle according to which all Jews have the right to become Israeli citizens (Raijman & Hochman, 2011).

Until recently, this principle did not pose a challenge to the state's "immigrant friendly" disposition. Non-Jewish migrants were a minority among migrants in Israel and were only seldom accepted as residents, let alone citizens, subject to the authority of the Ministry of the Interior. Since the late 1980s, the composition of migrants in Israel has changed dramatically, with increasing numbers of non-Jewish migrants arriving to the country. In January 2014, the number of non-Jewish migrants in Israel was estimated by the Population and Immigration Authority (PIBA) at approximately 232,700 individuals (PIBA, 2014), comprising about 3% of the entire population of Israel (based on data from PIBA and Israeli Bureau of Statistics).

According to the PIBA (2014), most of the non-Jewish immigrants in Israel today are individuals overstaying their tourist visa without permission (93,000 persons). The second largest group is labor migrants holding a temporary visa (about 71,352).¹ Research on public attitudes toward labor migrants (legal and illegal) in Israel report attitudes to be moderately negative (e.g., Pedahzur & Yishai, 1999; Rajman, 2013). In line with theories of intergroup relations (Blalock, 1967; Quillian, 1995; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), the main mechanisms associated with these negative views are perceptions of economic and symbolic threats, negative stereotypes associated with crime and other problems, and diseases.

A third group of non-Jewish migrants arriving into Israel is African asylum seekers.² The vast majority of asylum seekers in Israel are from Eritrea or the Republic of Sudan. Before 2006, their arrival occupied a rather peripheral place in the public discourse, mostly due to their small number, less than 3,000 individuals. By late 2013, some 52,961 citizens of African countries were residing in Israel, making this group more visible and dominant on the public agenda (PIBA, 2014).

One can identify two main periods in the development of Israeli policy toward African asylum seekers. In the first period, between 2002 and 2006, UNHCR (the United Nations Refugee Agency) was authorized to make recommendations regarding asylum applicants, which were later considered by an interministerial committee in the Knesset. Individuals whose applications were under consideration received a protection letter from the UNHCR and a work permit. Applicants who were approved received the status of temporary resident. Sudanese individuals entering Israel during this period were exempt from this procedure because the Republic of Sudan is considered to be an enemy state to Israel. Sudanese individuals were instead detained and released after a short period without further special reporting restrictions.

In the second period in the development of Israel's policy toward asylum seekers, beginning in 2006-2007, the number of asylum seekers entering the country greatly increased, with over 5,000 entering in 2007 and over 17,000 entering in 2011. The large flow of migrants overwhelmed policy makers, who responded at first with a series of ad hoc steps, sometimes delivering a contradictory message (Paz, 2011). For example, in 2007 Israel issued tempo-

rary residence status to some 500 Sudanese from Darfur, as a demonstration of tolerance and in recognition of their needs as asylum seekers. Some 2,000 Eritreans received a work permit, which is usually granted to temporary labor migrants.

At the same time, restrictive policies were also under way. For example, the government expanded the use of detention to subjects of different countries (not only Sudanese). Individuals released from detention were granted a conditional release visa that provided them immunity from deportation but no other rights.³ In addition, Israel pursued a practice of “hot return” at the border with Egypt, forcibly returning asylum seekers to Egypt immediately after they crossed the border and denying them the right to file an asylum request. Another policy initiative implemented in the second period was the “Hadera-Gedera” provision, which designated certain geographical areas as “asylum seekers-free,” meaning that asylum seekers were prohibited from residing or working there.

Eventually, both provisions were cancelled, following petitions to the Supreme Court and public pressure placed on policy makers by human rights organizations, parliament members, and others.⁴ Indeed, since 2006 a refugee sector has emerged in Israel that provides services for asylum seekers in Israel (Yaron, Hashimshony-Yaffe, & Campbell, 2013) and also serves to advocate their rights in the political, public, and legal spheres, as in the case of the above-mentioned petitions.

Gradually, however, the government has taken more comprehensive measures toward asylum seekers that echoed the restrictive initiatives presented above. One such measure was the 2008 introduction of the anti-infiltration bill in the Knesset (Yaron et al., 2013). The bill intended to include all newcomers from Africa under the term “infiltrators” and to legalize the use of long-term detention against them. The bill finally passed in early 2012 in the form of an amendment to the Prevention of Infiltration law.⁵ In the interim, in light of the growing number of asylum seekers entering Israel, the government initiated two main projects: construction of a fence along the border with Egypt and construction of a detention facility meant to detain up to 30,000 persons.

Paz (2011) proposes that during this second period in the evolution of an asylum policy in Israel, asylum seekers in Israel were “discursively dressed” by the government in a fashion that illuminates the normative foundations of Israeli society: securitization, ethnonationalism, and the legacy of the Holocaust (Paz, 2011, pp. 7-8). The use of the terms “infiltrators” and “labor-infiltrators” was key in this process. The term “infiltrators” was originally used to address individuals (mainly Palestinians) entering Israel “knowingly and unlawfully” from enemy states, with an intention to “cause death or serious injury to a person” (Yaron et al., 2013, p. 145). Referring to asylum seekers as infiltrators thus associated them with actual historical events that threatened the security of the State of Israel and its citizens. Additionally, the linkage of

the term “infiltrators” with the term “labor” strengthened the association of asylum seekers with the sociocultural and economic threats that were linked to the emergence of illegal labor migrant communities in Israel mainly during the late 1990s and early 2000s (Pedahzur & Yishai, 1999).⁶

The third normative foundation of Israel's social identity construction – namely, the legacy of the Holocaust – served mainly human rights organizations and public figures in their efforts to counter the government's negative campaign against African asylum seekers. The association of African asylum seekers with the position of the Jews in the Holocaust was relevant mainly for the case of Darfurian Sudanese, who escaped genocide and thus provoked humanitarian responses linked with the Jewish genocide experience (Paz, 2011).⁷ The association between the Holocaust and the African asylum seekers had a minor and short-term effect on Israel's asylum policy, which was dominated by the hostile association between asylum seekers and various forms of threat.

A main concern arising from the dominance of the “infiltrators” frame in the Israeli discourse on asylum seekers is its connection with the spread of negative and hostile attitudes toward them. Studies demonstrate that public views toward asylum seekers in general are typically negative and suspicious (e.g., Louis et al., 2007; McKay, Thomas, & Kneebone, 2011). Yet, only limited empirical work has been done to model the role of framing in the emergence of such attitudes and to consider the role of the intergroup setting in their formation (but see Augoustinos & Quinn, 2003).

In this study, I first measure the extent and spread of negative attitudes towards asylum seekers in Israel. Second, I estimate the extent to which these negative attitudes are associated with the negative framing of asylum seekers in recent years. Finally, I investigate the possibility that framing effects mediate the relationships between instrumental factors – namely, socioeconomic threat, symbolic threat, and exclusionary attitudes.

THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

The current study seeks to identify an association between a hostile public atmosphere toward asylum seekers and the formation of attitudes toward them. Specifically, this study tests whether exposure to the frame “infiltrators” mobilizes individuals' views toward exclusion more than exposure to the frame “asylum seekers.” Framing represents a process by which the media, or other influential agents, emphasize a certain aspect of reality, thus promoting specific meanings and interpretations of issues or events (e.g., Keren, 2011). The words, images, phrases, and presentation styles used by the media and politicians when referring to an issue represent “frames” that take part in the formation of individual attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Schuck, 2006; Zaller,

1992). The role of frames in shaping public views is known in the literature as the framing effect. The literature indicates that framing effects are associated with processes of exposure, accessibility, and applicability of specific considerations regarding an issue. Once a consideration is accessible, a person can consider it applicable and use it to form an attitude toward the issue at hand. Alternatively, a consideration might be subjected to evaluation based on other considerations accessible to the person and their comparative applicability. Competing considerations may be pre-existing in an individual's mind, or they may originate in media exposure (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

Here one should make a conceptual distinction between "valence framing," also known as "strict frames" (Keren, 2011), and "issue emphasis framing," known also as "loose frames" (Keren, 2011). The strict (valence) definition of framing effects represents a competition between two frames that are logically equivalent and that serve as direct opposites of one another in terms of negative or positive valence. Such strict framing effects were the focus of Tversky and Kahneman's (1981) work and continue to be central in psychological inquiries. The loose (issue emphasis) definition of framing effects does not represent such logical equivalency. It refers to presenting an issue in a way that emphasizes one value dimension over another (Chong & Druckman, 2007). In the context of asylum seekers in Israel, the term "infiltrators" clearly carries negative meanings, yet I cannot assume that the competing frame of "asylum seekers" represents the equivalent positive inverse of this term. I therefore understand the case study at hand in the context of issue emphasis-framing effects.

Although this study's main aim is to investigate the role of framing in attitude formation, I also refer to more conventional theoretical explanations for the emergence of exclusionist attitudes toward foreigners in Israel. The literature proposes two main types of perceived threats that are associated with foreigners: socioeconomic and ethnonational threats. The theoretical origin of the notion of socioeconomic threat is the realistic group threat theory. This theory proposes that perceived competition over scarce resources such as jobs or social benefits between a given in-group and a respective out-group leads to an inherent conflict of interest between the two groups (e.g., Blalock, 1967; Levine & Campbell, 1972). Stephan & White (2000) add additional dimensions of perceived socioeconomic threat that are associated with prejudice toward migrants, like increased crime levels and risks to public health. Symbolic threat is typically associated with the social identity theory. This theory maintains that individuals strive for a positive self-concept among others by securing positive group identification. In order to secure positive group identification, individuals tend to characterize their own group (ingroup) as superior and distinct from respective out-groups. This process also implies the devaluation of out-group members and the emergence of

negative views toward them (Savelkoul et al., 2011). Foreigners are thus postulated as carriers of distinct values and practices perceived as alien and destructive to national identity (McLaren & Johnson, 2007; Rajiman, 2013). Symbolic threat is predicted to be particularly central to exclusionary attitudes in Israel, where nationality is strongly associated with an ascribed ethnic (Jewish) group membership (e.g., Shafir & Peled, 2000).

This study proposes a combined model that estimates both framing effects as well as perceived socioeconomic and symbolic threats, representing instrumental predictors of exclusionary attitudes (Wimmer, 1997). It will thus not only provide a test for the role of each in the formation of exclusionary attitudes, but will also investigate the possibility that the typical associations observed between perceived group threats and exclusionary attitudes are mediated by the frames used to represent the threatening out-group.

DATA AND METHOD

Data for this study was collected between June 2013 and August 2013 among a representative sample of the Jewish adult population of Israel. Respondents were randomly drawn from a telephone and cellular phone registry with proportional sampling based on community size. Extra efforts were made to make sure the rates of men and women would be as similar as possible to the general population. The response rate was about 60%. The design was based on two versions of a questionnaire composed of standard questions regarding attitudes toward foreigners used in international surveys (ESS-ERIC, n.d.; ISSP, n.d.) and questions about the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents (see Appendix 1).

The two versions used different terms for the reference group toward which the respondents were asked to convey their attitudes. The first version began with the following sentence: "In recent years, people from various African countries have entered Israel via the Egyptian border, and asked for asylum for reasons of political persecution or civil war" (N = 501). The opening sentence of the second version of the questionnaire was, "In recent years, people from various African countries have infiltrated into Israel through the Egyptian border without any visa or permit, thus breaking the law" (N = 300).⁸ Aside from the opening section and the different wording for the reference group, the questionnaires were identical. As demonstrated in Table 1, the sociodemographic characteristics of participants in both the asylum seekers and the infiltrators versions of the survey were similar (see Table 1).

The attitude section of the questionnaires included five main parts. The first part referred to whether or not Israel should allow the entry of asylum seekers/infiltrators. The second part included a battery of questions gauging perceived socioeconomic threat. The third part presented a battery of items

TABLE 1 Description of Respondents' Sociodemographic Properties by Frame

	Infiltrators Percentage/Mean (SD)	Asylum Seekers Percentage/Mean (SD)
Gender		
Male	43.81%	47.62%
Female	56.19%	52.38%
Ethnicity		
Europe-America	25.66%	29.63%
Asia-Africa	35.40%	31.75%
Israel	19.47%	21.16%
Former Soviet Union	17.70%	15.08%
2nd Generation mixed	1.77%	2.38%
Immigration background		
Native	67.70%	70.90%
Immigrant	32.30%	29.10%
Religiosity		
Ultraorthodox and Orthodox	26.99%	26.46%
Traditional	27.88%	25.13%
Secular	45.13%	48.41%
Political identification		
Right	29.65%	28.57%
Center	11.50%	15.08%
Left	12.83%	16.14%
Religious parties	10.18%	6.61%
No identification	35.84%	33.60%
Employment status		
Currently work	83.19%	77.78%
Currently do not work	16.81%	22.22%
Academic education		
No	50.44%	47.88%
Yes	49.56%	52.12%
Age	45.17 (13.38)	46.63 (14.56)
SES (occupation)	49.42 (27.21)	51.51 (27.73)
Years of schooling	15.38 (3.26)	15.13 (2.93)
Income (middle points)	11710.66 (6184.04)	12360.66 (6545.09)
<i>N</i>	226	378

Source. Author data.

gauging social distance and interpersonal anxiety, and the fourth part was composed of a battery of questions related to specific rights asylum seekers/infiltrators should or should not enjoy. A final item inquired into the way participants view the basic values defining the State of Israel.

The current study measures exclusionary attitudes by using an item involving entry policy into Israel: "Are you of the opinion that entry of asylum seekers/infiltrators into Israel should be unlimited, limited, or prohibited altogether?" Complete prohibition is regarded as an exclusionary attitude, while limited and unlimited entry are both regarded as inclusive (only 24 respondents replied that entry should be unlimited, 18 of them from the asylum seekers questionnaire). The main predictor of exclusionary attitudes

in the model is the frame presented in the questionnaire: “asylum seekers” or “infiltrators.”

To measure levels of perceived socioeconomic threat, I used a battery of attitudinal items, such as “Asylum seekers/infiltrators in Israel take jobs away from Israelis,” and “Asylum seekers/infiltrators in Israel increase crime rates” (see Appendix 2 for more details). Answers to all nine items ranged between 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree). An exploratory factor analysis (principal component factoring) yielded one factor for all nine items (with loadings higher than 0.7) in both the infiltrators and asylum seekers questionnaires. Notably, among the nine items, two might be associated with the concept of national threat: “Asylum seekers/infiltrators pose a threat to Israel's national security,” and, “In the future the number of asylum seekers/infiltrators in Israel will be so large that it will pose a threat to the Jewish majority in Israel.” Both items load very well on the socioeconomic threat factor and hence I decided to include them in it.⁹

Perceived symbolic threat was measured using one item: “Some maintain that Israel should be a ‘Jewish’ state. Others maintain the opposite, that it should be a ‘state for all its citizens’. On a scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 is ‘The State of Israel should be a Jewish state’ and 7 is ‘The State of Israel should be a state for all its citizens,’ where would you place yourself?” Due to the skewed pattern of responses to this item, it was recoded into three dummy variables: 1, 2-5, and 6-7. The reference was respondents who placed themselves in 6-7 on the respective scale and were more supportive of the “all its citizens” end.

The political identity of the participants was coded from their reports on the party that best represents their political opinions. I composed five categories out of the respondents' responses representing right-wing parties, left or center parties, religious parties, other parties, and a final group of respondents who did not give an answer to the question. The two latter categories were combined into one for the analysis.

The participants' ethnic descent was coded from information they provided on their own country of birth or, if participants were born in Israel, their parent's country of birth. These countries were coded into four groups that represent the main categories of ethnic origin of the Jewish population in Israel: Mizrahi (family origins in Asian or North African Arab or Muslim countries); Ashkenazi (family origins in Eastern or western Europe, North or South America, and Oceania); Israeli (respondents' parents are Israeli born); and immigrants from the former Soviet Union (family origin from one of the former republics of the FSU).¹⁰ The model additionally controls for whether or not the respondent is an immigrant.

Socioeconomic status was measured using participants' self-reported household income, number of years of education, whether respondents had an academic degree, and SES code based on self-reported occupation.¹¹ Level of religiosity is a common demographic property used in the Israeli context

to differentiate ultra-Orthodox (in Hebrew: haredi), modern Orthodox (in Hebrew: dati), traditional (in Hebrew: masorti) and secular (in Hebrew: hiloni) Jews. This predictor was based on the participants' self-reports, where they chose which of these four categories best described them. To account for the respondents' age, I calculated their current age from the year of birth they reported.

FINDINGS

Table 2 presents the distribution of the respondents for the question on exclusionary attitudes (entry or prohibition of entry) across the different predictors. The first line in Table 2 shows clear differences in the respondents' preferences to allow or to prohibit entry of asylum seekers/infiltrators into the country. Looking at the proportions of the respondents opting for prohibition or permission of entry by frame, slightly over 26% of respondents opting for allowing entry were those exposed to the "infiltrators" frame.¹² The remaining 73% of them are those respondents exposed to the "asylum seekers" frame. Some 45% of those opting for prohibition of entry are those exposed to the "infiltrators" frame. The remaining 54% are those exposed to the "asylum seekers" frame. The relation between frame and attitude toward entry were significant at the 0.05 level (chi-square test).

I also find clear differences in the share of respondents with differing political identifications in each of the entry policy alternatives. The majority of respondents opting for prohibition of entry identified themselves in right-wing political terms (37.4%). In addition, while left-wingers composed about 26% of the respondents opting for the permission of entry, they were less than 6.4% of those prohibiting entry. Here too, the differences in the proportions of respondents in each entry attitude were significant. Interestingly, the proportions of those who provided no political identification were almost equal in the two alternative entry policies. These individuals represent a meaningful share of the respondents in both questionnaires, as demonstrated in Table 1 (between 34% and 35% of the samples). This finding fits national statistics from the last Israeli election, showing that a similar proportion (about 33%) of those eligible to vote chose not to vote.¹³

With regard to ethnic origin, the data presented in Table 2 suggests that respondents of European or American ethnic origin represent the largest group in the permission of entry alternative (37%).

Respondents of Asian or African ethnic origin represent the largest group among those prohibiting entry (37.9%). The proportion of Israelis in either the permission or the prohibition alternatives is almost equal, with approximately 20% in each. Individuals of FSU origin are represented somewhat more highly in the prohibition alternative, with 17.7%, compared to 13.9%, in the permission

TABLE 2 Descriptive Overview of Respondents' Preferences¹

	Allow	Prohibit
Frame		
Infiltrators	26.64%	45.51%
Asylum seekers	73.36%	54.49%
Political identification		
Right	17.76%	37.39%
Center	18.53%	10.14%
Left	26.35%	6.38%
Religious parties	3.47%	11.30%
No identification	33.98%	34.78%
Ethnic origin (parents)		
Europe-America	37.07%	21.45%
Asia-Africa	26.64%	37.97%
Israel	19.69%	21.16%
Former FSU	13.90%	17.68%
2nd Generation mixed	2.70%	1.74%
Religiosity		
Ultra-Orthodox and Orthodox	17.76%	33.33%
Traditional	22.39%	28.99%
Secular	59.85%	37.68%
Immigration background		
Native	72.20%	67.83%
Immigrant	27.80%	32.17%
Education		
Not academic	42.86%	53.33%
Academic	57.14%	46.67%
Employment status		
Currently work	78.76%	80.58%
Currently do not work	21.24%	19.42%
Gender		
Male	44.02%	47.83%
Female	55.98%	52.17%
Age (mean; std. deviation)	46.06 (14.90)	46.10 (13.57)
SES (mean; std. deviation)	50.02 (26.92)	51.26 (28.01)
Years of schooling (mean; std. deviation)	15.53 (3.00)	14.99 (3.09)
Income (middle points) (mean; std. deviation)	12254.67 (6535.7)	11994.79 (6319.7)
N	259	345

Source. Author data.

¹Items in bold indicate that chi square tests (or t tests where applicable) were significant at the 0.05 level.

alternative. A chi-square test of significance indicated that these differences are significant. The distribution of respondents by level of religiosity for each of the entry-policy alternatives demonstrates that among those opting for permission of entry, some 60% are secular. Secular respondents are about 37% of those opting for prohibition of entry. These proportion differences were also significant. The data suggest no meaningful differences in the proportions of immigrants and natives or of men and women, in either the prohibition or the permission alternatives.

The indicators of socioeconomic status present a complex picture: in line with the theory, of those respondents opting for permission of entry, close to 57% hold an academic degree. On the contrary, of those respondents opting for prohibition of entry, the majority (53.3%) hold no academic degree. In all other indicators for socioeconomic status, I found no significant differences in the proportions of respondents of high or low socioeconomic status across the two entry policy alternatives.

Although informative in its own right, the descriptive data discussed thus far do not suffice to determine that framing effects partake in the formation of exclusionary attitudes toward asylum seekers. A stricter test requires control over possible interventions in this relationship. I thus move to predicting the odds of respondents exposed to the different frames to exclude asylum seekers while controlling for their different sociodemographic characteristics. The dependent variable in this analysis is dichotomous, requiring the use of a logistic regression model.¹⁴

Table 3 presents the regression coefficients derived from the logistic regression models (SE). Three models were estimated: Model 1 includes only sociodemographic predictors and the frame manipulation; model 2 adds the indicators for perceived socioeconomic and symbolic threat; and model 3 also includes an interaction effect for frame and perceived socioeconomic threat.¹⁵ The main result of the estimation presented in model 1 is documented in the first line of the first column, with a significant negative effect for the asylum-seekers frame for the odds of choosing complete prohibition of entry ($b^{\text{exp}} = -0.876$). Model 1 thus suggests that exclusionary attitudes are, to some extent, shaped by the collective definition of the intergroup setting or the position of the (in-) group. Importantly, this effect is found controlling for all other sociodemographic predictors.

Among these predictors, I found that respondents with left-wing or centrist political identification also showed lower odds of opting for complete prohibition of entry, as compared to individuals with right-wing political identification ($b^{\text{exp}} = -1.946$ and -1.087 for left-wing and center, respectively).¹⁶ Additionally, findings reported in model 1 reveal that ethnic origin of the respondents also contributes to variations in the odds that they will choose exclusion of asylum seekers/infiltrators. Specifically, individuals of Asian or African ethnic origin (determined by parents' country of birth, or own country of birth for foreign-born respondents) show higher odds of preferring complete exclusion compared with respondents of European or American origin ($b^{\text{exp}} = 0.660$). Respondents of Israeli or FSU ethnic origin show the same inclination ($b^{\text{exp}} = 0.635$ and 0.677 , respectively, for individuals of Israeli and of former FSU origin). The odds of respondents opting for prohibition of entry were also higher among Orthodox respondents ($b^{\text{exp}} = 0.642$). The various measures of socioeconomic status were all insignificant, suggesting that individual socioeconomic characteristics do not play a cen-

TABLE 3 Logistic Regression Coefficients (SE)^a

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Asylum seekers	-0.876* (0.199)	-1.174* (0.230)	-1.123* (0.226)
Academic degree	-0.481 (0.272)	-0.297 (0.309)	-0.300 (0.308)
Age (centered)	0.016** (0.008)	0.019** (0.009)	0.020** (0.009)
Years of schooling (centered)	-0.017(0.045)	-0.013(0.051)	-0.008 (0.051)
Income NIS 6,000-12,000	-0.165 (0.326)	-0.064 (0.364)	-0.046 (0.363)
Income NIS 12,001-18,000	0.462 (0.375)	0.681 (0.427)	0.680 (0.428)
Income NIS 18,001-20,000	0.413(0.401)	0.606 (0.452)	0.619 (0.452)
Income no information	0.084 (0.377)	0.006 (0.423)	0.013 (0.424)
SES	0.010** (0.004)	0.011** (0.005)	0.011** (0.005)
Pensioner/Student	1 .040 (0.594)	1 .171 (0.678)	1 .198 (0.688)
Currently not working	-0.232 (0.258)	-0.622** (0.298)	-0.613** (0.300)
Left political identification	-1.946* (0.345)	-0.962** (0.399)	-0.980** (0.401)
Center political identification	-1.087* (0.319)	-0.697 (0.363)	-0.710 (0.366)
Religious political identification	0.224 (0.451)	0.518 (0.512)	0.445 (0.513)
No political identification	-0.645* (0.242)	-0.355 (0.275)	-0.326 (0.277)
Asian-African ethnic origin	0.660** (0.258)	0.601** (0.289)	0.600** (0.290)
Israeli ethnic origin	0.635* (0.301)	0.510 (0.350)	0.532 (0.353)
Mixed second generation origin	0.378 (0.622)	0.058 (0.733)	0.028 (0.735)
USSR ethnic origin	0.677** (0.330)	0.414 (0.365)	0.447 (0.368)
Immigrant	0.244 (0.256)	0.328 (0.282)	0.324 (0.283)
Ultraorthodox and Orthodox	0.642** (0.281)	0.045 (0.334)	0.076 (0.338)
Traditional	0.390 (0.249)	0.084 (0.283)	0.028 (0.285)
Male	0.043 (0.197)	0.210 (0.225)	0.238 (0.226)
Jewish state		1.115* (0.326)	1.090* (0.327)
Jewish and all citizens state		0.380 (0.326)	0.369 (0.328)
Socioeconomic threat		1.167* (0.132)	0.826* (0.188)
Asylum socioeconomic threat			0.602** (0.255)
Constant	0.304 (0.488)	-0.410 (0.591)	-0.528 (0.592)
Observations	604	604	604
Log likelihood	-345.5	-284.0	-281.2
Pseudo R ²	0.162	0.312	0.318

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Source. Author data.

^a Reference categories were infiltrators; no academic education; income less than 6,000 NIS; work; right-wing political identification; European-American ethnic origin; native; secular/traditional; female.

tral role in the determination of exclusionary attitudes toward asylum seekers/infiltrators. This finding is not surprising and is similar to that of previous studies on attitudes toward foreigners in Israel (Lewin-Epstein & Levanon, 2005; Rajiman & Hochman, 2011).

The literature implies that there may be specific subgroups within the sample population for whom the framing effects are more likely to be meaningful (Knoll, Redlawsk, & Sanborn, 2010; Zaller, 1992). These subgroups are individuals with right-wing political views, individuals with academic education, and Orthodox Jews, for whom I also tested possible interaction effects. All effects turned out to be nonsignificant.

Model 2 includes the regression coefficients for perceived socioeconomic threat and symbolic threat. As expected, both indicators significantly

predicted the odds of a respondent choosing prohibition of entry of asylum seekers/infiltrators into Israel. Specifically, respondents who maintained that Israel should be a Jewish State were more likely to prefer the exclusionary option compared with those who maintain that Israel should be a state for all its citizens ($b^{\text{exp}} = 1.115$). An increase in levels of perceived socioeconomic threat similarly implies higher odds of choosing this option ($b^{\text{exp}} = 1.167$). The effect of the frame (infiltrators/asylum seekers) maintains and, in fact, slightly increases its significance ($b^{\text{exp}} = -1.174$).

Model 2 also demonstrates the role of perceived symbolic and socioeconomic threats as mediators for the relationships between some sociodemographic properties and exclusionary attitudes. Once these predictors are in the model, the effect of ethnic origin is no longer significant. Differences between religious and secular respondents are similarly insignificant in this model, but the differences associated with the respondents' political identification are maintained with left-wing voters less exclusive than right-wing voters ($b^{\text{exp}} = -0.962$). Similarly, despite perceived socioeconomic and symbolic threats, Asian and African respondents are still more likely to prohibit entry of asylum seekers/infiltrators ($b^{\text{exp}} = 0.601$). Model 2 also reveals significant differences between respondents who currently do not work and those who do. These differences were not significant in the previous model. Contrary to theory, respondents out of work show lower odds to opt for exclusion ($b^{\text{exp}} = -0.622$), compared with respondents who work.

In Model 3, an interaction term was included to model the role of the framing in shaping the association between perceived socioeconomic threat and exclusionary attitudes. As reported in Table 3, both the main effect of perceived socioeconomic threat and the interaction between the framing effect and the perceived socioeconomic threat were significant, along with the framing effect itself ($b^{\text{exp}} = 0.826$ for the main effect of perceived socioeconomic threat, $b^{\text{exp}} = 0.602$ for the interaction effect, and $b^{\text{exp}} = -1.123$ for the framing effect). These results imply that among those exposed to the frame "asylum seekers," the effect of perceived socioeconomic threat on exclusionary attitudes is slightly stronger than among those exposed to the frame "infiltrators." This finding indicates that framing effects intervene in the association between perceived socioeconomic threat and exclusionary attitudes. Since the interaction between symbolic perceived threat and the frame was insignificant, it seems that this mechanism is not involved.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This study took advantage of a contextual reality in which the status and rights of individuals are debated by means of competing frames. According

to international opinion (as well as the position of NGOs), African migrants into Israel are asylum seekers and potentially also refugees. The Israeli government, however, rejects this understanding, presenting and referring to these individuals as illegal infiltrators. In this study, I investigated the possibility that these two competing frames are consequential for the emergence of negative attitudes toward Africans in Israel. Specifically, I asked whether exclusionary attitudes are greater when the reference group is defined using the term “infiltrators,” which in the Israeli context, is negatively charged and associated with threat. In order to rule out the possibility that the framing effect is a result of a nonrandom distribution of specific sociodemographic traits among respondents exposed to the different frames, I control for those traits potentially related to exclusionary attitudes, such as socioeconomic status, political identification, and religious preferences. Additionally, the model accounts for group and individual-instrumental predictors of exclusionary attitudes, namely perceived socioeconomic and symbolic threats. Notably, I do not only control for these predictors but also ask whether the framing effect mediates their association with exclusionary attitudes.

The findings confirm that there is a framing effect in attitude formation processes among the respondents. Those exposed to the asylum seekers frame were less likely to prefer a “closed border” policy that meant preventing entry of asylum seekers altogether, compared with those exposed to the infiltrators frame. Theoretically, this finding is meaningful to the extent that it confirms the relationship between frames in communication (Chong & Druckman, 2007) and personal attitude formation, at least among the respondents sampled here and within the bounds of the issue of attitudes toward asylum seekers.

Addressing the usual suspects in the formation of exclusionary attitudes, the models estimated also included measures of perceived socioeconomic and symbolic threats. In line with previous studies investigating mechanisms of exclusionary attitudes, I find that both of these mechanisms are active. Interestingly though, the framing effect seems to imply a moderation only in the effect of one of these mechanisms on exclusionary attitudes: perceived socioeconomic threat. This finding indicates that the collective and the individual processes predicted to shape individual attitudes toward foreigners are interrelated. Symbolic threat, although clearly shaping the respondents attitudes toward asylum seekers, works in the same way for both frames of references selected.

Studies focusing on labor migration into Israel often find that right-wing political identification is associated with more exclusionary attitudes. This finding applies to the case of asylum seekers as well, regardless of the frame of reference used to describe them. Right-wing political identification thus implies higher levels of rejection of foreigners, even when controlling for

different descriptions of this “foreign” group. This finding may hint at some component of the exclusionary attitude that is implanted deep within the opinions and convictions of right-wing voters in Israel. Alternatively, it may be related to the fact that the current policy toward asylum seekers was initiated by a right-wing government.

The findings discussed here may have meaningful consequences for policy in Israel and elsewhere. First, the study provides an empirical indication of an association between the framing of an issue in the public discourse and public opinion toward that issue. Thus, access to the public discourse seems to be valuable for the mobilization of public attitudes. Second, the study rejects the possibility that framing is more important for the formation of attitudes among individuals holding particular political views, religious views, or differential education levels.

Further, the study shows that perceived threats, which consistently predict negative sentiments toward foreigners, explain the emergence of such sentiments also toward asylum seekers. In Israel, perceived symbolic threat seems to imply higher probabilities of an exclusionary attitude, regardless of the frame used to refer to asylum seekers. Perceived socioeconomic threat, however, has a stronger effect on the probability of an exclusionary attitude among those exposed to the frame “asylum seekers.” Although this finding may appear counterintuitive, I would like to propose that it is not. My interpretation for this finding is that among respondents exposed to the “infiltrators” frame, the question of whether these individuals pose a socioeconomic threat is only of secondary importance. However, among those exposed to “asylum seekers,” the potential socioeconomic threat they pose serves as a meaningful tool for the formation of attitudes toward them. Future studies will benefit from a generalization of the differential effects of framing on the relation between perceived socioeconomic and symbolic threats and exclusionary attitudes in other contexts, to rule out or sustain the possibility that Israel's ethnonational character accounts for them. This study is the first to investigate attitudes toward asylum seekers among the Israeli public. It thus provides important new insight into a relatively new phenomenon that remains high on the national agenda. This study is also first to examine these attitudinal constructs in Israel using a national sample (of the Jewish population). Future studies in this area should aspire to provide a better representation of the diverse social groups that make up Israeli society. Additionally, a comparative dimension could be added to clarify whether the mechanisms explaining attitudes toward asylum seekers are different or similar to those explaining attitudes toward other foreign groups in Israel. Further research might also test different frames of reference for asylum seekers that go beyond those represented in the official public discourse.

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NOTES

1. The number of undocumented labor migrants is currently estimated at 15,366 when website was accessed June 25, 2014. Population and Immigration Authority (2014), Foreigners in Israel Data. <http://www.piba.gov.il/PublicationAndTender/ForeignWorkersStat/Documents/563343n80.pdf>
2. Importantly, the term “asylum seekers” is applicable to these individuals because they are placed in Israel under temporary group protection (TGP), although many of them have not formally applied for asylum. In fact, since 2006, Israel has not acknowledged asylum applications filed by those placed under TGP. There are a few exceptions to this rule, but even among those who did file an official asylum claim, rates of acceptance are minimal. Yaron et al. (2013) maintain that of the 3,693 asylum claims submitted during 2010-2011, only one was approved. Under these circumstances, the UNHCR officially acknowledges individuals placed under TGP in Israel as individuals in a “refugee-like situation.”
3. Since 2010, the visa carries a line stating, “This visa is not a work permit,” thus withholding the right to work from asylum seekers. However, the Supreme Court has prevented the state authorities from implementing this prohibition. The prohibition of work statement is thus used mainly to spread uncertainty among employers who might otherwise be willing to employ asylum seekers.
4. Pressures were also voiced from IDF reserve soldiers positioned at the border, as demonstrated in a news report by A. Bereshkovsky (2007): <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3414994,00.html>
5. The amendment to the infiltration prevention law was implemented in June 2012. Yet, in September 2013, the Israeli High Court of Justice found the amendment to include unnecessary violations of basic rights and returned it to the parliament for further amendment. A new law was then designed to overcome the problems noted by the High Court, which nevertheless followed the exclusionist approach of policy makers in Israel toward asylum seekers.
6. One example for this association is evident in the following news report by T. Goldstein (2010) <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3837667,00.html>
7. The media too recognized the association between the realities of Darfur and the Jewish Holocaust as apparent for example in the following column by Bauer (2008) <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/what-do-we-have-in-common-with-them-anyway-1.247743>
8. The two groups sampled have a different number of respondents due to limitations associated with the funding sources of this project. A random sample of 300 out of the 501 respondents to the asylum seekers questionnaire revealed robustness of the findings as compared to the sample size.
9. I first tested the factors separately for the two frames and then pooled for the entire sample. In all cases, the factor loadings were well above 0.7, indicating that respondents do not consider them to represent a third different factor. Moreover, I estimated the model without these two items, and the main findings remained the same. The convergence of security and socioeconomic threats in the Israeli case is not surprising. Given the strong position of ethnicity in Israel's political culture (Peled, 1992), threats to society that are associated with a foreign (non-Jewish) group are likely interpreted as threatening the existence of Israel as a Jewish-democratic state.
10. Israeli-born participants whose father was born in Israel were coded according to their mother's foreign country of birth, and Israeli-born participants whose mother was born in Israel were coded according to their father's foreign country of birth. If both parents were foreign born but from a different ethnic-descent group, the participant was coded as mixed.
11. The scale was developed by Semyonov, Lewin-Epstein, and Mandel (2000).
12. Percentages given in the text are approximate. Please refer to the tables for exact values.
13. Among Jewish Israelis some 25% did not vote (Ben Meir, 2013).
14. To maximize information about the different predictors, several steps were taken: Missing information on respondents' education (in years) was imputed using their reports on the highest education

certificate they hold. To narrow down the number of nonresponses regarding SES, a dummy variable representing retired individuals and students among whom reports on SES are past oriented or temporal is included in the estimation model for control. Individuals who did not provide an answer regarding their income were represented in the model using a dummy variable.

15. The interaction between perceived symbolic threat and frame was insignificant.

16. Interestingly, I also find that respondents with no clear political identification show similar tendencies to those found among respondents who identified as left-wing or center ($b^{\text{exp}} = -0.645$).

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Appendix:

Table 1: Sample Description

	Percent/Mean (std. deviation)
Age	46.73 (14.53)
Years of schooling	15.23 (3.11)
Male	47.1%
Academic education	50.0%
Native (Israeli born)	70.0%
Income under 6000 NIS	12.4%
Income between 6000 and 12000 NIS	34.1%
Income between 12000-18000 NIS	19.0%
Income over 18000 NIS	15.1%
No income	20.0%
Right wing political identification	28.0%
Left wing political identification	15.2%
Center political identification	13.0%
Religious political identification	8.0%
No political identification	36.3%
Ashkenazi (Europe-America)	44.2%
Mizrachi (Asian-African)	32.3%
Israeli	21.0%
Mixed second generation	3.0%
Unemployed	24.3%
Ultra-Orthodox	10.1%
Orthodox	17.1%
Traditional	25.4%
Secular	47.4%
N	801

Source: own data.

Table 2: Factor Loadings of the Perceived Socioeconomic Threat Construct

Item	Factor Loading
Asylum seekers in Israel are a burden on the welfare services provided to all residents	0.74
Asylum seekers in Israel are a burden on the education services provided to all residents	0.75
Asylum seekers in Israel take jobs away from Israelis	0.77
Asylum seekers in Israel reduce the wage level of Israeli workers	0.73
Asylum seekers in Israel raise crime levels	0.78
Asylum seekers in Israel are a threat to national security	0.82
Asylum seekers in Israel are a threat to public health	0.79
Asylum seekers in Israel are a threat to personal and family security	0.75
Asylum seekers in Israel threaten the Jewish majority	0.73

Source: own data.